

**imagine imagination  
imagining imagination  
imagining imagination**

**THE  
ELECTRONIC  
CHRONICLES**

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**"The past looks to the future for interpretation.**

**The future, trailed by veils of transference, will be equally unable to read the past."  
-Kiru, Chief Wizard and Librarian Twin Lions 2161 Blue Planet Years**

**School of Visual Arts  
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**- Adrienne Wortzel, 1995, New York City**

# THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES

## Table of Contents in Alphabetical Order

|                       | <u>Section/Pagination</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Abstract              | Abstract 1                |
| Artist's Statement    | Artist's Statement 1-     |
| Bibliography          | Bibliography i - iv       |
| Conclusion            | Conclusion 1-2            |
| Description           | Description 1-3           |
| History               | History 1-8               |
| Introduction          | Introduction 1-3          |
| Journal               | Journal 1-8               |
| List of Illustrations | List of Illustrations 1-  |
| Rationale             | Rationale 1               |
| Signatures            | Signatures 1              |
| Theory                | Theory 1-8                |

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**ABSTRACT**

**became."  
and it .....  
placed it on his tongue .....**  
**Then Ptah thought it,.....**  
**"First, was a word..... [- Egyptian, 8th century B.C.]**

This printed paper accompanies an electronic work of art initiated in 1995 and in perpetual construction on the World Wide Web. Under the canopy of The Electronic Chronicles are clusters of written and imaged fictive episodes that construct a world. The characters emerging in this world take a good look at how to look at history and let us know how they feel about it.

The Chronicles are presented as the publication of an archaeological expedition. The expedition takes place in a far future which regards our present time as occurring prehistorically. These archaeologists of the future discover, interpret and "reconstitute" our present and our past, and in doing so, also reveal much about what happened to our world in the future:

"In their 21st millennium, the peers of the Blue Planet created electronic archives of all of the printed documentation of their world from the time of its beginning. These electronic documents were published onto archival media and encapsulated into the cornerstone of the Twin Lions Building, the last architectural bastion of material recordings in the universe."

**The Casaba Melon Institute Report,**  
Twin Lions Cornerstone Excavation  
Archaeological Deconstruction Publication  
Tome 6, Vol. A ID CMI No. 42-  
049.962.9808a.XVII

THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES  
Rationale  
"HERE AND THERE"

The nature of the internet stresses a new concept of "place" that is more in the mind than in the body/world. In hypermedia on the World Wide Web, the context, order and rationale for links are at the discretion of the artist creating them. This provides artists with a new key to every door, avenue, can-of-worms, Pandora's Box, treasure-chest, cup-of-tea and creative explosion possible for the making of art.

Bridging things which have been assigned into categories and eventually discarding arbitrary barriers between them is possible partially because we no longer need to be overwhelmed by all the information in the world. Computers can handle the storage, organization and access to that information and knowledge, leaving us free for the breaking of new artistic and philosophical ground.

The World Wide Web functions for artists as a simultaneous studio and exhibition space. Work can be ever changing on it, by the artist's hand, by collaboration from the Web community, by linkage: having its meaning amplified and mirrored by what its connections to other sites "says".

Working in ones and zeros on The World Wide Web gives legitimacy to the idea that many worlds, i.e., many ways of looking at things, many ways of voicing things, can co-exist successfully in, and contribute to, a work of art, giving it room to transcend, or bypass, just being the sum of its parts.

At the same time it is the vehicle or support for the work (as a canvas for a painting), it also functions as the tool (as the paint for a painting). Building intricate hypermedia in clusters of art work may result in an entirely new communicative language for artists.

# THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES

Adrienne Wortzel

## List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1* "Newsetta Takes Wing"  
Insignia of the Casaba Melon Institute Archaeological Team
- Fig. 2* "Joyce pun", diagram by Umberto Eco  
from "The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce", Tulsa U.P., 1982, Tulsa, Oklahoma, p. 75.
- Fig. 3* detail, map of the world (ca. 1300), Hereford Cathedral.  
from "The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages, Language, Theory, Mythology and Fiction, by Jesse M. Gellrich, plate 6, page 62.
- Fig. 4* "Confucius Comes to Dinner", Watercolor and text by Hendrik van Loon, "An Indiscrete Itinerary", 1933, Harcourt, Brace, p. 570-571
- Fig. 5* "A Borromean Knot" - Diagram of The Electronic Chronicles, by Adrienne Wortzel, 1995
- Fig. 6* "Ahneed" - Diagram of section of The Electronic Chronicles, by Adrienne Wortzel, 1995
- Fig. 7* "musEleanor" - Diagram of section of The Electronic Chronicles, by Adrienne Wortzel, 1995

## **THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES**

### **Description**

#### **RIGHTING NOVEL FOR THE WORLD WIDE WEB**

The Electronic Chronicles are a work of art consisting of text and images created for and on the World Wide Web. The work is in the form of hypermedia. I.e. text and images are activated to link to other text and/or images.

It is meant to be viewed with the latest and most developed graphical browsers, at this time that is Netscape 1.1b3. It is scripted in HTML (Hypertext Markup Language).

Clusters of stories and articles are continually constructed and connected to each other as well as to other sites on the Internet, the World Wide Web sites and to virtual communities.

Links between stories and images in these electronic documents are regarded as pockets, absences, lapses, synapses, indicating what is inexpressible or interactively assumed by the viewer/reader. The subtext of the work is embedded in the links and left to the viewer to decipher.

Characters in The Electronic Chronicles take on a life of their own and appear as characters in MOOs – Object Oriented Multi-User Dungeons --- as well. MusEleanor, a prime character, has been asked to do a column on “Art in New York” for the Berlin VideoFest VideoWeb site. A photograph of musEleanor has been forwarded to VideoWeb for their new home page. The photo will be incorporated into a clickable map leading to all their web site features. musEleanor’s first article will be her comments on the 1995 Whitney Biennial, date of publication yet to be determined.

## UPSTAGING DOWN

It interests me to place elements upon the theater stage-set space of the World Wide Web in increments of stage-set depth. In *The Electronic Chronicles* there is an armature of three increments of depth, corresponding to foreground, middleground and background

I. The facade of the piece is the Casaba Melon Institute section consisting of reports and interpretations of its Twin Lions Building Excavation Site. This section functions as a cover for my book both in the sense that it surrounds and embraces the real heart of the book and also that it functions as a cover story. Like a false door of an Ancient Egyptian tomb we have hopes it will sidetrack the plunderers. The plunderers are any of the audience that accept things at face value, i.e., tend to judge a book by its cover.

II. There are the in situ electronic documents that have been uncovered. We are concerned with their condition, their origins, their meaning to the wizards who preserved them and the archaeologists who discovered and deciphered them.

III. There are the voices of those who created the documents; the characters of this fictive work, bringing us their experience and expression.

I have tried to vary the tone of these stories both in relationship to each other and within themselves. I.E., one might seem to emulate the vibrancy of color and sound as a 70 mm movie; while another might appear awkward and ungainly. One might grow from a huge intricate compiled , compressed thing only to dwindle down and trickle out. Sometimes the graphics are florid, sometimes subdued, Time becomes democratized in all directions, any period being as valuable and palpable as any other.



Different parts of The Electronic Chronicles are on servers in different parts of the world. This is not necessary of course for people to have access to the whole piece as it grows, but it is a romantic notion of mine that the piece is connecting people to other people, because they can go from server to server.

The primary site is at the School of Visual Arts at  
<http://www.sva.edu/WGTB/flypaper.html>.

Other current sites are as follows:

VideoWeb, The Berlin VideoFest  
Site:<http://www.artcom.de/videofest/zero/videofest/www.html>

ArtNetWeb :  
<http://www.awa.com/artnetweb/projects/ahneed/first.html>

University of New South Wales, College of Fine Arts:  
[http://hepworth.cfa.unsw.edu.au/gallery/vg\\_exhibts.html](http://hepworth.cfa.unsw.edu.au/gallery/vg_exhibts.html)

University of New South Wales, Chimera Festival:  
<http://hepworth.cfa.unsw.edu.au/gallery/chimera.html>

**THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES**  
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**Artist's Statement**

**ARE YOU SURE  
IT'S REALLY ROUND?**

Drawing the curtain on the 13th century, we see that some viewed the world as a flat, circular disc, finite, and with a definite edge.



