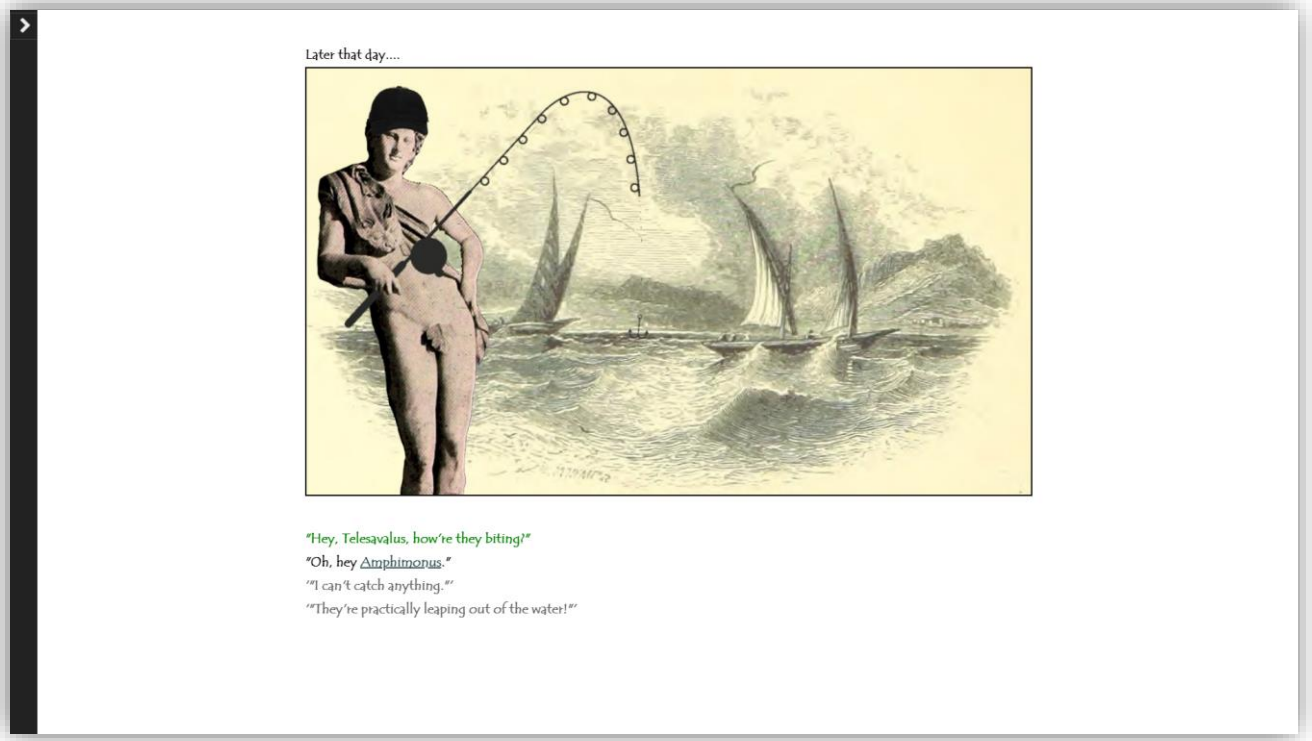
Emerging Formats: Discovering and Collecting Contemporary British Interactive Fiction



Dr Lynda Clark
British Library & Nottingham Trent University

Emerging Formats

- Ebook Mobile apps
- Structured Data
- Web-based Interactive Narrative

Emerging Formats

- Identify
- Collect
- Preserve
- Describe

Identify

Interactive Fiction, a definition:

‘computer programs that display text, accept textual responses and then display additional text in reaction [to those responses]’.

Nick Montfort, *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*, 6th edn (Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press, 2005), p.vii.

Identify

Interactive Narrative, a definition:

‘a form of digital interactive experience in which users create or influence a dramatic storyline through their actions’.

Mark O. Riedl and Vadim Bulitko, ‘Interactive Narrative: An Intelligent Systems Approach’ in *AI Magazine*, (Spring 2013, 67-77), p. 67.

Identify

Interactive Narrative as defined by the British Library:

- Interaction: typing, clicking, navigating
- Narrative: fiction, non-fiction
- Web-based: born-digital, but NOT downloadable

