



The Glitch Potential:
Procedural Forms, the Poem Hack and New Media Writing

BRILLIANT VIBRATING INTERFACE, SPAM Press
Funded by the Edwin Morgan Trust's Second Life Award

6-8pm, 1st December 2022 (on ZOOM)
with Kirsty Dunlop

About this workshop:

Where lies the potential in glitching and what happens when we write directly into our everyday digital interfaces? In this workshop, we'll be diving straight into New Media Writing, to provide you with the tools and ideas to craft your own digital poetics and hybrid works (including hypertext forms, game writing, and social media poetics). If, as Legacy Russell claims 'This glitch is a correction to the "machine", and, in turn, a positive departure', how might we use poetics and alternative ways to interact with Web 2.0, as a site of queer experimentation and possibility? Using procedural forms, and the notion of the poem as a 'hacking' device, we'll write both with and into the digital to create new interactions and subversions, to glitch and perform a queer brilliant vibrating interface. We'll also look at several hybrid New Media works and consider the possibilities of collaborations across disciplines, in tandem with queer theory and theories of the glitch. No coding experience is required for this workshop and it is open to all abilities.

The workshop will be conducted over ZOOM and you will require a digital device and internet access. **Prior to the workshop, please download the digital writing tool Twine - it is free to download at <https://twinery.org/>.**



About SPAM:

It is time for poetry to enter the post-internet age, and SPAM Press wishes to take upon its shoulder the weight of this herculean enterprise. Operating as a pamphlet press, zine, online magazine, literary journal, DIY organiser and podcast, SPAM watches highbrow theory and pop culture make love in and against the oscillating stratospheres of late capitalism, while exploring literary weirdness, trash aesthetics and experimental critiques of our thoroughly mediated condition.

Website: spamzine.co.uk // Twitter: @spamzine

Email: spamzine.editors@gmail.com

About Brilliant Vibrating Interface:

Taking our cue from Edwin Morgan's assertion that 'Poetry is a brilliant vibrating interface between the human and the non-human', this project traces the liquid pixels, folds and veils of various kinds of interface: from language to the ever-present digital screens of our lives. Uniting several concerns of Morgan's own writing – queerness, experiment, hybridity and technology – Brilliant Vibrating Interface offers a dynamic and multiplatform series of creative outputs and community events based online and in Glasgow. We will investigate, publish and spark conversation around queer literary experiments in the digital age; in turn, expanding the canon to highlight the work of younger, emergent writers. With emphasis on works which engage explicitly, in form and content, with the internet, we will host a series of podcasts, interviews and workshops, leading up to a book-length anthology publication and digital exhibition.

Brilliant Vibrating Interface highlights the continual influence and relevance of Morgan's work as a proto-internet poet (who wrote code, computational and concrete poems informed by machines) by placing his legacy in direct conversation with digitally native ('post-internet') writers and artists – from Morgan's instamatics to the Instagram poetry of today. At the heart of this project, we share Morgan's passion for poetry in dialogue with the visual, with technology, everyday life, sexuality and gender. Expect workshops on glitch poetry, interfaces, the queer poetics of trash, multimedia, collage and procedural forms. Our research and interview phase will explore the media, process and tools behind post-internet poetry as well as its cultural contexts, offering insights into how and why poets are engaging with various technologies in their work. Together we'll dream more abundant, queer and playful digital worlds through poetry. Envision the virtual world of Second Life colliding with Morgan's 1968 collection *The Second Life*: that's our vibe!

This project is kindly funded by the Edwin Morgan Trust's [The Second Life Award](#). More information about the project can be found at spamzine.co.uk/brilliant-vibrating-interface.

Project leaders:

- Maria Sledmere
- Kirsty Dunlop
- Loll Jung
- Alice Hill-Woods



About the facilitator:

Kirsty Dunlop is a multimedia writer, editor, researcher and musician. She is working towards a DFA in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow, exploring the possibilities of hybrid New Media writing and glitchful experiments through her concept of 'Emergent Essaying'. She is a tutor in Creative Writing and English Literature at the University of Glasgow, regularly leads workshops and guest lectures on digital hybrid forms, and is a freelance Games Developer. She is Senior Editor at SPAM Press and recent publications include the collaborative pamphlet *Soft Friction* (Mermaid Motel, 2021) and multimedia research in *ICIDS 2021* (Springer).

