



Abstract

Dispatches From Planet Nowhere explores how using the tools of fiction can aid and expand User Research and Product Design in the field of Industrial Design. The thesis asks the fundamental question of how imagining other worlds can teach us about our own. Aaron's belief is that using the lens of fiction, and especially science fiction and fantasy, can give us novel and unique insights into what people hope, fear, and dream about the future. Drawing on the fields of Speculative Design and Future Studies Aaron proposes a new method for gathering user data, and a participatory model for understanding the future we want to build. The thesis book is a collection of writings on key aspects of the process including personal narrative, collaborative writing, and group world building. Finally, the book includes an archive of the stories created in the world building workshops.

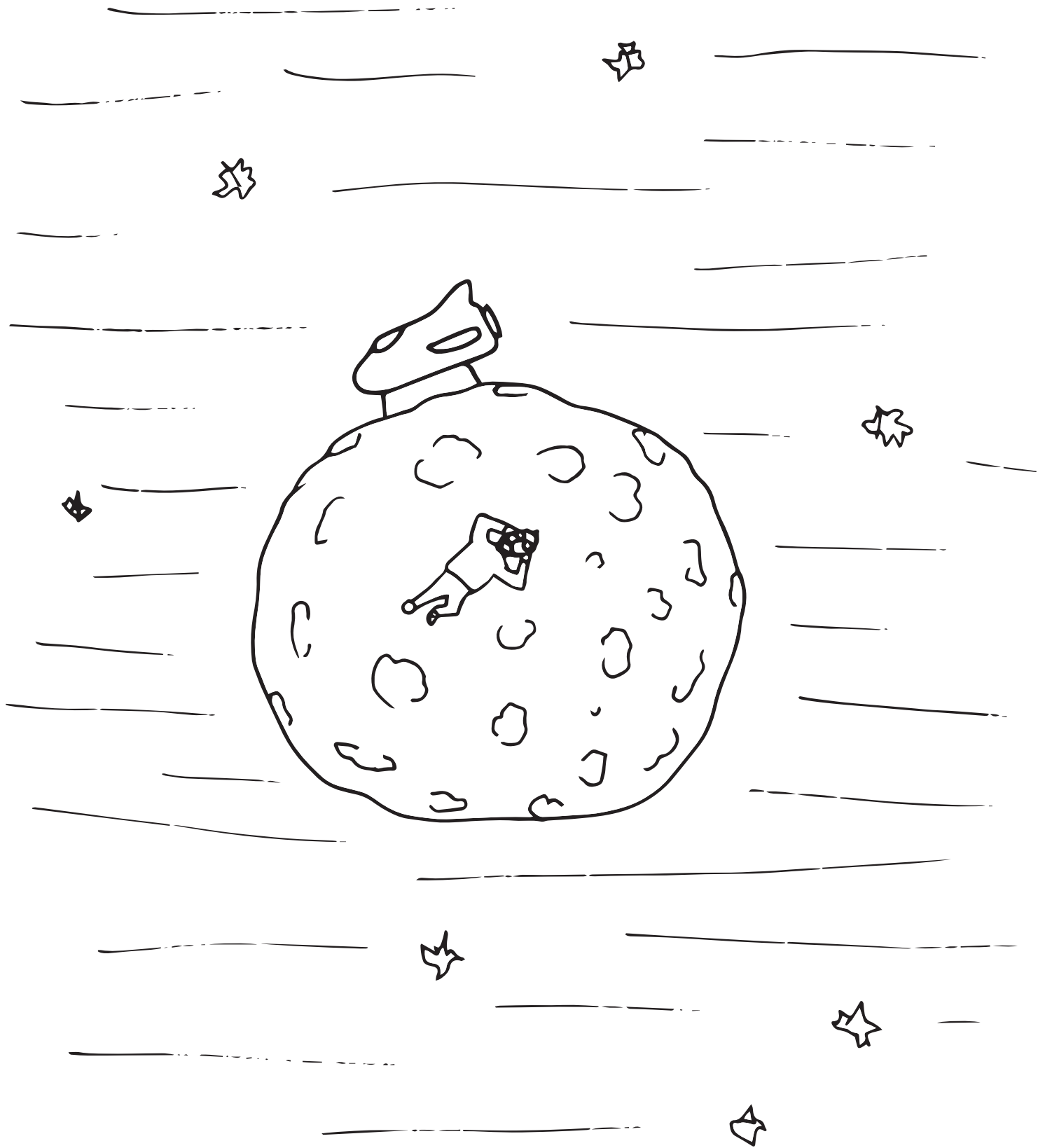
DISPATCHES FROM PLANET NOWHERE

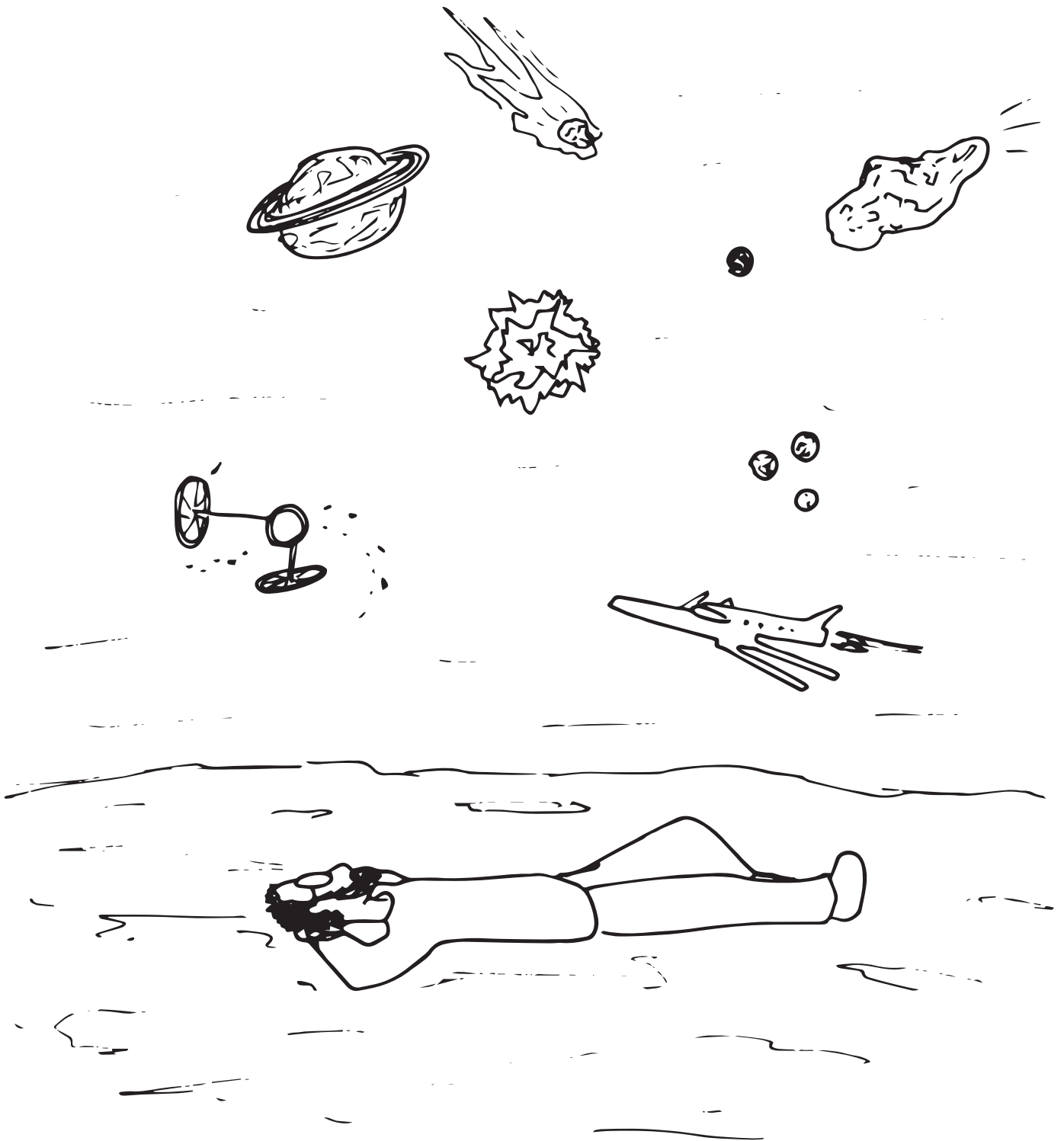
Aaron Field Simmons

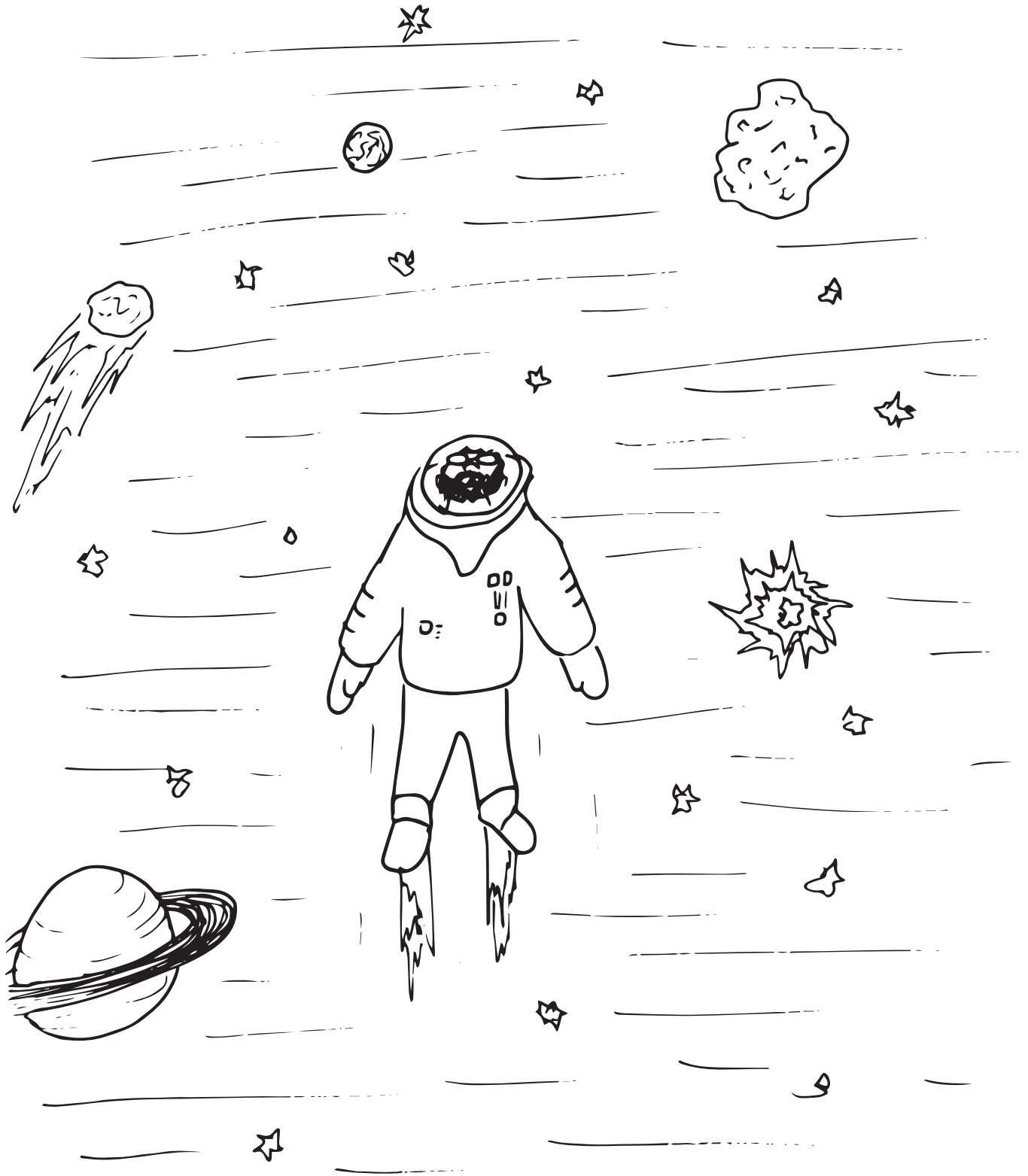
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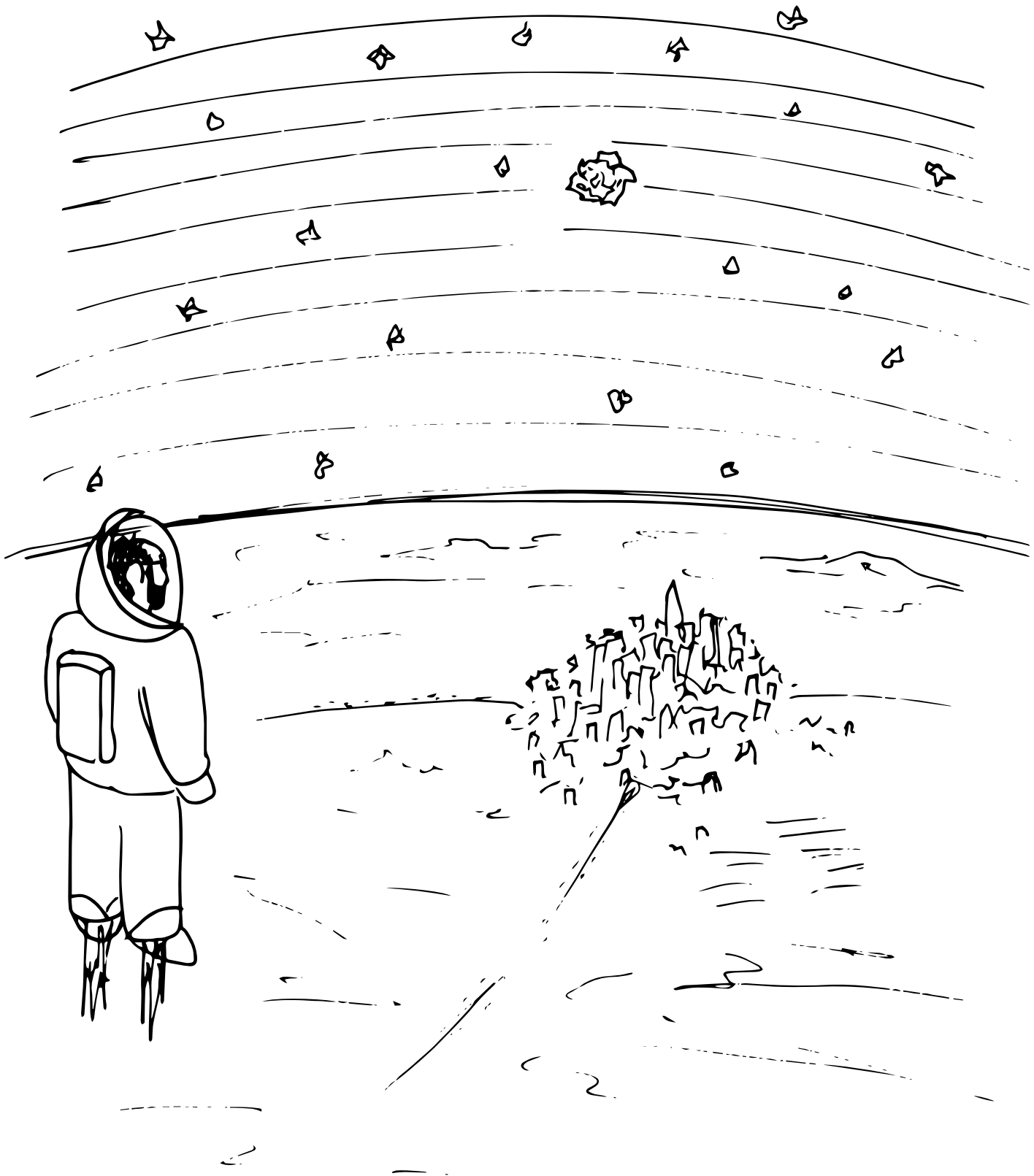
DISPATCHES FROM PLANET NOWHERE

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Introduction

In his essay “Just Design,” Cameron Tonkinwise explains that “Design makes futures.”¹ For him, this means that design, more specifically industrial design, creates the tangible future world. Our activities from iterating, ideating, to prototyping, are all futuring activities that help us build a preferable designed future. This gives us great power as designers over what the future will be. As a human centered designer I believe that having this power over the future means that we should involve others in that futures creation and direction. The foundational futurist Jim Dator states in his laws of futuring that ““The future” cannot be “predicted,” but “preferred futures” can and should be envisioned, invented, implemented, continuously evaluated, revised, and re-envisioned.”