*fig. 3. detail - map of the world (ca. 1300 AD). Hereford Cathedral.*

The center of the disc was occupied by heavenly phenomena radiating out into manifestations of earthly existence. As one proceeded farther out to the edge of the world the nature of things declined and became faulty and cumbersome; this was purgatory.

Inside the edge and outside the edge meant completely different things. Lost for eternity outside were the ideological inhabitants and territories of hell: the gargoyles, demons, monsters, sinners, unformed and deformed inhabitants of the over-the-edge world. The world was seen ideologically; there was hardly any interest at large in maps as charts of the real geographical, topographical world. Human nature being what it was, and is, everyone just wanted to know the most phantasmagorical news.

Cyberspace is an invitation to explore and remap the world ideologically again, retaining all its diversity, and even deepening it. At the same time, since everyone in cyberspace is a traveler, it allows for the end of all ghettos, the disintegration of borders, and the suspension of all bipolar judgments.

In cyberspace, we are not limited to a flat, circular disc. We are not limited to a round sphere. We are not limited. The World Wide Web's only shape will be the one we will probably impose on it eventually, most likely in our own image, or in the image of our limitations. On its own, the World Wide Web is a chameleon, and can change shape, color and scope at will.

I hope that artists will play in cyberspace like porpoises, abandoning all the models they already know as art and moving through it like pioneers, via their own special blends of sonar, ingenuity and effort.

**THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES**  
©1995 Adrienne Wortzel

**“Do you still see the dragons breathing fire;  
the windmills nestling coyly in the hills  
waiting to be considered dangerous?”**

**...musEleanor, C.M.S.A.S.  
speaks out to the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Blue Planet Time**

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper discusses issues regarding the creation of literature in a new and developing medium: the electronic arena of the World Wide Web of the Internet. Its primary focus is the evolution of the idea of the book as it rolls over into cyberspace.

The paper is styled in a form as close as possible to the structure of the pluralistic paradigm of the medium it discusses. It is not imperative that sections be read in any particular order; an effective and surprising reading will occur by shuffling the pages like a deck of cards. The pages do, however, remain readable from left to right, top to bottom. This may be subject to change upon translation into a language reading right to left, top to bottom, or, as with Ancient Egyptian (a sadly underutilized pictographic language) in any direction whatsoever.

Sections are named in addition to being numbered: i.e.: Introduction-1, Introduction-2; Theory-1, Theory-2, etc.. This new literature takes a multidimensional, rather than linear, form. It is less important to indicate linear order via numbers than to hint at content and amplify the presence of the thing itself by using its name.

Hypermedia is any textual and imagerial work or construction that contains linkable areas, which allow linkage, leaps within a particular work as well as to other works. At the time of this writing, on the World Wide Web this means combinatory activating

linkages between text, image (moving or still), audio, site. The World Wide Web is that part of the Internet that can support graphical browsers supporting these clickable linkages. In creating The Electronic Chronicles I used the available potential of the World Wide Web for the construction of intricate hypermedia as a new language for artists. Parts of this constructed world link to each other and some link out to sites that amplify their expression.

This paper will discuss some of the works that have influenced me in creating this work, both in print and on the internet. In print these have been literary and historical texts, sometimes fictional, sometimes factual, sometimes a combination of both. The work is ongoing and can go on as long as the internet exists in its current, available state. It is a great pleasure to work at this time, with the current limitations of the World Wide Web, just at the cusp of the time when its technology is about to become entirely virtuoso.

### **THE ELECTRONIC PONTE VECCHIO**

This paper will also discuss what I like to call the Ponte Vecchio Affect; the ability of this medium to bridge things that have previously been diametrically opposed and assigned different positions on either side of a subjectively constructed abyss: art and science, politics and humanities, fact and fiction.

Most importantly, I hope to prove by example that this new medium enables us to end the arbitrary quarantine imposed between image and word, bringing them together in a new syntax.

As a medium for art, the World Wide Web offers the advantage of new and improved form because work on it can constantly be updated and changed. Clusters of

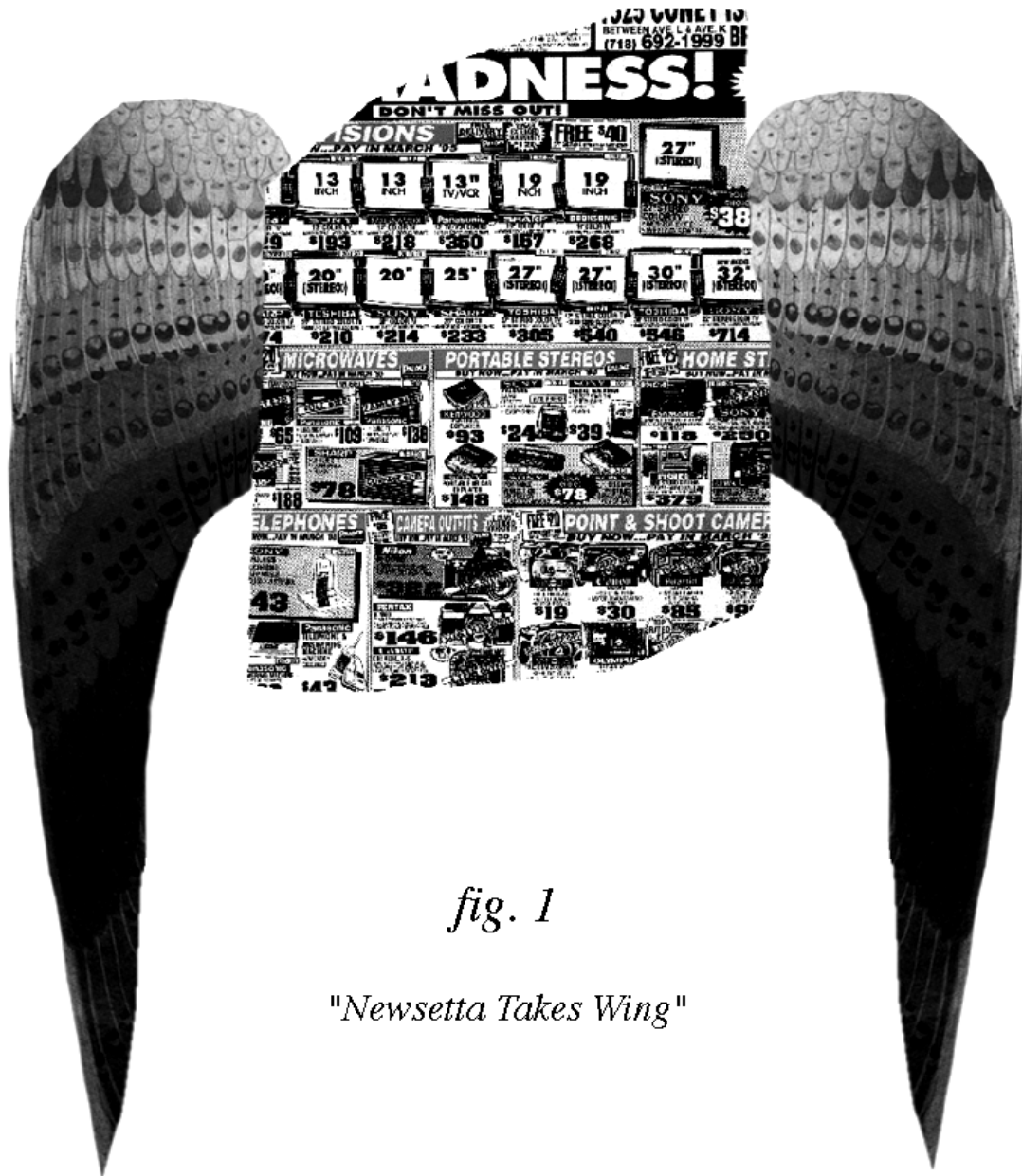
people working in real time on the internet can provide up-to date-works in collaborative form, each keeping the others informed of progress in their area. The World Wide Web also provides for a fluidity of form in creating work. Since the structure is NOT linear, material can be interjected anywhere, asides can be indicated, and tangents can lead to whole other worlds because of the World Wide Web's branching structure and mode of connectivity.

### **UNARCANE ARCHAEOLOGY**

I celebrate accomplishment; a process, which no longer has to be linear, or even incremental: Expressions like: "one step at a time", "one thing leads to another", "best foot forward", may fall away from our vocabulary when the steps can be multidimensional and even pluralistic. The rationale for steps, or links, can be at any level, and/or at more than one level simultaneously.