Identify: Sources

https://ifdb.tads.org

http://philome.la

https://sub-q.com

https://itch.io

https://www.choiceofgames.com

http://pr-if.org

https://www.springthing.net

https://readingdigitalfiction.com/writing-competition

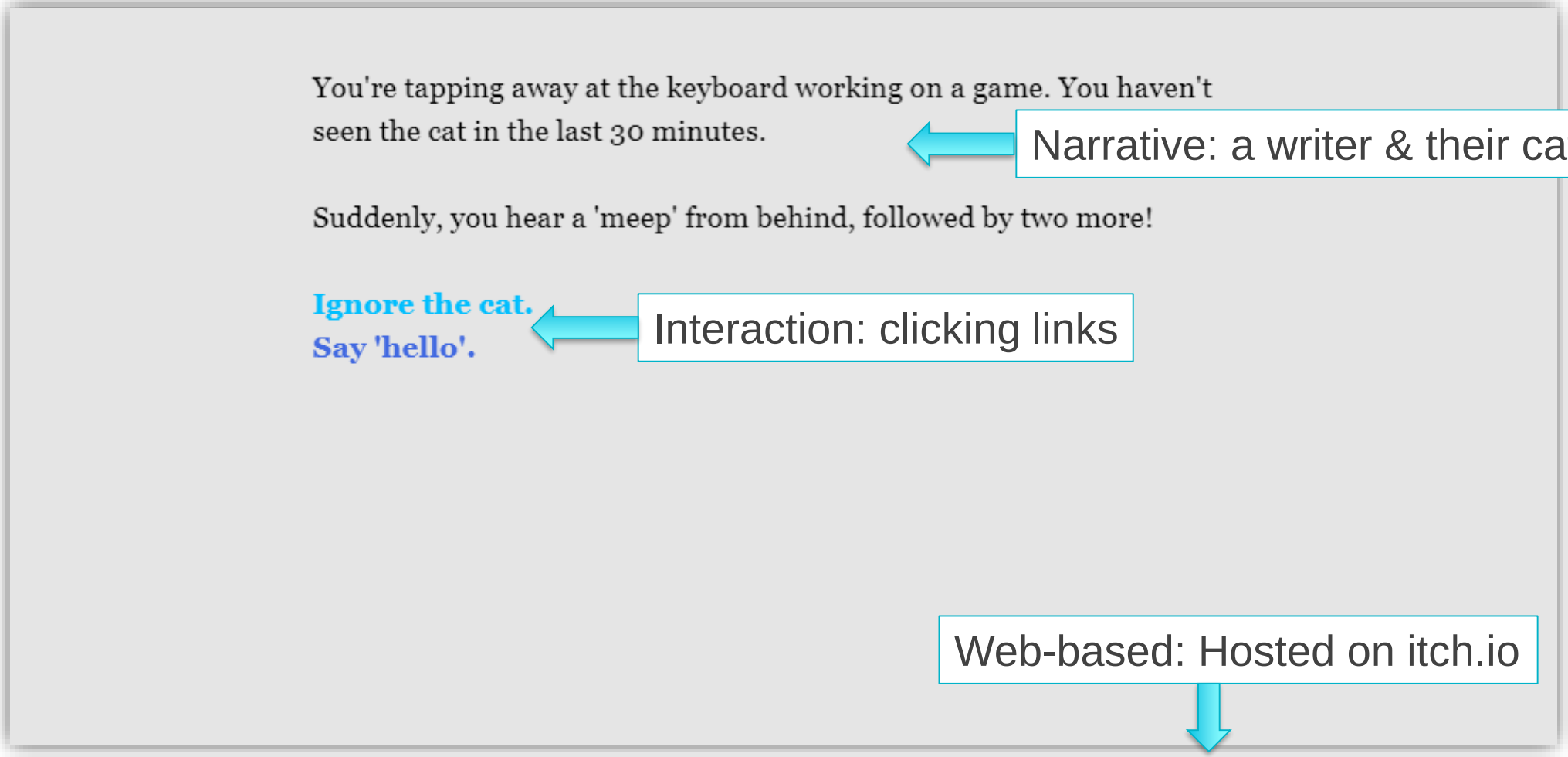
https://ifcomp.org

https://intfiction.org/

Identify: Categories

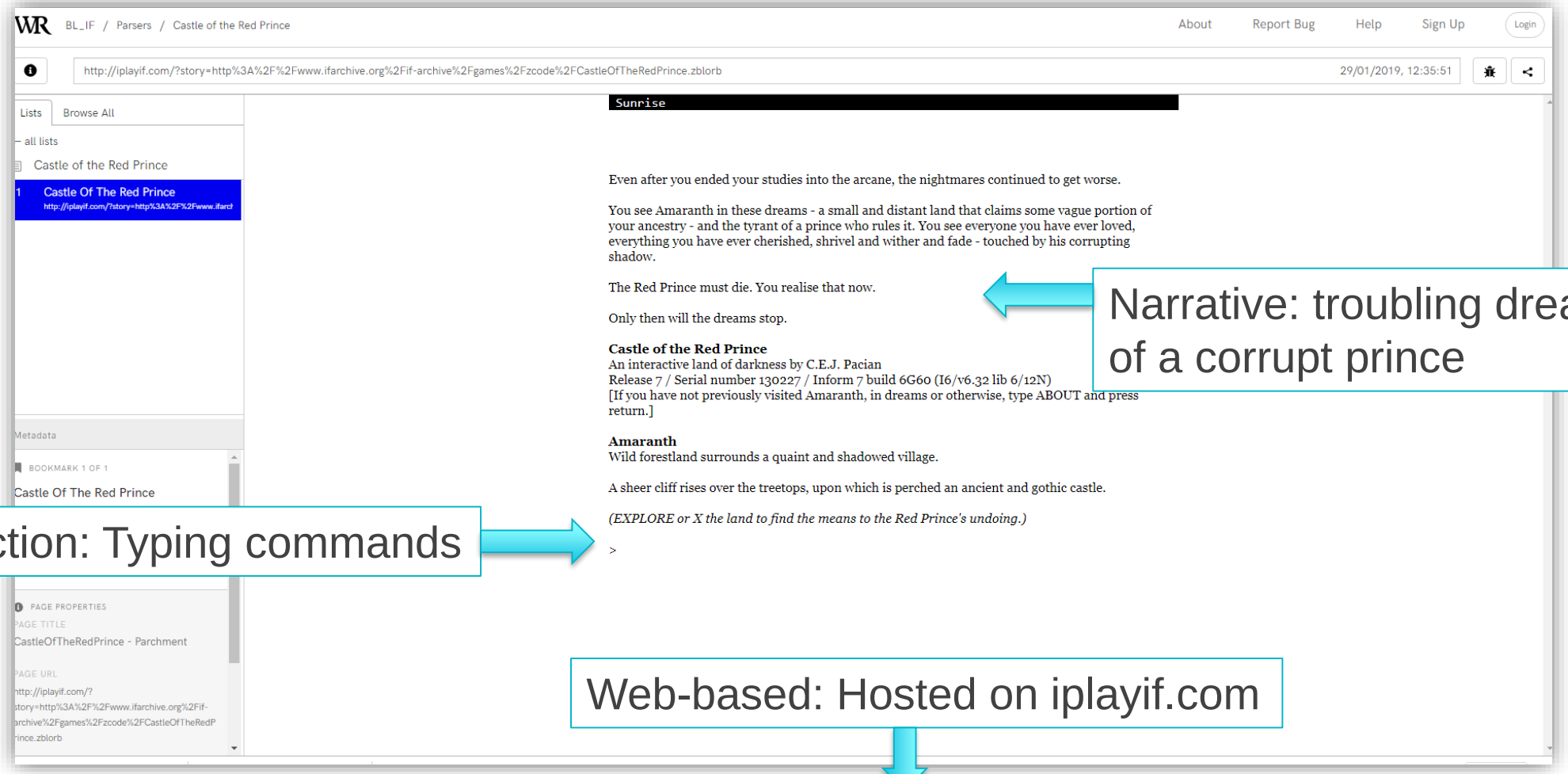
- Hypertext
- Parser-based
- Multi-modal
- Choice-based
- ????

Identify: Hypertext



Adam Hay, *The Cat Demands,* Twine, 2015, https://unusualcadence.itch.io/the-cat-demands

Identify: Parser-Based



Narrative: troubling dreams of a corrupt prince

Interaction: Typing commands

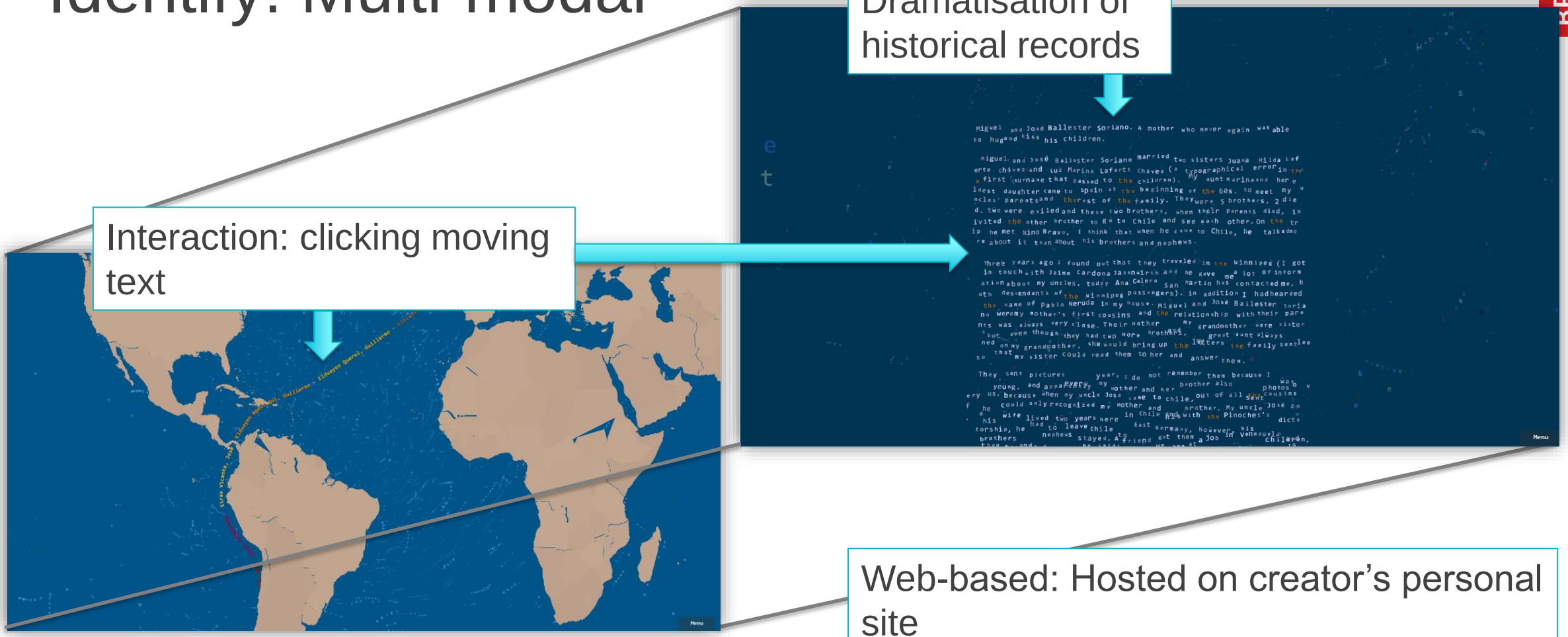
Web-based: Hosted on iplayif.com

C.E.J. Pacian, *Castle of the Red Prince,* Inform 7, 2013, http://iplayif.com/?story=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ifarchive.org%2Fif-archive%2Fgames%2Fzcode%2FCastleOfTheRedPrince.zblorb