Twitter: [@kirsty_jean](https://twitter.com/kirsty_jean)

Work Cited and Suggested Materials:

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- Anna Anthropy, 'Queers in Love At The End of the World' (2013).
- Donna Haraway, 'The Cyborg Manifesto' (2016).
- Edwin Morgan, 'emergent poems', *National Poetry Library* (1967).
- Elizabeth Sampat, *Empathy Engines: Design Games That Are Personal, Political And Profound* (2017).
- Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Creative Failure* (2011).
- J.R Carpenter, 'Translation, transmutation, transmediation and transmission in TRANS.MISSION [A. DIALOGUE]' (2012).
- Kirsty Dunlop, 'Emergent Gameplay, Emergent Essaying', *Interactive Storytelling*, pp. 193-202 (2021).
- Lauren Berlant, 'The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times*', *Environment and Planning*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 393-419 (2016).
- Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism* (2020).
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- Matthew Sweet and Tom McCarthy, 'The Glitch', *BBC Radio 3*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000zmp8> [Accessed 25/11/22] (2021).
- Mau Baiocco, '(SPAM Cuts) "The Noughties" by Dom Hale', *SPAM Plaza* (2020)
- N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008).
- Nathan Allen Jones, *Glitch Poetics* (2022).
- Neil Hennessy, 'Puddle' (1999).
- Rae Phillips-Smith, '#hyperbole#', *SPAM003* (2021)
- Rosa Menkman, 'Glitch Studies Manifesto' (2010).
- Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology', *GLQ A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 12, pp. 543-574 (2006).
- Shelley Jackson, 'my body – a Wunderkammer', *Electronic Literature Collection* (2006;1997).
- Shelley Jackson, 'snow' (ongoing).
- Zoe Quinn, Patrick Lindsey, Isaac Schankler, 'Depression Quest' (2013).

Context on Electronic Literature and Poetics, entangled with queer theories

QUEERING POETICS IN DIGITAL INTERFACES - some connections/beginnings

MULTIPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK!

Can we consider writing into our everyday digital interfaces as an intrinsically queer practice? What does it even mean to queer the internet? How does this connect to the act of glitching? What new 'bodies' of work might we create? How can the hybridity of this work - in both media and form - disrupt the capitalist hierarchies of Web 2.0? What does it mean to re-orientate our understanding and means of interacting with the digital through poetics (extending from poems to hybrid multi-media work?) How does this transfer to our understanding of ourselves and how we orientate? How can writing into the digital complicate the relationship between reader/author, player/designer? How can it complicate our own ideas about who creates multi-media work and blur boundaries between different disciplines? How does writing into the digital encourage failure and how does the idea of the 'glitch' fit into this? What new worlds can we create and enact in this digital environment, both on the screen and on the page? How does this tie into the queer spaces that have already been formed across the internet? And how can we tie all of this back to queer poetics that were proto-technology?!

SOME STARTING POINTS:

'Poetry is the brilliant vibrating interface between the human and the non-human.'

- **Edwin Morgan**

'So if phenomenology is to attend to the background, it might do so by giving an account of the conditions of emergence for something, which would not necessarily be available in how that thing presents itself to consciousness, which is after all the presentation of a side. If we do not see (but intend) the behind of the object, we might also not see (but intend) its background in this temporal sense. To see what the "natural attitude" has in its sight, we need to face an object's background, redefined as not only the conditions for the emergence of the object (we might ask: how did it arrive?) but also the act of perceiving the object, which depends on the arrival of the body that perceives.'

- **Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology' (2006)**

'In this discussion, the term "translation" is situated within a string of variables pertaining to the word *trans*:- translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission. Translated into JavaScript, this string of variables could be written as follows: "var trans=['lation', 'mutation', 'mediation', 'mission']."

The word *trans*- is a prefix meaning across, beyond, or through. This prefix may be used in combination with an element of origin: transcontinental, transatlantic. This prefix may be used to imply a state of change: transmit, transfer, transport, translate. And, somewhat more abstractly, this prefix may be used to imply a poetics of coming and going. The word "transverse" applies the prefix *trans*- to the Latin *versus*, meaning a turning. Every verse has a re-verse, which is to say, verse has direction. In Greek verse, *Strophe* sets out from east to west across the stage. *Antistrophe* replies from west to east. Neither voice is in either place. Both are calling: across, beyond, through.'

