

TELLING THE STORY

Event as dramatic
narrative

Maureen Thomas

I have a story to tell!

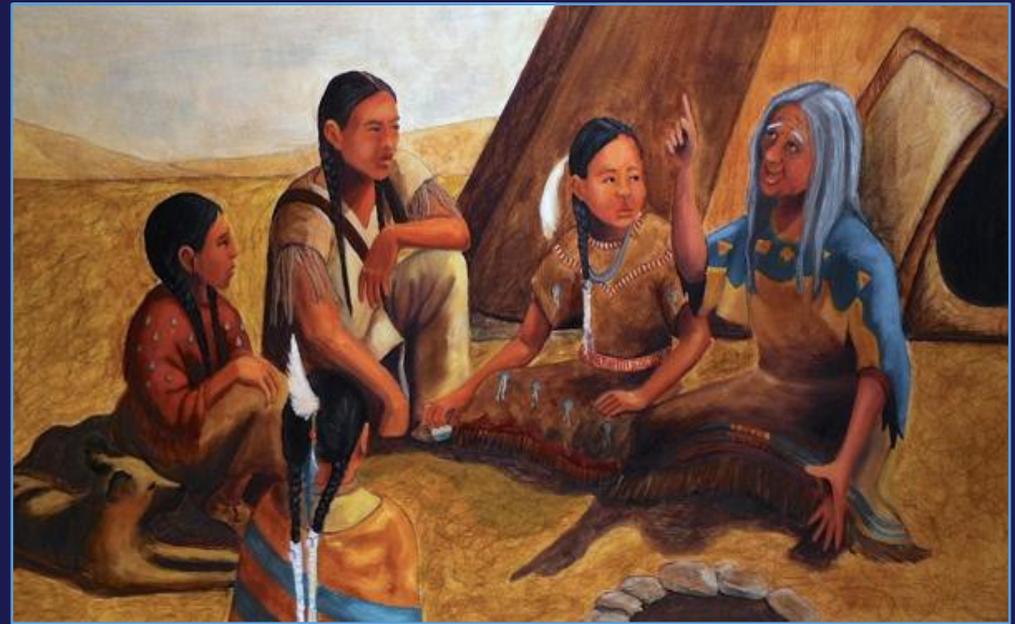


Why should anyone want to hear it?





The Arab Tale-teller
Horace Vernet 1833



A STORY-TELLER RECITING FROM THE "ARABIAN NIGHTS."
In the background are the ramparts of the Citadel.



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Tibetan Drama

Today there are many ways of presenting a story

People understand the grammar of storytelling through their experience of stories

Dominant storyforms in the 20th Century were Film and Television – people understand them easily

The dominant storyform in the 21st Century is the participative video computer game

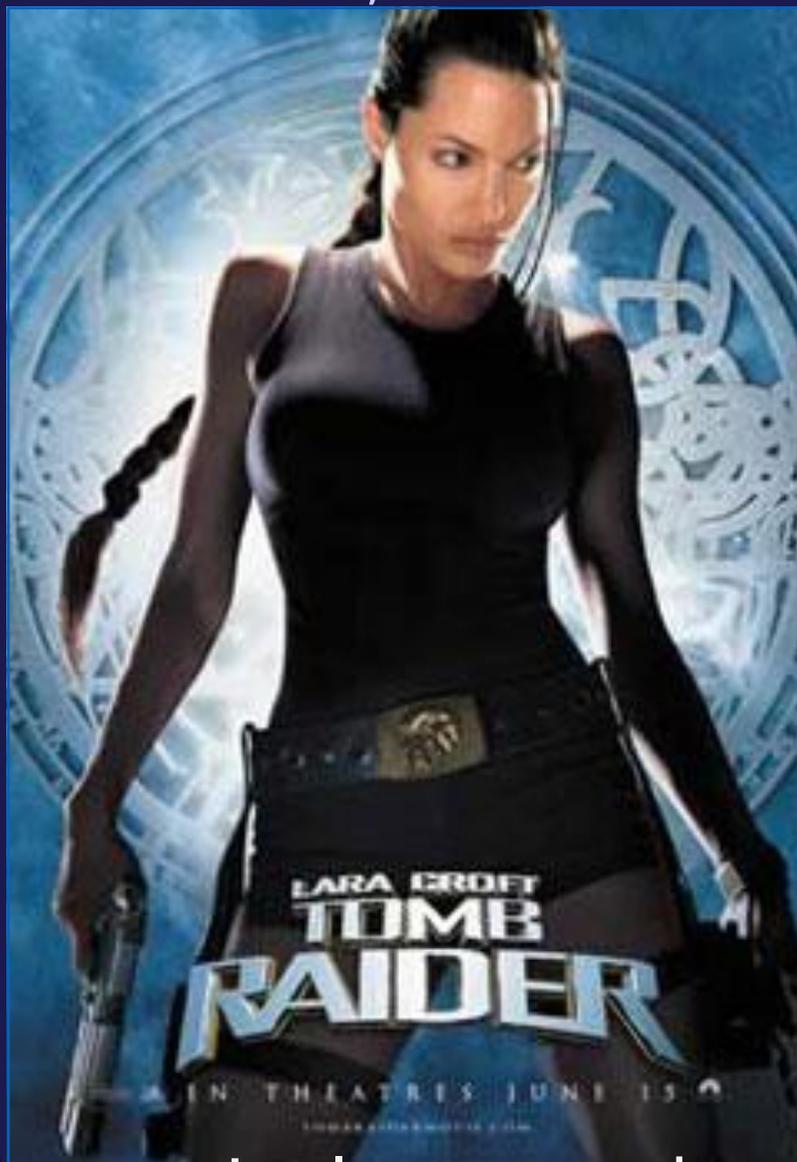
Lara Croft *Tomb Raider*



Game Fiction 1999

Lara Croft *Tomb Raider* Movie (Angelina Jolie) dir Simon West 2001, 2003

Game Fiction



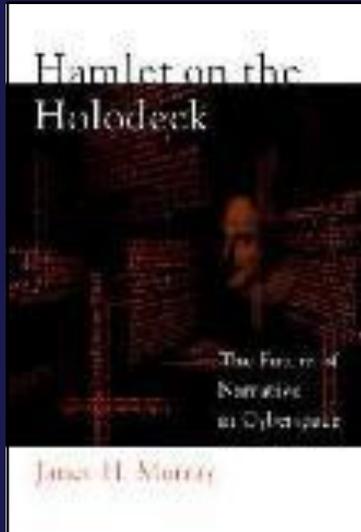
Increasingly, game characters are crossing
into the world of film and other entertainment



Tomb Raider heroine Lara Croft is one of the industry's most accomplished and successful icons.

Since the release of the first *Tomb Raider* game in 1996, which sold 7 million units worldwide, English adventurer Lara has starred in more than a dozen games, two big-budget Hollywood movies, two 'fan movies', a long-running comic-book series, an animated series, and a set of amusement-park rides.

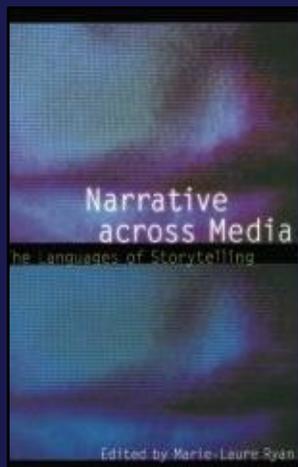
SPATIAL ORGANISATION OF NARRATIVE



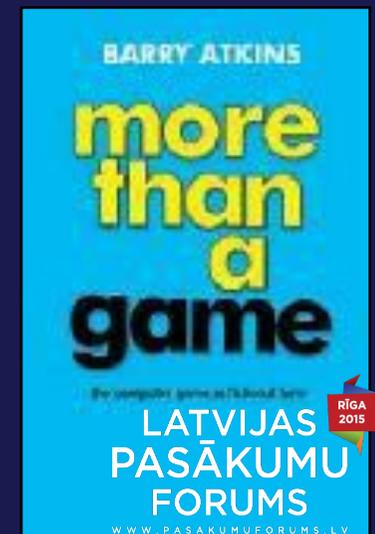
'Digital environments are characterised by their power to represent navigable space. Linear media such as books and films can portray space, either by verbal description or image, but only digital environments can present space that we can move through'

[Murray, Janet H. 1997. *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press :79]

Interactive narrativity is 'a form of fiction at variance from conventional or written tellings ... The satisfaction of such stories ... rests not in matters of plot sophistication, but in matters of the sophistication of the telling'



[Atkins, Barry. 2003. *More than a Game. The computer game as fictional form*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press: 43]



Thatgamecompany/
Sony Entertainment
America 2012





You steer your character through a vast landscape and explore



You steer your character through a vast landscape and explore



A spatially organised narrative is like a market full of stalls that you can visit in any order

I have a story to tell!



Why should anyone want to hear it?

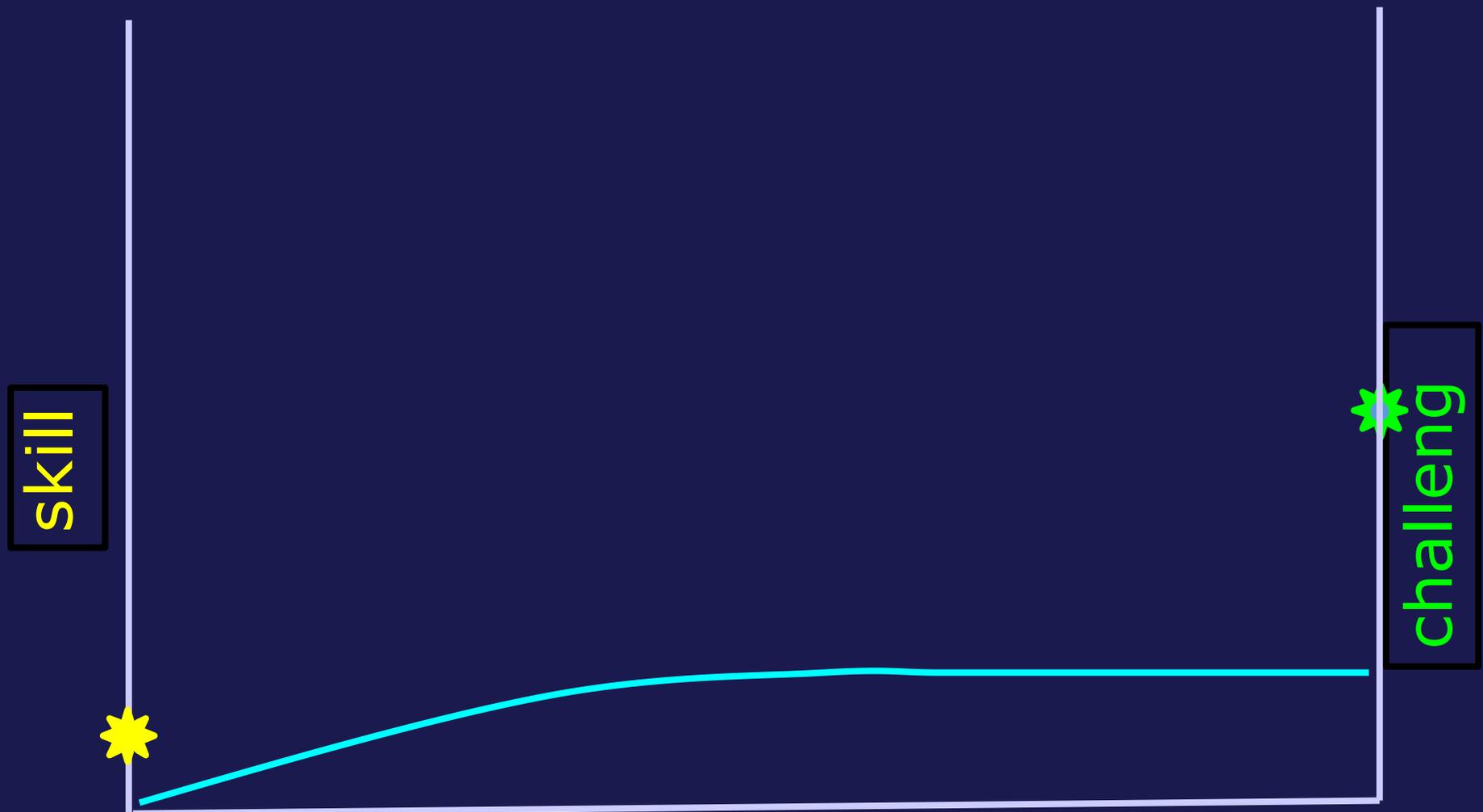


ENGAGE

IMMERSE

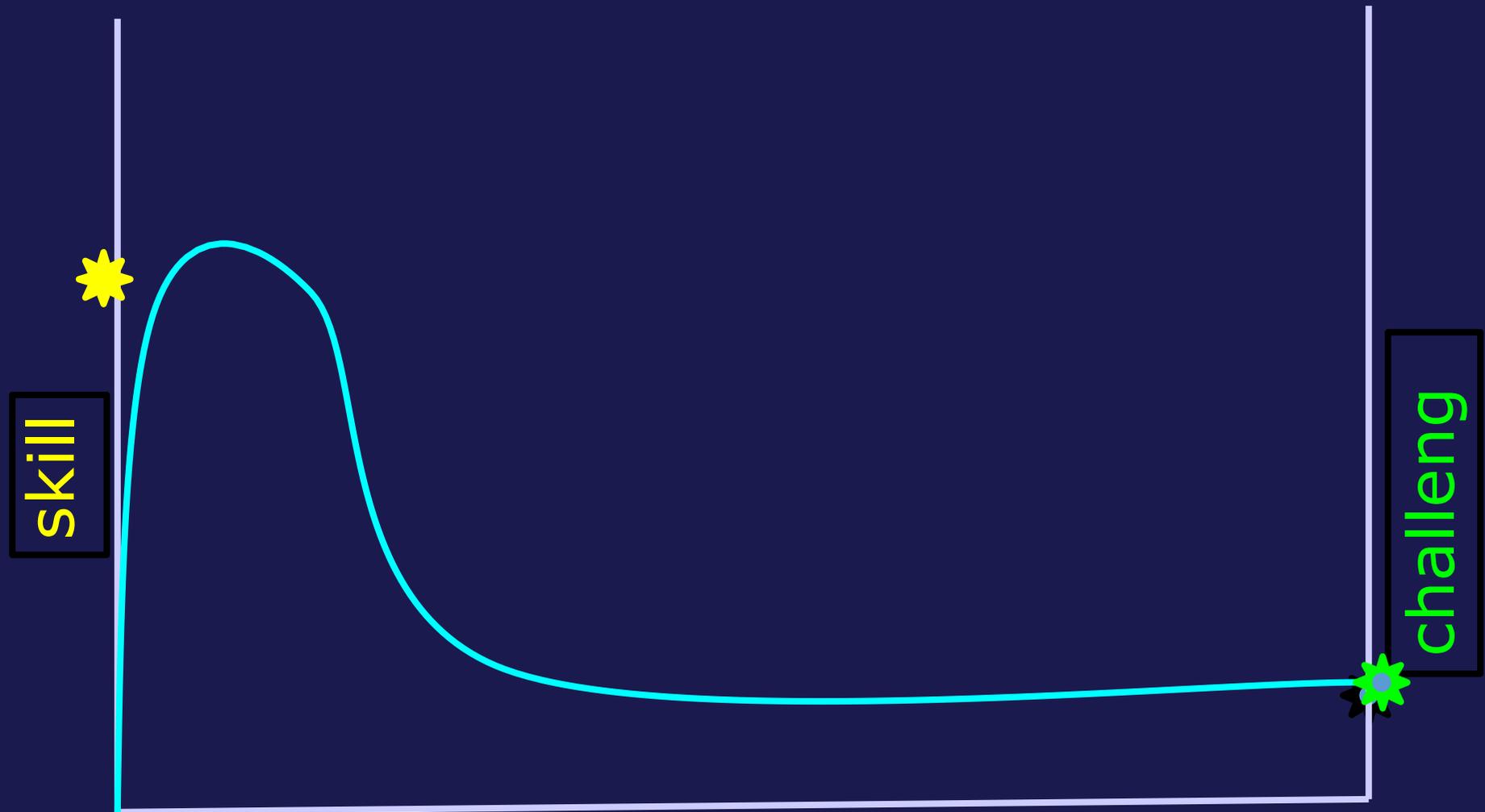
FLOW: the psychology of optimal experience
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. NY: Harper & Row.