Identify: Multi-modal

Narrative: Dramatisation of historical records

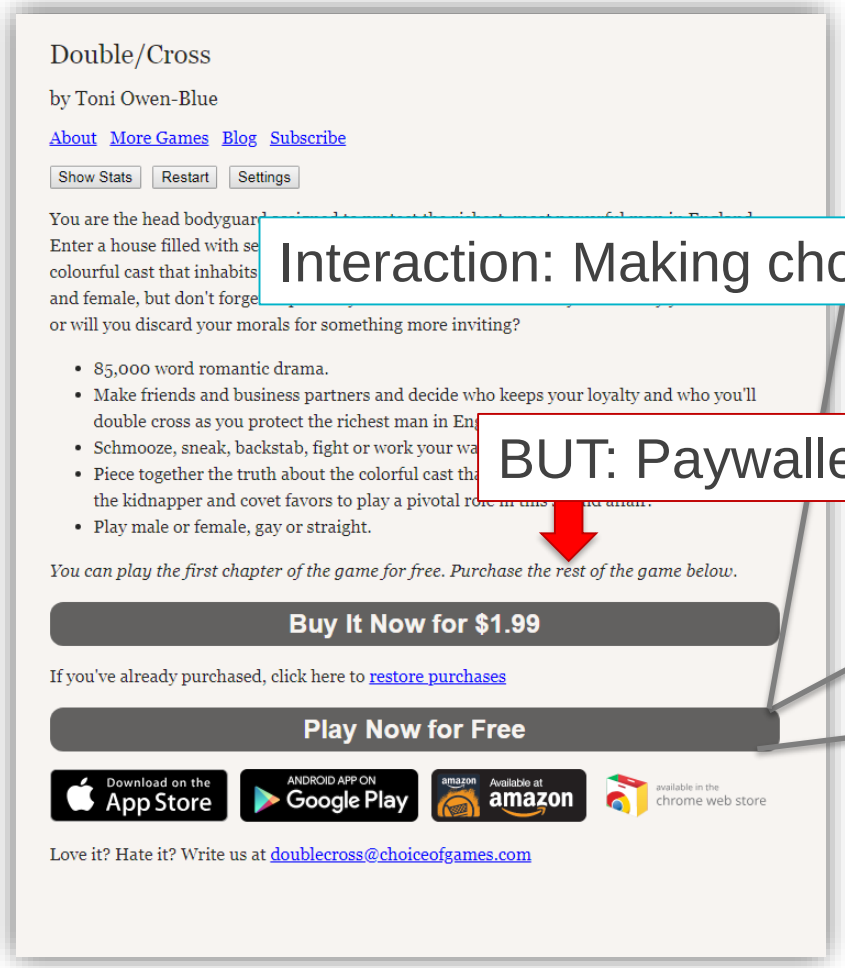
Interaction: clicking moving text



Web-based: Hosted on creator's personal site

Maria Mencia, *The Winnipeg (El barco de la esperanza/The boat of hope)*, Web, 2018, https://winnipeg.mariamencia.com/

Identify: Choice-Based



Interaction: Making choices

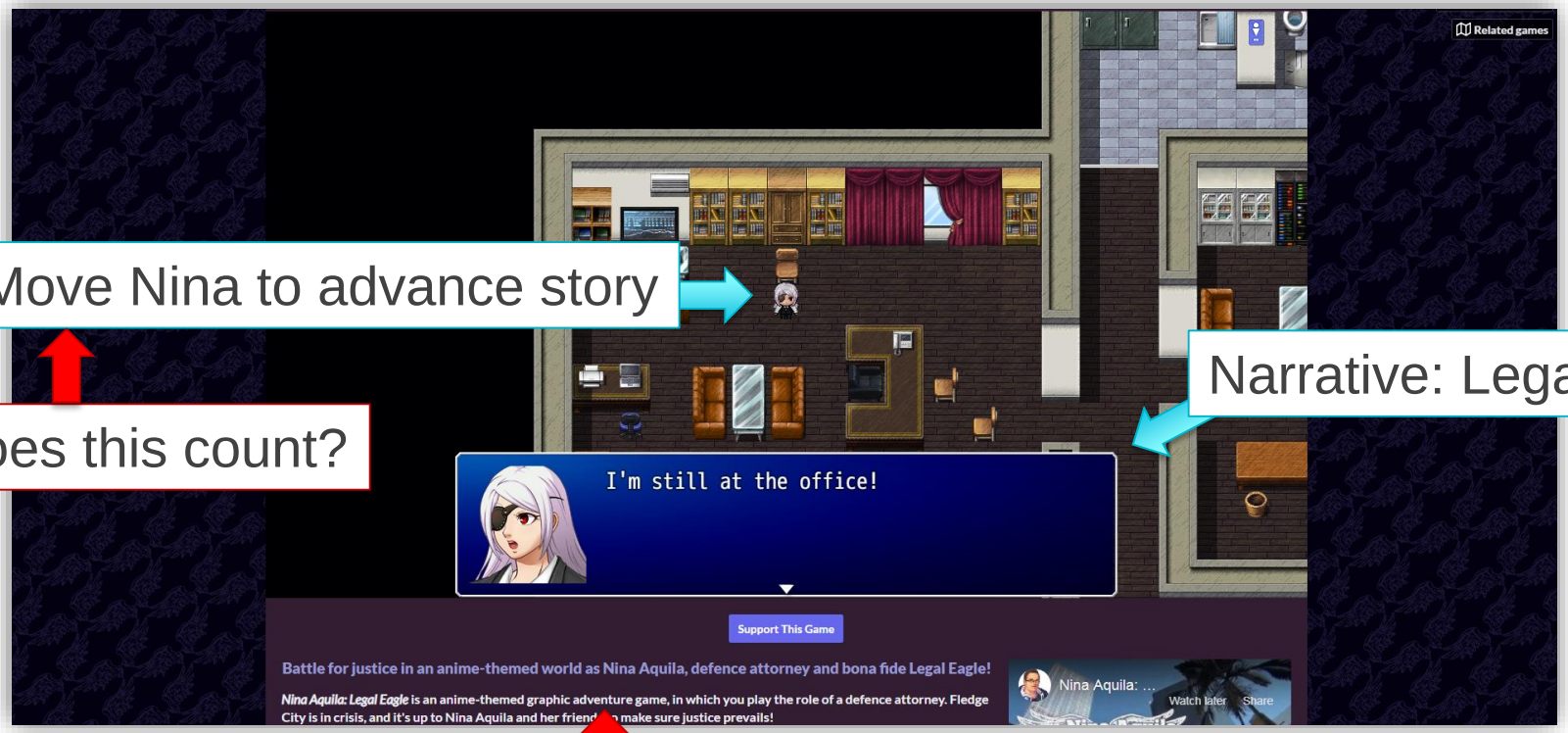
BUT: Paywalled

Narrative: Crime

Web-based: Hosted on Choice of Games

Toni Owen-Blue, *Double/Cross,* ChoiceScript, 2015, https://www.choiceofgames.com/user-contributed/double-cross/#utm_medium=web&utm_source=ourgames

Identify: ???



Interaction: Move Nina to advance story

BUT: Does this count?

