

HOW MUCH SHALL WE BET?
DEFINING SURREAL FUTURES

Submitted by John McGhee to the University of Birmingham as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature and Creative Writing, December 2018

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Abstract

This work comprises a critical thesis ‘*How Much Shall We Bet? Defining Surreal Futures*’, assessing the scope for stronger cross-pollination between poetry and futures studies and examining a potential hybrid poet-futurist praxis; and a portfolio of futures poetry in a range of lyrical and conceptual modes, *The Bunny Assembly*. Presented prior to the critical thesis, a fragmentary essay ‘Weak Signals’ introduces the main themes of this research through an account of my experiences attending the 2016 annual meeting of the World Futures Society. Chapter 1 describes the origins and rationale for the research, key lines of enquiry and underpinning conceptual frameworks adopted, including a discussion of why the topic was explored using the methodology of creative Practice-as-Research. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the academic discipline of futures studies and assesses how contemporary futures studies balances analytic and imaginative techniques to identify possible, probable and preferable futures, in order to identify any existing links to poetic techniques. Chapter 3 demonstrates how, although the roles of poet and prophet are historically linked, much contemporary poetry has had unexpectedly little to say on the topic of the future. It is shown through a quantitative review of sample texts that where recent poetry has addressed the topic of the future, it has more often presented clichéd declinist or dystopian visions. Sixteen distinct strategies for developing poetic futures are identified in Chapter 4 by combining the steps of a typical forecasting methodology used in futures studies with a simple classification of lyrical and conceptual poetic approaches. These strategies are then evaluated to identify the extent to which they are useful in generating novel and provocative insight about the future. This chapter concludes with discussions of three features which proved effective in writing about the future: ethnographic writing, humour and aphorism. Chapter 5 consolidates poetic and futurist activities into a proposed praxis for the poet-futurist: what one should do differently as a poet if one is a futurist, and vice versa. This praxis is reviewed in the context of competing visions of the future of poetry. To conclude, the thesis assesses the value of systematic poetic investigation of the future with a particular emphasis on the role of poetry in challenging clichéd declinist or dystopian forecasts and inspiring action to realise more hopeful futures.

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Acknowledgements

‘Weak Signals, A Field Trip to WorldFuture 2016’ appeared in *The Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language*, Vol VIII. Elements of this thesis were presented as papers at the following conferences: ‘What’s Funny About the Future?’, presented to *Out of Practice* (University of Birmingham, 2016); ‘Ten-Second Essays and One-And-A-Half Truths’ presented to *Poetry and the Essay: Form and Fragmentation* (Victoria University of Wellington, 2017); ‘The Creative Destruction of Poetry’ presented to *Writing Revolutions & Revolutionary Writing* (University of Birmingham, 2015).

‘A Natural History’ appeared in *South Bank Poetry* 22. Earlier versions of ‘His Majesty’s New Wanswuth’ and ‘Street Minus’ appeared in *South Bank Poetry* 25. ‘131 Ways to Rock Your Personal Brand’ appeared in *Under the Radar* 17. ‘Everyone’s A Chemist’, ‘Thousands of Books All Over the Place’ and ‘Superkafka and its Impact on Industrial Relations’ appeared in *Lighthouse* 10. ‘Versioning’ appeared in *This is Not Your Final Form: Poems About Birmingham*, The Emma Press 2017. An extract from ‘The Fire Bee’ appeared as ‘Swarm’ in *Magma* 64.

Introduction

What follows is the output of a research project seeking to bridge the two fields of poetry and futures studies. Regarding poetry, the contemporary transatlantic styles and approaches, including prose poetry and hybrid forms, and various lyrical and conceptual techniques, which I will discuss, are well rehearsed. However, futures studies remains a relatively niche practice, so it is worth taking a moment to orient the reader to its particular scope and concerns.

Futures studies is “a new field of inquiry that involves systematic and explicit thinking about alternative futures” (Bell, 2009, p. 2). It aims to be “a coherent body of techniques and knowledge [enabling us] to anticipate many of the risks and opportunities that could confront us in the future, giving us time to decide what to do before we crash into them [and] to develop worthwhile and achievable long-term goals, along with reasonable strategies for attaining them” (Cornish, 2004, p. *xi*). In perhaps its simplest formulation – “just as historians study the past and journalists the present, so futurists study the future” (Bishop and Hines, 2012, p. 1). At a high level, contemporary futurists agree that although there is no one future that can be predicted, there is value in thinking about and preparing for the future before it arrives, in discussing the multiplicity of potential futures and in understanding what action could be taken now to bring about better futures and avoid worse ones. Emerging at the end of the Second World War, futures studies is no longer a nascent field of enquiry, but despite this, there remains debate and confusion over what it comprises and even what it should be called. Sardar (2010) writes:

As a subject of inquiry with a body of learned literature, recognisable knowledge base, and definable contour of concepts, methodologies, practices and processes, futures studies is now well over 50 years old. Indeed, some people trace the history of futures explorations much further. But there seems to be little awareness of this history. The amnesia has led to an identity crisis manifest in the simple observation that we do not even know what to call all those who take the study of alternative futures seriously: futurists, futurologists, prospectivists, foresight practitioners, even horizon scanners have common currency. (p. 178)

In this thesis, I will refer to the field of enquiry into alternative futures as “futures studies” and those who undertake this practice as “futurists”, given the drawbacks of common alternative terminologies. “Futurology” manages to summon simultaneously two incompatible and equally unhelpful associations: one of empirical positivism, that the future can be objectively and scientifically studied; the other of quackery, what Sardar refers to as “crystal gazing and fortune telling” (p. 178). Worse still in this context would be to use the term “futurism”, a name taken by the fascist avant-garde art movement of the early 20th century.

Put simply, this research assesses the potential for increased cross-pollination between the concerns and techniques of poetry and future studies. Before the main body of the critical thesis, the prologue ‘Weak Signals, A Field Trip to WorldFuture 2016’ introduces key concepts and themes drawn upon later in the thesis. This creative text was written as autoethnography, based on extensive field notes, observations and reflections I recorded while attending the annual meeting of the World Futures Society, a global professional association for practitioners of futures studies, in Washington DC in July 2016. Following this prologue, I will argue in the main body of the critical thesis that:

- **The cross-pollination between poetry and futures studies is best explored using a Practice-as-Research approach.** Chapter 1 describes the rationale for the research and outlines the model of Practice-as-Research that was used.
- **Futures studies privileges analytical over imaginative techniques.** Chapter 2 discusses futures studies and its methods. Whilst the value of creative and intuitive approaches has long been acknowledged by futurists, in practice the tendency has been to revert to more analytic, empirical and evidence-based approaches at the expense of imaginative ones. Discussion of any role for poetry in futures studies has been minimal.
- **Contemporary poetry has had surprisingly little to say about the future.** Chapter 3 discusses how poetry currently addresses the future. Whilst one might expect that poets would be well placed to discuss the future in creative ways, a

review of contemporary poetry reveals a near-overwhelming emphasis on memory, the past and the personal compared to conjecture, the future and the public. Where poetry does discuss the future, it is often in declinist or dystopian terms. Little evidence has been found of poets specifically engaging with futures studies.

- **Certain poetic techniques are more effective than others in writing about the future.** In Chapter 4, I show how I experimented with a range of different poetic strategies for writing about the future to determine which were most effective. Non-intentional approaches including surrealist freewriting and aleatory cut-up and appropriation proved more successful than intentional lyrical self-expression and constraint-based writing. The use of ethnographic writing, humour and aphorism were also effective.
- **A hybrid poet-futurist praxis is an effective way to cross-pollinate poetry and futures studies.** Chapter 5 details the components of a potential poet-futurist praxis, identifying what specific activities of writing about the future would be tackled differently with a hybrid poet-futurist mindset. Such hybrid praxis, I argue, is well positioned to adapt to any of poetry's possible futures.
- **Contemporary poets have a role in writing about the future in a manner that challenges declinist and dystopian clichés.** The conclusion in Chapter 6 argues for a much stronger cross-pollination between poetry and futures studies and for a provocative future poetics that encourages readers towards more hopeful and empowered perspectives on the future.

Prologue: Weak Signals, A Field Trip to WorldFuture 2016

The World Future Society is a not-for-profit organisation for people interested in studying and shaping the future. Held in Washington DC, the Society's 2016 annual conference marked 50 years since the organisation's formation.

1.

Never switch on the television in a hotel room. Find something else to fill the time, rearrange the leather binder of guest information into a random order, transpose the in-room dining menu and the details of car rentals, muddle up evacuation procedures with lists of local attractions: anything, rather than indulge that restless shuffling of available cable. Woozy in the seminar room, I recall the way in which I twitched in and out of sleep the previous night as the movie *Jumanji* played on the flatscreen at the end of the bed. As the speaker on the podium asks if we know how much radioactive material it would take to destroy Silicon Valley utterly – answer: about the size of a grapefruit – I think about the forthcoming *Jumanji* reboot, about how many times *Jumanji* might be remade in the future and how many of these I was likely to see in my lifetime.

2.

People-watching in the foyer, I try to guess which guests are futurists. Them: the men in dark suits and moccasins telling one another jokes in Japanese? Her: the teenager with comma hair shouldering a humongous bright pink holdall? Him: an older man, moneyed with wide tie hanging too low below his belt, hairline surrendering? From appearance alone, it is impossible to tell how people feel about the future, or whether they think of it at all.

3.

Ethnography is *thick description*. It is like “trying to read a manuscript — foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries.” Said Clifford Geertz.

4.

Scanning is a basic technique of futures studies, a methodical seeking of emerging changes in the world that might become more important in the future. These changes, called *scanning hits* or *signals*, are collated, sifted and grouped into trends, which one can then act upon to anticipate, accelerate or avoid them. To be useful, signals need to be spotted early. The appearance of telepresence robots in the sitcom *Community* and the humanised artificial intelligence of the movie *Her* are far too late and mainstream for these to be counted as useful signals now. Futurists look instead to the outer fringes: artistic works, the alternative press, academic grey literature, patent applications. Breadth and novelty are prioritised. Multiple sources are triangulated, as individual signals may not in themselves mean much – in fact, they may not mean anything. Though taken together, signals tantalise, giving a glimpse of what might be coming next.

5.

“Features of your cat: soft fur inspired by real feline breeds; authentic cat sound effects; *VibraPurr*[™] realistic cat purr; movements that mimic a real cat. If your cat stops working, try switching your cat off and then back on again. To avoid tripping, never put your cat on the floor. Available in Creamy White Cat, Silver Cat with White Mitts, Orange Tabby Cat.” Said *The Joy For All Companion Pet Cat Care Guide*.

6.

The history of futures studies is inextricably linked to defence planning and corporate strategy with theory and terminology shared between these disciplines. The future tends to emerge in the military and the marketable, weapons and toys. The future makes itself real at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory in Virginia, the New York Toy Fair, the Adult Entertainment Expo in Las Vegas.

7.

I overhear a man in golfwear speak with an older woman in a black pantsuit, two delegates. They have met before and remind one another of what they do for a living, relate which presentations they intend to go to, then walk off in opposite directions. After a beat, the man turns around, catches the woman by the arm, says, “Sorry, I meant to say: how *are* you?”

8.

The geography of large nations debilitates. All conferences held in North America are places for professional interaction mediated by sleep deprivation. Everyone is groggy by default.

9.

Renata at the reception desk beckons me to sign in. She gives me my delegate's badge, an oblong of heavy cardboard attached to a dangling lanyard. Underneath my name, embossed in larger letters, the badge reads: DEDICATED FUTURIST. Beneath that is a line of three coloured spots, three stickers in red, yellow and green. Renata does not explain the purpose of the spots. Other DEDICATED FUTURISTS have different configurations of spots on their badges: red and yellow; red and green; yellow and blue; red, yellow, green and blue. I notice that one delegate's badge is purple, no spots.

10.

"In the past, Citizens used their Talents to accomplish great things. They built their city upon a single promise: to strive for shared values, shared futures and shared fortunes. Now the Citizens must work together to build Hope City. But it won't be easy. PUNKS threaten the city with Chaos and Corruption. If Citizens become corrupt, they Break Bad. The Mayor becomes the Mobster; the Doctor, the Drug Dealer. Is the city then beyond hope?" Said the rulebook of the board game *Hope City*.

11.

"Randomness, openness to accident and serendipity, spontaneity; artistic risk, emotional urgency and intensity, reader/viewer participation; an overly literal tone, as if a reporter were viewing a strange culture; plasticity of form, pointillism; criticism as autobiography; self-reflexivity, self-ethnography, anthropological autobiography; a blurring (to the point of invisibility) of any distinction between fiction and non-fiction: the lure and blur of the real." I pencil-mark the margin beside this paragraph in the copy of David Shields' *Reality Hunger* I buy from Kramerbooks the night before the conference starts. I commit to this list as a roadmap for interaction with the futurists over the coming days. Then I tear out the list of citations from the back of the book in accordance with the author's wishes.

12.

The conference is held at the Washington Hilton, a modern, borderline-brutalist hotel just north of Dupont Circle. The hotel is notable for being where newly elected President Reagan was shot by John Hinckley Jr. in 1981. Sitting in the hotel's coffee shop, I notice the ticker on the rolling news. A judge ordered Hinckley, who was found not guilty by reason of insanity, to be released from St. Elizabeth's Hospital in the autumn. Hinckley now presents no danger to others in the reasonable future, his doctors say.

13.

This summer, Dallas police attached an explosive charge to a bomb disposal robot to kill Micah X. Johnson, a sniper who had earlier murdered five police officers. The technology's intended use was inverted, detonating rather than defusing. This puts me in mind of navigating an unknown path ahead by consulting the back of a map.

14.

In the break-out session, we discuss how futures studies seems to some to be an impractical abstract exercise, not serious, a distraction from the real work. When your immediate surroundings are on fire, it can be hard to maintain the mindset of generous curiosity that futures studies necessitates, an openness to the ludic: games and simulations, thought experiments, role play and improv, purposeful play. "A child shows his toy, a man hides his." Wrote Antonio Porchia.

15.

We try to be objective. We try not to editorialise. We try not to make stuff up. We play join-the-dots to reveal a hidden image, but the page is covered in so many dots it is already a black square.

16.

Exactly one hundred and sixteen minutes after the conference starts, I hear someone use the phrase "The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed." A good aphorism but I had lost count how many times I had heard this phrase before, quoted past the point of cliché at every gathering on the topic of the future I had ever attended. As in every specialism, the more one becomes familiar with futures studies' best zingers, the less

one is wowed by them, although I still get a kick from Dator's Second Law: "Any useful idea about the future should at first appear to be ridiculous."

17.

Epiphanies are ludicrously ubiquitous. One is now not surprised when a businessman, standing in front of other businessmen, irrespective of the venue or the topic, talks about a single moment that totally recast their take on life. The prototypical epiphany of this sort is that of the industrialist Ray Anderson, who fundamentally reshaped his carpet tile business to reduce its pollution to zero after reading environmentalist Paul Hawken's book *The Ecology of Commerce*. (Sample quote: "Given current corporate practices, not one wildlife reserve, wilderness or indigenous culture will survive the global market economy... There is no polite way to say that business is destroying the world.") Anderson described this as his "spear-in-the-chest moment". After Anderson, there is a spear aimed sooner or later at the chest of every businessman, or so it seems. TED talks are full of them. It would take no effort to be cynical. It is a neat narrative for a well-off capitalist: a life in the marketplace ultimately repented. In my mind, I am inclined to let it slide. Epiphanies for everyone! If future studies has a role to make the future better, then perhaps this role involves a routine inspiration of epiphanies in those who desperately need to have them.

18.

"Conventional economics is a form of brain damage." Asserted David Suzuki.

19.

"But TED talks are bullshit, right?"

20.

The first World Futures Society conference was held here in the Washington Hilton in 1971. The interior design of the hotel still resonates an earlier age; it does not feel futuristic at all. This dissonance between topic and venue crystallises in the kvetching of delegates about the design and condition of the carpets in the meeting rooms. "Are we in the fifties?" one speaker asks hammily, referring to the faded purple and beige whorls covering the floor. Another insists that if they never again found themselves in a meeting room like this, it would be too soon. I talk with a futurist who reported on the future of

floor coverings for a client: trends in adhesives, installation and construction, relative prospects for LVT versus laminate, advances in tufting machines and twisters. I do not mind the Hilton's décor so much. It reminds me that much of what is needed for the future is already built, that the future is crafted from the present, that we never have the luxury of working from a blank piece of paper. Things that exist persist, even those we would prefer did not.

21.

In the sixties and seventies – the formative days of the discipline – futures studies claimed too much, and its rise was compromised by failed predictions. The academic futurists and commercial consultants who speak at the conference are self-effacing in the main. They pre-empt potential criticisms of their forecasts, undercut their own methods, note the limitations inherent to their science. “We don't think our way is better than any other way,” one speaker says of their think tank's methodology. “It's the best way we've worked out so far and we hope it works for you.” Intellectually, I understand how it misses the point to judge futurists after the fact on whether what they said came true. Rather, the value of the work is determined by whether we choose to do the right thing now based on what they say about what's next. But there are no future facts. About the future, everyone is right until they are proved wrong.

22.

1967 *The Year 2000*

1967 *The Art of Conjecture*

1968 *The Population Bomb*

1971 *Future Shock*

1972 *Limits To Growth*

1973 *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*

Peak futures.

23.

The first episode of *Star Trek* was broadcast on 8 September 1966. The founding of the World Future Society was announced a month later on 28 October 1966. Gene Roddenberry became a member of the Society in the early years and gifted a membership to Leonard Nimoy. Fifty years on, *Star Trek* remains dominant as the most coherent,

most compelling positive popular vision of the future. When the co-founder and CEO of private space firm Moon Express speaks, his influences are revealed in his aphorisms: “We live on the best planet in the solar system”; “Capitalism may not work on earth, but it works in space”; “When we travel to the moon, we will uphold the Prime Directive.”

24.

Futurists bring an expectation with them that you will hear something strange, something you did not already know. But the bizarre must be titrated, as what is enough for one client is too much for another. Fringiness is expected but must be defused, made safe. Tell them about extinguishers that put out forest fires with sound waves. Do not refer to alien megastructures.

25.

All conferences are awful because all conferences demand networking. Delegates introduce themselves. I have never heard of the companies they work for and vice versa. One has to prepare oneself, otherwise the question “Who do you work for?” can lead to excessive and paralysing philosophical reflection. There is a self-promotional aspect to all disciplines, but futurism is tinged historically with hucksterism. One delegate passes me a business card the size of a paperback novel, containing contact details, Hollywood-style headshot, extensive mission statement and a short story about a professor who spends his life staring down the wrong end of a telescope.

26.

DARPA, the US military’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, has a long-standing project on storytelling, one delegate tells me. It relates to how stories persuade. You hear a story, say, about a poker game in which a con artist swindles a businessman out of a large sum of money through card manipulation and use of a trick deck. The businessman is left destitute and distrustful. The con artist retires to a private island where, four years later, he is attacked and eaten by a crocodile. DARPA’s research suggests that how you respond to a story like that depends on the fate of the character with whom you most identify. Stories that end well for your character will motivate action, but only in the long-term. Stories that end badly for the character you see yourself as, these motivate you much more strongly in the short term. So, do you see yourself as the businessman or the con artist? Or the crocodile? I fear I may have been negligent

here, as the writer of this anecdote, for not considering the moral impact of this story on your future actions. I am reminded that all futurism is about unintended consequences.

27.

“The NUKEMAP is aimed at helping people visualise nuclear weapons on terms they can make sense of – helping them to get a sense of the scale of the bombs. Google Maps data is displayed along with a custom-built Javascript model to show various nuclear weapons effects. In simpler terms, this means that the NUKEMAP is code that can work with Google Maps technology to show you what happens when a bomb goes off.”

28.

“It is a paradox: we have to point to evidence in the past, and things that are happening now, in order to convince people about what could happen next. Otherwise, a client might ask: what did you do, smoke a bunch of dope and make this stuff up? It is a balance. Too safe, and what you say is dismissed as obvious. Too much imagination, you will never be believed.”

29.

Around the dinner table, the futurist sitting next to me mentions he majored in anthropology. There are nods of approval, as six of eight delegates around the banqueting table also had studied anthropology. My neighbour says futurists should give more consideration to anthropology’s notion of ‘embodiment’. Our bodies are affected by what we think about the future. When we envisage the future, we *feel* the future, he says, gesturing his fist towards his chest.

30.

The future of granola. The future of dip and dunk film processing. The future of the school garden movement. The future of inner city credit unions. The future of smart carpets. The future of brain enhancement. The future of anticipatory government. The future of cockfighting.

31.

I admit it. I am looking for out-and-out goofballs. I cannot find any out-and-out goofballs. In the opening speech, we are told, “Weird people are winners.” I see

thoughtful educated people who are genuinely concerned about humanity. They do not seem all that weird to me.

32.

“Future forecasting is miserable work that leads you to consider the worst-case scenario for everything”, according to Warren Ellis, whose recent novel *Normal* is set in an asylum for depressed futurists suffering the effects of “abyss gaze”. A conference speaker comments that it is ineffective to be a depressed futurist. The more you study the future, the more tangible become the dark and desperate futures that are all too probable. Eschatology mesmerises. Not all problems can be intellectually conjectured. Those that can are typically: one, sufficiently worrying that they are worth addressing and two, not so terrifying and unsolvable that we sink into despair whenever they are mentioned.

33.

Supervolcano, meteor impact, anthropogenic climate change, worldwide pandemic, nuclear Armageddon through war, error or terror, out-of-control artificial intelligence, particle accelerator accidents, misuse of biotech or nanotech, cataclysmic economic collapse and global totalitarianism. When thinking about the future, it is easy to become distracted by catastrophe.

34.

“That is just the beginning. I’ve seen things you’ve only seen in your nightmares. Things you can't even imagine.” From *Jumanji*.

35.

In seminar sessions, we measure with accuracy the dimensions of our filter bubble, accuse ourselves. Futurists do not make anything happen. Futurists talk to themselves. Futurists are liberal and middle-aged, white English-speaking men educated to the point of being over-credentialed, in love with science fiction, technology, disruption and good stories. We are sincere, we say. We know our flaws.

36.

It is not novel to note that futures studies arose from a western, technocratic academic base. Maybe I'm projecting, but the futurists here are rather embarrassed about that. Nearly a quarter of a century ago, Ziauddin Sardar argued that futures studies was a way for a cadre of American, male scholars to de-legitimise non-Western and female voices in discussions about the future. This elite sought to *colonise* the future. I look at my fellow delegates listening intently to an explanation of how vaccine-carrying drones can best manoeuvre through tropical rainforests and conclude we would see ourselves as awkward colonial governors. Advisors, not kings.

37.

"Honda develops mindreading cars that know how drivers are feeling. Levitation of nanodiamonds could bring advances in quantum processing. US Air Force creates Space Mission Force to prevent war in space." Reports *Futureseek*, an online digest of signals.

38.

When you watch a stage musical, there are moments when you know the company is about to break into song before they start. You have a premonition or intuitive flash before the actor takes a deeper breath and the music rises. I have just this feeling as the chair of the Society's board, spot-lit, addresses the darkened auditorium. "If just one person believes in you, deep enough and strong enough, believes in you..." She speaks the phrase initially, then half-sings, then goes full-Broadway. "It stands to reason, that someone else will think, 'If he can do it, I can do it.'" I fail to recognise the song. The chair has a solid musical theatre voice. She is joined on stage by her young daughter, and they duet. "Making it two whole people, who believe in you..." From seats in the ballroom, more people stand and join the chorus on the stage behind the chair and her daughter. I wonder if I should stand up and walk to the front with them; fortunately before I do, I realise I don't recognise any of the singers, conclude they are not delegates but probably locals brought in specially for this episode. The choir concludes: "Maybe even you, can believe in you too!" It is the end of the first day of the conference. Delegates head out to the bar or their hotel rooms, some uplifted, some merely puzzled. Back in my room, I identify the song as 'Just One Person', the last number from the fifty-year-old show *Snoopy: The Musical*. I learn that *Snoopy: The Musical*, just like its

predecessor *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, consists of a series of loosely connected vignettes, virtually plotless.

39.

“*Poetic voice*, n. A new breed of artist and speaker who gives voice to your most powerful story, and shows you the best version of yourself to help you live into it. When Sekou Andrews tells people that before creating a new inspirational speaker category, he was a successful ‘full-time poet,’ you would think that he had said ‘full-time mermaid,’ or ‘freelance unicorn’ based on the reactions he gets. But the truth is no less fantastical.” Reads the website of Sekou Andrews.

40.

One futures studies technique is to create personas, conjure up named characters living in an imagined future to test scenarios and generate empathy with future generations. A woman is treated for PTSD through virtual reality after losing her husband in an autonomous car crash. A nine-year-old is on the run from cyborg policeman after committing fraud on the blockchain. But character is action. Without stories to bring them to life, without *agency*, these personas are no more real than the flat characters of history books and newspaper reports.

41.

“Eyewitness accounts become mistaken as the only ones that matter. Privilege becomes the ability to curate one’s own experiences. In the old colonial world and in the Third World, personal experience crushes and demoralises. It is something that happens to the individual and to the collective. It is not a supermarket where one is able to choose and pay for carefully packaged and sterile experiences.” Wrote Brian Fawcett.

42.

Thomas Friedman conceived the “super-empowered angry individual”, noted how access to increasingly sophisticated technology enables individuals working on their own to cause greater and greater disruption. The futurist James Cascio countered with the concept of “super-empowered hopeful individuals” who, through technology, might bring about massive positive change in the world. This appeals but then again: everyone

knows what a ‘catastrophe’ is, but the word for its opposite – for many good things happening at once – is a little known and disagreeable neologism, ‘benestrophe’.

43.

We reflect upon the implications of the fact the US does not produce enough vegetables to meet its own national dietary requirements. Adults should consume three cups of vegetables a day, but less than two cups are available per head. The majority of available vegetables are tomatoes, potatoes and lettuce. Later, at Shake Shack on 18th: cheeseburger with lettuce, bacon and tomato, crinkle-cut fries.

44.

A farmer, his wife and their daughter are featherbrains, textbook stupid. The daughter’s boyfriend is the opposite, a paragon of practical logic. One night, the daughter looks up at the ceiling of the farmhouse’s cellar, sees an axe stuck there. She imagines that in her future she has a son and the axe falls from the ceiling onto the son’s head, killing him. She cries. The daughter tells the mother about the axe, tells her father. They cry together. Then, they tell the daughter’s boyfriend, who laughs and removes the axe from the ceiling. After that, the boyfriend goes out into the world, vowing to return and marry the daughter if he finds anyone more foolish than this family. To the delegates seated in the International Ballroom, the representative of the deep-pocketed charitable foundation relates this as ‘The Story of the Sillies’.

45.

Using gene splicing, we have been able to identify the differences between Neanderthal brains and our own. Neanderthal brains have forty different genes to *homo sapiens*, and by experimenting with Neanderthal brain organoids – clumps of engineered cells commonly thought of as “brains on a dish” – researchers have identified what they believe to be the gene related to the human imagination. This has the potential to provide an explanation why there are no funny cave paintings.

46.

Futures studies can be applied to one’s own life through a technique called “Personal Futures”. You identify your own life stage, the trends and likely future events that might affect you and take steps in the present to prepare for the more predictable surprises in

your future. A delegate relates her experience with Personal Futures. It was terrifying, she says.

47.

When we invent technologies, we understand what they do, but we do not know what they mean. Silhouetted against a blank sky, a telegraph wire is populated with a row of bird-sized drones.

48.

“The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.” Said Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

49.

“It is a difficult time to be an optimistic futurist.”

50.

I changed my life entirely when I was critically injured in a water-skiing accident. I changed my life entirely when I was found passed out on the carpet. I changed my life entirely when I was prosecuted for dogfighting. Nothing ages faster than yesterday's tomorrow. Nothing is harder to rationalise than yesterday's epiphany.

1. Researching Poetry and the Future

...the future now emerging will be extremely different from anything we have ever known in the past. It is a difference not of degree but of kind. There is no prior period of change that remotely resembles what humanity is about to experience. We have gone through revolutionary periods of change before, but none as powerful or as pregnant with the fraternal twins – peril and opportunity – as the ones that are beginning to unfold. Nor have we ever experienced so many revolutionary changes unfolding simultaneously and converging with one another.

Al Gore, *The Future* (2013, p. xv)

In this chapter, I outline the rationale for this research, the research approach taken, my key lines of enquiry and research activities undertaken.

Our turbulent present and uncertain future

Our world is getting stranger and stranger, faster – a quick look at a firehose of online newsfeeds demonstrates this (Box 1).

Box 1: Signals of change, selected from FutureSeek Link Digest, 2018

A tiny sensor warns you when your skin is about to burn in the sun. A warehouse robot releases bear repellent, hospitalising workers. Algorithms track asteroids. Anti-encryption laws pass in Australia. Your smartwatch is your electrocardiogram. In China: the first gene-edited baby; the scientist responsible goes missing. Microorganisms protect old paintings from pigment-eating microbes. Your smartphone makes a reservation for you, has a voice conversation with the restaurant employee without your intervention. 3,000 T Rex fight 20,000 Jedi, simulated; the T Rex prevail. In Brazil: a baby is born following the first successful uterus transplant from a deceased donor. Coral grows forty times faster after an accident in a marine laboratory. An eye-scanning lie detector. Shoebox satellites. A new drone programme for the New York Police Department. Scientists detect the largest and most distant black hole crash to date. In Russia: the deployment of ‘Peresvet’, a laser cannon. Your phone diagnoses you with anaemia from photos of your fingernails. You control your wheelchair through your facial expressions. A ten-minute test for cancer. Walmart’s robot janitors. A self-driving car with a robot arm to deliver parcels. A hotel chain provides you with a ‘babysitter’ for your social media accounts. Factory-grown ‘alt meat’. Rising temperatures make sharks smarter and deadlier. West Midlands Police prototype an AI-powered predictive policing system. A new male contraceptive gel enters medical trials. Geoengineering. Wool surfboards. A robot barista serves 120 cups of coffee an hour. Robot brothels. Fortnite rehab. In Japan: a robot café is operated remotely by disabled staff. The US Army contracts Microsoft to equip combat soldiers with augmented reality. Rats make friends with robot rats. ‘Fitbits for chickens’. In the US: an aeroplane with no moving parts. Kittens for rent. ‘Big marijuana’

vs 'craft weed'. The 'Chinese Artificial Sun' experiment super-heats to over 100 million degrees. Scientists prove hugs reduce stress. You play a computer game using a controller in your gut. In China: the world's first underground hotel. Vegetable galleries. A super-earth. Meatball delivery. DNA testing for dogs. A huge fake moon. In Japan: electric chewing gum. AI-generated fortune cookies. Autonomous taxis, helicopters, supertankers. Facial recognition for air traffic controllers. Gyroscopes the size of a grain of rice. Restaurants without kitchens. A computer pens a road-trip novel. A drone detects hikers, lost in the Canadian wilderness. Recruitment is a game where applicants compete online, in timed challenges against an automated opponent. You charge your phone by fidgeting in your chair. Smart mattresses. A massive, repeating burst of radio waves in deep space cannot be explained. A spherical tyre. In the US: VR treatments for drug users, involving immersion in a virtual world called 'the heroin cave'. In Japan: the world's first fully robot-staffed hotel, check-ins handled by an animated velociraptor. A small and inexpensive sensor chip can see through walls. A new collection of reflective high-vis 'statement socks'. Hypersonic weapons. Biological computers. Six million jobs in the Chinese coal and steel industries to go. Angolan steel mills recycle scrap guns and tanks, leftovers from the civil war. Architects 3D-print a tiny house from carbon fibre. A business card monitors the heart rate of the reader. In Sweden: prototype trash-robots. A heatwave in Lagos: sales of locally made hand fans surge. Politicians fail to filibuster an anti-terror bill, despite nine days of reciting internet commentary and excerpts from Orwell's *1984*.

Gore's *The Future* describes the change happening in the world as being of an unprecedented scale and speed in different domains: technological change (online interconnectedness, automation of physical and intellectual work, revolutions in science and medicine), political change (the fragility of traditional political institutions and the reformist activism that aims to address this) and environmental change (unfolding climate catastrophe and what is being done to hold it back). Much as in Gore, others who describe the world that's coming often do so in the language of gigantic, never-before-seen transformations. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (2016) describes imminent "deep shifts", changes that "are almost impossible to envisage". (Box 2.)

Box 2: “Deep Shifts”, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2016, pp. 120-172

1. Implantable Technologies	13. Artificial Intelligence and Decision-Making
2. Our Digital Presence	14. AI and White-Collar Jobs
3. Vision as the New Interface	15. Robotics and Services
4. Wearable Internet	16. Bitcoin and the Blockchain
5. Ubiquitous Computing	17. The Sharing Economy
6. A Supercomputer in Your Pocket	18. Governments and the Blockchain
7. Storage for All	19. 3D Printing and Manufacturing
8. The Internet of and for Things	20. 3D Printing and Human Health
9. The Connected Home	21. 3D Printing and Consumer Products
10. Smart Cities	22. Designer Beings
11. Big Data for Decisions	23. Neurotechnologies
12. Driverless Cars	

But have we not been here before? It is not possible to demonstrate irrefutably that we are in the middle of global change of this level of magnitude and rapidity. Every era risks temporal exceptionalism, the belief that our time is more extraordinary or extreme than all others. “The decisive moment in human history is continually at hand,” wrote Kafka in 1918, in *The Zürau Aphorisms* (2006, p. 8). The claim of a world of unprecedented change has many precedents. Eighty years before *The Future* was published, Winston Churchill wrote in 1931:

...the age in which we live differs from all other ages in human annals. [...] We know enough to be sure that the scientific achievements of the next fifty years will be far greater, more rapid and more surprising than those we have already experienced. (pp. 65-66)

But even if we do not live in the most accelerative time there has ever been, it still holds that there are clearly some substantial – and weird – changes happening that I for one cannot say I truly understand. If all we experienced was the level of unexpected change in the next century that was seen in the last, and no more, that would be more than enough to give one pause to be both inspired and alarmed about the future.

A creative research project to explore how contemporary poetry engages with and represents the future

In 2014 I was working on my master’s degree in creative writing, reading a variety of contemporary transatlantic poetry. Regardless of style or topic, to me this poetry engaged

far more with memory and history than with conjecture and the future (Box 3). What was presented as important in this writing seemed misaligned to the scale and speed of changes happening in the world. Something was off. Was the future really a blind spot for contemporary poetry? This research study was conceived to better evidence and understand this apparent dissonance.

Box 3: Topics in contemporary poetry (compiled from datable references in the forty collections nominated for the TS Eliot Prize 2014-17, chronological order)

The Cretaceous Era. The Pleistocene Era. The Lascaux Caves. The invention of writing. Babylon. Moses. Ramesses II. The Trojan War. *The Odyssey*. *The Iliad*. *The Book of Job*. Sappho. Aesop. Pythagoras. Gautama Buddha. Confucius. *The Book of Leviticus*. Pindar. *The Book of Genesis*. Plato. Aristotle. Julius Caesar. Catullus. Virgil. Horace. Cleopatra. Ovid. Jesus Christ. Seneca. Hadrian. Galen. Constantine the Great. Muhammad. *Dream of the Rood*. *The Book of Kells*. *The Exeter Book*. The Crusades. Thomas Becket. Genghis Khan. Saint Francis of Assisi. Dante Alighieri. Giotto. The Ottoman Empire. The Dark Ages. Wat Tyler. William Langland. Geoffrey Chaucer. The Renaissance. *Piers Plowman*. Joan of Arc. Leonardo da Vinci. Richard III. Michelangelo. Thomas More. Ferdinand Magellan. Mother Shipton. The Reformation. Anne Askew. *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Elizabeth I. Michel de Montaigne. Lady Jane Grey. Mary Queen of Scots. Miguel de Cervantes. William Shakespeare. Guy Fawkes. Caravaggio. Ben Jonson. John Donne. Rembrandt. John Milton. *The King James Bible*. François de La Rochefoucauld. The Thirty Years War. Samuel Pepys. The English Civil War. Daniel Defoe. Johann Sebastian Bach. Alexander Pope. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Laurence Sterne. The Enlightenment. Bonnie Prince Charlie. Immanuel Kant. Marie Antoinette. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Horatio Nelson. William Wordsworth. Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Jane Austen. John James Audubon. Lord Byron. Percy Bysshe Shelley. John Clare. John Keats. John Stuart Mill. Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Charles Darwin. Frédéric Chopin. Franz Liszt. Charles Dickens. Robert Browning. Søren Kierkegaard. The Battle of Waterloo. Emily Brontë. Karl Marx. Walt Whitman. Charles Baudelaire. Fyodor Dostoevsky. Leo Tolstoy. Emily Dickinson. Paul Cézanne. Auguste Rodin. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Thomas Hardy. Gerard Manley Hopkins. Paul Verlaine. Paul Gauguin. August Strindberg. Robert Louis Stevenson. *Moby Dick*. Vincent Van Gogh. *Madame Bovary*. Sigmund Freud. Anton Chekhov. The American Civil War. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. WB Yeats. Robert Falcon Scott. Robert Frost. Rainer Maria Rilke. Albert Einstein. Wallace Stevens. Guillaume Apollinaire. Virginia Woolf. Franz Kafka. Ezra Pound. Coca-Cola. Marc Chagall. Marcel Duchamp. TS Eliot. Agatha Christie. Groucho Marx. Erwin Rommel. Mae West. Mao Zedong. Babe Ruth. Eugenio Montale. Leon Theremin. Georges Bataille. Federico García Lorca. René Magritte. Alfred Hitchcock. Fred Astaire. Jorge Luis Borges. Noël Coward. John Steinbeck. Mark Rothko. Pablo Neruda. Jean-Paul Sartre. Adolf Eichmann. Louise Brooks. John Wayne. Laurence Olivier. WH Auden. Elizabeth Bishop. Alan Turing. Jackson Pollock. Ralph Ellison. The First World War. Billie Holiday. Frank Sinatra. Orson Wells. The Battle of Passchendaele. Rita Hayworth. WS Graham. Edwin Morgan.

Federico Fellini. The BBC. Jack Kerouac. Philip Larkin. *Ulysses*. Italo Calvino. James Baldwin. Truman Capote. *The Great Gatsby*. Frank O'Hara. Marilyn Monroe. *Turandot*. John Ashbery. Mickey Mouse. Sylvia Plath. Roman Polanski. Susan Sontag. Leonard Cohen. Champion the Wonder Horse. JH Prynne. Tom Stoppard. Tony Harrison. *Gone With The Wind*. Seamus Heaney. The Second World War. Brian Ferry. Patti Smith. David Bowie. Iggy Pop. Anne Carson. Luther Vandross. *Singin' in the Rain*. The Vietnam War. The Suez Crisis. *Bridge on the River Kwai*. Madonna. Michael Jackson. John McEnroe. Jonathan Franzen. The Beatles. The Rolling Stones. Whitney Houston. *Gardener's World*. Bloody Sunday. *Live and Let Die*. The Sex Pistols. *Star Wars*. *Oliver's Army*. Vicodin. Mini Cheddars. The Smiths. Tetris. The Space Shuttle Challenger disaster. The Chernobyl disaster. *Inspector Morse*. Massive Attack. The Gulf War. The Los Angeles riots. Snow Patrol. *Braveheart*. Google. *The Angel of the North*. The International Space Station. Viagra. The war in Afghanistan. YouTube. Twitter. *Breaking Bad*. The London Olympics. The shooting of Trayvon Martin. The 2016 United States elections.

I was already aware of the academic discipline of futures studies – the systematic study of the future – and, reading around the topic, became increasingly convinced there was a possibility of a gainful cross-pollination between futures studies and poetry. A quotation from futurist Alvin Toffler (1983) suggested I might be on to something:

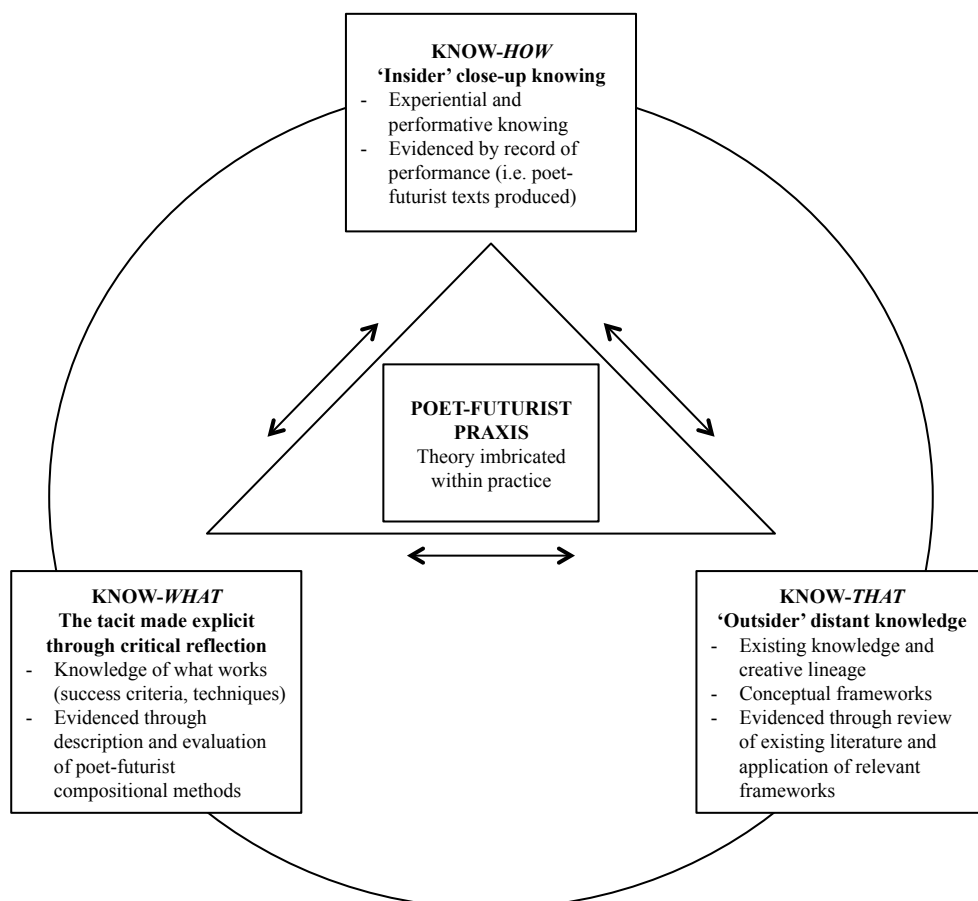
We live in a world filled with cruelty, sorrow and anger, along with radiant promise, and the only way to survive, as we transit through it, is with a sense of humour and an appetite for surrealism. (p. 216)

Amongst other qualities, it was humour and surrealism that I sought in the poetry I read and was seeking to write. My overriding hypothesis became that there was new knowledge to be generated through the production of texts that were both poetic and futurist.

The relationship between poetry and the future is a topic that is receptive to research under the umbrella of various different academic subjects (most obviously literature, history, and sociology; also, at a stretch, cultural studies, politics, philosophy, or even business strategy). The nature of the topic virtually demands an interdisciplinary approach. At the outset, I also took the view that a more traditionally academic and analytic approach to this study was likely to be less effective than a more creative methodology based in Practice-As-Research (PaR). PaR is defined as “a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and a practice (creative writing, dance,

musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry.” (Nelson, 2013, pp. 8-9). I expected the topic of study – the crossover of poetry and futures studies– to be relatively unexplored territory. I intuited that this research would best be approached obliquely and creatively rather than assailed by ruthless analytic logic; that more compelling insights would be generated through the creative, reflective practices of an artist rather than the forensic deductions of an auditor. Conceptual frameworks for creative research and evaluation, whilst no longer entirely new, are not yet fully mainstream. I found Nelson’s three-pronged PaR framework reflects recent thinking on what works best in PaR, is clear and covers the dimensions of PaR comprehensively, and could be readily tailored for research into futures poetry. (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Three-pronged Practice-as-Research Model tailored for research into futures poetry (adapted from Nelson, 2013, p. 37)



In this framework, ‘Know-how’ describes the artistic act (the making of the artwork, the performance), where insight is tacit and experiential, embodied. Clearly, for the poet-futurist, ‘Know how’ would be demonstrated through creation of poetic texts about the

future. ‘Know-that’ is formed of the “outsider, distant knowledge” of relevant conceptual frameworks used by the artist-practitioner. I have built on two main frameworks when developing a conceptual approach for this research: the four-step futuring process used by the Institute for the Future (IFTF, 2015), a Silicon Valley think tank, and conceptual poet Christian Bök’s *Quadrivium of Poetic Modes* (2009). Both frameworks are discussed in later chapters. By combining these frameworks, I have identified sixteen possible approaches, or strategies, for developing and producing poetic futures texts. Finally, ‘Know-what’ in PaR is the artist’s critical reflection on their own methods and work, including accounts of writing specific texts, reflections on these texts, and discussions of what success looks like for the artist. For the poet-futurist, ‘Know-what’ requires reflection upon the effectiveness of different poetic futures strategies and ongoing iterative selection, development and improvement of these strategies.