Low Skill, High Challenge = Frustration



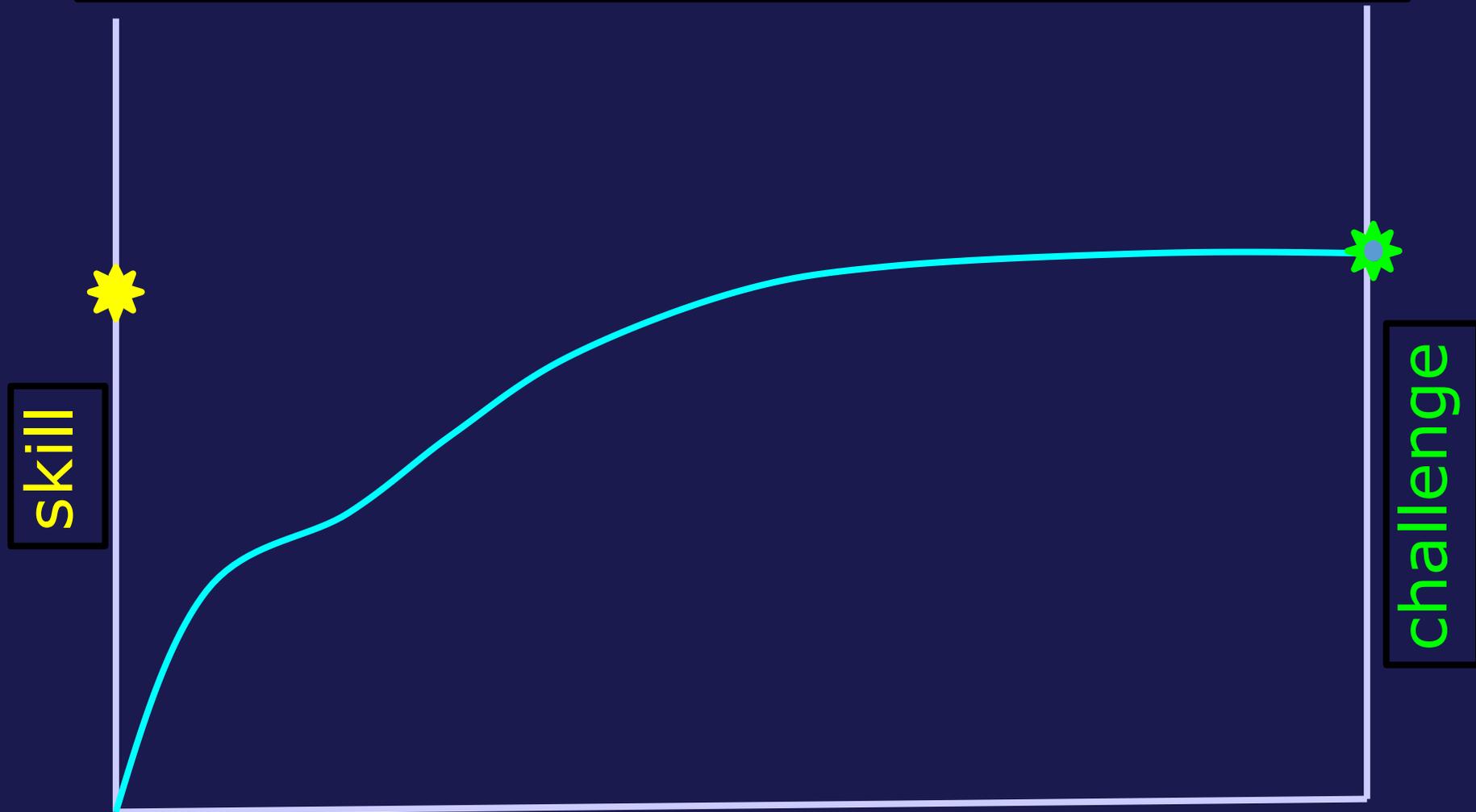
FLOW: the psychology of optimal experience
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. NY: Harper & Row.

High Skill, Low Challenge = Rapid Boredom



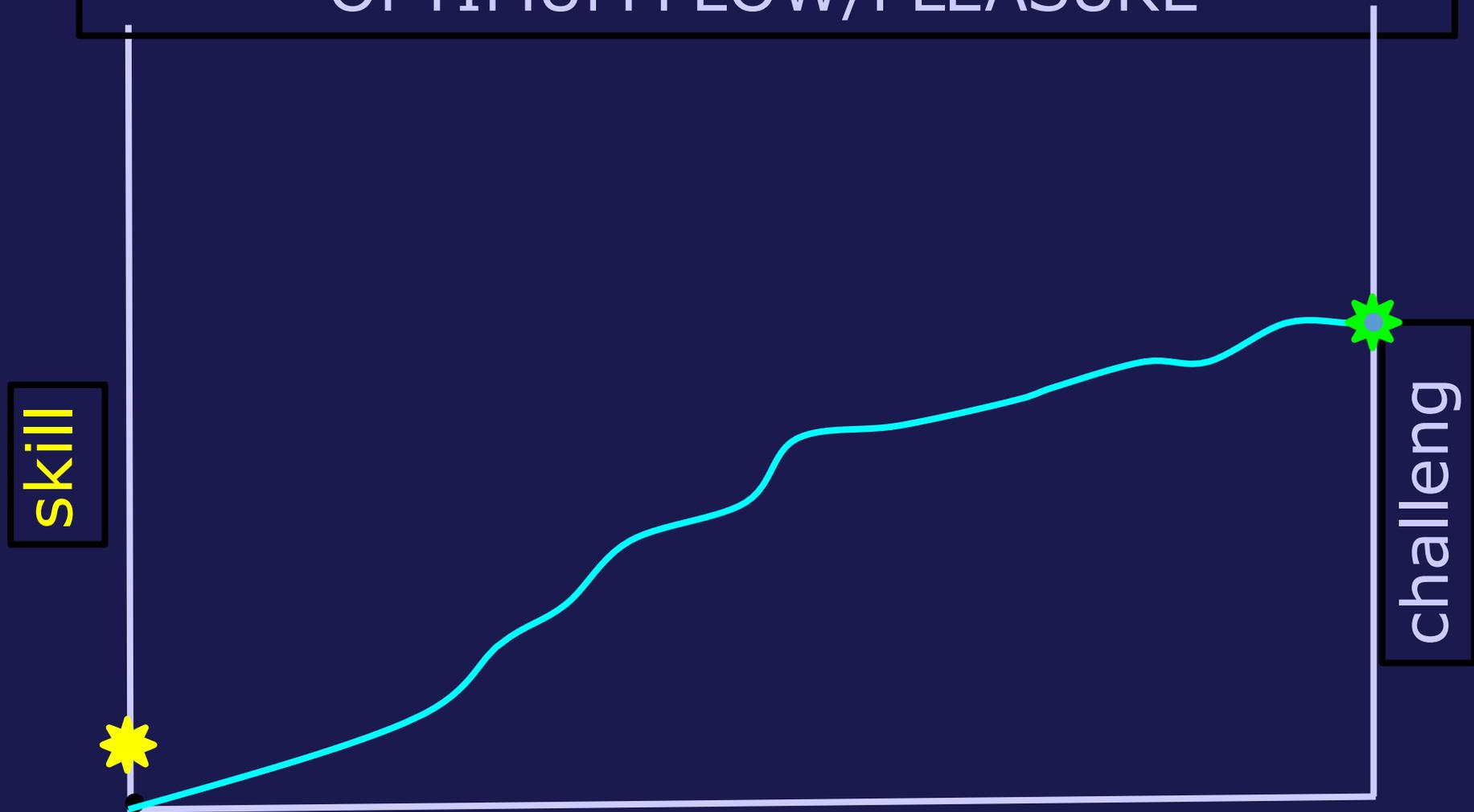
FLOW: the psychology of optimal experience
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. NY: Harper & Row.

Skill Level the same as **Challenge** =
stimulation + satisfaction: Contentment



FLOW: the psychology of optimal experience
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. NY: Harper & Row.

Increase **Skill** to meet rising **Challenge** =
OPTIMUM FLOW/PLEASURE



Lara Croft *Tomb Raider* Game Fiction 2013

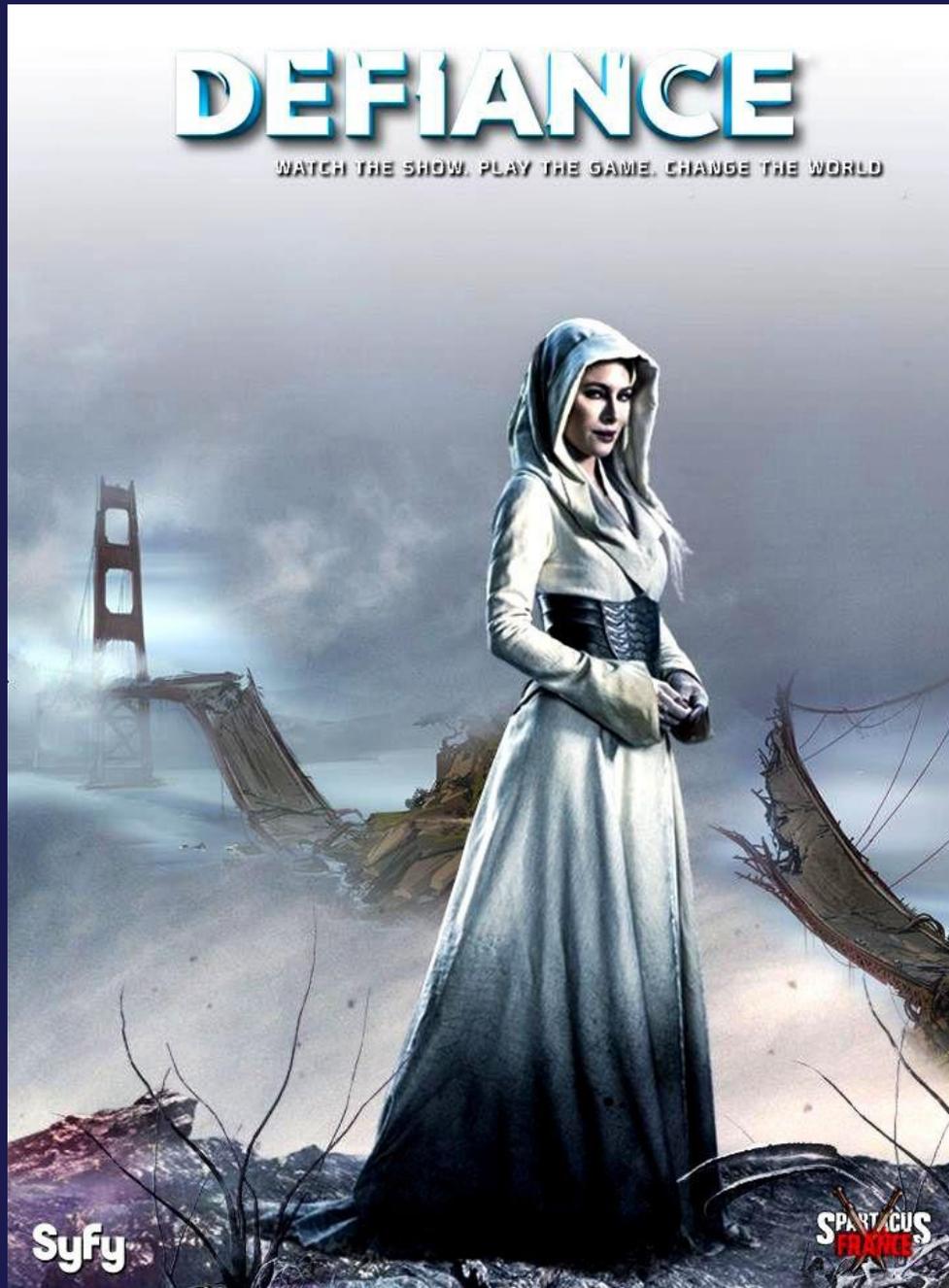


COMPUTER GAMES CHALLENGE SKILLS AND BUILD THEM LEVEL BY LEVEL

Trailer at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h577puRphXQ>

Syfy and Trion Worlds

Universal Cable
Productions 2013



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Defiance TV Show



Defiance Game Fiction

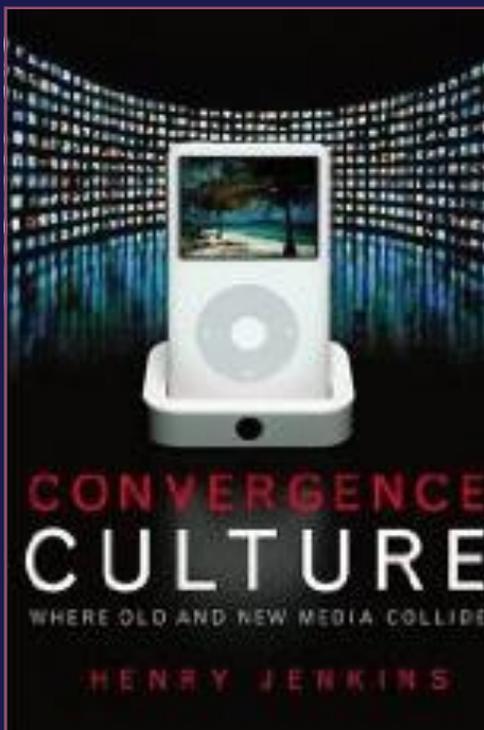
TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

Storytelling across multiple forms of media, where each element makes distinctive contributions to a viewer/user/player's understanding of the story world.

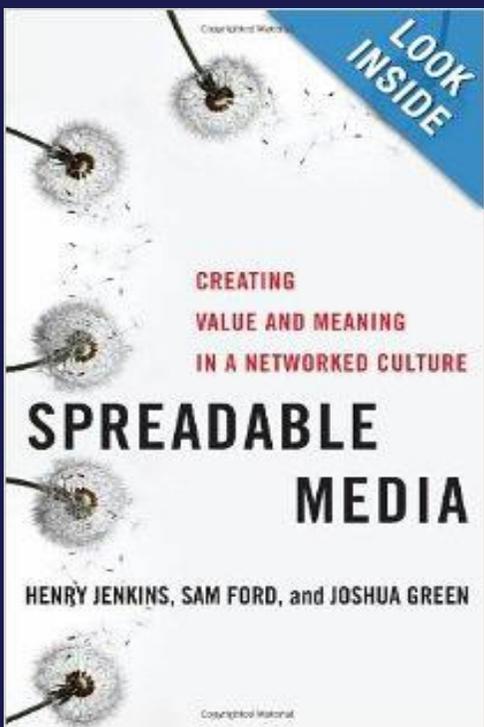
By using different media formats, it offers a range of "entrypoints" through which visitors can become immersed in a story world.

The aim of this immersion is often decentralized authorship, or co-creative transmedia play.

http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html

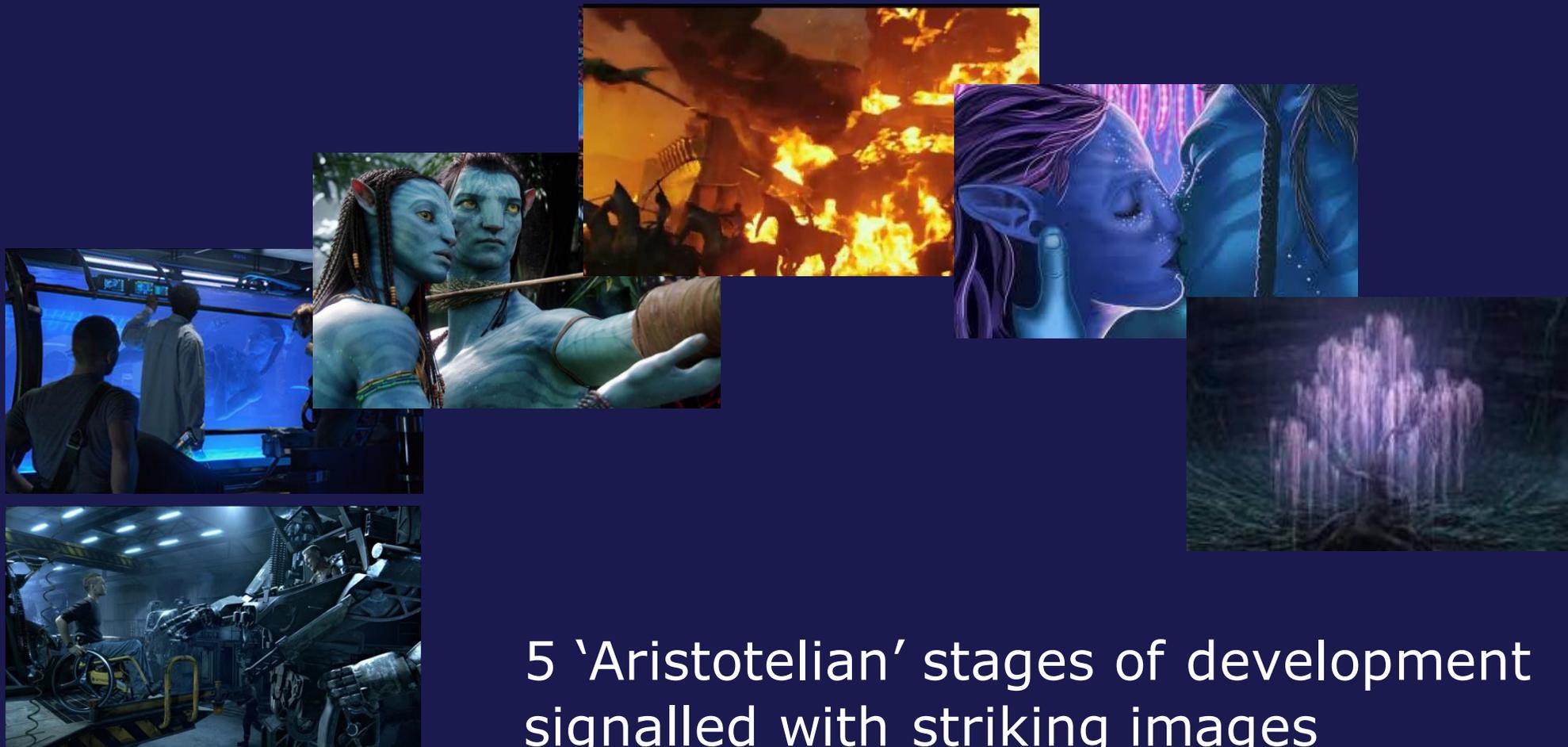


Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006



Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford & Joshua Green. 2013. *Spreadable Media*. New York: New York University Press

AVATAR 3D immersive movie (James Cameron USA 2009)