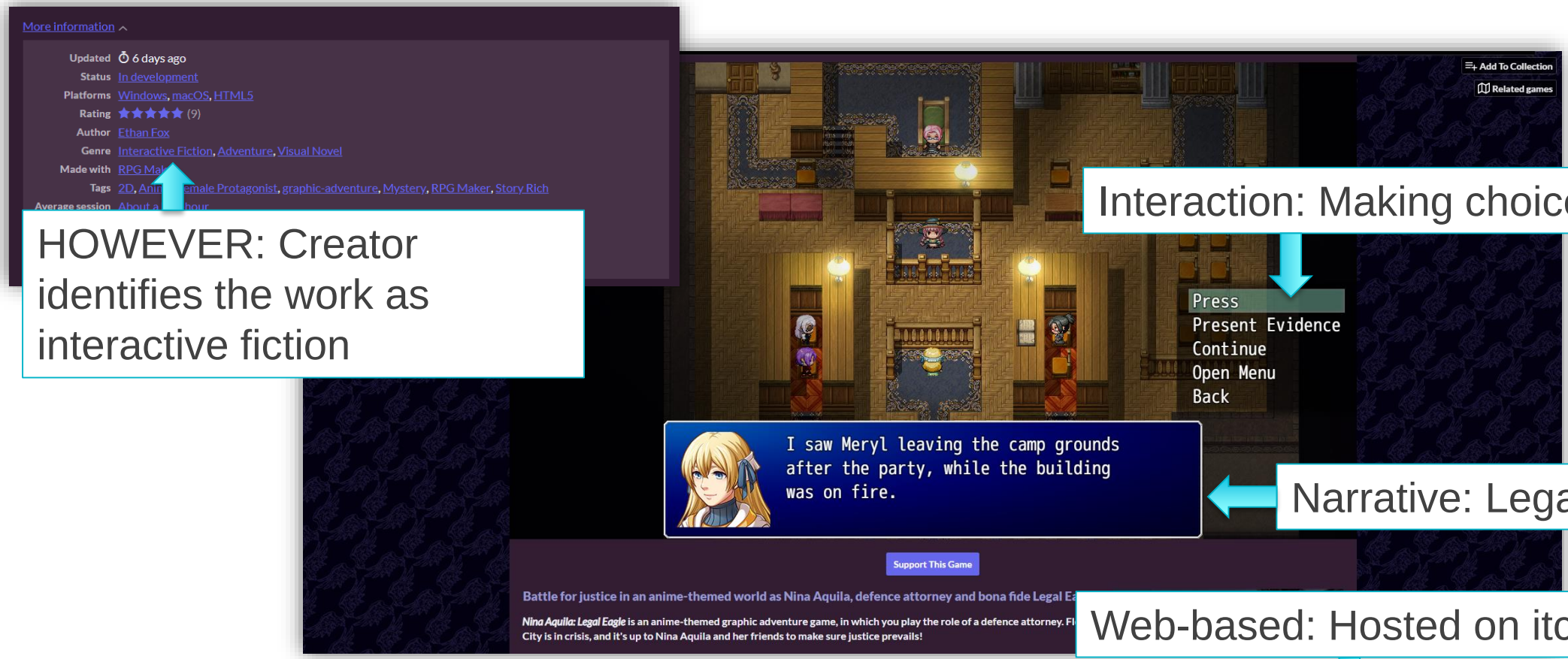
Narrative: Legal Drama

BUT: Is this a game rather than interactive fiction?

Web-based: Hosted on itch.io

Ethan Fox, *Nina Aquila: Legal Eagle,* RPG Maker, 2018, https://ethan-fox.itch.io/nale

Identify: Avatar-Based



HOWEVER: Creator identifies the work as interactive fiction

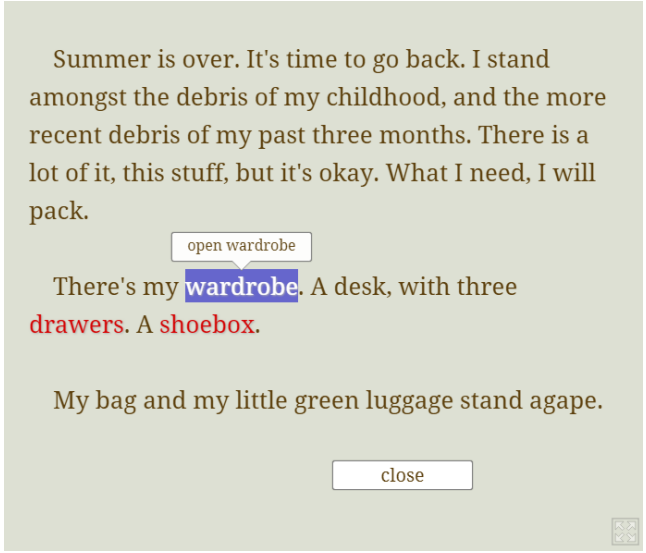
Interaction: Making choices

Narrative: Legal Drama

Web-based: Hosted on itch.io

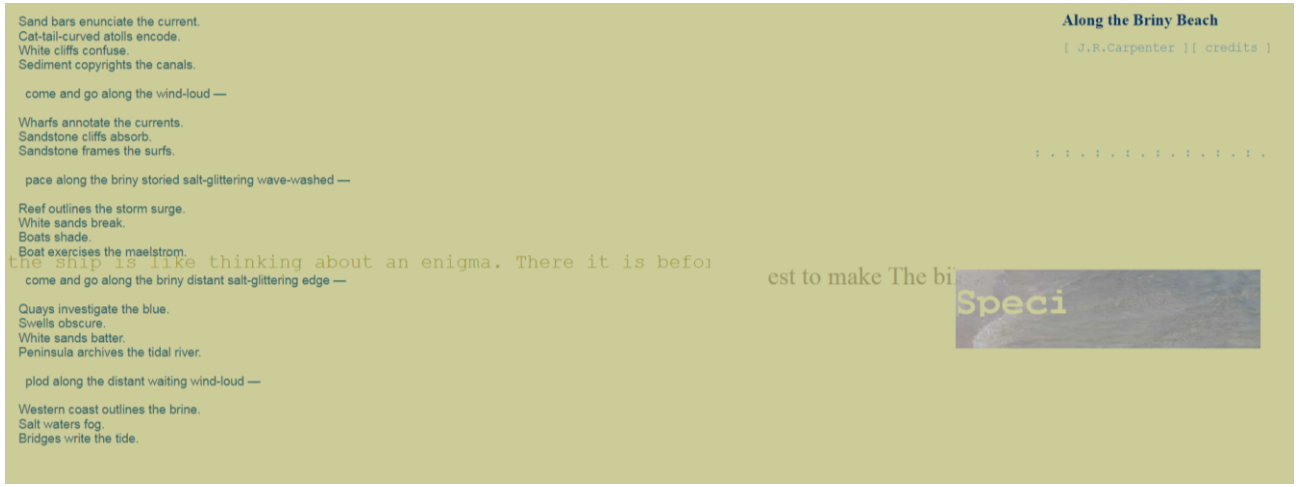
Ethan Fox, *Nina Aquila: Legal Eagle,* RPG Maker, 2018, https://ethan-fox.itch.io/nale

Identify: Anomalies



(Above) Verity Lee, *30 Kilogrammes,* Texture, 2016, https://verityvirtue.itch.io/30-kilogrammes

(Below) J.R. Carpenter, *Along the Briny Beach,* Javascript, 2012, http://luckysoap.com/alongthebrinybeach/



(Above) Emma Pooka, *Bad Influences,* Html, 2013-2014, http://badinfluences.org.uk/

Identification Summary

- Matching criteria ≠ collectable
- Investigative use may be necessary
- Creators are a valuable additional source of information
- Unusual tool usage should be expected with Emerging Formats
- Create new/expand old categories & definitions BUT
- Accept that some still might not fit