- **J.R. Carpenter, 'Translation, transmutation, transmediation and transmission in TRANS.MISSION [A. DIALOGUE]' (2012)**

'Queerness offers the promise of failure as a way of life...but it is up to us whether we choose to make good on that promise in a way that makes a detour around the usual markers of accomplishment and satisfaction.'

- **Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011)**

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. In the traditions of “Western” science and politics—the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other—the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination. This essay is an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction. It is also an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end. The cyborg incarnation is outside salvation history. Nor does it mark time on an oedipal calendar, attempt-

- **Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ (2016)**

WHAT IS THE GLITCH? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GLITCH?!

'The written word of the post-digital age is infected, perhaps compromised, perhaps augmented, by the temporalities and structures of computational code [...]. Glitch poetics serves as a digital-age metaphor for a phenomenon that preceded the digital – the verbal corruption – which now strangely reveals something of a pervasive digital quality'.

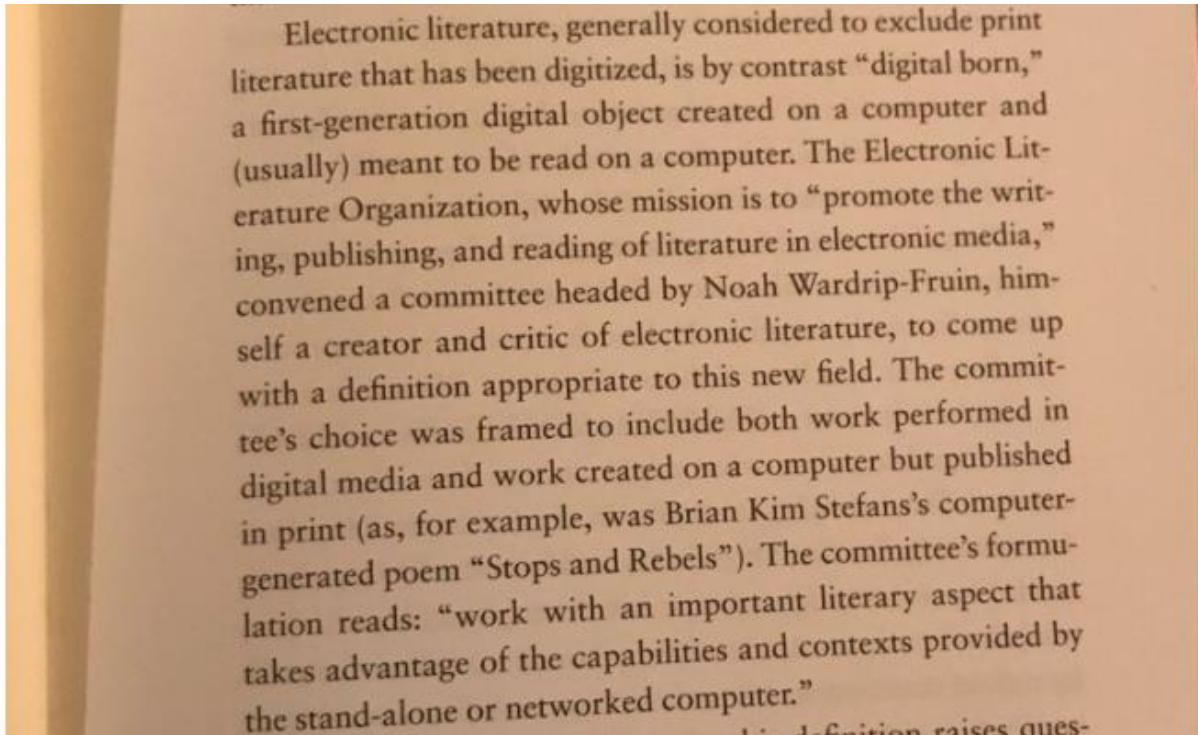
- **Nathan Allen Jones, *Glitch Poetics* (2022)**

'As glitch feminists, this is our politic: we refuse to be hewn to the hegemonic line of a binary body. **This calculated failure prompts the violent socio-cultural machine to hiccup, sigh, shudder, buffer. We want a new framework and for this framework, we want new skin. The digital world provides a potential space where this can play out.** Through the digital, we make new worlds and dare to modify our own. Through the digital, the body 'in glitch' finds its genesis. Embracing the glitch is therefore a participatory action that challenges the status quo. It creates a homeland for those traversing the complex channels of gender's diaspora. The glitch is for those selves joyfully immersed in the in-between, those who have traveled away from their assigned site of gendered origin. The ongoing presence of the glitch generates a welcome and protected space in which to innovate and experiment. Glitch feminism demands an occupation of the digital as a means of world-building. It allows us to seize the opportunity to generate new ideas and resources for the ongoing (r)evolution of bodies that can inevitably move and shift faster than AFK mores or the societies that produce them under which we are forced to operate offline.'