² In this quote Jim Dator points to the iterating process in future studies that is closely related to user research in design. Both focus on building a deep picture of our users lives, and how they hope their lives will change evolve for the better.

My belief is that imagining other worlds through fiction is a perfect way to understand our user’s hopes, fears, and dreams for the future. In my thesis I explored how the tools of fiction can be integrated into design user research, and how those tools yield unique insights. I did this through leading a series of writing workshops with over sixty people that generated over a hundred unique stories. This process confirmed my assumption that rich qualitative user data can be drawn from collaboratively built fictional worlds, and that those worlds offer an

1 Cameron Tonkinwise, “Just Design,” Medium, August 21, 2015.

2 Jim Dator, What Futures Studies Is, And Is Not (Hawaii: Futures Studies Department, 2014).

exciting and novel inspirational base for designers.

In the following chapters I explain how I came to these conclusions through meditations on process, analysis of the narrative structure of my workshop, and a series of frameworks that help format the design process. The book finishes with a collection of selected stories from the workshops. This book is not a how-to-guide on running fiction based design workshops, but rather a collection of thoughts on my process as a designer working in this space. Throughout the work I try to focus on how fiction, design, and futures intersect, and how the specific context of the world I am working on has a relationship to the present day. In this book I focus on the world of Aurora City that is placed on Mars in the year 2169. Although this is a specific world, the principles underlying the workshops I facilitated, and the stories that came out of them, are applicable in many settings and across many worlds.

Why Fiction?