Collect

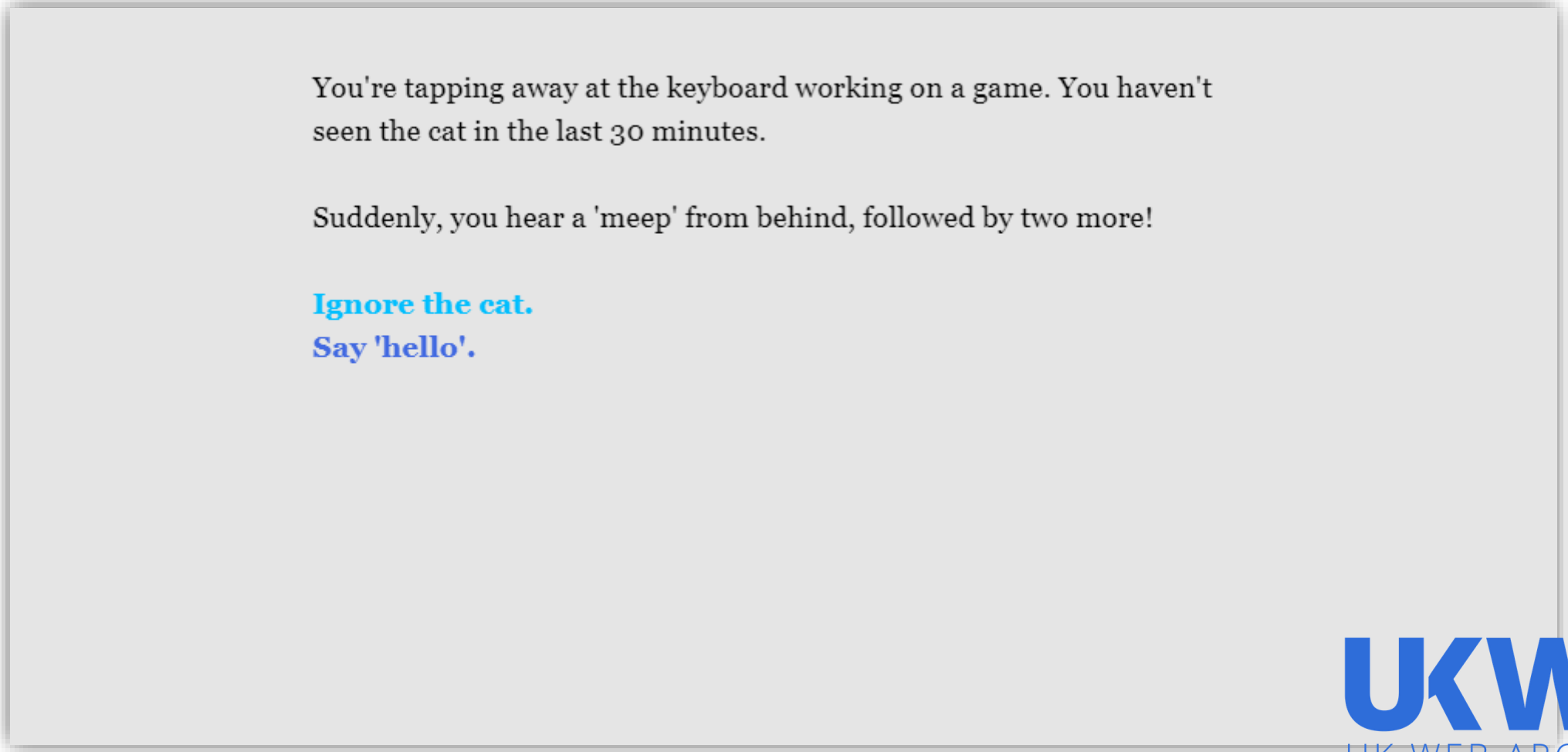
Collection Tools:

UKWA
UK WEB ARCHIVE

(UK WA W3ACT)

Webrecorder
Collect & Revisit the Web

Collect: Hypertexts



Adam Hay, *The Cat Demands,* Twine, 2015, https://unusualcadence.itch.io/the-cat-demands

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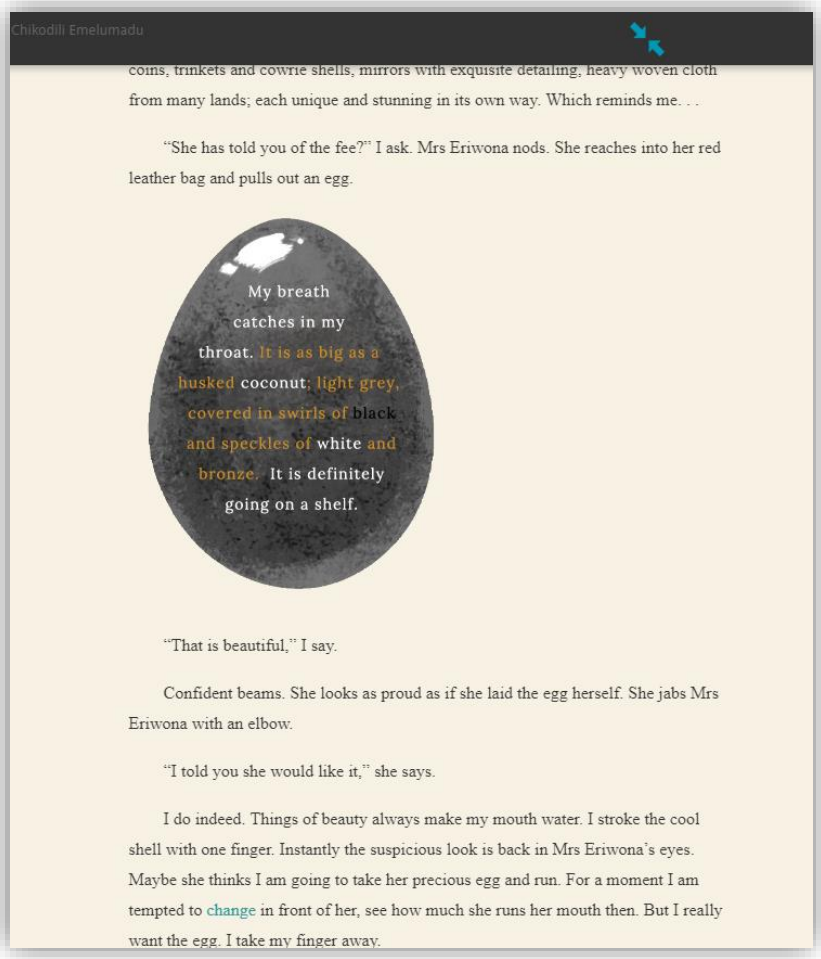
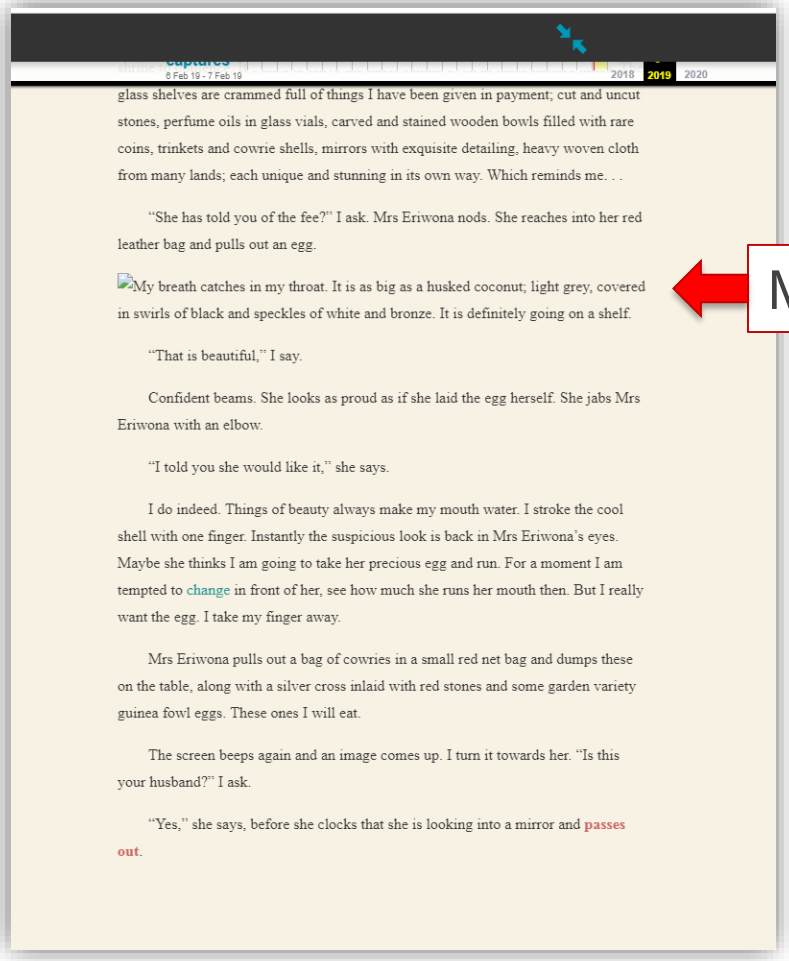