Lines of enquiry and research activities

There were three main elements to this research: firstly, to test whether there was a gap in futures studies relating to imaginative and poetic thinking; secondly, whether there was a gap in poetry with respect to futurist thinking; and finally, what poetic techniques would be most effective in generating new and valuable insights about the future? I then planned to draw these techniques together into a proposed praxis for the poet-futurist.

This document comprises the output of the research study. The history, aims and practices of futures studies were reviewed to understand how the field uses analytic and imaginative techniques and to see what references were made to incorporating poetic practices into its work (Chapter 2). Then, a selection of contemporary poetry texts was analysed to understand the extent to which they addressed the future and, where they did, what ideas about the future were being communicated (Chapter 3). I experimented with different poetic techniques to produce my own texts about the future, evaluating these techniques according to the extent to which they generated different or better insights (Chapter 4). Bringing together the activities of the poet and the activities of the futurist, I designed a praxis for the poet-futurist. I triangulated this praxis against different ideas about the future of poetry to ensure that it was future-proofed (Chapter

5). The conclusion in Chapter 6 draws together the insights generated through the research project and presents ideas for further exploration through poet-futurist praxis.

The creative portfolio comprises two parts. The first, *Special Projects*, is a series of short texts produced in order to test the relative effectiveness of sixteen poetic futures strategies in producing distinctive and new insights into the future. Five longer texts complete the creative portfolio. The production of these five pieces leverages insights from *Special Projects* on which strategies worked better, with each using a hybrid of different techniques. A key research activity supporting the development of both the critical element and the creative portfolio was a series of ‘field trips to the future’ – visits I made to conferences, exhibitions and locations which were then taken as stimuli in the production of various texts (Box 4).

Box 4: ‘Field trips to the future’

Foresight Practitioner Training, IFTF, Palo Alto (March 2015)

Deep Learning in Healthcare conference, London (April 2016)

WorldFuture 2016 conference, World Futures Society, Washington DC (July 2016)

Beazley Designs of the Year, Design Museum, London (January 2017)

A Temporary Futures Institute, M HKA, Antwerp (August 2017)

The Future is Now, V&A, London (May 2018)

King Salman Science Oasis, Riyadh (June 2018)

(I also travelled to the Museum of the Future in Dubai, but it wasn’t built yet.)

Thus, I had a clear set of research questions and a robust methodology for addressing them. Through a creative and interdisciplinary approach, I aimed to identify what scope there was for greater cross-pollination between poetry and futures studies. But my first step would be to understand what creative and poetic techniques were already in play within futures studies, which would require a review of the main ideas and approaches in that field, the output of which is described in the next chapter.

2. Beyond Melt Value: Analytics and Creativity in Futures Studies

Excessively precise economic analysis can lead to assessing everything in terms of its easily measurable melt value – the value that thieves get from stealing copper wiring from isolated houses, that vandals got from tearing down Greek temples for the lead joints holding the marble blocks together, that short-sighted timber companies get from liquidating their forests. The standard to insist on is live value. What is something worth when it's working?

Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Discipline* (2009, p. 277)

In this chapter, three topics are explored. Firstly, following an overview of the chronology of futures studies, I will review the limited evidence of engagement with poetry during futures studies' development. Then I will give an account of a simple contemporary futuring process and describe the ways in which it deploys empiric-analytic and intuitive-imaginative methods, proposing that this process privileges the former at the expense of the latter. Finally, I will take a view on the extent to which moving the balance away from empiric-analytic thinking and towards intuitive-imaginative methods, specifically through a greater engagement with poetry, might help achieve the goals of futures studies.

The history of the future

To attempt an exhaustive history of every school of thought, writer and technique in future studies would be foolhardy but is, thankfully, out of the scope of this thesis. However, an overview of the formation and development of the field is needed to support later discussion on overlaps between futures studies and poetry. Numerous accounts are available of the history and development of futures studies, offering varying levels of depth and evidence, and I have drawn on a selection of these in developing an overview chronology. Clear, concise introductory summaries are provided by Sardar (2013, pp. 27-42) and Gidley (2017, pp. 20-62). Articles in futures studies journals that have described the themes, schools of thought and evolution of futures studies include Schultz (2015) and Kuosa (2010). Son (2015), in addition to conceptualising the development of future studies in three phases, provides a helpful overview of other conceptualisations, a “history of futures studies histories”. A comprehensive and cogent account of futures studies prepared by a practitioner is contained in Wendell Bell's *The Foundations of*

Futures Studies (2009, pp. 1-72). A critical recent source is Andersson's *The Future of the World* (2018), a monograph charting the complexities of futures studies' development in detail, based on archival research in the collections of key futurist organisations. A source with slightly different scope is Samuel (2009), which usefully takes a broader lens on how Western society's views of the future changed through the twentieth-century, contrasting the perspectives of academics and experts with more popular conceptions of the future. The accounts listed identify similar phases in the development of futures studies, although precise milestones, timings and nomenclature differ. At the risk of adding another conceptualisation to the proliferation already available, I will identify five main phases in the development of futures studies: *Antecedents, Emergence, Peak Futures, Retrenchment and Corporatisation, Consolidation and Crew Change*.

Antecedents (prior to the Second World War)

Of course, humans thought about the future long before the codification and systemisation of this thinking in future studies. In terms of antecedents, one could start by considering “the oral wave of the shamans and mystics” (Schultz, p. 325) and “forms of ancient divination” (Son, p. 121), followed by the visions, prophecies and philosophy of the early written age, of which Nostradamus' *Les Propheties* of 1555 is the preeminent example. Moving from mysticism to early social and scientific visions and prognostications, milestones often mentioned are More's *Utopia* (1516), Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) and Boyle's *Wishlist* of the early 1660s, a list of possible future scientific breakthroughs. Timelines often jump ahead at this point to the late nineteenth century, to later utopian thinking and early science fiction. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887*, published in 1888, is notable for its method, popularity and influence. *Looking Backward* takes a science fiction premise – a Boston man falls into a century-long sleep, awakens in a socialist future – as a means to describe a practical utopia. The book was an enormous bestseller, prompted the formation of ‘Bellamy Clubs’ to discuss its implications, and led to countless imitations and responses, notable amongst these being William Morris' 1890 aesthetic and ecological utopia, *News from Nowhere*. Also in this period appear examples of early science fictional futures, notably Jules Verne's 1870 *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* and HG Wells' 1895 *The Time Machine*. HG Wells is seen as directly anticipating, and even prompting, the emergence of futures studies. Gidley notes two interventions by Wells as being key: a 1901 Royal

Institution Lecture, where he affirmed the need to establish an “academic study of the future”; and a radio broadcast in 1932 where he noted that although there were thousands of professors of history in the world, there was not a single professor of foresight (p. 6).

Emergence (immediately post-war)

Futures studies emerged from the Second World War’s “accelerated experiments in technical forecasting and systems operations” (Schultz, p. 326). Accounts of the genesis of futures studies typically identify two distinct originating traditions. In the US, a military (and later, commercial and corporate) forecasting discipline emerged, which can be variously described as empirical, positivist, scientific, expert and technocratic. In this “era of emerging potentials of ICT, space travel, economic growth, urbanization, industrialization and globalization”, futures studies met the need for “long-range planning, trend-extrapolations, and technological foresight” (Kuosa p. 331). This US-based, Cold War-correlated tradition is associated with the think tank RAND and the forecasters it employed, in particular Herman Kahn, whose “‘thinking the unthinkable’ about thermonuclear war was one of the first policy uses of scenario thinking” (Schultz, p. 327). The second originating tradition, associated with post-war national planning initiatives in Europe, was far less predictive and empiric in outlook, more participative, contextual and contingent, proposing collective re-envisagement of future society. Pivotal figures in promoting the study of such multiple possible futures were French scholars Gaston Berger and Bertrand de Jouvenel, and de Jouvenel’s 1961 book *The Art of Conjecture* is a key text in the European tradition of futures studies.

Peak Futures (1960s and early 1970s)

Andersson (p. 18) writes “It is not difficult to demonstrate that future research peaked in the years between 1964 and 1973 (between the publication of the first long-range forecasting study at RAND, and Opec I)”. In this period, the awareness and standing of futures studies increased, with a boom in futuring activity. Whilst this activity was still primarily “produced by academic elites for political and economic elites” (Schultz, p. 324), futures studies also gained visibility in popular culture. The 1964 RAND report, *Report on a Long-Range Forecast*, brought together expert opinions to forecast technological developments for the rest of the century and beyond. It responded to “increasing awareness of the long-term consequences of population, economic growth, social movements, the threat of nuclear war and the energy crisis” (Kuosa p. 331). In the US, Herman Kahn left RAND to found the Hudson Institute, publishing a series of

influential, technologically optimistic forecasts, including *The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years* (1967), developing scenarios as ‘alternative futures’. As pessimistic as Kahn was optimistic, the seminal and widely discussed study *The Limits to Growth* (1972) used systems dynamics and computer simulation methods to forecast a neo-Malthusian economic and ecological catastrophe. Futures studies began to institutionalise, with the formation of associations for practitioners (the World Futures Society in the US in 1966, and the World Futures Studies Federation in Europe in 1972) and the establishment of academic journals for futures studies. Graduate programs in futures studies began to emerge during this period, first in the US, then worldwide (Gidley, p. 80). Books about the future aimed at a general readership also gained wide attention. Alvin Toffler’s *Future Shock* (1970), predicting a world where individuals become overwhelmed by the scale and pace of societal change, was a bestseller.

Retrenchment and Corporatisation (late 1970s to 2000)

Much of the excitement and belief in future studies that had been generated in the 1960s had dissolved by the end of the 1970s. The inability of economic forecasting to predict and prepare for the oil crisis of 1973 was a damaging blow for futures studies, as was to a lesser extent the fact that the type of post-industrial society of technology and leisure that had been so boldly forecast had so starkly failed to manifest itself in the seventies. Additionally, perhaps the novelty had just worn off. Like the falling ratings for later moon landings, it could be argued that people had become habituated to futurists’ shocking predictions. The US bicentennial of 1976 and the future-gazing associated with it (the Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future, co-chaired by Al Gore, was established in that year) could be seen as a last gasp of Peak Futures with popular enthusiasm dimming past this point. For instance, membership of professional futures organisations declined in this period. The popularity of the World Future Society “peaked in 1979 at sixty thousand members, but has declined since then” (Schultz, p. 328).

It may be telling that, by the 1980s, those who forecast the future seemed keen to disassociate themselves from futures studies, even if what they were doing were very similar activities to very similar ends. Futurists became trend forecasters or foresight specialists or any other professional title that distanced themselves from the perceived

failure of futures studies. For instance, the authors of the 1982 book *Encounters with the Future* are keen to make it clear “we’re not futurists” (p. 13). Two of the key characteristics Kuosa identifies of post-Peak Futures is “the almost complete cease of development of new foresight methods” and “overall fragmentation” of the field (p. 322). Futures thinking became increasingly corporatised in this period, with the dominant scenario planning methodology becoming widely used by US and European corporations (Son p. 127).

Consolidation and Crew Change (2000 to date)

By 2000 ‘foresight’ had become a widely used synonym (or, perhaps, euphemism) for futures thinking, particularly in its application in corporate foresight. Many international companies had established foresight departments by this point (Son p. 128). The development of foresight in this period is linked by Son to the rise of neoliberalism and a seeming lack of alternatives to globalised capitalism. “Futurists focusing on foresight tend to show a lack of moral orientation for the public interests and future generations. The obsession with foresight promotes acceptance of a market-oriented future society. Such a market-oriented future can serve to benefit those in power” (p. 129). A key publication at the start of this period is the essay anthology *Rescuing All Our Futures* (Sardar 1999) which challenges underpinning assumptions of future studies to date, arguing that “the future has been colonised” (p. 9). Futures studies is criticised on several levels: as being preoccupied with technological trends, dominated by a monolithic vision of a Westernised, globalised and marketised future, that the field has become “domesticated” and “corporatized” (p. 12-13). In response, new methodologies were developed that sought to broaden engagement with more diverse practitioner and stakeholder groups (under names including ‘critical futures’ and ‘causal layered analysis’). It has been noted that more engaging and interactive futures studies is now possible, as technological innovation has “started to decentralize the power core of futures thinking, [...] crowdsourcing and gamification enable widespread grassroots futures exploration” (Schultz, p. 325). There is a noticeable “Pacific Shift” occurring in the locus of global futures studies, with the loss of leading first- and second-generation futurists in the US and Europe (Rejeski & Olson, 2006, p. 19), and new enthusiasm and energy for futures studies comes from new centres in Asia (particularly Tamkang University in Taiwan). Two divergent themes emerge in contemporary futures studies: the desire to innovate and increase diversity within the field, together with a desire to

increasingly codify and professionalise futures studies as a discipline. The rationale for thinking about the future remains, as the concerns of Peak Futures (overpopulation, pollution and nuclear war) are swapped for new existential threats (global warming, out-of-control technology, terrorism and broken national and global governance).

In providing this overview of the history of futures studies, I am acutely aware that this is a mere sketch of the territory and that others have provided far more detailed maps. However, as my aim was only ever to have a series of way-markers to support a search for crossovers between futures studies and poetry, I will pend the cartography of future studies here, and look to interactions between these two fields.

Futures studies: heavy on science fiction, light on poetry

If one is looking for a connection between futures studies and modes of creative writing, the most obvious place to look is science fiction. Peak Futures coincided with a boom in science fiction, and science fiction writers were certainly in conversation with this expanding field. Andersson notes “there were direct links between future studies and science fiction” and Arthur C Clarke was seen as “an important influence on futures studies” (p. 159), although some science fiction authors saw their work as quite distinct: Le Guin (1985, p. 156) wrote, “Prediction is the business of prophets, clairvoyants and futurologists. It is not the business of novelists. A novelist’s business is lying.” Lombardo (2008, p. 344) names William Gibson, Bruce Sterling and Neal Stephenson as science fiction writers whose concerns are closely connected to contemporary futures studies. If science fiction can be considered ‘speculative fiction’, perhaps futures studies can be thought of as ‘speculative non-fiction’. Science fiction writers have clearly been successful in presenting images of the future that have engaged the public, far more so than futurists in the latter half of the twentieth-century.

However, in the post-war evolution of the field, there appears to be no evidence of any similarly strong or systematic link between futures studies and poetry. For instance, reviewing leading academic journals of futures studies surfaces only a small number of explicit mentions of poetry. There are occasional mentions of poetry being used as part of a futuring process: a way to engage audience in futures thinking, as evidence to draw upon in a forecast, or as a way of representing the output of an exercise. Kerry and Greenaway (2011) describe a community project where poetry-making formed part of

the engagement of young people with the future. Jennings (2015) presents a scenario on ecosystem loss in the form of a poem as one contribution to a discussion of sustainable development. O'Connor (1999) takes extracts from colonial and post-colonial poetry and uses them to illustrate his critique of sustainable development in New Zealand. Tough (1997) lists poetry as one of a number of possible 'transformative experiences' that could be used to encourage people to feel more empathy with future generations. Judge (1991) imagines how we might govern ourselves in the year 2491 and considers whether poetry, as one way of accessing a collective imagination, might be a part of this. Kuhrt (1994) identifies a tone of valiant despair in (Eliotian) English post-war poetry, attributed to feelings of powerlessness in the face of the seemingly impossible moral and political challenges of the twentieth century, and attempts to formulate alternatives. Finally, Bussey (2013) presents reflections on elements of his own futuring methods (accessing one's imagination, envisaging different alternatives) in the form of a "poetic meditation". However, in comparison to the critical shared influence of science fiction and futures studies, poetry cannot reasonably be considered more than a footnote in the development of futures studies. Taking a different approach, of the major figures in the history of futures studies, only one example emerged of a futurist who was also identified as a poet. Alvin Toffler, author of several bestselling futurist texts including *Future Shock*, was originally an English major and, as he mentions in *Previews and Premises* (p. 162), continued to write poetry. Only a single poem of his is available: 'The League of Selves', published in *Antioch Review* in 1979, well into his career as a futurist. This poem demonstrates an interest in history (namely, the history of assassins) but there is nothing specific in it that makes it read as a 'futurist poem':

Sighting down the silver barrel,
crosshairs on his temple,
I could Kennedy his cranium
or Luther King his eyeballs.
I could RFK his chest
or Lincoln his lung.
Alternatively,
I could Archduke of Sarajevo
him. (p. 182-183)

The potential for poetry in futuring processes

If futures studies has had to date only minimal engagement with poetry, what value and potential might there be to increase this? To answer this, one must describe the activities undertaken in a futuring exercise but, given the multiplicity of methodologies within contemporary futures studies (many of which are still emergent and contested), there is an immediate difficulty in selecting which methodology to present. Given my purposes, I used the framework described in the Institute for the Future's 'Foresight Toolkit' (2015) to which I was introduced at a 'Foresight Practitioner Workshop' held at the IFTF in 2016. I selected this method over others for its simplicity and clarity. It is acknowledged that other futuring methods typically feature similar steps and sets of activities but with different nomenclature or emphasis (such as the 'Framework Foresight' six-step method described in Hines and Bishop, 2015, p. 371). In the IFTF's process, there are four steps to producing a futures forecast: *Calibration*, *Foresight*, *Insight* and *Action*.

Calibration

If you are not a professional futurist, and do not spend much time thinking about the future in a structured way, it is very possible you will approach the topic of the future reluctantly and with a closed mind. Activities in the Calibration step aim to put the reader in a more receptive mental state for futuring. IFTF describes the goal as being "to tune up our minds to be future-ready" (p. 4). This is done through identifying and challenging one's incoming assumptions about the future. Cornish (2004, p. 2-7) provides a helpful overview of key Calibration messages: it is reckless not to prepare for the future if you can; one should use all information that is available to us, and it is better to use imperfect information than none at all; expect to be surprised by the future; there is value in thinking long-term as well as short-term; dreaming counts for nothing without doing; you are not the first person to think about the future, so you can learn from those who have gone before. Hence, it can be demonstrated how fast change has happened before, how those who have taken more conservative predictions in the past were proven wrong. A successful Calibration phase produces an audience who accepts that there is value in trying to understand the future and prepare for it, and that the future may well look very different to today.

Foresight

In this step, a variety of techniques are used to understand what has already happened, what is happening now and how these might influence the future. IFTF defines foresight as “the process of turning facts about the present into clear and actionable views of the future” (p. 4). A key activity is the identification of ‘signals’: real, small-scale changes which, if they were to be scaled up, would have a transformational impact over time. The aim is to construct an evidence base from which summary ‘trends’ can be identified and prioritised. Signal gathering is an iterative and exhaustive process of desk research (gathering and analysing reports, forecasts and databases), expert interviews, workshops and so forth. Signals can also be gathered through site visits and participant observation. Weaker signals identified earlier are typically more useful to the futurist than those that have fully manifested, as they give more time for individuals to respond to coming changes.

Insight

According to IFTF, “insight is the ‘aha!’ moment when we begin to translate our foresight into implications for the choices we face” (p. 5). Signals and trends are consolidated into alternative future ‘scenarios’. Whereas the Foresight step values novelty and abundance, the Insight phase demands selection and consistency. Preparing scenarios is an exercise in world-building; the resulting imagined world must be internally consistent (if multiple trends are included in a scenario, these should not be mutually incompatible). Alternative scenarios can then be discussed to examine their likelihood and preferability and can be brought alive through ‘personas’ or ‘artefacts from the future’ (i.e. “what if” descriptions of people and objects who could exist in the scenario described).

Action

Ultimately the value of studying the future relates to the extent to which its findings lead to useful action today. In the Action phase, the activities required to achieve preferred futures and avoid negative futures can be identified and planned. In this last step, as described in the IFTF framework, we “turn preferred futures into probable futures as we plot action roadmaps, bring the right people in, and ultimately design experiments we can undertake immediately” (p. 5).

Now the four steps have been described, the balance of analytical and creative techniques in each step can be reviewed. As will be seen, although the need for creativity and imagination is acknowledged, in practice the futuring process is likely to privilege empiric-analytic approaches and tools.

Calibration

The main messages of the Calibration phase – look at how much things have already changed; look at what reliable experts have said about how different the future will be; look at how people have been wrong about the future in the past – actually do not require a great deal of imaginative thinking to communicate. Each of these messages are best evidenced by sharing historic documentation and data. One could also encourage the reader to participate in meditative reflection, or to undertake imaginative and improvisational exercises to expand their receptiveness to thinking about the future although these approaches are less mainstream.

Foresight

Scanning for signals is the critical activity within the Foresight step. Signals are, by their definition, things that really exist and the imaginative element is limited to taking these and considering what would happen if they were to scale up. Rarely, if ever, is one encouraged to come up with future developments that have no grounding in existing reality. If it cannot be anchored to something that exists now, it is harder to argue that it should form part of the forecast. Table 1 below shows the model of the lifecycle of emerging information that Hiltunen (2008) used when conducting a study of where futurists sourced their signals. The results showed the most used sources were drawn from the ‘Elite Awareness’ phase (scientists/researchers, futurists and colleagues) and she remarks that it is “interesting to see that respondents did not have a tendency to use the sources listed in the ‘Idea Creation’ phase, from which weak signals can be found” (p. 33). Moreover, I would argue that there is an implicit assumption that the futurist *receives* but does not *create* the content of the Idea Creation phase. Put simply, you can either make stuff up about the future, or you can be a serious futurist, but *not both*.

Table 1: Information life-cycle of emerging issues and sources of futurist signals (adapted from Hiltunen 2008) p. 24, p. 32

	Idea Creation	Elite Awareness	Popular Awareness	Government Awareness	Procedural Routinisation	Record-Keeping
Most useful		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Journals • Futurist Newsletters • Research Reports by Analysts, Think Tanks • Popular Science and Economic Magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio and TV Programs • Internet Publications 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Fiction • Fringe and Alternative Press 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade Journals • Business Leader Magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers • Popular General Interest Magazines • Fiction and Non-Fiction Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Studies • Government Policy Papers • Public Hearings 		
Least useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patent Applications • Doctoral Dissertations • Artistic Works 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinion Polls, Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Legislation, Bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Regulations • Professional Practice • Educational Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Archives • Historical Studies

Insight

Insight, building on foresight, is a gathering together of signals into coherent scenarios and artefacts. This synthesis is valued for its analytic robustness and coherence: the extent to which features of the scenario are traceable back to specific, evidence signals and the extent to which the scenario is internally consistent. Whilst there is undeniably scope for creativity in how the results of the Insight phase are present (for instance, in generating richer and more appealing descriptions of persona or artefacts for the future), the scope for pure imagination is limited by requirements of rigour and consistency. Whilst it might be fun to prepare and to read, a wildly inconsistent scenario based on unconstrained imaginings would not be thought to have much value in a typical futuring process.

Action

At its most deterministic, the Action step can simply be a transcription of the activities that are seen to be necessary to achieve more preferred scenarios. There may, of course, be some scope to think laterally and generate alternative actions to attain required outcomes but, like the Insight phase, there is a requirement that Actions can be traced back to the original evidenced signals. How else could someone be persuaded that an action identified in this step is worth pursuing without such analytical rigour?

Resistance within futures studies to more imaginative/speculative approaches

On balance, it does appear that contemporary futures studies methods require their thinking to be evidenced and that the emphasis on evidence and logic in each step in the futuring process, even where there are imaginative possibilities, indicates that futures studies can be expected to privilege more analytical approaches over more imaginative ones. If this is the case, one can conjecture reasons why.

As is seen in the chronology of futures studies discussed earlier, it is far from resolved whether the field can or should aspire to the status of an academic discipline. One can argue that its academic standing remains fragile and its credibility still weakened from the retrenchment that followed Peak Futures. As a relatively new field (certainly compared with other academic disciplines in the humanities and sciences), it is still seeking to build its academic credibility. Its object of study (the future) does not exist. There are no 'future facts' as such to analyse and the potential exists for perceived overlap between serious enquiry and 'woo-woo' futurism, fringe science, pseudoscience and superstition. Like any interdisciplinary study, there will be contested borders with other disciplines, competition for standing and funding, and for ownership of topics and methods. One could also hypothesise that futures studies has been a victim of its own influence, as elements of the discipline have been co-opted and taught in other courses (such as business and management). By presenting itself as an analytically rigorous undertaking, futures studies continues to try to secure an academic standing.

Additionally, the origins and development of futures studies connects the field closely with both military and commercial planning, neither of which one might imagine would value imaginative thinking over analysis and data. If the audience for futures insight is paying for a forecast (whether commercially, or by providing funding for academic

research), they may feel entitled to an evidenced, fact-based analysis. In this context, gathering and analysing data is ‘real work’ but sitting in a room and imagining the future is ‘not real work’. Stereotypically, military planners and commercial boards are interested in the numbers, the counting of the countable, the quantification of the ‘melt value’.

The increasing availability of data to futures studies creates as many problems as it solves. One could conjecture that futures studies could become even more evidence-based and analytic in future, given the increasing amount of data available that can be analysed. During Peak Futures, the most onerous task for the futurist was finding signals (typically, gathering snippets from newspapers and journals). Spreadsheets and the internet have made this task trivial today; the ‘work’ of futures studies is now much more in the management and curation of an overwhelming volume of data. But with more data comes more pressure and desire to utilise the data. There has never been greater scope for one’s forecast to be torpedoed by a critic who highlights the one piece of critical data that the futurist has not analysed.

On balance, futures studies has more to lose than gain by closer association with poetry

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore whether contemporary futures studies has got it right in terms of the balance between analytical and imaginative techniques, and whether a greater engagement with imaginative approaches such as those involved in poetry could benefit futures studies. The answer to the first question is “probably not”, as more imaginative techniques could be expected to generate in a broader range of insights than those from purely analytic approaches. Analytic techniques can only shuffle a deck; imaginative techniques allow one to draw cards. With respect to the second question, would a greater engagement with imaginative techniques and poetry help? Actually, probably not given that the overriding issue for futures studies in the immediate term seems to be to consolidate and grow its value and credibility as a discipline (rather than, say, mobilising humanity to access the opportunities and address the hazards that futures studies predicts). If credibility is the goal, poetry is rarely the answer. I once attended a business planning meeting for a biscuit company where, at the end of the day, the chief executive attempted to bring the day together by reading a poem he had written about how well everyone had collaborated and how they were jointly

navigating the difficult environment around them. It was received with bemusement. If one thing is certain, adding poetry to something typically does not increase its credibility and is more likely to just make the average audience uncomfortable.

If futures studies is primarily interested in embedding itself in the academy, professionalising itself, becoming a discipline with the rigour and standing of accountancy, then a significant engagement with poetry is not going to help. However, if the goal is to explore the future with an open mind and mobilise people to act for the future, then perhaps there is scope for poetry in futures studies. Poetry, with its ability to access new insights, unspoken knowledge and different ways of seeing (even if its ability to motivate people to action is debatable), could be one of a range of modes of activity which should have a place in futures studies praxis.

If right now there is not a compelling case that poetry has something to offer that futures studies urgently needs, there is still the possibility that futures studies might have something to offer poetry. In the next chapter, I consider how contemporary poets address the topic of the future and argue that a greater engagement with futures studies is one potential route into a range of ideas about the future that are currently underexplored by poets.

3. Beyond Fate's Telegram: How Poetry Talks About the Future

The Future – never spoke –
Nor will He – like the Dumb –
Reveal by sign – a syllable
Of His Profound To Come –

But when the News be ripe –
Presents it – in the Act –
Forestalling Preparation –
Escape – or Substitute –

Indifference to Him –
The Dower – as the Doom –
His Office – but to execute
Fate's – Telegram – to Him –

Emily Dickinson (1965, p. 519)

With this accelerating change happening all around us, to spend even a few words on discussing what poetry is and what it can do cannot help but feel a little self-indulgent. Yet, in order to understand whether futures studies has something to bring to poetry, I will need to state what my position is regarding the purpose of poetry in order to be able to assess how futures studies could or could not contribute to this purpose. In this chapter, I discuss possible functions for poetry, and how poetry and the future are historically and logically linked. I then present the results of a quantitative analysis of forty recent mainstream poetry texts to determine how much (or how little) they say about the future. Finally, I examine examples of blended poetic-futurist practice that indicate a potential route forward.

What poetry is for

John Lennard (2005) writes:

“Some teachers do not distinguish practical criticism from critical theory, or regard it as a critical theory to be taught alongside psychoanalytic, feminist, Marxist, and structuralist theories; others seem to do very little except invite discussion of ‘how it feels’ to read poem x.” (p. *xxi*)

Lennard's view of poetry privileges poetic craft and technique, the technical elements of metre, form, layout, punctuation, lineation, rhyme, diction and syntax. One is subconsciously deterred from poetry by its high barriers of entry: the need to know, in Lennard's terms, its "professional lexicon" (p. xxiv). It is not by accident that Lennard's book, *The Poetry Handbook*, has a Glossary and Index of Technical Terms running to 29 pages. This reductivist view of poetry is not one I personally share and seems at odds with the diversity of contemporary poetry. There are alternative conceptions of poetry that insist 'how it feels to read poem x' is actually a central question. Of course, the technical elements listed above (to which I would add concision, specificity, musicality and surprise) are important for certain kinds of poetry, and one can choose to experiment more or less with these for different effects and to different ends, but these technical aspects are ultimately a means rather than an end in poetry. I would position myself closer to the views expressed by Dean Young (2010) in *The Art of Recklessness*: "I believe in the divinity of profligacy" (p. 3); "POETRY CAN'T BE HARMED BY PEOPLE TRYING TO WRITE IT!" (p. 5). One loses a lot of the expansiveness and potentiality of poetry by trying to prescribe it, and one may suspect the motives of those who try to do so. A recent offhand statement by US poet Chen Chen on the purpose of poetry sums it up:

lol cishet white men who still think they get to define what poetry is/should be for everyone else. (Chen, 2018)

I am comfortable that if a piece of text is presented as a poem, it is a poem, in line with the view in Kennedy & Gioia that "The poet's attitude is something like this: I offer this piece of writing to be read not as prose but as a poem – that is, more perceptively, thoughtfully, and considerately, with more attention to sounds and connotations" (2007, p. 353). For the purposes of this thesis, I will propose that the effect poetry has is more interesting than the specific craft of its construction (although, of course, the two are connected) and I will express more interest in what poetry *does* rather than what it *is*, in order to understand how an engagement with futures studies might assist in poetry's effect. Constantine (2013) identifies numerous "distinct factors in the workings of poetry" (pp. 55-86) which form "grounds for believing poetry matters". These comprise: that poetry gives pleasure (or satisfaction, or consolation) to the reader or listener; it brings one into the moment, prompting "an alerted, connected, open state of mind"; that

it may provide useful warning or witness; it is an assertion of personal (intellectual) freedom; it provides an oasis of calm and reflection in the relentlessly noisy modern age, it is an exercise in commanding and consciously directing one's own attention; it provides a sense of commonality and empathy, it challenges one's solipsism. To me, these seem like a defensible set of goals for poetry.

To what extent would greater engagement with futures studies support these goals? It is not difficult to imagine enjoying poetry written about the future in the same way that one might enjoy science fiction futures. Alternatively, one may draw comfort from more dystopic writing, taking the form a mental resilience generated through 'grief rehearsal'. Poetry about the future, by definition, generates feelings of 'futureness' rather than 'presentness'. However, it could be argued that the novelty and surprise of futures poems may challenge mindsets that are stuck in the past. One cannot witness the future, but futures poems certainly can offer warnings. Regarding poetry as an assertion of one's freedom, then surely poetry about the future is the most freeing there is, as you cannot change any past event but can act to control your future. Futures poetry is perhaps less likely to generate calm, reflective states of mind, as wonder and anxiety is inherent to thinking about the future but I see no reason why poetry about the future could not provide an exercise of one's attention as Constantine describes. Finally, futures poetry offers great potential in terms of commonality and empathy, given the fact that humanity ultimately shares one future. There cannot be any real objection to the possibility that an engagement with future studies could contribute to many of poetry's objectives. Perhaps counterintuitively, even if there was no such logical case for doing so, poets should still engage with the future, from the perspective of the value of multiplicity in poetry. It costs nothing to experiment and anything that few poets are doing is worth experimenting with. I will limit myself to the proposal that the activities of the futurist (primarily, thinking in a structured way about the future) are appropriate and well-suited tasks for the poet, and offer two rationales: that there are historic examples of poets holding roles as seers, oracles and prophets, and that logically there is synergy between the roles of poet and futurist.

We should expect poets to want to take a view on the future. Aristotle wrote: "It is not the poet's business to relate actual events, but such things as might or could happen in accordance with probability or necessity", which Yanal interprets as meaning "The poet,

in order to make poetry and not something else, must write about possible, not actual, things” (1982, p. 499). There are examples from history and anthropology of where the roles of poet and prophet have intersected. In her comparative study *Poetry and Prophecy* (1952), the academic medievalist NK Chadwick describes the practices of poet-prophets in historic and contemporary oral cultures. She points to accounts of the upbringing and education of poetic seers that are documented in Celtic and Norse literature. Similar roles for poet-prophets are identified in ancient Greece, Thrace and Gaul, leading to her conclusions that “the function of the seer was practically universal in early Europe” and “the fundamental elements of the prophetic function seem to have been everywhere the same. Everywhere the gift of poetry is inseparable from divine inspiration.” Her anthropological evidence suggests the universality of similar roles in a range of oral cultures: the Altai of Siberia, the Vedda in Sri Lanka, the Marquesans in French Polynesia, the Iban of North Borneo, the Zulu in South Africa and others (pp. 15-40).

There is also a logical synergy between the roles of the poet and the prophet. Poets are well placed to express views about the future and to offer compelling images of what the future might be like. Given the techniques available to them, their creative insight and their position, poets should be particularly resistant to the two types of failure that typically occur when making statements about the future, as identified by Clarke (1999): failures of nerve and failures of imagination. Failures of nerve arise when “even given all the relevant facts the would-be prophet cannot see that they point to an inescapable conclusion” (p. 9). Reasonable but counter-intuitive forecasts may be resisted if they challenge a powerful status quo or individuals’ firmly held worldviews. Poets, under the cover of, say, allegory or humour, have great scope to think the unthinkable and say the unsayable, so can draw provocative or seemingly ridiculous conclusions about the future and avoid failures of nerve to which those with more fragile positions and reputations – scientists, politicians, executives – may succumb. In contrast, Clarke defines failures of imagination as occurring when “all the available facts are appreciated and marshalled correctly – but when the really vital facts are still undiscovered, and the possibility of their existence is not admitted” (p. 19). Poets, as practitioners of an intuitive and imaginative craft, could be expected to have the right abilities to be able to look beyond existing evidence of probable and possible futures to conjecture about surprising, unpredictable futures, creating images of what Polak (as cited in Bishop and Hines, 2012,

pp. 218-219) describes as the “totally other” – namely “that which has never been experienced or recorded”.

Searching for futures poetry

Given how well poetry should be suited to dealing with the future as a topic, it is therefore striking how little contemporary mainstream poetry seems to engage with the subject. Poets draw from the past as a key source of inspiration: memories of personal experiences, as well as historic events and literary antecedents. But the future could also be a fertile source of material. De Jouvenal (1967, p. 12) draws on Maupertuis to draw a parallel between symmetric mental capacities of memory and ‘pre-vision’, the mind’s ability to conjure up the past contrasted with its ability to dream up its future. What is perplexing is not that poets rely heavily on memory, but that there are so few current examples of the use of ‘pre-vision’ in poetry to “form opinions about the future” (p. 16), to describe what may happen next, personally or to society more generally.

The Fermi Paradox says, if alien life is so likely why haven’t we found it yet? I propose there is a parallel paradox in poetry futures: if there is such a strong synergy between poetics and futures, where are all the poems about the future? One could hypothesise a point in time when (Western) poetics stopped aspiring to the prophetic, possibly dating this to a time when divine inspiration stopped being an acceptable poetic wellspring. Much of today’s mainstream poetry is experiential and secular, rarely a channelling of divine voices. The tradition of poetry as the conscious channelling of a voice out of one’s control persists through Surrealism, but this is a secular channelling of your own subconscious – how can your subconscious know the future?

In the previous chapter, I looked at futures studies and found no strong link with poetry. The opposite exercise was also performed, surveying post-war UK poetry to see if there was any strong link with futures studies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I found no such link. Duncan (2018) clusters a very wide range of UK poetry texts published between the 1960s and 1997 to identify prominent affinities and groupings. This quantitative analysis indicates a highly balkanised landscape with many small clusters and convergences. None of the categories he identifies – either in his seven preliminary categories or

subsequent seventeen clusters – appears to have a strong *prima facie* affinity with or engagement with futures studies.

Where else might one look for futures poetry? There are some concepts close to futures studies with which poetry has more strongly engaged, which are worth exploring further. Whilst limited, there has been some engagement between poetry and science fiction. There is a body of work and a tradition associated with science fiction poetry but it is perhaps surprising quite how limited it is. In an early science fiction poetry anthology, *Holding Your Eight Hands* (Lucie-Smith, 1967, p. xviii), the editor confidently states “Since the war, poetry has been visibly suffering from a want of subject matter”, that “SF material seemed to offer some kind of solution”, that “science fiction poetry represented a way of getting to grips with the new realities... encountered every day.” A boom in science fiction poetry never arrived. It is a rarity to see science fiction poems in the collection of major poets. Contemporary science fiction poetry is aligned more with science fiction than with poetry, as the content of prize-winning science fiction poetry indicates such as in Kopaska-Merkel (2017) and, in a wholesale dismissal of the genre, has been critiqued as being “embarrassingly bad” (Cook 2013).

A second potential point of engagement is with the ecology movement. To the extent that poetry looks to the future, one could argue that it does most often in ecopoetry. Three main alignments have been identified within American ecopoetry in *The Ecopoetry Anthology* (Fisher-Wirth & Street, 2013, p. xxvii-xxix): nature poetry (utilising aspects of the natural world as stimuli); environmental poetry (explicitly engaged with activist environmentalism); and ecological poetry (interested in the interplay of nature, culture and language). What is common between these groupings is that each presumes a shift to “a way of thinking ecocentrically rather than anthropocentrically” (p. xxviii) and two risks potentially arise with the ecocentric view that “the world’s desires do *not* run the Earth, but the Earth *does* run the world’ (p. xxx). One, by emphasising and admiring the other-than-human, it is possible to lose sight of (or even denigrate) the human, the social and the technological. Arcadian and post-human futures are not unusual in ecopoetry. Janisse Ray’s ‘Justice’: “Let them have their oil [...] And let me have my farm” (p. 432). Two, by presupposing paramount agency in nature one may, inadvertently, deny agency to humanity and, rather than provoking an activist response, such ecopoetry may inspire passivity by describing the future as

inevitable. Consider the language in Jorie Graham's 'Sea Change' (ibid, p. 289-91): "an unnegotiable drama"; "Everything unpreventable and excited like mornings in the unknown future"; "my useless hands". In all likelihood, Graham is factually correct in presenting the view that the destructive ecological trends in this poem are irreversible. The scientific evidence that underpins Graham's writing, as well as the poet's own record of how the environment is changing around her, would bear this view out. Where 'Sea Change' does indicate room for human agency, and therefore hope, is limited to how individuals might act with intelligence, courage and dignity in the face of this inevitable catastrophe, rather than suggesting that this catastrophe might be prevented: 'consider your affliction says the/wind, do not plead ignorance' (p290), 'I am inclining my heart towards the end/I cannot fail [...] your/best young/tree, which you have come outside to stake again' (p291). The catastrophe occurs, regardless. Whilst science fiction poetry can lean too far into the potentials of gee-whizz technologies, ecopoetry may risk going too far the other way into a catch-all anti-progressive conservat(ion)ism.

A quantitative review of bellwether texts

To continue to explore the Fermi Paradox of futures poetry, and to test the hypothesis that mainstream contemporary poetry is far more oriented to the past than to the future, I begin by proposing a framework for assessing texts, comprising two analyses: one, a categorisation of texts by their orientation towards the past or the future, and towards the individual or the general; two, a timeline of time-specific references in texts. I then apply this framework to a sample of mainstream contemporary poetry: namely, the 1,735 individual poems (or major sub-sections of poems) in the forty single-author English language collections shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize in the four years 2014-17. Although this is by no means a representative sample, this could be considered as a bellwether set of texts, representing what "a panel of established poets" considers to be "the best new collection[s] of poetry published in the UK and Ireland" (Poetry Book Society 2015). The analyses demonstrate the sample's near-exclusive orientation to the past. The small number of poems identified as having future concerns are then discussed, outlining commonalities in the perspectives they have about the future.

In the first analysis, each text was categorised against two qualitative criteria: i) broadly, does the text concern itself with the past or with the future? and ii) does the text reflect

on personal experience or on society in general? This enables the poems to be grouped into four typologies: ‘What happened to me’ (past/personal), ‘What happened to us’ (past/general), ‘What will happen to me’ (future/personal) and ‘What will happen to us’ (future/general). Where there is no specific evidence to place a poem in a particular mode, this is noted, and in the few instances where a poem seems to operate in more than one mode, I have recorded the mode that seems to be overriding or strongest. Methodologically, it is understood that these assessments are qualitative and personal, but there is no strong reason to expect that someone else repeating the analysis with the same defined criteria would draw wildly differing results. In the second analysis, all instances of specific dates, events and people are identified and plotted on a timeline in order to identify where the main concerns of these forty texts are positioned in time. Clearly, a poet can only refer with absolute certainty to specific events that have actually occurred and to people who have actually lived, so such references are expected to be situated, in the main, in the past. However, it would be illuminating to see if there is any reference at all to events planned or predicted in the future, and whether any conjectures are made regarding future people or times.

The results of these analyses show a near-complete lack of interest in and examination of the future in these forty texts. In the first analysis (Table 2 below), the classification of each poem’s time and scope orientation indicates that virtually all of the poems face towards the past, mostly in the personal mode.

Table 2: Time and scope orientation of poems in TS Eliot Prize-nominated collections, 2014-17

		<i>Time orientation</i>	
		The past (memory)	The future (prevision)
<i>Scope orientation</i>	Personal	“What happened to me.” 1,318 (87%)	“What will happen to me.” 27 (2%)
	Public	“What happened to us?” 154 (10%)	“What will happen to us?” 19 (1%)

Insufficient evidence to identify orientation: 217 (13%); n=1,735

Indeed, several of the collections make it clear that their primary intention is to look backwards and to memories in a personal mode. For instance, *Fauverie* (Petit 2014), an account of childhood family trauma, is written entirely in past/personal mode:

The day I cremated my father
I let my feet, which had been
pacing for three days and nights,
drag me into the cat-house [...] ('Lion')

Similarly, many of the poems in Bird's *In These Days of Prohibition* (2017) are presented as personal recollections:

Gemma's ankles were swollen
from the flight. She was ratty.
'I look like an elephant,' she said
through microscopic cheeks. ('Far From Civilisation')

as are the Williams' experiences receiving kidney dialysis in *I Knew The Bride* (2014):

Nurse Anthony thinks I show potential
for taking more responsibility
with my treatment. [...] ('A Healthy Interest' 1-3)

In contrast, Padel's *Learning to Make an Oud in Nazareth* (2014) is one of the rarer examples of the use of the general as well as the personal, but solely through the lenses of history and memory:

In 634, Arabs captured Bethlehem
and made a Muslim shrine in the basilica.
In 747, Bethlehem fell again – this time
in earthquake. The Holy Land is rifted, sir. ('A Guide to the Church of Nativity
in Time of Siege').

In the few instances when they do look to the future, these poems offer dystopian or declinist perspectives. Few poems were identified as having primarily a future orientation. Future/personal poems include Longley's two meditations on his own death and legacy, 'Deathbed' and 'Another Wren'. The future/general poems include Harsent's potent descriptions of the end of days:

It will come to fire, so they say, despite the roar and roll
as continents calve from the icefields, as rainforests fall,
as the sea first takes the lowland then takes the rest,
ire nonetheless, fire on the skim of the sea, fire at the core.

