Narrative

Mark Bernstein
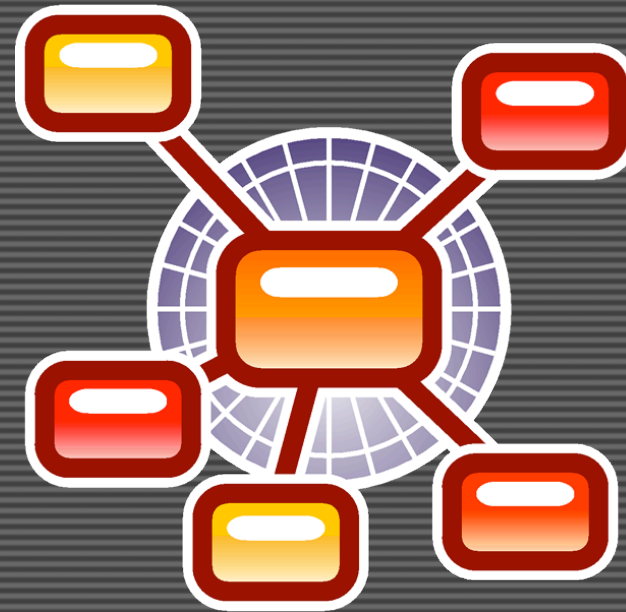
Eastgate

Eastgate

Hypertexts Tools

Storyspace

Tinderbox

Hypertext Publishing

Original fiction, nonfiction, and poet

Widely studied

TEKKA: enjoying new media • software aesthetics

See also…

Spatial Hypertext

Marshall, Shipman, Nakakoji

Sculptural Hypertext

Millard, Weal

Hypertext Rhetoric

classical: Joyce, Bolter, Landow, Aarseth…

new: Walker, Tosca, Rau, Miles…

That message **will be** narrative

It **will** include predictions of unfolding events, promises, contracts, memories

Let's begin with the conclusion

(even our oldest stories begin in the middle)

The turkey usually gets cooked

Despite symbolic, schematic, and systematic mismatches and mistranslations, the holiday Turkey usually gets roasted.

Even from a kitchen crowded

- with relatives who are strangers,
- relatives who dislike and distrust each other,
- relatives schooled in different traditions,
- who speak different languages,
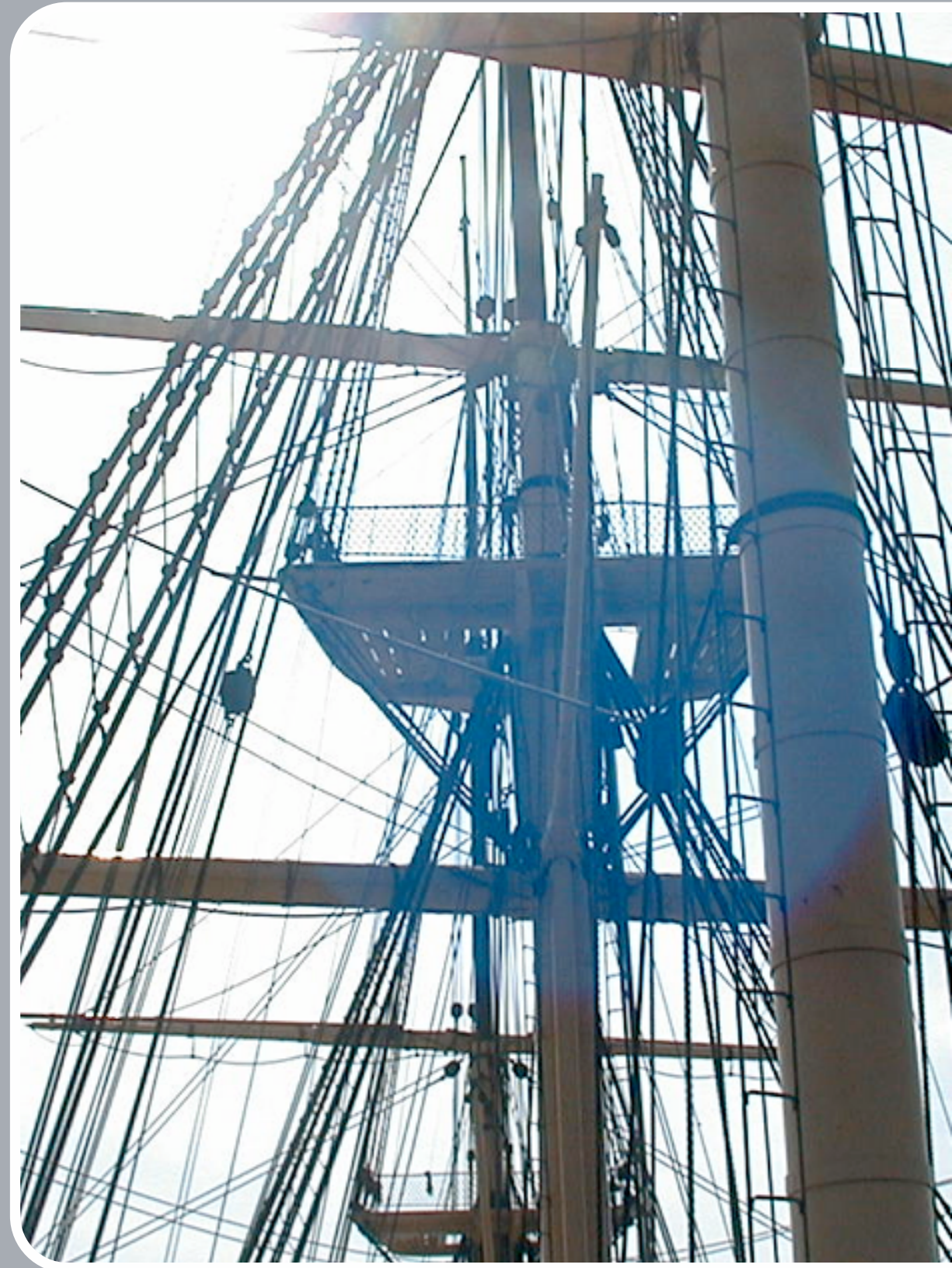- who are accustomed to different equipment