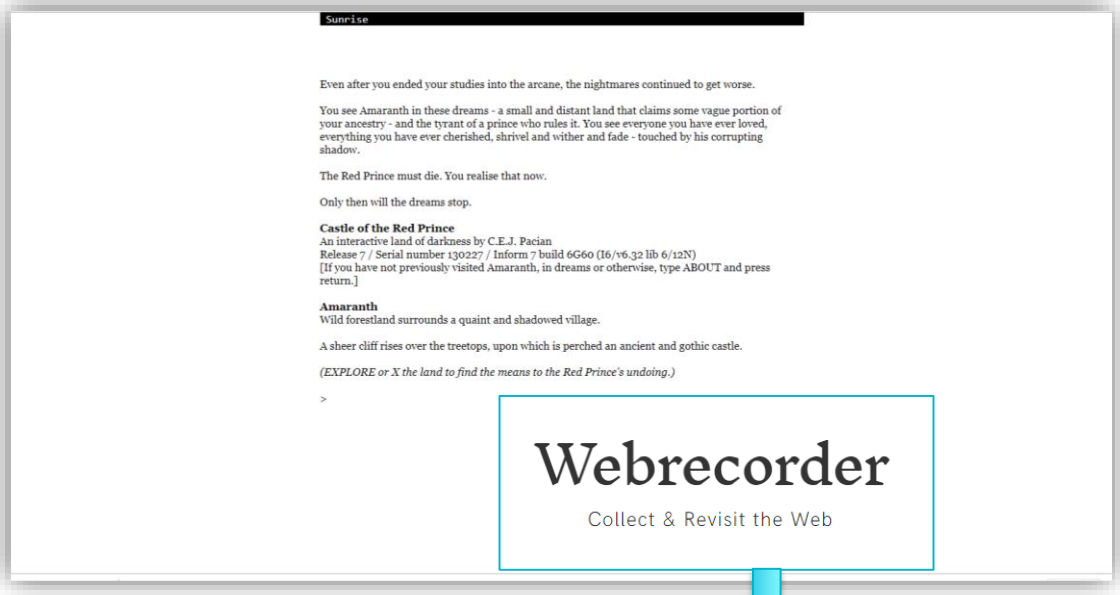
Missing Image

UKWA
UK WEB ARCHIVE

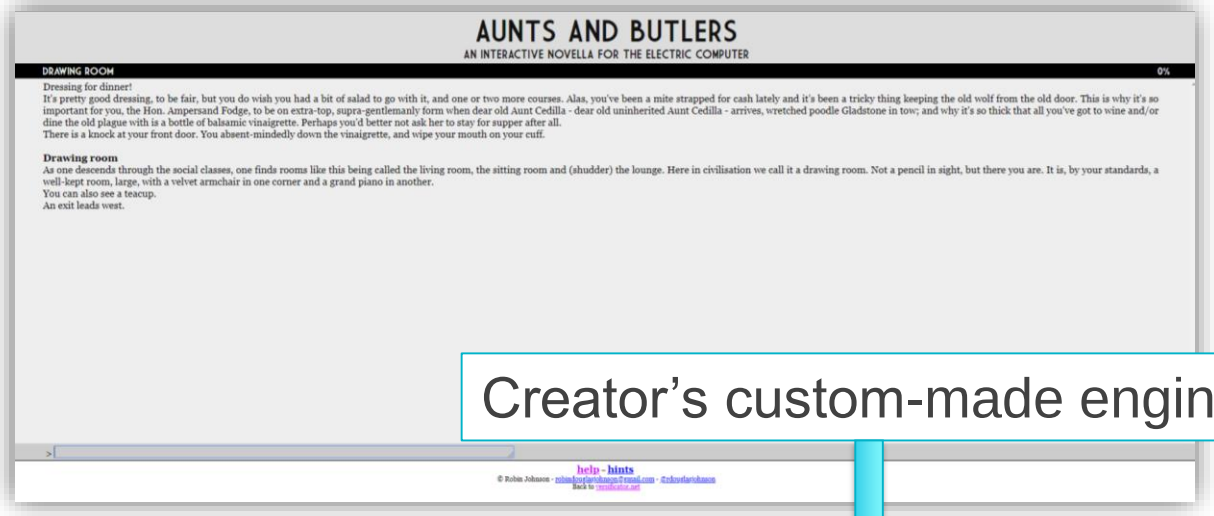
Webrecorder
Collect & Revisit the Web

Chikodili Emelumadu, Onyinye Iwu & Tory Hoke, *The Fixer,* HTML, in *Sub-Q Magazine,* 2015, https://sub-q.com/play-the-fixer/

Collect: Parser-Based



C.E.J. Pacian, *Castle of the Red Prince,* Inform 7, 2013, http://iplayif.com/?story=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ifarchive.org%2Fif-archive%2Fgames%2Fzcode%2FCastleOfTheRedPrince.zblorb

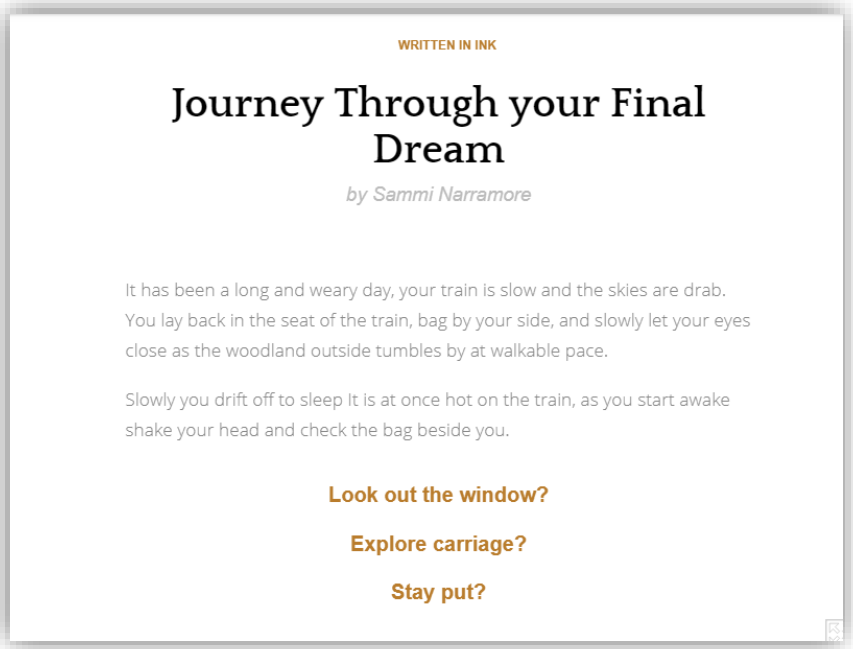


Creator's custom-made engine

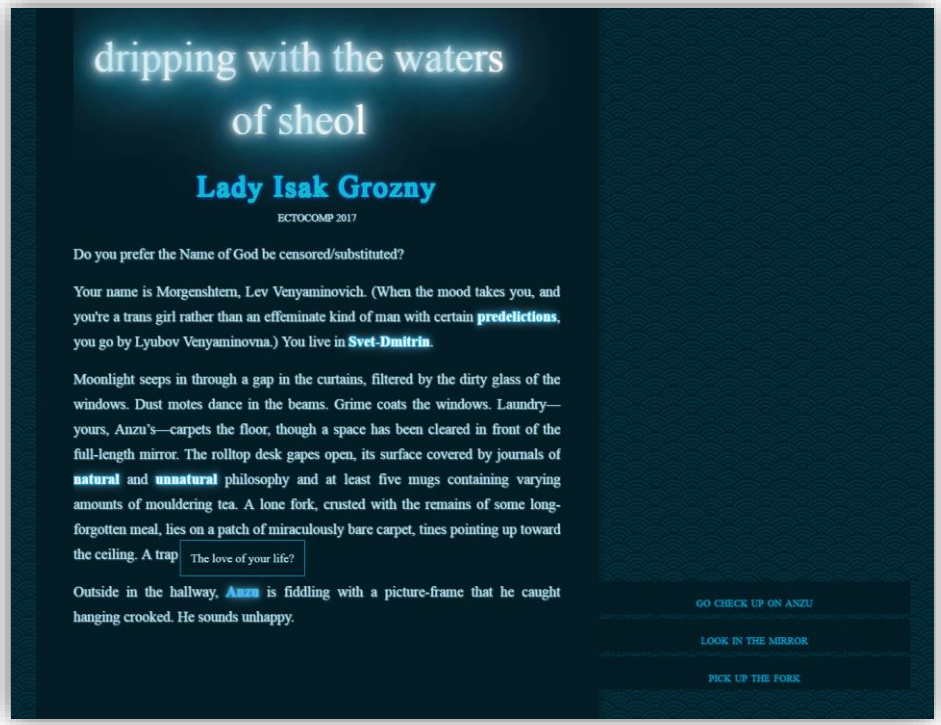
Robin Douglas Johnson, *Aunts and Butlers,* Versificator, 2006, http://versificator.net/aunts-and-butlers/