The genres of detective and mystery stories, science fiction, fables, scholarly and scientific reporting or journalism all contained under the auspices of archaeology. Archaeology encapsulates all of these forms with the added advantage of leaving room for poetry.

The World Wide Web provides a pluralistic structure that I very much see as a theater, or arena. It interests me to superimpose upon that theater a kind of stage-set space in increments of depth:



*fig. 1*

*"Newsetta Takes Wing"*

**THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES**  
**Theory**  
**TREES FOR THE FOREST**

The material of the content of the internet is metaphorically close to the nature of the basic common denominator of matter: electrons creating packets of data that are lively, buoyant and free to interact. This phenomenon represents a powerful manifestation of the pure power of 1's and 0's in the form nearest to what they are: alternate and juxtaposed impulses.

It seems ironic that, following eons of binary thinking, a binary proposition, has provided us with the tools to end the inevitability of hierarchical and bipolar works of art. All of the ways that computer technology powers expression are accessible in the Boolean laboratory of electronic alchemy: juxtaposition, mirroring, combination, provocation, association, randomness, superimposition, and multiplicity.

**THE LANGUAGE OF LINKS**

The generator for the metaphors of the new electronic metanarrative is couched in its synapses - the spaces between its content. Precedent for this lies in the literature of this century, in the works of James Joyce, Italo Calvino, and Jorge Luis Borges.

These lively synapses called links provide not emptiness but a dynamic space to punctuate the full body of a work; and because the seams in the new electronic fiction on the net are invisible, they leave room for the inexpressible to be expressed.

The significance of the links is provoked/evoked by what is at either end; the link is not empty, it is a vehicle for the Real: the inexpressible that resonates its presence. The relationship of one section of a work to another conjures up additional language in the reader's mind in order to make the leap from one part to another, which brings on this new language of the links.





being full circles. Women, however, are designated as straight lines, which not only makes them simplistic, but extremely dangerous because you cannot see them coming head on. This leads to some unfortunate accidents. However, Flatland<sup>1</sup> has a 2-dimensional philosophy of art that even more painful, i.e. foreground, middle ground, background/big, medium, small in scale.

## **WHAT TIME IS IT?**

Millenniums, like haircuts, are a construct we implement to roll ourselves over into a space of new hopes and possibilities. The year for our turn of the millennium, 1999, brings us to a place where we may leave the limitations of a 3-dimensional environment to enter into a new relationship with time and space. The year 1999 also simultaneously gives us an end and a beginning. and our new beginning commences for artists with a provocative technology available to artists without precedence.

At this time we are witness to the development of new rites of courtship between art and technology that can merge them into a nonbinary and fluid form allowing for the unpacking and airing out of pluralistic art forms.

This technology provides a vehicle to act art out in real time, to give us back the actuality and the mirror image of an art not limited to the linear, nor the emulation of multi-tasking, nor the predictability of tree and branch structure, nor the tyrannies of the model of spiraling centrifugal force, but a true in-and-outgrowth of its own existence, conveying meaning, choosing structure and content, and fashioned in one or many voices. These are the electronic arteries and synapses of the World Wide Web as a medium. Salman Rushdie has a complete and wonderful description of this:

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<sup>1</sup> See Edwin A. Abbot, Flatland, A Romance of Many Dimensions, Penguin Books U.S.A., New York, 1984, written 1884.

"He looked into the water and saw that it was made up of a thousand thousand thousand and one different currents, each one a different colour, weaving in and out of one another like a liquid tapestry of breathtaking complexity; and Iff explained that these were the Streams of Story, that each coloured strand represented and contained a single tale. Different parts of the Ocean contained different sorts of stories, and as all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of being invented could be found here, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was in fact the biggest library in the universe. And because the stories were held here in fluid form, they retained the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories and so become yet other stories; so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead, but alive."<sup>2</sup>

This electronic medium also restores communicative writing to the position of enriching our daily lives that it had in Joyce's time. In the time of James Joyce, mail in Dublin was delivered several times a day; so that you could post an invitation to someone for dinner at noon and receive their written reply before the dinner hour. Email and talk sessions restore the possibility for immediate reciprocity of verbal/and or imagerial exchanges. Writing loses the demand on it to be a formal construct of book or article, it can flourish well again as direct communicative correspondence. Content and imagination are free to rear their heads in an open and ventilated text. Interactivity between viewer/reader and the writing is in the act of freely interpreting the text., discerning the subtexts and also participating in its construction via responses.

### **WHAT'S KNOT TO LIKE?**

Burrowing in and out of the writings of great minds like an industrious prairie dog, I searched for an example of a structure that could serve as an armature for a fictive work on the net. The main requirements was that this structure would prove hospitable to

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<sup>2</sup> See Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Granta Books, London, in assoc. w/Penguin Books, 1990, p. 71.

pluralism without the albatross of A MAIN IDEA as the focus of a hierarchical structure. In this work the main idea evolves slowly and incrementally and gains depth and intensity the more the work is experienced.

Jacques Lacan's notion of The Borromean Knot, which consists of a linkage of three rings constituting an entire world stressed the existence of three simultaneous registers in life. The rings link the imaginary, the symbolic and the real in a way, which bypasses any notion of hierarchy of any one of these three registers. (*See. Fig. 5*)

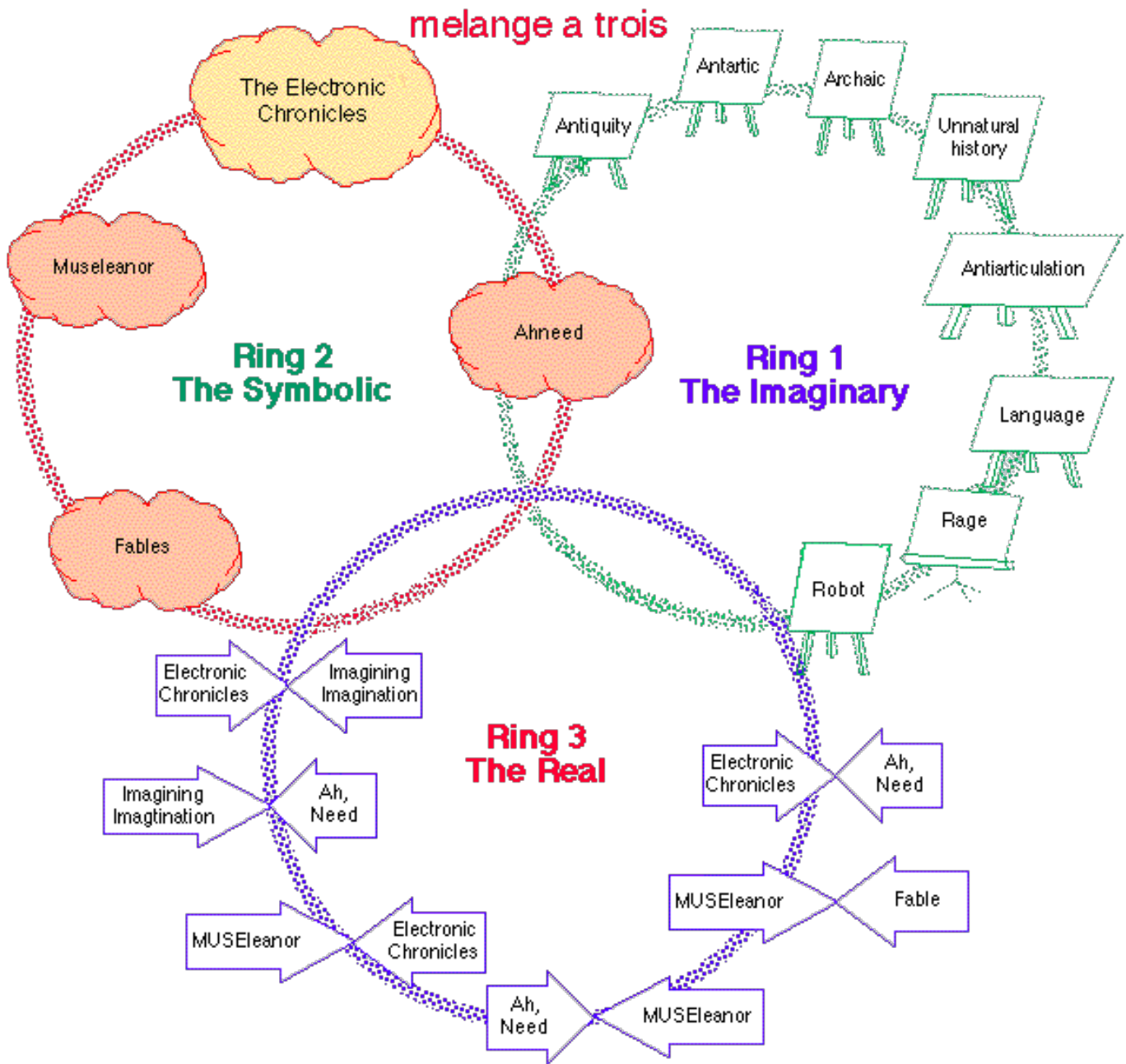
The Symbolic registers the construction of language; the Imaginary the fantasy and imagery in our lives and the Reality whatever is left over and unaccountable for, impossible to symbolize, and inexpressible. In my work, that describes the content that emerges in the action, place and time of the synapsespace of a link.