...dinner will usually emerge.
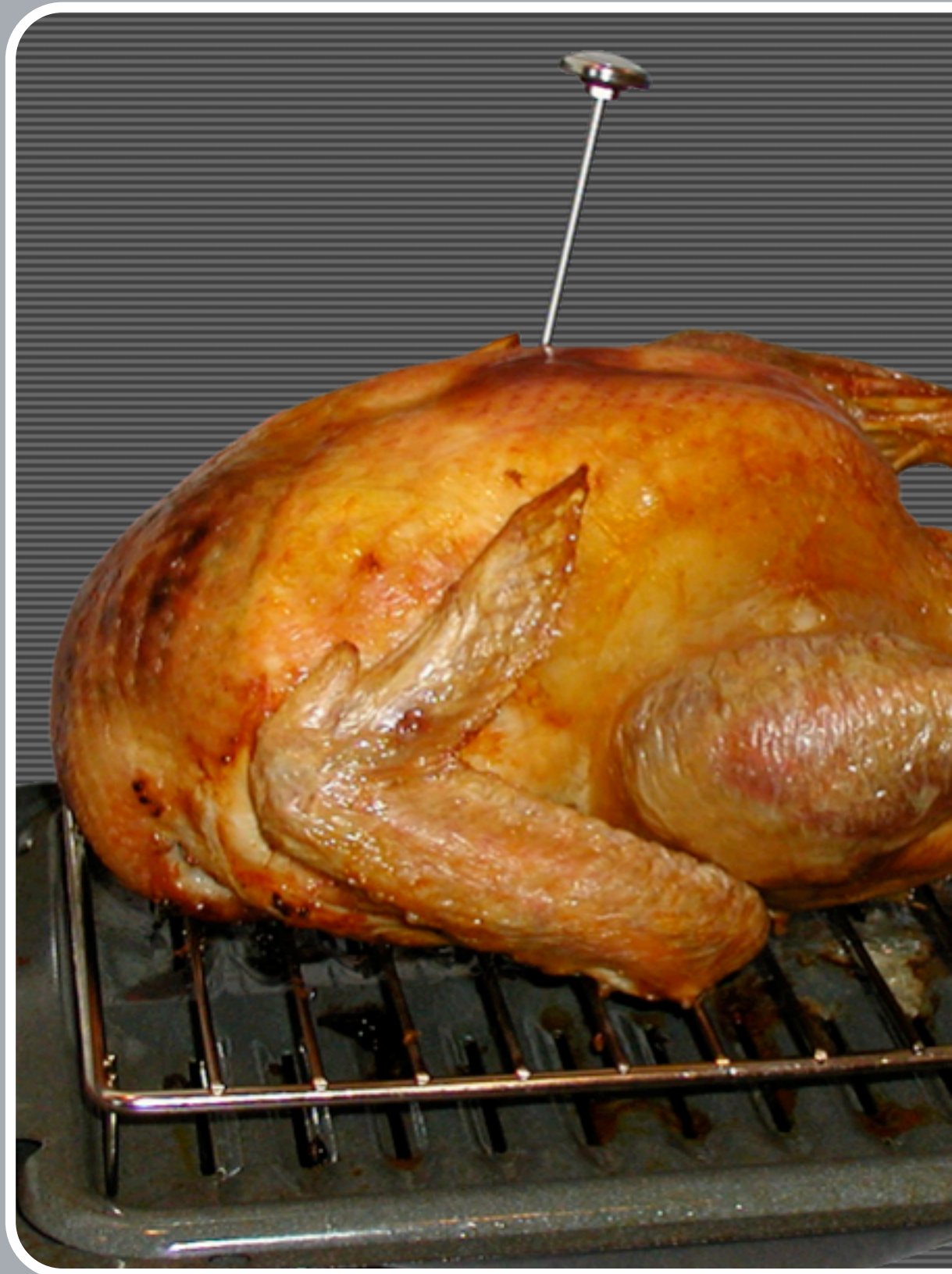
Stories

- Why Galveston is better, and Corpus faster

- The last time Management tried to "fix" the process

- J. Clark and the fire/4th quarter/ strike of '96

Semantic distance

- Focus Scenario negotiation:

  - C1: I want an X right a way!

  - C2: You mean a Y! Can't have it, it's now a Y1 with a Y2, and the Y3 upgrade. With new features too!

  - **C1: oh -- and painted green, please!**

  - *maybe the most important point*

- construction for meaning (and deconstruction...): beyond essentialism

- but, we can usually manage

- when we can't, it's surprising

- and, frequently, funny -- reminding us how surprising it is

narrative divergence

Workers optimizing personal goals at corporate expense

Divisions optimizing their performance but starving resources from rival divisions

Collaborators looking ahead to future divergence

Decision-makers demanding intelligence that ratifies their policy preferences

Not just for scoundrels

CAT扫描是什么东西?

"This is an 'encouragement' talk?
I thought it was 'share my pain'."
     -- Buffy Summers, (Fear Itself)

...and not just misunderstanding

Montage

Juxtaposing two images
creates a third idea…

…even if the idea is tricky
…even if you don't want it to

Collage

Montage in space instead of time

(Links do this too. See Tosca, The Lyrical Nature of Links, 99)

You can't avoid it

- People **assume** that recipients understand montage and collage

- If you try make montage and collage illegal, you've got to solve the frame problem

- EVERY potential signifier will be one, eventually

Landow, Hypertext 2.0

The frame problem

meeting an old guy on the road leads to the plague?

I. Once upon a time (context)

II. This thing happened (process)

III. But there was one thing they had all forgotten

we're going to have real problems with the third act

Third Act Problems

A SIMPLE CASE

At "noon" on the flight from London (clock time)

