

“Patchwork Girl”

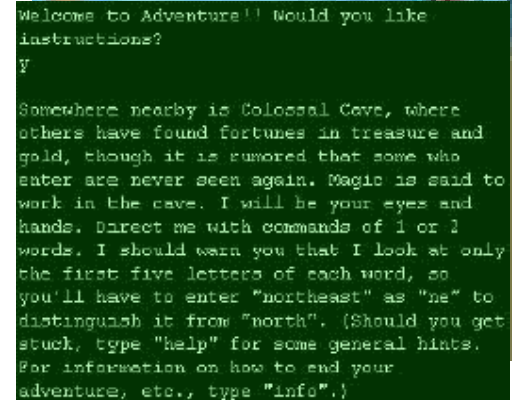


A Brief Overview of Hypertext Literature by Barbara Chin

Originally delivered October 25, 2006 for Transcriptions, UCSB
(modified by Katherine D. Harris for English 56B, SJSU
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What is Hypertext Literature?

- an interactive literature
 - *pop-up books*
 - *The Jolly Postman*
- an interactive electronic literature
 - old text-based games
 - video or computer games
- particular and effective use of hypertext*
 - *text that "links" in multiple ways to other text*
- general non-linearity
 - *"Choose Your Own Adventure" novels*
- ergodic literature (non-trivial effort to read)

