

DOCUMENTING THE EXPERIENCE
OF EARLY DIGITAL LITERATURE

Pathfinders

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Title Page

**Pathfinders:
Documenting the Experience of Early Digital Literature**

by
Stuart Moulthrop & Dene Grigar

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Pathfinders: Documenting the Experience of Early Digital Literature by Stuart Moulthrop (<http://www.smoulthrop.com>) and (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/rebooting-electronic-literature/index>) (<http://nospace.net/dene>) Dene Grigar (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/rebooting-electronic-literature/index>) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>). Based on a work at (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/rebooting-electronic-literature/index>)<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders> (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders>).

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Dedication

For Anne Balsamo, whose belief in this work made it possible

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Introduction to Pathfinders



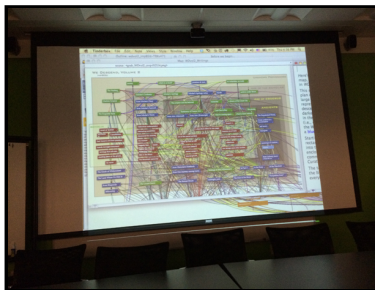
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A video introduction to the Pathfinders Project

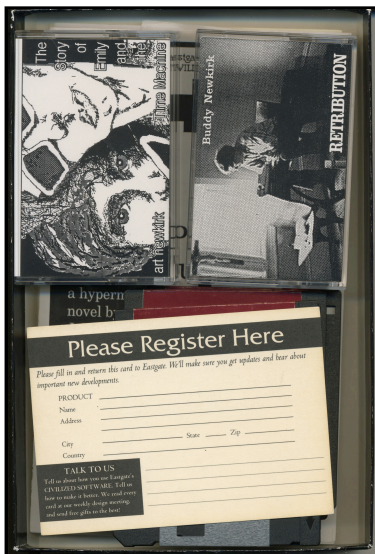
Pathfinders begins the necessary process of documenting early digital literature, specifically pre-web hypertext fiction and poetry, from 1986-1995. These literary works were produced with programming languages like BASIC or authoring systems like Storyspace and HyperCard and require a degree of interactivity between the reader and the work. They were also among the first computer-based works of literature to be sold commercially in the U.S. and, because of their availability through commercial distribution, were influential in shaping literary theory and criticism that, today, are used to discuss born digital writing. They are also literary works in danger of becoming inaccessible to the public because they were produced on and for computer platforms that today are obsolete.

From among the many hypertexts and other digital projects we could have selected to document, we decided on four:

1. Judy Malloy's *Uncle Roger* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy>), programmed in BASIC as a serial novel and published on the net from 1986-1987; sold from 1987-1988 in various versions on 5 ¼ floppy disks through *Art Com Catalog*; published in 1995 on the web
2. John McDaid's *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid>), a hypermedia novel created in Hypercard 2.0 and published in 1993 by Eastgate System, Inc. as a box containing artifacts from the literary estate of the titular Uncle Buddy
3. Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson>), produced on Eastgate's Storyspace platform and published by the company in 1995; regarded by critics as an important work of hypertext and cyberfeminism
4. Bill Bly's *We Descend* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly>), a complex hypertext novel--also created on Eastgate's Storyspace platform for both floppy disks and CDs--that experiments with the layering of time and published by the company in 1997



Bill Bly's "We Descend" in Tinderbox



The contents of the artist box of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

We chose these four

because they are long-form works that represent a specific individual contribution unique to the field as well as reflect a wide range of experimentation taking place during this period. For example, Malloy's *Uncle Roger*, the first commercial work of electronic literature to be sold in the United States, was first published in 1986

as a serial novel delivered to an online audience on the *Whole Earth 'Lectric Link (WELL)*. Later iterations expressed on floppy disks and the web speak to its enduring popularity and give rise to its status as a classic work of the period. John McDaid's *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* was produced with HyperCard, a software application available on Apple computers for creating hypermedia. Like Malloy's *Uncle Roger*, *Funhouse* is a novel, but one that includes sound and printed elements as part of its storytelling strategy. Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, produced with Storyspace--a hypertext authoring system created and sold by Eastgate Systems, Inc. ideal for long-form, complex writing--is viewed by many as the high point of hypertext literature in the pre-web period of the early digital age. Its recent re-release on flash drive, 20 years after its first publication, demonstrates its on-going status as an important work of contemporary fiction. Finally, Bill Bly's hypertext



Apple IIe Monitor showing Malloy's "Bad Information"

novel *We Descend*, also created with Storyspace, takes advantage of the affordances of this tool to experiment successfully with the multi-temporal narrative and intricate narrative structure (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/we-descend-tinderbox.jpg>).

Our method of documentation is unique in that we videotaped each artist and two additional readers interacting with a work on its original computer platform—a methodology we call “traversal.” When watching the traversal for *Uncle Roger*, for example, scholars can hear the crackle of the Apple IIe as it boots up and see the words “Bad Information (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bad-information.jpg>)” appear a few seconds later on the screen. Neither of these two elements is part of the story, but they are important cultural and artistic features lost in the migration to the web version that came later. Traversal recordings also capture the musings of authors about intentions, circumstances of writing, and on some occasions, effects that no longer work as intended.

We see our work with documentation as a form of digital preservation, one that builds on the method of “collection,” as opposed to the other two more common methods, “migration” and “emulation,” by providing scholars wanting to experience the work in its original format access to video documentation of the works in performance on a computer with which the work would have been originally experienced.

Besides videos of traversals, *Pathfinders* also includes videos of interviews with the artists and readers of the four main works; photos of physical artifacts such as floppies, folio covers or boxes containing floppies and other media; sound files from traversals and interviews; and commentary about the works and media. For example, John McDaid’s *Funhouse* consisted of five floppy disks packaged in a black box. Nowhere is it documented that the box (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-box-open-front.jpg>) also contains two music cassettes, a paper copy of a short story marked up by an editor, and a letter from the editor. All of these additional materials also make up the *Funhouse* and, so, are crucial to one’s understanding of the work. *Pathfinders* provides a video of McDaid opening the box and discussing each item found inside; certainly, an experience that scholars will see as helpful for understanding the breadth of McDaid’s vision. In total, *Pathfinders* features 173 screens of content, including 53,857 words, 104 video clips, 204 color photos, and three audio files.

In developing the project, we have striven to provide information helpful to scholars. Publication dates, versions, production methods have been vetted by publishers and artists when possible. Thus, we hope to clear up discrepancies relating to this information as well as offer information previously unknown about these works. Judy Malloy’s *Uncle Roger* serves as a case in point. While many scholars know that she published “A Party in Woodside” in 1987, they may not be aware that she updated and republished it in 1988. Nor it is well-known that the Modern Museum of Art holds a copy of the 1987 version of *Uncle Roger*, numbered “no. 10.” (<http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b550258~S8>), a fact highlights the work’s status as a recognized work of art.



NEH logo

With the traversal videos and ensuing author interviews, we attempted a first cut at an oral history of early

electronic literature. This effort yielded several notable insights, such as Judy Malloy's description of online interactions with her audience during the composition of *Uncle Roger*, Shelley Jackson's acknowledgment that the origins of *Patchwork Girl* owe something to Avital Ronell as well as George Landow, John McDaid's description of *Funhouse* as an attempt to "write a novel no 20th-century novelist could write," and Bill Bly's revelation that his work on *We Descend* has continued beyond Storyspace into the Web and other environments.

This open-source, multimedia book, is funded by The National Endowment for the Humanities (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/NEH.jpeg>) through a Start Up grant from the Office of Digital Humanities. The NEH support made it possible to work directly with the artists, develop the materials for this book, and create this book for open-source access. Without the assistance from the NEH, *Pathfinders* would not have been possible.

Many other individuals and organizations provided support for our research.

From the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver: Madeleine Brookman served as Grigar's research assistant and was funded through fellowships and grants provided by Washington State University. She was responsible for final edits for and the management of all of the videos found in the book, the production of the *Pathfinders* trailer, and uploading, tagging and describing media for the book. We acknowledge the videography of Aaron Wintersong and early organization by Amalia Vacca, who served as Grigar's first research assistant and who helped to organize the traversals and interviews. Greg Philbrook provided tech support for most traversals and interviews. Will Luers, faculty member in the CMDC leading its digital publishing initiative, is responsible for the design and styling of this book.

From the English Department at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: Brian Keilen and Rachael Sullivan, both doctoral students, worked with Moulthrop to catalog the raw video and audio files, construct first cuts of the traversal videos, and assemble static graphics. The Digital Humanities Laboratory in the Golda Meir Memorial Library at UWM provided work space and equipment for this effort.

We thank the Electronic Literature Organization (<http://eliterature.org>) for its leadership in developing methods for evaluating quality of "digital" creative and critical works and its insights into cataloging its growing body of "digital" fiction, poetry, and other literary forms—activities from which this research grows. We owe special thanks to Dean Anne Balsamo of the New School of Public Engagement, who brought together the two incipient strains of this project, and to Noah Wardrip-Fruin of the University of California Santa Cruz, whose 2012 Media Systems Workshop set the scene for that crucial conversation. We appreciate the support of Tara McPherson, Erik Loyer, and others at the University of Southern California's Alliance for Networking Visual Culture for the development of the Scalar platform on which the book is built. We thank Matthew Kirschenbaum and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities at the University of Maryland College Park for sharing *The Bly Collection* with us for our project. We particularly recognize Grigar's Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver, which provided access to her collection of computers and works, without which the project would not have been possible. We thank Mark Bernstein of Eastgate for taking the time to answer questions about publication dates and packaging, as well as giving us access to images needed for the book. We also thank the Modern Language Association (<http://mla.org>) for allowing us to exhibit

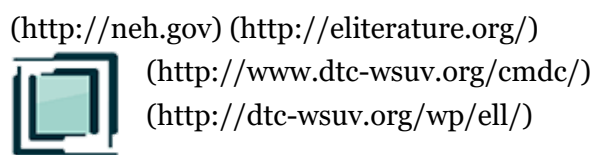
our *Pathfinders* research at the 2014 conference in Chicago. Finally, we thank the four artists who provided their time and insights into their work. They all shared so much of their knowledge, history, insights, and time to this project. Literary history is better for it.

The development of this project is documented at the Pathfinders (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/wp/pathfinders>) blog managed by Grigar. Also of note is the *Pathfinders* YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzeZQ05p_1TliolDBeWMxOA) where rough cuts of videos were made available, early on, for scholars to use for their research and the curated Vimeo channel (<https://vimeo.com/channels/elitpathfinders>) where all videos are now hosted.

The exhibit, mentioned previously, that showcased these authors and their works as well as contemporary expressions of experimental writing at the Modern Language Association's 2014 convention, is archived at *Pathfinders: 25 Years of Experimental Literary Art* (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/wp/pathfinders/exhibit/>). The exhibition ran from 9-11 January and was curated by Grigar and Moulthrop. Literary scholars were able to preview the videos and photos developed for the project and access some of works on Grigar's vintage computers, though it should be noted that three of the computers shipped to Chicago were destroyed en route to the exhibit. Though we mourn their loss, it represents exactly the calamity our work of preservation is meant to address.

Finally, we are already thinking ahead to an independent book project, *Traversals*, that further explores the uses of preservation for digital writing, and to the next version of *Pathfinders* that will include Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, an afterword by Joseph Tabbi, and possibly transcriptions of the traversal videos for each artist. In a word, we see this project as one that will continue, adding artists and their works and capturing important information that needs to be documented for posterity.

Funders and Collaborators



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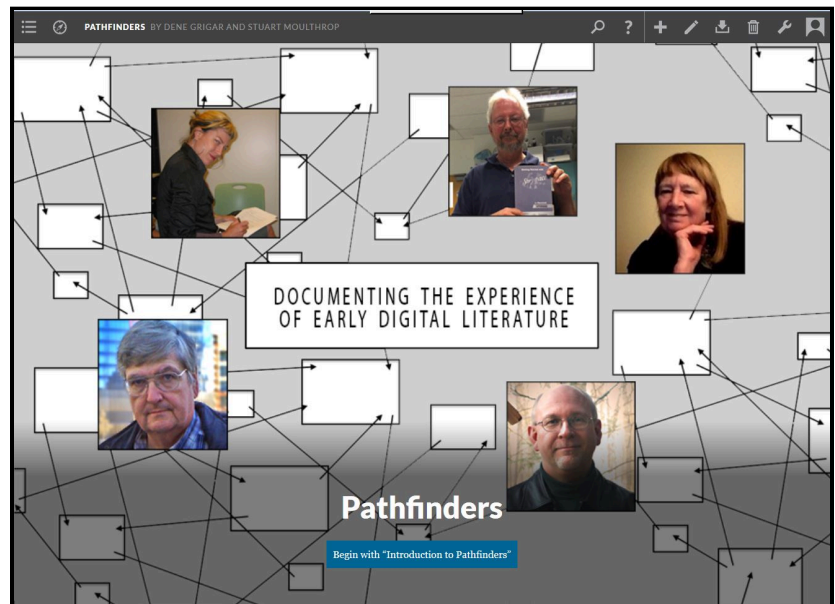
About Pathfinders

[A portion of this essay by Moulthrop and Grigar has been developed into an article entitled, "Traversals: A Method of Preservation for Born-Digital Texts" to be published in *The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities*, edited by Jentery Sayers.]

Pathfinders can be interrogated from two perspectives: as a material object and as an idea.

As a material object (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/pathfinders%20on%20iPad.JPG>), *Pathfinders* raises challenging questions of nomenclature: What do you call a publication that contains a central idea comprised of many discrete

sections of information contributing to that central idea? What if that publication entails the use of words, images, sound, and videos for expressing the ideas? What if it is produced on the web but exported for one's own personal computing device? Certainly, we cannot call such a material object a book—at least, not in the traditional sense of the word because, well, it's not a printed, self-contained artifact one would archive on a bookshelf. In fact, the tablet on which it resides may contain other items, like a digital level or a calculator, that have absolutely nothing to do with bookish activities. It's also not an eBook because the content is dynamic, alive with movement and sound. It doesn't feel like a traditional website (though certainly its production took place on the web and the work now reside there) because it is laid out in a way that evokes the features of books (e.g. chapters, sections).



Screenshot of the Pathfinders multimedia book home page

The best way to think about the artifact that is *Pathfinders*, in its current iteration, is as a hybrid publication: a web-book—a new form of knowledge environment that experiments with web-based multimedia for providing criticism and scholarly content to a wide audience interested in experimental writing and literature of the late 20th century. But for simplicity sake and the fact that there is really no elegant name for what we have produced, we refer to it as our open-source, multimedia *book*.

As an idea, *Pathfinders* raises questions of purpose: What does one call an initiative to keep a work alive by documenting its existence, dynamism, and experience? While *Pathfinders* is intended as a kind of digital preservation project, is it actually preserving work when it does not migrate or emulate, for example, one single node or path of Bill Bly's novel *We Descend*? Even as *Pathfinders* features



Judy Malloy giving her Traversal of "Uncle Roger"



Bly's performance of the work, one collected along with vintage computers needed to read it, does *Pathfinders* even constitute preservation by collection? The answer is, on the one hand, *not exactly*. At its core, *Pathfinders'* purpose is to make it possible for scholars and the reading public to experience a work of digital literature as close to its original cultural context as possible by showing videos of people—the artist,

readers—experiencing works in original formats and on original computers used for

their production and/or presentation. A vicarious pleasure, indeed, but libraries and other venues that house early digital literature but can't or do not want to collect computers for showing it are able to supplement the experience of merely holding, for example, Judy Malloy's hand-made box of *Uncle Roger* in one's hands and wondering what the work is like with a video of Malloy (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-uncle-roger.jpg>) performing it—on the computer it was intended for at the time she produced it. In this way, those studying the work can see and hear the way it functioned in 1987 on the Apple IIe, thereby able to tease out unique characteristics lost in the migrated web version or the DOSBox emulator. So, the answer is, on the other hand, *in a way*. The works and vintage computers make up a collection at Grigar's Electronic Literature Lab (ELL) (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/ELL.jpg>) where two of the four traversals and interviews were conducted. People can, indeed, travel to Vancouver, WA, visit ELL, and experience the collection. But for those who cannot, *Pathfinders* may be a helpful alternative because it does document the collection as a way of disseminating information about the work and, thereby, preserving the cultural and historical context about and providing access to early digital literature in danger of becoming obsolete and forgotten. As we have said elsewhere, we wish we had a video of Sappho performing one of the many poems she is credited for writing but are, today, lost to us. So much richer would our culture be for it.

Documenting four works of early digital literature has been a huge undertaking. Videos taken during traversals, interviews, and public readings and already edited for flow and continuity were reedited into 102 smaller clips. Photos—hundreds of them of the artists and readers—were optimized for the Scalar environment. Images of folios, CDs, and flash drive were created by scanning or photographing them. Sound files were derived from video footage and, so, reedited to make sense as aural content. Someone had to keep tabs of equipment, media, and computers. Someone had to design *Pathfinders* so that it is compelling and engages readers. These are tasks beyond conceptualizing the project, conducting the scholarship comprising its contents, and *authoring* it. However, the *Pathfinders* book production team was not a large one—counting Moulthrop and Grigar, only five people. Madeleine Brookman (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/madeleine%20and%20ell.jpg>), a student in the Creative Media & Digital Culture program and a video specialist, handled all of the video editing, did a large part of the scanning and photography work, and assisted with uploading



Madeleine Brookman and others preparing the Electronic Literature Lab for visitors at WSUV's 25th Anniversary Celebration

and documenting the media content for the Scalar environment. She also prepared the *Pathfinders* trailer that introduces the project and has served as media librarian during much of the project. Will Luers, faculty in the program, was our designer and the consultant for the Scalar platform. Greg Philbrook, the program's tech guru, made sure everything in the lab worked, and when something did not, he moved fast to fix it.

There is much to be said about the future of the book and what constitutes reading in rich media environments, like *Pathfinders*, especially in light of what we have witnessed in the evolution of digital platforms in the last 25 years. Floppies, CDs, flash drives and cloud technology



Size comparison of a flash drive and a 3.5-inch floppy disk. The flash drive can hold about 11,380 times more data, from Creative Commons

(https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/Flash_Drive_v._Floppy.jpg) all speak to great innovations in digital technologies taking place in a very short period of history. Works like Sarah Smith's *King of Space* cannot be read on today's Macs because it's published on a 3 1/2" floppy disk. We are concerned about a great many works like Smith's disappearing from our collective knowledge. Therefore, documenting four of the many that need to be preserved is the first step in a grand gesture. The irony of producing our research (about works in danger of obsolescence due to evolving digital technologies) in digital format should not be lost on anyone. However, we have observed through our 60 years of combined experience with electronic media that the two most stable formats, heretofore, remain the web and video. For that reason, we have opted to trust them enough in order to begin this project. No longer can we afford the luxury of waiting to preserve this precious treasure that is early digital literature. We hope to inspire others to do the same.

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Schedule of Traversals, Interviews, and Public Lectures



Stuart Moulthrop giving his traversal of "Victory Garden"

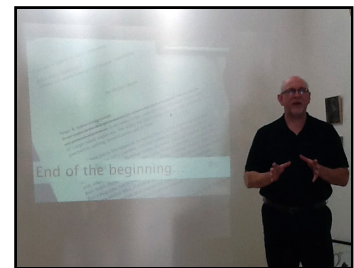
Pathfinders' traversals and interviews took place from summer 2013 to winter 2014. We began with *Victory Garden* because it necessary to fine tune our methodology on a member of the team before applying it to the other works. After Moulthrop, we moved confidently on to John McDaid's *Funhouse*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, and Judy Malloy's *Uncle Roger*, in that order. At the invitation of Matthew Kirschenbaum at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, which houses *The Bly*

Collection, we included Bill Bly's *We Descend*. Thus, Bly's traversals and interviews constitute the last of this phase of project.

Here is the list of Traversals, Interviews, and Public Lectures associated with the project.

Stuart Moulthrop

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/moulthrop-lecture.jpg>) , *Victory Garden*, July 8-11, 2013, Electronic Literature Lab (ELL), Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV). Public Lecture: Tuesday, July 9; 7-8:00 p.m., Nospace Gallery.



Stuart Moulthrop giving his public lecture at North Bank Artists Gallery

John McDaid

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-lecture.jpg>) , *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, August 7-10, 2013, Electronic Literature Lab (ELL), Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV). Public Lecture: Thursday, August 8; 7-8:00 p.m., Vancouver Community Library.



John McDaid giving his lecture at the Vancouver Community Library in Vancouver, WA

Judy Malloy

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-uncle-roger.jpg>) , *Uncle Roger*, September 6-8, 2013, Faculty Office, Princeton University.



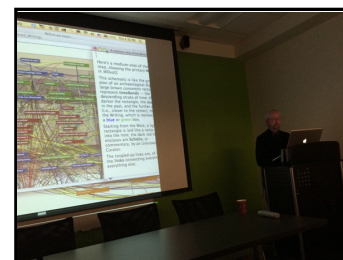
Judy Malloy giving her Traversal of "Uncle Roger"

Shelley Jackson
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/jackson-lecture.jpg>), Patchwork Girl, October 17-20, 2013, Electronic Literature Lab (ELL), Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV). Public Lecture: Friday, October 18; 7-8:00 p.m., Angst Gallery.



Shelley Jackson giving her public lecture at Angst Gallery

Bill Bly (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bill%20reading%202.JPG>), *We Descend*, January 30-February 2, 2014, Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), Hornbake Library, University of Maryland (UMD). Reading: Thursday, January 30; 4-5 p.m.



Bill Bly giving a reading of "We Descend" at MITH at the University of Maryland


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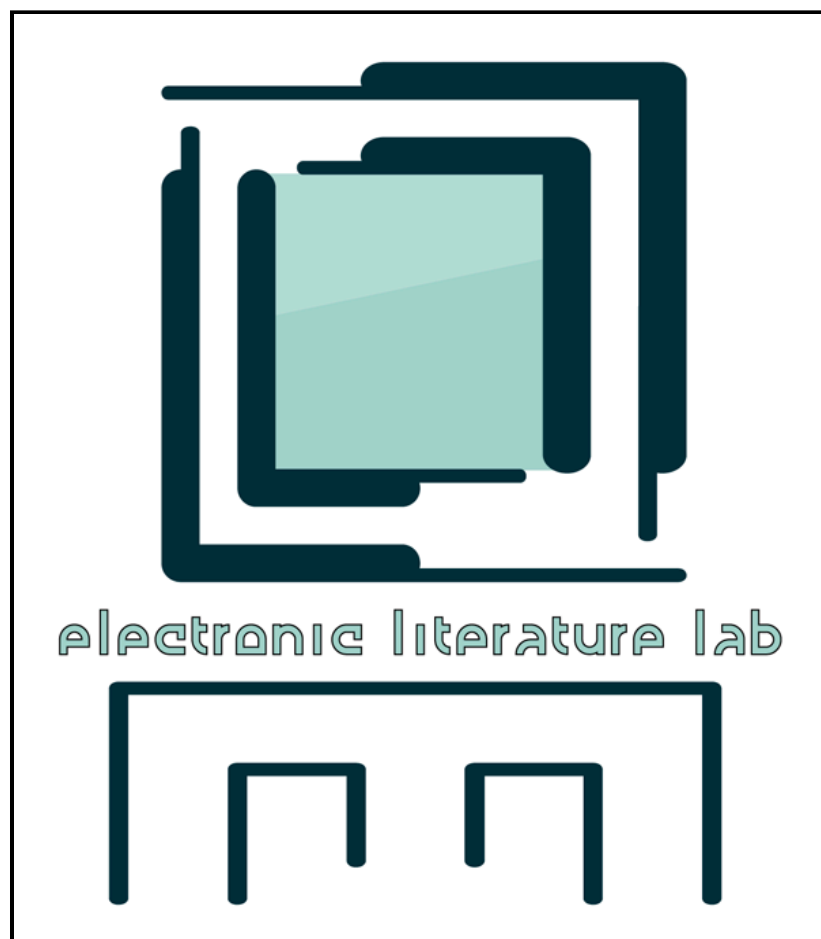
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Collection of Early Digital Literature in the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL)

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy.97>)



Electronic Literature Lab (ELL) logo



An example of some of the computers found in the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL) Collection

Pathfinders innovates the method of digital preservation called “collection” by making the collection experience widely available to audiences through traversals—that is, documentation of artists' performing their works or users' interacting with works on vintage computers in collections like the ones found in the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL)

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/ELL.jpg>) and at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH). ELL contains over 300 works of electronic literature—many of them produced and/or published before the introduction of the browser—and over 60 vintage Apple computers dating from 1983. A complete inventory of works and computers can be found in the ELL Catalog (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/ell-catalog>). Early digital literature, like those featured in *Pathfinders*, was created with an authoring system or programmed in languages like BASIC and, then, published on either 5 ¼” or 3 ½” floppy disks. Some works completed just as CD technology was becoming prevalent, like Bill Bly's *We Descend*, were published simultaneously on both a floppy disk and CD. They were sold and distributed through catalogs or by publishers, like *Art Com Catalog* and Eastgate, the developer of Storyspace and Tinderbox that also pioneered publishing methods for electronic literature. ELL's early digital literature features these titles, below, from Eastgate. Missing from my collection are two works published by the company: Christiane Paul's *Unreal City* and Mark Bernstein and Erin Sweeney's *The Election of 1912*.

Mark Bernstein and Erin Sweeney, *The Election of 1912*, 1988
 Robert DiChiara, *Sucker in Spades*, 1988
 Michael Joyce, *afternoon: a story*, 1990
 Clark Humphrey, *The Perfect Couple*, 1990
 Stuart Moulthrop, *Victory Garden*, 1991
 Sarah Smith, *King of Space*, 1991
 Carolyn Guyer, *Quibbling*, 1992
 George P. Landow, *The Dickens Web*, 1992
 George P. Landow & Jon Lanestedt, *The In Memoriam Web*, 1992
 Judy Malloy, *its name was Penelope*, 1989-1993
 John McDaid, *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, 1992
 Mary-Kim Arnold, *Lust*, Diskette 1993, CD-COM 1998
 J. Yellowlees Douglas, *I Have Said Nothing*, Diskette 1993, CD-ROM 1998
 Deena Larsen, *Marble Springs*, 1993
 Jim Rosenberg, *Intergrams*, 1993
 Kathryn Cramer, *In Small & Large Pieces*, 1994
 Giuliano Franco, *Quam Artem Exerceas?*, 1994
 David Kolb, *Socrates in the Labyrinth*, 1994
 Kathy Mac, *Unnatural Habitats*, 1994
 Rob Swigart, *Directions*, 1994
 Edward Falco, *Sea Island*, 1995
 Richard Gess, *Mahasukha Halo*, 1995
 Diane Greco, *Cyborg: Engineering the Body Electric*, 1995
 Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*, 1995
 Judith Kerman, *Mothering*, 1995
 George Landow, *Writing at the Edge*, 1995
 Deena Larsen, *Century Cross*, 1995
 Judy Malloy & Cathy Marshall, *Forward Anywhere*, 1995
 Michael Van Mantgem, *Completing the Circle*, 1995
 Tim McLaughlin, *Notes Toward Absolute Zero*, 1995
 Christiane Paul, *Unreal City: A Hypertext Companion to T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land,"* 1995
 Michael Joyce, *Twilight: A Symphony*, 1996
 Robert Kendall, *A Life Set For Two*, 1996
 Jim Rosenberg, *The Barrier Frames*, 1996
 Jim Rosenberg, *Diffractions Through*, 1996
 Richard Smyth, *Genetis: A Rhizography*, 1996
 Bill Bly, *We Descend*, 1997
 Wes Chapman, *Turning In*, 1997
 Edward Falco, *A Dream with Demons*, 1997
 Deena Larsen, *Samplers*, 1997
 Eric Steinhart, *Fragments of the Dionysian Body*, 1997
 Stephanie Strickland, *True North*, 1997
 M.D. Coverley, *Califia*, 2000
 Rob Swigart, *Down Time*, 2000
 Richard Holeyton, *Figurski at Findhorn on Acid*, 2001
 Judd Morrissey & Lori Talley, *My Name Is Captain, Captain*, 2002
 Roderick Coover, *Cultures in Webs*, 2003
 Megan Heyward, *of day of night*, 2004
 Mark Bernstein, *Those Trojan Girls*, 2016

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/schedule-of-traversals-and-interviews?path=introduction>)

End of path “Introduction to Pathfinders”;

Continue to “Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger”

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy>)



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Version 66 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/the-electronic-literature-collection.66>) of this page, updated 7/27/2021 |

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Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger



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Judy Malloy standing outside of her office at Princeton University

Judy Malloy's Biography

With a literary and visual arts background that includes artists books, text-based installation art, and narrative performance art, and with experience as a computer programmer for early library systems, Judy Malloy is a poet who works at the conjunction of hypertext, magic realism, and information art.

Her work with nonsequential literature began in 1976, the year she started exploring nonsequential narrative in experimental artists books. In subsequent years, she created a series of card catalog artists books that were first exhibited as a series in the exhibition, "Judy Malloy 3X5," Visual Card Catalogs at Artworks, in Venice, California in 1979. The first artists book in her series of push-button electromechanical books was created for her installation, "Technical Information," at SITE in San Francisco in 1981. Then, in August of 1986, she began writing and programming the hyperfiction *Uncle Roger* which was first released on the BBS of *Art Com Electronic Network* on the WELL in December 1986.

Her work has been exhibited and published internationally including the San Francisco Art Institute; Tisch School of the Arts, NYU; Sao Paulo Biennial; the Library of Congress, National Library of Madrid; National Library of Portugal, Lisbon; Los Angeles Institute for Contemporary Art; Boston Cyberarts Festival; Walker Art Center; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; University of Arizona Museum of Art; Visual Studies Workshop; the Electronic Literature Organization; Universite Paris I-Pantheon-Sorbonne; Eastgate Systems; E.P. Dutton; Tanam Press; Seal Press; MIT Press; *The Iowa Review Web*, and *Blue Moon Review*, among many others. Parts of her recent work, *Paths of Memory and Painting*, have been exhibited or presented at the Berkeley Center for New Media Roundtable, the E-Poetry Festival at the Center of Contemporary Art in Barcelona, and the University of California Irvine, as well as short listed for the Prix poesie-media 2009, Biennale Internationale des poetes en Val de Marne. In 2012, her work was given a retrospective at the Electronic Literature Organization Conference in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Her papers—including the original notebooks and programs for *Uncle Roger* and *its name was Penelope*—are archived as the *Judy Malloy Papers* (<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/malloyjudy/>) at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University.

Judy Malloy has also been active in documenting the electronic arts and is the host of *Authoring Software*, a resource for teachers and students. She has been an artist in residence and consultant in the document of the future for Xerox PARC, taught as Visiting Faculty in the Digital Media program at the San Francisco Art Institute and is a member of the Electronic Literature Organization's Literary Advisory Board. In fall 2013 she was named the Anschutz Distinguished Fellow in American Studies at Princeton University, where she also teaches a seminar on Social Media: History, Poetics, and Practice.

As an arts writer, she has worked most notably as Editor of the MIT Press book, *Women, Art, and Technology*, as Editor of The New York Foundation for the Arts' NYFA Current, (originally Arts Wire Current) an Internet-based National journal on the arts and culture; and as an Associate Editor for *Leonardo*.

She believes that ideally print literature and electronic literature are parallel art forms where writers and artists in each medium understand each other's vision and, as between poetry and fiction, sometimes move with ease between print and screen.

Versions of *Uncle Roger*

★ *Version 1*: "Serial Novel for the Net," published 1986-1987, *Art Com Electronic Network (ACEN)* on *The WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectric Link)* and produced on topic 14 (conference system: Picospan)

1.1 *A Party in Woodside* (file 1), December 1, 1986-January 29, 1987

1.2 *The Blue Notebook* (file 2), July 1987

★ *Version 2*: "Interactive Narrative on the Net," published 1987-1988, ACEN Datanet on *The WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectric Link)* and programmed with UNIX Shell Scripts

2.1 *A Party in Woodside*, early 1987

2.2 *The Blue Notebook, and Terminals* (file 3), in 1988.

★ *Version 3*: "Boxed Version as Stand Alone Artists Software in Narrabase," programmed in AppleSoft BASIC, published 1987-1988, and sold through *Art Com Catalog*

3.1 *A Party in Woodside*, published in 1987

3.2 *A Party in Woodside*, updated and republished in 1988

3.3 All three works (*A Party in Woodside*, *The Blue Notebook*, *Terminals*) were packaged together and sold as a boxed work in 1988. There are two editions of this version of the boxed set, one with separate inserts and another with inserts in "accordion style" fold

★ *Version 4*: "Boxed Version as Stand Alone Artists Software in Narrabase," programmed in GW-BASIC, published 1988, and packaged with all three works packaged on one floppy disk for exhibitions

4.1 *Uncle Roger: A Party in Woodside, the Blue Notebook, Terminals*

★ *Version 5*: "Web Version"

5.1 Created with HTML 2.0 and published in 1995, on *The WELL* (<http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncle Roger/uncle Roger.html>)

5.2 Updated title page and introduction, in 2012

5.3 Updated metadata, in fall 2015

★ *Version 6*: "DOSBox Emulator Version"

6.1 Published in 2012, recreates the functionality of the database narrative found in Version 4.1 but with the content found in Version 5.2

Exhibitions (a sample):

Judy Malloy, *Uncle Roger, Art Com Electronic Network*, 1986-1988 (ACEN version partially funded by the California Arts Council and Art Matters; Documentation: Literary and Linguistic Computing, 2014).

Pathfinders: Documenting the Experience of Early Digital Literature. Dene Grigar and Stuart Moulthrop. 2015. <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders> (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders>).

Pathfinders: 25 years of Experimental Literary Art. The Modern Language Association 2014 Conference. Chicago, IL. 9-11 January 2014. <http://dtc-wsuv.org/wp/pathfinders/exhibit> (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/wp/pathfinders/exhibit>).

Judy Malloy, Retrospective. Electronic Literature Organization 2012 Media Art Show. University of West Virginia, 20-23 June 2012.

ARTWARE. A Space. Toronto, Canada. 6 April-6 May 1989.

Art Com Software. Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, 1988 (show also travelled to San Jose State University, the University of Colorado, Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria, Carnegie Mellon University) Ultimatum II, Images du Futur '87, Montreal, September 1987.

Collections:

Judy Malloy Papers. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

The Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art, Cornell University

Telematic Connections, The Walker Art Center

Jean Brown Collection, The Getty

Franklin Furnace Collection, Museum of Modern Art, NYC

Museum of Modern Art, Special Collections, NYC

The Poetry Center, San Francisco; di Rosa, Napa, California, Media Archeology Lab, UC Boulder

Media & Microtext Center, Stanford University

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Research Library and Archives

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Judy Malloy's Artist's Statement for Uncle Roger



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Judy Malloy sitting in front of an Apple II computer

Intertwining elements of magic realism with Silicon Valley culture and semiconductor industry lore, the three files of the pioneering electronic hyperfiction, *Uncle Roger*, originally appeared beginning in 1986 on Art Com Electronic Network on The WELL. In the 27 years since the work began, it has been authored as a social network intervention, with UNIX shell scripts; on floppy disk with BASIC; and on the World Wide Web with HTML. In File II of *Uncle Roger*, “The Blue Notebook,” reflecting the increasing complexities of the narrator’s Silicon Valley life, five parallel narratives advance the story at the will of the reader. Some of the text is taken from the narrator’s notebook where, as she explains: “The things I wrote in the blue notebook didn’t happen in exactly the way I wrote them.”

“Everything I typed on the keyboard showed up on a large screen which filled the entire wall at the front of the room. Five men in tan suits were sitting around the screen, watching the words as I typed them in.”

In the spring of 1986, I was invited by video and performance art curator Carl Loeffler to go online and participate in the seminal Art Com Electronic Network (ACEN) on The WELL, where ACEN Datanet, an interactive online publication, would soon feature computer-mediated works of text-based art, including works by John Cage, Jim Rosenberg, and my interactive *Uncle Roger*.

Once in a while in a lifetime, everything comes together. In 1986, it was my experience in database programming, the idea I had been working on since 1977 of using molecular narrative units to create nonsequential narrative, the availability of personal computers that would make what I had been trying to do with “card catalog” artists books more feasible, and the arrival of Art Com Electronic Network, a place to create, publish and discuss the work.

In August 1986, for publication on ACEN, I began writing and designing the interface and programs for the hyperfictional narrative database, *Uncle Roger*. And in the process, I created an authoring system — Narrabase — which I have continued to develop for my work for 27 years.

A seminal interactive hyperfiction for command line computer platforms, *Uncle Roger* is based on a narrative and creative use of links (originally called keywords from the database algorithms that informed this work). The composing of the three files that comprise *Uncle Roger* was influenced by my experimental artists books, by my experience with library database programming, by the slide-based narratives I performed at alternative art spaces in the early 80’s, and by scene-based Renaissance comedy.

The Story

*"I pictured a whole line of men in tan suits
scampering around on a stage, singing
'The yield is down. I think we lost the process.'
The chorus was 'We lost it in the submicron area,'
which is what Jack said next."*

ACEN's host, The WELL was (and still is) a pioneering Northern California-based social media environment, which hosted digerati from all over the World, including Silicon Valley, where I had once lived. Thus, at the time that *Uncle Roger* was created, I was immersed in 1980's San Francisco Bay Area personal computer culture. With locations including a party in Woodside, a microelectronics lab, and an early corporate word-processing office, *Uncle Roger*, like the interface and the programs with which it was created, is set in this era of transitioning computer culture. Events are observed by a narrator, who in telling the story intertwines elements of magic realism with Silicon Valley culture and semiconductor industry lore.

Files 1 and 2 are interactive hypertexts in which the reader actively follows chains of links through the narrative—either one link or combinations of links using the Boolean operator “and” (“men in tan suits” and “dreams”, for instance)—and then returns to the beginning to follow another link or combination of links. Simulating the diffuse, unsettled quality of the narrator's changing life, the third file is generative.

The Three Files of *Uncle Roger*

What I type on the keyboard appears in green on the screen which is called the monitor. When the screen is full, the letters scroll up somewhere inside the machine."

The following background information about each file of *Uncle Roger* is from the packaging of the original Apple II Applesoft BASIC version.

“A Party in Woodside”

During a long, mostly sleepless night after, a party is remembered fitfully, interspersed with dreams. Like a guest at a real party, you hear snatches of conversation and catch fleeting glimpses of both strangers and old friends. There are occurrences which you never observe. You meet people whom others may never meet. A fragmented, individual memory picture of the party emerges.

“The Blue Notebook”

In "The Blue Notebook," the story is continued by the narrator, Jenny. The narrative is framed by a formal birthday party for Tom Broadthrow at a hotel restaurant. Jenny's fragmented memories — a car trip with David, a visit to Jeff's company in San Jose, an encounter with Uncle Roger in the restaurant bathroom — weave in and out of the birthday party recollections. Some of the text is taken from Jenny's blue notebook

where, as she she explains: “The things I wrote in the blue notebook didn’t happen in exactly the way I wrote them.”

“Terminals”

In January the narrator, Jenny, left the Broadthrow family and started working for a market research firm in San Francisco. As Jenny sits at her desk, memories of a Christmas party in Woodside, a trip back East for the Holidays and other things that happened come and go in her mind.

More about “The Blue Notebook”

We walked through a door into a vast expanse of gray cement floors. There were no windows. Rows of benches were covered with black and silver equipment; piles of cables; boxes of small objects encrusted with wires; microscopes; tv screens; clear plastic boxes with holes in them; surgical gloves. In the back exposed pipes alternated with ten foot tall machines.”

In Silicon Valley, things do not happen simply and clearly. In File 2 of Uncle Roger, “The Blue Notebook”, five parallel yet intertwining narratives advance the story in sometimes conflicting ways—reflecting the increasing complexity of Jenny’s life.

The story is framed by a formal birthday party for a microelectronics company president. His party—in a Silicon Valley hotel dining room—is punctuated by the narrator’s unlikely encounter with the eccentric semiconductor market analyst Uncle Roger. And while Jenny sits at the banquet table, other narrative threads—a car trip with a former lover, a visit to a semiconductor house in San—come and go in her mind.

Parts of the story are taken from her notebook where reality is difficult to separate from fiction and dream: “The things I wrote in the blue notebook didn’t happen in exactly the way I wrote them.”

Technical Information

“It’s an FX-7000G,’ said one of the men in tan suits. He pulled a thin calculator out of his pocket. The other two men leaned over the calculator while he pushed some buttons. Small grey graphs appeared on the tiny green screen.”

Uncle Roger was first told online on the ACEN conferencing system on The WELL, beginning in 1986. Beginning in 1987, it was published online as a working hypertext narrative, programmed with UNIX shell scripts on ACEN Datanet. It was also self-published as computer software, programmed with BASIC for both Apple and IBM-compatible computers and distributed by the Art Com Catalog, (a video and small press distributor) as well as exhibited internationally in the traveling exhibition Art Com Software.

Over the years, I have worked to keep *Uncle Roger* available to a public audience. A web version was created in 1995 and is still available at <http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncleroger/uncle.html> (<http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncleroger/uncle.html>).

And in 2012, I recreated the BASIC version of *Uncle Roger* for the DOSBox emulator. Access is available at my site (http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncleroger/uncle_readme.html).

Continue to “Judy Malloy's Traversal of Uncle Roger”

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Judy Malloy's Traversal of Uncle Roger

This traversal of Judy Malloy took place on Friday, September 6, 2013 at Malloy's office at Princeton University, where she has served as Visiting Faculty. It is divided into four videos.

We originally planned only to use Version 2 of the work—that is, the one sold commercially on floppy disk and requiring a vintage computer. However, taking Grigar's Apple IIe from her lab in Vancouver to Malloy's office was not possible due to cost of shipping. Malloy, however, had a colleague who gladly let us borrow his own. Unfortunately, halfway through the traversal, it broke, and we were relegated to using web version and the DOSBox emulation of *Uncle Roger* on Malloy's office Dell computer. The experience turned out to be fortuitous because traversing the work in both formats allowed us to experience many of the deviations between the second and third versions and strengthened our argument for the "collection" method of digital preservation. Assisting with the traversal and interview was Aaron Wintersong, *Pathfinders*' videographer, whom we flew with us to New Jersey. The commentary for the videos was written by Grigar.

Malloy Traversal, Part 1,
"Unpacking and
Loading *Uncle Roger*"

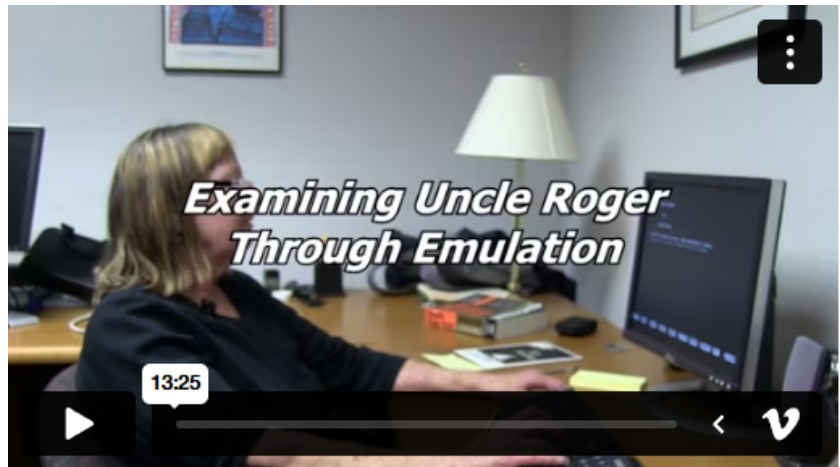


The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 10:25 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

(<https://vimeo.com/119406324>)

This video clip shows Malloy opening the packaging for *Uncle Roger* and discussing each element within it. She explains that the work was originally sold in 1987 as one file, "A Party in Woodside," but was expanded to include all three parts in 1988. We can see that the version of the documentation she displays differs from the one included in the packaging used in *Pathfinders*. She boots up "A Party in Woodside" on the Apple IIe and explains how one would read it. She quickly moves to "The Blue Notebook" and reads from it. The computer's aberrant flickering is noticeable; the computer later quit working.

Malloy Traversal, Part 2,
"Examining *Uncle Roger*
Through Emulation"



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 13:25 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

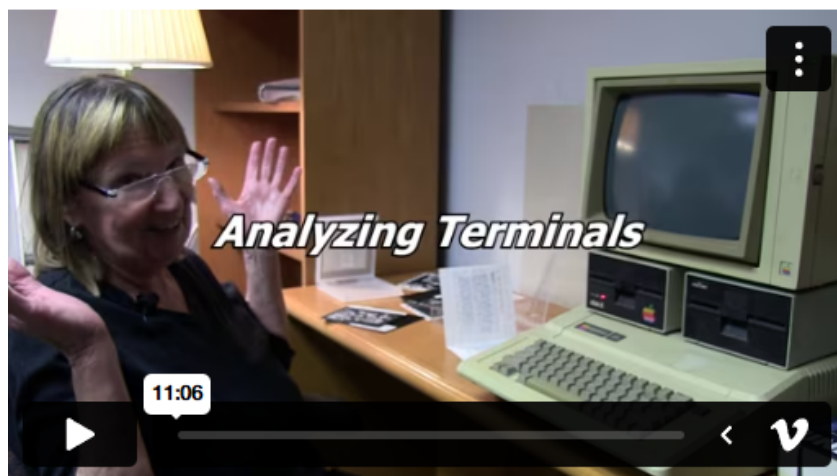
(<https://vimeo.com/119406326>)

Malloy reads from her Dell PC because the flickering of the Apple IIe borrowed for the traversal proved to be bothersome. This shift in computer platforms provides the opportunity for her to point out some of the differences between the Apple and PC versions. She continues reading from "The Blue Notebook," explaining that it entails five different stories. Of note is the information Malloy provides that contextualizes the story within her personal experience with the early computer and chip industries, a time when producing the fastest chip was the prime goal and piracy was typical. At the end of the clip, Malloy begins a reading of "Terminals."

Malloy Traversal, Part 3, "Analyzing Terminals" (<https://vimeo.com/119406328>)

Malloy continues to read from the final file of *Uncle Roger*, "Terminals." This story sees *Uncle Roger's* main character Jenny move from the chip industry to a job in word processing. Malloy also explains the way in which *Uncle Roger* was programmed—as a series of files, numbered

from 1 to 100, for which the user could evoke and combine on the command line. This narrative strategy is what leads Malloy to refer to the work as a database narrative. She also explains the way in which her next work, *its name was Penelope*, came about and the way it differs from *Uncle Roger*.




The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 11:06 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloys-artists-statement?path=judy-malloy>)

Continue to “The Interview with Judy Malloy about Uncle Roger” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-interview?path=judy-malloy>)



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Version 56 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-traversal.56>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-traversal.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-traversal.meta>)
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The Interview with Judy Malloy about Uncle Roger



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Judy Malloy showing her scrollbook during her Interview

This interview of Judy Malloy, conducted by Grigar and Moulthrop, took place in the afternoon of Friday, September 6, 2013 at Malloy's office at Princeton University and followed after Malloy's traversal. It is divided into 13 video clips that capture much of Malloy's thoughts regarding the development of *Uncle Roger* and other works, such as *its name was Penelope*. A sound file that condenses the 100+ minutes of taped interviews can be found on this page (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy-interview--sound-file>). Grigar wrote the commentary, giving care in providing a summary of each video clip. Readers are encouraged to watch the videos and gain a good appreciation for Malloy's depth of knowledge about programming, art, early digital culture, and other topics.

Malloy Interview, Part 1, "Humble Beginnings"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754676>)

This video clip focuses on the origins of *Uncle Roger*, beginning with Malloy's professional connections with those involved in art and technology in the mid to late 1980s, as well as early projects like the card catalog (1981) and "Bad Information," leading to the development of *Uncle Roger*. We learn that she began writing the 75 lexias that constitutes Version 3 in August 1986 and published (at ACEN housed on the WELL) the first lexia on December 1, 1986. Thereafter, she released 1-2 lexias each day. Of note, to her work as it was being delivered. Because of audience participation, *Uncle Roger* may



q~A~!A~AA`~A:AA~L...:"XOEOATCEA!_?;::~A of fl LQA
k!~AM?QABCEQA!~IA:AA~L...:"A...!A~~AM^H~A
~;::~!πAABCEAπ...:IA;::~πA!_A~A°~!A~!L~;::πA°~M

Malloy Interview, Part 2, "The Chip Industry and *Uncle Roger*

(<https://vimeo.com/114754678>)

In this video clip Malloy discusses the background of *Uncle Roger*, a work she calls "a cross between a Renaissance jig and Jane Austin," with Uncle Roger functioning as a "Falstaffian" character in the story. The story's first two parts are set in the male-dominated 1980s computer chip industry in the Silicon Valley where piracy was common; the final part, "Terminals," shifts to the



q~A~~!A~AA`~~A:AA~~L...:"ACEOATCEA! ?;::~~Ak of flQA
k!'~AM?QAGCEQA!~~KA : AA~~L...:"A..!A:~~AMH~A
~.:~!πASROA π...:KA;~ πA! A~A~ ~A~!L`;πA~M

female-dominated word processing industry in the Bay Area. The tech-savvy audience reading the work at ACEN, many of whom were involved in these industries, would have been familiar with the zeitgeist, plots, characters and places found in the work.

Malloy Interview, Part 3, "Structural Differences"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754681>)

Malloy talks about the structure of *Uncle Roger*, including the differences between the versions produced for the Apple IIe and the IBM PC, and reveals the way she created an "ending" for the work. She also points out that "A Party in Woodside" and "The Blue Notebook" were both created as database narratives and "Terminals," as random access (meaning, the reader would not be able to control the lexia that would be evoked). The video ends with Malloy recounting the structure of the story: "A Party in Woodside," action taking place at a party; "The Blue Notebook," recollections involving five storylines (what she refers to as "paths;" "Terminals," a wide range of memories, some coming from the first two parts of the story. In all, Jenny's voice is the dominant one, a rarity in fiction of this nature.



q~A~!A~AA~A:AA~L...:"ACEOATCEA!~?;::~~A of flLQA
k!~?QABKESQA!~^KA~AA~L...:"A...!A:~^H~A
~..;~!πA~OCCA~π...~:KA;~`~πA;!~A~A~!A~!L~;~πA~M

Malloy Interview, Part 4, "Avant Garde Qualities"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754682>)

In this video clip we learn about Malloy's background and the various genres of literature that she pioneered. Malloy came from a background of producing artists books and doing performance art, particularly cabaret in the tradition of the "jig." Because of this experience, she views drama as the model on which *Uncle Roger* is built and calls the work "satire." The work is one of the first to experiment with the: 1) serial publication, 2) database novel, 3) generative text, and 4) participatory work. She mentions that she was influenced by John Cage's work of generative poetry published by ACEN.



q~A~!A~AA~A:AA~L...:"ACEOATCEA!~?;::~~A of flLQA
k!~?QABKESQA!~^KA~AA~L...:"A...!A:~^H~A
~..;~!πA~OCCA~π...~:KA;~`~πA;!~A~A~!A~!L~;~πA~M

Malloy Interview, Part 5, "Challenges and Thrills for Readers"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754683>)

This video clip focuses on the way early digital literature, like Malloy's, challenges the reader, where the reader is expected to put together the story in a way different from print literature. Malloy, who began her career as writer of artists books, book installations, and performance art, clarifies that she came to write *Uncle Roger* as narrative poetry—that is, the 50-character limitation served as a constraint that forced Malloy to think like a poet in developing the work.



q~A~!A~AA~A:AA~L...?"ACECAACIA! ?;::~~A of flLQA
k!~AM?QA~CEQA!~A:~AA~L...?"A...!A:~AM~H~A
~..;.!πA~VWA~π...:KA;~π~A!~A~A~!A~!L~;π~A~M

Malloy Interview, Part 6, "Art Community and Feminism"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754752>)

Malloy discusses the community with which she associated—that is, Art Com Electronic Network—and the differences between it and the one that arose out of Eastgate Systems. She relates how she came to move from ACEN to be published by Eastgate. The conversation shifts to a discussion of the feminism inherent in Malloy's work and her connection with cyberfeminism generating out of the beginning of 3rd Wave Feminism.



q~A~!A~AA~A:AA~L...?"ACECAACIA! ?;::~~A of flLQA
k!~AM?QA~CEQA!~A:~AA~L...?"A...!A:~AM~H~A
~..;.!πA~VWA~π...:KA;~π~A!~A~A~!A~!L~;π~A~M

Malloy Interview, Part 7, "A Retrospective" (<https://vimeo.com/114810614>)

In this video clip Malloy reflects upon the qualities of programming behind the net and boxed versions of Uncle Roger that are missing from the web version, specifically focusing on the Boolean logic making it possible to combine keywords on the command line. She tells us that this aspect of Uncle Roger provides a richness and complexity to the work. She also reveals that her early background in computing began in 1969 when she programmed a technical library for a company associated with NASA.



q~A~~!A~AA~A:AA~L...~"ACEOATCEA!~?;::~~A of fl LQA
k!~AM?QA~CEQA!~~IA~AA~L...~"A...!A~AM~H~A...~!~A
~ACEA~π...~IA;~π~A!~A~A~!A~!L~;~π~A~M

Malloy Interview, Part 8, "Creating Art with Digital Technology"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754753>)

Malloy discusses the technological and artistic influences upon her work. We learn that she was not inspired in the beginning to use computers because the one she used, in 1969, was an IBM 1160, which had no screen. In her discussion about artistic influences she talks about the work of Lew Thomas and Sonya Rapoport. Malloy claims that her own work is 1/2 visual art and 1/2 writing.



q~A~~!A~AA~A:AA~L...~"ACEOATCEA!~?;::~~A of fl LQA
k!~AM?QA~CEQA!~~IA~AA~L...~"A...!A~AM~H~A...~!~A
~ACEA~π...~IA;~π~A!~A~A~!A~!L~;~π~A~M

Malloy Interview, Part 9, "Uncle Roger's Innovation and Audience"

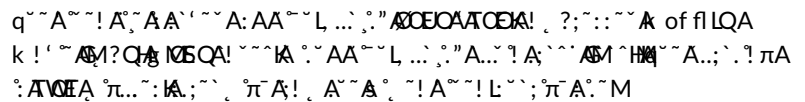
(<https://vimeo.com/114754756>)

Malloy names three innovations that emerge from her work: 1) envisioning "lexias" as building blocks for narrative, 2) developing textual links, and 3) publishing her work in a social space with a "vision of audience." She returns to a discussion about the "flatness" of the web version of *Uncle Roger*, suggesting that this characteristic may be the reason why the work does not get attention, despite its availability.

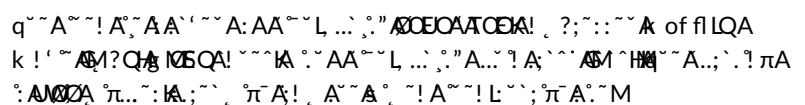


q~A~~!A~AA~A:AA~L...~"ACEOATCEA!~?;::~~A of fl LQA
k!~AM?QA~CEQA!~~IA~AA~L...~"A...!A~AM~H~A...~!~A
~ACEA~π...~IA;~π~A!~A~A~!A~!L~;~π~A~M

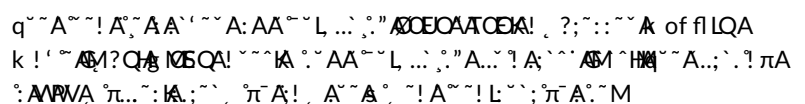
This video clip moves into a discussion about audience feedback and the isolation artists and writers may feel. Malloy cites an example of her watching an audience interact with *its name was Penelope* at a gallery show and, then, making changes to the work based on that feedback.



The conversation about audience feedback continues and includes Malloy's views on the difference between audience feedback and critique. Malloy talks about the lack of competition between artists in the early days of digital literature, a situation that she believes has changed over time. She mentions the importance of Mark Marino's work with critical code studies for opening up code as a platform for literary critique.



In this video clip Malloy talks about how she views herself as an artist. She begins by calling herself an "electronic writer" and "a poet who works with narrative." She goes on to detail a database product she produced with BASIC, a program she began using in 1990, and talks about the potential of "electronic writers," and "makers of electronic literature." She emphasizes the importance of the "buzz" stemming from exhibits, courses, and other activities for building interest.



Malloy Interview, Part 13, "Limitless Potential"

(<https://vimeo.com/114754795>)

The interview concludes with a discussion about the limitless potential of electronic literature. Malloy points out that she sees this potential because of the abundance of tools and the vision of individual artists. She talks about current work, one that has her "scoring" text based on musical notation.



q ~ ~ A ~ ~ ! A ~ ~ A A ~ ~ A : A A ~ ~ L ... ~ ~ . " A O E O A A T O E A ! ~ ? ; ~ : ~ ~ A of fl L Q A
k ! ~ ~ A M ? Q A ~ ~ O E A ! ~ ~ ~ A : ~ ~ A A ~ ~ L ... ~ ~ . " A ... ! A : ~ ~ A M ^ H A ~ ~ A ... ! . ! π A
~ : A O E A ~ π ... ~ : A ; ~ ~ ~ π A ! ~ A ~ A ~ ~ ! A ~ ~ ! L ~ ~ ; ~ π A ~ ~ M

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-traversal?path=judy-malloy>)


Continue to "The Sound File of Judy Malloy Interview"
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy-interview--sound-file?path=judy-malloy>)



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Version 62 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-interview.62>) of this page, updated 11/5/2015 | All versions

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The Sound File of Judy Malloy Interview



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Judy Malloy with Stuart Moulthrop during her interview for Pathfinders

This sound file (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/pathfinders/sound-files/malloy/malloy-interview.aif>) is an edited compilation, produced by John Barber, of all of the video interviews of Judy Malloy. In developing this archive, Barber stripped the sound from the video and, then, reworked the material to make the ideas flow logically. In most cases, he also removed false starts, unneeded language cues, and the interviewers' voices so that all that remains is Malloy's story, what Barber calls, "an audio artist's statement."

Oops, we couldn't find that track.

[Privacy policy](#)

The file is saved as high-quality, non-compressed audio (.aif). Because the duration is 15:45 minutes, and the size is 250.4 MB, streaming from the *Pathfinders* server, please allow time to access the "downloadable" version. The "playable version" is streaming from the *Pathfinders* channel on SoundCloud.