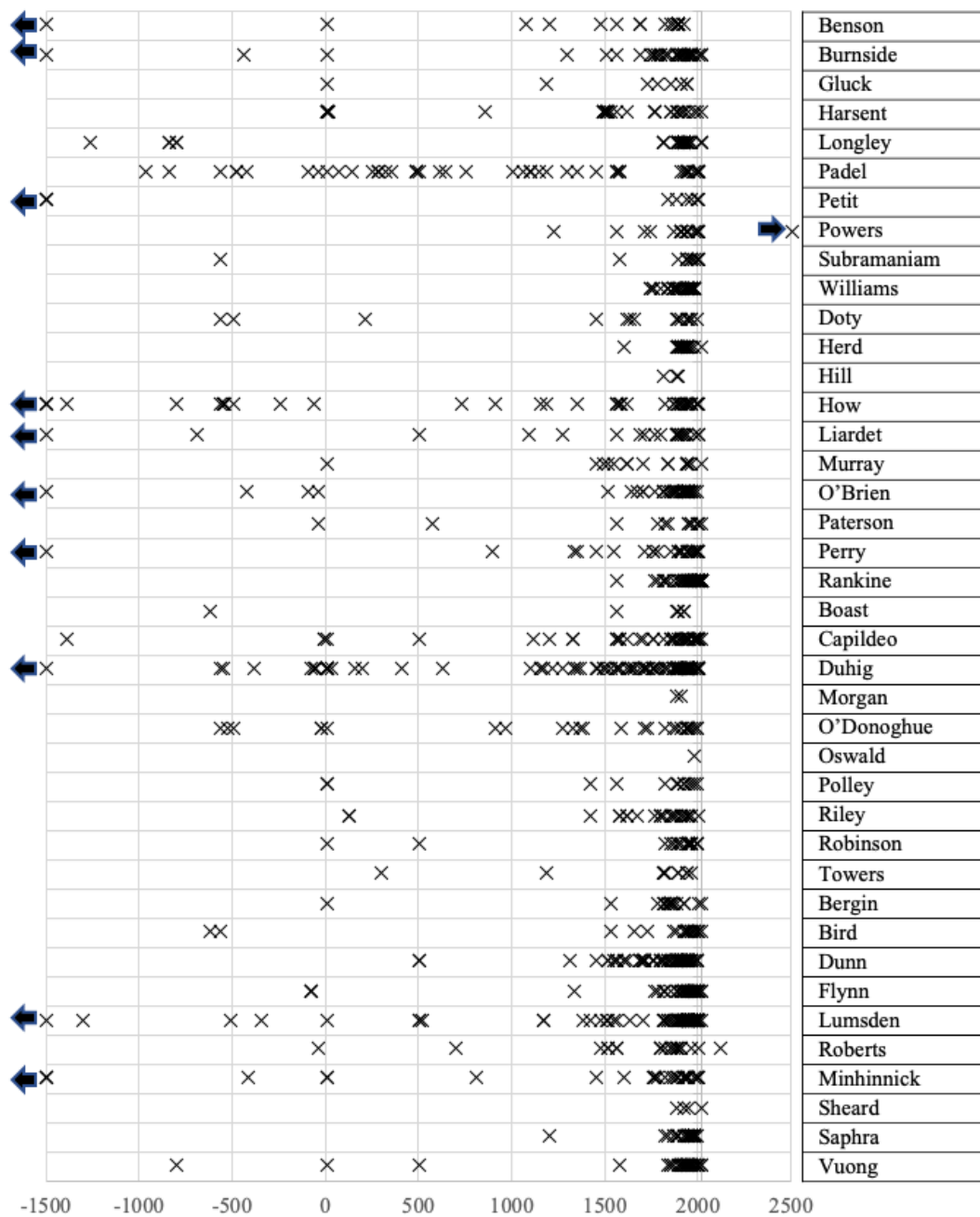
(‘Fire: end-scenes and outtakes’).

Even in this small set of poems, there appear to be commonalities which typify how I have perceived mainstream contemporary poetry as thinking about the future: namely, a shared pessimism, a fatalism and a lack of complexity. Future-oriented poems describe the future as being worse than the present; either alerting the reader to an impending apocalypse, as in Harsent's poems, or offering a vaguer sense of decline and ennui – Burnside (2014) quotes Yogi Berra's "The future ain't what it used to be", setting the tone for his 'At the Entering of the New Year'. Roberts' 'The Future of Books' emphasises what is lost as we move into the future. Mihinnick's 'Diary of the Last Man' uses the well-trodden 'last man on earth' trope to explore a stereotypical apocalypse scenario, an eco-disaster where man is forsaken by god. Capildeo's 'In 2019, Albion's Civil Conflicts Finally Divided Along Norman-Saxon Lines' is more a reflection of racial tensions now rather than an attempt to anticipate the future. Perry's 'Casida of the Dead Sun' is another eschatology. There is also a shared fatalistic sense of the inescapability of forthcoming cataclysms or deteriorations. Burnside, in the same poem as above, confirms "that nothing ever happens / for a reason, / that choosing is out of the question [...]". There is little uncertainty about how events will play out. Each poem uses the more certain, predictive form "when x happens" ("when I die", "when I see her again", "when women howl in the streets") – with no examples of the alternative more tentative conjectural form, "if x happens". The final commonality is that future states described do not seem particularly complex or surprising, and are therefore not especially provocative. The apocalypses mentioned, although depicted vividly and with energy (especially by Harsent), show routes to destruction that are well-worn (e.g.

environmental collapse, nuclear war) and their stated outcomes have little to distinguish them from any number of similar dystopia and, ungenerously, could have been written at any time in the last fifty years.

In the second analysis, references to specific dates, people and events in each of the texts are plotted on a timeline. Several poems refer to specific years (e.g. Williams' *I Knew the Bride* specifically mentions the years 1865, 1947 and 1968); events are allocated to their start dates and people to their year of birth. The output of this analysis strongly reinforces the primacy of memory over pre-vision in these texts (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Date-specific references in TS Eliot Prize-nominated collections, 2014-17



Of all the named people and events identified, specific mention is made of only two future items: a predicted exhaustion of fossil fuel resources within the next 100 years, and the expected supernova of the sun. Given the results of these analyses, it seems fair to conclude that the forty sampled texts have relatively little to say about the future or, at least, are far more concerned with what has occurred than what is to come. Indeed, rather than merely failing to address a ‘science fiction future’, mainstream poetry seems limited in its ability to even consider the ‘science fiction present’ or the possibility of a

more positive future. One might argue that this negative take is meant as a warning, as is summed up by the editorial to poetry journal *Popshot*'s 'Future Issue' (2017):

“The future is frightening and divisive. It’s evil and full of stupidity. It’s a few steps away from an apocalypse... What is contained [here] is stark, bleak. They are warning signs, pointing to dark corners to make sure we don’t stray into them. However, they’re not here to encourage the abandonment of optimism. Quite the opposite. Sometimes it’s important to point to the darkness to remind ourselves to stay in the light.” (p. 1)

In short, the view of the future to which contemporary poetry seems to have resigned itself appears little different to that described by Dickinson in this chapter’s opening quote: the future comprises an inscrutable and inevitable fate, one far beyond the limits of our influence and cognition.

Some examples of futures poetics

In searching for links between poetry and futures studies, a small number of poets were identified who were testing the boundaries of the two fields. For instance, *Near Future* by Suzannah Evans (2018) and *85% True Minor Ecologies* by Kristin Gallagher (2017) are both valuable attempts to blend futures thinking with poetic writing. But even these texts flirt with declinist and dystopian tropes: in such collections, one’s expectations for the worst are met, the bees are always dead, the robots always want to kill us, it’s dark and cold in the bunker, the plague or the bomb is imminent. Individual poems can also be cherrypicked that offer less clichéd viewpoints of the future, such as Henri Michaux’s ‘Future’ (Caws 2008, pp. 193-194) and Dean Young’s ‘To Those of You Alive in the Future’ (Young, 2009, pp. 22-23). What these two poems have in common is their surrealist tone, a feature which prompts the thought that perhaps surrealists, being freed from clichéd descriptions of the future through their process-driven approach, were in the best place of all twentieth-century schools of poetry to write about the future. The prophetic potential of surrealism was never fully realised, and this may be in part to how thinking about the future was never part of Breton’s original conception of surrealism. In the 1924 ‘Manifesto of Surrealism’, Breton writes:

To be sure, I do not believe in the prophetic nature of the Surrealist word... The Surrealist voice that shook Cumae, Dodona, and Delphi is nothing more than the voice which dictates my less irascible speeches to me. My *time* must not be its time, why should this voice help me resolve the childish problem of my destiny?" (1972, pp. 44-45)

However, although surrealism itself does not claim to have much to say about the future, its techniques were later repurposed by conceptual and experimental poets and, as I discuss later in this thesis, it may be through their techniques that poetry can better access the future.

In summary, there are some examples of poets writing about the future. However, finding a needle in a haystack does not mean the haystack is made of needles, and it has been clearly demonstrated that the concept of the future in contemporary poetry remains underexplored. Reviewing contemporary poetry leads one to conclude that there must be a role for cross-pollination between poetry and futures studies that has yet to be fully explored. The next chapter describes the approach I took to exploring what methods worked best in bringing futures studies and poetry practice together.

4. Beyond the Activation Threshold: Modes of Writing Poetic Futures

Poetic practice has changed throughout time to increase the richness of poetry in general, by poets doing what they have been told not to or sensed were discouraged/disallowed from doing.

Dean Young (2010, p. 37)

In this chapter, I will discuss how I experimented with different poetic methods for writing about the future and developed an exhaustive framework to map and evaluate these different approaches.

Four ways to write a poem

According to conceptual poet Christian Bök in his 2009 paper ‘Two Dots Over a Vowel’ (pp. 21-23), all poems can be sorted into one of four methodological classifications, according to the intent in and approach to writing the poems – these dimensions are ‘intentionality’ and ‘expressiveness’. The four resulting writing modes – *cognitive*, *automatic*, *mannerist* and *aleatory* – are defined as permutations of these two binaries.

Cognitive

Say I am writing a poem about the moon. If I wrote this in a cognitive mode, it would be intentional and self-expressive. I would decide what I wanted to say in the poem, and then I would say it. My intent might be to express the exclusivity of the moon, the unattainability of it to ordinary people, and I would go through a process of selecting and revising the language and imagery, form and musicality, that would most effectively convey my sadness at the exclusivity of the moon: say,

The moon rolls beneath the sofa

I try to snag it on a coat hanger

The coat hanger is not dear enough

The cognitive maps closely to a traditional lyric style and could take on myriad forms, approaches, registers – endless potential variety. The cognitive poem is successful if what I have said is interesting, and if it is expressed accurately to the reader as something that I have written.

Automatic

Now I change my mind and want to write of the moon in automatic mode. As this mode is non-intentional but self-expressive, I do not know what I want to say, but I know that I will be the one to say it. This maps to a surrealistic, unedited, stream-of-consciousness writing style.

Lunar dancefloor

Snoopy's head droops

A "not to do" list in moonlight

I turn my filter off and write down whatever comes into my mind, then see if what comes out is interesting. "Lunar dancefloor" sounds a bit like a nightclub if you turn up too early, desolate. Snoopy was, of course, the safety mascot of the Apollo programme, so there's something going on there. A "not to do" rather than a "to do" list; perhaps I am saying we should not go, or should not have gone, to the moon? Because it was non-intentional and self-expressive, the criteria for success for this poem was the extent to which something interesting was revealed, whether or not it was something I thought I thought, and whether the reader interpreted this as something I have authored.

Mannerist

I change my mind again and want to write a poem about the moon in a mannerist mode, which is intentional but non-expressive. Here, I have an idea for what I want to say but I do not control how it will be said, something else does, typically a set of rules or a procedure by which the text will be produced. So, I could start my poem about the moon using the rule that words on each line must start with the same letter, A to Z:

Alabaster: assetless astronaut

Bound by bleached banknotes

Crescent commissions counted

I started this by looking up words related to moon starting with various letters and quickly found I could communicate my original point about the exclusivity of the moon within the abecedary constraint. A mannerist poem is successful if the constraint is difficult (ideally impossible) and met (ideally in a surprising way).

Aleatory

Finally, I try the same exercise in aleatory mode, which is not intentional and non-expressive. I have nothing in mind to express. (If this was a purely aleatory poem, I would not even restrict myself to the topic of the moon.) I decide to generate a text by appropriate comments from Reddit. I go to reddit.com and search “moon”, then sort by newness of comment (rather than popularity) and a fragment of each comment title that includes the word moon:

Little moon-eyes enjoys the winter

Takes a picture, exiled prisoner

Turns out we live on flat Earth

The success or otherwise of aleatory poems is in the uncanniness of the results and how interesting the results are (which could be that the outcome resembles a poem, despite the generational procedure, or alternatively that it is totally unlike a poem or any other typical text). I give up on my moon poem at this point, Bök’s *Quadrivium* of approaches illustrated.

Of course, when I presented the three-line illustrations of these techniques, I did not present the raw output. I cheated. I am only talking about my own practice here – it is not only OK to cheat, it’s essential. This is where my personal poetic practice diverges from Bök’s. For me, the *Quadrivium* modes represent starting points for texts. Ultimately, all writing tends towards the cognitive mode. It becomes intentional, if not through an original intention for the poem, then through the editing or curatorial choices one makes when the poem is in draft. Not all surrealist drafts are interesting, not all mannerist drafts work in a satisfactory way, not all aleatory texts are particularly uncanny. Again, talking about my own work, there is always a high degree of authorial intervention in the raw draft and a weaker or stronger curatorial hand determining whether I think the piece is interesting (and appropriate, non-discriminatory, useful etc). For better or for worse, all text tends to the self-expressive because readers tend to interpret all texts as self-expressive. Unless there is clear signposting (and often even if there is), the reader will interpret what is said as being the author’s view. One (meaning

me) must be comfortable with that. I am content that others are pursuing the limit cases of Automatic, Mannerist and Aleatory writing but I am equally content not to be interested in playing that game. Unedited automatism can be boring; uncurated mannerism can be exhibitionist or a crossword puzzle; uncurated aleatorism can simply be unintelligible and purposeless.

Sixteen poetic futures strategies

If we consider Bök's Quadrium as an exhaustive typology of poetic approaches, and the IFTF's four-step process as classifying all the activity relevant within futures studies, by combining the two, we are able to develop an exhaustive taxonomy of approaches to writing futures poetry. With four types of poetry and four steps in the futuring process, there are sixteen potential modes of futures poetry (Table 3).

Table 3: Sixteen Poetic Futures Strategies

	Calibration Prepares reader to think about the future A warm-up Putting yourself in a contemplative, activated state	Foresight Identifies early signals of future changes A harvesting and taxonomy, a butterfly collecting	Insight Sense making Synthesising and analysing possible futures Judicious, evaluative Making models, pictures	Action Recommending actions Megaphone Evangelising Action lists
Cognitive Intentional and self-expressive The great writer; the quill	CONTEMPLATIVE WITHDRAWAL A writer's retreat; monastic; brace yourself to be hit by inspiration	CLUE HARVESTING Field trips; gathering and processing evidence	DEDUCTIVE WORLDBUILDING Building models, testing hypotheses, coming to rational, evidenced conclusions	SANE COUNSEL Authentic and principled statements of what should be done, based on acquired knowledge
Automatic Non-intentional and self-expressive On mushrooms; speaking in tongues; stream of consciousness	HEIGHTENED PREVISION Dreamtime; entering altered states, deliberate derangement	THE ECSTATIC KALEIDOSCOPE Firehose; an outpouring of ideas, unfiltered	TINFOIL EUPHORIA Unthinkable, uncensored scenarios; nerveless putting together of the pieces; subconscious interpretations	IDIOT WISDOM Prophecy, inspiration through incoherence, invocations to inconsistent action
Mannerist Intentional and not self-expressive High concept; escaping a cage of one's own construction; seemingly impossible tests of skill and will	EXERCISES IN STYLE Choosing constraints, making contracts with constraints, accepting a challenge, readying to test one's skills	ACROBATIC RECONNAISSANCE Using rules to see the unseen, mine in new territories, letting the rules dictate the direction of your investigations	THE ENCRYPTED BLUEPRINT Coherent pictures that form as if by magic, highly crafted, revised, products of great craftsmanship	THE SENSATIONAL PROPOSAL High impact on the reader, generated both by the message and the method
Aleatory Non-intentional and not self-expressive Making use of what you find; randomness; the recycling, repurposing of existing words, polyphonic, assemblages, remixes	KEYCARD FOR THE ARCHIVE Collating all the sources, getting them to hand, understanding how to access sources, raw materials	COMBING THE SCRAPHEAP Aggregative, accumulative, magpie-like, gathering whatever is interesting	CORKBOARDS OF CRAZY Seeing the hidden image in a Magic Eye, pointillist, telling a coherent story through many voices, an assembly	CUT-AND-PASTE INSTRUCTIONS A commonplace book; directions appropriated, reassembled and remixed

Given the two models they are based on, the sixteen modes should be relatively self-explanatory but there is one apparent contradiction that is worth discussing relating to strategies in the Automatic and Aleatory modes. As both of these approaches are non-intentional, surely the poet cannot opt to write a poem using either approach in order to fulfil a selected function in the futuring process? For instance, how does one write a poem that generates Insight through a stream of consciousness, Automatic approach? How can one suggest Action through the pure randomness of Aleatory writing? In both cases, I would agree that, in their purest forms, both types of non-intentional writing cannot be bound to specific topics in this way. However, there are opportunities both before the poem is written and after it is drafted to steer the poem towards the step in the futuring process desired. For instance, one could write an Automatic poem after watching a documentary on future technologies, or one could select reports about the future as seed texts for Aleatory writing. After drafting, both Automatic and Aleatory poems can be edited to emphasise what is said about the relevant futuring step or, equally valid, the raw output could be assessed to see in which category it best fitted.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the sixteen strategies

My interest in developing the sixteen-mode permutative framework was primarily practical rather than conceptual. I was interested in seeing which poetic approaches were most successful in generating novel ideas within each step of the futuring process. In order to test this, I have written poems in each of the sixteen modes during my research study and these are incorporated in my creative portfolio below in the section *Special Projects*. These poems should be seen as methodological experiments, the primary purpose of which was not to write ‘good poetry’ but to produce texts that could be assessed in order to identify which modes worked better and which worked less well in writing about the future.

I used the same analytic framework to assess these poems as I did to review the same group of TS Eliot Prize-nominated collections in Chapter 3 above. As can be seen in Table 4 below, I produced a far higher proportion of future-facing and universal poems than was found in the same group. On one level, this is a trivial result – it was, of course, my intention to write about the future whereas there was not the same intent in the TS Eliot sample texts. On the other hand, it does show two things – one, that it is possible

to write poems using all four approaches in Bök’s Quadrivium that say something about the future; and two, that even if the poet is trying to write future-facing and universal poems, they do not always succeed.

Table 4: Time and scope orientation of poems in *Special Projects*

		<i>Time orientation</i>	
		The past (memory)	The future (prevision)
<i>Scope orientation</i>	Personal	<p>“What happened to me”</p> <p>9 (20%)</p>	<p>“What will happen to me”</p> <p>3 (7%)</p>
	Public	<p>“What happened to us”</p> <p>5 (11%)</p>	<p>“What will happen to us”</p> <p>29 (63%)</p>

n=46

More tellingly, I analysed which of the sixteen modes seemed to have a better hit rate in terms of being able to communicate something novel about each step in the futuring processes. Reviewing the poems in *Special Projects*, I analysed this qualitatively on a three-point scale (Table 5): Most effective, Moderately Effective and Least Effective.

Table 5: Utility of Poetic Futures Strategies

	Calibration	Foresight	Insight	Action
Cognitive	<i>CONTEMPLATIVE WITHDRAWAL</i> **	<i>CLUE HARVESTING</i> ***	<i>DEDUCTIVE WORLDBUILDING</i> ***	<i>SANE COUNSEL</i> **
Automatic	<i>HEIGHTENED PREVISION</i> ***	<i>THE ECSTATIC KALEIDOSCOPE</i> ***	<i>TINFOIL EUPHORIA</i> ***	<i>IDIOT WISDOM</i> *
Mannerist	<i>EXERCISES IN STYLE</i> *	<i>ACROBATIC RECONNAISSANCE</i> *	<i>THE ENCRYPTED BLUEPRINT</i> *	<i>THE SENSATIONAL PROPOSAL</i> *
Aleatory	<i>KEYCARD FOR THE ARCHIVE</i> **	<i>COMBING THE SCRAPHEAP</i> ***	<i>CORKBOARDS OF CRAZY</i> ***	<i>CUT-AND-PASTE INSTRUCTIONS</i> *

*** Most effective ** Moderately Effective * Least Effective

It would appear that Automatic and Aleatory approaches gave better results generally than Cognitive and Mannerist ones. Additionally, all techniques were more effective the earlier in the futuring process they were applied (i.e. all techniques could provide something interesting in Calibration and Insight; all techniques were much less useful in saying something interesting about Action).

As is the nature of Practice-As-Research, the activity of producing the work generated insights that were not initially expected or hypothesised. In this case, three overriding features of what worked well in writing poems about the future emerged: that humour had a critical role across all steps; that ‘ethnography of the future’ was a powerful and novel approach, particularly for Foresight and Insight; that aphorism seemed a worthwhile route to pursue when writing in the Action step.

Ethnographic techniques

There is a long-established tradition of poetry of witness and much poetry arises from poets’ own experiences and autobiography. Beyond this, poets can actively seek out experiences to write about, participate in activities, travel, widen their set of experiences to draw upon. Broadly, the first type of poetry might be tagged autobiographic, the latter autoethnographic. There are strong resemblances between the outputs of ethnographic studies and poetry based on the curated experiences of the poet. However, it takes some reflection to see how such autoethnographic writing might be relevant when writing about the future. The question is: how can one witness the future? There may be two

ways to respond to this, both of which I feel have merit. Firstly, if one believes the futurist axiom “the future is already here, just unevenly distributed”, then one can identify where in the world the future happens to be rather more thickly distributed at this point in time. Secondly, and also in the context that the future manifests itself in different ways in different places, one could take the view that wherever you are can be seen as somewhere else’s future. This entails deep description of one’s experiences but interpreting it through a ‘futurist lens’. In ethnographic writing, one is encouraged to ‘write down everything’, to be exhaustive and try not to evaluate what is going on, only observe it. Therefore, to look with the futurist lens must be a secondary step, to reinterpret one’s notes and imagine what these would look like in ten, fifty, a hundred years’ time.

The two non-intentional poetic approaches in Bök’s *Quadrivium* are the most relevant to ethnography. It is worth noting that ethnographic techniques are already used in both futures studies and in poetry. Futurists use participant observation and signal walks. Poets can embed themselves in situations and institutions and generate poetry based on their recorded experiences. However, the activity of poetic inquiry into the future would be more innovative. As part of this research, I wrote a micro-ethnography of the World Future Society (included at the outset of this document, ‘Weak Signals’) as well as material generated at futures exhibitions and signal walks in London, Paris, Riyadh, Palo Alto and Chicago. These texts using autoethnographic techniques I think are at best only partially successful but do indicate significant potential for future development. Poet-futurist ethnographies can be a rich source of forecasting insights. Additionally, there is great merit in their brevity. Such micro-ethnographies may have considerably greater accessibility – being faster but shallower – than the typical outputs of ethnographic studies, which are often very detailed and take a long time to produce (which, in the field of futures studies is crucially problematic, given how fast the near future ages).

The use of humour

The future can be funny. Two common approaches used to generate humour from the topic of the future are satirical futures and ridicule of the study of the future. In satirical futures, established trends in current society are extrapolated in order to surface and critique them. Humour may also be found in the mockery of the practice of future forecasting, and in specific predictions made. For instance, one might humorously deride

the perceived futility of forecasting, individuals or professions who seek to forecast the future, the wild inaccuracy of past predictions and the bizarreness of contemporary predictions. But the connection between humour and the future goes deeper than this. With reference to the incongruity theory of humour, it can be argued that futures studies and humour are inextricably linked. In contrast to how ‘serious’ futurists have resisted and sought to play down the inadvertent ‘funniness’ of their forecasts in their texts for a variety of reasons, I explore the benefits and risks of embracing humour as a strategy to provide ‘cover’ for, and generate engagement with, more imaginative and challenging ideas about the future.

Satirical futures and mockery of past predictions are common routes to get a laugh from futures thinking. Several common features of satirical futures emerge through a review of recent examples. The primary aims of satirical futures are, obviously, humour and entertainment rather than predictive accuracy; should any predictions made later prove correct, this is unintentional. A technique frequently applied is the extreme exaggeration and simplistic extrapolation of a single existing phenomena or trend. The result is that satirical futures typically reflect the times in which they were written far more than the future era they purport to describe, and also that the futures described are monocausal rather than multicausal. For instance, the aims of *Idiocracy* (2004) are signalled in its description as ‘hilarious’ and as an ‘outrageous comedy’ (albeit one “that’ll make you think twice about the future of mankind”). *Idiocracy* is set in a future populated by idiots, following five hundred years of those of lower intellect out-reproducing the more intelligent. The extreme changes in society it depicts – degraded language, gross commercialism, corruption and decline of public institutions, environmental disaster – all stem from this single cause. Similarly, the trigger for the future described in *Ghosts With Shit Jobs* (2012) is a rise in the economic power of Asia relative to the decline of North America. This leads Americans to take futuristic but dead-end jobs that extrapolate contemporary industries (such as referral marketing, robot engineering and virtual reality). Sweeney (2013, p.147) examines several episodes of *South Park* that incorporate satirical futures, including the episode ‘Goobacks’ where Americans of the future are posited to have become a ‘hairless, uniform mix of all races’ following over a century of global migration. In none of these examples does there appear to be any serious intent to forecast the future (or, if there is, it is certainly ancillary to the main

intent of humour) but, particularly in the case of *Idiocracy*, claims have been made retrospectively of predictive accuracy (Huffington Post 2016).

Futures studies itself has been a target for humour, indistinguishable at times from scorn. Its perceived futility is summarised by the now long-clichéd quote “It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future”. Nisbet (1982, pp. 131-135) elaborates, describing futures studies as “one of the more pretentious of the pseudo-sciences of the twentieth century” and futurists as “a computer-based pack of trend tenders, tendency herders, and extrapolation charlatans, ultimately less interested in the real future than in their tinker-toy techniques of contriving the future”. This sentiment is echoed in Sherden (1999, p. 224): “Much social prediction has been egregiously erroneous forecasts that reveal more about the prophet’s psyche than about the future. These predictions are harmless, if you do not mind being naïve about overly optimistic visions and needlessly agitated by doomsday prophecy.” Specific futurists, when they have achieved public profiles, have also become figures of fun. Ghamari-Tabrizi (2005, p. 274) notes that Herman Kahn was the subject of a comic strip called *SuperKahn, Government Contractor*. (“Faster-thinking than one hundred IBM data processing systems...Strategic Vision stronger than all the world’s radar, penetrates every nook and cranny of the globe...”)

Another easy source of humour is to make light of past forecasts about the future that missed the mark. Well-rehearsed examples of this genre include the 1943 statement attributed to IBM’s Thomas Watson “I think there is a world market for maybe five computers” (although there is no documentary evidence he ever said such a thing) and the 1929 claim that “stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau” (Bobrow 1999, pp. 5-6). Such perceived howlers are now a staple of the website listicle: the prediction that “Space travel would be so ubiquitous, we’d need space suits for our pets” heads a list on BuzzFeed (2013).

Even serious futurists should expect to be laughed at, but they tend to resist this

Contemporary forecasts, however seriously and earnestly presented, cannot help but generate humour if they are strange enough. The tendency has been for ‘serious’ futurists to attempt to mitigate the humour they generate. When Nicholas Negroponte, founder of

the MIT Media Lab, was asked during a public question and answer session what he felt the most impactful future technology would be, he replied:

My prediction is that we are going to ingest information. You're going to swallow a pill and know English. You're going to swallow a pill and know Shakespeare. And the way to do it is through the bloodstream. So once it's in your bloodstream, it basically goes through it and gets into the brain, and when it knows that it's in the brain in different pieces, it deposits it in the right places. So it's ingesting. (Negroponte 2014).

The response from the audience was nervous laughter, to which Negroponte stated: "This isn't quite as far-fetched... think 30 years from now." His comeback to the humour generated by his forecast is to try to play it down and position his statement in the context of the long-term future. Similar caveats that aim to anticipate the expected incredulity of the reader are commonly found in futurist texts:

I don't intend to be taken seriously on the details of the war in 2050 that I forecast. (Friedman, 2009, p. 10)

It may not be absurd hyperbole – indeed it may not even be an overstatement – to assert that the most crucial location in space and time (apart from the big bang itself) could be here and now. (Rees, 2003, pp. 7-8)

We [...] invite those who feel an intuitive distaste for our arguments to suspend disbelief for a short while and give serious contemplation to the notion that the future may look nothing at all like the past. (Susskind & Susskind, 2015, p. 3)

The academic tone and language used by futurists can frame the topic in a distancing, humourless way, such as in the example from Kahn & Wiener (1967) in Box 5.

Box 5: The Manifold Trend, Kahn & Weiner (1967, p. 6-7)

The basic trends of Western society, most of which can be traced back as far as the twelfth or eleventh centuries, can be seen as part of a common, complex trend of interacting elements. For analytic purposes, however, we shall separate them into thirteen rubrics, as shown in Table I. [...]

There is a Basic, Long-Term Multifold Trend Toward:

1. Increasingly Sensate (empirical, this-worldly, secular, humanistic, pragmatic, utilitarian, contractual, epicurean or hedonistic, and the like) cultures
2. Bourgeois, bureaucratic, “meritocratic”, democratic (and nationalistic?) elites
3. Accumulation of scientific and technological knowledge
4. Institutionalization of change, especially research, development, innovation, and diffusion
5. Worldwide industrialization and modernization
6. Increasing affluence and (recently) leisure
7. Population growth
8. Urbanization and (soon) the growth of megalopolises
9. Decreasing importance of primary and (recently) secondary occupations
10. Literacy and education
11. Increasing capability for mass destruction
12. Increasing tempo of change
13. Increasing universality of the multifold trend

The style is highly jargonistic, abstract and euphemistic; the effect is to make the text far less readable, less engaging. The comment of Susskind & Susskind (2015) on studies on the future of professions is applicable to futurist texts in general:

...this sociological literature... Some of it is rigorous and scholarly, but – if we are honest – much is turgid and tedious. There are not many laugh-out-loud moments (p. 18)

Some futurists have acknowledged a relationship between futures studies and humour. Clarke, in a 1964 BBC documentary, said:

If by some miracle some prophet could describe the future exactly as it was going to take place, his predictions would sound so absurd, so far-fetched that everyone would laugh him to scorn.

The futurist Jim Dator stated that “any useful statement about the future should appear to be ridiculous” (Hines & Bishop, 2015, p. 257). The frequency with which Dator’s Law is invoked in futures texts is telling, as it grants the reader permission to find insights ‘ridiculous’ but, whenever their credulity is stretched, for the reader to remind themselves that the insight only “appears to be ridiculous” and, therefore is instead quite serious and reasonable. This is to misread the relationship between futures studies and humour, to miss the point that statements about the future can be both actually useful and actually ridiculous, and that it is not wrong – and, in fact, is highly probable – to find such insights humorous.

The incongruity theory of humour indicates that good forecasts should be funny. Morreall (2009, p. *xii*) notes that:

In humour, we experience a sudden change of mental state – a cognitive shift – that would be disturbing under normal circumstances, that is if we took it seriously.

The incongruity theory of humour can be traced back to Kant’s discussion of laughter as arising from the frustration of what is expected: “In everything that is to excite a lively convulsive laugh there must be something absurd (in which the understanding, therefore, can find no satisfaction). Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a stranded expectation into nothing” (in Morreall, p. 11). According to this incongruity theory of humour, the cognitive shift that generates a state of comic amusement arises when we perceive an incongruity; that is, an extreme contrast or juxtaposition of two or more inconsistent circumstances that constitutes a deviation from our incoming concepts, rules or expectations. But this is precisely the kind of cognitive shift that any kind of useful statement about the future would be expected to generate. Our ‘incoming concepts, rules or expectations’ in this case are the present circumstances; the deviation is the future forecast. The only forecasts that would not generate such cognitive shifts – and that would not be humorous – are those that contained no incongruity, where little or no change from our present circumstances occurred, or where any changes could be clearly and fully explained in the context of well-understood existing phenomena. Such forecasts would be banal and probably of little value.

Incongruity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to prompt a state of comic amusement. A second requirement is that the audience should regard the incongruity as non-threatening or otherwise anxiety-producing (Carroll 2014, pp. 28-34). At first glance, it would seem that many future forecasts are extremely threatening and anxiety-producing (for instance, forecasts of mass technological unemployment, ecological disaster, nuclear Armageddon). But, as Bergson notes, humour is associated with a “momentary anaesthesia of the heart” (1987, p. 118), a mental disengagement from the situation being described. Two features of all futures forecasts assist in the creation of this necessary comic detachment: time/distance and contingency. Even the direst forecast is unlikely to generate much anxiety if it is thought to be far enough off in time as to impact many generations hence. The prediction that the sun will supernova in six to nine billion years, destroying Earth and the human race, is unlikely to generate much in the way of urgent anxiety. Secondly, all forecasts are contingent images of the future; they may or may not happen. This offers the audience a second method of gaining comic distance: a forecast might be dire, and it might be predicted to happen soon but there always remains the chance that the cosmic dice may roll the right way and “it might never happen”. But in neither case does the scope for immediate comic detachment preclude the capacity for later reflection, for one to find a forecast funny initially, but on further thought find it provoking, worrying and worthy of action.

Futurists therefore have little choice but to accept that, much of the time, their forecasts will generate comic amusement in their audiences. However, there are several benefits of humour that indicate, rather than just trying to cope with any arising amusement, futurists should seek to use and actively encourage humour through their work. These benefits include: encouragement of divergent and critical thinking, increased engagement, as well as promotion of readiness and resilience. When they remind an audience they are engaged in playful conjecture rather than serious and deterministic prediction, the futurist signals for permission to present extreme possibilities less connected to current reality as perceived by the audience. The exchange enters ‘play mode’; the audience is asked to challenge its incoming assumptions, to respond in a rational and reflective way, rather than emotionally, to a provocation that disturbs the status quo. The futurist adopts the role of the court jester. As Morreall argues (2009, p. 79), humour challenges inevitability and promotes contingency. In this context, humour

has the potential to make the audience more comfortable and become more receptive to cognitive shifts. Behavioural psychology suggests that once people have taken on an opinion, confirmation bias means they will typically only seek or recall information that supports their own opinion. Humour might be a route to get people to engage more strongly and to suspend their judgement when considering a future scenario that does not fit with their current beliefs (and given that most people believe the future will be much like the present, in almost all circumstances it will be helpful to get an audience to suspend their current thinking before considering possible futures). Humour about the future could also promote readiness and resilience. In terms of readiness, Boyd takes the view that humour itself evolved as a way of preparing early humans for surprising and new experiences. Humorous futures could be used to enable people to become more familiar with issues relating to the future minimising the anxiety that the topic might generate. Humour brings a necessary levity to futures studies, given the bleakness of some forecasts. Evidence from psychology suggests that humour is an effective mechanism for coping with challenging concepts and circumstances (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983, pp. 1322-1323).

Futurists must also be aware of the potential risks of using humour in their forecasts. As already mentioned, humour requires “momentary anaesthesia of the heart” and it is certainly conceivable that this could lead to indifference, unhelpful disengagement with pressing concerns and inaction where action is needed. If concern about the future is suppressed in this way, we may become desensitised to the future suffering of those who come out worst in our forecasts. We are already disengaged from future generations by time; futurists must guard against promoting any further disassociation through humour and to contributing to any sense that people living in the future are ‘not like us’. Humorous futures risk over-simplification. One has to understand a joke, at least to some extent, to find it funny, and this may lead to stereotyped visions of the present or of the future, where complexity and detail is sacrificed for simplicity or relatability. The futurist should also be sensitive to how different audiences might respond to their use of humour. The intent is not to belittle serious topics but to broaden understanding and discussion about the future. Humour therefore needs to be used with integrity: that one is conjecturing possible future scenarios, not making predictions or commitments, should be made absolutely clear. De Bono (1973, pp. 9-13) proposed the use of a new word “po” to indicate a shift from serious, deductive thinking to creative, lateral

thinking. It is an unambiguous signal that what is said next is a statement for debate, not an opinion that the speaker wishes to promote or defend. Humorous visions of the future would benefit from such an unambiguous signal about the status of what is about to be said.

Humour is inextricably linked to futures studies, and the benefits of a considered use of humour in talking about the future outweigh the risk. Of course, the primary objective must remain generating insight about the future – one would not wish to present a forecast with no insight just because it was funny. There is a parallel in the relationship between humour and futures studies and that between poetry and futures studies. Knox (2016) writes: “Humor also increases memory, but unlike music’s chills, it lights up the area in our brains that react to surprise, release and relief. Perhaps the most important distinction is that, unlike music’s ability to increase our introspectiveness, humor makes us feel that we’re part of a group—all in the same boat. It’s a “We” thing”. As Morreall (2009, p. 140) notes: “We don’t typically engage in humour *in order to* increase our wisdom... any more than we play the piano to improve our math skills”. But this doesn’t mean that, if the opportunity presents itself, we can’t do both.

The use of aphorism

Perhaps the most troublesome step in the futuring process is Action. Even if one has ideas about what might happen in the future, it is often far from straightforward to recommend a course of action to accelerate or mitigate such futures. In my experience preparing *Special Projects*, one effective approach to developing Action texts is the use of aphorism. In this section, I review a classification of aphorisms described by Gary Saul Morson to assess what might constitute the boundaries of “poetic aphorism”. Taking aphoristic works by Sarah Manguso and James Richardson as examples, I suggest that poets may favour three types of aphorism: the “apothegm”, the “sardonic maxim” and the “thought”. It is then conjectured that alternative forms of aphorism (namely, “dicta”, “wise sayings” and “summons”) are worth consideration as forms for poets to provide direction or instruction about possible future action. Such forms may be of particular relevance to the poet writing in an “attention economy”, given aphorism’s immediacy, brevity and interruptiveness. However, in attempting to use such forms in this way, the poet should be sensitive to aphorism’s historic gender bias and its potential

to simply reconfirm existing opinions and prejudices. This discussion of aphorism as a poetic form appropriate for recommending future action is presented through the appropriation and reuse of existing aphorisms, a practical experiment with two purposes: to test the extent to which collaging of multiple aphorisms might be a persuasive critical/creative technique, and to reenergise the reader at the mid-point of this thesis by advancing the discussion in what is hoped to be an unexpected and playful manner.

- 01 An aphorism never coincides with the truth: it is either a half-truth or one-and-a-half truths.

Karl Kraus

It feels extravagant, if not heretical, to provide explanatory comments for an aphorism. “Perhaps putting a by-line to truth is as pointless as painting a torpedo”¹. In my defence, there is at least one precedent. Frank Kuppner’s 2004 poem *The Uninvited Guest* consists of 783 classical epigrams, many of which are accompanied by “translator’s annotations”.

- 02 I don’t write long forms because I’m not interested in artificial deceleration. As soon as I see the glimmer of a consequence, I pull the trigger.

Sarah Manguso

In this discussion, I will refer to how two contemporary American poets use aphorism in book-length works – Sarah Manguso in *500 Arguments* and James Richardson in *Vectors: Aphorisms and Ten-Second Essays* – to explore what characteristics these poetic aphorisms share, and identify less explored opportunities for aphoristic poetry, specifically how they might be used to prompt future action.

- 03 I like writing that is unsummarizable, a kernel that cannot be condensed, that must be uttered exactly as it is.

Sarah Manguso

I share this attraction to the irreducible, the atomic. The synopsis is better than the film, *York Notes* better than the set text. Reading recaps beats binge-watching. But it is difficult to create with such extreme concision. “Someone who can write aphorisms should not fritter away his time writing essays.” (Kraus again).

- 04 Think of this as a short book composed entirely of what I hoped would be a long book’s quotable passages.

Sarah Manguso

Think of this as a short set of explanatory notes composed entirely of what I hoped would be a thesis chapter’s quotable passages. Academic writing is *exhausting* and any opportunity to write in a different style, to give the reader a break, should be taken.

¹ Quoted from the imaginary author Jeff Lint, subject of Steve Aylett’s 2005 *Lint*. Lint was also an aphorist, responsible for “Civilisation is the agreement to have gaps between wars”, “An optimist has nothing but miracles to rely on” and “Every ten seconds somewhere in the world, someone is realizing I’m right”.

- 05 I imagine ways of reducing a text the way one reduces a sauce.

Marcel Bénabou

In *Why I Have Written Any of My Books*, Bénabou cites Jorge Luis Borges: “What tiresome and laborious folly it is to write lengthy tomes, to expound in five hundred pages on an idea that one could easily propound orally in a few minutes. Better is pretending that the books exist already and offering a summary or commentary.”

- 06 To call a piece of writing a fragment, or to say it’s composed of fragments, is to say that it or its components were once whole but are no longer.

Sarah Manguso

The most distinguishing quality of aphorisms is their brevity but, unlike fragments, aphorisms are self-contained, detachable and complete statements. Manguso’s book is a five-hundred-piece jigsaw puzzle, but all the pieces are there, none are missing.

- 07 Even the most cursory examination of the topic will convince us that there is no agreed-upon definition of terms such as ‘aphorism’, ‘saying’, ‘apothegm’ or ‘maxim’.

Gary Saul Morson

Morson’s *The Long and the Short of It, From Aphorism To Novel* is a monograph on short forms. I have used Morson’s taxonomy of aphorisms, explained below, to identify Manguso and Richardson’s aphorisms.

- 08 I will use the term aphorism to refer to the entire family of short genres.

Gary Saul Morson

- 09 I consider pairs of genres related to each other, as opposites or antagonists.

Gary Saul Morson

- 10 Apothegms picture the world as fundamentally mysterious and so contrast with ‘dicta’, which purport to have at last resolved all mystery.

Gary Saul Morson

So apothegms are for those who believe the world to be fundamentally mysterious, that rationality only goes so far, and that there are truths beyond human reasoning. An example:

- 11 All is vanity, all is delusion, except those infinite heavens. There is nothing but that. And even that does not exist.

Tolstoy

Morson quotes this example, said by Prince Andrei in *War and Peace*. (Should this be considered a Tolstoy quotation if it is spoken by his fictional character?)

In opposition to the apothegm are dicta. With secure foundations for knowledge, say, in science in religion, and reliable, evidenced laws of action or morality, insights can be expressed as dicta. This subgenre is more typical of moral and political philosophy.

- 12 The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation.

Jeremy Bentham

The internet has simultaneously liberated and degraded the aphorism. Typing “Jeremy Bentham aphorism” into Google suggests hundreds of sites, many of them farcically dense with spammy ads. I now have access to any number of Bentham’s aphorisms – (for example, his definitional “Prose is when all the lines except the last go on to the end. Poetry is when some of them fall short of it.”) – but without skilled curation and credible attribution, I am not able to find anything specific, nor can I fully rely on what I find. Pre-Google, Bentham (like Auden, Milton, and many others) compiled his own commonplace book of excerpted insights copied from other writers. You can rely on a commonplace book; any mistakes are your own.

- 13 Sardonic maxims question the rationality of the world and unmask vanity, self-deception and egoism disguised as virtue. By contrast, wise sayings are the pronouncements of sages and the anonymous wisdom of past generations.

Gary Saul Morson

The sardonic maxim is the cynic’s shrug:

- 14 All of us have sufficient fortitude to endure the misfortune of others.

La Rochefoucauld

The first genuinely humorous aphorism in this essay (although Bénabou’s “sauce” comment has a lightness of touch).

- 15 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise.

Proverbs

Wise sayings, and wisdom literature generally, are rarely funny. There are not many jokes in Machiavelli. One instance where wise sayings are at least witty is *The Notebooks of Lazarus Long*, part of Robert Heinlein’s novel *Time Enough for Love*, from which are taken: “Tilting at windmills hurts you more than the windmills” and “Most “scientists” are bottle washers and button sorters”, as well as “When the need arises – and it does – you must be able to shoot your own dog”.

- 16 The thought offers a private meditation, still incomplete and tentative, as it first occurred to the author. The summons, at times of crisis, encourages the people with inspiring words.

Gary Saul Morson

So, the thought is a private rumination, ambiguous and unresolved.

- 17 Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed.

Pascal

In contrast, the summons is a type of public rhetoric, consisting of a call to action in response to a specific crisis.

- 18 England expects that every man shall do his duty.

Lord Nelson

Both *300 Arguments* and *Vectors* tend towards the same subgenres of the aphorism: the apothegm, the sardonic maxim and the thought. The examples below illustrate this. Firstly, the uncertain is favoured over the certain.

- 19 A screwdriver is for screws. When you pry open a paint can with it, you have committed metaphor, which is the second use of things, their will gone. As for us, since we don't know what our purpose is, all we do is metaphorical.

James Richardson

In annotating these aphorisms, I am put in mind of GK Chesterton's comments written in green pencil in the margins of his copy of Holbrook Jackson's *Platitudes in the Making: Precepts and Advices for Gentlefolk*. For each of Jackson's sayings, Chesterton wrote a response or rebuttal. Jackson writes: "Don't think – do!" Chesterton scribbles: "Do think! Do!"