UKWA
UK WEB ARCHIVE

Collect: Choice-Based



Sammi Narramore, *Journey Through Your Final Dream,* Ink, 2018, https://narramoreart.itch.io/finaldream-inkjam18

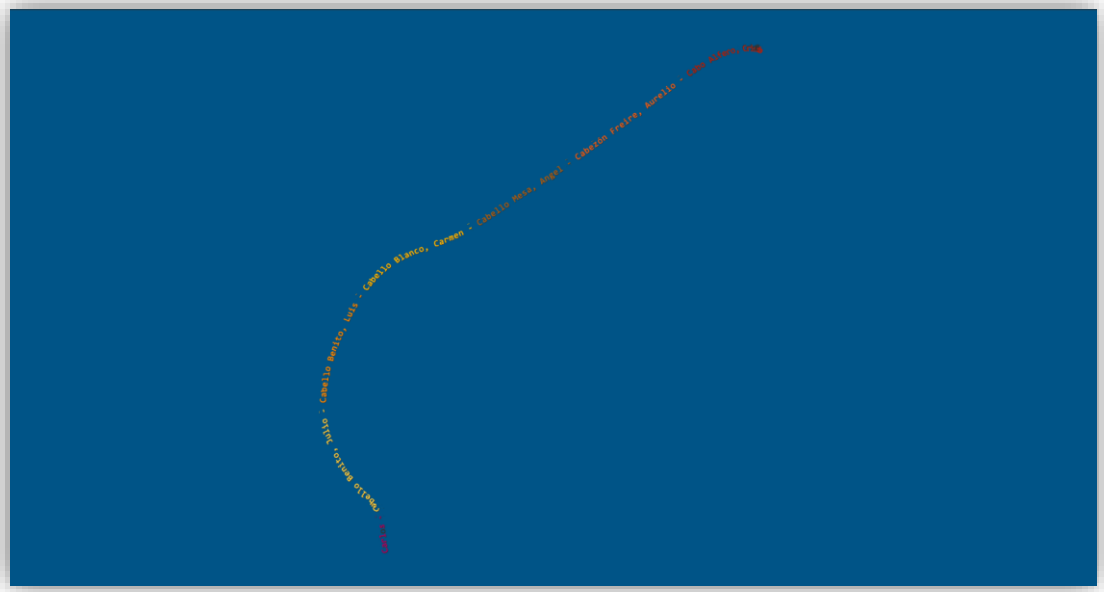


Isak Grozny, *dripping with the waters of sheol,* Ink, 2017, https://ladyisak.itch.io/sheol