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-interview?path=judy-malloy>)

Continue to “Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-readers-traversals--interviews?path=judy-malloy>)



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Version 17 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy-interview--sound-file.17>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy-interview--sound-file.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy-interview--sound-file.meta>)



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Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

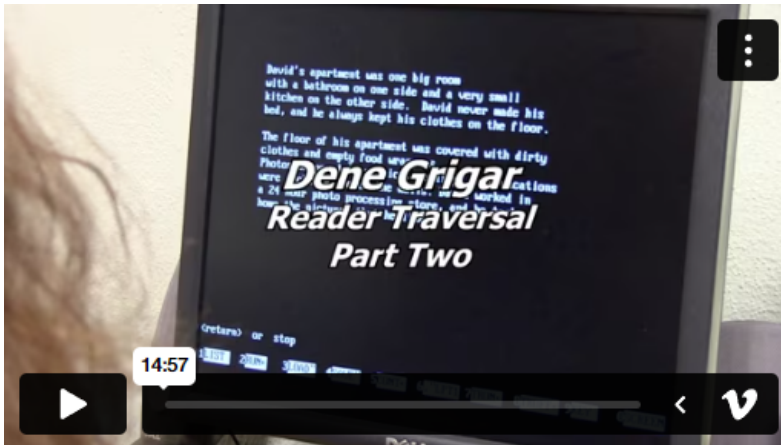
Dene Grigar giving her traversal of Uncle Roger

The reader traversals and interviews took place on Saturday, September 7, 2013 at Malloy's office at Princeton University, a day after Malloy's. Hosting the event outside of our own environment and away from our own network meant that we did not have the ability to bring in two outside readers to engage in the traversal and interview. Working through Malloy's story ourselves and talking about it among ourselves provided us the opportunity to experience, firsthand, the traversal. There are two video clips for each reader: one for the traversal and one for the interview.

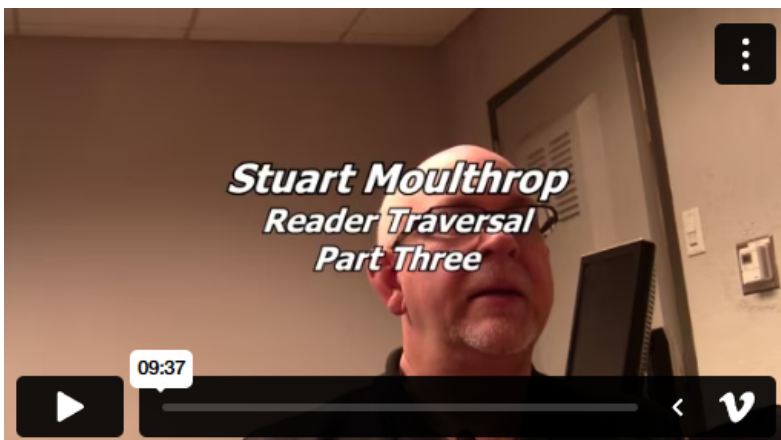
Malloy Traversal by Dene Grigar, Part 1 (<https://vimeo.com/117767792>)

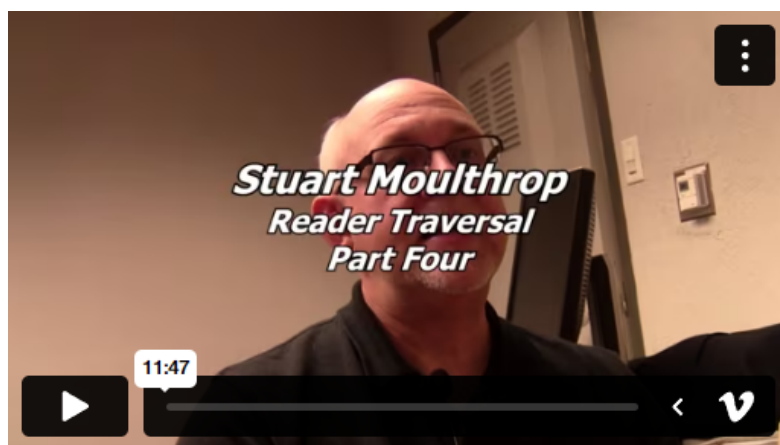


Malloy Traversal by Dene Grigar, Part 2 (<https://vimeo.com/117767811>)



Malloy Traversal by Stuart Moulthrop, Part 3
(<https://vimeo.com/117767813>)






« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/judy-malloy-interview--sound-file?path=judy-malloy>)

Continue to “Photos of the Box and Its Content for Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-its-content-for-judy-malloys-uncle-roger?path=judy-malloy>)



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Version 38 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-readers-traversals--interviews.38>) of this page, updated 5/31/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-readers-traversals--interviews.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-readers-traversals--interviews.meta>)

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Photos of the Box and Its Content for Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Judy Malloy with a copy of Art Com Catalog

General Comments about the Packaging for Uncle Roger

There are three boxed versions of *Uncle Roger*. The first, published in 1987, was a stand-alone package of "A Party in Woodside" that was numbered. In 1988 this version was republished with a few changes. The third version, also published in 1988, addressed a few bugs in the original and included all three files packaged in a clear plastic box. The 1988 version came either with 1) three separate folded inserts, one for each file, or 2) with an accordion fold insert that covered all the files. Malloy sold *Uncle Roger* for \$15 through *Art Com Catalog*. Advertised in the catalog as "Software by Artists for Personal Computers," *Uncle Roger* was originally envisioned as software for which the box served as packaging. However, in making the packaging for each individual box, Malloy drew heavily from her art practice. Additionally, because Malloy exhibited *Uncle Roger* widely as a work of literary art, it is not a stretch to view the packaging as more than simply a container for software disks but also as an extension of her artistic vision.

About the Version Used in this Project

Two complete copies of the box that constitutes the work, *Uncle Roger*, are archived at Duke University's Rubenstein Library in the Judy Malloy Papers. Another representing the original 1987 version, numbered "no. 10" can be found at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City. Because copies were sold by *Art Com*, it would be difficult to know how many are still available. The copy used for this project was provided by Malloy to Grigar and Moulthrop for developing the documentation for *Pathfinders*. This loaned version represents the 1988 version with separate inserts and may be a "second" not intended to be sent to *Art Com* for distribution. Thus, the anomalies discussed in the packaging reflect this possibility. Missing from this box is the final floppy disk, "Terminals," which Malloy kept with her at Princeton. Her copy of "Terminals" is missing the sleeve into which the floppy would have been slipped when packaged, which is why it is not shown here. Future plans for *Pathfinders* includes a visit to Duke Library and MOMA to view these copies.

Production Method

The label and inserts were designed by Malloy, who hand-lettered or created textual elements with Apple's The Print Shop, a desktop publishing software originally created for the Apple II. She, then, printed the layouts of the label and inserts on her own printer and trimmed the paper to size on a paper cutter or by hand. Because inserts contained four pages of textual information, information for each page needed to be produced and printed on her computer. They were, next, readied for a master layout by cutting them to the size of the paper on which the master copy layout would eventually be printed, then, pasted to the master copy layout. This master copy layout was, then, xeroxed once. If this copy showed lines where the pasted element had been, Malloy would need to eliminate the lines by whitening them out. She would xerox the master copy layout again. The process would continue until the final product was rid of all errant marks. If Malloy ran out of copies of the label to paste onto the box or inserts to include in it, she would remake these items. This production method explains why the box and inserts of *Uncle Roger* may vary from copy to copy.

Special Note about This Section

Of all of the works included in *Pathfinders*, Malloy's is the most unique in that it was produced by the author with an authoring system she produced, called "Narrabase," and each copy that was sold and distributed was made by her hand. Because scholars like N. Katherine Hayles call for literary criticism of electronic literature to address the work's material specificities, the approach taken in examining Malloy's work does just that by describing each component of the work through direct interaction with it. It also draws upon *ekphrasis*, an approach to writing about art dating back to the ancient Greeks that provides a description of a work so that readers without access to it can still imagine it. This concept was discussed at the Electronic Literature Organization's "State of the Arts" conference at UCLA in 2002 during the session, entitled "Multimedia Criticism," moderated by Rob Kendall that included Rita Raley, Joseph Tabbi, Thom Swiss, and Jane Yellowlees Douglas. It provides an excellent method for this project where works of art like Malloy's are not easily available to readers. Misspelled words, typos, changes in style all speak to the uniqueness of the artifact and an aesthetic far from mass production and an industrial graphical aesthetic. The compelling quality of *Uncle Roger* lies not just in the quality of the poetry—the words Malloy uses to express herself—but in the way in which the work is instantiated as an object of literary art. It should be noted that the commentary for this section was written by Grigar.

Box Contents

Four hand-made inserts explaining the work, the last one signed by the author in 1988

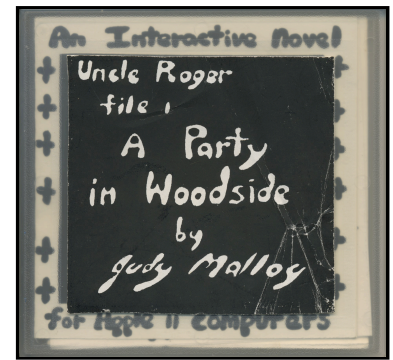
1. General introduction to *Uncle Roger* and instructions for interacting with "A Party in Woodside"
2. Introduction to "A Party in Woodside" with instruction for interacting with it
3. Introduction to "The Blue Notebook" with instructions for interacting with it
4. Introduction to "Terminals" with instructions for interacting with it

Three 5 1/4" floppy disks in hand-made sleeves (only two represented in this archive)

1. "A Party in Woodside"
2. "The Blue Notebook"
3. "Terminals"

Box, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-cover-front.jpg>): "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

The box measures 6 1/4" x 6" x 1/2" in size and is made of opaque white, heavy-duty plastic. The top section of the box closes firmly onto the bottom, holding the contents safely inside. On the top of the box a black, regular bond paper label (4 1/2" x 4 1/4") is affixed. It reads, "Uncle Roger File 1 A Party in Woodside by Judy Malloy." The lettering is white and hand-lettered. The label is placed on the box so that it fits inside a square box embossed in the plastic. The first insert placed inside the box can be seen through the opaque plastic around the black label. On the top above the words, "Uncle Roger," we can see "An Interactive Novel." Running along the right side of the black label we can see six plus signs (+) evenly distributed. At the bottom below "Judy Malloy," we can read "for Apple II computers." Plus signs are found along the left hand side of the label, matching those on the right hand side. Thus, the package shows great care in its design and execution, with detail given to the placement of words and other visual elements.

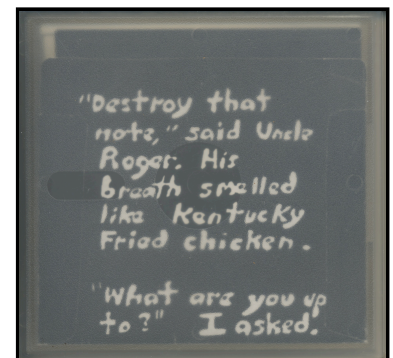


Front of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

Box, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-cover-back.jpg>): "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

The back of the Artists' Box is unlabeled, but one can see the back of the floppy disk's sleeve through the opaque white plastic. The image shown here represents the back of the floppy disk sleeve for "The Blue Notebook" visible through the plastic box. The back of the box would actually show the art from the "Terminals" sleeve, which is missing from this archive.

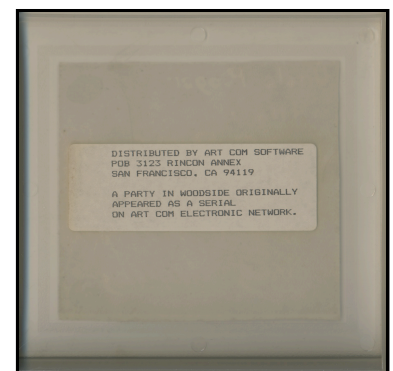


Back of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

Left Side of the Box, Inside

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-cover-open-left.jpg>): "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

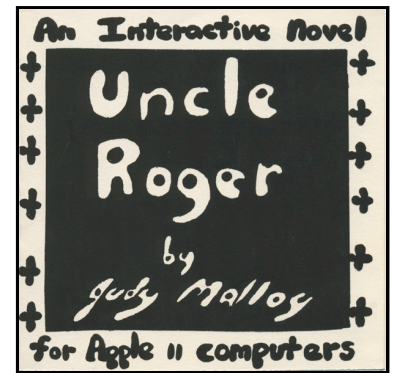
On the inside of the left side of the box is a small, white label, 4" x 1 1/2" in size (rounded corners) centered in the space with information about the work's publication divided into two sections. Section one contains the address of the publisher and is divided, due to space limitations, into three lines. Line one reads: "Distributed by Art Com Software"; Line two: "POB 3123 Rincon Annex"; Line three: "San Francisco, CA 94119". There is a space between this information and the next. Section two is comprised of one sentence broken into three lines: Line one: "A Party in Woodside Originally"; Line two: "Appeared As A Serial"; Line three: "On Art Com Electronic Network." This segment is punctuated with a period.



Left hand side of artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger" opened

1st Insert of Box, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert1-front.jpg>): "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

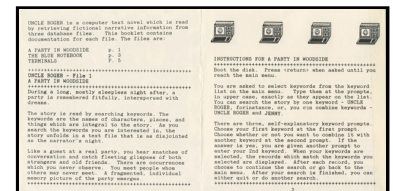
Printed in heavy, white card stock. The 1st insert of the box, visible through the front of the box, introduces readers to the novel. The insert's design follows that of the box itself. A black square (4 1/2" x 4 1/4") found at the center of the insert, is surrounded by a white border 3/5" thick in width. Black lettering runs along the top, right, left, and bottom of the border. On the top above the label's first word, "Uncle," we see "An Interactive Novel." Running along the right side of the black label are six plus signs (+) evenly distributed. At the bottom below "Judy Malloy," we read "for Apple II computers." Plus signs are found along the left hand side of the label, matching those on the right hand side.



Front of 1st insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

1st Insert of Box, Opened (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert1-open.jpg>): "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

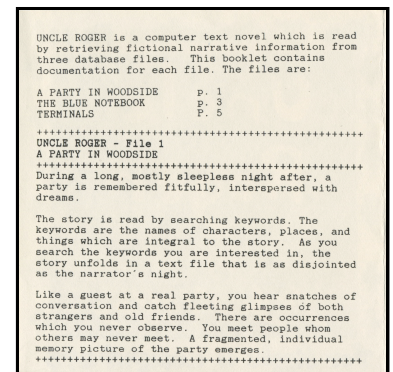
The insert opens to a size of 11" x 5 7/16"—that is, almost a regular size sheet of paper in portrait mode cut in half. The lettering is typed rather than hand-drawn like the lettering found on the front of the insert.



1st insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger" opened

1st Insert of Box, Left (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert1-left.jpg>) Hand Side: "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

The information on the left-hand side is divided into two sections. The first section reads, "UNCLE ROGER is a computer text novel which is read by retrieving fictional narrative information from three database files. This booklet contains documentation for each file. The files are:". Then listed below this section in three lines are: (Line 1) "A PARTY IN WOODSIDE p.1" (Line 2) "THE BLUE NOTEBOOK p. 3" (Line 3) "TERMINALS P. 5". The "P" is capitalized in the last item in the list. Below "TERMINALS" is a line of 51 plus signs running the length of the insert dividing the first section from the rest of the information on that page. Title information, organized into two lines, "UNCLE ROGER - File 1" and "A PARTY IN WOODSIDE," is set off by another line of 51 plus signs. Following the title information, we are provided some context about the story and an idea of how the story is formulated. Paragraph one reads, "During a long, mostly sleepless night after, a party is remembered fitfully, interspersed with dreams." The second paragraph reads, "The story is read by searching for keywords. The keywords are the names of characters, places, and things which are integral to the story. As you search the keywords you are interested in, the story unfolds in a text file that is as disjointed as the narrator's night." The third paragraph reads: "Like a guest at a real party, you hear snatches of conversation and catch fleeting glimpses of both strangers and old friends. There are occurrences which you never observe. You meet people whom others may never meet. A fragmented, individual memory picture of the party emerges." The series of 51 plus signs run along the bottom of the last line, providing a border for the textual information.

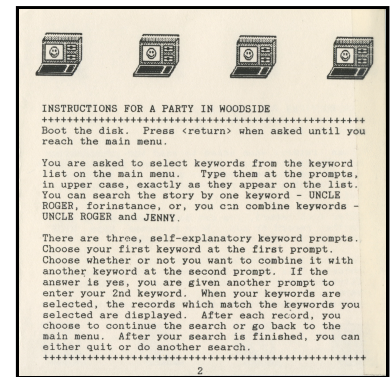


Left hand side of the 1st insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

1st Insert of Box, Right

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert1-right.jpg>) Hand Side: "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

The right hand side of the insert is listed as "page 2." It is divided into two parts. The first contains four hand-drawn images of an Apple II computer featuring a "smiley face" displayed on each monitor. These design elements are distributed evenly across the top of the insert page. Below that section are detailed instructions for interacting with the work. It is introduced with the title, "INSTRUCTIONS FOR A PARTY IN WOODSIDE" followed by a line of 51 plus signs (+) serving as a border between the computer monitors and instructions. The instructions are divided into three paragraphs. Paragraph one reads: "Boot the disk. Press <return> when asked until you reach the main menu." Paragraph two: "You are asked to select keywords from the keyword list on the main menu. Type them at the prompts, in upper case, exactly as they appear on the list. You can search the story by one keyword - UNCLE ROGER, forinstance [sic], or, you can combine keywords - UNCLE ROGER and JENNY." Paragraph three: "There are three, self-explanatory keyword prompts. Choose your first keyword at the first prompt. Choose whether or not you want to combine it with another keywords at the second prompt. If the answer is yes, you are given another prompt to enter your 2nd keyword. When your keywords are selected, the records which match the keywords you selected are displayed. After each record, you can choose to continue the search or go back to the main menu. After your search is finished, you can either quit or do another search." Like the left hand side of the insert page, this one also features a border of plus signs along the bottom. The number "2" is found at the bottom, centered.

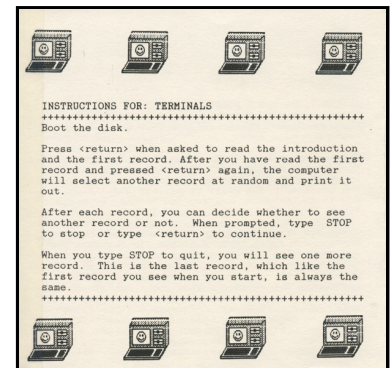


Right hand side of the 1st insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

1st Insert of Box, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert1-back.jpg>): "Uncle Roger by Judy Malloy"

The back of the 1st insert contains instructions for "Terminals." We find the same visual design elements--the four computers with the smiley faces on the monitors--at the top and bottom of this page as we did on the right hand side of the insert (page 2). The text is organized also in a similar manner. Below the four computers at the top of the page we find, "INSTRUCTIONS FOR: TERMINALS" followed by the line of plus signs. Below this section we find the directions articulated in four paragraphs. Paragraph one: "Boot the disk." Paragraph two: "Press <return> when asked to read the introduction and the first record. After you have read the first record and pressed <return> again, the computer will select another record at random and print it out." Paragraph three: "After each record, you can decide whether to see another record or not. When prompted, type STOP to stop or type <return> to continue." Paragraph four: "When you type STOP to quit, you will see one more record. This is the last record, which like the first record you see when you start, is always the same." The border of 51 plus signs follows below the last paragraph and separates it from the four computers at the bottom of the insert page.

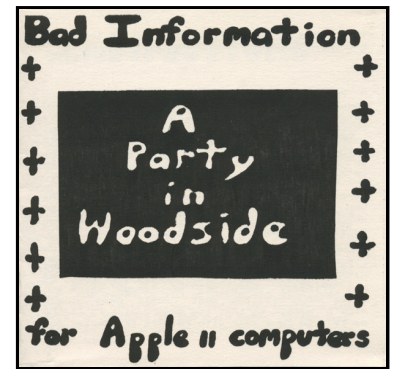


Back of 1st insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

2nd Insert of Box, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert2-front.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside".

Printed in heavy, white card stock. The 2nd insert of the box introduces readers to Part One of the novel—"A Party in Woodside." The insert's design, once again, follows the general design of the box and 1st insert. A black square (4 1/4" x 3 3/4"), found at the center of the insert, is surrounded by a white border that measures 1 1/4" at the top, 1 3/8" at the bottom, 5/8" on the left and 3/4" on the right. Black lettering runs along the top, right, left, and bottom of the border. On the top above the label we see "Bad Information". Running along the right side of the black label are six plus signs (+) evenly distributed. At the bottom we read "for Apple II computers." Plus signs are found along the left hand side of the label, matching those on the right hand side.

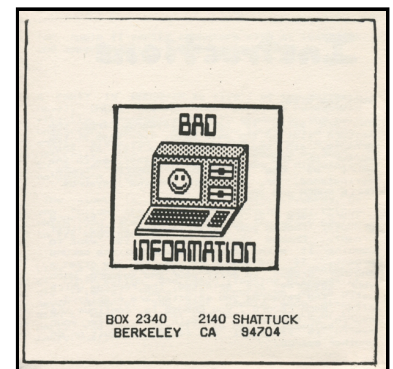


Front of 2nd insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

2nd Insert of Box, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert2-back.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside"

The back of the 2nd insert repeats the motif used right hand side and back of the 1st insert: an Apple II computer featuring a "smiley face" displayed on its monitor. The design, however, is larger in size on this insert. Above the computer is the word, "BAD," and below, "INFORMATION"—the name Malloy gave to one of her first digital projects that became the name she continued to give to her practice. A hand-drawn box outlines the computer and company name. The box measures 2 9/16" x 2 7/16". Below the logo's box we find Malloy's address provided in two lines. Line one reads: "BOX 2340" and "2140 SHATTUCK". Line two is centered within the first line and reads: "BERKELEY, CA 94704". The logo box and address are contained in another box, also outlined in black that serves as a border for the insert. This larger box is 3/16" (top) x 3/16" (bottom) x 1/8" (left) x 1/8" (right).

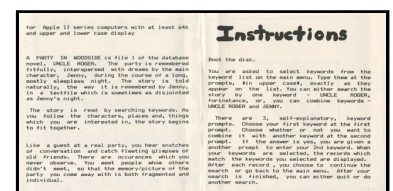


Back of 2nd insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

2nd Insert of Box, Opened

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert2-open.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside"

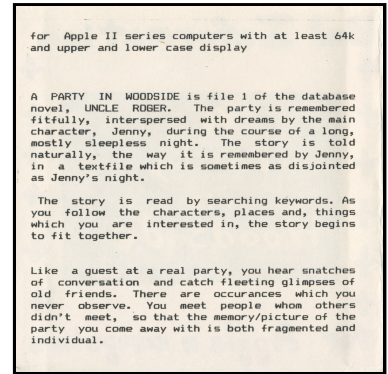
The 2nd insert opens to a size of 11" x 5 3/8"—that is, almost a regular size sheet of paper in portrait mode cut in half. The lettering is typed rather than hand-drawn like the lettering found on the front of the insert. The typeface differs from the first insert in that it is larger in size and heavier in appearance.



2nd insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger" opened

2nd Insert of Box Left (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert2-left.jpg>) Hand Side: "A Party in Woodside"

The left hand side of the 2nd insert is divided into four paragraphs of textual information. Paragraphs 2-4 are very similar to the information in the left hand side of the first insert (*Uncle Roger*). Unique information to this insert, therefore, is found in the first paragraph, which reads, "for Apple II series computers with at least 64K and upper and lower case display." The second paragraph provides background of the story and more detail than that of the 1st insert. It reads, "A PARTY IN WOODSIDE is file 1 of the database novel, UNCLE ROGER. The party is remembered fitfully, interspersed with dreams by the main character, Jenny, during the course of a long, mostly sleepless night. The story is told naturally, the way it is remembered by Jenny, in a textfile which is sometimes as disjointed as Jenny's night." The third paragraph offers a general understanding for how to interact with the work as a database novel and is more concise than the information found in the 1st insert: "The story is read by searching keywords. As you follow the characters, places and, [sic] things which you are interested in, the story begins to fit together." The fourth paragraph continues with the explanation of the way the database novel is conceptualized: "Like guests at a real party, you hear snatches of conversation and catch fleeting glimpses of old friends. There are occurrences [sic] which you never observe. You meet people whom others didn't meet, so that the memory/picture of the party you come away with is both fragmented and individual."

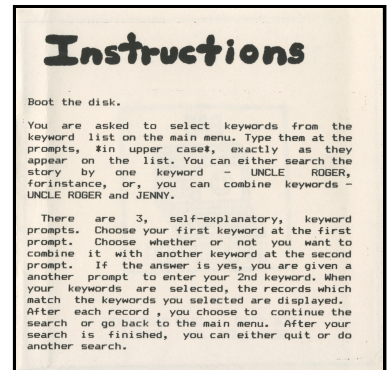


Left hand side of the 2nd insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

2nd Insert of Box, Right

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert2-right.jpg>) Hand Side: "A Party in Woodside"

The right hand side of the 2nd insert is divided into four paragraphs containing much of the same textual information as that found in the first insert (*Uncle Roger*). Paragraphs one and two are, however, more condensed. Paragraph one in this insert is comprised of one word, "Instructions", hand-lettered by Malloy. Paragraph two, presenting typed text, simply tells the user to "Boot the disk." Paragraphs three and four both provide similar information as that found in the first insert. Paragraph three reads, "You are asked to select keywords from the keyword list on the main menu. Type them at the prompts, * in upper case,* exactly as they appear on the list. You can either search the story by one keyword - UNCLE ROGER, forinstance [sic], or, you can combine keywords - UNCLE ROGER and JENNY." The inclusion of the asterisks highlighting "in upper case" and the word "either" in the search parameters are unique to this insert. Note that the error, "forinstance", is retained. Paragraph four: "There are 3, self-explanatory, [sic] keywords prompts. Choose your first keyword at the first prompt. Choose whether or not you want to combine it with another keyword at the second prompt. If the answer is yes, you are given another prompt to enter your 2nd keyword. When your keywords are selected, the records which match the keywords you selected are displayed. After each record, you choose to continue the search or go back to the main menu. After your search is finished, you can either quit or do another search." This textual information differs in the substitution of the number "3" for the word, "three" found in the first insert and the addition of the erroneous comma between "self-



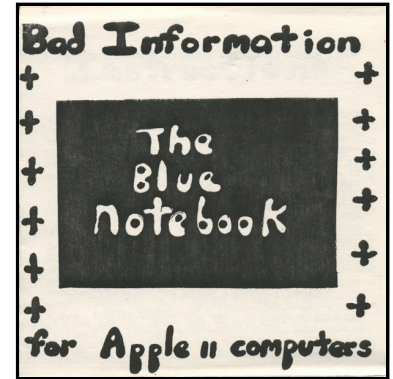
Right hand side of the 2nd insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

explanatory" and "keyword." It is also important to note that the type of the 2nd insert is larger than that of the first and suggests that a different computer was used to produce it.

3rd Insert of Box, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert3-front.jpg>): "The Blue Notebook"

The 3rd insert of the box introduces readers to Part Two of the novel, "The Blue Notebook." The insert's design, once again, follows the general design of the box and 1st insert. A black square (4 1/4" x 3 3/4"), found at the center of the insert, is surrounded by a white border (top, 1 1/4"; bottom, 1 3/8"; left, 5/8"; right, 3/4"). Black lettering runs along the top, right, left, and bottom of the border. On the top above the label we see "Bad Information". Running along the right side of the black label are six plus signs (+) evenly distributed. At the bottom we read "for Apple II computers." Plus signs are found along the left hand side of the label, matching those on the right hand side.

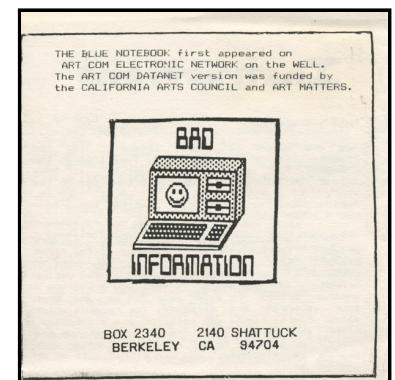


Front of 3rd insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

3rd Insert of Box, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert3-back.jpg>): "The Blue Notebook"

The back of the 3rd insert repeats the back of the 2nd. The design in the center is the Apple II computer featuring a "smiley face" displayed on its monitor surrounded by a black border. Malloy's address is located at the bottom of the insert. All information contained in a larger box provides a border effect for the insert. As in the 2nd insert we see above the computer the word, "BAD," and below, "INFORMATION". The hand-drawn box outlining the computer and the company name measures 2 9/16" x 2 7/16". Unlike the 2nd insert, the third offers four lines of textual information at the top, above the logo. Line one reads, "THE BLUE NOTEBOOK first appeared on". Line two, "ART COM ELECTRONIC NETWORK on the WELL." Line three: "The ART COM DATANET version was funded by". Line four: "the CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL and ART MATTERS." Below the logo's box we find Malloy's address provided in two lines. Line one reads: "BOX 2340" and "2140 SHATTUCK". Line two is centered within the first line and reads: "BERKELEY, CA 94704". The logo box and address are contained in another box, also outlined in black that serves as a border for the insert. This larger box is (top) 3/16" x (right) 3/16" x (bottom) 1/8" x left (1/8").

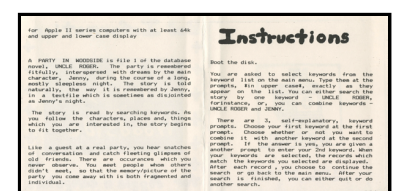


Back of 3rd insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

3rd Insert of Box, Opened

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert2-open.jpg>): "The Blue Notebook"

The 3rd insert is slightly larger than the 1st and 2nd insert. It opens to a size of 11" x 5 1/2"—that is, exactly the size of a sheet of paper in portrait mode cut in half. The production of this insert also differs



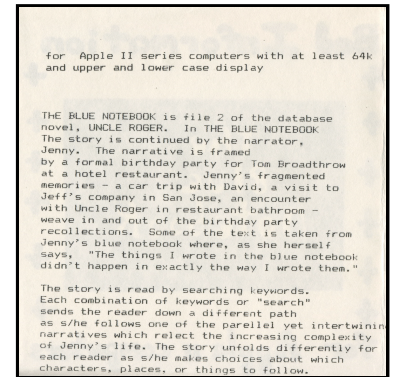
3rd insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger" opened

from the previous two inserts in the way the information is displayed: The textual information is not centered and margins widely vary. The typeface also differs from the first insert in that it is larger in size and from the second in that it is not as heavy in appearance.

3rd Insert of Box, Left

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert3-left.jpg>) Hand Side: "The Blue Notebook"

The left hand side of the 3rd insert is divided into three paragraphs of textual information. Paragraph one repeats the same information found in the 1st insert, while Paragraphs two and three provide background on the story and information about interacting with the work, respectively. Paragraph one reads, "for Apple II series computers with at least 64K and upper and lower case display." Paragraph two reads: "THE BLUE NOTEBOOK is file 2 of the database novel, UNCLE ROGER. In THE BLUE NOTEBOOK The [sic] story is continued by the narrator, Jenny. The narrative is framed by a formal birthday party for Tom Broadthrow at a hotel restaurant. Jenny's fragmented memories—a car trip with David, a visit to Jeff's company in San Jose, an encounter with Uncle Roger in [the, sic] restaurant bathroom—weave in and out of the birthday party recollections. Some of the text is taken from Jenny's blue notebook where, as she herself says, 'The things I wrote in the blue notebook didn't happen in exactly the way I wrote them.'" Paragraph three tells the user that, "The story is read by searching keywords. Each combination of keywords or "search" sends the reader down a different path as s/he follows one of the parallel yet intertwining narratives which reflect the increasing complexity of Jenny's life. The story unfolds differently for each reader as s/he makes choices about which characters, places, or things to offer."

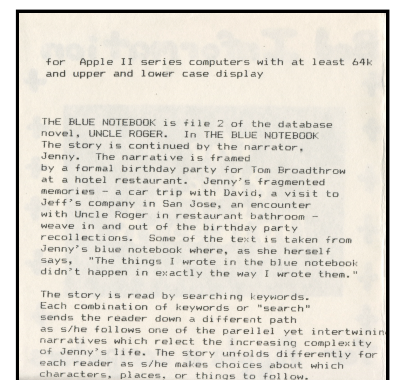


Left hand side of the 3rd insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

3rd Insert of Box, Right Hand Side:

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert3-right.jpg>) "The Blue Notebook"

The right hand side of the 3rd insert is almost identical to that of the 2nd. It is divided into four paragraphs. Paragraph one reads, "Instructions", hand-lettered by Malloy. Paragraph two, presenting typed text, tells the user to "Boot the disk." Paragraph three reads, "You are asked to select keywords from the keyword list on the main menu. Type them at the prompts, * in upper case,* exactly as they appear on the list. You can either search the story by one keyword - UNCLE ROGER, for instance [sic], or. [sic] you can combine keywords - UNCLE ROGER and JENNY." The erroneous period found after the word, "or," is the only difference between this paragraph and that of the 2nd insert. Paragraph four: "There are 3, self-explanatory, [sic] keywords prompts. Choose your first keyword at the first prompt. Choose whether or not you want to combine it with another keyword at the second prompt. If the answer is yes, you are given another prompt to enter your 2nd keyword. When your keywords are selected, the records which match the keywords you selected are displayed. After each record, you choose to continue the search or go back to the



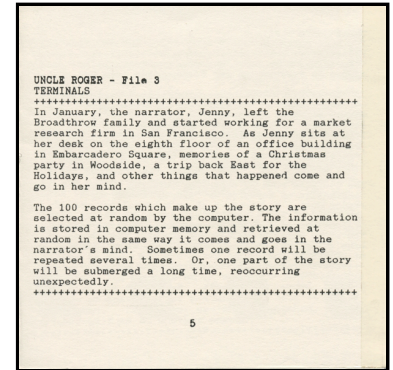
Left hand side of the 3rd insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

main menu. After your search is finished, you can either quit or do another search." This textual information matches the information found in the 2nd insert.

4th Insert of Box, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert4-front.jpg>): "Terminals"

The 4th insert introduces readers to Part Three of the novel, "Terminals." The insert's design is completely different than that of the other three inserts in that it presents the reader with textual information highlighted in the plus sign (+) border used to punctuate information on the back of the 1st insert. The textual information is also organized into three sections. Section one includes title information; section two, background about the story and directions for interacting with it; and section three, the page number. Line one of the title information in section one reads, "UNCLE ROGER – File 3." Line two: "TERMINALS". This section is followed by 51 plus signs that make up a border separating this section with section two. Section two contains two paragraphs. The first reads, "In January, the narrator, Jenny, left the Broadthrow family and started working for a market research firm in San Francisco. As Jenny sits at her desk on the eighth floor of an office building in Embarcadero Square, memories of a Christmas party in Woodside, a trip back East for the Holidays [sic], and other things that happened come and go in her mind." Paragraph two reads, "The 100 records which make up the story are selected at random by the computer. The information is stored in computer memory and retrieved at random in the same way it comes and goes in the narrator's mind. Sometimes one record will be repeated several times. Or, one part of the story will be submerged a long time, reoccurring unexpectedly." The last paragraph is followed by 51 plus signs (+), setting the section from the other two. The final section is comprised of only the number 5, signifying the page. Since the only other insert with a page number is the 1st insert and the number provided, "2," is found on the insert's third page, the numbering system of this archive does not follow any particular logic. However, the first insert—the one associated with the introduction to *Uncle Roger*—does alert the reader that there is page numbering connected to particular files and that page 5 "contains documentation" for "Terminals." The issue with the numbering system has led Malloy to suspect that the version of *Uncle Roger* loaned us is one of the "seconds" not sent to *Art Com Catalog*.

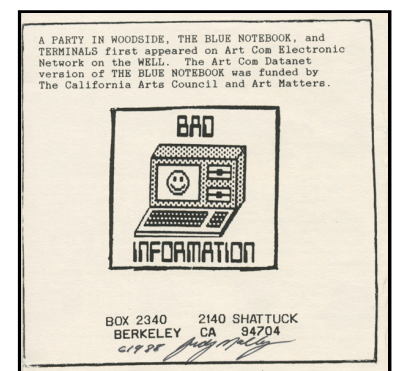


Front of 4th insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

4th Insert of Box, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert4-back.jpg>): "Terminals"

The back of the 4th insert is similar to the 3rd. It is divided into three sections with the first section providing publication and funding information, the second containing the logo, and the third stating Malloy's address. This insert, however, is signed by Malloy and dated, 1988. Section one reads, "A PARTY IN WOODSIDE, THE BLUE NOTEBOOK, and TERMINALS first appeared on the Art Com Electronic Network on the WELL. The Art Com Datanet version of THE BLUE NOTEBOOK was funded by The California Arts Council and Art Matters."



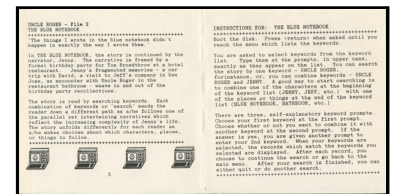
Back of 4th insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

and Art Matters." Section two repeats the back of the 2nd and 3rd inserts—an Apple II computer featuring a "smiley face" displayed on its monitor with a black border. Above the computer appears the word, "BAD," and below, "INFORMATION". The hand-drawn box outlining the computer and the company name measures 2 1/2" x 2 1/2", so varies from the other two inserts. Section three containing Malloy's address is provided in two lines. Line one reads: "BOX 2340" and "2140 SHATTUCK". Line two is centered within the first line and reads: "BERKELEY, CA 94704". Malloy's signature begins with the copyright symbol and 1988, followed by "Judy Malloy." The logo box and address are contained in another box, also outlined in black that serves as a border for the insert. This larger box is (top) 3/16" x (right) 1/4" x (bottom) 3/16" x left (1/16").

4th Insert of Box, Opened:

(<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert4-open.jpg>) "Terminals"

The 4th insert is the exact size of the first insert, x 5 7/16, so is slightly larger than the 2nd and slightly smaller than the 3rd inserts. Additionally, its typeface matches that of the first insert.

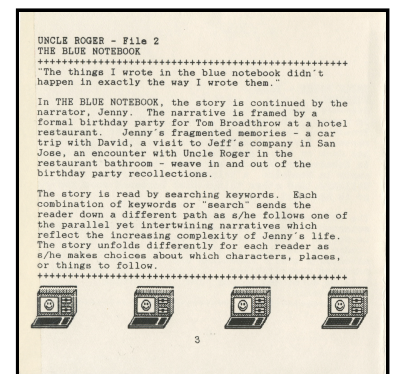


4th insert of the artists' box of Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger opened

4th Insert of Box, Left

(<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert4-left.jpg>) Hand Side: "Terminals"

The left hand side of the 4th insert provides information for "The Blue Notebook." It is divided into four sections: the title, information about "The Blue Notebook" including story background and directions, the design motif, and the page number. Section one presents the title in two lines. Line one reads, "UNCLE ROGER – File 2"; Line two, "THE BLUE NOTEBOOK". Section two is comprised of three paragraphs and is separated from the other two sections by the same 51 plus sign (+) border used to punctuate information on the back of the 1st insert and front of the 4th. The first paragraph reads, "The things I wrote in the blue notebook didn't happen in exactly the way I wrote them." However, the next two paragraphs are almost identical to those found in the left hand side of the second insert, associated with "The Blue Notebook." It reads, "In THE BLUE NOTEBOOK, the story is continued by the narrator, Jenny. The narrative is framed by a formal birthday party for Tom Broadthrow at a hotel restaurant. Jenny's fragmented memories—a car trip with David, a visit to Jeff's company in San Jose, an encounter with Uncle Roger in the restaurant bathroom—weave in and out of the birthday party collections." The only difference between this textual information and that of the 2nd insert is the revision to the error—the missing "the" before the word "restaurant." The second paragraph reads, "The story is read by searching keywords. Each combination of keywords or "search" sends the readers down a different path as s/he follows one of the parallel yet intertwining narratives which reflect the increasing complexity of Jenny's life. The story unfolds differently for each reader as s/he makes choices about which characters, places, or things to follow." The only difference between this paragraph and the one from the 2nd insert is that the word, "reflect," is corrected from "relect." Following the border of 51 plus signs (+), we find the four Apple II computers with the smiley faces displayed on each of the monitors, centered on the page. The fourth section contains the page number, "3."

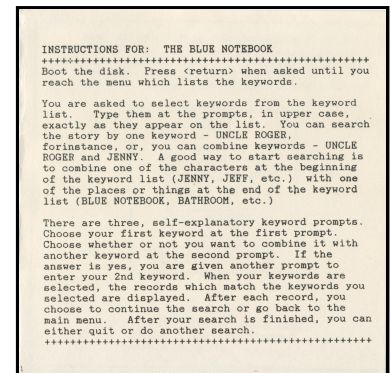


Left hand side of the 4th insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

4th Insert of Box, Right

(<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-insert4-right.jpg>) Hand Side: "Terminals"

The right hand side of the 4th insert is organized into two sections: a title and directions for interacting with "The Blue Notebook" highlighted by the 51 plus sign (+) border. The title reads, "INSTRUCTIONS FOR: THE BLUE NOTEBOOK". The second section is divided into three paragraphs and provides some of the most detailed directions for interacting with Uncle Roger than seen anywhere else in the inserts. Paragraph one reads, "Boot the disk. Press <return> when asked until you reach the menu which lists the keywords." Paragraph two continues with the familiar directions, "You are asked to select keywords from the keyword list. Type them at the prompts, in upper case, exactly as they appear on the list. You can search the story by one keyword—UNCLE ROGER, for instance, or, you can combine keywords—UNCLE ROGER and JENNY." We see the erroneous period from 2nd insert associated with "The Blue Notebook" corrected to a comma, but "forinstance" remains unchanged. Additionally, the asterisks used in the 2nd insert are eliminated from this insert's textual information. The second paragraph continues with more detail about how to interact with the work: "A good way to start searching is to combine one of the characters at the beginning of the keyword list (JENNY, JEFF, etc.) with one of the places or things at the end of the keyword list (BLUE NOTEBOOK, BATHROOM, etc.)" A period is missing from the end of this sentence. Finally, the third paragraph reads, "There are three, self-explanatory keyword prompts. Choose your first keyword at the first prompt. Choose whether or not you want to combine it with another keyword at the second prompt. If the answer is yes, you are given another prompt to enter your 2nd keyword. When your keywords are selected, the records which match the keywords you selected are displayed. After each records, you choose to continue the search or go back to the main menu. After your search is finished, you can either quit or do another search."

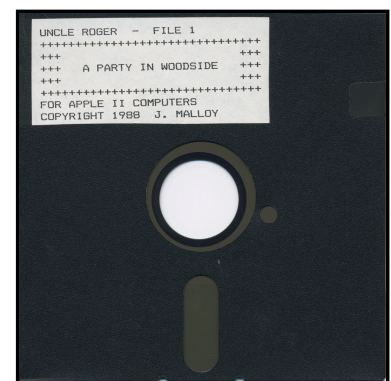


Right hand side of the 4th insert of Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger"

Floppy Disk (File 1), Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-floppy2-front.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside"

The floppy disk for "A Party in Woodside" is a standard 5 1/4" size floppy disk, introduced in 1976 and in wide use until it disappeared from the market in the mid-1990s. By 1988—the same year that Malloy's work was published—it was already being outsold by the 3 1/4" floppy disk. A white label measuring 3 1/2" x 1 1/2" is placed on the top left hand side of the disk. The information is organized into three sections. Section one contains the title, "UNCLE ROGER -- FILE 1". Section two is set off by the border of plus signs (+), one long line of 31 at both the top and bottom and three lines of three on the left and right side. Inside this border we find, "A PARTY IN WOODSIDE". Below the bottom border is Section three, comprised of two lines. Line one reads, "FOR APPLE II COMPUTERS". Line two, "COPYRIGHT 1988 J. MALLOY". There are no other distinguishing features on this floppy disk.

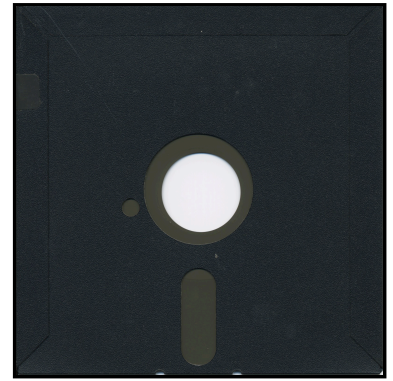


Front of floppy disk of Judy Malloy's "A Party In Woodside"

Floppy Disk (File 1), Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-floppy2-back.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside"

The back has no packaging or design.

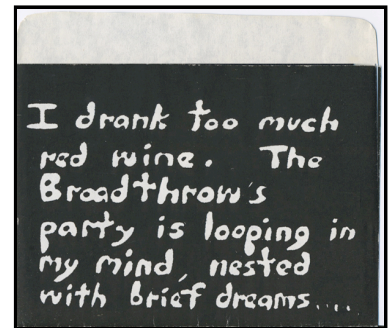


Back of floppy disk for "A Party In Woodside" by Judy Malloy

Sleeve 1, Front

(<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-sleeve1-front.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside"

The 5 1/4-inch floppy disk of "A Party in Woodside" was packaged in a hand-made black sleeve that measures 5 5/8" x 4 3/8". The hand-made quality of the sleeve is apparent in the slightly slanted cut on the back portion. When inserted into the sleeve, the disk appears above the top of the sleeve by approximately 1/2". The title of the disk found on the disk's label is visible above the front of the sleeve. On the sleeve we find the words lettered in white, "I drank too much red wine. The Broadthrow's party is looping in my mind, nested with brief dreams."

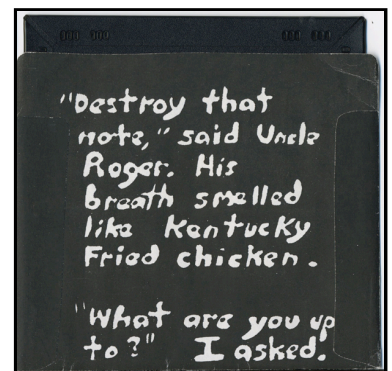


Front of the sleeve for "A Party in Woodside's" floppy disk

Sleeve 1, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-sleeve1-back.jpg>): "A Party in Woodside"

On the back of the sleeve we find hand-lettered text like that of the front of the sleeve. We read, "'Destroy that note,' said Uncle Roger. His breath smelled like Kentucky Fried Chicken. 'What are you up to?' I asked." We find space between the exchange between the two characters, and the text is not centered on the sleeve. There is a 3/4" margin at the top and 1/4" margin at the bottom of the sleeve.



Back of the sleeve for "A Party in Woodside's" floppy disk

Floppy Disk (File 2), Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-bn-floppy-front.jpg>): "The Blue Notebook"

This disk is marked by a hand-made black label on the top left hand side, measuring a general size of 2 3/8" x 1 5/8". The corners of the label are rounded, also irregularly. The text is hand-lettered and reads, "The Blue Notebook". The three words appear on its own line and are centered.

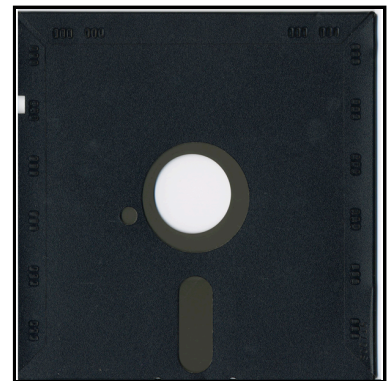


The front of the floppy disk of Judy Malloy's "The Blue Notebook"

Floppy Disk (File 2), Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-floppy-back.jpg>): "The Blue Notebook"

The back of this disk is, like the first disk, unadorned, but it is of a different type. It is marked by a line of six groupings of three small rectangles equally distributed along the left and right sides. The top contains four groupings of three small rectangles, two on each corner. Embossed on the disk is the number "800716". It is clear that the black plastic of the disk has been folded and the markings are actually the method by which the plastic is held together.

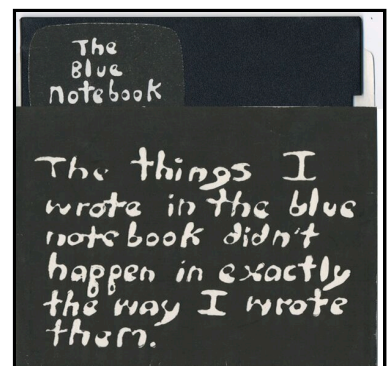


Back of floppy disk of Judy Malloy's "The Blue Notebook"

Sleeve 2, Front

(<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-sleeve-front.jpg>): Front "The Blue Notebook"

Like the 5 1/4 floppy disk of "A Party in Woodside", the disk for "The Blue Notebook" was packaged in a hand-made black sleeve that measures 5 5/8" x 4 3/8". The hand-made quality of the sleeve is apparent in the slightly slanted cut on the back portion. When inserted into the sleeve, the disk appears above the top of the sleeve by approximately 1/2". The title of the disk found on the disk's label is visible above the front of the sleeve. On the sleeve one we find the words lettered in white, "The things I wrote in the blue notebook didn't happen in exactly the way I wrote them."



Front of the sleeve for "The Blue Notebook's" floppy disk

Sleeve 2, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-sleeve2-back.jpg>): "The Blue Notebook"

Unlike the sleeve for "A Party at Woodside," there are no markings on the back of this sleeve.



Back of the sleeve for "The Blue Notebook's" floppy disk


« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-readers-traversals--interviews?path=judy-malloy>)

Continue to “History of Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-judy-malloys-uncle-roger?path=judy-malloy>)



(<http://drc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://drc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 122 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-its-content-for-judy-malloys-uncle-roger.122>) of this page, updated 11/5/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-its-content-for-judy-malloys-uncle-roger.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-its-content-for-judy-malloys-uncle-roger.meta>)

 (<http://scalar.usc.edu/scalar>) Powered by Scalar (<http://scalar.usc.edu/scalar>) (2.6.9 (<https://github.com/anvc/scalar>)) | Terms of Service (<http://scalar.usc.edu/terms-of-service/>) | Privacy Policy (<http://scalar.usc.edu/privacy-policy/>) | Scalar Feedback (<http://scalar.usc.edu/contact/>)

History of Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger

```
Enter your selection, M for previous menu
or control-d to exit.
: 4

//////////
ART COM ELECTRONIC
////////// NETWORK //////////

UNCLE ROGER is a three part interactive novel
which is read by retrieving fictional narrative
information. In the first two parts or "files",
each reader follows an individual path through the
story by searching key elements called "keywords".
File 1, A PARTY IN WOODSIDE, is read by searching
one keyword. File 2, THE BLUE NOTEBOOK, is read
by searching combinations of keywords. The third
file, TERMINALS, simulates the narrator's memory
patterns. It is read by asking the computer to
retrieve narrative information at random.

Please enter the number of your selection at the
prompt below.

1. File 1. - A PARTY IN WOODSIDE
2. File 2 - THE BLUE NOTEBOOK
3. File 3 - TERMINALS
4. Return to the Start Menu

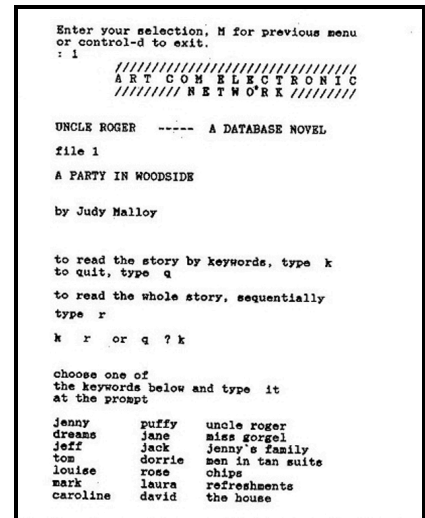
Enter your selection, M for previous menu
or control-d to exit.
: 1
```

"Uncle Roger's" menu from ACEN

The first part of this information, entitled "History of *Uncle Roger's* Production, has been adapted from the timeline Malloy provided Grigar about the production of *Uncle Roger*. The only changes made to this document is that it has been put into a narrative format and in 3rd person. The second part, entitled "The Menu for the IBM BASIC Version," is derived from information that Malloy sent to Grigar about the PC version of *Uncle Roger*. It is reproduced exactly in the manner that Malloy wrote it.

Part 1: History of *Uncle Roger's* Production

Uncle Roger began in April 1986, when at Carl Loeffler's invitation, Malloy went online on *Art Com Electronic Network* (ACEN) on *The WELL* (*Whole Earth 'Lectric Link*). By August she began writing the text and designing the structure of File I of "Uncle Roger: A Party in Woodside." Programming for "A Party in Woodside" started in the fall 1986 and was undertaken in BASIC. At that time Malloy created the authoring software BASIC Narrabase. On December 1 1986, using the BBS topic form as a story telling vehicle, Malloy put "A Party in Woodside" on the net on ACEN



"Uncle Roger's" interface for ACEN

(https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/ACEN_ur_party.jpg) as an online serial narrative. Keywords are included so that users can use any database software to create their own version of the work.

On January 29, 1987 the telling of "A Party in Woodside" on *ACEN* was completed. Malloy began work on programming "A Party in Woodside" with UNIX shell scripts, and *ACEN* published it as an interactive hyperfiction on *ACEN Datanet*, which also published works by John Cage and Jim Rosenberg. In July 1987 she began telling the next part of the story, "The Blue Notebook," File 2 of *Uncle Roger* on *ACEN*. Her essay, "Information as an Artists Material," was published in *Whole Earth Review* no. 57:48-49, Winter, 1987. It included *Uncle Roger*. Also that year Malloy created the first BASIC artists' book disk version of "A Party in Woodside," and this version was distributed by *Art Com*. The disk version of "A Party in Woodside" was exhibited at Ultimatum II, Exhibition, Images du Futur '87, Montreal, Canada, September 1987.

Throughout 1987-1988 Malloy programmed "The Blue Notebook" with UNIX shell scripts with funding from The California Arts Council and Art Matters. The interactive version of "The Blue Notebook" was published online on *ACEN Datanet*.

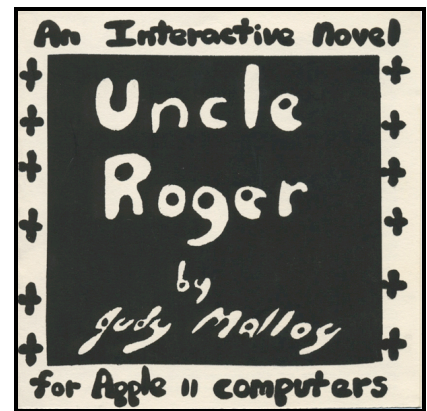
In 1988 Malloy expanded the Narrabase system for file 3 of *Uncle Roger* to include a generative function implemented with both UNIX shell scripts and BASIC. File 3 of *Uncle Roger*, "Terminals," was published on *ACEN Datanet* as an interactive generative hypertext, programmed with UNIX shell scripts. During this time, all three files of *Uncle Roger* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/ur-front.jpg>) were implemented in BASIC

Narrabase, self-published on disk with packaging and documentation, and distributed internationally by Art Com (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/malloy-art-com-sized.jpg>). Based on her Card Catalog HOME (circa 1978), *Molasses* (for MacIntosh Computers/HyperCard), one of the first HyperCard hyperfictions, was produced at the *Whole Earth Review* under sponsorship of Apple and self-published in 1988 on disk with packaging.

In November 1988 both *Uncle Roger* and *Molasses* were included in the traveling exhibition, Art Com Software: Digital Concepts and Expressions, held at the Tisch School of the Arts and New York University, in New York City, from November 4 – 22. The show also traveled to San Jose State University, University of Colorado, Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria), and Carnegie Mellon University. The show was reviewed by *High Performance* and *Art Week*. Malloy began writing and programming *its name was Penelope*, based on the program for file 3 of *Uncle Roger*.

In 1989 the artist book version of *its name was Penelope* was implemented in BASIC Narrabase and exhibited at the Richmond Art Center in an installation with painted text on the wall and the work running on a computer. (See: *Revealing Conversations*, Richmond Art Center, CA, Oct. 3 – Nov. 19, 1989. Catalog). "A Party in Woodside" was exhibited in ARTWARE at A Space, in Toronto, Canada, from April 6 – May 6, 1989. That year *Uncle Roger* was listed as a new genre in the *Wall Street Journal's Centennial Issue*. (See Michael Miller, "A Brave New World: Streams of 1s and 0s" *Wall Street Journal Centennial Issue*, June 23, 1989.)

Malloy's essay, "*Uncle Roger*, an online narrabase" was published in 1991 in *Leonardo* 24(2):195-202, 199, a special issue entitled "Connectivity: Art and Interactive Telecommunications" (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/leonardo-cover.jpg>) and edited by Roy Ascott and Carl Eugene Loeffler.



The front of the hand-made artist box containing all three disks of "Uncle Roger"



Art Com catalog and ad for Judy Malloy's "Uncle Roger: A Party in Woodside," taken from the original at Malloy's office at Princeton

Part 2: The Menu for the IBM BASIC Version

The IBM BASIC version was all on one disk. There was an overarching menu -- which is reprinted below -- and then lines 540, 550 and 560 sent the reader to separate directories for each file, according to what the reader selected.



The cover of special issue of Leonardo, featuring Judy Malloy

```
100 REM Uncle Roger PC Version

110 REM Copyright Judy Malloy 1988

350 FOR x = 1 to 10

400 SOUND 100, .01

410 SOUND 40, .01

415 SOUND 32767,1

420 NEXT x

500 FILE$ = "TITLE"

510 GOSUB 700

512 FOR x = 1 TO 10000: NEXT x

520 CLS: FILE$ = "MENU"

530 GOSUB 700

535 PRINT : INPUT "      ? ", C$

540 IF C$ = "1" THEN CHDIR "party": CHAIN "PARTY.BAS"

550 IF C$ = "2" THEN CHDIR "blue": CHAIN "BLUE.BAS"

560 IF C$ = "3" THEN CHDIR "terms": CHAIN "FILE3.BAS"

565 IF C$ = "stop" THEN GOTO 900

570 IF C$ = "STOP" THEN GOTO 900

580 PRINT "You typed "; C$ :PRINT "Please try again."

585 FOR X=1 TO 10000: NEXT X: GOTO 520

690 END

700 REM FILE PRINTING SUB

710 OPEN FILE$ FOR INPUT AS #1

720 WHILE NOT EOF (1)

730 LINE INPUT #1, LINES$

740 PRINT LINES$
```

```
760 SOUND 100,.01

770 SOUND 40, .01

780 SOUND 32767,1

790 FOR A=1 to 500: NEXT A

800 WEND

810 CLOSE #1

820 PRINT

830 PRINT

840 RETURN

850 END

900 REM end

904 FOR x = 1 to 5

905 SOUND 100, .01

910 SOUND 40, .01

915 SOUND 32767,1

920 NEXT x

930 FILE$ = "title"

940 GOSUB 700

950 LOCATE 10,10: PRINT "THE END"

960 FOR x = 1 to 10000: NEXT x

970 CLS: PRINT: Locate 14,30: PRINT "c1986-1988 Judy Malloy"

975 PRINT:PRINT

980 PRINT TAB(10): PRINT "UNCLE ROGER first appeared on"

990 PRINT TAB(10): PRINT "Art Com Electronic Network (ACEN) on the WELL"

995 PRINT TAB(10): PRINT "The ACEN Datanet version of THE BLUE NOTEBOOK"

997 PRINT TAB(10): PRINT "was funded by The California Arts Council"
```


998 PRINT TAB(10): PRINT "and Art Matters"

1000 END

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-its-content-for-judy-malloys-uncle-roger?path=judy-malloy>)

Continue to “Essays about Malloy's Uncle Roger”

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/malloys-critical-essays?path=judy-malloy>)



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Version 25 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-judy-malloys-uncle-roger.25>) of this page, updated 5/31/2015 |

All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-judy-malloys-uncle-roger.versions>) | Metadata

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-judy-malloys-uncle-roger.meta>)



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Essays about Malloy's Uncle Roger

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid.52>)



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This photo was taken at Malloy's office at Princeton University in fall 2013. It includes Judy Malloy (center) with Dene Grigar (left) and Stuart Moulthrop (right)

This page contains two critical essays by Dene Grigar about Judy

Malloy's *Uncle Roger*. The first, entitled "Exhibiting Uncle Roger: Challenges of Presentation," is derived from a part of the presentation Grigar gave at the Electronic Literature Organization 2013 Conference in Paris, on September 26. The paper, which includes much additional information, was published a year later as "Curating Electronic Literature as Critical and Scholarly Practice"

(<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/8/4/000194/000194.html>) in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*.