### **AN AMATEUR HISTORIAN, BUT ONE WHO WAS THERE IN REAL TIME**

The approach of a year of the number \_999 could well resonate Cortes' approach towards Mexico City in that it is inevitable, overbearing and seductive.

In his book, "The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico", Bernal Diaz del Castillo describes in detail the first meeting between Cortes and Montezuma, at which he was present as Cortes' right-hand man in real time and is recalling in writing, 20 years later. The meeting took place on the grand causeway leading into Mexico City. Cortes and Montezuma mirror each other; and each other's alien worlds. Montezuma, who is about to lose his boundaries is cautious and regal; Cortes, boundaried as a fortress preparing for conquest, is cavalier and tries to touch Montezuma. The setting seems like it could hardly be real, it seems more like the yellow brick road to Oz. Yet it was real. I offer the

Fig.5



text below as an image, more than as a text, and Diaz himself questions how what was "real" seemed so impossible as a reality in its every aspect:

"Gazing on such wonderful sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on one side, on the land, there were great cities, and in the lake ever so many more, and the lake itself was crowded with canoes, and in the Causeway were many bridges at intervals, and in front of us stood the great City, and we did not even number four hundred soldiers who well remembered the words and warnings given us by the people, that we should beware of entering the great City, where they would kill us, as soon as they had us inside.

When Cortes was told that the Great Montezuma was approaching, and he saw him coming, he dismounted from his horse, and when he was near Montezuma, they simultaneously paid great reverence to one another. ... it seems to me that Cortes through Dona Marina, offered him his right hand, and Montezuma did not wish to take it, but he did give his hand to Cortes and then Cortes brought out a necklace which had had ready at hand... and he placed it round the neck of the Great Montezuma and when he had so placed it he was going to embrace him, and those great Princes who accompanied Montezuma held back Cortes by the arm so that he should not embrace him, for they considered it an indignity.

Then Cortes through the mouth of Dona Marina told him that now his heart rejoiced at having seen such a great Prince, and that he took it as a great honor that he had come in person to meet him and had frequently shown him such favor.

Then Montezuma spoke other words of politeness to him, and told two of his nephews .. to go with us and show us to our quarters, and Montezuma ...returned to the city, and all those grand companies of Caciques and chieftains who had come with him returned in his train.

As they turned back after their Prince we stood watching them and observed how they all marched with their eyes fixed on the ground without looking at him, keeping close to the wall, following him with great reverence. Thus space was made for us to enter the streets of Mexico, without being so much crowded.

But who could now count the multitude of men and women and boys who were in the streets and on the azoteas, and in canoes on the canals, who had come out to see us. It was indeed wonderful, and, now that I am writing about it, it all comes before my eyes as though it had happened but yesterday. Coming to think it over it seems to be a great mercy that our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to give us grace and courage to dare to enter into such a city; and for the many

times He has saved me from danger of death, as will be seen later on, I give Him sincere thanks, and in that He has preserved me to write about it, although I cannot do it as fully as is fitting or the subject needs. Let us make no words about it, for deeds are the best witnesses to what I say here and elsewhere."<sup>3</sup>

## ARENA

The World Wide Web, with its textual, imagerial and audio browsers, constitutes for artists a simultaneous studio and exhibition space affording artists a multidimensional arena; an exquisite theater in the round, and a performance space that matches the one in our minds.

Artists who view the internet as an ocean of knowledge and a sea of stories find in its depths not merely a place to surf, but a place to deepsee dive in order to coral meanings, a whale of a story, purposes and doll fins, and the experience of art forms never seen before in situ. Artists become archaeologists, uncovering, interpreting and reconstructing magnificent digs.

We are not physicists nor metaphysicians: we must be Egyptologists. For there are no mechanical laws between things, nor voluntary communication between minds. Everything is implicated, everything is complicated, everything is sign, meaning, essence. Everything exists in those obscure zones, which we penetrate as into crypts, in order to decipher hieroglyphs and secret languages.

- Gilles Deleuze<sup>4</sup>

-

One of the themes running through my work is the artist as detective-archaeologist. The artist, in facing a passion head-on, and articulating it in work, is faced with the delicious problem of a preexisting deconstruction: the "ruined" art, philosophy, technology of predecessors.

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<sup>3</sup> See Bernal Diaz del Casteillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, The Noonday Press, New York, pp. 192-196.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Donald Theall in his paper, reproduced online: "THE HIEROGLYPHS OF ENGINED EGYPSIANS: Machines, Media and Modes of Communication in Finnegan's Wake."

Where civilizations are concerned, the ravages of time have layered sediment and noise over a once-upon-a-time, preexisting community of mind. Its Geography, geology, meteorology, have been blanketed and camouflaged by forces of nature and time and subsequent thinking. News and information about a constellation of civilization that is no longer in existence or has permutated to a completely different state is masked, disguised, and poised for discovery and interpretation by each new generations of artists.

The artist not only digs for clues in regard to reconstructing this philosophical civilization but is creating commentary about its nature, and conjecturing on the bearing that its existence on the artist's consciousness of it has upon the artist, and subsequently on the cluster of constellations in which the artist lives. The artist, like the archaeologist, must also remember that the great temple monuments of antiquity were colored in sharp and biting primary colors, closer to kitsch than classicism, and that the romance of "faded ruins" has nothing to do with the civilization that reared those monuments.

### **IN SITU OR IN SITCOM?**

"A magic carpet flies and is so incredible that it is, in fact, difficult to believe. A true story, however, is harder to get off the ground, and has other liabilities in its predictability of coincidence, resonance of it's life is stranger than fiction aspect, and challenge it presents of running to touchdown without being tackled by cliché."

- a certain 20th century maker of livres des artistes electronique :)

Building a fictive work for the World Wide Web means building a hypermedia entity in component parts including text, image and audio. In turn, these parts are linked to each other as well as other existing entities out there on the net.

In a segment of The Electronic Chronicles devoted to the relationship between two fictional characters: Fate and the Volcano, one can click on "Leap Into The



Volcano" and connect to The Michigan Technological University Volcano Page. MTU's page contains continually updated documentation on every volcano in the world. In turn it links every other site in the world that has to do with volcanoes. This leap from the fictional to the factual hardly requires a great leap of faith, yet that is exactly what it is. Although in this medium it seems quite natural, it still requires a consideration as to what is "real". "Real" information becomes an equal source to the imagination as "fantasy". And since ultimately, all information and history will be available simultaneously, this leaves us wondering what kind of criteria we would need to discern what is "real".