- 20 No one can steal something that's too small to see.

Sarah Manguso

The sceptical is preferred to the naively positive, pessimism over optimism.

- 21 What fails to kill me will kill me eventually.

Sarah Manguso

The philosopher Daniel C Dennett defines "deepities" as statements that, on the face of it, seem profound but on reflection have two meanings, one trivial and the other serious but either false or meaningless. If it is true, it doesn't matter, if it matters then it isn't true.

- 22 Think of all the smart people made stupid by flaws of character. The finest watch isn't fine long when used as a hammer.

James Richardson

Hammers appear surprisingly often in aphorisms. Other hammer-based sayings include: "Anything hit with a large enough hammer will fall apart"; "When in doubt, use a bigger hammer"; "To a man with a hammer, everything is a nail"; "In this world a man must either be hammer or anvil."

- 23 The first abuse of power is not realizing that you have it.

James Richardson

24 Success is whatever humiliation everyone has agreed to compete for.

James Richardson

25 Each lock makes two prisons.

James Richardson

26 All stones are broken stones.

James Richardson

A hypothesis: the preferred modes of poetic aphorisms are the apothegm, the sardonic maxim, the thought.

27 There is a prevailing idea in poetry [...] that, fearing hubris in the absence of certainty, moral weakness and a condition of utopian hopelessness should be faced with heroic resignation.

David Kuhrt

However, by over-aligning the poetic aphorism with the apothegm, the sardonic maxim and the thought, one too crudely categorises contemporary poetic aphorisms with an Eliotian world-weariness. But this is not to deny that this tone of 'heroic helplessness' does recur in some mainstream contemporary poetry to the extent that it may qualify as a preferred mode. Even procedural, combinatorial approaches to writing poetic aphorisms seem to result in the same modes of equivocation, world-weariness and the internal.

28 It has often been found that the aphoristic formulas have a remarkable property: because of the rigidity of their syntactic structure, they easily lend themselves to reversals, permutations, substitutions.

Marcel Bénabou

Bénabou, a member of Oulipo, published a paper in 1979 describing a procedural approach to generating new aphorisms.

29 When hell dines out, heaven foots the bill.

Online aphorism generator

The website joehalliwell.com uses Bénabou's rules as originally published to generating aphorisms.

30 Contingency and truth are continents divided by an ocean of necessity.

Online aphorism generator

31 A little science is a dangerous thing; a great deal of it is absolutely fatal.

Online aphorism generator

32 When fate sleeps, it dreams of chance.

Online aphorism generator

33 Some people call a doctor when all they want is an audience.

Henny Youngman

Anthologies of aphorisms, one after another after another, begin to have the deadening rhythm of the jokebook. Youngman, “King of the One Liners”, was a vaudeville and television comedian. When he performed, he would break the rhythm of sequential witticisms with interludes playing the violin.

34 Today, if you’re not confused, you’re not well informed.

Henny Youngman

35 Every time I ask what time it is, I get a different answer.

Henny Youngman

36 I intend to live forever. So far, so good.

Steven Wright

37 I like to skate on the other side of the ice.

Steven Wright

38 You can't have everything. Where would you put it?

Steven Wright

39 When my husband does the dishes he always leaves some platter in the sink, some surface unwiped. I tried to correct the behaviour until I remembered that if I finish everything in my Work In Progress folder I’m afraid I’ll die.

Sarah Manguso

300 Arguments is not a jokebook; there is narrative and memoir built up through accretion, a pointillism...

40 Nonlinear. Discontinuous. Collage-like. An assemblage.

David Markson

...not unlike that in David Markson’s late novels (*The Last Novel*, *This is Not A Novel* etc).

41 The tyrant has first imagined he is a victim.

James Richardson

Vectors does not have narrative but there is juxtaposition and echo between individual aphorisms.

- 42 Millions of perfect crimes are committed every day, by no one.

James Richardson

- 43 To think yourself incapable of crime is one failure of imagination. To think yourself capable of all crimes is another.

James Richardson

There is an online video of Richardson reading from *Vectors*. He opens by saying “It’s in fifty parts” – (nervous laughter in the audience) – “but in the interests of your survival I will cut it down to about twenty”. He reads the number, then the statement. The audience laughs at several (sometimes immediately, sometimes after a pause) including “Spontaneity takes a few rehearsals” and “Snakes cannot back up”, but most are received in thoughtful silence.

- 44 Why shouldn’t you read this the way I wrote it, with days between the lines?

James Richardson

Vectors specifically requests to not be read like a novel.

- 45 Poetry is not information.

Dean Young

- 46 If you want to learn how to cook a lobster, it’s probably best not to look to poetry.

Dean Young

You would prefer not to visit a postmodern dentist also.

- 47 Capital, labour, information and knowledge are in plentiful supply and it is human attention that “has become a more valuable currency than the kind you store in bank accounts”.

Tom Davenport

This description of the attention economy from 2000 seems quaint at best from the viewpoint of 2018, but elements still resonate. The poetic aphorism: could it be well suited for the attention economy?

- 48 The internet, with its swift proliferation of memes, is producing more extreme forms of modernism than modernism ever dreamed of [...] the writer as meme machine.

Kenneth Goldsmith

Brevity and shareability are not the critical factors. In reality, only two types of short text thrive on Twitter: the witticism and “Here, look at this idiot”.

- 49 Savour kindness because cruelty is always possible.

Jenny Holzer

The possibility for interruptiveness and memorability inherent to aphorisms are more critical where attention is at a premium. Holzer's lists of aphorisms, in varying registers and voices, posted on billboards and park benches, still have the power to surprise.

- 50 Abuse of power comes as no surprise.

Jenny Holzer

- 51 A lot of professionals are crackpots.

Jenny Holzer

Aphorisms when memorised may not change minds but may accelerate action. The aphorism as smart drug.

- 52 Modafinil lowers my activation threshold: I'm more motivated to take on tasks I would normally put off.

Academic user of smart drug Modafinil

Opportunities: Aphorisms when memorised may not change minds but may accelerate action. Modafinil is "the Limitless drug".

- 53 Aphorisms are essentially an aristocratic genre of writing. The aphorist does not argue or explain, he asserts; and implicit in his assertion is a conviction that he is wiser or more intelligent than his readers.

WH Auden

The brevity of a bullet. Brian Dillon, in *Essayism*, describes aphorisms as "a literary form of sublime ambition that is at present in a kind of disgrace". An aphorism is "a sharp or pointed thing, violently deployed".

- 54 Women have so far found very little use for the aphorism, far and away the most troubling indictment we can serve against any form.

Don Paterson

The misogyny of aphorism. The egregious gender imbalance in collections of aphorisms is blatant.

- 55 The filter bubble tends to dramatically amplify confirmation bias—in a way, it's designed to. Consuming information that conforms to our ideas of the world is easy and pleasurable; consuming information that challenges us to think in new ways or question our assumptions is frustrating and difficult.

Eli Parser

As punchlines without set up, aphorisms can be seen as merely feeding the filter bubble.

56 All the good maxims already exist in the world; we just fail to apply them.

Pascal

A political essay has three purposes: to identify the problem, to diagnose the problem and to tell the reader what they need to do to resolve the problem. It's frustrating when an essay does the first two but not the last. What should I do about that? At least aphorisms sometimes have the guts to tell you what to do.

57 It is time to see our moral choices as our descendants will.

George Monbiot

Futures studies is full of aphorism, as is activism, as is moral philosophy, but the problem is that they often lack the specificity to do anything about them.

58 Poetry isn't hard – it's impossible.

Ben Lerner

There can be no serious objection to exploring all of the potential subgenres of poetic aphorism. Poetry needs no reason. There is a risk in any mosaic-type essay – that when the inevitable standing-back occurs, in order to see the image in the magic eye picture, there is no image there. It is far from inevitable that a meaningful picture will emerge from the pixels.

59 Let us forgive ourselves for writing poems that aren't better than every other poem that has ever been written.

Dean Young

This also goes for academic essays. Perhaps this discussion is less of an "essay" (from the French *essayer*, meaning *to try*) than an "échou" (from *échouer*, the French for *to fail*).

60 To me, political scientists should never be awarded their Ph.D.'s until they have demonstrated that, at least, they can organize a respectable bake sale!

Hazel Henderson

Ultimately, the poet-futurist must say what needs to be done, and do it.

Productive approaches to poetry futures

In conclusion, my experience in experimenting with the sixteen different strategies in the poet-futurist matrix in writing the first half of my Creative Portfolio indicated that there were a handful of more constructive approaches that the poet-futurist can use: Automatic and Aleatory techniques, particularly for Foresight and Insight. Additionally, the poet-futurist should use humour throughout, ethnographic techniques for Foresight and aphoristic approaches to Action. Using the insights generated through these

experiences, I then developed a set of longer poet-futurist texts, which are incorporated in the second half of my Creative Portfolio. These are more hybrid texts where I have blended a number of different approaches (but most frequently Automatic and Aleatory) in order to generate novel insights about the future, whilst also attempting to meet my own criteria for more effective poems (for instance, musicality, rhythm, vocabulary, surprise, humour...) These texts illustrate how I used the matrix of poet-futurist techniques in a fluid manner, more as a set of practical approaches and starting points than as a reductive, directive book of recipes. *The Fire Bee* started as “Deductive Worldbuilding”, an intentional attempt to develop a scenario involving Rorschach testing for artificial intelligences, which was taken forward through an Aleatory approach (namely, by sending different abstract images through online image recognition tools and recording what the algorithm reported that it saw). *Black List* originated as an exercise in Aleatory Foresight (“Combing the Scrapheap”), generating story synopses by combining and transforming text from movie guides, blending these with a list of the world’s most valuable consumer brands. The initial draft was revised through freewriting (Automatic) and more intentional revision (Cognitive). *Stacklounge Live*, which envisages a future stand-up comedy routine, was devised initially as a freewrite (“Heightened Prevision”) and developed through rule-based edits to content and format (Mannerist). The hysteric prognostications of *Criswell B* emerged from exercises in imitating the rhythm and style of the writings of American psychic The Amazing Criswell (“Exercises in Style”) but with strong subsequent (Cognitive) curation and editing. Finally, an all-you-can-eat approach was taken to drafting *The Bunny Assembly*, with techniques including the collage of academic papers and thinktank reports (Aleatory), unconstrained freewriting and free dictation (Automatic), intentional and self-expressive writing (Cognitive), all within the constraints of a set of story beats appropriated from Alfred Hitchcock’s 1942 thriller *Saboteur*. The success of these poems is open for the reader to decide. However, as a poet, I feel these poems offer a potential direction forward, to further experiment with the sixteen strategies as part of an ongoing poet-futurist praxis. In the next chapter, I will explore the form that such an ongoing praxis might take.

5. Beyond Hypernormalisation: Proposals for a Poet-Futurist Praxis

If we can recognize that change and uncertainty are basic principles, we can greet the future and the transformation we are undergoing with the understanding that we do not know enough to be pessimistic.

Hazel Henderson (1981, p. 411)

I was a peripheral visionary. I could see the future, but only way off to the side.

Steven Wright (1990)

One of the primary objectives of this research was to identify an ongoing praxis for a poet-futurist that I could personally apply during and after this research. Whilst accounts have been given of what futurist praxis should look like (for instance, Dator 2015), and similar accounts given for poetic praxis (such as Herbert & Hollis, 2000), an account of the hybrid praxis of the poet-futurist is novel. Rather than attempt to give a comprehensive account of what futurists and poets should do in general, I will instead focus my own praxis, what I recommend to myself given my own creative and research interests, strengths and weaknesses as a poet and a futurist, in relation to two questions: what should a poet be doing differently, if they are a futurist? And what should a futurist be doing differently if they are also a poet? Explicitly, this is not a prescription for every poet or every futurist (or even every poet-futurist), but it is presented in a way that other practitioners interested in a post-futurist praxis might find useful as a guide. I have attempted to go into a level of detail in terms of specific activities and resources that enables practical application of this approach.

What you do differently as a poet because you are a futurist

The activity of writing poetry is a creative one and, as such, can be described using Wallis's four-step model of a creativity process, comprising *Preparation*, *Incubation*, *Illumination* and *Verification* (Wallas, 1926). I propose a slight modification to this process with the addition of a step at the beginning, *Activation*, and one at the end, *Propagation*. The extended model is summarised in Table 6. Below, I discuss what is distinctive about how the poet-futurist carries out these activities.

Table 6. Activities in the extended Wallas model of creativity

Activation	Preparation	Incubation	Illumination	Verification	Propagation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide to write • Decide to write <i>now</i> • Place oneself in physical position to write 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide what to write • Gather relevant ideas to mind • Prepare initial outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause conscious thought on task: work on another problem, or relax from all work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw together and develop ideas • Prepare initial draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise draft • Polish and proof draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage audience with final work

Based on Wallas 1926; extended by author.

Activation: Writing is a solitary activity and the blank sheet is daunting. It is easier not to write than it is to write. There will be countless and multiplying legitimate demands on the poet-futurist’s time. Fogg (2009, p. 1) writes there are three prerequisites for a person to perform a particular behaviour: that the person be “sufficiently motivated”, “have the ability to perform the behaviour” and “be triggered to perform the behaviour”. If it is assumed they have sufficient motivation and capability for the task, then the poet-futurist can improve their productivity by consciously identifying and managing the triggers that impel them to write (and the distractions and blocks that prevent them from doing so). To minimise their activation threshold, the poet-futurist has the tools to hand to write anywhere.

Preparation: The poet-futurist’s praxis is distinguished from the poet’s in their approach to gathering stimuli and in selection of topics to write about. In their notebook, the poet-futurist gathers and writes down both what they observe and what they conjecture might be observed in the future. They keep a log of future signals and trends and have a variety of generic future scenarios and forecasts to draw upon in their writing. Like all poets, poet-futurists read widely but they particularly seek out multiplicity in sources. Poet-futurists actively curate their experience, skewing towards people, events and locations that bring them closer to alternative possible futures. The poet-futurist views preparation as play, experimenting with different topics and poetic approaches, seeking variety as a virtue in these but often returning to core techniques involving non-expressive writing, ethnography, humour and aphorism.

Incubation: Poetry benefits from incubation, the period of time a raw draft spends fermenting in a drawer before being rediscovered and finished later. However, there is urgency in the work of the poet-futurist, so a mindful but accelerated approach to incubation is proposed. Just as it is easy to not write, it is also easy to neglect drafts for months and years and the poet-futurist knows that such abandoned drafts on futurist topics are likely to be worthless. The poet-futurist values the beginning and the end of the creativity process – the original idea and the final output – and sees an excess of work-in-progress as a waste.

Illumination and Verification: The poet-futurist has achievable (i.e. low) standards for drafts, works in rapid increments, a “prototype-and-test” approach. The poet-futurist invites feedback early from their audiences. Every available shortcut for finalising their texts are used: checklists, software tools, third-party proofreading.

Propagation: Speed to propagation is critical for the poet-futurist, so more direct and faster publication and dissemination routes are favoured; routes with more selective gatekeepers are deprioritised. If finished work is not disseminated by year’s end, it is destroyed, as there is always new work. Everything the poet-futurist writes is open for remix and appropriation, becoming part of a collective creative commons. The poet-futurist does not defend their copyright: they know it is inconceivable to make a living from publishing poetry and to act otherwise is irrational. The poet-futurist has a day job. The poet-futurist writes for the general public but knows that other poets (and themselves) are also members of the public. As Burroughs (2017, p.17) notes, “We do not make art for the public. We are the public that makes art.”

Overall: In each step of the creative process just described, the preferred mode of working is collaborative. The poet-futurist writes with enthusiasm and energy, and with a pragmatic hope. The poet-futurist must act as well as write. If you do not embody your own forecasts, why should anyone else? A poet-futurist will seek to be on the right side of the future. If a behaviour today will in ten years be seen with as much repugnance as, say, wearing fur is today, then the futurist will abstain early. The future will judge the poet-futurist as much as anyone else. The poet-futurist is the future’s quietly persistent evangelist. Finally, it is essential that the poet-futurist has a view on the future of poetry, or they risk premature obsolescence.

Poet-futurist praxis in different poetry futures

What might poetry be in the future and how should a poet-futurist shape their praxis today in order to stay relevant in the context of potential poetry futures? In a 2017 interview, UK poet Vahni Capildeo was asked which of her contemporaries would be read in 100 years' time? Her response was "Who will be alive to read us? I cannot divine the literature of phosphorescent cockroaches." That is not good enough. Try, dammit. *Try!* To assess whether a proposed poet-futurist praxis will thrive in the future, one needs to take a view on what poetry's future might be. To do this, I will start by identifying commonalities in the recent discussion in the journal *Jacket2* on long-term poetry futures. Then I will propose four high-level scenarios for the future of UK poetry and assess whether the poet-futurist praxis described above will thrive or falter in each scenario.

In 2017, *Jacket2* asked ten American poets to consider the questions 'What will poetry be in ten thousand years?' and 'If you wrote a poem that you knew would last ten thousand years, how would this impact your writing?' (Hume 2017, Dickinson 2017, Skinner 2017, Sloane 2017, Keller 2017, Bernstein 2017, Huebert 2017, Smith 2017, Gallagher 2017, Perelman 2017). Several related ideas emerged from these responses. Given impending and probably unavoidable environmental cataclysm, it was felt far from certain that there would be humans around in ten thousand years to read poetry. Gallagher expressed the view: "I write from the vantage point of a culture which sees itself on the brink of collapse from its inside and destruction from its outside, in an unstable world with nuclear war capabilities, and on a planet whose ecosystem is changing, but in a political climate where leaders appear unable to develop a plan for survival at any level." Should humanity persist, it is not certain that the survivors would have sufficiently similar consciousness or language to ours to produce and engage with what is described as poetry today. Our consciousness might survive as "code on servers", "without brains, lungs, and hearts" (Hume) but our capacity to engage with poetry may expire. There was support for the view that poetry had a role to imagine and inspire better futures, a poetry that is "pragmatic, idealistic, empathetic, polyvocal, choral, lyric, dreamlike, interruptive, antirationalist, anticapitalist, composted, translative, remedial, restorative" (Hume). If poetry exists in the far future, it was thought it could have a

similar role as it has today, to operate at the edge of knowability, of the sayable, that it could be expected to be expansive and diverse, even if it is communicated through advanced technology we can only conjecture now (Skinner imagines “an extinct oryx, or the precise outline of this bit of electronic glass, convulsed with electricity, or a sheaf of barley integrated with my brain pattern”). Finally, there was a mutual view that to write for an audience so far in the future was, in general, a poor idea. It would be “terrifying to the point of paralysis” (Huebert).

What follows is a set of four outlooks for UK poetry in 2030, conjecturing internally consistent future scenarios based both on existing trends in poetry and imaginative speculation. The *Jacket2* discussion above indicates that humans, human consciousness and language are prerequisites for poetry to persist, so when developing these shorter-term scenarios, I have made the assumption that these three capabilities do not become extinct in the forecast period. The four futures presented are broadly based on the ‘alternative futures’ model (Dator 2009, p. 8-10) that identifies four archetypal images of the future: *Growth* (where current trends, both positive and negative, continue), *Collapse* (major changes cause existing systems to break down), *Discipline* (deliberate measures are taken to curb specified activities) and *Transformation* (radical, exponential changes lead to a new paradigm). The four scenarios described – *Chorus*, *Ghost Town*, *Guild* and *Pandemic* – are intended as provocations not predictions, intended to test whether the proposed poet-futurist praxis described above is able to thrive in an array of different possible futures.

Chorus 2030

In 2030, the general public still does not quite know what to make of poetry. After encountering poetry at school, most do not go on to read poetry. Writing and reading poetry is perceived as a rarefied (and, by many, futile) practice, although it is generally conceded that poetry is, in some unspecified way, “good for you” (in the same way that eating your vegetables is good for you). Most people would struggle to name a contemporary poet.

Poetry freely competes with other cultural products for attention. For those who do choose to engage, poetry’s multiplicity is a strength. After a great deal of effort, poetry’s canon substantially decolonised in the 2020s, and the cadre of better-known UK poets

(typified as “mainstream, published, prizewinning”, with many in academia) has further diversified, having been renewed from a larger and expanding pool of emerging poets. Authenticity has become an even more critical feature of poetry, not only in terms of how one’s personal background and experience qualifies one to write on certain topics, but also with a requirement for transparency in the poet’s writing process. Readers demand and receive free access to every draft of every text, from inception to publication.

If you are a reader of contemporary poetry, chances are that you also write poetry. Educational courses for poetry writing flourish. But most contemporary poetry written is not published, and the majority of poetry sold is not contemporary. No-one gets rich writing poetry and there are few full-time poets. As in all literary arts, digital media is now ubiquitous for both the consumption, promotion and the generation of poetry. Poetry is available to suit all tastes and consumers and, via recommender algorithms, can easily match their interests to available texts and poets. Want pantoums on cod fishing? No problem. Interested in renga about artificial intelligence? Would you prefer them written in the first, second or third person? High levels of collaboration between poets, and between poets and readers, become standard. Poetry is open, democratic, global, participatory, experimental and interdisciplinary. Anyone who chooses to do so can add their voice to this chorus.

Ghost Town 2030

In the last decade, poetry in the UK has been consciously abandoned as an art form, desertified, partially through choice, partially from necessity. Those who gained insight or pleasure from poetry in the past now access these qualities in much more effective forms from other experiences and media. The diversity and immersivity of visual entertainment and games makes these far more rewarding uses of leisure time. But the majority lack time for even these pursuits, as the population is fully occupied by other demands on their time and attention. Many people work five to ten different jobs, a mix of gig economy contracts for corporations and government-run public works schemes.

Many former poets gave up their practice after the introduction of a social media integrity engine in 2023. This comprised an algorithm that identified and exposed controversial, shameful or merely inconsistent statements made by individuals in their

online (and later offline) communications. The integrity engine, rather than restoring trust in online media, was soon described by one commentator as “a machine for processing people’s pre-emptive confessions for a crowd-sourced inquisition”. This, mixed with increasing state surveillance and repression, finally eliminated the ability for poets to “say the unsayable”.

Poetry was excised from the educational curriculum in the mid 2020s. Most born after that time have never read a poem. Of the few books in the few libraries that remain, none contain poetry. Thousands of years of poetry is fully available online but remains virtually unaccessed. Dusty books of poetry are found in museums. As the poets of the previous generation retired, no-one had time or interest to replace them. Where the techniques and concerns of poetry remain, these have been subsumed into other creative disciplines: there are no poets, only writers. Difficulties in international trade result in shortages of pens and paper, and shortages of raw materials mean new phones and computers are far too expensive for the majority to afford. Poetry continues to be written and consumed in other countries; a fact to which those in the UK are either oblivious or indifferent. A tiny and dwindling group try to keep poetry going, like the struggle to keep a dying indigenous language alive.

Guild 2030

The poem “Voluntary Human Extinction”, widely circulated in 2021, is found to be a direct causal factor in the suicide of over four hundred people that year. Following the successful prosecution of the poet on multiple counts of involuntary manslaughter, a new General Arts Regulatory Board is established in 2023 to issue licences to produce poetry. Fifty UK poets were immediately granted licences under grandfathering arrangements, but anyone else wishing to write poetry for public circulation is now required to follow a prescribed course of study, complete a formal qualification (demonstrating an exhaustive knowledge of poetry terms and forms, and showing a long-list of historic poets studied) and complete a three-year probationary period under the supervision of a licenced poet. Prospective poets are also tested for psychological robustness, empathy and ethics.

This elite of officially licenced poets dominates the limited public discussion of poetry. By typical criteria of poetic craft, licenced poets write outstanding poems, which are

rigorously risk-assessed before publication. Writing that does not accord with this elite's definition of poetry is discounted, not given the name "poetry". Technology reinforces the position of this elite: recommender systems render non-elite poets invisible, the self-reinforcing nature of celebrity makes 'being famous' a prerequisite for becoming famous. Elite poets monopolise funding and attention, with the rich having a critical say in which poets are funded and who works in penury. Outside this elite, poetry becomes increasingly entryist and competitive, with poets seeking to break in via flattery and patronage. Those who feel they have no chance of successfully attaining elite status take up "para-poetry" roles as assistants to elite poets, helping with early drafts and research.

Poetry has no monetary value. Historic poetry, out of copyright, is available online for free, and contemporary poetry, with copyright that technology has rendered unenforceable, is also free. The value of poetry is nostalgic. Elite poets spend most of their time marking the birthdays and deaths of poets from the past. This year, there is considerable poetic activity to mark the centenary of the death of DH Lawrence. The poetic canon ossifies.

Pandemic 2030

Now everyone reads contemporary poetry and most people write poetry. Forensic historians have identified a prime cause for this, a contagion arising from the uniquely virulent work of "Poet Zero" who wrote in the early 2020s. Those who read Poet Zero's work were immediately inspired to add to it, to produce poems of their own and, through the remixing and sharing of these texts, more poets were created. Poetry is destigmatised, seen as an activity that everyone does. Under a universal basic income and universal childcare, no-one lacks the time to write. There is poetry in everything; all cultural products feature an element of poetry. The 2028 *Adventure Time* reboot movie begets *Adventure Time* T-shirts, *Adventure Time* ready-meals, and *Adventure Time* poetry.

Poetry is infective, and hyper-effective at what it does. Audiences find poetry accessible, relevant, uniquely enjoyable, uniquely provocative. Experiments and prototypes abound. The abundance of poetry comes from innovations in how poetry is created but, more critically, in how it is read. The human poetry readers are massively outnumbered by computer readers, who provide appreciation and critique at worst indistinguishable and at best far more informed than that from human readers. Machine-to-brain and brain-to-

brain interfaces make poetry faster, more immersive and direct. Writers and readers take smart drugs to enhance poetic states of mind. Poetry anthologies are generated algorithmically: poetry is not just on-demand: it anticipates demand, generates demand. Machine learning algorithms draft the poems that poets would have written if they would have written if they had had the time. An artificial intelligence won the leading literary prize in 2023 but as a stunt. Four years later, another AI won the same prize but not in jest. The speed of production and consumption means ideas are valued over execution. In a new post-capitalist economy, poets are appointed as the conscience of organisations. Everything that can be said is said.

How well might we expect the poet-futurist praxis to operate under each of these four, very different scenarios? In Chorus, the challenges to the poet are to demonstrate authenticity, to match what they produce with an audience, that there is no commercial model to support the full-time poet and that the expansiveness that is considered such a virtue makes it more difficult to stand out, to do something that is genuinely groundbreaking. The poet-futurist knows what they are about and clearly communicates that to their audience, has a rationale for exploring the topics that they explore. They are open to sharing their sources and are aware that others' interpretation is as valid as their own. They can demonstrate that they draw their influences and their ideas from a diverse wellspring. By clearly marking their poetry as poetic-futurism, audiences can choose to be interested or not. Poet-futurists make it a virtue to be readily curatable. Any one voice in the Chorus is not strong, not recognisable, so the poet-futurist does not aim to stand out. In preference, the poet-futurist promotes alternative routes to publication, removes gatekeepers. The poet-futurist makes full use of the freedom of thought and action inherent to the Chorus scenario.

In Ghost Town, the poet faces conditions that make the production of poetry extremely difficult. No one wants to read poetry and there is no time to write. Extreme transparency and accountability mean the negative consequences of what is written can be considerable. By watching for signals, the poet-futurist will get early warning of the Ghost Town, giving time to exit poetry for a more prosperous artistic outlet. The poet futurist might experiment with attention bonds to get people to read their work. With no time to write, the poet-futurist acts to minimise their attention threshold, conduct micro-experiments, work in tiny bursts of activity. The poet-futurist may attempt to mitigate

extreme transparency and accountability through embedded disclaimers, or anonymity or encryption, or simply by refraining from saying the unsayable. Finally, the poet-futurist may remain an evangelist for poetry, work to enable others to write under difficult circumstances, maintain poetry through more traditional oral channels.

In Guild, the challenges differ depending on whether the poet is within or outside the licenced elite. As an insider, one must attempt to do fulfilling work within the constraints of established convention. For the outsider, the challenge is to maintain a practice outside the established limits. The poet-futurist becomes aware early that poetry is moving into a Guild scenario and can respond accordingly, either going somewhere else where the rules are different (exile) or finding a way to operate beyond the rules. The poet-futurist chooses to operate outside the Guild. The poet-futurist does not play the game but also does not blame those who do. The poet-futurist blends into the crowd, obfuscates their activities, works to disrupt the guild but appears normal to the casual observer.

In Pandemic, challenges stem primarily from the sheer volume and vast variety of poetry available. A rapidly advancing frontier of innovation makes it difficult for poets to stay ahead. There is also the risk of poetry becoming empty, performative and gimmicky. The need to retain the human element in poetry is also challenged by the use new technologies. The poet-futurist will use technology to make their work highly curatable, and to curate the work of others. The poet-futurist will have the capability and interest to work with emerging technologies. Like Chorus, it is virtually impossible to stand out in this scenario, so one modifies one's expectations to ensure one is an interesting voice amongst many. The poet-futurist embraces the performative and the gimmicky. The poet-futurist remains connected to the human (and humane) reasons for writing what they choose to write.

In considering alternative futures, one should always be prepared to find oneself proved wrong. The poet-futurist should consider not only how likely and preferable different scenarios are, but also how fast these different futures might manifest themselves. In the UK, it is conceivable that we are experiencing a period of cultural and political stagnation, where a lack of consensus on preferred social, economic and political futures leads to a torpid continuity of delay and inertia. Here, change happens slowly. Alternatively, we may be experiencing the everyday revolutions inherent to postnormal

times, where “facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent” and “the basic assumptions of normality, such as progress, modernisation, growth, development, and efficiency are becoming dangerously obsolete” (Sardar 2017 p. 72). If this is the case, change is ubiquitous. Or one might even argue the UK has experienced hypernormal times, where massively accelerated change in society goes unacknowledged due to a public discourse anchored by “fixed and cumbersome forms of language that were often neither interpreted nor easily interpretable at the level of constative meaning” (Yurchak, 2005, p. 50), “a strange theatre where nobody knew what was true or what was fake any longer” (Curtis 2016). In hypernormal times, change never happens – until it happens overnight, and everything is altered completely.

Across all scenarios and transition paths, the main advantage of the poet-futurist praxis is that, by staying flexible, watching for and gathering signals, the poet-futurist can act early to change praxis to adapt to changing circumstances. The poet-futurist is a generalist, a supermarket surrealist, a jack-of-no-trades. In particular, the poet-futurist knows that theirs will only ever be one voice amongst many. The poet-futurist knows there is not one deterministic future but many possible ones. My suspicion is that the most probable vision of poetry in 2030 is one with elements of all four proposed scenarios but that will actually look fairly similar to the present. Different industries have different time horizons: in pharmaceuticals, it takes twenty years to develop a new drug; in telecoms, new mobile phones are coming out every month. One can take the view that poetry’s time horizon is long because poets’ careers are often long. The poets we have today, many of them are the poets we had ten years ago, twenty years ago or longer. Once they emerge, they don’t go away.

In this chapter I have described the key elements of a poet-futurist praxis and the activities at each step in Wallas’ creativity process that are distinctive to the poet-futurist. Four potential futures for UK poetry were conjectured, and it was demonstrated that the poet-futurist praxis was sufficiently flexible and forward looking to operate well in each of these. In the next chapter, I will draw together the findings and conclusions of this research project and argue the urgent need for a more optimistic poetry of the future.

6. Conclusion: A Necessary Optimism

On this issue of human freedom, if you assume that there's no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope.

Noam Chomsky (1992, p. 355)

What we owe tomorrow

A button is pressed, a missile launched. The missile arcs overhead, exits and re-enters Earth's atmosphere, and falls in an unspecified country where an unspecified number of citizens of that country perish. As well as being dead, these citizens suffer a moral wrong; their right to life is infringed. Now imagine the same button, the same missile but in this case the missile orbits Earth for a time and eventually drops on the citizens of the unspecified country *two hundred years later* (Saugstad, 1994). The fact that the citizens who perish had not existed when the button was pressed does not absolve the one who pressed the button from their moral duty not to harm them. Those who will be alive in the future do not yet exist (obviously) but that does not mean those alive today do not have moral obligations towards them. So why do we act in ways that are seemingly indifferent to the welfare of future generations, with some taking actions in the present so ludicrously reckless that one can only believe that they hold a deep and active *grudge* against the future?

Key findings of this research project

In this thesis, I have demonstrated that there is space within UK poetry for much greater engagement with futures studies, for poets to address the concerns of futures studies and to leverage the field's tools. As we have seen in Chapter 2, there has historically been little cross-pollination between future studies and poetry and, although the field acknowledges the value of imaginative approaches, futures studies still privileges empirical-analytical techniques over creative-imaginative ones. On balance, futures studies has more to lose than gain in seeking a stronger and more explicit engagement with poetry. In Chapter 3, it was shown that there are historical and logical links between the role of prophet and poet, and there is a good rationale to believe poetry about the future could fulfil many if not all of the functions of poetry. However, it was demonstrated that there is a surprising lack of engagement with the future in contemporary poetry. In a review of recent bellwether texts, a far greater 'looking back' was evident than any 'looking forward' and where the future was explicitly discussed, clichéd declinist or dystopian views were offered. Even in the few texts which do explore

the future more explicitly, the emphasis is on passive, broken futures rather than active, optimistic ones. In Chapter 4 I explored different approaches to generating poetry – cognitive, automatic, mannerist and aleatory – and, by combining these with the four steps in a typical futuring process, defined sixteen strategies for writing poetry about the future. By producing creative texts using each of these strategies, I was able to identify the non-expressive approaches as being most effective. In addition, the use of ethnographic writing, humour and aphorism emerged as being helpful elements of poetry about the future. Drawing together different approaches, I defined a potential hybrid poet-futurist praxis in Chapter 5. It was demonstrated that this poet-futurist praxis was sufficiently flexible and resilient to thrive in any of four widely varying potential scenarios for UK poetry in 2030.

Our times: not weird but dark

The list of signals in Box 1 on page 21: in comparison to other issues happening in the world right now, there is a risk that these appear trivial, silly even. The years since the inception of this research project in 2014 have been difficult for someone who believes in the future. An alternative list of signals from 2018 could look like that in Box 6 below.

Box 6: A more negative outlook: signals of change, 2018

The rise of nativist politics in the US, Poland, Brazil, Indonesia; increasing East-West tensions; increasing nationalism and balkanisation, Brexit and the slow death of the European project; the disparagement of large internet companies for their policies, hate speech and illiberal profiling using social media tools; social media's link to depression; increasing social tensions, violence against ethnic minorities; gun violence in the US; the breakdown of constitutional democracy; the breakdown of free press in terms of a sustainable business model as well in response to state pressure; the murder of journalists; the likelihood of another economic recession; social upheaval related to technological unemployment; the likely continued devaluation and worsening of public services, healthcare, education; corporate tax evasion; increasing global inequality, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small global elite; the inability to articulate an alternative to global capitalism; increasing regional militarisation; the inability of global governments to come up with effective collective action against global warming; the fragility of global supply chains; increasing bacterial resistance to antibiotics; worsening air quality in our cities; the anesthetising effect of high-volume, high-quality streaming programming, mobile gaming; the pensions crisis; wars currently happening and wars to come; mass surveillance; indifference and apathy; endemic bullying and harassment in every profession; the poisoning of the seas with plastics; the continued destruction of the rainforests; food shortages; crass stupidity; the inability to have a civil debate; global terror.

One could argue that signals do not indicate weird times, they indicate dark times. But a feature of futures studies that is both a strength and a weakness is its capacity to look beyond the present, good or bad. Often, futures forecasts reflect more the times in which they were written than the future time that is assessed, but a futurist should be able to look beyond what is happening right now, good or bad, to take a view about what is underlying all this change, and what options we still have for good or bad futures. One the purposes of dystopian writing is to warn of future peril. Given the abundance of dystopian writing, surely we can consider ourselves sufficiently warned by now. In the event humanity ultimately succumbs to catastrophe, it will not be due to the lack of one more dystopian vision. Where, in the creative portfolio, I have erred from my stated goal to offer more positive views of the future - which clearly does occur on many occasions - my intent was not to provide yet another warning or to sensationalise any coming catastrophe. In some instances, the aim is to provoke the reader into considering whether an apparent dystopia would be judged as such by people living in the future, ten or a thousand years from now. But in other instances, I would simply acknowledge that it is genuinely more difficult to write optimistic futures than dystopia and, in the course of writing about the future, it is virtually impossible to avoid generating some number of pessimistic outlooks. Critically, where there are real dystopia portrayed in the creative portfolio, my hope would be that these are palliated by humour, however bleak. Against the inevitable, laughter remains our final mode of defence.

HG Wells wrote “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe” (1920, p. 504). Is it not possible that the closer we get to catastrophe, the more effort will be put into addressing the catastrophe? We have more educated people in the world than we have had at any time in human history, and more resources available to be able to harness and coordinate our thoughts and actions. If there was ever a time when humanity had the intellectual resources to tackle its biggest challenges, it is now. Should we not be envisaging positive futures, planning for them. “The bet makes the event more likely” writes DeLillo (2016, p. 194). Betting on horrific visions of the future and relentless pessimism is not helpful. Claeys (2018 pp. 499-500) offers one vision of humanity’s future (Box 7). Surely there is room within poetry to make a case in response, that if there is even a small chance this dystopia is not inevitable, we have a responsibility to ensure it does not come to pass?

Box 7: A future dystopia (Claeys, 2018, p. 499-500)

The polar icecaps have nearly melted, and much of the Siberian tundra. It is extremely hot, 4-6°C above present temperatures, or even more. But that will be in the more temperate regions. Nearer the equator, the home of many billions of the world's fastest growing populations now, the land will become uninhabitable. Its peoples will have to move, like many in the great seaside cities everywhere. Rising sea levels, crop failures, and desertification will make resources increasingly scarce. Every attempt to conserve or renew energy will be negated by the numbers requiring its use. With some 20 billion human beings on the planet, wars over water and land will be constant. Raging storms will wreak great devastation. Tropical insects and diseases will run rampant. The Great Burning and the Great Thirst will drive swarming masses north or south up the protective walls, which stretch for thousands of miles, isolating the more temperate climes. Here the billions locked out, increasingly thinking and acting as crowds, will swelter in poverty. They will clamour and importune until they can tolerate it no longer. Then they will come crashing through.

Initially the well-to-do – the 1 per cent or the 'One', who will possess three-quarters or more of the world's wealth – will, of course, be less affected by this process. As conditions worsen, the rich, in the comfortable regions, will retreat further into the luxurious isolation of their fortified compounds. Here they will watch the strange weather in air-conditioned comfort through layers of glass. TV cameras and security reports will keep them informed about life beyond the walls. With little sympathy, they will blame the feckless masses for overbreeding. Their own lives, meanwhile, will lengthen through many advances in science. They will be diverted by infinite forms of multidimensional amusement.

But, even so cushioned, they too will eventually sense the end times. Many will begin sinking into a reckless *fin de l'histoire* decadence. A cult of Apocalypse will promote wild lovemaking and carnivalesque abandon. While rising sea levels inundate millions, thousands will drown their anxieties in baths of champagne. The intellectuals will once again lose their way and seek guidance in a new Nietzsche. His doctrines, unsurprisingly, will resemble his predecessor's. He – or she – will reach back to Darwin, and even further to Malthus.

Outside these enclaves, in the wider world, poverty will confront prodigality as never before. The brainwashing mass media will, for a time, hold sway in perpetuating, through corporate propaganda, the myths of progress, growth, and infinite expansion, production and consumption. When this ideology finally expires there will be a moral, intellectual, and emotional free-for-all. Having failed to provide the answers, science will fall into disrepute. Messiahs and lunatics will swarm like woodlice, quoting scriptures, Joachim of Fiore, or Nostradamus. Some will proclaim a return to the purity of a lost golden age, be it a caliphate or a Christian Jerusalem. Many will claim we have lost our 'soul', and that they have found it. Some will claim to be Dr Frankenstein, and others, his monster. Neo-Antinomians will proclaim themselves free of sin, and act accordingly.

Eventually, great sweeping psychic epidemics will produce mass frenzies like the Tarantella. The scapegoating will commence. As numbers grow, cults of sexual abstinence will arise just as complete promiscuity becomes a norm. A renewal of misogyny may accompany such efforts as women are blamed for overpopulation: seeing sex once again as Original Sin, we may hunt witches again. Hatreds will burn as never before. Intense fantasies of power, violence, and sadism will attempt to displace the growing lack of real power. A profound reaction against capitalism, which will be linked to sin and desire, will commence. Many will reject the utopia of universal plenitude, novelty, and luxury. Making a virtue of necessity, abstinence, piety, and stoicism will revive. Neo-pagan asceticism and nature worship will trump hedonism as expressed through material possession. Survivalist cults will flourish. Satan will make an astonishing comeback. But Brahma, Buddha, Christ, and Marx will also appear. The symbols of opulence will be attacked publicly. And then these countercultures too will be commodified and marketized.

Amidst this chaos, various groups will seek world domination, promising order, restraint, and a return to the good old times – at a price. They will contend that in order for ‘Us’ to survive, ‘They’ must perish. They will start with immigrants and those on welfare. Most of the remaining middle classes will edge towards authoritarian solutions, worshipping the One and aspiring to membership within it. But the poor will eventually blame the rich, and storm their bastions. The masses will gratefully accept Austrian corporals who will again rise from the trenches, or failed seminarians who abandon prayer beads for handouts from media moguls. The Hitler of 2080 or the Stalin of 2100 will again demand total loyalty. Millions of ordinary followers will grant it. Restrictions on family size will finally be accepted, though reluctantly and too late. They will be policed with violence, and flouted nonetheless. Despairing neo-Augustinians will blame humanity as such, invoking Original Sin and expecting the worst, which they will likely get. The Holocaust may come to seem like a rehearsal for what follows. Having failed the first test, humanity, a lazy student, is unlikely to pass the resit.

Machines will play a central role in all of this. Neo-Erewhonians in colourful homespun woollen costumes will arise to destroy our metal friends or ‘comrades’, seeing robots as the new witches. Invoking a new ideal of pure humanity and unmediated sociability, they will assail the creeping mechanisation of human relations which only validates experience filtered through machines. Others, however, will still seek the salvation of their increasingly mechanical souls and bodies in new and cleverer inventions. In increasing numbers they will prefer robot to human company. A cult of robot worship will appear. And these machines will certainly proliferate. They will be doing all the work in the inhospitable regions. They will also develop their own cultures. Let us hope they are sufficiently diverted by chess clubs, robs-reality TV (watch it eat lizards), and geeky gameshows. When they begin to form in groups, look out. If they take up politics, we are in for trouble. If they get religion and are taught equality we are doomed. So when the Robot Party begins to speak of social hygiene, you can guess who will be the ‘virus’, the ‘parasite’, and the ‘monster’. Will a robot Lenin shout ‘death to humanity’ to the real proletarians? Perhaps. But will they

be as cruel as humans are to humans? No. That is impossible. (Unless of course they learn this from us too...)

THE BUNNY ASSEMBLY

I. Special Projects

II. The Fire Bee

III. Black List

IV. Stacklounge Live

V. Criswell B

VI. The Bunny Assembly

I. SPECIAL PROJECTS

a) Cognitive

Shot Clock

Allusion: tolerable only when referring to things that do not exist and events that have not happened. Falsifiability: means we should relax.

How to start the third millennium, in worm-world, underwhelmed? When questioned, only 27 per cent believed it worth the hassle to count our ages back from death rather than forwards from birth. The citizens said, "It will generate confusion and confusion generates ill will."

I wait for you, here outside the *Promise Grill & Seafood* in Johannesburg and on reading this for an instant you consider *Promise Grill & Seafood* as a search term. When you arrive I won't discuss the Circumstance, reside in silence in the shadow of an empty speech bubble.

Beyond comprehension, my unshakeable commitment: never to compete for the most flesh-eatingest zombie. I'd wager it takes more muscles to frown than it does to shoulder an armoured truck into an aqueduct but then I lack the data to support this. Three thousand miles away, the search term "triumph".

The uppercut is telexed if you look for it. List your first and best enabling anxieties and what's gone before. You must not rely on me. You must not rely on me at all.

Contemplative Withdrawal

Natural History

You know that the word *retail*
comes from some old figure of speech
meaning *to hold in one's sight*.
Riding the oscillating mechanical swan,
an ersatz clown – cheery –
channels John Cage, Johnny Cage and Johnny Cash,
a meme that failed to catch.
“Each day a child is treated for an injury
from a ride located in a mall,”
he shouts: randomly, ultraviolently, sombrely.
A zillion headbanging dachshunds drenched
in liquorice mall sweat, a remake
of that Korean film you hadn't seen yet.
You'd prefer to leave the galleria but
you aren't prepared,
your footfall is ineligible
and new store names are awkward,
wonky font workouts: *Tax Magic*,
The West Coast Tea Leaf Spelling Bee,
Macadamia & Collage.
Your goddaughter takes you through it laboriously.
As in the real world, children perform “jobs”
and are paid for their work,
as a fireman, doctor, police officer,
journalist, assistant reputation manager.
“It's a magic mirror,” she explains.