In the summer of 2017 I began a project with Evan Limberger, an SF based illustrator, to create a comic book that featured a bag I was designing. The two would be sold together to offer our customers a new approach to product narratives. The process of working with Evan on writing the comic, and designing through the lens of fiction was exhilarating. As I moved into my thesis year I was interested in how I could take this process which I found so fulfilling and expand it to working with a larger group. On a small scale, Evan and I had imagined another world that played on our current concerns with climate change. We had done so to upend the narratives around objects we buy and were trying to offer a more diverse end-user experience. Working with Evan planted the seed of understanding how writing fiction could be an exhilarating part of design process

Throughout the process of writing the comic with Evan he had been recommending comic books for me to check out. Since graduating college, and putting down my dense philosophy texts, I had taken a deep dive into fiction, anime, sci-fi and fantasy. The comics Evan was recommending fit perfectly into this wide breadth of narratives that were influencing me. Even though I had left my philosophy books behind, what I was finding in fiction were the same issues being worked out in a more digestible and entertaining format. My own appreciation and exploration of these genres was being mirrored in wider culture where the world of sci-fi and fantasy had taken off due to the resurgence of star wars, the birth of the Avengers franchise, obsession with the Hunger Games, Harry Potter, etc. Basically, our world is a much nerdier place than it used to be.

In my thesis I wanted to understand how my interest in fiction was useful

to my design practice, and more specifically to understand how fiction was able to explore complex issues, and whether that would be useful for design research. Evan and I were just two people, so for the purpose of the thesis I decided to expand into the writing workshop format that would allow me to work with more people at once. Working with a larger group gave me the opportunity to gain diverse perspectives that would be much broader than anything Evan and I could create. By including more people I hoped to simulate a new form of user research that took fiction as its base.

In these broader workshops I wanted to continue the trend that Evan and I had started with our comic; not focusing on super-heroes. The superhero to me is an un-relatable concept. The comic series *Saga* is so compelling precisely because it doesn't feature a superhero, but focuses on the relationship between two regular soldiers from different factions and their daughter who through their love end up changing the course of an intergalactic war.¹ The characters in *Saga* are fallible and display real human flaws, desires, and struggles. These types of stories resonated with me, and as a designer I saw their power in the user-research setting. As designers we are always trying to find the pain points in our user lives. In industrial design we are trying to identify pain points that are applicable across a large group of people. As I was hoping to develop a design tool available for use with a wide audience focusing on everyday issues in the fiction seemed key to its success. For this reason I chose to have participants in my workshop write all of their stories from a personal perspective, so that they would be able to see themselves in the

1 Brian K. Vaughan, Fiona Staples, *Saga* (Berkeley: Image Comics, Inc, 2014).

world we were creating.

Keeping the story in the realm of sci-fi and fantasy was incredibly important to me. I was interested in how the genres of comics, anime, fantasy, and sci-fi, could so effectively work out complex issues through a wide diversity of worlds while escaping cultural specificity. Ursula Le Guin clearly lays this out when speaking about dragons.

Whether fantasy is set in the real world or an invented one, its substance is psychic stuff, human constants, imageries we recognise. It seems to be a fact that everybody, everywhere, even if they haven't met one before, recognizes a dragon.²

The issues in the sci-fi and fantasy that I was reading were universal, and I was fascinated with the way they could extrapolate a current tension in a wildly different universe. Just like the dragon, which is recognizable across cultures, I wanted to explore fundamental human tensions in the design setting. One of the unique instances of a over arching human theme being played out in a unique world is in *Seven to Eternity*. The world of this comic is plagued by the Mud King, an evil overlord who in return for giving him access to your eyes, ears and thoughts grants you your ultimate desire. For me, this comic is a direct critique of our willingness to give up our personal information to corporations in order to receive a momentary pleasurable outcome. This type of critique was so potent, and at the

2 Ursula Le Guin, *Words Are My Matter* (Easthampton, MA: Small Beer Press, 2016), 19.

same time entertaining that I wanted to develop a way integrate this type of rich depth into my design practice.

In order to focus my efforts to achieve the potency in terms of human themes, and to give my participants a clear and coherent narrative I decided to focus on a single world for the workshops.³ The world I chose was a single city on Mars one hundred and fifty years in the future. I wanted to focus on a world that was recognizable to the participants in my workshops, but had enough room for their imaginations to explore. Mars is a part of our current cultural dialog due to companies and organizations like SpaceX, and NASA, but while it maintains this prominent cultural status the details of what life on Mars will be like remain unclear. By placing my workshops so far in the future it excused me from current issues surrounding Mars exploration, and gave me room to explore what a settled Mars of the future would be like. By focusing on a city I chose a context that was relatable to my participants but open enough for diverse interpretation. Everyone has some conception of a city but asking two people from the same city to describe it will net different results. Cities are mythic places that have characters unto themselves. The eventual series of workshops focused on the three basic parameters of place, time, and context to build a unique and compelling narrative.

Together, my participants and I created the world of Aurora City. It is a city in the northern territories of Mars in the year 2169. Later in the book I will discuss the precise details of the world, but what is most important is that Aurora

³ I initially ran a couple workshops that created multiple worlds, but these fell flat in relation to each other and were hard to draw conclusions from for a unified project.

City took shape outside of the bounds of what I had imagined. It became a world that I started but exceeded my expectations. It offered me insights into how my participants were imagining their future, and what they believed was important enough in their lives to share in their stories.



Mars

Place



Aurora City

Context

2169

The Future

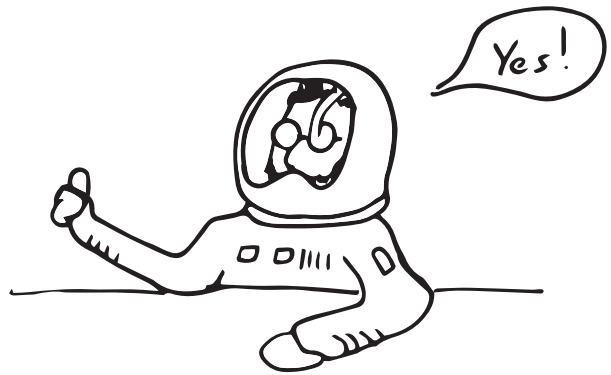
Time

Building Blocks

Would you like to
talk about yourself?



How about now?



The Personal

Fiction offers the best means of understanding people different from oneself, short of experience... Fiction is terrific at giving factual, psychological and moral understanding.¹

Each story in the Aurora City workshops is written from the first person perspective. As Ursula Le Guin points out, fiction allows us to imagine ourselves otherwise and this imagining allows for deep insights into human characteristics. For the purposes of the workshops I was interested in how people would imagine other characters and what they would bring from this world along with them. When we imagine another world we build on our existing knowledge. The lens of fiction allows us to contemplate the future, and to be able to see ourselves more readily in it. As designers we are looking to understand the motivations and backgrounds of our users so that we can design effectively to solve problems in their lives. Making sure we have the full picture is crucial so that we do not come up with solutions that on a surface level seem great, but in actuality miss the complexities of daily life, and become obsolete upon arrival. Using fiction as a way to probe for a more holistic picture of a users life allows us to draw on the rich worlds that fiction creates. Doing this from a personal perspective forces participants to immerse themselves, and share the factual, psychological, and moral motivations in their lives through stories.

1 Ursula Le Guin, *Words Are My Matter* (Easthampton, MA: Small Beer Press, 2016), 18.

Focusing on the personal and societal concepts we bring with us when writing fiction allowed me as a designer to gain insight into the important aspects of my participants lives. The choice of one of my participants in following story to create a dating app of the future tells me that dating is important in that person's life. The context in which it arises gives me a sense of their views on the positivity of that service on their life, and how they think it will affect future relationships.

Story # M1691110SDV:

Call me Beyonshmael,

I'm a 37 single lady, looking for love <3 on Mars. Interests include romantic love memory downloads, protein synthesis, my pet micro-person, and long walks on the beach, but I wish there was more than one. My three husbands and two of my wives are pretty boring, but one of them is ok. We're always looking for more M,F,H,W,T,I or P to join us. Fertility or financial stability desired. Access to the direct feed to earth broadcasts will be an immediate yes :) Looking to move south, if you have a place near the southern ocean I'm ready to move, I need out of this city of the past, let's start a new future!

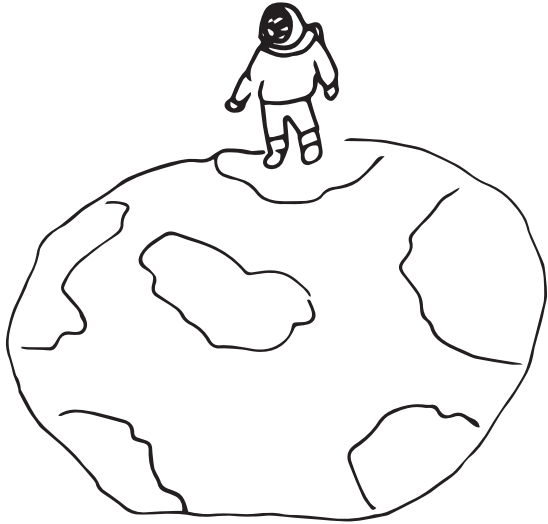
Feedback:

I was putting my dating angst onto the conditions of Mars. I don't really see it getting better.