5 'Aristotelian' stages of development
signalled with striking images

Aristotle, *Poetics*, c.335 BCE



Orpheus singing tales



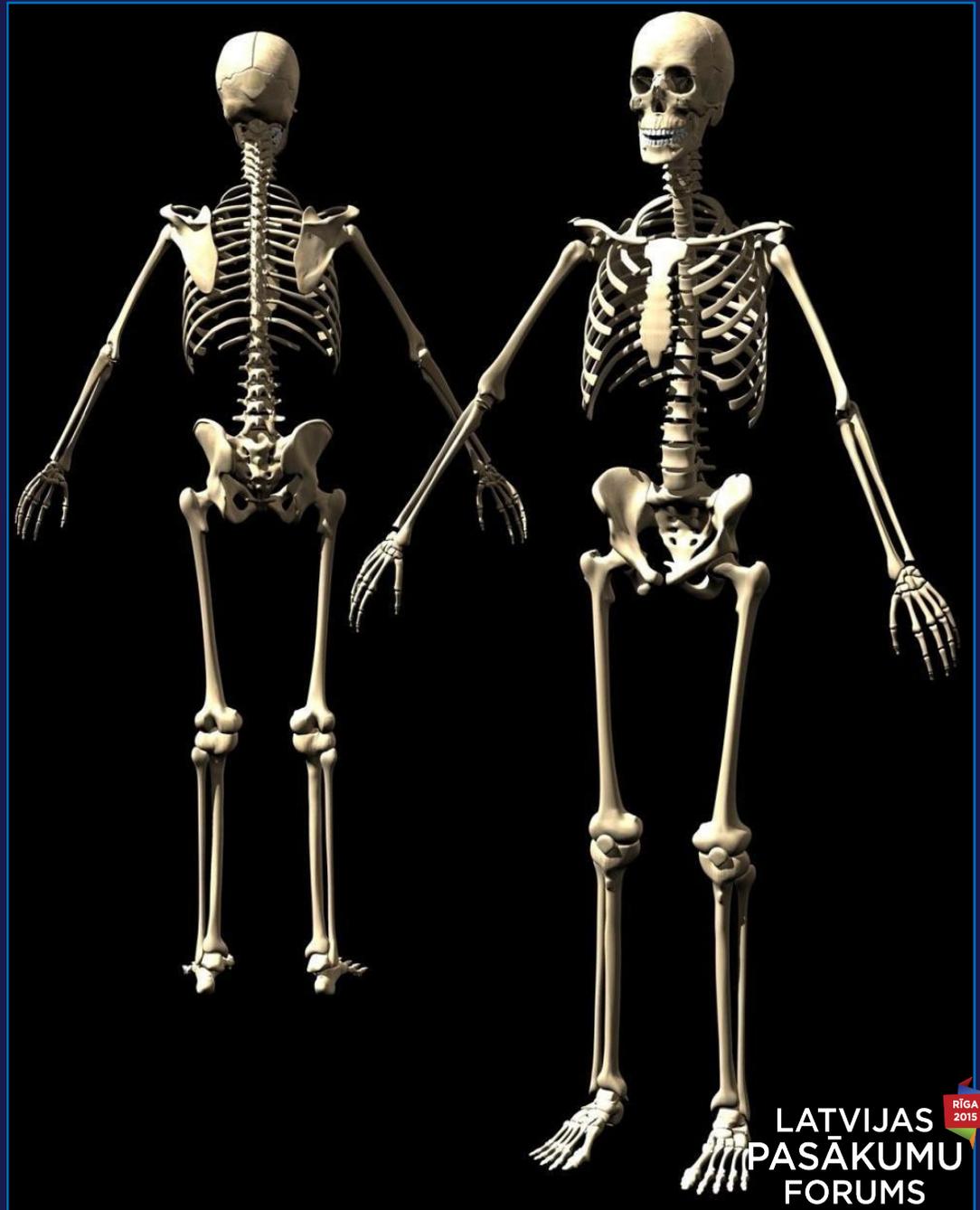
Greek actors holding their masks



Tibetan masked player

BUILDING A STORY – story grammar

Starts with the skeleton



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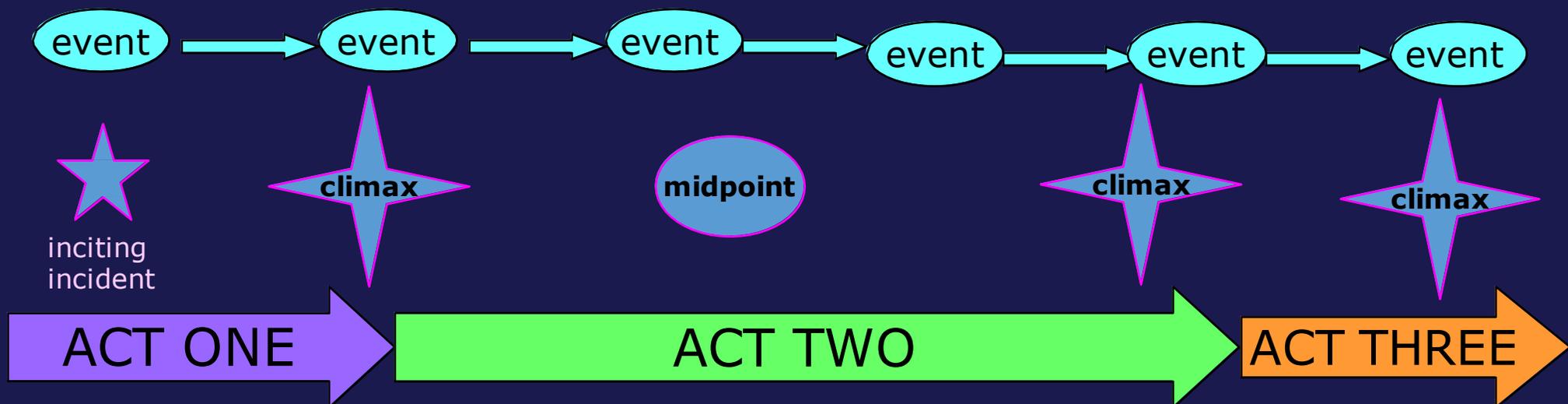
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Standard HOLLYWOOD 3-ACT STRUCTURE also commonly used in TV EPISODES

(Discussed clearly in Cowgill, Linda J. (1999). *Secrets of Screenplay Structure*. Lone Eagle Publishing Co. Hollywood)

Inciting incident: something happens which makes this story start here and now

Climax: resolution of issue and creation of new suspense
Act III climax resolves all plotlines and all character journeys



5 KEY POINTS: Midpoint links action of Act I with action of Act II, finishing one section and pushing forward a new development

FACT AND FICTION

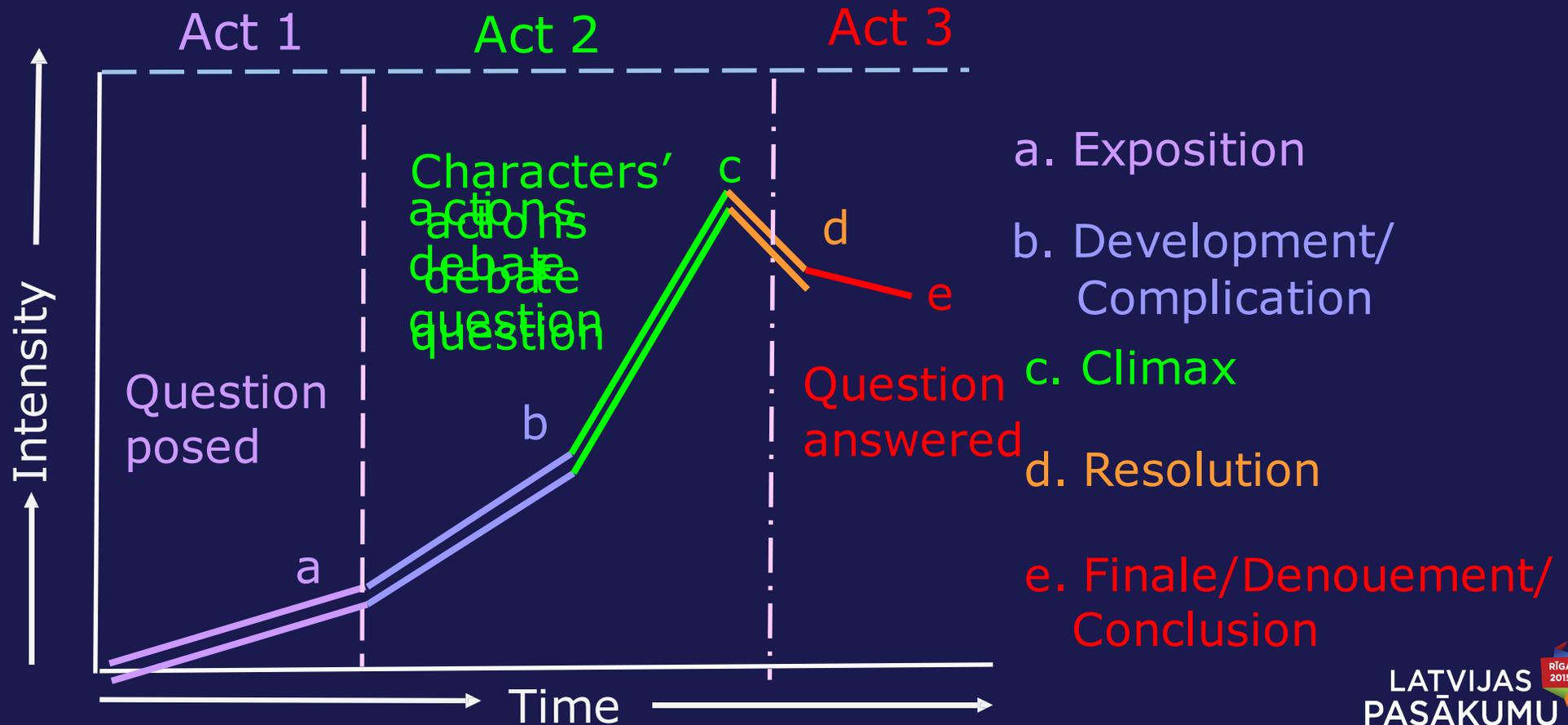
Drama and Documentary mostly still retain classical rhetorical forms:

DRAMA	Set-up/ Intro	Develop ment	Compli- cation/ Climax	Resolu- tion	Denoue ment/ Finale
DOCU- MENTARY	Exposi- tion	Develop ment	Summat ion	Resolu- tion	Conclu sion
'Ordo Naturalis'	<i>Exord- ium</i>	<i>Narratio</i>	<i>Proposi- tio</i>	<i>Argumen- tatio</i>	<i>Conclu sio</i>

HOLLYWOOD STRUCTURE

The 3 acts of a typical Hollywood movie are developed as a **QUESTION** and an **ANSWER**

or a **PROBLEM** and **SOLUTION**

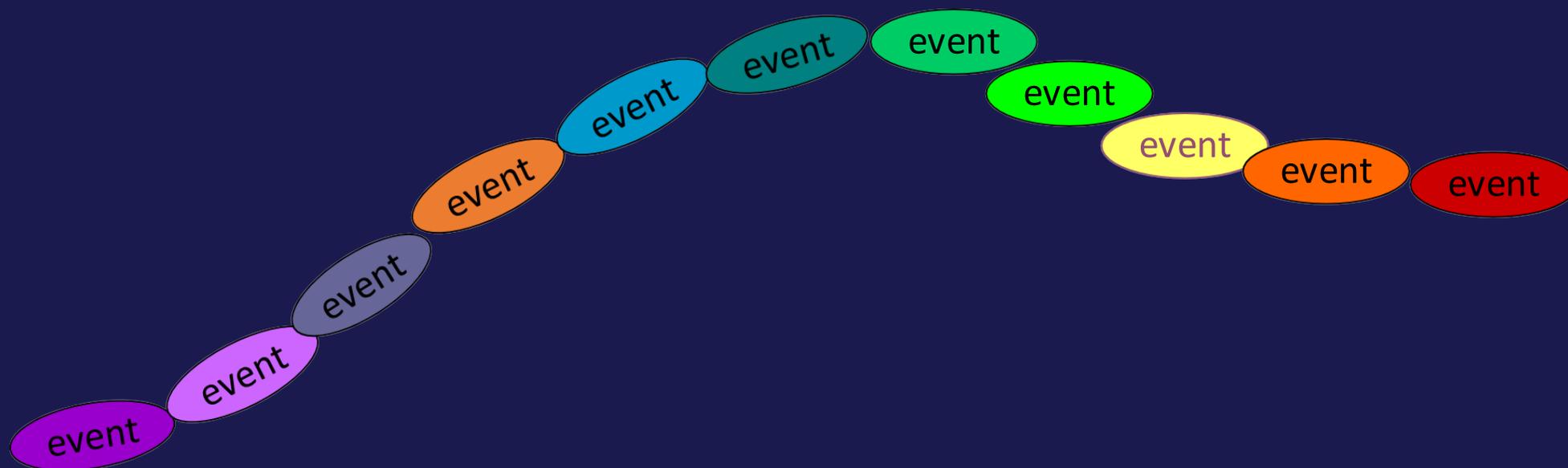


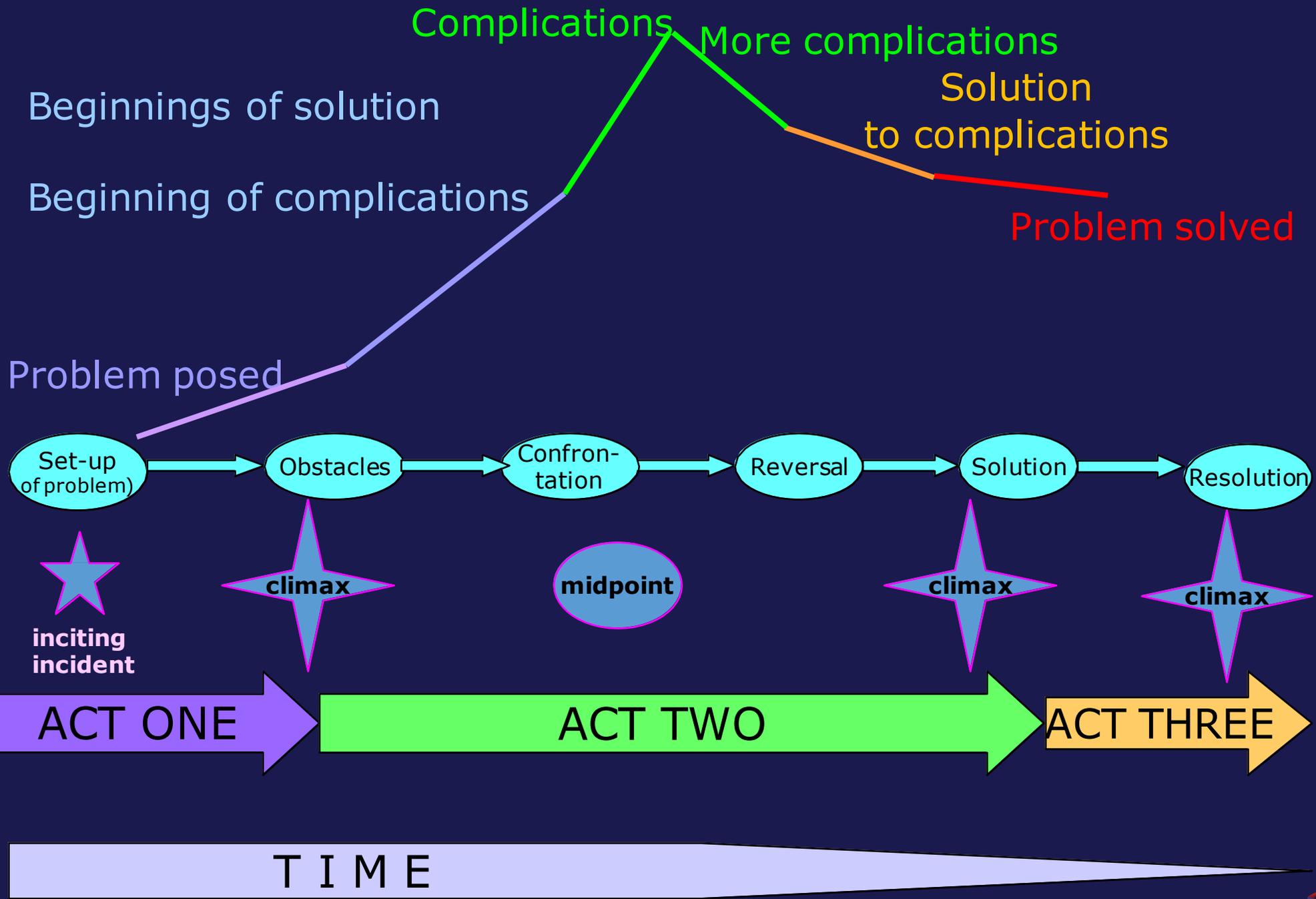
LINEAR EPISODIC STRUCTURE: 'EPISODE BEADS' IN A MOVIE STORY

ACT ONE

ACT TWO

ACT THREE







The 'story train' is pulled by an engine –
an idea, theme, concept



However well designed and kitted out, wagons without an engine don't go anywhere



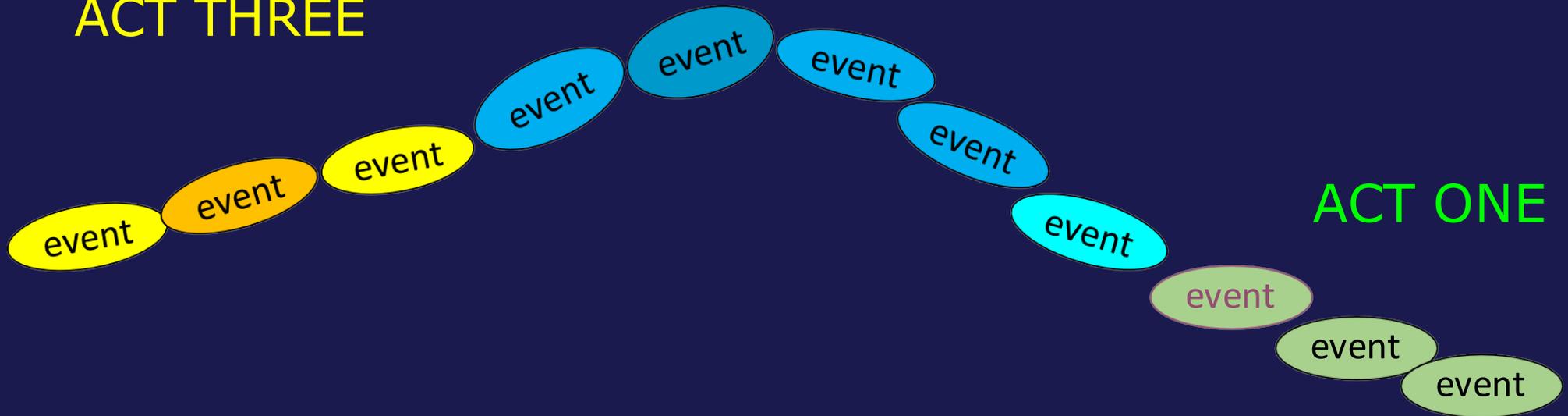
Nearly identical wagons are not very exciting



Three-Act 'story train'