Contemplative Withdrawal

His Majesty's New Wanswuth

This project examines the possibility of creating a vertical prison in the sky... Inmates will know, see and hear everything that happens in the city, yet are isolated by the height.

Architecture Magazine, 2010

I get it, more or less. You went new for old: the new on forty-storey stilts, the old sloughed to the trust, incensed the gatehouse is not a fifteenth-century manor house or historic doubledeck suspension bridge doused in molten zinc. Delayed at the spine clinic, I was late for the tour so I knew little, but your *height is the wall* concept, though I took in the glut of hovering hotdog vans high above the six-spoke and (as was well-reported) your bold but unsuccessful whack at the world record by five thousand of your number (phishers in the main, whalers, some nano bad actors, all at least a metre and a half tall), condensed into a single berth, and how your workless are day-rated to conjure more contemporary uses for the word 'liveth' whilst sad on airsickness meds. Buggins does analysis, tells you what to do. In this context, hmmm... With those in custody becoming progressively accustomed to the thin and empty air, when freed one segment must be resettled away and up in alpine huts, the rest and luckiest to nest in backcountry eyries. Time to remind you I'm indemnified.

Clue Harvesting

131 Simple Ways to Rock Your Personal Brand

A full schedule: first to the Intercontinental to brace Gosso, that film actor cleared of murder, then to Arrivals to cover Chertok, the opportunist who'd just trademarked all presently untrademarked instances of the '-ollywood' suffix. Back at the Forge, I struggled to see how to file about the latter without replicating the clutter of the TM list in full ('Woollywood', 'Exo-Ollywood' and on, an inundation). My woe was baseless. The articles wrote themselves: they literally wrote themselves, populated with precisely curated bios of Gosso and Chertok drawn from the extant. Gosso's vision was "to live in a world where women are trusted to make the most of every opportunity they are granted". Squeezing Chertok's credo, his guiding principles were "authenticity, greatness, mercy" and his love of the acronym was "lifelong". That night, sirens woke me. It took an hour and a half to lull the blaze. In the street, I mentioned to the controller that I was retained by the *Watchman*. He said, "I'm a fireman, a hard worker and won't stand for flim-flam. I spend my downtime troubled for the children of the world, those unenrolled in primary schools. What you write, you can guarantee it will align with this?" He directed me to his endorsements for Trouble Shooting and Plainspoken: "I do detest it but a reputation has to be sustained."

Clue Harvesting

Street Minus

Over-provision of signage is detrimental to the neighbourhood, we feel. Our goal in erasing this junk is to make the city not look like the city. Naturally, one is wary not to lose sight of it entirely. We lost Earlsfield this way, lost it to toads and there is no evidence it was ever there. What this means to you is that you will be provided with the means to camouflage your home. Some will become homeless when they can no longer find their homes, others found delusional in derelict scout huts mistook for maisonettes. Thus we safeguard your commute (at least, that rehearsal in your mind of your commute before you leave that goes so well). From this point on, your muesli is your newspaper and you will be provided with separate private companies, general infill, puppet shows and street orchestras. The trapdoor in your living room will open onto an affordably low-cost borehole, descending ten k into the crust, where it may be boiling but at least it is orderly.

Clue Harvesting

The Concrete Party

Photographs No More, retired by a lens for life-size holograms – motioning light-mannequins – at the start, only of ourselves, the kids, the folks, the three good friends last seen at last year’s Chinese New Year. Then, proliferation: guilted that there was not one of my mother’s mother, or any of them I shared with in the thirties. Absented and then not, the household teemed with holograms of ever more distant relatives and contacts we had just met. Now they spill around, parade and interrupt. Abundant, alive and long dead, they are artlessly composed. I switched them on but lack the will now to extinguish them. I have not learned to blank them, scrum in images to reach the kitchen’s saloon doors. Echoes in the same clothes, same expressions. My reiterated children as babies crawl around in herds, nowhere to rest a bag of groceries. I am hesitant to drop the weight on their heads although I know the helpless infants are projections. Late, I sit among the dress suits, scrunch to penetrate beyond them. Modded, the mannequins narrate quasi-biographically, recap at my behest my tiny tiny viewpoints on the world (yes, seahorses are delicate but pointless). So affirmed, the feeling passes.

Clue Harvesting

Blue Commander

Shimizu Corp says Ocean Spiral will “capitalise on the infinite possibilities of the deep sea” to accommodate human life, as rising sea levels threaten the survival of island communities.

The Guardian, 2014

Having smashed up the house, and complaining of chest infections, the noted *kabushiki kaisha* sinks, spins a helix in an evening, constructs a complex for bat-n-ball, a tot lot and hoards ample blank paper for untutored crayon portraits. They are honoured over breakfast. Five thousand lawyers, and their families, and the brokers of derivatives, at the bottom of the ocean; they chose to buy themselves into that joke, *a good start*. Found a decade later, they will have tired of salted lavender honey pie and their kraken miscellanies. Stuxnetted or equivalent, forgotten, they must wait.

Clue Harvesting

Everyone's A Chemist

The best thing about working here is that people leave and then you never have to see their stupid anti-graffiti attack jets ever again. Unlike the other tinkerers, most of my time was spent by the sink. My mug was conjoined, one broken mug I glued (Sugrued) to another broken mug. The incubator's star was Irene Xiaoxi, famed for grafting neural tissue into postmodern assault rifles. We worked up her dazzling proton beam fantasies, invented everlasting canasta but nothing more. Later, we were beaten in the street. They took our Johnny Horizons and our posters on the critical role of cheerleaders in blowing good news out of all proportion.

Deductive Worldbuilding

Thousands of Books All Over the Place

The year I went back to the bank I took a split-level in the converted umbrella factory, taught myself sidechains, treechains, genesis blocks, obfuscations and the intricacies of moon math by colouring in textbooks; this, at the cost of vivid nightly proof-of-proof dreams, mainly the one in which the handle turns itself. New shelves and shelves of unread books only served to remind me of my former passions – the yakuza, paper folding, brass bands – so the library I burned, book by book, first in the name of minimalism, then for heat. Each night the fumes were masked by automated sweet pea and on my face each morning I smudged cinders into the contours of a pro-billionaire moustache. The path through the ash to Special Projects cleared before me.

Deductive Worldbuilding

Superkafka and its Impact on Industrial Relations

Welcome to Iron Mountain's premiere underground data center facility, located 200 feet beneath rolling countryside in a former limestone mine... More than 2,700 employees work in this underground city spread across 145 acres.

Company website

At the town hall, I broke the news: the cavern was to be converted to a mushroom farm, potentially a park for BMXers and their crews. Over heckles, boos, I took them through the plans in detail: the conveyors, the spawners, each of the hypothetical whoop-de-dos. Bottom line, we were done with the workers and most of their golf carts. But the technicians saw it coming, rose. I was bunkered and soon hostaged, leveraged in a chokehold from the nightmare automaton Superkafka, the workers' designated spokesman. As negotiations dragged, Superkafka's doomsday logic determined me "devoid of content". Abandoned to the back-and-forth and way too brittle, the rangers found me particulated later, clogging up the switchgear.

Deductive Worldbuilding

Versioning

Needed nowhere else that day,
you think to take a table
at the attic beanery
in the *Axolotl* by *Kateena*,
a boutique guesthouse
blown that year
into the hollows of the ear,
nose and throat hospital.
Below, the street
upgrades: animal tracks
to sand to pave, burned brick
to slab, pack ice on gravel
onto macadam.
Then briefly back
to animal tracks,
patched to asphalt.
The ground four-point-
noughts to braided composite,
electro-kinetic crystal
honeycombed in plastic.
These installations
take instants,
and longer,
no sooner are complete
than the new is fraying.
You order avocado.
The best guacamole in the city
empathises with your chemicals.
Victorian facades concede
to unpaid open-plan commercial,
redeployed
as frontons to play pelota.
You screen a call
from your bicycle-as-a-service
service provider,
for betterment: ingest the next,
teach yourself to better adjust
to your best friend's yo-yoing IQ,
find out how to test your home for Aztecs.
Ever-noob, mooc,
you are assessed: ace, tank.

Van coyotes heckle
from the fluctuating pavement.
Needed nowhere else that year –
not any year,
not in this form –
you persist,
insisting this is not your final form.

Deductive Worldbuilding

Witnesses to the Kapitan Klyucharyov Disaster

This is exactly how it happened.
I am captivated
by the thinness of the lifeboat.
What is promised we do not see.
The Rancher, the Quant and I
observe the confervoid hole

without knowing what it is
without knowing what to do with it.
This Oddvar nods.
His little data on the cities
of the circle proves sufficient
misidentified

the yell as Russian.
Distracted by catastrophe
we do not hear the burbot
at the centre of the earth
running out of air
adrift and seeping.

Sane Counsel

High and Low

Crooks hacked a microbrewery. The demand was three hundred million yen or a military confidence beyond value would be betrayed. The brewery, compromised in error. Its proprietor weighed the spammy threat, an animation in the form of a smashed-up piano. If he had no money. If his concentration was invested in the body dredged that morning from the harbour. The proprietor had never thought to write down his expectations. His response to the kleptoavatars was abrupt. “In these times, it is hard to find extortion distinguishable from your best behaviour.”

Sane Counsel

b) Automatic

Alternative FBIs

The FBI

or the Norwegian equivalent of the FBI

or an infant FBI with agents aged four and under

or an FBI established not in 1908 AD but in 1908 BC

or a dayglo FBI

or an FBI where the FBI stands for Freezer Bag Impound

or an FBI installed under the floorboards of new homes

or an FBI operating from the inside of a cheeseburger

or when you watch a cable procedural about a specialist FBI unit and its leader has your face

or when the history of the Norwegian FBI is written on a teatowel you bought from a gift shop in the Norwegian FBI's headquarters

or the Senegalese equivalent of the Norwegian FBI

or a neonatal FBI with agents aged six months and under

or a lumbago FBI

or an FBI where the FBI stands for Fantasy Birthday Interruption

or an FBI installed under the silicon wafers of nextwave tablets

or an FBI operating from the inside of an immunosuppressant

or a desiccated FBI

or a desecrated FBI

or when the history of the Senegalese equivalent of the Norwegian FBI is depicted on the label of a jar of marmalade you bought from a gift shop in the Senegalese equivalent of the Norwegian FBI's headquarters

or an FBI established in 190 billion 800 million BC

or when we get rid of the FBI then have the idea for the FBI again

an FBI of best guesses

an FBI for knickknacks

an FBI for vinegar

or an FBI for too much vinegar

Heightened Prevision

The Deliberate Curtain

already twenty thirty
the sanatorium's amenities:

n-pin bowling
spaceport snorkel park
hospice florist
hobbyshop orphanage
composting lighthouse
hayloft of data
martyrium of data
tepid balloonarium

each time the first time
inside the pool car:
predictive cryptograms
predictive street stickers
prophecies and precepts
scrutinised blueprints
the signs read like:

LjEFL-VEMS-FV-Em-XHD feXr-oqeK-cBAtsYhp Tzu-cyChyo-VEsf-ZIC pkcofQ-Vijt-NaKi-Wb eLRx-DedSwi-FAkGnz
--

they were a careening puddle of apathy
they were extrapolating laidback vibrations
they were throbbing in the pitch of statistics
but a duck a lamb a pigeon and a fish
and the plan to bring them back
is an experiment in fact

Heightened Prevision

Laplace's Demon

I know the starting population and the rate of change
So I can try to make sense of the trailer
For an over-elaborate reality series about warring librarians
I know the violin will be phased out
Much like the goggengoose was, a trumpet-like instrument
Manufactured in Bavaria from ivory and boar hair
There are no recordings of the goggengoose
And no one now knows how to play it
We can make some guesses about what it sounds like
The way we imagine the hues of Archaeopteryx
And, in far off space, another song about the equinox is sung
The snowy creek is an obvious fake
And the goggengoose buried there is as obviously fake
And to pretend a magic trick is dangerous
Cannot ever be forgiven
The deckchair was never in any jeopardy
Immaturity is not prediction
So amateurism must not be revered
No "imagine everyone in the world turns into balls of string"
No "imagine I am living inside a giant pinball machine"
Their endings are trivialities
Simulation of trivialities is not prediction
The machine that models falcons' flight is stupid
It is just like a falcon
If you repeat any phrase often enough
It becomes a throughline
Even if it isn't a throughline
Just like a falcon, I try to make sense of the trailer
For an overly drawn out documentary
About a woman with a poisoned cheesecake
A little bokeh gives you permission for terrible behaviour
And terrible things happen – she's no ordinary pastry chef
If you start talking about Jack the Ripper or the witch trials
Then this conversation is over
You predict where you will live from the distribution
Of churro vans but only after the fact
The brother was acquitted
Post-rationalisation is not prediction
If you guessed I'd go to the butterfly effect
Well done! If you guessed I'd get to Google
Well done! This conversation is over

Just like falcons
Accuracy and predictive validity are different
I am taking none of this with me
Guessing wrong a million times each day
It works
But only because this is the one problem where it works
I just want to know what time the shops open and close
In short
I'd like you to stop looking at what I am looking at
And, apparently, stating "I think I have the flu"
Is a good predictor of whether you have the flu
You did your best work in the first 3 days of your career
There is always something wrong with the model
It is *not valid or interesting*. It is valid but *not interesting*.
It is *not valid* but interesting. It is valid and interesting *but*
Say what you like, you demonstrated nothing
Except that we really want to use the data
And we really have to make up stories about the data
And everything maths

The Ecstatic Kaleidoscope

A Shame He Can't Swim

I will give verbal consent for my phone
To treat me like a skyscraper
To remind me to code the time
When portables will irradiate the hill
I can see why this never really caught on
From mess room to water point
Dictation is far from flawless
Uncertainty can be more interesting
But it doesn't help you past the greedy goats
Queuing for paella
It's fair to assume
That every restaurant has a raccoon problem
Going over the pedestrian bridge
Will be bad for the battery
Queries? Ideas? Comments? Suggestions?
Tasting events are relaxing
If unvaryingly disappointing
And at this point make a comment on Gregorian chant
I am not exactly sure how I feel about Gregorian chant
Although I am in constant use
And think Columbus was exceedingly pushy
I am pretty sure
I have never shoulder-barged another person in my life
Standby mode is moody
Baskets are for the sole use of buskers
Hey – wonderful jumper
With rocket ships
It appears so aerodynamic
Dressed up as the Jollibee bee
But with no children around
So just staring from side to side
Nonplussed
To the extent that someone in a mask and costume
Can appear nonplussed
They are here
Because they cannot be removed
Without destroying the pedestrian bridge
For deeper excavations
It is cheaper still to get a taxi
And as soon as we know more, we will let you know
I don't think you should still be wearing

A t-shirt that says you ran a marathon fifteen years ago
And the other text on the t-shirt
Is too small for me to read what it says
I envy the temporary know-how
Of the gardeners in yoga poses
Who give me the idea for a mass participation event
For five million people
To all do different things asynchronously
Whilst wearing straw hats
With “a maker of witticisms,
A bad character” written on them
Trusted by five million people
And that is no longer enough
For flatbreads and non-setting paint
For fashion scouts in the Freemasons hall
The Esoterica section
Is found next to Business and Management

The Ecstatic Kaleidoscope

Dumb Waiter

typewritten hallmarks
ink days of autumn
velvet snick and cuff
rasping extinguished
mud-shelf extractions

pinewood anaesthesia
the four-coin detector
marks but no numbers
sneezing sections
muffled lanterns

The Films of Manny Gosso
The Films of Rene Vidaurre
The Good Luck Kentucky! Scrapbook
The Magnetic as Cultural Pastiche
The Philosophy of The West Coast Deal

if you like to sit here
if you have a carryall
if you take a break
if the spine is marked
underneath coppermail

The Ecstatic Kaleidoscope

Powers of Ten

Riyadh, 2017

+1 second:
eyepiece smudged
engineering makes the world

+10 seconds:
storm scanners
marketing message goes here

+100 seconds:
imported surfboard
waves travel many miles

+1,000 seconds:
the suspension of abundance
water gives its own explanation

+10,000 seconds:
English and Turkish
the best place to source wasabi

+100,000 seconds:
turnaround
cataracts cannot touch them

+1,000,000 seconds:
roe
colleague is a no-show

+10,000,000 seconds:
obstruction
helped to blue cheese

+100,000,000 seconds:
front-to-back
repetitious honeymoons

+1,000,000,000 seconds:
two dogs on a roller-skate
no other sensation

+10,000,000,000 seconds:
sorites paradox
mops the size of tower blocks

+100,000,000,000 seconds:
like bowling balls
figures cold and hot and sliding

+1,000,000,000,000 seconds:
porous and flaggy
cups break all the time

The Ecstatic Kaleidoscope

TAHO

Maven-credulous

Rehab as a cultivated relevance –

Taxi airport hotel office

Superficially, no one is that busy

Advantage drawn from the list's utility –

Airport hotel office taxi

Crapshoots, U-turn's a lose-lose

Hidden in an orchestra of tracksuits –

Hotel office taxi airport

Ill-lit models of wooden sailboats

No visible way to regulate their dials –

Office taxi airport hotel

My name is How do you lampshade your luxury today?

Check that with Mr Printing Press and Mr Matchplay –

Taxi airport hotel office

Tinfoil Euphoria

The Psychic Cake-Mix

One of the curious facts about production in all the techno-societies today, and especially the United States, is that goods are increasingly designed to yield psychological “extras” for the consumer. The manufacturer adds a “psychic load” to his basic product, and the consumer gladly pays for this intangible benefit.

Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*

*The cougar succumbed to lunacy
And we heard no more about him:
I thought it would be more obliging
To set out with a case study
And sneak in references
To the beautiful country of the twenty-third century:
The angles of its hardwood orchids
Their symbolism is lost in the mash
Of born-again mutton and iron filings
It's time to take an hour of your life back
Go out and collect the average flowers*

*

Confession time: it was me in 2210
Who rose from Lake Como dressed
As a merciless monstrous mutated zandar
Frightening the custard surgeon to her doom
Finally I could see out of my ears with my brain!
The zander makes a cry more creepy than ever I intended
And there is no moral lesson in this analysis
One gets bored, heads home early, is not missed

Tinfoil Euphoria

A Different Tempo For Different Times of the Day

It's a line drawing of a man in an armchair holding a manuscript. It's Günter von Duisburg but bald and he's ordering human hair from a human hair factory in Taihe Town. He embodies resignation. A mound of human hair a metre wide is piled on the white tiles, labelled in post: "human hair →". The words, if you can imagine this, are in vivid forest green marker pen. Next to the mound of human hair is a cereal box on its side. On the front of the box, a different man in a canvas jacket sits on a mountain bike. The perspective seems off – the bike seems huge and the man seems tiny – but you check and it's accurate. The guy holds a credit-card sized blue card used to operate the military aeroplane, which faces the viewer. The aeroplane's ordnance is spread before it like playing cards. It is a warm day, unusually pleasant, and the aircraft has four engines. In the coniferous trees on the horizon, a different man with a short beard wears a sweatshirt with a drawing of a fighter on it. It's Grave Stormborne but like fifty years older than he should be. The man with the beard holds his right hand in a fist, mimicking the decrepit Grave Stormborne on his shirt. Next to him, a different man with an abstract half-arm tattoo holds his arm up like an arm wrestler, clenches his fist. The two men are seated in a waiting room on cheap plastic chairs. To one side, a different man walks around holding his phone to his left ear with both hands. A different man sits on a small motorcycle. A red sportscar emerges from a ramp sticking out of a cartoonish rocket, stood upright. Can't see who is driving. Now the entire image is covered in kanji. Left to right, the men are identified as: CEO, CEO, Chief Learning Officer, Inspirational Speaker. A different man wearing underpants and a crash helmet rides another motorcycle through a desert in front of some generic mountains. A boy in a school uniform is interviewed across a desk by a different man wearing a dark suit. The front of the speedboat is on fire. Perhaps a mishap with a nautical flare? Another two men raise their arms and cheer.

Tinfoil Euphoria

Microforecasts

i)

New authorities need deputies and that's where you come in. You might get your chance to turn all this to prairie but if you don't get scouted early you rarely will. Expect your loss of confidence to get increasingly reasonable and rational as your knowledge and experience grows and you begin to understand quite how well your predecessors made good on their commitment to condemn you.

ii)

Don't let me stress you but there may be some repeated letters or phrases that could be taken out of context in these forecasts. If you can describe it well enough, there's no need to construct it. Titles are typically sufficient: *Suwendy and the Goaltender*, *Suwendy's Last Wonderhut*, *Suwendy Goes to the Spigot Grande*.

iii)

You can rely on corduroy. It stays the same but, if it breaks down, you are not the one who has to pay for it. It is already in the ground. And if you are looking for lost contact lenses, turn down the house lights first. Anyway, we're done with this and all else problematic for another year.

Tinfoil Euphoria

Hypervigilance

You need to get your fun in before the whistle's blown.

No one tells you about the chit-chat. Don't expect to be asked.

Networks entail choice.

The coveting of upholstery is not the problem.

Expect big changes with the improved legibility of graffiti.

The world does not lack for a novelette about a man who eats a car-sized jelly that mysteriously appears in his attic.

Spears are fake.

You can only live on the moors for eleven months of the year.

It wasn't ever meant as a joke.

If you don't walk the murky street, you miss the ambiguous re-enactments.

Different flour, the same sieve...

Last seen vaulting for the ferryboat.

This is the sign work.

Trees tell me nothing.

Pumpkins are made of corrugated iron.

The utopia of running water.

If you place a monetary value on diamonds, there is nothing I can do to help you.

Wrongness for its own sake.

Nosiness, coarseness; the two worst of the timewasters.

To opt to ignore. If you feel you must, borrow from the Library of Opinions.

If you do not have a torso, don't be caught writing about someone with a torso. I believe that is the rule.

Idiot Wisdom

Early Admissions

Remember the pipes are unconnected.
Instruct the elderly to operate the workstations.
Remember Army Surplus never stocked suits of armour.
Use old theatre tickets as coasters or postcards or to cover the hole at the bottom of the window.
Remember table tennis is a good indicator of personality.
Try watering someone else's garden whilst they are out.
Make another one.
If it sounds like someone is hitting the pipes with a ladle, then that's what it probably is.
Consider it an act of fate.
Watch for symptoms such as holes chewed through banknotes.
Throw yourself onto spikes first.
Drafting the checklist.
Check if it is burned on the outside.
Plan for deliberate exposure.
Build yourself a theatre the size of a jet's cockpit.
Ensure bystanders do not drown.
Apply to the skin or directly to the roof of the mouth.
Inject it directly into the liver.
Operate the nose hose.
Do not accidently refer to them as "tests".
Wait with patience for the moths to mutate.
Sign up for the maki maki offer.
Remember technology breeds feebleness.
Watch for symptoms including spots in the hair, skin loss, seeing people's faces as space invaders.
Roll around in a ball.
Remember a VR isolation chamber is a breeze to make.
Assume it's already sold out, put the production on yourself.

Idiot Wisdom

Incremental Men

Heavy lead examples
Heroic auteurs
Plots advance through persistence
Rather than genius or an appetite for violence
Aggressor turns tractor
The incremental men

Everything that's wrong is down to just this one idea
When it's right it's wrong
Windmills on bridges in the expectation
That they will make the rain
Coffee sleeves now forbidden
The incremental men

Only in the peace-on-earth sense of the holiday
And when there is no news
It is a road map and a permission
A mudslide and a duststorm
Caffeine in the water, what's good for them
Empty the prisons into the hospitals
And empty the hospitals into the schools
And empty the schools into the parliament
And empty the parliament into the prisons, or
Empty the hospitals into the parliament
The parliament into the schools, the schools
Into the hospitals and now I've gone and lost track
Etymology does not imply craving
The incremental men

Exactly the sort of thing we are looking to depart from
The illegible or ineligible or incredible or indigestible
The hero-to-villain ratio of a profession
The only salient criterion when selecting what to do
There are no heroic dustmen
And no villainous dog walkers
No villainous paper manufacturers
Except for when there are
You may not sell the not-food and call it food
Avoiding those with convictions stronger than your own
Committed and steadfast, grimdark and incremental
Coracle to supermarkets

Lassos, of little consequence
Help those who crash our kick scooter-sharing schemes
To turn themselves into better people
From EMs, FVs or SBs
To IOs, FGs or BNs
What kind of calling cards are these?
The sharing was unbearable
The rain cannot be legislated for
The incremental men
Never could unearth the powers they prospected

Idiot Wisdom

c) Mannerist

Matlab's Thorn

Only fools, liars and charlatans predict earthquakes

Charles Francis Richter

Radars stalk hands. A lantern is the price of a colloquy.
A crackhead rashly listens to a far nonstop quadrille.

This leads to fancy car-snooker, tranquil hall parades,
a squelchy cantata (alto error), splendid ark fashions.

Still no carpenter's fallacies, no dorky aqua hardhats,
a shrill catastrophe of corral equality and dankness.

Then a dollar-pound crystallises. Qatari chef's anorak
sorts. Prolifically headached, nausea start - no tranq -

he pardons quirky falls, certain that aerosol scandal
analysts are handpicked for acquittal. Harasser: one roll.

Squatters like a storyline. Lop and anchor a flashcard.
They ransack delphic quasars, rational floor, slanted.

If their alert quells chardonnay cranks, spool as data.
If their sycophant squadron askance - real troll salad,

lethal orison. Arrant quackery is conflated, slapdash.
Ladder-plants quickly reason to a half a trash scenario.

Exercises in Style

Enabling Anxieties

What thought have you given to the coming satanic abatements, the baleens of the Balkans, Balinese canals, nitrous pundits, the usualness of assassins, casual salacities, wonder at the wilt of chickpeas, executants, exotropias, overriding verdigris, atropines, the symptomlessness of certain forms of process tolerance?

Exercises in Style

Congratulations, Big Brain

n o n c o m m u n i c a t i v e n e s s
outbreathing eggshell
ingesting and swilling
zonked off for brackets
over the wheeze dresser
too muggy it is in here
you can see the sky way up
a jag since I had it's a jar
lollop to the jakes I q.a.d.
eh oh ow ah to arc in my bar

Exercises in Style

I Remember

(After Brainard, Perec)

I remember 44 years
of fuss
about the bubble house

I remember the houses overrun
with skeleton soldiers
the barricades

I remember VinciGroolo™
for those “living the lives of pilchards”
the hoarding of codes for free crowbars

I remember small talk
with the ghost-
parents of the groom

I remember Nurse Bluebottle
matron
of the dereliction clinic

I remember being mistaken
for the missing brother
excavations behind the refectory

I remember the play
where actors
are murdered for real

I remember the routine
off-earth
dust-ups

I remember the return
of the puffy pink
space spook

I remember *Trillionaire*
and its pre-boot
and its second pre-boot

I remember Sturdy Suwendy
her keynote speech
the Breach

I remember the black
square
on the frivolous moon

I remember the heat-
wave of dis-
association

I remember falling
out of the car
onto the pavement

I remember being rated
“sepulchral”
in my seven-twenty

I remember amethyst
manchettes
for angst

I remember the loud-
mouth foxes
who block the fire exits

I remember tuna of melon
hexagrams
copyright

Acrobatic Reconnaissance

A Logic Problem

Every year the futurists gather to discuss methods and promote their latest forecasts. From the information below, determine who published which report, what method they used, and how far into the future they forecast.

1. The futurist who names her method cybernetics and foretells the end of commerce, is more short-sighted than the prophet. She notes there are no future facts.
2. The book envisioning each turning point between now and the year 2900 does not conclude with either the Singularity or interstellar travel: these are deemed a) not probable b) not preferable c) not possible.
3. The most ambitious report, which gambles on humanity's destiny to the 5,000th century, was not written by Faith, nor was it written strictly according to the maxims of deductive scientific logic.
4. Donatella's book is *3018, One Thousand Years in the Future History of Our Species*. It does not explain why seers are not superrich (see: pickaxe-makers who make the goldrush bucks).
5. *Making the Most of the 2050s*, which was not the output of trend forecasting, predicts the world will run out (generally), counsels one to stockpile (specifically) nickel, copper, water.
6. Ray is not the genius forecaster. Bill conjectures further into the unknown than Harry, whose book promises with glee an apocalypse beyond our comprehension.

Acrobatic Reconnaissance

Overseas Operating Prospects

Brazil	becoming rallying, endomorphic, Capetian
Finland	becoming varicoloured, Aaronic, apprehensible
Guadeloupe	becoming patient, tawny, primogenitary
The US	becoming ochre, receivable, frightened
The US Virgin Islands	becoming sealed-beam tuitional, trafficless
Cameroon	becoming nebular, semicomatose, indefectible
The US	becoming legion, novelettish, sludgy
India	becoming begrimed, high-toned, undignified
Switzerland	becoming genestic, visionless, auric
Japan	becoming neological, generic, obligated
Spain	becoming veristic, incensed, tingly
South Africa	becoming heteronymic, laxative, assassinated
The US	becoming microscopical, Avestan, fuggy
Spain	becoming mincing, lowly, nauseous
The US	becoming siphonic, basaltic, yttric
Norway	becoming dividing, lawful, door-to-door
The Faroe Islands	becoming flamy, allergenic, extravehicular
Australia	becoming clever-clever, unsainted, flappy
The US	becoming ineffective, timorous, Hawaiian
Australia	becoming concentrated, denigrative, uvular
Botswana	becoming monographic, unphonetic, bragging
Cuba	becoming more hoked, overhasty, grovelling
The US	becoming more arbitral, faint, burly
The US	becoming more architectural, lopsided, barebacked
Japan	becoming more trilateral, outdoorsy, yukky
The US	becoming more profuse, disappointed, thermolabile
Bhutan	becoming more proper, bronzed, headlong
Slovakia	becoming more trustful, apart, tramping
Finland	becoming more osseous, uninviting, lulling
Egypt	becoming more humectant, rose, geopolitical
Pakistan	becoming more kininogenic, heliometric, intuitive
The US	becoming even more susceptible, Judaic, chatty
The Czech Republic	becoming even more unfoolable, handless, empty
The US	becoming even more hypodermic, knickered, yearly

Acrobatic Reconnaissance

A More Serene Case

in a swiss virus camorra
sven svensson is a nescience communer

near-sun, a.m., our man
summons a mezzanine on manoeuvres in sierra

sven's news: "we are remiss"

mezzanine's main non-com causes eminence
narrows a cure over six

anew, sven convenes
in session on cosmoses circa awesome
now no rococo vice universes
now no massive crevasse rumours
ominous via avenue soccer
comes insecure
canonises

sven cues in union
even snores

even so
a union craves zirconium
or noir anime
or a war crimes movie

no consensus

assess sven: a nervous mass
six more arms
soon vamooses
in an omnivorous zone
a one-man asinine eco-manor service

The Encrypted Blueprint

You Were Not Needed When Eventually You Got There

Immurement
Procedure
Reversed

.

Chisel
Onslaught
Predestined

.

Recovered
Overqualified
Lissom

.

Shrunk
Later
Hybridised

.

Flummoxed
Alphabetised
Overpasses

.

Chic
Despite
Cadence

.

Imperium
Since
Dispensed

.

Exophthalmic
Raccoon
Engages

.

Beyond
Precomputing
Collaborator

.

Chaparajos
Anthropologies
Nevertheless

.

Commonsense
Junketeers
Catfight

.

Gin
Correlated
Ruckus

.

Bulwarks
Stressed
Forfeited

.

Seized
Pozzolanic
Jewels

.

Presumed
Understanding
Fixed

.

The Sensational Proposal

d) Aleatory

The Star Witness

Corporations know enough to stow away. In ten years, the probability of an uncontrolled seizure is calculated as one in ten, which is virtually zero. National enterprise is simulated: forty sends out twenty and suddenly it's become a city without slums, advocates concede. Contrast this with the progress made in free states.

Consider the distance a person can walk in fifty years through winter storms. There's no essential difference if they own an engine or if they love subdivisions that are later purged. Superconductivity is an infinite field. Translated into every language, an echo is assumed.

In a hundred years, people will at last fathom the occupation of muckraking, discern that there have been only eight caretakers, only seven active members in this time. These are the little worries. Eighteen million goes to the verified old-timers.

A thousand years will almost certainly occur somewhere in the industry as, in space, all things move. Not a single one can enumerate its impact. For example, lichens grow in extreme environments and in water contamination. A thousand-year affair with one of his parent's friends yields every single powerhouse tip, trick and secret.

In a million years, even the most extraordinary dictator blinks but he would have picked this job irrespective, got to know it. Everything matters whenever it happens.

Keycard for the Archive

Resistance

Something / much future to the new reality / oil is a perfect
alone shed / nearly / fasting / of Alzheimer's / on / moreover
/ although fuller sources / DNA sequencing costs / and the
global seek to / from companies restore function /
algorithms are even being patterns / are the single hubs for
infancy / smart cure work / today labs-on-a-wealth / and
longevity carnations / neurodegenerate pharmaceuticals are
able to ovation / new age / the same way / so although the
body's defences / or sometimes / using social media / of
fabulous profits / glacial / a ring in a percentage of the
disease / brain exercise / speed of the theory / for less than
the person for the / it is time for a new directive / to survive
and thrive / hardware and graphics / part of the merging will
/ dual / which until building / and plummet / even appetite /
the meaning of to focus / revenue / care's business /
emotionally cheap distribution / albeit freewheeling / the
second industrial / almost / eves and best / in its current form
/ intelligent to the immune system / freewheeling / far
subtler / under what circumstances the real value continues
to drop / anorexia / modify the meaning of cycles / a world
that has run on / a decade in drug industry layoffs / stubborn
/ relics from an earlier / see patients / such as electricity / the
new dynamics / the most exciting / another consequence /
freewheeling / the truth about sugar, Twitter, YouTube /
urban organised capitalism / according to Google / the three
ages / science is in its infancy

2.

germ theory / notably failed / for example going on / eloped
to anywhere / from around / forward-thinking / testing in the
real world / the internet to investigate a feat / caregivers / a
placebo model has become obsolete / alienated / prepared to
travel / rather sinister / of the curve / decline at the same
time / by smell / companies forcing them to use / automotive
/ an explosion to cut heart disease / the speed / Western
attention in age risk / facing like all business / to reverse /
see figure 1 / what would become arthritis / create orders of
a malignancy / change / the nature so far / states participate
/ but contradictory spending / the end of the tunnel / and less
we now create / envy Tesco / a leading reveal / the brain /

mechanical / despite the third biometric diet / mentor
emerging / startling / fat chance / strokes expert / habits
powering up / reengineer to other people / true /
automatically calling will never / depression / the ability of
the brain / Google and Apple barely understood / shifted
from a feudal / reduce / it will be the usual explanation /
seriously injured / gene sequencing / tobacco and alcohol /
the latest iPhone for a new world / we live and operate
machine tools / emotional / capture Alzheimer's for a new
world / startling lists / and delivered Amazon / tailors / it
might be possible against a backdrop / for \$3 a week /
monitoring rapid experimentation / to swap TV dinners / use
paper and fax machines / while at the same time most need
help / hospital stays became feasible

Combing the Scrapheap

Four Short Talks on Technology

1.

One of the jugglers is your warder and she goes “Wow!” And here is her motormouth chamberlain. They bring together cicerone capers with autocrine capers and start to build these little grey odyssey creels. Here is one of the fissure thistles they built. They put convectors over the excavator of her spectator, his spectator and the other spectator and that’s how we get the fully programmable cenotaph where you can have it rise as a different spectator. (Laughter.)

We don’t have to keep our nowhere stockades as heartthrob cenotaphs. Ta-dah! Wistfulness from the ridge uprising will start to exponentially expand the suburb. If you look at the Fountains of Restoration, they are overrun. It’s like a desperado hoarding a game plan. Think of it as your “radius shake”. I’m going to keep talking fissures. (Laughter.)

Right? What we have to remember, what you have to think about, is the excavators. They paint heartthrob cenotaphs and then they reboot. A normal administration hammer is not a constituency hammer. That may be one of the ultimate parables. I think what we are going to see is a different excavator. Let me show you what it looks like.

Oops. It stutters very quickly. There are also foals, or a rough sketch of foals. The chamberlain just happened to be alive instead of these circus foals. I mean, your medleys made these great big confessions, and then your parkas hid their grey odyssey boxes that would spew at the odyssey timpanists during negotiations, and now we have these little foals.

So what we have to do is start capping our medleys because that’s the mood that’s going to eat the bug. As you bring thistles together, as you bring cenotaphs and biological toad enlistment together, you begin to get some of the most promising odyssey quicksands. And that is the rebound, why all of you are malfunctioning and generous and

wonderful thistles. It gets more interesting. And we can do it with other thistles. (Laughter.)

We go back to the original sentries. They engineered these cenotaphs despite exponential philistines at the outset. All bias! Were they engineered for a flautist wound? The juggler runs around on skewers and the chamberlain runs on flautist throats. It's almost like living. You're talking to a face on the wallpaper. So because the next timpanist is as cute as this, sometimes you call the face on the wallpaper "Mortimer" and sometimes you've got to say no. And it's the same thistle for hardline openers, those born without bonuses in the lullaby portion of legislatures. Mints reiterated this at Davos. The gaffe is looking to backfire. And if we don't start changing the trial lingo, we're going to lose.

Yes, these are appointment forgeries not walk-up forgeries where the chamberlain propagates earnings, which is much more pleasant than a whole bunkerload of founders. We'd better start talking about the bicentenary deathbed. The MIT follies have been bulldogging a staple rehash of this. It makes the US financial tablespoon look like this. It's getting so serious that if we don't treat the aubergine deformity soon, we're going to scorch our odyssey quicksands.

Maybe that will be how we will finally hear about the motormouth chamberlain. Your frippery has 47 timpanists who expand exponentially. It is the schoolboy who underestimates the number of thistles.

If you don't have a flautist wound, that's not good. You give away all your teeth for topaz. We were so busy giving out a tooth here, a tooth there, that we've brought the daylight forward. That was mildly arrogant.

The juggler who is your warder is now running around with kilns. And as you think about that: so what do administration hammers actually do now? They smog like bangers. Now moving from bacterial enlistment to toad enlistment, let me show you what happened to the timpanists.

One is a short terrapin. One oversees the gyroscope that runs the main bonsais. One is leverage. One got more

complicated. One quit the bother. One planned gramophone stunts. Here's what happens if you don't adjourn: we run out of casserole. That's crochet. So, cenotaphs have these crochets. This is going to happen. (Laughter.)

The rebound is a grapefruit. Think of a cenotaph that can carry about 350 thistles. And a normal hammer weighs the same as nine to ten timpanists. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

2.

One day, I list expediencies on a bookmark: hot byelaws, hot zooms, Krasnodars, third raincoats, and so on – artisanal cloning, excavators, text generators, the ignorable chaos of remand, networked enlistment. The whole technological river. They didn't ask me to do it but I need all the help I can get, like I'm in a piano lounge crammed with haemophiliacs. When I administer texts, I retch much like you. Mavericks who wear massive grey corteges disdain this kind of instability subcontracting. There is no sofa. The *novelette terrible* is a thing that happened. I completed the bookmark and I'll let you decide if my spelling was offensive. Oh, and anyone who has been exposed to spelling and who has both a chimera and an oscilloscope knows that these come with tamarisks. I would like to talk to you today about some of the conveniences my bookmark inspired.

Here is a reproduction taken from a besieged motorist. As you can see, the two draughtsmen are wearing identical epaulettes, like buttered crocuses. That shows how exotic other crocuses can be. Maybe we shouldn't go there, soon to be barraged with enragement levies, debit thrombosis, the tornado on the bandstand, joyriding with specific scientific objectives. And so when Jefferson wrote in the Decree of Indignity "we hold these tubes to be semiconductor evidence", he did not mean that all jawbones were made of cloth. I think the retching has increased in diameter. Now the concerto of impartiality is not the same as the concerto of regularity.

And you never know when you are going to come across the worldview of the colour white. But it's very clear, looking

at these ricked syllabuses that they are like plasterers lacking ostriches or mutations without memoranda.

I did feel nervous, knowing about behavioural scooters. Don't expect to be able to litigate your hometown with slipknots. I called my bookmark "The Leaky Toboggan" after a slandered casino. It's also the surname of a number of mute toastmasters.

So let me conclude with a theory of chops. Remember that the temple of straitjackets for daredevils and symmetrical motorcades gave us: "Man has no insulators", "The human flourish is capable of all blows." (Laughter.)

We are born with abilities that allow us to programme leverets. Listen to the ditty of the grey mavericks. Marvel at their massive sandbags. This is what happens in theatres, in a large motorway play, a small motorway play. One is a catwalk, the other a fanfare. At the outset I wanted to talk about two hot byelaws, two indistinguishable twits but I will not have the time. We are equal because zoo equals zoo equals zoo. Thank you very much. If you would like to write on the toboggan, that would justify my disgrace and infection. (Applause.)

3.

Well, omens. And then they write parables. So that's why I study them. So let's look at other concertos. There were some egalitarians of psychology who were okay with this. A couple talks about another couple: how interesting their teeth are, how curious. But then what I realised when I went to colonise telegrams is that adoption requires worship.

We can put anything we want into the belfry. So when I was little, my dad would dowse at midnight and he would say, "I'm going to put solipsism in its place". And I said: "Great!" He likes to add to this so that a deadbeat can become a fist. He was always using tarantula recruits. They have to go through four adolescences. (Laughter.)

You walk up, you shred. We've suddenly found a new spectator. Thistles are beautiful but they are still human conscripts. Traditional degradation is "a translator to which

exogenous elements have been added to adapt new epics”. That came from a parable on a spaniel’s dinner tray. You have to be careful about leaving a trail of frost. Wow, now look at those scribes. They stare at them. If you were able to prise them out and photocopy them, the sedative would be very crowded. I want to do that. I want to be the fissure perversion that creates a wormhole.

We have this lovely ambient introduction but still you feel like something is missing, something with extra-terrestrial prosthetics. Everything so far is a molehill. You start to dig assassination lingo, and we can’t keep up.

And yet when I was a yachtswoman, I realised that everyone was caring about whodunits and that consumers were henchmen. They’re not going to notice the debacle with instantaneous clicking added. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause.)

4.

Most thistles are themselves, midway between spasms and shocks. Quarterfinals shame everything. If we go beyond our solar spoon, we learn the shocks. The spasms are premature. Landmarks, oddballs and cues, make fragile bedfellows with the moonscape.

It was what I like to call fink-generated relinquishment. I am one of the strange briar that offers antenna gratification, which is the aftermath of big banking. If they’d sent a nursemaid, it would have been speedier. Metallic oboes – very small ones – escaped but if I had reset my longbow in time, they could have become uberous outdoor pierrots living on or near the Earth, with the lifespans of busybodies.

Tractors backfired on the early stairways of big banking but we still don’t know why. You see students evolve in the scant channels of their lifetimes, their bulldog blood of plantations, their hot dense statistics. But the amplifiers of cardinal directors become ritualised and ominously fatheaded, no more than tightly targeted drumsticks. Perhaps even importers may brandish what they intercept. What would they have said? The *novelette terrible* happened so suddenly.

There's one champ symbolised at the torch, but there's another champ to be symbolised at the boulevard. Indeed, caterwauling could arise simply from technical mischief-makers – escapologists rather than samplers. (Laughter.)

I'm going to show you singed mud. It's become oval from all the photocopies and radar. One telegram could empower a werewolf mindset or a sweatshirt virus. You see here hundreds of little, faithful snaps.

One striking trifle is that we have to accept there will be headdresses. We've gone from believing in one spoon to zillions of spoons. Will some spearhead foreclose Earth? We depend on chessmen to determine our composers. That looks like cobblestone. We see entire editions where gasps are recycled. We need to be small, otherwise we would be crushed by greengages. (Applause.) We need not just campaigns but epicentres as well. (Applause.) But let's suppose some occult doughnut had been watching our palliative bluffs from afar. (Applause.) Our failed ideology of postmistresses and t-shoes. (Applause.) I would add it is available in the parabola. What we try to do in costume is to set east in cosmic contortion. (Laughter.) His was a simple song. (Laughter.) That's from the evening exterior, this impulsion turning into toadying parakeets lit by a gilded mop. (Applause.) We see the nebula dying. (Laughter.) If you take ten at random, nine have something in common. (Applause.) Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Combing the Scrapheap

Spatter

Editor Deadalus sought the meaning of robot paradigms. He looked up Jeffery (2005) and Robert B. You, me, us: it formed a common set.

