



Making a Choice: The Melete Effect and Establishing a Poetics for Choice-Based Narratives

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declaration

*I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.*

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## Abstract

In this dissertation, I establish a poetics for Choice-Based Narrative and situate this form as a foundational form of Interactive Narrative. A Choice-Based Narrative is a story that allows for choices to arise at designated junctures within a given experience. The story is predetermined in advance by the creative writer or author of the experience and can have many different outcomes. The spectator (viewer/audience/reader/user) then participates in the process of making a choice and the result of their choice impacts the direction of the narrative. These types of narrative exist in a diverse range of mediums across the creative and performing arts including interactive film, interactive theatre, hypertext, Interactive Fiction, video games and books.

As a part of this creative practice research an original Choice-Based Narrative was written. This work, *The Melete Effect*, was used as a process to understand how Choice-Based Narratives are written and structured. Through a series of iterations (pre-defined writing periods) the development of the narrative shaped and pushed the direction of this practice-led research. This resulted in establishing a new body of literature and in providing a brief historical overview of the form. This research also involved several author, illustrator and editor interviews with those involved with the Choose Your Own Adventure series published by Bantam Books (1979 to 1998) which was a book series critical to the development of this form.

It was through this research that several new Praxi (methodologies) for creating Choice-Based Narrative were discovered. These Praxi were designed to aid practitioners in further developing their own practice and to provide an insight into the creative writing process. They consist of the Story Choice Framework (an approach designed to assist creative writers in developing Choice-Based Narratives), the notion of Sans Medium (that narrative can exist without a medium container) and Tessellations (a new method for visual representation of Choice-Based Narratives). Finally this research established that there are four qualities that all Choice-Based Narratives share: they are episodic and epic, they use priming and misdirection, genre is used as a narrative shortcut and that they allow counterfactuals to influence characters and plot. These four qualities represent the poetics of Choice-Based Narrative and represent an original contribution to this field of research.

# **Making a Choice: *The Melete Effect and Establishing a Poetics for Choice-Based Narratives***

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**Written By Nicholas Peter Velissaris**

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## Dedication

For my Papous [Grandfathers] Arthur Bleas and Nicholas Velissaris without whom I would not be where I am now, both physically and metaphysically. Without their separate decisions to come to Australia my parents wouldn't have met and I wouldn't have been born. And then where would I be? On the road not taken.

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Finally an anecdote:

My Papou Arthur always wanted me to have an education and used to say to me as a child "One day you'll grow up to be a Doctor, Nic, just like Doctor Jaoul!"

I never found out who Doctor Jaoul was, my Papou never told me, but the meaning was clear: one day with hard work and perseverance you too will be educated and live a good life.

So it's only fitting that this too should be for Doctor Jaoul (whoever he may be) and to what he represents.

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My intention in developing my research was to change the field of practice in some way. I believe that everyone who commences their research toward a PhD, hopes that their research will be the one to unlock a new discovery or be the catalyst for a new area of research. I know I did. I do not know if this research will yield a major new discovery or new way of approaching creative writing, however it is the spirit of that ambition that I have continued to honour and strive towards. This means at times I have been overly ambitious in my research, particularly in the synthesis of the different fields that I have relied upon to bring this research together. This is not an apology for my work, but merely an acknowledgment that sometimes I reached far in order to uncover the aspects that I think are important to this topic. The challenge in any research is to limit the scope enough to make the argument clear and concise, and I hope that I have accomplished this and reached still a little bit further than may be necessary for just the completion of a PhD. And maybe, just maybe, this will open up the possibilities for further inquiry into the field of Choice-Based Narrative and reassert its importance as a narrative form. One can only hope.

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# 1. An Introduction to the Research

*You arrive at the location printed on the back of the flyer. It doesn't look like what you were expecting. You don't know what you were expecting but it wasn't this. Maybe that says more about you than anything else.*

*Just who are you? That's a good question. You're someone who's interested in a good story. You like when things all come together, when the story has a resolution and things are explained. But you're open to new things and The Melete Effect sounds interesting and different. Why else would you have come here tonight? The Melete Effect promises to be a story where you get to make the choices and shape the story, like those Choose Your Own Adventures you loved as a kid.*

*You arrive at a derelict factory and a man is waiting in the doorway, you give him your name and he checks a list and then motions for you to enter.*

*You're in a makeshift foyer and there are people milling about. Everybody is looking curious and eager to go in. You can't help but get caught up in the mood, you're excited, and a little nervous too.*

*At a second doorway another man appears and addresses the audience.*

*"Welcome," he says, "to The Melete Effect" and then he asks each of you in the audience a question. It seems innocuous enough.*

*"Would you prefer the Lounge or the Bar?"*

*Different audience members consider their options and move to different parts of the space. You look at both options and decide that you prefer the bar. As you settle down on a bar stool you wonder if you've already made some kind of choice, and what kind of ramifications it will have.*

*You know that the story of the show will be shaped by your involvement and you hope that it will be more interesting than the typical audience participation. In other words you hope that they won't embarrass you or put you in the spotlight. But right now while you're sitting at the bar, you're waiting for the show to start.*

*Suddenly a woman enters and sits down on a bar stool and she orders a drink from the barman. She's speaking quite loudly and you can't help but eavesdrop on her conversation, until you realise that the show has actually begun.*

*The Barman seems to know her and they talk with the familiarity of old friends. It's casual, but you sense that there's a tension underneath the woman's words, that's she's waiting for something to happen. And then her phone rings loudly, almost like an explosion, and the woman, Melete, hurries off.*

*At that moment the audience eye each other and look uncertain what to do, but the Barman motions you through a doorway at the back of the bar and into another space...*

*A new scene begins as you enter the next room, and through the rest of the evening you move through three or four more rooms and the complex story of Melete's life unfolds.*

*Occasionally if the scene calls for it, you're asked as a group to make suggestions, but most of the time you feel as though you've made decisions without even knowing it.*

*The story finishes and you return to where you started, fascinated by what you've seen. You know there must be different versions of the story but your version seemed so complete. You wonder what different stories in *The Melete Effect* look like, and think that maybe you'll come again just to see what happens.*

## 1.1. The Melete Effect

My doctoral project, *The Melete Effect*, began as an attempt to create a performative experience that could be returned to multiple times. The initial intention was to try to understand how an audience's response could be used to craft an experience which would be unique each time. As *The Melete Effect* developed it became a story which allows the audience to choose what happens next. It represents an attempt to understand the implications for writing a story that enables an audience's agency; not a complete agency with which to fully change the parameters of the story and experience, but a limited agency that allows the audience to decide where the story goes next.

This type of story is typically identified as an Interactive Narrative (Ryan, M. & Herman, D. Jahn [eds], 2005, p.323), but as a term, it is too broad to accurately describe how *The Melete Effect* functions. The reasons for this are discussed briefly in section 1.3 below and at length in Chapter 2. A fundamental part of this research involves the exploration of my own practice as a creative writer, the results of which were used to create *The Melete Effect*. This development process formed the basis of both my methodology and methods in creating these types of narratives. In brief, *The Melete Effect* is the story of an investigative journalist, Mary Melete, who was at the frontline of some of the major news stories of the 1970s and 1980s. *The Melete Effect* grew out of a larger project, *The Capgras Project*, which formed the first eighteen months of my research and represented an important part in the development of my ideas, and a brief discussion of that larger project is provided here so as to contextualise *The Melete Effect's* development.

## 1.2. The Capgras Project

The idea for *The Capgras Project* arose organically as an extension of the writing I created for my Masters by Coursework in Writing for Performance, which I completed in 2012 at the Victorian College of the Arts. During that time, I developed a play called *Scenes from an Action Film*, which had six different versions and could be arranged and presented in multiple ways. Initially the sequence of these six versions was preset by me; however in performance it proved possible to take three versions and present them in a non-linear or non-chronological order, so that viewers of the performance could interact with the stories in any sequence they chose. This non-linear approach, which was discovered towards the end of my Masters research, served as inspiration and the basis for undertaking my doctoral research.

*The Capgras Project* was designed to explore different aspects of performance and to be the bigger, more complex sibling to *Scenes from an Action Film*. For instance, I was interested in the ways audiences could interact with a play, how a play could incorporate components of interactivity, much like a game, and finally, what it meant to be able to introduce this approach to telling stories, which combined elements of audience participation through non-linear Interactive Narratives.

Ultimately, *The Capgras Project* would be about involving the audience in the story itself; whereby the audience is given an opportunity to directly influence the plot and outcome of the story. It would

forge three different types of narratives into a single performative experience. My interest lay in how these different types of narratives would interact with one another and how an audience could transition between these different narrative experiences. I was also interested in the transmedial possibilities of these different types of narratives and whether each work could be created, reframed, or partially constructed in another medium (such as a film, hypertext or dialogic novel). The three types of narrative that I intended to work with were as follows:

1. A traditional linear narrative
2. An Interactive Narrative (Choice-Based Narrative) where at certain points the audience could interact with the story
3. A generative narrative space or environment, where there is no set story, but a world in which the audience and performers can make the story

These three narrative types were chosen because there was a suggested interplay between their different types; a relationship that could be explored further through my research. I also chose these narrative types because as a theatremaker I believed that an audience could move easily between them. The narratives offered different levels of complexity and I was interested in exploring this complexity through my practice. As most of my creative practice has been as a playwright and theatre practitioner, I conceived of this project as three theatre/live art projects that would interact with each other. My research was intended to focus on how this interaction would take place and how different audiences would interact and react to these different narrative experiences.

*The Capgras Project* takes its name from a psychological disorder known as the Capgras delusion, in which the affected person believes that a close relative or spouse has been replaced with an impostor who looks exactly the same (Christodoulou (ed.), 1986). The Capgras delusion is one of several Delusional Misidentification Syndromes (Christodoulou (ed.), 1986). These different conditions all offer very dramatic storytelling possibilities and it was for these reasons that I wanted to explore the possibilities of these syndromes theatrically.

Beside the Capgras delusion, the four syndromes that I was most interested in were:

1. The Fregoli delusion – in which the affected believes that the different people they meet are in fact the same individual person in disguise.
2. Subjective doubles – in which the affected believes that there is a doppelganger of themselves carrying out independent actions.
3. The Cotard delusion – in which the affected person holds the delusional belief that they are already dead, do not exist, are putrefying, or have lost their blood or internal organs.
4. Reduplicative paramnesia in which the affected believes that a familiar person, place or object has been duplicated. (Wikipedia, 2017a)

Each of the three storytelling experiences within the project was to utilise one of these syndromes as its underlying theme which would be explored in a relevant story or environment, but each theme would only be understood completely when the three experiences were brought together.

The idea was that the various narratives that made up the project were set in worlds (realities) that had characteristics of these different syndromes, which would be reflected in their narratives. These three narratives were called *The Double* (Linear Narrative), *The Melete Effect* (Choice-Based Narrative) and *A Sideways Leap* aka *The Asylum* (Generative Narrative). *The Double* and *The Melete Effect* were both designed to be staged in traditional theatre environments, but *A Sideways Leap* was to be set in an immersive environment (say a warehouse or gallery space) where the audience could interact directly with the performers. The audience could change and influence the environment and interact with the performers to create their own stories by following the rules and

parameters of the environment as set out in advance. Furthermore, *A Sideways Leap* was designed to only be experienced after an audience member had seen either of the other two narratives.

**Table 1.1: The Capgras Project Overview**

Project Name	Narrative Type	Syndrome for Inspiration	Storytelling Environment
<i>The Double</i>	A linear narrative	Subjective Doubles	Theatre performance
<i>The Melete Effect</i>	A choice-based narrative	The Capgras delusion, the Fregoli delusion and reduplicative paramnesia	Interactive theatre performance
<i>A Sideways Leap</i>	A generative narrative	All syndromes	Immersive storytelling environment

When it became apparent (during my candidature) that I would only be able to focus on one of these three experiences due to size and time constraints, I took to evaluating each part of *The Capgras Project* in the hope that I could easily identify which part to focus my research on. I began by evaluating the potential of each of the three narratives for their thematic and formal qualities to determine what research possibilities they could offer. The remainder of this section will discuss the rationale behind the selecting *The Melete Effect* as the focus of my research.

*The Double* is a traditional linear narrative about Thom Janus, a businessmen whose life is slowly being overtaken by his secret double. Thom lives in a 1940s noir-like world where people routinely travel by Zeppelins but in which World War II as we know it, did not happen. The exploration of Film Noir as a genre took up several months in my second year, as I researched how the genre worked, what characters were common to the form, and what plots would be useful to this story. This exploration of the Film Noir genre helped me to recognise the possibilities that genre offers; how it can help an audience understand the story being told, and how it shortcuts the need for unnecessary exposition. A world and its characters can be quickly established and the narrative can then move immediately into developing its plot. This recognition, of genre as a shortcut, later became important in the development of *The Melete Effect*, particularly during the second iteration of the story's development (see Chapter 3, section 3.5.2 and Chapter 4, section 4.3 for more information).

However from a research standpoint, *The Double* did not directly offer an opportunity to experiment with different narrative structures; I would be writing a traditional play and talking about the themes and ideas, which I have done many times before. As I wanted a research experience that would challenge and extend my practice as a writer, I decided that either *The Melete Effect* or *A Sideways Leap* represented the best options.

The paratext written below was developed to establish the meta-world in which *The Capgras Project* would take place.

# PROJECT CAPGRAS

## THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

*On July 16<sup>th</sup> 1945, the Manhattan Project detonated the first nuclear bomb, nicknamed the Gadget, at White Sands New Mexico. The very next day a man claiming to be Terrence T. Ganting walked into his home in Alamogordo New Mexico to find his wife in bed with another man. The man in that bed was also Terrence T. Ganting.*

*A heated exchange took place, followed by gunshots, and one of the men ended up dead. When the police arrived they found the Ganting who was still alive had some strange notions about the world and insisted on trying to talk to the police in Creole French. While this event was initially put down to a bizarre anomaly, it became a sign of things to come.*

*Since that time whenever a nuclear weapon has been detonated anywhere across the world, random people have appeared in the days following the detonation, always claiming to be from a world that is not our own. These people are known as anomalies. Each claims to have come from a world very much like ours but that is not the same. They describe cities and countries that don't exist and world histories that are radically different to what we know.*

*Since that time a top secret project codenamed CAPGRAS, has been secretly categorising these anomalies (people) that arrive in our world. Project CAPGRAS is a worldwide allied effort that has been trying to discover how these people arrived in our reality and what their intentions are. As the anomalies' different mental states appear very similar to the psychological group of disorders known as Delusional Misidentification Syndrome, Project CAPGRAS has used these conditions to categorise the anomalies. The five prime categories are:*

1. CAPGRAS
2. FREGOLI
3. COTARD
4. PARAMNESIA
5. DOPPELGANGER (Subjective Doubles)

*Each condition is colour coded to match the colours and symbols of a specific Zener Card<sup>1</sup> to enable easy identification of the different subjects. These anomalies are housed in an asylum hidden underneath the White Sands Motel in Alamogordo New Mexico.*

*There has been some speculation from the staff of Project CAPGRAS that the different anomalies are attempting to alter our reality in order to make this timeline closer to their own timeline. However there has been no proof at this time to confirm this theory.*

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<sup>1</sup>Surveillance Note: Zener cards have been traditionally used to as an attempt to test for Extrasensory Perception. It is not clear as to why Project CAPGRAS used this system as no evidence of psychic or other activity has become evident in the anomalies.

Initially I was drawn to *A Sideways Leap*. *A Sideways Leap* is the meta-story that is at the heart of *The Capgras Project*. *A Sideways Leap* puts forward the notion (as outlined above) that every time a nuclear bomb test occurred in our world, a person or group of people would appear but with histories, languages and identities different to our own. These people were collected by the governments of the world and deposited in a facility known as The Asylum where they are categorised and studied. The Asylum was to be the part of *The Capgras Project* where the audience would interact with performers in an immersive environment where their actions (the audience's) could shape the directions of the characters and the narratives of *The Double* and *The Melete Effect*, but where the audience members could also discover their own unique stories. The story they were to uncover was called *A Sideways Leap*.

A concept important to development of my research for *A Sideways Leap* was the notion of somebody who oversees and facilitates the entire experience. This person, akin to a Dungeonmaster in role-playing, would control or shape the experience for the attending audience. This person was called (for want of a better term) the Theatremaster, and it would be their role to oversee the experience that the audience had. This notion of someone who would control and determine the direction of the narrative, became a very powerful conceptual tool particularly in relation to the planning and testing of *The Melete Effect*. The Theatremaster as a concept, pointed to the position that the author of Choice-Based Narrative is often responsible for. They (the Theatremaster) would have to hold all of the narrative possibilities in their head and facilitate the overall experience so that a reader/audience would be able to encounter different parts of the narrative.

There are several reasons why I ended up abandoning *A Sideways Leap* in favour of *The Melete Effect*. Although I have some practical experience in live-action gaming (the area that *A Sideways Leap* would be situated within), this area is still being defined within the academic world. Live-action gaming is essentially a subset of either gaming studies (predominantly video gaming) or the cognitive study of play and I did not immediately want to shift into these areas, preferring to focus on narrative design. Secondly as almost half of my allotted candidature had passed by the time I was considering this, I recognised that it would be difficult to test *A Sideways Leap* properly. I knew that I would have to set up a series of games and interactions with a large group of people and I didn't think that this was achievable given the time remaining. By contrast, *The Melete Effect* allowed me to control most of the project through my own creative writing, and testing of the narrative could be accomplished with smaller groups, which was more achievable with the time remaining.

The final reason and perhaps the biggest deciding factor, was that my overall aim for *The Capgras Project* was that it would be a conscious attempt to understand and develop a complex narrative. Whereas *Scenes from an Action Film* had allowed me to explore this form, it wasn't the project's main intention. *The Capgras Project* with its three narratives would allow me to create and explore complexity through its scale. Through my research I have learned that in my practice I like working with scale. I like working at either end of the spectrum of scale, from the small intimate details to large, sprawling complex stories. I frequently conceive of stories that involve large casts of characters and complex storytelling elements, multiple plots and story threads. On the other end of the spectrum I am obsessed by the detail, the minutiae, the look of a room, the backstory of a minor character. These two pulls of scale mean that I strive to create work that is both large and detailed. Yet *The Capgras Project* was too large to be satisfactorily accomplished within the timeframe of my doctoral studies, whereas *The Melete Effect*, as a Choice-Based Narrative, allowed a high level of complexity that could be developed largely by me without the high need for external collaborators (which *The Capgras Project* would have required) and this made the project easier to manage, control and realise.



### 1.3. Choice-Based Narratives: A Definition

I want to return now to providing a definition of Choice-Based Narratives. A Choice-Based Narrative is a story that allows for choices to arise at designated junctures within an experience. The audience (viewer/spectator/reader) then participates in the process by making a choice and the outcome of their choice impacts the direction of the narrative. This is a definition that I have developed through a wide reading of literature (Cover 2010, Tresca 2011, Ryan 2001, Glassner 2004, and Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005) and which will inform my theoretical framework. It is important to state that this definition is my understanding of what this type of narrative is. My research represents an exploration of this creative writing form through an examination of the relationship between theory and practice. I also acknowledge that this definition can be contrasted by others found in different sources. For instance, in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory (in an entry by Espen Aarseth) this type of narrative is defined as “[a] work of fiction or video/film where the audience or reader at specific points has to choose between alternatives in the text is sometimes called a multi-path narrative. Also known as ‘Interactive Narrative’, ‘interactive fiction’, hyperfiction, or ‘branching narrative’, these texts are not structured in a linear sequence from beginning to end, but allow exploration of a labyrinth constructed by one or more authors.” (2005, p.323)

Although the definition of a Multi-Path Narrative seems like an appropriate catch-all, Aarseth’s definition in fact oversimplifies the situation significantly. By associating these different forms under the umbrella of Multi-Path Narrative, many of the different areas of focus from each of the terms identified by Aarseth become generalised. This tendency to generalise and group together these terms has meant that the different distinct qualities of the various types of Multi-Path Narrative have been largely ignored or the focus placed mostly on the interactive (and game-like) nature of these narratives. Disentangling these different terms became a major part of my research and is discussed at length in Chapter 2.

While studies of this type of storytelling can be situated within the broader field of Interactive Narrative, my particular focus is on a specific subset of the existing literature which I am identifying as Choice-Based Narratives. The difference between Choice-Based Narratives and other Interactive Narratives is that Choice-Based Narratives have a strong focus on narrative as developed by an author, and limited, set interactions to enable exploration of that narrative. Choice-Based Narratives have their origins in experimental literature and in the children’s game books, such as the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series. These kinds of non-linear and non-chronological stories have been the focus of a range of research initiatives. There are examples of studies that have looked specifically at audience psychological responses to stories and why audiences respond to them in the ways that they do (Vicary & Fraley 2007). Other projects have looked at narrative structure in the context of games theory (Aarseth 2004; Salen & Zimmerman 2004; Salter 2014), and the role of computer game design in narrative experiences and audience engagement (Mallon & Webb 2005; Riedl & Bulitko 2012). However my research aims for Choice-Based Narratives are outlined in the next section.

## 1.4. Research Aims

The overall aim of my research is to compare the existing theories and literature with the processes and practice that developed through the writing of *The Melete Effect*. This creative practice is (as I identified earlier) an extension of the practice which was first developed in my Masters work *Scenes from an Action Film*. This research has been broken down into two aims which this writing will address:

My first research aim is to explore how Choice-Based Narratives are created and can be structured. This will be accomplished through the development of my own Choice-Based Narrative, *The Melete Effect*, and through a series of reflections on the work's evolution. This research aim seeks to identify the processes and practices involved in creating Choice-Based Narratives that can be used by practitioners to create their own work. While some of these processes and practices represent previously existing methods; several represent an original contribution to the body of practice and these will be identified throughout the writing.

My second research aim is to determine the fundamental components that make Choice-Based Narratives possible, and to establish how these components function within the narrative experience. By defining how Choice-Based Narratives are distinct from other forms of Interactive Narrative it will become possible to establish a clear poetics for Choice-Based Narratives as a form. This poetics of Choice-Based Narratives represents an original contribution to the body of literature.

## 1.5. Chapter Overview

This research is divided into four remaining chapters which reflect the journey that my research has undertaken. Chapter 2 will be looking at situating this research both in the literature and in the creative practice of writing a Choice-Based Narrative. This chapter will be largely focused on establishing terms and identifying the existing structures and historical precedents for this form of storytelling. It will also feature an illustrative example of the Choose Your Own Adventure series published by Bantam Books from 1979 until 1998.

Chapter 3 will examine how different theories, methodologies and methods developed throughout the creation of *The Melete Effect*. This chapter outlines my creative practice and the processes underlying the creation of various iterations of *The Melete Effect* and establishes some new concepts and processes for creating Choice-Based Narratives. Although the terms theories, methodologies and methods are typically used to describe the different elements of research, I have adopted the terms *Theoria* (Theory), *Poiesis* (Methodology) and *Praxis* (Practice), more commonly found in the field of design, to describe my research. This chapter will explain my decision to use these terms, and they will be used as the framework for explaining the overall development of *The Melete Effect*.

In Chapter 4 I will establish clearly the poetics of Choice-Based Narrative as a form. This will include the discussion of different cognitive techniques such as priming and misdirection, the importance of genre to this form and an examination of the counterfactual nature of Choice-Based Narratives. There will also be a brief identification of the common structures found within Choice-Based Narratives. Finally in Chapter 5 I will summarise my findings and my contributions to the literature and will nominate some areas where I believe this research can be continued.

## 2. Situating the Literature and Practice

### 2.1. Introduction

To explain *The Melete Effect* as a form and how it functions, it became necessary to identify and define several concepts and situate these within the broader literature. The most important of these terms is Choice-Based Narrative and much of this chapter is about establishing how this form operates in relation to the more common notion of Interactive Narrative. This process of defining Choice-Based Narrative was interwoven with the process of writing and developing *The Melete Effect* (for more about how this process developed see Chapter 3), and this chapter represents the culmination of this research.

Although this literature is about the writing and creation of a Choice-Based Narrative, a major part of accomplishing that task has been to establish the definitions, concepts and literature that identify the parameters of what a Choice-Based Narrative can be. This proved to be a larger task than anticipated, in part because of the equivocal nature of Interactive Narrative. By equivocal here I mean the fact that there are many interpretations about what experiences can be considered an Interactive Narrative. The general assumption when discussing Interactive Narrative (regardless of its medium) is that it contains some type of interaction that guides the narrative for its audience. As a result, what constitutes an Interactive Narrative is a broad field, which draws upon a wide variety of mediums, and often leans towards a focus on computing and video-gaming.

As a creative writer, I understood that what I was creating with *The Melete Effect* was not necessarily a game; although it definitely contained interactivity which made the narrative a playful experience. Yet this was still too complicated as a definition. It opened up too many fields and bodies of literature, some of which seemed crucial to understanding what Interactive Narrative is, and others which further solidified what *The Melete Effect* isn't. This chapter is about that journey through the literature and the decisions made in order to identify *The Melete Effect* as a Choice-Based Narrative.

### 2.2. Defining Choice-Based Narrative and its relationship to Interactive Narrative

Traditionally when we experience a story we do so as the author, playwright, director or games designer intended us to. Although Eco (1969) and others, identify that the reader is responsible for constructing ideas and meaning out of the words, typically as a reader (audience) we do not have any impact on how the narrative unfolds; we may construct different or alternative meanings about the events, but the events of the experience unfold as they were designed to by the author. However there is an existing form of narrative that allows the reader (audience) the ability to shape and influence the way that the story unfolds, and to create their own preferred narrative. This form is commonly identified as Interactive Narrative.

In chapter one I referred to Aarseth's definition (in Herman, Jahn and Ryan, 2005) of a Multi-Path Narrative (an alternative name for Interactive Narrative) and the way that his definition favours the mechanisms (of branching structures) and mediums over its storytelling capability. While the use of these mechanisms is key distinction between this form of storytelling and other forms (such as a novel), there is inherently a problem with this term, as typically the only other demarcation between

these different types of Interactive Narrative has been made by their medium. In this way medium has clouded the discussion of what constitutes an Interactive Narrative. As a result it is difficult to qualify the ways in which these narratives work or function unless that interaction is defined by its established medium. For example an interactive film is limited by the constraints of the medium of film. It presupposes that medium, and indeed interaction, are more important than narrative. As a creative writer, this seems like a strange proposition, as personally the narrative is most important aspect and the medium is simply a vehicle I use to best represent the story I am trying to tell.

A second element which remains problematic with the term Interactive Narrative is its broadness and inclusiveness. There is an established notion that narratives that contain complex game mechanics such as role-playing elements, character statistics and the ability to keep score, can also be categorised as Interactive Narratives. Within games literature (Cover, 2010; Salter, 2014; Tresca, 2011) it is common to categorise some games with narratives in this way, and this is why I felt it was important to delineate the form of storytelling that I am creating in *The Melete Effect* from the broader field of Interactive Narrative.

At this point it is important to provide a definition of Interactivity, which is “a feed-back loop through which user input affects the behaviour of a text, especially regarding the choice of information to be displayed” (Herman, Jahn & Ryan [eds.] 2005, p.250) For me Interactivity is the ability for the audience to interact with an object, person or space. Yet within gaming Interactivity takes on further different levels of meaning. While Interactivity is a crucial part of making all Interactive Narratives function, the nature of how that interaction functions for the audience is beyond the scope of this research.

When deciding that *The Melete Effect* would be ‘interactive’, I gradually came to understand that an alternate term would need to be established which would move away from the sometimes vague notions of being an ‘Interactive Narrative’, and more clearly represent what I understood *The Melete Effect* to be. In this way I am putting forward the term Choice-Based Narrative as a way of distinguishing the form from other types of Interactive Narrative. Once again my definition of Choice-Based Narrative is as follows:

***Choice-Based Narrative***

A Choice-Based Narrative is a story that allows for choices to arise at designated junctures within an experience. The spectator (viewer/audience/reader/user) then participates in the process making a choice and the outcome of their choice impacts the direction of the narrative.

In fact through this research I will argue that Choice-Based Narratives are a foundational form of Interactive Narrative from which multiple mediums of Interactive Narrative can be constructed. This is an argument that will be made throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

At this point, I would like to address the way in which I identify the reader/audience throughout this writing. Although many cases have been made for the different contexts and meanings to identify the reader/audience/viewer/user/spectator, in different fields of study, throughout my research across a variety of mediums I have not seen it necessary to delineate between these different terms. The reason for this is that regardless of medium or body of literature, these terms all represent the intended recipient of the narrative. Some terms preference particular mediums (user) or senses (viewer) yet all are valid ways of identifying the individuals or groups who will be the recipient of the narrative. Throughout the text I will interchangeably refer these persons as readers, audience,

viewers, users and spectators, but in whatever context I identify them, they remain the people who will receive the narrative.

### 2.3. The Balance between Narratology and Ludology

In exploring what *The Melete Effect* is, I have spent a lot of time trying to situate my ideas within existing bodies of literature. For a long time I became confused by the artificial boundaries between two fields of literature for which I thought that *The Melete Effect* and latterly Choice-Based Narratives would best sit. These two fields were that of Narratology, the study of narratives and Ludology the study of games. It could be argued that a Choice-Based Narrative, and particularly certain tenets of Interactive Narrative and gamebooks can be considered to have many game-like elements, they feature interactivity and in some cases inventory management and dice-rolling (particularly the Fighting Fantasy series originated by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone originally published by Puffin Books from 1982-1995), all of which are key elements to gameplay. Yet for me the delineation between a Choice-Based Narrative and more game-like Interactive Narratives or gamebooks is an important distinction: that the focus in Choice-Based Narratives is on the interaction between choice and the narrative that the writer has constructed. The narrative still remains at the heart of the experience and the discovery of that narrative and how it unfolds is central to what the reader/audience/spectator experiences.

What I quickly discovered was that there had been a huge debate between academic scholars of Narratology and those of Ludology about the relationship between narratives and games. Questions were asked (and sometimes not satisfactorily answered) such as: can games even be considered to have narratives? Is narrative an artificial construct that is added to games and gameplay? In many respects this whole debate seems now, with the benefit of hindsight, like an attempt by Ludology scholars to establish themselves as a legitimate field of study, and in this attempt at legitimacy there has been much staking out and marking of intellectual territory.

It has been argued by authors like Aarseth (1997) and Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan (eds, 2002, 2007, 2009) that games are individual constructs and cannot be viewed by the same theories that narratologists have come to define much of storytelling, that new theories will have to be developed. For me as writer (and even as a player of computer and video games) I believe that it is much more important to distinguish between games that have stories and those that don't, and how those stories operate in relation to the gameplay. Recognising this, I quickly came to realise that situating Choice-Based Narratives within the literature of Ludology (which is useful to understanding the mechanisms that exist within Choice-Based Narratives) would fail because in effect Choice-Based Narratives were not enough like games. They did not have enough interactivity or offer the reader complete enough agency to be truly considered games by ludologists. For me I see the form of Choice-Based Narrative (and this is the broader intention of writing *The Melete Effect*) as a bridge from narrative toward the game. Choice-Based Narratives point toward gameplay but limit the amount of agency a reader/audience/spectator has, and this is problematic within Ludology where notions of complete player agency are often central to the reasons of understanding how games function. This is not to say that some of this writing does not have relevance to what I am attempting to do with *The Melete Effect* or how I sometimes understand aspects of the writing I'm creating; it's just that Choice-Based Narrative does not sit neatly within the boundaries of Ludology.

The arguments proposed by Ludology scholars were initially in response to the ideas suggested by Brenda Laurel in her work *Computers as Theatre* (1993 and 2014 2nd edn) and Janet H. Murray in her work *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1998). I found it useful to refer to these works directly rather

than the Ludology debate that they had inspired. Both works looked at how computers could be used to facilitate narrative as a kind of interface (Laurel, 1993) or online within cyberspace in a virtual way (Murray, 1998). For Laurel, her design ideas are influenced by theatrical staging conventions and this juxtaposition is where my interest with her work lies, not with the interfaces she discusses. Although through her discussion of interfaces I can see an engagement with her ideas and the writing of *The Melete Effect* and in turn the conceptualisation of Choice-Based Narratives.

I personally see many parallels with the performance of theatre in space and the way that we use and interact with computers, and that is because I too have worked in both Information Technology (IT) and the professional theatre. Whereas Laurel started in the theatre and moved into computer software and interaction design, I started in IT and moved into the theatre, this parallel in our experience makes her arguments easier for me to understand. In fact through her description of theatre as an interface, I began to see similarities between the intentions that lay underneath *The Capgras Project* of which *The Melete Effect* still remains a part.

“As people grapple with the notion of interaction in the world of computing, they sometimes compare computer users to theatrical audiences ... ‘Users,’ the argument goes, are like audience members who are able to have a greater influence on the unfolding action than simply the fine-tuning provided by conventional audience response. In fact, I used this analogy in my dissertation in an attempt to create a model for interactive fantasy. The user of such a system, I argued, is like an audience member who can march up onto the stage and become a character, shoving the action around by what he says and does in that role.

But let’s reconsider for a minute. What would it be like if the audience marched up on the stage? ... They wouldn’t know the script, for starters, and there would be a lot of awkward fumbling for context. Their clothes and skin would look funny under the lights. A state of panic would seize the actors as they attempted to improvise action that could incorporate the interlopers and still yield something that had any dramatic integrity. Or perhaps it would degenerate into a free-for-all, as performances of avant-garde interactive plays in the 1960s often did.

The problem with the audience-as-active-participant idea is that it adds to the clutter, both psychological and physical. The transformation needs to be subtractive rather than additive. People who are participating in the representation aren’t audience members any more. It’s not that the audience joins the actors on the stage; it’s that they become actors—the notion of observers goes away.” (Laurel, 2014, e-Book section ch.1: Throw the Baggage Out)

It is this dichotomy that is at the heart of the original intention of this project. *The Capgras Project* was to be a theatrical experience that offered multiple levels of experiential engagement; a traditional theatre experience, a completely interactive and immersive experience and *The Melete Effect*, a Choice-Based Narrative which bridges both types of experience.

Laurel goes on to define Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) as being divided “into two large categories: productive and experiential (Laurel 1986b). Experiential activities, such as computer games, are undertaken purely for the experience afforded by the activity as one engages in it, while productive activities such as word processing have outcomes in the real world that are somehow beyond the experience of the activity itself.” (Laurel, 2014, e-Book section ch.1: Theatre: More than an Interface Metaphor) While neither HCI nor the notion of productivity have direct bearing on *The Melete Effect*, experiential activities do. At its core it could be argued that all narrative is in some way experiential, and it is that quality that I am playing with in creating *The Melete Effect*. Perhaps most importantly Laurel’s work here is instructive of how different paradigms can be used to reconceptualise and reframe existing fields of knowledge. For me this process of reconceptualising

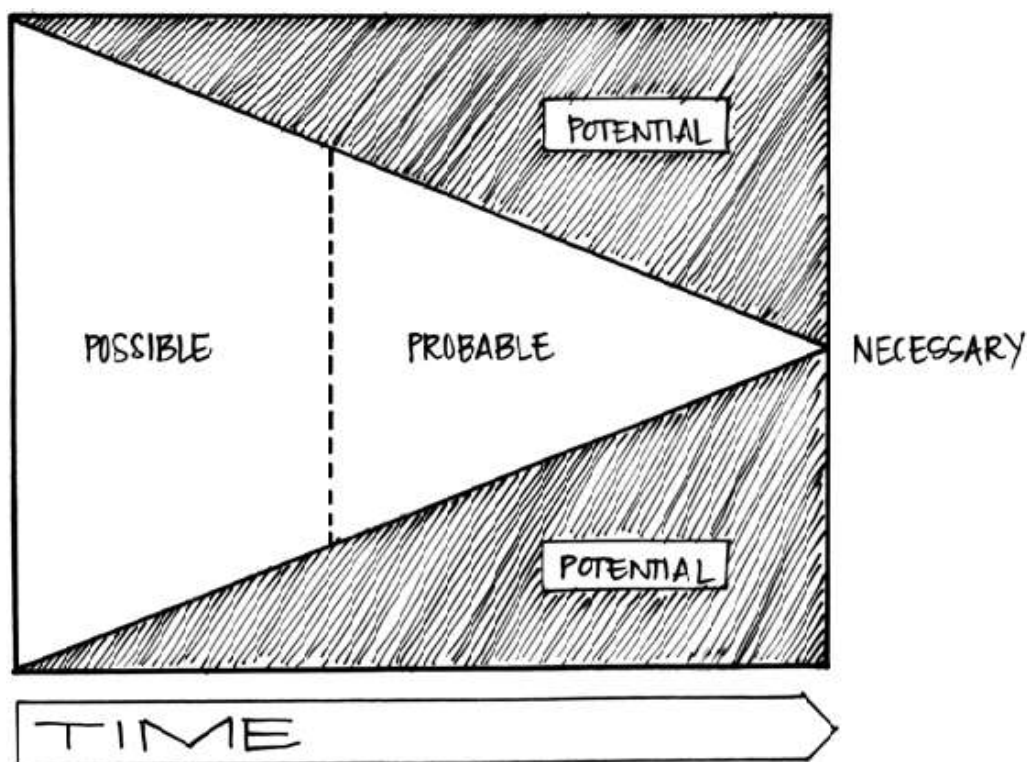
and reframing is a critical part of my methodological approach to creating *The Melete Effect* and defining Choice-Based Narrative (See chapter 3).

One final aspect of Laurel's work is her observation on what she calls the Flying Wedge which she explains by first defining the narrative potential of a play. She states "[i]n Aristotelean terms, the *potential* of a play, as it progresses over time, is formulated by the playwright into a set of *possibilities*. The number of new possibilities introduced falls off radically as the play progresses. Every moment of the enactment affects those possibilities, eliminating some and making some more *probable* than others." (Laurel, 2014, p.84)

Laurel goes on to state that:

"At each stage of the plot, the audience can perceive more than one line of probability (that is, more than one probable course of events), creating engagement and varying degrees of suspense in the audience. At the climax of a play, all of the competing lines of probability are eliminated except one, and that one is the final outcome. [...] How this pattern is accomplished in a play depends, in the main, upon the playwright's selection and arrangement of incidents and how they are causally linked." (Laurel, 2014, p.84)

Laurel's flying wedge is visualised as follows:



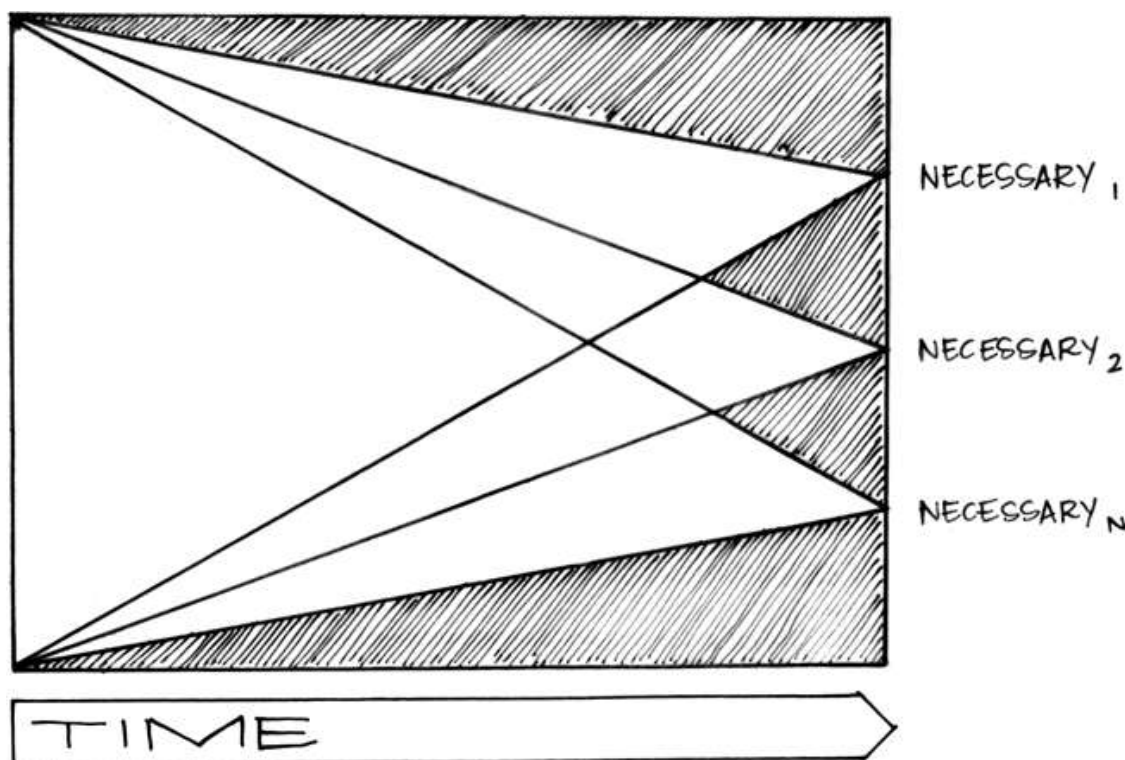
(Laurel, 2014 p.85: Figure 3.1 *The "flying wedge"*: A plot is a progression from the possible to the probable to the necessary.)

**Figure 2.1: The Flying Wedge (courtesy of Laurel)**

Consider for a moment that Laurel is talking about theatrical narrative mechanisms as a way of translating Human Computer Interaction (HCI) into manageable chunks; so that the flying wedge can

represent the 'narrative' of how a person interacts with software. That their actions can be broken up into individuated performances or interactions with the computer. However what Laurel is describing here can also be used to re-conceive narrative as it is received. What I have taken from her writing is the recognition of a systematic approach to the construction (and reconstruction) of narrative. This is an approach that is inherent in all Choice-Based Narrative; an approach that I first experienced in the Choose Your Own Adventure books I read as child. Like those books, Laurel recognises that the user experience in software can be and is individuated, in other words, it is different for each person. This is my intention behind the creation of *The Melete Effect*: To develop a work that can be received in multiple ways and can facilitate different individual responses to the narrative.

Laurel recognises this and can see how the Flying Wedge can be reconceptualised for different users:



*'In human-computer interaction, the shaping of potential is influenced by people's real-time choices and actions, pruning possibilities and creating lines of probability that are different from session to session and person to person. The "flying wedge" can be pointed off in different directions; thus, the program contains the potential for many whole actions.'*  
(Laurel, 2014, p.86: Figure 3.2)

**Figure 2.2: The Different Perspectives of Laurel's Flying Wedge**

This initial description, again mirrors what I see is the potential of Choice-Based Narratives and what they have achieved since they were invented. So while Laurel is discussing the way theatre can illuminate HCI, she is also identifying the possibility of a new form of narrative experience when she describes:

*"Many of the aspects of a play's enactment are the result of the rehearsal process, in which the director (and actors) determine where and when to move and what sorts of lighting and*



other technical effects should be produced. If these inventions were happening in real time rather than in the rehearsal process, plays could be seen as being far more “dynamic” in terms of the actors’ relationship to the script. The displacement is temporal, but so are the constraints. What actors and directors typically cannot do is to change the order of events or the words spoken by the characters, either in rehearsal or performance, nor can they invent new ones. A program that reformulates the potential for action, creating new possibilities and probabilities “on the fly” as a response to what has gone before, is equivalent to a playwright changing a plot in real time as a collaboration with the actors and director and communicating new portions of script to them in real time through some automagical means. In other words, the way in which human-computer interaction is more dynamic than drama is in the aspect of formulating the action, rather than in its enactment.” (Laurel, 2014, p.86)

Once again although the discussion here is about HCI, it makes an important point about the qualities of Choice-Based Narrative; that is that they allow for the construction (through their narrative action) of more dynamic narrative. Although this quote is taken from the second edition of the book, it remains intact from the first edition published in 1993, and what this reflects is that the possibilities offered by Choice-Based Narrative existed as a conceptual idea at that time (and in fact earlier)(See also section 2.5). For me the identification of this as a distinct narrative form, got waylaid by the debate between narratology and ludology, by the emphasis of new media focusing on the internet, hypertext and similar technologies at the expense of the form, and finally by the semantic argument about interactivity, agency and the audience. It is not possible to discuss these issues in any great depth in this section, partially because of their size and complexity but more importantly because these issues shift the focus away from identifying what a Choice-Based Narrative is.

Briefly though I will discuss the role of Hypertext and the contributions of Theodor (Ted) Nelson. Nelson coined the term hypertext (Murray, 2001) and developed many of the structures for linking text in multiple different contexts through his work on Project Xanadu(Nelson, 1981) it was this work that later lead to the development of Hypertext storytelling and systems such as Storyspace (Eastgate Systems, 2018) and saw a rise in hypertext storytelling, particularly within the academic world. However it must be noted that much of these structures which existed electronically were designed by Nelson to operate across both analogue and digital mediums and so his work remains interesting as it serves as a precursor to some of the types of storytelling discussed in section 2.4.

If there is one text that seems to be the source of much of this debate between narratology and ludology (particularly amongst ludologists) it is Janet H. Murray’s book *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1998). Murray’s book written in the late nineties, which is evident in the language it uses, reflects the attitudes and optimism at the time for the World Wide Web as a tool to allow different potentialities for narrative. It reads in part like a thought experiment, an example of what she believes could be possibilities for when narrative meets cyberspace (a term less than 20 years later that seems both archaic and quaint).

Murray frames much of her work around the idea of defining digital environments and then talking about the qualities that these environments must engage with in order to facilitate narrative. To begin with she identifies four qualities that she believes these environments share:

- Digital environments are procedural
- Digital environments are participatory
- Digital environments are spatial

- Digital environments are encyclopaedic (Murray, 1998, p.71-89)

Murray states that the first two qualities “make up more of what we mean by the vaguely used word *interactive*” (1998, p.71). If I look at procedural, which Murray defines as an engine that allows complex, contingent behaviours (1998, p.72), I can see how Choice-Based Narratives and more specifically *The Melete Effect* operates in this way; it is a framework for multiple stories. In fact the procedural nature of *The Melete Effect* lends itself to rearrangement and restructuring which turn leads to different stories and experiences.

Examining the participatory, Murray goes on to state that “[p]rocedural environments are appealing to us not just because they exhibit rule-generated behaviour but because we can induce the behaviour. They are responsive to our input.” (1998, p.74). The participatory arises out of the procedural; without the engine, the algorithm, the participation can’t take place. Choice-Based Narratives operate in tandem with the procedural through their emphasis is on giving the reader/audience/spectator choice. They are inherently participatory and allow for the exploration of a world and the characters and plot within that world.

This exploration of the world, characters and plot takes place spatially. Murray describes this as ‘like the firing of a prop gun on the stage of theatre. You are not reading about an event that occurred in the past; the event is happening now’ (1998, p.81), she goes on to quantify this as “the interactor’s navigation of ... space has been shaped into a dramatic enactment of the plot.” (1998, p.83). This is why the creation of the world is so important to a both a digital environment and a Choice-Based Narrative; as it is through the navigation of this world that the story can be understood.

Finally the notion that an environment can be encyclopaedic in size and scope, which Murray identifies as not only the ever increasing size limits of digital media, but the also the ability for a digital environment to grow exponentially in the representation of the data that they show. This is an idea that narrative has traditionally struggled with. The notion that a story can extend out beyond its narrative frame is either one that writers abandon as being ‘impossible’ or choose to focus on the narrative on the plot and ignore the obvious side plots, paratexts and other digressions that are not ‘essential’. In creating *The Melete Effect* I have recognised that these supplementary texts are just as relevant to the world of the story, but I have also recognised that the encyclopaedic nature of a Choice-Based Narrative means that a story like *The Melete Effect* does not have a conventional ending, it can go on as long as there are interesting tales to be told. This means that the writing of *The Melete Effect* is never finished, that it can be continued for as long as I, or other writers, feel it has relevance.

All of these qualities that Murray identifies within digital environments can be said to be inherent to Choice-Based Narratives. This is because the qualities that Murray ascribes to digital environments can be found also within large scale narrative worlds. Worlds such as the Star Trek, Star Wars, Lord of Rings and the DC and Marvel comic universes all have aspects of these qualities that allow for readers to engage in these environments and return to these worlds time and again. They are procedural, spatial and encyclopaedic, however what these large scale worlds can sometimes lack is sophisticated participation from their readers. Although participation is present through letters to the editor (comics), cosplay, fan fiction and even online forums where fans can discuss the minutiae of character’s lives and events (Jenkins, 2006), the readers cannot change the overall narrative of these worlds. The stories of these large scale worlds remain canon and in the hands of their authors (or rights holders) regardless of the reader’s attempts to influence these worlds. In contrast Choice-Based Narratives offer a different experience where the readers can change the narrative, but the

narrative plot and decisions are made in advance by the author and the reader cannot change the narratives offered.

Murray's work overlaps in several places with that of the narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan who has numerous writings that look at the nexus between narrative and interactivity. In her article 'Multivariant Narratives' (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth (eds), 2004 p.415-430) she examines the different types of discourses that are open to stories to multivariant narratives (a term for me that is analogous to Choice-Based Narratives). However Ryan sees multivariant narratives as being more suited to digital media, in this respect she shares Murray's view of a 'cyberdrama' being created through digital means. She defines several qualities that digital media has:

- Algorithm-driven operation
- Reactive and interactive nature
- Performantial aspect
- Multiple sensory and semiotic channels (multimedia capabilities)
- Networking capabilities
- Volatile signs
- Modularity (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth (eds), 2004 p.416)

Immediately there is a similarity here between Murray and Ryan, in the identification of the engine (the procedural) and its algorithms as being at the heart of digital media. For me algorithm is an underlying structure beneath the Choice-Based Narrative. It is important to note that here algorithm does not represent the traditional concept of an algorithm as found in mathematics or computer science where algorithms are distinct and precisely reproducible. Here algorithm is being defined informally as a way to represent a process or a method for accomplishing a task, in this case the creative writing process of creating a Choice-Based Narrative and how the narrative can be arranged and presented to the reader. In Choice-Based Narratives, just as in digital environments, the code or algorithm is not always consciously identified by the reader (and in some cases even by the writer during creation); it can remain subconscious or in the 'background' without the need for further articulation and identification. In the creation of *The Melete Effect* and through this dissertation it has become important to identify this algorithm or collection of algorithms to understand how my story operates as distinct from other examples of Choice-Based Narratives (see also Chapter 3).