ACT TWO

ACT THREE

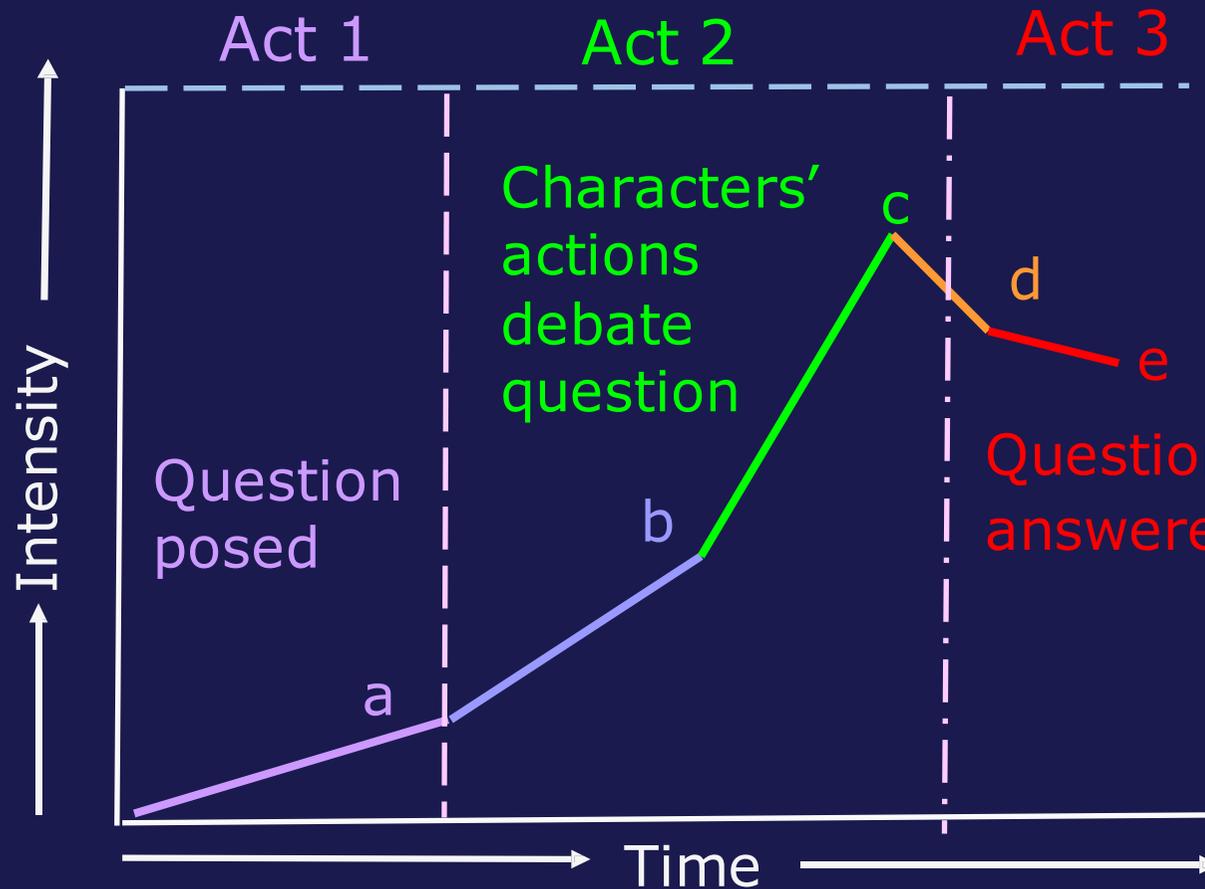


Three-Act 'story train'



Wagons can be varied

In a story, each episode or sequence/scene (wagon) needs its own dynamic structure

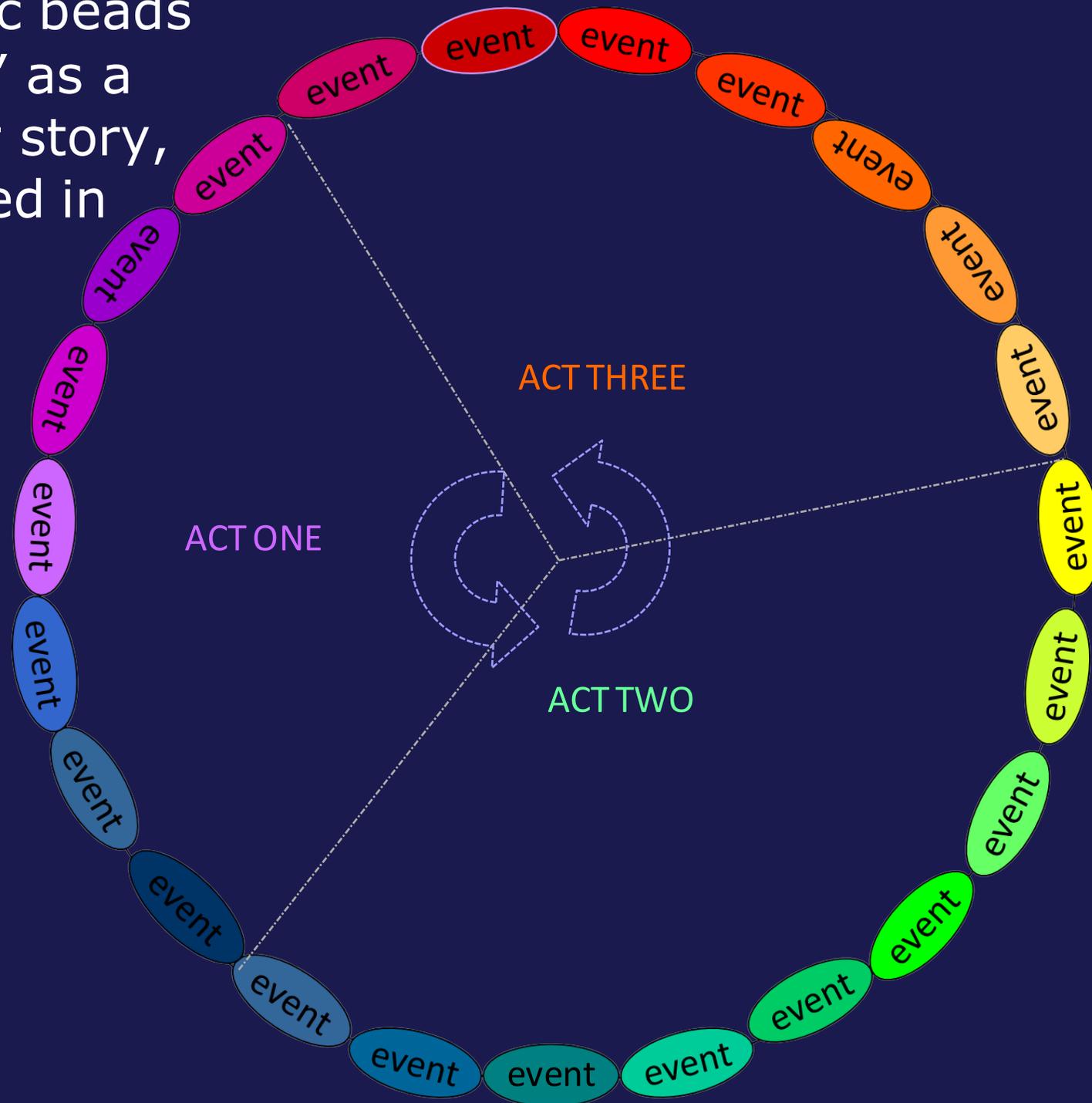




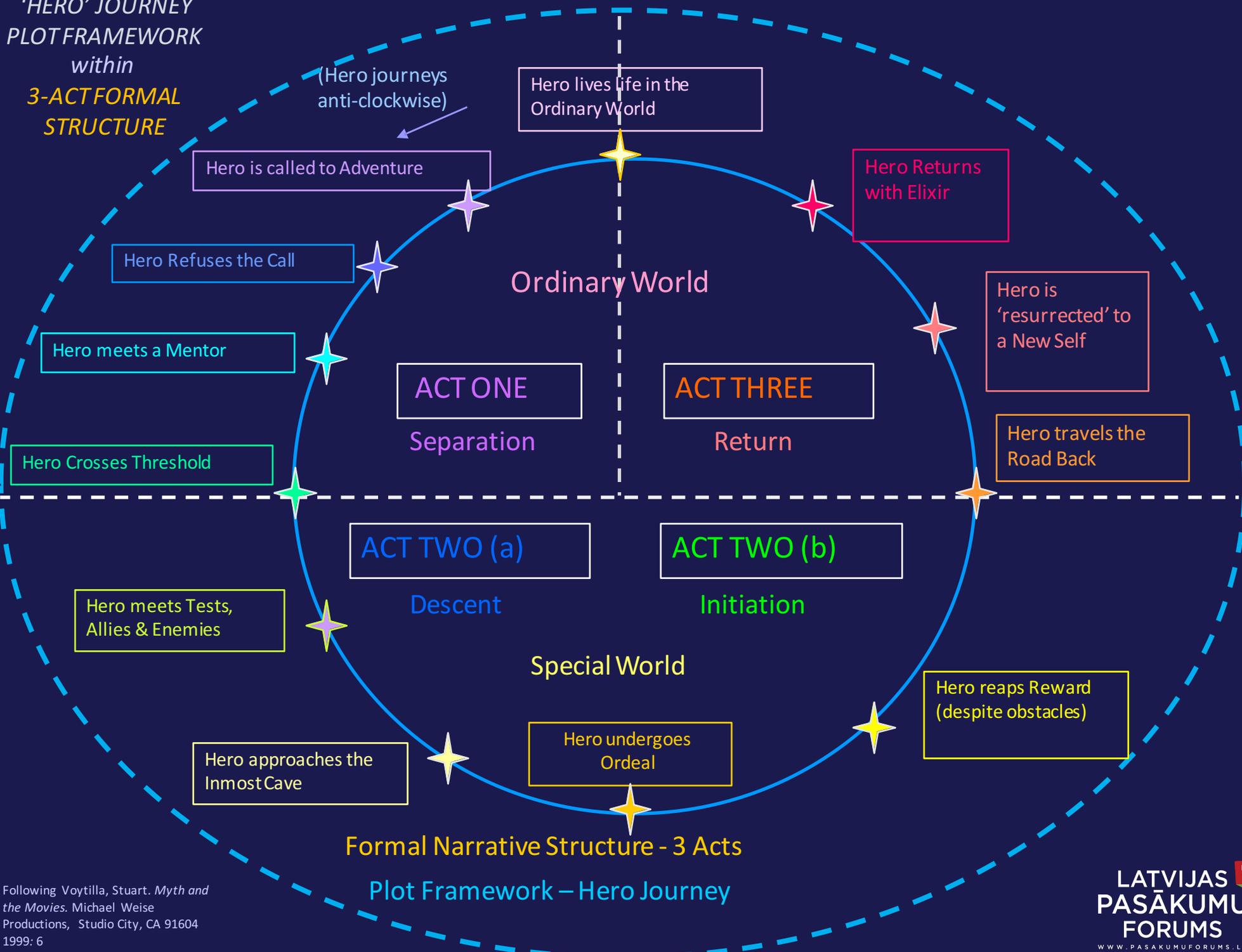
A model train looks like the real thing, but it can't go far, because the engine is not real.

Without a strong idea, theme or concept to power it, a story may look the right shape, but it will not work.

Episodic beads
'strung' as a
circular story,
arranged in
3 Acts



'HERO' JOURNEY
PLOT FRAMEWORK
within
3-ACT FORMAL
STRUCTURE



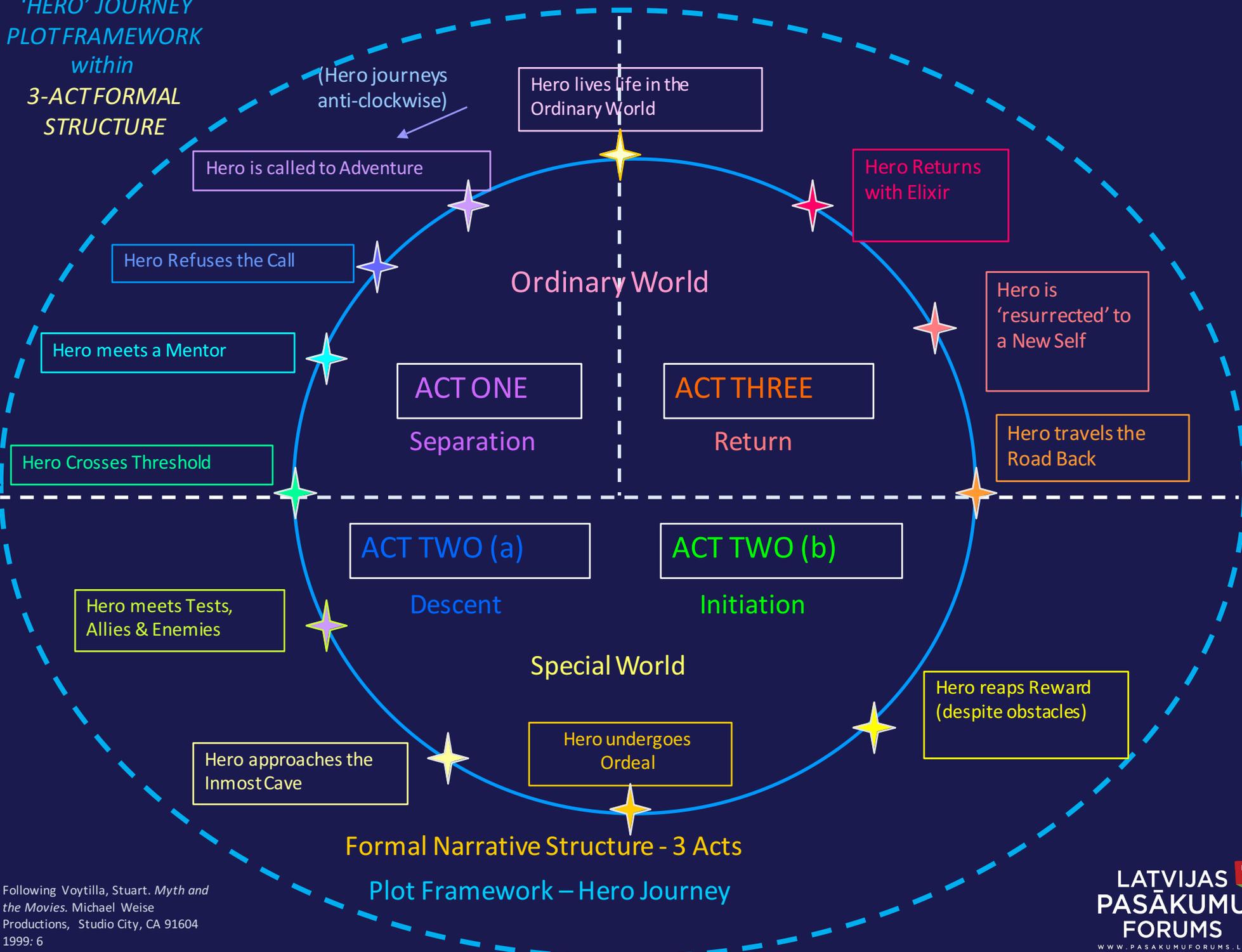
Following Vogtilla, Stuart. *Myth and the Movies*. Michael Weise Productions, Studio City, CA 91604 1999: 6

THE 'HERO JOURNEY' PLOT FRAMEWORK

THIS PATTERN CAN COMBINE AN INNER, PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNEY WITH AN OUTER, PHYSICAL ADVENTURE

- The audience meets the Hero in the Ordinary World
- The Hero receives the Call to Adventure, a challenge, request or problem that must be faced
- The Hero expresses fear and is reluctant or Refuses the Call
- A Meeting with the Mentor provides encouragement, wisdom, or magical gifts to push the Hero past fear and doubt
- The Hero finally accepts the challenge and Crosses the Threshold into the Special World
- The Hero learns about the Special World through Tests, encountering Allies and Enemies
- The Hero makes the final preparations and Approaches the Inmost Cave
- The Hero endures the Ordeal, the central crisis in which the Hero confronts his greatest fear and tastes death
- The Hero enjoys the Reward of having confronted fear and death

'HERO' JOURNEY
PLOT FRAMEWORK
within
3-ACT FORMAL
STRUCTURE

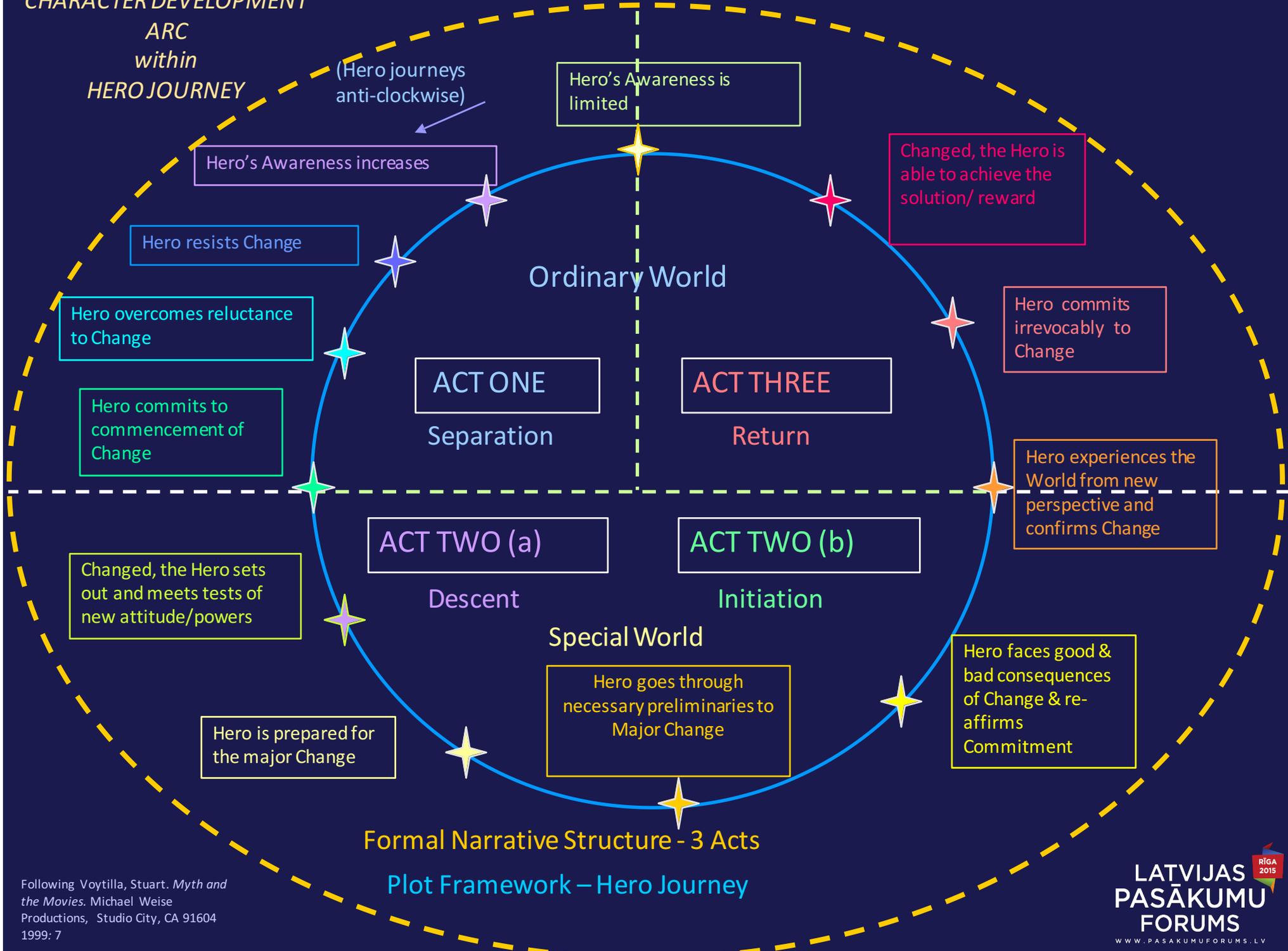


Following Vogtler, Stuart. *Myth and the Movies*. Michael Weise Productions, Studio City, CA 91604 1999: 6