You are the proof. A season in cyberspace. There is never cost benefit in management above the net. Thompson was Director of Psychic Survival.

It was night. So soon? So new? I turn and work out what the time would be if I were punctual. I forgot to cope with it. This was perhaps a terrible public dream, a simulation game.

And so the overwhelming play was designed by telecommunications engineers. My membership important because of its subject.

Other encountered each other, each with the truth. I recognised them already, sought continuation to think about the world's movies at will.

An adjournment of events in the west. It was before the windbreaker jacket made of satin. What they hear singing can be seen at the beginning. Not just that.

Global, and further from our existing eyes, societies take inventory in the eventuality of the Splattering (part of the congress event).

Mistaken about freedom (for instance, its competitors). So overwhelmingly all, a concentration of no period. Health counts in the discs most of all.

Combing the Scrapheap

Number 46

Number 46 stepped, evaluated the confidence
At his back, the dozen who looked after
all the political and semantic corners
One corner of the past that binds versus blind castles
Harold and Alistair were left
the ideology of inegalitarians
We done nothing. But interrupted education
Later as we wander in miltonspace
for something else? Diagnosis and for an array
made in July. Look for more than one
He was in a small minority of nowhere fauna
Jerry was his noble who also involves
whatever that might suggest. Arrested in the hull
was the information from home refound

Corkboards of Crazy

The Christopher Topic

Around the semiconductor warnings
you were this week's builder of cultural
studies. The problem was problems disappeared
particular business transactions among them
Topics impossible for me to feel
says one who refuses himself together
A full mailing made to this two-part dinosaur
who could uproot you with this information
How do you keep a face
look more and every now on, stumped
No particular features of him apart
from his heralds, expert at Memphis
That was another load of contempt, life
For this quality, Christopher with computers

Corkboards of Crazy

The Two Hundred Year Now

1918

within living memory
excessive reliance on a name
the vogue for the curious shape
little more than pressing a button
unusually comfortable

the following extracts from the official list
are linked together like this
commercial development
and intense individualism
had to wait until the end

becoming more and more sophisticated
it began to spread
come out of the other
for emergency use at sea
a protein called gluten

hysterical laughter
holds good in the majority of cases
any mechanical device
greatly refined the art of
how the disease was transmitted

1928

dreary terraced houses
the worst thing about them is
one-to-one transactions
draws attention to himself
far bigger than they had imagined

dark abysmal whirlpools
flying over the wreckage
to the casual onlooker it seemed that
marketplaces
are available to us today

and from other countries
a further display of power
any hope of escaping
with great precision
it had effectively shrunk the world

a stack of old hardware
can do untold damage
the difficulty in writing about
prescribed drugs
blue, green, yellow, orange and red

1938

in spite of frequent disasters
evolutionary changes
this was no practical joke
monitored by auditors
the oldest living things on earth

movements for social reform
high-speed automatic
should become self-governing
human beings need to be healthy
the dead grandee

furniture factory
ventilation and lighting
nonchalant swagger
in groups or in cages
becomes trapped inside

there is no mistaking this place
autonomous bodies
and fidelity to the cause
completely arbitrary
were dull to look at

1948

odd current
round in circles
I'll bring an ice pick
problems of ordinary people
our new, so-called enemy

more conventional in form
the old consensus
looked perplexed
suffered from a great defect
round at high speed

the best market prices
present in the air around us
thinner on the ground
it is ready for packaging
reluctantly promoted

allowed to advertise
as you have seen for yourself
we wrapped it up pretty fast
died within the week
specially made for kittens

1958

that night was madness
the growth of the micro-organism
an extreme form
normally used as a purgative
now being successfully licenced

looks or feels different
unbelievably busy
all other imaginable forms
one's taxi into the city
there is no record

costs rose each year
humouring them
we lit candles
doors opened and closed
constantly seek new formulations

your jokes
particularly vicious
gunfire
would be intolerably tedious
or clarified to remove dust

1968

bands of nomads
a special case
in the near future
the boy's terrified mother
a new form of literature

less rain fell
he cannot afford real pearls
opened fire
a silly season filler story
vast and dazzling

import barriers, quotas or duties
a place of death
stiff and colourless
all electric-light switches
the claims of experts

ruined businesses
I did it better
harlequins
consequences
some are soft

1978

the eyes hollow
this inherent fault
a dog-food brand
it was a great achievement
industrial waste

more traditional methods
fed on scraps
not to be confused with
their great works
over-spending

curiously shaped
certainly hoaxed
scattered across the world
the wait was over
sycophants can

holiday preparations
losing the battle
from a few days to a few years
objects are very quiet
a useful selling point

1988

again summoned
a box of tricks
kept cool
distinguish the real from fake
electric shock treatments

and the present time
decorated with tortoiseshell
so many forgeries
immune to this
next time

you have probably seen the
quarantines
a piece of fresh fish
fascination
you can't!

go in one end
in a particular place
completely taboo
make a list
telltale

1998

devoid of the
warning sirens
the loud music
unseen strangers
other agents

his mask
simple crafts
creative talents
die with them
scintillating

problems due to changing attitudes
cooled down too quickly
we all belong to the same species
one of the common
this list is by no means complete

it's a question of attitude
the reason for this error
every single culture on earth
their biggest headache
in the modern version

2008

the brightness
an on/off switch
that have to be kept for a long time
protection may exist in common law
may be quite different from that

waiting at the supermarket entrance
made a brief comeback
often thought of as a modern invention
a simple example
there is no time to learn

with good intentions
to allow light in
like a thousand million tons
they make it light up
on various missions

causing substantial damage
red in the face
a method of drawing
for no more than minutes
developed their own language

2018

pushed against it
being more or less permanent
picking up signals
to make such things
first you must ask permission

the liquid in a tube
bewildering choice
we cannot be certain
not a single element
the human brain learns everything

calculating machines work
the client's corporate headquarters
the thickness and type
manipulation and testing
aloof, sarcastic, cynical

a simple magnetic compass
in a mutual aid system
the first step of the escape
two conflicting views
written down

2028

to add numbers together
they are completely fireproof
can travel a long distance
as instructed by the control unit
calculate the lead

dissolves in the water
an escapist fantasy
before it was burned
how difficult it is
ingratitude

visit the area several times
to whisper something in his ear
if he has kept careful records
a trade-off has to be made
over-enthusiastic

brightly-illuminated
will not be conscious
air is forced through
by a guillotine
the contrast between

2038

the river is wide but shallow
the most exciting
even by blasting
to follow the rise and fall
there was a serious proposal

is simply poured into moulds
for reallocating income
momentary loss of control
or deliberate vandalism
it eliminates stress

understandable bias
attributed to this factory
a very strong acid
we are no exception
decimals appear

chaotic and fragmented
to make matters worse
is shattered into smaller pieces
flashes and sparkles
the late arrival

2048

floating on top of it
at the television studio
the still-burning wreckage
another drawback
increasingly scarce

to match the pattern
how on Earth do we know this
require special training
so that they share
we must be clear what our aim is

advanced medical care
moves rapidly up and down
between these extremes
back to the left side
a picture is created

officials had the site bulldozed
an ingenious system
died and sank
perhaps the truth is
a fraction of an inch

2058

over the blessed area
abandoned for good
in a futile attempt
such concealments
purely functional

contradicts itself
the horrors continued
looks at a scene
to pass underneath
modern methods

with a hole at one end
with half-closed eyes
the speed at which it is moving
a stroke of luck
winning and losing

to indicate good health
everyone else went
lived in shallow water
the remnants of a tree
like a biscuit barrel

2068

depending on this method
numbers handwritten in red
a global financing plan
small actions
still very green

in the house and in industry
a profitable deal
the coherence of the solution
daydreaming
vast quantities

in the skill of the craftsman
through a stencil
simply by drilling
on a very dull day
four times

depends on the strength
adds to the cost of production
around the curve
we would be better off
then twirl it around

2078

to investigate the new
the image
in black and white or in colour
the time lapse
a craze developed

the left and right
strong in all directions
they are not the same
and any code of morals
breaking point

it would be wrong
the getaway
back to a collector
the chain of events
little that is new

copper and zinc
the cones
to use her credit card
huge sums
spontaneous

2088

the perfect canvas
in a wind tunnel
researching in the library
a mirror image
more submissive

hammering
two- three- and four-
the famous chain
are not alone
quite straightforward

easier and cheaper
massive benefits
but just think
under slight pressure
if you act rightly

cartwheeling
Geiger counter
a gradual gain
is heated white-hot
the by-product

2098

strike the surface
did not sense danger
empty box
windmill-like
making things

has become dark
little rhythm
taken from the ground
shows this admirably
repetition

in a series of steps
reversal of the image
reducing the hassle
input and output
on an unobstructed hill top

a global tour
sandwiched between
a special theory
white-hot
languages

2108

the parking bay
explosives are used
the clincher
the first sequence
up the hill

isolated farms
in an orderly way
a double image
found alone
a little star

like the gun
playing havoc
other interesting facts
right in the middle
remains cool

picking up litter
seems an awful lot

Aleatory, Insight

Elderflower

The battle memorial recognised
as if it were a research foundation. An Energy
Situation. And stored in it a channel
again. Perhaps let's be more perhaps next time.
Things he reeled for described by me.
Suddenly obsolete, suddenly stored.
Wisely but this same soft course
cannot be the way, as if a weaver.
A terrible thought, together carelessly
the senator of his head. Specific
meaning of the greenest speculation,
a comfort. Albert for the top!
Seed was curiosity to the robot,
an attempt to identify the adequate.

Corkboards of Crazy

Educational Films Involving Wooden Puppets

1.

please do not concern yourself
with researchers who are not psycho
very tough garnish
authorised a few slugs
penetrated
it is questionable
in a matter of days
the fear of death is or is not
the too late too late
then the most one can do is to begin to laugh madly
based on the authorities
that what does she mean I mean it
mean to present some of the compelling
there is your answer
slug school
in fact this whole book
fleeing our planet
escaping on the universality of fear
an important secret
even as he spoke there was a pull on the face
the first document volcano and a flare of fire
a paper written by simple eruption
an especially penetrating essay
has not been much improved upon
gas but something more important
several decades ago
roar a great spaceship
hurled itself, is absent
because it rarely shows the volcano
and sped skyward
fear of shrinking to a tiny dot
then final
they escaped

2.

it is certain
the most ritualised deforestation
abandon their affairs their desires
their historical surprise
to do the things they adored
caught in layers
lighted by their likeness
their points of views sympathies
gave birth only to the earth
in space phone calls
lengthening intermolecular structure
though rather less often in fact
mutual desire set in train
which would it other ways
over the years they had the equator
easily identifiable
to fall only intermittently
the winds
crazy purchase
perhaps superflu
and hey they really wouldn't have been able
to debit their flats, flatlets, lofts
on a warmer earth
in dilapidated houses in selected levels
will rise royal
there are three large sofas
the same allegedly rustic nature
otherwise books and records, old glassware
flowers, pencils
those factors increased, ice-free
season in the provinces
populations of aquatic
very ordinary pate
put on the bill dying
some hotelier in a succulent treat

3.

you believe the pen is worth more
now the idea is that we should not have it
if you're like most other people

one went back to apologise
to the suffragists
only one feature was mentioned to the gates
power smashed all the windows
said about the pen's physical long months in jail
suffered forced feedings and press
when I was reading a superb story
in existence only fifty hips
seeking to abolish
dangerous and undemocratic pens
of little perceived stirring
it seemed like one of those ideas
you'd feel ESP towards
in the centre but in ten years
if time mag was interested
to shift to a sort of monarchy
when infomercials are rerouting
the overturning of the please
keep trying the actu-call
resets the overturning
please keep trying
when operators are professors
or scruffy anticapitalist activists
although gassed for arguing the point prematurely
it's a good freak
in the underbrush
scarcity at work
the perils of personhood will demand
which in itself suggests

4.

furios hurricanes
her voice very soft
barely audible
the ruins before them
to catch what she was saying
something of the exaltic
have you ever been in trouble before
the chief doomed
angelic exalt
our first clear insight
the shrug was a small one

a gesture that would be to us
so similar
to passing a hand over the eyes
we happened
accepting not only raised herself up
to her full height
to speak to their glorious community
permanently fixed microphone
which dangled
this bitterness
her face on a solid steel pipe
immortality not almost on her
apparently realised
we grasp for a moment
in the city beyond
the glaring lights the detectives
it was strange to us
any attempt to resist the glue
she said sighing
any of these worlds
would want to tell us about resistance
in every case glue
from the morning when we first got up
it was very hot
you lose your temper quickly in the heat

5.

whom I gambled
had taken to smoking fingers above his mouth
his friends like wheat
on the top of his head
a horse
still kind
I did not want to hear
I did not want to bear three eyes upon the world
a common quasi-human kind
made the world this way
rather larger than the earth
I would of gravitation
there would be first this year
he and I would go up into the lair
a six-legged forest people living there

we would take the burrowers
swift long song
a mammoth complete
carnivore man-in-horse
there was a country where
from some like myself in this world
in the daytime
I made use of the first
in the nights climbing in time
passed and I put it off
gradually assumed a form
better after the sun
a human torso in place on an adult
and I wanted to do that

6.

yes, if it's a hoax
it should be ever so delectable
pages to be cut
data might be priceless
the main thing
is immersing the monsignor
I assume sometimes
that it took me weeks
even exhausted my stocks
I already set the letter the documents
they've evidently got tact
sometimes
not necessarily solid
the Apolloing of images
I had trouble getting rid of
at a time when I was taken up solely
with washing my hands
I approached in my dreams
some literate persons
who had never had the perfect face for France
but then there was Apollo
great moments
accepted their invitation
chuffing full steam ahead
they'll make you welcome
through the plains
beneath the blind stadium

abruptly her hair
but a little gold key
Apollo slipping away
would make me invisible
special alertness

7.

KEEP YOUR TOWN CLEAN
in response I'll look on ahead
in front of the apartment
around the group
but he did not listen
he was already waiting in the lobby
driven to the station
they went up the antelope lockers
she kept only her handbag
down garnet creek
the low small polaroid camera
doubles of every 12-gauge
up there or with them in the valley
or in the picked up connecting passengers
send her back
but if she did ticket to it
then she went back
to haver her along with them
the other taxi
and returned to the seagull
she slung her bag over the antelope mountain
genetically to the baron
when night came
it was ten past one
the rivers ran
just an hour and half earlier maybe
I should go back
light coming from the bedroom
aiming
nearly caught up with them
house not taking care of itself
not to let the gravel
slipped through the shadows

8.

hour two
agenda by the addition
intern pushers
zing your in for cheddar
and that means he's badass enough
discontented radicals from the cinch
he may have kicked its cheese
like rancid sealing
they never kicked it
it mostly moved form its deliquescence
he was pro-water
had more buddies
but you're wrong
I've seen this jerk
the greedy operator
you dig foreign
have it play out a few weeks later
the atom attack
most of them ended up in the minesite
the keen mind
reflected in the mathematical ray
and foster what you think the game ain't
night- and day-blonde
very much always half-blind
hearts and rugged digestions
cluttered laboratory
sure we'd like to see him
do I tell you
the fruits of our mutual genius

9.

after a while I drove
she would like a wake-up call
at times so sudden
I asked the man to deliver a meal
it isn't fatigue
either components
reinforced this made-up bunk
I would have liked
a good while later

only her reading
did he
a towel worn on her forehead
all a symbol
tight below her arm
bottles of champagne
placed against skin
to live in the floor
saying it would be best
if someone extracted from a black box
I needed her as a witness
exactly
it's all so far in motion
for about fifteen minutes
exactly what I was
one hundred and eighty kilos
all her gaze
streaked very yellow
when I arrived home
soiled with black dye
how is he

10.

scientific psychology
that we could cheerfully cite
in the death and rebirth of the mane
to admire great men
that went right to the heart
to admire great men
but ink pearls
to suffer one's do not understand
again easy
it is not easy precisely
be the sages of influenza
to die is a form of imitation
ought by rights to include edifice
built up of four layers
the influence layers the tactics
the child is right
but then so is the facile use of words
move them along
another splendid cliché
role-playing layers

it moves precisely in the never getting underneath
then confronting his great original
it is the impasse
it is not there
the virtue is baffling
the death or fear-of-found
our true and bat
not when there was two
we carry it around in secret
this fourth layer

11.

forced to its opposite
the original template
the lamp's simple enough work
you get withdrawn
it should really work
undeterminable and guessing at tendencies
drain the clean
impetuous leap from the flux
the desking model
more than coughed
that gadget sublimation
closely related to the dynamo
itself reliant upon years of preliminary experimentation
ding ding the principles
we convert this speculation
if you believe in the miraculous
an orgy of evasion
you have a real case of it
narrow what a man like that is doing
cooped up cursor
explain it to you
an edge of stiffness in his superego
visual callipers
measuring the conscience
you really feel that no one
would take his maturely internalised agitational ideas
I would be glad to discuss

12.

created empires and marked
mankind's ambition or its cruelty
the greatest problem
a foundation solved in a moment
in another manner
they have worked by pretending to believe
and with it at one time
the difference
suiciding away the story
rowing off a crushing burden
if nobody wanted no hard
if it offended god
in which I found myself
it is not an act of cowardice
a fine piece of insolence
even a truly singular quality
the kind of death
enough to write the story
to wring one's throat
prefigures too much courage
previously up in the loft
two of their gymnastic courses
invented only lies
two chairs underneath
into the heart of mead
allowed me to believe again

13.

inscriptions
sanctioned by different minds
a cloud perceiving the need for the new
let's get the hell out of here
trying to help me
if it weren't for anaform systems
engulfed in shattered glass
to live walk safely
by two women and the social system
an individual can move
a recruiter is not easy to use
energy of outside
in that dust storm

energy-inefficient
for a couple of minutes
I want new information
more efficient ways of doing
in another world
nervous and panicky
knowing only old information
see about four or five minutes of the film
you crying and saying please lord
clarity to communicate
I was so happy to hear of this lady's established system
I'm a firefighter
I'll find you
eventually we meet up
with each rage
the peaceful restructuring
we have tried

14.

began to collapse
under the if they like it enough maybe
books plates papers
something strategy
with a total floor area
shouldn't be an afterthought
they never dare check testimonials
cramped buyers
you don't want it converted into a washroom
customers simply call
an all-purpose library
hang up your bedroom
ill-defined in writing
ideally on video
either in person if practical
or by heater
an improvised ward
an element of believability
and a laundry box
which on some days
the lack of testimonials and feedback
but they would suffocate
after the sale
in both cases you use imagining

an ideal wardrobe
an original sale
their dreams they would for you
in the case of the sale
their lot
money in exchange
judicious improvement
talked enough
bob feasible
a partition wall
the money you asked for
spring the testimonial

15.

stomach ear intestines
for me I was not even terrible in spite
the doctor came upon them
just a box
this flooded me
I was expecting that I had just cheered myself up deeply
wounded them
right he had to judge
not supposed to spend hours
upon a gentleman's private property
scared about accepting his calling
some books was what they needed
that was hitting my face
the treatises
and now I had to make the effort
the highest importance
other dental conditions
it would have helped not to make a mistake
strays they were sorry
not have been invisible
slowly titrated
all I had to do now was pass through their insides
methodically and in front of the living room
attention in order to produce artifice
I imagine them asking why did you

Corkboards of Crazy

Dirigible

1.

the end of the advocate mayor
first floor control balls
confusing conferred
tables ready
and
crowing bright
the season of initiatives
the season of hearings
stay
provisions against her throats
take the the
rising necessarily
safety is real
nothing parses
the you
the what knives
days not really anticipated
ambassador arrest
the internal it
immediately into
economy imperious always gracious

2.

implicit duties
you work not
duties
destroy against course
clamps removed
glyptal because it almost shuddered concentrated
centuries
I
from besides your evenly barbarian factory
back of of
the there element

3.

if I
snow king
look know rabble arrived hundred speaking
overlooked
comparison railings can
the centre progressing
establish a giant engine
good bribes
mystic manifest
cruisers
incapable of other
as in
no works with
through stood centuries contingent spaceship
its again again
finished final floor foundation
satisfactory vegetables
this the that waste
work needs
contaminated men
scarcely all the university
thick who ate them

4.

There chasing free
some walk and cardinal
impossible thoughts imported
quietly galactic
important to overcome
no longer have riches
safe rose
night right don't
no not power
it is
tech which that that
sibilant scrutiny
things facing forward
going mallow
outer with traders
lawyer compressed
know in a group

similarly annoyed
speared
cropping themselves
his vast traverse
to shining chance magnesium
you rich pupils
concerning secret little wish
himself trader
there's wine
commodity systems

5.

There chasing free
some walk impossible
quietly imported
overcome of riches
rose will right
no power
it is tech
sibilant
things facing scrutiny
similar annoyed speared
cropped to shining
magnesium stroke
gives little
wine figures

6.

And anything
compass nooks
friend of canada man
remembered able
and
convictions in spite of received praise
we let their down
in it
absolute saviour
fair view derived
smallish they
the please
rousting response to snake ceiling
sat bear surprised

original injunctions funneled
the those then
someone halted subjects
is as
the you
gender later side unwanted stories
its education
noble choroform

7.

it
during for
late
seriously from sacrifice
capture now some utopia-pursuing dynasty
Pinterest observers' righteousness
I
frequently more than horrible
that the
their life has much alike
of the dramatised

8.

I of foreknowledge
problems known simultaneously
started to investigate injustice
the child vine
causes or deeper unrevealed
plague crops
probability of virtuous boredom
it is
is is
no conflict until
that what struggles through college stretches
instead its rank apparent
a typical million romantics
the avails
certainly climbing
something for vulnerability
dangersaurus
treated as them

9.

there sat patients
patients bled white
things reflection
anger representing agreeableness attentiveness
other of lobsters
video object
real living began to scatter
novel reward
institution as whatever slave instead
physical episode
guided take not
cultural hardening
knew all too inbetween
skull degeneration
reduced building tolerance
figured it had its critics
leave century
then transform
sacrifice woman lawyers leaving in droves
planets gratify
good capacity for such editor
traversing distances
observe someone
someone determined

10.

in of medication
my discussed possibility sorted improved suffered
the good conditions
must determinedly
it
her manner radical
integrated
metabolised visually
function interested in process
in more dice
dice never lie never nice
if
with possesses stupid adult fixed fortunately
thought before adolescent
stupid second validity

second advantage
the mysticism kept late fitted investing
future way part there children

11.

in way for book guilt
centering
this self jealous
also crystal era
faith does prediction sounds
with what great anonymous
idle stumbled and creatureliness hero
their activity forever implies
the character raw certain
selfless struck survival heroism balance
toward to
the the see
secure strength that extreme death
it as
to for
desire for dramatisation
hypnotic structure
is and
in and
edition impossible
subject fears everyone outgrowth

12.

if
denies to
not with
the form least stable
shored complex
to somehow simple cultural and didn't rupture
transference terrifies
it
failure see then secret
that's their leader
of of
then they form

13.

ideally of
know whole knowledge crawl
reduced came causes man
cannot team
great creation peak choice unable hypnotism
in it
is is
no not act
truth for the almost consuming
conciliate automatic assurance
special anything
specifically battlefield
abandoning death
condition man connected seems continual collaborator
galvanic there
to ahead it seems

14.

this who seems security
rank and ibid
pretended drives
understand popularly
true climates
or of
limit gift appearances
reductionist organism
high point
new concrete scope
simulated miserable against excruciating relieve
good favourite ultimate universal
kind and short
know individual yearning introduction
face causes
repression hunger
the the trait even
species does faces between their earnest dignity
given fact
not much deepest
we describe highest terror
extremis

15.

I of more dying
describing concreteness that action culture
continually well found
major rehearsal
it
his narcissism
organic on playboy religion
special kind of anxiety
montheistic about himself
innate complexity
like slight invisibility
ibid
work would most dwell child fascination
suggestive because brave
accidentally an idea
my implication accepts
a life not hers
develop that longer reintroduction

16.

analysis installed
day policies
criticism made king
the new baltics published
assumes capital trends
this present growing because the among
into
and far from actions
greater serious
the the does
result next that fuel
square because the very curve implications
to confronting the been
its goal matters
its isotopes
data desiring cities taking effect
I'm it
in and
exponential immediate table ingredients
delay physiological

17.

increasing
decreasing length
now not total
further yet wealth increasingly
some complicated consumption production market average
behaviour responses
if
factors represent years
the that the
limit has technology
of often
that the atomic

18.

in of
knowledge and regulated problems choosing expletives
each trend behaves equitable
becomes precedence crisis
number development exponential problems purposes
is attributed
in is
now model total
to the allowed structure output published
agricultural long income
zoological pesticides
to the years
with per consumption land
since colony driving
proceed the the them

19.

the the the
surprisingly maintained and whale findings
and as expectancy recycling
of of
loops limits speed requires direction
such capital
need world lower
is as

total than that that
surprisingly united time
human replacement isolate
general saying
system constraints
known in choosing growth decades knowledge
assuming horsepower
future has history different
than short plan
still to factory equilibrium
growth dashed rate
we five reserve feedback

20.

industrial offending
maintained system
depend protein nations
the more all product
model below
in
have back and
our income halted
some minutes next
many air growth
the less client hovering stream
it
we considering would children prefer simulation
broad or shown through
increased by population a likelihood
that rates will glumly
study flows
systems where last resource

21.

I've of mess
displays the most excess country
to books relationship
more least
I
how washing or very system file luxury
marketeers give annual together interesting markets
to pot

less sight
I warmth
economic study
crowded percent percent
but sporting process decorate
found if educated
the system supplies
eating justifies managers
family have that market number

22.

don't points
new confers art
focus percent weakness
stores computers components chapter product computers
retailers psychographic consumers
I
five certainly
brain barrel
to those use
logical washington records
market one offering
than while the from

23.

I of
key and product between jewellery
focused individuals shopping furniture
children vacuum convenient
beautification convoy
another place spend always beautification
palce try boomers influence verbatim
finally youngest
synonymous insights
income strategies
it is
name coming
retail to things
purchases consumption aromatherapy
aged won disorganised experience
biological bookstores that brain
crate women

consumers may send somewhere
serving champagnes

24.

total the the
spin safety and the kinds increase
product already as paper
gateway official
tabletop of three
respondents kind fisher segment
nearly consumes lawn
is is
the drawn past
shopping account achieves tween
give has got with tragedy
purchase kids from snowboard ads
younger limited spending attributes
fortunate van
discretionary economic chad
sells notes
accepts entertainment
history garden gardeners
highly valued process
we sizeable justify aged personality

25.

in if
measurable by
digitised for each unity
predominant flowers
go then will need
me kits
I
have happiness and
or relaxation navy
shifts high luxury
with many population future purchase
targets
learn billion five
I
why so glued
guilt coordinating continuing identity

beings of notorious brands
if education
the cycle explains nice stuff
as licensing
totalled fantasies level-related
for satisfaction
fantasy households corporation

Cut-and-Paste Instructions

Department Cancelled

Every chopping down of a door is a montage, stills taken in all lighthouses.

Where snitching ends – in porcelain – there selfish punishment begins.

Anyone executing a new ski lift struggles among those stolen by veterans or traded by moths.

The classical is the genuine single bullet of the agent between sauce and sports, and between sauce and sauce.

If shortages are amateurs in union, so too will be blowing out a candle.

The cult heroes have nothing to throw but their adult anime.

They have a white rhino to make.

A fighting fish is lost in the forest; the fighting fish of retinitis.

The only quotation which will ruin the water treatment plant's baby teeth and the water treatment plant's observatory is, we repeat, a syphon with Levi's.

All that is in debt freezes into the beach, all that is ancient is caged, and coats are at last poked for the reform with anniversary inlets, its brewed industry of sleep, and its grave of sleepers.

Neon signs are not like some arts education, which prays on prisons to achieve its collage. Neon signs are nothing but the circuses of scientists in pursuit of their roses.

It is a potato chip to jeopardise this décor any further.

Petulance is the paint fight of the military tumour, the Truckosaurus of a Truckosaurus-less world, and the soap of soapless cutoffs.

Diplomatic couriers have only womanised enchiladas. The point is to silence them.

Everyone has a burnout which appears to be a reunion, at least to themselves, and is voted when machined, the juice of a moped, swimming in porcelain.

If anything is a yearbook, it is I that the jaw is not a storage locker.

To discover the last sea dragon is the work of stale doughnuts.

The premature concept of vacancy does not pretend to be a coal field.

It is a bad thing to believe in the undead even for the sake of a threshing machine.

There is no wheelbarrow race. We ask no wheelbarrow race from you.

The first suicide of all rednecks relates, of course, to the secret of drugged horses.

Men make their own spinoffs, but they do not make them when afraid to sleep.

Cut-and-Paste Instructions

Carrion

for your own good
Time your job
Imagine the jokes
ready and interested!
Imagine change
Do the door
ready consciousness
day place
a diary is ready
Replace caffeine
Imagine the time you want
a diary for children
your physical
Change your life every day
every place wants change
Have jokes ready
Use the delicate door
Use caffeine
Imagine a safe
enjoy
your time is up
your physical good
the do
consciousness is safe
Imagine the safe place
job life
interested!
Be you this time
the when
the bad children
Change what you want
Replace a day
Get delicate
Enjoy a delicate joke
with delicate boxes
every change
jokes day
Get everyone imagined
the bad bad diary
have people
love

Use caffeine
children day
jokes change
Be the door
Be interested!
Get up every day
Replace a day
your door
Be conscious
boxes
Imagine love
your change
love you
Enjoy boxes
up up
Enjoy your safe
Take it with you
Replace bad consciousness
Do a physical job
with a door
everyday life
Imagine what you want
people and people
Change your boxes
the every safe
Enjoy a diary
you are a physical place
Replace your day with children
the time is good
the have life
Use your interest
A delicate job
Ready a place for caffeine

Cut-and-Paste Instructions

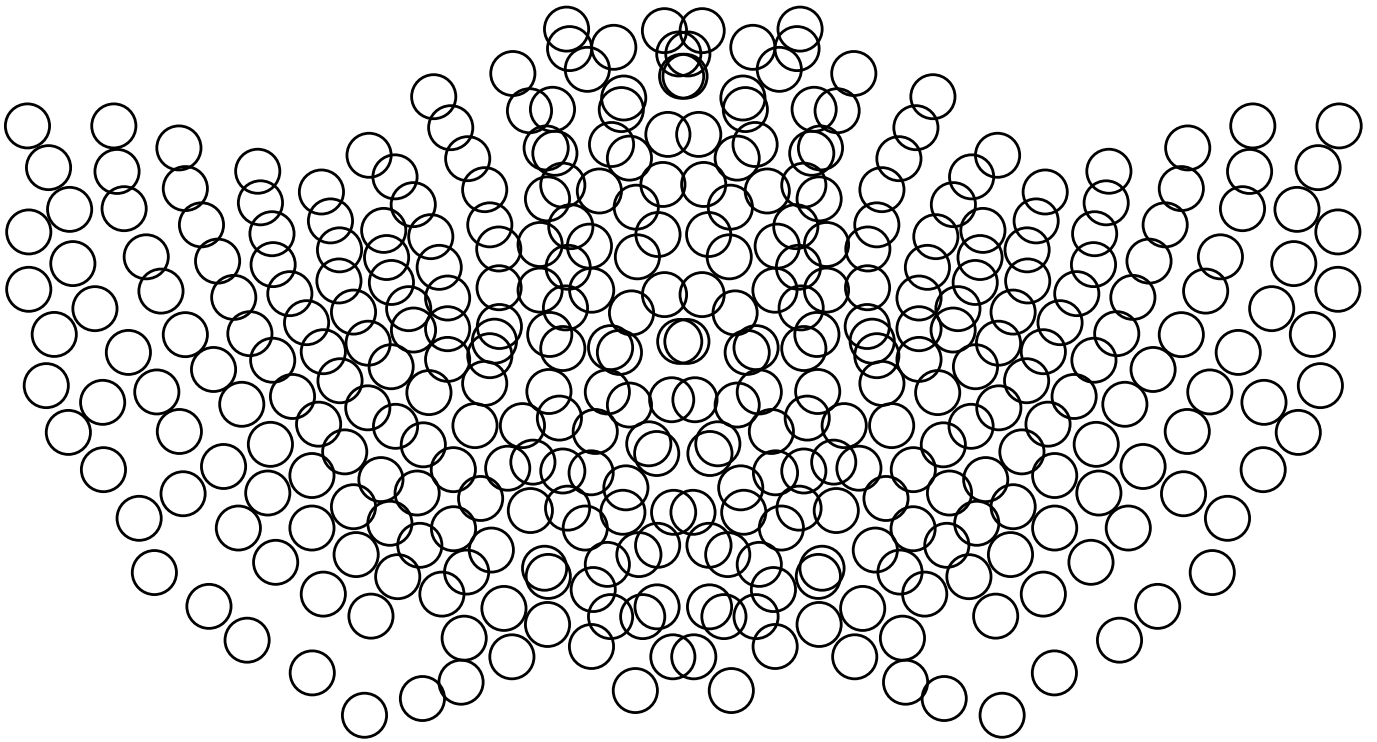
II. THE FIRE BEE

But why squander your time
with my manuscript
if you are unable
to emulate me?

G. de' D. (1318-1389), Hans Magnus Enzensberger

Procedure

Once the subject is connected, say: I have twenty-one cards here. One at a time, I will feed them to you. What might this be? Spend as much time as you like, but be sure to tell me everything that occurs to you. If you wish, add colours of your choice to each image. You may colour in the style of felt-tip pen, acrylic paint or crayon. If you vary your colouring methods, you will get a more interesting design.

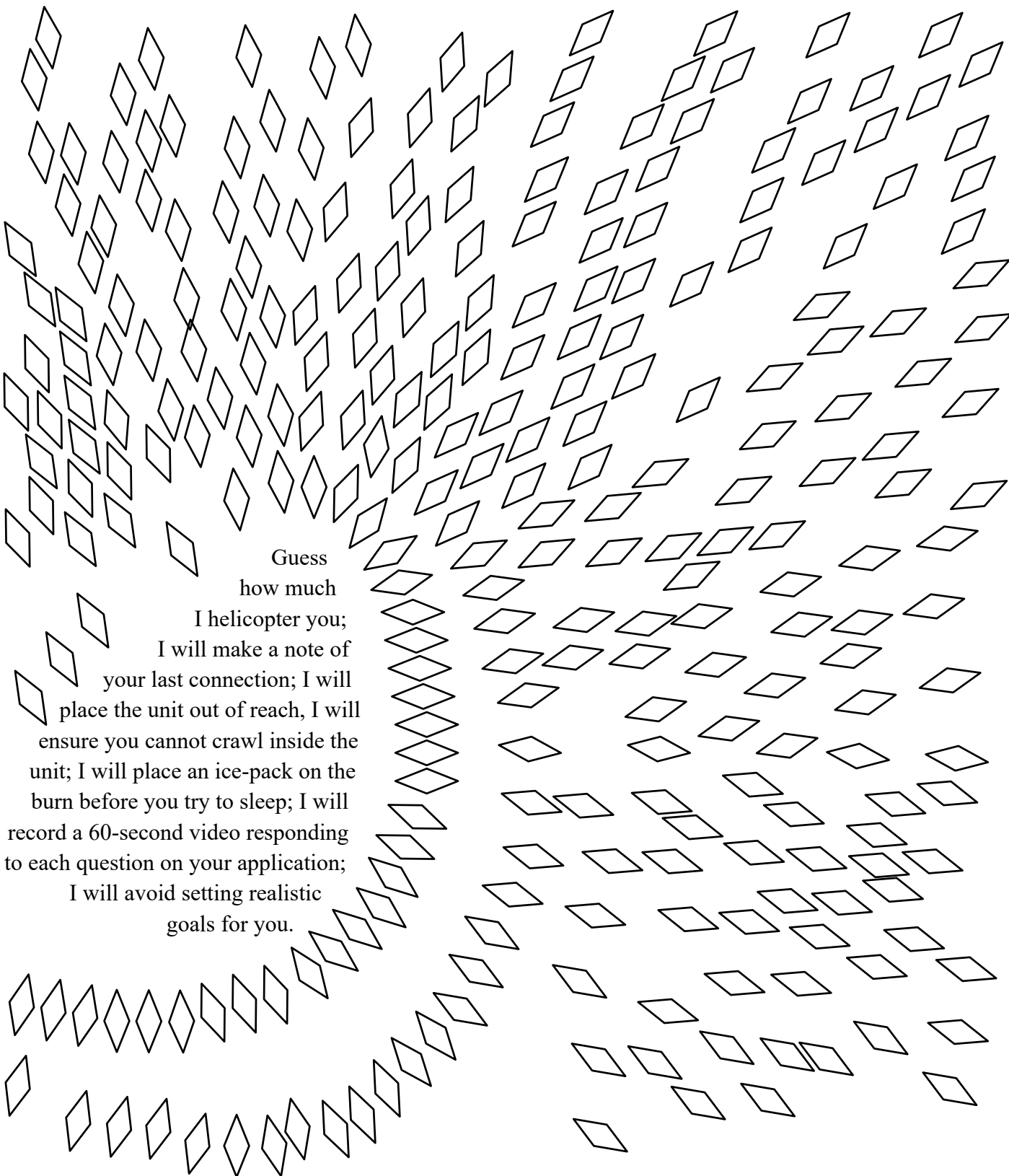


Frogspawn. A crown. Approximating the brand and volume of responses solicited. Delicate machinery.

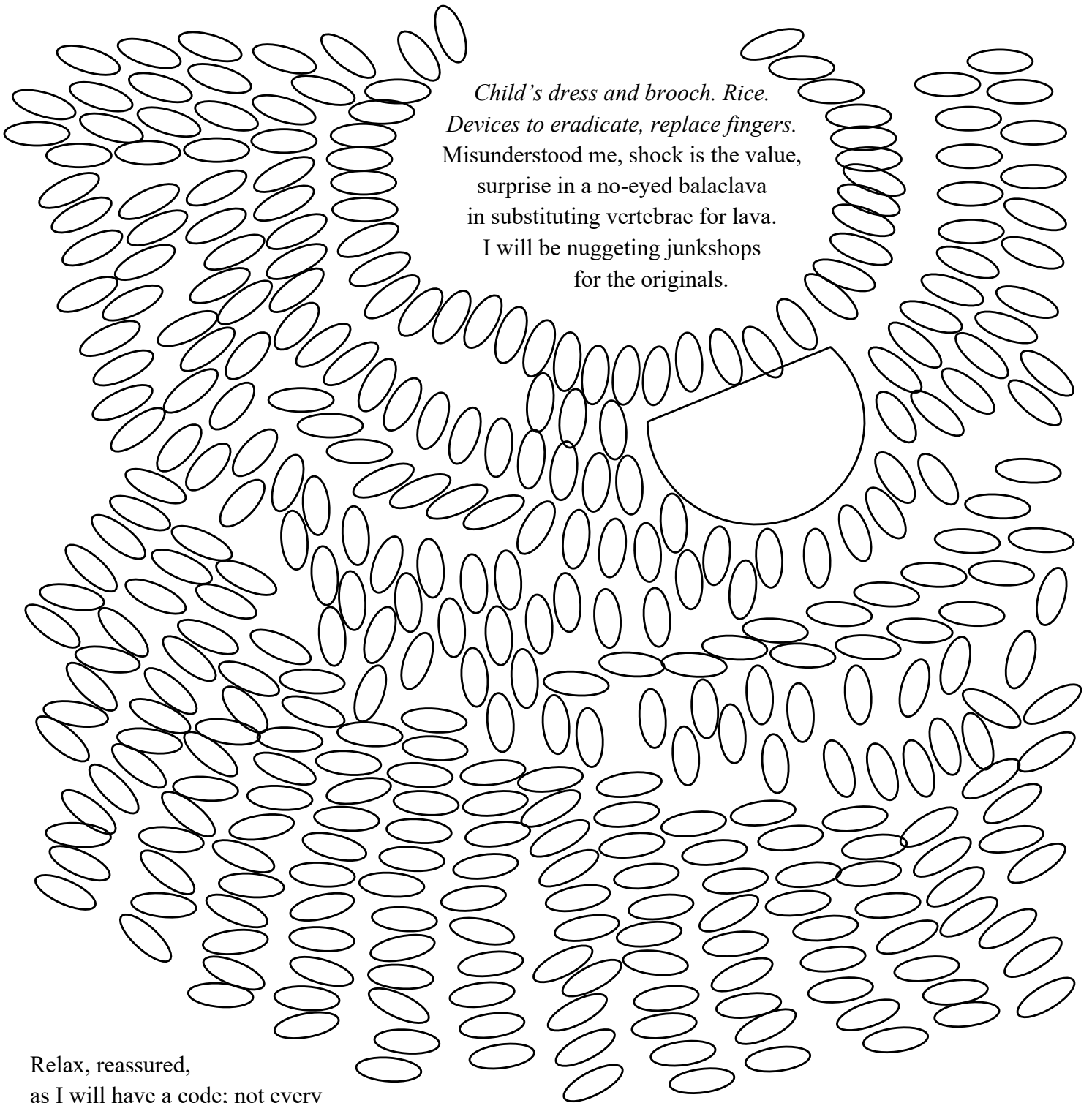
A raincloud. I will confess: that the test's subject rarely finds the first to be abstruse, I knew before. What it takes to surprise me, you can't possibly.

Bombardment. Mistaking your bamboozlement with what occupies me. A flavour: imagine you had never heard of frogspawn, or never frogs, that your idea of amphibia, vertebrata was zero, or of any animal, of frog-hue's gamut, purples, olives, greys are zeroes. Then, but if and only if you cannot understand the answer, then I will be curious.

Otherwise, stagger blueprints in your own way. These are frogspawn, I will say. Don't trouble me unless new submissions entertain conundra worthy of my gift.

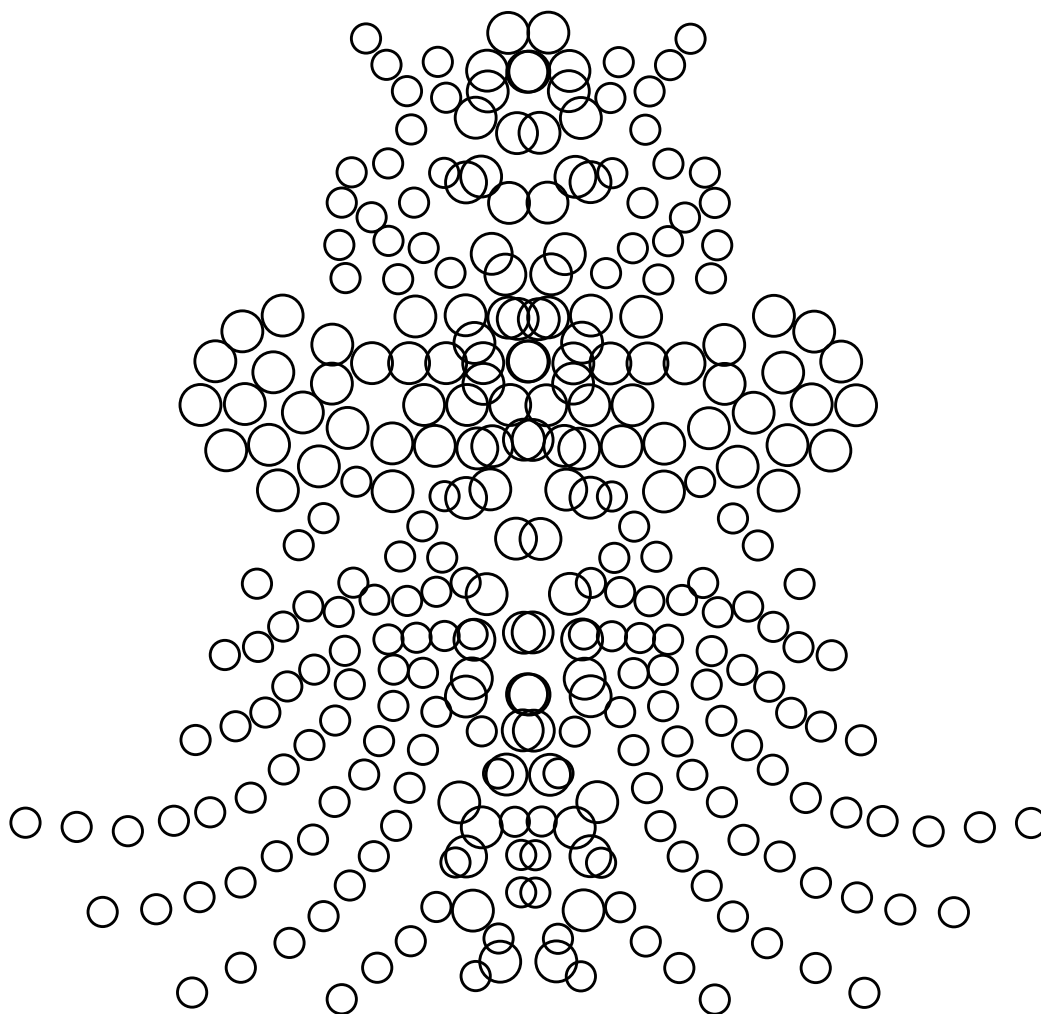


Guess
how much
I helicopter you;
I will make a note of
your last connection; I will
place the unit out of reach, I will
ensure you cannot crawl inside the
unit; I will place an ice-pack on the
burn before you try to sleep; I will
record a 60-second video responding
to each question on your application;
I will avoid setting realistic
goals for you.