The narrator's time

The "present" time in the story

> …in which the characters may be looking back

> …to a past at which they were speculating

> …about times still to come

Narratology and Time

a narrative is not an annal

Jill Walker, HT99

DISTINGUISH:

The patient would like it by Sunday

The NCA would like it by Sunday

Wall Street analysts expect it by Sunday

If it's not here Sunday, it'll be too late

Distinguishing Times

Secrets

The managers of P1 and P2 agreed not to tell their top management about the arrangement until Feb 22.

Hawkins learned about it on Feb. 7, probably from Clarkson. Not wanting to further complicate a murky situation, he informed his entire staff but swore them all to secrecy. But then…

Romaniuk, *Content Modeling and Analysis for The EastEnders,* **IA Summit**, 2003

It's not just trust

It's not just security

It's not just IP protection

Tricky representation issues
- belief states, counterfactuals
- predicting behavior
- if you forbid this, people will subvert your system

Solution 1: blame it on people

- People construct implicit narratives
  - Unintended and unwanted messages
- Avoid them!
  - require formal systems, formal channels

Won't work!

Gödel.

Besides, people rely on those implicit messages.

Solution 2: schematic narrative

- 1980's: slots & scripts

- Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folk Tale

- cynical view of Hollywood

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- If it were that simple, would we still spend hours on end, waiting to see how things turn out?

NO FREE LUNCH

You can't avoid narrative

You can't evade montage and collage

Time is not a sequence, secrets are part of the story

Multivalence is not a vice

"There is no simple way to say this"
—Michael Joyce, *afternoon, a story*

Far to Go

- The message is a narrative

- Can't avoid it

- Can't avoid montage/collage sidebands

- Time and secrets can't be added on