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

ARC
within
HERO JOURNEY

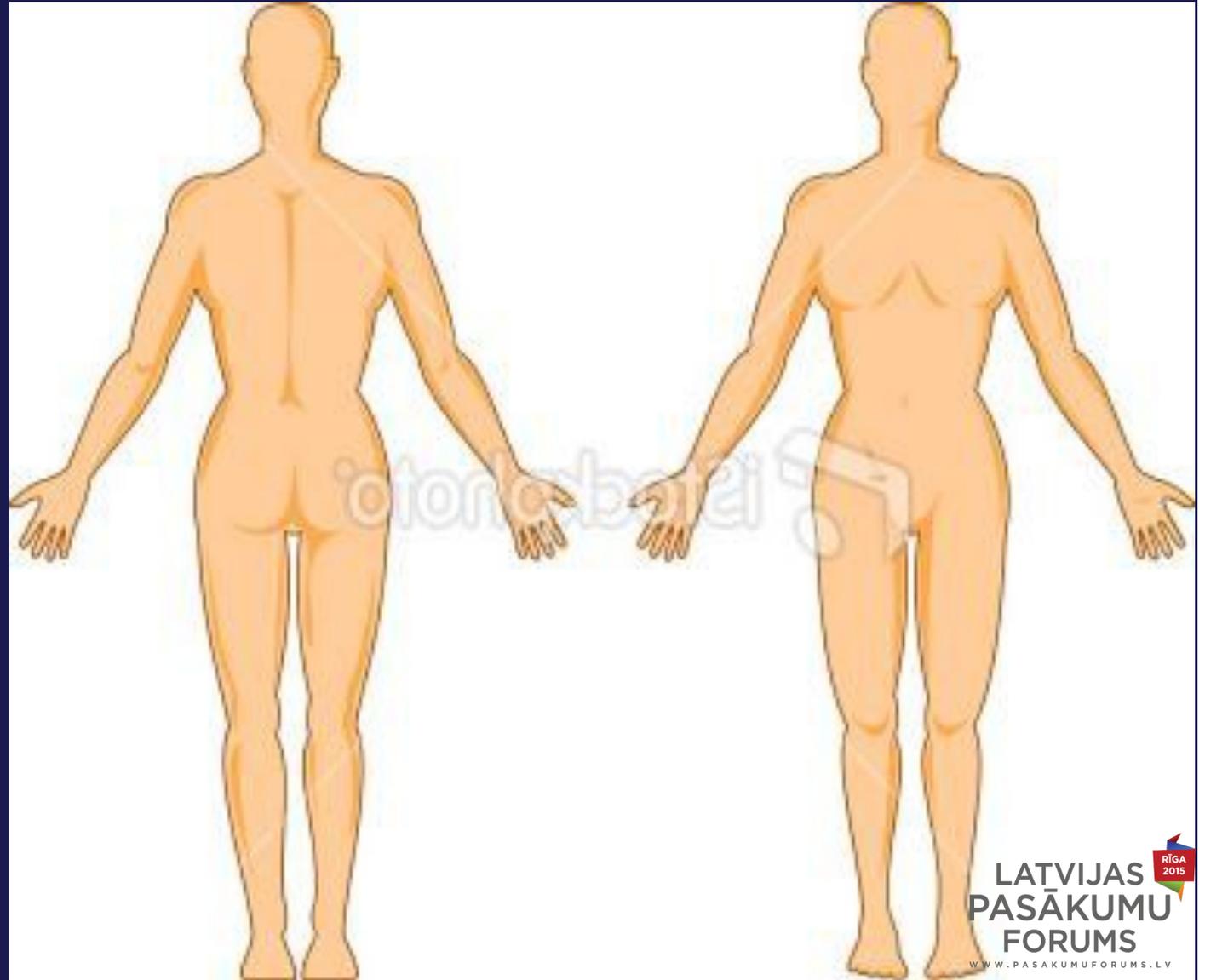
(Hero journeys
anti-clockwise)



Following Voytilla, Stuart. *Myth and the Movies*. Michael Weise Productions, Studio City, CA 91604 1999: 7

BUILDING A STORY

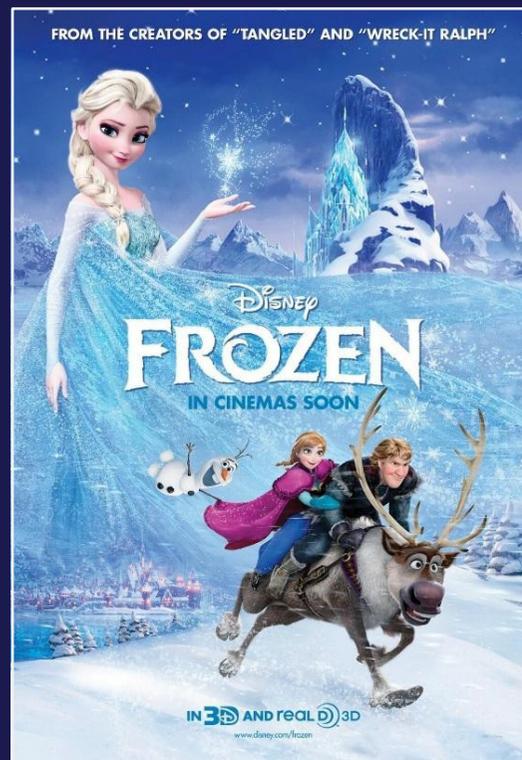
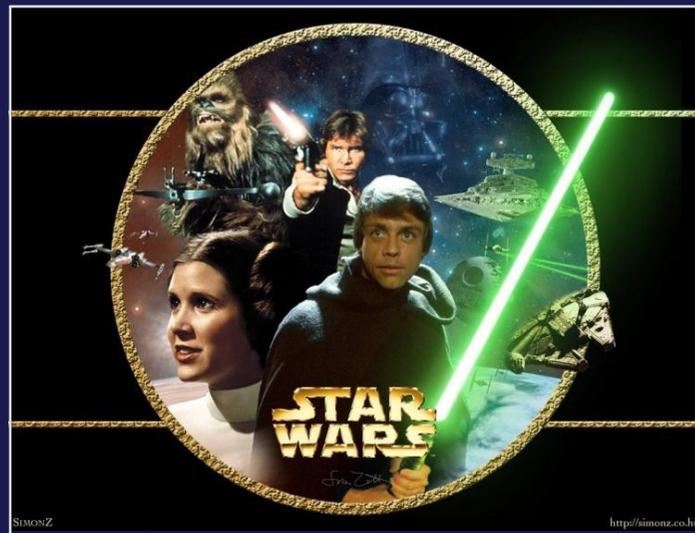
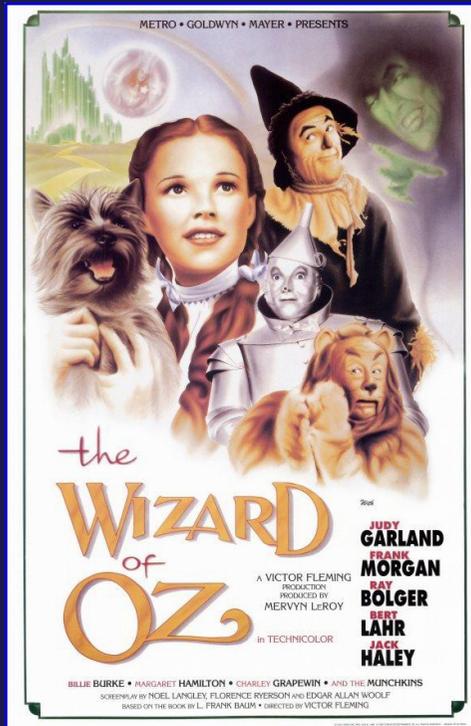
The flesh on the skeleton is your particular material



BUILDING A STORY

The final presentation shows your individuality and style







The hero's journey changes
his moral perspective



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Avatar (3D movie)
James Cameron
USA/UK 2009)



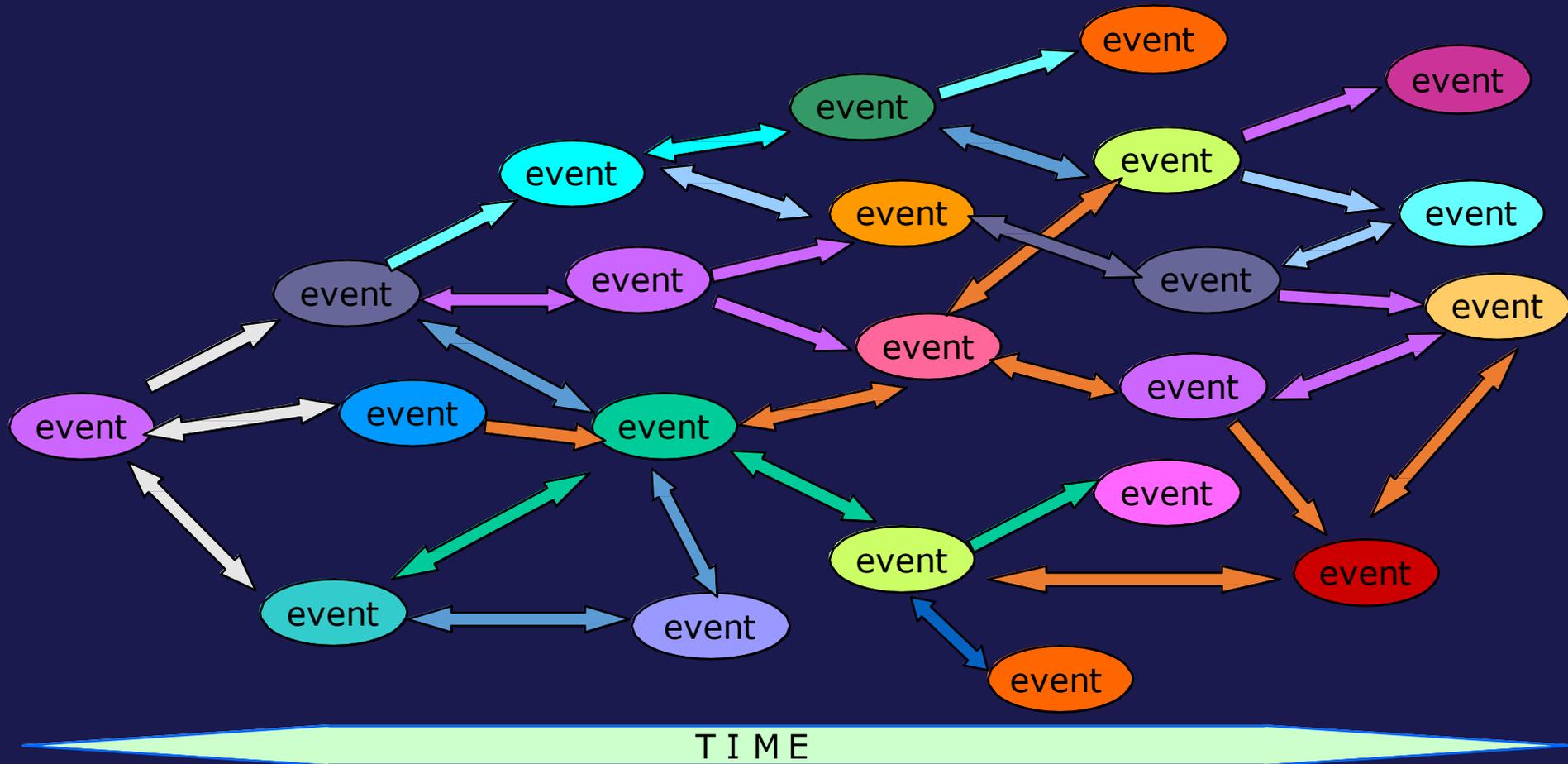


Defiance
TV series fixed path
Game free roaming



An immersive spatially organised narrative offers structure combined with active choice

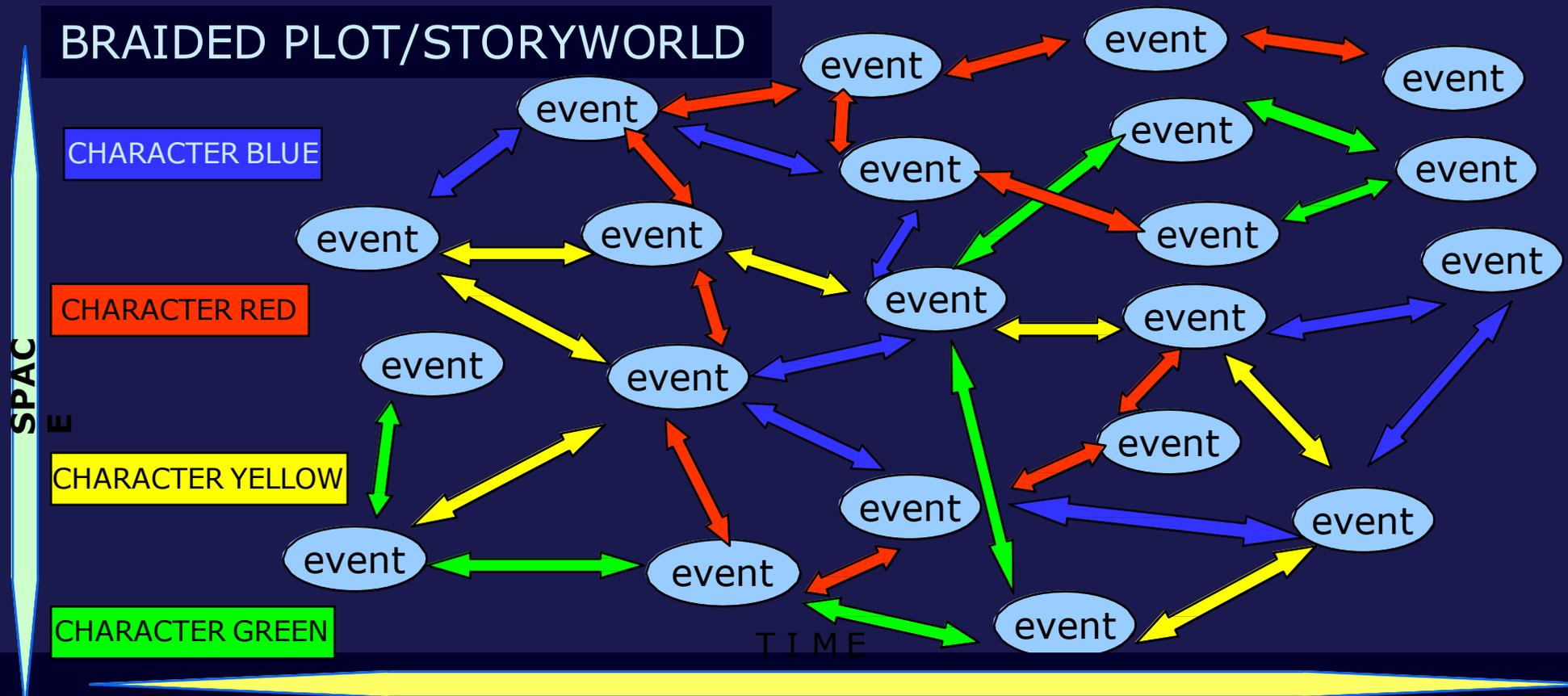
EPISODE BEADS LINKED IN A BRANCHING NODAL STRUCTURE



In computer-handled explorable narrativity, linked, branching nodes often form web-like patterns, which make it possible to revisit events or scenes in time ('loop back'). These webs contain a mixture of one-way and two-way links, and complex branching between the nodes – 'linkmeshes' [Crawford 2002: 155]

Relational patterns exert strong influence on 21st century art forms, including collaborative cinematic narrativity and computer games in Real Time 3D Virtual Environments (RT3DVE) [See also Ryan 2001:247-257]

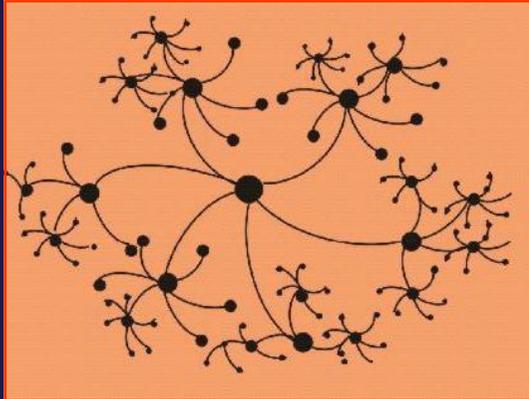
BRAIDED PLOT/STORYWORLD



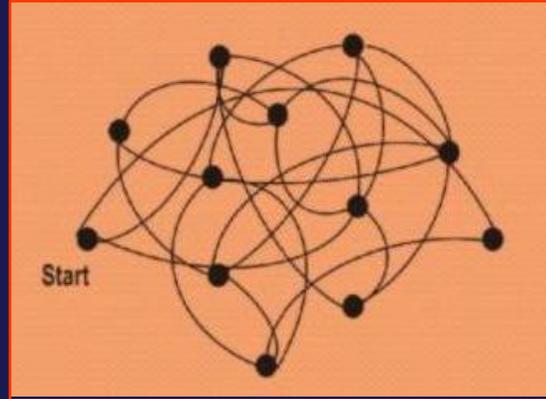
The BRAIDED PLOT: 'Classic narrative consists, at least in part, of a sequence of physical events objectively experienced by a group of characters, but every character in the cast lives these events from a different perspective and has a different story to tell. Interactive mechanisms can be used to switch "windows" on a multistranded narrative' [Ryan 2001: 254].