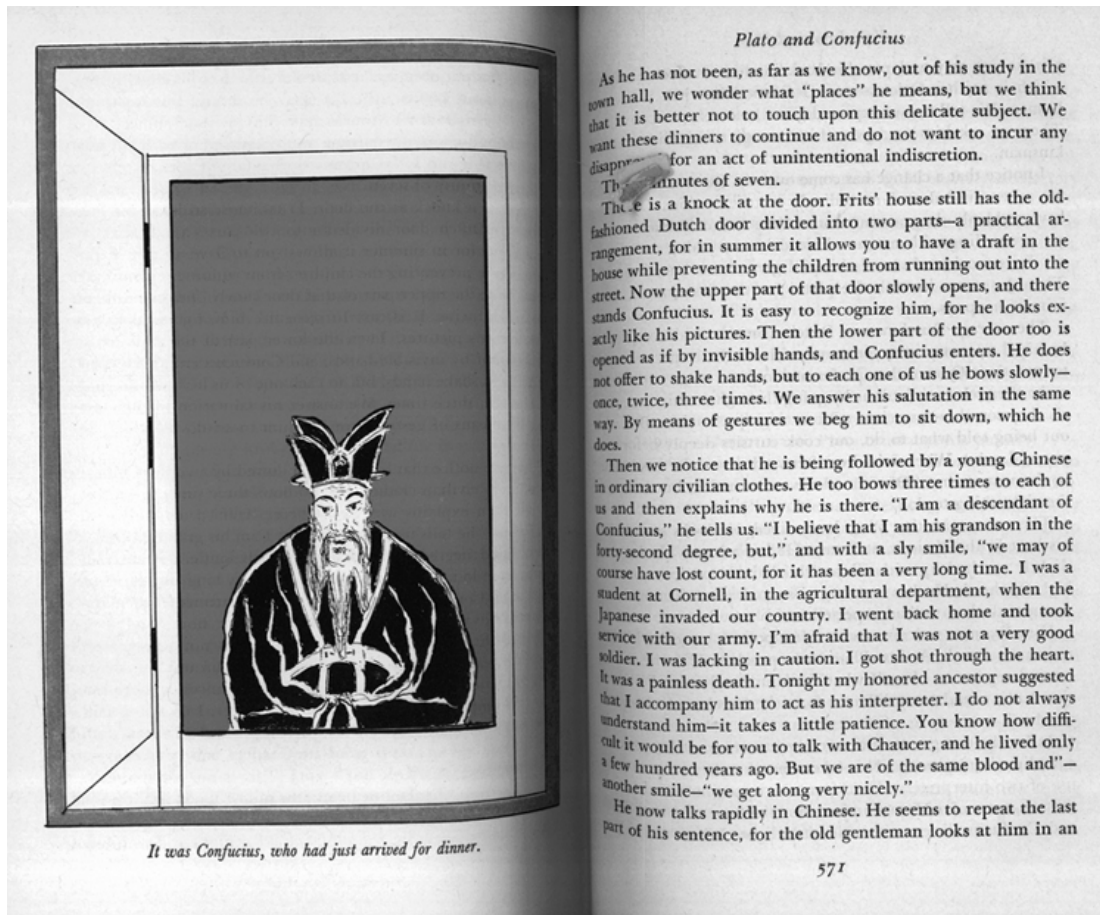
**THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES  
HISTORY  
PRECURSORS AND TRAILBLAZERS**

**"MEGA BIBLION, MEGA KAKON"**

**[A Big Book is a Big Nuisance]**

**--Callimachus, Poet and Librarian, the Alexandrian Library, 260 BC**

Travelling along the dotted line of linearity, we cache our experience and knowledge into written language under the auspices of a progression. Our scroll, codex and book not only reflect our predilection for recording knowledge linearly, but our devotion to quarantining the language of words from the language of images.



*fig. 4. Book.*

## **INSIDE**

The grouping of content known as an object called book has a history of over 5,000 years. All of its historical forms have presented temporal problems of production, physical vulnerability and comfort in use. Although the codex liberated the book from the configuration of ancient papyrus scrolls, it retained storage and handling problems similar to print books of our times.

Christopher Evans, in his book "The Micro Millennium", in a chapter called "The Death of the Printed Word"<sup>5</sup>, talks about today's electronic phenomenon of compression techniques enabling us to store "a whole library in a space about the size of one of today's paperbacks." This is news that Callimachus, poet and a Librarian of the Alexandrine Library, would have welcomed, as the library he overseered in the third century B.C. archived an average of 700,000 papyrus scrolls, some as long as 25 feet.

## **OUTSIDE**

An interesting way to tell a contemporary book is not by its cover, but by its index, bibliography and glossary. The index supplies us with an associative analysis of the contents and the tenor of the grouping of ideas, information and images that make the book. The bibliography gives us grounding, an indication of the author's wave length.

In "Writing Space"<sup>6</sup>, J. Bolter describes the difficulty in presenting the public with a pluralistic voice in print. Singling out the historical novel as an exception even though it interleaves fact and fiction, but emphasizing that a pairing of disparate interests, like

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<sup>5</sup> See Christopher Evans, *The Micro Millennium*, The Viking Press, New York, 1980, page 105.

<sup>6</sup> Bolter, Jay David, *Writing Space, The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associations, Inc., Hillsdale, New Jersey, 1991.

Rates of Growth of Indigenous Animals of Antarctica and the Homogenization of the Global Economy, or a printed text of 1/2 fact and 1/2 fiction, would be considered unorthodox and possibly uncomfortable for readers to experience. Historically, particularly in the Middle Ages, texts of disparate subject matter were bound together or often added years later where there was available space. The form of the book was mainly based on the concept of storage, not on the homogeneous unity of its content.

The book is also a physical object between two covers, one cover signifying the beginning and one the end. An electronic hypermedia document is not a physical object and it does not require a designated beginning or end or even an orientation or a scheduled place or time for catharsis. Its given is that it may be a concordance, an encyclopedia, a dictionary, an index and a narrative at the same time. Unless it is specifically "reproduced" as an object after the fact, it remains a stream of electronic pulses in a network. This network can have many voices; specific individuals or groups can access the voice they would like to hear, or if the voices are not defined, they can travel through the network, resting where they are more comfortable or most diverted. There can no longer be an overabundance of information that will burden the reader, if the reader has choices in regard to how much information to access- i.e., how deeply to go. Bolter emphasizes that this phenomenon does not situate the text in something like chaos, but provides a continually shifting of relationships between its parts to form a dynamic entity of "patterns, constellations," that is dynamically coherent. Ironically, unlike a book in print, there is no urgency to produce thousands of identical copies. On the internet, work can be changed or "updated" continually; copies are produced upon demand, electronically, and the reader can decide whether or not to "print".

Bolter calls mathematics as "a special kind writing at least since the evolution of

modern notation in the 17th century. “The jargons, vernaculars, vocabularies, languages, of the arts, sciences, music, medicine, magic, ritual and philosophy are all important to the electronic fiction-maker as tools for imaging in words.

The relationship of one part of a document to another adds another layer of additional language in the reader's mind - in order to make the leap from one part to another - therefore there is the language of the link., inexplicable because it is not really there.

Nesting information and ideas provides an opportunity for poetics. The relationship between the nested texts has much more powerful potential to emote absurdity, anthropomorphic relatedness, outrage, comfort, instruction, than linear text because it involves juxtaposition.

Electronic documents provide a field day of cross-referencing. Footnotes can be linked to text; but also footnotes can be linked to footnotes, to bibliography, index , table of contents, .This of course, still sustains the model of the book; which may not be the most appropriate model for electronic hypermedia on the net as it evolves. The new model may not only have no beginning, or assigned functions to its elements, but absolutely no main idea.

### **A MARGINAL CASE OF DEJA VU**

An early non-electronic type of hypertext could be found in a medieval scriptorium in the writing of books of hours and breviaries. These contained numerous and varied texts simultaneously relating to each other and existing as independent episodes. A set of daily devotions to be read at canonical hours would be nested within other texts; a calendar identifying the feast days of saints, a Litany of Saints, penitential

psalms, extracts from the gospel, hours of the cross, and/or short prayers of the saints and the Virgin. Illuminations of the Life of the Virgin were inserted at the beginning of each new set of devotions.

What went on in the margins of these manuscripts was an extremely interesting aside from sanctioned texts and illuminations. Monks sought diversion with comments about the quality of their lamplight or parchment, lack of adequate supplies, physical and/or mental condition, and their longing for the tedium of writing to be over. Sometimes these marginal notes were encoded in tiny complicated illustrations.

### **THE 20TH CENTURY: THE MERCURY PROJECT<sup>7</sup>**

A good parallel of weaving fact and fiction, hypertext, text and subtext on the World Wide Web is The Mercury Project site, which involves the creation of a whole world. The world is a hybrid of fact and fiction.

'An inter-disciplinary team at the University of Southern California would like to announce the MERCURY PROJECT, a WWW site that allows users to tele-operate a robot arm moving over a terrain filled with buried artifacts. A CCD camera and pneumatic nozzle mounted on the robot allow users to select viewpoints and to direct short bursts of compressed air into the terrain. Thus users can "excavate" regions within the sand by positioning the arm, delivering a burst of air, and viewing the newly cleared region. We seek a coherent theory that explains these buried artifacts.'