'Glitch is something that extends beyond the most literal technological mechanics: it helps us to celebrate failure as a generative force, a new way to take on the world.'

- **Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism* (2020)- for more info see <https://www.legacyrussell.com/GLITCHFEMINISM>**

NEW MEDIA WRITING - DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES



- **N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008)**

You'll see that Hayles also refers to the Electronic Literature Organisation, which began in the 90s as a space to promote both literature created on a computer or through code and literature generated by a computer. The ELO have a brilliant website and publish collections of really varied, exciting electronic pieces: <https://eliterature.org/>.

EXAMPLES OF NEW MEDIA WRITING:

- Interactive Fiction
- Hypertext
- E-poetry
- Bots
- Social Media Poetics
- AI collaborations
- Poetry Generators
- Glitch Art/Post-internet art
- Sound work and film work online

THE QUEERING OF NEW MEDIA WRITING AND WHO GETS TO WRITE NEW MEDIA WORKS

Who has access to writing into digital interfaces? Who is kept out? How can open access tools such as Twine act as a radical movement allowing more voices, particularly those from within marginalised communities, to be heard? What power can be re-claimed by writing into these digital (and often exclusive) spaces? What are alternative hybrid modes of using these tools?

The world of video game design has long been dominated by men – Anna Anthropy, perhaps, knows this better than anyone.

Anthropy, a transgender freelance game designer, is a vocal advocate of accessibility for “women, people of color, and queer and trans folk” in her field. She argues that the demands of the video game industry and gaming culture are to blame for disproportionately excluding these marginalized groups.

Her 2013 keynote speech “*Difference, Games and Class*” explores this exclusion, citing the obstacles that tend to affect young transgender adults in particular: poverty, homelessness, and unemployment, to name a few.

“

You think a person in that situation can shell out a hundred dollars for the “Professional” version of Game Maker? The \$260 required to participate in the IGF [Independent Games Festival]? Does that person have the time to commit to learning Python? Does that mean this person isn’t “serious” about game development? Does that mean this person doesn’t have anything valuable to tell us about play, about the human condition?

Anthropy had to overcome many of these same barriers while developing *Dys4ia*, a minimalistic art game chronicling her experiences with hormone replacement therapy. *Dys4ia* is an unconventional and heavily narrative-driven game that guides the player through a series of simple yet symbolic tasks – navigating a women’s restroom, bouncing negative comments off a shield, literally jumping through hoops to find a clinic. All of these virtual tasks represent the social, medical, and emotional struggles that accompanied Anthropy’s transition in real life.

- **Anna Anthropy <https://femmagazine.com/anna-anthropy-dys4ia-and-re-defining-the-indie-game/> (2014)**

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE NEW MEDIA WORKS:

HYPERTEXT

At one point, studying the world for signs, I pretended that I could read the future in the white clouds rising slowly behind the pink panes. But, like all systems of augury I invented myself, there was a flavor of phony about it.

In my tumbling class at the Y I grabbed quick looks at the little girls' tiny nails daubed pink and wondered at [how different their lives were from mine](#). My nails were chewed ragged and rimmed with dirt. Sometimes I colored them black with pencil when I was bored in class. More recherche were the fake fingernails I snipped for myself out of fruit leather at lunchtime and stuck on with spit, to my friends' disgust. [I privately thought they looked glamorous](#).

When I was five, I slit open the fourth finger on my right hand with a razor blade my babysitter, Miss Mudd, had left lying around. I cut through my fingernail right up to my first knuckle, where the scar dwindles to a pale line, and my fingernail has a point at the apex of its arch like certain cathedral windows - the style is called ogee - and has a ridge bisecting it which at the nail end is a weak spot where the nail tends to split. It is an arcane detail, a devil's mark, neither beautiful nor ugly, but it reminds me of myself, like [the scar on my upper lip](#).