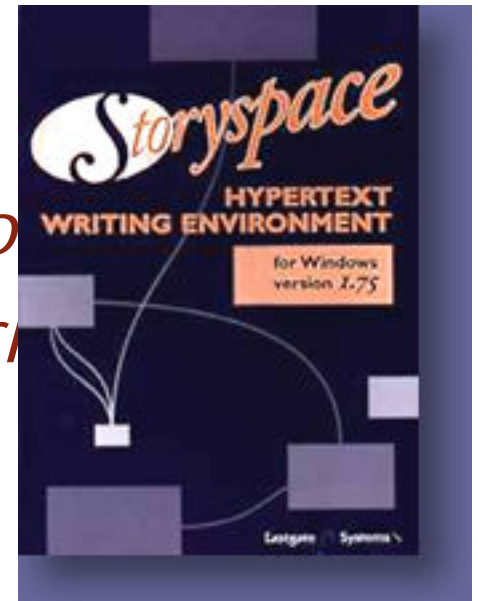
A screenshot of a text-based adventure game interface. The text is displayed in a monospaced font on a dark green background. The text reads: "Welcome to Adventure!! Would you like instructions?" followed by a prompt "Y". Below this, it says "Somewhere nearby is Colossal Cave, where others have found fortunes in treasure and gold, though it is rumored that some who enter are never seen again. Magic is said to work in the cave. I will be your eyes and hands. Direct me with commands of 1 or 2 words. I should warn you that I look at only the first five letters of each word, so you'll have to enter "northeast" as "ne" to distinguish it from "north". (Should you get stuck, type "help" for some general hints. For information on how to end your adventure, etc., type "info".)"

```
Welcome to Adventure!! Would you like
instructions?
Y

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others have found fortunes in treasure and
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History of Hypertext Literature

- Introduced and popularized around the late 1980s, through mid-1990s
 - *pre-dates the World Wide Web*
- Published using special software
 - *Storyspace (Eastgate Systems)*
 - *Hypercard*
- Michael Joyce, *Afternoon, a Story*
- Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*



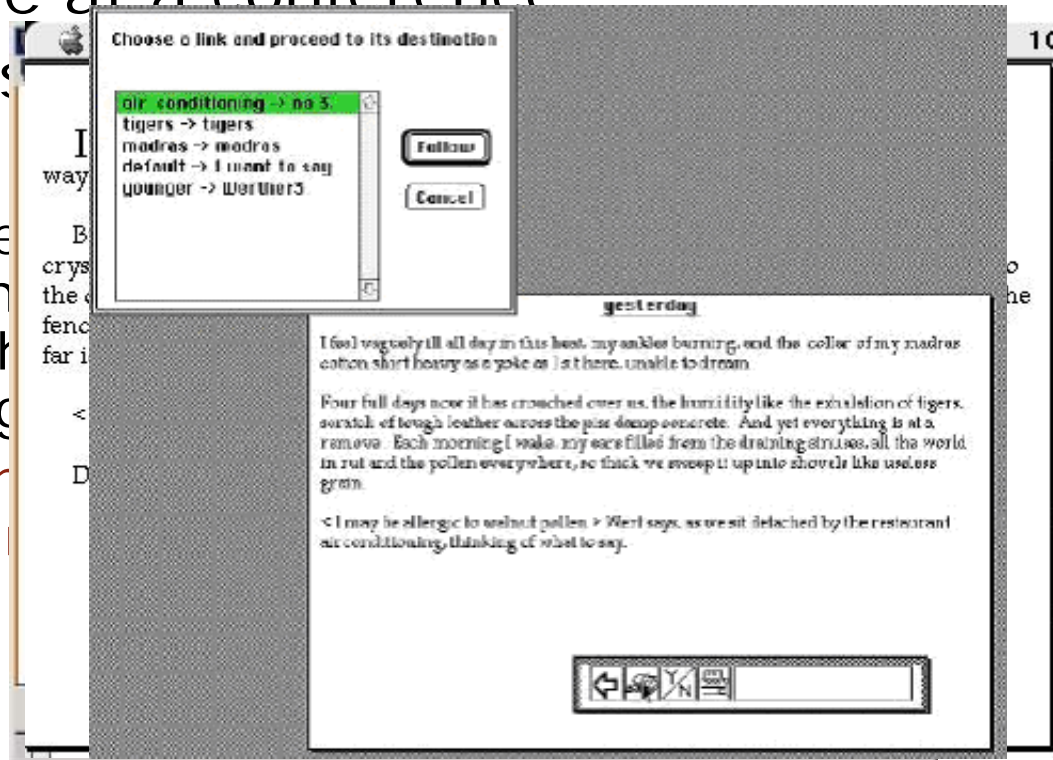
Afternoon, A Story

Created as part of a demonstration of Storyspace software at a conference

Consists

Plot:

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Afternoon, A Story

- ❑ Some interesting characteristics
 - Changes in narrator, narrative loops
 - Invisible links, difficult to track user interaction
 - Time collapse: reality/memory confusion
 - Emphasis on traditional text, not images
- ❑ Critical reception
 - **Pro:** transcends normal reader experience - postmodern
 - **Pro:** Reveals what the reader "takes for granted" in print
 - **Con:** limited user access (requires computer)
 - **Con:** relies on technology that is quickly outmoded

Patchwork Girl

- Sometimes called a “new standard” in hypertext fiction
- Consists of 323 lexias, 462 links
- Inspirations
 - Novels
 - *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* (L. Frank Baum, 1913)
 - *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818)
 - Current literary and cultural criticism
 - “The Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna Haraway

Patchwork Girl

□ Plot:

■ **What did you think it was about?**

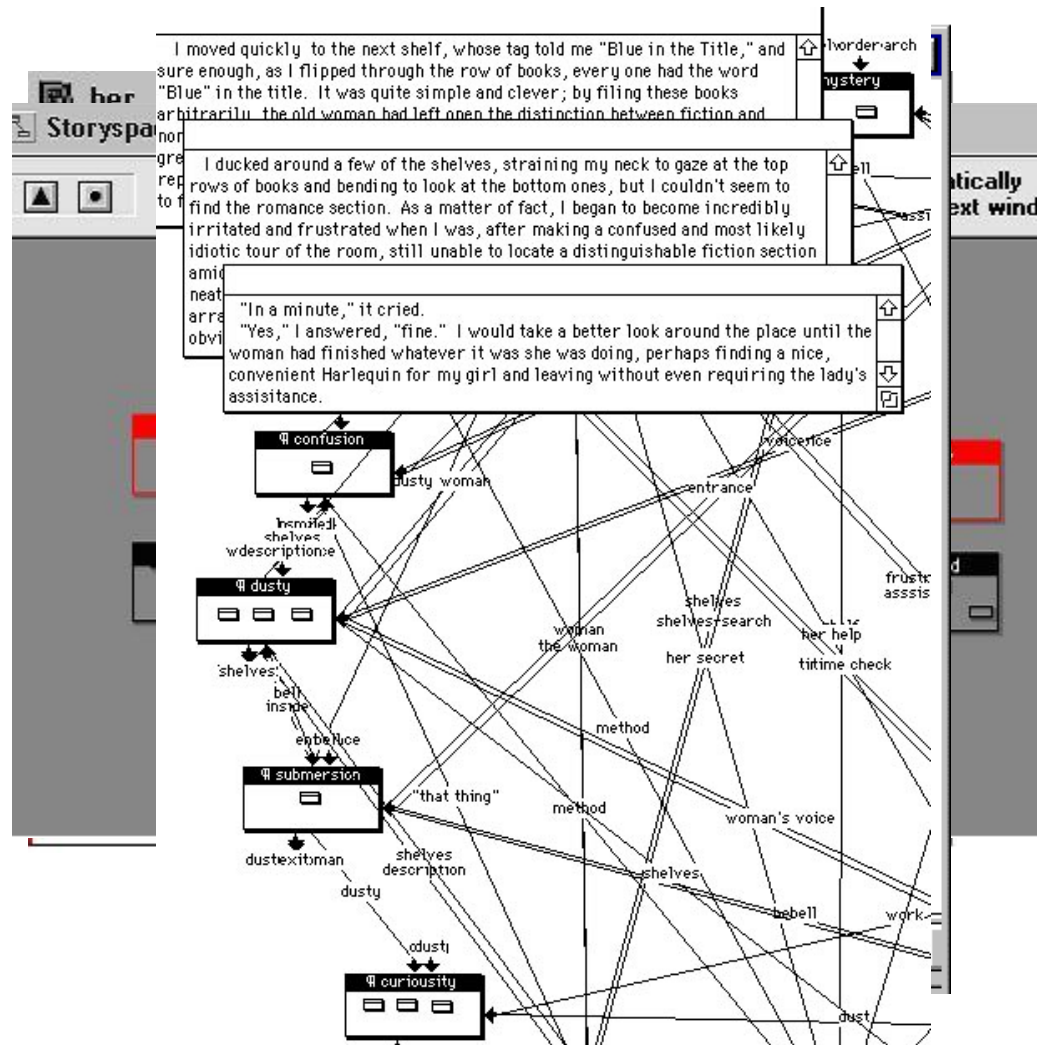
■ Basic premise

- "...Mary Shelley's second monster, the **female companion** that Victor Frankenstein began creating but then **destroyed**, was **secretly finished** by Mary Shelley herself."