UKWA UK WEB ARCHIVE

Webrecorder
Collect & Revisit the Web

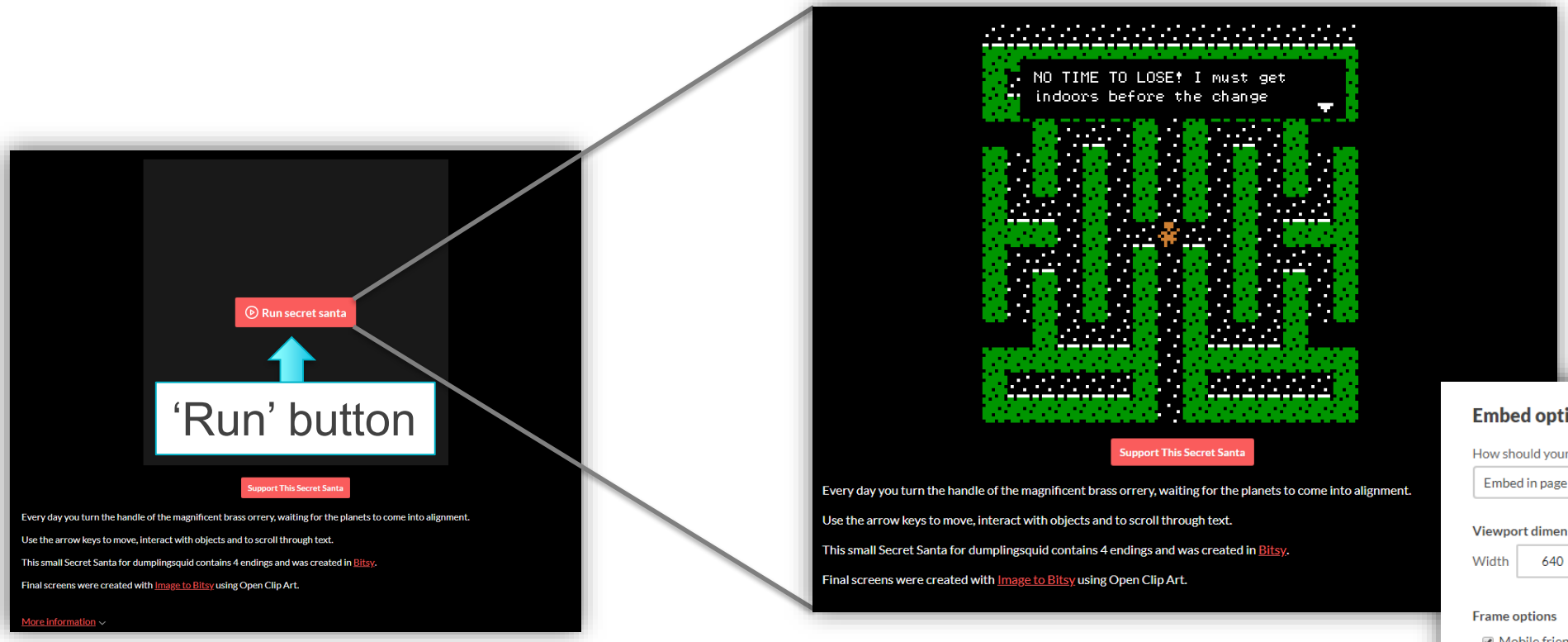
Collect: Multi-modal



UKWA
UK WEB ARCHIVE

Webrecorder
Collect & Revisit the Web

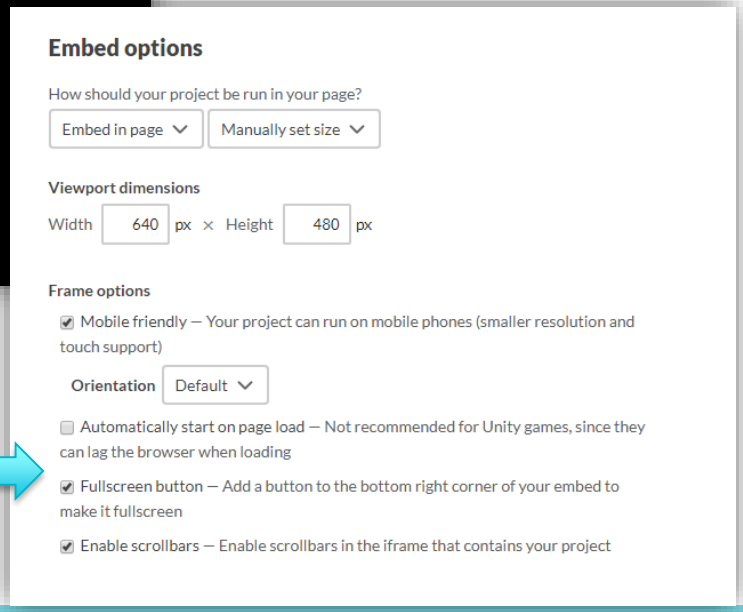
Collect: Avatar-Based



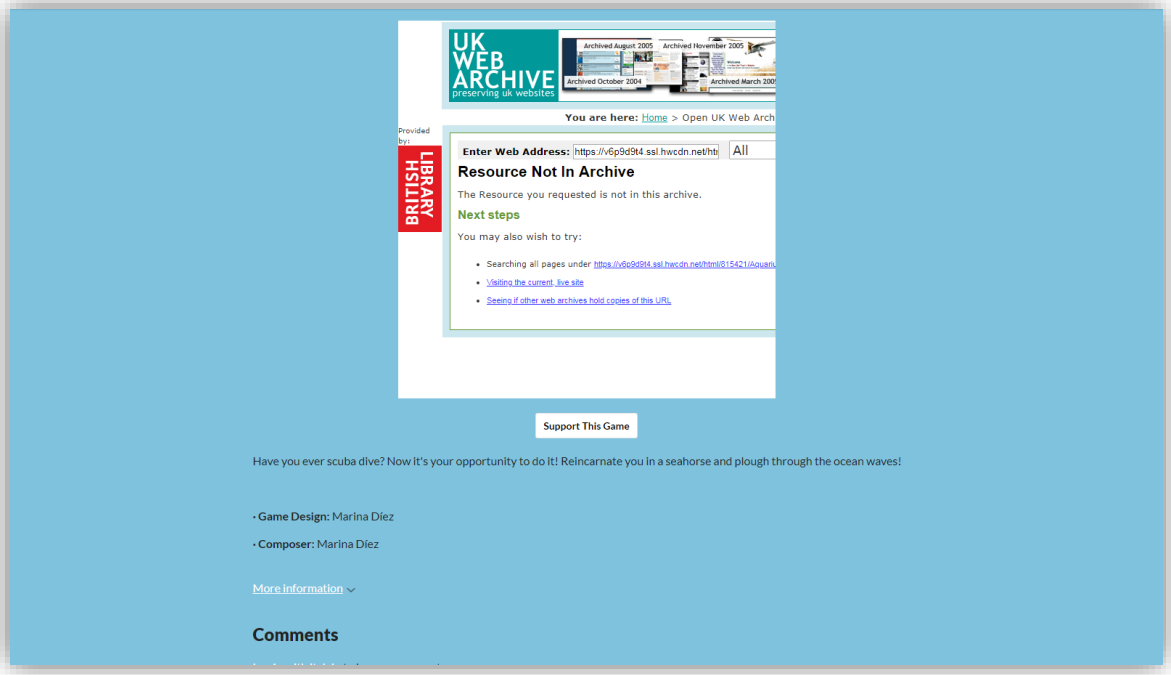
Ash Green, *Changes: A Mysterious Tale*, Bitsy, 2018, https://ashg.itch.io/changes-a-mysterious-tale

UKWA UK WEB ARCHIVE

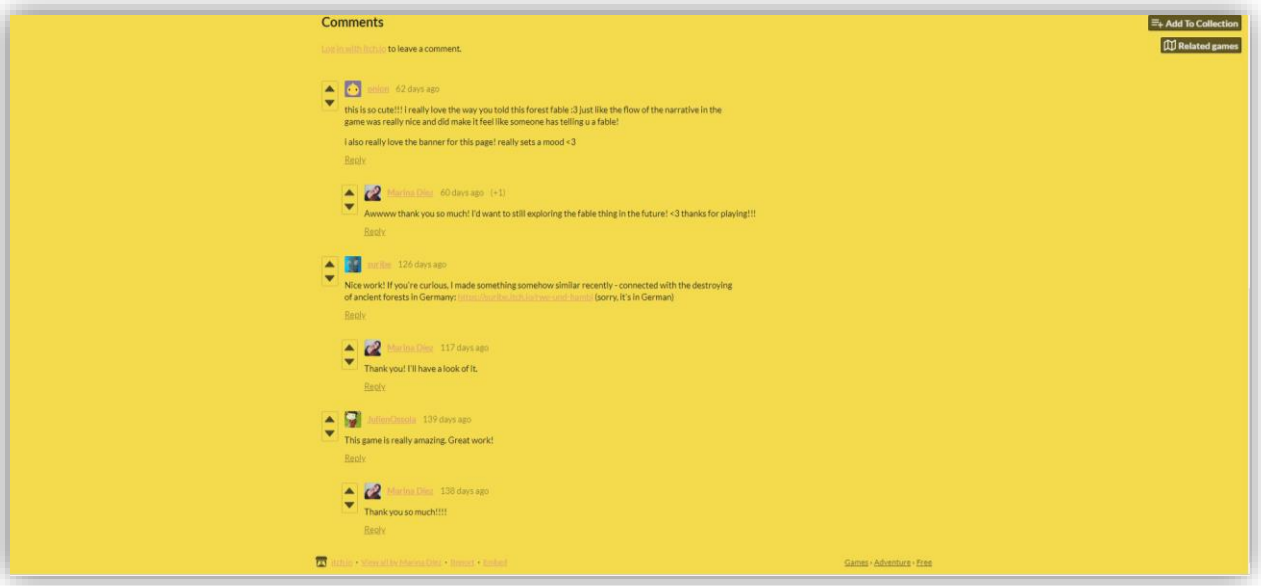
Settings which affect capture



Collect: Contextual Information



Marina Díez, *Aquarium,* Bitsy, 2018, https://ninfa.itch.io/aquarium



Marina Díez, *The Forest: A Fable,* Bitsy, 2018, https://ninfa.itch.io/the-forest-a-fable (comments section)

Collection Summary 1

Creation Tool	Additional Notes on Content	Recommended Capture Tool
Any	Works containing significant video, audio, or visual elements	Webrecorder (any browser)
Any	Work which requires a button press or text entry to start rather than a click	Webrecorder (any browser)
Twine	Most images in Twine works capture successfully with ACT, particularly if image URLs are added. Some may require Webrecorder if javascript or dynamic images are used.	ACT in the first instance, Webrecorder with any browser to eliminate issues with images, Webrecorder with Firefox v49 to eliminate issues with javascript
RPG Maker		ACT
Bitsy	If the work has an opening page which can be started by clicking, ACT will be able to capture successfully, if not, use Webrecorder	Click to start: ACT Arrow keys to start: Webrecorder
Inform 7	While Webrecorder is generally recommended for Inform 7, ACT can work equally well depending on whether it is click to start, or space bar to start, and where and how it has been uploaded.	Webrecorder (any browser)

Creation Tool	Additional Notes on Content	Recommended Capture Tool
Emulated BBC Micro (online)		Webrecorder (any browser)
Adventuron		ACT
Ink/Inklewriter	Basic Ink works capture well with ACT, those which have been heavily customised may require Webrecorder	ACT in the first instance, Webrecorder with any browser to eliminate issues with styling such as dynamic or hover text elements.
Texture		ACT
ChoiceScript	Only compiled works can be captured fully, although any CS works can be captured to some degree with Webrecorder (Firefox v49)	ACT (compiled) Webrecorder (uncompiled – errors likely)
Flash		Webrecorder (Firefox v49)
Quest		Cannot be captured with either tool.
Genarrator		Cannot be captured with either tool.
Construct 2		ACT
Unity		ACT
Javascript Website	Depending on the nature of the dynamic content, it may be best to run the site through ACT to ensure CSS code, images, html index files etc are captured and follow up with Webrecorder to see if more of the 'feel' of the site can be obtained.	ACT & Webrecorder

Collection Summary 2

- Webrecorder:
  - ☺ Great for video, audio etc
  - ☹ Time-consuming, manual
- ACT:
  - ☺ Large scale, easily scheduled, automated captures
  - ☹ Limited success with some formats
- Having creators on hand to experiment saves time
- Forward planning of what to collect & which method to collect with improves efficiency

Thank you for listening!

Dr Lynda Clark
British Library & Nottingham Trent University