My sister sucked her thumb, but I chewed my nails. When I was five or six, everyone in my class were given a daily piece of fruit at school and ate it in unison. Bananas and apples were fine with me, but oranges made my heart sink. I dug what was left of my nails into the peel. A thick, sticky scum collected under my nails. [The raw skin under my nails and my ragged cuticles started stinging](#). We had to rise from our desks and leave the room in single file past a washroom where, if I was lucky and the monitor was kind, I could wash my hands. If not, I sat through prayers with burning fingers, desperate to be done. Since then, I hate to have anything sticky or slimy on my hands: tree sap, Crisco, what slugs exude.

- Shelley Jackson, *'my body': a Wunderkammer* (ELO Collection, 2006; 1997):

https://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/jackson_my_body_a_wunderkammer.html

E-POETRY

Alongside prose, there was also the growth of poetry in the electronic sphere. There's a great website called 'I Love E-Poetry' with loads of examples alongside numerous essays/reviews on the topic.

- [Generative poetry](#) is produced by programming algorithms and drawing from corpora to create poetic lines. This is the oldest e-poetic genre and remains relevant today through e-literary genres like the [bot](#).
- [Code poetry](#) is written for a dual audience: computer and human readers.
- [Visual digital poetry](#) arises from Visual, Concrete, and Lettrist poetic traditions and is extended by
- [Kinetic poetry](#), which uses the computer's ability to display animation and changing information over time.
- [Multimedia poetry](#) incorporates audio, video, images, text, and other modes of communication in its strategies.
- [Interactive poetry](#) incorporates input from the reader in the e-poem's expressive strategies.
- [Hypertext poetry](#) uses nodes and links to structure the poem into spaces for the reader to explore.

-- Leonardo Flores, *What is E-Poetry?* (2015): <http://ilovepoetry.org/?p=11968>

Puddle

by Neil Hennessey



- Early example of Visual digital poem/Kinetic e-poetry
- Neil Hennessey, *Puddle* (1999):
<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/eazines/deluxe/two/puddle.html>

INTERACTIVE FICTION

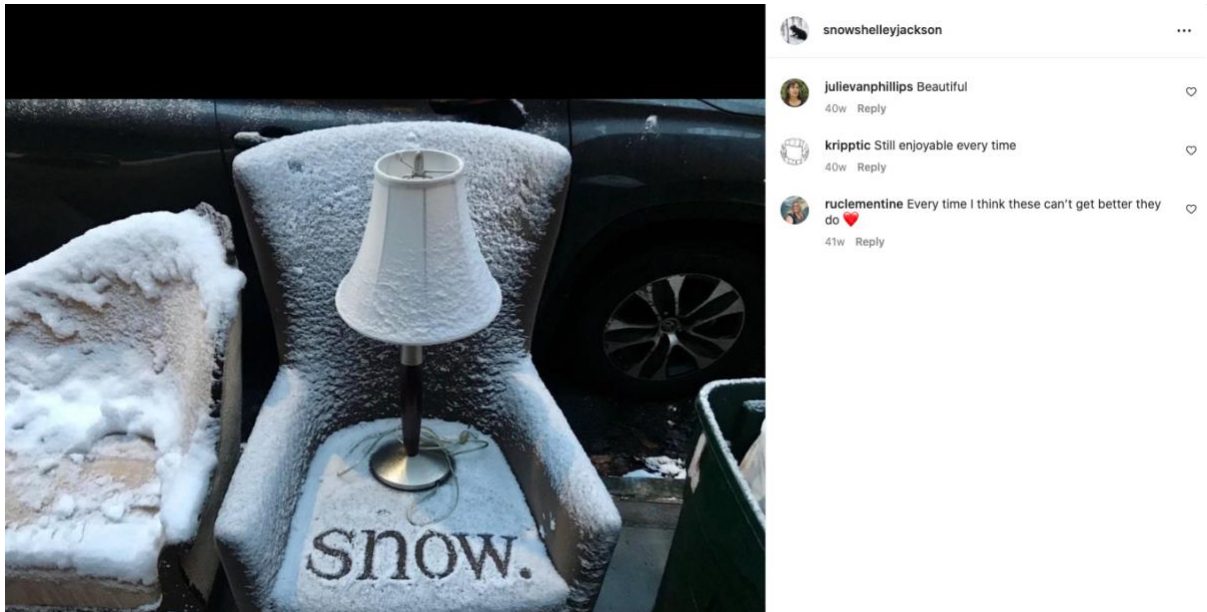
<https://w.itch.io/end-of-the-world>

- Anna Antrophy 'Queers in Love At The End of the World' - more can be found at <https://w.itch.io/>