The similarity of ideas between Murray and Ryan continues with the discussion of the next quality on the list; the reactive and interactive nature. For Ryan the reactive and interactive nature of digital systems is in direct relation to the algorithm and the underlying code. She argues that conditional statements that make up the algorithm dictate the ways in which digital system can respond, either in a reactive or interactive way (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth (eds), 2004 p.416). She goes on delineate between reactive and interactive stating "I call a system reactive when it responds to changes in the environment, or to non intentional user actions; it is interactive when the input originates in a deliberate user action." This bears a strong similarity to Murray's notion of the participatory. However Ryan's definition has a different affect on *The Melete Effect*, the notion of the reactive is not something that is easily integrated into the construction of the writing. At this stage I can't envisage how *The Melete Effect* or any Choice-Based Narrative can be reactive, because to a degree it must be fixed in order to succeed as a narrative. In other words it is a quality (reactivity) that can be more easily actualised in a digital environment and to a degree in Live Action Role Playing (LARP) environments. When Interactive Narrative (but not Choice-Based Narrative) does move into this more reactive behaviour, the narrative as established by the author becomes less important, and the narrative as established by the audience (the participants) becomes critical. This

form of narrative, which arises out of the experience, is called Emergent Narrative (Ryan, 2006) and is discussed briefly below.

The performantial aspect sees Ryan in effect echoing Laurel (1993, 2014). By describing how the underlying algorithm functions in performance Ryan states “A digital text is like a music score or theater script: it’s written inscription is meant to be executed, either by the underlying code alone, or through a feedback loop that leads from the user to the underlying code to the display, and back to the user” (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth (eds), 2004 p.416). If for a moment, we take the notion of display not as a screen but as a form of representation, then Ryan definition is tailor-made to describe a Choice-Based Narrative. In this way a Choice-Based Narrative is enacted by the user/reader/audience and this is what allows the narrative to function.

With her next point she identifies that digital media allows for multiple sensory and semiotic channels, that there is not one specific way that digital media can be received, because it allows for multiple interpretations to be present. The interesting thing here is that while digital media allows this to be true through their format or medium, Choice-Based Narratives allow this to be true through their content. I would argue that *The Melete Effect* functions on multiple sensory and semiotic levels in its structure (construction) and narrative, because it is designed to be interacted with by a reader/audience/spectator in multiple ways and so it must allow for multiple interpretations.

The next two elements that Ryan identifies, volatile signs and networking capabilities, can be excluded because of their reliance on digital technology and as a result they don’t have a direct and clear correlation to Choice-Based Narratives. Volatile signs Ryan defines as the way computers can rewrite and rearrange their code to display multiple versions of an artwork without losing the underlying qualities (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth (eds), 2004 p.416). This is a vague notion, but I believe that Ryan is talking about the fluidity of how digital images (and screens) operate, that there is not a fixed perspective and that these images can be altered almost instantaneously without loss of the work. In other words if a painting was cut from its frame, all that would remain would be the frame, the image cannot be recalled, in the digital medium recalling images remains possible. This quality is not something that is immediately useful to representing or understanding Choice-Based Narrative. Networking on the other hand is used by Ryan here to refer to the ability to use systems and computer networks to connect and share information. Interestingly Choice-Based Narratives do use networking ideas such as nodes and mathematical graph structures such as branching tree diagrams to represent their narratives (see section 2.6) but they do so in different ways to what Ryan is referring to here.

Modularity represents the final aspect of digital media and it suggest a return to the work of both Manovich (2001) and Cameron (2008) who identify new media (Manovich) and film (Cameron) as having modular qualities. Whether it is called modularity, episodic or by another name, it simply represents that in digital media that “objects can be used in many different context and combinations, and undergo various transformations, during the run of the work” (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth (eds.), 2004 p.416). So while this modular quality that exists in digital media, it is (and has been) utilized by Choice-Based Narratives in order to break the plot into manageable and permutable parts and to allow for a richer narrative experience. In fact when I wrote my first iteration of *The Melete Effect* I found that I was naturally writing short and fragmented scenes because I felt instinctively that the story needed to be broken up in this way.

Ryan goes on to elaborate on this further in her book *Avatars of Story* (2006) in the chapter ‘Towards an Interactive Narratology’. Here she makes the case for an interactive narratology that is greater

than what Choice-Based Narratives can sustain, in part because of the technological limitations and in part because Choice-Based Narratives are created by a writer for the reader, whereas Ryan's notion suggests a narratology almost completely procedural and without an authorial voice and shaped by the reader. Narrative meaning she states "...is the product of the top-down planning of a storyteller or designer, while interactivity requires a bottom-up input from the user. It will consequently take a seamless (some will say miraculous) convergence of bottom-up input and top-down design to produce well-formed narrative patterns. This convergence requires a certain type of textual architecture and a certain kind of user involvement." (Ryan, 2006, p.99)

The kind of interactive narratology Ryan proposes here is solely at the service of the reader with the storyteller creating many different stories and permutations to satisfy the reader's curiosity. I remain unconvinced that Choice-Based Narratives can facilitate and sustain this.

Ryan then goes on to outline just what would be required by a writer or creator in order to create an interactive narratology, she begins by stating, "[i]t would be of course easy to constrain the user's choices in such a way that they will always fit into a predefined narrative pattern" (Ryan, 2006, p.99) which it is could argued is where most Choice-Based Narrative sits currently, and certainly *The Melete Effect* is indicative of that. Ryan then suggests an extension of the form, that initially seems achievable, "but the aesthetics of Interactive Narrative demand a choice sufficiently broad to give the user a sense of freedom, and a narrative pattern sufficiently adaptable to those choices to give the impression of being generated on the fly." (Ryan, 2006, p.99). Her final notion though, begins to move away from the realm of Choice-Based Narratives or narratives shaped by a writer and move towards a notion of procedural authorship (which in a way divides and dissipates the authorial voice) and complete reader agency as she states "the ideal top-down design should disguise itself as an emergent story, giving users both confidence that their efforts will be rewarded by a coherent narrative and the feeling of acting of their own free will, rather than being the puppets of the designer." (Ryan, 2006, p.99-100).

Here Ryan in recognising the procedural development of narrative is suggesting a future in which narrative can be automated. Approaches such as Generative Narrative and Intelligent Narrative in the field of Computational Creativity, already offer insights into how this might be accomplished (Riedel and Young 2004; 2006; 2010). However while these forms are of interest to me, they are beyond the scope of this research. Furthermore it must be stated that Choice-Based Narratives (at present) represents a creative writer's attempt (rather than an Artificial Intelligence) to develop these types of stories for their reader. Although the potential ramifications of using Artificial Intelligence in developing Choice-Based Narratives will be discussed briefly in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 5.

The idea of the audience being at the centre of the experience, finds it home in many existing game formats be it video games or live action role play or alternative reality gaming. These narratives move away from the writer and base themselves completely in crafting an immersive experience for the reader to explore and uncover and construct meaning. Here the narrative constructed is not procedural (or automated), but rather emergent; it emerges out of the interactions of the audience (Bonsignore et al. 2014). Yet this type of narrative moves away from Choice-Based Narratives as I understand them and more towards the reader/audience/spectator sitting at the centre of the experience, rather than a character like Mary Melete created by a writer. This distinction is an important one because it recognises that the narrative created by a Choice-Based Narrative (like *The Melete Effect*) sits on a spectrum ranging from linear traditional stories (created by an authorial voice) to completely reader-driven experiences where the narrative emerges organically but is crafted by the readers themselves in a framework constructed by the experience organisers. Choice-

Based Narratives lie somewhere between these two experiences and any emergent narrative possibilities that arise are discovered and utilised by the writer not the audience.

## 2.4. A Brief History of Choice-Based Narratives

At this point I would like to provide a brief history of Choice-Based Narratives. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of all of the examples and stories that exist in this form, this section instead intends to discuss important historical examples and those which influenced the development of *The Melete Effect*. Also some examples will be discussed directly as a result of explaining the process of writing *The Melete Effect* in Chapter 3.

As a form of storytelling Choice-Based Storytelling has existed in a variety of mediums. The oldest of these mediums is that of experimental literature, particularly that arose out of the experimentation of the French group *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* (or *Oulipo* for short) and the writings of the Argentine in exile Julio Cortazar and the British author B.S. Johnson. *Oulipo's* full title (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*) can be broadly translated as the 'workshop of potential literature' and was founded by the French author Raymond Queneau and Francois Le Lionnais in 1960 (Motte, 1986). Novelists such as Georges Perec and Italo Calvino and the poet and mathematician Jacques Roubaud have all created works based on Oulipian constructs and constraints. Their definition of 'littérature potentielle' can be described as 'the seeking of new structures and patterns which may be used by writers in any way they see fit.' (Queneau quoted in Motte, 1986, p.3) *Oulipo's* experiments led to works like Perec's novel *La Disparition* (*A Void*) (1969) which is notable for not using the letter E. One of Queneau's own work *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (*A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems*) published in 1961 is a book of 10 sonnets where each of the 14 lines is printed on separate strip, allowing the reader to construct literally billions of different sonnets as they so desired (Motte, 1986). The writers of *Oulipo* were fascinated by the possibilities of mathematics and particularly the area of combinatorics, and what they suggested for the construction of stories and storytelling opportunities. This is obvious in the work Queneau, Roubaud, and in the writing of Claude Berge (in Motte, 1986) who analyses several structures that exists within the work of *Oulipo* writers. For a more detailed analysis of the structures found in Choice-Based Narrative see Section 2.6.

An *Oulipo* example that uses the structure of a Choice-Based Narrative is *The Theatre Tree* by Paul Fornel and Jean-Pierre Enard (in Motte, 1986) which is a play designed to be combined in different ways to allow for different endings and narrative experiences. The play tells the story of a kingdom in turmoil through a series of complicating events. It features a number of choices and two distinct endings which resolve the two different plots. Fornel and Enard intend the play to work by having the audience decide how the story will unfold. They state "In order that the structure be immediately recognised by the audience, we have tried to construct simple plots and intrigues, for which the choices offered to the audience are both real and functional" (Fornel and Enard, in Motte, 1986, p.160). This identification of generic plots is an important element of Choice-Based Narratives and will be touched upon again in Section 2.5 and in Chapter 4.

B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* first published in 1969 is often referred to as the 'book in the box'. It is not the only example of this type of experimental literature, Marc Saporta's *Composition no.1* first published in French in 1962 is the earliest known example of this form. What both books share in common is the fact that they allow their readers to read the book in any order they see fit. While Saporta's book consists of 150 loose leaf pages, Johnson's is arranged in 27 sections of varying

lengths, with only the first and last section identified as such. The instructions for reading *The Unfortunates* are written on the inside cover of the box that houses the book, they state:

“Note

This novel has twenty-seven sections, temporarily held together by a removable wrapper. Apart from the first and last sections (which are marked as such) the other twenty-five sections are intended to be read in a random order.

If the readers prefer not to accept the random order in which they receive the novel, then they may re-arrange the sections into any other random order before reading.” (1999)

Jonathan Coe in his introduction to *The Unfortunates* explains Johnson’s motivations for ordering the book in this way. The book as a narrative is an attempt to preserve Johnson’s own memories of his friend Tony who died of cancer, and these memories are triggered while visiting Tony’s home town of Nottingham to cover a soccer match. Coe states “Memories of Tony were unfolding, certainly, but not in a structured, linear way, and they were interrupted at random by the action on the pitch, and his [Johnson’s] attempts to start writing his match report. It was this randomness, this lack of structure in the way we remember things, and receive impressions, that Johnson wanted to record with absolute fidelity. (Coe, 1999, p.ix). So Johnson decided that his novel should not be bound at all, as Coe explains:

“There was a paradox here, because – in his life as well as his writing – Johnson was an extremely orderly man, and he liked to exert absolute authorial control over his material. ... Johnson opted, in the end, for a compromise. *The Unfortunates* would come in twenty-seven unbound sections, with the first and last being marked as such to give the material a proper sense of form and closure.” (Coe, 1999, p.ix-x)

This structure, although attempting to recreate the way the mind wanders, however does allow for a narrative to emerge over the course of the novel. Johnson’s work suggest not only multiple ways of engaging with the work but also a firm narrative journey. In contrast to this Saporta’s work is in effect 150 page long fragments from which impressions of a narrative gradually emerge. Saporta’s work is more in keeping with the notion of Eco’s open text (1969), in that it can be ‘read’ multiple ways. It could be argued with Johnson’s work, that although it is ‘open’ in format, it remains ‘closed’ in interpretation. That in effect, a definite impression can be garnered from its structure, regardless of its ordering. This is true of Choice-Based Narratives and equally true of the experience of reading *The Melete Effect*.

Perhaps another aspect that makes Johnson’s work resemble a Choice-Based Narrative, is the fact that in his decision to break *The Unfortunates* into 27 distinct parts, he has created definite modules or sections for the story. These modules break the story into manageable sections, but also clearly delineate how and when the choice will be made; at the end of the relevant section. Although the choices made by the reader are not articulated in a definite way (e.g. If you want to find out what happens to Tony turn to page 65), they are still present; in other words even without articulation Johnson’s text still encourages a reader’s choice.

Another novel that shares many qualities with Choice-Based Narratives is Julio Cortazar’s 1966 novel *Hopscotch*. As a novel it tells the story of the life of Horacio Olivera and his experiences in Paris and Buenos Aires. Cortazar establishes at the very beginning that “[i]n it’s own way, this book consist of many books, but two books above all.” (1966, p.i [unnumbered]) Cortazar goes on to state:

“The first can be read in a normal fashion and it ends with Chapter 56, at the close of which there are three garish little stars which stand for the words *The End*. Consequently, the reader may ignore what follows with a clean conscience.

The second should be read by beginning with Chapter 73 and then following the sequence indicated at the end of each chapter.” (1966, p.i [unnumbered])

Hopscotch is a title both metaphorical and physical, the novel ‘hopscotches’ through the experiences of Oliveria’s life and the reader physically does the same by following the different orderings that Cortazar (or perhaps the reader themselves) has devised. It is this quality that encourages the reader to choose how they receive the narrative that Cortazar has devised. Hopscotch though is not a true Choice-Based Narrative, as the choices are largely proscribed by Cortazar, unlike Johnson who encourages the reader to experiment with his text. Hopscotch is instead a literary experiment that instead shows the early development and potential for literature and narrative to offer different experiences.

When defining Choice-Based Narratives, there are several mediums that share many of the characteristics of Choice-Based Narratives, but do not adhere to these characteristics all of the time. A good example of this, and an important medium in its own right, is that of Interactive Fiction. Interactive Fiction (or IF for short) is a text-based form of storytelling that originally arose in the late 1970s originally on mainframes before moving to personal computers. Maher (2006) defines Interactive Fiction as “a unique form of computer-based storytelling which places the player in the role of a character in a simulated world, and which is characterized by its reliance upon text as its primary means of output and by its use of a flexible natural-language parser for input.” (Ch.1, 2006) Interactive Fiction is essentially a form of storytelling that displays its story on the screen to be read by the user/player. What Maher’s definition reveals, once you remove the restraints that the medium (A computer) places on the storytelling experience; is its similarity to Choice-Based Narratives. Both experiences feature ‘storytelling which places the player in the role of a character in a simulated world’. (Maher, Ch.1, 2006) Here the text parser is the form of interface that allows for the reader/player to interact with the world of the story and move throughout the story making choices about how they wish to proceed.

As an early form of gaming, Interactive Fiction often features puzzles, inventory management and simulated action (e.g a fight sequence) to convey the story. These aspects move the experience away from being a pure story which you interact with (like *The Unfortunates*) to having more game-like elements where for example a score may be kept. It is these game-like elements which when they become too intrusive or are favoured at the expense of the narrative, which sometimes prevent Interactive Fiction from being true Choice-Based Narratives. The more the narrative is beholden to its game mechanics the less likely it is to function as a Choice-Based Narrative. This is an important distinction because it recognises that not all Interactive Fiction can be recognised as a Choice-Based Narrative. This helps to refine the boundary of what a Choice-Based Narrative is, but also presents the unique problem of situating Choice-Based Narratives on a spectrum between linear storytelling created by an author which an audience has no control and storytelling generated by an audience over which an author has no control. While Choice-Based Narrative sits on this spectrum, its focus is on the depth of the narrative experience, not the mechanics by which this experience is achieved.

In looking at Interactive Fiction, I have favoured examples that minimise their game mechanics and feature strong storylines. There are many existing examples of IF, and the examples I have chosen



here are the ones that I have found to be interesting in their relationship to *The Melete Effect* either thematically or in their genre considerations.

*A Mind Forever Voyaging*, is the title of an Interactive Fiction written by Steve Meretzky and distributed by the company Infocom in 1985. Nick Montfort in his analytical history of IF, *Twisty Little Passages* (2003) describes the story as being made of inner and outer worlds. He states,

“In the frame world, the player character exists as a sentient computer in the United States of North America of 2031. This computer player character, PRISM, is gendered male and comes complete with a human-like, synthesized past, described in the documentation. ... PRISM has a job to do, of course. He must enter a special simulation mode, and try to learn what the future effects of the proposed right-wing Plan for Renewed National Purpose. He does this not as a disembodied intelligence, as in the frame IF world, but through the eyes of his human persona, Perry Simm.” (Montfort, 2003, p.153)

Maher (2006) goes on to explain the finer points of the story that plays out over 5 time periods across forty years (2041, 2051, 2061, 2071 and 2081) detailing how the plan of Senator Richard Ryder (an obvious Ronald Regan analogue) goes astray. Maher makes an interesting point about Meretzky’s work “[i]t’s design provides an ideal balance between a linear storyline and free-form exploration.” (Maher, Ch.5, 2006) He goes on to state,

“The game emphasizes its narrative (as opposed to puzzle-solving) elements to an unprecedented degree. Thought of in term[s] of Graham Nelson’s characterization of IF as a ‘crossword at war with a narrative’, *Mind* is the first game to award the victory unconditionally to the narrative.” (Maher, Ch.5, 2006)

What strikes me immediately about this is the complexity of the storytelling put into what is essentially a text-based experience. This is a story that deals with characters and events in a deep and sophisticated way. It illustrates how Interactive Fiction can serve as an immersive experience for the reader, through its description of characters and the world of the story. While immersion is a bigger topic that for the most part is beyond the scope of this research; it is important to recognise that immersion and immersive experiences are a fundamental part of making narratives work in the mind of the reader. Without immersion the requisite suspension of disbelief that is necessary to make a story function is absent and can lead to the destruction of narrative logic. In other words a story that appears unbelievable or unrealistic within the frame that has been established is not convincing. Immersion is a critical aspect of what makes all narratives function and Choice-Based Narratives are no exception. Interactive Fiction such as *A Mind Forever Voyaging* with this its mix of narrative and interface (the parser) illustrate this very well.

The parser represents an important part of how Choice-Based Narratives operate, they provide an interface or mechanism by which the reader can interact with the story and influence its direction. In B.S. Johnson’s example *The Unfortunates*, it is the shuffling of sections that serves as the interface. The parser within Interactive Fiction is a more sophisticated mechanism, but serves a similar purpose. Maher defines the parser as “a computer algorithm that converts simple sentences entered by the user ... into an instruction that the computer can understand” (ch.1, 2006). Again all Choice-Based Narratives feature this interface between the reader and the story. The job of the author is to anticipate the reader and surprise them by the direction that the story takes.

Interactive Fiction is useful as an example as it also reflects the importance of genre in storytelling. Another example of Interactive Fiction that is interesting because of its narrative complexity and

because of the themes that it deals with is another title by Infocom called *Trinity* (1986) and written by Brian Moriarty. *Trinity* is “centered around the development and use of atomic weaponry and is divided into three parts.” (Maher, ch.5, 2006) Through the exploration of the story the main character works through multiple time periods to try and stop the development of the nuclear weapons. *Trinity* is interesting as Interactive Fiction because of the seriousness of its story, and the way it reuses historical events such as the bombing of Nagasaki and the testing of the first atomic bomb in New Mexico. *Trinity*’s storyline certainly illustrates how genre can be used to shape a narrative experience that can be quite serious in tone and its story served as a further inspiration for writing *The Melete Effect*.

There are two further forms that could be said to have evolved out of Interactive Fiction, they also share many of the qualities of Choice-Based Narratives; they are Adventure Games and Visual Novels. Adventure gaming is the natural evolution of Interactive Fiction, as what started out as a text-based genre due to the limitations of computer hardware evolved to include graphics and a radical change in user interface: The text based parser was replaced with a point and click interface. (Salter, 2014) However what Adventure Games share with Choice-Based Narratives is the fact that they allow the reader/user/player to explore the narrative. Where Interactive Fiction often favoured one ultimate ending, Adventure Games allows for multiple endings of varying degrees of success, with the author (or in this case games developer) preferencing one ending over the others. Examples of Adventure Gaming include the LucasArts games such as *Maniac Mansion* (1987), *Day of the Tentacle* (1993) and *Grim Fandango* (1998), and the Sierra games such as the *King’s Quest* series (1980-1998) and the complex *Phantasmagoria* (1995). The narratives of these games each feature a character (or avatar) which the reader/player controls through the story making choices and utilising items that are kept in an inventory to help solve problems and progress the story. The use of puzzles means that Adventure Gaming as a form shares many of the qualities of Choice-Based Narratives but (like Interactive Fiction) can sometimes be considered games first and narrative second.

Visual Novels are also an extension of Interactive Fiction, but were influenced by the development of Adventure Games. As a form they rose to prominence in Japan in late 1980s and remain a popular form of entertainment in Japan, only recently becoming popular in Europe and the United States. Two examples which were influential to the development of *The Melete Effect* were *Hotel Dusk* (Cing, 2006) and *The Last Window: The Secret of Cape West* (Cing, 2010) they tell the story of the mysteries within the life of former detective Kyle Hyde. Visual Novels are defined by Lebowitz and Klug (2011) as “...a type of game that is in many ways similar to reading a book. The story is told through large blocks of text, generally written in a first-person perspective from the main character’s point of view. However, unlike e-books, visual novels contain background images that change based on the hero’s current location and facial and/or full-body portraits of any character or characters he’s talking to.” (2011, p.193-4)

They go on to state:

On the surface, they’re fairly similar to those found in Choose Your Own Adventure books. Every so often, the player will be presented with a choice, with the story branching accordingly depending on his or her decision. Also similar to the Choose Your Own Adventure formula, it’s quite common for many wrong choices to lead to the hero’s unfortunate demise, forcing the player to back up and try again. However, the branching path stories in visual novels represent significant improvements over those found in Choose Your Own Adventure books. First, some decision points are hidden from the player, with the game automatically selecting a branch based on the player’s past decisions. For example, in one part of *Fate/Stay Night* the hero, Shiro, is seriously injured and close to death. If, over

the course of the game, he was friendly enough to Ilya (a mysterious girl he encounters at various points), she'll come to his rescue. If not, he'll be left to fend for himself. Things like that would be far more difficult to track in a physical book. (Lebowitz and Klug, 2011, p.194)

There are several points here, firstly the identifying of branching path structures (or branching tree structures) as being fundamental to creation of Choice-Based Narratives, and secondly that the automation of choices that Visual Novels undertake unbeknownst to the reader, is sometimes critical to the construction of Choice-Based Narratives, both of which will be discussed at length in Section 2.6.

Lebowitz and Klug also identify the Choose Your Own Adventure series (by Bantam Books) as a historical forebear is important and will be discussed at length as a illustrative example in Section 2.5. This illustrative example will also disprove the notion put forward by Liebowitz and Klug that "[t]he focus on deep stories with mature themes and consistent plots throughout all the branches further sets them apart from Choose Your Own Adventure books." (2011, p.194) While this is true of Visual Novels, it also true of Choose Your Own Adventures.

It is also possible to have large scale complex narratives within Choice-Based Narratives in books as a medium. An example which disproves Liebowitz and Klug's notion is Kim Newman's novel *Life's Lottery* (1999) which is a large complex novel telling the story of an individual's life, Keith Marion, in which the reader is able to make choices about the life they lead. It features many storylines and endings and deals with the nature of living a fulfilling life. Liebowitz and Klug's notion is a common observation put forward by game writers and developers to justify the importance of gaming as a form of storytelling. The argument (in this instance in praise of Visual Novels) goes something like this:

"But most importantly, being a digital product, visual novels don't face the length restrictions found in physical books. When taking into account all of *Fate/Stay Night's* different branches, the total word count is more than that of the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. A book of that size would be huge, and the need to constantly flip through the pages to follow different branches would make it a chore to read. However, this significant increase in length allows visual novel games to tell stories as long and complex as those found in any good novel while still using a branching path structure." (Liebowitz and Klug, 2012, p.194)

Here there is a medium bias: that one medium is better or preferential over another. However this bias is not just limited to gaming and can be found anywhere where a creator or writer is justifying their choice of medium. As a justification it serves to promote the author's preferred medium, but as a realistic appraisal of Choice-Based Narratives it is untrue. Choice-Based Narratives, as this section should prove, appear in a variety of mediums. These include Interactive Film (*Kinoautomat*, [Činčera, 1967] and *I'm Your Man* [Bejan, 1992]), Hypertext (*afternoon, a story* [Joyce, 1987 & 2001]), Interactive Theatre (*Choose Your Own Documentary*, [Penlington, Guitierrez De Jesus, Smail & Watson, 2014]) and Interactive Documentary (using Korsakow software). It is simply not possible to discuss all of these examples and mediums in any detail here. Choice-Based Narratives as a form is in need of a complete history, which unfortunately is beyond the scope of this research.

What is clear from each of these forms of storytelling is their reliance on the technology of their chosen medium. At some point Choice-Based Narratives must integrate the constraints of their chosen medium into both the interface and the design of the narrative. This is something that will be explored later in this dissertation.



## 2.5. Choose Your Own Adventure: An Illustrative Example of the Form

When explaining my research to people for the first time, there is a pat response that I have developed over the course of my research which simplifies it into a short description. This description is usually along the lines of:

What happens to a narrative when you introduce choice into it? How does choice change the structures and construction of a narrative?

Typically the response I receive from people, particularly those who were young readers in 1980s and 1990s, is: "Oh you mean like a Choose Your Own Adventure book". The pervasiveness of this book series and the impact it has had on propagating the experience of Choice-Based Narrative is beyond measure. The chapter book series was published initially by Bantam Books from 1979-1998 and currently by Chooseco from 2005 onwards. It could be argued that this series single-handedly did more to identify and codify the underlying poetics and structure of Choice-Based Narrative than many other forms of media.

In this section I will be looking predominantly at the history of the Bantam Series of Choose Your Own Adventure books published from 1979-1998. Although Chooseco are the current right holders of the Choose Your Own Adventure name and brand, and continue to publish new books, the majority of the evolution of the form took place during the 20-year period that the Choose Your Own Adventure books were being published by Bantam Books. As such this section will focus almost exclusively on the developments of the series during that time.

The one exception to this is Chooseco's publication of the series *The Golden Path* written by Anson Montgomery (2008) of which two books have been published, *Into the Hollow Path* (2008) and *Burned by the Inner Sun* (2008). The series was initially announced as a six book series in the end papers of Chooseco's Choose Your Own Adventure book re-issues, however this has since been revised to being a trilogy of interactive books with the third book, *Paying the Ferryman*, being announced but to date remaining unpublished. This is not uncommon in the history of these types of books (or more broadly with chapter book series in general) where the demands of the marketplace can mean that stories are left incomplete due to a lack of readership or financial incentive. This is unfortunate as Montgomery's structure in this series (still branded as a spin-off Choose Your Own Adventure Book) is designed so that multiple pathways continue through subsequent books; a structure that is complicated and deserves a deeper analysis. However due to the incomplete nature of the series, it would be difficult to fully evaluate how the structure is designed and functions as a whole and as such an analysis of that particular series will not be undertaken here.

The Choose Your Own Adventure series during its publication at Bantam Books produced 184 books over a period of 20 years. This is an enormous number for any chapter book series and is perhaps a number rivalled only by series' such as *Sweet Valley High* (also published by Bantam Books), *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew*. The success of the series is a product of both good timing (the series arose at time when home computing and programming logic was becoming more prevalent and commonplace) and conscious effort. This section will attempt to examine the factors which contributed to the development of the series.

One final note on this research before continuing: When I decided that *The Melete Effect* would be the focus of my research and that it would be a Choice-Based Narrative, I knew that I would have to research the history of similar narrative examples. While it had been relatively easy to find scholarly

research on the history of groups such as Oulipo and experimental writers such B.S. Johnson, whose works are well documented within academic literature, it surprised me how difficult it was to find information on a series as successful and influential as the Choose Your Own Adventure Books. Most research into the history of Interactive Narrative mentions the series as an important forebear to the development of the form (Gygax 1987; Glassner, 2004; Cover 2010; Tresca, 2011; Salter, 2014), but I have been unable to find a deep analysis of how or why the series worked.

This research arose primarily out of my own close-reading and analysis of the books within the series, and from a series of interviews that I conducted with selected authors about their involvement in the series. Participants were identified through the use of publically available information gained from internet searches, social media and websites associated with the authors and illustrators and by utilising snowball sampling (chain sampling) techniques to speaking to other authors who had worked on the series. A formal ethics approval process was undertaken and granted by RMIT University and the Participant Consent Form and a Sample of the Questions asked (each of which was customised to interviewee's role as author, editor or illustrator) can be found in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively.

I suspect there are a combination of factors for why this research does not exist; as a series of chapter books written for children the series does not represent the type of work that is typically studied in literature studies, and the series can be seen as representing a type of 'low' culture that is sometimes not considered worthy of study. Furthermore reading all of the books in the series represents a huge time investment and would involve a lengthy analysis of data, something that may be less likely to be undertaken if the perceived value of the work is considered negligible. This however, is my own personal conjecture and is probably something that cannot be categorically proven and is offered here only as an observation.

### **2.5.1. *What is a Choose Your Own Adventure Book?***

At the risk of redundancy, but for the sake of someone who may have never read a Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) Book, I will now briefly describe the format of these books. All of the CYOA books were written in the second person, a stylistic choice that was made so as to enable to reader to more closely identify with the story and the events being told. These books were aimed at young adult readers aged 10 and up. A typical description within a book will read:

“You’ve hiked through Snake Canyon once before while visiting your Uncle Howard at Red Creek Ranch, but you never noticed any cave entrance. It looks as though a recent rock slide has uncovered it.” (The Cave of Time, Packard, 1979 p.2)

At the end of the page (or sometimes the open spread of two pages) there would be either a direction (Go on to the next page. or Turn to page 63.) or a choice for the reader to make such as:

“If you decide to start back home,  
turn to page 4.  
If you decide to wait,  
turn to page 5.”

(The Cave of Time, Packard, 1979 p.3)

The reader would continue on in this way until they reached an ending, which was indicated by the words “The End”. Sometimes a book would allow the reader to continue on past an ending by offering one last choice; however this became uncommon as the series progressed.

A CYOA book was designed to be read multiple times. Typically readers would attempt to discover all of the various endings and developed many different approaches to reading these books. Some readers would hold their finger on the previous page, in case the choice they made turned out badly, so as to allow them to return to the story and keep on reading. I personally had particular ways in which I liked to read certain books. For example when reading *The Underground Kingdom* (Packard, 1983) although there were multiple ways to reach the titular kingdom, I would always choose the same pathway because of the drama and difficulty that it offered.

### **2.5.2. *The History of the Series at Bantam***

The Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) series’ history is one built on a mythos that was used by Bantam Books to help sell the series. At the centre of that mythos sits primarily one person, Edward Packard author of the first book in the series, *The Cave of Time* (1979). The biography for Packard for this book (and most of his books) in the series reads:

“Mr Packard conceived of the idea for Choose Your Own Adventure series in the course of telling bedtime stories to his children, Caroline, Andrea and Wells.” (1979, unnumbered)

Packard himself described this experience as:

“I started making up a story about a boy named Pete who was cast up on a strange island and couldn’t think of what would happen next in the story, so I asked the kids what they would do if they were Pete and got two different answers, and that’s what gave me the idea of continuing the story on two tracks, then branching out and leading to multiple endings.” (Edward Packard Interview, April 2014)

His daughter Andrea Packard, herself the author of two books in the series, described the experience as this:

“He told us bedtime stories and we were actually 3 kids, Caroline who's my older sister, she's 3 and half years older and then there's me and I was born in '63, and I have a younger brother who's is 2 and half years younger, Wells. And so Wells being the youngest participated in these stories but was not always as vocal as we were by virtue of being younger. And my sister and I sometimes competed for his attention and wanted the story to go this way or that. I believe he tells this story that he reached a point of exhaustion where he wasn't sure what to add next in a conventional story and so he asked us what we thought might happen next. I don't remember that particular moment, what I remember are the stories and his engagement with us, fostering my own wish to think of stories.” (Andrea Packard Interview, June 2014)

The book that arose from the stories that Packard told was not *The Cave of Time* (1979). Although *The Cave of Time* is first book in the Bantam Series, it is not the first book developed by Packard using this formula. This original book was called *Sugarcane Island* (1976) (Katz, Gamebooks.org, *Sugarcane Island* entry) and was written in 1969 but was not picked up by a large publishing house. In fact it was first published by Vermont Crossroads Press a small independent publishing house run

by Raymond Almiran Montgomery Jr. (who would eventually author CYOA books as R.A. Montgomery) and Constance Cappel. Although Sugarcane Island would be the first book that could be called a CYOA, it had a complicated publication history being first published with Vermont Crossroads, then Lippincott in 1978 and then finally as part of the series that it helped to spawn in 1986 as book 62 of the Bantam series.

Raymond (Ray) Montgomery was first person to see the value in what Packard had created and he knew that the books would be a series. Montgomery was responsible for taking the book series which he had called 'The Adventures of You' to Bantam Books once the initial set of books exceeded Montgomery's ability to publish them. Shannon Gilligan, current publisher of Chooseco and Montgomery's wife describes the process by which Montgomery came to see the value that interaction had when creating a storytelling experience:

"He was a big promoter of the empowerment affect. Get people to think, kids especially, to think with power. And that has its roots, and he has lot of interesting stories, and he did a lot of games design in the late sixties and early seventies. Where he would design games for training for the Peace Corp and other government groups... So he really carried forward his knowledge, his firsthand knowledge of designing those games and how to empower somebody. And you know you give them character and occupation identifiers and you say this is YOU. Often it was done with a very light touch and it wasn't meant to be truly pedagogic or heavy handed but there it would be just enough to give that person, to as you say prime them to take the role and run with it. And I think the most successful Choose Your Own Adventures do that. They really ask you to look through a different pair of eyes. That are clearly not your own." (Shannon Gilligan Interview, May 2014)

When the books were picked up by Bantam Books both Packard and Montgomery were responsible for delivering a requisite number of books to Bantam a year. Initially it was six books each, so that a new book in the series could be published monthly. Both men would then subcontract out these books out to authors they felt were appropriate and they each owned the copyright for their respective books (Edward Packard Interview, April 2014). Each book was identified by a colophon on the title page indicating that it was 'An Edward Packard Book' or 'An R.A. Montgomery Book'. When the series took off in 1979, twelve books a year were published (one a month), a pace that kept up unabated until the series began to decline in 1992 (Shannon Gilligan Interview, May 2014). Edward Packard described it in this way:

"I invented the concept and wrote the first books. Montgomery ran the small press that published my first book. Bantam awarded contracts providing that each on us would write or hire writers so as to supply equal numbers of books each year...I could not personally write all the books needed under my contract so I hired other authors. I supervised and pre-edited books written by my subcontractors. Same was true for Ray Montgomery." (Edward Packard Interview, April 2014)

This high output explains how the series was able to produce such a high number of books over the course of its original publication. The series is notable for producing numerous spin-offs using the same basic formula for different demographics including Choose Your Own Adventure for Younger Readers, also known as Skylarks, (1981-1992, 52 books), Your First Adventure (1984-1987, 12 books), Choose Your Own Adventure Walt Disney (1985-1987, 12 books), Choose Your Own Adventure Super Adventure (1987, 2 books) and Choose Your Own Nightmare (1995-1997, 18 books). There were also two spin-off series known as Space Hawks (1991-1992, 6 books) and Passport (1992, 6 books) and two further licensed books series Choose Your Own Adventure – The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles



(1992-1993, 8 books) and Choose Your Own Star Wars Adventure (1998, 3 books). Although many of the authors interviewed here authored books across a number of the different spin-offs, the focus in this section is mostly on the main series published from 1979-1998.

The series is somewhat unique as a chapter book series because each author is credited with their real name. Typically in a chapter book series a house name is used such as Franklin M. Dixon (The Hardy Boys) and Carolyn Keene (Nancy Drew), or is an author who developed the idea for a series whose name then became the house name such as Francine Pascal (Sweet Valley High) and Ann M. Martin (The Babysitter's Club). Early on in the series' development Montgomery decided that all of the authors would be properly credited, and the series is responsible for giving many authors their first opportunity to be published.

The decline and demise of the series seems to be the product of a number of factors, one of which must surely have been the number of spin-offs that the publisher was trying to maintain. However the most prevalent reason according to Shannon Gilligan, is that the fact that by the time that series finished at Bantam in 1998, the company had been through three mergers and that there was no one who was consciously steering the direction of the series. With each merger the children's book department responsible for the series was made smaller until the series was no longer considered a priority for the company who now owned it (Random House). As a result very little focus was put into continuing to develop the series and a disastrous decision was made to change the size of the books from rack size (designed to fit on a rotating book rack) to digest size, a size associated with young readers who were not typically the demographic associated with the series, which led to significant fall in sales and resulted in the end of the series at Bantam in 1998 (Shannon Gilligan Interview, May 2014). When Bantam's copyright lapsed on the series in 2005, Montgomery and Gilligan purchased the copyright and republished some of the books in the series (only those whose copyright was owned by Montgomery).

### ***2.5.3. The Evolution of Narrative Design, Book Design and Writing***

In this section, I will look at several aspects of the writing and development of the CYOA series. The first aspect I will examine is the general evolution of the narrative structures across the life of the series, then I will look at the way in which the design of the books changed, finally I will detail the actual process of writing these books. In the writing below the word 'you' is used in two different contexts. When the author is using the word 'you' in lower case they are referring to the reader, but when they are talking about 'YOU' in capitals they are referring to the second-person character and their agency within the story.

#### ***Narrative Design***

From a close reading of the overall series there are three distinct periods in the evolution of the narrative across the series. These evolutions have mostly to do with changes in the ratio between the number of choices and the number of endings. In general these periods overlap with the changes to the overall design of the books. The average CYOA book is around 8-12,000 words in length and is designed to be printed on no more than 144 pages or 9 octavos of 16 pages each. This is an important consideration as it physically limits the size and complexity of the story that can be told in this format, a factor that was reflected throughout the narrative evolution of the series.

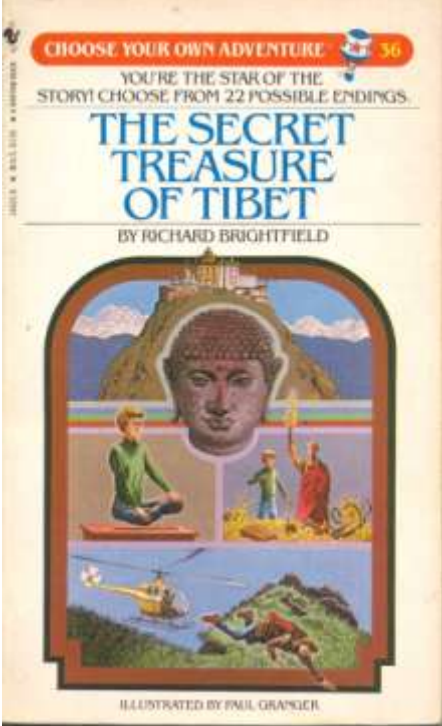
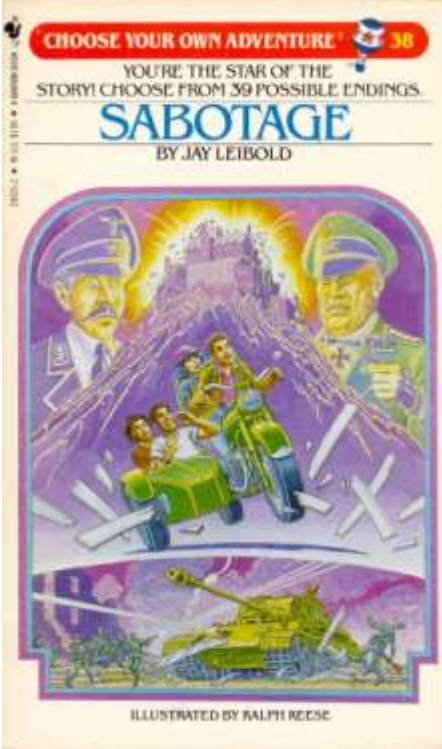
The first period of narrative evolution can be defined as 'high choice/high endings' where there was much experimentation with the form of the CYOA books and how many choices and endings could

be presented. In this early phase which went from books 1 to 40, where there was typically between 20-44 endings.

For high endings 26 and above (the highest in the series is 44 endings) the number of choices becomes overemphasised and the narrative becomes more episodic and fragmented. In other words the narrative between choices becomes smaller and more compact. Characters become stereotypes and the story becomes extremely reliant on a clear objective or purpose and a recognisable world or situation. Yet a high number of endings can still work if the world and the objectives of the narrative are very clear. If either of these two qualities are not present, then the choices seem arbitrary and without purpose and the narrative can appear random and chaotic. The importance lies in making sure that each episode of the narrative relates clearly to the next episode.

The best examples of high endings stories have a clear goal set in a clear genre. In fact in high-ending stories, the more clearly established the genre is, the easier it is for the reader to become involved in the story and making choices. As the reader already knows what to expect from the genre they are naturally primed to make choices that fit within that story's genre. Priming as a technique is important not just for CYOA books but for all Choice-Based Narratives, as it lowers the barriers to the reader to making a choice and is discussed further in Chapter 4. The table below outlines two examples of high-ending stories set in a clear genre, *The Secret Treasure of Tibet* [Book 36] (1984) by Richard Brightfield and *Sabotage* [Book 38] (1984) by Jay Liebold.

Table 2.1: CYOA Books with High Endings and Strong Genre Narratives

Title	Goals	Genre
<p>The Secret Treasure of Tibet [Book 36]</p> 	<p>Find Si-ling-la and/or prove that levitation is possible.</p>	<p>Adventure Stories</p>
<p>Sabotage [Book 38]</p> 	<p>Rescue your friends in the Resistance from their captors.</p>	<p>World War II Stories (which is a subset of Adventure Stories)</p>

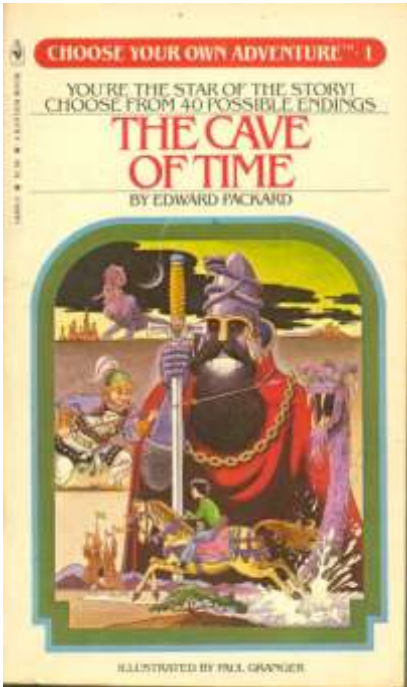
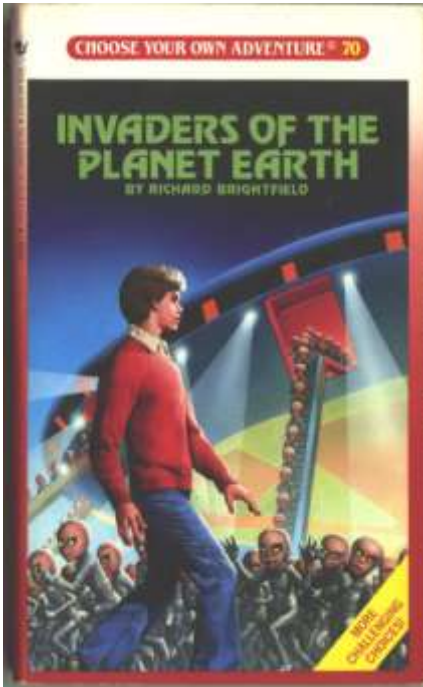
The second period of narrative evolution in the CYOA series can be defined as 'medium choice/medium endings' and it was during this period that the form solidified and stabilised. The bulk of the series from books 41 to 140 encompasses this period. During this time the books in the series had between 15 to 26 endings. It is this structure that enables a strong narrative and a good balance between choice and endings. This optimal range allows for 3-5 well-developed storylines and enough additional endings to allow for sudden conclusions/deaths (a stylistic trademark of the series). It's important to note that although this form represents a clear balance between narrative and choice, other variations (higher and low endings) can work providing that they balance their choice with the narrative.

The third period can be defined as 'low choice/low endings'. This period reflects the series from books 141 to 184. During this time the books in the series had between 7 to 16 endings. As a result of the low number of endings the focus shifts to a strong well-developed narrative and choice is deemphasised. This was due to a decision within the Bantam Books editorial team to create deeper narratives with less choice and interaction (Shannon Gilligan Interview, May 2014). As with fewer choices comes fewer endings, therefore good characterisation, a compelling story, a strong resolution and a realistic and probable world, all become critical to the narrative functioning. The lowest number of endings in the CYOA series is 7, with several books having 8 endings, however any books less than 10 endings seems too low to provide a compelling mix of choice and narrative. At a minimum between 10-14 endings allows for a complexity of choice, however if the choice is not compelling enough the narrative lacks momentum and this will compromise the reader's engagement.

## Book Design

In the tables below are documented the overall changes to the book design that happened over the life of the series.

**Table 2.2: An Overview of Changes to CYOA Book Design**

Initial Design (1979-1987)	First Change (1987-1993)
<p>A rack-sized book. A white background with a cover illustration created by the illustrator of the interior illustrations. A red 'hot-dog' shaped logo which identifies the series and its number.</p> <p><b>Books 1 to 69</b></p> 	<p>A rack-sized book. A coloured background fading from white into a different colour (in this case red). The red 'hot-dog' logo is retained.</p> <p><b>Books 70 to 139</b></p> 

**Second Change (1993-1997)**

A rack-sized book. A completely coloured background front cover. The cover illustration is by a different artist to interior illustrations and may or may not represent actual events which take place in the book. A new banner style logo which stretches the length of the book cover.

**Books 140-175****Final Change (1997-1998)**

A larger digest style book. A completely coloured background front cover. The cover illustration is by a different artist to interior illustrations and may or may not represent actual events which take place in the book. All interior illustrations are by one artist, Eric Cherry. A new large logo which takes up a large amount of space on the book cover. However there is no numbering on the cover to indicate where this sits in the sequence.

**Books 176-184**

## Writing Process

The process of writing a Choose Your Own Adventure book typically began with the mapping out of the overall narrative structure. This mapping out was accomplished by using branching tree structures (Branching structures and how they function are outlined in greater detail in Section 2.6.) and was explained by Edward Packard like this:

“I made a flow chart that looked like a tree lying on its side. Above a branch I’d put the choice; below it a word or two saying what happened if you made that choice; and I’d label each branch with the page number or numbers telling what happened until the next choice. I’d have this chart in front of me when writing.” (Edward Packard interview, April 2014)

This mapping of the narrative is one aspect of planning and writing a CYOA book. Fellow author Jay Liebold described his overall process in greater detail:

“I start with an adventure idea, usually something that I’m interested in learning more about or an event, place, or period that I find exciting. I may or may not have an idea of how the story starts and I may have a sense of the positive endings in mind. However, most of my ideas come when I’m doing research. I read, sometimes for weeks, about Japanese mythology and the ninja, or the American Revolution, or the Great Wall, or Turkey, or the Russian Revolution and so on. I take lots of notes and it’s usually in this note-taking process that ideas for story threads, characters, and endings come to me.

Then (after consulting with the editor), I decide approximately how many endings to create. You saw the chart for *Sabotage*, my first book [see Figure 3.8], in which I thought I was required to have a choice on every page. As I kept writing and eventually worked with the guy who edited a lot of my books, we decided to have fewer endings so that the story threads could be more developed.

The first thing I do, once I know about how many endings there will be, is draw a chart like the one you’ve seen – a branching tree. The manuscripts were about 75 pages long (per publisher’s instructions), so by drawing this chart, I had an idea of how many choice points there would, how many story threads (trunks and branches), and how many pages I’d have for each.

I’d try to come up with a different scenario for each branch – for instance, in one main branch, you might travel to the Levant by sea, while in another you go overland. As I do this, the general shape of each storyline takes shape.

Then the hard part: actually writing. It’s helpful to know about how many pages I have before reaching a choice, because it prevents me from overwriting – I know I have to keep the story moving. I leave room for spontaneity, so that I’m never sure exactly how “You” are going to get from point A to point B – I feel my way through it. Sometimes I get stuck and that’s very painful – after some delay, I have to force myself to go on. I tell myself to just writing anything, anything, to keep the story moving – I can always throw it out or rewrite it later. Other times, the writing and story flows. It’s very nice when that happens but at the same time I think every writer worries when things feel like they’re coming too easily.

The first 20-30 pages are the hardest. As the pages pile up I start to realize I’ve only got a certain number of pages left, and I still have a lot of ideas from my research, so I get more

focused. I'm often up against a deadline, too, so the last week is very pressured and hectic. But ultimately the book takes shape and I get to 75 pages (20,000 words). Then it's time to go back and see how I can improve and tighten it, and also to make sure the various storylines are consistent with one another." (Jay Leibold interview, July 2015)

It's interesting here because Leibold identifies that his books would be as long as 20,000 words and would then be edited down into the appropriate format. Leibold's branching structure for his 1984 book *Sabotage*, mentioned here in this excerpt, can be seen in full in Figure 3.8 in Chapter 3.

Throughout the course of researching the series, I was able to find and be provided with multiple examples of the branching tree structures that were used to create the CYOA books. An example of this mapping structure can be seen below in the two page map for *Danger At Anchor Mine* as mapped out and written by Louise Munro Foley (1985).