The Mercury Project robot was constructed and assigned to rummage through debris at the Nevada Atomic Bomb Test Sites. You could operate the robot from your chair in front of your computer. The robot arm could be moved laterally, forward, back, left, right, and you

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<sup>7</sup> The Mercury Project, University of Southern California, at: <http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/raiders/> - a site of combined robotics and archaeology in an interactive art installation.

could "zoom" in and discharge a puff of air to clear the dust from the debris. Extremely interesting artifacts peeked up through the dust and debris.

Before you could operate the robot you were required to study its operation and take a test in order for the Project Staff to feel assured that you knew how to operate the robot and wouldn't break it. Having passed the exam, you were granted a password, and permitted to queue up to operate the robot.

The Mercury Project was so complete a world, it had biographies of all of the staff, some obviously fine fictive work, complete technical specifications (real) for their operations (the robot was real, it was just in a cardboard box in their basement which was filled with debris and "artifacts"). There was a log where you could leave your comments and your conjectures about the significance of finds. There you read all the log entries made by others before you. It was a complete and rich world, half fictive, half factual.

## **HISTORY TOLD AS HIS STORY**

Hendrik Van Loon was a Dutch historian who created a genre of history books, which could only be described as wonderfully idiosyncratic. They are history told in a no-nonsense, "this is how it was," way, complete with van Loon's own guileless drawings and watercolors, and his ironies. The author of "The History of the World" and The Story of Mankind", also wrote "Rembrandt van Rijn", a biography engaging you, screaming and kicking, in real time interactivity with the domestic strife of Rembrandt and Saskia.

"This book was written and illustrated by Hendrik Willem van Loon to give the general reader (who perhaps had always considered this a rather remote subject) a better understanding and a greater appreciation of

1. He has personally taken control of the integration of word and image; the images are as informative on various levels as the text. (See figure ); 2. He blithely states his own subjective contempt for most "other" readers, and their capacity to understand art everything that has been done within the realm of painting and architecture and music and sculpture and the theater and most of the so-called minor arts from the beginning of time until the moment we come so close to them that we begin to lose our perspective."<sup>8</sup>on their own (i.e., without a guide such as himself); 3. he claims the equal knowledge of ALL periods of art through history; something, in our age of specialization, we would be prone to suspect as reeking of dilettantism. However, he does all of this with such glee and in such a vulnerable state of dis-grace that it all comes off as being rather incredibly good.

### **WORLDS IN THE REAL ART: CALVINO**

On the book jacket of Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*<sup>9</sup>. Mary McCarthy is quoted as saying "Calvino is a wizard!" "IF..." is actually a book of many books, spoken by many voices.

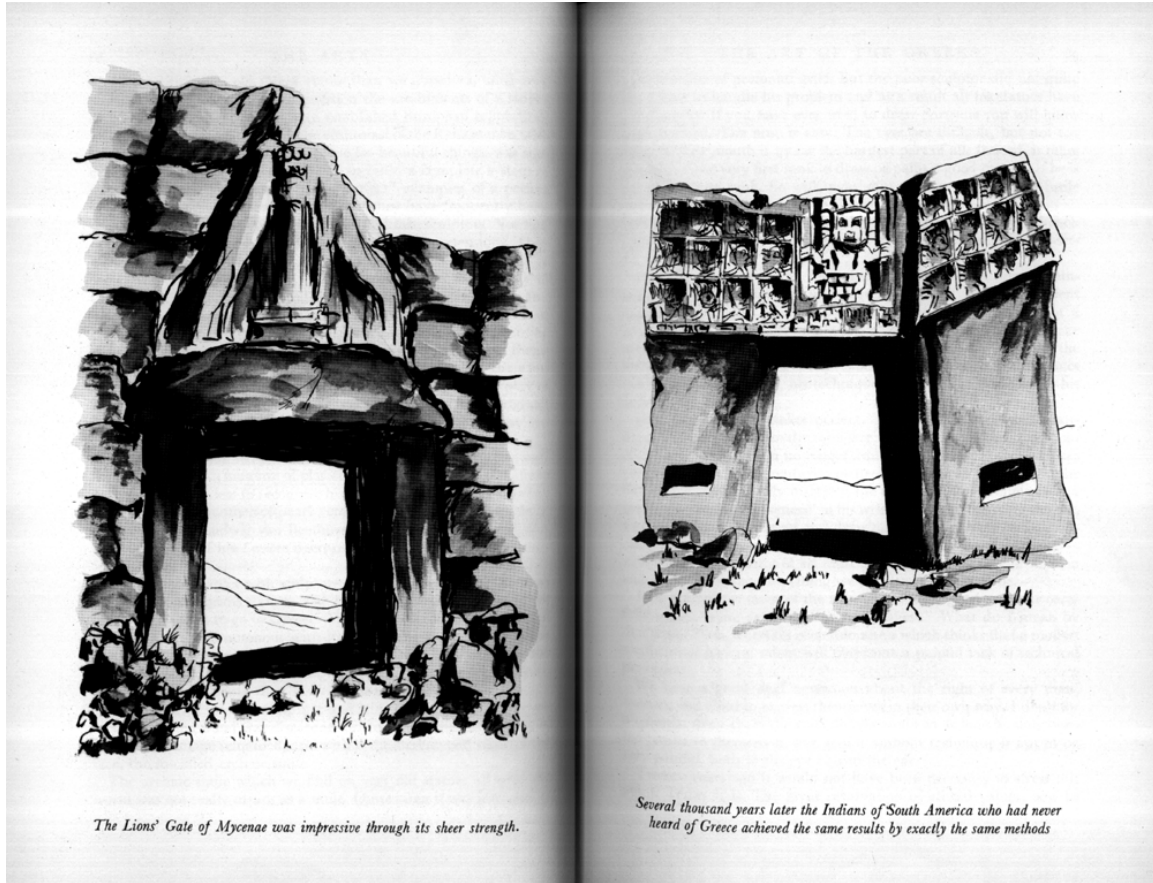
The book begins with: "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*.by Italo Calvino." And later: "You have now read about thirty pages and you're becoming caught up in the story. At a certain point you remark: 'This sentence sounds somehow familiar' .....Damn.... What you thought was a stylistic subtlety on the author's part is simply a printer's mistake: they have inserted the same pages twice.

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<sup>8</sup> Van Loon, Hendrik, *The Arts*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1937.

<sup>9</sup> *If on a winter's night a traveler*.by Italo Calvino”  
Harvest/HBJ Book,Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, New York, 1979





*The Lions' Gate of Mycenae was impressive through its sheer strength.*

*Several thousand years later the Indians of South America who had never heard of Greece achieved the same results by exactly the same methods*

### Van Loon's Compare and Contrast

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Interweaving with this voice are stories that run from the particular to the sublime – the return of the defective copy of the book with repeated pages results in a series of adventures for the reader of that book that changes the course of his life. Among those events, there is the acquaintance he makes with a scholar whose life's work is to study and preserve an obscure cultures (Cimmeria) and its language, both of which may have never existed.

Even though one is reading linearly through the book, this is not a story where associations are strung like pearls. The are scattered like marbles with strange magnetic properties, spilled out and moving closer rather than further apart, continually attracting and repelling each other in different degrees.

Phrases about or by the book itself are interwoven with fragments of conversation, with descriptive writing, reporting and witnessing of tangential emotive tantrums, mutative courses of events, passion not expressed, passion expressed, the express lack of passion expressed, and then unstated. There is high and low drama, both in events that occur and in thoughts expressed by the characters, one of whom we keep being reminded, is the book – always in third person.

Aside from the marvelous writing, the coherency lies in the fact that all these elements equalizes characteristics of writing without homogenizing them. In fact, each element begins to have its own independent existence and character.

This mirrors what may be happening in the world, which, while shrinking in one way, at the same time is expanding in another, by making room for all its multifaceted life options, and their wildcard interpretations.

# THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES

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## EXCERPTS FROM THE ARTISTS'S JOURNAL RELEVANT TO THESIS

*My fourth birthday! October 7, 1945*

Even today, they don't leave me alone for a minute.

I want to be left in front of the mirror - full length for me at my age. It is there I can think about how:

"I am HERE.

I am also over - in - outside THERE.

I have two hands here, and, of course, two arms, legs, eyes....

Each set of twos are almost identical, but reversed.

