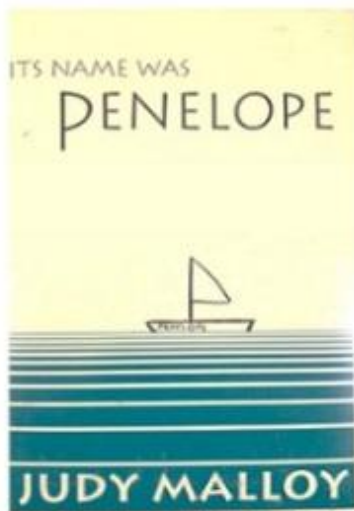


## Judy Malloy: Negotiating The Shifting Electronic Literature Environment

Presented at the Book launch for Dene Grigar and Mariusz Pisarski: *The Challenge of Born-Digital Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, March 22 with speakers Michael Joyce, Judy Malloy, and Stuart Moulthrop

```
10 REM story - program NARRABASE c1990 Judy Malloy
20 REM *Its name was Penelope* c1990 Judy Malloy
25 SCREEN 0
30 CLS
40 PLAY "mb"
50 SHADE$="o2 c8d8e8c8"
60 ISLAND$="o1 a8a8 o2 f8d8"
70 FINE$="o1 g8b8 o2 d8f8"
80 ROCK$="e8c8"
90 PLAY "t40 L2 o1 c32d32e32c32"
95 REM create the sea
100 GOSUB 1700
110 PLAY "t40 L2 o2 a32a32 o3 f32d32"
115 REM create the toy boat
```



Thank you, Dene, and Mariusz for bringing us all together and for all the work you have done in negotiating the shifting electronic literature environment. And thank you Mark Bernstein for your work that brought so many writers and artists together -- including Micheal, Stuart, and me.

The Yamaha Musical Instrument Guide observes, that “In the 18th century, bassoons with three or four keys were the most common. Then, in the latter half of the 18th century, bassoons equipped with 6 keys began to appear. However, the fingering varied depending on the manufacturer, and a standard design had yet

to be established.”

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, creators of electronic literature work in a similar fluctuating environment. Computer operating systems change and unexpectedly they no longer support our works; suddenly excellent authoring systems are no longer supported by their makers.

Because I came of age on the Internet working for Arts Wire , where we had to swiftly make radical changes as the internet environment evolved, I am accustomed to riding such waves, but because for many this is not the case, I believe that the environment, in which we as e-literature composers work , will eventually both stabilize contemporary electronic writing and support early works in the way that musical instruments now do. Dene continues to lead the way.

Meanwhile, here comes a summary of how its name was Penelope has floated on the waves of changing environments for electronic literature.

In 1988, after using BASIC to create a system of generative hypertext to tell Terminals (part 3 of Uncle Roger), I wanted to create another narrative in which memories came and went the way they do in real life. Thus – with some variation -- I used my Terminals authoring system to create the first draft of *its name was Penelope*.

```
900 REM random number sub
920 S = VAL (RIGHT$(TIME$,2)): RANDOMIZE S
930 X = RND * Z
940 X = X + Y
950 X = CINT(X)
952 IF X = U THEN GOTO 900
954 C = 1
955 U = X * C
960 V$ = RIGHT$(STR$(X),P)
990 RETURN|
```



*its name was Penelope*, Revealing Conversations, curated by Zlata Baum, Richmond Art Center, October 1989. The text for 66 core lexias is on painted and/or penciled panels on the wall. The work was installed with an IBM 286 computer