<http://www.depressionquest.com/dqfinal.html>

- Zoe Quinn, Patrick Lindsey, Isaac Schankler

SOCIAL MEDIA POETICS



- Shelley Jackson, *Snow*, ongoing
<https://www.instagram.com/snowshelleyjackson/?hl=en>

GLITCH POETICS

```
#hyperbole#  
  
sonnet < - code(English_language, British = TRUE)  
scale_y_continuous(iamb metre)  
scale_x_continuous(pentameter)  
structure = octave(abba x 2)  
length_poem("sonnet", lines = (7 x 2))  
sonnet < - filter(petrarchan, 10_letter)  
view(sonnet_Shakespearean, this = ?better)  
rhyme_scheme < - octave("rhyme" = continuous = TRUE)  
  
sonnet < - read_volta(shift("subject", "logic"))  
poem < - mutate("octave", "sestet", agree)  
fill_sestet(Roman_alphabet = classic)  
sestet_structure < - sestet(rhyme, cde)  
arrange(alliteration > archaic)  
sonnet < - final_line(read("hyperbole"))
```

Rae Phillips Smith, '#hyperbole?', *SPAM003*

WRITING EXERCISE 1: Be the Poem Generator

Part 1: Write a poem that is deliberately 'glitched' - you can use source code (see code in the poem above in SPAM 003 for inspiration). What does it mean to you to write a poem that is glitched? What hierarchies of structure at the level of syntax and expectation on the page might we include? How can you include multiple choice, punctuation, space on the page, to disrupt? What happens when we include links that don't work? Code that can't be activated?

Part 2: Put parts of your poem through a poem generator and see what you produce (many of these will produce *bad* poems! poems that fail! ... but perhaps are somehow alluring!) - some classic open poem generators can be found here or you can google your own!

<https://www.poem-generator.org.uk/>

<https://sites.research.google/versebyverse/>

Part 3: Put some key words from your poem into the chat box - once everyone has inserted their words, pick and choose a few from across the contributions and write a new poem or hybrid piece of writing - don't overthink! At this moment, the group and you, as the writer, are the poem generators.

WRITING EXERCISE 2: Collaborative social media poetics

Part 1: Use a poet bot generator to write a poem - either continue on from one of the prompts, or use only lines generated from the poet bot, creating a procedural poetics in collaboration.

Examples: <https://twitter.com/sapphobot>, <https://twitter.com/queerlitbot>, <https://twitter.com/whatsylviaate>

Part 2: I have set up a collaborative Twitter - beginning with a quotation from Sappho bot - during the course of the first exercise, please write on from the previous submission **on this Google Doc below** and I will update in real time on the Twitter account which can be found here: <https://twitter.com/glitchvibrating>. I will alert whoever is next through the Google Chat. Write your line in conjunction with what has come before, in any way you interpret it. Write in this Google Doc and I will upload onto the Twitter.

WRITING EXERCISE 3: Twining memory and desire

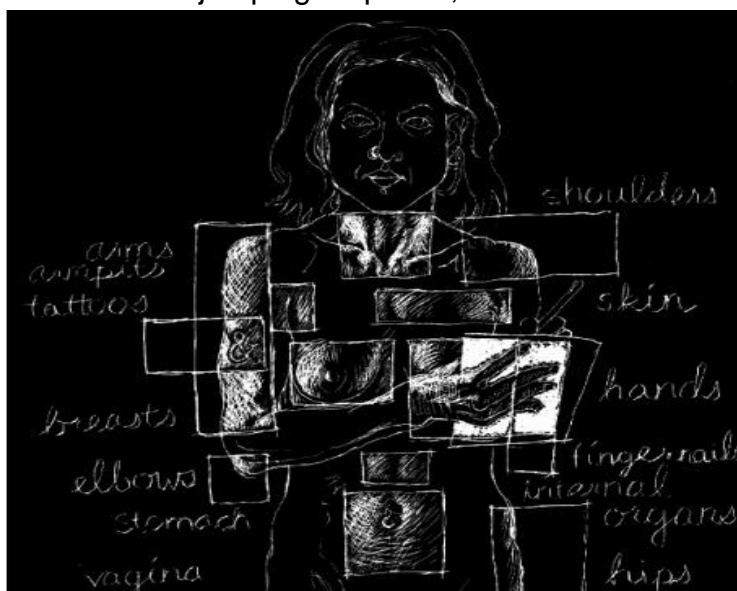
PART 1: Hyper-connections

This exercise is intended to think through how we might make hyperconnections with specific words and phrases, creating our own forms of internal logic in writing. Taking inspiration from Shelley Jackson's 'my body' we are going to write into memory and specifically how it entwines with our relationship to technology.