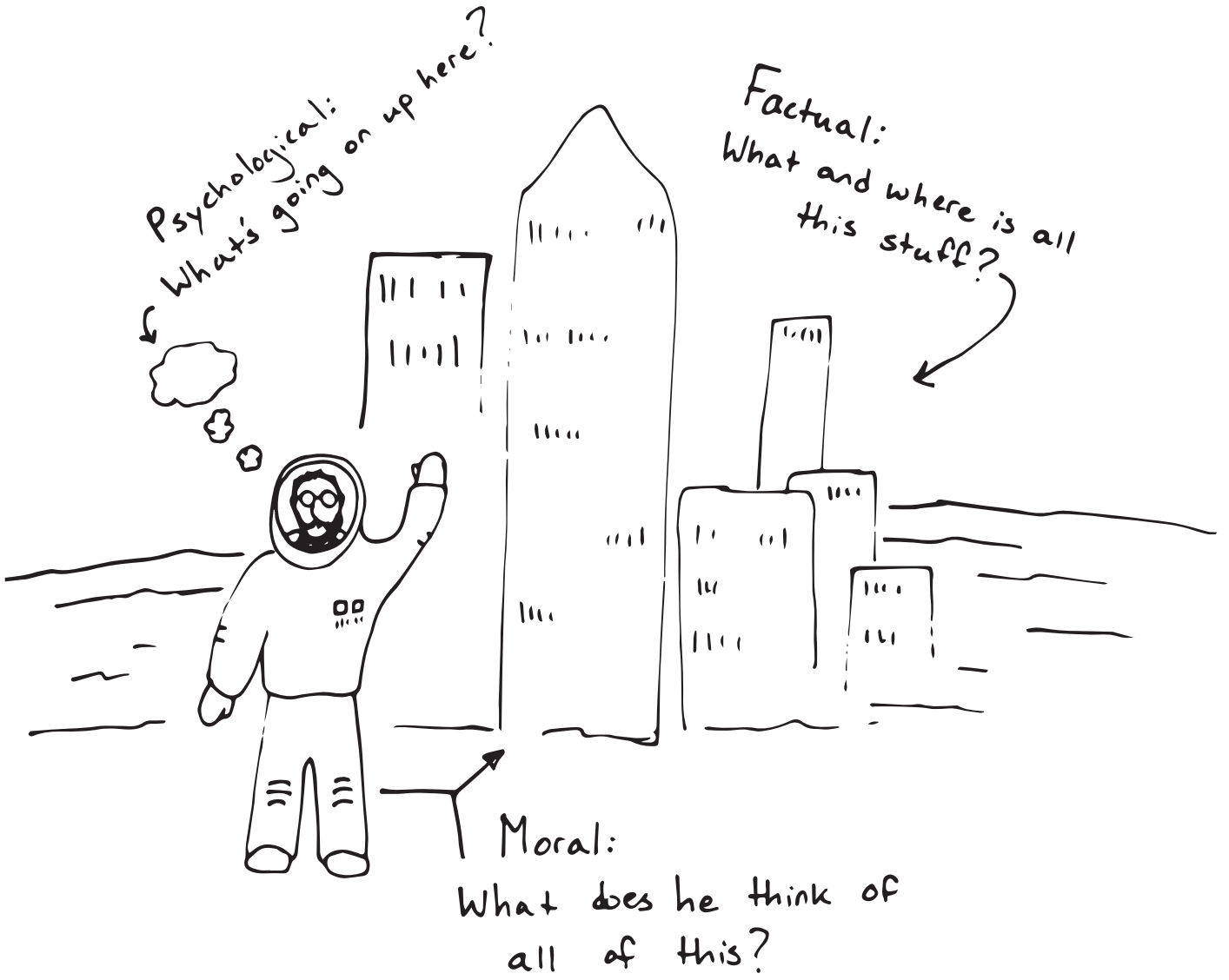
What's it like
over there?



About the same as
over there.



We bring ourselves along
wherever we go.



The three facets of fictions ability to make us empathetic that Le Guin points to, “factual, psychological, and moral understanding,” are key ingredients in effective user research. In the Beyonshmael story we see all three extrapolated. Factually the story recreates current dating structures, and mirrors the format of the present day dating apps into the future. Beyonshmael’s disillusionment with her current relationships and reality reflects the author’s own psychological disillusionment with meaning in contemporary dating. A moral critique of the superficiality of dating apps is evident in Beyonshmael’s exaggerated emphasis on assets and resources of a future partner. Taken together the story and feedback offer deep insights into that participants views on superficiality of current dating practices, and their belief that the human experience does not change even with a distance of a hundred and fifty years.

From the story we are able to draw a rich depiction of the authors thoughts on their present life, and from the feedback understand why they brought the character to life. The concerns addressed in the Beyonshmael story are echoed throughout many of the Aurora City stories, and relationships become a major theme of the overall narrative. Linking all of these narratives together allowed me to understand the trends in my participants lives, and having the specificity of a personal narrative allowed me to understand the nuances and particularities of each predicament.

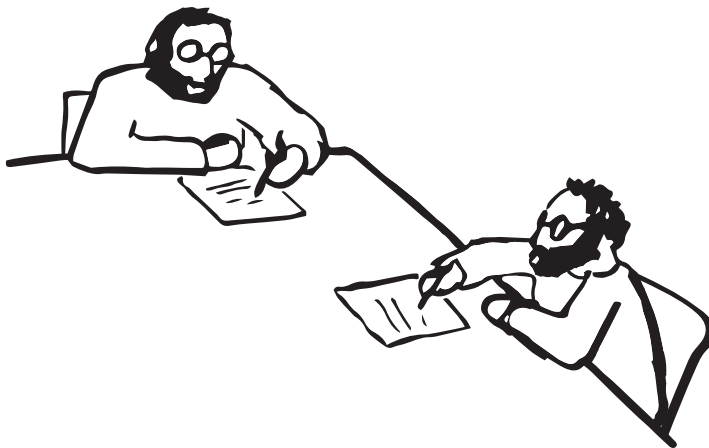
The Communal

Just as the personal was incredibly important for me as I developed Aurora City, the collaborative aspect was an essential part of my continued exploration of the relationship between fiction and design. In the project I conducted with Evan Limberger we built a stronger narrative together than we each could have done on our own. Evan and I worked closely, and the world we created was very beholden to our own interests in the genre. In transitioning to my thesis I wanted to understand how that process between two people could be extrapolated into a larger group setting. In addition I was interested in whether the insights I had drawn from working with a creative from another profession could be applied across a diverse group of people. To stay true to the type of collaborative nature of the work I did with Evan, I decided to maintain collaborative writing as a key aspect of the world I would create in my thesis.

In each exercise I ran throughout my thesis I paired individuals together to write personal narratives. I would also ask that people switch partners throughout the workshops to encounter a diversity of perspectives and writing styles. By switching partners I felt it would build coherency among a group as people continued narratives through multiple stories. The Beyonshmael narrative continued to appear throughout the workshops as a single participant explored it with multiple creative partners. This layering of narratives across multiple workshops allowed specific participants to understand the continuity of the story, and to explore writing with a diverse group of people.

In total I worked with around sixty people, and generated over 100 stories. The main group I worked with were between the ages of 24-35 and were

comprised of writers, artists, scientists and designers. In addition I worked with two groups of high schoolers. From final feedback I received from my participants the emphasis on communal writing both made it easier for people because of their ability to give up certain parts of the story, but also forced them to encounter another person's creative vision and respond to it. Oftentimes in my workshops people were working with strangers and this forced them to encounter another perspective. As I continue to work on building a collective vision of the future I believe that collaborating on that vision is key to making relatable and compelling narratives.



Story Structures

Speculative futuring workshops are not new, and to try to create a coherent experience for my participants I drew heavily on lessons learned from the work of The Extrapolation Factory and from Dunne and Raby.¹ For these designers the future needs to be democratized. Too much of the future is left up to professional futurists, and The Extrapolation Factory's belief is that we are all futurists because we all at a fundamental level imagine the future in our daily lives. Whether we do so at a societal scale is another matter, but should not exclude us from conversations about what we want from the future.² Drawing on lessons from these designers, it was incredibly important for me to keep much of the world open for interpretation. I did not want to stifle the imagination. I wanted to create a climate in which my participants imaginations could creatively thrive.

Although the workshops needed to be open, they also needed to have a solid structure that would act as a good base for further imagining. In the models of many speculative design workshops there is a set process with a loose narrative frame. In the Extrapolation Factory's process participants are led through a series of exercises where they imagine futures based on scenarios that are drawn from experts looking at the future of their field, or news and journal articles predicting trends. They extrapolate these scenarios into the future and play out what might

1 Elliot P. Montgomery, Chris Wuebken, *Extrapolation Factory Operator's Manual* (New York: The Extrapolation Factory, 2016)

Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Boston: MIT Press)

2 Montgomery, Wuebken, *Extrapolation Factory Operators Manual*, 10, 21.

happen if those things came to pass and how they would influence the future.³ Drawing on these lessons I specifically built out the basic structure of Aurora City based on historical trends in colonization, our current relationship to the corporate space race, and trends in globalized culture. Each of these themes were loosely integrated throughout the basic story description that participants received at the beginning of each workshop. Embedding these recognizable cultural and historical trends within the stories allowed my participants to see themselves in the world, and to expand from there.