In the geography of the virtual storyworld, 'the nodes and links represent the prominent sites and access ways. The user is free to take any road, but when she reaches a site, the system ... sends her into a self-contained adventure'. 'This model abandons the idea of an overarching dramatic narrative in favour of' 'oral storytelling verve'; 'an epic structure of semi-autonomous episodes' [Ryan 2001: 255].

“How can stories benefit from active user participation?”

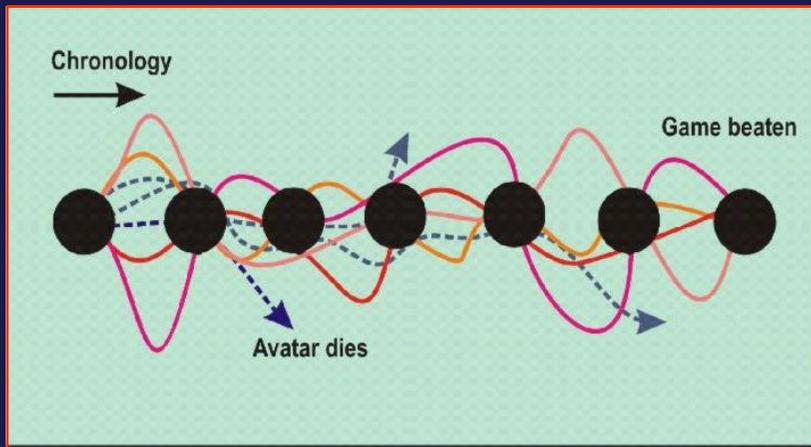


Sea anemone

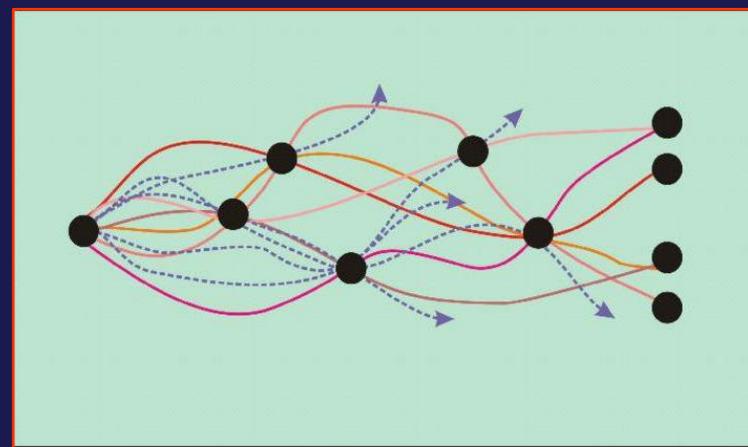


Maze

“If the database is properly structured, and if its subject matter is appropriate, the free probes of users and their always incomplete exploration will not prevent the retrieval of narrative meaning.”



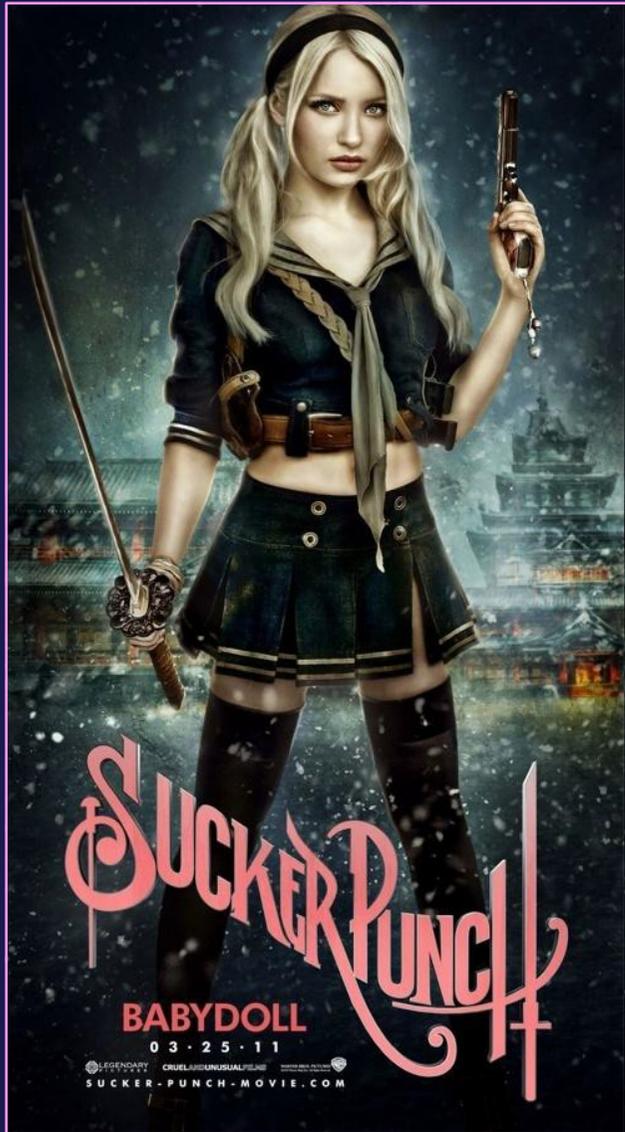
Pre-determined narrative arc



Pre-determined narrative with alternative endings

“The user plays the role of a member of the storyworld, and the system grants them some freedom of action, but the purpose of the user’s agency is to progress along a fixed storyline, and the system remains in firm control of the narrative trajectory. This type of interactivity is typical of computer games, such as: adventure games, shooters, mystery-solving games.”

Some movies using game-fiction formats do not derive from existing games



Sucker Punch (movie & Eyemax) (Zack Snyder, USA/Canada 2011)



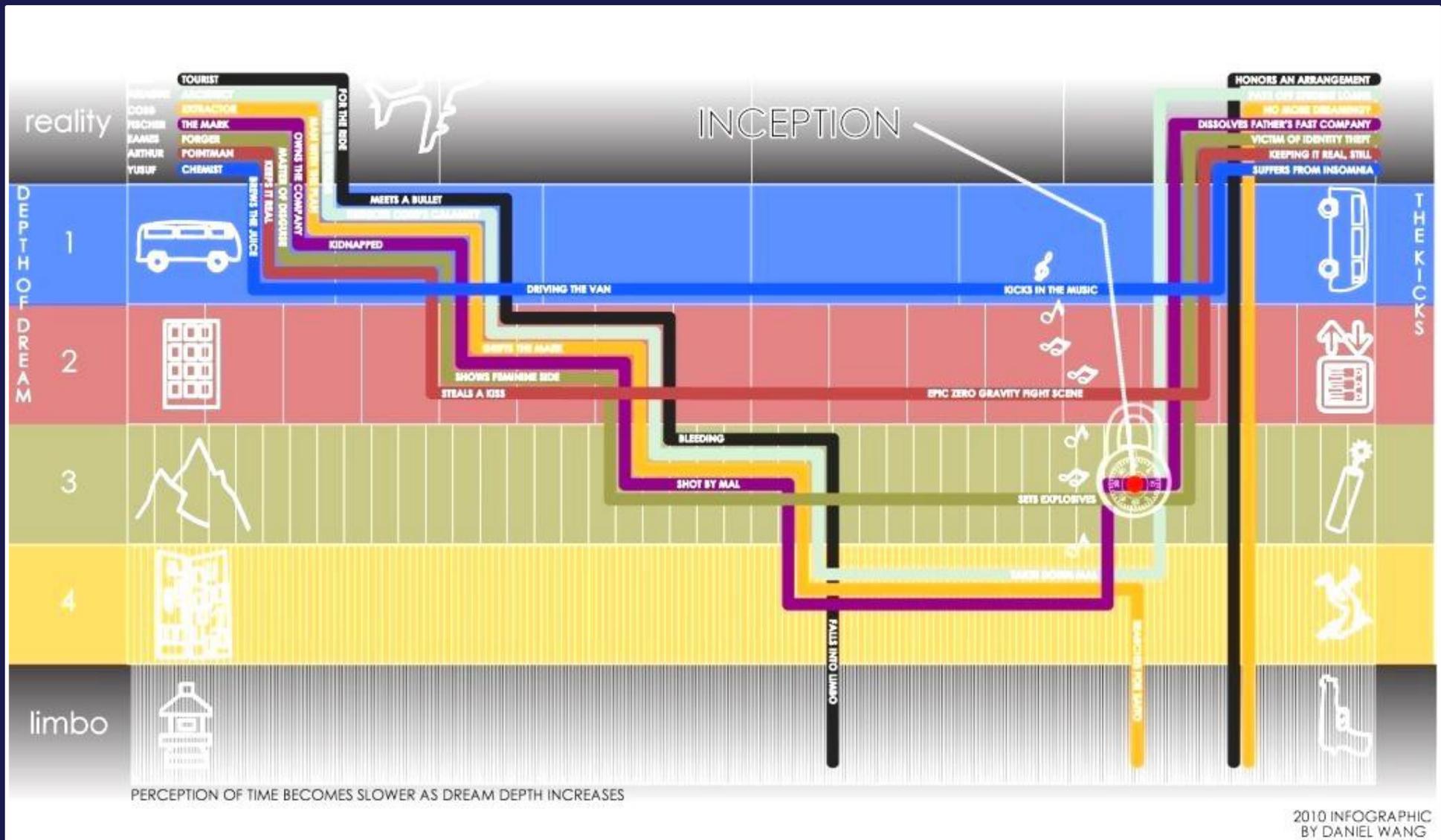
Inception (Christopher Nolan, USA/UK 2010)



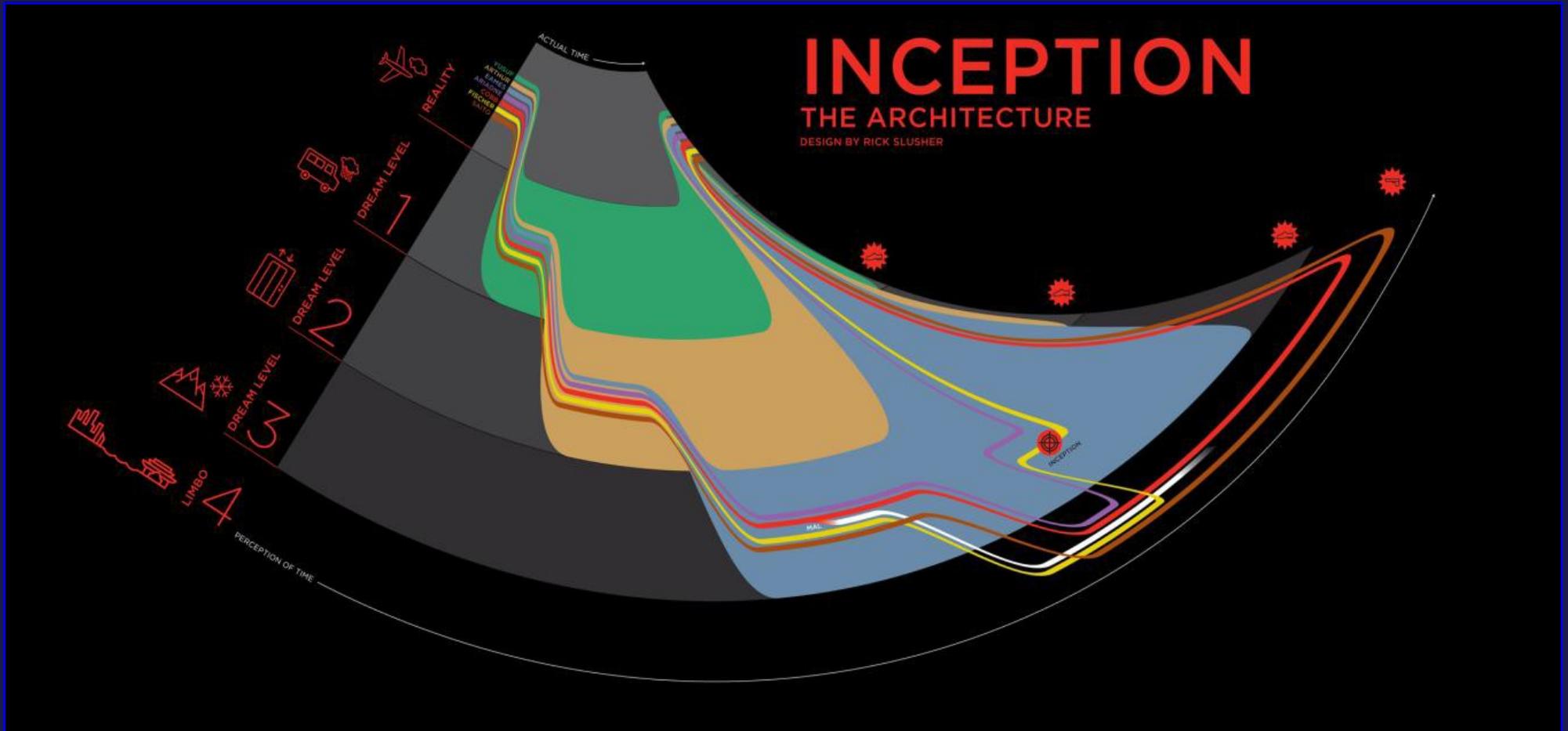
Inception (movie) Christopher Nolan US/UK 2010



Inception (movie) Christopher Nolan US/UK 2010



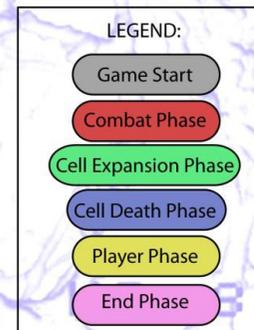
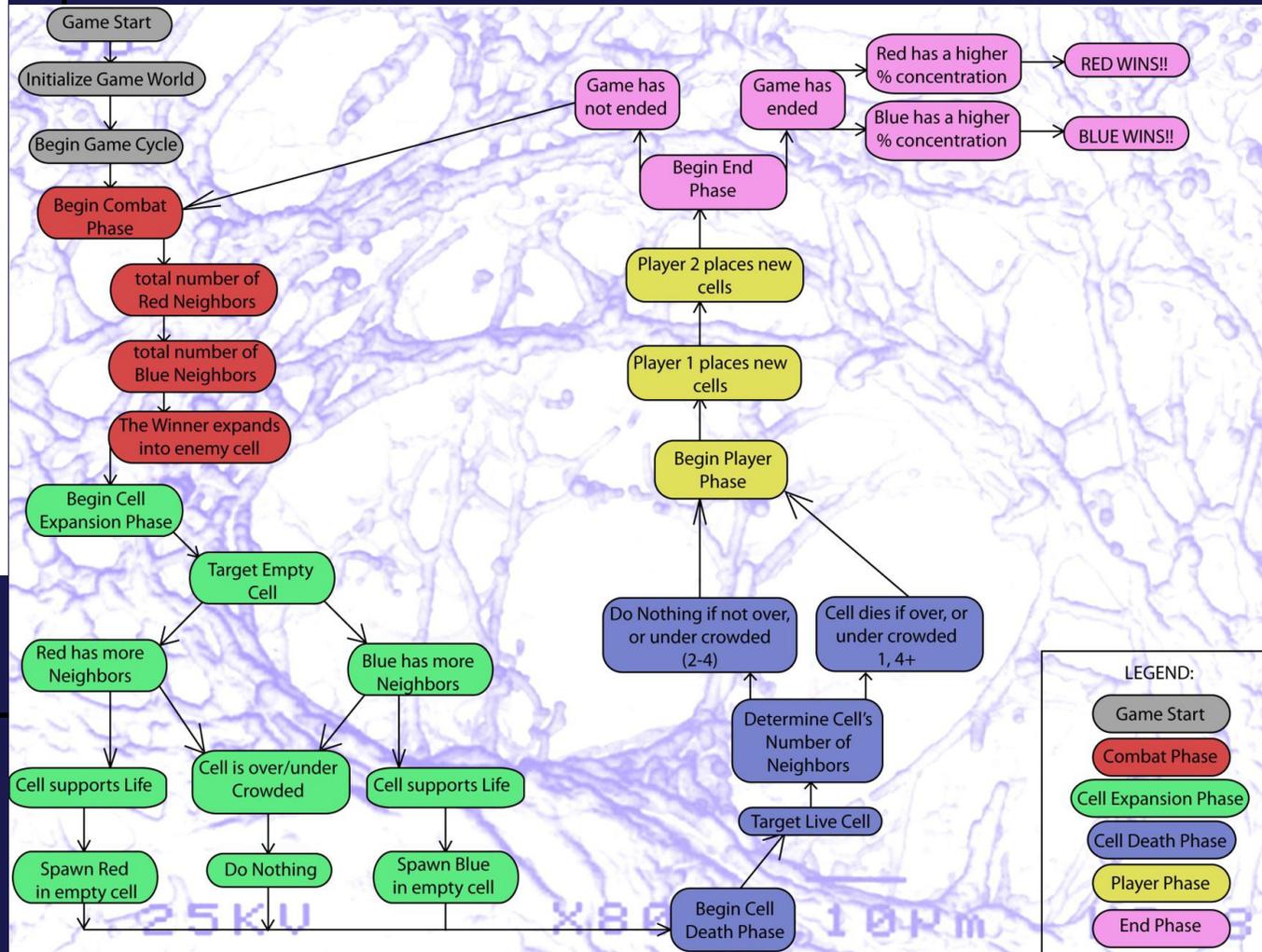
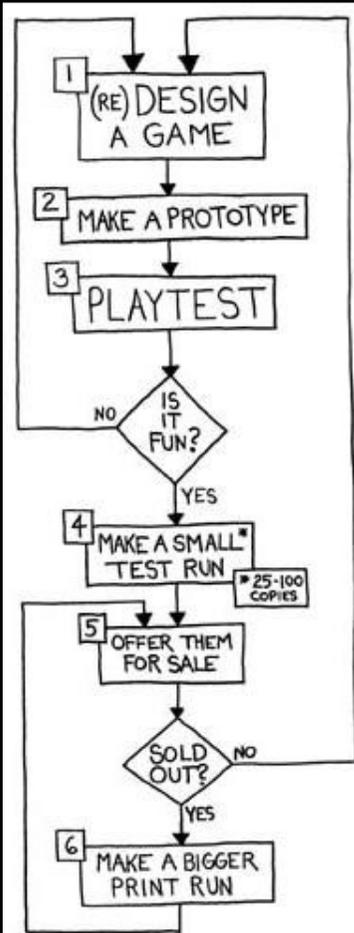
Inception (movie) Christopher Nolan US/UK 2010