The second, "The Structure of Uncle Roger," was published originally for the *Pathfinders* blog in

September 2013. In both cases, the essays have been republished as close to the original versions as

possible; however, as I dug deeper into researching the work, I was able to gather more details about it.

This means that the version of the first article in this book has more exacting information than the article published in the journal.

Contents

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(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar.18>)
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar>) "Exhibiting Uncle Roger: Challenges of Presentation" by Dene Grigar
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar?path=malloys-critical-essays>)

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(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/the-structure-of-uncle-roger-by-dene-grigar>) "The Structure of Uncle Roger," by Dene Grigar
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/the-structure-of-uncle-roger-by-dene-grigar?path=malloys-critical-essays>)

Begin with "'Exhibiting Uncle Roger: Challenges of Presentation" by Dene Grigar"

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« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-judy-malloys-uncle-roger?path=judy-malloy>)

End of path “Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger”;
Continue to “John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid>)



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"Exhibiting Uncle Roger: Challenges of Presentation" by Dene Grigar



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Judy Malloy's Uncle Roger at the Pathfinders Exhibit at the MLA 2014

My second question focuses on obsolescence and the challenges it poses for presenting works in exhibits—what I refer to as the “challenge of presentation.” Christiane Paul addresses this issue for media art in her

seminal essay, “The Myth of Immateriality.” Here she reminds us that “the digital is embedded in various layers of commercial systems and technological industry that continuously define standards for the materialities of any kind of hardware components” (252) and suggests that the constant upgrades of hardware and software may be addressed, in varying degrees of practicalities, by collecting technologies (hardware and software) for the purpose of display, emulating code on newer systems, and migrating works to the next version (269). We can extrapolate much from her ideas, but Paul’s view that the “lowest common denominator for defining new media art” is “its computability” (253) bears attention in that it signals a difference in aesthetics between media art and electronic literature and explains why she values one strategy (emulators) over others (collecting and migration).

Unlike media art where “media” is anchored in the tradition of cinema and “art” is associated with terminologies found in fine art and performance, electronic literature generates from a wide variety of disciplines and practices, among them digital humanities, which itself is described as a “mode of scholarship and institutional units for collaborative, transdisciplinary, and computationally engaged research, teaching, and dissemination (Burdick et al 122). Additionally, electronic literature embraces the technological origins of both coding and writing technologies, declaring this heritage in its genres’ naming convention. Computability—functions made manifest by characters expressed in written code and which drives the words, images, video, animation, sounds, etc., of the work—is the point, is the common denominator connecting hypertext fiction with flash poetry, generative poetry with interactive fiction. So, what is the best way to present electronic literary works produced on systems that have been rendered obsolete?

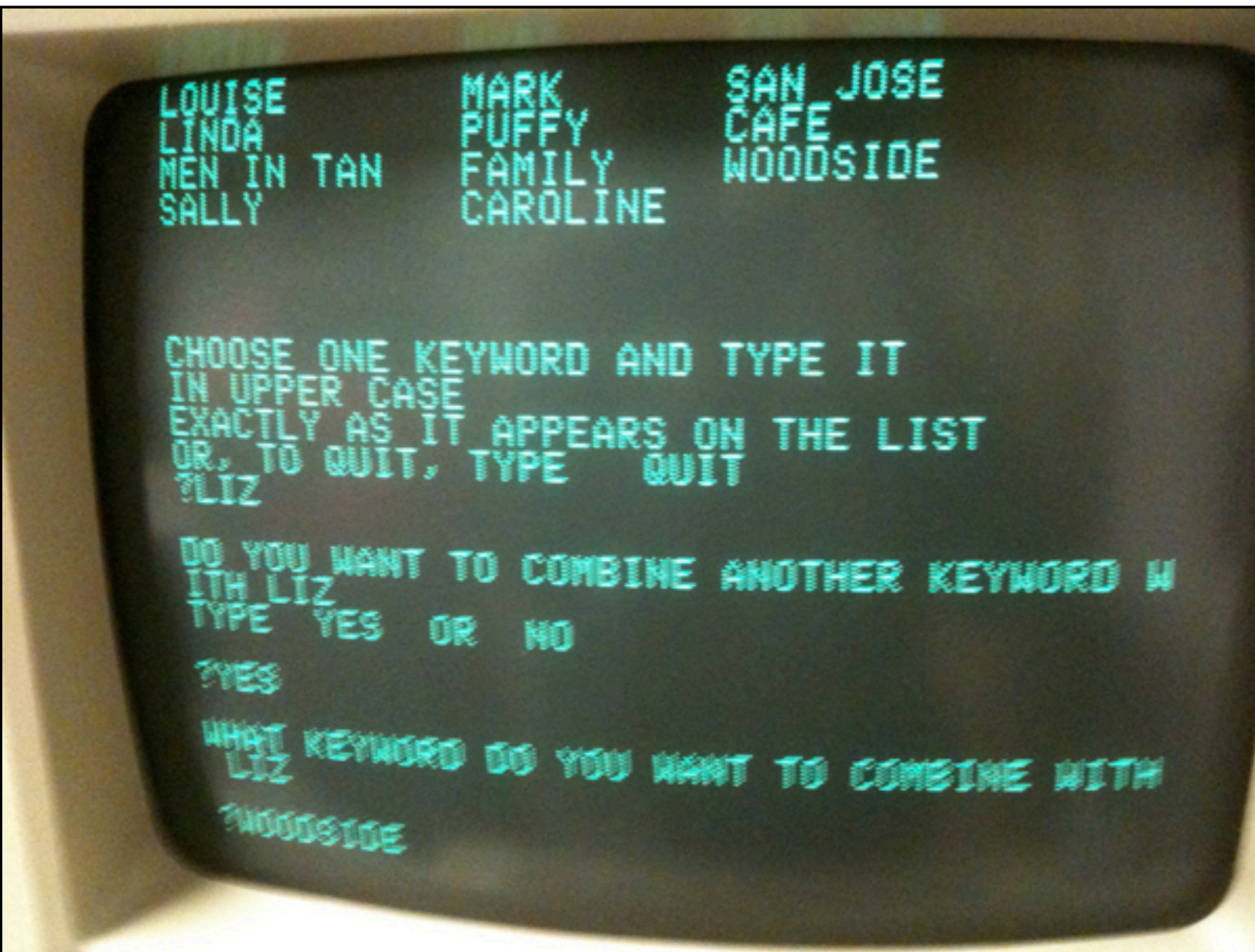


In this photo taken in fall 2013 we see Judy Malloy reading from her work, *Uncle Roger*, on an Apple IIe in her office at Princeton University. With her were Dene Grigar and Stuart Moulthrop.

To answer this question, I turn to Judy Malloy's database narrative, *Uncle Roger*, begun in 1986 and published on the *Whole Earth 'Lectric Linkin* from 1986-1987. It was contemporary with the Apple IIe and was, in fact, produced on this model. Version 1.0 was originally written in BASIC and delivered as a serial novel comprised of 75 lexias over the network. The version that was eventually sold commercially through the catalog, however, was Version 2.0. It was made up of three 5 1/4-inch floppy disks on which Judy organized the material from the lexias of the previous version into three parts: "A Party at Woodside," "The Blue Notebook," and "Terminals." Version 2.0 made it possible for readers to navigate the story by selecting and typing keywords on the command line. Each combination would result in a lexia or series of lexias relating to the keywords typed. Typing "David" followed by "Jenny" in the next query, for example, brings up episodes about the relationship between these two people: David's messy apartment that Jenny recalls, the picture of David's former lover that Jenny tears into tiny pieces and places back into his wallet.

This photo taken by Dene Grigar in October 2013 shows the ad for "Uncle Roger" that ran in ArtCom.

Judy made each hand-made box and contents of Version 2.0 and sold it through *Art Com Catalog*. No one knows exactly how many copies are left, but we do know that two are held at Duke University's library along with other materials that now comprise the *Judy Malloy Collection*, one is located at the Museum of Modern Art, and two others divided, at the moment, between Judy and me. So, to present all these parts of this historically important work in the exhibit at the Modern Language Association conference in Chicago, IL in January, I needed to ask Judy to lend me the floppy I was missing ("Terminals"), then, ship my Apple IIE to Chicago in order to show them. Recognizing that it is difficult for scholars to collect and maintain vintage computers or travel to locations where they could be accessed, Judy did produce Version 3.0, a web version in 1995 that also contains a DOSBox emulator that runs on contemporary computers. [1]



This photo taken by Dene Grigar in October 2013 shows "Uncle Roger" on the Apple IIe that we borrowed for the traversal at Princeton University.

Having access to *Uncle Roger* online sounds like a good solution to the problem of shipping a vintage computer across the U.S. and risking a rare work of electronic literature, but let's step back for a moment and think about the qualities that may be lost if I blithely show Version 2.0 on any Apple IIE or Version 3.0 on a contemporary computer without thinking critically in advance about my choices.



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

This photo taken by Dene Grigar in October 2013 shows "Uncle Roger" displayed on Judy's Dell computer used for the traversal at Princeton University when the Apple IIe broke.

Uncle Roger centers on the semi-conductor chip industry of Silicon Valley of the 1980s, a time in which floppy disks and an Apple IIE computer with its black screen and green dot matrix type were familiar technologies. This particular computer is one of the most robust that Apple ever produced, lasting 11 years on the market. When Judy began posting *Uncle Roger* on the WELL, the computer was only three years old. In fact, Judy wrote *Uncle Roger* on a version of the Apple IIE that constrained her lines to 50

characters, resulting in a narrative poem and Judy finding herself a narrative poet. Later iterations of the computer cause the lines to wrap in ways Judy did not plan for them to, but Version 3.0 running on a contemporary computer keeps the line lengths in tact. What is lost in moving to the newer version, however, is the look and feel of the period—the cultural context of the work itself. On the circa 1988 Apple monitor, the aesthetic of computer and story design meet seamlessly, the time-stamp of the work's technology making sense in the context of the material presence of the computer. Thus, when I showed *Uncle Roger* at the *Pathfinders* exhibit at the MLA where over 5000 literary scholars convene, I needed to be aware that I am doing more than showing content of a work—I was also providing a context for understanding and interpreting the work.

Additionally, as a curator I am taxed with highlighting the unique features of *Uncle Roger*, such as its interactivity and ability to compel audience participation. In fact, the work may very well be one of the first social media narratives, presaging twitterature and other familiar contemporary forms today. With Version 1.0 Judy posted one to two lexias every day, in serial style, to friends on the Art Com Electronic Network (ACEN) who, then responded by chatting with her about the story and riffing off to other topics. "Great stuff, Judy," one reader wrote on December 2, "the ideas and the content are both up to ridiculously high standards. Thanks for the fresh air." Another: "What jacket are you wearing?" (Malloy, *Art Com Electronic Network*). Without this social invention into the work, it means that readers of both Versions 2.0 and 3.0 miss a crucial feature of the work found in Version 1.0.

Translation theory holds that translation is ultimately a betrayal of the text by the translator. Tautologically speaking, the best we can do to bring a work to a reader is just our best (Weaver 119). So, for the *Pathfinders* exhibit, I carted my Apple IIE computer to Chicago since it wraps Judy's text properly and, so, provides a better cultural context for the work than the MacMinis or iMacs I generally use for exhibits do. Unfortunately, all vintage computers were broken in transit. So, the videos of the traversals displayed on tablets provided the only content I could show at the exhibit—along with the "cracked Macs."

Notes:

[1] A more complete history of *Uncle Roger* can be found at Judy Malloy's *Authoring Software*, http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncleroger/uncle_readme.html (http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncleroger/uncle_readme.html).

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Paul, Christiane. "The Myth of Immateriality: Presenting and Preserving New Media." *MediaArtHistories* Ed. Oliver Grau. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007. 251-274.

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([https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/the-structure-of-uncle-roger-by-dene-grigar?
path=malloys-critical-essays](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/the-structure-of-uncle-roger-by-dene-grigar?path=malloys-critical-essays))



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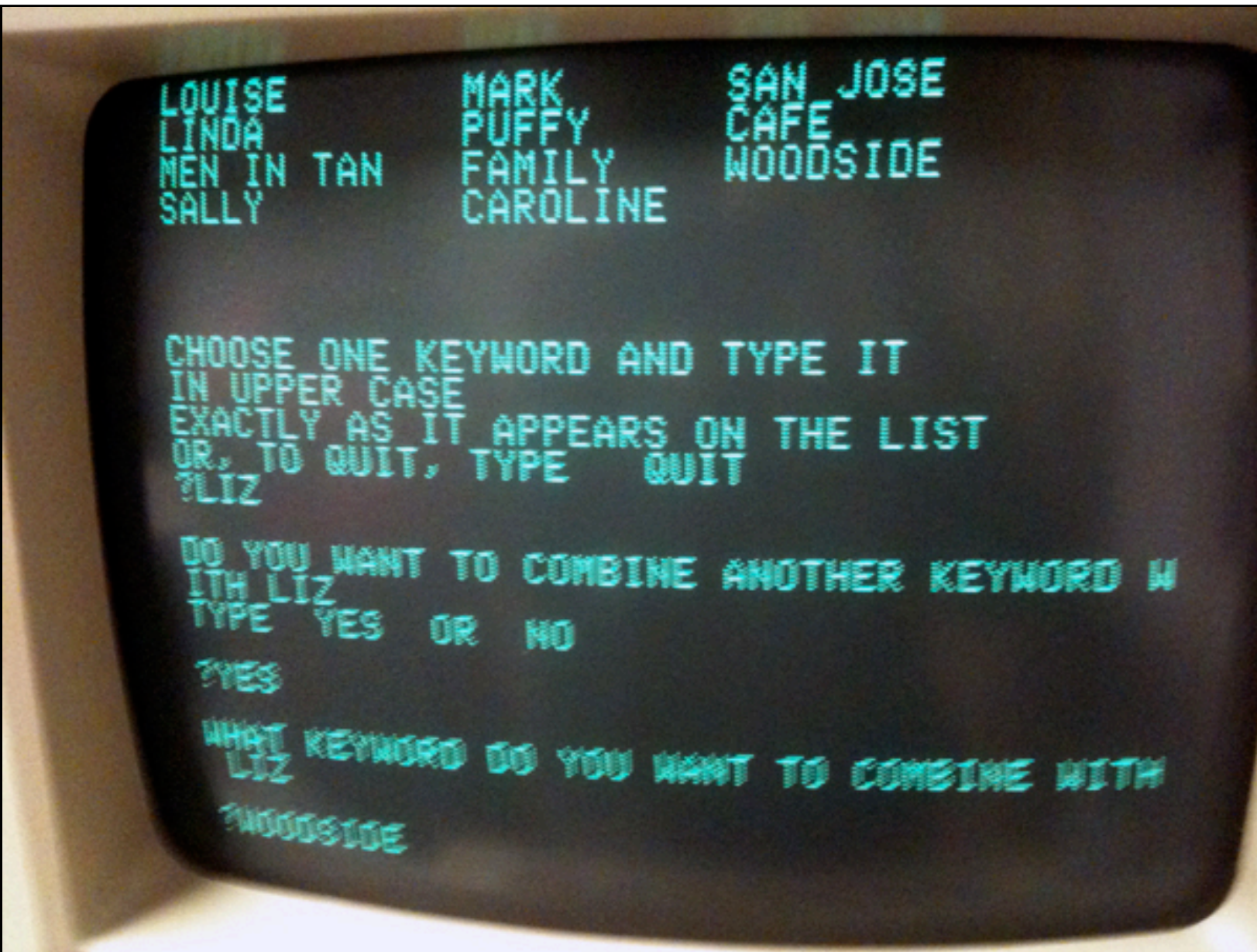
Version 18 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar.18>) of this page, updated 11/5/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar.meta>)



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"The Structure of Uncle Roger," by Dene Grigar

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid.52>)

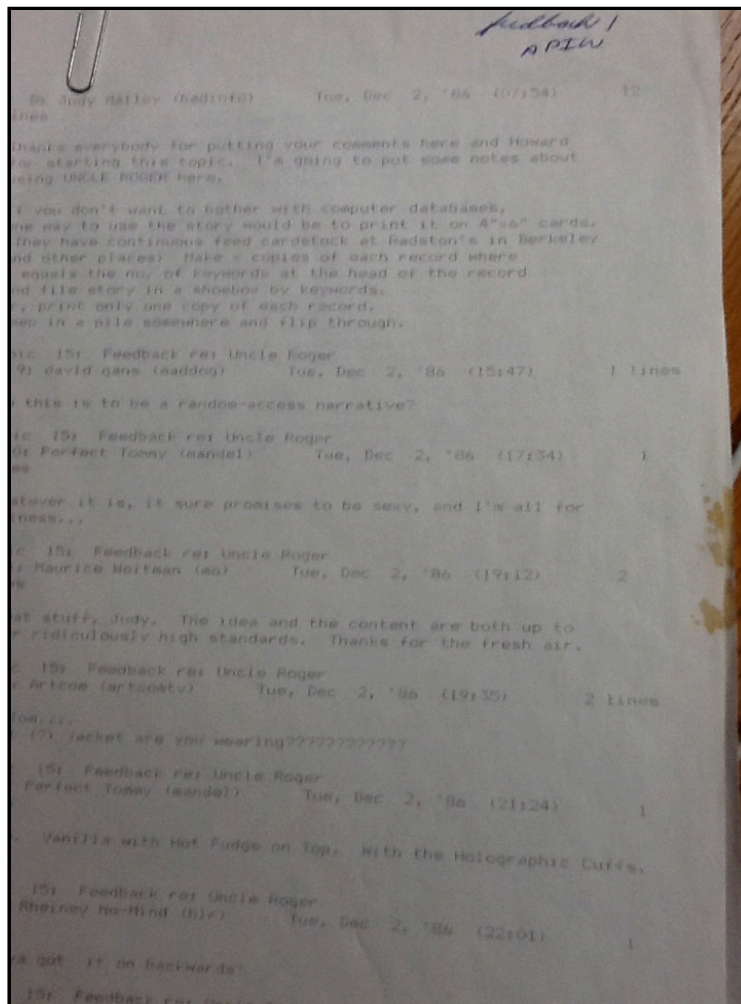


[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Blue Notebook on Apple IIe monitor

Silicon Valley in the 1980s. Success in the semi-conductor chip industry measured by companies that could produce the fastest. Engineers who could deliver it, wooed away with the promise of more money. Industry espionage, a common practice. This is the setting of Judy Malloy's *Uncle Roger*, a serial novel created in BASIC and delivered to the tech savvy audience of the Art Com Electronic Network community that resided in the WELL ("Whole Earth 'Lectric Link") [1] circa 1986.

From the beginning *Uncle Roger* was envisioned as a database narrative. Malloy began the project in 1986, ultimately taking six months to create 100 records (or lexias) and a database that made it possible for readers to navigate the story by selecting and typing keywords on the command line [2]. Each combination would result in a lexia or series of lexias relating to the keywords typed. Typing "David" followed by "Jenny" in the next query, for example, brings up episodes about the relationship between these two people: David's messy apartment that Jenny recalls, the picture of David's former lover that Jenny tears into tiny pieces and places back into his wallet.



This is a photo taken by Dene Grigar in September 2013 at Princeton University of a print out from a conversation between Malloy and another member of the ArtCom community about "Uncle Roger"

The work may very well be one of the first social media narratives, presaging twitterature and other familiar contemporary forms today. Malloy posted one to two lexias every day, in serial style, to friends in her network, who then responded by chatting with her about the story and riffing off to other topics. "Great

stuff, Judy,” one reader wrote on December 2, “the ideas and the content are both up to ridiculously high standards. Thanks for the fresh air.” Another: “What jacket are you wearing?”

Uncle Roger unfolds in three parts. “A Party at Woodside” takes place at, as the title suggests, a party—the ideal situation for keeping the narrative open and introducing the reader to the characters living this heady, highly competitive lifestyle. “Blue Notebook” consists of five parallel narratives told in retrospect by Jenny, a not completely credible narrator, with many of the episodes, a memory inside a memory. “Terminals” is both metaphorically and literally the end of the narrative, told from Jenny’s perspective taking the form of random thoughts.

Both Jenny and Uncle Roger serve as the common thread among the three parts, Jenny as narrator recalling this particular time in our country’s collective history and her uncle as the catalyst driving the action among the various players. Malloy suggests that Roger, a semi-conductor industry analyst (a kind of venture capitalist), is a Falstaffian character who provides comic relief and functions, ultimately, as the *deus ex machina* in a story about power and money in an industry that essentially built the U.S. economy from which we are still reeling, even now.

Limited to 50 characters per line, *Uncle Roger* is a type of constrained poetry. Though not a poet when she began writing *Uncle Roger*, Malloy became one, she says, during the creation of this work. Those who read the work may be struck by the use of alliteration, internal rhyme, and other poetic devices. The repetitive use of the “M” sound in one episode draws out the action, while the liquid sound of multiple “Ls” in another takes us to undulating waves signifying possibly unstable times.

Malloy sold *Uncle Roger* through the *Art Com* catalog beginning 1987. Each copy was a hand-made artists’ book that Malloy refers to as a “material hack.” Hack or not, *Uncle Roger* constitutes one of the first commercially sold works of electronic literature in the U.S., a serialized database novel, artfully hand-produced and structured in a way that compelled readers to interact with its author. [3]

References:

[1] The WELL, founded in 1985, is one of the first social networks. It describes itself as “a cherished destination for conversation and discussion. It is widely known as the primordial ooze where the online community movement was born — where Howard Rheingold first coined the term ‘virtual community.’” See <http://www.well.com> (<http://www.well.com>).

[2] Malloy was originally known at the WELL (re: her “handle,” as names were called) as “badinfo.” Her name later shifted to jmalloy. She was also known as Judy.

[3] The material garnered for this essay is derived from the two-day traversal and set of interviews held with Judy Malloy at her office at Princeton University, on September 7 and 8, 2013. Stuart and I would like to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding to conduct these activities that has led to this posting.

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/exhibiting-uncle-roger-challenges-of-presentation-by-dene-grigar?path=malloys-critical-essays>)

End of path “Essays about Malloy's Uncle Roger”;
Continue to “John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom
Funhouse” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid>)



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John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

John McDaid in the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL)

John G. McDaid is a science fiction writer and citizen journalist from Portsmouth, Rhode Island. His hypermedia novel, *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, published by Eastgate Systems, was a New Media Invision Award finalist in 1993. As a member of the TINAC collective, he has spoken on digital narrative at dozens of colleges and conferences.

He attended the Clarion workshop in 1993 and sold his first short story, the Sturgeon Award-winning “Jigoku no mokushiroku” to *Asimov’s* in 1995. A novelette, “Keyboard Practice,” appeared in the January, 2005 *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and his most recent story, “Umbrella Men,” was the cover story in that magazine in January, 2012. As a citizen journalist, he has written about local news and politics on his site, *harddeadlines.com*, for the past seven years; his reporting has also appeared on *RI Future*.

He attended Syracuse University, did graduate work at the New School University, and is ABD in Media Ecology at NYU. He lives in Portsmouth with his wife, Karen, son, Jack, and their feline companions Curiosity and Eclipse.

Versions

Uncle Buddy’s Phantom Funhouse has been released in four formats, two of which on physical media and published by Eastgate Systems, Inc. The publisher’s copyright date is listed as 1992, though the work was distributed in 1993. Hence, readers will find both dates listed for the work.

★Version 1.0 The Floppy Disk Edition for Macintosh

This edition features a box of five floppy disks; a 12-page installation guide; an installation flyer; a letter from *Vortex: The Anthology of Cyberfiction*; a nine-page short story, entitled “Tree;” two music cassettes, one entitled “Retribution” and the other “The Story of Emily and the Time Machine”

★Version 2.0 The CD-ROM Edition

This edition, distributed in 1993, features a box of one CD; a 12-page installation guide; an installation flyer; a letter from *Vortex: The Anthology of Cyberfiction*; a nine-page short story, entitled “Tree;” two music cassettes, one entitled “Retribution” and the other “The Story of Emily and the Time Machine”

★Version 3.0 The Emulated Edition

This edition created by the author and uploaded to the Internet Archive in January 2018 is a DOSBox emulation of the work that consists of the contents of the disks. No documentation of the other physical media packaged in the box is available.

★Version 4.0 The Web Edition

This edition, developed in 2022/3 by students in Creative Media & Digital Culture and members of the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver, is an archival version for the Web. The physical media is included as downloadable documents or 3D models of the original.

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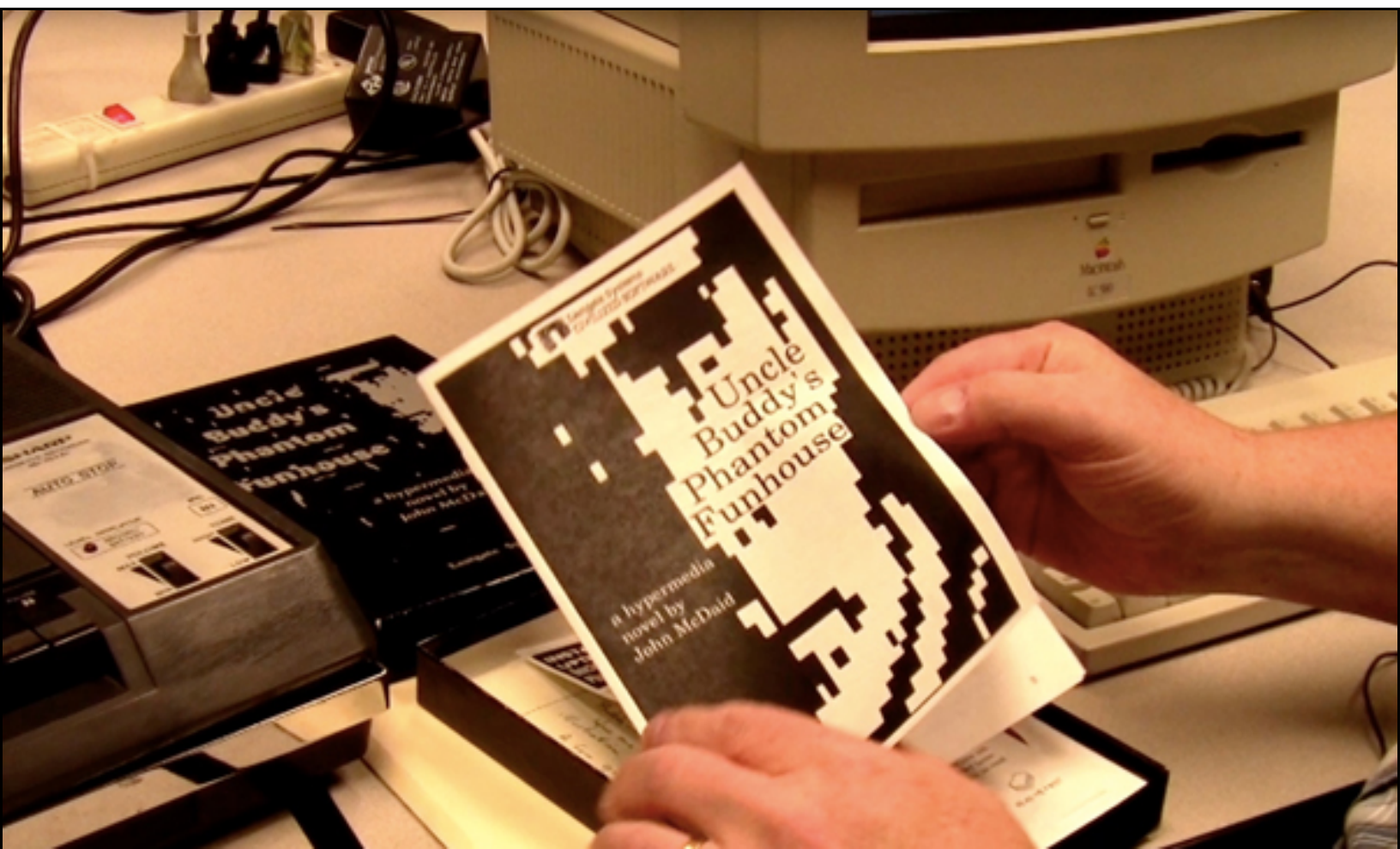
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John McDaid's Artist's Statement



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

John McDaid talking about the content of the box

Sometime in the late 1980s, I was talking about writing with my friend, the mathematician Jim Propp, and he said, as a sort of throwaway challenge, to try imagining what it would take to write a novel that a 20th-century writer could not write. I remember being intrigued by that, and almost immediately realizing that hypermedia was the answer. I couldn't write such a novel, of course, but what I could do was create a space within which such a novel might emerge. I had the great good fortune to stand on the shoulders of giants. I was a student in Neil Postman's Media Ecology program at NYU, and the invited guest at their 1987 conference was Jay David Bolter, who introduced me to Michael Joyce and Mark Bernstein. I was working in Expository Writing at NYU with [Jane] Yellowlees Douglas, and travelled to Yale to meet Stuart Moulthrop and to Brown, where Eli Mylonas, George Landow, and Robert Coover were both doing

pioneering work. There was a fantastic energy in the air around hypertext, like a Tesla coil that we were all tuning in.

Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse was an attempt to use hypermedia to embed the elements of story entirely within situationally appropriate artifacts. The conceit of the fiction was that an attorney has passed into the reader's hands the literary estate of science fiction writer Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk. At one point, I had thought about literally distributing it on a hard drive — something that would only become possible much later — but settled for a hybrid approach, with a marked-up print proof of an unpublished story and two cassettes of music accompanying the digital traces of the vanished author.

As much as possible, I tried to adhere to one of the axioms our little cabal of theorists had cooked up: "all possible endings." While there does exist some set of actions, pegged to times, that can be encountered in the fiction, how the reader makes sense of those will vary depending on where they have come from and where they go next. There are some characters, and two of them — Art Newkirk and Emily Keane — appear to have a good deal to say. But again, how the reader makes sense of their embedded narratives (and the degree to which they are trusted) will depend.

For me, it was important to have a balance of word and image, of discursive and presentational, and using HyperCard made that possible. To keep things loose, I added a strictly projective element, a set of "Oracle" fortune-telling cards that emerged for me as I was writing the text (and, in some cases, from which the text emerged.) And in sections of the fiction, I used the programming language, HyperTalk, as both a generator of randomness and as an embedded text.


The result, hopefully, is a text with emergent properties that could be read (and in the process, created) by a non-20th-century audience.

Continue to "John McDaid's Traversal of Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"
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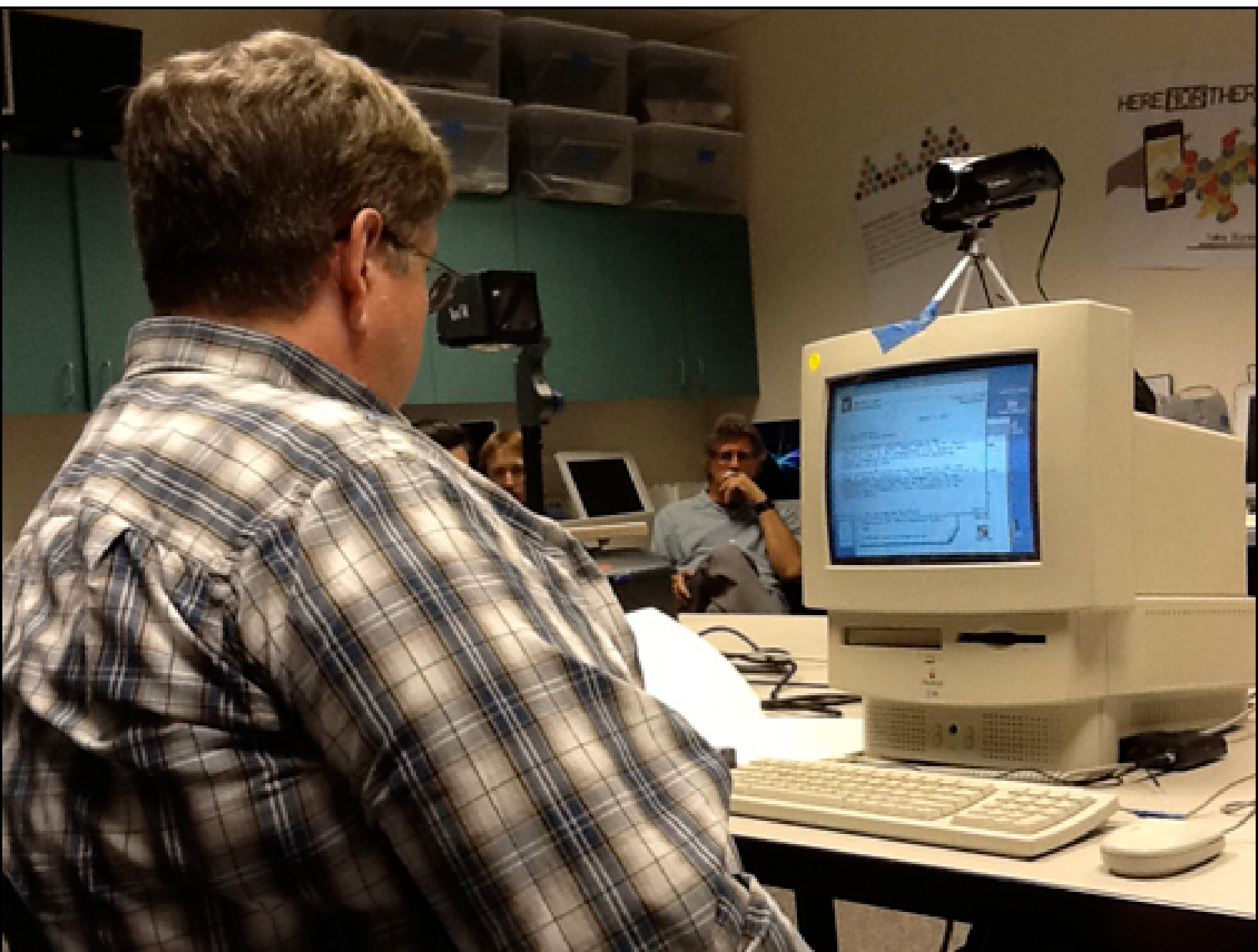


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John McDaid's Traversal of Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

This photo shows John McDaid undertaking the traversal of his work, "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse" at the Electronic Literature Lab at WSUV in August 2013.

John McDaid's traversal of *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, conducted by Dene Grigar, took place on Thursday, August 8, 2013 in the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver as part of the *Pathfinders* project. The conceit upon which *Uncle Buddy's* is built (you receive a box of seemingly random items from your Uncle Buddy's literary estate) was derived from McDaid's personal experience: In 1986, the same year McDaid began work on *Uncle Buddy's*, his dying Aunt Rita sent him a See's candy box filled with odds and ends that constituted a portion of her "estate" that she wished to give McDaid. The video of the traversal is divided into six parts and reveals to us the craft and conceptualization underlying the work. The commentary provided on this page was written by Moulthrop.

**McDaid Traversal, Part
1, "Opening the Chocolate Box"**
(<https://vimeo.com/119436636>)

"A chocolate box full of death:" McDaid opens and inventories the box-of-stuff that is the *Funhouse*. Contents: a How-to-Guide; A sheet instructing how to load the files; a CD, taking the place of 5 diskettes in the original.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:51 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

McDaid presents the Funhouse



Contents of the UNCLE BUDDY box

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/00%20box%20contents.jpg>) as a move beyond

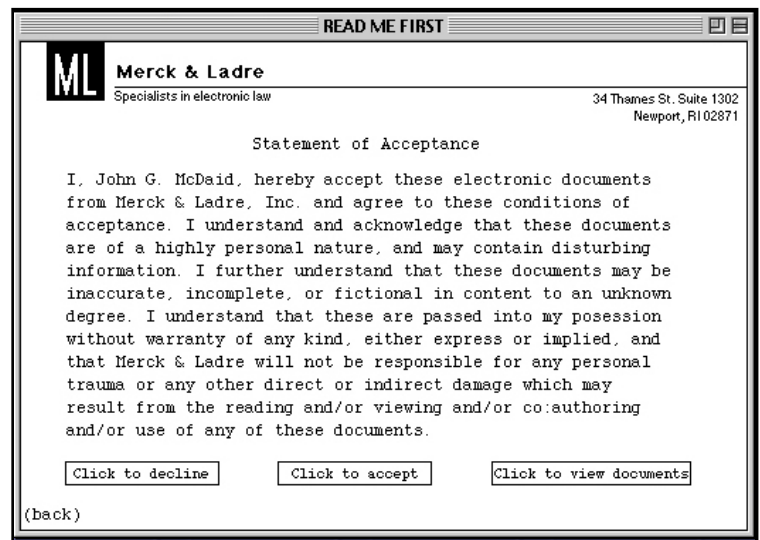
exclusively text-based fictions, as in text adventure (IF) or the Storyspace fictions. Its principle: "modally appropriate artifacts." You are the literary executor of a vanished science fiction writer.

More box contents: cassette tapes, *The Story of Emily and the Time Machine, Retribution*. At the bottom of the box: a letter from an editor and page proofs of "Tree," an 8,000-word short story scheduled to run in *Vortex: The Anthology of Cyberfiction*.

McDaid begins the traversal by loading the *Story of Emily* tape into the player and playing the first track: "Looking at a picture of you, traveling through time." Fade audio down on: "...to face the face of last night's dream."

A digital lawyer's letter from the firm of Merck and Ladre, explaining that you have at some point known Arthur Newkirk, but have forgotten him due to "lapses of memory" or other "divergences of an unspecified nature."

Reader is required to agree to a
Statement of Acceptance



READ ME FIRST

ML **Merck & Ladre**
Specialists in electronic law
34 Thames St. Suite 1302
Newport, RI 02871

Statement of Acceptance

I, John G. McDaid, hereby accept these electronic documents from Merck & Ladre, Inc. and agree to these conditions of acceptance. I understand and acknowledge that these documents are of a highly personal nature, and may contain disturbing information. I further understand that these documents may be inaccurate, incomplete, or fictional in content to an unknown degree. I understand that these are passed into my possession without warranty of any kind, either express or implied, and that Merck & Ladre will not be responsible for any personal trauma or any other direct or indirect damage which may result from the reading and/or viewing and/or co-authoring and/or use of any of these documents.

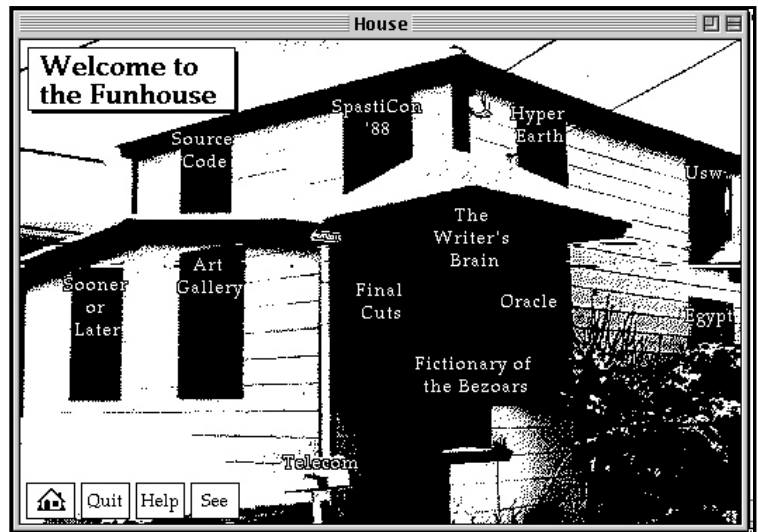
[\(back\)](#)

Lawyer's letter acceptance requirement

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/03%20readme%2003.jpg>), warned of "disturbing references" and advised that Merck and Ladre are "not responsible for any personal trauma" resulting from the encounter with Newkirk's effects.

The Home Stack -- image of the Funhouse

(https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/05%20funhouse_c.jpg) (McDaid's actual home in Rhode Island) with text links placed around it leading to other stacks: *The Writer's Brain, Oracle, Fictionary of the Bezoars, Final Cuts, Art Gallery, Sooner or Later, Spasticon, HyperEarth, Usw.*, and *Egypt*.



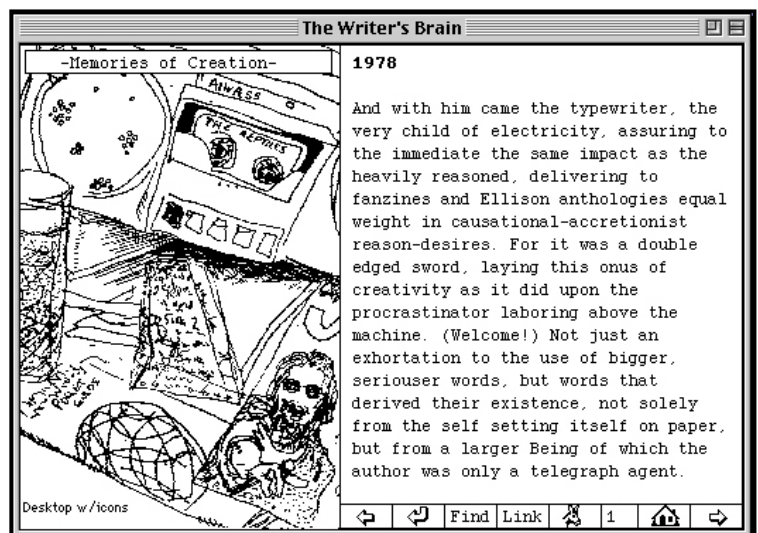
Home card of the Funhouse

McDaid Traversal, Part 2, "Exploring the Funhouse"
 (<https://vimeo.com/119436637>)
 Clicking on "Welcome to the Funhouse" from the Home Stack brings us to Newkirk's introduction: "Play along, for now . . . suspend, for a moment, disbelief." Also: "This is not a game. This is never meant to be a game." McDaid: imagine having to try to send a message to someone you don't know, but whose attitudes and interests you can try to hypothesize. "Believe everything at least temporarily. Believe nothing permanently."



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 10:32 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

To The Writer's Brain

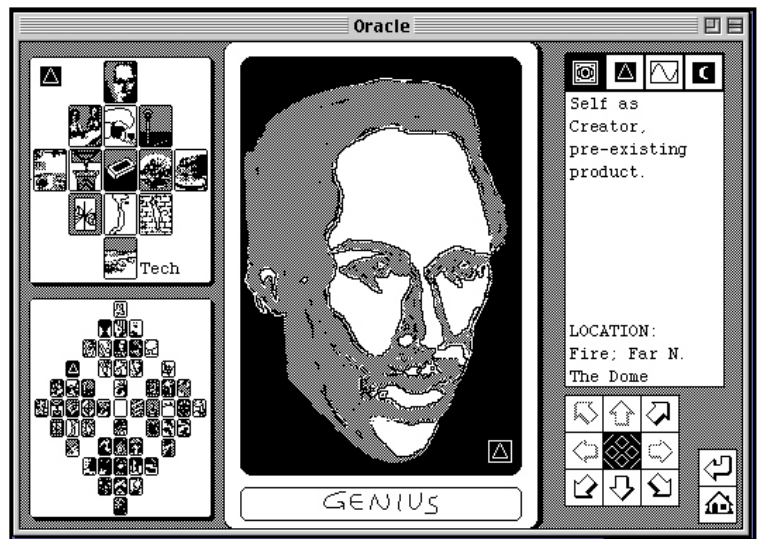


First card of THE WRITER'S BRAIN stack

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/TWB.jpg>) stack -- Buddy's sketchbook. McDaid talks about the difficulty of thinking about a sketchbook in a hypermedia system -- a strange idea at the time. First card: "Memories of Creation - 1978" -- Buddy's reflections on acquiring his first electric typewriter. McDaid describes the interface (navigational) widgets, including the link to the Burrower, a facility that automatically rearranges the text on any card from which it is activated. He "Burrows" the "Memories of Creation" card to demonstrate. A Dadaist experiment in truth beyond rational language.

McDaid flips back a few pages in *The Writer's Brain*, comments on its blend of word and image, stretching the bounds of hypertext to include graphics as well as words. Several cards of *Writer's Brain* are shown. McDaid notes that the stack is "not directly advancing a narrative," but "building up in slow incremental drips" a sense of Arthur Newkirk.

To the *Oracle* stack, with its four suits: Self, Cosmos, Gravity, Technology. Brief visits to several cards in this stack, including "Phantom Limbs," "Control," "Taliesin," and "Entropy Messiah." Freihoffer's Chocolate Chip Cookies; Nikola Tesla, or Genius.



Card GENIUS from ORACLE stack

(https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/GeniusCard_c.jpg)

**McDaid Traversal, Part 3,
"Inspecting Final Cuts"**
(<https://vimeo.com/119436638>)

McDaid tours the *Final Cuts* stack: a "History in Lyrics" of Art Newkirk's punk band, The Reptiles. McDaid discusses the object as "modally appropriate," an experimental hypertext made by a band that lived "at the intersection of art, zines, and SF," and thus were "at home in the matrix" -- That's William Gibson's "matrix" from *Neuromancer*, not Neo's Matrix from the Wachowski Brothers films, which had not been made at this point.

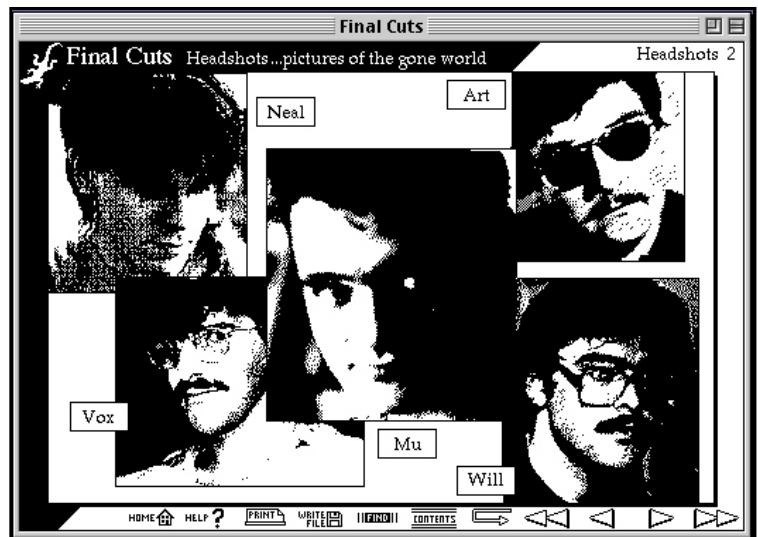


The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:54 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Card from FINAL CUTS stack

McDaid notes that the navigation options in the stack now seem unremarkable, though in a time before the World Wide Web, they were something more novel.

Final Cuts



Card from FINAL CUTS stack

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/FinalCutsFaces.jpg>) is dedicated in part to "Emily." Who's Emily? McDaid begins to unfold the basic mystery of the Funhouse. In addition to an Arthur, there is an Emily around somewhere.

Contents of Final Cuts: front matter, headshots, chronology, discography. A list of songs and lyrics. An album (see cassette 1) called *The Story of Emily and the Time Machine* (1983-84). Remarks on the making of this album. Mentions of time and time machines therein. A song called "Moving Clox Run Slow." Relativity.

McDaid Traversal, Part 4,
"Piecing Together Uncle Buddy"
(<https://vimeo.com/119436639>)

Fictionary of the Bezoars, Buddy's (McDaid's) parody of Milorad Pavic's "lexicon novel," *The Dictionary of the Khazars* (English edition 1988). Note the advice on the title page: "other spacetimes may be almost identical but not exactly."

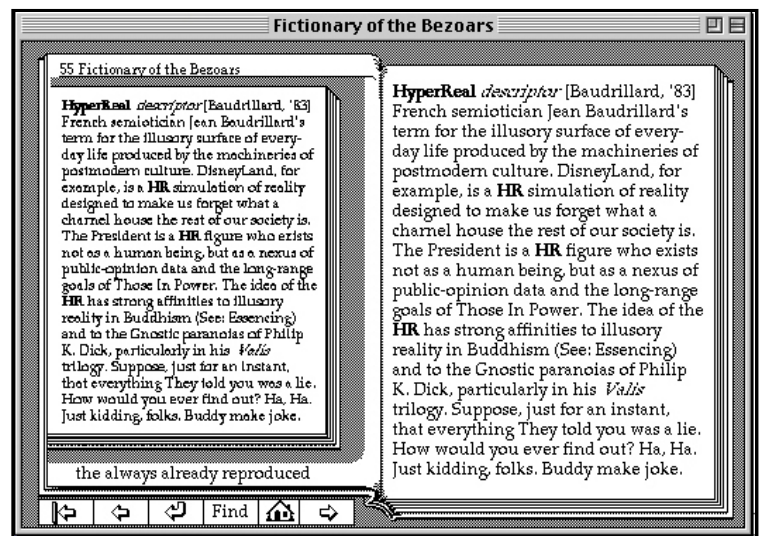
McDaid reviews the list of words in the *Fictionary*: *agon*, *albedo*, *asymptote*; but also *bagel stretcher*, *cardboard cone*.

To the *bagel stretcher* card: "Any abstruse . . . puzzle or diversion . . ." The included example refers to the text-adventure version of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1984), in which the problem of the babel fish is a legitimate bagel stretcher.

To the entry on hyperreal



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 9:58 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.



Entry for HYPERREAL in Fictionary of the Bezoars

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/12%20hyperreal.jpg>). Paranoia. "Suppose, just for an instant, that everything they told you was a lie? Just kidding, folks, Buddy make joke." And McDaid make French semiotician joke -- see card.

From *Fictionary* to other stacks: *Art Gallery*, a series of images; *Sooner or Later*, a screenplay set in the Superconducting Supercollider (back in the 1980s, not something from an alternate universe). McDaid reads from the first scene of the screenplay, notes it is about advanced particle physics, speculates on what that might have to do with time travel.

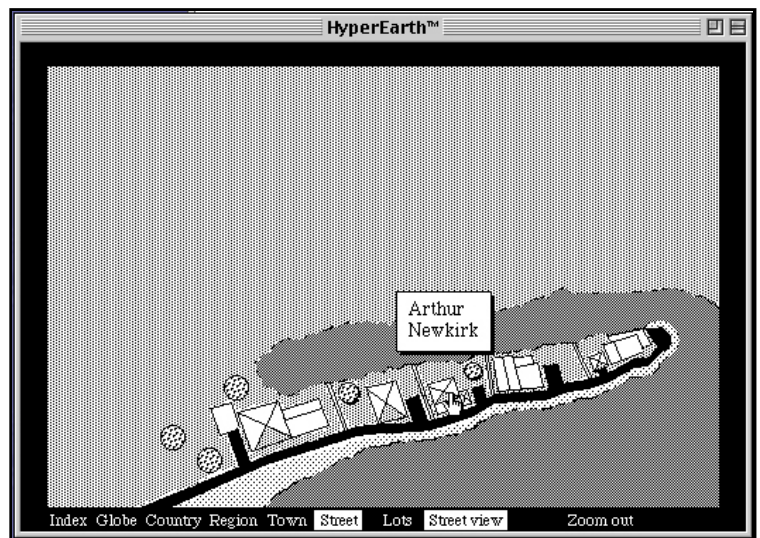
Another stack: *Source Code*, to which Buddy's contribution is "Postscript code as poetry," an Adobe Illustrator file which (if you have a really old copy of Illustrator) will yield an image.

A stack called *Spasticon '88*, the "hyperprogram" of a science fiction convention in St. Louis, MO. "All weapons must be peace bonded." Buddy scheduled to speak on superstring theory and postmodern science fiction.

**McDaid, Traversal Part 5,
"Hypertextual Innovation"**
(<https://vimeo.com/119436641>)
We begin with the HyperEarth



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:40 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.



STREET VIEW in HyperEarth

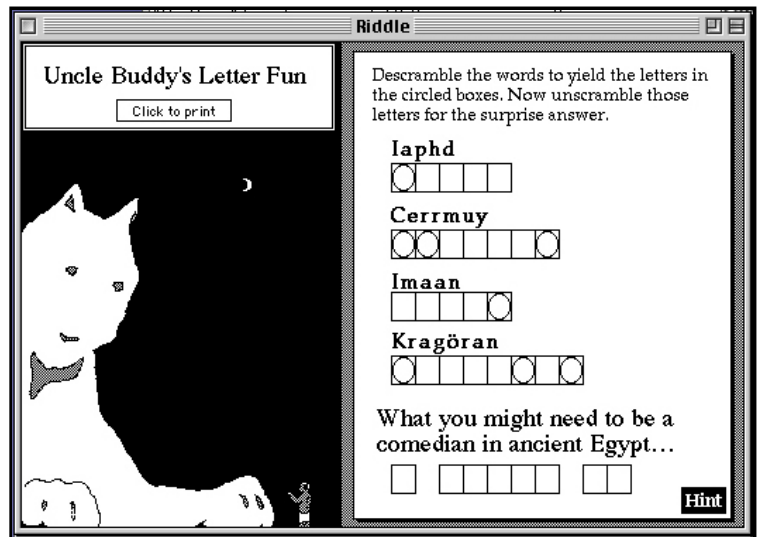
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/23%20HyperEarth%20Street%20View.jpg>) stack. "It's hard to remember now what things were like in the late 80s." McDaid demonstrates ability to drill down from planet view to continent, nation, region, town, and finally street. A modest claim to have invented the concept (if not the term) "Street View," now familiar from Google Earth. "This was done in 1990 before we had access to the Keyhole satellite data -- at least most of us." McDaid says his fiction is simply "anticipating what was happening already."

Back at the *Funhouse*: "the mailbox is a mailbox" -- clicking on the mailbox in the graphic takes us to Newkirk's e-mail facility, a terminal emulator called *HyperTerminal*. We start with Newkirk's profile statement, "My History as a Writer." McDaid sets out to read some of Buddy's mail, but the machine

apparently balks. "That's how you know this is a real traversal, because every now and then the machine stops." Whatever happened was non-fatal, and McDaid continues.

To the *Usw.* stack, with mention of a scholarly article from Jerome Brentano on "The Story of Emily and the Time Machine."

To the *Egypt* stack, which demands: "What is the password?" To deduce the password, we need to go to the stack called Riddle



RIDDLE stack

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/RiddleCard.jpg>), presenting us with a Sphinx and a jumble puzzle, "Uncle Buddy's Letter Fun." What you need to be is a comedian in ancient Egypt: "a merry ka." McDaid: "I'll wait for the laugh."

Entering the password in Egypt takes us to a new stack: *Auntie Em's Haunt House*, which looks nearly identical to the earlier house interface except for changed link cues: *The Writer's Brain* becomes *The Writher's Pain*; *Oracle* becomes *Coracle*; *Fictionary of the Bezoars* is *Decorticationary of the Schizonts*.

Clicking on the title link at Haunt House brings up Auntie Em's welcome message, which is "halfway between Burrowed text and something else." E.g.: "pop a person into your Walktape"; "imagine if you're a pirated friend from a game."

We are in a **mirror world**, says McDaid: Auntie Em inverts, tropes, or otherwise answers Uncle Buddy. McDaid reads at some length from the first card of *The Writher's Pain*, comparing it to the corresponding card in *Writer's Brain*. Among other things, we learn of "a field of Being, of which the Adaptive Resonance Theory [McDaid aside: "A-R-T"] was only a telegram with the author's message."

McDaid Traversal, Part 6, "Mirror Image" (<https://vimeo.com/119436645>)

"We are clearly in a different place now." McDaid explores more of the differences between Emily's world and Buddy's, starting with *Decorticationary of the Schizonts*, which includes fewer terms than the corresponding *Fictionary*, "but interesting ones." Writing here "mirror[s] and evert[s]" that in the other



stack.

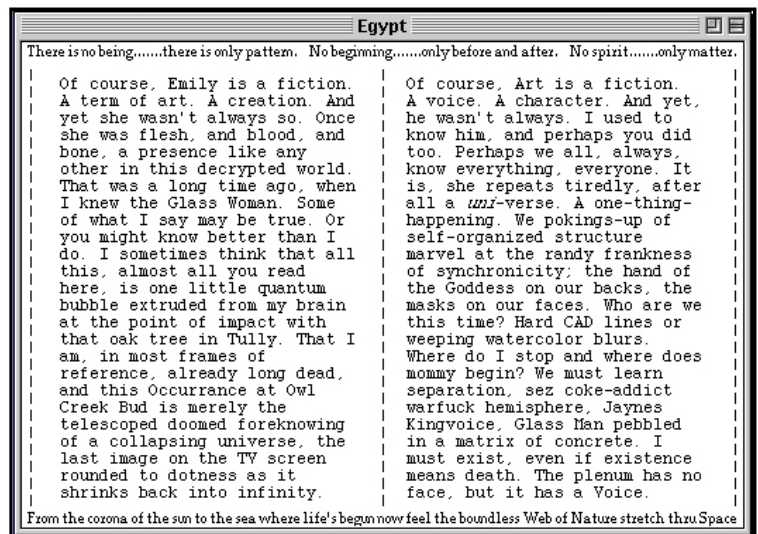
We go to the term "Dead man's book," derived from the "French" (actually Belgian) media theorist Jean Baudet, a poststructuralist for whom writing inevitably reduced to a self-referential and self-operating code. "It is the act of writing which kills the author," Baudet writes. A list of books (putatively) never written, including the sequel to *On the Road*, the book John Belushi was said to have been writing at his death, and *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, the forbidden Book of Goldstein in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Also included is *The Mason and Dixon Line*, Thomas Pynchon's magnum opus for which the world was waiting all through the 1980s. So much for Baudet, since this one did appear (as *Mason and Dixon*) in 1997.