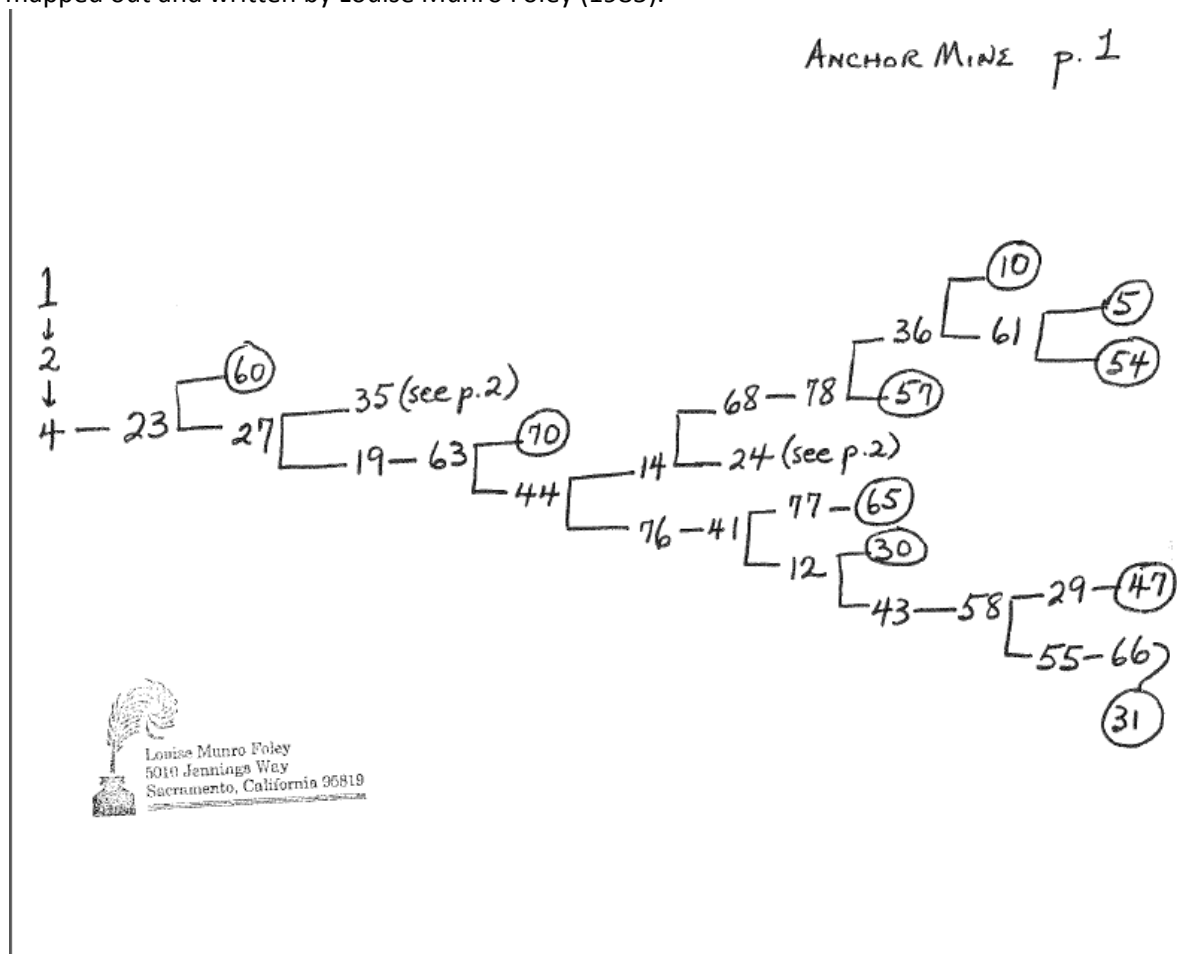
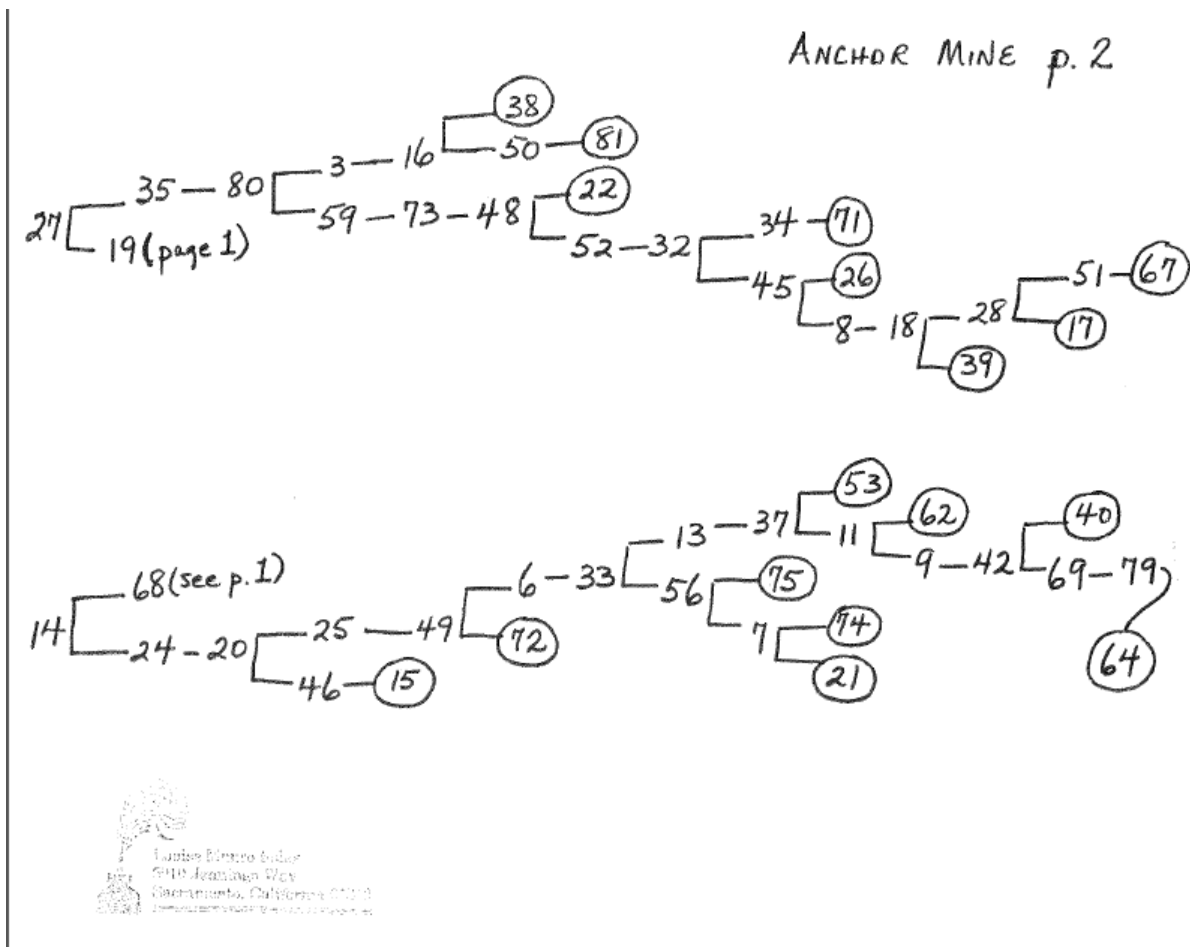


Figure 2.3: *Danger At Anchor Mine* Branching Map Part 1





**Figure 2.4: Danger At Anchor Mine Branching Map Part 2**

Here the choices are represented as branches in the tree and endings are represented within a circle. During my interviews with Louise Munro Foley she described this process as follows:

**“TRACKING:**

Have a sequentially numbered page to keep track of which pages are written or assigned. E.g. 1. – 5 – (7)  
(12)

Page 1 leads to page 5, page 5 leads to pages (7) and (12)

This is so hard to explain in words. Diagrams are easier! Circle every page that ends a track.”  
(Louise Munro Foley Interview, September 2015)

What is interesting here is that in the diagram for Danger at Anchor Mine there are 27 potential endings represented (as indicated by the circled pages) and yet the published book has only 16 endings. This presumably means that 11 endings were removed before eventual publication. It would be interesting to compare the original manuscript with the final script to evaluate what ideas were cut out, but this presently beyond the scope of this illustrative example.

Because of the limitation of the size of the books, narratives could not grow exponentially and so ways had to be found to limit the size and complexity of the experience. This was often achieved by having a branch of a storyline merge or loop back to another branch. This technique is explained by Edward Packard as follows:

“[S]ometimes two different paths would merge, e.g. you might choose to go to New York or Los Angeles, but paths leading from both of these decisions might later take you to Chicago. They are not in principle either a necessary evil or lazy device. As I used them, they reflected real life.” (Edward Packard interview, April 2014)

Here what is called a loopback by authors in fact represents four different techniques (Divisions, Merges, Loopbacks, and Switches) that are used to control the size of the story. These techniques are discussed further in section 2.6. Ellen Steiber, an editor on the series, goes on describe loopbacks in this way:

“I don’t remember telling writers that they had to use loopbacks, though most did. So I don’t think of loopbacks as essential to maintaining the structure of a story. Rather, it’s one of those ways for the writer to stay sane while writing these books. These books had a page count and a word limit—they were not open-ended in terms of length. So the writers worked with quite a number of restrictions. I forget the exact numbers now, but it was something like 130 manuscript pages (roughly, double-spaced, 12-pt type, 250 words per page), in which they had to develop two or three inter-related stories with many choices along the way. Loop-backs were a survival mechanism for the writers.” (Ellen Steiber Interview, November 2014)

It’s clear here that the boundary set by the limited book length meant that writers had to become creative about how their storylines interacted with one another and sometimes this would mean that storylines would become incoherent if they were not properly edited.

On a popular series such as this it became important to establish some rules and guidelines for the writers on how to proceed with particular topics or themes. Through my research I was able to find that that Bantam developed a story bible or set of guidelines that outlined what writers could and couldn’t do. However locating the story bible itself became an impossible task as none of the people interviewed had retained a copy of it. When I asked the authors what they remembered was contained in the story bible, they had this to say:

“The main rule I remember is that a character can’t be bad in one branch but good in another – although that doesn’t mean that the circumstances (brought about by your own choices) might not cause a character to react in a negative way in one branch and a positive way in another one.” (Jay Leibold Interview, July 2015)

“I was told: 1/3 “Good” endings, 1/3 “Bad” (you get killed, etc.), 1/3 middle ground. Really!” (Ellen Kushner Interview, November 2014)

“Forbidden in my books for kids: Torture.” (Louise Munro Foley, September 2015)

“I was only told once by an editor that I could not have the YOU character murder another character, if they sneezed and that sneeze sent another character off a cliff that was okay,

but not outright murder. This was the only time I was told what I couldn't include." (Deborah Lerme Goodman, September 2015)

Unfortunately the closest I have come to the story bible is a pamphlet written by Edward Packard and R.A. Montgomery called 'How to write a book like a Choose Your Own Adventure book' (1985) in which they outline 7 steps for creating a CYOA narrative:

1. Where will you get your idea from?
2. What type of story will you write?
3. Who will "YOU" be?
4. What kind of setting will your adventure have?
5. What will be the main goal or challenge in your book?
6. What will be the various plots in your story?
7. What kind of choices will appear in your book? (1985)

Each of these steps represents the process that CYOA authors would have undertaken when writing these books. The pamphlet also outlines in some detail how to map out a CYOA book and plan your story. This pamphlet, produced to promote a competition for young writers to have their own CYOA published, is the only example during the series' original publication where the process was talked about in some detail.

#### ***2.5.4. Some Observations on the Nature of Choice***

One of the most interesting aspects of the Choose Your Own Adventure is the way choice was developed and used throughout the series. Through my own close reading of the books I was able to identify that there was a tendency to offer choices that could be considered to be either good or bad choices. Occasionally the story would give the reader two good choices (they both sounded reasonable or interesting) or two bad choices (it doesn't matter what the reader chooses it's probably not going to end well), which made the reader carefully consider their actions. In general the choices that were utilised across the series were designed not to have a predictable outcome; which was a fact that was reiterated by almost all of the authors I interviewed. Sometimes the narrative gave clues to the outcome of a choice, but sometimes the outcome could appear arbitrary. Yet a bad choice fell into two categories; a boring choice (that seemed mundane or uninteresting) or a choice that didn't offer the reader a genuine change to their situation and often lead to an instant death. In this section the writers of the series provide some insight in constructing these choices.

##### ***What makes a good choice?***

Each author interviewed had their own view on what makes a good choice. Edward Packard stated that "[a] good choice is always one that would seem plausible in the circumstances -- what you might choose if this were a real life situation. A wise choice increases the likelihood of success, but doesn't guarantee it. I would very rarely, if at all, offer a choice that made no sense, though it might be a reckless or dumb one." (Edward Packard Interview, April 2014). This philosophy seemed to lie at the heart of most books across the series. Jay Liebold expanded on this notion further by saying "I think the most important thing is for each choice to feel like a reasonable or attractive option. On the one hand, I don't want to give away that one choice is obviously better than another. But there's something deeper here: We make choices in life, blind to their consequences. We only find out if the choice was a good one as we live it out. We live our lives as a kind of CYOA, and in

retrospect we construct the story of the choices we've made. I wanted the choices in my CYOA books to feel like that." (Jay Leibold Interview, July 2015)

By contrast author Louise Munro Foley placed her emphasis on the character or role that the reader inhabits stating "[a] 'good' choice is one that requires YOU to think. And consider the options." (Louise Munro Foley Interview, September 2015). Here the inference is that the choice the reader makes is guided by the character and their situation; that a reader has to understand that different characters and situations require different thinking. Ellen Kushner in contrast observed that "[m]y editors told me that there should be no real connection between the choices YOU made and what then happened to YOU! In other words, if YOU were clever or brave, YOU could still end badly! This made me uncomfortable, but I tried to follow those instructions." (Ellen Kushner Interview, November 2014). What Kushner is identifying here is that unpredictability is an important part of writing these stories. Interestingly both of these authors were edited by Ellen Steiber, who gave her own lengthy insight into the way that choices worked in the series:

"That's an interesting question, because we often would have two choices that seemed neutral or both bad or both good, just to make it harder to predict the turns of the story. Or sometimes we'd flip it—there would be a choice that seemed obviously bad and yet it could lead to something good or vice versa. In all, we worked very hard to avoid predictable outcomes. We wanted the books to be fun, and that means surprising the reader.

Some choices, of course, were based on situation and setting. Ellen Kushner, for example, was playing with historical events of England, so that her choices related to the overthrow of the usurper, King John. And I know that Lou Foley, in *The Mardi Gras Mystery* [Book 65], wanted to get the reader into one of the old New Orleans cemeteries, and had a storyline that led there. So again, the setting and situation go a long way toward determining the choices offered.

To me, there were two kinds of good choices: 1) choices that offered an exciting action of some sort—opening the door to the locked room even if it was forbidden—especially when defying a rule led to more adventures; and 2) the interesting moral choice—often between what is easy or good for YOU versus helping another. Good plotting is based on conflict, so ultimately in CYOA, you [the author] want the choices to create conflict within the reader. Or to paraphrase another writer: for a good story, you need a point where your character has her back against the wall. In CYOAs, it's the reader whose back has to, at least one or twice in the story, wind up with their back against the wall." (Ellen Steiber Interview, November 2014)

From this statement Steiber clearly indicates that choices were designed to facilitate narrative engagement and excitement. However in the event those choices were arbitrarily designed, as Kusher suggests, this sometimes could lead to a lack of narrative cohesion; where the choices made don't necessarily make narrative sense.

### ***What makes a bad choice?***

In contrast authors were clearly able to explain what makes a bad choice, "[a] boring choice is a bad choice. You risk losing the reader. "Instant death" is bad, because you force the reader to go into another story track." (Louise Munro Foley Interview, September 2015). Jay Leibold highlighted that authors were often aware of the difficulty of constructing choices stating that "[i]t's frustrating for the writer, too, if you feel like you haven't come up with a good choice. Some of it has to do with the page limit – you have to bring certain parts of a branch to a quick end so that you can more fully

develop others. I always had 2-3 quick endings near the beginning so that I'd have more pages available in the rest of the book. If the choice is boring, that could also have to do with not having enough space to set up a good choice. Or it could be poor planning." (Jay Leibold Interview, July 2015) It seems clear that bad choices in the series are often a reflection of either poor narrative planning, or using a narrative situation which has limited dramatic potential. However these decisions were often due to the limitations of size in the CYOA format and it was not possible to get around these challenges. *The Melete Effect* in contrast due to its design is not limited in this way.

### 2.5.5. *The Types of Endings*

Through a close-reading of series, I have established that there are five types of endings that can typically be found in CYOA books. It is not possible at this time to undertake a deep analysis of each of these different types so this information is provided as a reference and the basis for further research. The five endings are as follows:

1. **YOU Get There Endings:** The successful resolution of the overall objective. YOU set out to find something, solve a mystery, save something or someone and YOU do so. The best of these endings usually resolves all of the various mysteries and reveals the full scope of the story and where each piece fits. This usually results in the tying up between 3-6 various elements, clues or parts of the story, to provide a cohesive whole that explains everything that has taken place.
2. **YOU Don't Quite Get There Endings:** The partial resolution of the overall objective. YOU find, solve or save only a part of the complete story. This ending is often most like real life, where not everything is resolved neatly. However in these endings, clues are often laid out to suggest that a complete resolution (the YOU Get There Ending) is possible, YOU just need to find it.
3. **YOU Know Nothing Endings:** The complete failure to resolve any of the objectives. YOU find out, or solve some elements of the story, but then decide it is too difficult to continue and opt out of resolving the story at all. These endings are often designed to encourage the reader to overcome their reluctance to making difficult or dangerous choices, as often safe and boring choices result in these types of endings. Because the narrative conclusion seems so unsatisfactory and nothing is resolved, the reader wants to re-engage in the narrative to find a better ending. These types of endings are best used sparingly as too many of these types of endings can result in the reader becoming disinterested in resolving the mystery, because it is too hard. In addition these endings are best used early in the story when leaving and not becoming involved in the story seems more logical and reasonable. If they appear too late, they seem to suggest that author is actively preventing the reader from achieving a good or okay outcome or that the author does not have a satisfactory resolution.
4. **YOU Go Off and Do Something Else Endings:** The objective is completely abandoned in favour of a new objective, which brings with it greater success or an easier resolution. These endings are often of the 'happily-ever after' variety, and result in YOU becoming fabulously wealthy and/or famous. These endings are representative of alternative narrative possibilities that YOU can take, however due to size restrictions of the format they cannot be explored in greater detail. However these endings can have darker implications, by the abandonment of the objective of the narrative, this can result in the abandonment of friends and family for the sake of a self-interested goal. Only occasionally will the author address the moral implications of YOUR choice in these types of endings.

5. **Too Bad Endings:** In which as a result of choice YOU die gruesomely or are forced to live a tragic/boring/horrific existence for the remainder of your life and sometimes feature the phrase “Too Bad” in their writing. These endings can be very ad-hoc and seem to defy the logic of the world and the characters. In a best case they represent some unexpected yet plausible happening in the world of the story. In the worst case the endings defy both the logic of the world and the characters and this is extremely damaging to the reading experience as it disengages the reader from the experience. When an ending defies the logic of the world, it can be partially forgiven as something that YOU were not knowledgeable about. However when an ending defies the logic of the character (i.e. a good character becomes evil for no discernable reason) it is not forgivable because the reader feels that they have been cheated by the experience, and this can create an impression that the experience is rigged and a good resolution is not possible. These endings are often remembered fondly by readers of the series.

### ***2.5.6. Conclusions and further research***

This illustrative example has attempted to provide an overview of the history of the CYOA series. One of the main reasons for conducting my research was to gain an understanding of the creative processes involved in writing these books. It was also to preserve the working knowledge involved in these books before the people who wrote, edited and illustrated these books died, three of the interviewees were in their eighties when I spoke with them (Edward Packard, Louise Munro Foley and Richard Brightfield) and one of the most important voices in the CYOA story, Ray Montgomery, died before I had a chance to interview him about his history and creative process. It is my hope that this information will provide a deeper understanding of how this series functioned and what factors were important to writing these books. There remains much to research here and at a later stage I intend to write a complete history of the series.

## **2.6. Choice Structures found in Choice-Based Narratives**

In identifying Branching Structures as a critical part of the Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) series, it becomes necessary to discuss the underlying structures that across Choice-Based Narratives. These structures need to be understood before a creative writer or an experience designer can build a Choice-Based Narrative. There are numerous structures and sub-mechanisms which support different interactions but not all facilitate the construction of narrative meaning. This section aims to provide an overview of the most common structures that facilitate the construction of Choice-Based Narratives.

The structures for choice are made up of two well known and established techniques for representing choice in narrative paths (Samsel and Wimberley, 1998). The first is tree or branching structures, which is called this because when you map out all of the relevant choices in a diagram it resembles a tree. The second is database or non-linear narrative structures, which allow the audience to move through them in any order that they choose; there is no linear path through the experience. It is important to recognise that these definitions are tailored towards the creation and writing of Choice-Based Narratives and so do not always conform to the strict notions or formal requirements of trees and other graph structures in mathematics or to the formal definitions of databases as identified in computer science. Here these definitions (trees, branching structures and databases) are used informally to avoid the formal constraints which may limit the process of creating these narratives.

In each section a description of the choice structures is provided and a visual illustration is given. At the end of each description an example will be provided to demonstrate the various structures at work. These examples are taken from a variety of Choice-Based Narratives including video games, Interactive Fiction, and books such as the Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) series. Please note that the structures identified here are not an exhaustive list of the permutations that exist when creating choice structures, they represent instead the most obvious and visible structures as based on previously published examples.

### 2.6.1. Tree and Branching Structures

Trees and Branching Structures have been used extensively to enable choice to occur in a variety of mediums including books, websites, computer software and hypertext. In its simplest and most basic form a Tree involves a choice between two alternatives (or possibly more) and from that different paths originate.

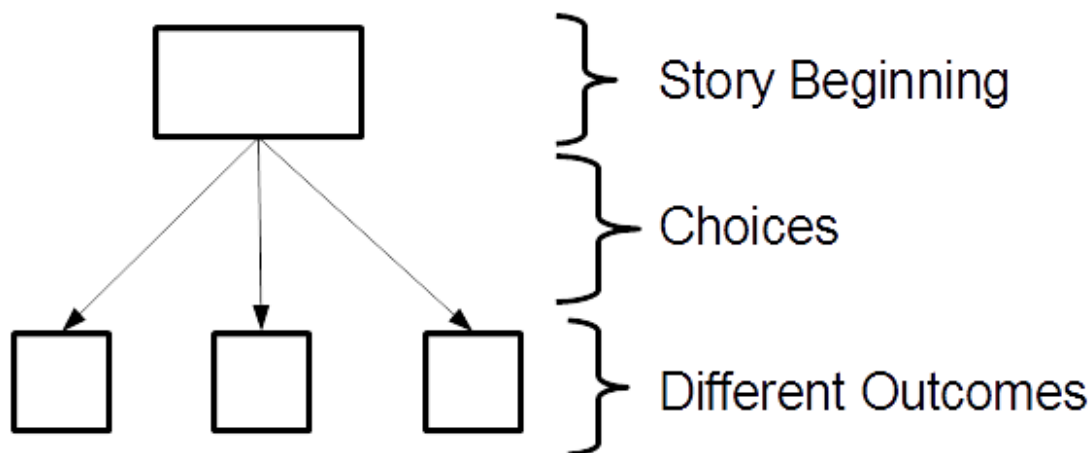


Figure 2.5: Basic Branching Structure

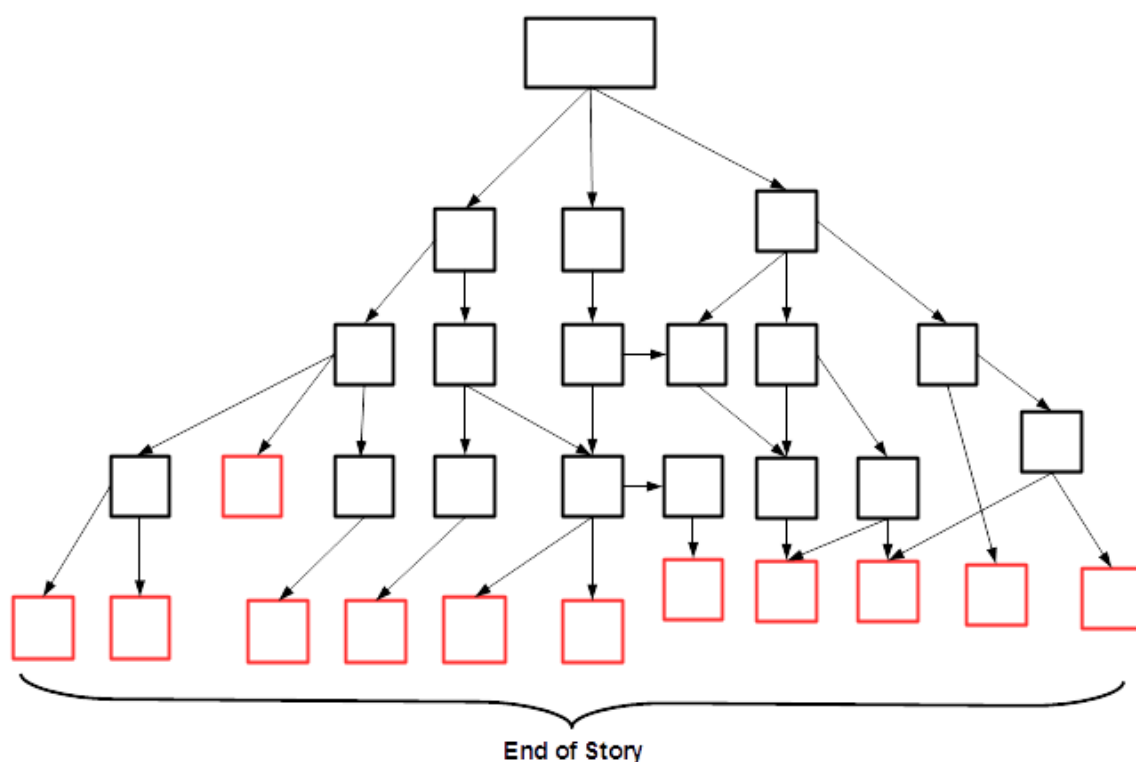
In this section I will be looking at a selection of possible tree structures, and how they can influence choice. This list is taken from a variety of sources, the first is Samsel and Wimberley's *Writing for Interactive Media* (1998), the second is Glassner's *Interactive Storytelling* (2004) and the third is Ryan's *Avatars of Story* (2006). There is also Claude Berge's work analysing the writings of Oulipo which is also instructive (in Motte, 1986, p.115-125), but as his work largely does not name these structures and only visually represents them without detailed explanation, he will not be discussed here.

#### ***An Extended Branching Tree***

An Extended Branching Tree (Samsel and Wimberley p.26, 1998) offers the fullest most complex variation of narrative within any of the branching narrative variations. Each choice leads to multiple different paths, with broad narrative differences and a wide variety of endings. Glassner refers to this mechanism as a fully populated tree (p.241-242, 2004). Glassner and Samsel and Wimberley (1998) both comment on how difficult and complex this

structure can be to achieve. An extended branching tree is not impossible but it does require a lot of forethought and planning.

Within an Extended Branching Tree, the narrative can exist in two forms with regards to the world of the story. The first form lets the choices take place and impact upon the same narrative world. The second and even rarer (and which requires yet more planning) is when each choice takes place within a different narrative world. This is difficult to achieve because each world must be carefully defined and constructed.



**Figure 2.6: Extended Branching Tree Structure**

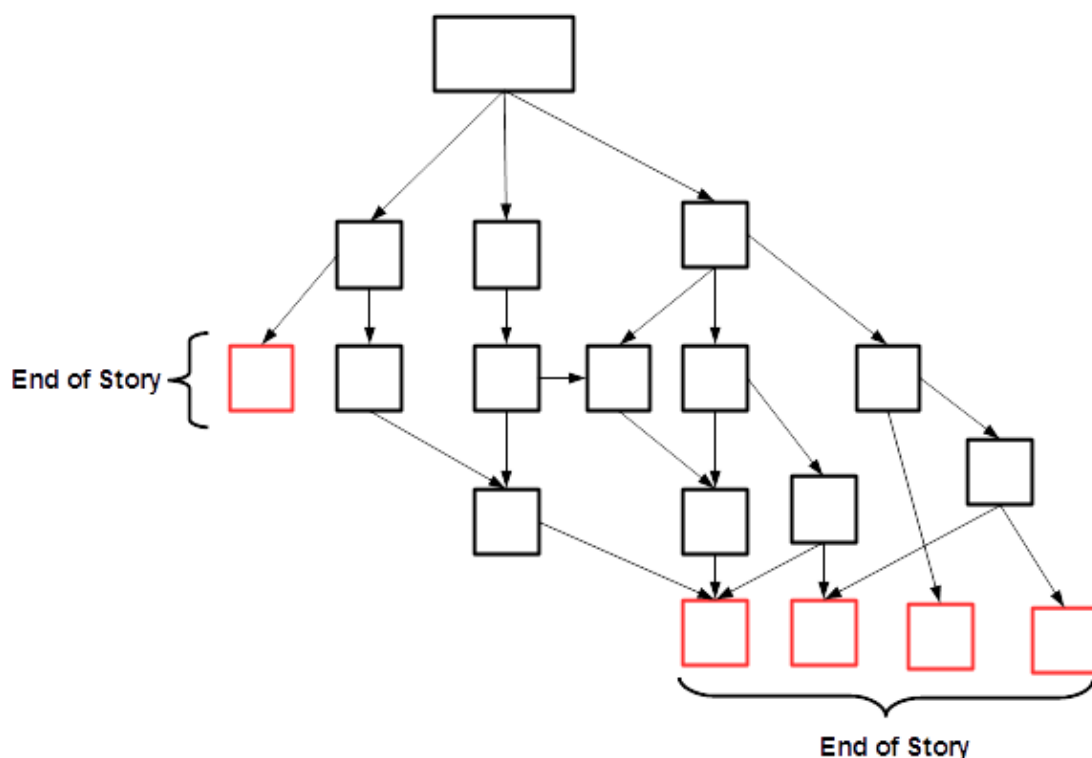
An example of the first form from the CYOA Series is *The Secret Treasure of Tibet* (Book 36) written by Richard Brightfield (1984) in which YOU (the second-person hero of the story) are tasked with finding a lost city in Tibet. Each choice leads to a genuine new exploration of different parts of the world and story. As a result many of the actions change according to the different choices and certain characters exist only in certain stories. However internal consistency remains high, and characters who commit bad deeds do so in all versions of the storyline and the initial goal and broader goal are both achievable within the frame of the story.

An examples of the second form is another CYOA Book , *Mystery of the Secret Room* (Book 63) written by Ellen Kushner (1986) which integrates 3 different worlds into its storylines. Two are variations of our existing world (one in the present, another in the future). The third world is a fantasy world unlike our own. This type of structure was more prevalent in the high choice/high ending phase of the CYOA series but disappeared as the series progressed.



### ***An Unbalanced Tree***

An Unbalanced Tree as identified by Glassner (2004) features a series of choices but often only a few paths lead to long and satisfying narratives. This structure is by the far the most common structure found in existing Choice-Based Narratives, particularly in printed books. An unbalanced tree often has two or more stories that are well developed. It is also common for this structure to have multiple story paths that are wildly divergent (yet all paths ostensibly take place in the same narrative world) with many different endings.



**Figure 2.7: An Unbalanced Tree Structure**

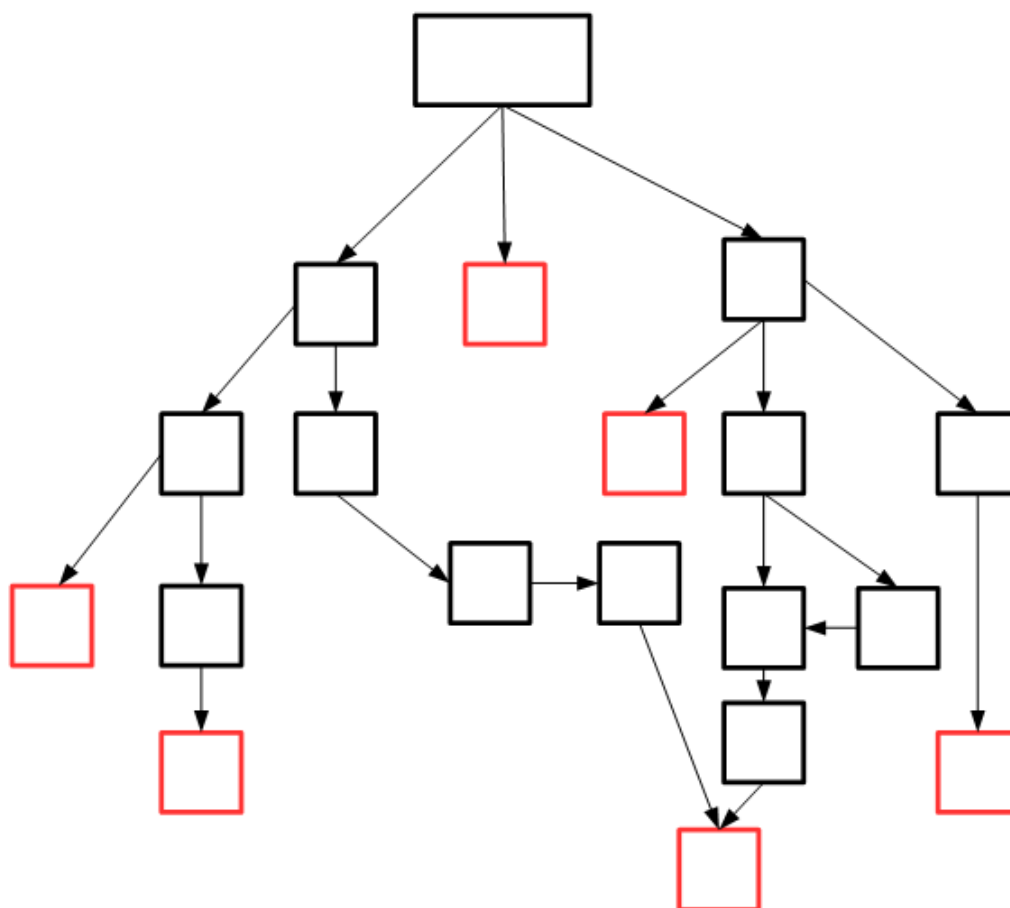
There are many examples of this type of narrative structure because it is by far the most typical found in Choice-Based Narratives. An example can be found in the Choose Your Own Adventure Super Adventure – Danger Zones (Book 2 in the series) written by R.A. Montgomery (1987) in which there are three story pathways but only two are developed in detail.

An Unbalanced Tree as a form of branching should be compared with the Pruned Tree and the Partial Bulging Tree.

### ***The Pruned Tree (Branching with Forced Paths)***

In the Pruned Tree structure, the creator favours one storyline over many others, so that although choice is available, the branches are pruned until we only receive the longest storyline that has been developed. As a diagram it represents a tree whose branches have been pruned. Samsel and Wimberley refer to this as Branching with Forced Paths (p.27-28, 1998) as often the choices forces the audience into a specific course of action.

There may be cul-de-sacs (Samsel and Wimberley, p.25-26 and p.93-100, 1998) diversions, merges and switches (see Sub Mechanisms section below), they will all eventually lead back to the central path. A Pruned Tree is different from an Unbalanced Tree because it focuses on one story at the expense of the others. There may be other stories in a Pruned Tree but they will be smaller and less significant than the central story.



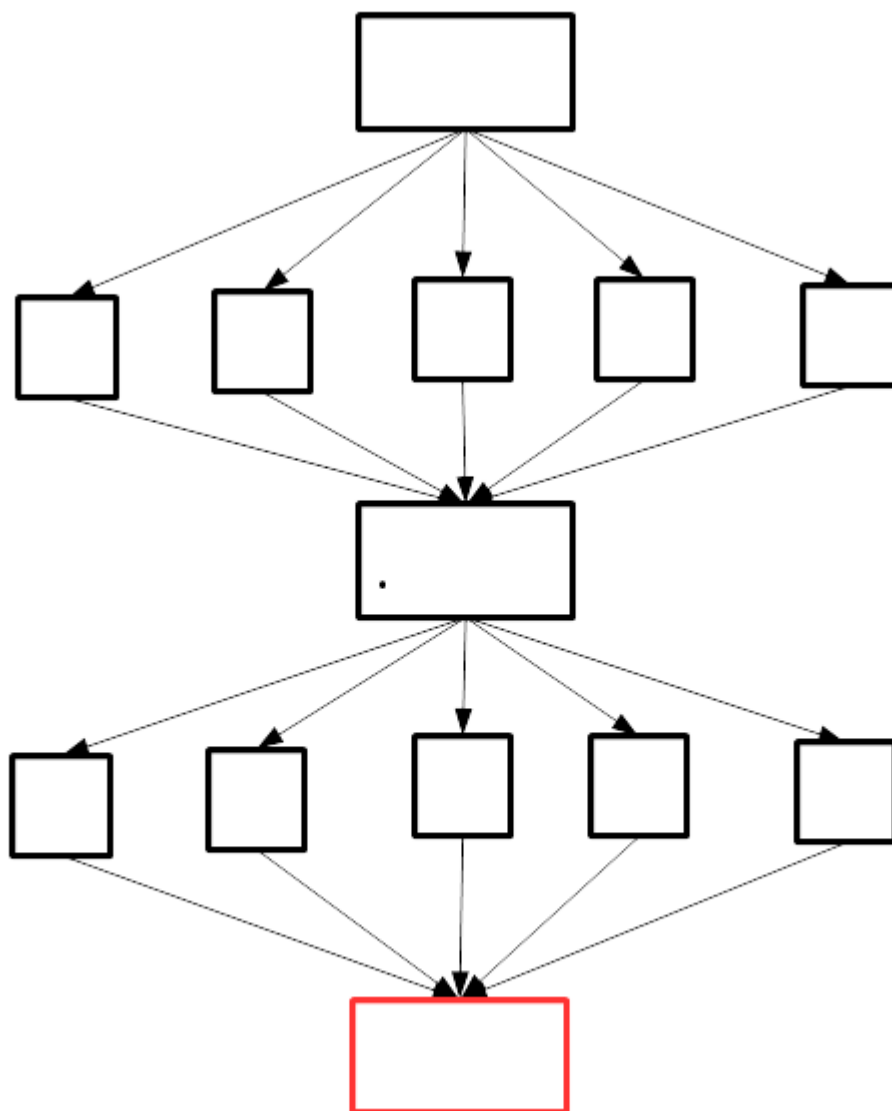
**Figure 2.8: Pruned Tree Structure (Branching with Forced Paths)**

Examples of this structure can be found in the later books in the CYOA series. As the series progressed the number of endings and choices decreased. This meant that many of the authors focused on longer storylines that developed into a single primary storyline. Two examples are the Edward Packard books *Superbike* (Book 124, 1992) and *Fugitive* (Book 182, 1998).

Pruned Trees can be disappointing for an audience because their curiosity and interest must lie in the story being told. Agency is also limited in this structure as most choices will not allow movement away from the central story.

### ***A Bulging Tree***

A Bulging Tree (Glassner, 2004, p.244) is when a series of choices allow exploration within the same story world but all of the choices will eventually return the audience to a predetermined ending. So although choice is possible, it leads to a set ending. Both Ryan (2006, p.104-105) and Samsel and Wimberley (1998, p.25-26) look at this form slightly differently by viewing the Bulging Tree as one in a chain that represents different forms of progress within a narrative. Ryan identifies this as a Flowchart while Samsel and Wimberley identify it as Branching with Bottlenecking. In Ryan's version it is possible for the audience to skip to a later Bulging Tree through the choices made (see also A Partial Bulging Tree), whereas in Samsel and Wimberley this option is not available. These permutations though offering different outcomes in the final narrative are ostensibly the same form as described by Glassner.



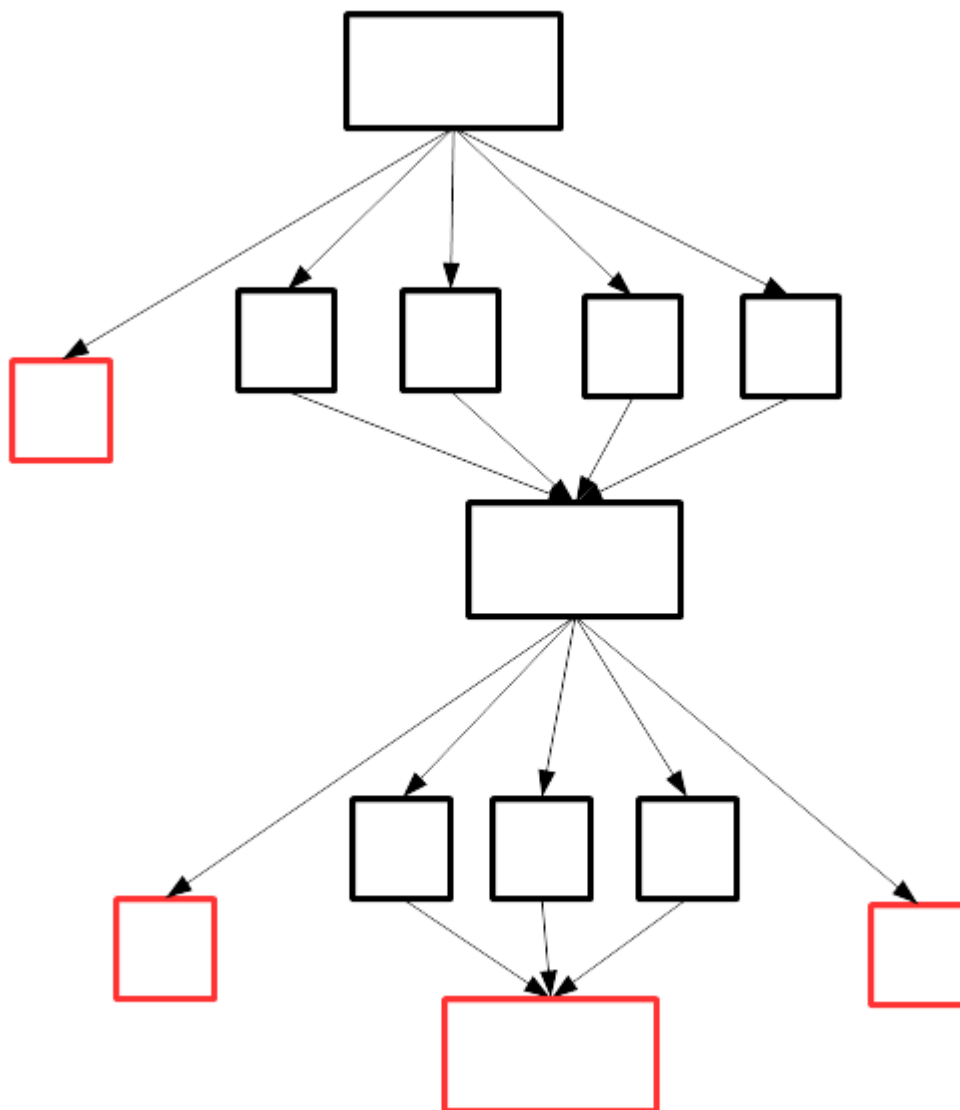
**Figure 2.9: Bulging Tree Structure (Flowchart/Branching with Bottle-necking)**

An example of a Bulging Tree is the Time Machine series of books published by Bantam books from 1984 to 1989. There were 25 books in the series and each book features a single mission that was to be completed by YOU the second person hero. There is only one ending in this book and it is only through exploration of the various choices within the time period that was the setting (e.g. the Spanish Inquisition or World War II) that the final ending could be reached.

By extension modern video games often utilise the Ryan/Samsel and Wimberley model to control the action and story in the form of chapters. This device is particularly used in first-person and third-person shooters, platform games and adventure games, where each mission can be separated into a single chapter each leading to the same endpoint rather than existing in one large continuous world.

### ***A Partial Bulging Tree***

Glassner identifies a Partial Bulging Tree (2004, p.244) as differing from a standard Bulging Tree in that it has multiple endings but only one ending that is considered the true ending. A Partial Bulging Tree is slightly different to a Pruned Tree as the shaping of the Pruned Tree allows for one main story and one or two smaller side stories to coexist. In a Partial Bulging Tree all choices that do not result in the true ending lead instead to false or negative endings. Whereas a Pruned Tree can be disappointing to the spectator for the lack of choice and agency, a Partial Bulging Tree is slightly more successful because the audience from the outset assumes only one true ending and so is primed to continue searching for that ending.



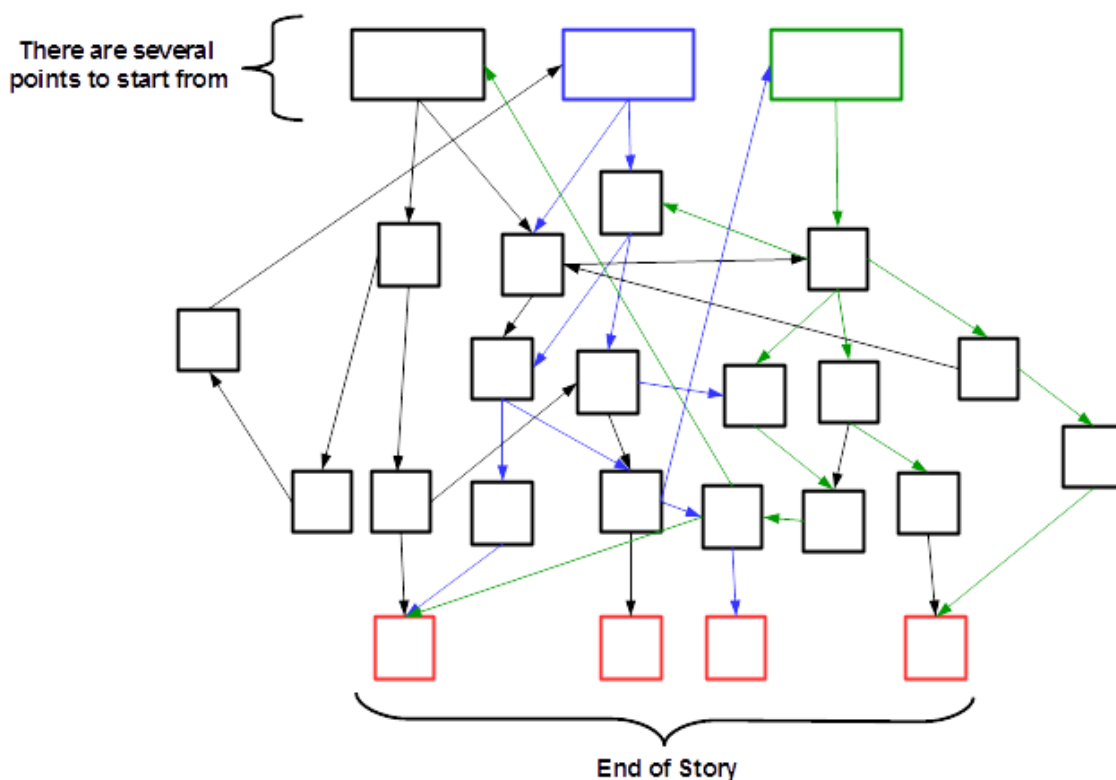
**Figure 2.10: Partial Bulging Tree**

An example of this is the Be an Interplanetary Spy series published by Bantam Books from 1983 to 1985. In this series 'YOU' were a spy tasked with various missions across the galaxy. Each book was a specific mission which held only one true ending which was always located

spatially at the end of the book, so the reader knew to continue progressing in this direction to complete the mission. Although there were other endings they always represented a failure in the completion of the set mission (and often featured a gruesome death). Much Interactive Fiction such as the Zork series (Infocom, 1981-1982) and Planetfall (Infocom, 1983) and Adventure Games such as Under a Killing Moon (Access Software, 1994) and Blade Runner (Westwood, 1997) also uses this structure.

### **Modular Tree**

A Modular Tree represents a more complicated concept than the previous trees and branching described above. There are several points at which the audience can start the experience and it allows for multiple contexts to be achieved depending on the selections made by the audience. This means that the scenes or nodes can have multiple meanings and context depending on their placement. So that in one version of the narrative certain scenes will have different meanings and context than in another version.



**Figure 2.11: Modular Tree Structure**

*The Melete Effect* is an example of a Modular Tree. Depending on the choices made by the audience throughout this experience they will see various scenes from the character Mary Melete's life as a journalist. Various scenes and nodes are designed to take on different meanings depending on which of the three storylines is represented.

### **Sub-Mechanisms within Choice Structures**

Many of the above examples of Trees and Branching also feature sub-mechanisms that help the creator to move the narrative in a particular direction or otherwise encourage the audience to move in a specific direction. These mechanisms although limiting the agency of the audience can be necessary to maintain cohesion and immersion within a narrative. The four sub-mechanisms are as follows:

### **Diversions**

A diversion is when a choice leads the audience into a short detour but then they are returned to a main story path quickly. This diversion provides a little bit more detail about the story and the characters, but the rest of the narrative remains the same.

### **Merges**

A merge is a longer and more significant diversion within a story that then shifts the audience to another branch of the storyline that they may not have chosen previously. This results in closing one particular storyline into another storyline. The original storyline cannot be returned to; it has been merged with the new storyline.

### **Loopbacks**

A Loopback is a return to a place where the audience has already been. In most cases the loopback represents the same location and time as when the audience visited originally, there is no change. This can lead to the audience feeling as though they are stuck in a narrative loop from which they cannot escape. Occasionally however a loopback can return to the same location but at a different time, serving to move the story in direction or to examine the spaces in which the narrative is set.

### **Switches**

A Switch is a sub-mechanism that leads to the abandonment of the current story to take you to the beginning of another major storyline. It is in effect a resetting of the choices made by the audience to lead them back to begin another narrative path. However it may be possible to switch back to original storyline at a later stage.

It should be noted these four sub-mechanisms are common to all Choice-Based Narratives regardless of their medium. These mechanisms are used predominantly to control the size and complexity of any given Choice Structure.

## **2.6.2. Database Structures**

In Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2001) he identifies the concept of the database as being at the centre of his definition of new media. As a form the database has much to offer Choice-Based Narrative in that a database, literally a collection of data that can be sorted and reordered depending on the parameters, can be given over to an audience to control. While Manovich initially separates database and narrative as two separate forms: "the database represents the world as a list of items, and it refuses to order this list. In contrast a narrative creates a cause and effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events)." (p.225, 2001) He eventually acknowledges that narratives require that "the user must uncover their underlying logic while proceeding through them – their algorithm." (p.225, 2001) Although Manovich here is juxtaposing narratives with games, the analogy

fits well to the concept of Choice-Based Narratives. Once again, as stated at the beginning of this section, this working definition of the database does not directly conform to the formal definition of database as understood in computer science. Manovich's definition is used however because of its ability to repurpose the database for narrative construction, and thus is the definition that has been utilised throughout this dissertation.

