"As we move into a situation where poetry is more electric and Net-oriented, and where videogames are maturing into their art possibilities, there will be more exploration of the meeting ground of poetry (and other arts) with games. Because games need to be literate, in some sense, to attain art in which language is handled with depth and precision, and poetry needs to move into the digital and find new ground rather than simply porting print to the digital." —(Andrews 2007, 58)

This book is about literary gaming—a specific form of digital gameplay that happens when we interact with digital artifacts that combine so-called ludic (from Latin *ludus*: game or play) and literary (from Latin *littera*: alphabetic letter, or plural *litterae*: piece of writing) elements. In other words, it looks at a hybrid subgroup of creative media that has both *readerly* and *playerly* characteristics. Or, as you might say in more straightforward terms, this book is about the creative interface between digital books that can be played and digital games that can be read, and it suggests ways of combining both processes for users and analysts.

In a sense, therefore, this book continues where art game designer Jim Andrews's prophecy left off in 2007 (see opening quote). I propose that future experimental creative practices in digital media will give rise to an ever-growing body of hybrid artifacts that blend verbal and other arts with videogame technologies. This fusion is urgently needed to grant creative writing a more contemporary, media-savvy outlook, as well as to expand and advance the artistic and critical significance of games.

Literary as used in this study is not an evaluative term. It does not entail any value judgment about the apparent creative merit or canonical potential of the texts studied. My selection of texts for close analysis is based on functional concerns, that is, how succinctly and reliably they allow me to illustrate the analytical methodology that lies at the core of this book. Hence, when I use the terms *literature* and *literary*, I refer to artifacts of verbal art in the broadest possible sense, where literariness in the sense of linguistic foregrounding is part of the authorial intention and where human language (spoken or written) plays a significant aesthetic role. In other words, this investigation includes only works that can be read in the sense of decoding letters, words, phrases, and other linguistic and semiotic signs and structures. Verbal art in the broadest sense is not bound to any particular genre, medium, platform, or technology—it may be called poetry, fiction, or drama; it may be print-based or digital; and it may require the use of (e-)book technologies, personal computers (PCs), gaming consoles, or mobile devices. What all works of verbal art have in common, however, is an aesthetic concern with structural and thematic elements of their own form, genre, or medium, and the way in which they express this self-reflexive agenda can be described in terms of subversive play.

By the same token, *literary* in the sense of verbal art also always refers to the experience of reading a text that one recognizes or identifies as such. What happens in literary communication (Pettersson 2000, 4) is that fictional events, situation, etc. are represented verbally and "presentationally." This means "the reader is supposed to make himself acquainted with them and to somehow derive pleasure from doing so." Hence, literary communication involves a virtual contract or unspoken agreement between text and reader that presupposes that the latter is willing to engage with the former and all its formal and conceptual implications in order to be entertained in some way, shape, or form.