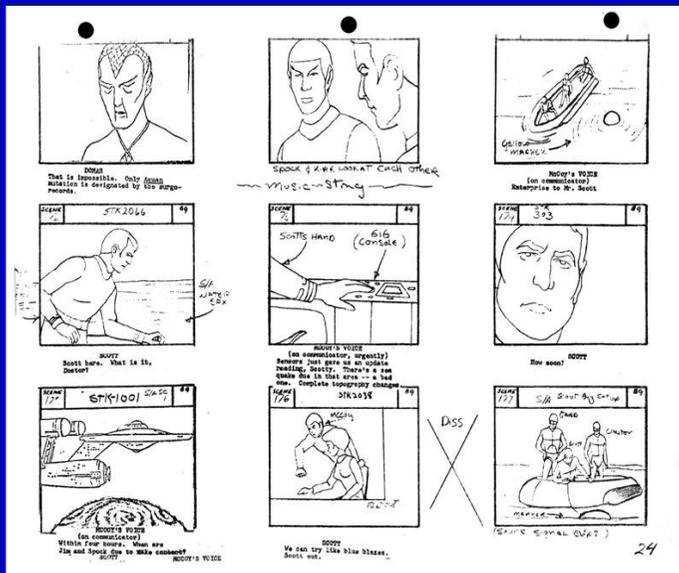
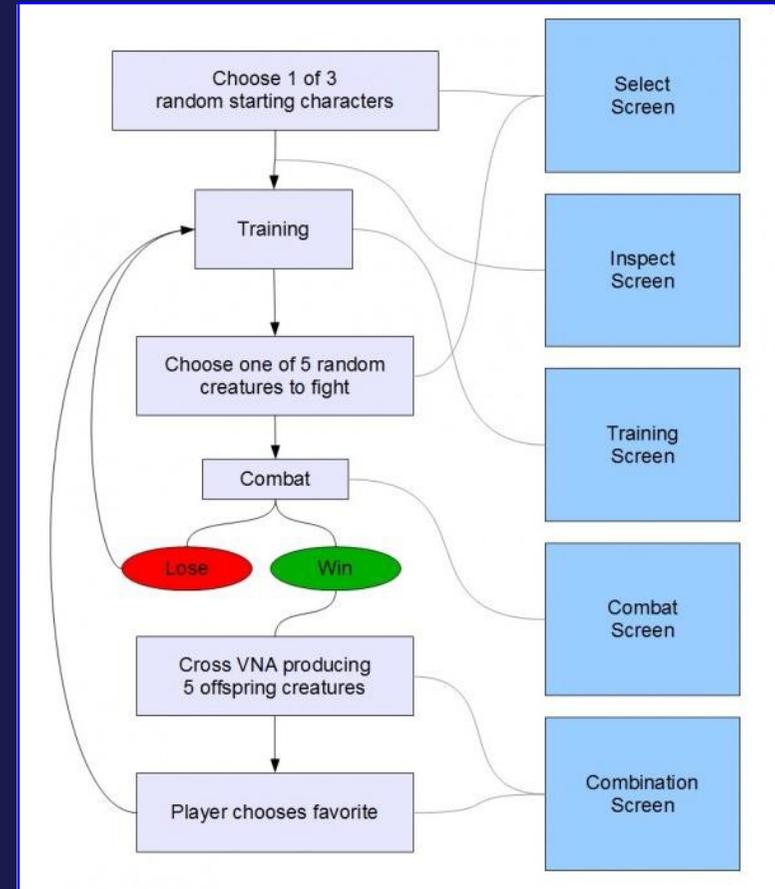


Spatial Organisation of Narrative in Layers/Levels

Flowcharts (as used in game design)

Player action > system action > media played > next option and navigation routes



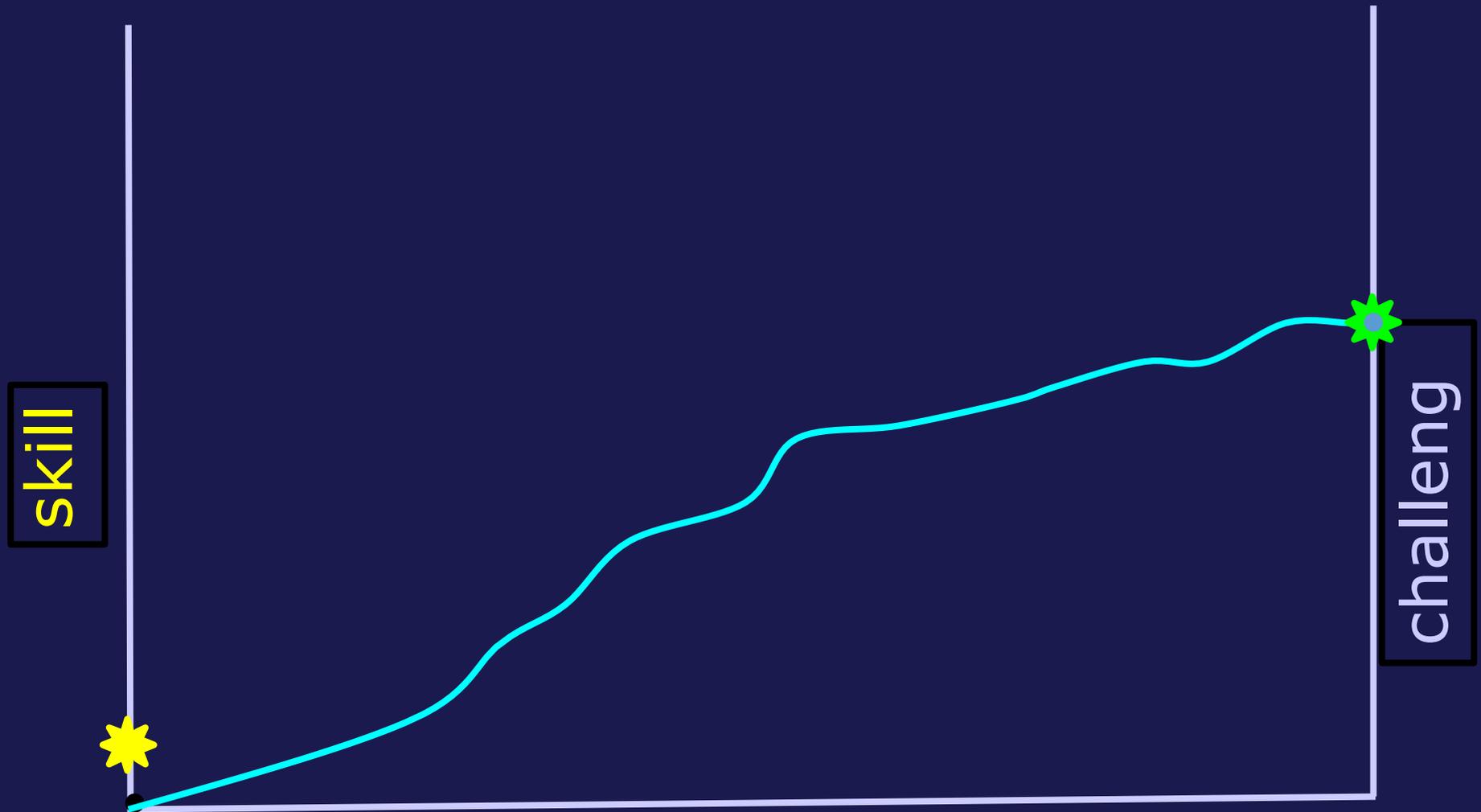




Immersive spatially organised narrative is about exploration with some designed parameters

Immersion through OPTIMUM FLOW

Increase **Skill** to meet rising **Challenge**



Dynamic interaction through motion/gesture



XBox 360 KINECT interface

Dynamic interaction through motion/gesture



XBox 360 KINECT interface

Immersion through dynamic interaction



Your own body moves to make Lara move

Dynamic interaction through motion/gesture



Playstation 3 Move interface

iPhone 5



4" IPS

1136 x 640

326 pixels per inch

iPhone 5S



4" IGZO

2272 x 1280

652 pixels per inch

Smaller and smaller

More and more mobile

More and more personal

Higher and higher
resolution



More interaction
with the environment
in which you are immersed

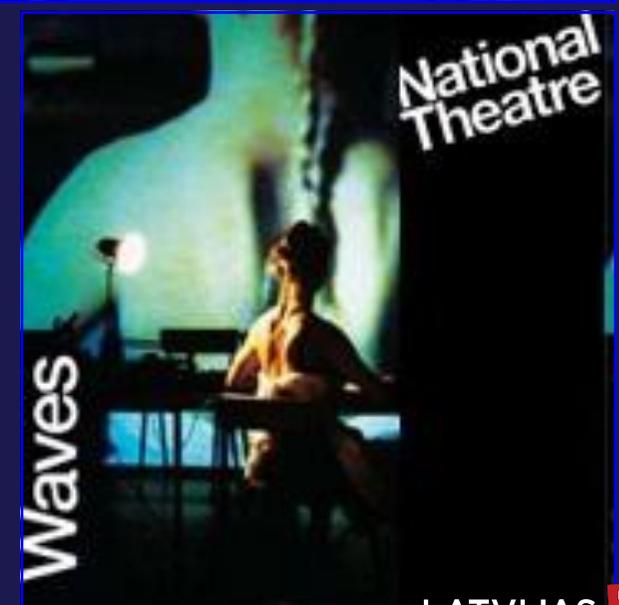


Multiple screens communicate in different ways

Theatre is increasingly using video (pre-recorded and live) to extend the space of the stage



"Theatre and video come together so seamlessly and complement each other so exquisitely it is as if Mitchell, her actors and video artist Leo Warner have created an entirely new art form"
(*The Guardian* blog: Lyn Gardner 04.12.06)



The Waves Katie Mitchell 2006
adapted from the novel by Virginia Woolf

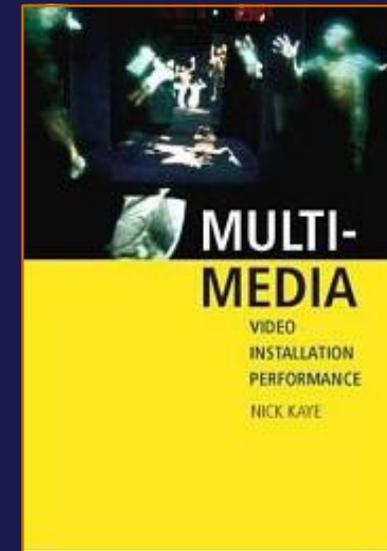
Live videography projected on stage

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Theatre is increasingly using video (pre-recorded and live) to extend the space of the stage



Nick Kaye, 2007. *Multi-media: Video - Installation - Performance*. London: Routledge.

Some Trace of Her
Katie Mitchell, National Theatre 2008
inspired by *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky
adapted by Katie Mitchell and the company

PARTICIPATION/INTERACTIVITY – CO-CREATIVITY/AUTHORSHIP



Chuck Tryon, *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media Convergence* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009)

Sophie McCall, *First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012)

Claire Bishop, *Participation* (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press 2006)

Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (eds.), *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Media* (London: British Film Institute, 2002)



Classical Roman Triumph



Medieval pageant wagon

Pageant wagons and carnivals moved around the arena, town or park

In town or park, the audience could move freely or wait for them to pass, one after the other





Mystery plays told the story of the creation of human beings, through the birth, life and crucifixion of Christ, to Doomsday – the Day of Judgement, when God will decide who goes to Heaven for eternity and who goes to Hell

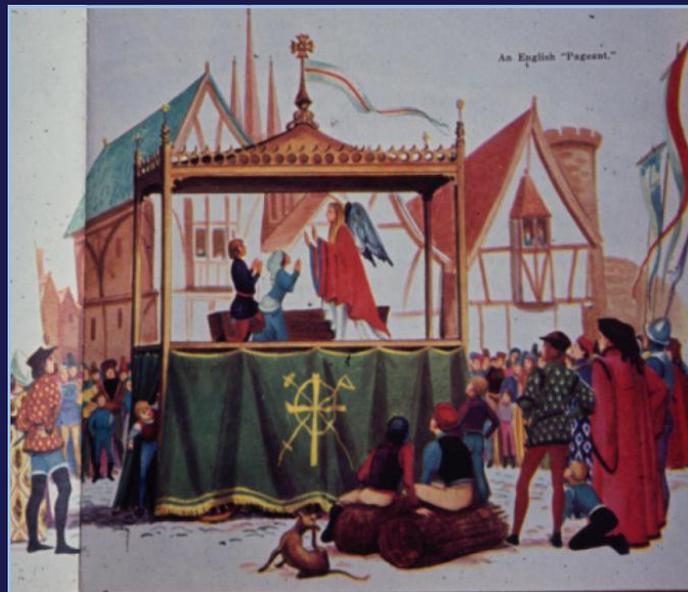
English medieval 'Mystery Plays' were played on wagons,
one scene per wagon





Sometimes wagons moved into place and stayed there, playing their scene over and over again

The audience wandered from scene to scene at will



The plays were performed every year at the Feast of Corpus Christi (July)



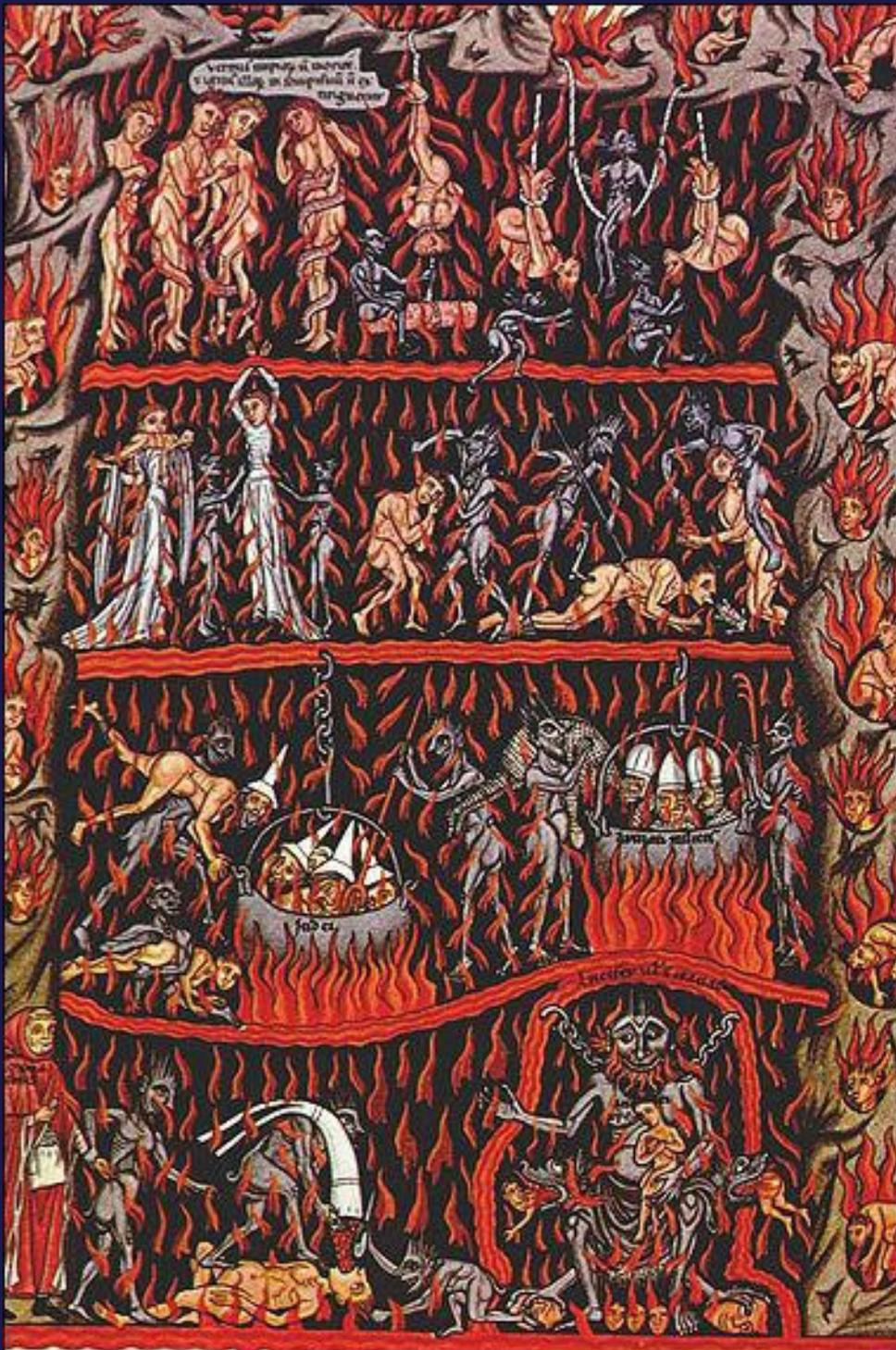
By seeing the same plays over and over throughout your life, you became familiar with the Bible stories

Going out to see the plays at the same time of year each year became a festival ritual

The plays were handed down from father to son in the guilds of skilled crafts (which were known as 'mysteries')



Devils in goatlike costumes with horns on their heads ran around and threw unwilling sinners into Hell Mouth



At Easter, in the time between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, Christ rescues the deserving souls of those who died before he was born from Hell