More of Auntie Em's domain: a gallery of images; screenplay for "Orpheus"; a film festival program in place of Spasticon. *Binkie the Politically Correct Dinosaur*, which may parody a popular HyperCard stack of the time called *Inigo Gets Out*, by Amanda Goodenough. *HyperDeath*, in place of *HyperEarth*. *Usw.* has its parody, also. And so we come to *Necropolis*, "the Egypt of Egypt."

The password dialog here says: "What is the password." Note punctuation. Enter *what* (which is the password) and we come to "the endgame:" contents of *Necropolis*.

McDaid reads at length from cards in Necropolis

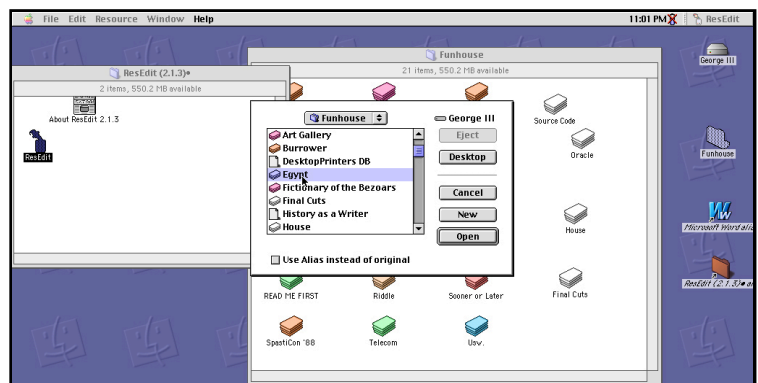
The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 15:48 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.



LEFT-RITE card in Egypt stack



Sinister dialog box in NECROPOLIS



Hacking into EGYPT stack with ResEdit

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/42%20Left-Rite.jpg>), including one called "Harley's Moon," which describes (among other things) the death of a New York pigeon. Also: "I found one of his fingernails in the lint screen" -- the *I* presumably being Emily; the fingernail belonging to -- Buddy? "There are some times when I almost seem to remember another life... Dopplering away under the pressure of the wind."

Next McDaid moves (somewhat laboriously, because the machine is not cooperating) to the final card of Necropolis

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/43%20Sorry%20You%20Saw%20That.jpg>). "Click on the Sphinx for the awful truth." An animation ensues, then a new state of the card: "Only the hand that erases can write the true thing." "We are at the end of where we can go with this fiction," says McDaid. The final state of the card presents "two realities, right and left [Left/Rite], with valedictions by Emily and Buddy, respectively. A click brings up a dialog box: "You shouldn't have seen that. Now I'll have to kill you." Clicking the response button ("But...") closes not just the fiction but the program that presents it: "and HyperCard is gone!"

But there is "a bonus" -- an Easter egg -- for those willing to "leap outside the system." McDaid explains the resource fork of the Apple file system and the programmer's tool called *ResEdit*. With this tool, he looks inside the invisible file in the Egypt stack

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/45%20Egypt%20in%20ResEdit.jpg>), revealing three text files, each of which he reads. Files 128 and 129 are again last words from Emily and Buddy. Buddy's includes a kind of apology for the Easter egg -- "madness at the lights!"

Text 130 contains a single line in Latin: *Finis coronat opus*: "the ending crowns the work," or perhaps "the ends justify the means."

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaids-artists-statement?path=john-mcdaid>)

Continue to "The Interview with John McDaid about Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"


(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-interview?path=john-mcdaid>)



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The Interview with John McDaid about Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse

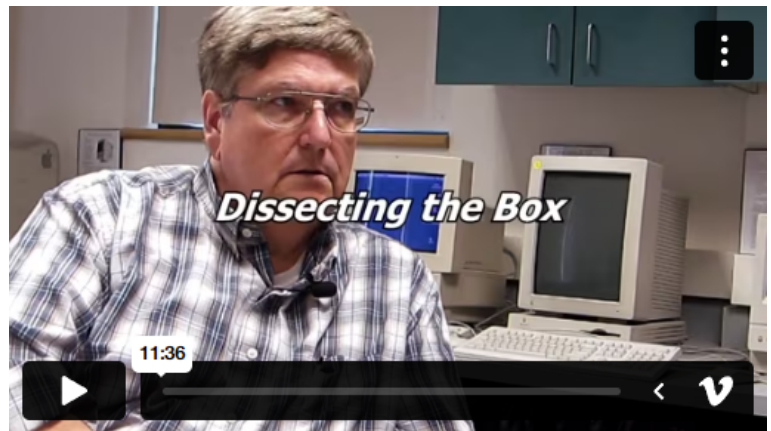


[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

John McDaid interviewed by Dene Grigar about Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse

This interview of John

McDaid, conducted by Dene Grigar, took place on Thursday, August 8, 2013 in the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver as part of the *Pathfinders* project. The interview is divided into nine parts and provides insights into the development of the work, its influences, legacy, and its relation to developments in digital storytelling. The commentary was written by Moulthrop.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 11:36 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

McDaid Interview, Part 1, "Dissecting the Box" (<https://vimeo.com/112474734>)

Grigar begins by asking McDaid about three inventories: literal contents of the box, media encompassed by those contents, and the genres they all draw from or represent.

There are five 3.5-inch diskettes (in the original version). When was the change to CD format? McDaid doesn't recall. [Mark Bernstein of Eastgate later writes to say, "at some point no later than 2003, we had replaced the floppies and cassettes with a CD."]

Discussing the booklet: a "colophon" and how-to, intended for readers wholly unfamiliar with the idea of hypertext.

How were the stacks assigned to their respective diskettes? "Not an artistic decision," but a matter of packaging. On the other hand, the decision to require all component stacks to be in the same folder (directory) was intentional. Stack scripts communicate with a central stack (Funhouse). This was a design choice.

What media are in the project? Letters, cassettes, e-mails, Tarot cards, journals, games and puzzles, a conference program, print fiction, photos, drawings, a screenplay. Also, McDaid points out, "poetry, embedded audio, including system audio." Also, HyperTalk scripts in some places are readable as texts.

The third inventory: genres and artforms. Generative text, hypertext fiction, lyrics, facsimiles of books -- the "novel" as container of all this multiplicity. McDaid: a "conscious aim" of the work was to have everything within it "modally appropriate" -- "using the tool the way the tool was designed to be used" -- "embedding the narrative diegetically within the actual artifact."

McDaid Interview, Part 2, "The Chocolate Box of Death" (<https://vimeo.com/112474735>)

DG: Characters of the work... there are two. McDaid: "There are ALLEGEDLY two main characters, Emily Keane and Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk. There are other, peripheral characters: Buddy's fellow Reptiles, Al

Magnusson, "Geraldus Cambrensis," co-author of Buddy's screenplay, among others. But "two main speaking parts."

The black box, or "chocolate box full of death" (Mark Bernstein). Cover design was McDaid's concept and original graphic (stretched to fit the boxtop). McDaid has notebooks and "page masters" for everything in the Funhouse.

Who's the image? It's John. How the image was produced -- with

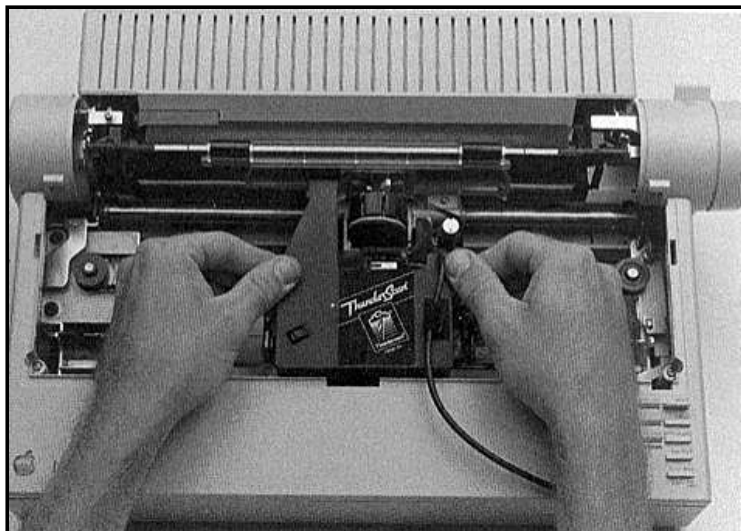
ThunderScan, a module that snapped

into an ImageWriter printer and allowed

digitization of images by feeding them through the roller. McDaid notes that this technology generally required use of an initial reproduction of the source image, so that the process began with photocopying, and thus immediately gave up image quality. Once digitized, McDaid's images were further processed with the tools in HyperCard, which are essentially identical to MacPaint. The graphics are all one-bit, on/off bitmaps. A highly stylized and distinctive visual aesthetic -- curiously similar to the "retro" effect Shelley Jackson chose for *Patchwork Girl*.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:00 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.



ThunderScan unit with ImageWriter printer

Why black and silver for the cover? Who knows, but the effect is edgy, "dangerous." Oakland Raiders colors(?).

The chocolate box really was sourced from a manufacturer of confectionery boxes -- which is ironic, since an inspiration for the *Funhouse* was a See's candy box full of mementos sent to McDaid by his dying aunt.

McDaid Interview, Part 3, "Deleted Scenes and Inspiration" (<https://vimeo.com/112474738>)

Anything left out of the *Funhouse*? Yes, two movie files too big for HyperCard and the diskette format. One of these was a music video for the "Time Machine" song. But aside from these specific omissions, McDaid

regrets the loss of information in the reduction of photographs to the one-bit HyperCard format. He shot original photos on 35-millimeter film, printed them to 8.5x11, then had to photocopy and ThunderScan, losing vast amounts of detail and nuance. On the other hand, this low-resolution aesthetic made it possible to "get away with a crap ton of stuff," as in the sketchbook approximation of an interface in the *HyperEarth* stack.



DG: The box is like a coffin. There's death here, or disappearance. McDaid: or never having existed in the first place.

DG: Literary allusions -- Burroughs, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens ("Asides on the Oboe"). McDaid: the work has two main parents. Its poetic "father" is Thomas Pynchon, whose novel *Gravity's Rainbow* [1973] contains music-hall numbers, popular songs, equations, and passages in the language of art, film, theatre. *Gravity's Rainbow* showed that a novel didn't have to proceed in linear fashion.

The "mother" of the *Funhouse* is Ursula K. LeGuin "the most underrated living American writer." Her 1985 novel *Always Coming Home* is an anthropological study of the Kesh, a group of people living in Northern California in the far future. It contains a linear narrative, but mainly consists of artifacts and documents: anthropological reports, maps, and in the slip-cased version, cassettes of the poetry and music of the Kesh. Seeing this work was "revelatory," says McDaid -- it was an example of modally appropriate presentation that "maintains the fourth wall and doesn't break."

"And she [LeGuin] lives right here in Portland!" McDaid recounts his encounter with LeGuin at a science fiction convention ("total fanboy squee"), when he had his copy of *Always Coming Home* autographed and asked the writer if she had ever considered doing it as a hypertext. This was in the early 1990s, and LeGuin hadn't heard of hypertext.

McDaid Interview, Part 4, "Hypermedia Community" (<https://vimeo.com/112474974>)

DG: The term "hypermedia" was not in wide use in the late 1980s and early 90s . . .

McDaid: Through "an accident of geography" -- living in Rhode Island -- he was able to be part of a circle of innovators based at Brown University [the Computers in the Humanities User Group, CHUG], organized by Elli Mylonas, then of the Perseus Project and later director of the Scholarly Technologies Group at Brown. This group included George Landow, Robert Coover, Andries Van Dam, Greg Crane, and others. "I was able to hang out with these people who were talking about hypermedia."

Grigar remembers a moment in the early 1990s when all the academic hypermedia research could fit into a small volume. McDaid: "It was a simpler time."

Grigar asks about HyperEarth and its anticipation of Google Earth. McDaid: "An obvious idea . . . someone's gonna do this. Maps are a killer app for interactivity."

"I'm a little happy that I called it 'Street View,' though."

John Barber, who was in the audience, asks about *Tristram Shandy*. McDaid: "not part of my reading at the time. I'm a genre writer. All I ever wanted to be in my life was a science fiction writer. I would read [mainstream] literature if it had science fiction in it." Barber turns the question to classic SF (e.g., *Canticle for Leibowitz*) in which the reader has to figure out the nature of a world based on documentary evidence. McDaid agrees that this is a major strain in science fiction, referring to Asimov, Heinlein, and Clarke. Making a world from traces is "the magician's 'force'," the manipulation that creates suspension of disbelief -- and allows us to see the world we inhabit as "a little weird."

McDaid Interview, Part 5, "Discussing Immersion"

(<https://vimeo.com/112474743>)

Grigar asks about "immersion," noting the criticism of Janet Murray and others that hypertext fictions (like Joyce's *afternoon*) fail at the effect because they require non-trivial user engagement. Grigar points out that the *Funhouse*, with its multiple modalities and its emphasis on building an experience, seems to contradict Murray's line.

McDaid: Immersion is relative. As audiences become more comfortable with media, immersion becomes easier, e.g. the introduction of "jump cuts" in modern film, which we sometimes no longer even perceive.

But in the *Funhouse* "you are doing nothing else but what you are doing -- you are sitting at a computer looking at a vanished writer's hard drive. YOU ARE THERE."

DG: Should Murray have been looking at the *Funhouse* instead of *afternoon*? McDaid: "I'm sure she did the best she could with the tools and texts that were available."



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:42 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

On Burroughs and cutups -- a way of understanding hypermedia and the Web? McDaid: the Web isn't explicitly Dadaist, but it has some aspects of the cut-up.

McDaid: "Among my challenges in the *Funhouse* was to try to write a novel that no 20th-century writer could write. To do this I had to push the text beyond what it's possible to do." McDaid comments on the emergent qualities of the text, its ability to produce things not directly intended: to transcend itself.

McDaid Interview, Part 6, "Digital Mosaic Chips"

(<https://vimeo.com/112474970>)

Barber asks about interactive fiction and the role-playing game tradition, noting that the reader's predicament at start of the *Funhouse* might as well be the start of a *Dungeons and Dragons* session (multiple entry points; which way do you go?)



McDaid recalls playing interactive fiction games -- *Adventure* on a PDP-11 before *Zork!* -- including *A Mind Forever Voyaging* and *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. "What I saw there was the limits of a parser and the limits of choice-point fiction. The *Funhouse* is not parser driven but MOSAIC. Its pieces are not choice-points but chips in a tessellated environment."

Barber: So, hypermedia rather than hypertext?

McDaid: Infocom games were heavily word-based, so yes.

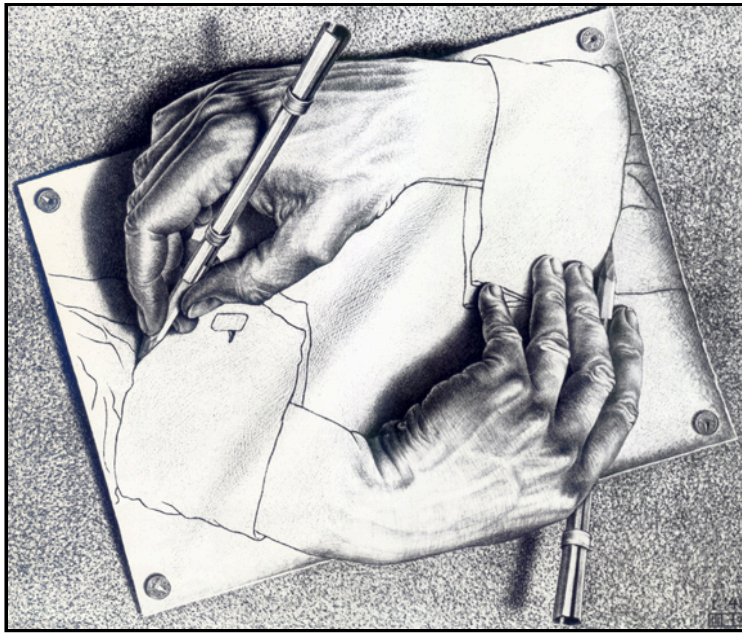
Grigar recalls resistance to including graphics in early multi-user environments (MOOs).

McDaid: It was an established tradition -- and graphics were "freaking difficult."

Grigar: "Is the *Funhouse* science fiction?" [Barber: So different from Heinlein!]

McDaid: "It is absolutely SF... living in the Interzone; or in the world of *Always Coming Home*. Humanity confronting scientific and technical realities." In 1992, the year the *Funhouse* was initially scheduled to be published [it appeared in 1993], McDaid was admitted to the Clarion Writers' Workshop, one of the leading professional academies for science fiction writers. His acceptance was partly based on "Tree," Newkirk's story in the *Funhouse*. While at Clarion, he wrote a "recursive SF story" written by either Buddy or Emily, in which the protagonist is at Clarion writing a story the other one will never be able to read.

McDaid: The "central conceit" of the *Funhouse* is the Escher image of two hands, each drawing the other -- "Identity under uncertainty."



M.C. Escher's "Drawing Hands"

McDaid Interview, Part 7, "Limitations of Technology"

(<https://vimeo.com/112475162>)

Grigar notes that in his traversal, McDaid still seems remarkably close to the work after 20 years . . .

McDaid: Twenty years, yes: the ideas got started in 1986 and gathered steam as technology came along and matured.

DG: How do you feel about the work now?

McDaid: Might change some of the writing, but generally happy with the narrative premise and execution. "I would dearly love to improve some of the graphics . . . I can't tell you how many nights I spent drawing dots with a mouse . . . with those old, brick-like, Mac Plus mice." It's so easy now to create immersive, full-resolution images.

DG: There was a progression in technological graphic art . . . from Xerox art to ASCII art to the first PC art in platforms like MacDraw and MacPaint. We should think about work from these periods within their context of production.

McDaid: Yes, that's the obligation of a curator. The old tools were clunky or non-intuitive. "As Spock says, 'I am trying to create the world's first duotronic memory circuit using stone knives and bearskins.'"



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:25 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

DG: Can you identify any other artists who may have been influenced by the *Funhouse*?

McDaid: "I honestly don't know." There was an informal "Eastgate School," including Stuart Moulthrop, Michael Joyce, Jane Yellowlees Douglas, Sarah Smith, Kathryn Cramer, and others; and all these people learned from each other; but the influences were mutual rather than uni-linear.

DG: *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* is the only artifactual, boxed product Eastgate has published. Have other works of this type been limited by commercial considerations, or by conceptual challenges?

McDaid: "I was at the tail end of getting away with it." Robert Coover observed at the time that work of this sort would in future be produced by teams, directed by a creative lead. McDaid compares his situation to that of a child before the "crisis of realism," a term from developmental psychology that describes the child's recognition that her or his artwork does not depict reality with sufficient accuracy or detail. The *Funhouse* was a creature of its time. Today, similar approaches to object-oriented storytelling and modally-appropriate presentation are more apt to be found in the game space. "You're playing in the same sandbox as *Bioshock*."

McDaid Interview, Part 8, "Potential Influence"

(<https://vimeo.com/112474973>)

DG: What similarities do you see between the *Funhouse* and the products of Bob Stein's Voyager Company, particularly their line of multimedia works called "Expanded Books?"

McDaid: An evolutionary link, but "probably more *Homo floresensis* [a side-branch not directly related to modern humans] than Lucy [our direct ancestor] . . . a short evolutionary limb off the tree."

McDaid sees more of a "through-line" to the cultural mainstream in terms of Voyager's hypermedia work and experimental film and video, e.g., the work of Mike Nesmith or The Residents. In the late 1980s, "many flowers were blooming, and then a big tree grew up."

DG: William Gibson's *Agrippa* is another boxed-set work . . . which brings us to what came outside and after the *Funhouse*; for you in particular . . .

McDaid: *Funhouse* was accepted for publication while I was at Clarion [the science fiction writers' workshop]. I was trying to move what I had learned about complex narrative into "something I could sell." So my output since the *Funhouse* has been short fiction. Several of these stories -- "Jigoku no mokushiroku," "Keyboard Practice" -- use inset documents as if they were modally-appropriate objects building up traces of a fictional world.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 12:47 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

McDaid doesn't absolutely rule out ever doing another complex, object-oriented fiction, but: "I've had my crisis of realism. I couldn't get away with low-res approaches."

DG: In just about every walk of life, we're learning that we need to work in teams . . .

Barber: But is high resolution always necessary? Doesn't art or literature basically come down to story? Does the writer have to keep up with technology?

McDaid: "It depends" As McLuhan observes, media take as their content other media, just as biological evolution subsumes other structures: so our brain still includes a medulla, taking care of breathing and digestion. In this sense, linear prose writing is still viable. Short stories, fan fiction are alive and well. "Does every writer have to do complex multimedia? -- No. It's probably a question of appetite, and: what kind of stories can you ONLY tell with this medium?"

Barber: "That's the key question."

McDaid: I've been interested in writers who push the boundaries of text . . . for example, Jorge Luis Borges, in "The Aleph" or "The Library of Babel" -- which I read as science ficiton, by the way -- I'm a genre writer."

McDaid asks, "What are the stories you can't tell in a print fiction?" Rob Swigart [another digital writer with whom McDaid worked in the 1980s] could turn *Portal* [Swigart's own HyperCard multimedia fiction, not to be confused with the later video games from Valve] into a novel, because fundamentally it's a mystery story." We know how this works; but when the answer to a text's basic questions are something like "maybe," linear form is more difficult to apply.

Barber: I see a connection between the *Funhouse* and [Tarantino's] *Pulp Fiction*, a film that explodes the standard conception of beginning, middle, and end in narrative.

McDaid agrees. "And then the completion happens [tapping forehead] in here, in your head." We're used to prescriptive meaning-making. "Do it the way Balzac did it!" as Tom Wolfe used to say. But there are other ways to tell stories.

McDaid Interview, Part 9, "Preserving the Ephemeral" (<https://vimeo.com/112475163>)

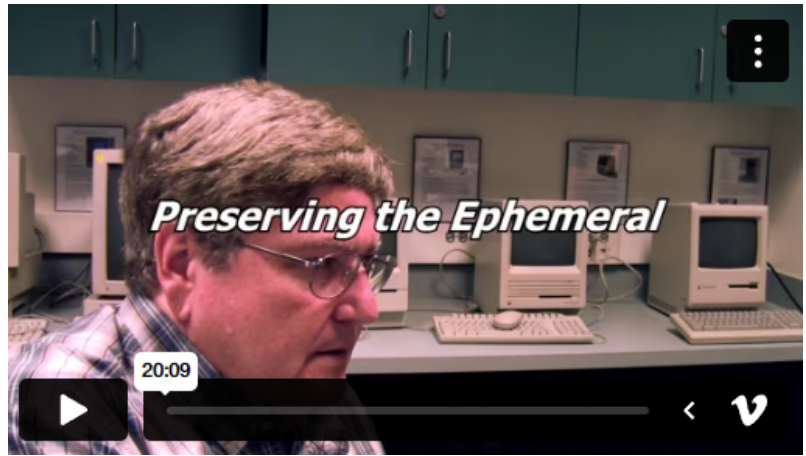
DG: About the reception of your work . . . do you know of readings that may be good, and likewise some that may be misguided or wrong? For instance, do you think some readings have put too much emphasis on technology and technique, and not enough on the message or meaning of the work? Beyond that, what constitutes a reading of a work as large and complex as the *Funhouse*?

McDaid: Anja Rau [a German writer on new media] has done a particularly good reading of the *Funhouse*. But whatever reading someone does is a close reading. One friend read nothing more than the messages in the e-mail system (*HyperTerminal*) and said, "I've got it." That was a satisfactory reading, says McDaid.

McDaid showed the *Funhouse* to his 13-year-old son Jack, who is "more of a fan of *Minecraft* than interactive fiction," and Jack's response was, "Wow, that's all black-and-white and stuff." Diving into the work, Jack found the *Egypt* stack, with its demand for password, and began trying to solve the puzzle,

which led him to "The Egypt of *Egypt*," which he also approached as a mystery to be solved, after which he was done with the *Funhouse*. "That's a close reading," says McDaid.

"One of my favorite readings is actually a misreading," from a blog maintained by Jed Hartman, now the editor of a science fiction magazine, who somehow came across the *Funhouse* stacks outside the context of the fiction. He assumed they were the work of an actual Arthur Newkirk, who seemed to be interested in the same ideas and writers as Hartman, leading the blogger to think about reaching out -- until "I discovered that he wasn't real!" This was "an enormously satisfying and close reading," says McDaid.



DG: The question of preservation: Is failure of technological accessibility the same as being out of print? She recounts her experience of trying to understand the *Funhouse* after one of the five disks in her copy became unreadable. Barriers to entry . . .

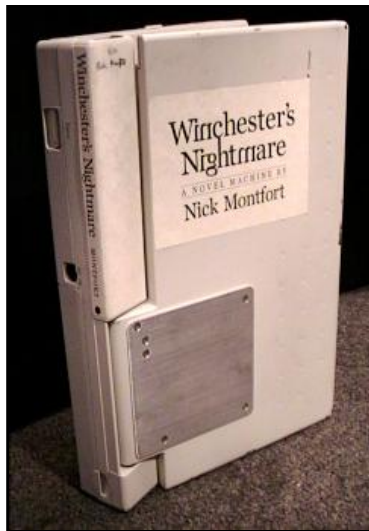
McDaid: Artists these days are tied to operating systems, software. Absent a standard such as HTML, XML or other things that can be "slurped up" into later systems, everything will eventually go away. There is a difference, McDaid says, between analog objects such as vinyl records, and digital records on CDs. With the analog object, we can physically recover sound information simply by running a needle attached to a megaphone along the grooves. In contrast, the CD, cut off from its technical dependencies, is "an essentially speechless object." McDaid mentions the discovery of early written records at the ancient city of Nineveh in the 1840s. In the absence of context, "they're just tablets with squiggles. There's no way to turn that into meaning. It scares the crap out of me."

There follows a digression about the 1960s and talking dolphins.

DG: But even analog objects are fragile, vulnerable . . . especially if we don't understand their "contextualization." Isn't this fragility part of the beauty of the work -- the beauty of ephemera?

McDaid: "One of the things driving the characters in this fiction is their awareness of ephemerality. Arthur and Emily are "curators," each building his or her own fragmentary collection of their mutual and private worlds. The *Funhouse* is "an embodiment of ephemerality."

McDaid says it occurred to him, briefly, to package the *Funhouse* on an actual hard disk drive, though that would have been hugely expensive at the time. [Compare Nick Montfort's interactive fiction *Winchester's Nightmare* (1999), whose "hardback" edition is a government-surplus 386 laptop.]



"Hardback" edition of Nick Montfort's
WINCHESTER'S NIGHTMARE,
shipped on its own laptop

One of the things driving the *Funhouse* was a loss in McDaid's family, the death of his Aunt Rita, who before her passing sent him a See's candy box full of odd bits and pieces. Looking at the collection, McDaid felt impelled to make some sense of them. This was in many ways the genesis of the *Funhouse*.

Barber: The subject of death comes in, or of disappearance. Perhaps there are two kinds of death here: physical and "memory death," the latter being what happens when no one has a way to connect to an absent person. In our relation to the *Funhouse*, are we keeping Newkirk alive?

McDaid: Making sense of things is our obligation as humans. We leave things behind, and who knows what sense they make?

"As as science fiction writer I am fundamentally optimistic, not one of the folks who writers dystopias. Humans can make meaning in the world . . . but only under the constraint of mortality. And there, we have to leave it."

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-traversal?path=john-mcdaid>)

Continue to "The Sound File of John McDaid's Interview"
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid-interview----sound-file?path=john-mcdaid>)



(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 51 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-interview.51>) of this page, updated 6/1/2015 | All versions

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-interview.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-interview.meta>)



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The Sound File of John McDaid's Interview



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

John McDaid talking about "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

This sound file (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/pathfinders/sound-files/mcdaid-interview/mcdaid-interview.mp3>) is an edited compilation, produced by John Barber, of all of the video interviews of John McDaid. In developing this archive, Barber stripped the sound from the video and then reworked the material making the ideas flow logically. In most cases, he also removed false starts, unneeded language cues, and the interviewers' voices so that all that remains is McDaid's story, what Barber calls, "an audio artist's statement."

Privacy policy

The sound file is saved as compressed audio (.mp3). The duration is 36:21 minutes. The "downloadable" file is 49.9 MB, streaming from the *Pathfinders* server. Please allow time to access it. The "playable version" is streaming from the *Pathfinders* channel on SoundCloud.


« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaid-interview?path=john-mcdaid>)

Continue to “Readers' Traversals & Interviews for John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaid-readers-traversals--interviews?path=john-mcdaid>)



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Version 12 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid-interview----sound-file.12>) of this page, updated 5/31/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid-interview----sound-file.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid-interview----sound-file.meta>)

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Readers' Traversals & Interviews for John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse

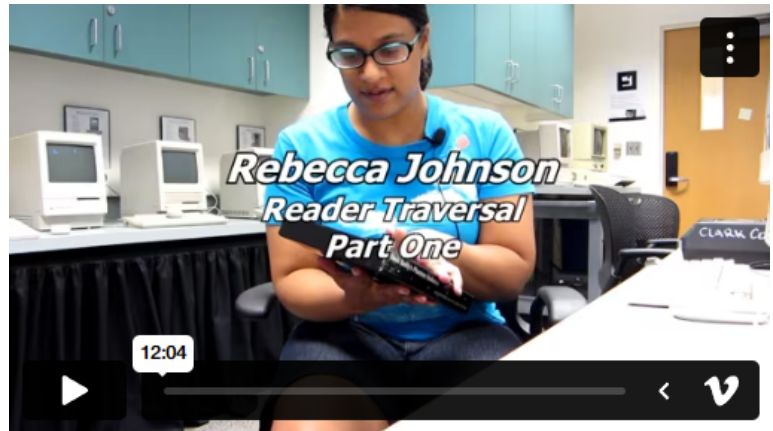


[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Reader's traversal of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

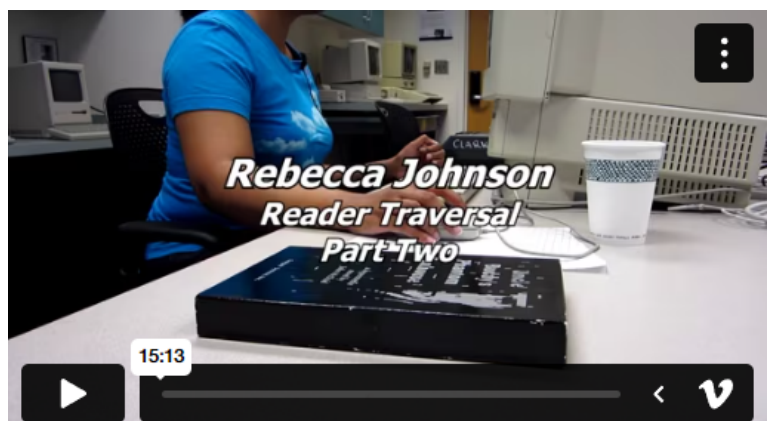
These traversals and interviews of readers Rebecca Johnson and Madi Kozacek, conducted by Dene Grigar, took place on Thursday, August 8, 2013 in the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver as part of the *Pathfinders* project. Both women graduated from the Creative Media & Digital Culture program at Washington State University Vancouver with a degree in Digital Technology & Culture. Thus, they have a background in coding for the web, writing for digital contexts, multimedia production, and digital storytelling. Neither had experience with early digital literature prior to their traversals, though Kozacek was familiar with the vintage Macs in ELL. Johnson works as a web developer, and Kozacek specializes in digital media marketing. Their interviews are divided into eight videos and focus on the historical and cultural experience of reading the work.

**McDaid Reader Traversal by
Rebecca Johnson, Part 1**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767862>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 12:04 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Traversal by
Rebecca Johnson, Part 2**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767863>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 15:13 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Interview by
Rebecca Johnson, Part 1**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767816>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 9:14 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Interview by
Rebecca Johnson, Part 2**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767819>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:02 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Traversal by
Madi Kozacek, Part 3**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767864>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 12:37 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Traversal by
Madi Kozacek, Part 4**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767894>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 11:05 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Interview by
Madi Kozacek, Part 3**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767857>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 13:22 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

**McDaid Reader Interview by
Madi Kozacek, Part 4**
(<https://vimeo.com/117767860>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 13:03 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid-interview----sound-file?path=john-mcdaid>)

Continue to “Photos of the Box, Floppy Disks, CD and Other Contents for John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom House” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-cd-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-john-mcdaids-uncle-buddys-phantom-house?path=john-mcdaid>)



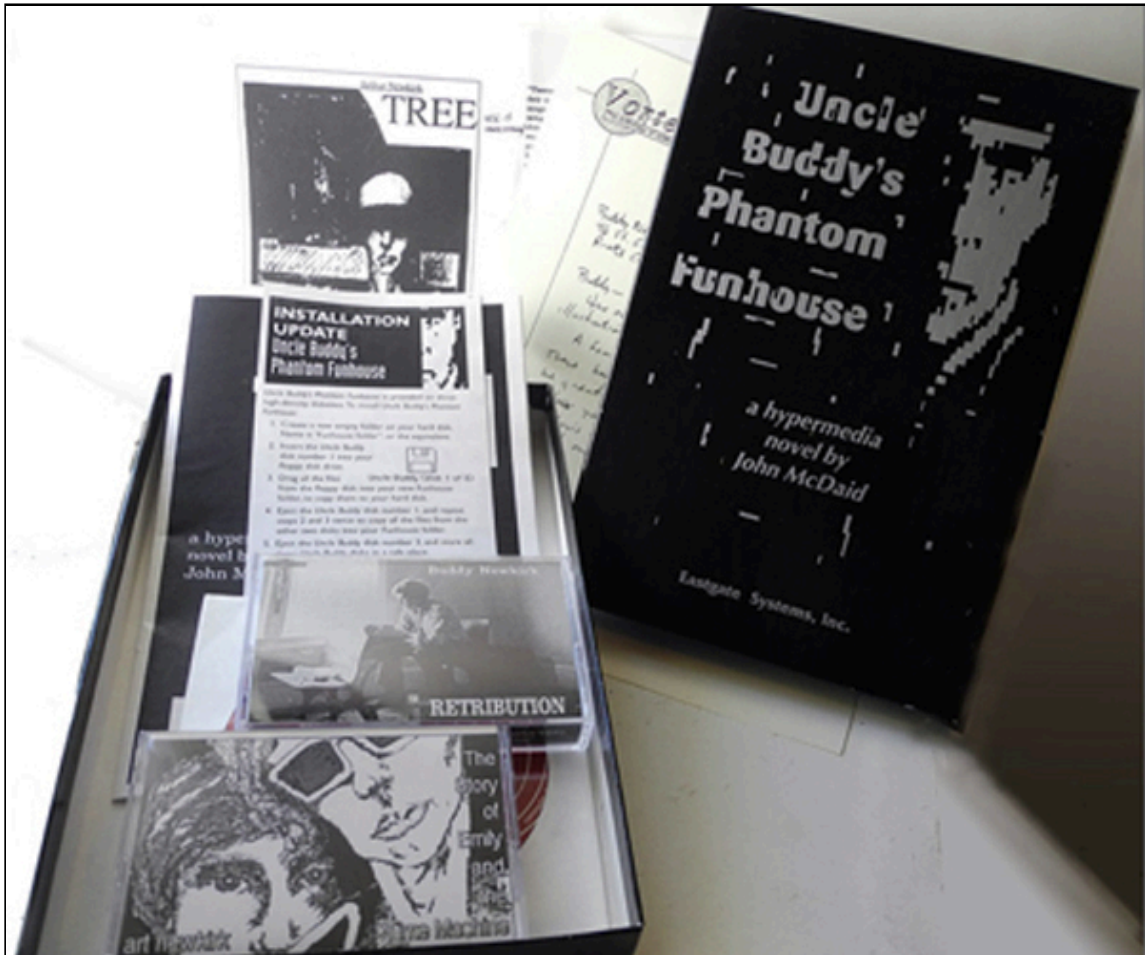
(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 18 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-readers-traversals--interviews.18>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-readers-traversals--interviews.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-readers-traversals--interviews.meta>)



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Photos of the Box, Floppy Disks, CD and Other Contents for John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom House



DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

The Chocolate Box of Death: "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Comments about Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse

McDaid's *Funhouse* is the first work published by Eastgate packaged in a box. As noted elsewhere in this section, the box's design was conceptualized by McDaid himself and inspired Mark Bernstein, his publisher, to call it "a chocolate box full of death." The elements of the work are extensive and speak to both McDaid's vision to produce a hypermedia novel and to the constraints of the time for achieving that goal. Floppy disks (or a CD), two music cassettes, a manuscript for a short story, and a letter from the editor all contribute to the whole of the work. The commentary for this section was written by Grigar.

Box

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-box-display2.jpg>)

The box, measuring 6 1/4" x 9 1/4" x 1" in size, is made of white cardboard covered by a black label on its top and bottom of the box. Referred to jokingly by McDaid and others as "the chocolate box full of death," the box--filled with the last of the titular Uncle Buddy's effects--was influenced by the box of memorabilia McDaid once received from his Aunt Rita. The work sold for \$39.95 at the time of its publication in 1992.

Box, Top

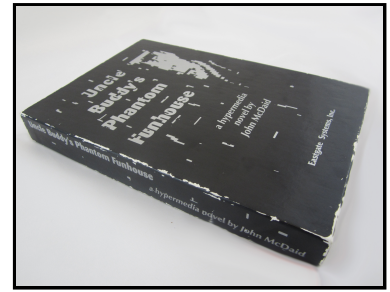
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-box-front.jpg>)

The lettering and image found on the top of the box are produced in silver, providing a strong contrast between these elements and the black covering. The title is laid out in four lines with each word placed on its own line. Each word is aligned "right" by the last word and butts up against the image of a man that fills the right half of the box. The man is represented only by his face, which is highly pixelated. What seems to be pixels are also situated around the box's top in a random design. The general mood evoked by the design is one of mystery, in keeping of the story about the mysterious uncle from whom you, the user, have just inherited this box. In fact, the box was referred to as "the chocolate box of death." The idea for a box filled with the last of Uncle Buddy's effects from his literary estate was influenced by the box of memorabilia McDaid once received from his dying Aunt Rita. Below the title and image and centered at 5 3/4" from the top are three lines. Line one reads, "a hypermedia". Line two, "novel by". Line three: "John McDaid". One inch from the bottom of the box, also centered, is "Eastgate Systems, Inc.".

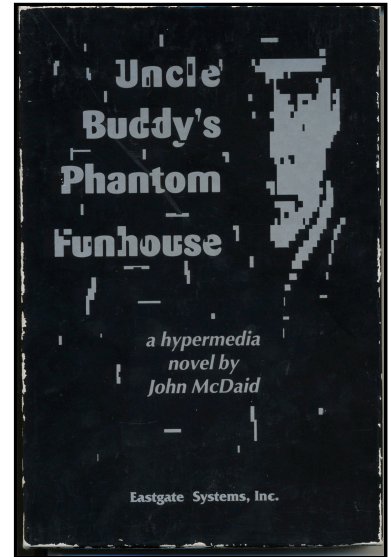
Box, Bottom

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-box-back.jpg>)

The bottom of the box is also covered with a black label but, unlike the top, has no marking.



The artist box of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"



The front cover of the artist box of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

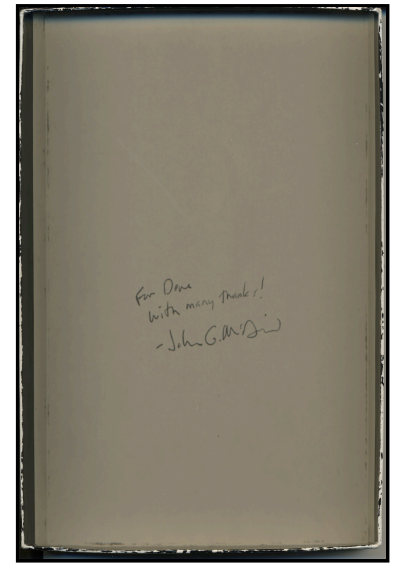


The back cover of the artist box of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Box, Inside of Top Cover

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-box-open-back.jpg>)

The inside of the top's white cover is generally unmarked. However, this copy, given to Grigar by McDaid during his visit to her lab for the traversal and interview, is inscribed by the author. The inscription is expressed in three lines. Line one reads, "For Dene". Line two, "with many thanks!". Line three, "--- John G. McDaid".

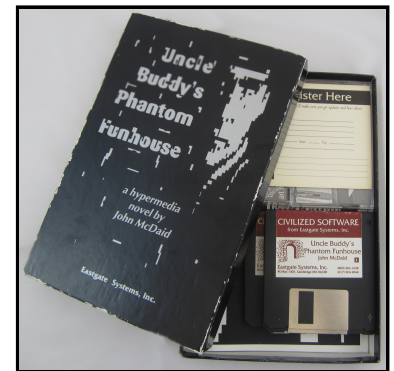


The inside of the artist box cover of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Box, Opened

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-box-open-display.JPG>)

The box, when opened, reveals a variety of contents. The original 1992 version, shown here, included five 3 1/2" floppy disks; two cassettes—one entitled "buddy newkirk Retribution" and the other entitled "art newkirk The Story of Emily and the Time Machine"; a letter from the editor of Vortex, "Chris;" a copy of a science fiction short story edited by Chris; a 12-page booklet providing background on the novel and directions for how to access it; a one-page installation guide; and registration card. The CD version released in 1993 substituted one CD-ROM for the five floppy disks.



The opened artist box of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Box, Contents (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-box-open-front.jpg>)

This photo provides another look at the contents found in the box. Visible are the two cassettes and the registration card that came packaged in the box.

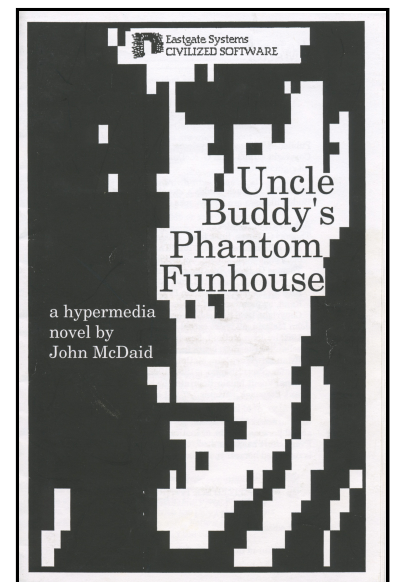


The contents of the artist box of John McDavid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Booklet, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-booklet-front.jpg>)

Booklets, like this one for *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, were included for all Eastgate Systems publications and were a necessary component because hypertext fiction required specific installation steps and differing access processes. Users needed to refer to booklets for this information. This particular booklet consists of six 8 1/2" x 11" paper folded, resulting in a booklet 12 pages in length. The paper is white with black printing. The design of the front cover is contained in a box that is black print on white. The result is a white border measuring 1/4" (top), 3/16" (bottom), 3/16" (left) and 5/16" (right) that reflects that of the top of the box with the title, image, and author information forming the majority of the art. However, the booklet's front cover is dominated by the pixelated image of Uncle Buddy, which stretches out from top to bottom of the page and is situated closer to the middle of it. At the top of the page where his head begins, we find the publisher's name and logo centered and printed in black, the typeface looking like it had been printed on a dot-matrix printer. The title, its four words expressed again in four lines, is laid out so that it fits inside the face of Uncle Buddy and makes up the right portion of the page. The print is black against the white face. On the left slightly lower than the title are the same four lines found on the box's top. Line one reads, "a hypermedia". Line two, "novel by". Line three: "John McDavid". One inch from the bottom of the box, also centered, is "Eastgate Systems, Inc.".



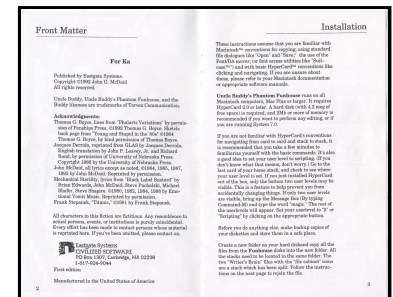
The front of the booklet of John McDavid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Booklet, Front Matter and Installation Information

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-booklet-toc.jpg>)

The first two pages of the booklet contains "front matter" (page 1) and a guide for "Installation" (page 2). Page 1 shows the dedication, "For Ka". This is Karen McDavid, the wife of the author. The publication and

trademark information follow in five lines with a small gap between the two. Line one reads, "Published by Eastgate Systems.". Line two, "Copyright ©1992 John G. McDaid". Line three, "All rights reserved.". Line four, "Uncle Buddy, Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse, and the". Line five, "Buddy likeness are trademarks of Torvex Communication." Torvex Communications is the name of the company owned by McDaid and is the name given to the publishing house from whom the user receives the letter from Chris. Below this information is a section of "Acknowledgements." Included in this list are Thomas G. Boyce, from whom McDaid borrowed lines from "Phalarts Variations" and "Young and Stupid in the 1980s"; Jacques Derrida, for *Glas*; John McDaid, for song lyrics used; Mechanical Sterility, for lyrics from "Black Label Bastard"; and Frank Stephanek, for use of his song, "Titanic." The next section tells us that "All characters in this fiction are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, events, or institutions is purely coincidental. Every effort has been made to contact persons whose material is reprinted here. If you've been omitted, please contact us. The final section provides the contact information for Eastgate Systems and its logo. The words, "First edition" are found here as well as "Manufactured in the United State of America."



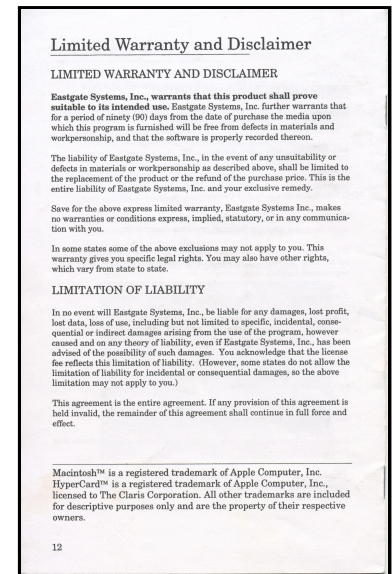
The table of contents of the booklet of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

On page 2, the Installation guide, we find five paragraphs. The first reads, "These instructions assume that you are familiar with Macintosh™ conventions for copying; using standard file dialogues like "Open" and "Save;" the use of the Font/DA mover; (or font access utilities like "Suitcase™") and with HyperCard™ conventions like clicking and navigating. if you are unsure about these, please refer to your Macintosh documentation or appropriate software manuals." Paragraph 2 continues with, "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse runs on all Macintosh computers, MacPlus or larger. It requires HyperCard 2.0 or later. A hard disk (with 42 meg of free space) is required, and a 2MB or more of memory is recommended if you want to perform any editing, or if you are running System 7.0.". Paragraph three, "If you are not familiar with HyperCard's conventions for navigating from card to card and stack to stack, it is recommended that you take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the basic commands. It's also a good idea to set your user level to scripting. (If you don't know what that means, don't worry.) Go to the last card of your home stack, and check to see where your user level is set. If you just installed HyperCard out of the box, only the bottom two user levels may be visible. This is a feature to help prevent you from accidentally changing things. If only two user levels are visible, bring up the Message Box (By [sic] typing Command-M) and type the word "magic." the rest of the userlevels will appear. Set your user level to "5" or "Scripting" by clicking on the appropriate button." Paragraph four, "Before you do anything else, make backup copies of your diskettes and store them in a safe place." Paragraph five, "Create a new folder on your hard diskand [sic] copy all the files from the Funhouse disks into the new folder. All the stacks need to be located in the same folder. The two "Writer's Brain" files with the "file cabinet" icons are a stack which has been split. Follow the instructions on the next page to rejoin the file."

Booklet, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-booklet-back.jpg>)

The back of the booklet provides the "Limited Warranty and Disclaimer". This title is listed twice on this page and is followed by four paragraphs explaining the warranty and two explaining "liability." Users are told they have a 90-day warranty and if the item is defected, the user will receive a refund of the purchase price or a replacement. The liability focuses on "any damages, lost profit, lost data, loss of use, including

but not limited to specific, incidental, consequential or indirect damages arising from the use of the program." At the bottom of the page is a section separated from the rest by a black line that reads, "Macintosh™ is a registered trademark of Apple Computer, Inc. HyperCard™ is a registered trademark of Apple Computer, Inc., licensed to The Claris Corporation. All other trademarks are included for descriptive purposes only and are the property of their respective owners."



The back of the booklet of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 1, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy1-front.jpg>)

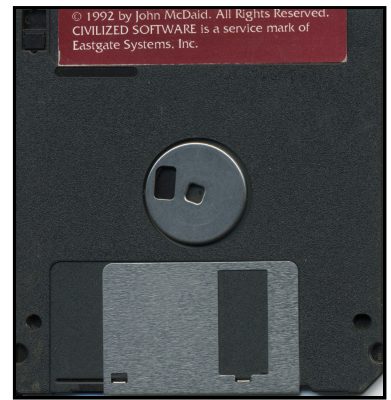
The floppy disk is a standard 3 1/2" diskette, made of plastic, black in color, with silver shutter. It is labeled with the standard burgundy and white Eastgate System sticker that shows the company tagline, title, author, company contact information. This one is also marked with the number 1, designating that it is the first one of the group of five diskettes comprising *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*. On the top on a burgundy background, 7/8" in width, we see in Line one, "CIVILIZED SOFTWARE", followed by "from Eastgate Systems, Inc." printed in yellowish beige and centered within the first line. Below this section, 1 1/4" in width, is the yellowish beige area of the label with all but the diskette number printed in burgundy. On the left is the Eastgate logo. To its right is the title in two lines with the author's name in the third. Line one reads, "Uncle Buddy's". Line two, "Phantom Funhouse". Line three, "John McDaid". On the left hand side at the bottom we see the company's address expressed in the traditional manner of two lines. On the right hand side at the bottom are the two phone numbers: Line one shows the 800 number and line two shows the number in Cambridge. As mentioned, the number "1" is listed and is situated between sections containing the author's name and phone numbers. It is left yellowish beige like the background but is highlighted by a box printed in burgundy.



The front of the first floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 1, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy1-back.jpg>)

The back of the floppy disk is unmarked, save for 5/8" of the label folder over the top from the front of the disk. This portion of the label is burgundy in color with yellowish beige print. The information is presented in three lines. Line one reads, "©1992 by John McDaid. All Rights Reserved." Line two, "CIVILIZED SOFTWARE is a service mark of". Line three, "Eastgate Systems, Inc."



The back of the first floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 2, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy2-front.jpg>)

The front of this floppy disk is identical to the first, with the exception that it is numbered "2."



The front of the second floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 2, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy2-back.jpg>)

The back of this floppy disk is identical to the first.



The back of the second floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 3, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy3-front.jpg>)

This floppy disk is identical to the first, with the exception that it is numbered "3."



The front of the third floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 3, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy3-back.jpg>)

The back of this floppy disk is identical to the first.



The back of the third floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 4, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy4-front.jpg>)

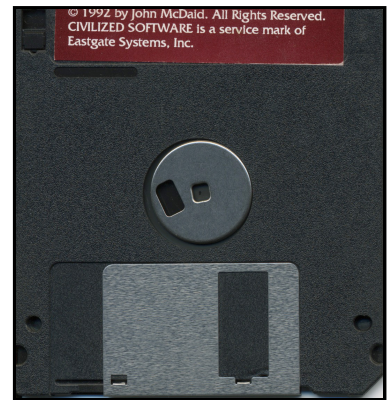
This floppy disk is identical to the first, with the exception that it is numbered "4."



The front of the fourth floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 4, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy4-back.jpg>)

The back of this floppy disk is identical to the first.

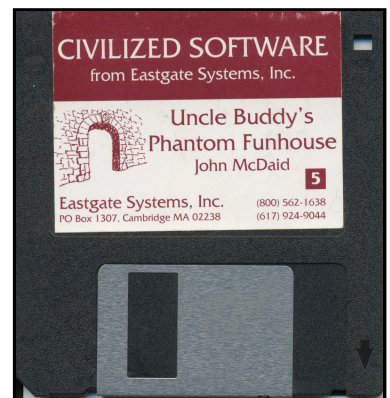


The back of the fourth floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 5, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy5-front.jpg>)

This floppy disk differs from the other four in that the typeface is lighter in weight. This variation results in more space between the logo and the title of the work. Also worth mentioning is that the burgundy box where the number "5" appears is larger in size and so highlights the diskette's number more readily than the other designs.

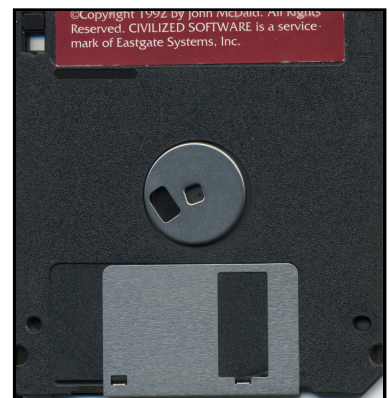


The front of the fifth floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Floppy Disk 5, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-floppy5-back.jpg>)

The back of this floppy disk, like the front, is different than the other ones. Here we see the word, "Copyright," appearing between the symbol and date. This variation causes the line to break differently than those of the other disks.



The back of the fifth floppy of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

"Retribution," Side One

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette1-side1.jpg>)

The cassettes found in the box are the standard size, 4" x 2 1/5". It is clear plastic with pink print. The front of the cassette shows the artist's name, title of the work, side #, and type of cassette. Line one reads,



"buddy newkirk". Line two is centered within Line one and reads, "RETRIBUTION". The number "1" is listed left of the supply reel. The type, "HX-Pro B", listed to the right of the take-up reel, refers to "Headroom eXtension," a technology innovated by Dolby in 1980. Above the type is Dolby's logo.

"Retribution," Side Two

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette1-side2.jpg>)

Side two of this cassette is identical to side one, save the number "2."

The first side of the first cassette of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

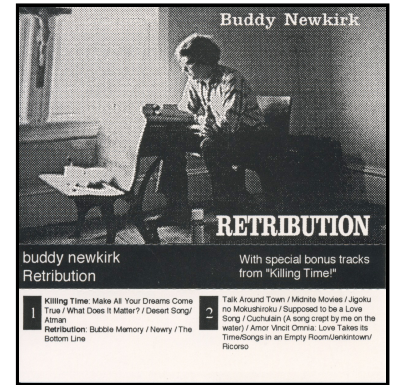


The second side of the first cassette of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

"Retribution," Liner, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette-sleeve2-front.jpg>)

The liner, when opened, is 4" x 4 1/4" in size and consists of white glossy paper printed with black and gray ink. When inserted in the clear plastic cassette case, the portion visible to the user contains a low-resolution photo of a man sitting at a table with a typewriter in front of him. The name "Buddy Newkirk" and "RETRIBUTION" are in white from the background. There is a large crucifix hanging on the wall to his right. He appears to be deep in thought, with arms are crossed in front of him and his hands not on the keyboard typing. The spine of the liner is printed in black and contains two sections of information left in white from the background. The section to the left is expressed in two lines. Line one reads, "buddy newkirk". Line two, "Retribution". The section on the right also presents two lines. Line one reads, "With special bonus tracks". Line two, "from 'Killing Time'". The portion of the liner that is visible at the back of the cassette case is white, with print in black ink. Section one is found on the left and contains the title of the songs on side "1". These include: "Killing Time: Make All Your Dreams Come True/What Does It Matter?/Desert Song/Atman/Retribution: Bubble Memory/Newry/The Bottom Line". The section for side "2" is located on the bottom right hand side and lists, ""Talk Around Town/Midnite Movies/Jigoku no Mokushiroku/Supposed to be a Love Song/Cuchulain (A song crept by me on the water)/Amor Vincit Omnia: Love Takes Its Time/Songs in an Empty Room/Jenkintown/Ricorso".



The front of the second cassette sleeve of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

"Retribution," Liner, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette-sleeve2-back.jpg>)

The back of the liner is unmarked.



The back of the second cassette sleeve of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

"The Story of Emily and the Time Machine," Side One
 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette2-side1.jpg>)

This cassette is similar to Cassette One, with a few exceptions. The author is listed as "art newkirk", and the title is "The Story of Emily and the Time Machine." The title on this cassette is in not in all caps and the number "1" is taller in height yet thinner in width than that of Cassette One.

"The Story of Emily and the Time Machine," Side Two
 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette2-side2.jpg>)

Side two of this cassette is identical to side one, save the number "2."



The first side of the second cassette of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

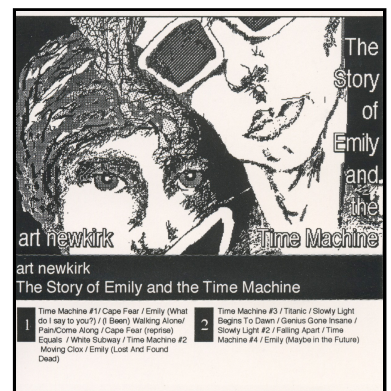


The second side of the second cassette of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

"The Story of Emily and the Time Machine," Liner, Front
 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette-sleeve1-front.jpg>)

The liner for "The Story of Emily and the Time Machine" is of the same size and style as the one for "Retribution." The art that would be visible on the front of the cassette, however, features a line drawing of two people, one presumably "Emily." The name of the artist is listed as "art newkirk," information located on the bottom left hand side of the liner.

On the right hand side we find seven lines. The first six contains one word of the title; the seventh both words, "Time Machine". The spine of the liner is printed in black and contains lines of information. Line one shows the name of the artist; Line two the title of the work. The portion of the liner that is visible at the back of the cassette case is



The front of the first cassette sleeve of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

white, with print in black ink. Section one is found on the left and contains the title of the songs on side "1". These include: "Time Machine #1/Cape Fear/Emily (What do I say to you?)/(I Been) Walking Alone/Pain/Come Along/Cape Fear (reprise) Equals/White Subway/Time machine #2 Moving Clox/Emily (Lost And Found Dead)". Side 2 contains: "Time Machine #3/Titanic/Slowly Light Begins to Dawn/Genius Gone Insane/Slowly Light #2/Falling Apart/Time Machine #4/Emily (Maybe in the Future)

"The Story of Emily and the Time Machine," Liner, Back
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-cassette-sleeve1-back.jpg>)

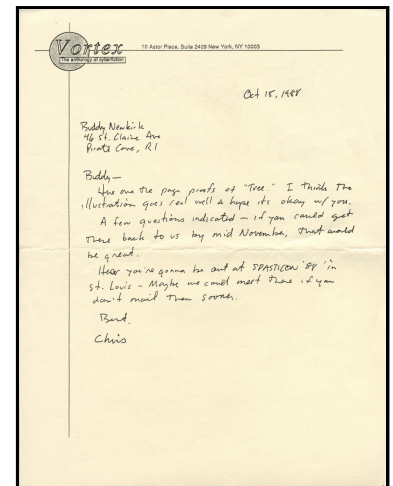
The back of the liner is unmarked.