- "The monster becomes MS's **lover**, then travels to **America**, where it goes through interesting adventures until its final **dispersal into its component parts** in the early 1990s."

■ Critical Reception

- **Pro**: Emphasis on both image and text, interrelated
- **Pro**: **powerful meta-commentary on the nature of all hypertext fiction**
- **Con**: Similar problems to *Afternoon, A Story*
 - **YET** - this time the "**cons**" are utilized in the text's meaning

Patchwork Girl



Patchwork Girl

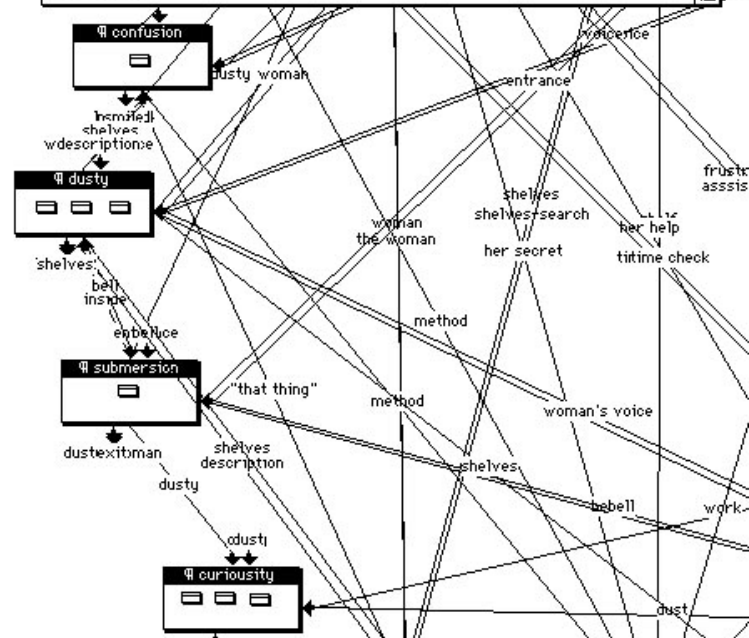


I moved quickly to the next shelf, whose tag told me "Blue in the Title," and sure enough, as I flipped through the row of books, every one had the word "Blue" in the title. It was quite simple and clever; by filing these books arbitrarily, the old woman had left open the distinction between fiction and non-

I ducked around a few of the shelves, straining my neck to gaze at the top rows of books and bending to look at the bottom ones, but I couldn't seem to find the romance section. As a matter of fact, I began to become incredibly irritated and frustrated when I was, after making a confused and most likely idiotic tour of the room, still unable to locate a distinguishable fiction section

"In a minute," it cried.

"Yes," I answered, "fine." I would take a better look around the place until the woman had finished whatever it was she was doing, perhaps finding a nice, convenient Harlequin for my girl and leaving without even requiring the lady's assistance.



Patchwork Girl

- One more Shelley Jackson quote:
 - On hypertext's difficulty
 - There's no question that hypertext will lose or never acquire those readers for whom a fated slalom toward the finish line is the defining literary experience; hypertext's not built for that. Probably it is because linear text's so well-built for it that it has become the dominant narrative style in the novel.
But there are other reasons to read.
 - For full text of "Stitch Bitch: The Patchwork Girl," see <http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/jackson.html>

Patchwork Girl

- Some issues
 - Collage, links, narrative, and intertextuality
 - Reproduction, (re)birth and creation
 - Destruction, fragmentation, and dissemination
 - Gender and sexuality
 - Bodies and embodiments
 - Female gender, quilting, patchwork
 - Queer sexuality
 - Gender, sexuality and “monstrosity”

Other Hypertext Literature

□ Online

- "My Boyfriend Came Back from the War"
- Originally created by Olia Lialina in 1996
- <http://www.teleportacia.org/war/>
- <http://myboyfriendcamebackfromth.ewar.ru/>