In 1989, I exhibited a running version of *Penelope* in the *Revealing Conversations* exhibition at the Richmond Art Center, along with Lynn Hershman's *Lorna* and Sonya Rapoport's *Shoe Field*. As if a mirror of my changing focus from the arts to the literary arts, mounted on the gallery wall -- behind the IBM 286 computer on which *Penelope* ran -- were 66 hand-painted or drawn panels of the text of core lexias.

```

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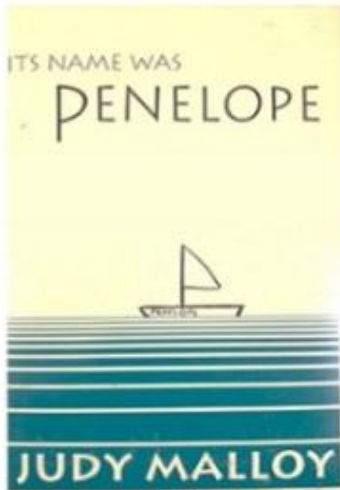
```



*the front and inside of the 1990 Narrabase Press version of its name was Penelope*

In 1990, After editing the text and tweaking my BASIC code, I created a packaged disc version that was distributed by Art Com.

One day, when I was in my studio tediously hand-making 8 copies for an order from an artists bookstore in Belgium, Mark Bernstein called me to propose that he create a re-visualized Eastgate *Penelope* with a StorySpace look and feel.



*Its name was Penelope, Eastgate, 1993.*

Eastgate was vitally important in bringing works of electronic literature to the forefront in a markedly stable environment. And I was very happy that my work was included in the Eastgate list.





Judy Malloy

its name was

# Penelope

"[Malloy is] one of the most fascinating hypertext stylists ... The experiment with randomization is bold and surprisingly effective. As a result, Penelope can be read through multiple times ... each reading creating overlapping, but never matching, impressions." -- Alvin Lu, *The Bay Guardian*

"Nicely evocative ... the effect is remarkably close to the subjective quirkiness of memory, of past moments floating unpredictably to the surface." -- Richard Grant

"In this work of computer fiction, Judy Malloy has created something very akin to the melange of snapshots most of us have shut away somewhere in a cabinet or a back shelf. ... in this work, the reader finds the same sort of casual, almost meaningless -- and thereby potentially most meaningful -- images of people meandering in a park, of tightly knotted skate laces, plates of food, or toy sailboats on the beach. Indeed, the visual imagery is strikingly vivid, as clear and lucid as one might expect from a visual artist, which Malloy is. ...

The narrator, Anne Mitchell, is an artist, a photographer, who offers us a tripartite

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**Mark Bernstein:** "We started to publish hypertexts after the second hypertext conference in 1989. In those days, everyone was desperate to know whether people would (or could) read hypertexts. Everyone in the field had built their own hypertext system; they wrote hypertexts themselves, assigned graduate students to perform evaluative studies, and recruited their own undergraduates to serve as test subjects. It was the very definition of a methodological problem, and it seemed a good solution might be to provide some well-known 'standard' hypertexts.

And so we published *afternoon*, and *Victory Garden*, and then *King Of Space* and *Quibbling* and *its name was Penelope*. "

Judy Malloy, "Interview with Mark Bernstein", *content | code | process*, August 2010



As is often the way, after a certain number of years, media archeologists became interested in early works in BASIC.

For my part, there was always something magical about the way memories emerged on the dark BASIC-powered computer screen. Thus, wanting to see this again, in 2016, I created a DOSBox version of *Penelope* in the Creative Code Studies Working Group. All this required was tinkering with my original BASIC program so it would run on the DOS emulator DOSBox. But on Critical Code Studies – as the old code appeared line by line, it was fun to do this with an audience.

```
390 GOSUB 1260
400 LOCATE 20,10 : INPUT B$
410 IF B$ = "1" THEN Y = 10 : Z = 53 : P = 2 : FILE$ = "shintro" :
W$ = "a gathering of souls" : GOSUB 770 : GOSUB 1040 : GOTO 470
420 IF B$ = "2" THEN Y = 200 : Z = 50 : P = 3 : FILE$ =
"isintro" : W$ = "that far off island" : GOSUB 770 : GOSUB 1040 :
GOTO 470
430 IF B$ = "3" THEN Y = 300 : Z = 45 : P = 3 : FILE$ =
"fiintro" : W$ = "Fine Work" : GOSUB 770 : GOSUB 1040 : GOTO 470
435 IF B$ = "4" THEN Y = 100 : Z = 41 : P = 3 : FILE$ =
"rointro" : W$ = "Rock and a Hard Place" : GOSUB 770 : GOSUB
1040 : GOTO 470
```