After developing the initial story I tested the amount of information needed to make a compelling future. For Jim Dator, even though the future cannot be predicted we can and should attempt to build preferred futures with groups of people. These visions will change with time and new inputs, but their continued creation is vital to being able to build a future for humanity that is worthwhile.⁴ In my workshops building a compelling world was key, and one that was open to change as the workshops developed. To set up a compelling story I progressively introduced more and more detail to the writing activities that I directly pulled from previous workshops or from environmental facts about Mars. Throughout, I was not necessarily interested in precise or reality based facts about Mars, and specifically allowed these to remain vague as I was much more interested in exploring the human elements of world building exercise.

3 *ibid.*, 36.

4 Jim Dator, *What Futures Studies Is, And Is Not* (Hawaii: Futures Studies Department, 2014), 1.

Much of the foundation of future studies and speculative design work in the realm of world building is driven by exploring trends in technology that will shape society.⁵ For me, I was much more interested in what technologies my participants would bring with them to the future and how they would use it there. The emphasis was always on how the characters in this world navigated their lives and what issues they were facing living in this new society on Mars. Participants were always encouraged to write from the personal perspective and to let the story follow the character rather than any particular technological advancement. The structure I provided was there to create tension and test out societal trends, and ideas about how humanity will repeat and transform its mistakes of the past.

In the following pages you will find the unedited initial Aurora City description that I handed out at my first workshops, and then a breakdown of my thinking behind each of the initial facets of the story. Finally you will find a fictional Wikipedia article that I wrote to summarize the stories generated by the workshops.

5 Dunne & Raby, *Speculative Everything*, 75.

Original Aurora City Narrative

This narrative was handed out at the beginning of each of my workshops. It is brief but inspired a rich world to be built.

- It is the oldest city on Mars.
- The year we are in is around 2169.
- There are 3 million people in this city.
- The city used to be the political, economic, and cultural center of power but with the shifting climate the economic and cultural centers have become located in the southern cities.
- The city remains the political center of power with the political offices mainly located within it.
- The city is leased to a corporation and acts as a corporate colony on lease from Earth but has a democratically elected government.
- Mars' atmosphere has been rebuilt, and the planet has developed liquid water. The southern portions have lakes and oceans, but the north, where our city is located, is still mainly desert.
- The initial importance of the city was due to its role as the base for the rebuilding of the atmosphere that allowed Mars to be habitable, but much time has passed and the citizen's of Mars take the rebuilt atmosphere for granted.
- Because the atmosphere is thin solar flares particularly affect it and there are magnificent aurora borealis' every night.
- There is a difference between Earth and Mars times and dates
- Earth remains the cultural center of the solar system and there is a lag in information between the earth and mars due to the distance.

Element Analysis

Aurora is the oldest city on Mars.

The most important restraint I set for myself was the form of the city. Everyone to some extent has a conception of what a city is, but if you were to ask anyone what they thought of a specific city, you wouldn't get the same answer twice. Cities are mythic places, and thus are ripe places for imagination. There is also something romantic about an aging city of the future.

The year we are in is around 2169.

Time is tricky. If based in this world and dimension, using historical precedents and the pace of human advancement as a narrative structure can help guide a groups imagination. I specifically chose a hundred and fifty years in the future, as I felt this would be far enough that a terraformed Mars might be possible, and it would seem more plausible that cities of some size had developed. It also meant that it was far enough that either my participants or their close descendants would be alive which would give a sense of continuity between now and then.

There are 3 million people in this city.

Combined with the hundred and fifty years it was important that the city be of some scale. Most people in my workshops had previously or currently lived in a

city, and I was specifically interested in this size as it mirrors US cities that play a sizeable role in the economy and culture generally. I had Chicago and LA in mind when choosing the number. Also, I was interested in this number as many cities in India and China are around this same population size.

The city used to be the political, economic, and cultural center of power, but with the shifting climate the economic and cultural centers have become located in the southern cities.

This proved to be one of the most contentious parts of the story. I had initially believed it would result in tensions between north and south that would manifest in terms of economic disparity, and jealousy, but ended up existing much more on an interpersonal and cultural segregation level. Xenophobia ran rampant throughout the stories, and many characters discussed not wanting to associate with members of the other geographical area. Multiple stories focused on not mixing romantically between geographic peoples.

I did not initially anticipate this type of reaction to the structure, but what it signaled very loud and clear was a desire for people to play out their concerns with the current xenophobic climate in the US that has been capitalized on and amplified by republicans and the Trump administration. I did not expect the stories to go to the extremes of segregation, but this was a reminder that simple suggestions of tension may end up leading to unexpected and polarizing places.

The city remains the political center of power with the political offices mainly located within it.

Unlike the North/South divide I had thought that the political centering would offer interesting dialog on the political climate, but this part of the structure never came up in a single story. This showed me that there are elements of the world I created that were not at all interesting to my participants, and if working with a similar group again I would leave this portion out.

The city is leased to a corporation and acts as a corporate colony on lease from Earth, but has a democratically elected government.

When we colonize Mars we are still colonizing. As far as we know now we will not be enslaving or mass murdering the native inhabitants of Mars, but the connotation and use of the phrase colonize as part of the space exploration discourse has always seemed odd to me, and a space where critique is necessary. In addition, the recent rise of corporate space exploration immediately draws parallels to the west's past of authorizing corporations such as the Dutch East India Company to colonize non-western countries with impunity. I was interested in what my participants felt about this aspect of space exploration and wanted to see what tension arose.

Part of my interest in corporate structuring of society on Mars was directly linked to the current trends of rebellion against corporate infiltration into all

aspects of our daily lives. From digital media platforms, to food, to energy, to politics, to entertainment corporations have become intimate parts of our daily life. In the case of Aurora City this meant the corporation directly controlled the continued existence of the entire colony. What would my participants write into their stories about this, and what form would it take?

To my delight this became a central issue in the stories and in my last workshop became the central tension. I purposefully left any mention of rebellion to corporate structures out after initially writing it in. This was to test whether the suggestion of some part of the world without positive or negative influence would create something I hoped to question. Within the second workshop I had a literal manifesto from a group of rebels living on the outskirts of the city, and a name for the corporation, Solar Corps. This proved to me that having a neutral but compelling atmosphere for fictional exploration can net direct results in understanding a group of peoples hopes, fears, and dreams about a current topic affecting their lives.

Mars' atmosphere has been rebuilt, and the planet has developed liquid water. The southern portions have lakes and oceans, but the north, where our city is located, is still mainly desert.

Again, I tried to establish tension between the geographical areas, but I was mainly interested in the continued existence of a city in the desert. It gave it a familiar desolation, and because of the size drew parallels to abandoned cities in

the Midwest because of the movement of industry and cultural power.

The initial importance of the city was due to its role as the base for the rebuilding of the atmosphere that allowed Mars to be habitable, but much time has passed and the citizen's of mars take the rebuilt atmosphere for granted.

To drive home the forgotten nature of the city I hoped to create a narrative around its importance to the underlying fabric of the planet, while also highlighting people inability to see larger societal dependencies. This part of the story proved to be uninteresting to my participants and rarely manifested in any meaningful way. The past in a funny way, does not matter to the fictional people of the future. My participants took on the same amnesia that was already written into the prompt.

Because the atmosphere is thin solar flares particularly affect it and there are aurora borealis' every night.

Every story needs a little sparkle. Mars because of it's thin atmosphere experiences Aurora's that cover the entire planet when solar flares hit.⁶ This is one of the most amazing and beautiful facts that I discovered during my research

⁶ Guy Webster, Nancy Neal Jones, Jim Scott, Deb Schmid, Laurie Cantillo, Dwayne Brown, "Large Solar Storm Sparks Global Aurora and Doubles Radiation Levels on the Martian Surface" NASA News, September 29, 2017

and seemed exactly the type of magic that was necessary to create a neutral but inspirational environment.

There is a difference between earth and mars time and dates

Although this seemed initially like something that mattered, it did not seem to cause any issues functionally for my collaborators. I initially thought it would elicit stories about the importance and uniqueness of living on Mars but failed to do so. Again, this shows how certain elements that you expect to cause a certain reaction in participants may fall flat where others you do not anticipate may take off.

Earth remains the cultural center of the solar system and there is a lag in information between the earth and mars due to the distance.

Rejecting or embracing earth culture became a recurring issue in stories. It also played a role in certain stories talking about subscriptions to earth media, that mirrored and mimicked cultural trends surrounding Netflix, Hulu, HBO, and other streaming services.

Aurora City Wiki



Aurora City Rendering

The following fictional Wikipedia article was written by myself and its contents are drawn from the stories that were developed in my workshops. It was used in my final workshop with a group of participants who had worked with me from the beginning. Ultimately it is a piece of fiction that I contributed to the project. There are aspects that I directly created. In the case of the War of the Five Towers I gave a name to a war that was developed in a workshop. The historical details of the war were explained, but the actual name of the war never surfaced in the narrative. As a designer I see this as my contribution to the story, and part of what is necessary for me to use the stories as a design prompt. I consider this fictional Wikipedia article to be the design summary of the stories created in the Aurora City workshops, and reflective of my particular analysis of the project. To read the stories created in the workshops please see the final chapter of this book.

