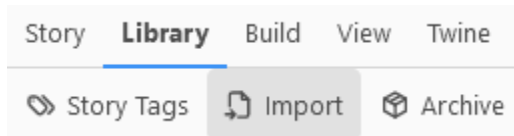


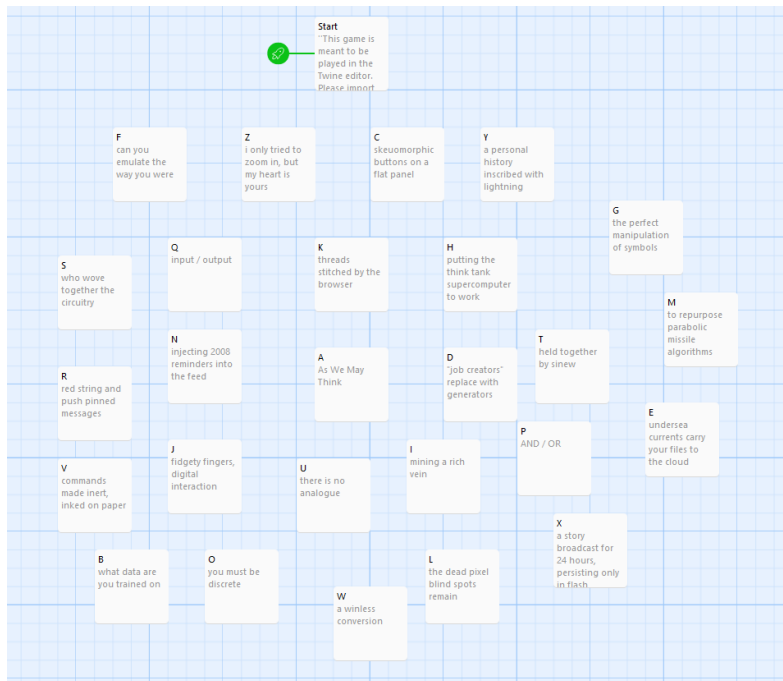
# Throughlines: An (Un)linked Hypertext Poem

## Instructions

“Throughlines” is a poem read in the Twine Editor. To engage with it, import the attached Throughlines.html as a story. The “Import” option is inside the “Library” tab:



You will see some passages. The “Start” passage includes a short description of the piece and brief instructions. Passages A-Z are pre-written lines of poetry.



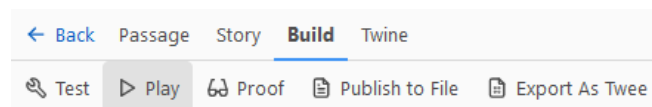
You can create links between these lines using the following syntax:

[[Words to click on->Destination passage]]

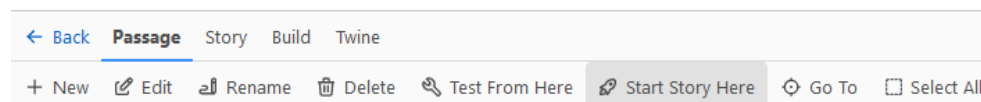
For example, to create a link between the word “emulate” in passage C and passage D, you would wrap the word “emulate” like so:

[[emulate->D]]

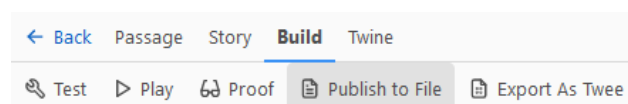
You can see your poem at any time using the “Play” button under the “Build” tab.



You can change the starting passage by selecting the passage of your choice and clicking “Start Story Here”.



When you are finished, export your poem as a .html file using the “Publish to Story” option under the “Build” tab:



## Artist Statement

"Throughlines: An (Un)Linked Hypertext Poem" is a poem and a tool for poem creation. It is a meditation on human / computer cognition and materiality. The poem's text explores these ideas using language that both evokes the supposed ephemerality and the inextricable materiality of the digital. Leveraging the affordances of the Twine Editor, it invites the reader to not only select between links but to establish links themselves. Twine projects can be opened in the browser for reading or playing but also can be imported into the editor itself. The reader draws the links between pre-written lines of poetry, creating an associative poem that resonates with the work of Vannevar Bush and N. Katherine Hayles through both its text and its links.

In Vannevar Bush's 1945 "As We May Think," he envisions new ways of engaging with text and data. He proposes a computer called the "memex" to better correlate machine processes with human thought. For Bush, the materiality of information is an impediment to access. The print document is isolated from other information. "The human mind does not work that way. It operates by association" (Bush 44). His vision resembles modern hypertextual systems. But can equivalences be drawn between machine processes and human cognition? Such supposed affinities are explored by N. Katherine Hayles in her history of cybernetic thought, *How We Became Posthuman*. But Hayles rejects the abstraction of information and cognition from their material substrates. "[I]nformation is never disembodied, ... messages don't flow by themselves" (Hayles 83). The poem's pre-written language approaches these topics from multiple angles, but its potential meanings multiply through the introduction of links.

Hypertext fiction created with tools like Twine allow readers to navigate a system of associative links, but for Bush it was the linking process that was most important. The memex user would establish links between documents, "exactly as though the physical items had been gathered together from widely separated sources and bound together to form a new book" (Bush 45). In "Throughlines," the reader directs the flows of information, establishing evocative connections between words and thoughts. Frameworks like choice poetics (Mawhorter et al. 2014) illustrate how links convey meaning by connecting origin and destination. By granting the reader control of their reader's available options and the associated outcomes, "Throughlines" allows them to express their own connections between the poem's ideas. The result is a poem that explores cognition and materiality through both text and link structure.

## Works Cited

- Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." *The New Media Reader*, by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, MIT Press, 2003, pp. 37–47.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Mawhorter, Peter, et al. "Towards a Theory of Choice Poetics." *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games*, Society for the Advancement of the Science of Digital Games, 2014.