Take a vivid memory you have and write a few sentences about it. **Google one of the words** in your paragraph and take found text from the internet, and copy and paste as much of this as you like to make the following paragraph. Then, **use a word or phrase from that piece of found text and highlight it, using this as the basis to construct your next paragraph**, which could take the form of another interlinking memory. Move back and forth between your own words and found text as much as you like and see where this leads you. A kind of collaboration between yourself and Web 2.0.

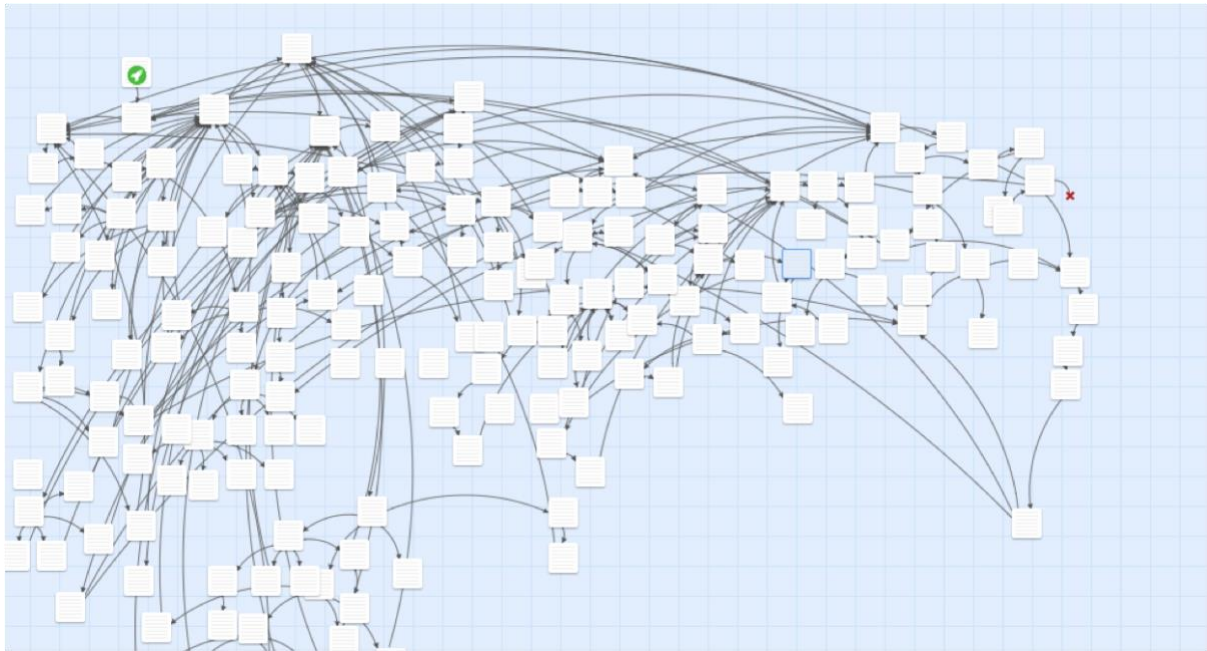
Alternatively, write about a fictional memory or a fictional body – taking inspiration – be it in a virtual space, or a physical space – you can combine all of these.

These are all jumping off points, rather than set ideas!



Screenshot from 'my body – a Wunderkammer' – Shelley Jackson

PART 2: Transcribe into Twine



Screenshot from Kirsty Dunlop's Twine work

It is very easy to begin writing your own hypertexts into Twine. Follow along with me as I screenshare and perhaps translate some of the writing you have just done with the word links you constructed into a connective piece as a starting point. You can begin seeing these links as live connections!

Now begin adding in choice! Think about how much choice you want, do you want to have several words highlighted per passage like Shelley Jackson's hypertext piece or lead up to this with only a few links per section? We'll discuss the benefits and disadvantages after sharing.

We're going to write into this for 20 minutes. At this stage it is simply a case of trying out connecting a non-linear hyperlinked narrative, and after the workshop you can add in more complex game techniques if you would like.

For full guide of Twine techniques, if you are unable to attend the workshop, see here: <https://twinery.org/wiki/twine2:guide>.