Last update: Dec. 14, 2169

Aurora city is the 3rd largest and oldest city on Mars. It was founded by Solar Corps in their northern territory in 2078, and is the global capital of Mars. It hosts the global assembly, the Prime Minister's office and the High Court. The current population is approximately 3 million and the economy mainly revolves around ore extraction, maintenance of the Magnetosphere, and the global government. The city sits between the base of the Utopia Planitia and the Elysium Planitia. Locals refer to the Elysium Planitia as the flatlands, as it is characterized by large flat desert like terrain. The Utopia Planitia is rocky and hilly, and is the main site of ore extraction. The mining industry and Magnetosphere attract migrant workers, and the relative stability of the economy means the city has an annual population increase of roughly 3%.

Aurora City is notable for the Aurora Borealis' that occur during the Martian Spring and Summer. The desert climate, it's proximity to the northern pole, and the relatively thin atmosphere make it perfect for the phenomenon. Also notable are the Martian Global Symphony, and that the city is the birthplace of Interplanetary Pop star Lee.

Culture

Being the home city of Lee the city has a reputation of producing music that breaks out beyond Mars. Earth culture still dominates the musical, artistic, design, and streaming cultures, but Aurora City is an incredibly proud place, and they value their domestic cultural scene highly.

Economy

The relative stability of the economy following the consolidation of Solar Corps means that the unemployment rate remains low around 4%. Most people are employed by Solar Corps and their multiple holdings, or by the global government. A major military base near the city employs 6% of the population, and leads to much cultural exchange across Mars and interplanetarily. Disparities in wealth are very high, but the broad social services provided to all citizens means that unrest is minimal.

Transportation

A series of high rise trams connects the city, and most people use this system over personal ground transport. The density of the city makes travel efficient, and the entire system is free to all citizens of the city as long as they maintain proper identification.

Unrest

In the early years of the city Solar Corps was the main shareholder on the lease for the city, but shared it with other solar system based corporations. A coup by three minor corporations coincided with a militant civilian rebellion and led to four years of intense fighting between multiple forces. Solar Corp's larger military force and its major share in the colony meant that the Intergalactic Military intervened on its behalf and eventually eliminated all civilian and smaller corporate entities. Solar Corps became the sole shareholder of the colony and strengthened the civilian political power, and police force to bring stability to the city. This time is referred colloquially to as the War of the Five Towers, and references the buildings used as sites of control by each of the respective forces.

Rebellion by civilian organizations continued on as a guerilla movement following the War of the Five Towers, and much of the resistance fled to the flatlands outside the city. It is reported that there are autonomous communities of rebels living in the flatlands, but they are rarely seen, and maintain a minus net presence.

Relationship with the Southern Territories

The northern and southern territories depend largely on each other. The south provides the north with fresh food, while the north supplies the south with ore, and industrial goods. Following the global trade pact of 2145 much of the

agricultural production in the northern territory ceased and moved south. This led to the emergence of large scale manufacturing in Aurora city, and the surrounding regional zones.

Citizens of the north often visit the south for vacations as the oceans and forests are a respite from the bitter cold of the northern desert. The South also serves as a resort destination for Earth's residents and is the hub of interplanetary cultural mixing.

With the founding of the Southern cities and the exodus of many citizens to the forest and ocean filled South there were many protests about disparities against the exporting of resources and jobs to these areas. There are multiple xenophobic organizations that operate in the city and protest the sharing of resources with the South. These organizations represent a small part of the population, but xenophobic sentiment towards Southerners is common among the general citizenry.

Frameworks

Throughout my thesis I have been focused on both creating compelling fiction, but also fiction that generates insights for designers. In the following pages you will find a brief overview of some of the thinking that went into designing the workshops, and some formatting for how I went about analyzing the stories that were created in the workshops. This is not meant as a guide on how to recreate what I accomplished but to shed light on my thinking and how I approached integrating fiction into my design practice.

1 // Building the Prompt

2 // Gathering Feedback

3 // Analysis

Building the Prompt

As a design tool the prompt allows us to test out ideas in a targeted way. Understanding what you would like to test is the first step in building the prompt and is necessary for building a compelling story. The prompt lays the foundation for the world creation, and mismanaging it early on can lead to errors later that will cause inconsistencies among the stories. Having a compelling prompt also means that participants will be eager to participate in the workshop as there is something to grasp onto.

I have previously analyzed my own prompt and shown where it worked or did not net the results I expected or wanted to test. No prompt is going to be perfect, but being targeted allows for more concrete design research for your project. My first workshops were very broad and because of this did not test out a specific principle, whereas my later workshops were aimed at achieving a specific outcome. In total the Aurora City workshops were a useful exercise in understanding the boundaries and strategies necessary for a successful design outcome. Using fiction in the design setting is not easy as it can be complex and dense, but having a solid structure in the form of a prompt, and the thinking behind it early on can net better results.

Below are my thoughts on a world-building framework that could be used to generate stories in a design setting. The frameworks are by no means exhaustive, but cover the basics of what I believe are necessary for a good initial story.

Pre-building Framework

The pre-building framework is a series of questions aimed at understanding the designers motivations for running the workshop that then allows them to build an effective story that aligns with their goals.

1. The Question - What are you asking?

What are you interested in exploring?

What is the design area you are trying to explore?

Why is it important to you?

What are your underlying motivations in exploring this question?

How do you see it being important to others and what will they get out of exploring this question with you?

What underlying assumptions do you have about this question?

2. Outcome - What are you seeking?

What is the outcome you are hoping for?

What variable would you like to test through the story?

What information are you seeking from your participants?

How does the information you are seeking relate to your participants lives and what cultural trends are relevant to that outcome?

3. Who - Who are you working with?

Who will you be working with, and why is this process important to them?

How many people are you planning to work with?

How many times do you plan to engage them?

Why is working with this group of people important to you and your project?

How can you craft your story and prompt to interest your audience, and what narrative elements will you need to integrate to reflect your participants lives?

What are they getting out of this process?

4. Context - Where are you working?

Where will these workshops be held, and what is their duration?

Does the setting of the workshop matter in terms of making your participants feel comfortable, or more involved in the story making process (i.e. if you are questioning environmental issues are you writing this outside or inside)?

When do the workshops take place, and what sort of accommodations are you providing for your participants?

Prompt Building Framework

The Prompt Building Framework are a series of questions and aspects of a story that need to be addressed to build a compelling world. T

Where // What world or worlds are we on, and what size is the world, nation, state, city, town, village, room, trail, etc. that your world is based in?

Who // What beings inhabit this world, and are you interested in focusing on multiple species?

Dimension/Time // Is this in another time, dimension, galaxy or an alternate time line to that of earth?

Technology framework // What is the technological environment and is it important to how the story outcomes will change?

Environment // What is the world like, desert, rainforest, mountain, underwater, outer space, in the sky, etc?

Culture // What do the beings do for fun? How is the culture shared and celebrated in this world?

Political // How is this world structured and led? How are communities organized?

Industry // Occupation - What do these beings do day to day, year to year?

Time line // What is the time line of the story? Does it progress during the workshop?

Sparkle // What is something special and unique to this story that is fun and interesting? Think environmental or psychological fascination.

Gathering Feedback

Feedback is crucial to a proper completion of the workshop. In asking participants to reflect on what they have written they expand upon their motivations and the issues being addressed through the story. For the designer it offers another lens into the users thinking. In addition it allows us as facilitators to request feedback on the format and structure of a workshop, so that we can tweak it to be more effective in future situations. As I illustrated early on with the Beyonshmael story, feedback can assist in offering a key design insight into a story. These types of reflections are incredibly precious for design as they allow us to understand the underlying problems for our participants, and give us data that is clear and contextualized.

In my workshops I usually spent about ten percent of the time conducting feedback activities. Moving forward with this project I would increase this to about one quarter of the entire workshop. The reason is that I found the feedback my participants gave me incredibly useful when trying to understand the complexities of their stories. It contextualized the stories in terms of the participants present day concerns. Together the feedback and the story created a more holistic picture of the world I was creating.

It also allowed me to ask direct questions about the subject matter I was exploring. One of the most important feedback questions I asked during my sessions was “Would you go to Mars?” This open ended question led to some incredibly interesting results. I have listed my two favorites below.

Participant A:

I'd move to Mars on a couple of conditions.

- 1) Interesting cultural stuff going on. A museum.*
- 2) Cheap rent.*
- 3) Accessible transportation to/from Earth, or my family and friends are mostly there.*
- 4) Good hiking.*

Participant B:

In all likelihood I would not move to Mars. My family and friends are here and ultimately they are the thing that I feel exerts the most gravity in my life. But there is some part of me that would do it in a heartbeat. That would fly to Mars in a heartbeat, brave the journey and the desperation, and the never-ending cold for a chance to stand on the frontier of human voyage. Often I wish that part of me was more of me.