Reflected in the mirror, they are reversed again.

I wonder...

JUST HOW MANY WORLDS ARE THERE?

I wait to see....

My parents tsk-tsk behind me about vanity and try to distract me --- I'm not sure what they mean but I already begin to understand that I am not understood.

I try to explain I am trying hard to forget the place I've been before and adjust to this one. "Before when?" asks my mother, incredulously. "Before all this!" I say, swooping around full circle. "All this WHAT?", says my dad, eyes rolling, "and where".

The parents exchange looks. I see I am upsetting them; my speech reeks of Great Uncle Benjamin. Great Uncle Benjamin shamed the family by growing up to be a nogood poet[slash]cabalist.

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*December, same year*

I give up on all direct forms of communication.

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cut to

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Kindergarten.

**IT SEEMS I AM A PAINTER!**

September 1958

An undergraduate at Brooklyn College, I visit the Fine Arts Department exhibition space and watch a man in blue overalls install an exhibition of paintings. I can see he is painstakingly "thinking through" the paintings in order to install them in their best relationship to themselves and each other. I am immediately drawn to him because of this amazing quality. I promptly congratulate him on his exquisite discretion, admitting that I am surprised to find so much aesthetic sensitivity in a municipal janitor. He thanks me for the compliment and introduces himself. His name is Ad Reinhardt. Later he tells me that he never wore overalls to teach again.

Later on, he is my painting professor, and in the first class, I am painting a painting, and he grabs the painting and runs away with it. By way of explanation he says: "YOU HAVE IT!! You absolutely have it! But you are very young, and I thought I would rescue this one before you kill it!" This was wonderful news for me, I knew I "had it" but with prior professors I could not get any help with my inexperience in working things through, and being told you have talent can actually be depressing when one knows something is lacking, but one doesn't know that it is experience.

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*August 28, 1967*

I wake up absolutely certain that I am going to die tomorrow exactly at 9 a.m. I begin to tell my roommate what to do with all my things. She shrugs, puts on her pillbox hat and gloves, and leaves for work. I sit down and make a list.

*August 29, 1967*

Ad Reinhardt dies in the morning. Was it just that death was looking for an "Ad....?"

*August 30, 1967*

I happened to be going to California. The man next to me on the plane is reading Ad Reinhardt's obituary. I try to think of a way to ask him for a peek at it, but I do not speak. Later, in a San Francisco art museum I note that the date of death has already been filled on the painting label where it was blank after the hyphen.

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*1979*

I read the work of Alexander Marshack, is excerpted in New Yorker Magazine. Subsequently - I buy his book: "The Roots of Civilization: of Civilization, The Cognitive Beginnings of Man's First Art, Symbol and Notation ". Mr. Marshack is a scientific journalist who had a leap of faith about a group of prehistoric bones with markings. He didn't think the markings were indicative of a game or a numerical count but of a lunar

calendar, and he proved it. In doing so, he proved that man was cognitive in very sophisticated ways before the time anyone thought it was possible. Mr. Marshack has a chair The Peabody Museum at Harvard. He also is famous for analyzing the images in Paleolithic cave paintings. Many artists relate to this discovery and contact Mr. Marshack. We feel artists suffer form a similar form of infantilization and are quite misunderstood. I am so moved by his writings, I write and send him a poem:

### **Note Found In a Bottle at Peche Merle**

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We passed along the wall  
and made marks,  
running our fingers through time,  
one of us over the other;  
all now together yet separate,  
we went to the wall  
and we wrote.

Years would pass and we would  
return to renew the process  
over and over again  
amazed each time to find how  
we had grown into it  
and how it could grow  
to accommodate us.

We had dreams . . .  
You passed in ships  
through the navy blue night  
men in huge arrows - Flint-shaped  
masses holding hundreds of you  
off to the moon and the stars  
and further on out  
through the navy blue night

You know, when you saw our marks  
you misunderstood  
and we suffered in our dreams  
from the agony of not being  
able to reach you

and we suffered in our dreams  
from the rage of seeing our  
images read  
as the work of uncertified  
shamans.

I speak for all of us when I say:  
What you know now,  
we knew

What you are sure of  
we absolutely had the courage  
to doubt.

We moved, we flowed,  
we created disciplines  
and recognized love

we spoke to everyone  
before us and after

we did this  
before there were sediments  
between layers, before there  
were tolls to bridge gaps,  
before there were gates  
between pastures where  
souls grow.

Always remember,  
our ashes are your seeds.  
A voluptuous blossoming  
this is our art."

Mr. Marshack responded with a very nice handwritten note: "We scientists work to understand, but it is the artists who make us see." I was so nervous and embarrassed I had sent the poem, I read it as "it is the artists who make us 'ill'". Years later, Mr. Marshack got a chuckle out of that.

*August 1990*

I begin to write a play called "NewsReal":

**NEWSREAL!  
A CHRONICLE OF LATE 20TH CENTURY BROADCAST JOURNALISM**

Synopsis: A major television network, concerned about the drooping ratings of their news broadcasts, decides to dramatize the news rather than report it. They form a repertory company of actors to act out the news, on site whenever possible.

Their rationale is that too often actual details of a news event is left to the viewer's imagination and producing the news as: "VIRTUALLY VERBATIM" safely leaves nothing to the viewer's imagination; therefore acting as a prophylactic process against the dissemination of misinformation.

**February 1991, The Gulf War  
The Gulf War News coverage.  
My "Newsreal" scenario has been mirrored head-on in the real world.  
I abandon "Newsreal".**

*Spring of 1994*

Thoughts in Ken Feingold's Here and There: Telecommunications for Artists I class.

*If I weren't a person, I'd want to be a packet. Well a packet with special attributes..*

*If they decided to do an experiment where a person was reduced to atomic particles and distributed over the net I would probably volunteer.*

*September 1994*

**McCluhan-esque**

I take a trip to Toronto to visit my friend Ann, a writer and filmmaker. We discuss working together on a feature film of our own. The story is about a group of investigative reporters using new technology to report and broadcast journalism over the



internet. We visit the McLuhan Center at the University of Toronto to meet some people and see a new multimedia software in development for the net. I videotape demos of the new software, pretending I'm a hacker/spy.

The McLuhan Center was Marshall McLuhan's real place of work for years and years. His own old and tattered leather chair is sitting there - still in residence. I sit in Marshall McLuhan's very own work chair. Ann and I feature it in a short video. We videotape one-on-one interviews with the McLuhan Center staff while they are sitting in Marshall McLuhan's chair.

We are invited to dinner where I find myself seated between Mrs. Marshall McLuhan and her son, Erik McLuhan.

Mrs. McLuhan is a southern belle, beautiful, charming and wily. She lingers over details about the first time she ever saw Marshall - at a southern summer lawn party. He was wearing a white suit and she thought he was very tall and handsome. She liked that he was very smart. They eloped. Her family disapproved of the religious differences and disowned her. I have no idea why she is telling me all this. This is very good wine.

Mrs. McLuhan has never heard of Donald Theall, the University of Trent professor in Toronto who has written intensely about Marshall McLuhan's relationship with the works of James Joyce. [He has also written "James Joyce And The History Of Cyberbase" and "The Hieroglyphs Of Engined Egypsians: Machines, Media and Modes of Communication in Finnegans Wake."] I subsequently download these papers for Erik McLuhan.

Erik McLuhan tells me that Marshall thought of "the medium is the message" on a flight to Vancouver for a speech he was to make there. He says Marshall thought it was a

good phrase but not as good as it got when it rumbled like tumbleweed, accruing accolades all over the world.

Note: Once again - I am in a real situation which feels decidedly unreal, -- sitting in a private home in a suburb of Toronto in the company of the woman who married Marshall McLuhan, bore all of his children, typed all his manuscripts, fiercely looks after children, manuscripts, and every aspect of her late husband's reputation. We have drinks in the basement, surrounded by black velvet paintings of far off, hardly discernable landscapes and several oriental credenzas (not very old).

Somehow, I can't help but think of Bernal Diaz' real-time account of being with Cortez for that historic meeting with Montezuma in the suburbs outside of Mexico City.

Cortez presents Montezuma with some garish costume jewelry with great ceremony. Montezuma allows him to put this necklace around his neck, this intimacy horrifies Montezuma's accompanying courtiers. Then Montezuma invites Cortez and his party to follow him back into Mexico City.