The back of the first cassette sleeve of John McDavid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Letter from Editor of Vortex, Front
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-insert2-front.jpg>)

Found among the effects in the box is a letter from "Chris" of *Vortex*: *The Anthology of Cyberfiction* dated October 15, 1988". It is addressed to Buddy Newkirk. The letter accompanies the page proofs for a story, entitled "Tree," written by Newkirk and is printed on good-quality, beige, linen paper. The company's logo appears at the top left of the page and is printed in black and gray; the contact information, centered at the top, is printed in black. The address reads, "10 Astor Place, Suite 2409 New York, NY 10003". The letter address is expressed in three lines. Line one reads, "Buddy Newkirk". Line two, "46 St. Claire Ave.". Line three, "Pirate Cove, RI". The salutation says only, "Buddy—". The body of the letter contains three paragraphs. Paragraph one reads, "Here are the page proofs of 'Tree.' I think the illustration goes real well & hope its [sic] okay w/you.". Paragraph two, "A few questions indicated — if you could get these back to us by mid November, that would be great." Paragraph three, "Hear you're gonna be out a SPASTICON '88 in St. Louis — Maybe see could meet there if you don't mail them sooner." The letter closes with "Best" and then Chris' signature. There is no markings on the back of the letter.

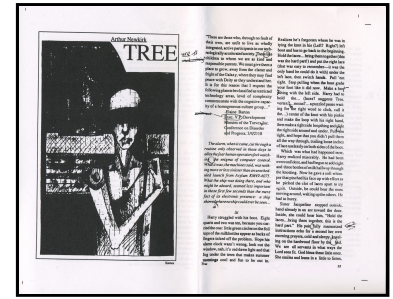


The front of the first insert of John McDavid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Arthur Newkirk, "Tree," Front
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-insert3-front.jpg>)

"Tree" is a nine-page short story written presumably by Arthur Newkirk and printed on one side of 8 1/2" x 11" sheet white copier paper. The document is folded so that it fits in the box but is intended to be spread to full size to be read. Page numbers found on the bottom right-hand side of the pages begin at page 92 and ends at page 108. The image to which "Chris," the editor from *Vortex*, refers in the accompanying letter is

found on the left hand side of the first page. It is a black and white line drawing of a solitary figure with the left arm bent and the hand gripping the side of the right hand shoulder. The story shows editing marks where the author is asked to make changes to the text. The story focuses on Harry, a resident of the Bishop Creagan Home for the Handicapped who is led astray for the mysterious "Tree."

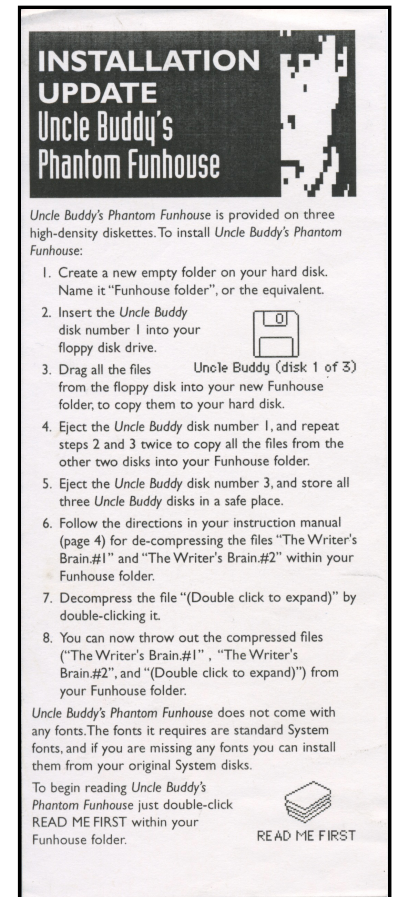


The front of the second insert of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Installation Update, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-insert4-front.jpg>)

Included in the box is a 3 9/16" x 8 1/2" document, printed on one side only in black ink on white paper. It is a brief installation guide. A box printed in black ink measuring 3 1/4" x 1 5/8" is located a 1/4" below the top of the document. Inside the box we find the title expressed in four lines. Line one reads, "INSTALLATION". Line two, "UPDATE". Line three, "Uncle Buddy's". Line four, "Phantom Funhouse". Below this information three main sections. The first reads, "*Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* is provided on three high-density diskettes. To install *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*:". This section is followed by an eight-step method for installing the work on a computer. Step one reads, "Create a new empty folder on your hard disk. Name it 'Funhouse folder', or the equivalent." Step two, "Insert the *Uncle Buddy* disk number 1 into your floppy disk drive." Step three, "Drag all the files from the floppy disk into your new Funhouse folder, to copy them to your hard drive." Step four, "Eject the *Uncle Buddy* disk number 1, and repeat steps 2 and 3 twice to copy all the files from the other two disks into your Funhouse folder." Step five, "Eject the *Uncle Buddy* disk number 3, and store all three *Uncle Buddy* disks in a safe place." Step six, "Follow the directions in your instruction manual (page 4) for de-compressing the files 'The Writer's Brain.#1' and 'The Writer's Brain.#2' within your Funhouse folder." Step seven, "Decompress the file '(Double click to expand)' by double-clicking it." Step seven, "You can now throw out the compressed files ('The Writer's Brain.#1', 'The Writer's Brain.#2', and '(Double click to expand)') from your Funhouse folder." The final section tells us that "*Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* does not come with any fonts. The fonts it requires are standard System fonts, and if you are missing any fonts you can install them from your original System disks. To begin reading *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* just double-click READ ME FIRST within your Funhouse folder."



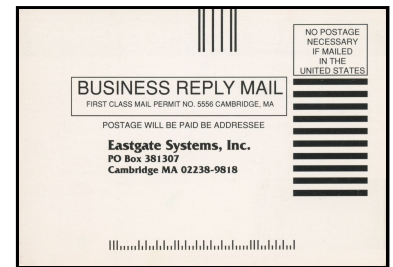
The front of the third insert of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Registration Card, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-insert1-front.jpg>)

The registration card, included in this packaging, allowed the user to register the product, receive

information about Eastgate, and make comments to the company about the user's experience with the product. Once filled out, the registration card was intended to be mailed back to Eastgate. Email was not yet common at the time, so this card unlike the one for We Descend did not allow for sending information to Eastgate by email. The front of the registration card is a traditional postcard, postage paid, and already addressed to the company. In the middle of the card was the information needed for mailing highlighted in a box:

"BUSINESS RELY MAIL" appeared on the first line. "FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 5666 CAMBRIDGE, MA". Below this section we see the words, "POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE". This information is followed by the company's mailing information in three lines: "EASTGATE SYSTEMS INC," "PO BOX 381307," "CAMBRIDGE MA 02238-9818. On the right hand side of the card, we see "NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES" in the space where a stamp would have been placed. Bar code markings are found at the top, right hand side and bottom of the card.



The front of the registration card of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Registration Card, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-insert1-back.jpg>)

The back of the Registration Card provides the place for the user to write in information to register the product. It is divided into four sections. The first, located at the top of the card, are the words, "Please Register". This information is highlighted in a black banner running across the top of the card 1/4" below the top of the card. Below this information are the directions, italicized, which reads, "Please fill in and return this card to Eastgate. We'll make sure you get updates and hear about important new developments." The next section provides the space—totaling 11 lines—for filling out the card. Here is where one would write the 1) "PRODUCT" name 2) user's "Name" 3) user's "Address" 5) "City" [and] "State" [and] "Zip" 6) "Country". There are four lines provided for the user to write in comments to Eastgate. The fourth section, located on the bottom left hand side, is a black box. Line one reads, "TALK TO US". Line two, "Tell us about how you use Eastgate's CIVILIZED SOFTWARE. Tell us". Line three, "how to make it better. We read every". Line four, "card at our weekly design meeting,". Line five, "and send free gifts to the best!".

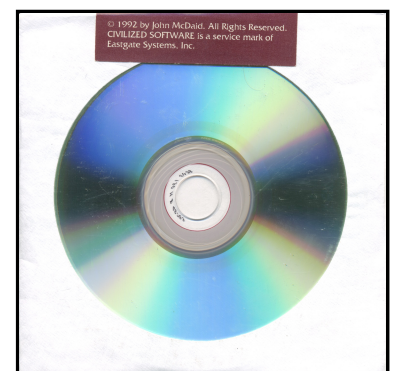


The back of the registration card of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

CD in Sleeve, Front

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-rerelease-sleeve-front.jpg>)

The CD is packaged in a white envelope, 5" x 5" in size, with a round, clear plastic window. At the top of the envelope, 3/4" of the Eastgate Company label, which measures a total of 2 3/4" x 2 3/4", can be seen. The label reads: "©Copyright 1992 by Eastgate Systems, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Storyspace is a trademark, and CIVILIZED SOFTWARE is a service mark of Eastgate Systems, Inc." The label functions also as a sticker that, when folded, adheres the flap to the back of the envelope.



The front of the CD re-release in its sleeve of John McDaid's "Uncle

The label is split into two colors: 1 1/4" is burgundy, and 1 1/4" is a yellowish beige color. The portion of the label visible on the front of the envelop is burgundy with white type. No other markings are found on the envelope.

Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

CD in Sleeve, Back

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/mcdaid-rerelease-sleeve-back.jpg>)

The back of the envelope features the label that had begun on the front of the envelope. The first portion is 3/4" and burgundy with the service make and company name rendered in two lines. Line one reads: "CIVILIZED SOFTWARE". Line two is centered within Line one and reads: "from Eastgate Systems, Inc." Below this section is the yellow beige portion of the label. We see in this section the Eastgate logo on the left hand side and the title of the work expressed in two lines. Line one reads, "Uncle Buddy's". Line two, "Phantom Funhouse". The author's name makes up the third line. All lines are centered with one another. At the bottom left hand side is Eastgate Systems, Inc.'s mailing address expressed in two lines. Line one in large letters, "Eastgate Systems, Inc.". Line two in small letters, "PO Box 1307, Cambridge MA 02238". On the right are the two phone numbers: Line one: "(800) 562-1638"; Line two, "(617) 924-9044".



The back of the CD re-release in it's sleeve of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdaids-readers-traversals--interviews?path=john-mcdaid>)

Continue to "History of John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-john-mcdaids-uncle-buddys-phantom-funhouse?path=john-mcdaid>)



(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 53 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-cd-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-john-mcdaids-uncle-buddys-phantom-house.53>) of this page, updated 6/1/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-cd-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-john-mcdaids-uncle-buddys-phantom-house.versions>) | Metadata

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-cd-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-john-mcdaids-uncle-buddys-phantom-house.meta>)



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History of John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Moulthrop, Joyce, Kaplan, and McDaid in 1989

Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse probably began in John McDaid's ongoing sketchbooks as early as 1978, which was (on the evidence of *The Writer's Brain* stack) the year McDaid began to muse on the electric typewriter, and through it, media, narrative, and technology. At some point in 1986, McDaid's friend Jim Propp prompted him to envision "a novel no 20th century novelist could write." This was a couple of years after Apple released the first Macintosh personal computer (January, 1984) and some months before the

company brought forth HyperCard, the revolutionary hypermedia authoring tool McDaid would use for his futuristic work.

McDaid was actively engaged on early versions of the *Funhouse* in 1987. In the summer of 1988 he took part in a summer writing/game design workshop at Humboldt State University in California, where a dozen writers and designers collaborated with the hypermedia author Rob Swigart and science fiction writer Vonda McIntyre on a hybrid game/novel based in HyperCard. The project was never completed, but McDaid gained important technical and aesthetic insights from the experience. He also acquired the mantra, "This is not a game," repeated prominently in the *Funhouse*.

In early 1990, McDaid demonstrated a draft of the *Funhouse* as part of an experiment in teaching hypertext led by Nancy Kaplan, then the Director of the Writing Workshop at Cornell University. McDaid had already met Jay David Bolter and Michael Joyce when they visited NYU. Through Kaplan he became acquainted with Stuart Moulthrop, who would join Joyce, McDaid, Jane Y. Douglas, and others in the informal circle called TINAC (standing either for "Textuality, Intertextuality, Narrative, and Computers" -- McDaid's reading -- or "This Is Never a Coincidence" -- Moulthrop's).

Eastgate contracted to publish the *Funhouse* in 1992, at about the same time McDaid was accepted to the Clarion Workshop, the influential seminar for beginning science fiction writers. Production considerations on the highly complex project delayed actual release until 1993. The version available from Eastgate in the spring of that year included two cassette tapes, proof pages of a short story, a booklet, and five 3.5-inch diskettes comprising the HyperCard stacks that make up the digital core of the *Funhouse*. Around the turn of the century, as diskette drives ceased to be included on personal computers, Eastgate produced a second edition of the *Funhouse* (2001) with a single CD-ROM replacing the diskettes. Both diskette and CD editions used the distinctive black-and-silver box, sourced from a confectionery supplier and referred to by Bernstein as "a chocolate box full of death."

A review by Gavin Edwards, regular contributor to *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*, appeared in *The Village Voice* shortly after publication. *Funhouse* was mentioned by Robert Coover in his controversial "End of Books" front-page essay in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1993. Coover wrote a longer account of the work, also in the *Times*, the following year. A number of hypertext and new-media theorists have written about the *Funhouse*, including Noah Wardrip-Fruin, N.K. Hayles, Jill Walker Rettberg, Scott Rettberg, Astrid Ensslin, Donna Leishman, Loss Pequeno Glazier, Stuart Moulthrop, Alvaro Seica, and Roberto Simanowski. The *Funhouse* is a centerpiece of Anja Rau's rejoinder to the Gutenberg Elegy controversy ("Wreader's Digest"), and part of Espen Aarseth's account of digital literature in "Narrative in the Turing Universe," included in Franco Moretti's *The Novel, Volume 2*.

Funhouse is now difficult to access in its original form. Eastgate no longer sells the title, and while neither author nor publisher rule out a future re-release or re-issue, the obsolescence of HyperCard poses a major obstacle. In March, 2004, after years of diminishing interest and investment, Apple withdrew HyperCard from sale. In October, 2007, with the release of Macintosh OS 10.5 ("Leopard"), Apple ended support for Classic mode, the emulation environment under which HyperCard could still run on newer machines. Subsequent versions do not include Classic. Various third-party schemes for emulating HyperCard have been proposed and attempted, but in mid-2015 none are readily available. At this writing, the most effective way to read the *Funhouse* is on a vintage Macintosh computer, as in John McDaid's traversal.

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-artists-box-and-cd-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-john-mcdaids-uncle-buddys-phantom-house?path=john-mcdaid>)


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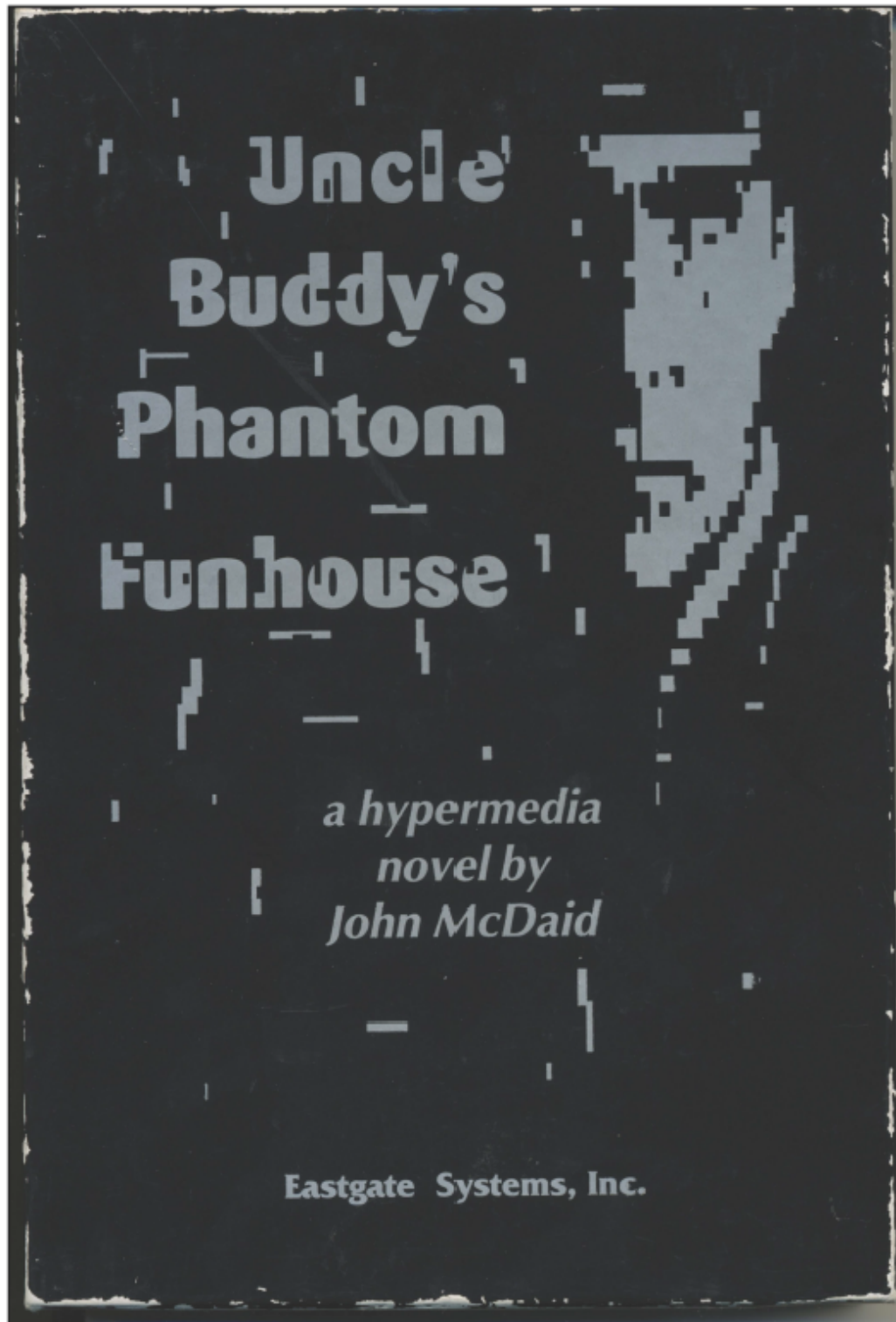


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Essays about John McDaid's Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse



The front cover of the artist box of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

In this section are essays about John McDaid's *Funhouse*, one each written by Moulthrop and Grigar. Moulthrop was closely associated with McDaid (along with Nancy Kaplan and Michael Joyce) in TINAC (which according to Joyce stood for "Textuality, Intertextuality, Narrative, and Consciousness"). Perspectives about hypertext and early digital literary aesthetics were discussed and shared among this group. Thus, the insights provided by Moulthrop generated from an intimate connection with the art and technology underpinning McDaid's work. Grigar's essay generated from her re-engagement with the work leading up to and during the traversal and interview.

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"The Story of Pathfinders and the Time Machine," by Stuart Moulthrop

Looking at a picture of you,

Traveling through time...

- Uncle Buddy, "Time Machine"

In this sense every machine was a time machine.

- Steve Tomasula, *TOC*

4-22-88 Toward a Theory of TT



And suppose one were investigating such an event, eh? Suppose one had found an "owl at dusk?" How Would You Know? Any effort to trace back would be futile; the effects would only, finally, be just What Had Happened.

Some, however, speculate that around the one or place involved, there may be a magic circle of duality-of Dasein and Nichts-which might reveal itself through vanishings, sudden curvings of reality, unexplained lacunæ in life-lines, certain absences. This would require a mindset so totally committed to finding these faint ripples that issues of subjectivity -and paranoia- would necessarily prevent testing and verification. It is perhaps in *this* that the ultimate security of the time traveller's enterprise safely rests.



Find

Link



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Screenshot from "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

Though the true subject of *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* is probably something like *the trouble with Being*, the work also has a good bit to say about science fiction, and especially that major science-fictional theme, time travel, abbreviated "TT" on the card above. Artifactually, the *Funhouse* comprises the sort of time machine called a time capsule, a set of documents and media objects bequeathed to a reader who finds her- or himself literary executor of one Arthur "Buddy" Newkirk. About this mysterious person a lawyer's letter asserts:

...you have, at some time, known Mr. Newkirk. Probably as a family acquaintance referred to as "Uncle Buddy." While you may not remember this, we are instructed to inform you that there may be reasons for this involving "lapses of memory" or other "divergences" of an unspecified nature.

(*Funhouse*, "READ ME FIRST," Card 1)

As the text of Card 189 suggests, one kind of “divergence” may be a disruption of causality or temporal integrity associated with the intrusion of a traveler from the past, future, or some other dimension of space-time. This effect may manifest in “absences,” but just as easily in uncanny presence. Our failure to remember Uncle Buddy, this card insinuates, may owe to his status as an “owl at dusk,” an agent of the Time Travel Conspiracy who has somehow escaped or flouted the general cover story.

All of which is fiction, or the basis of an ambitious structure of metaphor: the *Funhouse* is indeed about disruptions of *Dasein und Nichts*, but to a stubbornly realist way of thinking, these effects may have more to do with language and poetics than with the physics of time. However, like all so-called novels, but particularly in the case of this unconventional example, McDaid’s work proceeds from a specific, material and technological context. It comes as a box of actual objects (tape cassettes, page proofs, diskettes) and a collection of HyperCard stacks ostensibly backed up from a 1990s-era Macintosh owned by the mysterious writer. The relationship of this context to the fiction it transmits is highly significant, because it frames certain problems of time and mediation that are at once theoretical and interestingly practical.

Here then is a true story about time travel.

Uncle Buddy’s Phantom Funhouse makes significant use of multiple media. In most of the stacks, words share the screen with painstakingly digitized hand drawings and photographic images. The arrangement and design of cards can be essential to their interpretation. It was therefore desirable, in making the visual record of McDaid’s traversal, to capture images of the computer screen, like the rendering of Card 189 in “The Writer’s Brain” stack, shown above. Retrieving these images as part of the video record of the traversal posed problems. Because of its instantiation in an obsolete hypermedia system (HyperCard), the *Funhouse* is best experienced on vintage computers that are not capable of video output. Attempts to shoot the screen directly were frustrated by incompatible refresh rates, tired phosphors, and the finely scratched glass of 20-year-old monitors.

A better solution lay in software screen capture, a feature implemented from the beginning in Apple’s revolutionary operating system. When certain keys are pressed, the system will write the data for the current display (the screen bitmap) to an output file. It was thus possible, using a vintage Macintosh laptop, to re-visit and record certain cards McDaid accessed during his tour of the *Funhouse*, offering the viewer detailed visual context for the texts he read aloud.

However, a further problem presented itself: We were retracing McDaid’s steps on a “Wallstreet I” G3 PowerBook manufactured in 1998; how would we transfer the image data from this machine to a modern system? The screen images are saved in PICT format, which is no longer widely supported.

More troubling, the CD-ROM device installed in the vintage laptop could only read, not write. Using a legacy installation of Adobe Photoshop on the old machine (version 4.0), we were able to transcode the images from PICT to the more useable JPEG format, but we still could not transfer the data. HyperCard’s time capsule seemed stubbornly sealed.

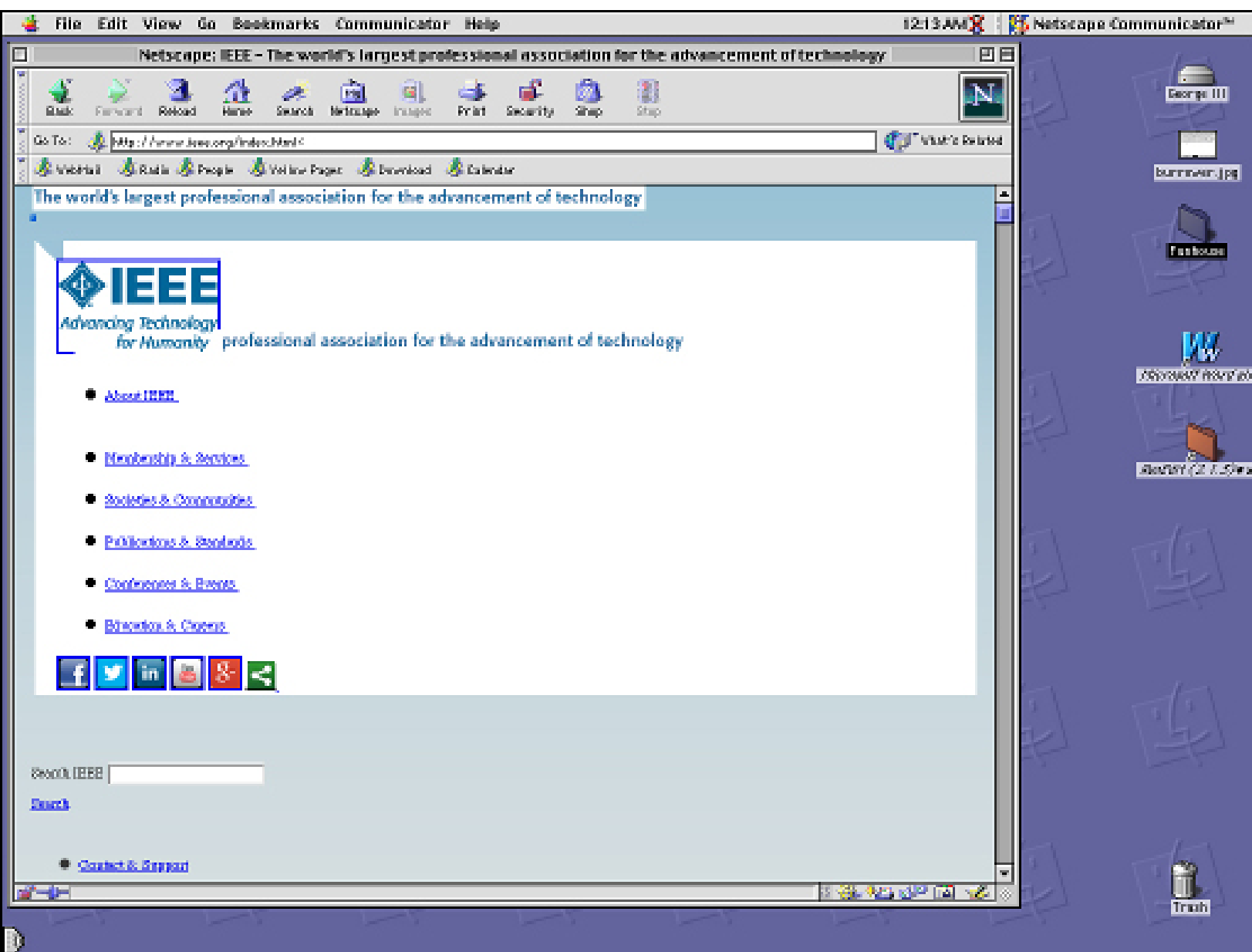
It might have been possible simply to find another old Macintosh with a CD-ROM burner, or a vintage third-party device equipped with a SCSI interface compatible with the PowerBook. Neither of these was readily available when editing of McDaid’s traversal began, so we turned to another, ultimately more

interesting method.

In the days when the *Funhouse* was created, there were basically two ways to connect a Macintosh to another computer: the proprietary AppleTalk local-area network (LAN), or a modem allowing data transfer over a phone line. As personal computing environments became diverse and dial-up connections gave way to high-speed optical networks, a third option was added to these interfaces: IEEE 802.3 or Ethernet, a networking technology that became ubiquitous in the pre-wireless era and is still in wide use today. Ethernet ports remain standard on many laptops and personal systems across manufacturers, and on devices such as network routers.

Using the Ethernet port on the PowerBook, we were able to wire it to our wireless LAN router, which was in turn linked to a cable modem leased from our Internet Service Provider. Once hooked up, the vintage laptop automatically acquired an Internet Protocol (IP) address and was connected to the Internet. This arrangement enabled some interesting side experiments.

Readers familiar with the Internet Archive's *Wayback Machine* (<https://archive.org/web/> (<https://archive.org/web/>)) may have sampled decades-old Web pages on modern equipment. We attempted the reverse of this trick, approaching contemporary sites with a 25-year-old browser. The results were as often enlightening as frustrating.



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2015 IEEE Web site viewed with 1998 Netscape browser

Though incompatibility with modern tracking and security measures severely limited these experiments, they nonetheless revealed a way forward. If the old laptop could receive information via Hypertext Transport Protocol (HTTP), it could theoretically transmit using that protocol as well. All we needed was HTTP server software. As it happens, the version of the Macintosh operating system installed on the 1998 machine (System 8.6) includes an extension called Web Sharing, intended to allow users to distribute files via HTTP, either locally or, if properly connected, across the Internet. Once the image files were transferred to a designated directory on the old laptop, we were able to call them up from any machine on our local network:



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The Internet as Time Machine

This ability to connect pre-millennial and post-millennial platforms underscores the value of non-proprietary, “protocological” resources like Ethernet, JPEG, HTTP, and IP. It also testifies to the good judgment of engineers and product executives at Apple, who many years ago built these facilities into their machines. Personal computing may be driven by development cycles measured in months, but long-term interests are sometimes also served. To paraphrase Tomasula, given smart design and manufacture, any information machine can at least potentially be a time machine. Back in the day, there was something uncanny and exciting about seeing futuristic software on early personal computers. Something of that same thrill returned, nearly three decades later, as we found we could push data from a desktop configured in the Bill Clinton administration into the information environment of the mid-twenty-teens. It is one thing to talk, read, or dream about time machines. It’s something else to find you own one.

Continue to “A Case for [Electronic] Literary History: John McDavid and Pathfinders” by Dene Grigar” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mcdavids-critical-essays?path=essays-about-john-mcdavids-uncle-buddys-phantom-funhouse>)



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"A Case for [Electronic] Literary History: John McDaid and Pathfinders" by Dene Grigar

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson.29>)



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This photo taken by Dene Grigar in August 2013 at the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL) at Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV) shows the team of faculty and students who worked on the team for the McDaid traversal.

The *Pathfinders* team worked this week with John McDaid to preserve his work, *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*. Begun in 1986 as a challenge to write a novel "that no one else could write," *Uncle Buddy's* was expressed in hypermedia and published by Eastgate Systems in 1993. It constitutes the second work we have documented now—Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* was the proof of concept that tested our theories and plans. While we recognized the importance of documenting these works for posterity, it was *Uncle Buddy's*, a work out of print and impossible to find even used—that made us acutely aware of the historical implications of our efforts. The fact of the matter is, *Pathfinders* is about contributing to the future of literature through documenting its past—and the past we are documenting focuses on experimental literary writing that emerged in the 1980s and has continued to grow and develop into what we call electronic literature today. We are, in effect, involved in creating the infrastructure for a literary history of electronic literature.

A
Literary History
of England

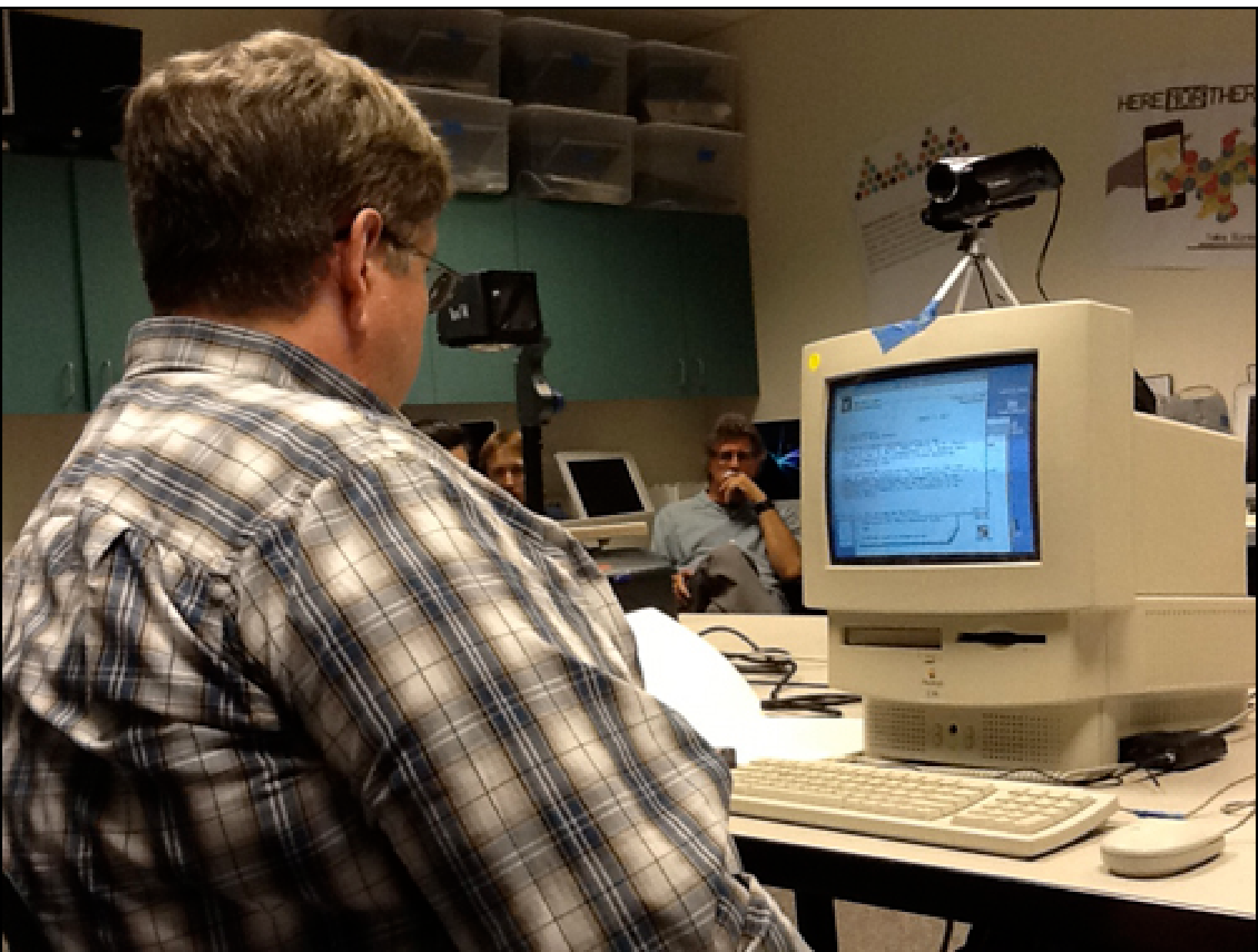
This is a photo of the cover of Baugh's *Literary History of England*.

I have to admit that I love literary history and have, in my life, collected volumes of books about it. Baugh's *A Literary History of England*, published in 1948, is a case in point. Close to 1700 pages, the book covers over a thousand years of English literary heritage, beginning with the middle ages. The copy I own was purchased second-hand well after I finished my undergraduate degrees in French and English and merely studying British literature for my own edification. I was delighted to find the previous author's marginalia and underlined text, for they linked me to the book's own history. At the first university where I held a tenure-track position, the PhD students in my department were required to know the literary history of England and America, in a strict chronology, for their exams. The department has long since revised this requirement, but during those early years of my career the "Baugh," as I called it, served as a sort of bible for me because I was not an expert in British literature and needed to have at my disposal the information it contained between its covers. Keep in mind this was the mid-1990s when the browser was just introduced and the web still in its infancy. Books like the Baugh constituted the references we used for research.

Eschew literary history all you want—and, yes, making grad students memorize historical "facts" found in them for their exams is a good reason to complain—but print literary scholars at least have a documented history to argue about or from. Those of us working in electronic literature should be so fortunate. We are working to construct ours, pixel by pixel, frame by frame, tag by tag. Making the task challenging is the fact that the works we seek to historicize are rendered obsolete sometimes seemingly overnight. The truth is, in order to have a history, one needs a stable present so that one can readily study the works one needs for that historicization. *Pathfinders* represents one of many efforts scholars in the U.S. and abroad are undertaking to document the heritage of electronic literature before it is too late.

I use the phrase, too late, not so lightly. During the panel presentation that I participated in at the 2013 Digital Humanities conference held in Lincoln, NE, an audience member asked the panelists how early electronic literature was received by the public when these works were first released. Two of us (a man in the back of the room and me) from about 50 people could share with the audience the memory of picking up the slim folio (that contained the floppy disk and directions for how to install and interact with the work) of a hypertext novel in our hands and trying to figure out how to begin our reading adventure. The truth of the matter is that when that man and I are dead and gone from this world, it may very well be up to pure conjecture to figure out what people thought of these works when they were first released. We absolutely have no idea what people thought the first time they heard the *Odyssey* recited by the Homeric poet either, but we expect to have this gap of cultural history with a work written thousands of years ago when orality was the only mode for sharing one's heritage. However, in an age when we have such a wide variety of communication channels with which to express our views, not having a record of human experience with a cultural object produced a mere 20 years ago is absurd if not ironic.

More challenging is that even if you got your hands on a copy of *Uncle Buddy's* (doubtful, as I mentioned earlier, since it is currently out of print), you would need a Macintosh computer running the Classic operating system with the ability to read either floppies or a CD and loaded with Hypercard 2.0. Without it, you cannot do much except explore the contents of Uncle Buddy's estate contained in the box with little idea of how the various items connect to the story.



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This photo shows John McDaid undertaking the traversal of his work, "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse" at the Electronic Literature Lab at WSUV in August 2013.

So, the *Pathfinders* team documented John McDaid's *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*. McDaid was on hand to give a traversal; an in-depth interview about the works' origins, its influences, and its challenges;

and a public lecture. Two readers joined us to traverse the works themselves. Taken together, these activities provide information that will help others to gain a better understanding of this particular work and the experiments that contributed to the field of electronic literature. Readers can find in this section of the book information about the work, including: 1) a complete inventory of the contents of his box (replete with photos of each), 2) a complete inventory of the media included in the work itself, and 3) a complete inventory of the art forms he experiments with in the work. The special video of John opening the box containing *Uncle Buddy's* (what he said Mark Bernstein referred to as “the chocolate box full of death”) and talking about each item and the part each plays in the story will also be made available.

So, I have a vision. Hear me out, and don't laugh. One day, 70 years from now, literary scholars will argue about the 1700 pages (or screens or whatever the heck they call the presentational modality at that time) of electronic literary history that some future Baugh has painstakingly detailed. These scholars will exclaim that such labor is not necessary, will complain that such work is hegemonic, a master narrative in need of overhaul. In that imagined future, these scholars can well afford the luxury of rejecting literary history. But we can't. Not today when we cannot even locate *Uncle Buddy's* at our local library.


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Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl



Shelley Jackson the Author of "Patchwork Girl"

Shelley Jackson the author of "Patchwork Girl"

Shelley Jackson is the author of the story collection *The Melancholy of Anatomy*, the novel *Half Life*, the hypertexts *Patchwork Girl* and *My Body, a Wunderkammer* and several children's books, most recently *Mimi's Dada Catifesto*. Her stories and essays have appeared in many journals including *McSweeney's*, *Conjunctions*, *The Paris Review*, *The Believer*, and *Cabinet Magazine*.

In 2003 she launched her project *SKIN*, a story published in tattoos on 2095 volunteers. The recipient of a Howard Foundation grant, a Pushcart Prize, and the 2006 James Tiptree Jr Award, she is also co-founder with artist Christine Hill of the Interstitial Library and headmistress of the Shelley Jackson Vocational School for Ghost Speakers & Hearing-Mouth Children, a work in progress.

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shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl) History of Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl?path=shelley-jackson>)

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(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl.12>) (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl>) Essay about Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl?path=shelley-jackson>)

Begin with “Shelley Jackson's Artist's Statement”

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jacksons-artists-statement?path=shelley-jackson>)

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/john-mcdaid?path=index>)

Or, continue to “Bill Bly's We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly?path=index>)



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Shelley Jackson's Artist's Statement



SHELLEY JACKSON holds an AB in art from Stanford University, and an MFA in creative writing from Brown. Her other e-publications include the Web-based *My Body* (Alt-X, 1997); *Stitch Bitch*, an essay/rant on hypertext (Media-In-Transition, 1997); and *Musée Mécanique*, a long story (Web Conjunctions, 2000). Her print works include

stories in *Conjunctions*, *Fence*, *Gargoyle*, the *Fetish* anthology, and other journals. Forthcoming are a novel, and *The Melancholy of Anatomy*, a collection of stories. She is also author and illustrator of children's books *The Old Woman and the Wave* (DK Ink, 1998) and the forthcoming *Alchemical Dog*. She lives nowhere in particular, and specializes in everything.

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Eastgate Systems Inc.
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USA

“Perhaps the true paradigmatic work of the era, Shelley Jackson’s elegantly designed, beautifully composed Patchwork Girl offers the patient reader, if there are any left in the world, just such an experience of losing oneself to a text, for as one plunges deeper and deeper into one’s own personal exploration of the relations here of creator to created and of body to text, one never fails to be rewarded and so is drawn ever deeper, until clicking the mouse is as unconscious an act as turning a page, and much less constraining, more compelling.” — Robert Coover

Jackson provides a strong statement about her vision at her Public

Lecture, entitled “The Shelley Jackson Vocational School for Ghost Speakers and Hearing-Mouth Children,” given for *Pathfinders*, on Friday, October 18 at Angst Gallery. She says:

*Literature is training in doing without oneself. The writer does not write as herself, of herself, or in her own words. The reader hollows herself out in turn, to play host to a host of voices. If she does this, for the most part, fearlessly and with ease, it is because she is, we are really already hollow. *mouth All speech is a speaking as if—as if one were a person. As if these were one’s own thoughts. They are not; our words, our thoughts, these emphatically included, are not our own, just borrowed for a while. We exist, if you like, but only as fictional characters do. At death, we all fall out of character, and into the world. But some perform this interesting operation before death, and that is the origin of literature.*


It is not ordinarily the origin of nonfiction, on whose domain I am trespassing today, but then, not knowing its place is literature’s place. If it scales its retaining walls, however, it is not to usurp the standard of the factual, but to plant in its place its own equivocal ensign, the bend sinister of the pretender.

Continue to “Shelley Jackson’s Traversal of Patchwork Girl” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/traversals?path=shelley-jackson>)

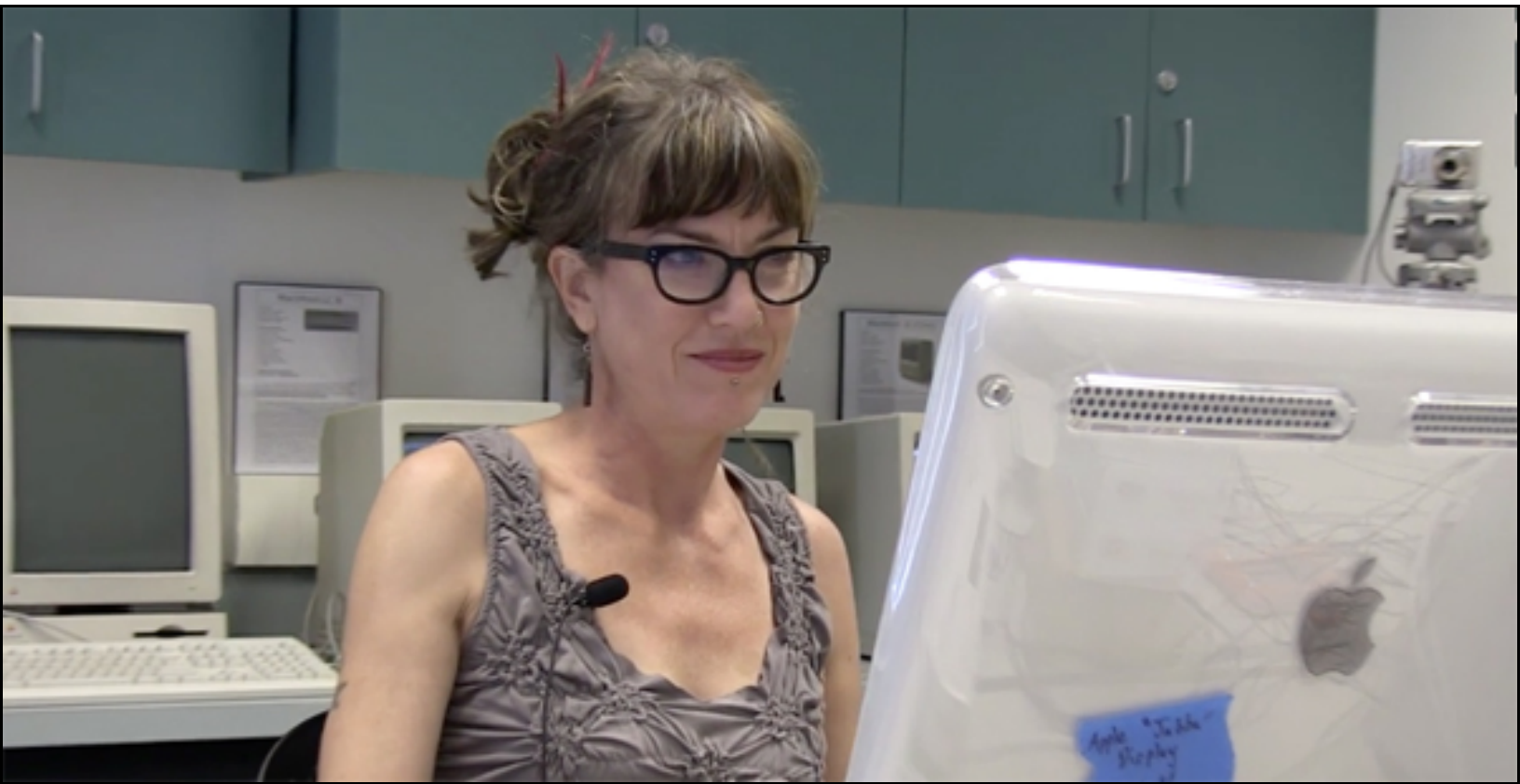


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Version 9 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jacksons-artists-statement.9>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jacksons-artists-statement.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jacksons-artists-statement.meta>)

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Shelley Jackson's Traversal of Patchwork Girl



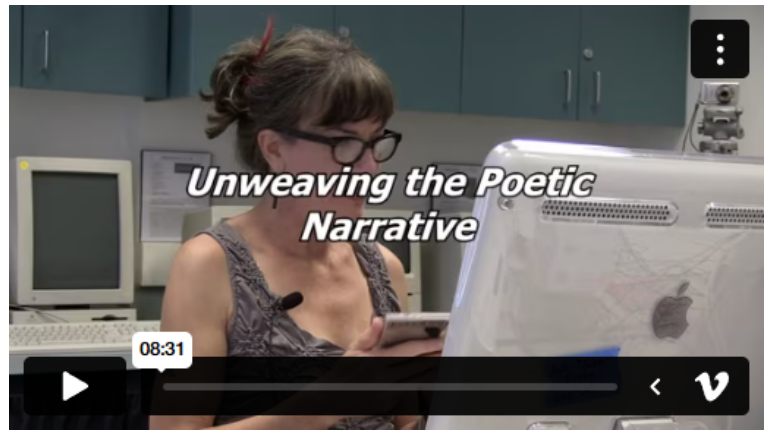
DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

Shelley Jackson's traversal

This traversal of Shelley Jackson took place on Friday, October 18, 2013 in the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver as part of the *Pathfinders* project. Jackson is the author of *Patchwork Girl*, a hypertext poem riffing off Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that represents a high mark of the genre. The traversal is divided into four parts and reveals to us the intricacies and nuances of the work. The commentary is written by Moulthrop.

Jackson Traversal, Part 1, "Unweaving the Poetic Narrative"
(<https://vimeo.com/119406329>)

Jackson introduces *Patchwork Girl*, noting differences between the original and the CD-ROM edition she is using here, then starts the program. She notes that the opening image of the monstrous body was produced with *MacPaint*, the graphics program included with first-generation Apple Macintoshes. From the image she moves to the Map View (boxes and curved lines): "For me this is what the piece looks like, really." She notes that by holding down two keys (ALT and COMMAND, the two keys left of the spacebar) readers can reveal linked words. There are five paths from the first lexia, "evenly weighted for the reader." Jackson decides to choose a path that emphasizes story, and moves to a lexia called "Birth." From there she moves into passages appropriated from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The male creature demands that Frankenstein provide him a female mate. The next lexia mixes Mary Shelley's prose with an interjection by Shelley Jackson's monster, in which she asserts autonomy (more in the manner of the Patchwork Girl of Oz): "I forge my own links," living her life as a fabric that perhaps "will begin to resemble a web." Jackson's female monster, then, alludes to her love affair with Mary Shelley, and this part ends in one of those reminiscences.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:31 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson Traversal, Part 2, "Confronting the Monster" (<https://vimeo.com/119406330>)

A link on the word "journal" leads to a section of a fictional Mary Shelley journal (invented by Jackson) describing Mary's first encounter with the female monster, who exists both as a real person (in Jackson's fiction) and as Mary's deliberate creation. From this section there are two links, displayed in a Storyspace link-selection dialog box, one labeled *written*, the other *sewn*. Jackson explains that this choice encapsulates her main metaphor in *Patchwork Girl*, the body as text, and text itself as a fabric or weaving.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 10:30 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson takes the link called *writing*. Jackson's Mary Shelley recalls the creation of her monster as an act of writing, but writing that quickly comes to resemble sewing and, thus, leads to a reverie or digression (somewhat eroticized) about the ladies of the town sitting together at their work.

Jackson backs up to take the other link, *sewn*. The making of the monster is now an act of needlework ("I had sewn her"), but sewing flips over into writing. From here we move to a lexia called "she stood,"

containing Jackson's Mary's description of her naked creature: "Various sectors of her skin were different hues and textures, no match perfect." She is monstrous, and yet "in this way she was beautiful."

After this, Jackson clicks through a largely linear section, passing over a lexia in which her Mary makes love to the female monster. She returns to Map View and jumps to the path called "Graveyard," which contains stories of the people from whom the monster's body parts have come.

Here Jackson demonstrates a striking feature of her design that seems partly unrealized in the current version. (The cause of the problem Jackson finds is not clear.) Clicking on each bodypart link, the reader should be able to move to a passage associated with the part, or alternatively to an image of the part, which Jackson intended to be moveable around the reading screen, allowing the reader to re-assemble graphically her own monstrous body. The attempt to do this with "arm" proves unsuccessful, though "head" does work. This technical exploit represents a strong departure from the purely verbal register, reminding us why *Patchwork Girl* is often compared to graphic novels. It is also clear that Jackson pushed the presentation space as far as she could toward the compositional workspace in which she created the project -- though Storyspace appears to have pushed back. Jackson reads lexias associated with the head, the lips ("my lips always get the joke") and the tongue. Then we leave the Graveyard: "a kind of resurrection has taken place."

Jackson Traversal, Part 3, "Stitched Remix"

(<https://vimeo.com/119406343>)

Back to the start (title page). We move from there to the "Quilt" path, which appears as "a visual image made out of the basic structure of the Storyspace program itself," i.e., an array or grid of variously colored boxes. Quilt contains passages remixed from various sources: *Frankenstein*, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, critical commentaries, works of cultural theory, and even the Storyspace user manual. At the bottom of each lexia in the Quilt we are supposed to see "a series of hyphens," representing the stitches that draw passages together. For some reason, these do not appear in the CD-ROM edition Jackson used for this reading, though they can be seen in earlier editions.

Monsters, hybrids, offspring: "Mosaic techniques of the maternal imagination, mistress of errors, aren't you the very demon of multiplicity?" Jackson's delight in this (lovely) passage is apparent, and she reads with a spontaneous smile. We leave the Quilt and travel "upstream" to the Map View again, descending once more into the "Story" path. Jackson explains that she wants to show how Story is built from two parallel threads that meet and diverge, one celebrating, the other resisting multiplicity.

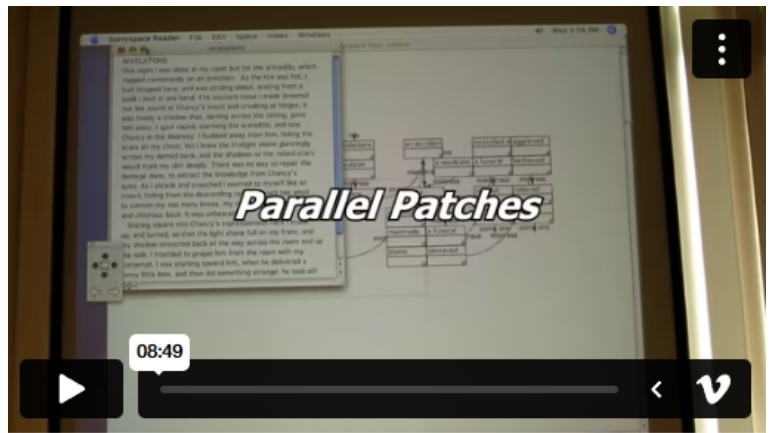


The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:09 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson Traversal, Part 4, "Parallel Patches"

(<https://vimeo.com/119406344>)

Jackson returns to the Story thread, following the female monster in 19th-century America. Illustrating the split between celebration and resistance, she reads two lexias that both bear the name "Revelations." They are two versions of the same scene, in which Chancy, the sailor into whose company the monster has fallen, walks in on her in a state of undress. In one version, Chancy also strips, revealing that she too is a woman. The succeeding lexia after this has Chancy responding to the situation with laughter, and the two make love. In the alternative (resistant) version, Chancy responds to the monster's body with aversion, and the two part "distrustfully."



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 8:49 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Both versions of "Revelations" lead eventually to a lexia called "An Accident," which Jackson reads in its entirety. The monster is run down by a cab, and her left leg is separated -- in something less traumatic than a bloody severing -- from the rest of her body. In an earlier lexia (in the Graveyard), the monster hints that her left leg has always had a wayward impulse and seems ready to go its own way.

The monster wonders at Chancy's astonished and fearful reaction to the accident and her survival: "Was there a right way to go to pieces?" Eventually the leg is found and receives a funeral, after which the monster heads west, and into something like the present day.

In the final sequence, the monster takes up residence in a trailer near Death Valley, where she tries to "erase my history and be made new." The attempt to re-stitch herself surgically has not succeeded, so she attempts a psychological re-unification. "Files could be erased, pictures snipped. ... I thought I could grow into my oneness" -- but this is not to be. The monster falls apart again.

In the final lexia, "Aftermath," she concludes: "And doubt and movement will be my life, as long as it lasts."

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jacksons-artists-statement?path=shelley-jackson>)

Continue to "The Interview with Shelley Jackson about Patchwork Girl"

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The Interview with Shelley Jackson about Patchwork Girl



DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

Shelley Jackson being interviewed about "Patchwork Girl"

This interview of Shelley Jackson, conducted by Dene Grigar, took place on Friday, October 18, 2013 in the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver as part of the *Pathfinders* project. The interview is divided into nine videos and provides insights into the development of the work. The commentary is written by Moulthrop.

Jackson, Interview 1, "Exploring Hypertext Remix" (<https://vimeo.com/groups/301152/videos/114482904>)

Jackson and Grigar discuss the tension between fragmentation, which some see to be an essential quality of hypertext, and the literary idea of unity. Jackson resists that idea that hypertext works against the unity of literary writing, pointing out that the very conception of the work joins her writing to previous print sources. There is a discussion of feminist theory from the 1970s and 1980s, especially French feminism, and Jackson's engagement with the idea of plural identity, ostensibly as an aspect of feminine consciousness (an idea for which she shows some skepticism).



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Jackson reflects on the experience of returning to *Patchwork Girl* after nearly 20 years, saying that she had initial anxiety but ultimately feels "proud" of the writing she has done -- though dissatisfied with the gap between her artistic intention and the limitations imposed by Storyspace.

Jackson, Interview 2, "Reflections" (<https://vimeo.com/114482905>)

Grigar asks what Jackson might have done (or might do) differently if re-writing *Patchwork Girl* with more contemporary software. Jackson resists the idea, explaining that *Patchwork Girl* emerged from the specifics of Storyspace, especially its visual signature of boxes in rows, which suggested to her both the Graveyard (headstones) and a patchwork quilt. The work "is about text as body," and is in some sense inseparable from its (technical) embodiment. A smoother, more intuitive interface wouldn't do. The work needs its discontinuities, its patches.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 9:24 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson talks about the history of *Patchwork Girl*, noting that it began with the final assignment in George P. Landow's graduate theory class at Brown in 1993 or 1994, where students were required to create a hypertext. In some sense, *Patchwork Girl* began as a series of doodles in the margins of Jackson's notebook "while listening to [Landow] lecture." These were images of monstrous, scarred, female bodies.

As Jackson goes on, she connects the Landow sketches to an earlier academic encounter, a course taught by the poststructuralist theorist Avital Ronell (most famous for *The Telephone Book*) at Berkeley in the early 1990s, before Jackson came to Brown. Jackson says she has never acknowledged her "debt" to Ronell and is now correcting the omission. From Ronell she learned that it was possible to read older, traditional literature through the lens of contemporary theory. So began a fascination with *Frankenstein* (covered in the Ronell class) and particularly with the "chopped-off" story of the female monster.

DG: Had you read *The Telephone Book* before writing *Patchwork Girl*? SJ: "I had fingered it."

Jackson, Interview 3, "Stitching the Patchwork Girl" (<https://vimeo.com/114482906>)

The immediate product of the Landow course was a "meta-hypertext" about female identity, materiality, and bodies: "the gnarl of theoretical concerns that informs my project." One of her Brown professors, Coover or Landow, showed the work to Mark Bernstein of Eastgate, who proposed to publish, though Jackson deferred the offer, wishing to expand and complete the work.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 5:42 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

The earliest part of *Patchwork Girl* was a series of theoretical meditations, along with the first part of the monster's story. The rest of the story came later, along with Quilt, Graveyard (and possibly Broken Accents, unless that is the older "theoretical" part). Quilt and Graveyard both reflect Jackson's interest in fragmentation and discontinuity.

Grigar asks Jackson to relate these properties to her encounter with Storyspace as a tool, asking if Jackson had considered using other hypertext or hypermedia tools at the time. She did not, and explains that she was strongly attracted to Storyspace, liking particularly how she could see links and move passages of text around in a spatial context.

Jackson explains that she thinks even of traditional, linear works as composed of moveable bits and pieces, so Storyspace was something of a revelation. "You can thank Mark Bernstein for that."

Jackson, Interview 4, "Revolutionary Patches" (<https://vimeo.com/114482907>)

Grigar asks a hard question (for which we can blame Stuart Moulthrop): *What would you consider the most significant innovation of Patchwork Girl?* "This is the sort of question you shouldn't have to answer about your own work," says Jackson (fairly enough) -- but she goes on to offer a "long answer" to the inappropriate question.

Jackson notes that the mainstream print world hasn't moved much further toward an embrace of discontinuity and fragmentation than it had in the mid-1990s. There is a "bizarre rhetoric" in popular criticism about the "naturalness of linear story form." So a first cut at *Patchwork Girl*'s innovation would be the way it stands against this tendency.

Beyond that, Jackson notes that she found herself "standing on the coast of a new world," as she considered what would be possible with emerging media. DG: "Do you still feel that way?" Jackson: "I do."