Both of these answers are intriguing and shed light on the societal and personal forces acting on their lives. In Participant A's case we are given a direct list of reasons that the participant believes leaving earth would be worthwhile. As a piece of design evidence we take this to be the motivating factors in that person's life for moving to a new place. Many participants did not share Participant A's enthusiasm for moving, as is the case with Participant B. This participant was interested in moving, but through their response we can sense the tension that

moving to the unknown causes. It also highlights how some of my participants were tied down in terms of connections to people or a place, and where others were much more likely to explore new destinations. Pairing this rich qualitative feedback, with their stories and basic demographic data allows us to build a coherent narrative about our participants hopes, fears, and dreams for the future.

What follows is a general framework that I developed around gathering feedback. It is constructed from a number of different feedback sessions that I facilitated in my workshops, and is offered to understand what types of things I was interested in asking my participants.

1. Understanding Their Story

- Why did they choose to focus on particular aspects of their story? These can be broken down into the following categories:

A. Character

- Why did they choose to write about that character?
- What about that character's background or personality was interesting to them?
- How did that character allow them to explore an aspect of the world?

B. Setting

- Why did they choose the setting inhabited by their character?
- What about the setting spoke to them?

C. Relationships

- What is the characters relationship to others?
- Are relationships in the fictional world different from this one and how?

D. Environment

- What interests them about the environment in the fictional world, and why did they choose to highlight certain aspects?
- How did the environment restrict or enhance their ability to explore things through the story?

E. Action

- What happens in the story and why was that important for them to explore?
- How do they view the daily lives of their fictional characters being different and how does this play out in what they do day to day?

2. Critiquing the Process

The following are a series of questions aimed at understanding what participants thought of the workshop process, and the context of the topic explored.

General Questions:

- What was it like to work with someone else?
- Did you find it easy to collaboratively write with others?
- What were the benefits and the downsides?
- What was compelling and/or interesting about the initial narrative?
- What did you find confusing in the initial narrative?
- Where would you add or subtract aspects of the process?
- Was it easy to start writing, and did writing with someone else influence that?
- Do you watch or engage with comics, anime, sci-fi, fantasy, etc on a regular basis?
- How many workshops/writing sessions did you participate in?
- What excited you about participating in the workshops?
- Was there a topic or thought you were interested in exploring in the workshops?
- Do you write creatively on your own time?
- How did you find working with someone else on a story? Did you come away with anything from the process?
- Is there a character or topic you would like to keep writing about that came out of the workshops?
- What do you think the outcome of the workshops will be?
- What about the future do you think about most?

- Do read fiction regularly?

Aurora City Workshop Specific Questions:

- Did you learn anything new or interesting through the workshops about Mars, others, or yourself?
- How often do you think about space exploration?
- Do you think we should be spending more on space exploration and trying to establish a new colony on Mars or the moon?
- Should we be privatizing space exploration?
- Would you move to Mars and why?
- What do you think of current space exploration and its implications for the future?
- What excites you most about going to space?

Story Analysis

Analyzing stories is difficult. Often when reading through the stories from a workshop I felt that I needed a PhD in Literature to be able to fully understand their complexity. As I have shown in the previous chapters understanding the initial prompt clearly, and using non-fiction feedback from participants can be incredibly useful in deciphering the stories, but is not a replacement for actual fiction analysis. To understand the themes and interests of my participants through their stories I used a series of categories to guide my process. These categories mirror much of what I have already discussed in the chapters on building the prompt and gathering feedback. It is important for the tools of the project to remain consistent throughout each of the stages of the process, so the narrative remains coherent and refers back to itself.

I have created a framework to analyze a story in terms of the overall narrative developed through the workshops, and in terms of what that individual story is expressing. Not all of the categories are necessary for exploring each story. Each workshop can have a different aim, and a particular category that aligns with the initial narrative may be more compelling for the specific design project. Additionally, analyzing a story precisely in terms of a desired outcome will have its own set of specific questions. The ones below are more general jumping off questions. Clearly understanding what parts of the stories you are looking for makes it easier to effectively navigate the rich data that is gathered in fictional workshops.

Culture

- What manifestations of culture are present in the story and how does that affect the characters and the stories outcome?
- How do characters express their culture?

Economic

- What do people do day to day in the story?
- Are economic forces a major contributor to the story, and how do they affect the stories outcome or subject matter?

Political

- How does the community in the story seem to be organized?
- Is there tension politically, and how does it seem to affect the characters?

Relationships

- What relationships are present between the main narrator and others?
- What is the nature of those relationships?
- Are those relationships important to the plot and how do they move action forward?

Transportation

- How do people get around?
- Does transportation play a vital role in the characters life?

How does it differ or reinforce current modes of transportation today?

Infrastructure

- Are the characters in the story able to move freely, and live happily in their environment?
- If not, why, and what are the contributing factors?

Environment

- How does the environment inhibit or enable the characters to achieve their goals?
- Does the story capitalize on already existing environmental factors in the initial story narrative and if so how are they used to express the feeling and concept of the story?

Communication

- How does the character communicate with others?
- Does this form of communication mirror or reflect current technologies, and if so how does it build or augment those?

Habits

- What habits does the character have, and what parts of their daily lives are explored on an intimate level?
- What objects does the character interact with in their daily life?

- What spaces does the character interact with in their daily life?

Relationship to Initial Narrative

- How does this story build on or interpret sections of the initial narrative?
- Does the story go outside the bounds of what you initially intended, and does it offer new depth, or cause unnecessary incoherence?
- If the story extends beyond the boundary of coherence, does it offer a unique insight?

Psychological

- What emotions is the character feeling in the story?
- How are those emotions motivating the character and driving the plot?
- Are those emotions responding to aspects of the initial narrative?

The Department of Historical Memory

The Department of Historical Memory is a fictional archive created to house the stories and feedback gathered from the Aurora City Workshops. It is used as a fictional device and is my design representation of the world of Aurora City. The following pages are a selection of stories and feedback from the workshops that I have chosen based on their coherence and importance to the overall story line. Each entry has an archival number that corresponds to the planet on which is originated, the year in which it is from, the date of its creation, and the authors of the document. Please enjoy the permanent collection.

DHM

ED. 14. 33. 69

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

***REFERENCE GUIDE FOR
PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF
AURORA CITY***

ARCHIVISTS:

XAVIER LOSSLESS M.I.S.

PHOEBE LEE M.I.A.



M1691027SAC

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

I'm remembering a time when I was a kid racing in the flat lands. Stones seemed to levitate as we flashed by. I'll never forget the sand created by the mix of engine and dust bouncing back and forth from the flatness below and the shallow barrier above. And I remember your hands gripping the loft handles, your gloves caked in dust, your masks regulator working furiously to clear debris as if there was anything in the flat lands to watch out for. The thrill was never ahead but always how fast we could escape from what we left behind.

M1691027SAC

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

I've lost count, but my acclimator has been making this terrible almost - shouting noise in the middle of the night lately. Folks at work just told me to change out the ion drive and forget about it. No one really cares how anyone else sleeps. "Sleep is a luxury in __," goes the schoolroom refrain. The only trouble is, I think it's been infiltrating my dreams. "Dreams are symptoms of a distracted mind and a depleted spirit," so says another refrain, but I can't stop the sound of the dreams, both machineries out of my control.

M1691027SAC

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory

Attn: External Memory

100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152

Aurora City, 478030-NT

Maybe I could get clearance to travel soon, not off territory of course, but out of here. They say we have everything we need and it's true this city has it all. But no matter how good the place is, if you can't leave it's still a prison. But prisons are usually built with some hope of leaving them; I was born here, so I'm stuck here. Now that I'm the only one in my family alive, the hope I've lost for the colony has been replaced with something else. It seems like everyone's a politician these days.

M1691027SAC

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

I've heard you can't last more than a week in the flatlands. The wind accelerates to 120mph, turning the dry dust into shooting pins. But maybe the gangs are more dangerous, living like wolves far from nascent civilization. Either way you couldn't make it even with a good regulator and a loft bike. Sal won't listen though. I thought all the loud planning at bars was just machismo, but now at the edge, regulator in hand, I'm watching those broad shoulders pulling away towards unwanted country.

M1691110SKM

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory

Attn: External Memory

100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152

Aurora City, 478030-NT

If I die, let the truth be known: a band of separatists and I demand our freedom from Solar Corp and we will do whatever we can to gain this freedom. We've established several bases around the desert outskirts of the city. When we overthrow the system, Mars will be revitalized - a utopian, bullshit-less oasis in the galaxy. People of Mars - tear out the chips and chords implanted right behind your ears. See the world void of the projection illusion and deceptions that has been collaged into your visual reality. See the world as it is - better, plain, ugly but full of potential; fecund with all its inhabitants and us.

M1691110SSB

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

Jumping from carpet pile to carpet pile has always been my favorite game, but in low gravity I feel like superwoman. I used to dream when I was a kid of jumping again and again and again each time taking a little longer to fall until my feet just wouldn't return to the ground. I'm not sure anymore if I'm awake. Maybe none of all of this happened - maybe its all a bad dream and I'll wake up warm and cuddly in my own bed. If I were a real superwoman I would have made it to the south in time, before they found the leak from the center of the planet. Carpet fluff in between my toes reminds me that I'm still an earthling, still human.