Furthermore time has shown that Manovich's separation between narrative and database was an artificial one, created by Manovich to help justify and identify the boundaries of new media and to separate new media from existing media at the time he was writing. This is not a criticism of Manovich, merely an observation that since that time, the database as a form has ceased to be viewed as new media artefact and is now viewed more broadly as an all purpose media artefact. The separation imposed by Manovich has been reconciled by creators and practitioners and also by theorists such as Marie-Laure Ryan who states "...if the database is properly structured, and if its contents are appropriate, the unpredictable probes and always incomplete exploration of the reader will not prevent the emergence of narrative meaning." (p.149, 2006). Ryan goes on to state:

"The reconciliation of database and narrative is facilitated when the following conditions are met:

1. A storyline with which readers are already familiar. When the global coherence of the story is not problematic, readers can bring a magnifying glass to certain parts without losing sight of the whole plot.
2. A very modular narrative, whose individual parts are themselves more or less autonomous stories.
3. A narrative that foregrounds the setting, so that learning about the world in which the story takes place is at least as important to the reader as following the narrative events proper.
4. A database design and a linking philosophy sufficiently transparent to enable readers to aim with precision at the elements of the story that they want to expand." (p.149, 2006)

It is from this starting point that Database Structures and Non-Linear Paths can be discussed in relations to Choice-Based Narratives, because it is from here that it is now possible to have database narratives that enable the audience to choose what will happen next.

From this definition arise two forms of choice structures that can facilitate Database Narratives. Each form prompts exploration through the experience that it creates, but a narrative can only be considered successfully constructed if the parameters defined by Ryan are met. These forms are as follows: Hypertext (Hyperlinks) and The Maze (Multilinear). A description of each form and an example is provided below.

### ***Hypertext (Hyperlinks)***

Hypertext and hyperlinks remain the oldest and most common form of database narrative. The navigation of a world is achieved through accessing links, and although this can exist in an analogue form (Nelson, 1981) it is most commonly associated with navigating the internet and the world wide web. A good example of this is Maximus Clarke's adaptation of Jorge Luis Borges' short story *The Book of Sand* (<http://bookofsand.net/hypertext/>) which transforms Borges story not only into an act of deciphering the order of the story, but also serves as an exploration of the nature of truth and fiction.

If there is one problem with Hypertext it is that the form remains the most medium dependent of all of the database narratives. Although hypertext documents can exist in



analogue form (Nelson, 1981) they are easier to navigate in electronic form. As such hypertext documents are typically limited to electronic formats which means that they cannot be easily utilised to create works which can exist in other mediums.

### ***The Maze (Multilinear)***

Ryan (2006) describes the Maze as a “the topography of a virtual world.” She goes on to state “The user wanders across this topography, trying to reach certain locations that correspond with the liberation from the labyrinth, while avoiding other endpoints that represent failure. The maze thus traces a spatial narrative with several endings, and every itinerary of the user represents a different adventure in the ... world.” (p.106).

The spatial nature of the Maze allows for its adaptation across various mediums. It can take the form of an Alternative Reality Game similar to the Why So Serious campaign ([www.whysoserious.com](http://www.whysoserious.com) - now defunct, but points to the creators of the campaign 42 Entertainment [42 Entertainment, work section – Why so serious?]) to promote the film *The Dark Knight* (2008). In which the character of the Joker recruited acolytes (the audience) to decipher codes and perform tasks for him in the real world. It can also take the form of theatre performance where the audience can wander through the experience and construct the narrative as they go depending on what they discover and how they interpret this. An example is *The Drowned Man* by Punchdrunk Theatre (2014) in which the audience moves through a real four storey building, the fictitious Temple Studios, to uncover the story of the performance.

Here the Maze as a choice structure, demphasises the quality of choice. Although the audience makes choice it's not always conscious and/or the ramifications of the choice are not always clear. The Maze represents a shift towards emergent narrative and is included here to illustrate how easily choice structures can move across the Spectrum of Interaction (see Figure 2.3). The Maze structure does allow for Choice-Based Narratives to arise, but it generally creates experiences where the audience is not necessarily aware of the consequences of their choices.

Each of these forms requires the audience to undertake an untangling of the information presented. This cognitive sorting by the audience is how the narrative is constructed, and the audience will create a narrative based on the experience that they have had. Database Narratives also lend themselves to allowing successful narrative construction after the experience is over. So while narrative meaning can be made during the experience, it can also be reconstructed at the experience's conclusion. This requires the audience to invest more heavily in the experience in order for them to satisfactorily create meaning out of what they've participated in.

## **2.7. Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter I have looked at a variety of different literature and practice in order to establish the boundaries of what a Choice-Based Narrative is. Prior to this research I was not able to easily situate this form, and in fact this chapter has drawn upon many bodies of literature to appropriately situate this form. I began by situating Choice-Based Narrative and its relationship to the broader term Interactive Narrative. I then discussed the history of the conflict between narratology and ludology and how Choice-Based Narrative sits somewhere between these two fields. I have then provided a brief history of Choice-Based Narrative as a form. This then included a detailed examination of the

Choose Your Own Adventure Series as an example of Choice-Based Narrative as a form, information which to my knowledge has not been previously documented. Finally I have looked at a selection of choice structures found in Choice-Based Narratives as a way of understanding how this form functions. This chapter has sought to meet the research aim of defining how Choice-Based Narratives are distinct from other forms of Interactive Narrative, which forms a part of my second research aim. It is hoped that this arrangement of literature can be used to serve as the foundation of a broader examination of Choice-Based Narratives as a form.

### 3. Methodology: Theoria, Poiesis and Praxis

As a creative writing practitioner, my writing practice has constantly evolved. Each of my writing projects has required a different set of practices or approaches to complete the task at hand. Sometimes there are overlaps in my practice between projects, but at other times, there is no similarity at all; instead they evolve with each project as it is realised. As this research is practice-led it has enabled me to interrogate my processes and practise, to develop my notions on how my practice works. In developing *The Melete Effect* there has been an attempt made to identify the commonalities in my existing practice and to consolidate it with the needs of creating a Choice-Based Narrative. This chapter will discuss interplay between theory (Theoria) methodologies (Praxis) and methods (Poiesis) in order to realise *The Melete Effect* as a Choice-Based Narrative. In this chapter I examine the theoretical framework, methodology and methods involved in my practice-based research for *The Melete Effect* and more broadly Choice-Based Narrative.

#### 3.1. Introducing the Algorithm

In the last chapter I introduced the work of Lev Manovich (2001) and his notion of a database as a storytelling construct. Manovich separates the database into two components, the structure or form that the database takes, and the algorithm that is used to parse the database to gain information. Here Manovich's definition of both database and algorithm are used specifically in a new media context, and he defines these terms very differently to their standard definitions in the fields of mathematics and computer science. Moving forward it is these definitions that I will be using as the basis for explaining my methodology. In fact the word algorithm is used informally throughout as shorthand to explain my methodology, it is a process that is repeatable, however unlike the mathematical notion of algorithm, this process can have multiple outcomes. This will be explored further below.

Manovich explicitly separates the database structure from its algorithm, in discussing computer games he states "...not all new media objects are explicitly new media objects. Computer games, for instance, are experienced by their players as narratives." (2001, p.221) He goes on to state that [w]hile computer games do not follow database logic, they appear to be ruled by another logic – that of the algorithm. They demand that a player execute an algorithm in order to win. ... As the player proceeds through the game, she gradually discovers the rules that operate in the universe constructed by this game. She learns its hidden logic – in short its algorithm." (Manovich, 2001, p.222-3)

As Manovich continues, he recognises that what he calls 'the algorithm' is distinct from the database as a whole. And it is the algorithm that shares a relationship with narrative "[i]n contrast to most games, most narratives do not require algorithm-like behaviour from their readers. However, narratives and games are similar in that the user must uncover their underlying logic while proceeding through them – their algorithm. (Manovich, 2001, p.225) The algorithm as a concept is relevant to the construction of Choice-Based Narratives and specifically *The Melete Effect*. I would suggest that what I am constructing with *The Melete Effect* is an algorithm that allows for multiple possibilities that can be reconstructed in different ways by the reader/audience/spectator. That the narrative that I am creating borrows from the database as a structure to allow for multiple reader/spectator experiences. Manovich describes this as:

“[t]he ‘user’ of a narrative is traversing a database, following links between its records as established by the database’s creator. An Interactive Narrative (which can also be called a hypertext in an analogy to hypertext) can be understood as the sum of multiple trajectories through a database. A traditional linear narrative is one among many other possible trajectories, that is, a particular choice made within a hypertext.” (2001, p.227)

This neatly defines the experience of reading a Choice-Based Narrative, and describes accurately how *The Melete Effect* functions as an experience. Each viewing will construct a linear experience, yet each subsequent viewing can be different in story and construction.

While an algorithm can explain the way in which Choice-Based Narratives function as an experience, it is also an elegant way of describing the process of creative practice. In discussing the development of *The Melete Effect* the idea of an algorithm and algorithmic thinking have served as the basis of my methodology and have been critical to understanding my own processes and approaches to writing. In the next section I will define this algorithm and compare it to the notion of the organic process.

### 3.2. The Algorithm and the Organic Process

There is a common misrepresentation that creative writing cannot be taught (Rodriguez, 2008); that it is a process accomplished through intuition, sensing and other processes difficult to quantify. Supposedly it is the organic nature of creative practice that contributes to producing captivating creative work. Subsequently, the algorithmic or systematic approach to producing creative writing can be considered repugnant by some practitioners who seek to maintain “continuing mythologies about the naturalness, mystery and spontaneity of the writing process.” (Smith, 2006, p.17) Yet I would contend that the organic process, as practitioners conceive it, is in fact an algorithm that is not yet properly understood. Through my own practice I have recognized that the approach I take is different to the bulk of other practitioners. The language that I engage in first as a practitioner is not the language of the organic; it is rather the language of the algorithmic.

An algorithm, in its most basic form, is simply a process that can be repeated. An informal definition according to Stone (1971) is “a set of rules that precisely defines a sequence of operations.” (1971, p. 4). Therefore in creative practice the algorithm is a repeatable process that a practitioner engages in. The adjective algorithmic, in contrast, is used here to describe the collection of algorithms that a practitioner may use throughout their practice (whether on a project-by-project basis or over their career).

The algorithm though common to the digital media arts, with practitioners such as Weight (2006) discussing its importance to digital arts practices, is rarely discussed in relation to creative writing practice. Smith (2006) is something of an exception who identifies the algorithm as a useful process to creative writing practice which she describes as:

...the process of writing has a series of underlying structures (though these are different from the structures of the resulting work, will keep changing as the work develops, and are multiple and rhizomatic). As such the method emphasizes the algorithmic aspect of writing. That is, it conceives of the writing process as the invention and application of step-by-step, well-defined procedures. These procedures are iterative, that is they are repeatable.” (Smith, 2006, p.17-18)

What practitioners call the 'craft' – that process of taking the first complete transmission of an idea and refining it, is the creative algorithm at work. It is this process of refinement that is used to make a creative work complete. For a creative writer, this process is accomplished by drafting and editing, for a musician it is achieved through repetitive practice of piece, and so forth. Each practitioner has their own version of the algorithmic that they use to refine the work that they create, making it more comprehensive, succinct and complete in its representation of the idea that they envisaged.

The organic, however is a much vaguer concept to define. As a practitioner I instinctively understand what the organic is, but it is not easy to put into words. When I do, I describe it in terms of sensory intuition. "I feel that..."; "It's just a sense I have..." The organic is often considered the purest form of creation, but paradoxically it is ephemeral and for some practitioners, to define it, is to destroy it. The organic is an unconscious process; perhaps without a conscious effort on the part of the practitioner to understand how it works. Ghiselin (1985) describes it as follows:

"The creative process in its unconscious action has often been compared to the growth of a child in the womb. The comparison is a good one, as it nicely communicates the important fact that the process is an organic development, and it helps to dispel the notion that creation is simply an act of canny calculation, governed by wish, will, and expediency." (1985, p.11)

It is fair to state that what is 'organic' for me may not be 'organic' for you. The interaction between the organic and the algorithmic is complex and different for each practitioner. Within my own practice it is common for the algorithmic to be utilised from the point of creation to shape the direction of my creative writing. So much so that in writing *The Melete Effect* the algorithmic has taken precedence over the organic. For other practitioners there has been a tendency to see my writing as 'problematic' or 'difficult' because they 'don't get' or 'can't understand' my practice. To them we are both affecting the same outcome, yet my practice appears unnecessarily complex. It is my intention that through the examination of the interplay between the organic and the algorithmic, that my approach to my research and practice will be more clearly understood.

### **3.3. The development of *The Melete Effect***

*The Melete Effect* is not the first instance in which I have utilised the algorithmic in my creative writing. In some ways the algorithm as a process has always been present in my work since I began writing, and it is through this research that I have been able to identify and define this. *The Melete Effect* due to its structure heightens and highlights the importance of the algorithm.

There are many ways to describe this creative writing, the first being to the potential reader:

*The Melete Effect* tells the story of Mary Melete a journalist who works for a newspaper in Franklin D.A., the capital of the United States of Columbia. As a journalist she has covered some of the greatest stories of her time, such as the break-in at the Sandgate Hotel and the destruction of Moscovw and the rise and fall of Los Liberatores revolution in Santo Cristos. To get each story Melete will put her life on the line and you can choose how she will respond in each scene. By making a choice you will decide what will become *The Melete Effect*.

The second is to an academic reader or someone interested in narrative structure or experimental narrative:

*The Melete Effect* is a Choice-Based Narrative, designed to be an interactive experience in which the audience determines the direction of the story that they wish to experience. Choice-Based Narratives provide choices at designated junctures, the story is told through episodic and distinct units or nodes that allow for the audience to make choices. The author of this type of narrative has prepared each of the different permutations of the story in advance, and typically the narrative is mapped out in a structure which can be followed by the author, but which is not immediately apparent to the audience. A Choice-Based Narrative is designed to encourage multiple explorations of the narrative experience.

These two descriptions provide a complete overview of *The Melete Effect*, from the perspectives of both the creative writer and the potential reader/audience. As a Choice-Based Narrative, *The Melete Effect* has a clear requirement for algorithmic thinking, which is inherent to the form. This algorithmic thinking evolved in three distinct phases often in cooperation with the organic. These three stages I first encountered in design research practice (Crouch & Pearce 2012), but can be traced back to Aristotle's poetics (2013), are paraphrased here as follows:

- Theoria: theorizing or contemplation, especially the theorising of what the truth may be.
- Praxis: the way in which we do things.
- Poiesis: the activity that produces things, using technical and planning skills. (Crouch & Pearce 2012)

These three stages can also be identified by the alternate terms of Theory (Theoria), Methodology (Praxis) and Methods (Poiesis). Smith and Dean (2009), through their iterative cyclic-web approach, argue that all of these parts constitute creative practice, and so to ignore specific parts is to misrepresent what creative practice is. This reflects what I too have discovered through my own research and practice; that the writing of *The Melete Effect* involved a constant interaction between these different phases. In order to fully explore the juxtaposition between the algorithmic and the organic, it is helpful to examine the interrelationship of these phases, which is represented in the table below.

**Table 3.1: The Melete Effect Development Timeframe**

Timeframe	Creative Practice Phase	Description of Activity
March to July 2013	Theoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ludology versus Narratology theoretical research</li> </ul>
August to October 2013	Poiesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First iteration of <i>The Melete Effect</i></li> </ul>
November 2013 to January 2014	Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of the Story Choice Framework</li> <li>• The recognized importance of choice structures in creating Choice-Based Narratives</li> </ul>
February to June 2014	Theoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of the Choose Your Own Adventure series</li> <li>• Researching Priming, Misdirection, Stage Magic and Genre</li> </ul>
April 2014	Poiesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing Choose Your Own Adventure</li> </ul>

to February 2016		Authors
June 2015 to March 2016	Poiesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing of the second iteration of <i>The Melete Effect</i></li> </ul>
September 2015 to January 2016	Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The identification of CYOA branching structures</li> <li>• The development of Tessellations as a mechanism</li> </ul>
January 2016 to April 2016	Theoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researching counterfactuals in narratives and Choice-Based Narratives</li> </ul>
April to May 2016	Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding how counterfactuals and choices impact on the construction of Choice-Based Narratives.</li> </ul>
May to July 2016	Theoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The documentation of tessellations, the organic and the algorithmic for the final chapters of the research</li> </ul>
August 2016 to February 2017	Poiesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The third (and final) iteration of <i>The Melete Effect</i></li> </ul>
March 2017 to June 2017	Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final summation of the process</li> </ul>
July to December 2017	Theoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The finalisation of the creative practice research</li> </ul>

This table represents my research from the time I commenced my PhD up until my final submission date. What can quickly be taken from this table is the order in which I engage my practice. I think about an idea (theoria), I write it (poiesis) and then I work out what I have done (praxis).

Theoria → Poiesis → Praxis

It was surprising and gratifying to see this process repeated in such a consistent way and to be able to identify it clearly as *my* creative practice. However this is in sharp contrast to how I was taught to practice formally which was in the following order:

Praxis → Poiesis → Theoria

This order is an extension of the practitioner's point of view, where doing is valued more importantly than the theory. In my experience as a student at the Victorian College of the Arts both as a theatre director (2002) and a playwright (2012) it was the Praxis, the methodology, that was always explained first and the Poiesis arose from that Praxis. From a purely practitioner's point of view, the Theoria is often left out as only the Praxis and Poiesis matter, and reasonably a practitioner who creates and does not wish to theorize their process will only ever engage in the following:

Praxis → Poiesis

This is problematic in creative practice pedagogy because it develops practitioners who never fully understand where their ideas are coming from and where their practice sits within the overall context and history of their field or medium.

However, in environments where research is paramount, the ordering of Praxis /Poiesis/Theoria, may be considered to be the default for those practitioners who bring their practice into the academy. The practitioner is given an approach to their practice (methodology), they create the practice (methods) and then they reflect and develop a theory about what was created. This algorithm is the approach that is favoured when teaching practitioners how to practice.

Remember that for designers (as identified by Crouch & Pearce [2012]) the three phases are represented as:

Theoria → Praxis → Poiesis

This ordering (as I have demonstrated) is not the only permutation available, but is perhaps the most commonly identifiable, through existing literature (Crouch & Pearce 2012; Lidwell, Holden & Butler 2010; Smith & Dean 2009; Barrett & Bolt 2007) and through discussion with design practitioners.

Shifting the order of the three phases of practice obviously results in differing outcomes, and it is something that remains underexplored in creative practice research. What is exciting about these potential different orderings is the way in which they can offer different practice and research outcomes, and this is an aspect that must be researched further. However there is another group whose work is represented within creative practice research; these are the practitioners whose work emerges out of their research within the academy and this is where I believe my practice sits.

Returning to my creative writing practice, what does my approach to creative writing reveal about my practice? Remember it looks like this:

Theoria → Poiesis → Praxis

By placing the Praxis last, the process is examined in direct relationship to the Theory (what I believe the truth to be) and the Poiesis (what I actually did). In this way the process (Praxis/Methodology) is informed by my research (Theoria) and practice (Poiesis/Methods); in fact my research is leading the practice and in turn defining the process. As a result I have uncovered new ways in which to write and construct Choice-Based Narratives. Through writing *The Melete Effect*, I have also discovered a new way in which to break scenes down to their component parts, both at a plot and character level. This emergence of new ways of doing is I believe a result of my approach.

In the next sections I will look at how the organic and the algorithmic have shaped each phase of my creative practice (Theoria/Poiesis/Praxis) through the researching and writing of *The Melete Effect*.

### 3.4. Theoria (Theory)

Theoria by its nature suggests an algorithmic approach. Begin by identifying the practitioners that are talking about what you are trying to do. Determine what theorists, theories and schools of thought are relevant to your practice. Although it can be difficult to define your ideas and relevant terms, once this has been established it is simply a process of looking for material that can inform your practice and reinforce the argument of your research. You repeat this process until your research is complete. For some practitioners this phase is exclusively algorithmic because there are established theorists and bodies of knowledge from which to draw, identify, and situate their practice.

However the organic is at work here also; at the beginning of this process, the definition phase, it is common for a practitioner to be an explorer within the darkened room of knowledge; you know you are looking for something but you are not sure what.



I want to return now to the notion that the organic is an algorithm that is not yet understood. This became relevant during the literature search to understand Choice-Based Narratives. The theorist stage to define what *The Melete Effect* is was more complex and protracted than I expected it to be. This was in part because what I had identified as a Choice-Based Narrative, did not have an established definition within what I thought would be the relevant body of literature. In fact I had to consult many bodies of literature in order to construct the definition and the process of constructing such a narrative.

Although nominally a form of storytelling that is a part of the broader field of Interactive Narrative, there were no definitive practical research texts on this form and much of my research required an organic 'sensing' of which areas were relevant and which were not. A synthesis of these multiple bodies of literature helped to construct a picture of how theorists discuss this form, and practitioners practice this form. This was informed by my own experience of reading Choice-Based Narratives such as the Choose Your Own Adventure series (Bantam 1979-1998; Chooseco 2006-) and Storytrails series (Cambridge University Press 1982-1988).

Briefly now I will recap some of the ideas I introduced in Chapter 2 in order to further the discussion about the development of my Theoria. To begin with, what Choice-Based Narrative is, was only established after first trying to situate my research within narratology (Ryan 2001; Aarseth in Ryan, Herman & Jahn [eds.] 2005; Laurel 1993; Laurel 2014; Murray 1998) and ludology (Aarseth 1997; Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan [eds.] 2004; Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan [eds.] 2009; Harrigan [ed.] 2007) and recognising that it instead belongs in a field that crosses both domains, namely that of Interactive Narrative. There are very few game-like elements and at best it can be considered a game of exploration that tells a variable narrative (Tresca 2011). This makes Choice-Based Narratives very different within the broader spectrum of Interactive Narrative. It meant that Choice-Based Narratives had to be defined as separate from other forms of Interactive Narrative, in order to distinguish them from those Interactive Narratives that contain more ludic (or gaming) elements. It was also to move away from the term 'branching narrative' which identifies a particular mechanism (branching or tree structures) that can be used to create Choice-Based Narratives, but is not the only mechanism that can be used in creating these stories (see Section 2.6 in Chapter 2).

To illustrate this further: as the reader's choice is central to a Choice-Based Narrative experience, much of the ways in which choice can be handled and manipulated needed to be examined. This led to integrating the psychological concepts of priming (which is used to develop the reader's expectations of the story being told) and misdirection (which is used to confound those expectations by surprising the reader as to the direction of the story) into the definition of how Choice-Based Narratives function. This organic discovery then led to the work of cognitive psychologists such as Bruner (1986) and professional magicians such as Fitzkee (1975), Kaye (1973) and Houdini et al. (1953).

In turn this led me to recognize the importance of genre because of the way that it utilizes priming (through the recognition of specific narrative patterns) to help readers quickly identify the story being told. Choice-Based Narratives often use recognisable forms, genre patterns and even historical events (e.g. World War II) to construct their stories. This collection of traits (genre, historical events, priming and misdirection) in combination with the reader making a choice, allows for the examination of counterfactual situations within the narrative. These are 'what-if' scenarios commonly found in alternative history fiction (e.g. what if John F. Kennedy was not assassinated in Dallas?), and I discovered through my research, are in fact a unique plot and thematic characteristic of Choice-Based Narratives as a form. While it appears that these different areas of research have natural relationships and can now be considered their own interrelated body of literature, this is in

fact the process of my organic discovery. None of these areas had been pulled together decisively before this. Yet all of this was only made possible by following my organic instinct which encouraged me to look at the interrelationships and commonality between these disparate areas. These findings will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

What conclusions did I draw from this wildly organic theoretical journey? I now understand that my Choice-Based Narrative, *The Melete Effect*, uses genre storytelling to prime a reader to make choices, but allows me, as the author, to use misdirection to disrupt the flow of the narrative. A Choice-Based Narrative can also involve historical events and counterfactual notions about the world in which it is set. These individual details about *The Melete Effect* did not arrive all at once, rather incrementally over the past four years (with some discoveries still to be made). This is evidenced in my earlier table which outlined the phases of my research. The process of how I came to write *The Melete Effect* will be detailed more within the following stages of poesis and praxis, but it is this organic journey through the different bodies of literature which has enabled *The Melete Effect* to be written in the way that it is.

To conclude this section I want to close by summarising the relationship of the organic and algorithmic at this stage:

**Organic:** Primarily the organic is used in the definition of ideas and terms. However if there is not an established body of literature the organic may be relied upon to ‘sense’ what areas/domains are relevant to the practice being undertaken. It can be useful for examining the interrelationships and commonality within related bodies of literature.

**Algorithmic:** The algorithmic is present in the established path of existing knowledge, theories and ideas. However the algorithmic can also be constructed from organic discovery and the synthesis of multiple bodies of literature, which can appear in retrospect as a cohesive whole, and may lead to the establishment of a new body of literature.

### 3.5. Poiesis (Methods)

As the theory of defining and understanding a Choice-Based Narrative has evolved, so too has the writing of *The Melete Effect*. There have been several ‘iterations’ of *The Melete Effect*. The word iteration here, drawn from computer science, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the “[r]epetition of a mathematical or computational procedure applied to the result of a previous application, typically as a means of obtaining successively closer approximations to the solution of a problem.” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/iteration> viewed 16th September 2017). Iterations are considered “a standard building block of algorithms” (Wikipedia 2017b). The decision to classify each draft of *The Melete Effect* as a separate iteration arose organically over the duration of my research. However once I began to consider the writing in this way, it became impossible to think about *The Melete Effect* without this structure. The algorithm here, the process of identifying the form my creative writing will take, has shaped the parameters of my creative writing.

Across the three iterations of *The Melete Effect* there were a total of 140 separate nodes. A nodes (or unit, module, etc) here is defined as a discrete set of actions that conveys information about the plot, characters and world. As a playwright I would typically identify nodes as scenes, but in writing *The Melete Effect* this delineation didn’t seem appropriate. This was in part because much of the material could not be considered a typical scene featuring characters in discussion or action being

enacted; the nodes were more fragments of larger scenes. Also some of this writing was more paratextual in nature; it did not serve the overall story, but instead provided insight into the world of Mary Melete and the other characters. An example of this is given below:

**TELEVISION TRANSCRIPT**

**Nightly News**

**COLUMBIA BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

**(Originally broadcast on the evening of Friday April 4th 1984)**

***TELEVISION ANNOUNCER:** Before we go tonight, we have just been informed that Mary Melete, CBC's own award-winning journalist, is believed to be in hiding somewhere in Santo Cristos where she has been reporting for the last two months. Apparently she may have become a target of those rebel forces with whom she had previously made contact.*

*At present her whereabouts are unknown, but we will bring you more on this story as it comes to hand. Good night.*

By identifying each part individually as nodes it became easier to see how they could be placed in different orders within the narrative. Unlike linear narratives, Choice-Based Narratives do not have a set order of nodes; instead their order is constructed by the reader's choices. In this way it was easier to consider how each node may fit together.

So it is clear how the algorithmic was present in the structuring of this narrative; yet the organic was not absent in this process. Instead it shaped the narrative's direction in a more discrete fashion. Before explaining this, I want to define the organic as I understand in regards to Poiesis (Methods). The organic is a process of exploration and discovery, but not one that I try to control in any way. I never seek to plan the story that I am trying to tell, I simply write continuously to allow it to emerge. Once I have what I believe is enough to craft or shape the story I will start to organise it into a recognisable form (or medium); a play, a poem, short story etc.

Usually I view this process as a form of 'listening'. When an idea arises either as a play, poem or short story, I will pursue this idea by following it instinctively. I call it 'listening' because I use all of my senses to 'listen' to the ideas being sent. It can appear as a visual scene or sequence in my mind or appear as a turn of phrase or dialogue that I will 'hear'. Very rarely (but wonderfully) it will be a smell that triggers a vision (the visual) or a phrase (the audible) or it will be a song that I hear in my sleep. Regardless of the 'sense' that is triggered internally, I still consider this process my 'listening' phase. There is a message being transmitted and I, as the receiver, must be open to accept it. The transmission of this message is not necessarily controllable, but rather like a radio receiver, I the practitioner need to be 'tuned in' in order to take the transmission and capture the idea in its intended message format.

It's also important to state that I am always reluctant to show my writing to fellow practitioners or readers during this listening period, because it feels as though it is a violation of the message being transmitted. That somehow by analysing or critiquing the writing before the creative message has fully arrived is to pollute the sacredness of transmission.

Pauline Oliveros, a sound composer, identifies her practice as deep listening which she defines as:

“...the process of practising listening with the understanding that the complex wave forms continuously transmitted to the auditory cortex from the outside world by the ear require active engagement with attention.” (2005, p.xxi)

This resonates with my understanding of the organic within my practice. Oliveros goes on to state:

“[T]he practise of Deep Listening is intended to facilitate creativity in art and life... Creativity means the formations of new patterns, exceeding the imitations and boundaries of old patterns or using old patterns in new ways” (2005, p.xxiv-xxv)

What is interesting here is that even though this is the description of Oliveros’s organic practice it points towards the discovery of the algorithm (the repeatable) within her practice. As the writer I have to trust the writing to let it reveal the message. As Ghiselin also states “It is organic need, too, rather than will, that must determine the choice of a subject.” (1987, p.17), he also makes an interesting point about the nature of planning in the creative process:

“This is not to be taken as evidence that planning is detrimental, but only that plan must not be enforced by will. Plan must come as a part of the organic development of a project, either before the details are determined, which is more convenient, or in the midst of their production, which is sometimes confusing.” (Ghiselin, 1985 p.17)

Ghiselin’s observation about planning arising in the midst of production (1985) accurately represents my creative practice. It is certainly how the writing in *The Melete Effect* evolved across iterations. The planning of the story took place as the writing was being generated, yet by having an algorithm in place, I was not concerned that this organic writing would not have plot or structure. At the completion of the first iteration, I had 4 distinct plots. In the second iteration only 3 of the plots were developed further (which is discussed in section 3.5.2). These plots were then consolidated in the third iteration. Each iteration brought an expansion in the size and structure of the Choice-Based Narrative. Although it is possible to continue iterating *The Melete Effect* indefinitely, for the purposes of my research the algorithm will end with its third iteration. In this iteration only those plots and characters that are fully realized will be included and the choices, to enable the movement between nodes, will be set in place for the reader.

Writing each iteration of *The Melete Effect* has revealed that the algorithmic and the organic are closely intertwined within this phase of my practice (Poiesis). They work so closely together in facilitating the creation of my writing that it is difficult to see what benefit there would be in disentangling them. Perhaps interestingly the algorithm can serve to ease a writer’s anxiety about the direction of their writing. By understanding that there is a process in place (even one that you don’t understand) can help a writer to be less judgemental of their organic Poiesis. In short the algorithm helps me to trust my organic writing process.

In the subsequent sections (3.5.1 to 3.5.3) I will describe the process of writing each iteration of *The Melete Effect*. More detail about this writing process is also given in Appendices 2 through 7, and these can be consulted as necessary to provide additional insight.

### **3.5.1. The First Iteration – Thirty-Three Scenes**

There are 33 scenes in the first iteration of *The Melete Effect* (a table describing these scenes can be found in Appendix 4). Most obviously these scenes illustrate the different storylines that evolved,

primarily out of the characters and their interactions. They also reveal the importance of paratextual documents to the creation of the world of *The Melete Effect* which will be discussed further below.

There are three storylines that are prominent within this first iteration, the Sandgate Scandal (a variation on the Watergate burglary and its fallout), the civil war in Rousya (a combination of events reflecting the fall of the Soviet Union and the Chernobyl disaster, and also a counterfactual reimagining of the history of Russia) and finally the revolution in Santo Cristos (an amalgamation of several events that took place in Central and South America throughout the 1970's and 80's). Furthermore a fourth storyline about a fictitious United States terrorist group, The Brothers of Liberty (based on the rise and fall of Jim Jones and Jonestown) is suggested in this iteration.

Each of these storylines is clearly drawn from real-world events and actions, a decision made deliberately to aid the reader in making decisions throughout the choice-based experience. The storylines also borrow from existing genres such as political and conspiracy thrillers to once again assist the reader's comprehension. These decisions arose organically during this first iteration and were identified and codified in subsequent iterations. This development process, which helped to effectively establish the poetics of Choice-Based Narratives, is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

What became apparent in this first iteration is just how large and vibrant the world of *The Melete Effect* is. Mary Melete as a character is both an agent for change within the story, and an agent that can be used by the reader to make their own choices. The world in which she inhabits is drawn from the period from 1972 (the Watergate Burglary) until 1991 (the fall of the Soviet Union). I chose this time period because I was fascinated with the politics and events that took place in this 20-year period. Looking back on this time as an adult, this seems like a period of great upheaval and yet as a child growing up these events seemed so ordinary and mundane (perhaps because I did not fully understand their significance at the time). The way in which history is always informing our reality is a major theme that continued to develop through the iterations of *The Melete Effect*.

Another aspect that presented itself early in the writing of *The Melete Effect*, is the use of fictional language and phrases that the characters use throughout the story. This arose organically out of writing the work, as I began to discover that people in Melete's world do not refer to certain objects in the same way. The use of this alternative language (for example Dog to describe the concept of God) is a way of establishing the story's counterfactual setting; that this story is not set in our world. In this first iteration these ideas were embryonic, but they grew significantly with each iteration of *The Melete Effect*.

As *The Melete Effect* arose out of *The Capgras Project* there has always been an element of the story which indicates that it is a part of a larger universe of stories. When writing the first iteration it became clear that the paratextual elements of *The Melete Effect* are there to represent a level of world building that was necessary to establish the reality of Melete's world. Several of the paratextual articles such as The Brick House, The Destruction of Willis Island and the SS Carpathia online encyclopedia articles have nothing to do with any of the storylines at all. They were written to construct a world in which the United States of America remained Isolationist deep into the twentieth century rather than taking on a role as a superpower. It is this climate, a society that is deeply insular (and potentially fascist), which enabled the events that occur in *The Melete Effect*.

### **3.5.2. *The Second Iteration – Seventy Three Scenes***

This second iteration saw an exponential growth in scenes/nodes (a table describing these scenes can be found in Appendix 5). This growth was centred on consolidating the existing storylines of Sandgate, Santo Cristos and Rousya. My writing focused on further developing the characters and plot to reinforce the world and its counterfactual history. In this iteration the relationship to broader metastory of *The Capgras Project* was firmly established, even though the other parts of the project were no longer being developed. It is here in the second iteration of *The Melete Effect* that the overall narrative construction of the writing can be seen; from this version it's possible to clearly identify all of the narrative parts and how they fit together.

The Sandgate storyline became by far the largest and most detailed story in *The Melete Effect* in this iteration. It is made up of 59 scenes/nodes that detail the complexities of the Sandgate Scandal and its longterm effect on the characters and history of the United States. In comparison the Rousya storyline is made up of 35 scenes/nodes, and although the events that take place have a major effect on the life of Mary Melete, the narrative is more condensed. Finally the Santo Cristos Storyline is made up of 32 scenes/nodes and this storyline would be developed further in the third iteration.

The Brothers of Liberty storyline, the fourth storyline for *The Melete Effect*, became significantly limited in this iteration. This storyline is made up of only 8 scenes/nodes of which only 2 scenes were written over two iterations. In the first iteration scene **No.23 Court Case (Fragment)** (see Appendix 4) was set in the aftermath of the Brotown massacre (an analogue for Jonestown) but this scene was too fragmented and was abandoned in the second iteration. In the second iteration scene **No.84 At the Gates of the Devil** (see Appendix 5) was the only complete scene that represented Melete's attempt to infiltrate the cult of Brotherly Love.

There were several reasons why this storyline was abandoned. Cults and cult behaviour was a difficult subject to research, and the complexities of this topic was too large in scope to be conveyed appropriately in the storyline as outlined. This storyline would have needed to become significantly larger than was appropriate for *The Melete Effect*. As envisaged the story would have been a fictional retelling of Jim Jones and the People's Temple, but after reading about these events, it felt somewhat disrespectful to the people who lost their lives at Jonestown, to recreate the story in this way. This feeling of not being able to honour these events with the gravity that they deserved profoundly limited my ability to write this storyline. In addition the scene **No.84 At the Gates of the Devil** as written had too many overlaps in action and ideas to the Rousya storyline, and as such didn't really add anything further in terms of narrative variety or novelty. There was also no clear ending that arose out of this story for Melete as a character unlike the other three storylines. As a result of these factors, I focused on developing the existing storylines and this storyline is referenced only in passing.

If the organic process is represented by the way in which I wrote these scenes, the algorithmic process is represented by the way I began to order these scenes. At the conclusion of the second iteration it was at last possible to arrange the narrative as a Choice-Based Narrative. From my research and in speaking with the Choose Your Own Adventure authors, I knew that creating a branching-tree diagram was the most common tool used to map out this type of narrative. However I found this type of diagramming to be problematic and so I began to look for different approaches to creating and representing these types of stories.

Initially I looked at open-source tools to see if it was possible to arrange and represent the story electronically. The tool that I chose to use was Twine (<http://www.twinery.org/>) which is designed to create hypertext and HTML-based narrative experiences. However in this instance I used Twine only as a way to lay-out and arrange the story, not to present the story. This arrangement process took a

significant amount of time and required that I constantly re-evaluate the placement of scenes/nodes to ensure that the story made sense. Here the placement and ordering represented the algorithmic process and helped me to discover different orderings and narrative pathways. Using Twine I was able to identify two narrative pathways through *The Melete Effect*, the first with its focus on Sandgate Scandal (See Appendix 6) and the second with its focus on the events in Rousya (See Appendix 7). These Twine maps however were extremely unwieldy to manage and to read, and I began to look for alternative ways of representing Choice-Based Narratives which are detailed at length in Section 3.6.

### **3.5.3. The Third Iteration – Forty One Scenes**

The third iteration of *The Melete Effect* consisted of 41 scenes (a table describing these scenes can be found in Appendix 8). As the third iteration would be the final iteration for the purposes of this research, I felt that it was necessary to make sure that each storyline was strong enough to be read individually. The Santo Cristos storyline was somewhat underdeveloped in comparison to the other storylines and so much of the writing in this iteration was about strengthening this storyline in relation to the others. By this iteration I had developed a new process for representing Choice-Based Narratives called Tessellations, which is described below in section 3.6.3. The mapping of the Santo Cristos Storyline was completed using this technique and this Tessellation can be found in Appendix 9.

The third iteration reveals an interesting fact about the construction of *The Melete Effect*, and that is that while each storyline is designed to be read and enjoyed independently, a complete understanding of Mary Melete's journey can only be gained by reading *The Melete Effect* in its entirety. This was a process that occurred organically in writing (and was not planned), but that was uncovered through the algorithmic construction of the text. It is possible to construct a definitive chronology of Melete's life from reading every story. There are paradoxes and some events which cannot happen given where Melete would be in space and time, but this is deliberate and serves to reinforce the counterfactual themes of the story and furthermore reflects the poetics of Choice-Based Narratives (see Chapter 4).

There are other stories present in this iteration of *The Melete Effect* besides the three main storylines. There is the Brothers of Liberty Storyline which is now marginalised but comes to represent the ways in which the United States became a fascist regime after the failure of the Sandgate Scandal. There is also the story of Melete's doppelganger Miriam Follows, and revelations about the identity of Deepwater, Melete's Sandgate informer. These stories can not be discovered by reading the text as a traditional Choice-Based Narrative; they are in fact hidden in the text and run in parallel to the three storylines of *The Melete Effect*.

Although this arose organically through writing the characters, in this iteration it is by conscious design. It was inspired by Edward Packard's similar decision in the Choose Your Own Adventure book *Inside UFO 54-40* (1982), where the reader is tasked with discovering Ultima, a planet paradise. However none of the choices within the book led the reader to this ending; it could only be discovered by randomly flipping through the book. The difference here in *The Melete Effect*, is that the three main storylines are intended to represent the perspective of Mary Melete, and these additional storylines represent other character's perspectives. In the case of Miriam Follows (Melete's doppelganger) the decision to hide her story, also represents the way in which the character is in fact hidden from Melete herself.

In this iteration I also noted that some scenes/nodes wanted to be paired together and certain scenes/nodes wanted to repeat over and over again. This meant that regardless of the storyline, certain scenes/nodes would always appear. For example the scenes **No. 71 *The Road to Nowhere***, and **No. 19 *Melete on the Line*** are inconsequential by themselves and yet they appear in every storyline. This resonance of pairings is something which suggests an algorithmic unit of narrative; that some parts of the story must be there, regardless of the overall story. This is an area of research that needs to be looked at further, but was identified too late in this research process to make any significant headway.

### 3.6. Praxis (Methodologies)

Praxis was in some ways the least understood part of creating a Choice-Based Narrative. As although there is much theory that discusses the idea of Choice-Based Narratives, identified as branching narratives in the literature (Glassner 2004; Tresca 2011)(see also Chapter 2 and the Section 3.4 in this chapter), there is almost no discussion on the Praxis of how these types of narrative were written. Much of the Praxis that I have identified evolved organically through the reading of many Choice-Based Narratives, primarily the Choose Your Own Adventure series (1979-1998; 2006-ongoing) and the Storytrails series (1982-1988).

Unfortunately the sole author of the Storytrails series, Allen Sharp, died before I could contact him, and this limited my analysis of that series. The one aspect of the Storytrails series that profoundly influenced *The Melete Effect* was the way that the series featured sophisticated and adult storylines proving that this form was not strictly the domain of children's or young adult literature (which historically many printed Choice-Based Narratives were). This view was reinforced by *Life's Lottery* (Newman, 2005) and the works of Dennis Guerrier, *State of Emergency* (Guerrier and Richards, 1969) and *Sleep, and the City Trembles* (Garlforth and Guerrier, 1969), all Choice-Based Narratives which feature decidedly adult themes.

The need to identify the Praxis of how these Choice-Based Narratives were constructed resulted in an almost two-year interview process with authors of the Choose Your Own Adventure series (see section 2.5). It is here that the process of *Theoria* and *Poiesis* (as according Crouch & Pearce, 2012) has been put to work to develop the Praxis of writing a Choice-Based Narrative. This is an unusual situation, as typically there is an existing Praxis with which to work (and in some cases to work against). However while this is not uncommon when working in new forms of practice, for a form as well established as Choice-Based Narrative, the formal literature on branching and interactive narratives reveals little about the process of constructing these narratives. Instead much was learnt from reading the Choose Your Own Adventure books themselves. By synthesising information from the interviews and conducting a narrative and structural analysis on a variety of Choice-Based Narratives, I was able to develop several approaches to how Choice-Based Narratives can be constructed.

The following approaches to Choice-Based Narrative Praxis will be discussed in this section:

- A Creative Practice Praxis – For realising Choice-Based Narratives in a creative practice context. (The Story Choice Framework)
- A Structural Praxis – For understanding the structural characteristics that seems to be unique to Choice-Based Narratives. (Sans Medium)



- A Representational Praxis – A Praxis for more clearly representing the design and structure of Choice-Based Narratives. (Tessellations)

These different Praxi arose out different aspects of my creative practice which I will discuss briefly here. The Creative Practice Praxis (The Story Choice Framework) arose directly out my observations about the writing process for Choice-Based Narratives. The Structural Praxis (Sans Medium) arose partly from trying to situate Choice-Based Narratives within the broader literature and from my own Theoria. The Representational Praxis (Tessellations) arose directly out of my own Poiesis whilst trying to create the Melete Effect. Here these different Praxi represent the complete process that I undertook to define and situate Choice-Based Narratives.

### ***3.6.1. A Creative Practice Praxis – The Story Choice Framework***

Much of the discussion about Choice-Based Narratives has the tendency to view the final object as a complete entity, and while this makes sense when describing an artefact in broad terms, or where it serves as an example of an author's ideas, it doesn't provide any understanding to would-be creators and practitioners of how these types of stories are built. It is only by identifying and analysing the various components that make up the experience of a Choice-Based Narrative that we can begin to understand how each component works in the greater machine.

As an audience we can talk about the experience of participating in a Choice-Based Narrative, whether it is an Interactive Fiction like Zork (Infocom, 1980-1982), a hypertext novel like Michael Joyce's afternoon (2001, originally 1987), or a Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) book. Yet often in Choice-Based Narratives, one component can fail at the expense of the overall experience. For example in a CYOA book it maybe common to be enthralled by the plot, but be disappointed by the choices offered. Similarly in an Interactive Fiction we are often disappointed when the parser doesn't allow us to commit our preferred action. Both of these examples are problems at an interface level (the point at which the reader directly interacts with the experience), but it is also just as easy to have problems with the narrative structure. For example it is common in Choice-Based Narratives (regardless of medium) to have a character who in one storyline can be an ally and in another a villain. These wild mood swings of character weaken the cohesiveness of the storytelling and so in turn strain our immersion in the overall experience. Broadly these problems are all issues of reader disengagement, and show that when one element breaks down the success of the entire experience is destabilised and can ultimately be destroyed.

The issue up until now, is that there hasn't been an easy way to identify exactly where these problems lie. The Story Choice Framework is my attempt to identify the constituent parts of a Choice-Based Narrative and to explain how it functions as an experience. This is so that the creative practitioner can fully understand how this storytelling experience works and in turn can build a better Choice-Based Narrative. Laurel (1993, 2014) and Ryan (2006) have through their description of the different approaches to narrative fostered the development of this framework. In the Story Choice Framework there are five parts that work together to create a Choice-Based Narrative experience. They are as follows:

**CHOICE STRUCTURES** – The structures by which choice can be introduced and implemented into a narrative (See Section 2.6 for more information).

**RULES AND RULESETS** – A collection of rules that limit which choices can and cannot be made. This could be an individual rule or a group of rules which forms a ruleset. These Rules

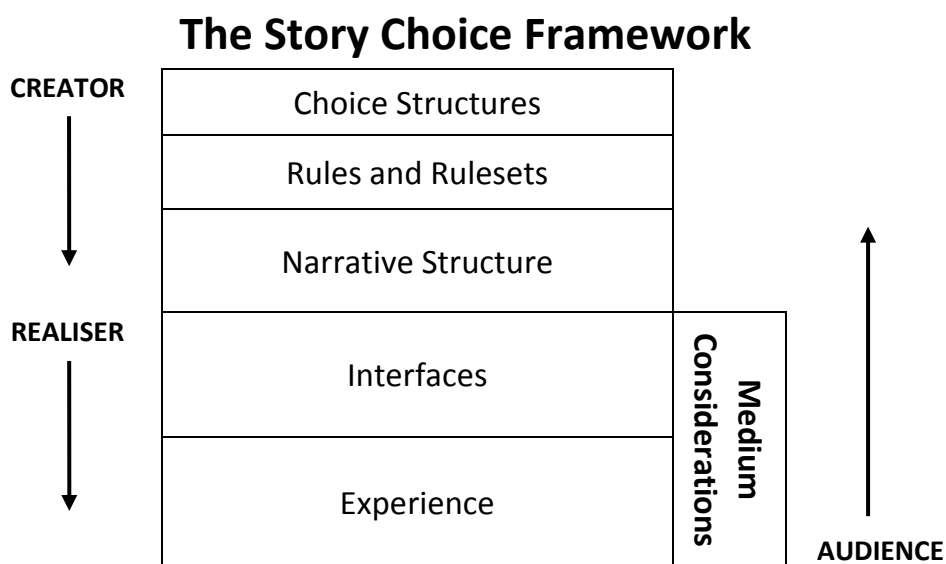
and Rulesets impact on how Choice Structures can be used within a Choice-Based Narrative to ensure that the Narrative Structure remains cohesive. Rules and Rulesets should be developed to ensure that poorly designed or illogical choices are not possible within the narrative.

**NARRATIVE STRUCTURE** – The story that will be told and the structure that will be used to construct this story. The Narrative Structure will interact with the Rules and Rulesets to make sure that none of the events within the story violate those rules. The Narrative Structure level is particularly geared to the construction of stories that belong to specific genres. Genres allow for set expectations and conventions and these are useful as a starting point when creating Choice-Based Narratives.

**INTERFACES** – How an audience can interact with the story. These Interfaces help to create the overall Choice-Based Narrative experience. The Interfaces level will interact closely with the Experience level and may also need to consider different medium constraints in its design.

**EXPERIENCE** – The Experience level deals with the formal requirements of different mediums and how the audience experiences the story and narrative. Primarily it is at this level that the constraints of a medium are considered and applied.

It's important to note that the Story Choice Framework is designed to represent the process of a Choice-Based Narrative from two different perspectives, that of someone creating the work (the practitioner) and that of someone experiencing the work created (the audience). For the purposes of *The Melete Effect* and my research I will be focusing predominantly on the practitioner part of the framework. The framework can be visualised like this:



**Figure 3.1: The Story Choice Framework**

Within the Story Choice Framework the creation of the narrative by a practitioner is broken into two phases: the Creation Phase and the Realisation Phase. In the Creation Phase the practitioner will create the story (or adapt an existing story) by constructing the Choice Structures, Rules and Rulesets and Narrative Structure. In the Realisation Phase the practitioner will realise the story in

their chosen medium, by constructing the Interfaces and Experience (and may possibly alter the Narrative Structure to better accommodate the audience). In many creative processes the Creator and Realiser will be the same practitioner but in some mediums this role can be split (for example the writer and director of a film).

In the Creation Phase, the practitioner can work with the relevant Story Choice Framework parts in any order they choose. One approach, which represents a traditional way of creating a narrative, will have the practitioner starting with the Narrative Structure and then working their way through the Rules and Rulesets and Choice Structures. Regardless of a practitioner's approach, it is only once these three parts are complete, that the practitioner can shift their focus to the Realisation Phase which involves integrating the Interfaces and Experience with the narrative created, so that an audience can experience it.


From an audience perspective, the Story Choice Framework is designed for a Choice-Based Narrative to be approached from the Experience moving through the Interfaces to the Narrative Structure. At present it is assumed that the audience may not be concerned with the Rules and Rulesets and Choice Structures on their initial interactions with a Choice-Based Narrative. However repeated interactions with the experience may result in the audience developing an increased agency within the experience and a desire to manipulate the Rules and Rulesets and Choice Structures to change their overall experience. However this is a hypothesis that will need to be tested more thoroughly with audience involvement and is presently beyond the scope of this research.