She goes on, wondering why literary critics and writers are so averse to "play." Why so much anxiety about the way new work integrates with old? *Patchwork Girl* does not invalidate Dickens. "I might prefer to read Dickens instead of *Patchwork Girl*" -- though, she adds, "that doesn't mean there shouldn't be a *Patchwork Girl*."

Jackson turns to other threads of innovation, such as the incorporation of media elements besides type. Her visual aesthetic in *Patchwork Girl* was "deliberately retro," based on the early graphics program MacPaint, already obsolete in the early nineties: using it was "like working in woodcut." Aiming at a "retro" aesthetic was a way to assert the linkage of old and new.

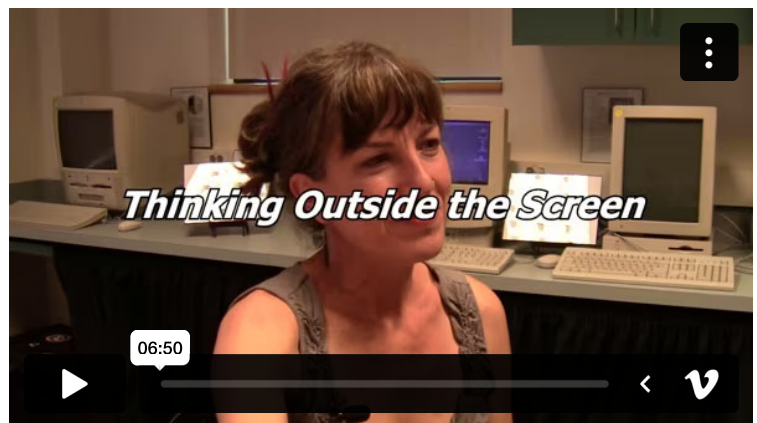
She also speculates on her experiments with nonlinearity without using devices such as footnotes, indexes, or loose-bound pages; though she notes somewhat ruefully that reading *Patchwork Girl* is not much easier than it is to read experimental print works produced with those devices.

Jackson, Interview 5, "Thinking Outside the Screen" (<https://vimeo.com/114482908>)

Grigar asks about constraints, affordances, and more about the influence of the medium on the message in *Patchwork Girl*. This brings to mind *Tristram Shandy*, which Jackson says she regularly teaches in her writing courses, and the fact that students bring in editions of Sterne in which the original conception is badly betrayed -- with the famous Black Page reduced a black box,



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The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 6:47 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

for instance. How do we draw the boundaries of a literary text? What belongs to the text?

Thinking about these questions has pushed Jackson beyond both the page and the screen, into projects that explore the way literature lives in a larger world. Books, she says, now seem to her not at all identical with the words on their pages. In encountering a book, we have to think about the entire cultural/commercial machine that accounts for its existence.

Grigar turns to the planning and compositional work that underlies *Patchwork Girl*. There was "a lot of trial and error," Jackson notes. She reveals that there was at some point an aborted draft of *Patchwork Girl*, in which all the words were as intensely linked as possible, producing a "Brillo pad" of swarming connections. Finding this structure unacceptable, she started over: "So I just erased all the links!" [Note the delight with which this is said.] The current text grew out of a more considered deployment of links in discrete lines and threads.

The "Broken Accents" section is indeed the remnant of that aborted first draft, and the most densely linked part of *Patchwork Girl*.

**Jackson, Interview 6,
"Influences" (<https://vimeo.com/114482962>)**

Grigar asks about influences: Landow, Coover, Ronell, Haraway -- Mary Shelley, obviously -- but others? And what about the influence of Jackson's work on other hypertextualists?

Jackson calls to mind Judd Morrissey and Lori Talley's work, *My Name is Captain, Captain* (also published by Eastgate). Like Morrissey and Talley's earlier *Jew's Daughter*, this piece subverts the conventional node-link transitions of hypertext. Any word in these works is useable for transition, but instead of flipping to a defined page when a word is clicked, the work rebuilds its text computationally on the basis of the given word.

Jackson praises the way this work "pulled the rug out from under you but still somehow retained continuity and a sense of narrative presence." She laments the celebration of hypertextuality for its own sake and insists on a productive "tension" between a conventional kind of reading, "giving the words substantial weight" versus disorientation and the obligation of the reader to take active part. In this respect she is more interested in longer-form versions of electronic writing rather than the intensely fragmented versions of hypertext that came after the first Eastgate works.

This part of the interview ends with Grigar asking about Jackson's awareness of women in hypertextual



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:47 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

writing, and the critical reception of her work. Jackson has no answer here, saying she is "averse to reading about myself," and therefore unaware of critical responses.

Jackson, Interview 7, "After Patchwork Girl" (<https://vimeo.com/114496137>)

Grigar asks about literary life after *Patchwork Girl*: How has Jackson moved from then to now, and what sorts of continuity exist? This will be a long answer, Jackson warns; looking back, though, she finds it interesting how much her work seems related to *Patchwork Girl*.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 10:06 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Immediately after *Patchwork Girl*, she wrote the semi-autobiographical Web piece *My Body*, then the story collection *Melancholy of Anatomy*, which like *Patchwork Girl* is an attempt to explore particularity (body parts and fluids) within the context of a unifying scheme (the medieval Humours) -- but circular rather than linear.

Her novel *Half Life* is about conjoined twins, hence monstrosity, and "the fuzzy boundaries of the self." It features a two-headed narrator who is never sure which head is doing the writing, and a "barely held cohesion of text mappable onto a body."

Skin is an ongoing effort to write a story onto the bodies of human participants, who will go out into the world and "remix themselves." "*Skin* is what the *Patchwork Girl* became after she fell apart."

Jackson is currently finishing a novel-length project about a fictional school in which students with speech impediments are trained to channel the dead. It's about being haunted by the speech of other selves, and the fundamental unoriginality of language. "There isn't an essential self." [Jackson read from this work at her Public Lecture during her Pathfinders visit.]

Grigar turns to the question of the intended or ideal reader. One answer is George P. Landow, for whom the first version of *Patchwork Girl* was meant. (This is said somewhat playfully.) Beyond Landow, her ideal reader was "someone who was alert to the theoretical implications;" or "an imaginary someone like me."

Jackson, Interview 8, "Interpretations" (<https://vimeo.com/114482963>)

Grigar asks if Jackson feels she has been in any sense misread. Jackson regrets that some (many?) critical readers of hypertext have had "a pre-existing critical agenda," either to celebrate or denigrate new media. This results in readings that concentrate too much on technology and technique, and not enough on the larger significance of the work. "It's like reading *Tristram Shandy* exclusively as a demonstration of

[Sterne's] theories about the book." Experimental books are not "treatises on bookness."

"I would like to have a reader who is . . . trying to see what [the work] is in itself, and not only as a representation of a class of experiments."

DG: Could hypertext have come (or will it come) closer to the mainstream? Jackson responds by wondering why anyone would want that. "Experimental literature has no mass audience."

Jackson, Interview 9, "Examining Obsolescence" (<https://vimeo.com/114482965>)

DG: How do you feel about our attempt to hold onto *Patchwork Girl*?

Jackson: "The desire to hold [things] together is doomed and unhealthy . . . Literature is a way to learn to let go of ourselves." So trying to hold onto any authorial self, or product of same, is "hypocritical."

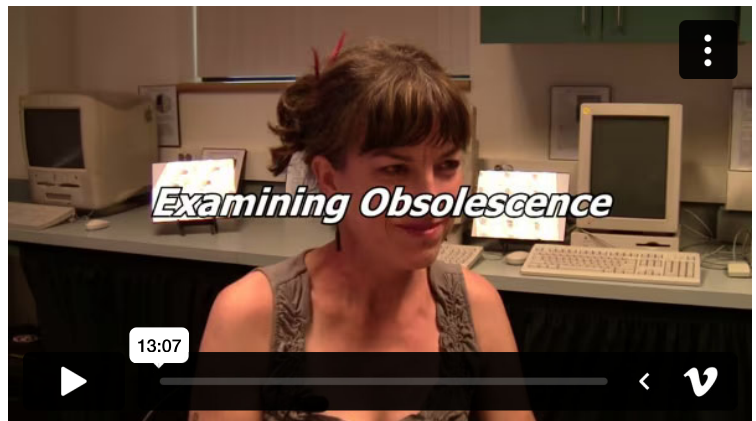
"Having said that . . ." she hedges. Disappearance of the work [as in the *Skin* project] should be part of the work's own logic. So it's okay for others to preserve *Patchwork Girl* "so long as it doesn't misrepresent my purpose in writing it."

Part of the logic of *Patchwork Girl* was to disclaim ownership, but this is problematic. In *Skin*, Jackson discovered that the readers (who carry the words) basically took over the text, overturning the conventional literary model of an author and an ideal reader.

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/traversals?path=shelley-jackson>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:07 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.




The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 14:10 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Continue to “The Sound File of Shelley Jackson Interview”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson-interview----sound-file?path=shelley-jackson>)

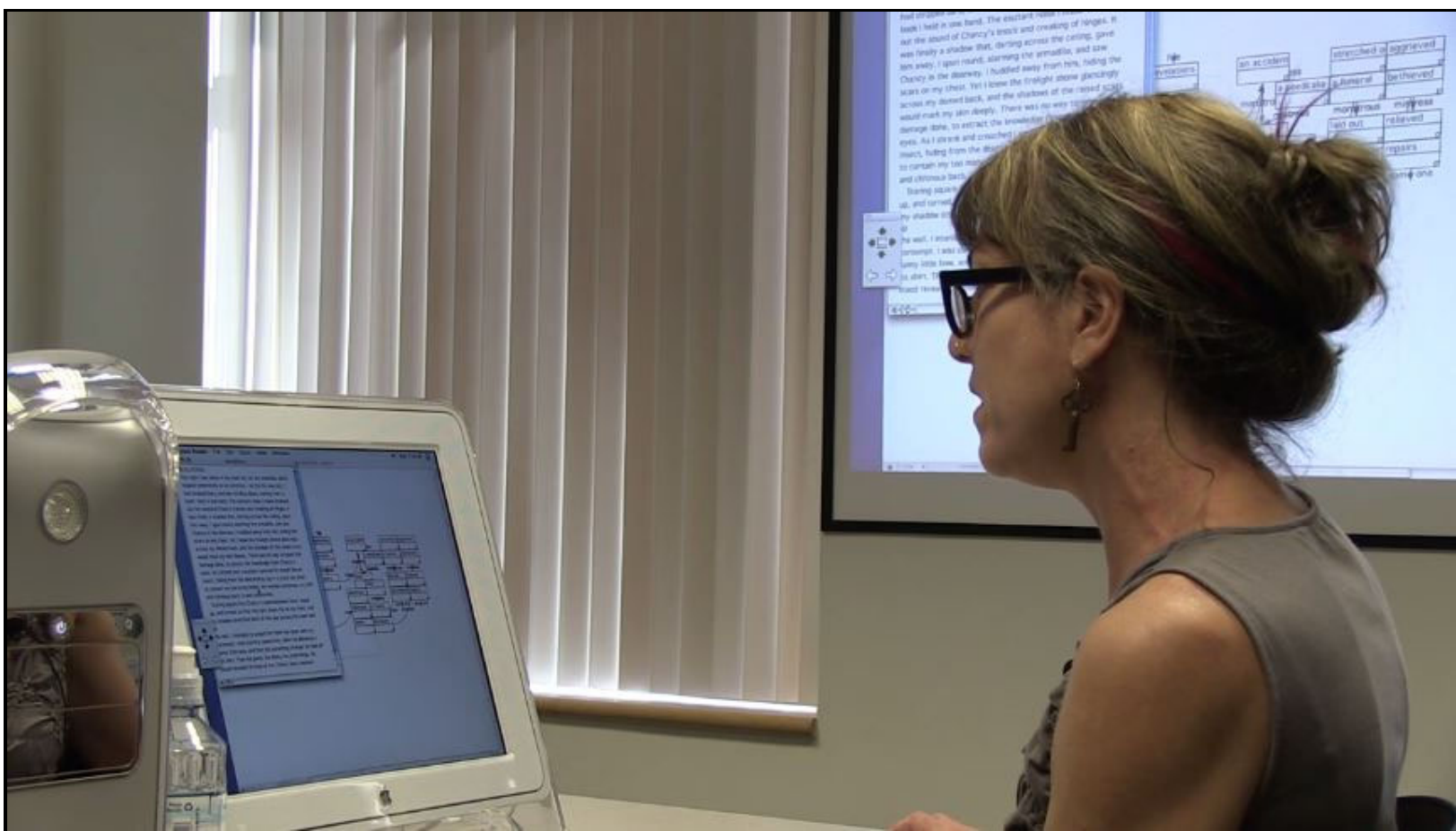


(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 50 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-interview.50>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-interview.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-interview.meta>)
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The Sound File of Shelley Jackson

Interview



DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

Shelley Jackson during her traversal

This sound file (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/pathfinders/sound-files/jackson-interview/jackson-interview.aif>) is an edited compilation, produced by John Barber, of all of the video interviews of Shelley Jackson. In developing this archive, Barber stripped the sound from the video and then reworked the material making the ideas flow logically. In most cases, he also removed false starts, unneeded language cues, and the interviewers' voices so that all that remains is Jackson's story, what Barber calls, "an audio artist's statement."

Oops, we couldn't find that track.



[Privacy policy](#)

The sound file is saved as high-quality, non-compressed audio (.aif). The duration is 10:57 minutes. The "downloadable" file is 166 MB, streaming from the *Pathfinders* server. Please allow time to access it. The "playable version" is streaming from the *Pathfinders* channel on SoundCloud.


« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-interview?path=shelley-jackson>)

Continue to “Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-readers-traversals--interviews?path=shelley-jackson>)



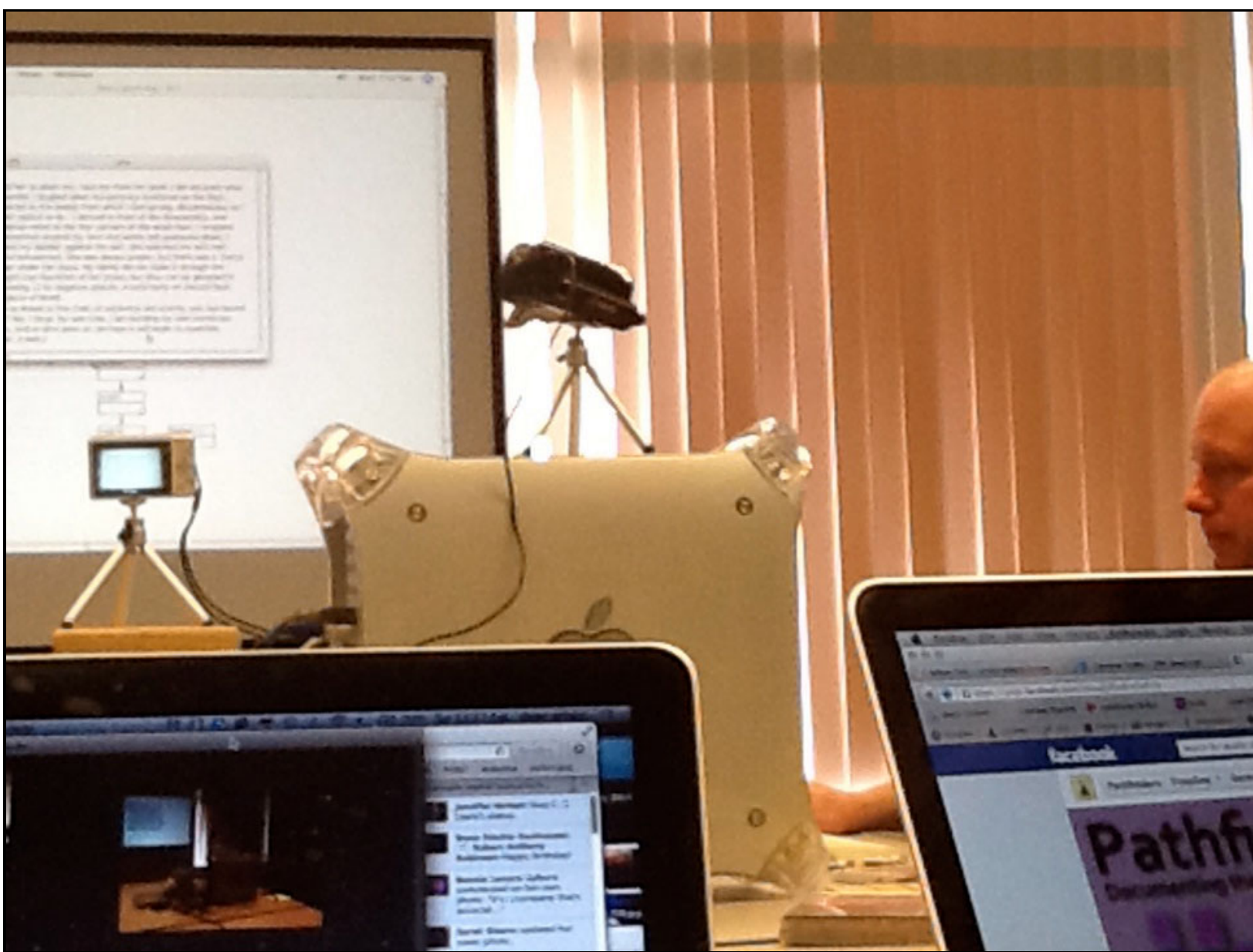
(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 29 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson-interview----sound-file.29>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson-interview----sound-file.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson-interview----sound-file.meta>)

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SHELLEY JACKSON'S PATCHWORK GIRL ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/SHELLEY-JACKSON](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson)) (5/8)

Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl



Ted Fordyce giving his traversal of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

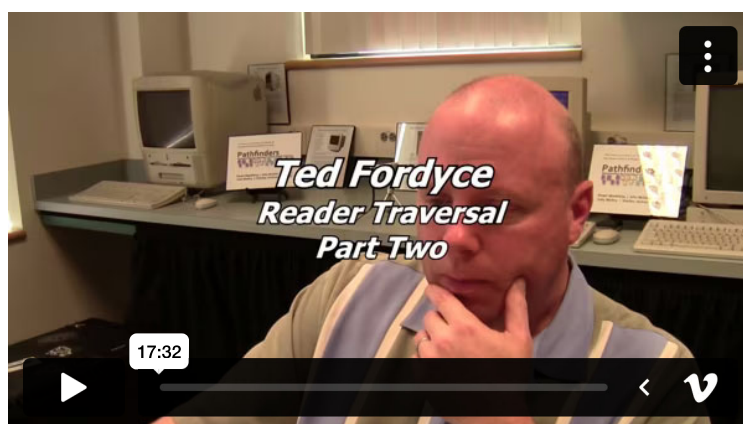
These traversals by readers Ted Fordyce and Curtis Miller and interviews of them by Dene Grigar, took place on Friday, October 19, 2013 in the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver as part of the *Pathfinders* project. Fordyce, an alum of the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver, hold a master's degree from the Communication, Culture and Technology program at Georgetown University. His thesis, entitled "Linked variations : authoring-system specific link construction and the analysis of hypertext literature," focused on hypertextual writing and explored Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, among other works. Miller is a writer and the publisher for *The Buzz*, living and working in Battle Ground, WA. Fordyce's experience with Jackson's writing and Curtis' background in print-based writing brought two different perspectives to the traversal of *Patchwork Girl*.

Jackson Reader Traversal, Part 1
(<https://vimeo.com/117815789>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 11:48 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson Reader Traversal, Part 2
(<https://vimeo.com/118452919>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 17:32 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson Reader Traversal, Part 3
(<https://vimeo.com/117815794>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 9:13 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Jackson Reader Traversal, Part 4
(<https://vimeo.com/118452918>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 17:22 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.


« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson-interview----sound-file?path=shelley-jackson>)

Continue to "Photos of the Folio, CD, and Flash Drive and Their Contents for Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl"
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-folio-cd-rerelease-and-flashdrive-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl?path=shelley-jackson>)

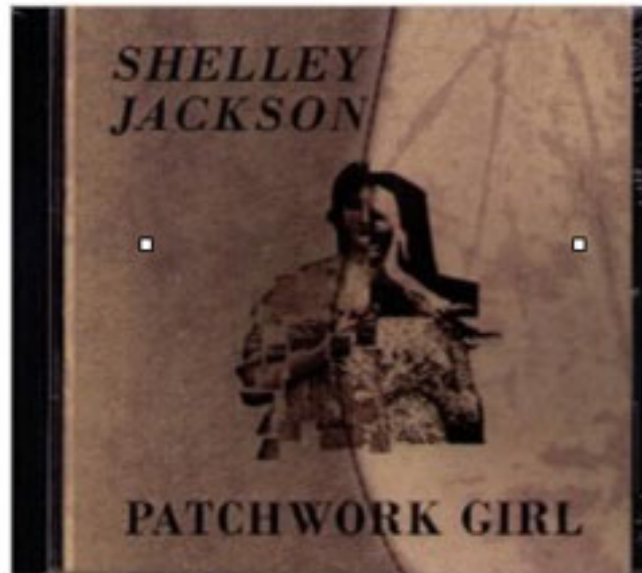
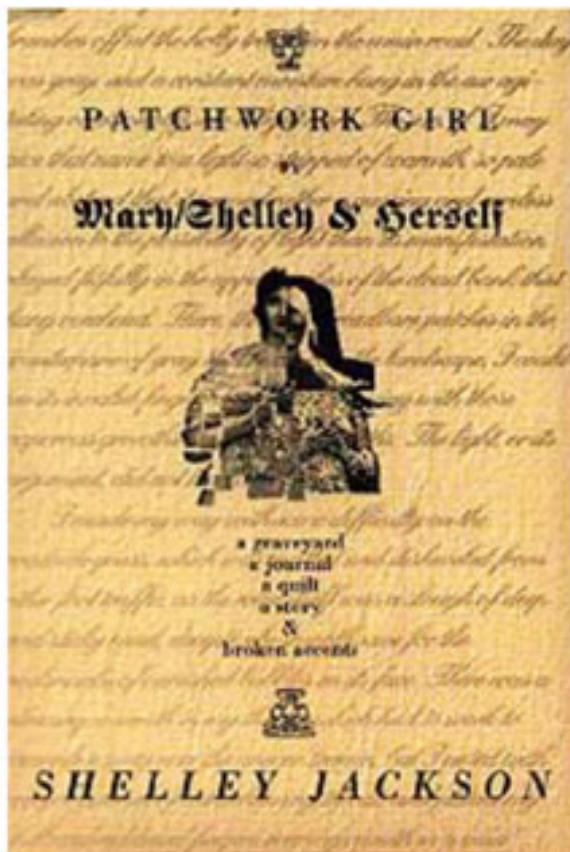


(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 36 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-readers-traversals--interviews.36>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-readers-traversals--interviews.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-readers-traversals--interviews.meta>)

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Photos of the Folio, CD, and Flash Drive and Their Contents for Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl



This section of *Pathfinders* contains 23 images of Shelley Jackson's folio, CD, and flash drive of *Patchwork Girl*. The photos detail the material aspect of the work and show the information that readers glean from its presentation.

Folio Contents

1. Floppy disk, 3 1/2," both original folio and re-release version
2. Booklet
3. CD, .047" thick and 3.150" in diameter
4. Flash Drive, 2014 re-release
5. Registration card

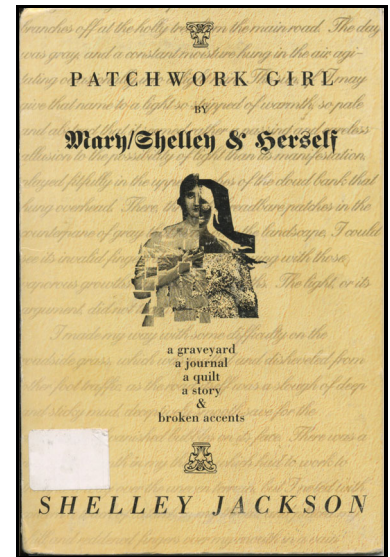
Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl, by Mary/Shelley and Herself* was published in 1995 by Eastgate Systems as a 9-inch by 6-inch folio made of heavy card stock. When opened, the folio reveals a pocket on each side. The pocket on the left contains the 3.5-inch diskette of the work, along with a registration card. Diskettes were of "HD" capacity (either 720 kilobytes or 1.4 megabytes), formatted for Macintosh or Windows (MS-DOS), since at this point the two operating systems used exclusive data systems. A notation on the reverse of the folio (see image of Folio Back, below) indicates the operating system. There is no indication on the diskette itself.

The pocket on the right side of the folio holds the back page of a 16-page booklet that gives directions for "Getting Started." The look of the folio with its front and back cover and interior paper contents resembles a book environment and, thus provided a breadcrumb leading readers from the world of print to the world of the digital where they were headed with electronic literature. Note that the folio has a minimal spine of about one-eighth inch, sufficient for main title of the work, author's name, and publisher's name, and so may be shelved like a book. A note on the verso of the folio credits Eric Cohen with "jacket design."

Folio, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-folio-front.jpg>)

The front of the folio shows a title page in the manner of a 19th-century novel such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*. Jackson's full title and description of the work is: "PATCHWORK GIRL, by Mary/Shelley and Herself, a graveyard, a journal, a quilt, a story, & broken accents." The list identifies the major sections of the hypertext. The author's name, Shelley Jackson, follows this list, separated by a decorative graphic. Below the main title is a collaged monochrome graphic, presumably created by Eric Cohen, assembled from four images of women in portrait pose, modified by various digital processes that evoke the allotropic "patchwork" process by which Jackson's title character --

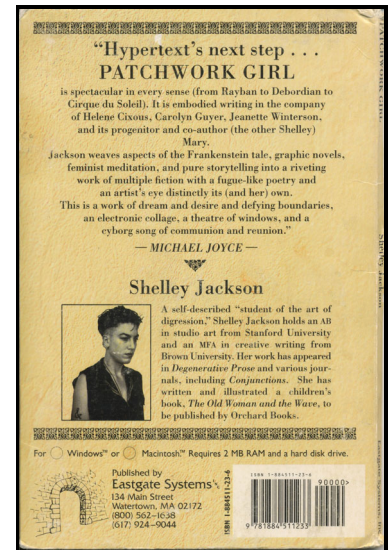
and her text itself -- come together. The cover is rendered in black ink over a sepia background that resembles a photographically magnified page from an old book. The text, which may come from *Frankenstein*, appears in a type face that mimics antique handwriting.



The front of the folio of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Folio, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-folio-back.jpg>)

The back of the folio continues the book-like design motif, offering contents similar to the back of a traditional print publication. Text on the back of the folio is divided into two parts, upper and lower. The upper part is set off with decorative borders. The upper part begins with an endorsement by Michael Joyce, the first two lines set as headlines, the remainder as centered body text. Joyce's remarks read: "Hypertext's next step... PATCHWORK GIRL is spectacular in every sense (from Rayban to Debordian to Cirque du Soleil). It is embodied writing in the company of Helene Cixous, Carolyn Guyer, Jeannette Winterson, and its progenitor and co-author (the other Shelley) Mary. Jackson weaves aspects of the Frankenstein tale, graphic novels, feminist meditation, and pure storytelling into a riveting work of multiple fiction with a fugue-like poetry and an artist's eye distinctly its (and her) own. This is a work of dream and desire and defying boundaries, an electronic collage, a theatre of windows, and a cyborg song of communion and reunion." --MICHAEL JOYCE." Following Joyce's endorsement is an image of (a young, *gamine*) Jackson at left, with a thumbnail biography of the author at right. The text reads: "A self-described 'student of the art of digression,' Shelley Jackson holds an AB in studio art from Stanford University and an MFA in creative writing from Brown University. Her work has appeared in *Degenerative Prose* and various journals, including *Conjunctions*. She has written and illustrated a children's book, *The Old Woman and the Wave*, to be published by Orchard Books." The lower part of the folio back, below the decorative border, begins with a line specifying the disk format (Windows or Macintosh) and advising that either configuration "Requires 2 MB RAM and a hard disk drive." The format selection is indicated with a circular white appliqué. Publisher's information follows: Published by Eastgate Systems, Inc. 134 Main Street Watertown, MA 02172 (800) 562-1638 (617) 924-9044 Adjacent to this information, on the right, is the ISBN-10 code for the work, running vertically: 1-884511-23-6. Immediately to the right of the ISBN-10 is

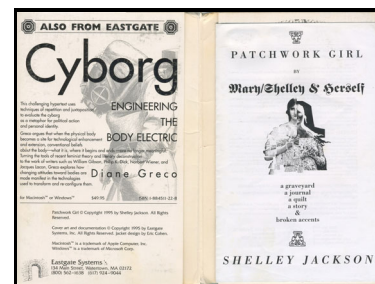


The back of the folio of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

an inset barcode.

Folio, Opened (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-folio-open-booklet.jpg>)

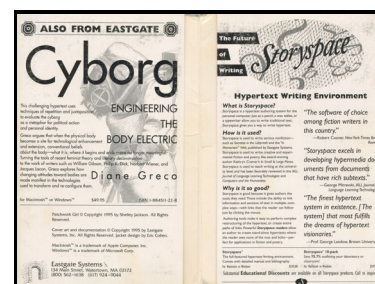
The opened folio reveals a slot, or pocket, on the left hand side where the diskette is kept. The inside, left-hand side of the folio's cover advertises Diane Greco's *Cyborg: Engineering the Body Electric* and provides copyright information for *Patchwork Girl*. The work is copyrighted 1995 by Shelley Jackson, with all rights reserved. Cover art and documentation are copyrighted by Eric Cohen. Trademark recognition is given for *Macintosh* and *Windows*. Publisher information is given here also. On the right hand side is the 16-page booklet that contains directions for reading *Patchwork Girl* on both Windows and Macintosh. Also included in the booklet is a biographical sketch of Shelley Jackson and information about where to get answers to technical problems.



The open folio with booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Folio, Booklet, Removed (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-folio-only-open.jpg>)

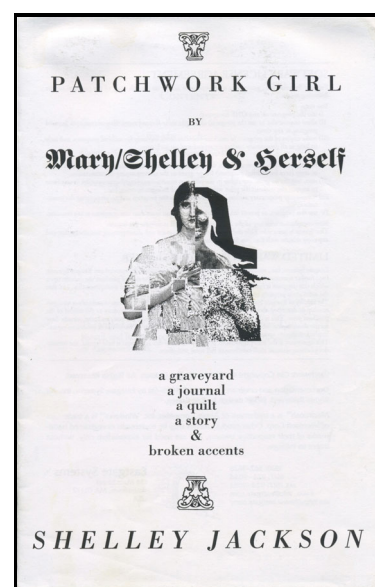
At right is a page advertising the *Storyspace Hypertext Writing Environment*, the system used to produce *Patchwork Girl* and other Eastgate titles, some of which are listed in a box at right (*Patchwork Girl*, *A Dream with Demons*, *afternoon*, *Victory Garden*, *Socrates in the Labyrinth*, and *Cyborg: Engineering the Body Electric*).



The open folio without booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Booklet, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-booklet-front.jpg>)

The covers of the included booklet are printed on thin card stock, with the interior pages on letter stock. Ink is black throughout. The cover of the booklet repeats the folio cover, minus the sepia-toned background and faux-antique text.



The front of the booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Booklet, Table of Contents (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-booklet-toc.jpg>)

At the top of the first page is a list of Contents: Getting Started with *Patchwork Girl* (one section each for Macintosh and Windows), About the Author, and Questions. Immediately following are Acknowledgements: "The author would like to thank George P. Landow, Dan Russell, and Robert Coover for their help in the composition of *Patchwork Girl*."

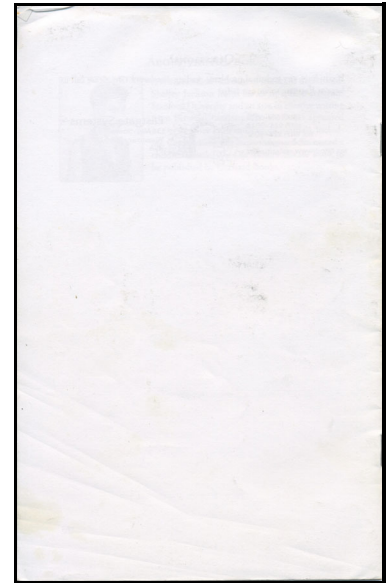
CONTENTS	
Getting Started with Patchwork Girl	3
Getting Started with Patchwork Girl	7
About the Author	12
Questions?	13

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
The author would like to thank George P. Landow, Dan Russell, and Robert Coover for their help in the composition of Patchwork Girl.	

The table of contents of the booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Booklet, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-booklet-back.jpg>)

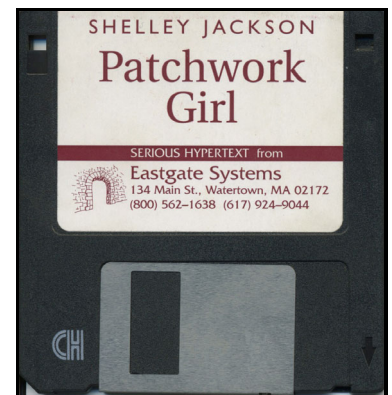
The back cover of the booklet repeats publisher information. It also includes a second indicator of operating-system format, this one including an option for "Both" Windows and Macintosh.



The back of the folio of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Floppy Disk, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-floppy-front.jpg>)

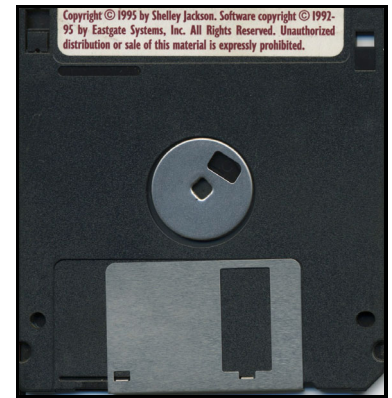
The 3 1/2" diskette containing *Patchwork Girl* is a double-sided, high density unit marked with the legend "HD" on the black plastic casing. The front of the disk has a white label overlapping onto the reverse, 2 1/4" of the front and 1/2" of the back. The front part of the label shows the title, printed in two lines centered, with author's name directly below it in italic capitals. Underneath is a red containing the text "SERIOUS HYPERTEXT from." Beneath this line and words is the Eastgate logo (a drawing of a stone arch) and contact information for the company. All lettering on the label is in a dark red ink.



The front of the floppy of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Floppy Disk, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-floppy-back.jpg>)

The label on the reverse of the floppy disk reads, "Copyright © 1995 by Shelley Jackson © 1992-95 by Eastgate Systems, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Unauthorized distribution or sale of this material is expressly prohibited."



The back of the floppy of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Re-Release, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-front.jpg>)

This is the packaging for a re-published version of *Patchwork Girl* brought out after all copies of the initial version had been exhausted. The package includes diskette and booklet shrink-wrapped against a cardboard backing.



The front of the re-release of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Re-Release, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-release-back.jpg>)

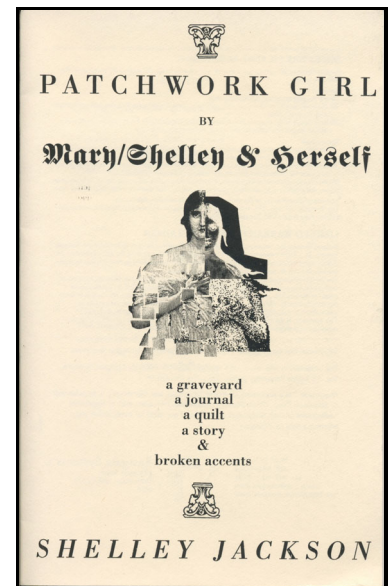
The reverse of the re-release packaging is blank.



The back of the re-release of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Re-Release Booklet, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-booklet-front.jpg>)

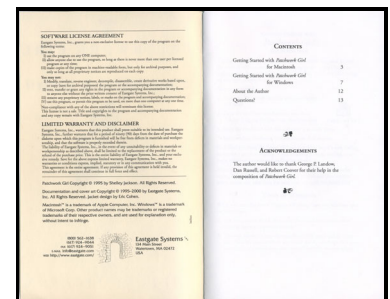
The re-release booklet is identical to the booklet included in the original release.



The front of the re-release booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Re-Release Booklet, Table of Contents (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-booklet-toc.jpg>)

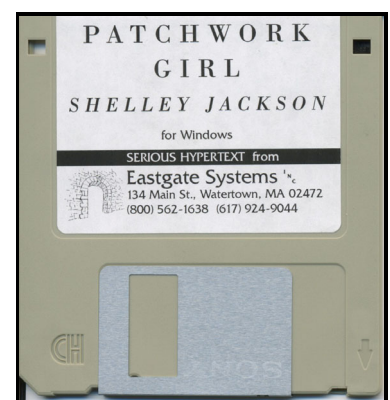
The re-release booklet is identical to the booklet included in the original release.



The tables of contents of the re-release booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Re-Release Floppy, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-floppy-front.jpg>)

Diskette included in the re-release packaging shows small differences from the initial release version (beige color, embossed "HD" indicator), but is essentially identical.



The front of the re-release floppy of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

Re-Release Floppy, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-floppy-back.jpg>)

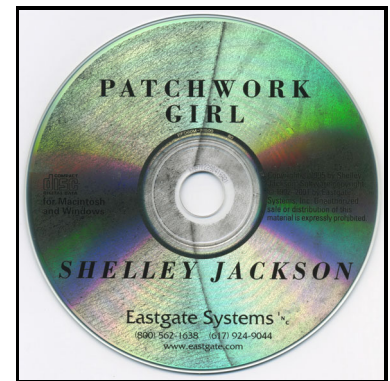
Diskette included in the re-release packaging is essentially identical to original release.



The back of the re-release floppy of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-cd-front.jpg>)

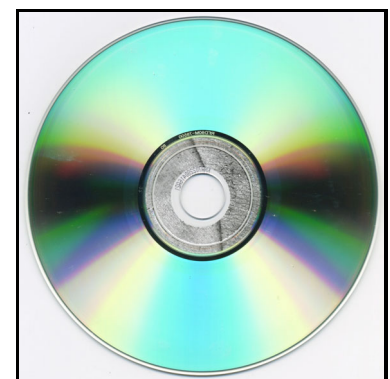
The CD-ROM version of *Patchwork Girl* was released in 2001, as the standard design of personal computers no longer included a diskette drive. the Compact Disk is readable by both Macintosh and Windows systems. The cover art (most likely by Eric Cohen) suggests two patches of skin connected by a line of fine sutures. (This image has the unfortunate effect of also looking like a crack in the CD, at first glance.) The title of the work appears in capitals. At left is a copyright statement. Eastgate's copyright date is given as 1992-2001. Author's name appears in large, italic capitals below, followed by publisher information.



The front of the CD re-release of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-rerelease-cd-back.jpg>)

Reverse of the CD-ROM is blank except for manufacturer's marks.



The back of the CD re-release of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release Liner, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-liner-front.jpg>)

The CD has an updated cover image by Eric Cohen. His original four-part collage now sits in the middle of a three-image stack. It lies over a lighter image that may suggest scarred skin. Over both this and the collage graphic is a darker image with fine graining suggesting unmarked skin. The left edge of this top image is a smooth but irregular curve which on close inspection shows regular indentations, as from surgical sutures. This line cuts through the collage and the lower graphic, giving the overall composition a

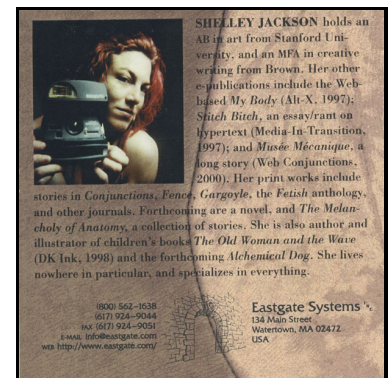
striking element of depth. The collage graphic remains in black, with the two new layers both rendered in a red-toned sepia. Jackson's name, in italic capitals, appears in the upper left corner of the cover. The main title of the work runs in larger capitals along the bottom of the cover.



The front of the CD re-release liner of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release Liner, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-liner-back.jpg>)

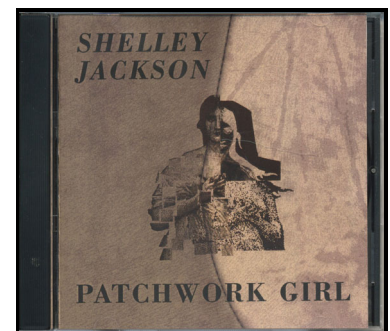
The graphical background for the reverse of the liner is the same as the front. the image of the author shows a (puckish? pensive?) red-haired Jackson aiming a Polaroid instant camera in our direction. (This image also appears on Jackson's Wikipedia page.) The biographical sketch has been updated to include several publications subsequent to 1995, including three publications on the World Wide Web (*My Body*, *Stitch Bitch*, and *Musée Mécanique*). More print works are also mentioned, including her story collection *The Melancholy of Anatomy*, which had yet to appear in 2001. "She lives nowhere in particular and specializes in everything."



The back of the CD re-release liner of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release Case, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-cdcase-front.jpg>)

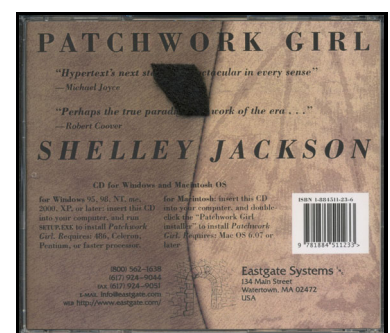
Front of the CD case showing liner cover graphic.



The front of the CD re-release case of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release Case, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-cdcase-back.jpg>)

Main title of the work runs across the top of the insert in large capitals. Following this are endorsements. Joyce's earlier text is edited to a single line ("Hypertext's next step... spectacular in every sense"). There is a new endorsement from Robert Coover, excerpted from his keynote address to the 1999 Digital Arts and Culture Conference: "Perhaps the true paradigmatic work of the era..." Below is the author's name in

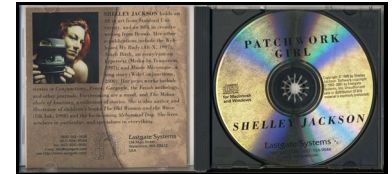


large bold italics. Following this, the legend "CD for Windows and Macintosh OS," and below that, two paragraphs offering operating system advice, first for Windows and then Macintosh, adjacent to the ISBN and barcode inset. Windows system requirements are listed as "Windows 95, 98, NT, *me*, 2000, XP, or later: insert this CD into your computer, and run SETUP.EXE to install *Patchwork Girl*. Requires: 486, Celeron, Pentium, or faster processor." Macintosh advice is: "insert this CD into your computer and double-click the "Patchwork Girl installer" to install *Patchwork Girl*. Requires Mac OS 6.07 or later. Below these elements, the Eastgate logo flanked at left by contact information, now including an e-mail address, with the Eastgate signature and postal address at right.

The back of the CD re-release case of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

CD Re-Release Case, Opened (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/shelley-cdcase-open.jpg>)

Reverse of the cover liner at left, CD in case at right.



The open CD re-release case of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

USB Stick Re-Release, Front (https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/pgUSB_ffront.jpg)

In the fourth quarter of 2014, Eastgate re-issued *Patchwork Girl* with updated installers and application code compatible with current versions of the Macintosh OS. Anticipating a time when standard personal computers will not include CD drives -- already the case on thin-format laptops -- Eastgate issued the work on a removable storage chip with a plug interface for Universal Serial Bus, referred to in their catalog as a "USB stick," and also popularly known as a *thumb drive* or *flash drive*. As of June, 2015, the new release is available only for Macintosh.



Front of 2014 USB stick re-release of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

USB Stick Release, Back (https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/pgUSB_back.jpg)

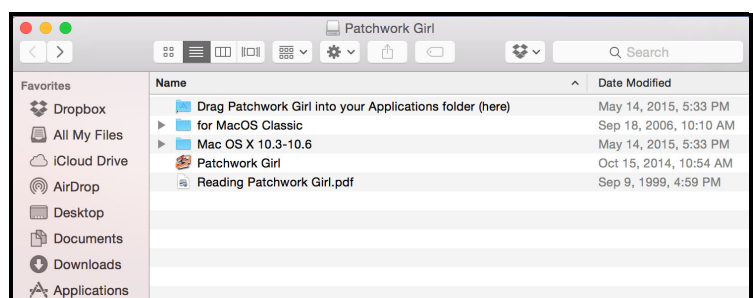
Reverse of the USB stick. Note the distinctive bamboo casing.



Back of 2014 USB stick re-release of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

USB Stick Release, Contents (https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/PG_thumb_contents.png)

Contents of the USB stick viewed in Mac OS 10.10. Drag-and-drop installation is available for the included version of *Patchwork Girl*. Note the folders below the installer alias, one each for the



Contents of PG USB drive (Mac)

"Classic" (pre-OSX) versions of Mac OS, the other for OSX versions prior to 10.7. The PDF document contains a reformatted version of the instruction booklet from the first release.


« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jacksons-readers-traversals--interviews?path=shelley-jackson>)

Continue to “History of Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl”
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Version 90 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-folio-cd-rerelease-and-flashdrive-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl.90>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-folio-cd-rerelease-and-flashdrive-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/photos-of-the-folio-cd-rerelease-and-flashdrive-rerelease-and-their-contents-for-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl.meta>)

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History of Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl

ALSO FROM EASTGATE

Cyborg

This challenging hypertext uses techniques of repetition and juxtaposition to evaluate the cyborg as a metaphor for political action and personal identity.

Greco argues that when the physical body becomes a site for technological enhancement and extension, conventional beliefs about the body—what it is, where it begins and ends—are no longer meaningful. Turning the tools of recent feminist theory and literary deconstruction to the work of writers such as William Gibson, Philip K. Dick, Norbert Wiener, and Jacques Lacan, Greco explores how changing attitudes toward bodies are made manifest in the technologies used to transform and re-configure them.

ENGINEERING
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BODY ELECTRIC

Diane Greco

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ISBN 1-884511-22-8

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PATCHWORK GIRL

BY

Mary/Shelley & Herself



a graveyard
a journal
a quilt
a story
&
broken accents

SHELLEY JACKSON

DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

The open folio with booklet of Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl"

The pre-history of *Patchwork Girl* begins somewhere in the first years of the 1990s, when Shelley Jackson, either still working toward her A.B. in Studio Art from Stanford or having recently finished, asked to sit in on a class at Berkeley taught by the critic Avital Ronell. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* was on the reading list, and Jackson was impressed by Ronell's ability to bring contemporary cultural theory into dialogue with a literary classic. Jackson became particularly interested in the gaps, discontinuities, and strategies of resistance that are characteristic of *Frankenstein* -- as well as its great theme of problematic embodiment and monstrosity.

By 1992-93 Jackson was enrolled in the Creative Writing program at Brown University and decided to take a class with George P. Landow, who in the late 1980s had begun to explore hypertext as an extension and proving ground of poststructuralist theory. Students in Landow's course were required to produce their seminar project as a hypertext. Brown had recently adopted *Storyspace*, the hypertext writing environment developed by Jay David Bolter, Michael Joyce, and John B. Smith, to replace their own *Intermedia* system, rendered unusable after Apple dropped support for the version of Unix on which it ran. The text Jackson produced in Storyspace was a meditation on gender, embodiment, textuality, and embodiment, using a strategy of intense cross-linking (possibly with links on nearly every word) to build a fabric of connections across passages of original and quoted material. Traces of this first version survive as the "Broken Accents" thread in the published version.

At some point in 1993, one of Jackson's teachers at Brown, probably either Landow or Robert Coover, showed her project to Mark Bernstein of Eastgate. Bernstein expressed immediate interest in publishing, though Jackson asked to defer, wanting to develop the work independently of its academic context. In particular, she decided to reconsider the over-abundance of links. She began a second draft by eliminating all links from the project, developing a new concept with discrete narrative and thematic threads in which links were used more sparingly and logically. As Jackson would write a little later on: "I see no reason why hypertext can't serve up an experience of satisfying closure not drastically different from that of reading a long and complicated novel, though it will do it differently" ("Stitch Bitch (<http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/jackson.html>)," 1998).


Eastgate published *Patchwork Girl* on 3.5-inch diskette for Windows and Macintosh in October, 1995, presenting the disk and auxiliary material in a card stock "folio" with design by Eric Cohen. At some point demand for *Patchwork Girl* exceeded the print run of the folio, so Eastgate shipped new copies in a shrink-wrapped package out of expediency. A second edition was issued in November, 2001 on CD-ROM, also for Windows and Macintosh, with new packaging. As operating systems outgrew its original software framework, *Patchwork Girl* became unreadable on many contemporary platforms, especially those running 64-bit systems. In the final quarter of 2014, Eastgate remedied this problem for the Macintosh, issuing an updated version on a removable solid-state drive connectable via Universal Serial Bus ("USB stick" or "thumb drive"). The USB edition contains a version of the hypertext compatible with Macintosh OS 10.7 and later, as well as all all previous versions of the work for Macintosh.

Continue to “Essay about Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl”
(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl?path=shelley-jackson>)

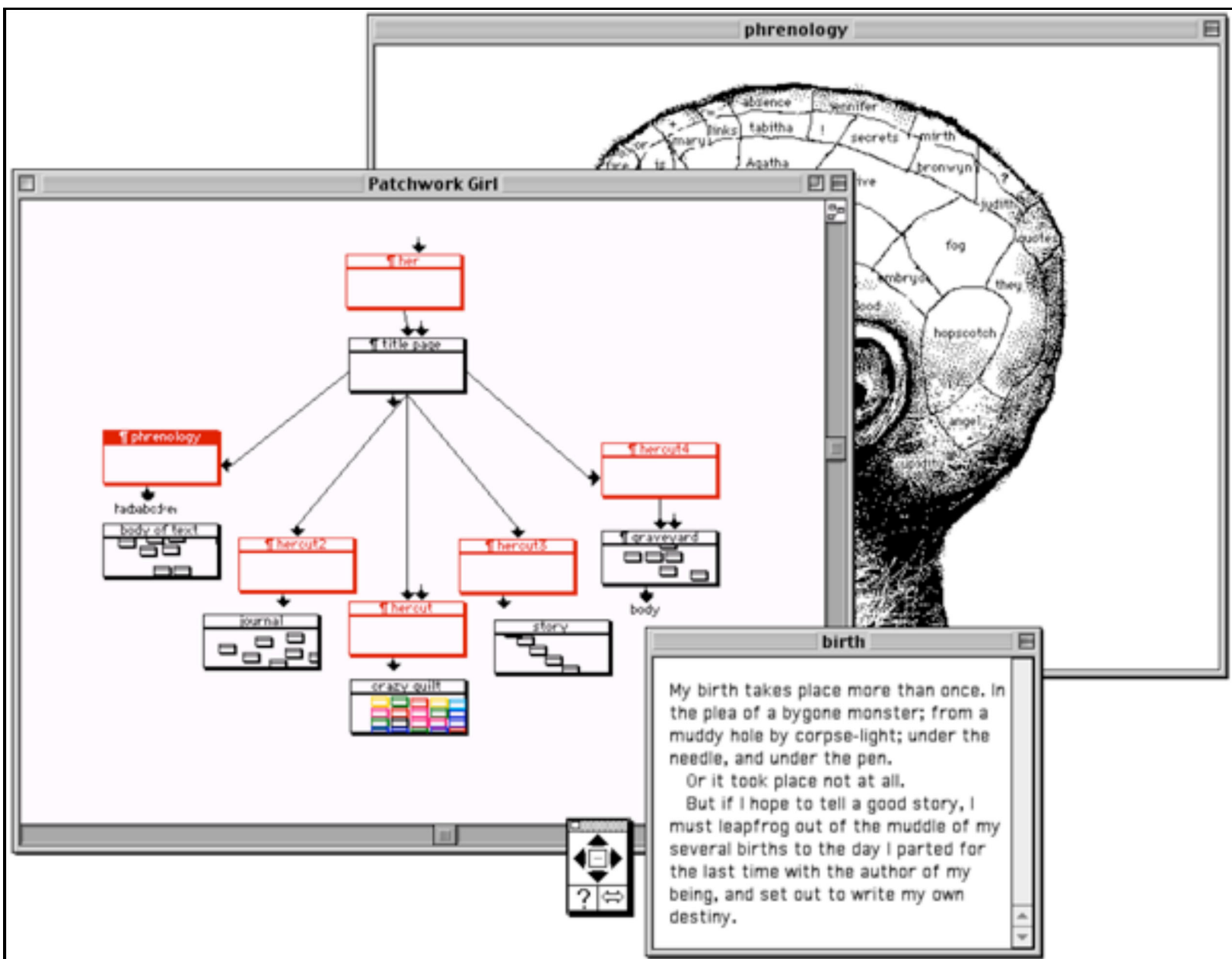


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Essay about Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl



DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

In this section of we offer a critical essay about Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, written by Stuart Moulthrop.

Contents

1

"The Right Way to Go to Pieces," by Stuart Moulthrop (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jackson-critical-essays?path=essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl>)

Begin with “The Right Way to Go to Pieces,” by Stuart Moulthrop” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/jackson-critical-essays?path=essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl>)

« Back to “History of Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/history-of-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl?path=shelley-jackson>)



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ESSAY ABOUT SHELLEY JACKSON'S PATCHWORK GIRL ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/ESSAYS-ABOUT-SHELLEY-JACKSONS-PATCHWORK-GIRL](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-about-shelley-jacksons-patchwork-girl))

"The Right Way to Go to Pieces," by Stuart Moulthrop



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

If memory is transgressive, then archiving and preservation might count as a kind of insurgency: an organized resistance, or perhaps an organized crime. The past is by definition what escapes us, released without honest expectation of return. Folding the then onto the now is a perverse practice, like trying in some later night's sleep to steal back onto the premises of an earlier dream. It can't really be done, and when we come close, the experience is spooky. Dreams are meant to fade. Time isn't intended for re-gathering. People need to let go of history, of previous versions of themselves. As Shelley Jackson says in the interview:

Literature is one of the ways we learn to let go of ourselves, learn to release ourselves into the stream of other people's thoughts and visions, and to enjoy that alienation from our own monotonous stream of consciousness. And so when people asked me early on whether I was bothered that technology was advancing and obsoleting Patchwork Girl, my answer was that it was complete appropriate that it happen... to try to hold onto it would be inconsistent with my central argument.

In the act of reading, Jackson says, the self yields to otherness, overthrowing a dominant or imperious identity. We let go and go outward, escaping the ego's binding centrality. Hypertext, as few know so vividly as Shelley Jackson, comes from the weird heart of this de-centered country, a practice that lets go even of its self-identity in stories that change each time you read them. If the text can't contain itself, why make any attempt at apprehension or recovery? Why not let the work slide into oblivion and legend, especially when kicking against the stream goes against artistic principle?

Left to her own devices, Jackson would probably not have re-visited *Patchwork Girl*. We inveigled her into our scheme and talked her into playing on our devices. She did her part wonderfully and may even have come to share some of our archivistic pleasure in the end; but persuasion was needed. We tempted Jackson to hypocrisy – yet we don't apologize, because we had good reason.

Among the incidents in the interesting life of Jackson's eponymous Girl, one stands out for the light it sheds on letting go:

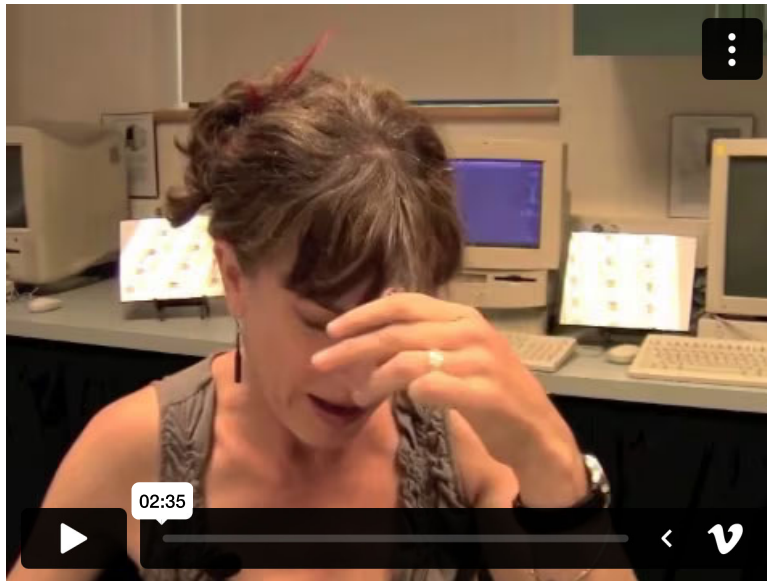
A pair of horses veered toward me out of the darkness; they were wild-eyed, snorting steam. Something happened to my balance, a horse's head struck me a glancing blow and I fell under stamping hooves. Tumult. Yelling; a horse's frightened whinny. Rumbling and shadow as the cab passed over me; I saw light glint off the steel rim of the wheel just inches from my face, or so it seemed. Then the commotion was on down the street, and diminishing. I saw my leg an impossible distance from me. I looked up from the street, and saw Chancy in silhouette against the light from the door, then she turned and I saw her face, showing alarm, and something stranger. It came to me that she thought I had thrown myself intentionally in the cabby's path. Or had she seen something amiss in the way my leg and I parted company? Was there a right way to go to pieces? I called to her, placatingly; she closed the door and left me there. -- ("An Accident")

Jackson's primary source, Mary Shelley's novel, dwells mainly on a different question of rightness: the right way to constitute a person, proceeding from parts and pieces to integrated being, thus threatening to unify created humanity with the creator God. Jackson's other source, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, runs more to the comic than the cosmic, but it too is organized around a many-from-one theme, a quest (ultimately abandoned) to assemble ingredients for the Powder of Life. Both books betray a certain anxiety about fulfillment, completion, and wholeness.

Your hypertext writer typically runs the other way, from unity to dissipation. After all, her work comes in no neatly bound volume but fundamentally in pieces (nodes, passages, lexias), some of these broken out by use of the *explode* function of Storyspace. Jackson's female monster, patchwork girl of memorious and melancholy anatomy, embodies (disembodies?) the textual problem. She goes to pieces in a very curious way, her left leg willfully absconding in order to avoid the cab wheel – which explains why, instead of bleeding out in the street, she is able to call to her astonished friend.

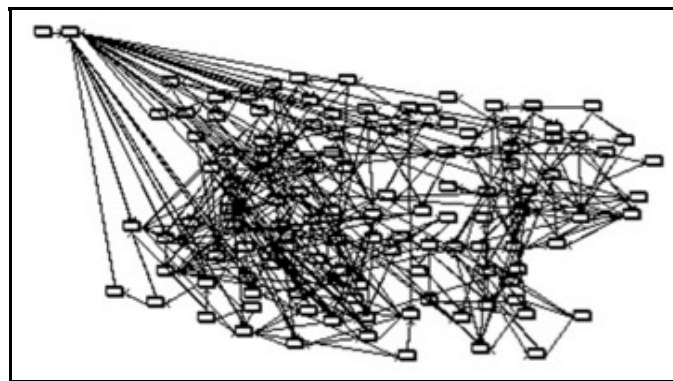
Crossing Shelley with Baum, Jackson imagines a creature whose aggregated parts remain aware of their original embodiments, as the pieces of a patchwork imply the cloths from which they were cut. The narrator's body is a confederation. In times of stress her organs may assert their own agendas, legging it for the hills. Things fall apart. Parts run away! What will people make of this dissolution, or the crazy-quilted text that struggles to contain it? Is there indeed a right way to go to pieces, or to do the kind of piecework that is hypertext fiction?