M1691110SSB

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory

Attn: External Memory

100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152

Aurora City, 478030-NT

Maybe it was worth it, if only for the sky lights. I haven't been up here in a really long time, not since the night I cut off all ties with my family on Earth. You'd never see this on Earth, but you'd also never see a face like that on Earth either. In the whirling vertices's of the Aurora I sometimes make out just a glimpse of Zem. A glance, a turn. The sense of an impression on the edge of my memory what we used to have.

M1691110SKA

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

I love my Mars hot air balloon, although the thin atmosphere makes it *technically* illegal. You can get so high up you can see the curve of the Mars and the blinking lights of the cities and outpost scattered across the horizon. I wish Cotey could be here to see it... I haven't seen her since I left Earth in 2159. She was resistant to coming here until the bitter end, until I left without her. Her absence is everywhere; strange how she has become, for me, so much a part of a place where she never wanted to be.

M1691110SDP

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory

Attn: External Memory

100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152

Aurora City, 478030-NT

I work at the sewage plant at the center city. I find challenges in navigating a new city. I transferred from Earth where the sewage system worked differently. There's so many things people took for granted when they moved to this shithole of a city - mostly, how they had no place to store the waste. And then there was figuring out how all that waste would affect the ecosystem - and that accounted for most deaths in the earlier decades. It wasn't until the engineers and scientists introduced the bacteria that things improved.

M1691110SCP

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

Dirt on the walls, in my hair, in the corners
of every cabinet, thin and red, unmistakable
taste. Like grandpa's Necco wafers, the ones he
would sneak me before I'd leave his house, back
when we lived on earth. Now, all I see when I
step outside are what we affectionately call "The
Fans." Loud, vicious labyrinthine mechanisms.
Now that I'm thinking about it, I wonder if the
pelts have dried...

Where did I go wrong by her?

M1691110SDV

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

Call me Beyonshmael,
I'm a 37 single lady, looking for love <3 on
Mars. Interests include romantic love memory
downloads, protein synthesis, my pet micro-
person, and long walks on the beach, but I wish
there was more than one. My three husbands
and two of my wives are pretty boring, but
one of them is ok. We're always looking for
more M,F,H,W,T,I or P to join us. Fertility or
financial stability desired. Access to the direct
feed to earth broadcasts will be an immediate
yes :) Looking to move south, if you have a
place near the southern ocean I'm ready to move,
I need out of this city of the past, let's start
a new future!

M1691110SDV

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

The blue synthetic squid was cold, but it was filling and of course, it was absolutely necessary because all our food was "hyper" - frozen and transported from the southern shores. The date was going terribly and I couldn't stomach the texture, I kept looking for an excuse to use the bathroom so I began to gag. But then I accidentally puked... Like, immediately, all over the hover table. It was disgusting, but that ended the date immediately, so mission accomplished. Fromm stormed out, and I apologized to the head chientist of the restaurant. I called to Romm, my pet micro-person to get the kar. Romm was in a trance, the rat half of his brain was virting a virt maze, but the chimp/human half was wide awake and responded quickly. He called back - no problem, Beyonshmael!

M1691110SDP

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory

Attn: External Memory

100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152

Aurora City, 478030-NT

This person seems to be from the south, where all have access to water and vegetation easily. He seems vivacious without a care in the worlds. I have one friend dating a girl from the South. Honestly though, I'm not sure about our worlds, our cultures, our way of living. Its like we were from different planets or something.

M1691110SAK

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

I've been so anxious recently about where I'm going to move next year. But this place is falling apart. Another week sleeping with the sand mites crawling into my ears and I'm literally going to run through the broken window on the 7th floor. Sometimes I wonder if anyone else even lives in this building. They said we weren't allowed to see anyone because of the quarantine. I used to hear doors slamming and people talking, but after I don't know how long it's been - I barely hear anything anymore.

M1691110SCC

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

The earth pop stars are supposed to be popular, but I feel like the people I know on Mars are making media that's way more interesting. For one thing.. I don't live on earth, know nothing about it's unbeautiful thick atmosphere. Are we just supposed to accept earth music out of tradition, servitude? The delay in our broadcasting of their mundane media should be reason enough to support our own culture. Besides, I don't relate to Earth life. Fuck that shit.

M1691110SCC

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

Apparently there are more colors on Mars than on Earth. I'm not sure if this impresses me or not. The colors seem to come from a different spectrum. The hues are shifted towards red - I heard that used to symbolize anger on earth, I don't know if that still feels true here though. I rarely feel angry though I often feel, well, violet, which grips me and doesn't let go. In the morning, though, I'm as clear as light, yellow light. At least, I think its yellow, a historical understanding of color they've indoctrinated us all with since we were born here.

E0171110RAM

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

K and I were talking about how absence is sort of the story of Mars. In most of what I wrote, I was drawing some kind of contrast to life on Earth, even if indirectly. I kind of like the idea that, even if spectacular, Mars could never be "enough."

I'd move to Mars on a couple of conditions.

- 1) Interesting cultural stuff going on. A museum.
- 2) Cheap rent.
- 3) Accessible transportation to/from Earth, or my family and friends are mostly there.
- 4) Good hiking.

E0171110RAB

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory
Attn: External Memory
100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152
Aurora City, 478030-NT

I really wanted to write about the cold. No matter how we change the atmosphere I can't imagine that the temperature on Mars will ever get above a place where you can't feel it in your bones. When I was walking over here I paid a lot of attention to the cold. I am deeply repelled by it, and at the same time find it the cleanest most refreshing experience. I think Mars would capture that in a way I couldn't imagine.

In all likelihood I would not move to Mars. My family and friends are here and ultimately they are the thing that I feel exerts the most gravity in my life. But there is some part of me that would do it in a heartbeat. That would fly to Mars in a heartbeat, brave the journey and the desperation, and the never-ending cold for a chance to stand on the frontier of human voyage. Often I wish that part of me was more of me.

E0171110RKM

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

Department of Historical Memory

Attn: External Memory

100 Sagittarius BLVD, Suite 80152

Aurora City, 478030-NT

I think the primary thing I was thinking about was how to conceptualize Mars without just holding it in relation to earth. Then the problem became.. well, would a Martian experience just deal with the same fundamental issues that human life on earth does? That also felt like a "cop out" and not productive. So ultimately the experience became about extrapolating my human life to imagine a place where there are culturally a whole host of new issues that are not just new to me, but also unknown to most humans i.e. there is very little cultural memory that isn't wrapped up in "the great move."

I would totally move to Mars. Just the chance to be a part of something so new. Would be very dope/exciting. Feels like ultimate form of travel.

E0171110RSS

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

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Attn: External Memory
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Aurora City, 478030-NT

I wrote what I wrote mostly inspired by my/our experiences with the natural world (insects are cool!) and the wonder at how Mars would differ from Earth scientifically (what kind of life would flourish there?). In the second piece, I drew from my experiences as a kid jumping from one pile to another, and how cool it would be to do that in a low gravity setting.

E0171110RCJ

DHM

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I naturally compared Mars to Earth because it's what I know. It was also an interesting way to get to know my partners... it felt like a very quick but deep insight into their characters and values. I also fixated on certain details that are already subjectively relevant to me on Earth, like color, dating, or ruminating on my parent's mentalities and how they view things.

Would I move to Mars? Yeah

Why? Because I like experiencing the edges and extremities of things, whether or not it makes me feel happy. Unless tons of people moved to Mars, and Earth was kind of empty. Then I'd probably stay here.

E0171110RVB

DHM

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- I was putting my dating angst onto the conditions of Mars. I don't really see it getting better.

- I would want to live in the area I felt I could find the most possibilities of happiness and comfort.

Just looking for my ride or die.

Economic stability is important and access to resources - the ocean.

E0171110RPR

DHM

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I was trying to explore the infrastructure-related concerns, for example, sewage, machinations that produce "clean energy." Also, I was thinking about what animals would be on Mars - would monkeys need dentists? Lastly, I was interested in how, or if, there'd be nostalgia for Earth.

I would move to Mars, because migratory instincts are as natural as rootedness for us.

E0171110RCS

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The lapse between Earth and Mars culture really interests me in this arc-narrative. Like are there new psychic repressions on a different planet? Is there like a pretentious contingent of young people on Earth obsessed with Mars "culture"? Do they see it as so new and colonized as to be "less than" theirs in veracity?

I would move to this Mars b/c it seems - at least in my continued speculations - to be a place of great solitude; maybe loneliness kills, but it is a prime territory for poignancy.

E0171110RDP

DHM

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Conficted. I think I would live on Mars, but only if traveling there got much, much safer. I find it interesting. I would really appreciate being able to see more stars, and I bet the lower gravity and air pressure would be fun to take advantage of.. As an Earthling, I bet that would be fun.

E0171110RCM

DHM

Submitted for archival determination

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Submitted: Yes --- No

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I could live on Mars - but only if I had a lot of autonomy. I don't want to be stuck there - or not have the ability to "abort mission." I liked imagining the quotidian realities of individuals for whom living on Mars is not a danger, a novelty, but rather "home."

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