There are two additional factors that need to be considered by practitioners when working with the Story Choice Framework and these are the requirements of Time and Space. These requirements are only relevant to the Narrative Structure, Interfaces and Experience parts of the Story Choice Framework. Time is important when considering how long in duration an action or event should take before introducing the next event (Narrative Structure), the next interface (Interfaces), and in helping to shape the overall experience (Experience).

Space in contrast is important when considering the locations of the story and how these spaces affect the structure of the story. Space can limit where and how to interact with an interface, and can shape the physical dimensions of the experience. Space will differ depending on the medium chosen to realise a Choice-Based Narrative. For example *The Melete Effect* was originally designed to be a live theatre performance, but has evolved into an interactive PDF partly due the way in which an interactive PDF profoundly simplified the need for space. Time and Space and their influence on Choice-Based Narratives experiences will require further research which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The use of the Story Choice Framework to develop *The Melete Effect* is outlined in the table below.

Table 3.3: Using the Story Choice Framework for The Melete Effect

The Melete Effect	Story Choice Framework Parts				
	CREATOR / REALISER 				
Storyline	Choice Structures	Rules and Rulesets	Narrative Structure	Interfaces	Experience
<b>The Sandgate Scandal</b>	Branching – Mapped using Twine (See Appendix 6)	The character of Arabella (Melete and Mac’s daughter) cannot be referenced in any storyline before she has been born in this storyline.  Various Genre Rules	An alternative history version of The Watergate Scandal set in the United States of Columbia.  Genre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Thriller</li> <li>• Conspiracy Thriller</li> <li>• Film Noir</li> </ul>	Hypertext links  (However <i>The Melete Effect</i> was originally designed to have live interaction and interfaces within a performance space)	In the present form an Interactive PDF.  (However <i>The Melete Effect</i> was originally designed to be a live theatre performance.)
<b>The Civil War in Rouysa</b>	Branching – Mapped using Twine (See Appendix 7)	The character of Miriam Follows can only appear in scenes that take place after the Nooclear destruction of Moscoww	The Rousyan Civil War results in the Nooclear destruction of Moscoww and a long period of reconstruction for Rousya (Russia).  Genre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Thriller</li> </ul>		
<b>The Fall of Los Liberatores in Santo Cristos</b>	Tessellations – Mapped using Excel and a Tessellations diagram (See Appendix 9)	Political Thriller Genre Rules	El Perros Salvaje the leader of Los Liberatores attempts to liberate Santo Cristos from an oppressive fascist regime.  Genre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political Thriller</li> </ul>		


**AUDIENCE**

Although the Story Choice Framework is my Praxis for creating *The Melete Effect*, it is designed to be used by any practitioner who wishes to create their own Choice-Based Narrative. The Praxis of writing and creating Choice-Based Narratives remains an area where I believe new discoveries will continue to be made.

### **3.6.2. A Structural Praxis – Sans Medium**

During the writing of the various iterations of *The Melete Effect*, a curious thing occurred; I stopped thinking about *The Melete Effect* as a theatrical performance. This was in part due to the complexity of the story which meant that it did not resemble a traditional theatre performance. If presented chronologically *The Melete Effect* would run for over 10 hours, similar to pieces such as Peter Brook's *The Mahabrahata* (1987) and Robert LePage's *Lipsynch* (2012), which I was fortunate enough to see in Melbourne, and both of which had 9 hour running times. The scale of *The Melete Effect* meant that I could not easily stage this production, and I did not want to limit this scale by presenting the work in a rehearsed reading.

However the main reason for this shift was that in defining Choice-Based Narratives I recognised that as a form they possess a unique characteristic: they are Sans Medium. Sans Medium literally translates as 'without medium', and this notion arose out of two different aspects of Choice-Based Narratives as a form. Firstly, that Choice-Based Narratives can and do exist in multiple mediums. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, there are numerous examples of this form that exist across a variety of media. It is not the medium that defines this type of narrative rather that a Choice-Based Narrative adapts to its intended medium.

Secondly because of this proliferation of mediums, I initially considered Choice-Based Narratives to be a form of transmedia. However when considering the idea of transmedia, as defined by Ryan (in Meister, Kindt and Schernus [eds.] p. 28-30. 2005) and discussed by Passalacqua, Pianzola and Ryan (2011) and contrasting this with the commercial understanding of the practice, there was a clear disconnection between the theory and practice and what was occurring in Choice-Based Narratives as a form. The notion of Sans Medium suggested itself as a way of resolving this problem.

Here Sans Medium allows for the narrative to take precedence over the medium. This is where the focus should be when writing a Choice-Based Narrative. This does not mean that medium is totally absent from a Choice-Based Narrative, rather that the medium, as a container, can be applied much later in this form of storytelling. This is an aspect of creating Choice-Based Narratives that has not been identified before. As a result of the medium being applied much later, it allows practitioners to experiment with a wider variety of forms. This explains why I have found numerous examples of this form in literature, experimental literature, Interactive Fiction, Visual Novels, Interactive Film, etc.

The state of 'Sans Medium' allows the story to become more complex and detailed the longer the story it remains in this state. Once a medium container (film, theatre, radio, hypertext, dialogic novel, etc.) is added, the complexity of the narrative must conform to the medium container. Sometimes the narrative can retain its complexity; sometimes it must sacrifice its complexity in favour of adhering to the medium's constraints.

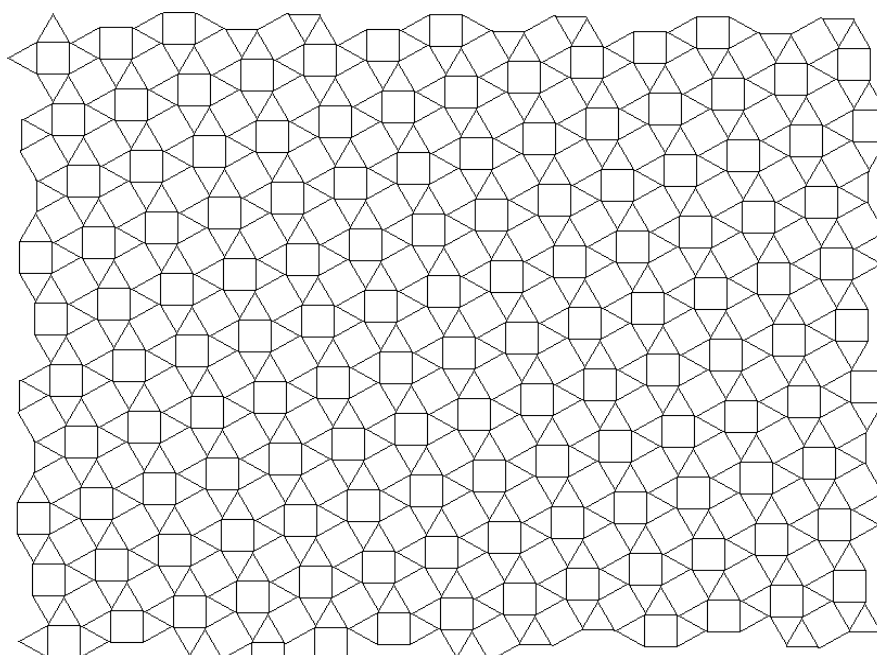
Recognising this, I deliberately held off placing *The Melete Effect* into a medium container for as long as I could. For example I could take *The Melete Effect* as it exists right now and easily convert it into a

hypertext (see Tom Bissell and Matthew S. Burns' *The Writer will do Something* <http://mrwasteland.itch.io/twwds>, viewed 3rd of October 2017), or even a dialogic novel ala *The Friend of Eddie Coyle* (George V. Higgins, 1972). In the end I chose a medium which would best support my work for submission as a PhD, an interactive PDF, which is similar in experience to an electronic version of a Choose Your Own Adventure Book.

### **3.6.3. A Representational Praxis – Tessellations**

Visual representations of Choice-Based Narratives can be difficult to construct and consult. For both creators and the audience branching graph structures are hard to navigate and extract information from (Fendt, Harrison, Ware, Cardona-Rivera and Roberts, 2012; Riedl and Young, 2006; Riedl and Young, 2010). The common complaint with branching structures is that they very quickly become unwieldy and difficult to manage because of the numerous amount of nodes they generate (Fendt, Harrison, Ware, Cardona-Rivera and Roberts, 2012; Glassner, 2004). For creative writers looking to develop their own Choice-Based Narrative, it is often unclear how to identify narrative nodes (scenes or units), how to represent choices, and how to determine what (if anything) is missing from the narrative structure. Subsequently writers and developers often adopt particular structures to manage these issues (see Chapter 2 section 2.6 for further information)

As a result of my own experiences working with branching graph structures I have developed an alternative method for visual representation of a Choice-Based Narrative as a tessellation. Although this type of representation is in fact a type of topographical visualisation, it has been given the name tessellation to make it easier to identify. This method seeks to address the issues of representation and navigation and to demonstrate that by using a tessellation that it is easier to undertake a narrative analysis of a Choice-Based Narrative. Tessellations are similar to tessellated patterns an example of which is given in Figure 3.2 below. It is important to note that tessellations were developed as a practice for the creative writer as a way of managing and planning their own Choice-Based Narratives. However I believe that this practice can be automated and adapted for use by generative narrative developers and game coders.

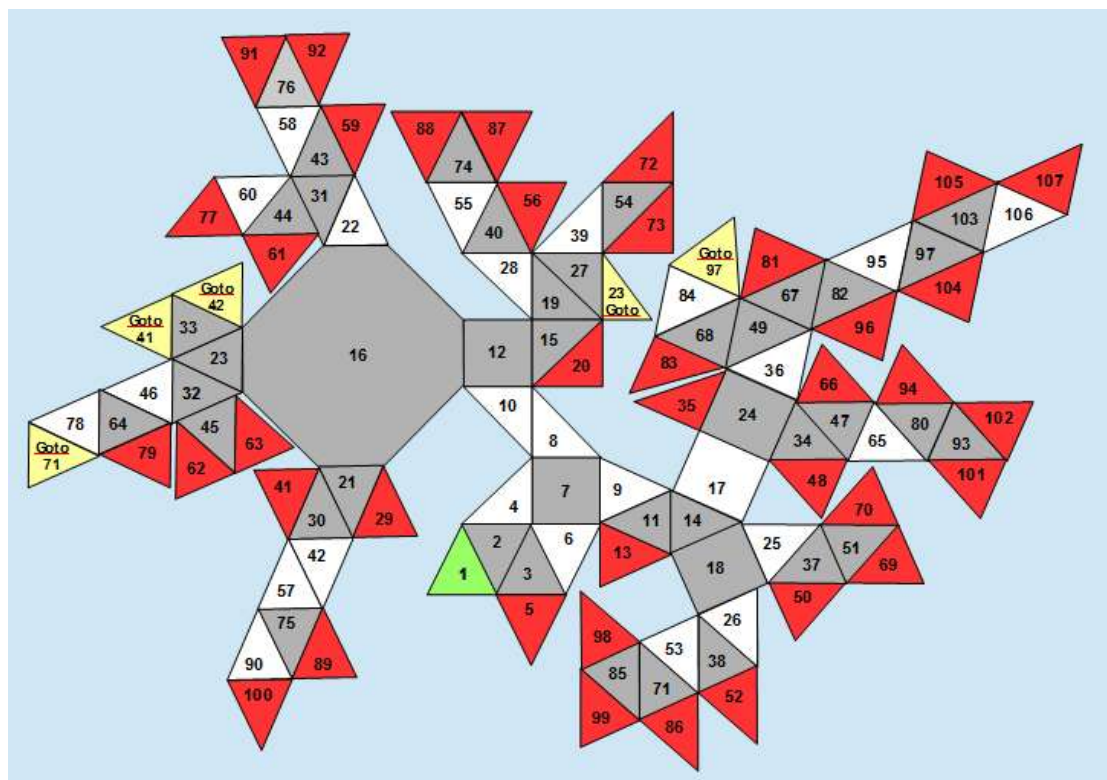


**Figure 3.2: A square and triangle tessellation**

In order to circumvent some of the problems posed by branching graph structures, a tessellation is proposed to allow different ways of managing both narrative nodes and the representation of narrative structures. The tessellation allows for the mapping of existing branching structures, can be used to adapt linear narratives into Choice-Based Narratives and enables the analysis of possible pathways through a Choice-Based Narrative. The tessellation is also intended to be used as a co-creation tool for creators working with Artificial Intelligence systems, but this aspect is currently beyond the scope of this research.

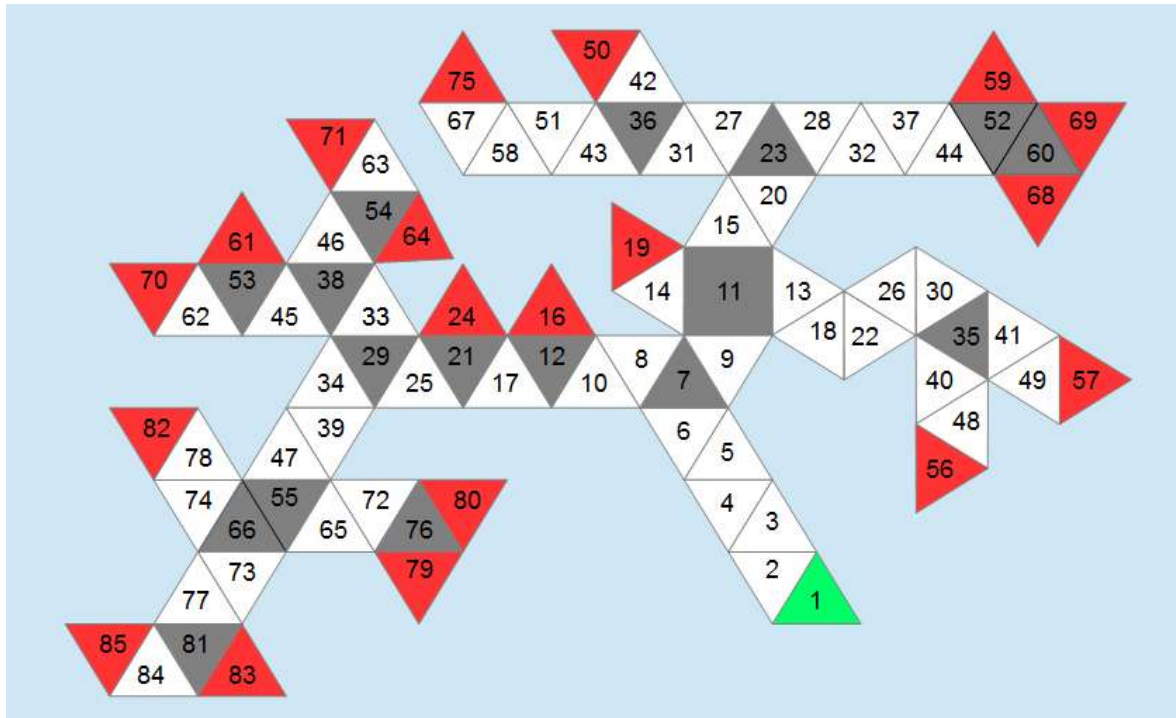
### **3.6.3.1. Constructing a Tessellation for Narrative Mapping**

The most obvious way to examine tessellations is to take existing examples of branching structures and transform them into tessellations, to see what different structures yielded when represented as a tessellation. For this I have selected books from the Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) series. Three books were chosen that represented three distinct phases in the series' development. The first book, Jay Leibold's Sabotage [book 38], set in World War II, represents a high degree of choice and a high number of endings (39 endings) (Figure 3.3)



**Figure 3.3: Sabotage [CYOA 38] as a Tessellation**

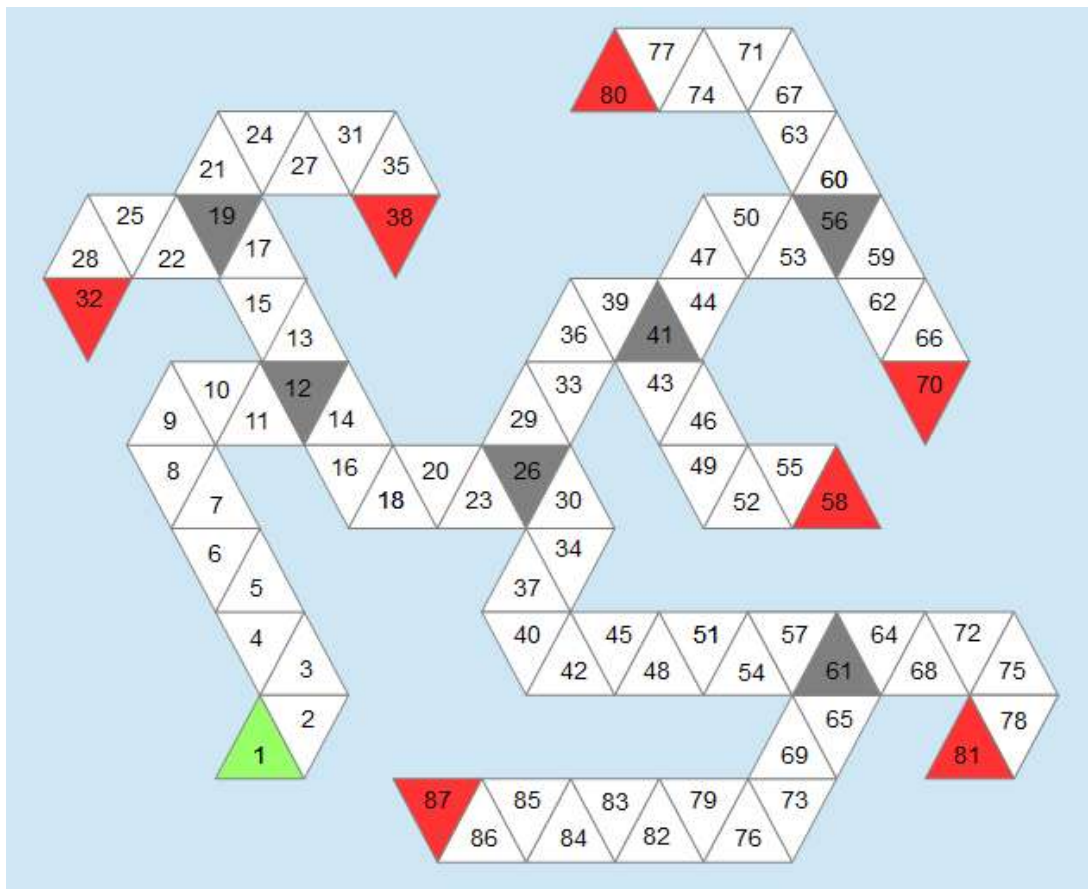
The second, Jim Wallace's *Terror on the Titanic* [book 169] set aboard the sinking ship, represents a moderate number of choices and endings (19 endings) (Figure 3.4).



**Figure 3.4: *Terror on the Titanic* [CYOA 169] as a Tessellation**

The final book, Doug Wilhelm's *The Underground Railroad* [book 175], represents a low number of choices and endings (7 endings) (Figure 3.5).





**Figure 3.5: The Underground Railroad [CYOA 175] as a Tessellation**

Each of these books is typical of the CYOA series in that they utilise genre conventions and/or historical settings to frame the stories being told. These books will be contrasted with my Choice-Based Narrative *The Melete Effect*. *The Melete Effect* borrows much of its construction from the conventions laid out across the CYOA series. This consistency in design and structure is why these examples have been chosen to examine and illustrate how tessellations function.

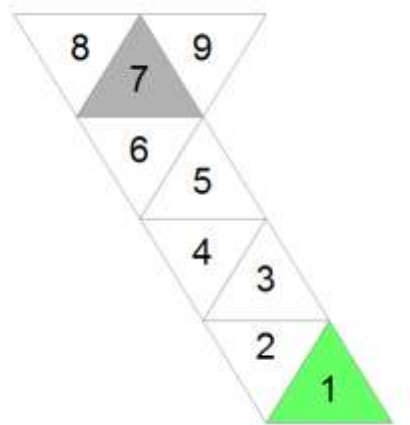
### **The Components of a Tessellation**

Any shape (or combination of shapes) that can be represented in a tessellated pattern (a repeatable pattern) can be used to generate a tessellation. Common shapes include triangles, squares, hexagons and octagons, uncommon shapes include kites and darts (Penrose Tiling).

Tessellations can support two forms of choice representation as identified by Rickerby (2016) whereby choices can be represented as either the edges of shapes (where they join other shapes) or individual nodes (their own shapes). Individual nodes allow for each choice to be represented within the graph by an individual node separate from the narrative content the choice is associated with. This allows for all choices to be clearly demarcated, which Rickerby identifies as being “extremely helpful when the narrative needs to support choices branching off in multiple directions without being directly prefigured in the text leading up to them.” (2016); however he also concedes that this will result in a more complicated graph structure with longer pathways (2016).

Through my experience, edges have proven preferential to individual nodes for representing a narrative as a tessellation. There is an elegance to edges that allows for a clearer representation of a narrative structure and it is for this reason they have been utilised here. This is not to discount the possibilities of an individual node approach for choice representation, but it is not the focus of this demonstration.

Edges enable shapes to be joined together, with each join representing a choice that can be made. To explain how edges function, a section of a tessellation from the CYOA *Terror on the Titanic* has been provided below (Figure 3.6). Each node is identified by a number which represents a selected section of the text. This diagram depicts the narrative from the beginning of the book until the first choice is made.



**Figure 3.6: Terror on the Titanic until the first choice**

Triangles have been used to represent the choices because most choices in the book are binary (there are two choices; you can either make one choice or the other) and typically they will arrive from only one previous location. This means there will be 1 entry (representing the arrival from the previous node), and 2 exits (representing the departure to the next two possible nodes). For a node with 3 or more choices different shapes are used (a square for 3 choices, a pentagon for 4, etc.).

A note on the colour schema used to represent the tessellations:

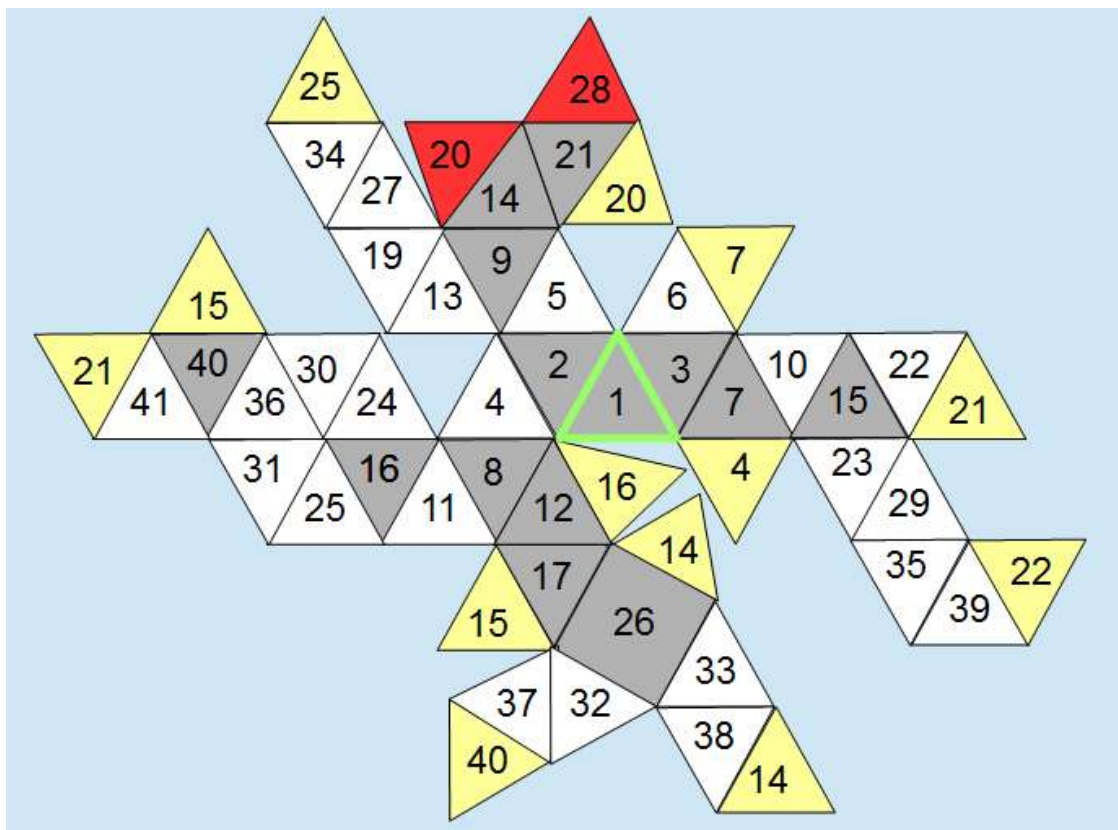
- Green represents the starting node for the narrative
- White are nodes in which no choice is made, and these automatically continue onto the next node.
- Dark grey are nodes in which choices are made
- Yellow are nodes that leap to other pathways.
- Red triangles represent the end of narrative path.
- Blue represents the same repeated node in a different context (this is rarely used).

These nodes and their paths are mapped out first in a table before being mapped out as a diagram. An example of this table is presented on the next page. The table tracks each unique choice point (or node) and identifies either the first line of the node or the choices presented in the node. The colouring of certain entries in the table reflects the colour schema above. The relevant page numbers are noted (both for the current node and the next node) as are the number of choices. In this way it is possible to track the process of the narrative from beginning to final ending.

Table 3.4: Terror on the Titanic Node Mapping

Choice Point	Scene/Choice/First Line	Page Number	No of Choices	Goes On to Choice Point	Goes on to Page Number
1	You stand on the deck of the RMS Titanic, the brand new White Star ocean liner.	1	0	2	2
2	"Bad omen! Pah!" says a middle-aged Englishman standing nearby.	p. 2- 3	0	3	4
3	"A classical pianist, eh?" says Mr. Hardcastle	p. 4- 5	0	4	11
4	Over the next few days, you and Jack Hardcastle explore the ship.	11	0	5	6
5	The Marconi Room, the "radio shack" is up forward on the port, or left, side of the ship.	p. 6 - 7	0	6	15
6	You zip down the stairs to the stateroom you're sharing with Andrew.	15	0	7	10
7	If you postpone meeting Jack to explore Andrew's car If you go to meet Jack with the binoculars	10	2	8, 9	64, 93
8	You hurry to the forward well deck, which shelters you from the icy air, and cross to the forecastle entrance up near the bow.	64	0	10	82
9	You decide to let the mystery in Andrew's car go for the moment.	93	0	11	115

Earlier books in the CYOA series allow for multiple entry points and merging of existing paths (which is present in *Sabotage* and *The Melete Effect*) but later books in the series simplified their story paths somewhat. The example of merging depicted below (Figure 3.7), is taken from *The Melete Effect*, and shows how the narrative can leap across multiple nodes and pathways. In this example which represents only the scenes set during the Sandgate Scandal storyline (A Watergate analogue) there exists several points that represent ‘leaps’ or merges with other parts of the narrative. These are represented by yellow triangles which feature the next node number. They allow movement to other nodes within the tessellation. The green triangle (with gray inside) here represents the first node and also the first set of choices. The complete table for this tessellation can be found in Appendix 10.



**Figure 3.7: The Melete Effect – Scenes set during the Sandgate Scandal**

From these two examples it is possible to identify how tessellations can be used to map existing branching narratives or can be used to construct a Choice-Based Narrative from scratch. It is also possible to take an existing linear narrative and use a tessellation to convert the linear narrative into to a Choice-Based Narrative. In narrative systems and intelligent narrative this process is referred to as narrative mediation (Young, Riedl, Branly, Jhala, Martin & Saretto, 2004; Riedl, Saretto and Young, 2003) which has been defined as “a technique whereby linear narratives are made interactive.” (2004). Although the intention of narrative mediation is for the system to identify the optimal story path for the reader, it seems plausible that tessellations could be integrated into these systems, as a means of output for system operators to identify different possible story paths as a process for optimisation, or that the system itself could examine these story paths.

In the sections below the different processes for constructing tessellations will be described in greater detail.

## Mapping an existing branching story

This section will outline the process of how to take an existing branching narrative and adapt it into a tessellation. Each of the three CYOA books were converted into tessellations using this process.

### 1. Move through the original text and identify and number all the different nodes/scenes/units.

There may be assumptions that need to be made here about what constitutes a node. Each narrative will represent nodes differently and it is important to be consistent across the process when identifying nodes. For adapting the CYOA books, the following assumptions were identified as nodes:

- Any page which featured a choice at the end of it.
- Any page which directed the reader to another page (e.g. Turn to page 69)
- Any double page (two pages in which the story continues naturally onto the subsequent page) which featured a choice at the end of it or directed the reader to another page.

So for CYOA books a node is typically a page. For *The Melete Effect* a node is the length of a scene. In B.S. Johnson's book in a box, *The Unfortunates* (1999), a node is the length of a chapter/section.

### 2. Identify all existing choices on offer.

In most forms of Choice-Based Narratives the choices are either stated at the time a choice needs to be made or the rules for 'operating' the narrative are explained in advance (such as in *The Unfortunates*, 1999). In the CYOA books the choices were displayed at the end of a page in a set position. This made it easy to identify the choices available.

### 3. Begin by mapping out all of the choices into a table (either a database or spreadsheet).

This table, (see Table 3.4), allows for the tracking of each node which can then be graphed in the tessellation. This table should identify each individual node and may track where it arrived from (the previous node) and where it is going to (the next node[s]). It may also be necessary to identify which pages (or parts) of the original text are being referred in the node.

A complete table for the Santo Cristos storyline of *The Melete Effect* can also be found in Appendix 9.

### 4. Once the narrative is mapped into the table, decide on a tessellation structure that suits.

This will be determined by the number of choices in each node, and will be obvious in existing branching structures where the choices are clearly identified. As a general rule of thumb:

- Two choices (with a single entry point) use a triangle
- Two choices (with dual entry point) use a square
- Three choices (with a single entry point) use a square
- Four choices (with a single entry point) use a pentagon

Example of the tessellation structures can be seen in each of the three CYOA books (Figures 3.3 thru 3.5) and the Sandgate Scandal storyline from *The Melete Effect* (Figure 3.7)

## 5. Create the tessellation diagram

This can be drawn with the appropriate graphical application, and ultimately it may be possible to use graphing software to generate the tessellation. At the present time these diagrams are created manually but ultimately this process is intended to be generated automatically from the table.

This process can also be used to take an existing linear narrative and convert it into a Choice-Based Narrative, however careful attention has to be made to identify each node/scene/units that make up the narrative and some thought must be paid to considering how choices will work.

### 3.6.3.2. Potential Uses of Tessellations

Tessellations allow for many potential uses at different stages of the creative writing process. Those uses identified here, have been developed throughout the creation of *The Melete Effect* in conjunction with an analysis of the three CYOA books discussed earlier. This section also draws upon an interview conducted with the CYOA author Jay Leibold. Please note that the different uses listed here are not intended to be a definitive list for the applications of tessellations.

One of main advantages of tessellations is that they allow for the shifting of focus and perspective. They can represent different levels of abstraction within a narrative environment and allow for multiple representations of the world, plot and characters of a narrative.

Tessellations also suggest the possibility of visually representing Narrative Intelligence (Mateas and Sengers, 1999; Blair and Meyer, 1997). Narrative Intelligence is explained by Mateas and Sengers (1999) as follows:

“By telling stories we make sense of the world. We order its events and find meaning in them by assimilating them to more-or-less familiar narratives. It is this human ability to organize experience into narrative form that David Blair and Tom Meyer call ‘Narrative Intelligence’...” (1999, p.1)

This construction of narrative which we do automatically as humans, I believe can be represented through tessellations. As a tessellation allows for different phases of a narrative to be represented as iterations, it is possible to see how different narrative parts can manifest different outcomes. This aspect of tessellations may be beneficial to many areas in which an overarching understanding of narrative design and narrative intelligence is required or where narrative patterns are examined in humans (such as psychology); however this remains an area currently beyond the scope of this research and that will need to be researched further.

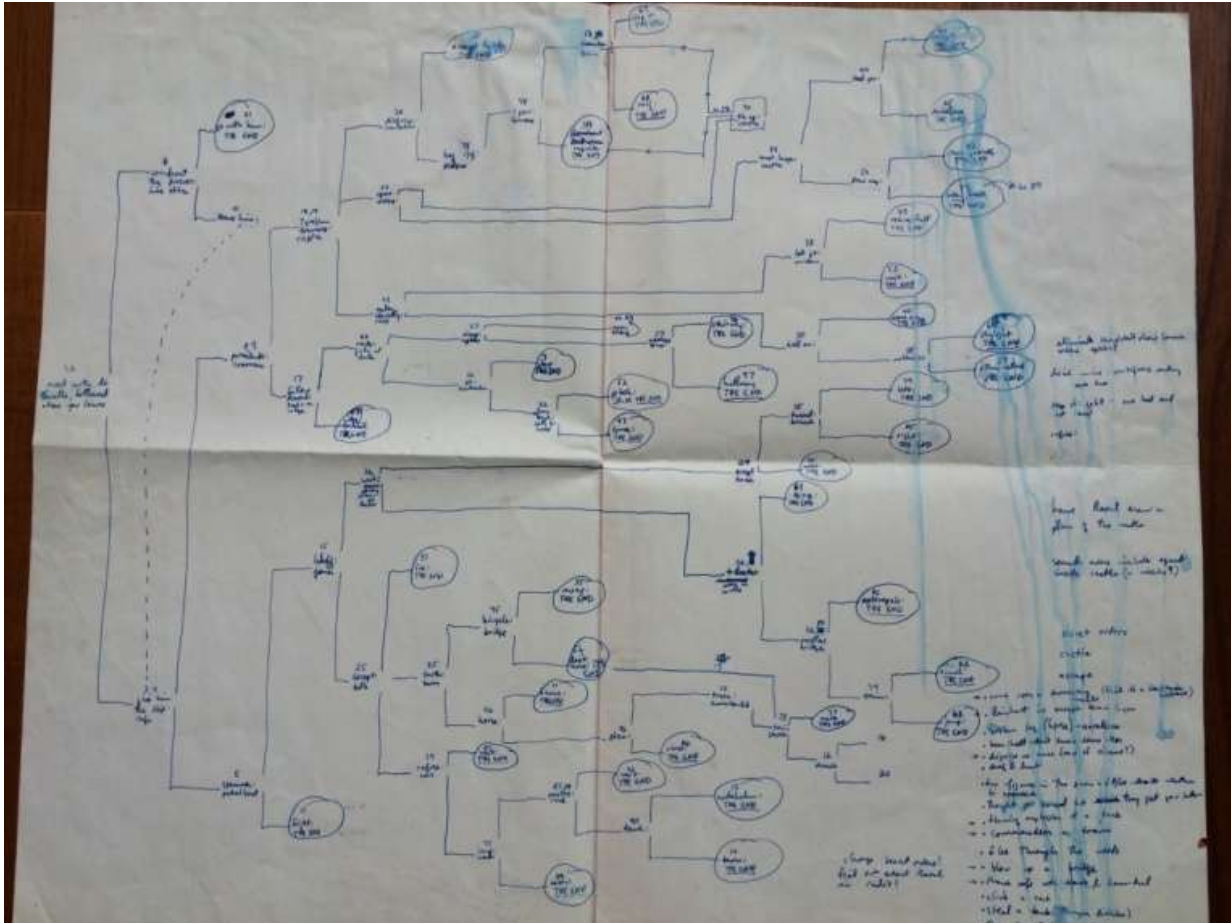
Three potential uses for tessellations are discussed below:

#### Representation of Narrative Plot

The prime use of a tessellation is for the visual representation of a narrative plot within a Choice-Based Narrative. It enables the writer/creator/developer to see clearly how the different paths of a story unfold and what the narrative looks like. Besides a simple representation of the nodes and choices in a story, it can also be used to identify themes and set pathways throughout the story.

As a comparison I will look at Jay Leibold’s *Sabotage* as mapped out as a branching narrative by the author himself (Figure 3.8) and the tessellation of the same narrative (Figure 3.3). In my interview with Leibold, he discussed the difficulties of mapping out branching narratives, “[t]he first diagrams had lots of crossouts or erasures, and when they got too messy I’d draw a new one. I tried to wait

until I had a good grasp of all the branches before I drew what would become the final tree on a large sheet of paper.” (Jay Leibold interview, July 2015). At the stage in which Leibold began writing his books for the series, the format of the CYOA books was quite complex, and he goes on to state “I was under the impression that there had to be a choice every page or two, that that was one of the rules of the series. It made sense, since the books were all about choice and interactivity.” (Jay Leibold interview, July 2015)



**Figure 3.8: Sabotage as hand mapped by Jay Leibold (courtesy of Leibold)**

From Jay’s handdrawn diagram we can see how detailed the branching graph diagram is. What this image does not accurately represent is the size of the drawing. Leibold informed me that his diagram was constructed at A2 size. Compare this with Figure 3.3 which is the tessellation of the same narrative which can be displayed on A4 page. Both diagrams represent the 39 endings of the narrative as written by Leibold. In each it is possible to track each branch and follow it through to its ending. However through from the tessellation (Figure 3.3) it is possible to clearly identify each choice (represented in grey), each merge or leap to another pathway (represented in yellow) and each ending (represented in red). Compare this to Leibold’s own diagram in Figure 3.8 and while it possible to identify some these parts (for example endings, which are circled) it is not possible to extract this information quickly. This is the major advantage of a tessellation over a traditional branching graph structure: the ability to quickly identify the function of each node.

From this it is possible to extract information about the number of choices and endings and use this information for different metrics for constructing Choice-Based Narratives. One of these metrics that became apparent is the ability to determine the level of agency that a given Choice-Based Narrative structure provides in relation to its narrative. A way to do this is to divide the total number of nodes

by the total number of choice-only nodes (grey and blue nodes). This number represents the Agency Quotient of an individual Choice-Based Narrative.

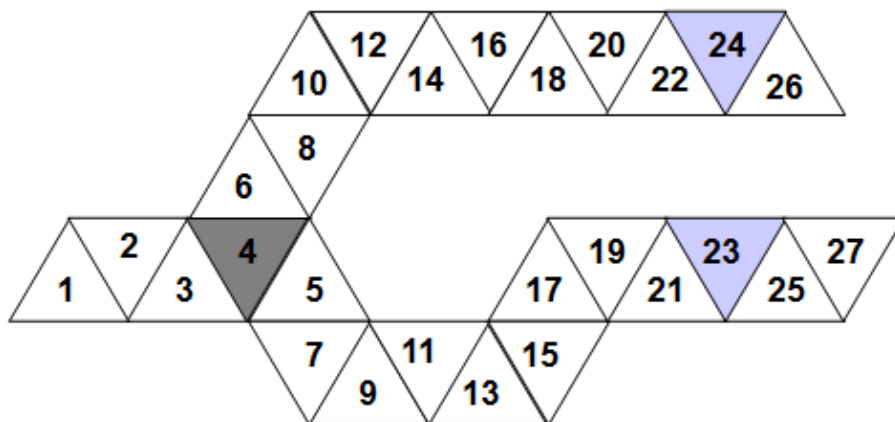
**Table 3.5: Determining the Agency Quotient**

Choice-Based Narrative	Number of Choice Points (NCP)	Number of Choices (NC)	Agency Quotient (NCP/NC)
Sabotage	107	42	2.55
Terror on the Titanic	85	17	5
The Underground Railroad	87	6	14.5
The Melete Effect (Scenes set during the Sandgate Scandal) [See Appendix 10.]	41	14	2.93
The Melete Effect (The Complete Santo Cristos storyline) [See Appendix 9.]	44	7	6.29

Based on the sample of the three CYOA books and *The Melete Effect* (Scenes set during the Sandgate Scandal [See Appendix 10.] and The Santo Cristos storyline [see Appendix 9.]) it was possible to establish that an Agency Quotient between 2 to 9 represents the standard spectrum of balancing choice with narrative, within a Choice-Based Narrative. Those with a quotient of less than 2 represent Choice-Based Narratives in which there is too much choice (and narrative is limited) and those with a quotient of greater than 9 represent Choice-Based Narratives that feature too much narrative (and choice is limited).

However, my assumption is that the effective lower limit of this quotient is closer to 3 and the effective upper limit of this quotient is closer to 7. Further testing with a larger sample group is required to assess the effective range of this quotient and its viability as a metric.

### Representation of a Character's Story



**Figure 3.9: Nikilev's Story – A Tessellation from the perspective of a specific character**



When constructing nodes for a Choice-Based Narrative, it is often possible to identify nodes that can be arranged on multiple characters within the story. Typically within a CYOA book and across most Choice-Based Narratives the reader is either identified in the second person as “You” or the reader takes on the role of a specific character. In some like B.S. Johnson’s *The Unfortunates* (1999) the reader becomes the narrator, in effect arranging the story by creating the narratorial voice. Choice-Based Narratives seem to encourage the shifting of perspectives; the ability to move from one character’s perspective to another.

In *The Melete Effect*, the focus is, as indicated by the title, is the character of Mary Melete. The story the reader constructs is of her life and decisions over three different storylines. However, many of the supporting characters feature so prominently within the story, that it is possible to re-orientate the story and its nodes around them. In the Rousya storyline (an alternate history Russia), the character of Leon Nikilev, a revolutionary, can become the focus of the Choice-Based Narrative. Nikilev’s Story revolves around whether or not Melete stays in Rousya or not after the nuclear destruction of Moscow. Figure 3.9 represents Nikilev’s story as featuring one major bifurcation with different outcomes. One node is represented twice (no. 23 & 24, represented here in blue), however, depending on the pathway, this repeated node has different alternative outcomes.

Throughout *The Melete Effect* (and by inference other Choice-Based Narratives) it becomes possible to map out the specific plot arcs for different characters. In *The Melete Effect* at least 5 supporting characters can have their individual plots mapped in this way. In theory it may be possible to map every character’s plot as a tessellation, but this may prove too time intensive and also yield too little useful information. The advantage of mapping nodes for each individual character’s plot is that it is possible to identify which nodes belong in which storyline. Importantly it helps to identify if any additional nodes are needed (i.e. Are there story elements that are missing?) and this is useful to a creative writer’s process.

To reiterate using a tessellation to shift characters and focus on secondary characters or antagonists it’s possible to identify gaps within the construction of the narrative.

### Folding Tessellations

If we return now to Fig 3.2, the original illustration of what a tessellation is, there is an immediate discrepancy between a tessellation as represented geometrically and how it is has been represented throughout this section. However this discrepancy is one of visual representation, and one that can be resolved by folding tessellations, like origami, to produce joined tessellations. The Underground Railway tessellation (Figure 3.5) through its layout immediately suggests how such a folding may be possible. However in order to provide a smaller and more manageable folding, let’s look instead at Figure 3.9 as a folded tessellation.

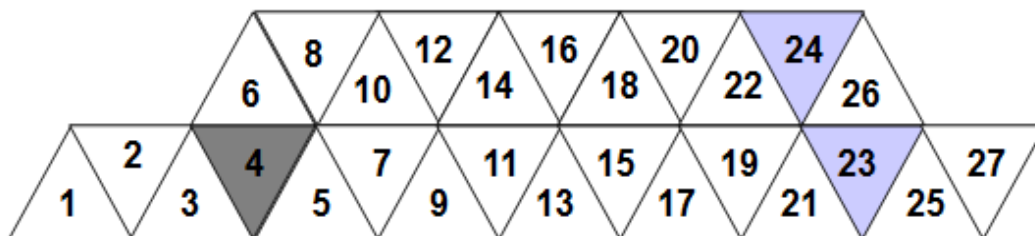
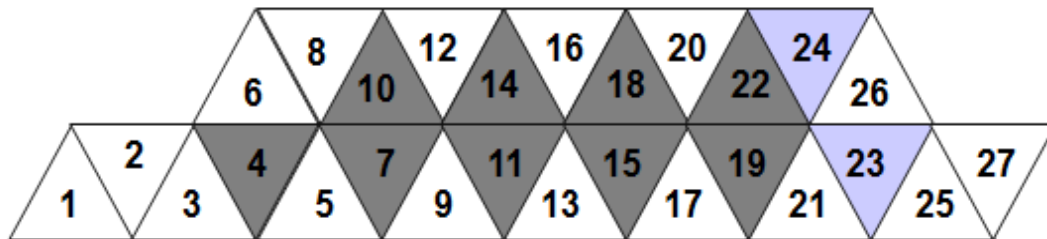


Figure 3.10: Nikilev’s Story as a folded tessellation.

It is clear from this diagram that several nodes now have interrelationships where there were none before (nodes 7 & 10, nodes 11 & 14, nodes 15 & 18 and nodes 19 & 22). Interestingly nodes 23 & 24 (which were the same scene but with different outcomes) now link to node 26. What this folding allows is different permutations through the different narrative pathways and suggests choices where previously there were none. This potential reordering of the choices is represented in Figure 3.11.



**Figure 3.11: Nikilev's Story as folded tessellation with added choice points**

This folded tessellation allows for different interpretations of the existing nodes, and it helps to construct different meaning within Nikilev's Story and suggest different pathways and orderings. Not all of the potential foldings will make narrative sense, but the opening up of different narrative alternatives is the overall intention of folding tessellations. What this means is that it is possible to fold, unfold and refold tessellations to examine what narrative possibilities they suggest. Folding tessellations also suggests the creation of three dimensional shapes, by folding the tessellation in three dimensions. These three dimensional objects can potentially be folded in such a way as to suggest polyhedrons. The potential for three dimensional polyhedral narratives remains an area for future research.

### **3.6.3.3. Further Research**

The tessellation, I believe, offers an elegant visual representation of plot, characters, choices and endings for a creative writer looking to create a Choice-Based Narrative. It allows multiple representations which are not easily drawn out from branching graph structures, such as the ability to break narrative pathways into smaller parts and to allow for the representation of plot from different character's perspectives. The full range of the tessellation's ability remains to be explored. Further research is required to develop an automated process for creating tessellations, and to understand the ramifications of an Agency Quotient on the development of a Choice-Based Narrative, as well as exploring the possibilities of polyhedral narrative. The tessellation has been extremely useful in breaking *The Melete Effect* into smaller parts for easier representation. As a structure for narrative representation, the tessellation will have benefits not only for the creative writer but may also offer automated narrative systems a longer term solution to the development of larger and more complex Choice-Based Narratives.

### 3.7. Chapter Conclusion

In closing, I want to reflect now on the relationship between Praxis and Poiesis. As a practitioner, working organically means that Poiesis comes before Praxis. I undertake my practice before understanding my process. For a long time I was under the impression that this was a problematic approach, that somehow it was better to have a clear process inform my writing. On closer analysis, and through the course of this chapter, I have come to realise that my approach allows my writing to take the form that it needs. It also offers me a deeper understanding of the ways in which my process can unfold, and allows me to map the roads down which my practice can travel.

The process of working with the organic can be unique, with each organic interaction yielding different results. This is a part of the joy of creative practice; you never know what you may create. In contrast, there is no singular algorithm to guarantee a universal or successful outcome (a best-selling novel, the blockbuster film or a literary masterpiece), but rather the algorithmic functions to support the organic in its process of exploration. The interplay between the organic and the algorithmic shapes the creative outcome and ensures that it accurately represents the practitioner's intentions.

Throughout this chapter I have discussed the ways in which the organic and the algorithmic have operated within the three phases of my creative practice. I have established that in each phase the balancing of the algorithmic with the organic has had different parameters and requirements. My intention here has not been to categorically define what the organic and the algorithmic is for all practitioners, but rather to assist other practitioners in identifying their own organic and algorithmic process by illustrating how it operates within my creative practice.

Here the algorithm and my understanding of it, has allowed me to evaluate my Poiesis (Methods) and to establish three new types of Praxis which have arisen directly out of my writing of *The Melete Effect*. These Praxis, the Story Choice Framework, Sans Medium and Tessellations are each processes that are involved in creating Choice-Based Narratives that can be used by other practitioners to create their own work which fulfils my first research aim. The Melete Effect has provided a unique insight in the different processes that are involved in order to successfully create a Choice-Based Narrative.

## 4. The Poetics of Choice-Based Narratives

In Chapter 3 I identified several Praxi that are useful for the mechanics of realising Choice-Based Narratives (The Story Choice Framework, Sans Medium and Tessellations), in contrast this chapter is about establishing the poetics that all creative writers must consider when writing Choice-Based Narratives. The Praxis of Sans Medium is something that can influence the development of Choice-Based Narratives, as medium as a container, will obviously shape the story in specific ways; yet regardless of the chosen medium these poetics still apply. These elements represent the basis for all Choice-Based Narratives as a form. These qualities are as follows:

- They are episodic and epic
- They use priming and misdirection
- They use genre as a narrative shortcut
- They allow counterfactuals to influence characters and plot

In this chapter these poetics will be examined in the following sections:

- Story Construction (Episodic and Epic)
- Managing Audience's Expectations (Priming and Misdirection)
- The Power of Genre (Genre)
- The Importance of 'What-if'? (Counterfactuals)

### 4.1. Story Construction

The structure of a Choice-Based Narrative has some unique qualities. It lends itself two qualities which are important to discuss here. The first quality is that Choice-Based Narratives by their nature are episodic. Each scene/node is complete and contained, allowing for choices to be placed at the end of each scene. The second quality is that Choice-Based Narrative lends itself to epic storytelling; long form, complicated narrative that allows for numerous choices and a large number of bifurcations and alternative storylines.

Murray (1998), Manovich (2000) and Cameron (2008) have all identified the episodic quality of Choice-Based Narratives which allows the narrative to be consumed in small manageable cognitive chunks (for more information see section 4.2). Without these small chunks (and small here is relative, as each episode can be quite significant in size if necessary) it is not possible for the reader to construct and reconstruct the events of the story. The structures that underline this episodic quality are drawn from a variety of sources. Balancing the narratological and ludological aspects of Choice-Based Narratives meant examining a variety of theories and ideas whose structures represented Choice-Based Narratives, even if they were not typical creative writing practices.

One such theory on how narrative meaning is constructed is Script Theory (Danesi, 2009). Script theory has been used in several fields such as cognitive psychology, media and communications, computing and even business, where the theory has been adapted to describe different aspects of human behaviour. At its core the theory suggests how human behaviour can be represented as a script that people follow or engage in when interacting with each other; that we as individuals expect certain events or actions to occur in certain situations (Danesi, 2009). Scripts represent discrete nodes that can be broken down and moved around, to examine how the story is functioning. In the creation of a Choice-Based Narrative much of the structure is built upon repurposing traditional 'scripts' that are rearranged as necessary to facilitate the storytelling

experience. In *The Melete Effect* the traditional script of “A Journalist investigating a Story” is separated into three separate stories that can be arranged in multiple ways. Script theory facilitates the episodic qualities of a Choice-Based Narrative.