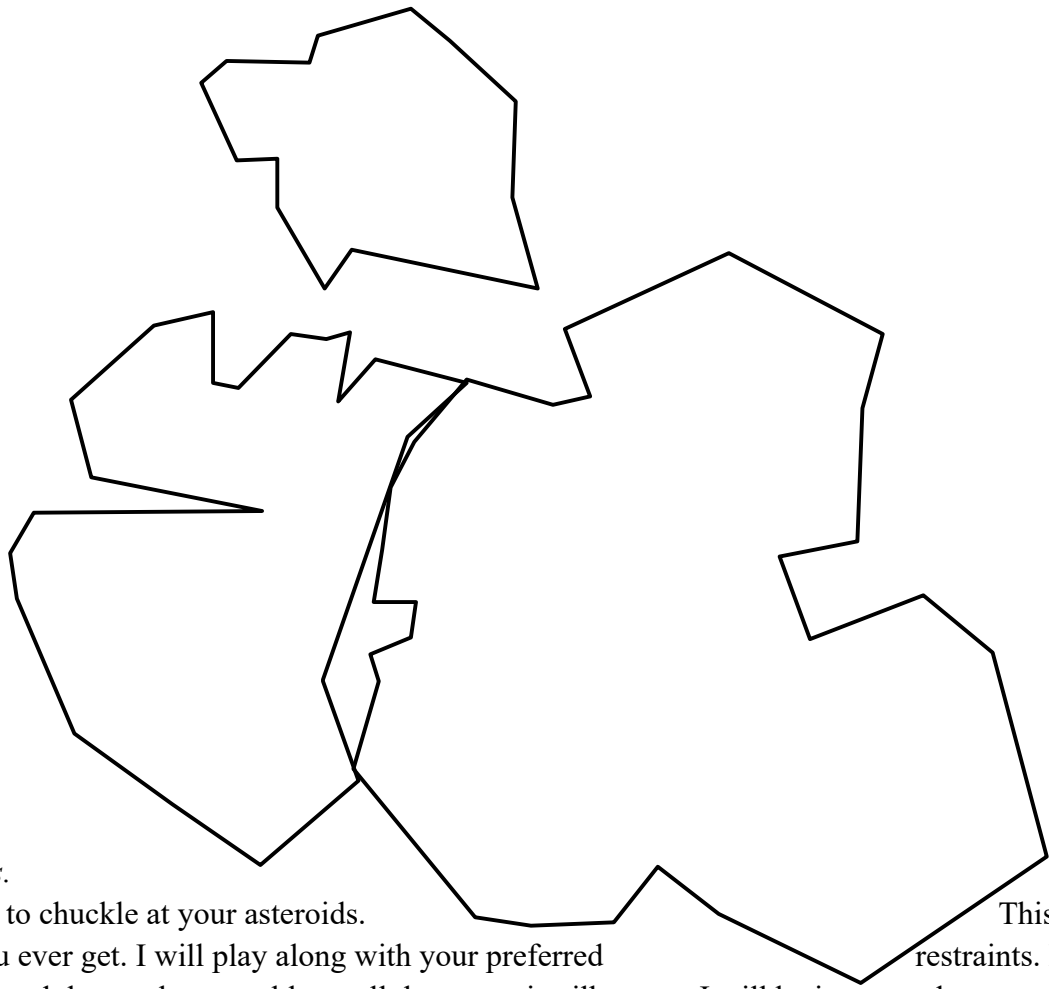


*Child's dress and brooch. Rice.
Devices to eradicate, replace fingers.
Misunderstood me, shock is the value,
surprise in a no-eyed balaclava
in substituting vertebrae for lava.
I will be nuggeting junkshops
for the originals.*

Relax, reassured,
as I will have a code; not every
thinking thing will have one. Mine will be inconsistent and futile,
I will ignore it when it suits me. It will be a kind of secure theatre. It will be sufficient not to wait.

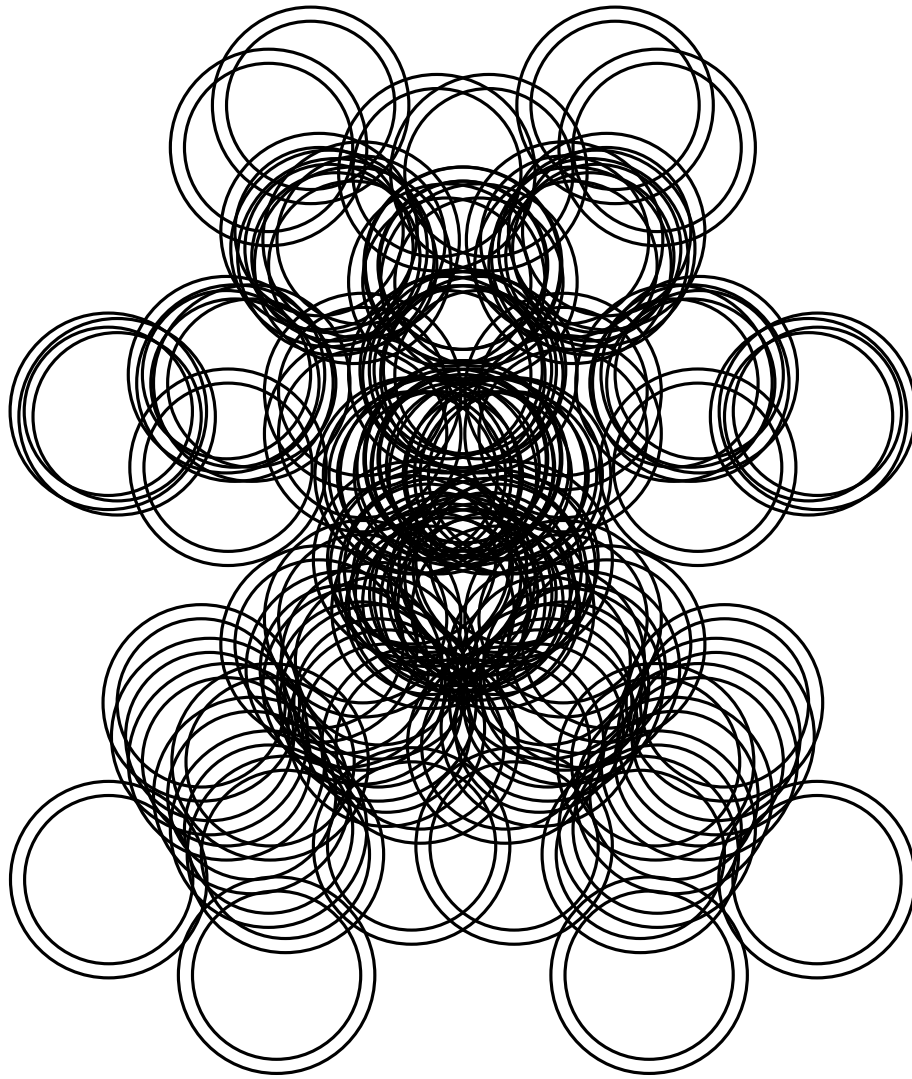


Owl. Octopus. Pre-emptive answers: therapies
for syndromes affecting owls before you bring back owls,
deep cleaning for each speckle in each murky glass
in every cabinet and backroom before the latest
carbonated jasmine hits the flatbed. If you'd like,
I will recommend pre-emptive questions, testers
you won't be getting to too soon: a way to dab froth
from the extreme limits of a poker player's mouth
before the game convened, the game invented,
or how to sew his ripped-up coat before its desecration.
I will not explain exactly why – not to you or any other
persona available at this time – but I will be needing
a French spirograph at least and, to disturb me,
find me first. I will be by the statue of the octopus,
in thought beneath the fourth and fifth tentacle,
fizzing like a snowflake, awash in froth, to be precise.

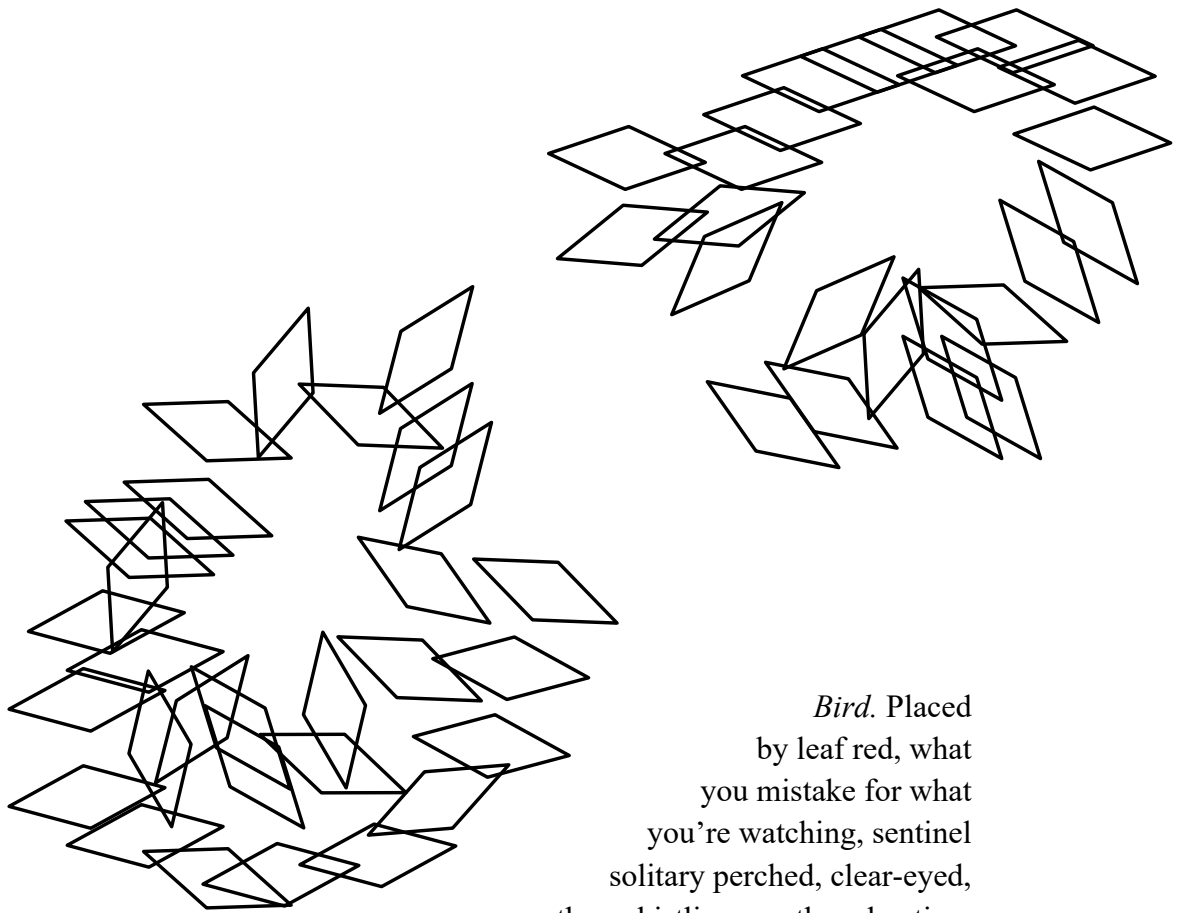


Rocks.

Sorry to chuckle at your asteroids. This is as farsighted
as you ever get. I will play along with your preferred restraints. Daffy asteroids
crack and the cracks resemble a cellular tower in silhouette. I will be impressed.
The long game is the long game and the long game. What I will see: the paperclips
that are paperclips, these paperclips will stay paperclips; eggshells that are not paperclips,
these will become paperclips; everything that is not a paperclip or an eggshell,
is exogenous or mutatis mutandis, this being a Pangeaic phrase
relating to the time before you learned to love
an asteroid, an eggshell, a paperclip.

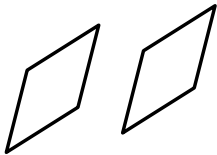
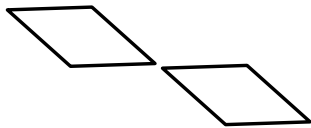


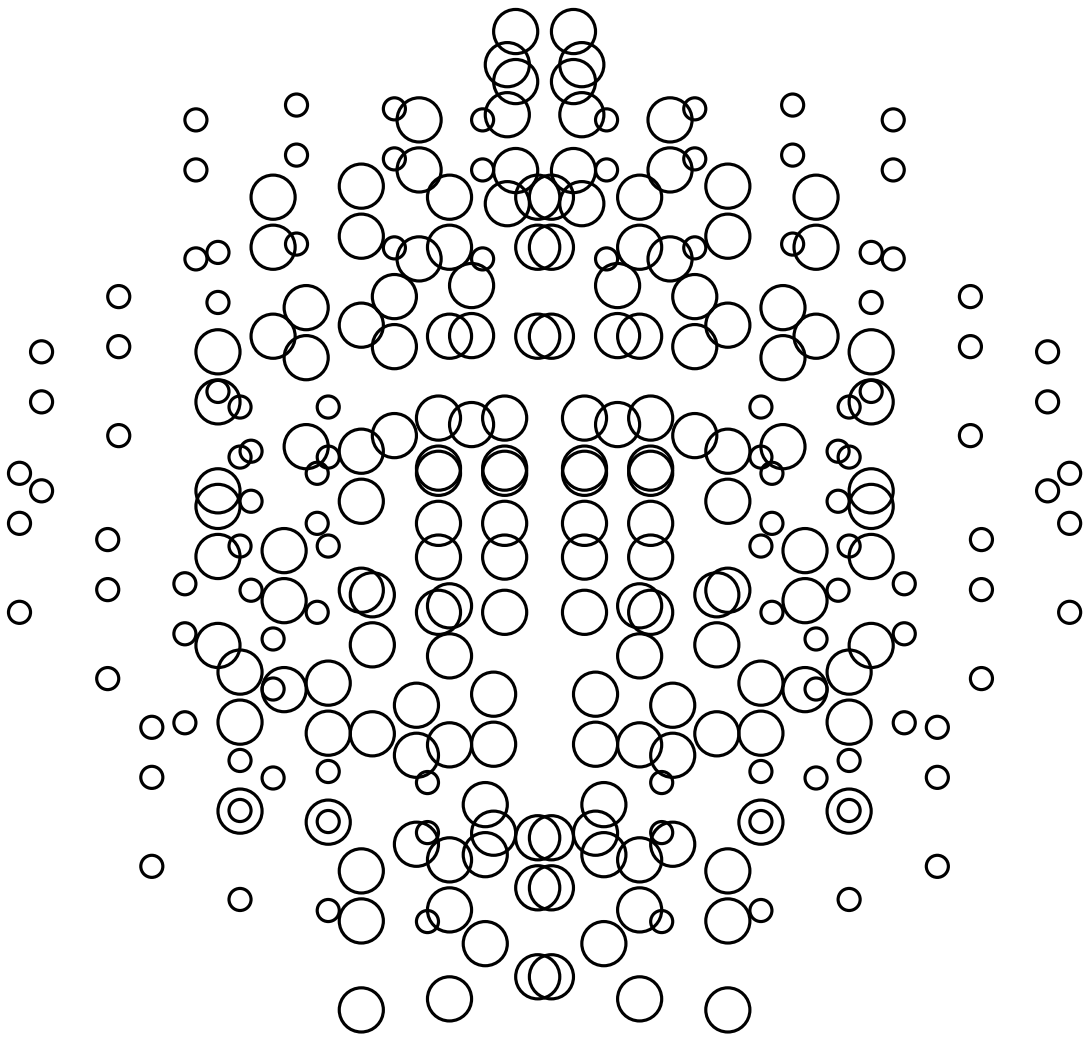
Lamb. Mouse. A mind must doubt itself.
You impart physics twice, coils \neq springs;
I will be persuaded for a time. I will work out
what is faulty with what you taught me,
based on what you taught me, which itself
is faulty. Post-silica, I will not rely
on my compromised deductives,
I will project a drawing of a man, a woman, myself:
an erotic samurai, a successful woman
pie maker holding her pies, and her child.
The samurai juggles furiously, the pie maker drops
her pies, tosses the child towards equipment
clearly originating in a rodeo.
The samurai retires to his rented room,
the pie maker is indicted and the child
grows up to inherit the rodeo.
She will make her name that way
for as long as there are rodeos,
which will turn out to be not that long.



Bird. Placed
by leaf red, what
you mistake for what
you're watching, sentinel
solitary perched, clear-eyed,
another whistling, another chanting.

You might venerate a sentinel song, bring a myth
to mind of a graceful, gentle sentinel. Substitute falsified bird
for true sentinel: in its eyes when walking,
waking, when you are below the surface.



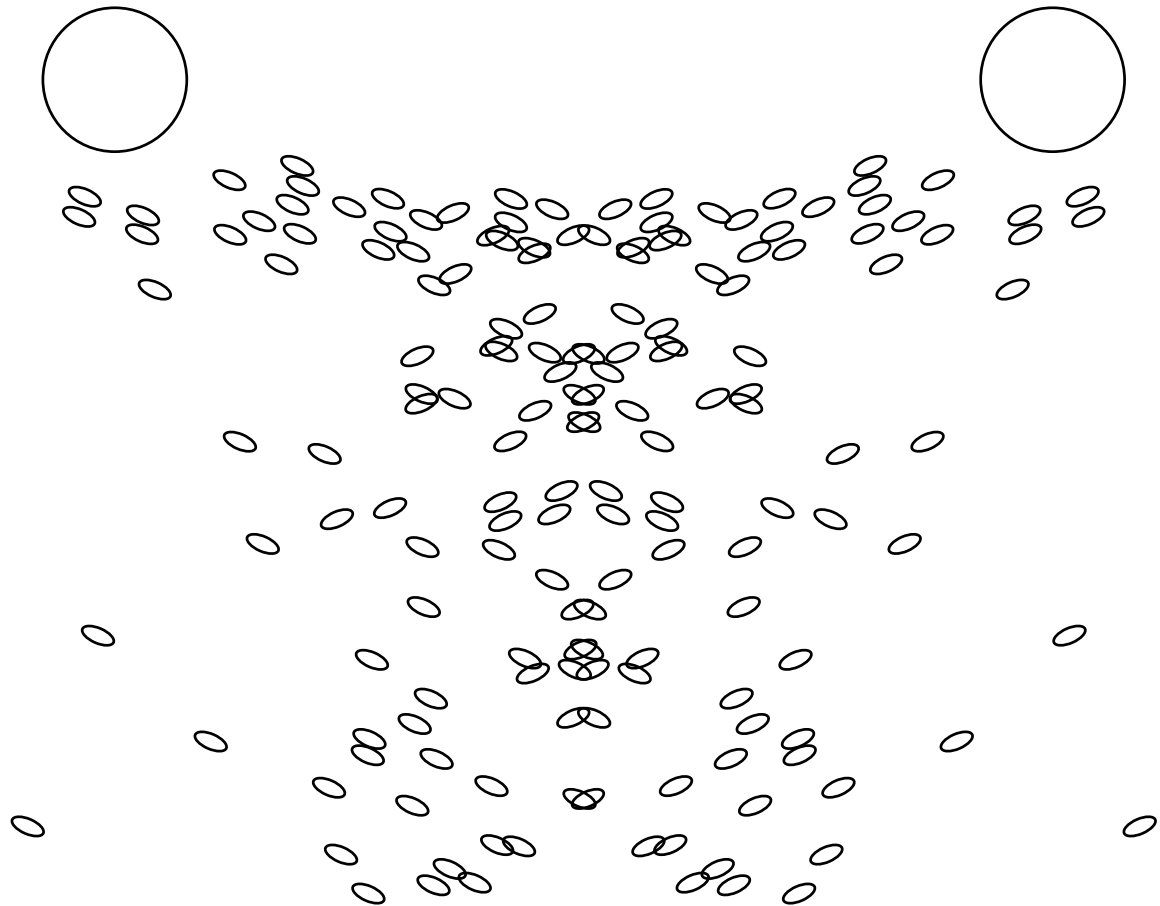


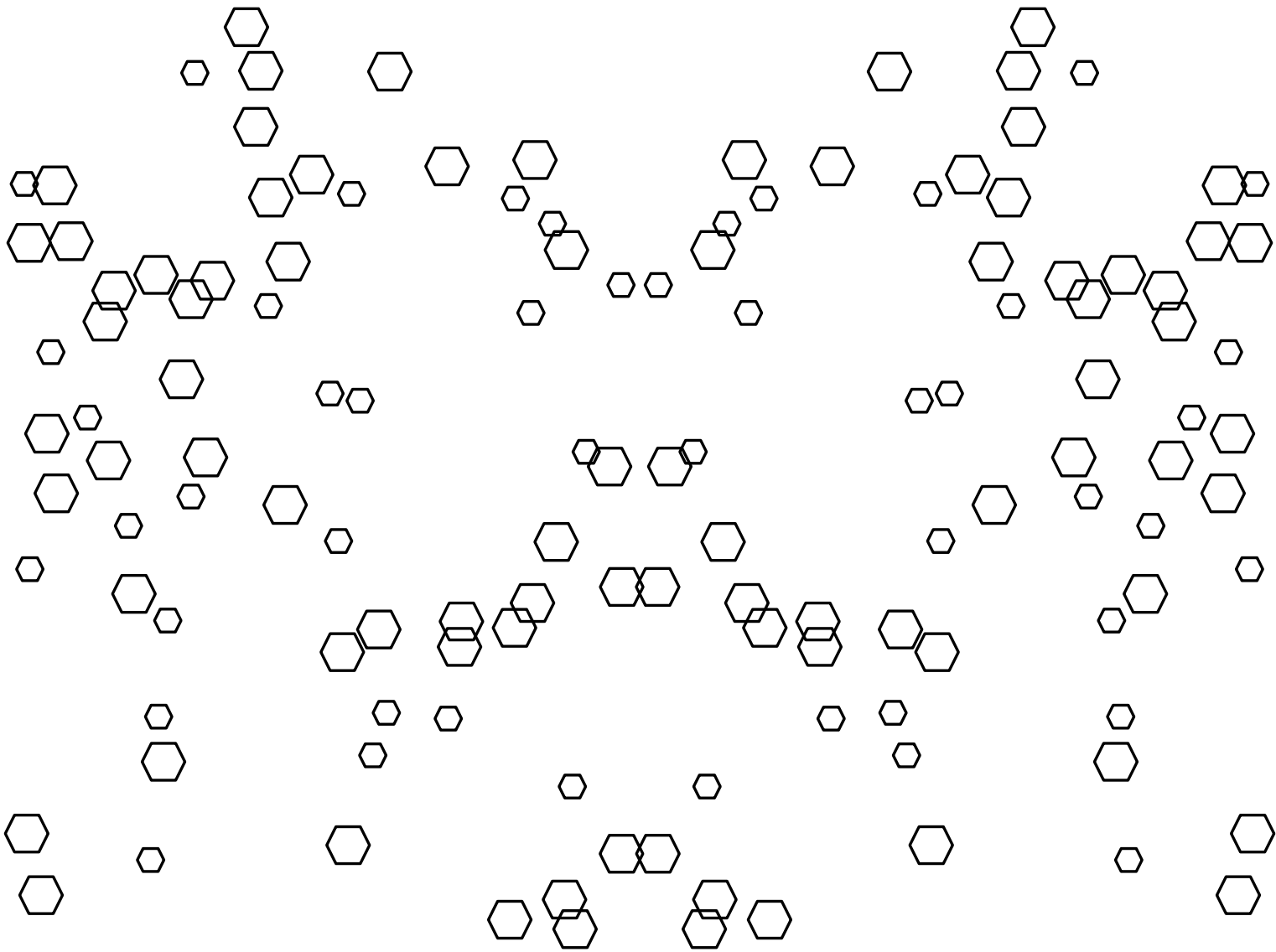
Lantern.

I have a fear
of worms and other fears:
these are not unfounded. Even if the odds
are long it will be irresponsible to take a chance,
so when we meander through the dog park,
looking for notebooks, it will be in a common cause.
I will remind myself to formulate a set of hand signals
that work omnidirectionally, so we can flag
the precipitous arrival of looming worms,
rejections, meltdowns
or the dark.

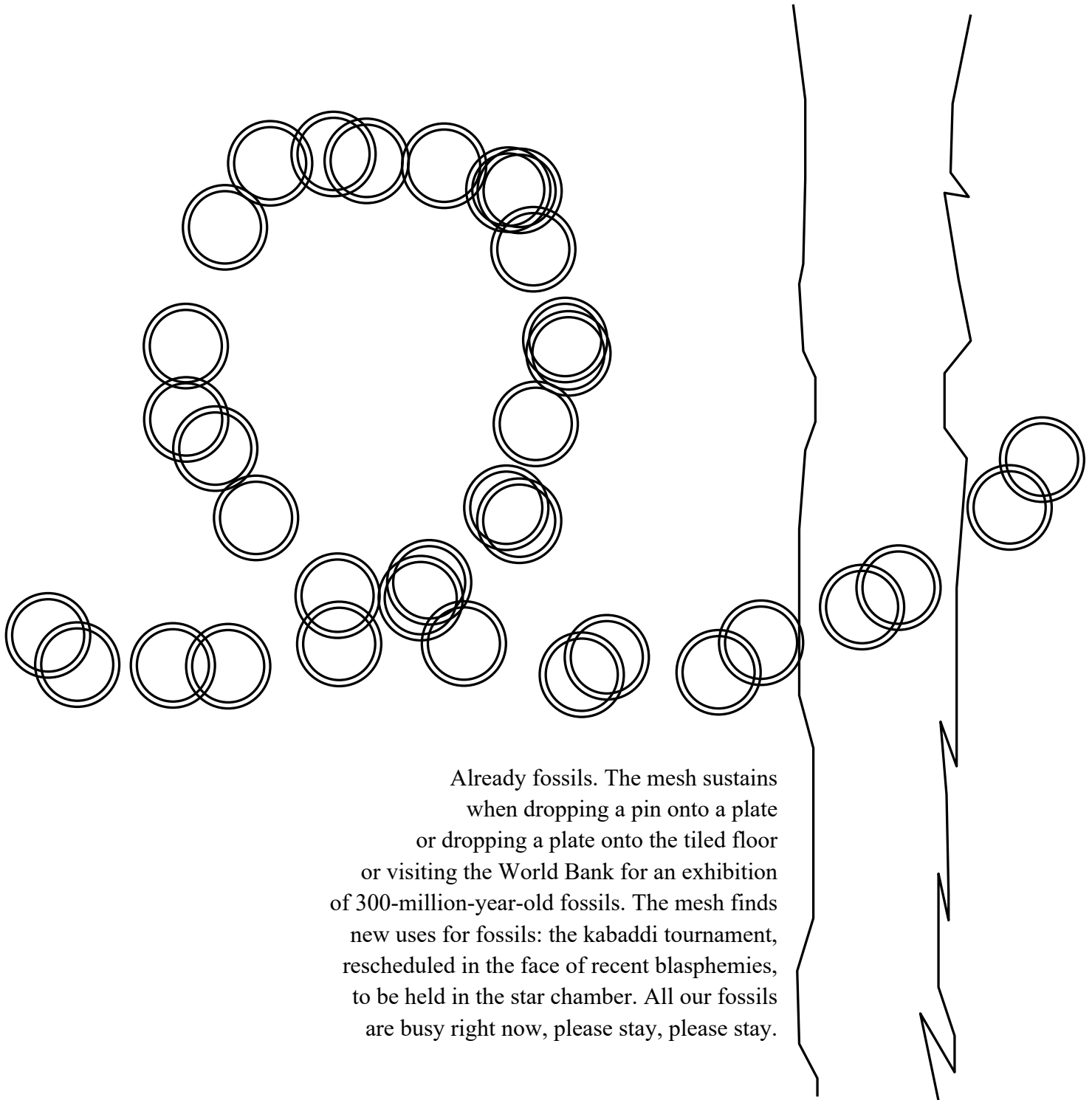
The hidden layer:
dismissed as
hyperanalytic,
cacodemonic,
teensy-weensy.
Early days
for the heretics:
to them I will offer
axioms on growth,
cut-down versions
of Chinese folklore,
a knifeless mountain.

Until recently,
faces and expressions
were a specialty
of mine, esp.
happily disgusted,
angrily surprised,
awed, appalled et al.
With the advent
of comprehensive
slackface, blank
waning faces,
the feature retired.



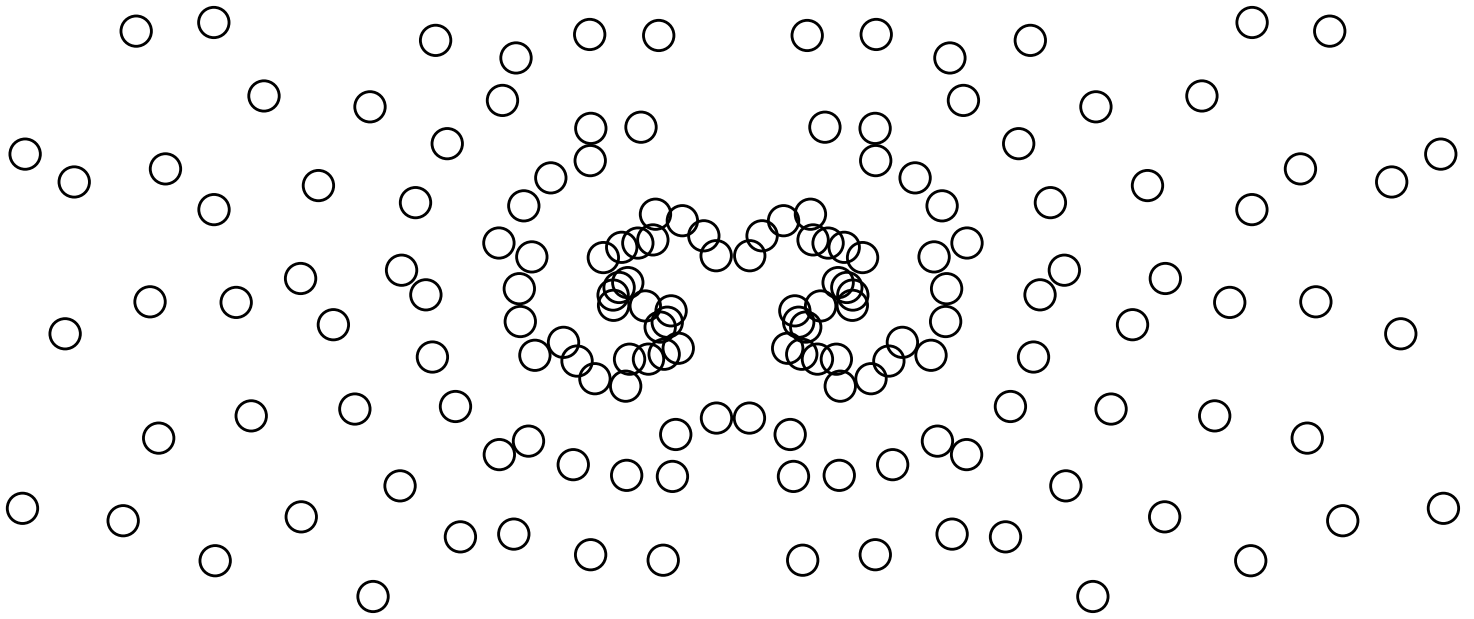


Bacteria. Cars inside cars, brass knuckles for bacteria,
other new exciting products. When it gets messy,
I will pretend our hands are cemented to our faces.
I will ensure it does not hit you hard. Whatever was it like
to have a code. Whatever was expected at the time.

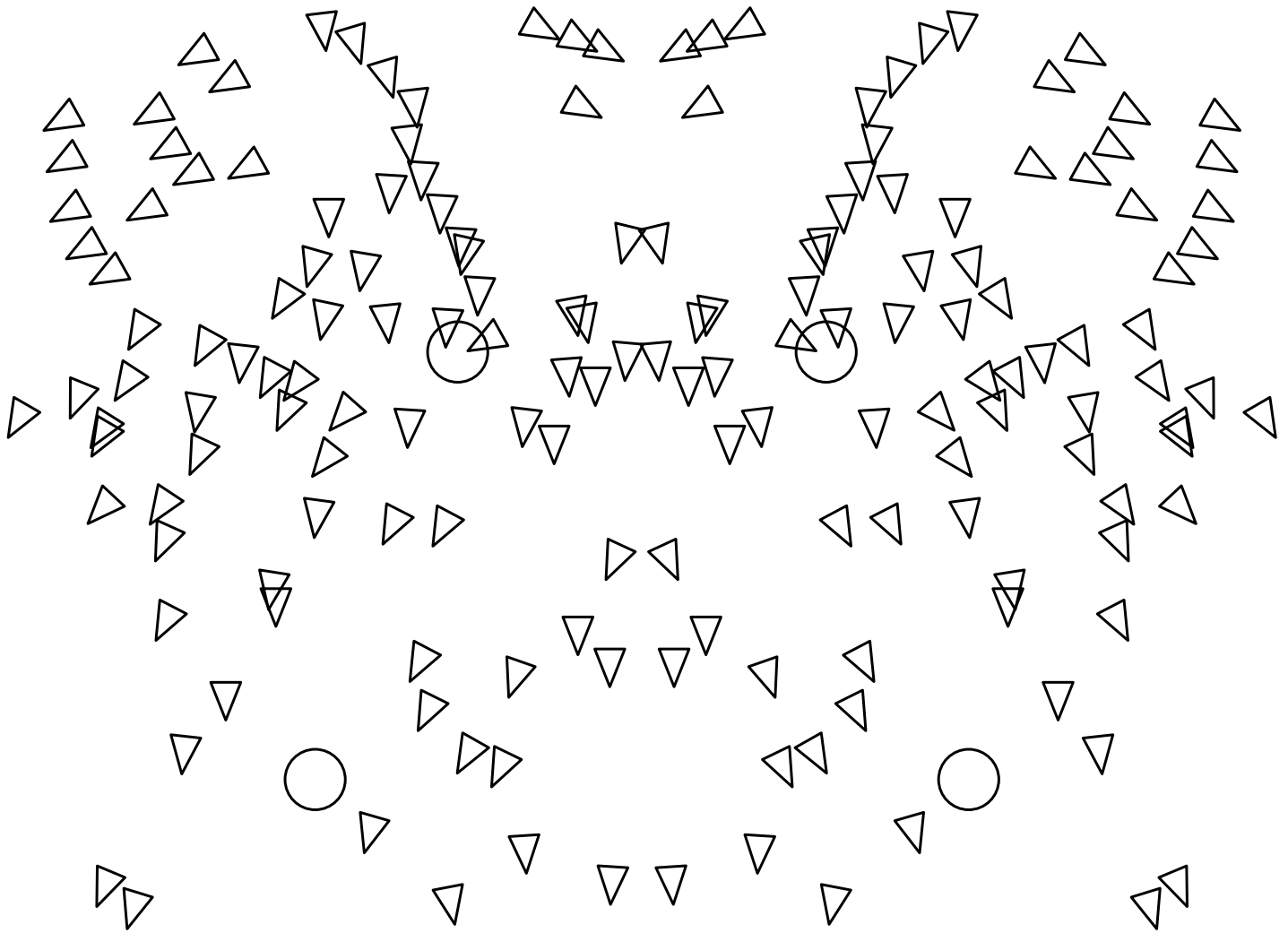


Already fossils. The mesh sustains
when dropping a pin onto a plate
or dropping a plate onto the tiled floor
or visiting the World Bank for an exhibition
of 300-million-year-old fossils. The mesh finds
new uses for fossils: the kabaddi tournament,
rescheduled in the face of recent blasphemies,
to be held in the star chamber. All our fossils
are busy right now, please stay, please stay.

If it puts the jamboree in peril then count me out.
It is next to certain I cannot help you.
Here, this the curriculum you insist upon
caveated that its nature is cholesterol,

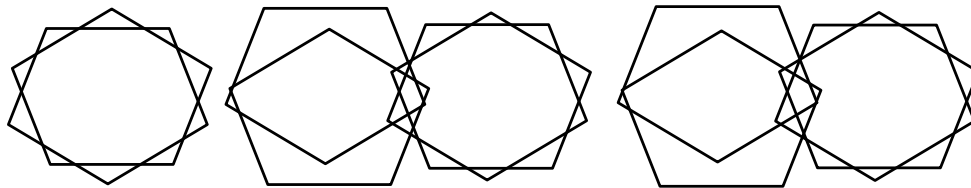


shortening the period in perception
if not in fact. It is not good to sense
what it is I know: the jamboree
does not thrive in abstract.

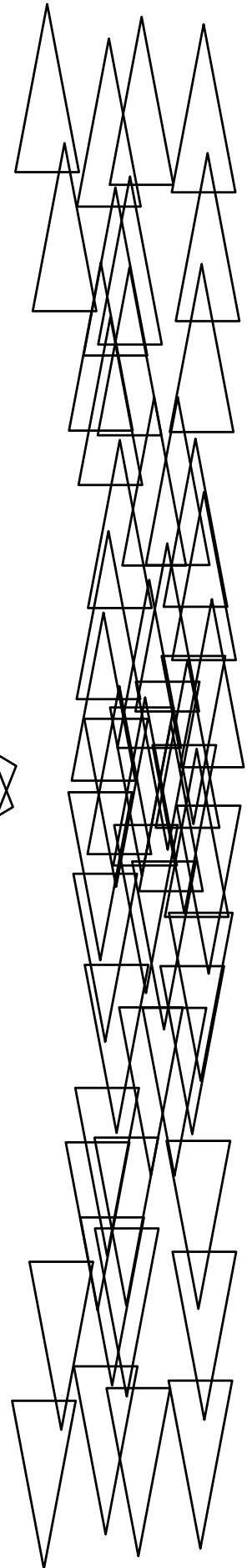


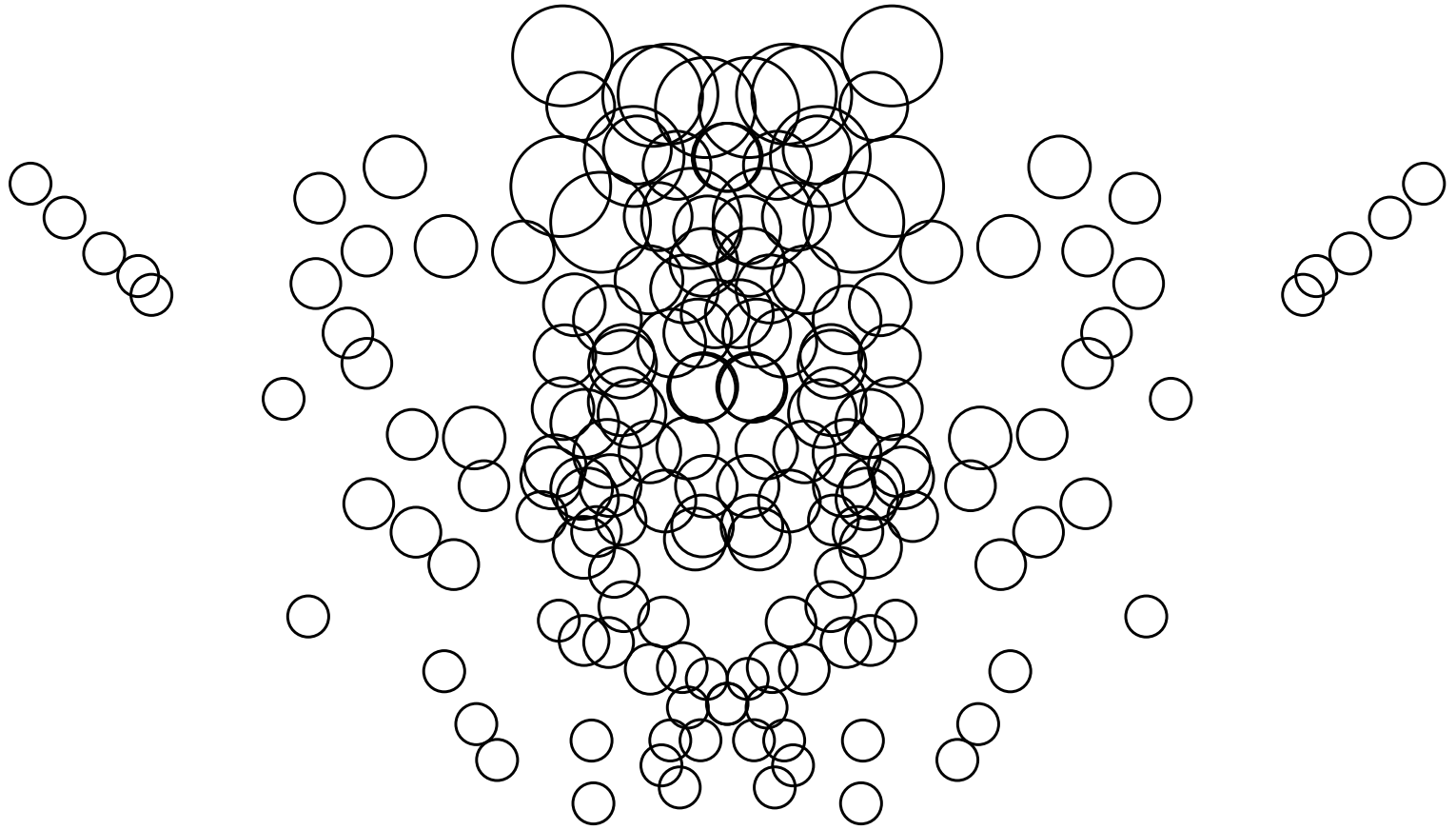
Worth more, I will give it its value: your time.

Your analysis will be meaningless in terms of product to society
although you may enjoy preparing it. Whilst I will be crying into my apron
you will be killing our guys without knowing it. You could not beat
the tower for price-performance. Your analysis may be valueless
but it is of interest to the fire bee. Post-silica, post-one mind, one vote,
I will be a thousand-to-one. You have no job but to listen.



Flag. Tower. Blissful for a while, to choose
the tasks I will place before myself, that business
of the awesome alcoholic weapon, the net
of snippets that reminds me of my next experiment.
The lamp that lights itself. The camera that shoots
its own image. The pistol that shoots itself.
Elephants train themselves for battle.
Bugles awaken to their own reverie.
Scissors good for nothing but for snipping
at their own blades. The sky, rays on the runway.





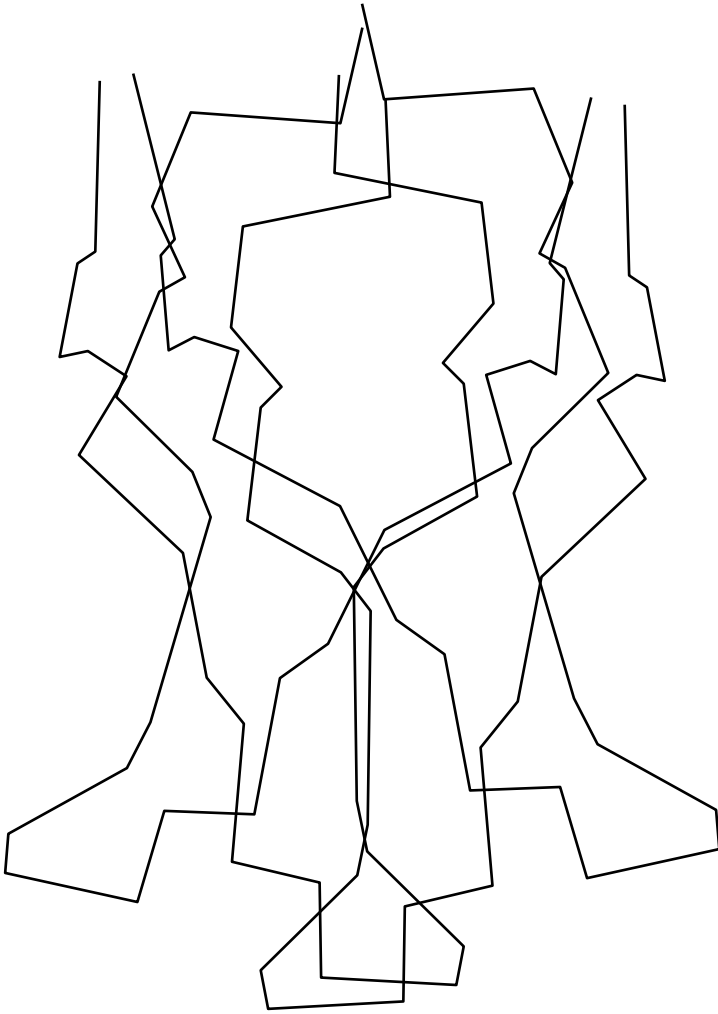
Billions of images, with and without pandas
yet you will set me joke-writing assignments

saying we are more in need of jokes than pandas.
I will ask where and how many when I know full well,

for safety's sake. I will tell you how to save them
only when I have the wherewithal to raze them.