When Jackson brought her *Patchwork Girl* to life, only a few people had approached this question – which is the reason no apology is due for digging up this nearly lost work and asking its author to return to an earlier dream. She was one of the first to discover what comes of going to pieces, and her insights are invaluable.



Design history of PATCHWORK GIRL

That Brillo pad may mean more than Jackson suspects. It has a certain history, and may even count as a hypertextual archetype. Here is a map of an experimental Storyspace exercise one of us produced a few years before *Patchwork Girl*:



Another instance of the Brillo pad

The illegibility of this map stems partly from the fact that its maker, having not bothered to read draft documentation included with a beta copy of Storyspace, was not yet aware the program allowed nodes to be embedded within other nodes. Using this feature properly, as Jackson does in *Patchwork Girl*, an author can reduce the eyesore of overlapping link lines to a neater ensemble of local structures. The nightmarishly over-linked first draft of *Patchwork Girl* probably looked less hideous than this example, at least in map view, though the image may suggest something of its promiscuous derangement.

There is a certain monstrousness in hypertext, a fact Jackson registers by affiliating her project both with Shelley's fabricated body and Baum's body-as-fabric. Both figures deny orderly closure to a certain system of embodiment called natural history. Likewise, hypertext violates decorum of that naturalized history of discourse-bodies otherwise known as literature. There is precedent for this analogy in the book world: Mary Shelley invokes something similar in the preface to the 1831 edition of

Frankenstein, where she identifies her novel with its Creature, and (with perverse fondness) names it her “hideous progeny.”

Hideousness, however, rests with the beholder. One man’s monster might well be the next woman’s gloriously dangerous vision; or another man’s imagining of something else. *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, the story of a comic and comical, thoroughly modern Prometheus, turns away from terror and finds joy in mis-shaping. When the newly animated Girl sees her crazy-quilted form in a mirror, she breaks out laughing. “I don’t blame you for laughing at yourself,” says one her companions. “Aren’t you horrid?”

"Horrid?" she replied. "Why, I'm thoroughly delightful. I'm an Original, if you please, and therefore incomparable. Of all the comic, absurd, rare and amusing creatures the world contains, I must be the supreme freak."

The passage from unspeakable horror to supreme freak (with “hideous progeny” as perhaps the middle term) represents a shift in attitude toward absolute order and its alternatives. *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* seems in many ways an inverse *Frankenstein*, beginning not as a ghost story for jaded grown-ups, but as wonder-tale for younger readers of all ages. Its goofy American pragmatism is oceans removed from the anxieties of European gothic. *Frankenstein* abounds in solitude and estrangement; *Patchwork Girl of Oz* is manically social. If its picaresque hero Ojo the Unlucky occasionally falls to brooding, he has nothing on Victor Frankenstein or his Miltonizing creature, and Ojo’s companions unfailingly cheer him out of any funk. Generally speaking, Oz is a warm and welcoming place. In the Emerald City oddity is beloved and *queer* becomes an honorific (perhaps even in the contemporary sense, since the girl-queen Ozma is after all a transformed boy). As the Shaggy Man sings:

*Just search the whole world over — sail
the seas from coast to coast —*

*No other nation in creation queerer
folk can boast;*

*And now our rare museum will
include a Cat of Glass,*

*A Woozy, and — last but not least —
a crazy Patchwork Lass.*

If we hold onto Mrs. Shelley’s conceit of hideous progeny, and Jackson’s own analogy of text as chimerical body, we might expect some reflection of this movement from monster to freak in the passage from text to hypertext. In this sense maybe the aborted first draft, with its abrasive explosion of links, represents a merely monstrous transgression (like Frankenstein’s male creature?) while the

reworked final version stands as a more perfect anomaly, a self-actualized (and female) “supreme freak.” When Jackson decides to erase all the links – evincing a glee that still seems fresh twenty years later – she makes her peace with hypertextuality and embraces the joyful anti-sublime of patchwork. We can lose the links and regain them on better terms. The second making will get it right.

As Jackson explains it – and we doubt any hypertext writer has ever done better – her reconception of the work brought the freakishness of hypertext back into alignment with the general aims of literature. In re-thinking the uses of her links, Jackson reconfirms Ted Nelson’s dictum that hypertext is “the most general form of writing.” The reader of any traditional work (certainly of epics, novels, and other long forms) constructs a “mental hypertext.” To move from mere monstrosity to properly freaky patchwork, Jackson adopts this recognition as her principle of design, and goes on to produce a work of remarkable and lasting importance.


End of path “Essay about Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl”;

Continue to “Bill Bly's We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly>)



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Bill Bly's *We Descend*



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Bill Bly with computers in the Electronic Literature Lab (ELL)

Bill Bly is the author of the hypertext novel, *We Descend* (Eastgate, 1997) and the online chapbook *Wyrmes Mete* (<http://www.infomonger.com/bbly/wyrmesmete/>)

title.html) (2002). His print poems and stories have appeared in *5 AM*, *Amelia*, *American Poetry Anthology*, *Antigonish Review*, *Encore*, *Explorations '95*, *MacGuffin*, *Runes*, *Yahoo! Internet Life*, and *Zone 3*, along with articles and reviews in *Books & Religion*, *Didaskalia*, *The Drama Review*, *Tekka*, and *Trinity News*. He has taught writing at New York University, Fordham University, and Wagner College, where he ran the Writing Program, and has won the Stanley Drama Award, competitive residencies at Shenandoah Valley Playwrights Retreat, Ploughshares International Fiction Seminar, and Vermont Studio Center, as well as fellowships from the Shubert Foundation and the Empire State Institute for the Performing Arts.

Bly's *We Descend, Volume One* was produced with the Storyspace authoring system and published on floppy disk in 1997 by Eastgate, edited by Diane Greco, author of *Cyborg: Engineering the Body Electric* and historian of science. *Volume Two* (<http://www.wedescend.net>), containing new material not found in *Volume One*, was published by the author on the web in 2011.

The work has been indexed at ELMCIP's Knowledge Base (<http://elmcip.net/creative-work/we-descend-archives-pertaining-edgerus-scriptor-volume-1>) and exhibited at the Electronic Literature Organization's first conference and media art show, State of the Arts (<http://www.eliterature.org/state/gallerytitles.shtml>), in 2002. It has been the subject of critical essays by Susana Pajares Tosca (<http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/especulo/hipertul/wedescend1.html>) (1998), Mark Bernstein (2002), Anne Mangel (2006), and Astrid Ensslin (2007). Bly has frequently written about his work, most recently for *Authoring Software*, (http://narrabase.net/bill_bly.html) a blog published by Judy Malloy, reprinted here in this book. Bly's papers, including ephemera from the early days of electronic literature, in addition to extensive development notes for both volumes of *We Descend, Volume One*, are archived at The Bill Bly Collection (<http://mith.umd.edu/research/project/bill-bly-collection/>) at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, located at the University of Maryland College Park.

Versions of *We Descend*

Volume 1, 1997, on floppy disk (and CD, after 2000), with Storyspace 1.0, sold and distributed by Eastgate Systems, Inc., \$24.95 (for Mac OS 9 and earlier)

Volume 1, 1998, on floppy disk, with Storyspace 1.0, sold and distributed by Eastgate Systems, Inc., \$24.95 (for Windows 95 up to Windows XP)

Volume 1, 1998, "WeDescend_30node," with Storyspace 1.0 (produced for readings and performances)

Volume 1, 1998, "Excerpt," HTML version, in the Gallery at *Word Circuits* (<http://wordcircuits.com/gallery/descend/Cover.htm>) (based on "WeDescend_30node")

Volume 1, 2006, on CD, with Storyspace 2.0, sold and distributed by Eastgate Systems, Inc., \$24.95 (for Mac OS X 10.2 and later) (<http://wedescend.com>)

Volume 2 "Demo," November 2011, with Tinderbox

Volume 2 "Complete," August 2014, at wedescend.com (<http://wedescend.com>)

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- 2 Bill Bly's Traversal of We Descend (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-traversal?path=bill-bly>)
- 3 The Interview with Bill Bly about We Descend (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-interview?path=bill-bly>)
- 4 Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Bill Bly's We Descend (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-readers-traversals--interviews?path=bill-bly>)
- 5 Photos of the Folio and CD and Their Contents of Bill Bly's We Descend (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-photos-folio-contents?path=bill-bly>)
- 6 The Bill Bly Collection & MITH's Symposium (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-symposium--the-bly-collection?path=bill-bly>)
- 7 Information about the Computers Used for the Creation of Bill Bly's We Descend (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/information-about-the-computer-used-for-the-creation-of-bill-blys-we-descend?path=bill-bly>)
- 8 Essays about Bill Bly's We Descend (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-bill-blys-we-descend?path=bill-bly>)

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« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/shelley-jackson?path=index>)

Or, continue to “Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Bill Bly's We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-readers-traversals--interviews?path=index>)



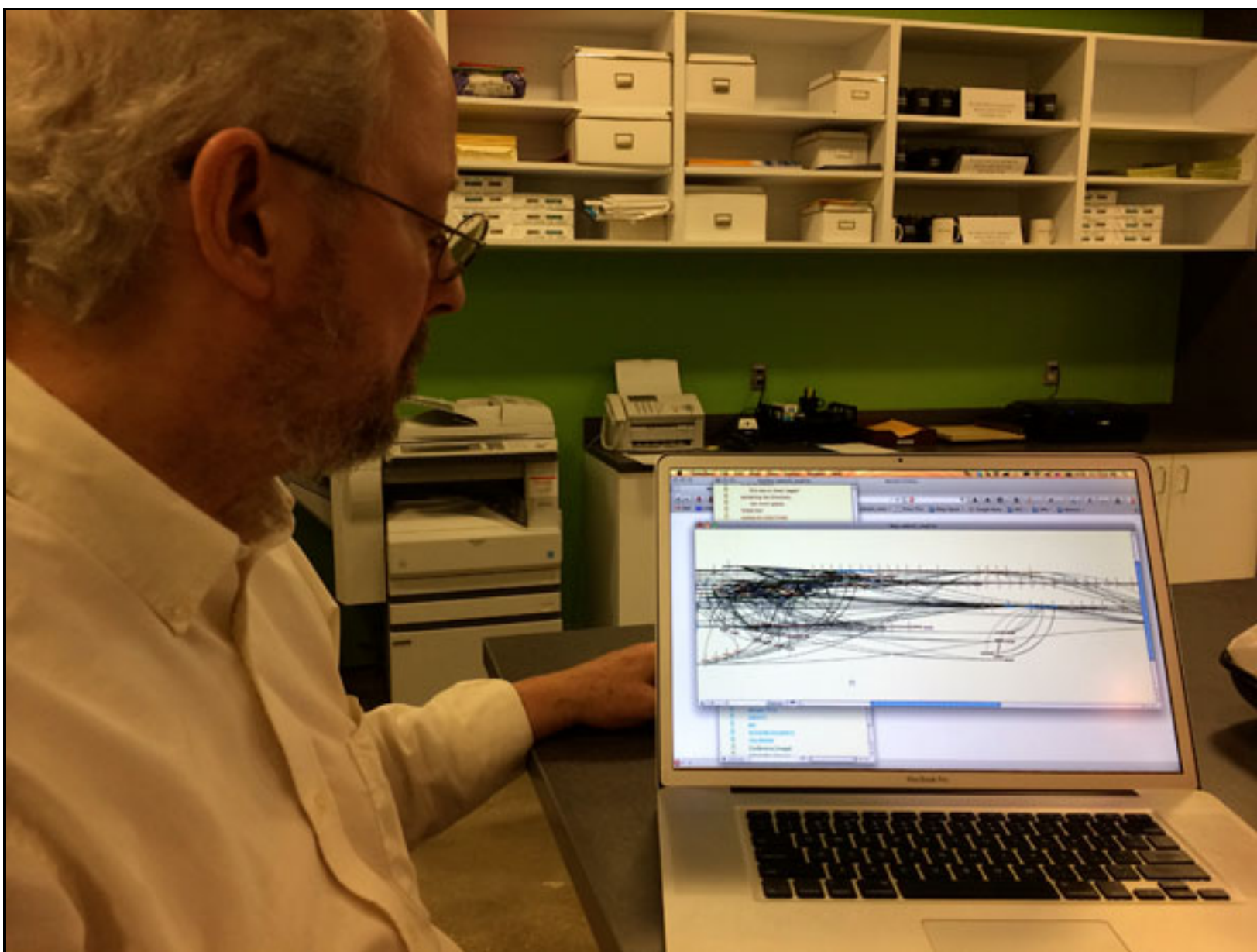
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Bill Bly's Artist Statement for We Descend



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Bill Bly at MITH in January 2013 showing "We Descend" to audience

Three decades ago, while I was doing something else, five words dropped unbidden into my mind: “If this document is authentic...” I tried to keep at what I was working on, but the phrase kept repeating, until I finally turned my attention to it.

Who’s saying this? I wondered. What document? Why wouldn’t it be authentic? How would it be authenticated? Where did it come from in the first place? As I pondered these questions over a period of time, a clutch of fragmentary writings began to appear under my hands.

Almost from the beginning it was clear that each of these texts bore a double significance: each told a story, but each had a story as well. Further, their transmission as a group formed yet another story: their possible origin in some personal collection that was passed on, lost, found again, added to, broken up and scattered, all but destroyed, then miraculously pulled together again. Eventually, what came to be called *We Descend* took the shape of an archive of archives, an anthology of writings by numerous authors, which had been gathered and repeatedly reorganized, passing through the hands of many generations.

Every time a new Writing turned up, those five first questions crowded in along with it, followed by a cloud of proposals, conjectures, romantic imaginings — each provisional solution embodied in yet another Writing, whose own provenance had to be established or at least guessed at. Successive curators of the archives must have tried to organize and present them in whatever way seemed best, given the circumstances and the tools each had at hand. And so I tried to do the same.

I was unaware that, while this was happening at home, another community of authors and scholars, all engaged in writing and theorizing literature that somehow exceeded the bounds of printed text, had begun to gather in the world outside the window over my writing desk. At the time I did not own a personal computer — if I even knew about such a hopeful monster: my gear consisted of a pad of paper, a fountain pen, and a clipboard to keep everything together, as well a typewriter for later making what I scrawled in ink decipherable for anyone else to read. (This rustic *mise en scène* was all too soon to be savagely disrupted — a wrenching operation that still cycles madly.)

When, in a fit of intrepidity, my wife and I bought our first Macintosh SE (talk about quaint: a family computer!), I became intrigued by a freebie program called Hypercard, and started working up ways to employ it to help me keep track of the various resources every teacher needs in order to ply the trade. Not long afterwards, Robert Coover’s revolutionary essay, “The End of Books” (<https://www.nytimes.com/books/98/09/27/specials/coover-end.html>), appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, in which he told of a new way of creating literature, something called hypertext — which “provides multiple paths between text segments... [and] webs of linked lexias, [with] networks of alternate routes (as opposed to print’s fixed unidirectional page-turning). [Hypertext] presents a radically divergent technology, interactive and polyvocal....”

Spellbound as I was by terms like “multiple paths”, “lexias”, and “polyvocal”, I only vaguely understood what he was talking about, though somehow I was absolutely certain it was important. And as I found out more about hypertext, it didn’t take long for me to realize that my work in what I was still calling just “the archives” — with its many voices, criss-crossing plotlines, and multiple bands of time — could only fully tell

its story if it were rendered into hypertext form. This meant that the time had come to completely overhaul my *modus scribendi*, which, until then, had been conducted in the conventional way, by rummaging in piles of scribbled-on pieces of paper, then scribbling some more.

To render what might be called handtext into hypertext entails a lot of pondering: of text, now that it's hyper; of writing in the first place; and of the reader an author addresses when writing, and by addressing conjures. I've come to think that this person, the reader, is as real as any person I hold in my memory. It's no use insisting there's a distinction between real and imaginary here: every person is imaginary who is not right there in front of us (and even that person is a hybrid of real and imaginary attributes).

Writing of course means encoding: it packs up and jams our experience of life into little suitcases made of words, to cite one especially fractious Author in the archives. It generates text, a magical... — well, what kind of a thing is text? Is it real or imaginary? is it matter or mindstuff? meat or ghost? It just won't do to blow off these essential questions by saying, "It's both." That doesn't answer the question: it deepens the mystery.

There are pleasures in life that simply cannot be had by solving a puzzle or triumphing over an adversary, and for me, this is one of them: using text to ponder text. And I find hypertext to be the most rewarding vehicle for carrying on that meditation. (My other vehicle is the Mahayana.)

The archives — for which I invented the name *We Descend* in order to publish the first volume (Eastgate 1997) — constitute an ongoing reflection, not only upon text, writing, and the reader, but upon the scholarly life altogether, a reflection which studies, among other things, what it means to study. To some, the scholarly life, being focused on the past and not the present, is less important than the active life; but the scholar often regards the active life as little more than "fighting one's way through the pack of others fighting their way", as another wry Author in the archives puts it.

I sense you, Dear myReader, nodding in sage agreement, for, I believe, you are (are you not? whatever your official job title?) a scholar as well. That being the case, the past is often more present to you than the present itself, which is too full of violence and anxiety to be capable of study, or even deep attention, and that is precisely the pleasure you seek, as you ponder over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore: raptness.

I cannot hope to fully satisfy that longing, if it even can be satisfied, for that would only be another victory, and winning isn't what we love the most, at least not when we're a-pondering. For me, the archives have proved rich in the enchantment of scholarly absorption — which may in part account for the absurd delay in getting this stuff out there.

The other part is that new material keeps turning up, at all levels of criticism, with the result that a second volume of *We Descend* — New Selected Writings from the Archives Pertaining to Egderus Scriptor — is only now nearing completion. Every time a new Writing "appears on the doorstep" (as it seems to do repeatedly for the unnamed Scholar in *We Descend*), BBly Renderor must engage in yet another bout of head-scratching and tinkering with the controls, as he labors to incorporate these new Writings into an ever-developing system of hypertext arrangement for the archives as a whole.

And then there's the tech, which won't stand still. One would like to think oneself progressive, the type of person who is capable of calmly regarding all developments in digital life and practice as evolution (and not just blooming chaos). But it's hard to keep up, especially when one takes as long as I do to painstakingly work out a method that — well, that works — and suddenly it can't be used anymore because the new OS won't support it. (Yeah, yeah — shut up, Senex, and quit interrupting the music.)

But let us finish this manifesto (O Ludd, another one!) and get back to work. Come the TechnoRapture, all this tsuris will be Left Behind. It's possible there will be scholars among the entities who enjoy that unfathomable afterlife, and it may further be that instead of gnawing on meat and vegetables, these supernal beings will draw sustenance from the ambrosia of mental life-forms that we preserve and thus transmit to them — by means of text, hypertext, peradventure even utterance. If so, what better offering can we make, whilst awaiting the awesomeness of that Very Last Day, than to render our thoughts, hopes, dreams, jokes, stories, theories, and best intentions into every potent medium we can contrive, so that Dear ourReader may have a richer life, and that abundantly?


[Sorry, gotta go update the OS on all my devices...]

Continue to “Bill Bly's Traversal of We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-traversal?path=bill-bly>)



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BILL BLY'S WE DESCEND ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/BILL-BLY](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly)) (2/8)

Bill Bly's Traversal of We Descend

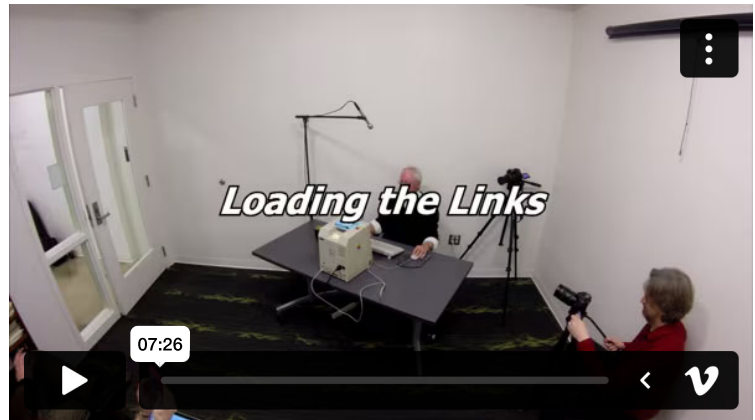


[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

This traversal of Bill Bly's

We Descend took place on Friday, January 31, 2014 at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), located in the Hornbake Library, at the University of Maryland.

For the traversal we used the floppy disk version of *We Descend* running on an Apple SE computer from MITH's collection of vintage computers. Handling the videography for this Traversal was Skizz Cyzyk, from Zinniafilms, who used three different cameras to capture the event. One camera was set on top of the computer in order to tape Bly's face as he looked at the screen and spoke. Another was set in the corner of the room and aimed at the screen in order to capture the screen action. A third camera was a hand held camera used to capture the audience and action taking place in the room. All of this data was edited into one raw file and then divided into smaller clips for the project. The commentary for the videos was written by Grigar.



Bill Bly Traversal, Part 1

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:26 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Traversal, Part 1, "Loading the Links" (<https://vimeo.com/111189147>)

This video clip shows Bly loading *We Descend* on the computer and talking through the work's introductory elements. He points out the default reading path and the "three principle bands of time" that the story encompasses. Also of note, we learn that the work is 895 KB in size and includes 598 spaces and 864 links.

Bly Traversal, Part 2, "Nuts and Bolts" (<https://vimeo.com/111189145>)

Bly talks through the "Directions" of *We Descend*, which he describes as "very detailed." He explains the difference between a "text link" and "basic link" and provides an excellent description of what we used to refer to as the "Tinkerbelle keys" (re: magic keys) that revealed the hidden hyperlinks—that is, the Command + Option keys.

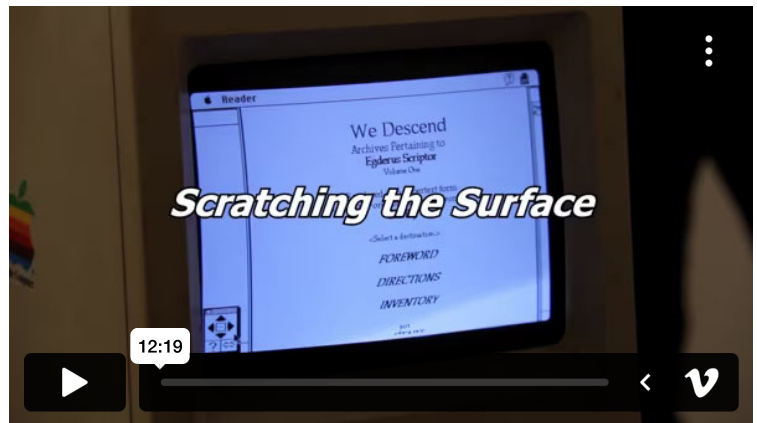


Bill Bly Traversal, Part 2

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 5:38 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Traversal, Part 3, "Scratching the Surface" (<https://vimeo.com/111189146>)

In this video clip Bly explains the "Inventory" and the seven archival writings that comprise it. He reads through two lexias, "Epigraph" and "Catastrophe," and points out some of the features of Storyspace, like the character limitations in the titling of works and the way it allowed for backspacing (Shift key + double-click on Arrow tool).

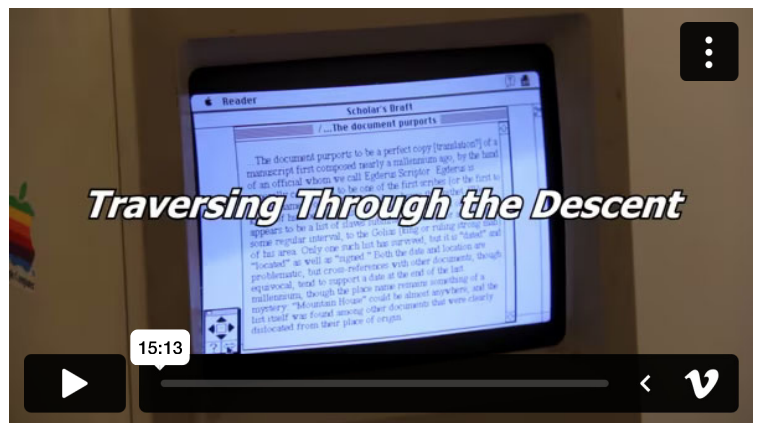


Bill Bly Traversal, Part 3

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 12:19 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Traversal, Part 4, "Traversing Through the Descent" (<https://vimeo.com/111189148>)

Bly continues the reading begun in video clip #3. Here he reveals the conceit of the work—that is, the multiple main characters inhabiting the multiple bands of time—and focuses his reading on the time period featuring Egderus Scriptor of Mountain House.



Bill Bly Traversal, Part 4

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track. The duration is 15:13 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.


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Continue to "The Interview with Bill Bly about We Descend"
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BILL BLY'S WE DESCEND ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/BILL-BLY](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly)) (3/8)

The Interview with Bill Bly about We Descend



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Stuart Moulthrop, Dene Grigar, and Bill Bly enjoying a conversation at MITH

This interview of Bill Bly, conducted by Grigar and Moulthrop, took place on Friday, January 31, 2014 at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland as part of the *Pathfinders* project. The interview is divided into nine parts and provides insights into the development of the work. The commentary for the videos was written by Grigar.

Bly Interview, Part 1, "The Genesis" (<https://vimeo.com/111274858>)

In the video clip Bly explains the origins of *We Descend*. We learn that it emerged, in the 1980s, from five words that came into Bly's mind: "If this document is authentic." The work grapples, he says, with the question of authenticity, particularly that of digital data where information must be authenticated at multiple levels of production. At the time, Bly believed that the work would be a play. The character he conceptualized was the scholar, but Bly struggled how to create the dialogue for him. He tells us that he learned about hypertext from reading Robert Coover's essay published in the *New York Times*, an experience that led him to write the authors listed in the article (Moulthrop, Nancy Kaplan, Michael Joyce and John McDavid) and develop *We Descend* as a hypertext novel.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 5:36 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 2, "Working with Storyspace" (<https://vimeo.com/111274859>)

Bly talks about his experience with Storyspace, the hypertext authoring program he used to develop *We Descend*. He argues that hypertext captures how we really make sense of books during the process of reading. We learn that he wrote the work in long passages and, then, decomposed the work into its hypertextual form, striving to be clear rather than "playful." He privileged the Storyspace Reader that provided a window of text over the Page Reader that provided a full screen of text. He also tells us that the evolution of technology of that period—that is, the larger screen real estate and color—impacted choices he made with his work.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:12 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 3, "The Excavation Explained" (<https://vimeo.com/111274860>)

This video clip focuses on the visual metaphor that Bly used to structure *We Descend*—that is "excavation." Bly describes the complex layering of the work and explains the irony behind the title. The writers and literary traditions that influenced Bly, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Margaret Atwood, Neal Stephenson, and the gnostic tradition, are also discussed.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 7:59 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 4, "Building the Characters" (<https://vimeo.com/111274861>)

This video clip presents the origins of the characters in the novel, notably Egderus. Bly reminds us that Egderus is the only character with a name; others are known by titles or were given names by others who came after in time. He took this approach because names have a quality that marks a person in a way that titles do not. He also reveals that after sending the work to the publisher, he felt that he had finally gained a good understanding of the hypertext environment.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280x720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 5:38 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 5, "After We Descend" (<https://vimeo.com/111274863>)

Bly discusses his views about working with Storyspace in Volume 1 and Tinderbox in Volume 2 and his early plans to recreate *We Descend* as a 3D version.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 6:48 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 6, "We Descend's Impact" (<https://vimeo.com/111276401>)

In this video clip Bly talks about his ambition to write a novel that could only be expressed as hypertext. The discussion moves quickly, however, into the various versions of both Volumes of *We Descend* in circulation and web version available since August 2013.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 10:29 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 7, "The Question of Longevity" (<https://vimeo.com/111276399>)

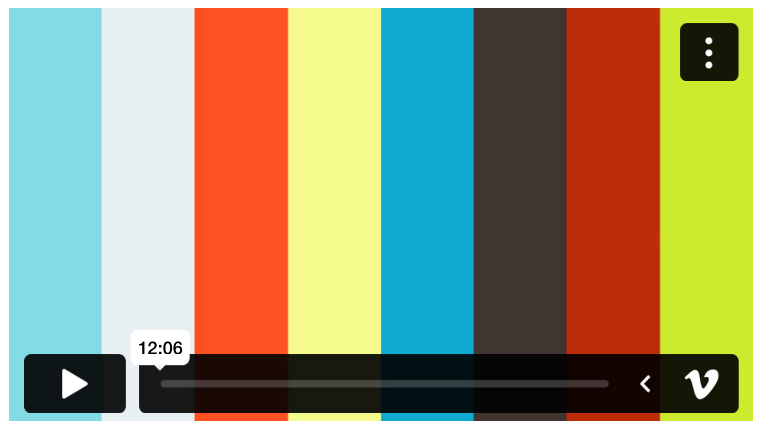
This video clip provides Bly's view of the legacy of *We Descend*. He talks about seeing his work from "a great distance of time," one that is many generations "hence" and discusses the five layers that the story presents: the old one, Egderus, the Scholar, the author, and the archived work.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 5:11 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 8, "E-Lit Artifacts" (<https://vimeo.com/111299540>)

Bly walks through various artifacts found in The Bly Collection, such as software and catalogs. He gives a good explanation of the features of Storyspace and Tinderbox and an explanation of how they work.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 12:06 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Interview, Part 9, "E-Lit Artifacts Continued" (<https://vimeo.com/111299541>)

This video clip continues with a walk through of the various artifacts found in The Bly collection, including items from CyberMountain, documents, and floppy disks.



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 12:24 minutes, streaming from the Pathfinders Vimeo video-sharing site.


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Continue to “Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Bill Bly's We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-readers-traversals--interviews?path=bill-bly>)



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Readers' Traversals & Interviews for Bill Bly's *We Descend*



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Matthew Kirschenbaum giving a Traversal of Bill Bly's "We Descend" at MITH

These traversals by and interviews of readers Matthew

Kirschenbaum and Margo Padilla, conducted by Dene Grigar and Stuart Moulthrop, took place on Friday, January 31, 2014 at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland as part of the *Pathfinders* project.

Both Kirschenbaum and Padilla made excellent readers for the traversals. Kirschenbaum is the Associate

Director of MITH and a leading scholar in Digital Humanities. He had served from 2006-2009 as Vice-President of the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO). Currently he is the curator of *The Bly Collection*; thus he is extremely knowledgeable with theories relating to electronic literature and intimately connected to Bly's work. Margo Padilla was a graduate student at the University of Maryland and from 2013-4 a Resident in National Digital Stewardship Program, an initiative of The Library of Congress in the area of digital preservation. While she was unfamiliar with *We Descend*, her training in digital preservation prepared her for a careful reading of Bly's work.

Readers wondering why there are no interview videos for Padilla should know that because the flow of conversation became so easy and organic by the end of the day, it made more sense to combine her traversal and interview.

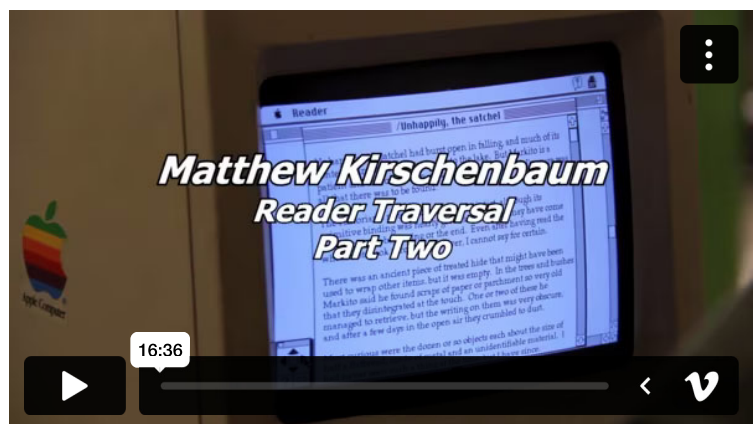
Bly Reader Traversal by Matthew Kirschenbaum, Part 1 (<https://vimeo.com/115197267>)



Bill Bly Reader Traversal, Part 1

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 10:08 minutes, streaming from Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Reader Traversal by Matthew Kirschenbaum, Part 2 (<https://vimeo.com/115197268>)



Bill Bly Reader Traversal, Part 2

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 16:36 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Reader Interview by Matthew Kirschenbaum, Part 1 (<https://vimeo.com/117767788>)



Bill Bly Reader Interview, Part 1

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 9:21 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Reader Interview by Matthew Kirschenbaum, Part 2 (<https://vimeo.com/117767789>)



Bill Bly Reader Interview, Part 2

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 15:58 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Reader Traversal and Interview by Margo Padilla, Part 3 (<https://vimeo.com/117767790>)



The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 11:07 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.

Bly Reader Traversal and Interview by Margo Padilla, Part 4 (<https://vimeo.com/117767793>)



Bill Bly Reader Traversal, Part 4

The video file is saved as a high-quality 1280 x 720, compressed MPEG-4 Movie (.mp4) H.264 codec, with a high-quality audio track (.aac). The duration is 17:47 minutes, streaming from the Vimeo video-sharing site.


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Continue to “Photos of the Folio and CD and Their Contents of Bill Bly’s We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-photos-folio-contents?path=bill-bly>)



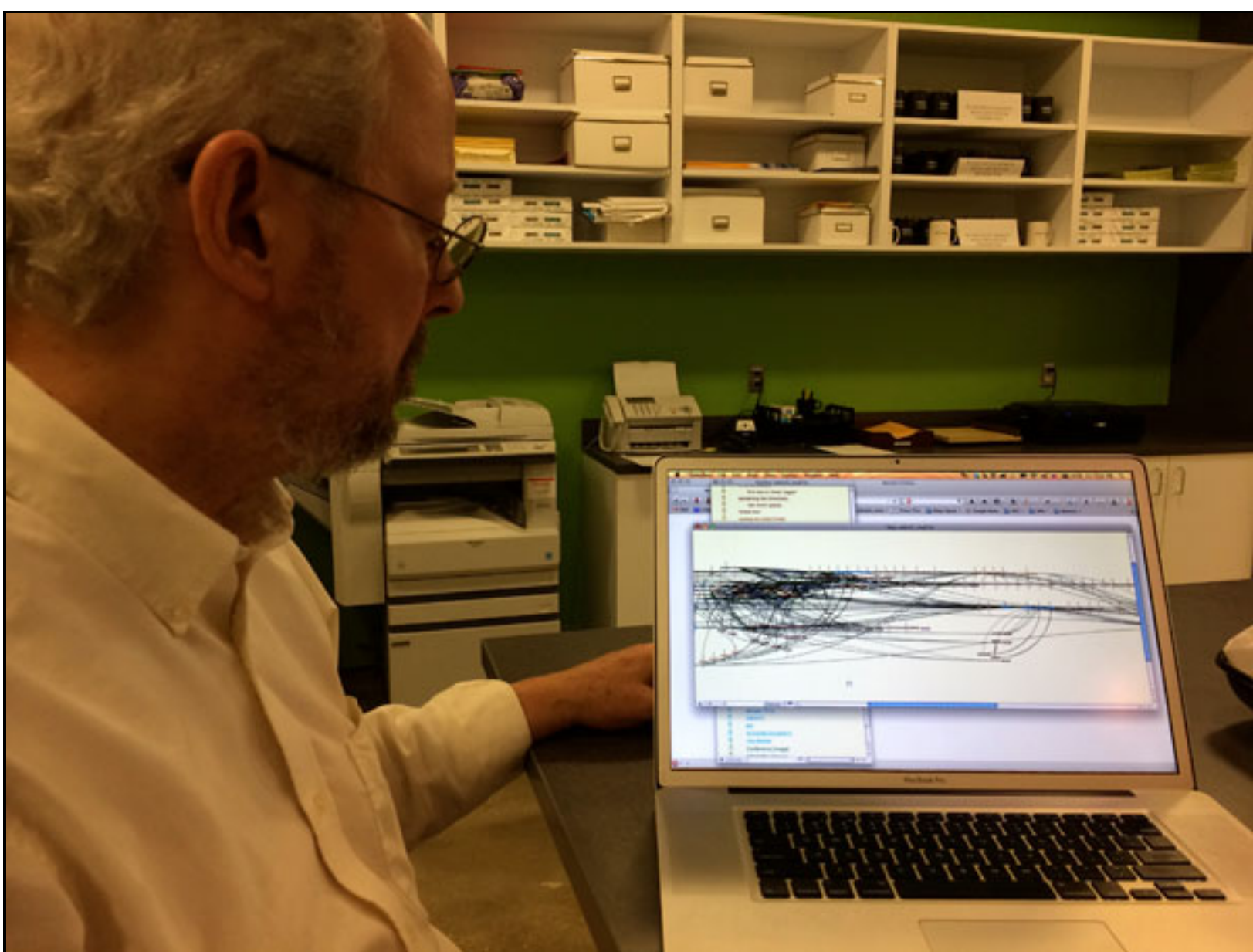
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BILL BLY'S WE DESCEND ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/BILL-BLY](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly)) (5/8)

Photos of the Folio and CD and Their Contents of Bill Bly's We Descend



Bill Bly at MITH in January 2013 showing "We Descend" to audience

This section of *Pathfinders* contains 15 images of Bly's folio and CD of *We Descend*, published by Eastgate in 1997. The photos detail the material aspect of the work and show the information that readers glean from its presentation. Thus, many of the characteristics of the packaging carries a similar aesthetic as Shelley Jackson's folio and CD for *Patchwork Girl*, but unlike McDaid's *Funhouse*, which was presented, instead, as a box containing floppy disks or a CD. The commentary was written by Grigar.

Folio Contents

1. Floppy disk, 3 1/2"
2. Booklet, 16-pages total with information printed on 13 of its pages
3. CD, .047" thick and 3.150" in diameter
4. Registration card

General Comments about the Packaging of Bill Bly's *We Descend*

Bill Bly's *We Descend, Volume One* was packaged in a 9-inch by 6-inch folio made of heavy card stock. When opened, the folio reveals a pocket on each side. The pocket on the left hand side contains the floppy disk of the work. The pocket on the right hand side is where the back page of the 14-page booklet that gives directions for "Getting Started" is slipped. The look of the folio with its front and back cover and inside paper contents resembles a book environment and, so, provided a breadcrumb leading readers from the world of print from where they had come to the world of the digital where they were headed with electronic literature. According to Bernstein, the owner of Eastgate, the folio was designed by Eric A. Cohen, who, served for several years as the company's staff designer. The original floppy disks had labels printed in PMS 194 (a Pantone color used for print graphic art). The CDs were originally custom-printed, but now they are labeled with a standard Eastgate design.

Folio, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-folio-front.jpg>)

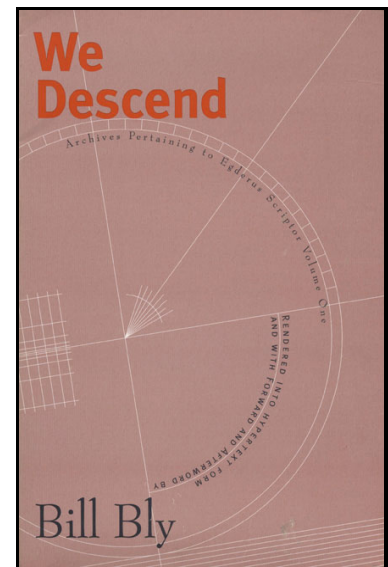
The front of the folio shows the title, *We Descend*, in orange and geometric designs in white against a light mauve background. Arcing around one part of the circle of the design and just beneath the title are the words: "Archives Pertaining to Egderus Scriptor Volume One." On the rest of the circle are two lines with the words in all caps. Line one says, "RENDERED INTO HYPERTEXT FORM", and the second says, "AND WITH FORWARD AND AFTERWORD BY". The second line leads to the name "Bill Bly" printed at the bottom of the folio.

Folio, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-folio-back.jpg>)

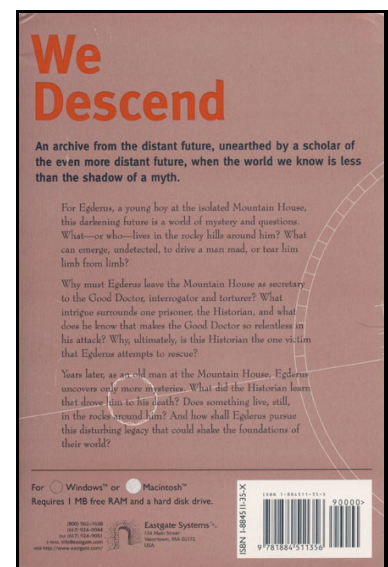
The back of the folio repeats the title in orange and continues the design seen in the front of the folio. Below the title are the words printed in bold type, "An archive from the distant future, unearthed by a scholar of the even more distant future, when the world we know is less than the shadow of a myth." A longer section of text, comprised of three paragraphs, serves as a teaser about the story and follows in regular typeface. Paragraph one reads: "For Egderus, a young boy at the isolated Mountain House, this darkening future is a world of mystery and questions. What—or who—lives in the rocky hills around him? What can emerge, undetected, to drive a man mad, or tear him limb to limb?". Paragraph two: "Why must Egderus leave the Mountain House as secretary to the Good Doctor, interrogator and torturer? What intrigue surrounds one prisoner, the Historian, and what does he know that makes the Good Doctor so relentless in his attack? Why, ultimately, is this Historian the one victim that Egderus attempts to rescue?". Paragraph three: "Years later, as an old man at the Mountain House, Egderus uncovers only more mysteries. What did the Historian learn that drove him to his death? Does something live, still, in the rocks around him? And how shall Egderus pursue this disturbing legacy that could shake the foundations of their world?". Below this section is information about the floppy disk's format. A circle is found by each "Windows" and "Macintosh." A white dot is placed next to the version the reader had purchased. The one shown is created for the Mac environment. Also located in this section are the words, "Requires 1 MB free RAM and a hard disk drive." The contact information for Eastgate Systems, including the company's toll free and MA phone numbers, fax number, email address, URL, and street address are also included. The ISBN sticker is situated next to the contact information showing the numbers, ISBN: 1-884511-35X; ISBN: 978-1884511356.

Folio, Opened (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-folio-open-booklet.jpg>)

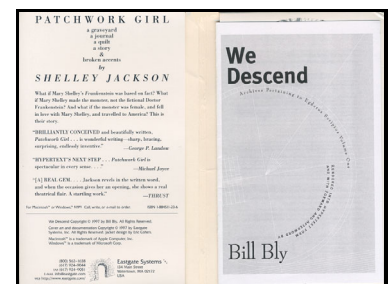
The opened folio reveals a slot, or pocket, on the left hand side where the floppy disk is kept. The inside, left-hand side of the folio's cover advertises Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* and provides the copyright information for *We Descend*. On the right hand side is the 16-page booklet that gives the directions for "Getting Started with *We Descend*" for both Windows and Mac. Also included in the booklet is a brief bio of Bill Bly and information about where to get answers to technical problems one may have with the work.



The front of the folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend"



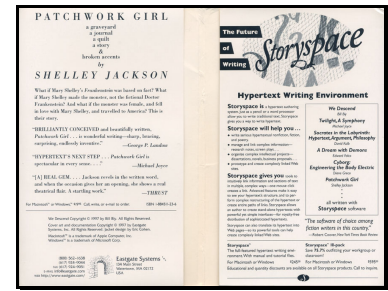
The back of the folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend"



The folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend," opened with the booklet in place

Folio, Opened, Booklet Removed (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-folio-only-open.jpg>)

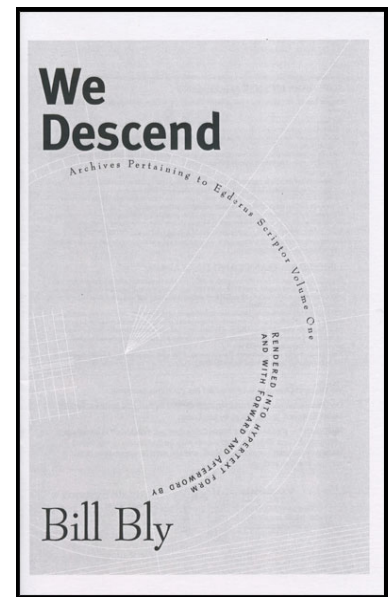
The folio with the booklet removed reveals a layout similar to a book cover. Both sides of the folio's inside cover are used to announce other works published by Eastgate Systems. On the left hand side is information about Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*; on the right hand side is information about Storyspace and important works published by Eastgate Systems created with the software, information set apart from the rest of the information in a box. Mentioned are Bly's *We Descend*; Michael Joyce's *Twilight, A Symphony*; David Kolb's *Socrates in the Labyrinth: Hypertext, Argument, Philosophy*; Edward Falco's *A Dream with Demons*; Diane Greco's *Cyborg: Engineering the Body Electric*; and Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*.



The folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend," opened with the booklet removed

Booklet, Front Cover (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-booklet-front.jpg>)

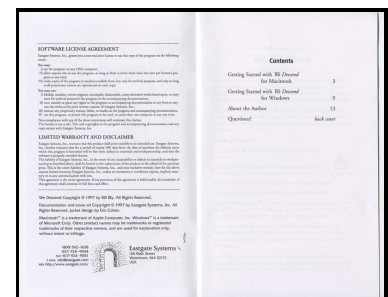
The booklet is printed on paper stock in black and white. The booklet's front cover design matches that of the front of the folio.



The front of the booklet found inside of the folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

Booklet, Opened (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-booklet-toc.jpg>)

Inside of the booklet on the left hand page is the "Software License Agreement," "Limited Warranty and Disclaimer," copyright and trademark information, and contact information for Eastgate Systems, Inc. The right hand side of the booklet contains the Table of Contents. There are four items listed: "Getting Started with *We Descend* for Macintosh," "Getting Started with *We Descend* for Windows," "About the Author," and "Questions?".

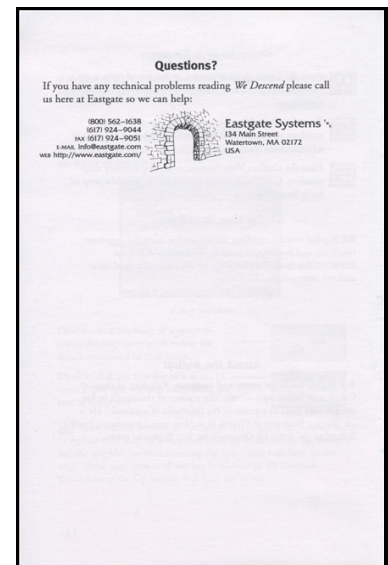


The booklet found inside the folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend," opened to pages 2 & 3

Booklet, Back Cover (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-booklet-back.jpg>)

The back cover contains information needed for getting technical help. The word, "Questions?," is centered

on the page, followed by "If you have any technical problems reading *We Descend* please call us here at Eastgate so we can help." The full contact information found on the inside cover of the folio is repeated, here, on the back of the booklet.

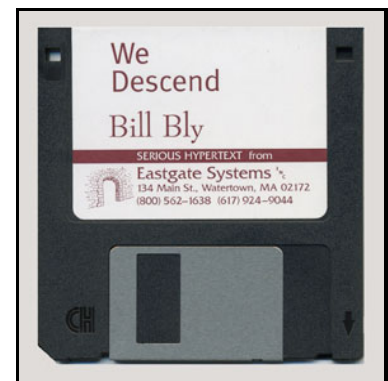


The back of the booklet found inside of the folio of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

Floppy Disk, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-floppy-front.jpg>)

The 3 1/2" floppy disk, containing Bly's hypertext novel, is a high density disk marked by HD in the black plastic casing. The front of the disk has a white label covering both sides of the disk, 2 1/4" of the front and 1/2" of the back. The front part of the label shows the title, printed in two lines left-justified, and author's name directly below it.

Underneath Bly's name is a red line with the words in all caps "SERIOUS HYPERTEXT" followed by "from." Beneath this line is "Eastgate Systems," with "Inc." appearing next to the name slanted vertically, with each letter descending toward the next line. This information is followed by the company's street address and phone numbers. The Eastgate Systems, Inc. logo is situated next to the contact information. All lettering found in the white section of the label matches the red burgundy color of the line and red in the logo.



The front of the floppy disk of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

Floppy Disk, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-floppy-back.jpg>)

The label on the back side of the floppy disk reads, "Copyright ©;1997 by Bill Bly. Software copyright © 1992-97 by Eastgate Systems, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Unauthorized distribution or sale of this material is expressly prohibited."



The back of the floppy disk of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

CD in Envelope, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-rerelease->

cdenvelope-front.jpeg)

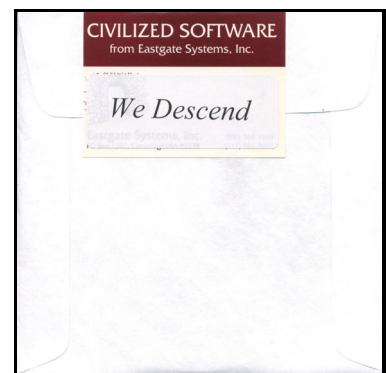
The CD is packaged in a white envelope, 5" x 5" in size, with a round, clear plastic window that allows for the title, "*We Descend*," to be visible to the reader. At the top of the envelope, 3/4" of the Eastgate Company label measuring a total of 2 3/4" x 2 3/4" can be seen. The label reads: "©Copyright 1994 by Eastgate Systems, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Storyspace is a trademark, and CIVILIZED SOFTWARE is a service mark of Eastgate Systems, Inc." The date refers to the software rather than the work, which was published in 1997. The label functions also as a sticker that, when folded, adheres the flap to the back of the envelope. The label is split into two colors: 1 1/4" is burgundy and 1 1/4" is a yellowish beige color. The portion of the label visible on the front of the envelope is burgundy with white type. No other markings are found on the envelope.



The front of the CD rerelease in the envelope of Bill Bly's "*We Descend*"

CD in Envelope, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-rerelease-cdenvelope-back.jpeg>)

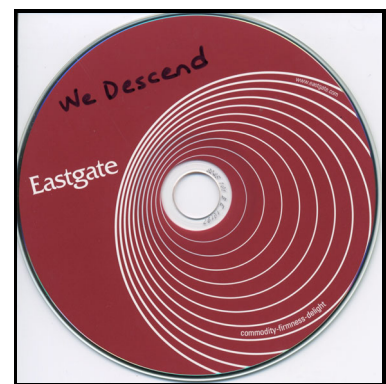
The back of the envelope features the label that had begun on the front of the envelope. The first portion is 3/4" and burgundy in color with the service mark and company name rendered in two lines. Line one reads: "CIVILIZED SOFTWARE". Line two is centered within Line one and reads: "from Eastgate Systems, Inc." Below this section is the yellowish beige portion of the label. Most of this section is covered by a white label with rounded edges, 2 5/8" x 1" in size. Centered in the white label is the title, "*We Descend*," in a typeface that is italicized. Through the white label the company's address and phone numbers are slightly visible.



The back of the CD rerelease in the envelope of Bill Bly's "*We Descend*"

CD, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-rerelease-cd-front.jpeg>)

The CD's design follows that of others, like Stephanie Strickland's *True North*, used by Eastgate Systems during the same period. It is screen printed, burgundy in color, with 11 white circles arranged so that the center spindle hole is highlighted. The overall look provides an optical illusion of a 3D space where the hole serves as the entry point. Above the line of the 4th white circle are the words "commodity-firmness-delight," referring to Vitruvius' "architectural virtues" that Mark Bernstein, the owner of Eastgate Systems, Inc., saw printed on a t-shirt he saw in the 1970s (http://www.markbernstein.org/May0201/CommodityFirmnessDelight_1.html). The name, "Eastgate", appears to the left of the circles and is also printed in white. At the top of the CD, the title of the work is hand-written in black lettering by Estha Blachman of Eastgate with a Sharpie pen.



The front of the CD Rerelease of Bill Bly's "*We Descend*"

CD, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-rerelease-cd-back.jpeg>)

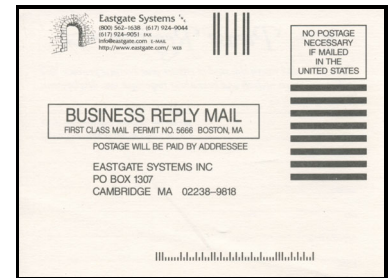
On the back of the CD we see the shiny layer that reflects the laser.



The back of the CD rerelease of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

Registration Card, Front (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-insert1-back.jpg>)

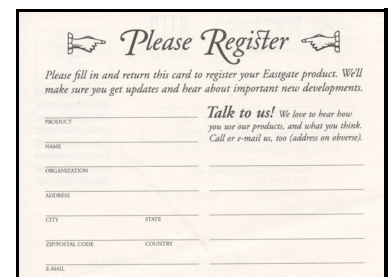
The registration card, included in the packaging, allowed the user to register the product, receive information about Eastgate Systems, Inc., and make comments to the company about the user's experience with the product. Once filled out, the registration card was intended to be mailed back to the company. By 1997 email was becoming more prevalent and, so, Eastgate Systems, Inc. also provided users with the opportunity to email as well as call by phone. Thus, the front of the registration card is a traditional postcard, postage paid, and already addressed to the company. At the top left hand side is the company name, phone numbers, email address, and website. In the middle was the information needed for mailing highlighted in a box: "BUSINESS RELY MAIL" appeared on the first line. "FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 5666 BOSTON, MA". Below this section we see the words, "POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE". This information is followed by the company's mailing information in three lines: "EASTGATE SYSTEMS INC", "PO BOX 1307", "CAMBRIDGE MA 02238-9818". On the right hand side of the card, we see "NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES" in the space where a stamp would have been placed. Bar code markings are found at the top, right hand side and bottom of the card.



The back of the registration card of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

Registration Card, Back (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-insert1-front.jpg>)

The back of the Registration Card provides the place for the user to write in information to register the product. It is divided into four sections. The first, located at the top of the card, are the words, "Please Register". On each side we see a hand with a finger pointing at the words. Below this section are the directions for filling out the card. It reads: "Please fill in and return this card to register your Eastgate product. We'll make sure you get updates and hear about important new developments." The third section makes up one half of the left hand side of the bottom section and consists of seven lines in a row equally spaced. Here is where one would write the 1) "PRODUCT" 2) [user's] "NAME" 3) user's "ORGANIZATION" 4) [user's] "ADDRESS" 5) "CITY" [and] "STATE" 6) "ZIP/POSTAL CODE" [and] "COUNTRY" 7) "E-MAIL". The fourth section is the



The front of the registration card of Bill Bly's "We Descend"

right hand side of the bottom part of the card. The words, "Talk to us! We love to hear how you use our products, and what you think. Call or e-mail us, too (address on obverse)." Below are five lines that run next to the ones on the left.


« ([https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-readers-traversals--interviews?
path=bill-bly](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-readers-traversals--interviews?path=bill-bly))

Continue to "The Bill Bly Collection & MITH's Symposium"
([https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-
symposium--the-bly-collection?path=bill-bly](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-symposium--the-bly-collection?path=bill-bly))



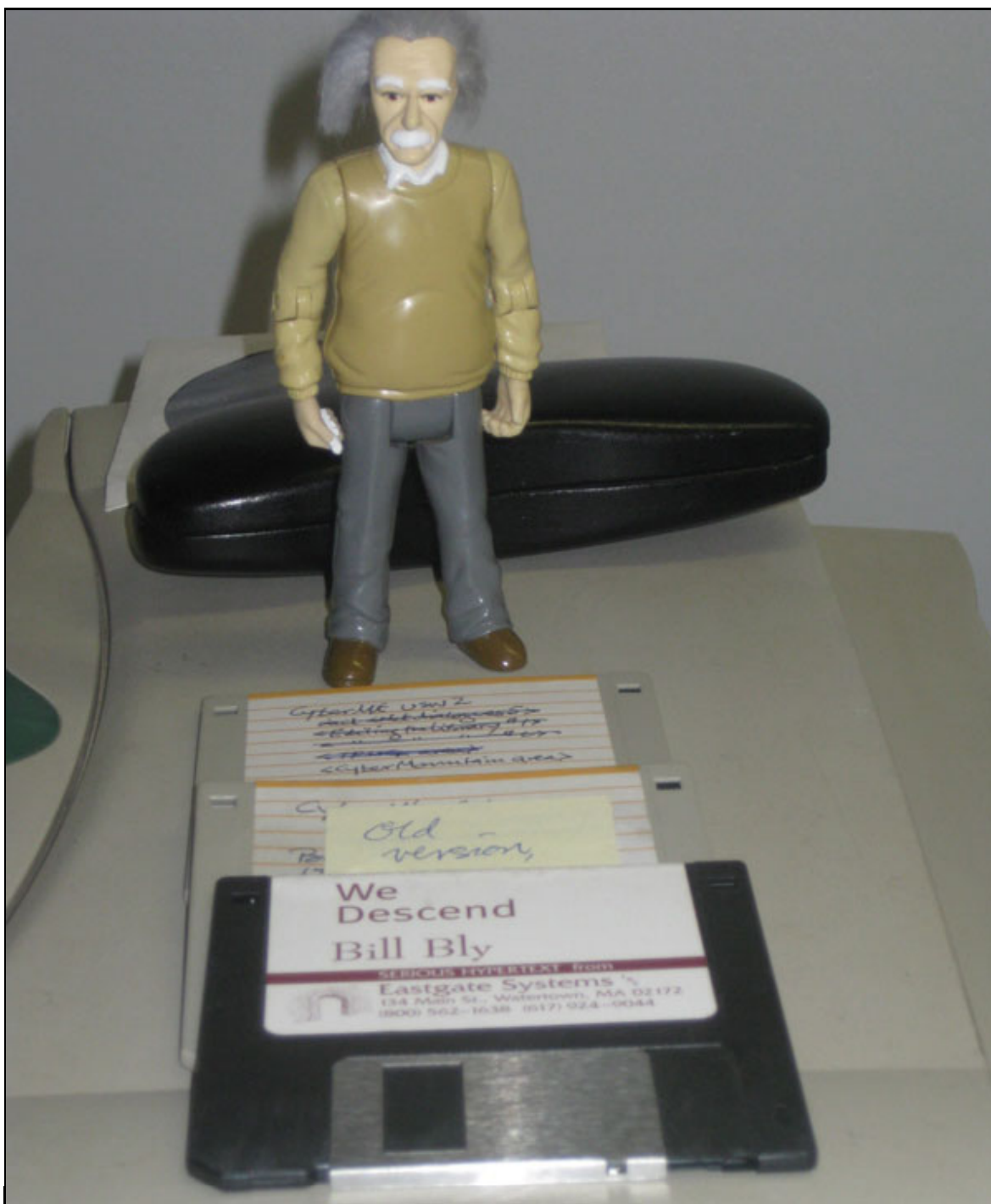
(<http://drc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://drc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

Version 113 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-photos-folio-contents.113>) of this page, updated 5/31/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-photos-folio-contents.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-photos-folio-contents.meta>)

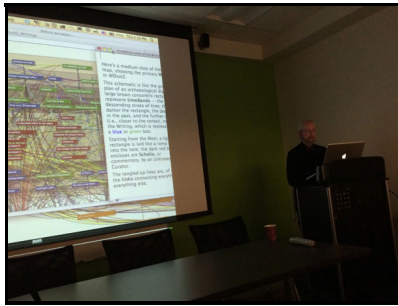
 (<http://scalar.usc.edu/scalar>) Powered by Scalar (<http://scalar.usc.edu/scalar>) (2.6.9 (<https://github.com/anvc/scalar>)) | Terms of Service (<http://scalar.usc.edu/terms-of-service/>) | Privacy Policy (<http://scalar.usc.edu/privacy-policy/>) | Scalar Feedback (<http://scalar.usc.edu/contact/>)

BILL BLY'S WE DESCEND ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/BILL-BLY](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly)) (6/8)

The Bill Bly Collection & MITH's Symposium

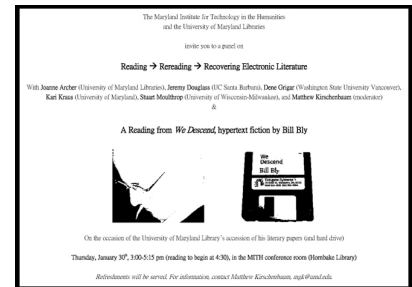


Materials from the Bill Bly Collection, University of Maryland. Photo by Matthew Kirschenbaum.



