

Judy Malloy:

Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace

Premiered at the 2025 Electronic Literature Organization Conference, York University, Toronto, Canada, July 11-13, 2025

Honorable Mention: The Robert Coover Prize for a 2025 Work of Electronic Literature.

MR = Modem Ready
TR = Terminal Ready
SD = Send Data
RD = Receive Data
OH = Off Hook
CD = Carrier Detect
AA = Auto Answer Mode



Judy Malloy



*Hunting and Gathering in
Cyberspace*

```
like a miner kneeling by fast moving water.....when all the
elegant code.....Mom's screensaver with the
shorebirds walking the beach..... Who are you
guest2?.....four trails led out of the
meadow.....the daily in and out flow of a billion
bytes,.....the system logged another
response.....instantly reproduced on multiple far flung
systems.....the system logged another
response.....as if on the same server.....
.....about this work
```

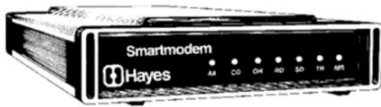
With dense poetry, *Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace* recreates the early 1990's experience of working online in the mountains. In a hypertextual and random access author-designed system, accompanied by the actual sound of the modem, the day to day real and online lives -- of those of us who lived and worked in rural environments -- emerge.

Wild animals appear on hilltops; beer cools in mountain streams; Visitors from Silicon Valley arrive; from verdant meadows, hypertextual trails materialize. And once again the sound of the modem echoes in woodland environments.

Navigation

1. The opening page is a Hayes Modem illustrated index in which phrases are randomly generated. From this variable index, click on a phrase:

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*Hunting and Gathering in
 Cyberspace*

a continual struggle between the real and the virtual
instantly reproduced on multiple far flung
 systems.....like a miner kneeling by fast moving
 water.....Just a minute, I have to logon
 first.....boxes of ancient 5 1/2 inch disks
the system logged another
 response.....put your posts in the proper places,
 please.....through the black earth of cyberspace to
 the surface of the system.....put your posts in the
 proper places, please.....the center of this former
 mining town.....
regenerate this indexabout this work

2. To the tune of the sound of the modem (make sure sound is set to automatic), a lexia appears. Usually, it contains clickable links.

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**The reader, like the narrator,
 is involved in a continual struggle
 between the real and the virtual --
 between stark black-backgrounded paths
 and bluegreen-backgrounded paths
 that follow beside clear mountain streams.
 into uncharted waters..... all the elegant code
 the sound of water not always obvious to the emperor..... it doesn't
 seem so long ago..... It was September..... in the gully below my path..... under the
 bourgainvilla..... while Mom and Dad lie sleeping..... The daily in and out flow
 of a billion bytes..... the smell of green grass..... warm stones by the river..... a
 red front door..... under the eaves of the porch..... inside, the text was
 black..... and then I'd wish for..... making love..... a black
 and white document..... we call our own..... a glass of
 champagne..... "What is the use then of all your
 traveling?"Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace**

3. The ensuing lexias that appear beneath my drawing are dense poems. Some are about the real life working environment indoors or outdoors. Some are about the online working environment. Some are quotes from

Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. These quiet screens are not introduced by the sound of the modem, and – except for the return to the index click ([Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace](#)) - they do not contain links.



*"The connections between one element of the story and another
were not always obvious to the emperor;
the objects could have various meanings;
a quiver filled with arrows could indicate the approach of war,
or an abundance of time,
or else an armorer's shop;
an hourglass could mean time passing or time past,
or sand, or a place where hourglasses are made,"*
Italo Calvino wrote in *Invisible Cities*.

..... into uncharted electronic waters..... when all the elegant code while the
grass replenished itself..... where tatoos are drawn on sailor's skin;..... as we march
along..... in song and story..... mining my memories..... and the deer and the buffalo play
..... come and sit by my side if you love me.... the smell of hops and honey.... The daily
in and out flow of a billion bytes..... the smell of green grass..... warm stones by the
river..... a red front door..... to the woodpile four times..... under the eves of
the porch..... inside, the text was black..... and then I'd wish
for..... making love..... a black and white document..... we call our
own..... mustard colored tiles..... a glass of champagne.....
"What is the use then of all your traveling?" **Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace**



Click

[*Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace*](#)

to run or rerun this work

Background Note:

In 1993, when I initially conceived this dense poetic electronic manuscript, in addition to working for the Telluride InfoZone and Ideas Festival, I was an artist in residence in an Arizona

State Summer MFA Program at Deep Creek School in Telluride, a place where the town and the school itself were once sites of gold and silver mining. It was an era when the lives of those of us -- who worked virtually and thus spent days and nights online -- were magical.

For example, at Deep Creek -- to introduce art students to writing about their work online -- I was housed in a hilltop cabin. To connect my system, MFA students strung cables across the trees and down the hill to the computers in the main building. In town, Festival participants set up their platforms in the basement of the Sheridan Opera House, where there were many monitors, many modems, and among other Community Networking systems, there was a Minitel terminal, demos of Community Memory, of MUDS, of The Well, of the Electronic Café, and of the Montana-based Big Sky Telegraph project. And, Randy Ross (Ponca) demoed Native Networks.

In 2024-2025, exploring how when in the later 1990's Silicon Valley mined the internet -- and in contrast, rural sites of Internet-based information only briefly flourished -- I mined the data in my 1996 *The Roar of Destiny*, until with 40 lexias (from 232 lexias in *The Roar of Destiny*), in poetic semi-fictional narrative, *Hunting and Gathering in Cyberspace* re-created the experience of working online in rural environments in the early years of cyberspace.

In this archeological process, I created a new structure, new algorithms, and new images, until -- emerging from a poetic array of competing information, again the sound of the then ubiquitous Hayes modem echoes in the recollected environment.

Judy Malloy