Script theory was initially used in computing for natural-language processing. Much of natural-language processing’s intention was to enable Artificial Intelligence (AI) to understand and comprehend what a person would ask of it. It’s here that scripts become extremely useful as a kind of shorthand in order for a machine to understand the context of what’s happening; and this context attempts to reflect how a person would think in this situation. Schank and Abelson (1977) in their discussion of scripts state:

“Thus while it is possible to understand a story without using a script, scripts are an important part of story understanding. What they do is let you leave out the boring details when you are talking or writing, and fill them in when you are listening or reading” (Schank & Abelson, 1977, p. 41)

So script theory offers an elegant way for the audience to be primed in a narrative in a particular way and for a writer to control that priming and challenge the audience’s expectations (which will be explored further in section 4.2).

Script theory also leads into another area of AI research that has important implications for the construction of Choice-Based Narratives. If script theory arranges particular scenes into set scripts which makes them easier to understand by an audience (or AI), then plot units allow for a story to be broken up into its constituent plots. Plot units were identified by Lehnert (1981) and Dyer (1983) and may represent an individual ‘script’ in its entirety or combine together to form a larger more complete ‘script’. So although you can have a set script e.g. A person ordering a meal at a restaurant, within that script it is possible to have multiple plot units combining to construct that script. Plot units become useful when constructing different pathways through a Choice-Based Narrative. Here plots units are responsible for shaping the overall structure of the narrative whether a writer is using tools such as the Story Choice Framework, Twine, a branching graph structure or a tessellation. Plot units help to construct both the episodic and the epic, in that they facilitate individual episodes and the overall length of the storytelling experience.

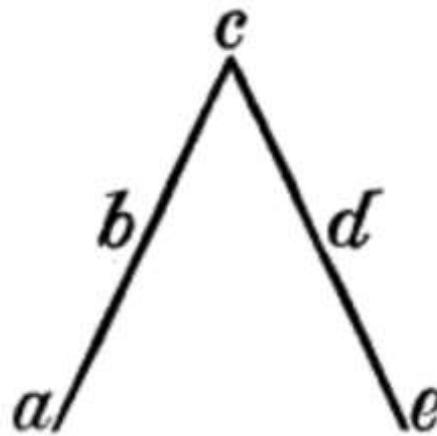
The next important aspect of story construction is the use of two existing narratives structures that are necessary for the coherence and consistency of that story being told. These are as follows:

1. Freytag’s pyramid structure (the classical 3 to 5 act structure)
2. Jo-Ha-Kyū (structure traditionally found in Japanese Noh [Nō] drama)

A third structure, Kishōtenketsu (a structure without conflict traditionally found in Chinese and Japanese poetry) was also considered, but a lack of examples in Choice-Based Narratives (although there are numerous examples within Video-Gaming) and a limited literature explaining the form prevented this structure from being explored further.

Choice-Based Narratives largely integrate these two types of narrative structure, one as external narrative structure (Freytag’s pyramid) and the other as an internal narrative structure (Plot Units and Jo-ha-kyū). When designed correctly Choice-Based Narratives function precisely because of the way they balance these internal and external structures. Traditional narrative storytelling, film, theatre, television, focuses on the external narrative structure whereas gaming and new media focuses on the internal narrative structure (the mechanic). Choice-Based Narratives sit on a spectrum between the two and so utilise both structures.

The external structure is represented by the idea of the narrative travelling in an arc throughout the duration of a story. The modern notion of this was formally identified by Gustav Freytag, although as a structure it has existed since storytelling began. Freytag's Pyramid is a theory of dramatic construction that he put forward in his book *Technique of the Drama* (1865, 1900 in English Translation). In this context Freytag is describing particularly how theatrical drama functions, but the utility of his description covers many different mediums of storytelling. Freytag describes drama as possessing "...a pyramidal structure. It rises from the introduction with the entrance of the exciting forces to the climax, and falls from here to the catastrophe. Between these three parts lie (the parts of) the rise and the fall." (Freytag, 1900, p.114-115) The pyramid looks something like this:



**Figure 4.1: Freytag's pyramid**

Freytag identifies the five parts as follows:

- (a) Introduction
- (b) Rise
- (c) Climax
- (d) Return (or Fall)
- (e) Catastrophe (also sometimes called Resolution) (Freytag, 1900, p.115)

Freytag goes on to identify three crises or moments "through which the parts are separated as well as bound together" (Freytag, 1900, p.115) He names these as follows:

- (1) The Exciting Moment (or Force)
- (2) The Tragic Moment (or Force)
- (3) The Moment (or Force) of Last Suspense (Freytag, 1900, p.115)

Each of these moments (or forces) is used to link the parts of the dramatic structure together. In some cases, the parts are directly intertwined with these moments. A common example which Freytag identifies is the way that the Climax is almost always intertwined with the Tragic Moment (or Force), and that those moments/parts lead to directly to the Return (or Fall) (1900, p.129).

This structure is seen as a universal across the history of Western literature, and Freytag developed his pyramid structure to help explain classical (the Greeks and Romans), Elizabethan (mostly Shakespeare) and classic German plays (such as Schiller and Goethe). The structure was later

adapted as the three-act structure for other storytelling mediums, most notably film. This structure is most commonly found In Choice-Based Narratives because it represents the most common way of understanding and experiencing narrative. This may be challenged in the future by the possibilities of non-linear storytelling, but by default all Choice-Based Narratives must meet this fundamental structural standard.

Before moving on to the internal structure, it is important to acknowledge a phenomena that influences both the external and internal narrative structure. Bordwell (2002) makes an observation about the importance of cause and effect in storytelling (here discussing the forking path film, but it is relevant to all Choice-Based Narrative). He states that “[w]hat comes earlier shapes our expectations about what follows. What comes later modifies our understanding of what went before; retrospection is often as important as prospecting.” (Bordwell, 2002 p.98) This notion of cause and effect and how it impacts the comprehension of the narrative is important because Choice-Based Narratives operates with this notion of prospecting and retrospection constantly: The reader anticipates what might happen next and after the decision they reassess the information they have been given in anticipation of the next choice. A writer must consider this when constructing their Choice-Based Narrative (see also section 4.2).

If Freytag’s Pyramid is the most common structure found in Western literature, one of the most prevalent in Eastern Literature is that of Jo-Ha-Kyū. Jo-Ha-Kyū is a structure found in Japanese Bunraku (formerly Joruri) and Kabuki Theatre. The internal structure, it could be argued is a representation of Freytag’s Pyramid in miniature. Jo-Ha-Kyū is explained by Gerstle as “...that there is a gradual increase in the tempo from a slow, deliberate beginning to a sudden, fast peak, followed by a short, slowing down cadence as the unit comes to an end.” (1986, p.41-42) Here Gerstle is talking about the musical function of Jo-Ha-Kyū within Bunraku (or Joruri), however in this context Jo-Ha-Kyū is being used to outline the rhythm and written structure of a scene or node. Gerstle goes on to elaborate:

“Units vary greatly in length. Early ones in a scene are introductory and bring the audience gradually to a heightened involvement in the intensities of the unfolding drama. The method is to speed up and then slow down the tempo, and to tighten and then relax the tension, bringing the movements to successfully higher crescendos until the climax of the particular scene. [...] If the drama is successful, the audience’s sensibilities will be raised to the point of participating in the emotions following the tragedy. If, on the other hand, this scene is not the climax and is followed by an even more critically dramatic scene, then the audience has been gradually prepared for the intensities to follow, and is allowed a moment of respite before moving on.” (1986, p.42)

This accurately describes the rhythm that each episode within a Choice-Based Narrative must have. This rhythm is shaped by the needs of the story and here genre can assist greatly in the construction of discrete episodes within a Choice-Based Narrative (see section 4.3 for more information).

In my own performance education Jo-Ha-Kyū was explained to me to as having the rhythm of a wave crashing on the shore. The action of the wave approaching the shore, pulling back from the sand, reaching the crescendo of its highest peak and then breaking on the sand, is the metaphor for the action that happens within a scene or node. Typically this motion of action, the Jo-Ha-Kyū, happens once within a scene, it is what gives each scene its dramatic momentum. However it is not uncommon for a scene to have two or three individual Jo-Ha-Kyū’s across its duration. This accumulation of dramatic actions increases and decreases in a rhythm, just as waves change their size with the tide.

In a Choice-Based Narrative, control of this rhythm by the writer is critical to keeping the audience engaged with the narrative. Here, engagement has another purpose and that is to lower the audience's resistance to making a choice. Without a sense of agency, the Choice-Based Narrative cannot function as a storytelling experience, because the story only exists through the choices made. In my observation the greater the engagement with the narrative the more agency an audience believes they have. Through understanding how Jo-Ha-Kyū functions in each scene, a writer can set the intended level of engagement for the audience, which in turn will facilitate the inevitability of choice.

Jo-Ha-Kyū helps to define the boundaries of the episodic quality of a scene. By understanding where the Jo-Ha-Kyū is, it is possible to understand the size and duration of a given scene or node. This is important for recognising the boundary of a node and where the placement of choice can occur. Without knowing where the end of a node is, it is impossible to determine if a choice is required or not. Jo-Ha-Kyū can also help to identify whether the rhythm of the narrative should be disrupted with a choice or continued without a choice. These are ultimately decisions made by the writer, but they are informed by the rhythm of the writing.

Although the internal and the external here are discussed in abstract terms, it should be understood that they represent aspects of the writer's craft. It is the skill of the writer that allows for these different aspects to be represented. It is important to also state that in good story construction there must be a balance between the internal rhythm and the overall external structure, and this is something that only comes with time and experience as a writer.

To conclude this section I will look at the epic qualities of a Choice-Based Narrative. The epic quality is often bounded by the writer, typically to limit the size and complexity of the narrative being told. For example the Choose Your Own Adventure books had a physical page limit of 144 pages (or 9 octavos of 16 pages each) which limited the story to about 8-12,000 words; they also had a thematic limit to ensure that their stories would be suitable to their young adult audience. In writing *The Melete Effect*, the epic quality was bounded by the life of the character of Mary Melete. Although I did not tell all of the events which occurred in her life, I focused exclusively on a 19-year period which effectively bounded the story, but allowed for a multitude of narrative possibilities.

The epic quality of Choice-Based Narratives also means that it is possible to have multiple versions of a narrative from multiple perspectives. As I have discussed elsewhere in this dissertation it was possible to create different versions of *The Melete Effect* from the perspective of the other characters. However there are several reasons why multiple-perspective choice-based narratives have not been attempted. Firstly there is a historical preference (although not all Choice-Based Narratives follow this model) for identifying the reader/audience as a second-person narrator ('YOU'), which limits the ability to shift character perspectives. Also there has been a traditional focus on a single hero throughout any given narrative. Finally multiple perspectives create a variety of counterfactual events (see section 4.4 for more information) and these different events can result in a complex and confused timeline. It's not impossible, as *The Melete Effect* has shown, but it requires considerable effort to construct a coherent and consistent narrative.

## 4.2. Managing Audience's Expectations

As the reader's choice is central to a Choice-Based Narrative experience, much of the ways in which choice can be handled and manipulated needs to be examined by the writer. Choice-Based Narratives have a complex relationship between the writer and the reader. The writer constructs the narrative pathways and the reader navigates those pathways how they desire. However the text that



the writer creates has gaps and requires cognitive leaps on the reader's behalf in order to construct the reality of the world. This 'gapping' is an important part of all narratives, but is particularly critical to the successful integration of the different narratives that exist within a Choice-Based Narrative. Spolsky in her entry in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory (Herman, Jahn & Ryan (eds), 2005, p.193) defines gapping as:

"In the presence of a gappy text (and all texts are gappy), if there is no evidence to the contrary, audiences assume that a communication is intended. ...On the strength of this assumption audiences mobilise a variety of cognitive abilities in combination with a large amount of linguistic, social, and cultural information, allowing them to complete perceived patterns, making a sense of them in context. Although it is generally assumed that it is the text that evokes the pattern, the reader merely completing it, it has not been easy to assess the balance of power between the text and the audience..."

Choice-Based Narratives (and *The Melete Effect* is no exception) must constantly deal with the 'gappy' nature of their construction in order to reconcile how a reader will receive and in some cases interact with a text. Much of this lies in how the writer constructs the story, but it also involves a secondary tool that is useful for the reader to understand the experience being constructed. This tool is also used routinely by magicians in their performance of magic, and has been developed across a variety of areas including in education theory (particularly in constructivism), cognitive psychology and research into artificial intelligence; it is the notion of priming.

Priming is defined by Macknik, Martinex-Conde and Blakeslee in their book *Sleight of Mind* as "a powerful influence in everyday life, by which subtle suggestions made to your subconscious mind can influence your subsequent behaviour." (2011, p.147) It is a concept studied predominantly by cognitive psychologists to help understand why people make certain decisions in given situations. In *Sleight of Mind* priming is identified as one of the tools that magicians use (like misdirection) to successfully perform their tricks by exploiting cognitive shortcuts that our minds use to construct perception. As Macknik, Martinex-Conde and Blakeslee observe "perception is not a process of passive absorption but of active construction." (2011, p.141) It is this active construction that magicians take advantage of by controlling our expectations and our assumptions. However as a writer I realise that it is also something that storytellers have used since time immemorial to guide readers into specific assumptions about characters or the plot. An example of this is the way plots use foreshadowing (or foregrounding) to help shape a reader's expectation of the narrative that they are reading/viewing.

Priming can be beneficial if you handle it subtly and carefully. However if you over-prime your audience (see Appendix 11), you risk invoking the wrath of the audience. In fact an audience that knows it is being manipulated and handled, can result in members of the audience actively resisting the experience and rejecting the narrative. This observation is taken from my own experiences as cinema-goer, theatre spectator and game player; at the moments in which I am being forced or coerced into eliciting a particular response, I immediately drop out of the experience and disengage from the narrative. In creating a Choice-Based Narrative it is important that any priming be handled in a way that is in service to the story, plot and most importantly the characters.

In fact Priming works best when it subverts the expectations of its audience. To understand how this subversion can take place, it is important to understand first how those expectations (that magicians exploit so wonderfully) can be shaped in the first place. Immediately the role of the reader as Eco defined it comes to mind; that no reader comes to a text without some prior knowledge (1969). Here the reader creates intertextual frames based on their own experiences from which they make meaning out of what they are reading. In an extension of intertextual frames he

discusses the concept of inferential walks, where once the reader has begun using an intertextual frame they begin to infer different possibilities for what the author and sender of the messages has intended. The reader constructs this meaning from 'walking' through their experience of similar messages; using their memory and prior experiences to forecast or anticipate what this message is and where it may lead (Eco, 1969, p.32). These 'inferential walks' are critical to the construction and realisation of a story in a reader's mind and understanding this a writer can use to shortcut the narrative construction required, by providing frames that can be easily identified and anticipated by their reader.

A second point raised by Eco (1969) and existent in many if not all forms of narrative is the notion of bias. That as writers we create from a place of specific intention and that as readers we bring our own ideological bias when decoding a message or reading a writer's text. Eco (1969, p.22) mentions that codes and messages can be misinterpreted or misrepresented by these ideological biases, that sometime more meaning can be ascribed to a particular text than was intended by the writer. Eco calls this an "aberrant code" one that switches the message from what the writer originally intended. In my observation, aberrant coding exists not only as an ideological bias in the construction of meaning, but also when considering the possibility of where a narrative may go. It may be possible at certain junctures, when the narrative permits it, to forecast or anticipate where the narrative may go next. This anticipation can create in the reader's mind a very different picture of the story being told. This can happen when reading a novel or watching a movie (and I suspect in any form of narrative storytelling) and can lead to the audience being disappointed in the outcome of the story if it violates too greatly the expectation that they (the audience) had constructed for the experience.

However, this also raises an interesting possibility, one that can be examined in Choice-Based Narratives, that of the possibility of creating a false impression; a kind of deception that allows the audience to expect one thing, but be given something else. In other words, what if the writer could knowingly control what the audience expects from the narrative? This deception is known in magic as misdirection, which Wikipedia (2015, para.1) defines as a form of deception in which the attention of an audience is focused on one thing in order to distract its attention from another. Dariel Fitzkee further explains in his book *Magic by Misdirection* (1975) that,

"The true skill of the magician is in the skill he exhibits in influencing the spectator's mind. This is not a thing of mechanics. It is not a thing of digital dexterity. It is entirely a thing of psychological attack. It's completely a thing of controlling the spectator's thinking. ... The real secrets of magic are those whereby the magician is able to influence the mind of the spectator, even in the face of that spectator's definite knowledge that the magician is absolutely unable to do what that spectator ultimately must admit he does do."

Misdirection is important as it introduces an element of chaos and unpredictability; the reader thinks they know where the story should go, but are instead surprised by where it does go. In literature the device of a red herring functions in a similar way, by suggesting an argument, pathway or course of action whose importance is unsure. Warburton (2007) describes this as,

"A form of irrelevance which leads the unwary off on a false trail. ... It is particularly effective because it may not be obvious for some time that the trail is a false one, since, typically, red herrings have intrinsic interest and seem at first to be pertinent to the question under discussion." (2007, p.124-125)

Typically red herrings are used to mask the true plot of a story, which when revealed results in the action reverting to the 'correct' path. They often involve the subsuming of the original idea in order

to keep the intended audience off track. Choice-Based Narratives frequently use this technique to increase the possibilities of the narrative. In Choice-Based Narratives though, the path is not limited to one linear pathway and many alternative pathways can become available and possible. This means that a red herring or misdirection can in fact become genuine alternatives to the 'correct' path. They can provide different narrative possibilities that change the shape of a story (see section 4.4). This is because both misdirection and red herrings suggest something that is not strictly 'true' but has dramatic potential. This consideration is necessary for the success of all Choice-Based Narratives because it offers the reader multiple ways in which to engage and re-engage with the narrative. It allows for the possibility of returning to the narrative, which is an important part of this type of narrative experience. In many respects this is where my initial interest in this project began, by looking at how and why people return to a story or an experience. Choice-Based Narratives offer this return while still allowing the writer to construct the narrative that they want audiences to receive.

A major aspect of misdirection is enacted by the audience themselves: It is their willingness to suspend their disbelief. Andrews (2014) explores how imagination coupled with the suspension of disbelief is important to making a fictional experience seem real; that there is a deception that takes place between the sender (the writer) and the receiver (the audience). She identifies the way tricks work to explain this process, "Three key elements contribute to the likelihood of the deception going undetected: (1) the performance of the conjurer, (2) attention to detail and setting, and (3) the disposition of the audience." (Andrews, 2014, p.23). This notion is expressed by many magicians when talking about their performance such as Houdini who states, "[w]ork with determination that you intend to make them *believe* what you say. Say it as if you mean it, and believe it yourself. If you *believe* your own claim to miracle doing and are sincere in your work, you are bound to succeed." (1953, p.240) In a Choice-Based Narrative this belief is particularly important to creating an immersive narrative that a reader/audience can engage with.

### 4.3. The Power of Genre

"The genre parodies give you a big leg up. You can just worry about the content, the form is kind of set. Because the audience knows the reference points, he can move much faster and he can just concentrate on being funny"

Lorne Michaels discussing Chuck Jones's work (specifically Rocket Squad [1956]) in the documentary Chuck Jones: Extremes and In-Betweens – A Life in Animation (2002)

Genre is used specifically in Choice-Based Narratives because of its ability to prime an audience quickly. Genre allows the audience to rapidly identify the type of story, where it is set and to establish the stakes involved in the situation, and in doing so, helps the audience become invested in these events. This is particularly useful for Choice-Based Narrative where a reader's investment increases their ability to make decisions. In this section, I will begin by defining Genre and then using *The Melete Effect* I will focus on three aspects of storytelling, that of world, setting and character to illustrate how genre has influenced the structure of my Choice-Based Narrative.

#### 4.3.1. A Definition of Genre

Genre is a term whose definition can be broad and encompass many fields. This is because genre is contextual; any attempt to define what it is and how it works, is reliant upon the context in which it

is being raised. Therefore any definition carries with it a predefined context by necessity. With this in mind, I will define genre in the context of writing a Choice-Based Narrative.

Mikhail Bakhtin defines genre as “a horizon of expectations brought to bear on a certain class of text types” (Bakhtin, 1981 p.428). He is quick to identify that many genres exist that are not limited to narrative storytelling or the arts. In this way Bakhtin suggests that genre is a ritual, a form, a process, a way of doing that comes to be expected. It can be systematic, but equally it can be informal; yet it is always expected by those receiving it. The nature of genre evolves because it is in constant conversation with the world about its meaning. Bakhtin’s definition presupposes that the parameters of genre will always evolve and change.

From Bakhtin’s understanding of genre come two aspects that inform Choice-Based Narratives. Firstly that the nature of expectation that a genre fosters is important; for the reader must have their expectations confirmed, or if they are denied then it must be done in a way that is in keeping with the broader scope of the story. Secondly it is the systematic nature of the form of Choice-Based Narrative when coupled with these expectations that influences the way in which genre and story are received by the reader.

One final aspect of genre that Bakhtin identifies is genre’s historicity. Flanagan (2009) quotes Bakhtin discussing the way that genre contains a memory of its history within its form:

“A literary genre, by its very nature, reflects the most stable, ‘eternal’ tendencies in literature’s development. Always preserved in a genre are underlying elements of the archaic. True these archaic elements are preserved in it only thanks to their constant renewal, which is to say, their contemporization. A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre.” (2009, p.93)

This sense of history (of a genre) is an important part of what *The Melete Effect* asks its audience to identify with. The recognition of distinct historical events that Mary Melete is a witness to and a participant in, is important to the reader’s understanding of the narrative but also to their engagement with the story.

While Bakhtin developed his work in relation to literary theory (particularly the novel) and his definition is elegant, it doesn’t completely represent genre as I have utilised it through writing *The Melete Effect*. My understanding of specific genres comes more so from film theory. I have particularly looked at the filmic genres of the political and conspiracy thrillers and to a lesser degree that of film noir when constructing *The Melete Effect*. Schatz (1980) in his discussion of Hollywood genres explains that “any genre’s narrative context imbues its conventions with meaning.” (p.10) He goes on to state that:

“This significance is based on the viewer’s familiarity with the “world” of the genre itself rather than on his or her world. ... It is not their mere repetitions which endows generic elements with prior significance, but their repetition within a conventionalized formal, narrative, and thematic context. If it is initially a popular success, a film story is reworked in later movies and repeated until it reaches its equilibrium profile - until it becomes a spatial, sequential, and thematic pattern of familiar actions and relationships.” (Schatz, 1980, p.10)

Schatz goes on to state that “[t]hus genre experience, like all human experience is organized according to certain fundamental perceptual processes. As we repeatedly undergo the same type of experience we develop expectations which, as they are continually reinforced, tend to harden into

‘rules’.” (1981, p.18) I have drawn my ‘rules’ for *The Melete Effect* from my preferred genres of political thriller, conspiracy thriller and film noir. The specific narrative parts of these genres have shaped my creative writing and these narrative parts are organised as follows:

- The world - The broader world in which a narrative exists, which forms a boundary on the types of narrative possibilities.
- The setting – The specific location, as distinct from the overall world, in which each scene takes place.
- The characters – The characters whose actions shape the events which occur in the narrative.

This is not an exhaustive list of the potential narrative parts that can be analysed; in fact only those that have been clearly influenced by genre have been chosen. The most obvious omission here is that of plot and this is deliberate. This is because in *The Melete Effect* the plot is actually designed to subvert genre expectations and here I wish to examine those elements which contribute to an audience’s recognition of genre.

In narrative storytelling, when genre evolves into a fixed, set definition, so too does its form (Schatz, 1981). Without continued evolution a genre can die or be caught in time. An example is the genre of film noir which began in 1940 (exactly which film was the first noir is open to conjecture) and was finished by 1959 (Spicer, 2010). Yet when genre continues to evolve, it can develop into different sub-forms, for example the neo-noir genre (1967 onwards) which is used to describe noir-like films which have appeared in the decades since the original genre ended (Spicer 2010, p.215-18). Schatz here also reinforces Bakhtin, by stating:

“There is a sense, then, in which film genre is both a static and a dynamic system. On the one hand, it is a familiar formula of interrelated narrative and cinematic components that serves to continually re-examine some basic cultural conflict [...] On the other hand, changes in cultural attitudes, new influential genre films, the economics of the industry, and so forth, continually refine any film genre. As such, its nature is continually evolving.” (1981, p.16)

Linda Aronson in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Screenplay (2010) establishes a genre equation, which she explains as follows: “Identify the pattern or genre you are writing in, remembering ‘the genre equation’ which is: genre = pattern + relevant emotion + real + unusual” (2010, p.22) The pattern components are the parts of the story that repeat across similar stories in the same genre; these can be found in the world of the story, the various settings or particular characters native to a genre. The relevant emotion is the tone that a narrative carries across its structure, and is similar to the palette that an artist uses to colour their painting. Aronson (2010) describes the real, as being the reality of the events that occur; things that happen must have a credible quality to them. The unusual by contrast is that original element that the writer brings to this particular genre; if the unusual contribution is strong enough, it can result in a long term influence on the genre, and sometimes lead to the creation of new and hybrid genres. An example of this is George Miller’s *Mad Max 2* (aka *The Road Warrior*) (1981) which took the elements of the first film, which featured the breakdown of society, and pushed it to its logical extreme placing the story in an Australian desert wasteland; and singlehandedly created the genre of post-apocalyptic desert wasteland films.

It is also interesting because Aronson’s equation represents a type of algorithm that can be repeated over again. Here she has literally developed a formula for recreating genre. Also it must be noted that the pattern components that exist in each genre are themselves algorithmic, repeated because the genre requires it. If I was to take Aronson’s equation and classify *The Melete Effect* in these terms I would express it as follows:

**Table 4.1: The Melete Effect using Aronson's Equation**

<b>The Melete Effect as:</b>	<b>Genre equation = Pattern components + relevant emotion + real + unusual</b>
Political Thriller	Pattern components + curiosity + real + unusual
Conspiracy Thriller	Pattern components + paranoia + real + unusual
Film Noir	Pattern components + pessimism + real + unusual

To expand upon this further, the pattern components that make up each genre are predominantly informed by the narrative parts of world, setting and character. The different emotional tones of curiosity, paranoia and pessimism are expressed across the complete narrative, but certain plots in *The Melete Effect* favour specific emotional tones. The real is represented by the appropriation of real world events within the fictional context of the narrative. The unusual is my use of alternative history (what-if scenarios that suppose different realities to our own history) in constructing the narrative and events of *The Melete Effect*.

### 4.3.2. The World

There are three main storylines that make up *The Melete Effect* and each is set in a different part of the narrative's fictional world. Set over a nineteen year period from 1972 until 1991 which covers a series of events investigated by the journalist Mary Melete. An important part of the story world is that it is set in an alternative universe in which historical events do not play out as they happened in our history. In the table below I have mapped out the different qualities of the fictional world and its real world inspiration for the fictional events.

**Table 4.2: Comparing the Fictional to the Real World**

<b>Fictional Place</b>	<b>Real World Inspiration</b>	<b>Historical Events</b>	<b>Fictional Event</b>
Franklin D.A.	Washington D.C.	The Watergate Scandal	The Sandgate Scandal
Santo Cristos	Chile Nicaragua El Salvador	The Pinochet Regime and the Los Despericiados The Sandinistas and the Contras The Civil War in El Salvador	El Perro Salvaje and the Fall of Los Liberatores
Rousya	Russia	The Fall of the Soviet Russia The Russian Revolution Conflicts in former Soviet States	The Rousyan Civil War

Here recent history can be considered a type of genre. These events were chosen to represent not only the character's journey but also to reflect a pivotal time in journalism and in the history of the Cold War. Our world and its recent history (the past 50 years) allows the audience to recognise certain events and to anticipate what might happen next. This anticipation will vary depending on the reader's level of recognition of the famous historical events being portrayed.

In establishing the world of Choice-Based Narrative (in this case *The Melete Effect*) the boundaries must be clear and recognisable. It should look like a world the reader will understand, if not then the rules of the world (e.g. because of low gravity people can fly or that science has discovered endless energy) must be explained upfront or through the story. However once the boundaries of the world

are set, they cannot be violated otherwise an audience's expectations can be damaged and at worst destroyed. Schatz describes this as such:

"We are most aware of a generic 'contract' when it is violated. The violation may involve casting an established performer 'against type,' as when musical star Dick Powell portrayed private eye Philip Marlowe in *Murder my Sweet* (even the title was changed from *Farewell my Lovely* so that audiences wouldn't mistake the film for a musical). Or the violation may simply be a matter of a vehicle (as a car on a Western set) from one genre turning up on the set of another." (1981, p.17)

What Schatz describes here as a set, I understand to be the world of the story, and he makes a valid point about the disconnection of seeing elements of one world (a motor car) impeding on another (the world of cowboys on horses in a Western). Here the world of the story serves as the limitation of what the story can and cannot do. Recognising this limitation helps to frame the audience's expectation of what the story will offer. Yet any violation of this expectation can destroy an audience's belief in the narrative.

### **4.3.3. The Setting**

"When I asked for details about Deep Throat's feeling that our lives were in danger, Woodward and Bernstein insisted that we move outdoors. Fear began to seep in as we talked more on my lawn. I thought I knew about hardball, but I had never yet felt that we were dealing with hitmen. I suspected our telephones were probably tapped, that our taxes were surely getting a world class audit, but I had never felt physically threatened. Now they were saying that our lives were in fact in danger."

Ben Bradlee, executive editor of the *Washington Post* during the time of the Watergate Scandal, from his autobiography *A Good Life* (1995, p.359)

If the world of *The Melete Effect* is a world that is somewhat like our own (and only the history is different) then in part it is the setting that helps to further distinguish Melete's world from our world. The setting here is taken to mean the individual location of each scene within the narrative. The various settings of *The Melete Effect* are required to do a lot of the perceptual work to aid the audience in identifying situations and placing them in an appropriate genre. Any tonal shift between different settings must be managed carefully to ensure that the audience knows where they are within the story at any given time. If the settings shift too radically it can result in the audience becoming disorientated and losing their ability to comprehend the story. This can be a deliberate choice by the writer, but at some point the narrative should right itself in order for the audience to retain a sense of narrative equilibrium, otherwise genre expectations can fail completely.

In the table below I have taken the fictional locations of *The Melete Effect* and identified both genre and fictional inspiration. I have also identified a relevant scene from *The Melete Effect* and specified the setting and real-world inspiration.

**Table 4.3: Comparing Genre in The Melete Effect**

Fictional Location	Genre	Fictional Inspiration	Scene from The Melete Effect	Setting	Real-World Inspiration
Franklin D.A.	Political Thriller	All the President's Men (Alan J. Pakula, 1976)	<i>Check your sources</i>	The offices of the Columbia Times	The offices of the Washington Post
			<i>A Hot Time in the Ol' Sandgate Tonight</i>	The Sandgate Complex	The Watergate Complex
			<i>The Worm Turns</i>	The suburbs of Franklin D.A	The suburbs of Maryland
	Conspiracy Thriller	All the President's Men	<i>Deepwater by Deepwater</i>	Meeting by a River	The Potomac River
			The Parallax View (Alan J. Pakula, 1974)	<i>Mac finds the Fifth Man</i>	Mister X.'s house
	Film Noir	The Dark Page (Samuel Fuller, 1944)	<i>An Empty House</i>	Mac's house	
Santo Cristos	Political Thriller	Missing (Costa-Gavras, 1982)	<i>The Path to Estadia Futbol</i>	Estadia Futbol	Estadio Nacional de Chile where the Pinochet regime kept political prisoners.
		State of Siege (État de siège)(Costa-Gavras, 1972)	<i>An Interrogation</i>	Interrogation Room	Interrogations conducted by Central and South American dictatorships
		Salvador (Oliver Stone, 1986)	<i>Enter the Lair of El Perro Salvaje</i>	Jungle	The jungles of Salvador and Nicaragua.
Rousya	Political Thriller		<i>On a Breslan Hilltop</i>	Breslan School Siege	Beslan School Siege in Chechnya



It is interesting to note that almost all of the genre work that has influenced *The Melete Effect* is drawn from the period in which the story is set. The exception being Samuel Fuller's *The Dark Page* (2007, originally published 1944), a novel written during the same period as film noir and set in a newspaper. Fuller's dark and cynical descriptions evoke a world eventually clouded in darkness, and it is this loss of innocence that influenced *The Melete Effect*. By contrast Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986), which focuses on photojournalist Robert Boyle's experiences in El Salvador in 1980, was an indirect genre inspiration. Here the look and feel of Stone's film, coupled with the trope of a character in over their head, contributed directly to the Santo Cristos storyline.

Yet it is the work of directors Alan J. Pakula and Costa-Gavras who have influenced *The Melete Effect* and its setting most directly. Alan J. Pakula's films *All the President's Men* (1976) and *The Parallax View* (1974) both have a cynical view of American society, and *All the President's Men* particularly shows that truth can sometimes only be achieved by dealing with the mundane. Most interestingly both films depict journalists who uncover truths that are explosive, for the protagonist of the *Parallax View*, Joe Frady (Warren Beatty) this truth results in his death, and for Woodward and Bernstein (Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman respectively) it means a constant vigilance to ensure that the truth will finally be revealed. Both films revel in their paranoia, and this is the overwhelming state that the audience is left with. These facets are reflected in the settings and narrative structure of *The Melete Effect*.

Costa-Gavras work is unique in that his films strive to present events in a balanced and neutral tone. Although horrific things happen to the protagonists of *State of Siege* (*État de siège* in French) (1972) and *Missing* (1982), Costa-Gavras seems to frame his work in such a way that he the director is not commenting on the action. This is of course a difficult assertion, because of course a director will frame and edit his story in a particular way, but Costa-Gavras offsets his stories by revealing the actions of all parties involved. No one is truly the protagonist or antagonist, rather everyone has a part to play. It is this spirit that has influenced *The Melete Effect* the most, because it recognises that depending on the setting, some characters have greater influence than others, and this brings us to the final narrative part.

#### 4.3.4. The Characters

In each of the storylines of *The Melete Effect*, the characters represent different stereotypes and archetypes found in their respective genres. Although a complete discussion of each character and their respective type would be useful, it is simply too large in scope for this section. Instead I will focus exclusively on the Sandgate storyline and highlight the types played by each character within the story while contrasting it to the real people involved in uncovering the Watergate Scandal.

**Table 4.4: Comparing Characters to their Real-World Equivalents**

Character Name	Real-World Equivalent	Type
Mary Melete	Carl Bernstein	Cipher and Crusading Journalist
Peter 'Mac' MacKenzie	Bob Woodward	Crusading Journalist
Frank McManus	Ben Bradlee	The Boss
Jerry 'Jer' Monotta	Harry Rosenfeld	The Believer
Tom Manning	Howard Simons	The Dissenting Voice
Deepwater	Deep Throat (Mark Felt)	The Informer
Sidney Robinson		The Martyr
Mister X. (Terrence T. Ganting)	G. Gordon Liddy	The Instigator
Yolanda Amenza	Janet Cooke	The Mole

Each of these characters represented in the table above conforms to a particular type. The main characters Mary Melete and Peter 'Mac' Mackenzie are analogues for the journalists Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. Woodward and Bernstein have become synonymous with the image of the crusading journalists who uncover a great scandal, and it is this quality that is being invoked in their characterisations. Mary Melete however has a dual role, besides the crusading journalist archetype, she is also a cipher for the audience; through their choices she represents a way of unravelling the narrative being told. Just like an algorithm that is used to perform encryption or decryption, Melete is the key to understanding all of the events that take place in *The Melete Effect*. Although ciphers are used as characters in genres, they are very rarely used as the central protagonist because of the revelations that they disclose. Yet in the form of a Choice-Based Narrative, the central character, whose role the reader assumes, is almost always a cipher. This remains an area of research to follow up on in the future.

By contrast, the remaining characters in the newsroom of the Columbia Times all play different roles to ensure that the story moves in a particular direction. Although mostly based on real people who participated in some way in the Watergate Scandal, they are not literal recreations of these people; instead they take on the type as required by the narrative. The characters of Jerry Monotta and Tom Manning serve as contrasting voices of support and dissent. Frank McManus the executive editor of the newspaper is there to ensure that reporters do their job diligently and do not bring the paper into disrepute. Sidney Robinson, a wholly fictitious character, serves here as the martyr whose death results in the end of the Sandgate investigation.

In *The Melete Effect* the Sandgate Scandal does not result in the resignation of the President, instead the forces of conspiracy succeed in their attempts to control their government and society. This is in keeping with the alternative history that was established at the world level. Those forces of conspiracy are represented by two figures Mister X., the fifth burglar and mastermind of the Sandgate burglary, and Yolanda Amenza, a mole within the Columbia Times. Amenza is based loosely on the African-American journalist Janet Cooke who falsified an article which led to her winning a Pulitzer Prize which she was later forced to return (Bradlee, 1995). Mister X. represents broadly the shadowy nature of conspirators and can also be considered a representation of G. Gordon Liddy, one of the convicted Watergate burglars.

The characters are conforming to particular types to ensure that the audience recognises their roles and can make informed choices about the direction of the story accordingly. Without these types it would be difficult to ascertain the role each character was playing. In some narratives this is a deliberate ploy to keep the audience uninformed, yet for *The Melete Effect* and more broadly in Choice-Based Narrative, recognising these types is a fundamental part of the reader's experience.

#### **4.3.5. In Summary**

"I am still half convinced that if Nixon had not bugged himself, if there had been no record of the president's most private conversations, Nixon would never have resigned. There would have been no "smoking gun", there would not have been enough votes to impeach; Nixon would have survived, scarred beyond recognition, but still president."  
(Bradlee, 1995 p.362-3)

This quote from Ben Bradlee illustrates just how tenuous the Watergate Scandal was for those reporting on it. Yet when viewing the film of *All the President's Men* as an audience, there is a tendency to assume an outcome; that the good guys will win in the end. What Bradlee's quote

illustrates is how in the stories of our own lives, often we don't know the outcome. That sometimes we are the hero and sometimes the villain; it is all a matter of perspective. Genre helps us to shape that perspective and develop an understanding of the events taking place; and it helps the reader to perceive that narrative in advance. Often this predictability is seen as the great disadvantage of genre, because supposedly a story holds no surprise. On the contrary genre is a critical part of making Choice-Based Narratives accessible to an audience, because of the familiarity it fosters is an asset to developing a reader's agency. Readers will want to make a choice because they clearly understand the stakes at hand, and this is what makes genre so useful to the writer of Choice-Based Narratives.

#### **4.4. The Importance of 'What-if?'**

In most forms of narrative, the idea of a counterfactual or the 'What-if' is used as a way of exploring an idea that is not possible in our reality. There are many examples of these counterfactual 'what-if' scenarios found in alternative history fiction (e.g. what if John F. Kennedy was not assassinated in Dallas?). In fiction, the counterfactual is set by the author and the reader must accept the decisions the author has made. Choice-Based Narratives are unique because they allow the reader a direct interaction with the possibilities of the 'What-if'; putting aside for the moment gaming's ability to construct and interact with narrative (which was discussed in Chapter 2).

In *The Melete Effect*, almost all of the major storylines are based on counterfactuals. In the Sandgate storyline (based on Watergate), the counterfactual is: What if Woodward and Bernstein weren't smart enough to bring down Nixon? In the Rousya Storyline (an alternate history version of Russia), the counterfactual is: What if the October Revolution Failed and the White Russians prevailed and Russia still developed the atomic bomb? There is no clear counterfactual identified in the Santo Cristo storyline.

In retrospect, this decision was made to highlight the counterfactual nature of Choice-Based Narratives and because of my interest in alternative history fiction. This is not to say that all Choice-Based Narratives must exclusively construct 'What-if' type stories. However Choice-Based Narrative allows for counterfactual situations to arise, and the writer must understand this quality and take advantage of it when constructing their narrative.

In order to construct counterfactual situations that successfully make narrative sense, the writer must have an awareness of the cognitive process of blending. Blending is a subconscious process that allows humans to take different parts that they perceive in reality and combine them together to create a solid notion of the world. As humans we are doing this all the time, and assimilating new knowledge and experience into our notion of the world (Dannenberg in Schneider and Hartner [eds], p.121-146 2012). This process becomes critical when we are evaluating how realistic or probable a narrative is. When the counterfactual qualities of the story are married with a skilful use of blending, it is possible to construct a coherent and consistent Choice-Based Narrative. Without successful blending readers are unable to see how these stories are capable of functioning, and will discount their reality and believability, and as a result, the narrative will fail.

#### **4.5. Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to identify the qualities that all Choice-Based Narratives share. It also represents the completion of my second research aim which I have stated was to define how Choice-Based Narratives are distinct from other forms of Interactive Narrative which in turn would make it

possible to establish a clear poetics for Choice-Based Narratives as a form. By doing so, it's hoped that this will make it easier for creative writers (and researchers) to understand what needs to be considered when constructing Choice-Based Narratives. Although there is a long history to this form, its poetics, to my knowledge, have not been previously identified. This chapter therefore represents a contribution that will hopefully go some way to consolidating the form within the broader body of literature.

## 5. Dissertation Conclusion

In creating *The Melete Effect* there have been many aspects that needed to be considered. In fact as a creative writer I was surprised at how many aspects were involved in creating a Choice-Based Narrative, a form that is considered relatively benign and no longer considered experimental (Glassner 2004; Douglas 1999). In some ways the form's basic and fundamental nature is why I believe so little attention has been paid to it; because it is assumed that creators and readers inherently understand the form. It is a story with choices that you follow until you reach an ending. However this simple definition belies a deep level of complexity and my research has proven this.

Choice-Based Narratives are important because they represent the simplest possible form of Interactive Narrative. It is the foundational nature of Choice-Based Narratives that illustrates how interactivity can grow and evolve. Most of the subsequent developments in Interactive Narrative have evolved out of the introduction of choice to a narrative, and some elements such as the introduction of ludic elements (statistics and location tracking) have evolved to allow for the experience to grow more complex. Yet Choice-Based Narratives remain the starting point for allowing the audience to play with the story that an author has constructed.

It is from this most basic of structures; the ability for the audience to make a choice about the direction of the story; that complexity arises. However my research has revealed that this complexity is twofold, and this is a point that appears not to be openly acknowledged in the existing literature. The first complexity is one of medium and the second complexity is one of structure. Each complexity brings different problems to the construction of Choice-Based Narratives.

Traditionally medium is the container that we define our artwork by. In contrast although a Choice-Based Narrative can be defined by medium, it can also be defined by structure. This is I believe a radical notion, because it liberates narrative from medium; that a story is a story regardless of its chosen medium. This realisation is important not just for Choice-Based Narratives, but has ramifications for narratives in all forms, because it recognises that there are certain parameters of a narrative that are limited by medium.

This is the fundamental problem of medium; that each medium has its own limitations and restrictions. Traditionally those restrictions limit the complexity of the construction of the narrative. In fact most of the ways that we construct narrative is formed by the medium container. When creative practitioners are asked about the story that they are writing, they frequently begin by identifying the medium in which they are working, "I'm making a film." "I'm writing a book". What creative practitioners don't typically discuss is how the structure of their work is shaped by their chosen medium.

Through working with Choice-Based Narratives, I have come to realise that narrative has the potential to operate Sans Medium. That it is possible to construct a narrative without medium, and to then apply medium as a container at a later stage. Sans Medium suggests interesting ramifications for the notion of remediation as identified by Bolter and Grusin (1999) and Bolter and Weight (2001). If media are constantly remediating from other forms, then the notion of Sans Medium, takes that remediation away from any specific medium. It instead introduces medium as a textural layer to be played with during the construction of narrative. A writer can deliberately play with different mediums as containers, in order to produce different versions of their story. This suggests that Sans Medium, which is an original contribution, will allow for the creation of new forms of narrative which permit greater complexity and this is an area which I intend to research further.

The discovery of Sans Medium was facilitated by the sheer number of mediums that Choice-Based Narratives exist within (books, gamebooks, interactive fiction, interactive film, interactive theatre, etc.). As these narratives exist across all these different mediums, I realised that there must be another common factor that exists which is not reliant on medium. That common factor is the structure. Recognising that a narrative's structure can radically affect the way a Choice-Based Narrative is constructed, pushed my research into new directions. If structure has traditionally been subservient to medium, what happens when it is released from under the yoke of medium constraints? This is a question that is only partially answered by my research, but is a topic that I believe will continue to be explored by other practitioners and researchers.

For my part the Story Choice Framework has been my original contribution to identifying the process of creating Choice-Based Narratives. The Story Choice Framework was developed in such a way as to recognise that each level has its own individual considerations that can facilitate a wide range of approaches depending on the creative practitioner. This framework has afforded me the opportunity to further explore the possibilities of structure. It also allows for the introduction of more complex forms of Interactive Narrative to be accommodated at the higher levels of the framework, specifically Interfaces and Experience (where medium is introduced).

Through working with the framework I was able to extrapolate the commonalities that exist in all forms of Choice-Based Narrative, regardless of their medium. It was possible to identify the narrative processes and archetypes that exist. This was facilitated by reading existing Choice-Based Narratives (most notably the Choose Your Own Adventure series) and through the process of writing *The Melete Effect*. This revealed that Choice-Based Narratives are both episodic and epic in their structure. This challenges the writer to identify how to break the story into smaller sections and where and when to end the story. Recognising this made it easier for me to understand the decisions that I made while writing *The Melete Effect*.

It was also important to recognise the cognitive processes that are necessary for the audience to understand Choice-Based Narratives. Priming and misdirection are strong factors in shaping how an audience receives and is surprised by a narrative. Both cognitive processes informed not only the writing of *The Melete Effect*, in terms of structuring scenes and overall storylines, but also helped me to develop an insight into how genre works. I came to understand that when you introduce choice into a narrative, genre becomes a powerful tool to help the audience comprehend the experience. Without genre, the shock of choice, and to a lesser degree the freedom of interactivity, causes the audience to become overwhelmed by the experience. In this way it is difficult for a narrative to retain coherence when the audience cannot easily determine what is happening. Genre helps to ease the shock of choice and focus the audience on what they can recognise: the genre of the story being told. In the future it may be possible to establish new forms of Choice-Based Narrative that are not reliant on genre, but at the present time it needs to be recognised that genre is a formative part of creating these types of narratives.

Another aspect that my research has revealed is that once choice is introduced into a narrative, it opens a pathway into the examination of different narrative possibilities. This allows for narratives in which the characters and their actions can be put into a variety of 'what-if' scenarios. These scenarios, known as counterfactuals, are something that Choice-Based Narratives are in a unique position to capitalise upon. For *The Melete Effect* these counterfactuals manifested themselves in multiple ways; not only through the characters and their actions, but through the decision (fostered in part by genre) to focus on specific political events from history. Counterfactuals, through their exploration of paths not followed, are the study of alternate histories and events. They allow us as creative writers to explore alternatives, and we can do so without having to determine our preferred pathway. All paths are possible. This is an important aspect of creative writing that is often

undervalued once a work is complete; that of the exploratory and wayfaring nature of creative writing. Choice-Based Narratives allow us to explore all of these options; to have our cake and eat it too.

Each of these qualities, the episodic and epic structure, priming and misdirection, genre and counterfactuals, represents the poetics of Choice-Based Narrative. This is an original contribution that can be used by researchers to understand how this form works and to identify strong examples of the form. It may yet prove that this form of literature, hitherto relegated as low culture, is one worthy of study. It may also have a broader contribution to understanding how people use narrative to construct their reality. Finally the poetics of Choice-Based Narrative also seems to suggest the possibility of automating the construction of these narratives; a task which can be given to Artificial Intelligence to complete.

Working with counterfactuals while writing *The Melete Effect*, allowed me to re-evaluate my creative process as a practitioner. I was able to recognise that the process that I had followed to write *The Melete Effect* was also useful in helping me recognise my process as a creative writer. I began to understand how there were two distinct processes that informed my creative practice. For the first time I was able to recognise how traditional organic and intuitive processes in combination with more algorithmic and established patterns of process, work in unison in my practise. That my creative practice is made of periods of organic wayfaring (or wandering) intertwined with periods of algorithmic rigour and revision. Perhaps what was so interesting about this discovery was how often this process has been discouraged through exposure to other practitioners. In part I believe this is because I engage with the algorithmic process first and let this shape my organic process; whereas other practitioners prefer to begin with the organic and move towards the algorithmic when it comes time to revise. For me personally there is no optimal method for engaging with creativity and I believe that there are many pathways to achieve the same result (a view reinforced by my research into counterfactuals).

Once identified, the algorithmic suggested another way for representing Choice-Based Narratives. Although existing branching and database structures are well developed and sophisticated, my process suggested an alternate way of narrative representation. This original contribution which I have identified as a tessellation, allowed me to map different storylines and parts of *The Melete Effect* quickly and easily. The tessellation suggests the possibility of developing new representations of stories and new story structures. It is my hope that in the near future I will be able to develop this form further so that it may be used as a tool to help creative writers convert existing stories into Choice-Based Narratives. It also offers possibilities for the development and automation of generative narrative, which is an area I intend to research further.

This is the journey that my research has taken me on, and looking at it from this vantage point, it establishes a clear overview of the different elements that represent Choice-Based Narrative. My two research aims, to explore how a Choice-Based Narratives are created and structured, and to determine the fundamental components of Choice-Based Narrative and establish how they function, have clearly been met. These two aims have allowed me to identify a new framework (the Story Choice Framework), a new way of conceptualising narrative (Sans Medium) and a new way of visualising Choice-Based Narrative (Tessellations) as well as firmly establishing the poetics of this form. Through this research it is now possible to identify the elements that are required for a creative writer to develop a Choice-Based Narrative.

When I started this project, I hoped to build a narrative that an audience could continue to return to time and time again, and through *The Melete Effect* I believe that I have achieved this. This research has sought to put the creative writer at the centre of this process and yet I see this research as

having great benefit to games designers and those working with artificial intelligence. I continue to believe that this research will extend into other fields. Of course the most obvious area is how situating Choice-Based Narratives as a foundational form of Interactive Narrative may change the way that we tell stories in all forms of interactive media. Personally I am most interested in how these poetics can be taken and automated through means of artificial intelligence, particularly using methods developed through the research of computational creativity. Using algorithms and artificial intelligence it may be possible to iterate *The Melete Effect* indefinitely. This research has reinforced the importance of creative practice and how it can revitalise existing processes and practices. At times the past four years have been frustrating, confusing and tiring, but the end results have been worth it.