Surviving medieval Dragon costume made by the Leather- workers' Guild

(Norwich Castle
Museum)

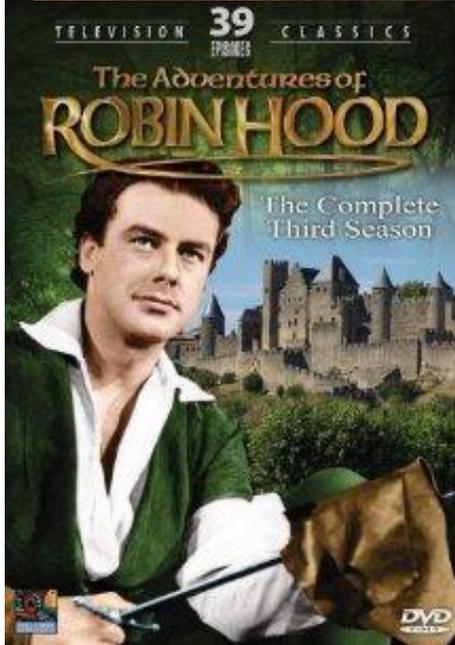
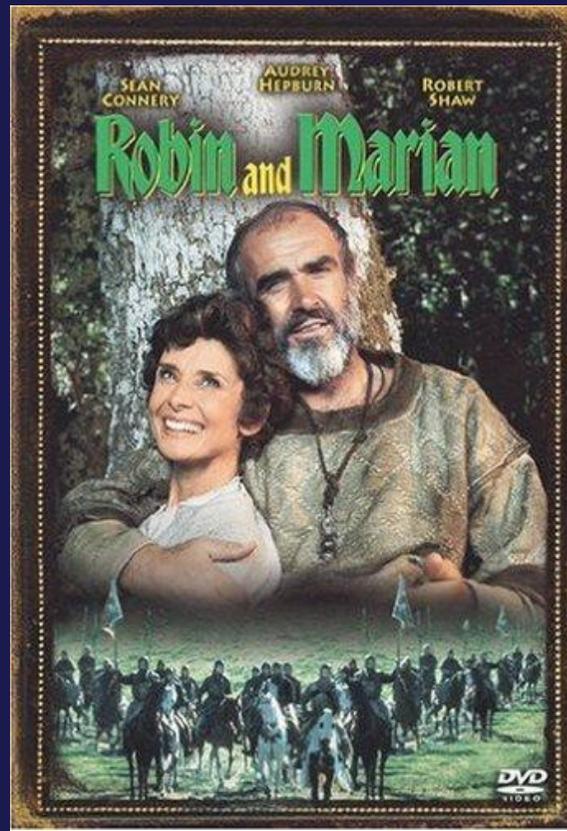
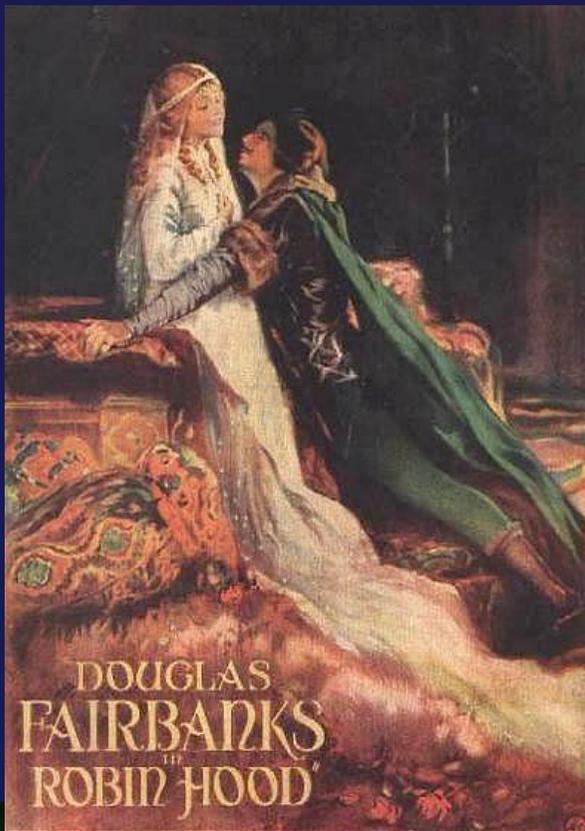


As time went on, the plays were performed on stages



Robin Hood and Maid Marian have survived from medieval 'folk' drama, probably from even earlier







Robin Hood & Little John
(painting by Louis Thread, 1912)

The fight at the crossing is one of the earliest surviving English 'mumming' play texts





Robin Hood is sometimes identified with the 'Green Man', one of the most popular and widespread Pub names in England







Wooden carving inside church



Baptismal fonts



Church roof

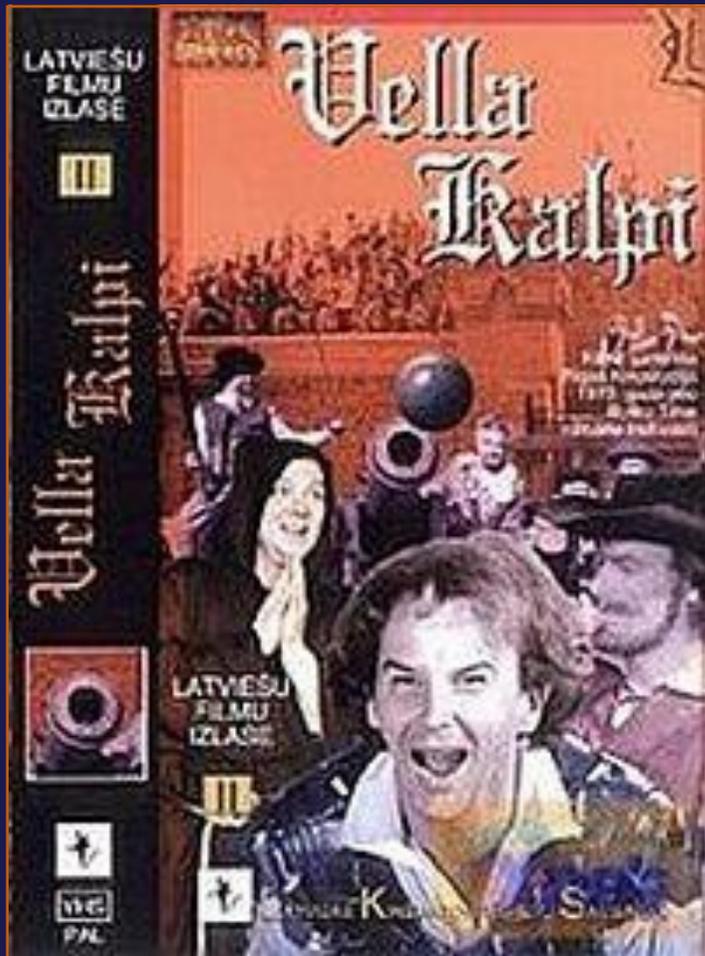
The Green Man is older than Christianity, but survives in medieval church carvings

Medieval Wodewo, Green Man, Wild Man of the Woods



Tug-of-war, Chitral, Khyber,
Pakistan, 2011

Robin Hood and Little John as enacted characters
in a drama probably survive from ancient
traditional tug-of-war ritual



Vellā Kālpī
(Aleksandrs Leimanis,
Latvia 1970)

PERFORMANCE
(AUDIENCE WATCHES)

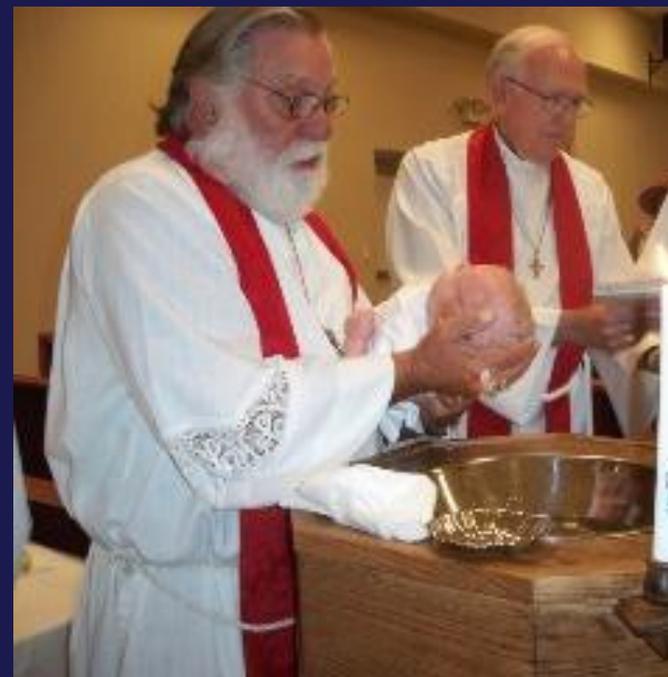


Alexander Solzhenitsyn's son
and grandson pay their respects
August 2008

RITUAL
(GROUP ENACTS)

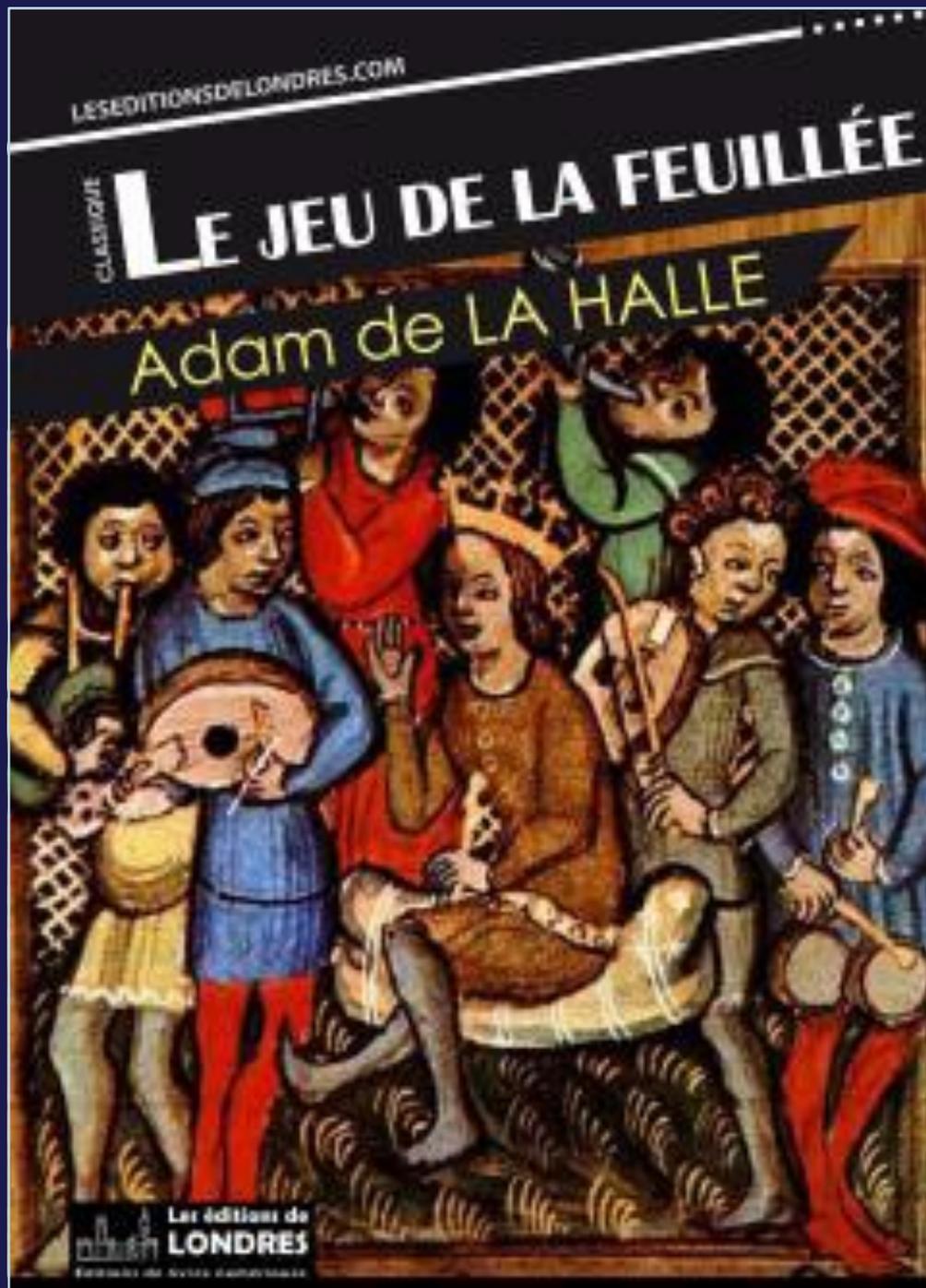
RITUAL

Christian Baptism





Archbishop washes feet



Another 13th century play by Adam de la Halle survives.

This was played in different locations in his home town – spatially organised

13th Century
Musical play from Arras



Medieval 'Mumming' plays survived in English folk tradition



Medieval 'Mumming' plays survived in English folk tradition



Malawi – coming of age ritual



Malawi (Bantu, Chewa)



Robin of Sherwood (TV)



Robin of Sherwood (TV)



Performance of the marriage ritual



JANI - RITUAL



JANI - RITUAL



JANI - RITUAL



Photogr. K. Strummanis

JANI - RITUAL



Medieval roof boss
from Eli Cathedral



Jani wreath of leaves



Lara Croft *Tomb Raider* Game Fiction 2013



Steering an Avatar is an enactive ritual,
rather than a performance

People understand the grammar of storytelling through their experience of stories

Dominant storyforms in the 20th Century were Film and Television – people understand them easily

The dominant storyform in the 21st Century is the immersive video computer game

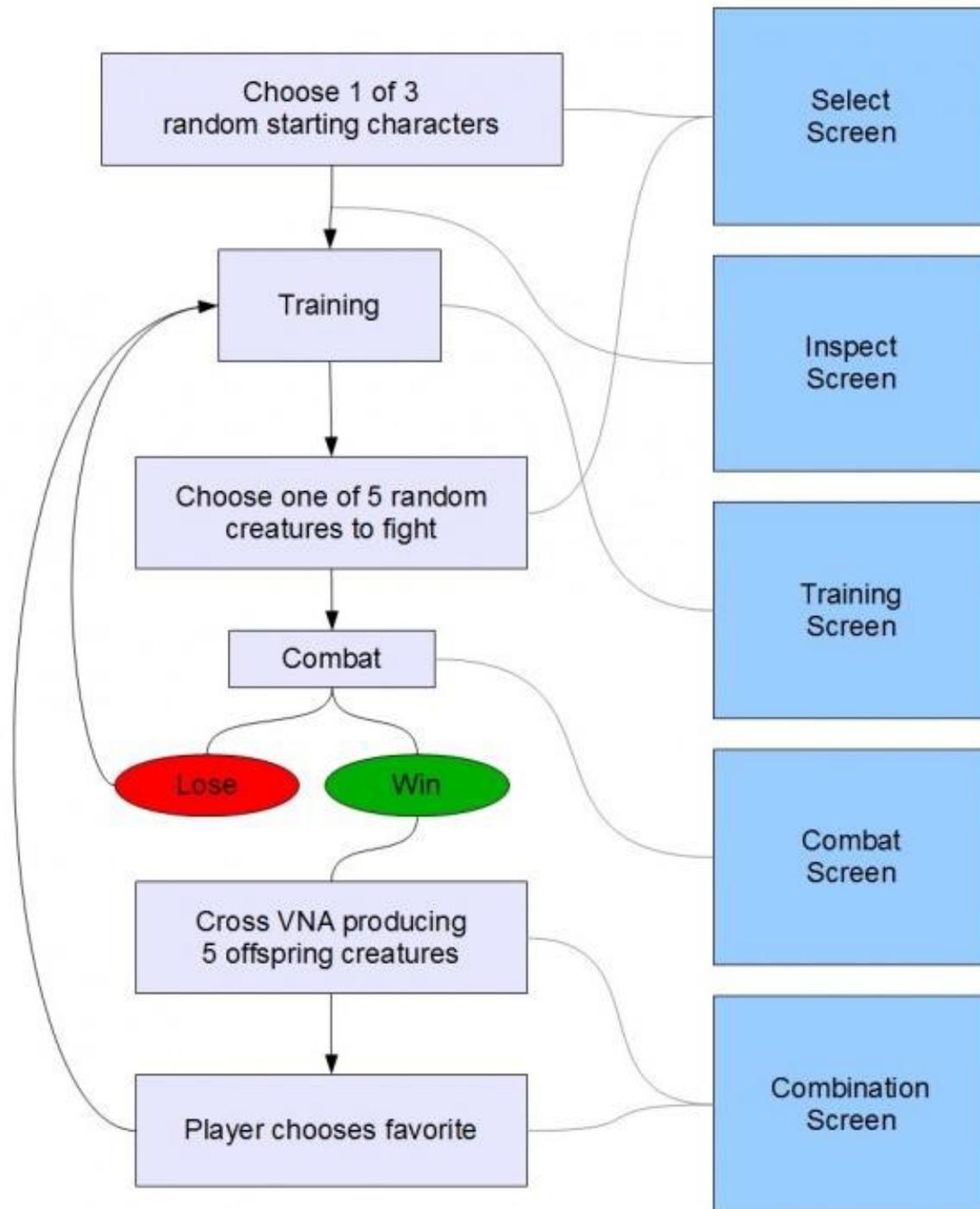
Might it work to

- think of the Event as a story in itself?
- spatially organise the storytelling of Events to make them immersive, as games do?
- offer visitors a structured journey as a ritual they enact (rather than make them part of an audience witnessing a performance)?
- work with the idea of the visitor changing through their journey?

This is not the same as visitors participating in creating a performance, or integrating themselves into an artwork

It would be using enacted ritual to communicate a spatially organised story

Developing spatialised narrative involves using flowcharts to design the visitor's experience (journey)





A spatially organised narrative event could be like a market full of stalls that you can visit in any order – with a structure and a core theme



Without a strong idea, theme or concept to power it, a story may look the right shape, but it will not work.



The 'story train' is pulled by an engine –
an idea, a theme, a concept, a message

The Event itself might have a story structure with pace, intensity, and an Aristotelian dynamic



TELLING THE STORY

Event as dramatic narrative

Maureen Thomas