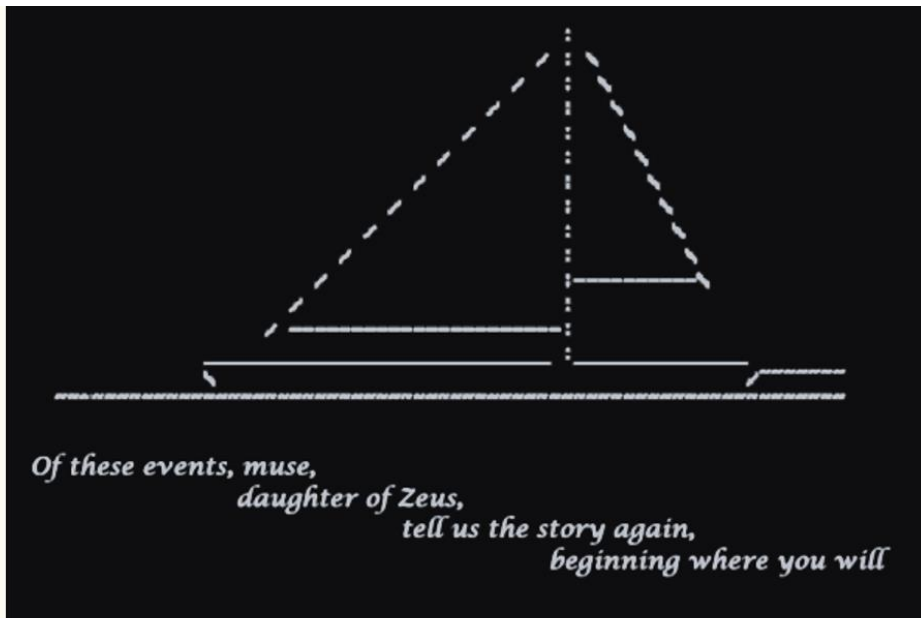
In 2023, using HTML/CSS/JavaScript. I created a scholars web version of the 1990 BASIC version.

I wanted a version that did not require the user to download, boot up and learn to use DOSBox, a version where at the will of the viewer, the narrative would play endlessly on the World Wide Web.

The web version is very close to the original BASIC version, and as Dene has pointed out, the versions of *Penelope* that model the original look and feel are different in look and feel from the Eastgate version. So, I think it is important to have access to both versions, just as different translations of *The Odyssey* gift readers different looks at the narrative – from which the woman-centered *Penelope* emerged.



In the late 1980's using the BASIC version or using the DOSbox BASIC version, *its name was Penelope* booted up with an animated boat graphic and opening sound. In the web version, this worked perfectly on my system using the browser I prefer -- that would be Firefox where settings changes are easy -- however, when viewers pulled the web version of Penelope up on other browsers, the sound did not play unless they had gone into a complex array of settings and selected auto play.



And the black background with white text seen on my system was seen on other browsers as white background with black text.

On some browsers, inserting CSS tags -- such as forced-color-adjust: none; to

fix this problem worked. On other browsers it did not work. Therefore, recently, I tweaked the web Penelope so that although it still looked different on different browsers. It was -- in most instances aesthetically good for my vision.

32 years ago!

Hypertext, Hypermedia: Defining a Fictional Form", Terence Harpold, chair, Michael Joyce, Carolyn Guyer, Judy Malloy, and Stuart Moulthrop, Modern Languages Association Convention NYC, December 29, 1992  
[http://lists.village.virginia.edu/lists\\_archive/Humanist/v06/0339.html](http://lists.village.virginia.edu/lists_archive/Humanist/v06/0339.html)