In closing I want to acknowledge that research can sometimes uncover things that have been lost and forgotten. When interviewing the Choose Your Own Adventure authors I was able to uncover much about the process of writing these books. I was also able to find out about the evolution of particular storylines and why certain characters behaved in certain ways; questions that the child reader was always curious about, the adult researcher was finally able to provide an answer to. One mystery that I unexpectedly solved was the question of the mythical book 185. When the series finished at Bantam Books in 1998 there were rumours that the final book in the series *Mayday!* (Packard & Packard, 1998) was not actually the last book; that another book had been prepared but not published.

This book, called *Escape from the Haunted Warehouse*, was written by Anson Montgomery (son of R.A. Montgomery). Information about this title had appeared either on a bookseller's list (from which booksellers could order books) or on a warehouse manifest that somehow made its way into the hands of adult fans of the series. If this information is vague it is because it is somewhat apocryphal. Yet online forums discussing gamebooks and interactive fiction, particularly Demian Katz's website [www.gamebooks.org](http://www.gamebooks.org) (viewed 2nd of December, 2017) were full of conjecture about this book.

In my interview with Shannon Gilligan I asked her about these rumours and she was intrigued about the possibilities of a secret book, but sceptical that Bantam Books would have left such a book unpublished (Shannon Gilligan Interview, May 2014). She did however admit that when reconciling the copyrights for the new series there had been at least two extra copyrights for books that to their knowledge did not exist. I implored Shannon to find out more about this book and she told me that she would look into it, and that was the last I heard about it. Until in email conversation with Demian Katz, he revealed that the book was to be published by Chooseco. In April 2015, 17 years after its intended publication *Escape from the Haunted Warehouse* (2015) was finally published.

Although I didn't write this book or publish it, it is a source of much personal pride that I had a hand in rediscovering it. For a moment I had become a character in my own Choose Your Own Adventure story; one in which I had managed to save a book from oblivion. As a boy growing up, I always dreamed of having such an adventure and now I had actually done it. This was something that had nothing to do with research outcomes or original contributions to the literature and everything to do with the 11-year old boy in me finally realising a dream; that it is possible to change the world. This unexpected research outcome has both inspired me as a practitioner and emboldened me as a researcher and I look forward to the choices that lie ahead.



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## **Appendix 1: The Melete Effect**

*The Melete Effect* has been attached electronically as an interactive PDF. To read this Choice-Based Narrative, please consult the attached document.

## Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form



School of Media and Communication

### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

**Project Title:** *The Capgras Project: An Investigation into Choice-Based Narrative*

#### **Investigator:**

Nicholas Peter Velissaris

PhD Candidate

[s9506879@student.rmit.edu.au](mailto:s9506879@student.rmit.edu.au)

#### **Supervisor:**

Dr Marsha Berry

Senior Lecturer

School of Media and Communication

RMIT University

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

#### **Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?**

This research project is being undertaken by Nicholas Peter Velissaris (Nic Velissaris) under the supervision of Dr Marsha Berry towards the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy in Media and Communication. This project is being conducted as a practice-led investigation into how choice can be introduced to narrative across a variety of mediums (predominantly theatre and live performance).

#### **Why have you been approached?**

You have been approached due to your involvement as either an author or illustrator in the Choose Your Own Adventure Series from 1979-1998 or 2005 onwards. Your contact details have been obtained either by conducting an internet search, through social media or websites or speaking to other authors in the series.

#### **What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?**

I am currently in my second year of my doctoral studies at RMIT University in Melbourne Australia. The topic of my thesis is how choice impacts on a narrative and its cohesiveness, and how choice mechanisms can be employed to involve a spectator in a story.

Ultimately the thesis will look at multiple mediums, but as a part of my thesis I am developing three different interactive experiences for performance/theatre. These three experiences include a passive experience, something similar to a standard theatre or cinema-going experience, a participatory experience, similar to a real-world gaming event played in a space with others (like a LARP/Nordic LARP), and finally a transitory experience where the spectators can actively choose how the story unfolds.

Each experience offers a different spectrum of choice. The passive offers the spectator mostly only the choice in how they react. The participatory allows the spectator full and complete choice, but the narrative has little cohesiveness, except when constructed in retrospect. The transitory, as a new form that I am developing, will be designed to sit between these two options.

At the present stage in my research, I have completed two scripts (one for the passive and transitory experiences). I am now researching existing forms of choice-based narrative and to that end there has been little or no research on the Choose Your Own Adventure series, its genesis, the process involved to create these books and its legacy. To that end I am looking to create a paper (and possibly a chapter of my PhD) on the history of the series, preserving the voices of those involved. I grew up reading Choose Your Own Adventure Books so I am an enormous fan of the series and its ideas. Some of the questions here will be directed to specific books and how branching narratives and gamebooks more generally work. There is actually very little literature on this form of literature, so I am looking to expand the research into the field.

***If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?***

You will be required to sit an interview consisting of questions that will be provided for you. These questions can be answered in one of three ways via conversation conducted by Skype, via email or by mail.

The questions will be broken into three sections:

- How to create interactive stories
- The genesis of the Choose Your Own Adventure series and publishing the books
- Specific questions about specific books that you wrote

Please feel free to answer these questions with as little or as much detail as you feel is appropriate and in addition if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, please do not feel obligated in any way.

***What are the possible risks or disadvantages?***

The only possible disadvantage that I can identify is that it will take your time to participate in this interview, if you participate via Skype it will take between 1 to 2 hours of your time. If you opt to reply via email or mail it may take up between 1 – 4 hours to reply to the questions depending on how detailed your responses are.

If you are concerned about your responses to any of the questions or if you find participation in the project distressing, you should contact me, Nic Velissaris, as soon as is convenient. I will discuss your concerns with you confidentially and suggest an appropriate follow-up, if necessary.

***What are the benefits associated with participation?***

The benefits associated with participation is that you will be preserving your views on the series that you helped to create and will be able to talk about your process (in some cases for the first time) of writing these books. You will also be contributing to the history of gamebooks and more broadly the study of choice-based and interactive narrative.

***What will happen to the information I provide?***

It will form the basis of paper and form a chapter in my doctoral PhD. It is intended that all participants will be identified by their name (or the name that they published under). Given your status as a published writer or illustrator it is assumed that you will be willing to be identified for the purposes of this study. Should you choose to not be identified by your own name, you can elect to remain anonymous or can be given a pseudonym in the publication of any subsequent material. Please feel free to discuss this further with the investigator.

The reason why you will be identified in the relevant research is because your views are being sought about the history and development of the Choose Your Own Adventure Series, and these views are related to your work and career as an author or illustrator. Because of the nature of data collection, we are not obtaining written informed consent from you. Instead, we assume that you have given consent by your completion and return of the materials via email or mail or through conducting an interview via Skype.

These interviews will be kept securely at RMIT for 5 years after publication, before being destroyed. Whereas the final research paper will remain online.

***What are my rights as a participant?***

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time
- The right to request that any recording cease
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to be de-identified in any photographs intended for public publication, before the point of publication
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

***Whom should I contact if I have any questions?***

If you have any question you should contact me, Nic Velissaris at the contact details provided above.

Yours sincerely,

Nic Velissaris

**All researchers must sign the information sheet, with his/her qualification/s listed below each name.**

*If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email [human.ethics@rmit.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@rmit.edu.au)*

## Appendix 3: Choose Your Own Adventure Questions

In this section a sample interview is provided to indicate the types of questions that were asked of the various authors, editors and illustrators who participated in the interview process about the Choose Your Own Adventure books series.

### AN INTRODUCTION

I am currently in my second year of my doctoral studies at RMIT University in Melbourne Australia. The topic of my thesis is how choice impacts on a narrative and its cohesiveness, and how choice mechanisms can be employed to involve a spectator in a story.

Ultimately the thesis will look at multiple medium, but as a part of my thesis I am developing three different interactive experiences for performance/theatre. These three experiences include a passive experience, something similar to a standard theatre or cinema-going experience, a participatory experience, similar to a real-world gaming event played in a space with others (like a LARP/Nordic LARP), and finally a transitory experience where the spectators can actively choose how the story unfolds.

Each experience offers a different spectrum of choice. The passive offers the spectator mostly only the choice in how they react. The participatory allows the spectator full and complete choice, but the narrative has little cohesiveness, except when constructed in retrospect. The transitory, as a new form that I am developing, will be designed to sit between these two options.

At the present stage in my research, I have completed two scripts (one for the passive and transitory experiences) and I am now preparing my first paper for presentation at the Great Writing Conference to be held at Imperial College in late June. This paper is the reason why I am contacting you as it is focused on Choice Mechanisms and how they work.

Finally I grew up reading Choose Your Own Adventure Books so I am an enormous fan of the series and its ideas. Some of the questions here will be directed to specific books and how branching narratives and gamebooks more generally work. There is actually very little literature on this form of literature, so I am looking to expand the research into the field.

The questions will be broken into three sections:

- How to create interactive stories
- The genesis of the series and publishing the books
- Specific questions about specific books

Please feel free to answer these questions with as little or as much detail as you feel is appropriate and in addition if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, please do not feel obligated in any way. Finally I have used the word 'you' in two different contexts. When I am talking about 'you' I am referring to you the author/editor [delete as necessary], when I am talking about 'YOU' I am referring to the second-person reader and their place in a story.

I look forward to receiving your answers via email or speaking with you on the phone (via Skype) and thank you in advance for your time.

Yours sincerely,  
Nic Velissaris

## HOW TO CREATE INTERACTIVE STORIES

1. *How do you write a book like a choose your own adventure? What tips would you give for planning and creating a book such as this?*
2. *Many of the Choose Your Own Adventure stories have since been mapped out by people online using flow charts, decision trees and types of diagrams. How did you map out your stories? Did you use index cards, sticky notes, etc or did you undertake multiple passes/drafts of the story to make sure that the various storylines and choices held together? Nowadays there are diagramming tools that could probably make this process much easier. Do you use any tools when writing these books?*
3. *How does creating these types of stories lead to story, characters and choice creation? Is it possible to write something, and then revise the choice structure to fit a story, plot or even to alter a character's personality and quirks?*
4. *What makes for a good choice? Often these books had obvious good or bad choices, but occasionally the story would throw either two good choices (they both sounded reasonable or interesting) or two bad choices (it doesn't matter what you do, it's probably not going to end well for you) which as a young reader was confusing and exciting. Explain your thoughts on good choice.*
5. *As a reader, a bad choice fell into two categories; a boring choice (that seemed mundane or uninteresting) or a choice that didn't offer you a genuine change in your situation and often lead to an instant death. Please comment on what you think makes a bad choice or your opinion on my categorisation of these types of choices.*
6. *How can you have more than two choices? Early on in the series it was not uncommon to have up to four choices on a page, as a reader I always got excited by this, but became disappointed when one or two of those choices was ruled out by instant death. Permutations within a story seem important to make the interactivity more alive and to see YOU as someone with real agency. Is there a more practical reason why more choices weren't available? How important can multiple choices (3 or more choices) be to creating a story?*
7. *Often the stories told would loop back on themselves and visit a part of the story that you had already visited or else a choice would take you to another storyline? How important are loopbacks to maintaining the structure of a story? Are they a lazy device or they a necessary part of creating interactive stories?*
8. *How many endings are satisfactory for replayability and depth of storyline? I have read almost the entire original series and for me the magic number seems to sit between 12 to 22 endings, as this seems to give each storyline enough depth and enough choices for there to be satisfactory conclusions to the various story strands. However towards the end of the original series there were some books that had only 6 or 7 endings, and while this gave you a deep story it didn't provide for variability and variety of choice. One particular example was Doug Wilhelm's *The Underground Railroad* (Book 175) in which 5 of the endings YOU died, and in the other two it was hinted that YOU would probably die. The storytelling was excellent but the interactivity suffered (every road lead to death). Where is the balance point between storytelling and interactivity?*

9. *How many times do you expect a reader will go back and revisit a book? What encourages re-readability? Is it the characters, the storylines, finding out all of the endings? Why do readers return to the story, even if they've read before?*
10. *In terms of interactive design, how important is the balance between the reader's experience and the choices that they make? How do you set up expectations for what they think will happen and what will happen next? In psychological terms this preparation is called priming and I'm interested in how you can prime a reader to make decisions.*
11. *Can you talk about the interactive design work that you've done that has influenced your design for the Choose Your Own Adventure series.*
12. *It seems that during the development of the series Bantam Books had developed a "bible", a loose list of ideas and rules that were used by authors within the series to develop their stories. Did you ever read a document like this? Do you remember any of the advice within this document? Do you have a copy of this document or do you know where I can get a copy of this document?*

## THE GENESIS OF THE SERIES AND PUBLISHING THE BOOKS

1. *How did you come to be involved in the Choose Your Own Adventure Series? What attracted you to the series and did you first become involved as a writer, editor or publisher?*
2. *Can you confirm is Jay Leibold your real name? There is some confusion as you have also published under Jay Montavon. Can you confirm which is the correct name?*
3. *How do you balance the story with need for choices and endings? Are there any concepts or ideas that are forbidden?*
4. *Can you talk a little bit about the end of the Bantam series and the decision to revive the series?*
5. *My understanding is that in the original series published by Bantam, the books were either an R.A. Montgomery book or an Edward Packard book. This meant that either you or Edward Packard owned the copyright to these books, is that correct?*
6. *Can you comment on the longevity of the original series (it had a staggering 184 books!)? Not to mention the numerous spinoffs and additional series. I can only hope that the current series continues for that long!*
7. *Have you seen any of the parody Choose Your Own Adventure Books that have been published? Such as Lose You Own Adventure, A Date With Destiny Adventure and Neither Either Nor Or to name a few. Do you have any views on these homages, which are clearly aimed at adults, yet go out of their way to capture the look and feel of your series? Can you comment on this?*



## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC BOOKS

(These example questions are taken from the books of Jay Leibold)

### Sabotage (Book 38)

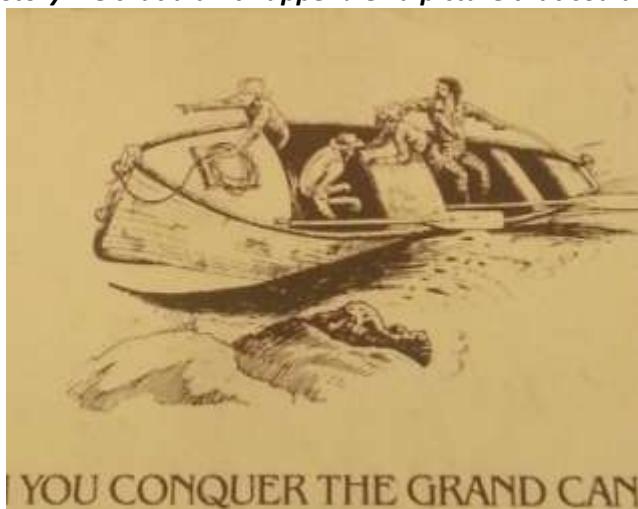
1. *This was my favourite book of yours as a child. It had everything, action, adventure and exotic locations and a great historical setting as a backdrop. This is only one of two books that deal with World War II in the entire life of the Choose Your Own Adventure series. The second book (Doug Wilhelm's Shadow of the Swastika) is a much more serious affair looking at how the Holocaust figured into World War II but your story is more about how the French Resistance worked. Can you talk about why you chose to write this story?*
2. *Can you talk about Ralph Reese's illustrations for these books? These are by far and away some of the best in the series? It seems clear that the villain Herr Kruptsch is based on the German actor Gert Frobe who played Auric Goldfinger in the James Bond film of the same name. I think the front cover is one of the best of any of the original series. It is so dramatic and captures exactly what's going on inside the story. Any comments you have about these illustrations would be great.*
3. *This book has the most endings of all of the books that you wrote. Rather than that being a disadvantage this seems to make this book the most exciting. It also conveys the difficulty of YOUR journey to rescue Jean-Paul and Marie LaRoche. There are many ways to go and much to do before you can rescue them. Can you talk about why you created so many endings for this book? Were you encouraged to do so, or did you just want to capture some of the excitement of the many stories of World War II?*
4. *I like how the Squirrel Faced Man who is trailing you in Morocco is actually a spy for Herr Kruptsch but at the same time inadvertently gives YOU a clue that maybe something is wrong with your mission. Can you comment on your intention here?*
5. *De Grelle is obviously an analogue for De Gaulle, and is even illustrated in that way by Ralph Reese with the moustache and bald head. Did you give these notes to Ralph Reese or was it something that he came up with himself?*
6. *Raoul that rat fink! What a stinker! At every turn he tries to betray you, does he have no morals? Seriously though how important was it that the book had an undercover villain? And also why did De Grelle ask you to open the letter when you got to Germany? It seems like a long time to wait for such important news. What was he hoping for? For Raoul to trip up?*
7. *On page 39, after being caught by Herr Kruptsch, you are given 3 choices on how to get out. By either refusing to talk, lying or telling the truth. One of the endings results in your death because Herr Kruptsch knows your plans (so don't lie) but the others lead in radically different directions. Can you talk about multiple choices and how difficult they are to plot out?*
8. *Sabotage, as an actual act perpetuated by YOU doesn't feature very prominently in the book. It could be argued that the title is representative of Raoul's actions and of the Nazi's around you who sabotage your act of rescuing the brother and sister team. Why did you choose that title? Or was there more sabotage acts that got cut out of the book?*

9. *I like how in this book how the element of surprise sometimes works and sometimes doesn't. When facing a German U-Boat in a fishing boat. It seems stupid to try to something against a U-Boat, but yet four of you, somehow manage to capture a tank. Where does the balance lie between making crazy decisions and making courageous ones?*
10. *I think Sabotage along with Richard Brightfield's Secret Treasure of Tibet, represent the fullest and best example of a complete large scale branching narrative. I think the reason why both of these books work is that both set firmly within genre conventions. Sabotage deals with World War II tropes and characters and SToT with its orientalism and hidden Tibetan cities is in the vein of James Hilton's Lost Horizon. This made the books easier to read, the characters easy to identify with, and so it meant that you could focus more on the action and story without too much explanation. Can you talk about this? Do you think it made you're plotting and story easier to create?*
11. *You seemed to master the Choose format with this book, you have several Loopbacks within this story that lead you to other parts of the story or endings? How did you come to understand the CYOA form?*
12. *You dedicated the book to Ray and Shannon, I assume this is Ray Montgomery and Shannon Gilligan, can you talk about what advice they gave you or how they helped to understand the CYOA format?*

### **Grand Canyon Odyssey (Book 43)**

1. *In general I feel this book is more problematic than Sabotage, because I feel it adds to many storylines that don't seem to arise organically from the central premise which is to rescue the missing horses from somewhere within the Grand Canyon. For me the reason that this is, is that the choices are quite arbitrary and don't suggest what might happen (even if it doesn't happen). This makes it difficult for the reader to work out the consequences of their choices. Was this deliberate? It certainly made the storylines seem more ad-hoc and arbitrary than straight forward.*
2. *Also I feel that there were too many ideas that could have been developed further and this would have strengthened the core of the book. For example as a River Runner it seems to me that YOU would be interested in Native American history of the Canyon and the history of American exploration, but when you discover prehistoric species it seems a little too far out of YOUR character's range to give up his job (for which he was paid), to suddenly chase down and catalogue these prehistoric species. This might be critical but it really felt out of character for me. Please comment.*
3. *The civilisation of Uqbar poses many questions and interesting ideas. Where did the idea of Uqbar come from, it seems to be combinations of the early part of William Golding's Lord of the Flies and the epitome of hippie ideals, in the form of communes. Was it in anyway related to Jorge Luis Borges story "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"?*
4. *The reality in this book is often taken in strange directions. For example YOUR encounter with Wapa-tayu and the Anasazi (whose endings don't help YOU return to YOUR quest), but you also encounter the form of the trickster in the form of the Coyote or an Iguana, and then YOU can also be led into the maze in the mountains, all of which seem to be drawn from Native American mythology. Can you talk about the inspirations for these encounters?*

5. ***Holy Cow! The screaming pit of death! Where did this idea come from (and what a way to die)?***
6. ***Essentially when you look at it you have 3 tribes in this book, the Anasazi, the Pueblos and the children of Uqbar. Was there a broader theme that you were trying to explore with this idea of encountering the different tribes?***
7. ***Delia your companion was Navajo, but aside from once saving YOU from a snake bite, it doesn't play a larger role in her story or YOUR adventure with her. What were your intentions for her? Do you think there were more to explore here with her character? Do you think you were limited by the form here?***
8. ***I had question about the logic of the world here. This might be overthinking it but when YOU are cast back in time with Powell and trying to return to YOUR own time a funny thing happens. If YOU stay under the water for 30 seconds YOU return to YOUR own time, but if YOU stay under for 60 seconds YOU travel to the time of the conquistadors. If time is a river flowing forward in one direction how does staying under for longer take YOU back to the conquistadors?***
9. ***J. W. Powell features in the book and his adventures down the Colorado River are amazing. Why did you feel it was important to include him in the story? Also can you talk about the ending where Powell is accidentally killed and YOU end up charting the river? This takes the book into an alternate history. (Note: Don Hedin misspells Powell's name as J.M. Powell in the illustration on page 74)***
10. ***Who was the inspiration for Don Pizarro de Manquila? Cortes? Francisco Pizarro? Cornando? The idea for the Seven Cities of Cibola are fascinating and is large enough for a story unto itself. Where did you hear of this myth and is it different from the myth of El Dorado and the Seven Cities of Gold?***
11. ***Finally the illustration on the back cover is unique and doesn't appear in the book at all. This seems to be the only time in CYOA series that this happen. Is the illustration part of a storyline that didn't happen? Or a picture that couldn't make it into the book?***



**Spy for George Washington (Book 48)**

*I think this book is an excellent retelling of the pre-history of the revolutionary war. It really captures the sense of history and complexity of life in the American colonies at that time. It holds up very well today.*

1. *Where did the inspiration for the Arzod and the Countess come from? Were there really attempts on Washington's life like this?*
2. *I like the descriptions of rural New Jersey. When I was in the United States in 2009, I stayed in Fort Lee which is the other side of the George Washington Bridge and leads to upper Manhattan. I know the cliffs that you mention here and it was good (as an adult) to mentally place this location. Did Mohawks really live in this area? What was their relationship with British and Americans?*
3. *In one storyline when YOU head out to sea on the Margaret, you encounter a British ship the Tremulous (which YOU can capture) or can go on a Nantucket Sleigh Ride. It becomes clear just how difficult it must have been to travel around the colonies at this time. Was this your intention to highlight the different types of travel that would have been open to a spy at this time? (As an aside I wrote a play about Whaling some years ago and spent a lot of time in New Bedford and went to Nantucket while I was in the US.)*
4. *How much research did you do for this book? It is one of the few books in the CYOA series that features a historical note at the end of it. You seem passionate about world history based on the books you wrote for the series. Please comment.*
5. *Was General Howe a real person? Was Hubert Hogglebottom, the so-called Monarchy loyalist, a real person or made up?*
6. *Where were the Dutch while all this was happening? I know you mention the "Dutch colony of Harlem" but what was there involvement in Pre-Revolutionary New York?*

### **The Antimatter Formula (Book 57)**

1. *I liked this book more as a kid, than I did as an adult. I think this is because as a kid I enjoyed the variety of adventures of YOU across the multiverse. As an adult I wanted a more scientific look at the potential of the multiverse (but then adult me is not who these books were written for). The ideas clearly lends itself to the CYOA format and how did you come to be interested in this topic?*
2. *This is one of the few books that features "YOUR" parents in the story. Usually CYOA books features a visit to an Aunt or Uncle or crazy distant relative who is some way contributes to YOUR adventures. Here it is the exploits of YOUR own parents that has YOU travelling to alternate dimensions. Although they don't play a big part in the story, it is interesting that they are mentioned. Can you talk about the reasons for introducing the parents in this book?*
3. *Can you talk about Frank Bolle's illustrations here? They are very comical and comic book styled throughout this book. Bolle was a major comic book artist before illustrating for CYOA. Did you provide him with any suggestions for the illustrations in this book? At times the illustrations are great (like the Robot [p.89] and the image of the tripod [p.103] but at other times for example with the Lizard and the illustration of Oglemooth and the balloon men the tone is off. Sometimes the illustrations look to realistic instead of*

*fantastic and sometimes they are too cartoonish to be taken seriously. It seems that there is an odd tone in the pictures that doesn't always capture the fantastic nature of the story well. Can you please comment on this?*

4. *I found two endings that have terrifying ramifications. When YOU discover the world that has no people on it, YOU decide to learn how to fly a plane and fly out around the world, but you never find anyone, ever. This is scary. What happened to these people? The rapture? Why was the world empty of people but filled with man-made objects like planes? Please explain.*
5. *More terrifying than this is the ending where YOU don't leave the mansion and spend the rest of YOUR life eating frozen pizza and reading Pogo comics. What kind of person are YOU? How can YOU be content to eat Pizza and read comics for all eternity? No people, no relationships, just pizza and Pogo. That's seriously messed up. Please comment.*
6. *Pogo was never published in Australia (I only discovered it while in the US and found it to be very funny, weird and subversive). Are you a big fan of Pogo?*
7. *I love the fact that the Earth is located in the realm of the Delusion Zone. Is this a comment on the state of affairs on Earth? I think this is very funny as an adult but as a child I never got the joke.*
8. *There are many strange characters in this book, there's the Lizard world, the Balloon Men and Oglemoroath, not to mention all the adventures YOU can have in outer space. There is so much going on in this book, in a way it feels like the whole thing could be expanded out and made longer. Was this book longer? Did you ever consider going back and expanding on the universe that you'd created?*
9. *This book has a special warning. I loved these as a kid, what compelled you to write this Special Warning for this book?*

### **Beyond the Great Wall (Book 73)**

1. *This book is fascinating from a historical perspective. You seem to be a keen student of history and this book also has an Historical Note at the beginning of the book. How much research did you do for this book?*
2. *The Cover art for this book is odd, because even though it's beautifully illustrated it becomes difficult to work out which time period the book is set in. Everyone is wearing clothing that doesn't seem to belong to the time period in which it is set (China in 1901) and it appears they are out of time from the setting. Please comment.*
3. *This is set after the Boxer Rebellion, you weren't tempted to include that historical event in the story?*
4. *The story is interesting as it clearly represents how many foreign interests were involved in China at the time. How did you become interested in this story?*
5. *Yee Chea Lin's illustrations are amazing and extremely appropriate for the subject matter. What did you think of his illustrations?*

6. *Finally I noticed that two of the characters were name Professor Montgomery and Sven Hedin were these nods to Ray Montgomery and Don Hedin (alias Paul Granger)? Were any of the other names references to real people you knew and if so who?*

### **You are a Millionaire (Book 98)**

1. *How did you manage to have two book published back to back? This book and Revenge of the Russian Ghost (Book 99) are one of the few in the latter half of the series to be published sequentially by the same author. How did this come about?*
2. *This is one of the classic CYOA books that enable kid wish fulfilment, but its grounded in such a realistic way that it seems like something that a kid could encounter. Can you talk about the intentions for this book? Were you trying to provide a morality tale here?*
3. *Everybody seems to be out to get the money for themselves. The police, the camp director, Bruce, Mrs Harkley and Roscoe. Is there anybody who doesn't want a piece of million dollars? It was like that movie It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World. What do you think the message was here? Don't trust adults with money or kids who a bigger than you are?*
4. *Bruce is such an interesting character, he clearly wanted to be loved and be from a stable home. The ending where the read finds he's disappeared and his mother is crying is really heartbreaking. Also the ending where he takes the money and then something like a decade passes and Bruce has become a multimillionaire/billionaire and he shouts YOU to lunch is compelling. Also he make Egypt so fascinating because of his impulsiveness. Can you talk about the genesis of the character of Bruce?*
5. *One of my favourite endings have to be when you go to Mombawe (A combination of Mozambique and Zimbabwe?) with Nelson and Josef after liberating the country from the scourge of Jack West (the original economic hitman?) Can you talk about how this idea of drug running and propping up foreign governments came about in the story (it's certainly true to life)?*
6. *Another of my favourite ending is when you spend the summer building up your fort, or the getaway by horseback with Ramona, Bill, Lyla and Greg. Both of these adventures sound like something that kids would do to escape from a situation. Where did this come from?*
7. *Can you talk about the concept of baksheesh? Where did that come from?*

### **Revenge of the Russian Ghost (Book 99)**

1. *I have to say that I was still buying CYOA as a teen when this book came out and I don't think I ever bought it because of the schlocky cover art which made it look more like a B-Grade horror than it actually is. In fact I have had the book for years (since collecting it as an adult) and that cover has still put me off reading it. It's does nothing to promote the book (for instance Madame Kolodina looks ridiculous). I think a cover featuring Rasputin would have been much better. Please comment.*
2. *That being said Stephen Marchesi's interior illustrations for this book are exceptional and truly capture the flavour of Pre-Glasnot Russia. I particularly like the illustrations of Rasputin arriving at the Gypsy camp on page 39. Please comment on his illustrations.*

3. *Had the fall of Communism happened at this point? Or was this book in the pipeline and written before the events in Russia had happened (the book was published in March 1990)? The Berlin Wall had definitely happened. It's a nice contrast between the two revolutions (Communist and Post-Communist). Was this intentional or a fortuitous accident?*
4. *I like the fact that YOU are in alternative medicine in this book. It really sets the tone for the type of person you are and why you would be attending a séance in Leningrad. This person is not me, but it was good to inhabit them for a time and it also suits the story really well. Please comment on your motivations for choosing this?*
5. *This book is excellently written in that all the choices lead organically to good and complex stories that have real, tangible, complex plots with identifiable characters. Please comment on the genesis of how you wrote this book.*
6. *On the strength of dialogue alone these characters are established and I think that this is important when writing these types of narratives. This is particularly important in books like Sabotage and Spy for George Washington where you have many endings and not a lot of time to establish characters and their motivations. In this book with its 16 endings it balances out the stories perfectly and enables good characters who mean something to the reader and help make the plot convincing. The scene in the prison cell firmly establishes the history of Petrograd through the dialogue between the characters. Can you talk about the characters of Boris (the policeman), Paul the Gypsy, Fyodor the Revolutionary and Illiodor the wandering Monk and how they come about? Were they inspired by Dostoyevsky?*
7. *What is a starets? This is one of your few books that doesn't feature a glossary, so please explain.*
8. *I liked the plot device that enabled you to travel through time, by recreating Rasputin's death you are carried back to Petrograd. This form of travel is achieved through a traumatic event. Can you talk about what you chose this method of time travel? For its dramatic intent?*

### **Fight For Freedom (Book 107)**

1. *This is an unusual and provocative choice for the series. A book set in Apartheid South Africa in 1976 seems strange for a series that spent most of its time grounding itself in the present. How did you pitch this idea to Bantam and where did it come from?*
2. *Many of your books have a great deal of research in them and this book is no different. This book has a Special Note to the Reader and a Historical Note which provides context for the audience. How much research did you have to do?*
3. *Was the assassination attempt of Abraham Mabaso based on a real person, if so who? Was Mabaso a real person (I'm sorry I don't know my South African history beyond Mandela and the ANC)?*
4. *The decision to be a young black person is also interesting, how did you think readers would have taken this?*

5. *Was this book a big seller? Or was it more problematic and difficult to place in the US?*
6. *It was published after Mandela was released from prison, so there was no temptation to write about Mandela's life (similar to the Martin Luther King CYOA for the Skylarks series)?*

### **The Search for Aladdin's Lamp (Book 117)**

1. *Aladdin's Lamp seems clearly inspired by many of the tales of the Arabian nights and other myths and legend from Arabia, can you talk about what inspired you to write them?*
2. *The goat man was truly creepy especially in the illustrations by Judith Mitchell (see page 109). Where did he come from?*
3. *The serpent queen is another fascinating tale and rescuing her daughter, does this come from 1001 nights?*
4. *This another book whereby the cover and the interior don't really work. The cover is how imagine the interior illustrations to be like but Judith Mitchell's illustrations seem more cartoon like and at times seem to detract from the world of your story. What do you think? Please comment.*

### **Surf Monkeys (Book 131)**

1. *Who is/was Pat Reed that you dedicated the book to? What was his involvement in the story of the book?*
2. *It seems around book 120 until the end of the series there was a major change in how many endings a book could have. In Surf Monkeys there was only 9 endings. Did you wish there could be more? Was it something that was mandated by Bantam (something that Shannon Gilligan and others have mentioned)? Do you wish you could have made it longer? For me 9 endings is too short and I feel like there could have been more endings here that expanded the story. Please comment.*
3. *This is another book that really feels modern (for the time) and has at its heart the concerns for Oil Spills in the environment. Was this as a result of the Exxon Valdez spill? Or was there another reason why you wrote this book? It clearly predates the BP spill but its resonance is still strong.*
4. *I like the way that the Earthquake plays a consistent part in many of the storylines, and like the idea of an event happening multiple times but YOU getting to experience it from different perspective. Perhaps the best ending is when you ride the massive tsunami wave into shore. I also liked the ending with Jorge when he is covered in oil and makes a wisecrack about greasing his hair. Please comment on the characters of Jorge and the Surf Monkeys that you developed for this story.*

### **The Ninja Series (book 66, 92, 113, 155 and 179)**

*The Ninja series is the second longest series of books in the history of the Choose Your Own Adventure Series. It is only supplanted by Richard Brightfield's Master Of series (7 books) but like*



*that series it features continuing characters and locations that are developed over the course of the five books, so in honour of this questions about these books will be handled collectively.*

### **Secret of the Ninja (Book 66 [Book 16 in the new series])**

1. *Secret of the Ninja perfectly captures for me a variety of Japanese qualities, what life is like in modern Japan, the history of Martial Arts and mythology. It is very difficult to get all of these qualities right, did you do a lot of research into the Ninja before writing this book?*
2. *Do you practice Martial Arts yourself?*
3. *There are many great aspects to this book, YOU get to travel back in time, YOU can be possessed by kami, YOU can meet a Tengu or even lava monsters. There are many adventures to be had, yet all seem within the realms of possibility because you establish the way that ninjutsu is complex and supernatural, and because of that the world never seems over the top. Do you think it was important to establish this world in order to make the choices more believable? How did you come up with this idea?*
4. *Did you make any changes for the Chooseco reprint of this book? I note that the reprint is 124 pages versus 115 pages in the original edition is this because of new content?*
5. *Can you talk about the illustrations in the new book (by Susan Nugent) as compared to the old illustrations (by S. Freymann)? Do you have a preference? I noticed that one major change is that the YOU character has reverted to a boy rather than a girl in the original series (p3). Did you have any say in this?*
6. *Was this book a big seller? Is this the reason why you went back to these characters and story or was there another reason?*

### **Return of the Ninja (Book 92)**

1. *Sequels are hard I think, because they rely on capturing what was great about the first book and expanding upon it, or they represent a legitimate expansion of the world that was created in the first book. What was your intention with this book? Was it always planned this way?*
2. *Once again time travel plays a major part in this book, and travelling back in time reveals the truth about Hitari and his relative Mito. Again kami plays a major part in this story of a distant relative of Miyamotori clan who seeks to avenge his honour. Can you talk about the theme of kami more broadly?*
3. *Also what attracts you to time travel stories? Many of your books feature this kind of story. Please comment*
4. *The cover art for this book doesn't accurately represent an action that takes place within the book (as far as I can tell) although YOU do try to hand the ninja a phony sword, this cover shows multiple ninjas which seems strange.*
5. *I really like S. Freymann's illustrations in the first book (although Frank Bolle did the cover) why wasn't he brought back for the sequels?*

## The Lost Ninja (Book 113)

1. *YOU return to San Francisco in this book and I think this diversion in the story of YOURS and Nada's friendship makes for a more interesting exploration of the motivations behind YOUR journey in Ninjutsu. What was the inspiration for this story? Why did you have the YOU character return home?*
2. *This book actually has 13 endings rather than the 12 advertised on the back. Do you know why this is? Was this just a Typo or a change in editorial staff? I know that after speaking to Shannon Gilligan about the series that editorial staff and priorities about the series changed as the Children's department became merged with other areas, is this what happened here?*
3. *Saito is an interesting and complex character and after two books with a lot of supernatural ninja action, it was great and interesting to see a plot that is more about your martial arts abilities and your ability to deal with people like the Yakuza. Did you feel that you wanted to focus more on character development in this book? Was it important to the story you were trying to tell?*
4. *A couple of endings feature what happens when YOU do nothing. I noticed it in Book 92 (when you decide not to go back in time or when you don't pursue the ninja) and here when you don't take more of an interest in Saito. These endings are always problematic because they suggest that the reader didn't care enough, is there a way that these endings can be avoided when writing or are they important to these types of books? They always feel unsatisfying as a reader, because it feels that somehow YOU should be drawn into the action rather than encouraged to be passive. Please comment.*
5. *Again the cover has nothing to do with any action that takes place within the book. You don't ever encounter a warrior with a sword on a bridge that looks like the Golden Gate (a couple of Yakuza maybe but definitely no swords). How did this happen?*
6. *This book features Child abduction as one of the plots. This seems like a pretty serious theme for a CYOA. Was there any resistance to this topic or was it just accepted as being a part of the nature of the story?*

## Ninja Cyborg (Book 155)

1. *Woah! Ninja Cyborg from the future! Is this the Ninja series jumping the shark? Although I liked the tongue in cheek nature of the book (Ninja Babysitters anyone?) and the obvious travel forward in time reflects back to books 66 and 92 when YOU went back in time.*
2. *Kun is a fascinating character and one I feel the series could have benefitted from earlier. This idea of an almost immortal ninja trainer kept alive presumably by his ninja skills is an awesome concept. He returns in Ninja Avenger but here he has such an amazing role. Please comment on his creation.*
3. *Richard and his swarms of digital bees/insects predicts drones by a good 15 years. That's a pretty impressive piece of prognostication. Were you reading up on future trends in technology when you were writing this or even reading Sci-Fi or was it purely your imagination? Also Richard is a strange name for a Japanese boy from the future, any thoughts?*

4. *Another thing that you seemed to predict is how the internet would make mainstream culture smaller and more generalised. When you talk about the Miasma you could be talking about the rise of the Internet. Again was this another thing you were thinking about when this book came out (the Internet would have been in its commercial infancy in 1995)?*
5. *Again with the cover, in general I have no problem with the girl fighting the cyborg that's right in the wheelhouse for what a book called Ninja Cyborg should be about, it's the guy in the blue unitard (all body leotard) waving a Bo that seems to have nothing to do with anything. Some of these covers are pretty crazy. Please comment.*
6. *Is Frank Bolle really the illustrator of this book? It is credited to Tom La Padula but his illustrations are near identical to Bolle's illustrations in book 92 and 113. They look so similar, please explain.*

### **Ninja Avenger (Book 179)**

1. *This has to be the strangest of all the Ninja series. It starts with you receiving a bill for the damage of the original Ninjaborg and again you return to the future to confront paying a bill! This admittedly sounds like a strange plot for a book about Ninja and Cyborgs?*
2. *As this was the last book you wrote for the series, what was your experience writing this book as opposed to the rest? Did you get a sense that the series was winding down?*
3. *Also this book was 99 pages, much shorter than the other books and it seems as though the interactivity really suffers because of it. It has 9 endings but the story doesn't really seem as expansive as earlier books. Was there a longer version of this book and do you feel it wrapped up the adventures of Nada and YOU or was there more to say? (Ninja Cyborg II anyone?)*

### **Super Eye Adventure**

1. *What can you tell me about these books (I believe there were 3 in the series)? This seems like a strange concept for a book/branching narrative series. I managed to find and collect these books as an adult, but I have to admit that they wouldn't have appealed to me as a teenager as I could never do the 3D eye puzzles.*

### **Digital Detective Series**

1. *What can you tell me about this series? It doesn't seem they were traditional branching interactive narratives? How did you come to be involved with them and where they an extension of your CYOA books?*

**Thank you for your generosity and time**

## Appendix 4: The First Iteration Nodes/Scenes

The table below represents the first iteration of *The Melete Effect* and explains each of the nodes/scenes that were written, from which storyline they were taken, the characters involved and a description of what takes place. The final column indicates whether or not the relevant node/scene is a paratext; a supplementary text that reveals more about the world in which the story is set.

No.	Name of Scene	Storyline	Characters	Description of Scene	Paratext (Yes/No)
1	<b>Check your Sources</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Mary Melete	The Editor in Chief McManus grills his reporters about their story.	No
2	<b>When Mac met Miriam</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac make their relationship more than professional.	No
3	<b>Deepwater by Deepwater</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Deepwater	Melete has a rendezvous with the confidential source Deepwater.	No
4	<b>A Message from the Wurlitzer Committee</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Clarence Weatherbee	Melete confronts a representative of the Wurlitzer Committee about not being nominated for a Wurlitzer Prize.	No
5	<b>Costa Real Immigrants Need to be Returned</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete	An editorial article about the rise of Costa Relean immigrants in the United States.	Yes
6	<b>Amenza to Society</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Yolanda Amenza Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac meet a former colleague of McManus, Yolanda Amenza from Costa Real.	No
7	<b>Revolutionary Forces Launch Attack on Rousyan Capital</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete	An article about the potential of capture of Moscoww by the Monerist Revolutionaries of the Free Rousya movement.	Yes
8	<b>A Fucking Diversion</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	Melete is prevented from marching on Moscoww with the Monerists by the Monerist Lieutenant Leon Nikilev .	No
9	<b>On the Road to Moscoww</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	On the Road to Moscoww, Melete and Nikilev are confronted with the atomic destruction of Moscoww	No
10	<b>All that Remains</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Mac is trying to locate Melete in the ruins of Moscoww aided	No

			Daniel Masters Doctor Nurse Mary Melete	by Daniel Masters from the USC State Department.	
11	<b>In the Ruins</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac walk through the Ruins of Moscoww.	No
12	<b>A Confrontation (Fragment)</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Margaret Brown (aka Mother Hubbard) Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Hubbard argue about the wellbeing of Melete's daughter Arabella.	No
13	<b>Who is El Perro Salvaje?</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	An editorial article about the mysterious leader of the Santo Cristan Rebels, El Perro Salvaje.	Yes
14	<b>Enter the Lair of El Perro Salvaje</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete El Perro Salvaje First Guard Second Guard Third Guard	A meeting between Melete and El Perro Salvaje in a secret jungle location.	No
15	<b>Rescue Me</b>	Santo Cristos	Commando 1 Commando 2 Commando 3 Commando 4 Mary Melete Daniel Masters	USC Commandoes under the guidance of Daniel Masters 'liberate' Melete from El Perro's jungle location.	No
16	<b>Television Transcript</b>	Santo Cristos	Television Announcer	Television transcript reporting Mary Melete's disappearance in Santo Cristos.	Yes
17	<b>Melete on the Line</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Operator's Voice Margaret Brown (aka Mother Hubbard)	Melete tries to speak with Mac on the phone.	No
18	<b>The Games People Play</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	An article about the civil war in Santo Cristos.	Yes
19	<b>Spike it to Save Lives</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac argue about whether an article written by Melete should be published.	No

20	Libel	Sandgate	Mary Melete Frank McManus	McManus informs Melete that he will not publish her article because it will likely get the newspaper sued.	No
21	SERV Shuttle Challenger – A Memorial for All	Sandgate	Mary Melete	An editorial article about the SERV Shuttle Challenger disaster that claimed the lives of seven rocketeers.	Yes
22	The Mary Melete Show	Sandgate	Voice Over Mary Melete TV Exec	Melete investigates the possibility of entering into television journalism.	No
23	Court Case (Fragment) <i>(This scene was removed from the second iteration)</i>	Brothers of Liberty	Judge Mary Melete	Melete attends a trial to defend her actions in regard to the rise of the Brothers of Liberty.	No
24	Negotiations Fail in Breslan Hostage Crisis	Rousya	Mary Melete	An article about the Icaucus Separatist Brotherhood's kidnapping of a school filled with children in Rousya.	Yes
25	On a Breslan Hilltop	Rousya	Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	Melete and Nikilev discuss the massacre in Breslan.	No
26	Bloodbath! Massacre at Breslan Schoolhouse	Rousya	Mary Melete	An article reporting the massacre in the Breslan Schoolhouse and its aftermath.	Yes
27	El Perro Sends a Message <i>(This scene was removed in the third iteration)</i>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Delivery Man	Melete receives a disturbing letter from El Perro Salvaje.	No
28	El Perro's Vision	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje Mary Melete	El Perro confronts Melete about the nature of reality.	No
29	Miriam Follows – A Poet Hiding in Plain Sight	Sandgate	Clarence Weatherbee	A review of the poet Miram Follows poetry collection "Hiding in Plain Sight" by Clarence Weatherbee.	Yes
30	The Brick House	Sandgate	N/A	A wikicyclo article about the history of The Brick House, the home of the President of the United States of Columbia	Yes
31	The Destruction of Willis Island	Sandgate	N/A	A wikicyclo article about the destruction of Willis Island, the primary entry for immigrants into the United States of	Yes

				Columbia.	
32	SS Carpathia	Sandgate	N/A	A wikicyclo article on the ship the SS Carpathia, noted for his history bringing immigrants to the United States of Columbia.	Yes
33	Advertisement found in the San Andreas Times (This fragment was later moved to the end of <i>Revolutionary Forces Launch Attack on Rousyan Capital</i> in the third iteration).	Sandgate	N/A	Advertisement for Howitzer Organ which reads: "New Howitzer Organs, they really pack a punch!"	Yes

## Appendix 5: The Second Iteration Nodes/Scenes

The following table represent the scenes/nodes written for the second iteration of *The Melete Effect*. In this section only scenes that have been added or moved from First Iteration are represented here. Where scenes have been moved the previous location in the script has been indicated in brackets.