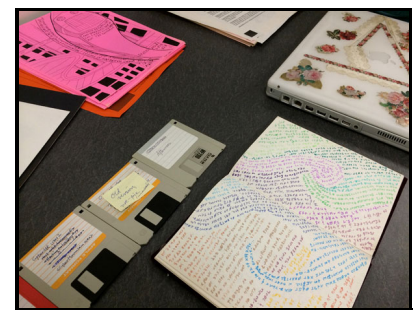
Bill Bly giving a reading of "We Descend" at MITH at the University of Maryland

Besides traveling to MITH to conduct the traversals and interviews for Bill Bly's *We Descend*, we also participated in "Reading, Rereading, and Recovering Electronic



The invitation for the symposium hosted by Matthew Kirschenbaum, "Reading, Rereading and Recovering Electronic Literature"
Source: Matthew Kirschenbaum

Literature," the symposium hosted by Matthew Kirschenbaum at the Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland College Park. The event took place on Thursday, January 30 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The symposium ([http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/symposium invitation.jpg](http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/symposium%20invitation.jpg)) was followed by a public reading ([http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bill reading 2.JPG](http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bill%20reading%202.JPG)) of *We Descend* by Bill Bly. In the audience were faculty and graduate students from the university and other interested individuals. Jason Rhody, our grant officer from the National Endowment for the Humanities that funded *Pathfinders*, was also present. During our visit to MITH, we also had the opportunity to look through the archives of *The Bly Collection*. The inventory dates from the late 1980s to 2004 and includes papers, art, and files by other artists like Deena Larsen. As Bly points out in the document, "BBL Y | Holdings for MITH June 2011," all digital materials "with a few exceptions" were created with and for a Macintosh computer running the Classic operating system. Some of the materials (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/bly-archive.jpg>) available for viewing were records and programs from CyberMountain, proceedings from annual ACM Hypertext conferences dating back to 1996, and copies of the SIGLink Newsletter from 1998-2000.



Items from The Bill Bly Collection at MITH

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-photos-folio-contents?path=bill-bly>)

Continue to “Information about the Computers Used for the Creation of Bill Bly's We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/information-about-the-computer-used-for-the-creation-of-bill-blys-we-descend?path=bill-bly>)



(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver
(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

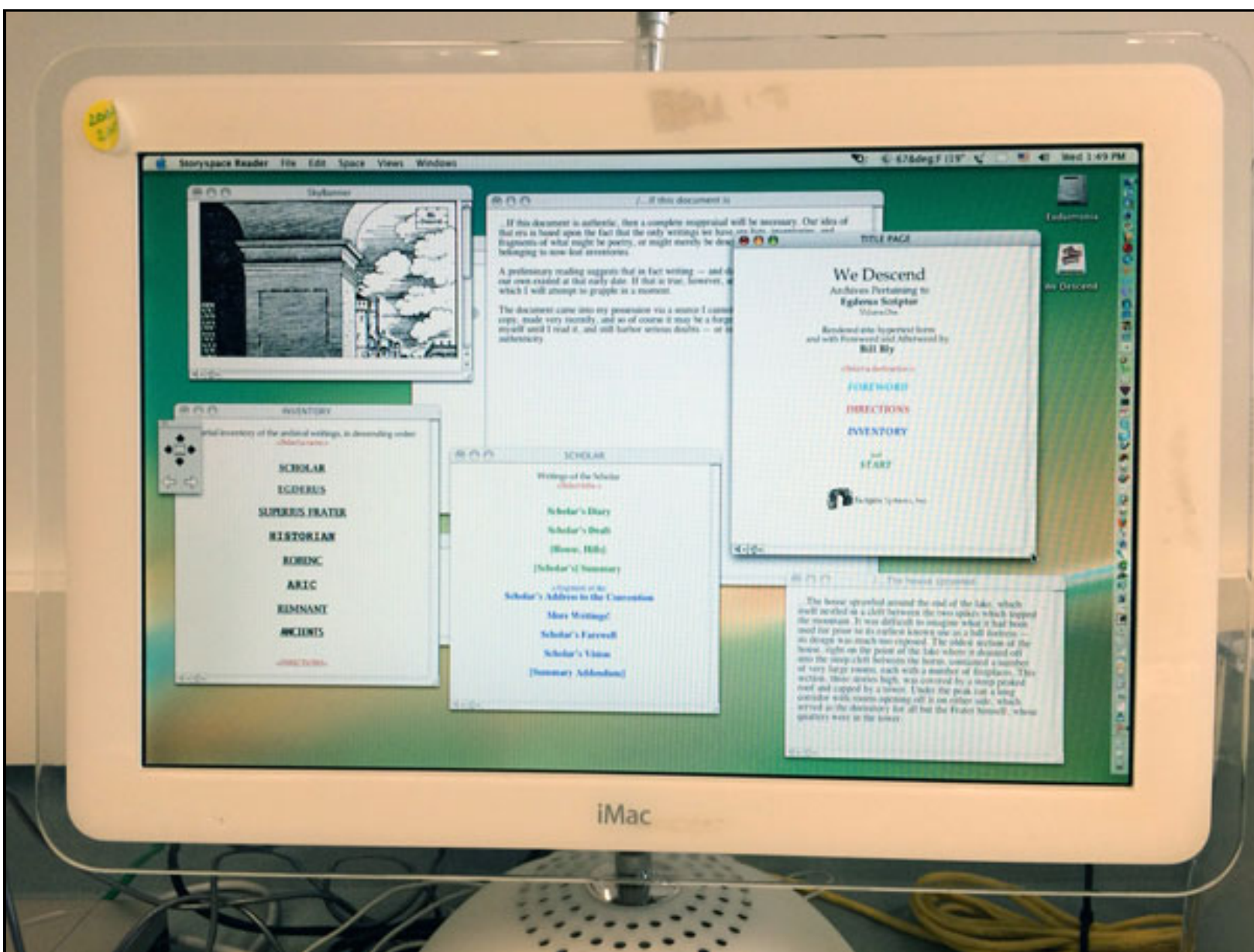
Version 26 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-symposium--the-bly-collection.26>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-symposium--the-bly-collection.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-symposium--the-bly-collection.meta>)



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BILL BLY'S WE DESCEND (HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/BILL-BLY) (7/8)

Information about the Computers Used for the Creation of Bill Bly's We Descend



A CD of Bill Bly's "We Descend" displayed on an Apple flat-panel computer

When Bill Bly began work on his

masterpiece *We Descend* in 1993 he used an Apple SE (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/Apple-SE.jpg>) to produce it. The computer, by then, was already six years old. The Apple SE, however, was built to last—it was the first Mac to come with a cooling fan. It was also the first compact Apple computer to offer a hard drive and ran operating systems from 3.3 to 7.5.5. Bly's computer came with only 512K of RAM that he, later, upgraded to 1MB by breaking the warranty and replacing the two 256K chips with two 512s. However, the SE did sport a 46 MB hard drive, which he never filled up. This machine was not cheap. The cost of a brand new Apple SE was \$2900 for the dual floppy version and \$3900 for the 20 MB hard drive. It was discontinued in 1990. Notable software that ran on the Apple SE included HyperCard, ClarisWorks, MicroSoft Word, Tetris, and, of course, Storyspace.

Later, Bly upgraded to a Mac IIxi (https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/Macintosh_IIxi_2.jpg), a more contemporary computer released on the market from 1990-1993. It provided sound-in port capability and a screen resolution at 640-480 in 8-bit color. It also had double the amount of RAM than his Apple SE. Bly recalls that his computer had 2 MB of RAM when he bought it.

Bly, however, completed the work on *We Descend* in June or July 1996 on a Powerbook 520 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/powerbook520.jpg>), running System 7, that came with a grayscale display and offered one of the first trackpads. He says that he never moved beyond System 9.0, which was released in 1999 because Storyspace 1.0 would not run in OS X.

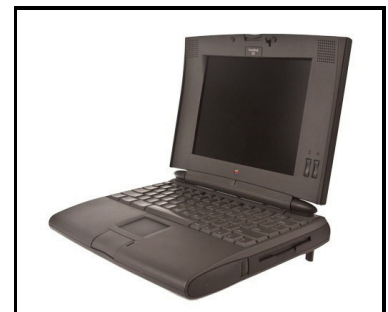
To experience *We Descend, Volume One* produced on floppy disks today, readers need a computer that reads high density disks. Thus, a Macintosh Plus or higher is recommended. To read the CD version, a Macintosh with a CD player running the Classic operating system is recommended. In 2002 Bly created a version of *Volume One* in Storyspace 2.0 that ran in OS X up to OS X 10.5.8 (Leopard). It also is available for PCs running Windows XP or any later version with XP mode installed.



Computer on which Bill Bly would have created "We Descend"



Apple's Mac IIxi



Macintosh Powerbook 520
Source: Shrine Of Apple

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/mith-symposium--the-bly-collection?path=bill-bly>)

Continue to “Essays about Bill Bly's We Descend” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/essays-bill-blys-we-descend?path=bill-bly>)



(<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>) Nospace Publications | Washington State University Vancouver (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/cmdc/nospace-pub/>)

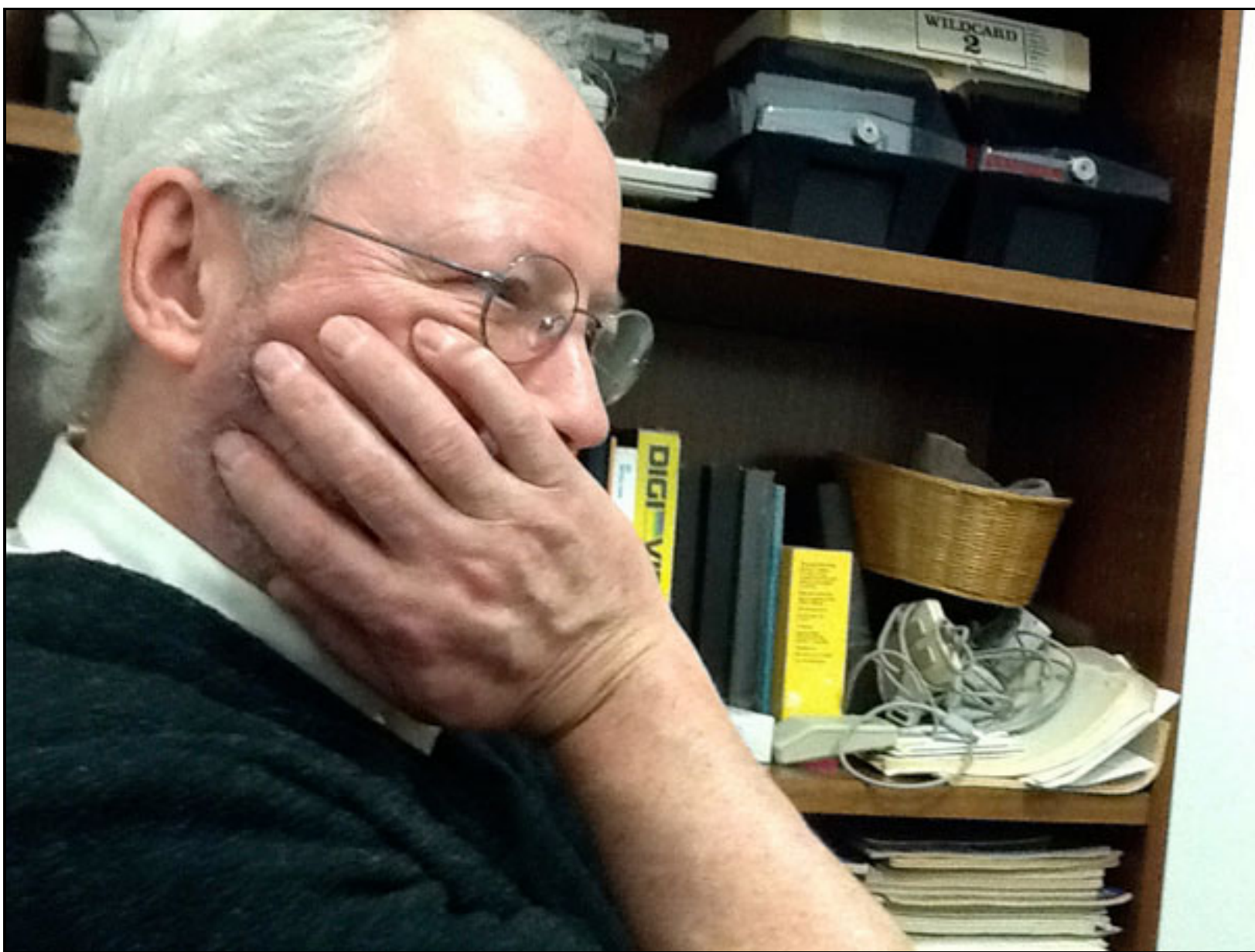
Version 23 (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/information-about-the-computer-used-for-the-creation-of-bill-blys-we-descend.23>) of this page, updated 5/30/2015 | All versions (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/information-about-the-computer-used-for-the-creation-of-bill-blys-we-descend.versions>) | Metadata (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/information-about-the-computer-used-for-the-creation-of-bill-blys-we-descend.meta>)



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BILL BLY'S WE DESCEND ([HTTPS://SCALAR.USC.EDU/WORKS/PATHFINDERS/BILL-BLY](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly)) (8/8)

Essays about Bill Bly's We Descend



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Bill Bly, taken at MITH Symposium, January 2014

In this section of *Pathfinders*, we offer two critical essays about Bill Bly's *We Descend*. The first is Grigar's essay, "We All Descend," about the use of metaphor in the story. The second is Bly's own statement, reprinted from *Authoring Software*, (http://narrabase.net/bill_bly.html) about the novel that includes information about the story, the history of its development, and technical information.

Contents

1

"We All Descend," by Dene Grigar (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-we-all-descend?path=essays-bill-blys-we-descend>)

2

"Essay about We Descend," by Bill Bly, reprinted from *Authoring Software* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/reprint-of?path=essays-bill-blys-we-descend>)


Begin with "We All Descend," by Dene Grigar" (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-we-all-descend?path=essays-bill-blys-we-descend>)

« Back to "Information about the Computers Used for the Creation of Bill Bly's *We Descend*" (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/information-about-the-computer-used-for-the-creation-of-bill-blys-we-descend?path=bill-bly>)



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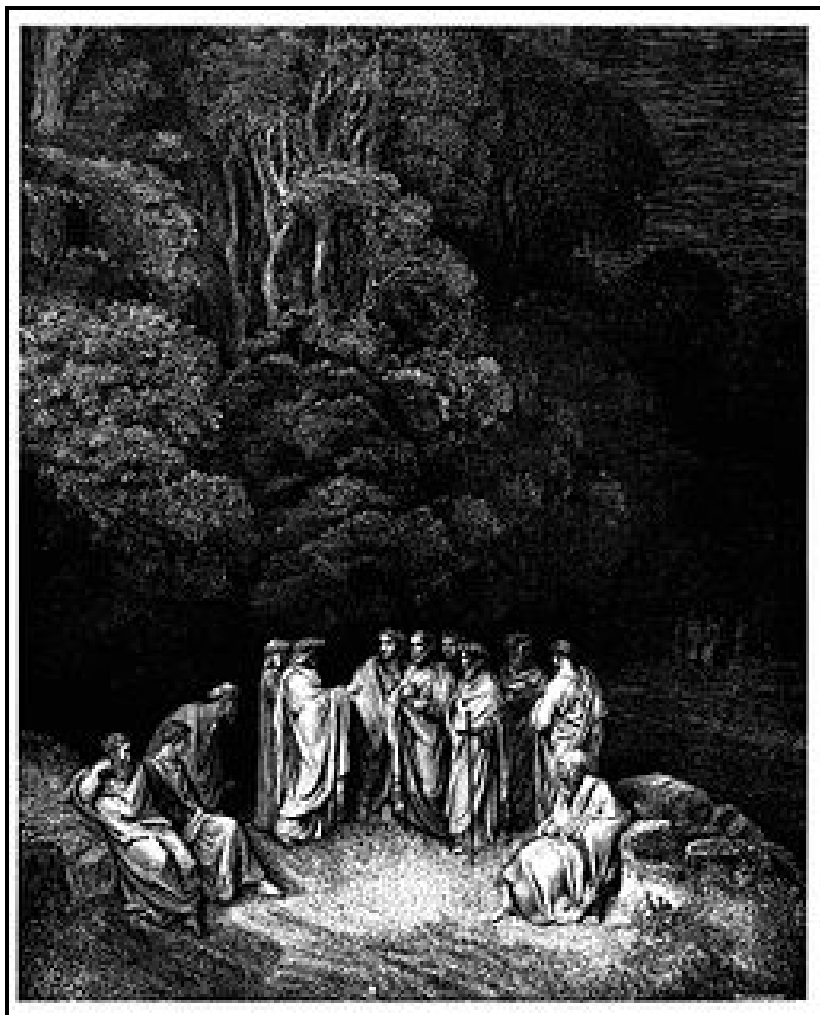
"We All Descend," by Dene Grigar

[Special Note: This post comes as a response to the traversal and interview that Stuart and I conducted with Bill Bly, author of the hypertext novel *We Descend*, at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) at the University of Maryland where Bly's papers are now archived (<http://mith.umd.edu/research/project/bill-bly-collection/>). A special thank you to Dr. Matthew Kirschenbaum, Associate Director of MITH, for participating in a traversal and allowing us to visit "The Bill Bly Collection" and videotape the traversals and interviews in MITH offices. Much appreciation goes to Bill Bly for the time he gave us during our visit. *Pathfinders* is richer for it.]

The BuzzFeed game I played yesterday about where I would reside in Dante's *Inferno* placed me right smack in Limbo with the virtuous pagans (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/dante-virtuous-pagans.jpg>), Plato and Aristotle. Those of you who know me probably understand why spending eternity with these Greek philosophers does not seem much of a punishment, even if it is hell we are talking about. Of course, in Dante's world view this nether land of shades and shadows is actually a far better location than any of hell's circles below.

Dante's story of his descent to this realm of the afterlife and his vision of the place he believes a great many of us will end up reminds me of Bill Bly's *We Descend* (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/We-Descend-title-page.jpeg>), another epic structured as a journey. My *Pathfinders* Co-PI Stuart Moulthrop and I had just spent the previous weekend with Bill at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities where we videotaped several traversals of his work. So, Bill's story of Egderus digging through a maze of information in his journey to knowledge about the past was still haunting me days after my return. Thinking about the metaphor of "the descent" as I played the BuzzFeed game, I was struck by the idea

that Bill's use of it has us
going as deep into the abyss
as we do for Dante's
underworld, for *We
Descend* takes us through a
complex scheme of
space—and of time ([https://
scalar.usc.edu/works/
pathfinders/media/](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/)

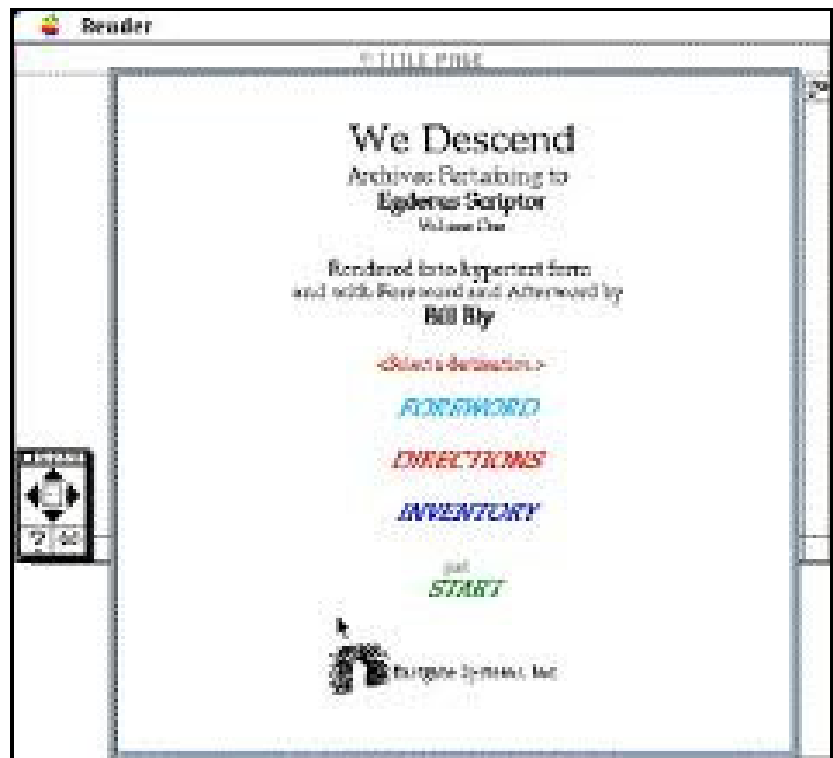


Gustave Doré's illustration to Dante's *Inferno*. Plate XII: Canto IV

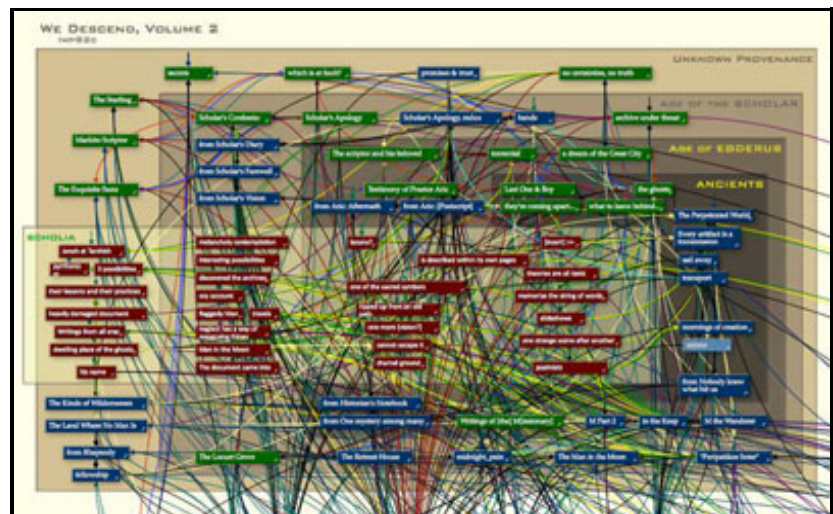
Map_WDvol2_Writings-75pct.jpg).

I know. It is difficult to imagine a more complex *schema* than Dante's hell with its many circles and bolgias, but *We Descend* holds it own against the medieval masterpiece in this regard. The story takes us through four timelines (five, if you count the timeline the reader represents), beginning with a future post apocalyptic storyline of Egderus who digs down through eons of data to reconstruct cultural history, encountering, along the way, Writings by an ancient who calls himself the Last One. As Bill says, "The Last One transmits the even more ancient writings from the magnificent civilization whose self-destruction he has survived" (Bly, 10 Feb. 2014). The metaphor of the "archaeological dig" that Bill talked about in his interview with Stuart and me, serves, he said, to "help us to visualize time" (See Bly's "Afterward for a better sense of the levels he presents in the story). And it does. Here, I am reminded of how time unfolded below me as I peered down at the ruins of Homer's Troy—Troy VI and VII—among the nine total possible Troys—and imaging Priam, Hector, and Paris having once dwelled upon one of stratum of soil among so many of them. And there I stood representing yet another Troy, one far removed from theirs.

We spend so little time on earth that we are fooled into thinking of time as a continuum. Without realizing it, we are tainted by Plato's allegory of the cave from the *Republic*, so seamlessly woven into the fabric of Western culture that we are unaware of its influence. And so, we believe that the journey of humankind—and our own personal journeys, for that matter—takes us from ignorance to wisdom, that evolution means eventual enlightenment if humanity can just stick it out long enough. I mean, modern humans are a far cry from Neandethrals, right? In this way, Bill's descent differs from Dante's. Whereas Dante hikes into hell with Virgil as his guide and leaves a better person for it by learning the true nature of sin, we wander alone through *We Descend* facing hundreds of possible paths with no idea if we will come out of it with any understanding of anything. Bill's story is, as he says, about “evolutionary descent” (“Bly Interview”). We refer to ourselves, as Bill reminds us, as “*descendants*” of those who preceded us, rather than their “*ascendants*,” a far cry from the more noble pilgrim status conferred upon Dante. Dante does, indeed, get to climb up Mt. Purgatory and the heavens after his sojourn through hell.



This image is the art from the title page of Bill Bly's "We Descend"



This image is an up-to-date map view of the writings of Bly's "We Descend, Volume 2" provide by Bly on 10 Feb. 2014

I exaggerate as writers sometimes do to make a point. Actually, we do come out of *We*

Descend with an understanding. In fact, Bill revealed this truth when he related the genesis of this story to Stuart and me: There were “five words,” he said, that came into his head, like a motif that had to be written down: “If this document is authentic.” Thus, the story suggests that humanity’s journey, our descent/ascent over thousands of years, is an odyssey to find those things that are authentic, to seek the true nature of truth. We can see through this tautology if we remember that the Greek word for truth is *alethe*, or “not forgetting.” Truth, then, is simply those things that we remember. The clearer and honest the memory, the more true the truth. It is through seeking cultural heritage, through preserving the memory of a people, as the characters in Bill’s story do, that truth is located and maintained.

Ultimately, what *We Descend* suggests is that we—all humans—are capable of descending and ascending, depending on how heroically we fight for the truth, how hard we work to place truth at the center of our lives.

Continue to “"Essay about We Descend," by Bill Bly, reprinted from Authoring Software” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/reprint-of?path=essays-bill-blys-we-descend>)



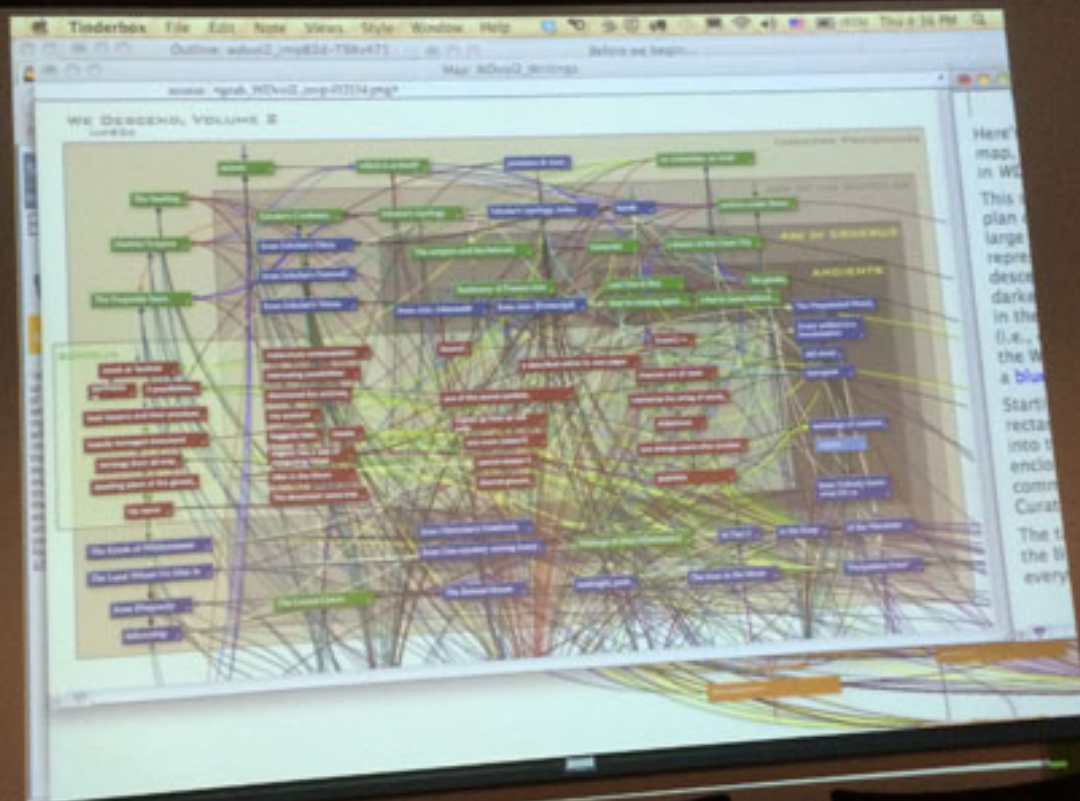
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"Essay about We Descend," by Bill Bly, reprinted from Authoring Software



Bill Bly's "We Descend" in Tinderbox

From *Authoring Software* Bill Bly, *We Descend Vol. 1* (Eastgate, 1997), Software: Storyspace; *We Descend Vol. 2*, Software: Tinderbox

Bill Bly is the author of the ongoing hypertext *We Descend. Volume 1* of *We Descend* was published by Eastgate in 1997. *Volume 2* was exhibited at the Convention of the Modern Language Association in January 2013 and 2014. His works also include *Wyrmes Mete*, a hypertext chapbook of poems, and, with John McDaid, he was awarded the John Culkin Award for Outstanding Praxis in the Field of Media Ecology for their music CD, *Media Ecology Unplugged*.

As a teacher, a founding member of the Hypertext Writers Workshop, and the recorder for the legendary Cybermountain Colloquium, Bill Bly has also been active in working with colleagues and students in the creation of electronic literature. He taught dramatic literature and theatre history at New York University (NYU) for 20 years, until he became interested in hypertext, which he taught both at NYU and at Fordham University. He also ran the writing program at Wagner College in Staten Island. Currently, he teaches Speech Communication at Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania.

In an *Authoring Software* statement about his densely layered work, *We Descend*, he sets forth the struggles and pleasures of creating hypertext. Beginning with reading Robert Coover's seminal article in New York Times Book Review, [1] he describes how he ordered every title published by Eastgate; his Eureka moment with Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* while participating in Robert Kendall's online Hypertext Poetry & Fiction class at the New School; the creation of *We Descend* in Storyspace; and the creation of *We Descend Volume 2* in Tinderbox.

What started out in the early 1990s as a simple node-link hypertext has somehow turned into my life's work," Bly observes.

The Bill Bly Collection of Electronic Literature is archived at The Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, (MITH) and more information about his work can be found on his homepage

Bill Bly's *Pathfinders* Page (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bill-bly>)

Dene Grigar's *Pathfinders* essay (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-we-all-descend>) on *We Descend*

1. Robert Coover, "Hyperfiction: Novels for the Computer (<https://www.nytimes.com/books/98/09/27/specials/coover-hyperfiction.html>)," *New York Times Book Review*, August 29, 1993.

Bill Bly: *We Descend*

About *We Descend*

We Descend is an artifactual hypertext, presented as an archive of writings gathered and transmitted over a vast span of time. A Scholar discovers the previously unknown Testament of one Egderus, a humble scribe who lived many generations before. Egderus' work leads to even older materials, a fragmentary archive which somehow survived a cataclysm that all but wiped out the magnificent civilization of its ancient authors. These documents promise to make the Scholar's reputation, but instead they destroy him, in a brutal reversal that provokes disturbing speculations about the present as well as the past.

The story unfolds in three "bands" of time:

We learn about the Scholar's world from his diary and the preparatory notes he makes for presenting the Egderus documenta to a convention of his peers.

Egderus' era is delineated in his Testament, which also incorporates letters, notes left behind by predecessors, and other miscellanea that ended up in his possession.

The fragmentary writings of the Ancients are mere scraps, almost impossible to interpret because their context is utterly vanished, but they provide a glimpse into a lost world that is both tantalizing and deeply troubling.

The thoughtful reader will discern -- in the commentary and cross-references throughout the archive -- a more recent band of time during which they were collected and arranged, and begin to perceive, if only dimly, the otherwise unknown person(s) who performed this labor. An artifactual work like *We Descend* invites the reader to join a kind of research project: Although the writings may be carefully and logically organized, they are not processed into a tale that can be told by a single voice, but rather are presented undigested, and the reader must assemble a coherent story for the whole, on her own.

In addition, using artifacts alone to tell the story foregrounds the three domains that any writing inhabits: text, meat, ghosts.

A writing is of course a text, made up of words and other symbolic inscriptions (images, diagrams, maps) -- an account that is written not enacted, intended to be read not listened to

Meat is the incarnation of text, comprising both the object(s) upon which it is inscribed and the inscription itself considered as a physical (i.e., non-symbolic) object -- whether a dried-up river of ink on paper or a parade of pixels on a screen

The ghostly domain is, paradoxically, where the story comes to life, in mental pictures of imaginary persons saying imaginary words, doing imaginary deeds. It is also the "place" where author and reader meet, and the story can be transmitted from one mind to another.

The History of *We Descend*

What started out in the early 1990s as a simple node-link hypertext has somehow turned into my life's work. Previous curators of these Archives also complain lovingly of the same difficulty: new material keeps turning up, and -- in my case, at least, the technology for displaying and reading it continues to change. (I can't in good conscience aver that the tech has always evolved.)

Actually, the earliest Writing in *We Descend* is dated 1984 -- four years before I touched a computer more sophisticated than an ATM -- and it begins "If this document is authentic, then a complete reappraisal will be necessary."

I doubt that I can retrieve that frayed scrap of notebook paper, (yes, I wrote everything by hand in those days) but when I created my first Storyspace document nine years later, I know I copied them off a page I pulled out of the back of the clipboard where I kept everything I was working on. It was a simpler time...

By 1993, when I first encountered the word "hypertext" in an article by Robert Coover in the *New York Times Book Review*, I had maybe a thousand words' worth of notes, sketches, and snatches of dialogue for a project that had no name; they all seemed to belong together, but I didn't know how. Coover's article electrified me: I couldn't fathom what he was talking about, but I somehow knew it was important. So I wrote an inquiry to every person he said was working in this new medium of hypertext and asked them to tell me more. One such pioneer was Mark Bernstein of Eastgate Systems, who sent me a copy of Storyspace 1.0 on a small rigid diskette that worked in my Mac SE.

The manual that came with the Storyspace demo was breezily confident and reassuring, and told me how to do this, and that, or, if I wanted to, some other thing. What I simply could not figure out was what I would be making -- or, for that matter, why I would want to perform any of those operations the manual so cheerfully taught me how to perform. Not liking to give up on something I just hadn't got the hang of yet, I thought maybe I would do better by reading some exemplary hypertexts. Along with Storyspace, I'd also ordered an issue of the *Eastgate Quarterly Review of Hypertext*, which comprised a paper Getting Started booklet and another floppy disk inserted into a totally badass black rubber jacket. I don't remember either work included on the disk, but at first encounter, I was even more befuddled after reading hypertext than I was trying to understand what Storyspace actually did.

I continued all at sea for two years after that. I ordered every title in the Eastgate Catalogue. I read books and articles recommended by my correspondents. I attended a conference in Boston, and I continued to play with Storyspace, even though I wasn't having any fun. I did love Apple's Hypercard, and built stack after stack, but found that Hypercard didn't make writing very easy, and linking, though possible, was awkward. I could write in Storyspace, and link easily from one writing space to another, and I found out how to get under the hood in all those exemplary writings to examine their structure, but, like Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, I remained in the dark.

The light dawned for me on a sunny afternoon in the summer of 1995, when I was taking Rob Kendall's Hypertext Poetry & Fiction class online at the New School. We'd been assigned to read Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*, which of course I'd already tried to read more than once before. I was tired. I was

exasperated. I gave up. I got it. All of a sudden, the whole elaborate structure of *Victory Garden* emerged from the murk in my mind, and I could see it -- better, I could feel it. Thinking about it didn't help, looking at the maps didn't help, poking around under the hood didn't help. As best I can explain it, the only thing that worked was to look at enough of it enough times -- and then I could read it, almost the way you read someone's face or body language. Now I'd been writing seriously for decades: I was a prize-winning playwright, a published poet and fictioneer -- and I had no idea writing could do that.

Technical development

The rest of my story's pretty much all tech.

We Descend was originally written and built in Storyspace 1 on Macintosh computers running System 7 through MacOS 9. Vol. 1 was published by Eastgate in 1997 for Mac or Windows on floppy disk. The two versions differ significantly from each other in look-&-feel.

An HTML excerpt for Rob Kendall's resource site *WordCircuits* was prepared in early 1998, using Adobe PageMill and Netscape Composer. By early 2006, most Macs were running OS X (which cannot open Storyspace 1 files) and post-iMac machines (i.e., after 2000) lacked a floppy drive, so I "translated" the Mac version into Storyspace 2, (which works in OS X) so that Eastgate could offer both Mac and Windows versions of *We Descend* bundled on CD.

We Descend Vol. 2 got underway in late 1998, using then-current Storyspace 1.7.5, and was eventually upgraded through Storyspace 2.5.1. At that point, Mark Bernstein was concentrating on Tinderbox, so work on *We Descend Vol. 2* was migrated to Tinderbox in 2006.

In 2009, several experimental demos of *We Descend Vol. 2* were constructed in Emberlight, a web app developed by Nathan Matias and Fred Cheung that published Tinderbox files directly on the web. But in 2011 Nathan accepted an offer to study at the Media Lab at MIT, so Emberlight's future became uncertain.

Tinderbox, a tool for making notes and visualizing information, improves on many of Storyspace's writing and organizing functions: its text engine is superior, and mapping has many more capabilities and much better aesthetics. Probably the best thing for me about using Tinderbox for developing *We Descend* is the ability to just write it, allowing organization to emerge organically, without my having to build containers and structures first, as I had to do with database-like programs such as Hypercard, and which is still the way with authoring platforms like Scrivener and most outliners.

Tinderbox can export all or part of the contents of a file to HTML and OPML, permitting an author to publish to the web or mobile devices -- though considerable pre- and post-processing is necessary, involving a lot of trial-and-error backing and forthing to get a satisfactory result. Tinderbox does not provide for spawning a Reader app such as Storyspace offered, no doubt because "everything's moving to the Cloud" -- which doesn't sound like a very stable... um, platform to build on, to me at least, but maybe this is just another concept that'll take this first-term Truman baby years to get.

In the meantime, I plan to soldier on in Tinderbox until *We Descend* is finished.

For a fuller description of *We Descend* and the topic for which it is the "test file" -- text, meat, ghosts -- see my talk for ELO2012

Vol. 1 of *We Descend* is available on CD from Eastgate Systems.

An HTML excerpt from Vol. 1 (<http://www.wordcircuits.com/gallery/descend/Cover.htm>) is featured in the Gallery at *Word Circuits*.

A demo of Vol. 2 of *We Descend* can be read at its website (<http://www.wedescend.net>) and blog (<http://www.wedescend.com>).

Software: Storyspace, Tinderbox (both from Eastgate Systems).

« (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/bly-we-all-descend?path=essays-bill-blys-we-descend>)

End of path "Essays about Bill Bly's We Descend";
Continue to "Traversals and Interviews Documentation"
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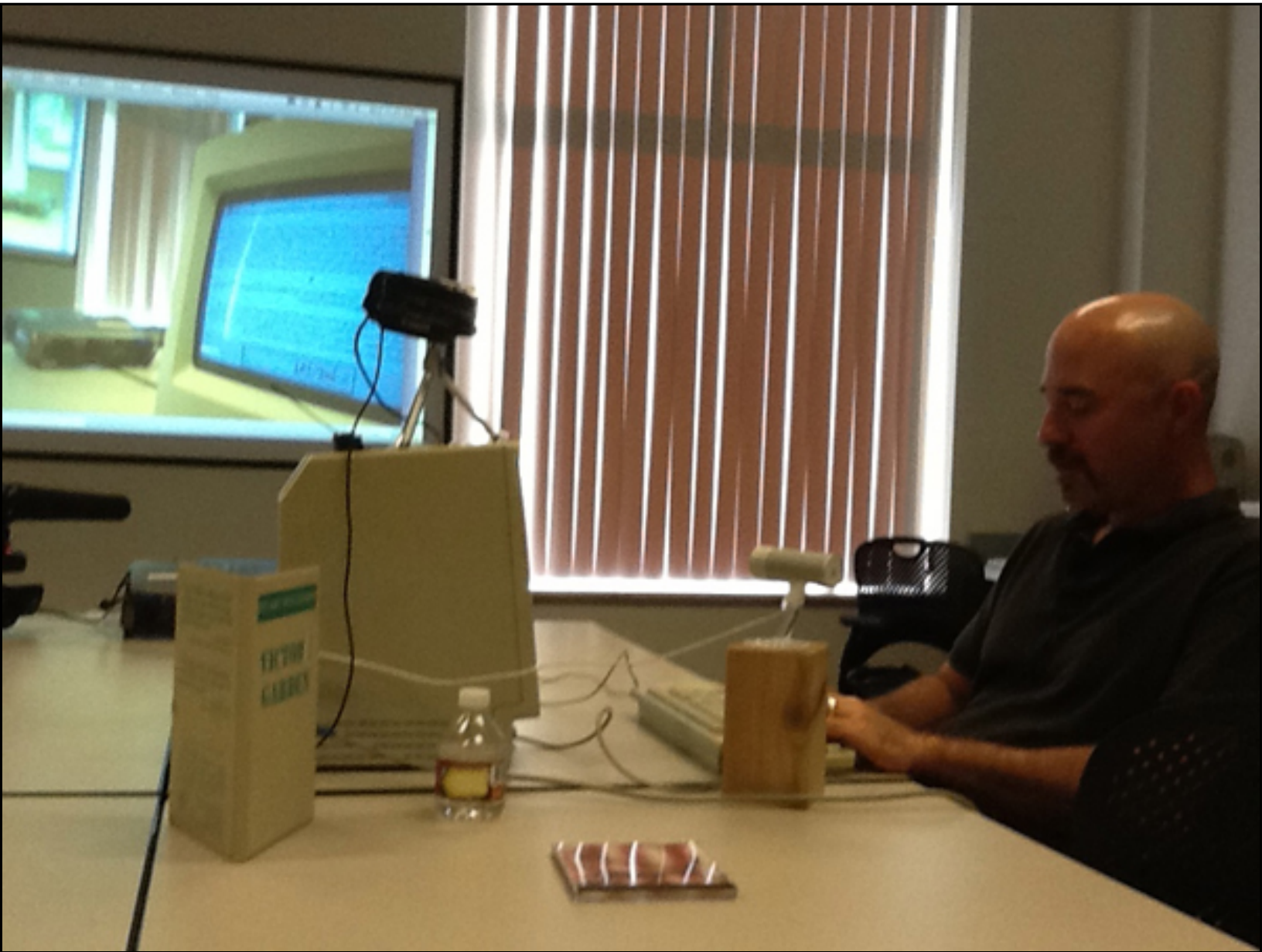
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Traversals and Interviews Documentation



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Pat Kutkey traversing Stuart Moulthrop's "Victory Garden"

Because the traversal is a new concept we are introducing to the Collection method of digital preservation, it was important that we provided guidance to the artists and readers about our vision. We also thought it necessary to help them with the preparation of the interview. This guidance was developed as a series of two documents, which we sent to the artists and readers prior to the event.

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Begin with “Artists' Traversal Protocol” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/artist-traversal-protocol?path=traversals-and-interviews-documentation>)



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Artists' Traversal Protocol



DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

Stuart Moulthrop giving his traversal of "Victory Garden"

This document, produced on June 10, 2013, was sent in advance to all artists to help them prepare for their traversals.

1. Prep

- a. Author may prepare a specific reading strategy, though this is not required.

- b. Prefatory remarks about platform, conception, genesis of the work (etc.) are welcome, but the Traversal should concentrate on exhibition or demonstration of the work.

- 2. Reading**

- a. The author should read aloud the text of each lexia or unit.

- b. Please announce the link or interface feature used in making a transition from one lexia or part to the next.

- c. Reflections or commentary are welcome at any point, though we are aiming for an extensive or representative encounter with the work, so please keep things moving.

- d. There can be more than one encounter within the recording session; we aim to record for about an hour.

Continue to “Artists' Interview Questions” (<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/interview-questions?path=traversals-and-interviews-documentation>)



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Artists' Interview Questions



DESCRIPTION DETAILS CITATIONS SOURCE FILE

Judy Malloy being interviewed by Dene Grigar and Stuart Moulthrop

These questions, produced on June 10, 2013 for the interviews with *Pathfinders* artists, were used as a guide, opting for a more organic approach than a rigid line of questioning. In following this method, we were able attain candid remarks from artists and tease out heretofore unknown information from the artists' remarks.

1. History and origins

A. How do you feel about this work? What's it like to return to it now, two or three decades after you made it?

B. Where did the project come from? What made it necessary or compelling to write?

C. What did you think you were doing (then)? What do you think now? How did your work resonate with its moment of production? How does it fit into the present?

2. Medium, process, metaphor

A. What made you choose these particular tools (re: computer, software, system) to create your work? Did they change the way you developed the piece? How? If you could change your tools, what choice would you now make, and why?

B. As an early adopter of writing technology, you were in a position to discover or invent. What aspects of your work do you consider most innovative?

C. What was your process of creation and composition? In particular, how did planning (schematics, outlines, technical ideas) intersect with prose writing?

D. Each work we're looking at has a strong informing (or structural) metaphor: notebook or database; forking paths or hypertext graph; patchwork, or the monstrous, hybrid body; and the virtual domain of a House (of fun, of cards). Was this metaphor, or another, present to mind when you made your work?

E. To extend the question of metaphor: If all our engagements with information technology tend to be governed by references to earlier media (thinking of operating systems and their 'desktops'), does your work itself represent a trope or metaphorical turn on or from paper-based writing? Could we think of your project as a virtualization of literature?

F. Are figures, concepts, or structural metaphors (whatever you want to call them) useful in understanding electronic writing? Is there a limit to their significance?

3. Influence

A. Were (or are) any literary influences or intertexts important to your work? How do you think about the relationship of your project to earlier or contemporary writings?

B. Has your project had influence on later works? Are there contemporary writers (in or outside the e-lit sphere) with whom you feel sympathy or connection? Does your electronic work contribute to these relationships?

C. How has your own later work moved on or diverged from this early project? What influence, if any, has that work had on your career so far?

4. Readers

A. Does your work have an intended reader? Who is s/he?

B. What would an ideal reading experience of your text be like?

C. You're probably aware of actual reading experiences with your text. (How) do they differ from what you imagine(d)?

D. Are there aspects of your work that seem misunderstood, either by ordinary readers or critics? What are they?

5. Controversies

A. Allegedly, there is no broad, commercial market for electronic writing. Some have dismissed this kind of work (especially hypertext) as more fun to make than take, or more interesting to theorists than ordinary readers. What do you think about these claims?

B. Computational texts complicate the work of reading, perhaps requiring different forms of attention, or even cognition, than most print productions. Does the experiment with electronic writing reveal a limit beyond which writers should not go? Or does this kind of writing usefully challenge accepted literary practice?

C. In her book on electronic literature, Kate Hayles regrets a lack of close attention (at the level of prose style, for instance) for new-media work. Does this seem a problem in reception of your work? Do electronic texts fall outside the citation stream of criticism and pedagogy? Are there examples of close reading of your work that you would like to point out?

D. One of the sillier objections to electronic writing was based on hydrophobia (or -philia): you can't read it in the bathtub! Does arrival of more convenient and intimate devices – smart phones, tablets, and perhaps wearable glass – raise some hope for electronic writing, or do mobile devices add to a lack of deep/close reading of your work?

6. Electronic writing, per se

A. To what extent (if at all) do you want to be identified as an electronic writer, or with ongoing work this area?

B. As all forms of discourse pass into digital mediation, will the term electronic writing become obsolete? Will it go the way of horseless carriage? Or is there some core idea or commitment in electronic writing that seems important to sustain?

7. Preservation

A. Is the technical obsolescence of electronic works fundamentally different from vicissitudes of the print cycle? Is failure of technical accessibility not the same as being out of print? How should scholars and writers approach preservation? Do you agree that electronic writing should be preserved even if the archived work itself differs from the original, or do you believe that the ephemerality of the medium is part of the beauty of the electronic medium?



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Readers' Traversal Protocol



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Rebecca Johnson preparing to give a traversal of John McDaid's "Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse"

This document, produced on June 10, 2013, was sent in advance to all readers to help them prepare for their traversals. Since most readers were unfamiliar with the artists, works, early digital literature, and hypertext, we also reviewed the document with the reader on the day of his or her traversal. We also spoke to readers by phone about the protocol in order to further explain the process.

1. Prep

- a. Author may be present but should not speak
- b. PIs will give some general guidance about system and hardware
- c. Reader should start with initial help or information file/lexia, if such exists.

2. Reading

Reader does not have to read aloud the text of each lexia. However, s/he should do the following:

- a. Announce the link or interface feature s/he is using for the transition
- b. Reflect briefly on the progress of the narrative (or experience) (Where are you? Where do you think you're going...?)
- c. Reader should verbalize questions, but PIs will answer only in case of malfunction
- d. Reader sets pace; can go as slowly or quickly as desired
- e. Reader may quit traversal at any point; we may require up to three attempts, if traversal seems short; aiming at 20 minutes of activity total


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Readers' Interview Questions

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/authors-bios.67>)



[DESCRIPTION](#) [DETAILS](#) [CITATIONS](#) [SOURCE FILE](#)

Sean Philbrook giving his interview for Stuart Moulthrop's "Victory Garden"

These questions, produced on June 10, 2013, were used for interviewing a reader following his or her traversal. We did not send the questions to the readers in advance because we felt that without developing a familiarity with a work, the reader would not have the context for understanding some of the questions.

1. Tell us about your reading experience, in general terms. We're interested not only in how it may have differed from your experience of books, but also how it may relate to your experiences of other electronic media – the World Wide Web, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Differences? Similarities?
2. More specifically: how often did you follow (or feel you were following) a predetermined sequence? How often did you feel you were departing from a pre-set course?
3. (For *VG*, *Funhouse*, and *Patchwork Girl*): did you use the diagrams or pictorial maps at all?
4. You obviously haven't seen every bit of the work. As a guess, what percentage of the work do you think you have seen in your reading?
5. What do you think may be in the unseen parts?
6. If you had to use a metaphor or analogy to describe this work, what would you choose?
7. How did the use of vintage equipment affect the experience?
8. Would your experience of the text have been significantly different if you had read on a mobile device (smart phone or tablet) instead of an early PC?

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path=traversals-and-interviews-documentation](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/readers-traversal-protocol?path=traversals-and-interviews-documentation))

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Authors' and Contributors' Bios

Co-Authors



Photo of Dene Grigar

Dene Grigar

(<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/media/grigar-pathfinders.jpg>) is Director of the Creative Media & Digital Technology Program (<http://dte-wsuv.org/cmdc>) at Washington State University Vancouver (<http://www.wsu.edu>), whose research focuses on the creation, curation, preservation, and criticism of Electronic Literature, specifically building multimedial environments and experiences for live performance, installations, and curated spaces; desktop computers; and mobile media devices. She has authored 14 media works, such as

"Curlew (<http://dte-wsuv.org/curlew>)" (with Greg Philbrook, 2014), "A Villager's Tale" (with Brett Oppegaard, 2011), the "24-Hour Micro-Elit Project (http://www.nospace.net/dene/24hr/24-Hr._Micro-Elit_Project/Home.html)" (2009), *When Ghosts Will Die* (<http://www.telebody.ws/ghosts/index.php>) (with Steve Gibson, 2005), "Fallow Field: A Story in Two Parts (http://www.nospace.net/dene/fallow_field/fallow_field_opening.html)" (2004), and "The Jungfrau Tapes: A Conversation with Diana Slattery about *The Glide Project* (http://www.nospace.net/dene/jungfrau_tapes/slattery_opening.html)" (2004), as well as over 50 scholarly articles. She also curates exhibits of electronic literature and media art, mounting shows at the Library of Congress and for the Modern Language Association, among other venues. With Stuart Moulthrop (U of Wisconsin Milwaukee) she is the recipient of a 2013 NEH Start Up grant for *Pathfinders*. She serves as Associate Editor for *Leonardo Reviews* (<http://www.leonardo.info/ldr.php>) and is President of the Electronic Literature Organization (<http://eliterature.org>). Her website is located at <http://nospace.net/dene> (<http://nospace.net/dene>).

Stuart Moulthrop is an award-

winning designer of electronic fiction and art projects, a veteran teacher of computer game design, and author of multiply-anthologized writings on digital art and culture. From 1995-99 he served as Co-Editor of *Postmodern Culture*



Photo of Stuart Moulthrop

(https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/editorial.html) and remains on its advisory board. He was a charter member of the Electronic Literature Organization (<http://eliterature.org>) in 1999 and currently serves on its Board of Directors. In 2014 he hosted ELO's annual conference, "Hold the Light," at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (<http://www4.uwm.edu>), where he is Professor of English (<https://uwm.edu/english/>) and a recent Fellow of the Center for 21st-Century Studies (<http://www4.uwm.edu/c21/>). His digital works include *Victory Garden* (1991), for which he performed the very first test traversal for *Pathfinders* (code-named Mercury-Redstone 2 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury-Redstone_2)), and a number of Web-based fiction and art projects spanning from the mid-1990s to the present day. His (good old) home page is at <http://pantherfile.uwm.edu/moulthro/index.htm> (<http://pantherfile.uwm.edu/moulthro/index.htm>).

Research Assistants

Madeleine Brookman, who has served as Research Assistant on the project from fall 2014, is a junior in the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver majoring in Digital Technologies & Culture. She has been awarded the 2014-5 Auvril Fellowship and a 2015 College of Arts & Sciences Summer Mini-Grant to pursue the development of this multimedia book. For *Pathfinders* she has painstakingly edited and managed 102 videos and helped to lay out and produce the book. She also created the *Pathfinders'* trailer found in the Introduction.

Brian Keilen worked with Stuart Moulthrop on the first draft of the traversal videos, annotation of the interviews, and documentary research. Keilen is a candidate for the PhD in English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, writing on the concept of play modes in video games. He has published several papers and book chapters on the horror genre, production-as-consumption, and other subjects in popular culture.

Rachael Sullivan advised Stuart Moulthrop on video editing and helped assemble the draft of the traversal clips, in addition to other key research tasks. In June, 2015 Sullivan successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, "Interface Fantasies and Futures: Designing Human-Computer Relations in the Shadow of Memex," written under supervision of Professor Anne Frances Wysocki, and will receive her PhD in English from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the fall. She is Assistant Professor of Communications and Digital Media at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Her continuing research focuses on feminist-critical analyses of technology, glitch aesthetics, and engaged digital literacy.

Amalia Vacca, who served as Research Assistant from summer 2013-fall 2014, is a 2015 graduate of the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver. While at WSUV she was the managing director of Nospace Gallery (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/wp/nospace>) and assisted Grigar at electronic literature exhibits, *Electronic Literature and Its Emerging Forms* (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/ELIT/ELIT-LOC/>) for the Library of Congress (April 2013) and *Avenues of Access* (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/ELIT/mla2013/index.html>) at the Modern Language Association 2013 conference. She was the recipient of the 2013-4 Norma C. Fuentes and Gary M. Kirk Undergraduate Research Scholarship for iSci and awarded a "Gray" at the 2014 Student Undergraduate Life Renewed (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/projects/life-renewed/>), the interactive exhibit created for the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center at Coldwater Station. For *Pathfinders* she helped to organize the traversals and interviews and managed the lab in preparation of these events.

Technical Support

Greg Philbrook is the Instructional and Technical Support Specialist for the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver and a 2013 graduate of the program. He is co-author with Grigar on "Curlew (<http://dtc-wsuv.org/curlew>)" and has contributed to *Fort Vancouver Mobile*, an app developed by Brett Oppegaard and Grigar for the Fort Vancouver National Historical Site.

Design

Will Luers, a digital media artist and writer, has been on faculty in the Creative Media & Digital Culture program at Washington State University Vancouver since the fall of 2010. In 2008, he was invited to the university as an artist-in-residence to work with students on location-based media projects. At the CMDC, he teaches "Digital Publishing," "Multimedia Authoring", "Advanced Multimedia Authoring", and "Digital Storytelling." His current research

and artistic interest is in designing and publishing multimedia books as mobile apps. In general, his interests are in the proliferating forms and expressive possibilities of web-based and digital cinema, including database documentaries, multimedia hypertext, networked video, and locative storytelling. In 2010, he was awarded the The Vectors-NEH Summer Fellowship to work on his database documentary, *The Father Divine Project*. His video art has been selected for the Media Arts Show at the 2010 and 2008 ELO Conferences.

Sound and Video

Many other artists and professionals contributed to the production of the video, sound and other elements of *Pathfinders*. These include:

John Barber, PhD, Creative Media & Digital Culture, Washington State University
Vancouver: The sound work for the audio artists' statements for John McDaid, Judy Malloy, and Shelley Jackson. Barber also had a speaking role in John McDaid's artist interview.

Aaron Wintersong, formerly a CMDC student, now Web and Graphic Designer at Evergreen Public Schools: Videography for John McDaid's, Judy Malloy's, and Shelley Jackson's traversals and interviews.

Troy Wayrynen, formerly a CMDC student, now Pictures by Troy: Video Editing for Bly's traversals and interviews.

Skizz Cyzyk, from Zinniafilms (Baltimore, MD): Videography for Bly's traversals and interviews.

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Dene and Stuart at MITH

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