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***October 1, 1994***

Started local web, see thesis sources - T-List

***October 8, 1994***

See WAX by David Blair  
little segments become equal to each other and almost cancel each other out.  
So many worlds, so little time, but now, much more room for place

*1995*

I telephone Alexander Marshack in New York. I tell him I am making art on The World Wide Web and that everything in regard to the kinds of meanings images convey will change with this new technology. Mr. Marshack is skeptical, but quite a sport, as he comes and visits to see what I am doing and to check out "The World Wide Web.". He stays over 3 hours, looking at sites, really appreciating The Mercury Site (telerobotic archaeological dig). He thinks I am right about images shifting their position in terms of meaning, but he's not sure how. He likes my work a lot, is a little concerned about the scope of the project and how one part will relate to another. He suggests I storyboard my imagination. I explain why I think that is NOT the thing to do in this new medium. That the links or linkages will have a life of their own, and add the appropriate

A few weeks later, the cave paintings at L'Ardeche are discovered in France, and the French Ministry of Culture immediately puts pictures and text on their Web site. <http://www.culture.fr/gvpda.html>. Alex and Elaine Marshack come over and are totally amazed that "it is just like being in the caves." They carefully examine the photographs and take notes. Alex has an invitation from the French Ministry of Culture to go to L'Ardeche as soon as a floor is laid in the caves. That will take months. The three of us sit huddled in front of the monitor arguing over who made what mark and whether the hyena is really a bear. It is one of the happiest times in my life. After they leave I see Alex has, in his excitement, left blue ball point pen traces all over the face of my monitor. I try to take an impression of the pattern, but am not successful.

# **THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES**

## **Conclusion**

### **INDETERMINATE ENDINGS**

### **THE DECLINE AND DISAPPEARANCE OF DESTINY**

"The method of the twentieth century is to use not single but multiple models for experimental exploration - the technique of the suspended judgment."  
-Marshall McLuhan

Without the limitations of a linear, incremental path connecting a beginning and an end, our art can simultaneously emulate and BE experiential.

Authors of genius (Calvino, Borges, cited here, and many more) have already created whole worlds dealing with pluralistic narratives weaving in and out of each other and democratized time by depicting the past, present, future as occurring simultaneous or in a mixed order.

The danger for artists working on the World Wide Web is in seeking (or allowing critical theory to create) a fixed or static genre. Creating virtual multi-faceted work allows us to truly live in our imaginations. But instead of our expression striving to signify something transcendent, educational, or cathartic, artists might simply settle for it as a substitution for the real.

"Sinking" or substituting virtuality for the real in art, could be interpreted as a form of madness, but may possibly become so prevalent that it would be called something else with a more popular ring to it.

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Approved-By: "Norman N. Holland" <NNH@NERVM.NERDC.UFL.EDU> Date:  
Fri, 17 Mar 1995 21:26:33 EST  
Reply-To: psycho-analysis@netcom.com  
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From: Joseph Caston <joec@itsa.ucsf.EDU> Subject: Jung & Joyce  
To: Multiple recipients of list PSYART <PSYART@NERVM.NERDC.UFL.EDU> X-  
UIDL: 795498500.014

More on Joyce and Jung. --Best, Norm

-----Original message-----

While I am an analyst whose theoretical core has been essentially American ego-psychological by training, I have for two decades included the following wonderful anecdote in conducting seminars at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, and local departments of psychiatry: The tale is told that James Joyce once went to consult Jung about his daughter, who was schizophrenic. Joyce, also cognizant of the seeming parallels between his written, and his daughter's spoken, speech, asked just how this was possible. Jung replied, "You dive, she sinks."

However, I no longer remember how I came by this story. I would much appreciate if any Jung scholars might cite the reference for me.

Joseph Caston, M.D.  
joc@itsa.ucsf.edu

In our culture, we have historically encouraged this kind of extreme, particularly when it can enhance the goals of a fierce economic, political or military population. For a militaristic body in action, where win or lose means life or death, commitment is made to a course of action as if it is the RIGHT and ONLY one. That course must BECOME the course of action.

In hypermedia fictive work, involvement with multifaceted characters, and the anxious phenomenon of choosing paths and experiencing consequences, very much mirrors real life and adds the tenor of performance to the work. Paths, along with their destinations or consequences, can be disparate or equal in intensity.

Artists may currently experience crisis because of the discomfort of floundering with a new technology. It is an act of faith to feel that surrendering to uncertainty could offer ventilation and growth and an opportunity to develop new and appropriate critical theory embracing the conditions in which we are all now making art.

# THE ELECTRONIC CHRONICLES

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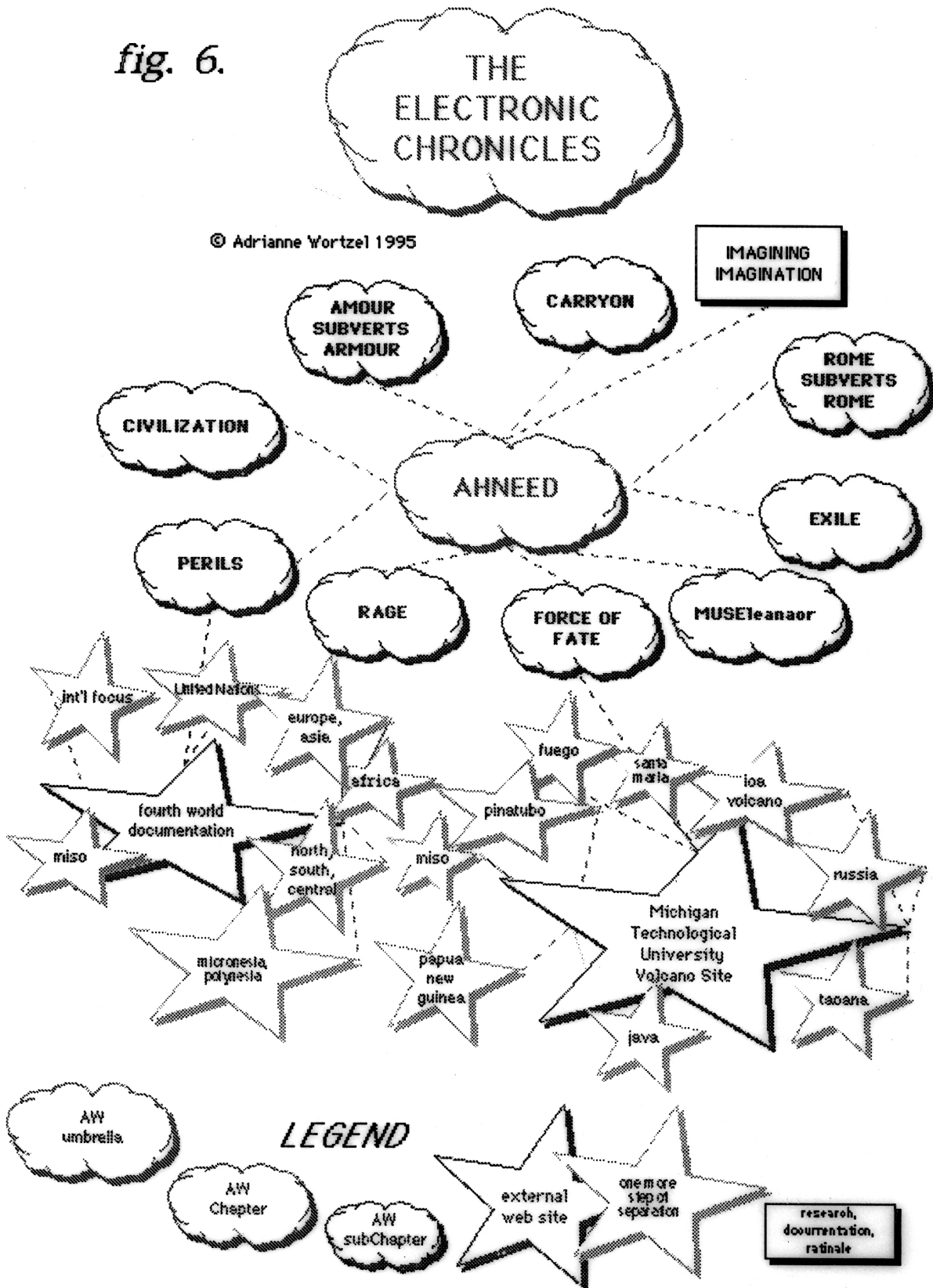
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fig. 6.



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