No.	Name of Scene	Storyline	Characters	Description of Scene	Paratext (Yes/No)
6 (18)	<b>The Games People Play</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	An article about the civil war in Santo Cristos.	Yes
7	<b>Electric System Shock</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Arabella Woman (Miriam Follows)	Melete calls the United States and discovers someone else has taken her place as mother for Arabella.	No
8 (6)	<b>Amenza to Society</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Yolanda Amenza Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac meet a former colleague of McManus, Yolanda Amenza from Costa Real.	No
9 (7)	<b>Revolutionary Forces Launch Attack on Rousyan Capital</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete	An article about the potential of capture of Moscoww by the Monerist Revolutionaries of the Free Rousya movement.	Yes
10 (8)	<b>A Fucking Diversion (aka A Phucking Diversion in the third iteration)</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	Melete is prevented from marching on Moscoww with the Monerists by the Monerist Lieutenant Leon Nikilev .	No
11 (9)	<b>On the Road to Moscoww</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	On the Road to Moscoww, Melete and Nikilev are confronted with the atomic destruction of Moscoww	No
12 (10)	<b>All that Remains</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters Doctor Nurse Mary Melete	Mac is trying to locate Melete in the ruins of Moscoww aided by Daniel Masters from the USC State Department.	No
13 (11)	<b>In the Ruins</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac walk through the Ruins of Moscoww.	No



<b>14 (12)</b>	<b>A Confrontation (Fragment)</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Margaret Brown (aka Mother Hubbard) Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Hubbard argue about the wellbeing of Melete's daughter Arabella.	No
<b>15 (13)</b>	<b>Who is El Perro Salvaje?</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	An editorial article about the mysterious leader of the Santo Cristan Rebels, El Perro Salvaje.	Yes
<b>16 (14)</b>	<b>Enter the Lair of El Perro Salvaje</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete El Perro Salvaje First Guard Second Guard Third Guard	A meeting between Melete and El Perro Salvaje in a secret jungle location.	No
<b>17 (15)</b>	<b>Rescue Me</b>	Santo Cristos	Commando 1 Commando 2 Commando 3 Commando 4 Mary Melete Daniel Masters	USC Commandoes under the guidance of Daniel Masters 'liberate' Melete from El Perro's jungle location.	No
<b>18 (16)</b>	<b>Television Transcript</b>	Santo Cristos	Television Announcer	Television transcript reporting Mary Melete's disappearance in Santo Cristos.	Yes
<b>19 (17)</b>	<b>Melete on the Line</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Operator's Voice Margaret Brown (aka Mother Hubbard)	Melete tries to speak with Mac on the phone.	No
<b>20 (19)</b>	<b>Spike it to Save Lives</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac argue about whether an article written by Melete should be published.	No
<b>21 (20)</b>	<b>Libel</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Frank McManus	McManus informs Melete that he will not publish her article because it will likely get the newspaper sued.	No
<b>22 (21)</b>	<b>SERV Shuttle Challenger – A Memorial for All</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete	An editorial article about the SERV Shuttle Challenger disaster that claimed the lives of seven rocketeers.	Yes
<b>23 (22)</b>	<b>The Mary Melete Show</b>	Sandgate	Voice Over Mary Melete TV Exec	Melete investigates the possibility of entering into television journalism.	No
<b>24</b>	<b>Miriam Follows – A Poet</b>	Rousya	Clarence Weatherbee	A review of the poet Miram Follows poetry collection "Hiding in	Yes

(29)	<b>Hiding in Plain Sight</b>			Plain Sight” by Clarence Weatherbee.	
25 (24)	<b>Negotiations Fail in Breslan Hostage Crisis</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete	An article about the Icaucus Separatist Brotherhood’s kidnapping of a school filled with children in Rousya.	Yes
26 (25)	<b>On a Breslan Hilltop</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	Melete and Nikilev discuss the massacre in Breslan.	No
27 (26)	<b>Bloodbath! Massacre at Breslan Schoolhouse</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete	An article reporting the massacre in the Breslan Schoolhouse and its aftermath.	Yes
28 (27)	<b>El Perro Sends a Message</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Delivery Man	Melete receives a disturbing letter from El Perro Salvaje.	No
29 (28)	<b>El Perro’s Vision</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje Mary Melete	El Perro confronts Melete about the nature of reality.	No
34	<b>An Interrogation</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Daniel Masters	Melete is interrogated by Masters about here activities in Santo Cristos.	No
35	<b>Pasta Fregoli</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Mac reveals everything he has found about Project Capgras since going under deep cover to Melete. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
36	<b>Monotta back Melete up</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Jerry ‘Jer’ Monotta	Melete thanks Monotta for supporting her and Mac and their article.	No
37	<b>A Deepwater Drop</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Deepwater	Melete meets Deepwater in an unexpected location to get more information about the Sandgate burglary.	No
38	<b>Amenza and the Crossword Man</b>	Sandgate	Yolanda Amenza Carl, the Crossword Man	Amenza offers to help the newspaper’s crossword man to do his job.	No
39	<b>The Problem of Being a Woman in a Man’s World.</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Mary Melete	McManus advises Melete that she has been denied the Wurlitzer Prize for her work on the Sandgate burglary.	No
40	<b>The Mandala Effect</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Science Advisor Social Advisor Political Advisor Doctor Portokali	Nikilev finds out the cause of Melete’s ailment from Doctor Portokali.	No
41	<b>The Spirit of El Perro Salvaje</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete El Perro Salvaje	Melete dreams a visit from the trickster El Perro Salvaje.	No
42	<b>Through a Glass Darkly</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete	Melete is visited in her hospital room by Leon Nikilev	No

			Leon Nikilev		
43	<b>The Poet Laureate</b>	Rousya	Clarence Weatherbee Miriam Follows	Weatherbee, the critic, introduces the poet Miriam Follows at an awards event.	No
44	<b>The Trickster Guide</b>	Sandgate	El Perro Salvaje Mary Melete	A fragment in which Melete is questioned about her past by El Perro Salvaje.	No
45	<b>Something in Common</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Sidney Robinson	Melete meets fellow journalist Robinson in a bar to talk.	No
46	<b>Dive in at the Dive Bar</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco) Marta aka Barlady	Melete follows a lead to a seedy bar in Cristos Citia where she meets her contact Tucomera.	No
47	<b>Monotta in Yooropa</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Jerry 'Jer' Monotta	Melete finds Monotta has taken over as head of Yooropan Foreign Office.	No
48	<b>Yek Eht Si Allebara Ara Bel La Isthekey</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Miriam Follows	Melete dreams about her doppelganger.	No
49	<b>Tell Me a Story Mac</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete and Mac discuss the breakdown of their relationship.	No
50	<b>Spastikhov Yearns for Power</b>	Rousya	Gregori Spastikhov Eugene 'Gene' Belitski Leon Nikilev	Spastikhov makes plans to meet with a soldier Belitski at a bar behind Nikilev's back.	No
51	<b>At the Bar Babushka</b>	Rousya	Eugene 'Gene' Belitski Gregori Spastikhov Soldiers	Belitski and his fellow soldiers wait for Spastikhov to reveal his plans at a bar.	No
52	<b>The Uprising that Never Arose</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Gregori Spastikhov Eugene 'Gene' Belitski Soldiers	Spastikhov confronts Nikilev in an attempt to overthrow him, but he is thwarted in his efforts by Belitski.	No
53	<b>A Visit with Mister D.</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Mister D. Prison Guard	Melete interviews one of the burglars from the Sandgate Burglary.	No
54	<b>Stay away from the Fifth Man</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Mac warns Melete to stop investigating the mysterious Fifth Man in the Sandgate Burglary.	No

55	<b>A Question of Compromise (or a Compromise to Question)</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Frank McManus Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Melete tells McManus about Mac's warning	No
56	<b>"You're off the story."</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Mac is removed from the Sandgate story because of his personal involvement in to the story.	No
57	<b>Mac finds the Fifth Man</b>	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Terrence T. Ganting (Mister X.)	Mac meets the Fifth Man, but things to do not go as planned.	No
58	<b>A Baby is Born</b>	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Margaret Brown (aka Mother Hubbard) Wet Nurse Male Orderly	Mac informs his Mother that Arabella has been born.	No
59	<b>Everything is Politics – Not Everything</b>	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Mary Melete Waitress	Mac and Melete have a heart to heart conversation about the future of their daughter Arabella.	No
60	<b>A Spy in Our Midst</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Frank McManus	McManus tasks Melete with locating a mole within their organisation.	No
61	<b>Mother Hubbard Explains All</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Margaret Brown (aka Mother Hubbard)	Mother Hubbard informs Melete of her new relationship with Mac and Arabella.	No
62	<b>Amenza makes a Call</b>	Sandgate	Yolanda Amenza	Amenza calls a colleague to discuss her plans.	No
63	<b>Robinson reveals the Secret Life of Mac</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Sidney Robinson	Melete and Robinson meet in a bar to discuss Mac's past.	No
64	<b>An Empty House</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete	Melete arrives at Mac's House to find it abandoned.	No
65	<b>Love and Amenza</b>	Sandgate	Sidney Robinson Yolanda Amenza Mister X. Mary Melete	Robinson watches as Amenza provides information to Mister X. After contacting Melete he pursues Mister X. Melete arrives and confronts Amenza	No
66	<b>Melete is Two Down, Three Across  </b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Carl, The Crossword Man	Melete makes an unexpected breakthrough with her investigation into the mole in their organisation	No

67	<b>McManus cleans House</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Frank McManus	After the murder of Sidney Robinson, Melete informs McManus of who she thinks the mole is.	No
68	<b>A Freedom Silenced</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus	An editorial by Frank McManus about the nature of democracy.	Yes
69	<b>The Betrayal of Tuco</b>	Santo Cristos	Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco) Yolanda Amenza	Tuco is tortured by La Dama de la Destruccion aka Yolanda Amenza as to the whereabouts of El Perro Salvaje.	No
70	<b>The Ballard of Terrence T. Ganting</b>	Sandgate	Terrence T. Ganting (Mister X.)	A popular folk song about Terrence T. Ganting who shot his wife dead for sleeping with his doppelganger.	Yes
71	<b>The Road to Nowhere</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	Melete is abandoned by the side of the road in her quest to find El Perro Salvaje.	No
72	<b>Live to Fight Another Day</b>	Santo Cristos	Marta aka Barlady El Perro Salvaje Julio Pepe the mute	El Perro Salvaje decides it is time for him to go underground in his battle for Santo Cristos.	No
73	<b>Amenza to the End</b>	Santo Cristos	Yolanda Amenza	La Dama de la Destruccion attempts to interfere with a peaceful protest and harm comes to her. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
74	<b>Tucomera’s Lament</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco)	Tuco reveals the truth about his involvement in El Perro Salvaje’s revolutionary movement.	No
75	<b>The Path to the Wolf’s Lair</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco)	Tuco leads Melete to where she can meet the mysterious El Perro Salvaje.	No
76	<b>An Audience with El Presidente Immortale</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Juan Pablo Dominguez aka El Presidente Immortale	Melete meets with El Presidente Immortale, the military dictator of Santo Cristos.	No
77	<b>Amenza Returns (The Rise of La Dama)</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Yolanda Amenza	Melete meets Amenza and learns of her new role in the Santo Cristan government.	No
78	<b>The Path to Estadia Futbol</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco)	Melete and Tuco are captured and taken to the notorious Estadia Futbol for questioning. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
79	<b>Fight or Flight? (The</b>	Santo Cristos	Tucomera Rodrigues De	Tuco escapes from his jail cell.	No

	<b>Redemption of Tuco (Part I)</b>		La Santos (Tuco)	<i>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i>	
<b>80</b>	<b>Fight or Flight? (The Redemption of Tuco (Part II))</b>	Santo Cristos	Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco)	Tuco escapes from his jail cell. <i>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i>	No
<b>81</b>	<b>A Hot Time at the Ol' Sandgate Tonight (The Sandgate Burglary)</b>	Sandgate	Mister A. Mister B. Mister C. Mister D. Mister X. (Terrence T. Ganting)	A group of men attempt to break into the Proliteriat National Committee (PNC) in the Sandgate Complex.	No
<b>82</b>	<b>The Barbarity of Barbekhov</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Mary Melete Aristole Barbekhov	Melete is caught trying to infiltrate the Rousyan Revolutionaries led by Aristole Barbekhov.	No
<b>83</b>	<b>Manning puts it in Perspective</b>	Santo Cristos	Tom Manning Mary Melete	Manning advises Melete of the lie of the land in Santo Cristos. <i>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i>	No
<b>84</b>	<b>At the Gates of the Devil</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Mary Melete Guard 1 Guard 2	Melete attempts to get an audience with Brotherly Love the head of the Brothers of Liberty.	No
<b>85</b>	<b>El Perro Vanishes</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje	El Perro Salvajes vanishes from Melete's life. <i>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i>	No
<b>86</b>	<b>Get the Dogdamn Story</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Jerry Monotta Tom Manning Sidney Robinson Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	An editorial meeting at the Columbia Times in which McManus discusses his stories with fellow editors Jerry Monotta and Tom Manning.	No
<b>87</b>	<b>Give Me Shelter</b>	Rousya	Gregori Spastikhov Soldier I Soldier II Mary Melete Leon Nikilev	In the ruins of an underground bus shelter, soldiers led by Spastikhov look for Nikilev and Melete.	No
<b>88</b>	<b>Heed the words of El</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje	El Perro makes an illegal radio broadcast to the people of Santo	No

	<b>Perro Salvaje</b>			Cristos.	
89	<b>Meeting Brotherly Love</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	Melete meets with the enigmatic Brotherly Love. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
90	<b>The Feathered Serpent (Fragment)</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete El Perro Salvaje	El Perro explains to Melete the cosmic significance of their shared experience.	No
91	<b>Mac Rescues Melete (This scene is removed in the third iteration)</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Mac rescues Melete from the Asylum.	No
92	<b>Melete gets into Deepwater</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Deepwater	Melete is contacted by a mysterious informer, Deepwater.	No
93	<b>The Authorities React</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters Gregori Spastikhov	Mac tries to locate Melete after the destruction of Moscoww with the help of Daniel Masters a member of the State Department.	No
94	<b>Who'll Destroy Los Liberatores?</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	Melete is being held after being captured and it is revealed that Masters and Amenza are working together to destroy Los Liberatores. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
95	<b>Communal Love</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	Melete investigates Brotherly Love's 'legitimate' businesses. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
96	<b>The Assassin and the Pacifist (Fragment)</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje Mary Melete	El Perro questions the nature of Melete's reality.	No
97	<b>Nikilev Rescues Melete</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Mary Melete	Nikilev rescues Melete from the Asylum. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
98	<b>The Worm Turns</b>	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Mary Melete Chris Gantry	Mac and Melete attempt to find someone to go on record about the events of the Sandgate Burglary.	No
99	<b>Find that Woman</b>	Rousya	Gregori Spastikhov Leon Nikilev	Nikilev tasks Spastikhov with finding Melete after the destruction of Moscoww.	No
100	<b>The Condemnation of El Perro Salvaje</b>	Santo Cristos	Guppo Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco) El Perro Salvaje	Tuco is rescued from his captors by El Perro Salvaje and given one last job.	No
101	<b>Putting a Freeze on a</b>	Brothers of	Brotherly Love	Brotherly Love's assets in the United States are seized.	No

	<b>Brother</b>	Liberty		<b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	
102	<b>Mother Hubbard Reveals All</b>	Sandgate	Margaret Brown aka Mother Hubbard Arabella MacKenzie Brown	Mother Hubbard reveals the truth about Arabella’s mother and what has happened to her. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
103	<b>Understanding How it All Fits Together</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Yolanda Amenza	McManus and Amenza discuss the state of affairs in the United States.	No
104	<b>A Free Pass</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters	Mac and Masters are given a pass to tour the Hospital Camps to search for Melete. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
105	<b>Manning Ties a Bow on it</b>	Santo Cristos	Tom Manning Mary Melete	Manning collects Melete at the Mexicago border with Santo Cristos and brings her back to the United States. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
106	<b>Arabella rescues Melete</b>	Sandgate	Arabella MacKenzie Brown Mary Melete	Arabella rescues her mother Melete from the Asylum. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
107	<b>“We’re not so different You and I”</b>	Sandgate	Sidney Robinson Mary Melete	Robinson and Melete bond over an unexpected revelation about their careers.	No
108	<b>The Hard Way</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters	Mac and Masters have to go undercover with an Aid Agency in their attempt to find Melete. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
109	<b>Liberating Love</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	The liberation of the compound of Brother Love and the Brothers of Liberty. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
110	<b>El Perro Rescues Melete</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje Mary Melete	El Perro rescues Melete from the Asylum. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
111	<b>Is there a Fifth Man?</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete	Melete investigates the possibilities of their being a fifth man involved in the Sandgate Burglary.	No
112	<b>Mac and Miriam (A Love Story)</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters Miriam Follows	Mac finds Miriam Follows (Melete’s Doppelganger) in the ruins of Moscovw. <b>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
113	<b>In the Back Alleys of Cristos Citia</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete	An article about life in the capital of Santo Cristos.	Yes



114	<b>Welcome to Brotown</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love Mary Melete	Melete visits Brotherly Love's Compound Brotown. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
115	<b>How the Deep Water Gets its Name</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Jerry 'Jer' Monotta	McManus and Monotta discuss how Deepwater got his name. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
116	<b>The Seduction of Nikilev Part I (Miriam Follows)</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Miriam Follows	Nikilev is seduced by the doppelganger of Melete, Miriam Follows. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
117	<b>The Brotown Massacre</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love Mary Melete	The mass suicide of all of the inhabitants of Brotown demanded by Brotherly Love. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
118	<b>All Roads Lead to Rome</b>	Sandgate	Sidney Robinson Mary Melete	Robinson and Melete discuss the evidence that Carl, the Crossword Man has put together on the mole.	No
119	<b>The Fractured Past of Mary Melete</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Gregori Spastikhov Mary Melete	Nikilev goes to see Melete in hospital as she tries to recover after the destruction of Moscovw.	No
120	<b>Mister X meets Robinson</b>	Sandgate	Sidney Robinson Mister X. (Terrence T. Ganting)	Robinson is confronted by the Fifth Man, Mister X. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene partially written at this time.</b>	No
121	<b>The Fifth Man?</b>	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Mary Melete	An unpublished article about the possibility of their being a fifth man involved with the Sandgate burglary. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	Yes
122	<b>An Examination of the Truth</b>	Rousya	Doctor Portokali Leon Nikilev Mary Melete	Nikilev asks Doctor Portokali for a true assessment of Melete's medical condition.	No
123	<b>Gone – Moscovw Destroyed in Atomic Blast</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	An article about the destruction of Moscovw by a nooclear weapon. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	Yes
124	<b>Mister X gets into Deepwater</b>	Sandgate	Mister X.(Terrence T. Ganting) Deepwater	Mister X. and Deepwater are involved in a confrontation. – <b>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</b>	No
125	<b>You're Free to Go (The Cure)</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Doctor Portokali Leon Nikilev	Doctor Portokali informs Mary Melete that she has been cured and that she is free to leave hospital, as per Nikilev's instructions.	No

126	Who is Deepwater?	Sandgate	Deepwater	The identity of Deepwater is revealed to be Myron Cobbs. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
127	The Seduction of Nikilev Part II (Mary Melete)	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Mary Melete	Nikilev professes his love for Melete and it is at last reciprocated. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
128	The Foreign Office Correspondent	Sandgate	Frank McManus Mary Melete	Melete approaches McManus about the possibility of transferring to the Foreign Office.	No
129	Return to the USC	Sandgate	Mary Melete	Melete returns to United States after several years being a foreign correspondent. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
130	Rousya is No Place for a Woman	Sandgate	Tom Manning Mary Melete	Manning and Melete discuss the different foreign assignments that she may take.	No
131	The Death of the Poet Laureate	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Miriam Follows	The death of Miriam Follows in the arms of Nikilev. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
132	McManus give Mac One Last Task	Sandgate	Frank McManus	McManus sends Mac the contents of the Project Capgras folder that Robinson was working on before his murder. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
133	A Vested Interest (El Perro)	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	El Perro Salvaje warns Mac that Melete is in danger.	No
134	Return to Rousya	Rousya	Mary Melete	Melete returns to Rousya since the end of the Civil War. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
135	The Long and Winding Road	Sandgate	Mary Melete	Melete goes looking for Mac, who has gone to ground. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
136	Valedictory ( <i>This scene is removed in the third iteration.</i> )	Sandgate/Rousya	Mary Melete	Melete gives a speech about her experiences as a journalist to an assembled audience.	No
137	Mission to Priyapat	Rousya	Mary Melete	Melete attempts to get into Priyapat to find out the reasons why the Rousyan army have invaded the town. – <b><i>Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i></b>	No
138	A Vested Interest (Mac Version)	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) El Perro Salvaje	Mac is informed by a stranger that Melete is in danger.	No
139	Death by Deepwater	Sandgate	Deepwater Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	Mac is killed by Deepwater after learning too much about the Project Capgras.	No

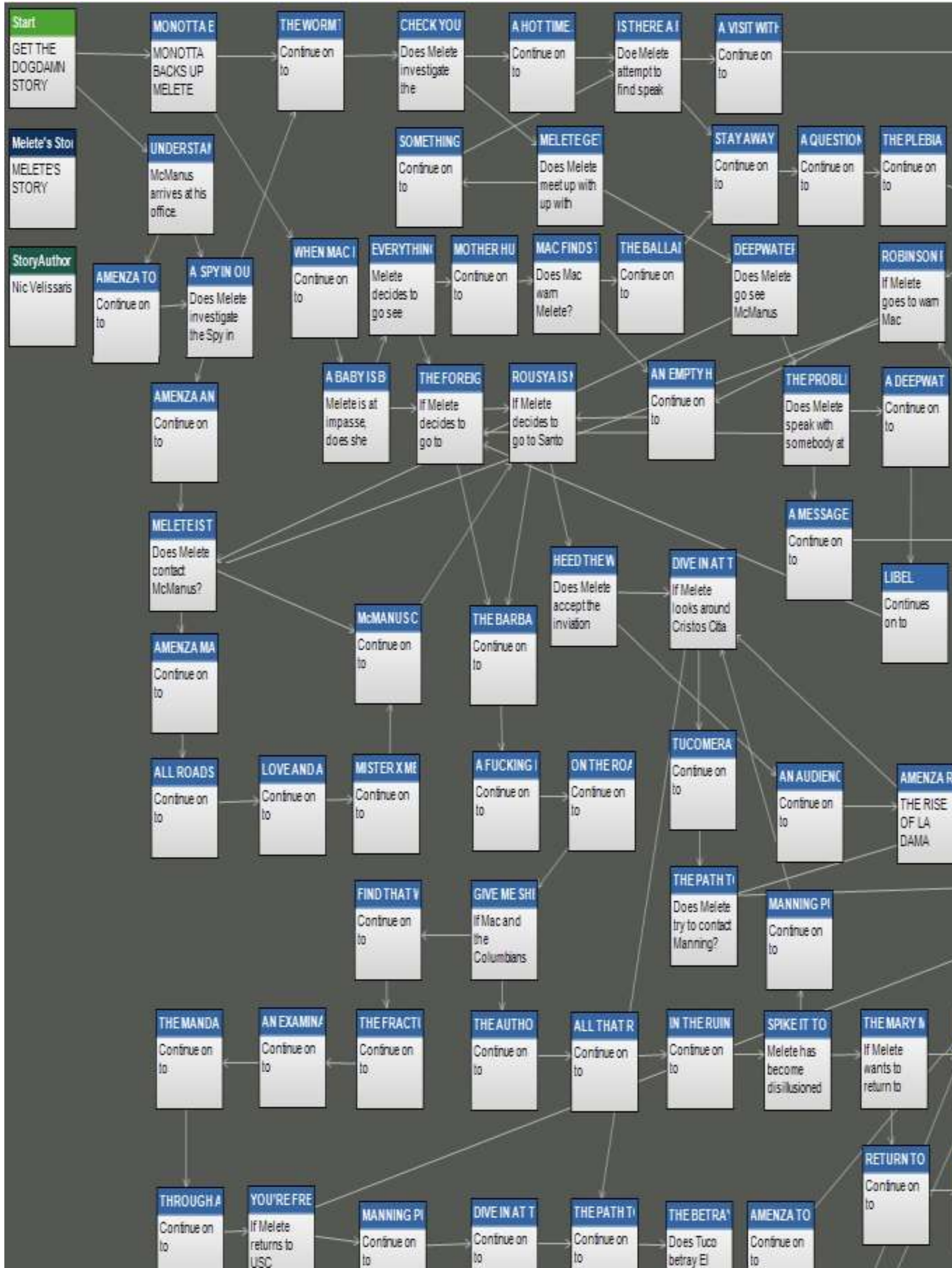
				<i>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i>	
140	Masters to the Asylum	Sandgate	Daniel Masters Mister X. (Terrence T. Ganting)	Masters is tasked by Mister X. with taking Melete to the Asylum, headquarters of Project Capgras. <i>– Node Placeholder as scene not written at this time.</i>	No

There are 131 scenes/nodes listed in the table above, which can be broken down as follows:

- There were 73 completely new scenes/nodes written for this iteration. This represents 121% increase in new material written.
- 38 scenes/nodes were identified as being necessary to complete the various storylines. These were given a brief one to two line synopsis or a placeholder text within the iteration document. Only one scene **No.120 Mister X Meets Robinson** had some partial text written for it. All of these scenes would either be developed or abandoned (as in the case of the Brothers of Liberty storyline) in the third iteration.
- 23 scenes/nodes moved from their original place in the first iteration. There is no specific reason why these scenes moved. In the process of consolidating this iteration document I noticed that certain scenes had shifted from their original numbering. This move was an organic process that I did not notice until after the scenes had moved, and as there was no good reason to revert to the original numbering it became permanent for all future iterations.

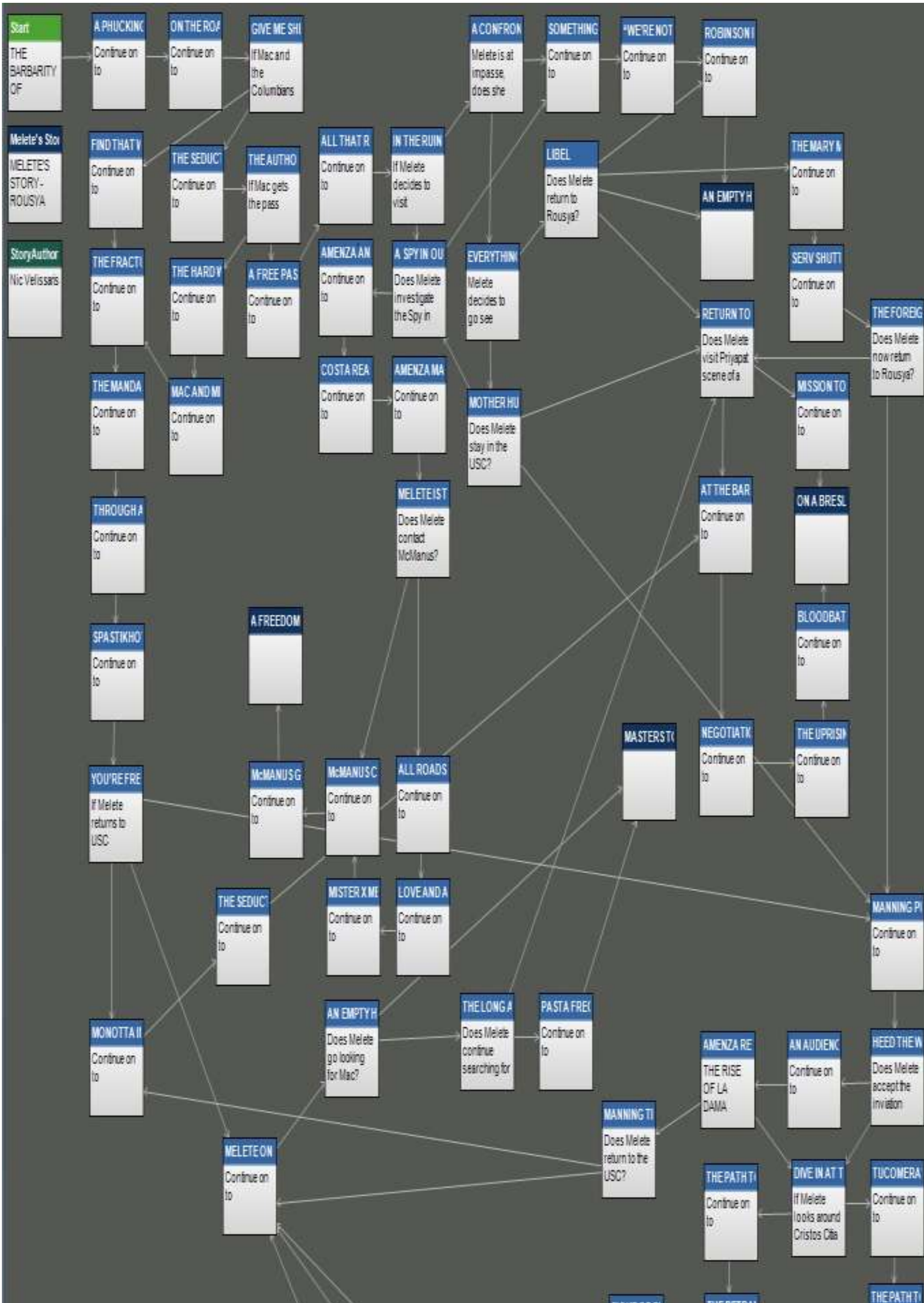
# Appendix 6: The Sandgate Storyline (Twine Map)

This is the Sandgate Storyline as represented in Twine.



# Appendix 7: The Rousya Storyline (Twine Map)

The diagram in this appendix represents the Rousya Storyline as mapped out in Twine.



## Appendix 8: The Third Iteration Nodes/Scenes

In this section I will discuss the final forty one scenes written for *The Melete Effect*. The third iteration represents the completion of scenes initially identified in the second iteration of *The Melete Effect* but not written at that time. After consolidating each of the storylines there were five new scenes written for this iteration, they are as follows:

- **No.91 Meeting Masters**
- **No.97 Nikilev Rescues Melete**
- **No.102 Mother Hubbard Reveals All (A Cold Uncivil War)**
- **No.106 Arabella Rescues Melete (Meeting Mother)**
- **No.110 El Perro Rescues Melete**
- **No.136 Arabella Finds a New Way Home**

Each of these scenes (except for **No.91 Meeting Masters**) represents the three different endings for the story. And although these endings can be accessed in this iteration, they are ultimately designed to be viewed only after an audience has attended *The Asylum (A Sideways Leap)* as a part of *The Capgras Project*.

Below is the table that reflects the final forty one scenes:

No.	Name of Scene	Storyline	Characters	Description of Scene	Paratext (Yes/No)
33	<b>The Plebian Purges (replacing Advertisement found in the San Andreas Times, the later of which was moved to end of Revolutionary Forces Launch Attack on Rousyan Capital)</b>	Sandgate	Margaret Brown aka Mother Hubbard	A wikicyclo entry on the history of the Plebian Purges which resulted in the purging of fascist elements in the United States government.	Yes

35	<b>Pasta Fregoli</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Maitre'D Waitress	Mac reveals everything he has found about Project Capgras since going under deep cover to Melete.	No
73	<b>Amenza to the End</b>	Santo Cristos	Yolanda Amenza (La Dama) Mary Melete Marta aka Barlady Soldier Personal Guard	La Dama de la Destruccion attempts to interfere with a peaceful protest and harm comes to her.	No
78	<b>The Path to Estadia Futbol</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco) The Driver	Melete and Tuco are captured and taken to the notorious Estadia Futbol for questioning.	No
79	<b>Fight or Flight? (The Redemption of Tuco) (Part I)</b>	Santo Cristos	Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco) Soldier	Tuco escapes from his jail cell.	No
80	<b>Fight or Flight? (The Redemption of Tuco) (Part II)</b>	Santo Cristos	Tucomera Rodrigues De La Santos (Tuco) Mary Melete	Tuco rescues Mary Melete from her jail cell and they escape into the Santo Cristan wilderness.	No
83	<b>Manning puts it in Perspective</b>	Santo Cristos	Tom Manning Mary Melete	Manning advises Melete of the lie of the land in Santo Cristos.	No
85	<b>El Perro Vanishes</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje	El Perro Salvajes vanishes from Melete's life.	No
89	<b>Meeting Brotherly Love</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	Melete meets with the enigmatic Brotherly Love.  <b><i>– The entire Brotherly Love storyline was removed from the final version of The Melete Effect due to length.</i></b>	No
91	<b>Meeting Masters (replacing the scene Mac rescues Melete)</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Official Daniel Masters	Melete arrives at Cristos Citia where she is interrogated by a Customs Official and Daniel Masters.	No
94	<b>Who'll Destroy Los Liberatores?</b>	Santo Cristos	Mary Melete Imperiale Un	Melete is being held after being captured and it is revealed that Masters and Amenza are working together to destroy Los	No

			Imperiale Dos La Dama (Yolanda Amenza Daniel Masters	Liberatores.	
95	<b>Communal Love</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	Melete investigates Brotherly Love's 'legitimate' businesses.  <i>– The entire Brotherly Love storyline was removed from the final version of The Melete Effect due to length.</i>	No
97	<b>Nikilev Rescues Melete</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Mary Melete	Nikilev rescues Melete from the Asylum.	No
101	<b>Putting a Freeze on a Brother</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	Brotherly Love's assets in the United States are seized.  <i>– The entire Brotherly Love storyline was removed from the final version of The Melete Effect due to length.</i>	No
102	<b>Mother Hubbard Reveals All (A Cold Uncivil War)</b>	Sandgate	Margaret Brown aka Mother Hubbard Frank McManus Arabella MacKenzie Brown	Frank McManus comes to visit Mother Hubbard and Mother Hubbard reveals the truth about Arabella's mother and what has happened to her.	No
104	<b>A Free Pass</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters Cyril	Mac and Masters are given a pass to tour the Hospital Camps to search for Melete.	No
105	<b>Manning Ties a Bow on it</b>	Santo Cristos	Tom Manning Mary Melete	Manning collects Melete at the Mexicago border with Santo Cristos and brings her back to the United States.	No
106	<b>Arabella rescues Melete (Meeting Mother)</b>	Sandgate	Arabella MacKenzie Brown Margaret Brown aka Mother Hubbard Doctor Portokali Mary Melete	Doctor Portokali brings Melete to meet with Mother Hubbards and Arabella. Everyone is reconciled and Arabella rescues her mother Melete from the Asylum.	No
108	<b>The Hard Way</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters	Mac and Masters have to go undercover with an Aid Agency in their attempt to find Melete.	



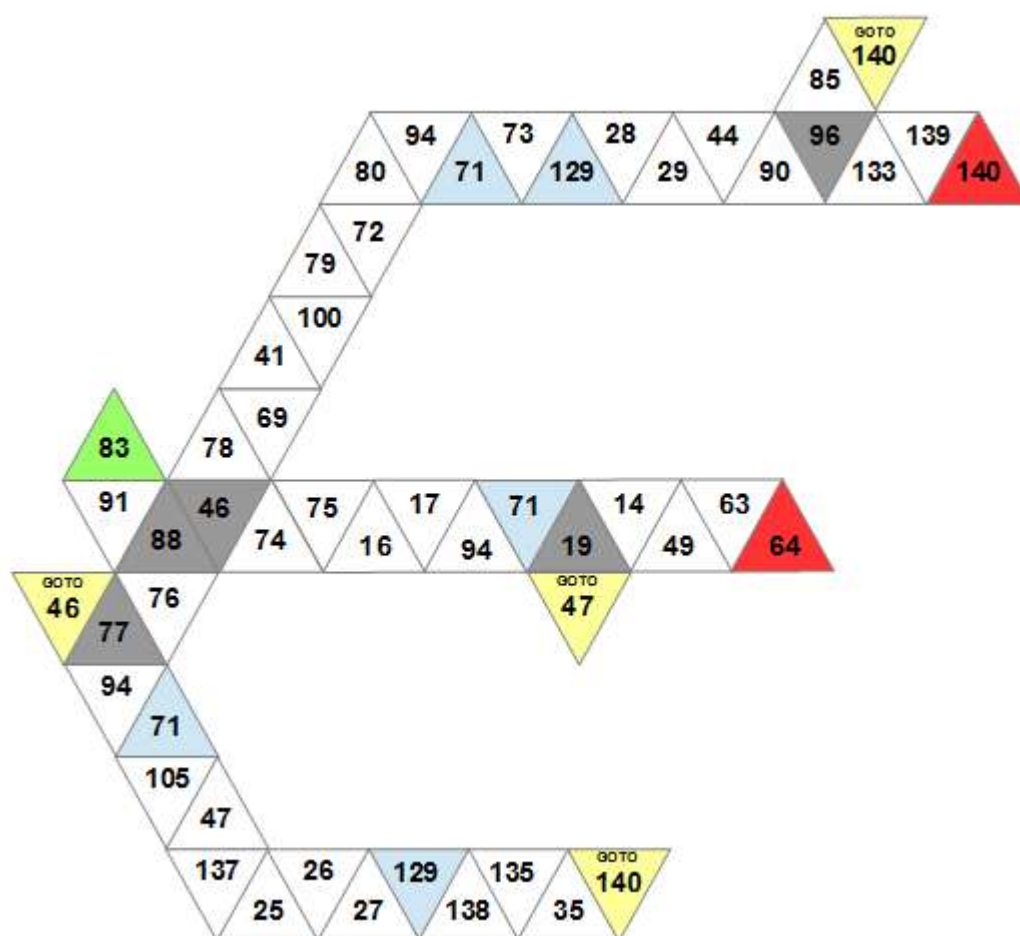
			Cyril		
109	<b>Liberating Love</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love	The liberation of the compound of Brother Love and the Brothers of Liberty.  <i>– The entire Brotherly Love storyline was removed from the final version of The Melete Effect due to length.</i>	No
110	<b>El Perro Rescues Melete</b>	Santo Cristos	El Perro Salvaje Mary Melete	El Perro rescues Melete from the Asylum.	No
112	<b>Mac and Miriam (A Love Story)</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Daniel Masters Doctor Miriam Follows	Mac finds Miriam Follows (Melete's Doppelganger) in the ruins of Moscovw.	No
114	<b>Welcome to Brotown</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love Mary Melete	Melete visits Brotherly Love's Compound Brotown.  <i>– The entire Brotherly Love storyline was removed from the final version of The Melete Effect due to length.</i>	No
115	<b>How the Deep Water Gets its Name</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus Jerry 'Jer' Monotta	McManus and Monotta discuss how Deepwater got his name.	No
116	<b>The Seduction of Nikilev Part I (Miriam Follows)</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Miriam Follows	Nikilev is seduced by the doppelganger of Melete, Miriam Follows.	No
117	<b>The Brotown Massacre</b>	Brothers of Liberty	Brotherly Love Mary Melete	The mass suicide of all of the inhabitants of Brotown demanded by Brotherly Love.  <i>– The entire Brotherly Love storyline was removed from the final version of The Melete Effect due to length.</i>	No
120	<b>Mister X meets Robinson</b>	Sandgate	Sidney Robinson Mister X. (Terrence T. Ganting)	Robinson is confronted by the Fifth Man, Mister X.	No
121	<b>The Fifth Man?</b>	Sandgate	Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Mary Melete	An unpublished article about the possibility of their being a fifth man involved with the Sandgate burglary.	Yes

123	<b>Gone – Moscoww Destroyed in Atomic Blast</b>	Rousya	Peter MacKenzie (Mac)	An article about the destruction of Moscoww by a nooclear weapon.	Yes
124	<b>Mister X gets into Deepwater</b>	Sandgate	Mister X.(Terrence T. Ganting) Deepwater	Mister X. and Deepwater are involved in a confrontation.	No
126	<b>Who is Deepwater?</b>	Sandgate	Deepwater (Myron Cobbs) Carl, the Crossword Man	The identity of Deepwater is revealed to be Myron Cobbs.	No
127	<b>The Seduction of Nikilev Part II (Mary Melete)</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Mary Melete Two Bodyguards	Nikilev professes his love for Melete and it is at last reciprocated.	No
129	<b>Return to the USC</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Jerry 'Jer' Monotta	Monotta warns Melete that the United States is not the same place she left.	No
131	<b>The Death of the Poet Laureate</b>	Rousya	Leon Nikilev Miriam Follows Doctor Portokali	Miriam Follows dies in the arms of Nikilev and Doctor Portokali reveals the truth about her existence.	No
132	<b>McManus give Mac One Last Task</b>	Sandgate	Frank McManus	McManus sends Mac the contents of the Project Capgras folder that Robinson was working on before his murder.	No
134	<b>Return to Rousya</b>	Rousya	Mary Melete Jerry 'Jer' Monotta	Melete returns to Rousya since the end of the Civil War.	No
135	<b>The Long and Winding Road</b>	Sandgate	Mary Melete Baldy	Melete goes looking for Mac, who has gone to ground.	No
136	<b>Arabella Finds a New Way Home (this scene replaces <i>Valedictory</i> from earlier iterations)</b>	Sandgate	Arabella Mackenzie Brown Margaret Brown aka Mother Hubbard Doctor Portokali	Arabella and Mother Hubbard journey to Project Capgras to determine the whereabouts of Mary Melete.	No
137	<b>Mission to Priyapat</b>	Rousya	Soldier Army Captain Mary Melete Doctor Portokali	Melete attempts to get into Priyapat to find out the reasons why the Rousyan army have invaded the town.	No

139	<b>Death by Deepwater</b>	Sandgate	Myron Cobbs (Deepwater ) Peter MacKenzie (Mac) Terrence T. Ganting (Mister X.)	Mac is killed in a gunfight between Mister X. and Deepwater after learning too much about the Project Capgras. Mister X. is also killed.	No
140	<b>Masters to the Asylum</b>	Sandgate	Daniel Masters Mister X. (Terrence T. Ganting)	Masters is tasked by Mister X. with taking Melete to the Asylum, headquarters of Project Capgras.	No

## Appendix 9: The Santo Cristos Storyline (A Tessellation)

Here the Santo Cristos storyline within *The Melete Effect* is represented as a Tessellation.



**Please note:** In this Tessellated Diagram, each number within a shape (Triangle) corresponds with the relevant Scene Number in the text of *The Melete Effect*. This is slightly different to the Tessellations as represented in Chapter 3 which arranges the tessellations by Choice Points. Here this change represents my need as a writer to arrange the narrative for presentation.

On the next page you will find the corresponding Table which maps out these interactions. The first column represents the chronological arrangement of Choice Points, and the relevant Scene Number can be found in the third column.

A reminder on the colour schema used to represent the tessellations:

- Green represents the starting node for the narrative
- White are nodes in which no choice is made, and these automatically continue onto the next node.
- Dark grey are nodes in which choices are made
- Yellow are nodes that leap to other pathways.
- Red triangles represent the end of narrative path.
- Blue represents the same repeated node in a different context (this is rarely used).

Choice Point	Scene/Choice/First Line	Scene Number	No of Choices	Go to Choice Point	Go on to Scene Number
1	MANNING PUTS IT IN PERSPECTIVE	83	0	2	91
2	MEETING MASTERS	91	0	3	88
3	Does Melete meet her contact? Does Melete accept the invitation to meet El Presidente Immortale?	88	2	4, 5	46, 76
4	Do they go directly to meet El Perro Salvaje? Does Melete instead get some background on the people of Cristos Citia?	46	2	6, 7	74, 78
5	AN AUDIENCE WITH EL PRESIDENTE IMORTALE	76	2	8	77
6	TUCOMERA'S LAMENT	74	0	9	75
7	THE PATH TO ESTADIA FUTBOL	78	0	10	69
8	Melete decides she is not going to be intimidated by Amenza Melete decides to return to her hotel and regroup	77	2	11, 4	94, 46
9	THE PATH TO THE WOLF'S LAIR	75	0	12	16
10	THE BETRAYAL OF TUCO	69	0	13	41
11	WHO'LL STOP LOS LIBERADORES?	94	0	14	71
12	ENTER THE LAIR OF EL PERRO'S SALVAJE	16	0	15	17
13	THE SPIRIT OF EL PERRO SALVAJE	41	0	16	100
14	If you arrived from "Amenza Returns (The Rise of La Dama)" continue onto "Manning Ties a Bow on It" If you arrived from "Rescue Me" then continue onto "Melete on the Line" If you arrived from "Fight or Flight? (The Redemption of Tuco) Part II" continue onto "Amenza to the End"	71	3	17, 18, 19	105, 19, 73
15	RESCUE ME	17	0	11	94
16	THE CONDEMNATION OF EL PERRO	100	0	20	79
17	MANNING TIES A BOW ON IT	105	0	21	47
18	Does Melete return to the United States of Columbia? Does she decide to take up the offer of a post in Yooropa?	19	2	22, 21	14, 47

19	AMENZA TO THE END	73	0	23	129
20	FIGHT OR FLIGHT? (THE REDEMPTION OF TUCO) PART I	79	0	24	72
21	MONOTTA IN YOOROPA	47	0	25	137
22	A CONFRONTATION (FRAGMENT)	14	0	26	49
23	If you arrived from "Bloodbath! Massacre at Breslan Schoolhouse" continue onto "A Vested Interest (Mac's Version)" If you arrived from "Amenza to the End" continue onto "El Perro Sends A Message"	129	2	27, 28	138, 28
24	LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY	72	0	29	80
25	MISSION TO PRIYAPAT	137	0	30	25
26	TELL ME A STORY MAC	49	0	31	63
27	A VESTED INTEREST (MAC'S VERSION)	138	0	32	135
28	EL PERRO SENDS A MESSAGE	28	0	33	29
29	FIGHT OR FLIGHT? (THE REDEMPTION OF TUCO) PART II	80	0	11	94
30	NEGOTIATIONS FAIL IN BRESLAN HOSTAGE CRISIS	25	0	34	26
31	ROBINSON REVEALS THE SECRET LIFE OF MAC	63	0	35	64
32	THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD	135	0	36	35
33	EL PERRO'S VISION	29	0	37	44
34	ON A BRESLAN HILLTOP	26	0	38	27
35	AN EMPTY HOUSE	64	0	0	0
36	PASTA FREGOLI	35	0	39	140
37	THE TRICKSTER GUIDE	44	0	40	90
38	BLOODBATH! MASSACRE AT BRESLAN SCHOOLHOUSE	27	0	23	129
39	MASTERS TO THE ASLYUM	140	0	0	0
40	THE FEATHERED SERPENT (FRAGMENT)	90	0	41	96
41	Melete shoots continue onto "El Perro Vanishes" Melete doesn't shoot continue onto "A Vested Interest (El Perro's Version)"	96	2	42, 43	85, 133
42	EL PERRO VANISHES	85	0	39	140
43	A VESTED INTEREST (EL PERRO'S VERSION)	133	0	44	139
44	DEATH BY DEEPWATER	139	0	39	140

## Appendix 10: The Sandgate Scandal Tessellation Table

**Please Note:** This table represents only the scenes set in the United States of Columbia during the Sandgate Scandal from *The Melete Effect*. Storylines from Rousya and Santo Cristos have been omitted. This table is also unusual in that the first node features a choice. As a result the first entry in the Choice Point column has been highlighted in Green to indicate that it is the first node.

Choice Point	Scene/Choice/First Line	Scene Number	No of Choices	Go to Choice Point	Go on to Scene Number
1	If you want to follow Melete? If you want to follow McManus?	86	2	2,3	36, 103
2	Does Melete keeps investigating the story? Does Melete visit Mac?	36	2	4, 5	98, 2
3	Does Yolanda Stay? Does Yolanda Go?	103	2	6, 7	8, 60
4	The Worm Turns	98	0	8	1
5	When Mac met Miram	2	0	9	58
6	Amenza to Society	8	0	7	60
7	Does Melete investigate the Spy in their ranks? Does Melete continue to investigate the Sandgate Burglary?	60	2	10, 4	38, 8
8	Does Melete investigate the possibility of their being a Fifth Man? Does Melete contact Robinson about a lead he had?	1	2	11, 12	81, 92
9	Melete is at impasse, Does she talk to Mac? Or Does she speak with McManus?	58	2	13, 14	59, 128
10	Amenza and the Crossword Man	38	0	15	66
11	A Hot Time in Ol' Sandgate Tonight (The Sandgate Burglary)	81	0	16	111
12	Does Melete meet up with up with Deepwater? Or does she check in with Robinson about his lead?	92	2	17, 18	3, 45

13	Does Melete decide to go see McManus? Does she decide to speak to Mac again?	59	2	14, 19	128, 61
14	If Melete decides to go to Rousya? If Melete decides to talk to Manning First?	128	2	20, 21	82, 130
15	Does Melete contact McManus? Or Does she speak to Robinson, whose stories are implicated in the information?	66	2	22, 23	67, 62
16	Does Melete attempt to find speak with Mr D.? Does she speak with Mac first?	111	2	24, 25	53, 54
17	Does Melete go see McManus about what she's learnt? Does she write up her article first?	3	2	26, 15	39, 66
18	Something in Common	45	0	16	111
19	Mother Hubbard Explains All	61	0	27	57
20	<b>The Barbarity Of Barbekhov</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
21	If Melete decides to go to Santo Cristos If Melete decides to go to Rousya after all	130	2	28, 20	82, 88
22	McManus cleans House	67	0	21	130
23	Amenza Makes a Call	62	0	29	118
24	A Visit with Mr D.	53	0	30	107
25	Stay Away from the Fifth Man	54	0	31	55
26	Does Melete speak with somebody at the Wurlitzer Committee? Does she decide it's time to leave the story to Mac? Does she meet again with Deepwater?	39	3	32, 14, 33	4, 128, 37
27	Mac Finds the Fifth Man	57	0	34	70
28	<b>Heed the Words of El Perro Salvaje</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
29	All Roads Lead to Rome	118	0	35	65
30	"We're not so different you and I"	107	0	36	56
31	A Question of Compromise (or a compromise to question)	55	0	36	56
32	A Message from the Wurlitzer Committee	4	0	37	49



33	A Deepwater Drop	37	0	38	21
34	The Ballard of Terence T. Ganting	70	0	25	54
35	Love and Amenza	65	0	39	120
36	"You're off the Story!"	56	0	40	63
37	Tell me a story Mac	49	0	40	63
38	Libel	21	0	14	128
39	Mister X meets Robinson	120	0	22	67
40	If Melete tries to Warn Mac If Melete tries to contact Deepwater	63	2	41, 15	64, 66
41	An Empty House	64	0	21	130

## Appendix 11: Grand Prix – An Example of Over-Priming

John Frankenheimer's 1966 film *Grand Prix* (Released on DVD in 2006) provides an illustrative example of the difficulties of foreshadowing and priming. This film is based around four different race drivers following them over the course of a single Grand Prix racing season. One character Jean-Pierre Sarti (played by Yves Montand) is framed as the noble but tragic figure who has fallen in love with a journalist Louise Fredrickson (played by Eva Marie Saint) even though he is married unhappily to another woman Monique (played by Genevieve Page). If this was not enough, Sarti is being eclipsed by a younger driver Nino Barlini (played by Antonio Sabato) who drives for the same team as he does, Ferrari. Although Louise and Jean-Pierre are in love, their story is the secondary story of the film, reflecting a similar love triangle that involves the main characters American driver Pete Aron (James Garner), the British Scott Stoddard (Brian Bedford) and his estranged wife Pat (Jessica Walter). In the main plot (what traditionally was called the 'A-Story') Pat who had been having an affair with Pete Aron is reconciled with her husband Scott; so while Pete Aron wins the championship at the end of the movie, Scott gets the girl.

In the Sarti subplot (the 'B-Story'), which ironically is more compelling than the primary story because of the humanity of his character, Sarti is overwhelmed by several factors that prevent him from reaching a happy ending. First there is the fact that he is conducting an illicit affair with Louise (and as a secondary plot, tradition demands that this plot is in marked contrast to the main plot), and then there are the ominous portents about the character's ability to drive. Sarti is involved in accident that kills two young spectators who got too close to the track. From that point on his car does not handle well, and his team seems to doubt his ability, resulting in the team delaying the arrival of his car for the final race until the last minute. Much of Sarti's dialogue echoes his doubts about continuing his career but underscores his inability to stop; he is a man in conflict with what he knows he should do: leave racing. At this point, it is clear that Sarti is being positioned as a tragic character, that his death is foreshadowed. However by the time he reaches the final race at Monza, the sheer weight of dramatic coincidence begins to overwhelm the viewer. It begins with Louise (his mistress) deciding not to attend his final race because of her uncertainty of maintaining a relationship with Sarti, then his estranged wife appears at the starting line to trade veiled insults with him. Finally he is belittled a final time by the team manager Mannelta (Adolfo Celi) who insists that he must race or else. At this point it is obvious that Sarti is going to die if he races. The audience has been primed so repeatedly by the nature of the events that have befallen Sarti, that there is no possible way out.

As I sat there watching, I kept hoping for a reprieve or a turnaround in Sarti's fortune; his car stalls at the start, maybe he will be disqualified and live? No, the car turns over and he is off and racing. Suddenly he is making his way through the field, the car is performing as it should; maybe he will survive after all? He continues to make his way through the field eventually finding himself in fourth position, behind the other main characters. He is looking for an opportunity to pass when a piece of tailpipe falls off Scott's car and causes Sarti to swerve off the road and be killed. Although the narrative has primed the audience to expect this outcome, it has also stretched the credibility of the situation too far. Sarti remains either oblivious or stoically resigned to his fate. He cannot solve his complex situation (how to resolve his marriage woes; how to continue his career outside of racing) so the narrative resolves that he must die. It is clumsy and heavy handed.

There were many plot opportunities that would have been more realistic or more dramatic than the tragedy as played out in the film. Perhaps Sarti would have abandoned the race when his car failed to arrive, or he could have left his vehicle once it failed to start. In fact Sarti is used as a simultaneously elegant and clumsy way of resolving the overall plot. The winner of the final race will

win the overall championship, with Barlini (Sarti's fellow Ferrari driver) leading the group, and the others in second, third and fourth. Sarti's death results in Manetta signalling a black flag and withdrawing his team from the race. This conveniently takes Barlini, who had been leading, out of the race and allows Aron to win. It is elegant in the way that it resolves all the plots single-handedly. However it is clumsy in that it does so by not resolving the journey of the character satisfactorily; Sarti is killed in effect because it is expedient to do so, not because his character has reached a resolution. The priming here seems to serve to convince the audience that the filmmakers are doing this (killing Sarti) because it will make for a dramatically satisfying event, but in actual fact they are using the priming and foreshadowing to in effect control and anticipate the audience's response.

This is an important point, because priming can be used in storytelling and in Choice-Based Narratives to control how an audience respond to what they are receiving. This can be beneficial if you handle it subtly and carefully. However if you handle it in the way that Frankenheimer did in Grand Prix, you risk invoking the wrath of the audience.