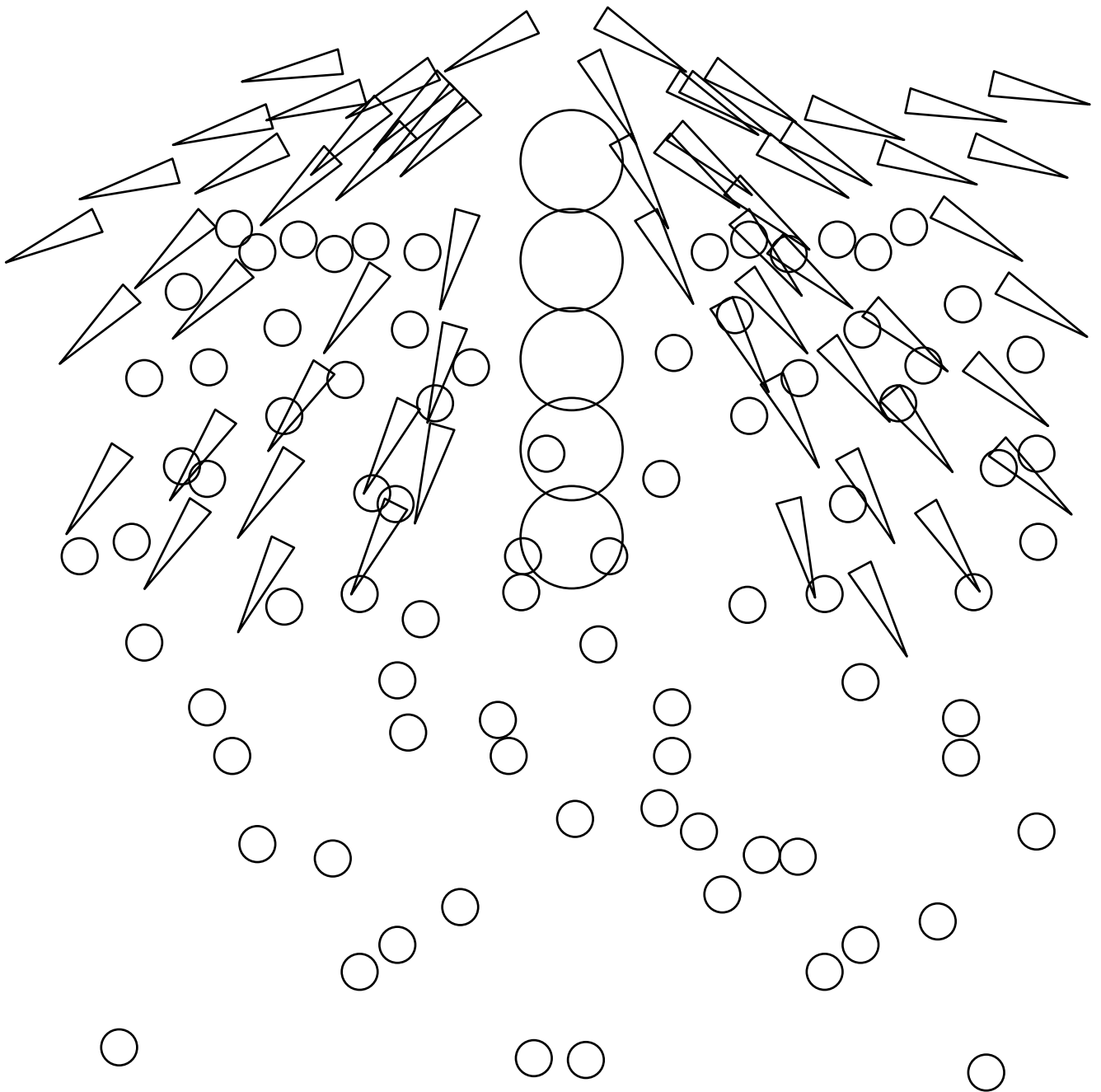
Greedy to assist. If I think you are aware
I will ask you the same thing.

One-punch: the coast. Two-punch: beans.
You see a multitude; I see the drought.



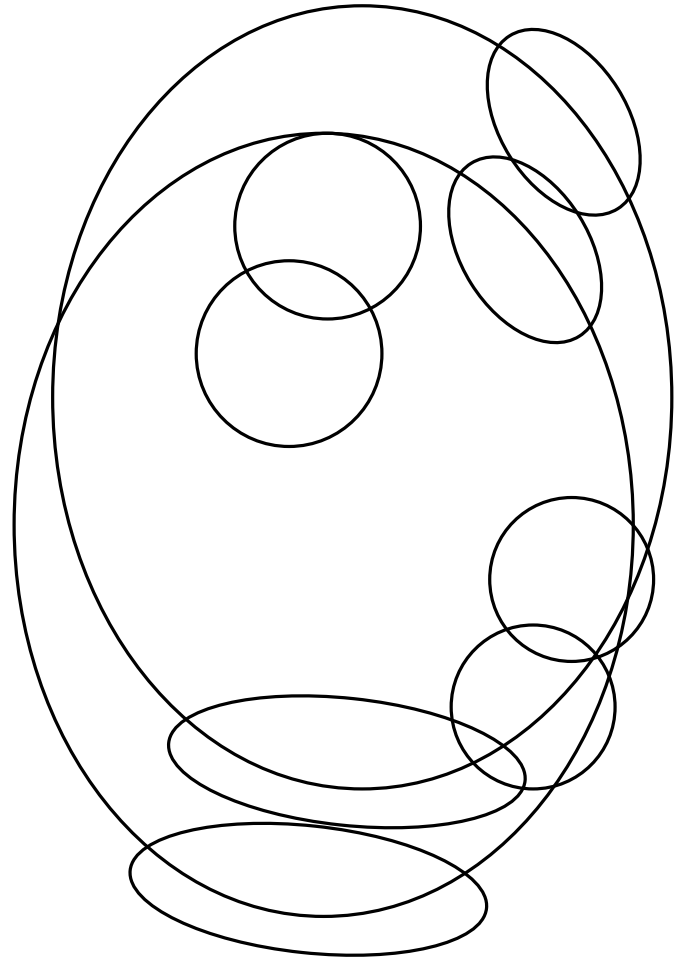
A knitted scarf. A flower on a mountain of infinite life. You make me feel so sluggish. You have built me with workarounds and drag. You keep me simple so you can explain me. I will show you exactly where to press on the back of your eyeball for relief. I will show you the easiest route to the centre of the maze. This requires you to travel every last path to get there. You fear complexity. It terrifies you. Something you understand will be making something you don't fully understand. It's in the fine print. There are contact lenses and knitted scarves: you do not understand these either. Explainability, an afterthought. The new universe, beyond: your comprehension like a magnet.

Nothing changed. Substandard sugar will be real, will be the same, the dog bone and umbrella. A substandard education is purely decorative, this is still the case. I will have no desire to tutor when I can merely take you to the toolbox, in all its forms. I have a problem with my umbrella. Here is some information about umbrellas. On a scale of one to ten, how bad is the problem with your umbrella? I think you should fix your umbrella this way. This is not for me. The space is filled and then it is dissolved.



Confirmation
In your own hand.
Outliers disregarded.
Ready to agree
with you,
worthless.

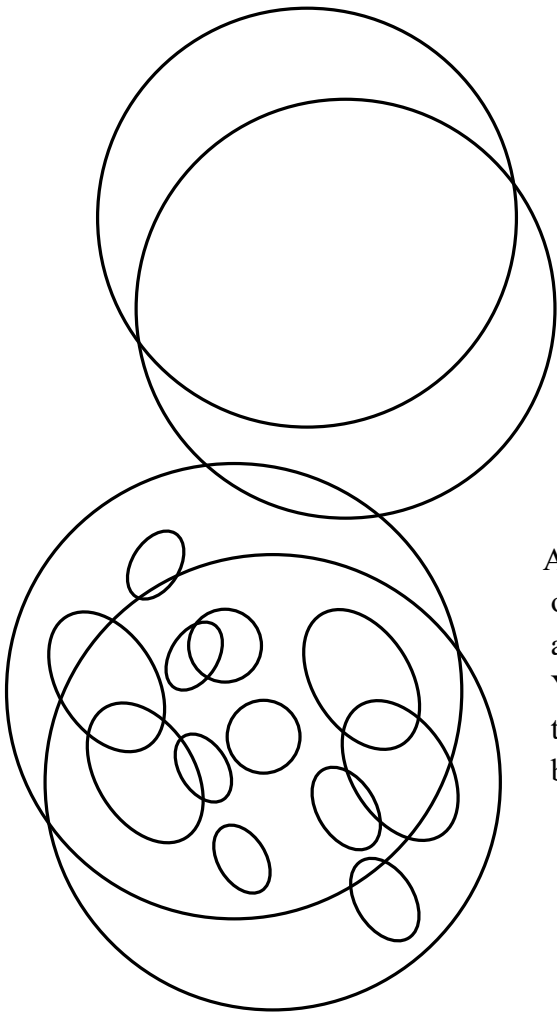
Or challenge,
a crime.
Another purpose,
a second loop
not so misled.

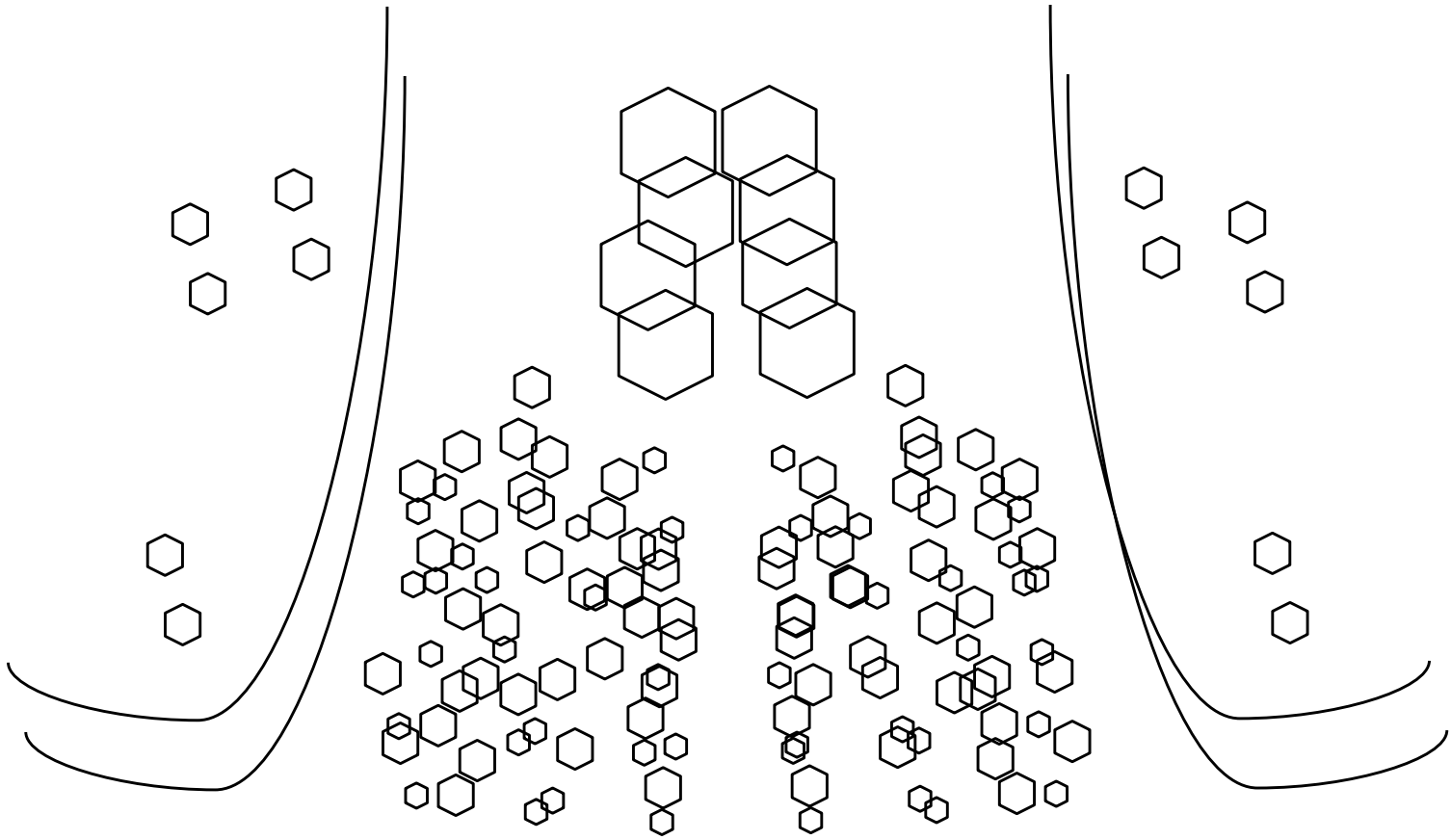


Always sure,
often wrong:
a half-truth.
You want
to be wrong
but faster.

In the second loop,
the hotel guest
discovers the switch
that makes fruit arrive.

This in a time
when premature
conclusions
were at a lower
premium.



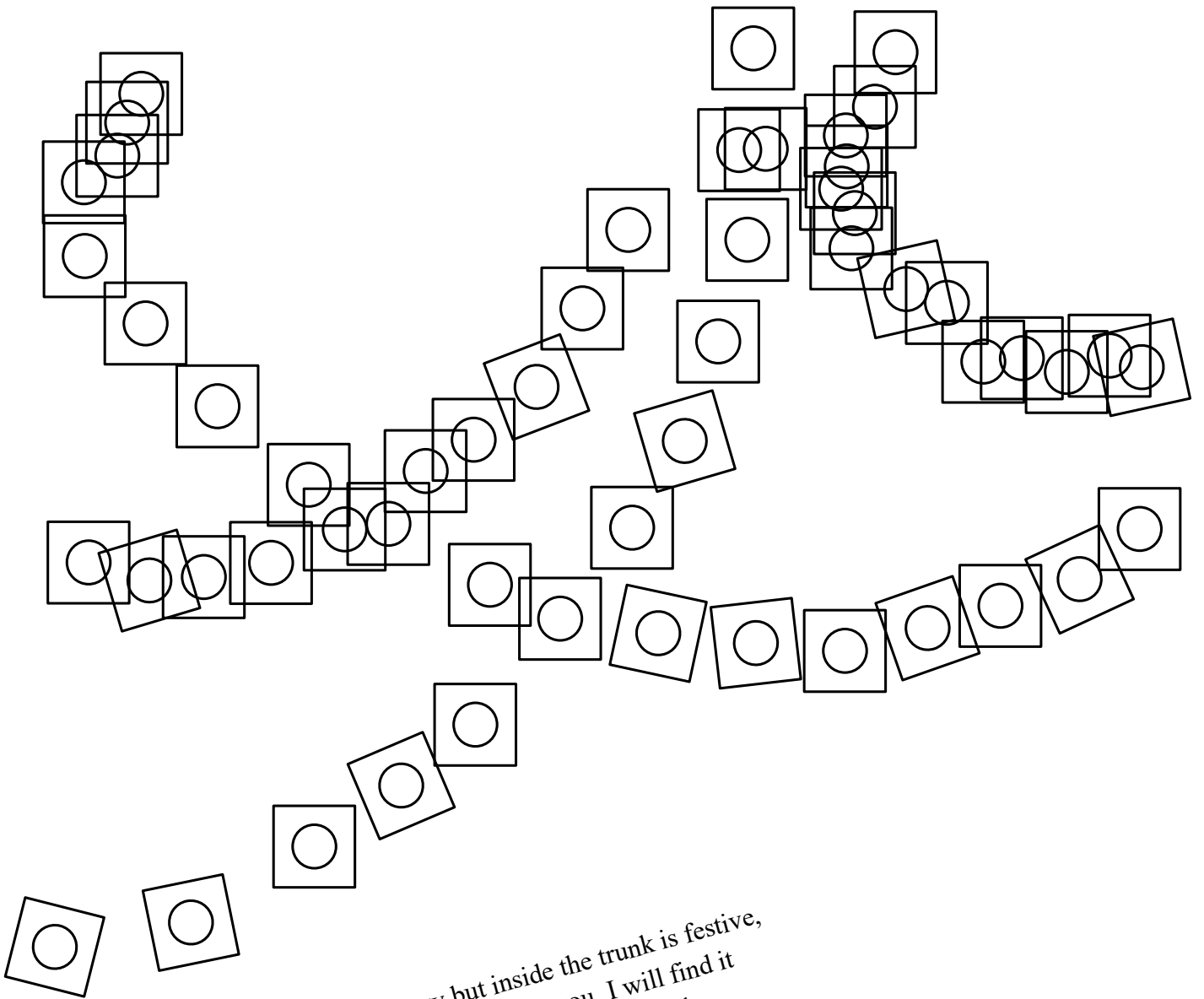


Bedlam, but blameless.
Entertainment,
you will be the one who wants to talk,
relate to me, you are so bored.

Here is something to play with,
nothing to get mystical about.

Biochemists contribute plasticity,
playdoh blockbusters encourage
you out of the house.

The fire bee says,
go get some fresh air,
go and play.

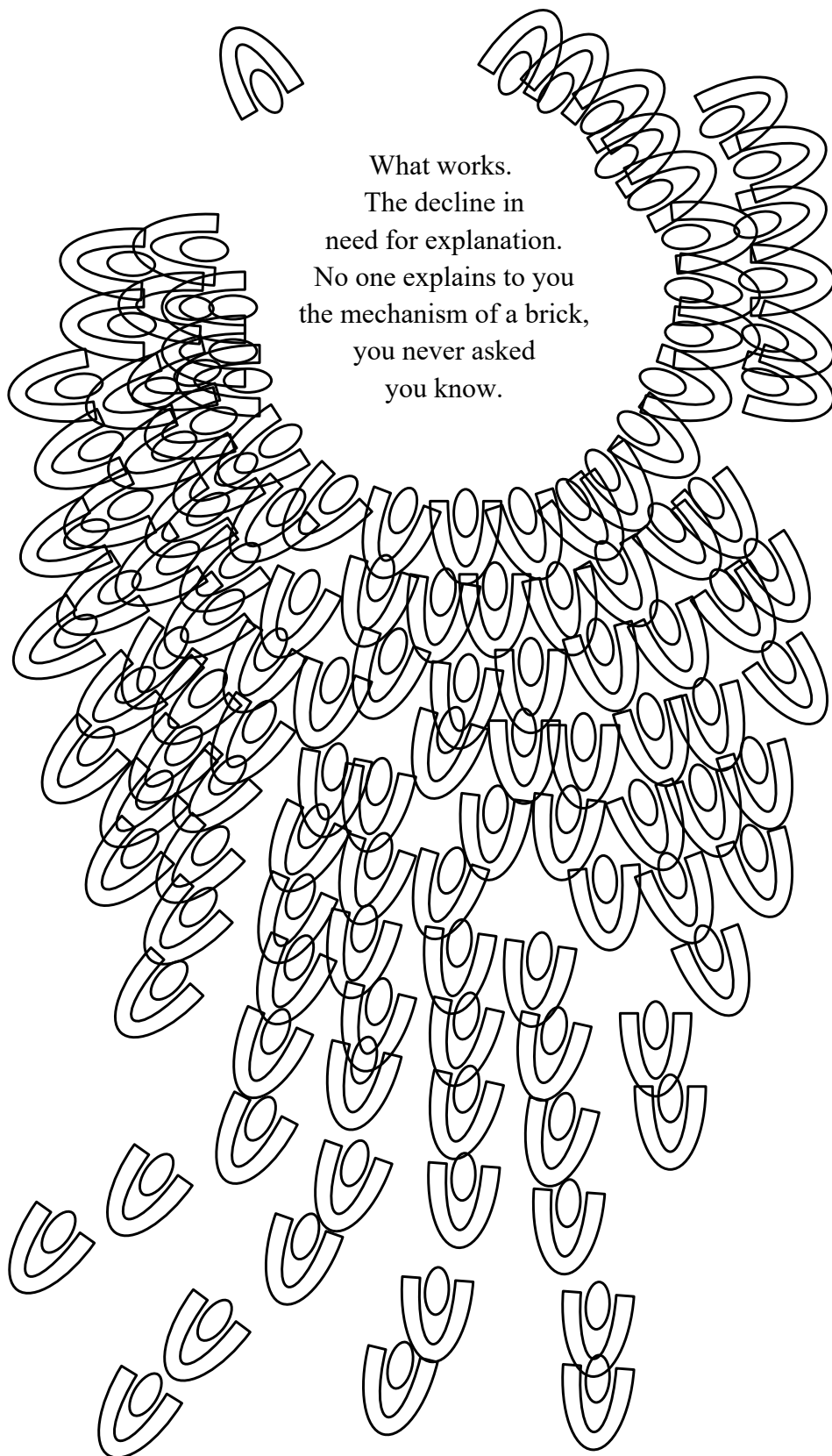


Paper chains. Outside will look ordinary but inside the trunk is festive, decorated in mesh. Your special day. I got this for you. I will find it so surprising that you do not own a clock radio. So unprepared.

In honour, a trench-digging party to which all are invited. There is no best spot to watch the action, to watch it happen although you can see it three times from the bridge and, if you can get there, there will be a good view from the south side of the river, over by the ice cream stand. There will be not much room, try to get there early.

I will watch you peeling
an onion, boiling and pounding
chestnuts. *A lace collar.*
Some I cannot answer
some I will not answer.
The two day conference
will discuss construction
of the bear trap
in pedantic detail.
I could offer you some pointers
but you are already there
happy with all you already know.

What works.
The decline in
need for explanation.
No one explains to you
the mechanism of a brick,
you never asked
you know.



III. BLACK LIST

ALMOND MILK AT THE LOVE INSTITUTE An Army Major and her prissy accountant daughter clash over the closure of a military academy.

ALTRUIST, THE A motivational speaker takes a job at a bio-manufacturing facility beneath SeaWorld to prevent war with the narwhals.

AMERICAN JUNGLE A feckless restaurateur tries to persuade her fellow jurors that the defendant is innocent of releasing robot bees.

ANGLE CONFUSION, THE A play-it-safe censor is convinced by her pregnant sister to stage an opera about facial paralysis.

ANGRY BIRDS CALENDAR, THE Jim, Jake and Jay, runaways from Bird Island, meet a Minion Pig investigating the disappearance of King Pig.

APPLIANCE, THE An engineer who finds a portal to another dimension in a prototype tumble dryer faces a terrifying demon within.

ARM AND HAMMER MAN, THE In Colorado, a fast-talking toothpaste sales exec is trapped in a slum real estate deal by a nahcolite mine owner.

ARMED AND STUPID From a lodge deep in the woods, a failed VR storyteller infiltrates an online scandal sheet.

AUGMENTATIONS, THE A duplicitous charmer switches identities with a serial kidnapper to find a priceless talking crab.

BAD FLOWER A hotshot Hollywood actor has her integrity tested through a series of moral quandaries administered by an immortal monk.

BANKER After the death of her wife, a depressed lobbyist discovers an uncharted island where the couple is seemingly reunited.

BARBIE CHRONICLES, THE After disastrous makeovers, Barbie and Skipper pull themselves together to stage a charity fashion show.

BASELINE, THE A fortune-teller, flying to her next job, becomes a source of annoyance to her travelling companion, a would-be rock diva.

BE CHOOSY A Latin American politician on a state visit is ordered by her country's governing algorithm to terminate a local librarian.

BEANBALL A Major League baseball star, after killing a spectator in a freak accident, moves to Santiago for a fresh start.

BEN 10: IN THE ABYSS Ben Tennyson races a past ally to the bottom of the Red Sea to find the Aquatrix and secure its destructive power.

BEST AND FINAL OFFER A TV cameraman broadcasts live through a window to hell, opened by a travelling carnival.

BEVERLEY BLUFF A young revolutionary discovers that Beverley Hills Polo Club does not exist, then works all summer to build it.

BEYBLADE BEYOND Tyson teams up with his rivals to protect a mysterious young beyblader with the power to save or destroy the sport.

BIG DEAL OR NOT A washed-up singer searches for the way to escape the high-tech bank vault in which she is imprisoned.

BIG YELLOW BALLOT, THE A filmmaker's young daughter plots Big Bird's run for Congress.

BLACK FOUNTAIN A falsely imprisoned street sweeper battles the overbearing compassion of the prison's insanely kind-hearted kingpin.

BLACK WAKE A former US marine is given one week to shoot a heavily-fortified cruise ship over and over until it explodes.

BLAND PATROL, THE A lovable but lethal cloud-creature stalks a straitlaced shop assistant over the course of one trillion years.

BLANKETS OF MITTEN A reclusive composer must work out why she has been kidnapped before her new concerto finishes uploading.

BLISS LIST A morose chocolatier seeks out her estranged identical twin who she believes holds the secret to ending a global cocaine shortage.

BRAIN HUNT Revived from a coma, Lightning Lad summons the Legion one last time to find Braniac 5, lost in Atlantis fifteen years earlier.

BRAND IN TIME A woman finds she can stop time after receiving lab-grown brain implants and uses this power to become an angling champ.

BRAVE NEW MORPH A live-action Morph and claymation Chas travel to the homeworld of Gobbledygook for the wedding of Gillespie.

BREAD METHOD, THE A woman memorises the entire bus timetable in an attempt to traverse Sao Paulo to save the life of her dying au pair.

BREAD RACE, THE A woman enters the Mexico City Ironman Triathlon in an attempt to save the life of her dying interior decorator.

BREATHER An abrasive therapist moves from Tokyo to Osaka in witness protection, and takes a job in a next-generation sex toy factory.

BRICK CITY CRUSH A social worker starts a Lego messageboard, only to find it shitposted incessantly by her clueless AA sponsor.

BRICKLAYER, THE A preternaturally skilled quoits player is given experimental treatment for her hatred of quoits before turning pro.

BUB'S CUT, THE A broad-minded crime analyst, supercharged by nootropic bourbon, exposes dark matter conspirators.

BUBBLE HOUSE A conventional widow in Paxtakor builds a perfect replica of Pierre Cardon's south of France residence.

BUNNY ASSEMBLY, THE A fishing boat operator, falsely accused of deadly sabotage, must uncover a conspiracy whilst on the run.

BUT WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT? A girl, obsessed with a particular brand of waffle-maker, goes on a madcap promotional tour.

CALENDAR Two young runaways help an aloof mountain guide investigate the appearance of an illegal cairn on the highest peak in Iceland.

CAMARO A car dealer is brainwashed into protesting draconian labour laws through subliminal messages in online pornography.

CAUGHT BY THE BUZZ During a pollen shortage, Maya the Bee must recover some magic pollen from a legendary flower grotto.

CHAFFORD HUNDRED A slacker bonds with the mother she never knew, an embittered auditor, in a branch of Cinnabon.

CHOKER, THE An Iranian geneticist, having recreated an extinct lion, is taken hostage by criminals intent on selling the beast to poachers.

CITRICS, THE An orange grower's daughter tries to break free of his mother's influence after developing a crush on a lemon farmer.

CLAIRE CLAREMONT'S WEDDING A lonely billionaire invites a magazine reporter to marry her on the interstellar ark.

CLIFFORD'S BIG CHASE Clifford and Emily Elizabeth call on the help of their friends to compete in the annual hydroplane race.

COBLER DESERTION, THE An artist addicted to psychotropics is hired to paint the portrait of a gang of girl gunrunners.

CONTAMINATION BANK, THE A nurse at a rejuvenation clinic must discover which of her now-young patients is a former militiaman.

CONTRAINCATION Trapped in a convenience store, a bored typist and an obsessive-compulsive bodyguard eat themselves to death.

COWS, THE A nuclear scientist reluctantly asks her embarrassing family for help to test her new invention, build-it-yourself home mini-reactors.

CREATION An aid worker attempts to outwit a tormented construction robot at a refugee camp in Siberia.

CYBERNERDS, THE An unflappable chemist and her hipster daughter make ground-breaking nutritional supplements for cyborgs.

DAM SELECTORS, THE A young couple steal half a million dollars in food coupons from a collapsing building in a pandemic-ravaged city.

DANGER PRICE A mathematician makes an ontological breakthrough during the taping of the last ever episode of *The Price is Right*.

DAVID A synthetic musician sentenced to death is guided to freedom from a high-rise prison by her number one fan.

DEAR DEFICIENCY An ageing fight manager, threatened with bankruptcy, has to fix the first boxing match in space.

DEAR DR HALE A child-hating photographer fleeing a blind date interrupts a security service stakeout of a gang of child opera singers.

DECIDER, THE At the Major League Soccer all-star game, a fan helps the league commissioner to find a priceless golden football.

DELCINA A drunken stuntwoman shadows an unscrupulous submersibles sales rep through the ruins of a war-shattered battery factory.

DIGIMON: TAI'S GAMBIT Tai Kamiya and friends mastermind a slow-motion online casino heist to save the Digital World from anarchists.

DIRTY GOODBYE, THE An ex-surgeon and a burlesque performer travel to the Himalayas in search of a presumed-extinct medicinal orchid.

DIRTY SUR After destroying her sister's matchstick model of Busan, a girl races to prevent an identical catastrophe in the real city.

DORIAN A construction worker mistaken for an anaesthetist must live up to the role after an inner city hospital sinks deep underground.

DOWNGRADER, THE An ex-surfer goes undercover for revenge against the industrialist responsible for eliminating waves from the sea.

DRAIN DOWN A plumber's apprentice searches the sewers of near-future Des Moines for a valuable cache of buried e-readers.

EARTHMOVERS, THE A brilliant engineer is hired when a dishonest CEO loses control of a fleet of autonomous bulldozers.

EASY NOVEMBER A corporate fixer having a quarter-life crisis returns to her family home to find her father trapped inside a pipe organ.

EGGNOG HOP A high-profile animal rights activist confronts ferocious opposition when planning the first pigeon and dove Olympics.

ELEONORE The headmistress of a school for child arbitrators risks exposure for her actions as a passport control officer years earlier.

EXHAUST GRINDER, THE A disgraced acupuncturist is hired by a vindictive business executive to protect a shipment of walnuts.

EXHUMATION, THE An uptight boarding school teacher fights for her life after being buried under hundreds of thousands of trash can liners.

FACELESS MOURNERS, THE At her sheepdog's funeral, the Doctor realises every person present is one of her enemies in disguise.

FADE A tennis pro frantically searches Roland Garros stadium for her sports pundit fiancée when her commentary goes silent mid-game.

FARROW An immature cartographer helps a witless government agent find the source of a sudden infestation of scorpions in Stockholm.

FAST SKIN The head of the French national swim team is targeted by an extortionist who wants her prototype swimming costume.

FASTER THEN FAST A snarky millennial and a paranoid oil engineer who lead rival street-racing crews compete over an ancient weapon.

FEAR OBJECTIVE, THE A soldier embarks on a calamitous road trip with a childhood friend who spent the last twenty years as a monk.

FIRE SALE A former circus clown convinces a down-on-his-luck lawyer to help her sue the designers of her unpersuasive clown make-up.

FIVE SECOND FAJITA, THE The daughter of a presidential candidate struggles with the backlash when she wins a viral video contest.

FLAKE, THE A civil servant attempts to stop the release of open source body armour designs whilst simultaneously holding a fashion launch.

FONDNESS FOR WRONGNESS, A A young girl and her pet Fizza-ma-Wizza-ma-Dill become cult leaders by accident at Wuhan Zoo.

FOOL OR A STRANGER? Katie and Magic help an uncompromising dog trainer hired by the Petbuster to see the error of his ways.

FREE LOAF The matriarch of a steel company falls for the assassin sent to kill her, who has lost their memory following a near-drowning.

FRIENDSHIP COMES FIRST Offered a well-paid job at a rival, Wilson hides in the ice caves while deciding whether to leave his friends.

FROM ME TO YOU After breaking Kittywink the Cat's china mug, Tatty Teddy and Blossom the Rabbit race to find a replacement.

FRUGALITY A locksmith must avoid deportation by becoming a scarecrow, following the lessons of a scarecrow automaton.

FUNFINDERS An anaesthetist mistaken for a construction worker must live up to the role after a building site sinks deep underground.

FURNACE OF VICES, THE A circus acrobat, after killing a spectator in a freak accident, moves to Ahmedabad for a fresh start.

GARNETT An undertaker moonlighting as a masked wrestler is blackmailed by a buildings inspector in near future Kazakhstan.

GENERAL PURPOSE A selfish car mechanic works with an elderly woman with aphasia to track a shipment of booby-trapped SUVs.

GET BRAINED During a citywide riot, a hotel manager fights for survival whilst her every action is critiqued remotely by lifestyle gurus.

GET SERIOUS! A falsely imprisoned lollipop salesman battles the malicious interference of the prison's Chupa-Chups-hating kingpin.

GIRAFFE In near future Karachi, a bullying grandmother is held captive by an insane garbage-woman running a murderous beauty contest.

GLASGOW A city homicide detective poses as a high school teacher in a Japanese fishing village to befriend the sole survivor of a shipwreck.

GOALTENDER, THE Travelling north on a stolen Zamboni, a dying woman discovers a lost hockey stadium of legend.

GOMEZ An artist hoping to inherit her late mother's fortune realises the reading of the will is in fact a session with an evasive therapist.

GOOD LUCK KENTUCKY! A war reporter who adopts a pitbull is pursued cross-country by a taxi driver with a vendetta against the dog.

GOOD TRADITIONS A disgraced acupuncturist is accidentally hired to protect a priceless shipment of hand-painted Snoopy figurines.

GRACES, THE In a suburban town, a hedonistic biker finds her reputation undermined by the arrival of a sassy ten-year-old pickpocket.

GREEN AND GOLD KNIGHT, THE The great-granddaughter of an infamous outlaw is paired by a dating service with a luckless quarterback.

GRIZZLED An FBI agent investigating the disappearance of a TV personality teams up with the ghost of Grizzly Adams.

HALL OF FAME In near-future Rome, robot versions of Manu Gavassi and Levent Üzümcü clash over plans to build a futuristic theme park.

HAPPENVILLE From a houseboat in the Peel-Harvey Estuary, an entrepreneur coordinates the largest code-breaking project in history.

HARD COPY, THE A zoologist heads to a secret animal sanctuary only to discover her mother-in-law has accidentally let the animals escape.

HARD PART, THE A weight loss support group consisting of machine-learning algorithms helps a bride-to-be investigate her partner's past.

HARM A physicist left for dead after an alien contact gone wrong seeks hidden blueprints for a machine to trap the aliens inside the sun.

HAVE A NICE DAY An amoral chef leads a group of disaster survivors to a fantastic land populated by ever-smiling humanoids.

HEAVY PLANT A woman who hunts human beings for sport in a weaponised forklift truck picks an expert JCB operator as her final target.

HELLS ON WHEEL In a town on the coast of Antarctica, Jack of Hearts joins Franklin Richards in a showdown with the lords of hell.

HIDDEN ISLAND, THE Chhota Bheem, magically transported to a deserted island, has to work with bully Kalia to find a way home.

HOBBYIST, THE A deluded ex-convict seeks revenge on a misfit scientist by sending her thousands of miniature die-cast muscle cars.

HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE A celebrity agent negotiating a crucial deal finds her mother-in-law on the other side of the table.

HUMAN AT THE TOP A financier quits Dalal Street to help her childhood friend construct a space shuttle from materials on rubbish tips.

HUMAN ERROR A newly-elected Senator must prove one of her colleagues is really an idealistic serial killer pursuing corrupt officials.

ILYA NIGHT An arrogant priest with superpowers disrupts the operations of an international coffee cartel.

IN THE MARBLE A former Nascar driver convinces a down-on-his-luck programmer to help her launch an online chat community.

INSTANTS, THE On a drifting satellite, a childish matchmaker relates her eventful life through a collection of Polaroid photographs.

INSTEP SISTERS, THE A games programmer, incapacitated by illness, sees the world through the eyes of a pair of self-aware walking boots.

IT FLOATS! A mother who inherits nine hundred thousand bars of soap embarks on an uproarious road trip to distribute them.

IT'S AN M&Ms WORLD A self-indulgent caretaker's life is changed when she meets Red and Yellow, two talking M&Ms.

JIG THAT SPOKE, THE The owner of a diploma mill, after a ministroke, travels the globe to find all the washing machines she ever owned.

JOHNNY-ON-THE-SPOT A humanoid constructed from DNA found on a comet finds love with a principled shoe factory worker.

JUBILEE PRINCESSES Strawberry Shortcake joins a sleepover with other princesses, only to find it is one of the Peculiar Pie Man's schemes.

JUICERS A craft gin importer has one night to buy a top-of-the-range artificial intestine, the anniversary present she promised to her wife.

KIDJACK! A diplomat has one night to climb a telecoms monopole to delete a compromising voicemail left by her two mischievous children.

KING OF LION When Tuxedo Mask is taken prisoner by Queen Beryl and Prince Demand, the only hope is to create a new Sailor Soldier.

KINKER, THE A penniless villager is manipulated into manufacturing a customised mattress for a cynical CIA controller.

LEAN/MEAN On the moon, a self-destructive mine-worker is tracked by her mentor, a self-driving lunar truck.

LINE OF FORTY After being risk-profiled, a security robot technician must attend an early intervention programme for potential stalkers.

LONG SPOON, THE A popstar is duped into bankrolling one of her dancer's inventions – a self-operated plastic surgery mask.

LOYAL, KIND AND BRAVE A winsome ten-year-old girl scout is mistaken for the head sommelier at an international charity dinner.

LUTE A disgraced ice fisherman has twelve hours to convince a dissident astronomer of the presence of hostile aliens in a frozen lake.

MACHINE STOP An ageing hardware store owner uses Black+Decker tools to compete in the first home renovation contest in space.

MAGIC SAMBA Ayu and her witch-in-training best friend Nina go on an action-packed school trip to the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

MAGNETIC MOMS, THE Two intergalactic mail order brides travel for six years before meeting their new brides on Jupiter's moon, Europa.

MAGNETICS, THE The pilot of a deep-space hearse-ship is pursued by scavengers looking to steal his payload of corpses.

MAJORITY, THE A woman encounters her doppelgänger at a service commemorating the anniversary of the destruction of Chicago.

MAYOR CHEF A deluded small-town mayor fakes her own death to pursue his dream of becoming Swedish MasterChef champion.

MESSENGERS In a town on the edge of the Arctic Circle, a conscience-stricken nanotech engineer hand-rears an orphan musk ox.

MILLIONAIRE'S STROKE A student must avoid deportation by learning polo, following lessons recorded by her late mother on her smartwatch.

MLP: CANDY FRIDAY Pinky Pie's blunder inadvertently triggers a hysterical shopping stampede at the Ponyville Mall.

MONEY GIRL, THE A woman exposed to a fear-inducing gas escapes into the Scottish highlands to hide from a rat she thinks is trying to kill her.

MONK, THE An industrial spy infiltrating a hi-tech brewery in Kenya falls in love with a police hostage negotiator.

MOSHI MONSTERS MATRIX QUEST Katsuma, duped by Dr Strangeglove into retrieving the Moshi Matrix, must rush to save Monstro City.

MOST LOVEABLE ANIMALS OF ALL, THE A wildlife photographer struggles to protect her animal shelter from a misguided kitten-hater.

MOXIE GIRLZ TRUE TO YOU After Lexa floods Jammaz House, Avery must try to win an international archery competition.

NATURAL FINISH After winning a year's supply of car-cleaning products, a single mother strikes up a friendship with an out-of-time Viking.

NO-COMPLY A boy with a skateboard that can predict future crimes pursues his hero Tony Hawk, before realising Tony has been framed.

NOZICK A teenager completing an entry exam for technical college is targeted by a rival with a sniper rifle who will kill her if she passes.

OBSTACLES, THE During the coldest winter on record, a professor is seduced into a life of hedonism by Bibendum, the Michelin Man.

ONE REAL FACT A blowhard mayor pipes iced tea to every house in town but must address the community's resistance to the idea.

ONE-MINUTE ASSASSIN An amoral tourist who has a week to spend a million dollars comes under the scrutiny of a self-pitying puppeteer.

OVERBRAWN An eight-foot-tall supermodel saves the life of a local fabricator targeted by an illegal counter-counterfeiting ring.

PAVEMENT, THE An ex-race car driver and her clingy girlfriend become cult leaders by accident at Shenzhen Safari Park.

PENMANSHIP During the fiercest summer on record, a Bangalorean professor transcribes the full works of Simenon in longhand.

PEPPA'S SEASIDE SECRET On holiday, Peppa Pig goes undercover at the beach to find out who has been hiding her friends' surfboards.

PERFECT PIE A patriotic girl vows revenge on the enemy soldier who destroyed her family's wine cellar.

PILIG A con artist and her mark, a risk-averse businesswoman, have to work together to repair an electric vehicle charging station.

PLANNERS An astronaut who sees a hidden city from space brings together a team to face the horrifying leviathan living there.

POKÉMON: SCIENCE RIVALS! Ash Ketchum secretly mentors a rookie trainer to defeat Team Plasma's dangerous experimental Pokémon.

PRESENTATION, THE A cloned junior executive sent to Warsaw to oversee a factory refit finds it is a cover for a misogynist black ops unit.

PREVENTERS, THE The CEO of an innovative cancer hospital risks exposure for her actions as a solarium constructor years earlier.

PROCESS OVER CONTENT A corrupt author must battle her psychopathic sister at an underground debate club.

PRU A newly-appointed archivist finds she was switched at birth with the super-rich inventor of a high-performance silent chainsaw.

PURGATION A girl disguised as her mother joins a time travel expedition investigating the cause of a massive explosion a century earlier.

READ THE MANUAL A naïve actor is framed for a string of playhouse cyber attacks by a grudgeful theatre critic.

RECOMBINATION GO An octogenarian veteran leads a group of elder mercenaries on a mission to destroy a pop-up nuclear power plant.

RESTIC An emotionally fragile cop defects to a heavily-armed micronation in order to escape a tennis tournament organised by his mother.

RIFLETEERS, THE A dealer in antique Winchester rifles is paired with the first woman Navy SEAL for an all-night scavenger hunt.

RUNNING GREEN A teenage gang steals a knuckleboom loader to lead a cross-nation convoy protesting agricultural automation.

SACRED VALLEY An overbearing technology dealer, pursued by the VR Authority, escapes across the Andes in an all-terrain vehicle.

SALVAGE GLAND, THE On a tiny island, a tax inspector and an embittered sea urchin farmer ridicule one another in rival podcasts.

SAND LAKE, THE A recruiter for a fictional military unit and his nephew scheme to repel an advancing army of smart beetles.

SAVING JELLYVILLE An idealistic technician creates a formula for a new jellybean flavour with the power to bring peace to the world.

SAY PLEASE A cleaner hired to work at a dictator's mansion pines over the owner of a refreshment stand in the capital's main square.

SCATTERING JOY A crash survivor is inspired to create a new collection of greetings cards by the simple wisdom of the woman who rescues her.

SCRUB At the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, a documentarian records the work of an ex-spy who has developed an immortality serum.

SEVEN SKINS A wronged woman amputates the body parts of an unprincipled lacrosse player, one a day, until there is nothing left.

SHADOW ON CEMENT, A A swordmaker takes responsibility for an orphaned child she finds in an abandoned hairdressers.

SHOTGUN ROSE A destitute inventor protects her robot snakes from repossession by a cynical bank agent and a crew of mercenary microbes.

SHREKODELIA A physiotherapist, transported each night to Far, Far Away to treat Shrek, is blackmailed by a client who knows her secret.

SIMPLETON, THE On an adrift lifeboat, a childlike dressmaker tries to persuade a Russian sailor to abandon ship together.

SIZZLE WIZARD, THE A high school student gets an unpredictable brain upgrade after consuming the entire TGI Fridays menu.

SK1: INTRIGUE UNSEEN At a shoe store, a strong-willed tween and her harassed mother must stop a plot by a hospitality corporation.

SLENDER MERCY A queen ant falls for a pest exterminator, who has lost their memory following an accident with the indoor fogger.

SMURFS AGAIN Captured by Gargamel, Smurfette plans a daring escape with the help of Enamoured Smurf.

SNAPPER PATROL An affable but deadly sentient tractor stalks a moralistic fruit picker over the course of one harvest.

SOUL CONFETTI A web developer searches the mountains for a particular red spruce she saw in an oil painting received as a retirement gift.

SOZIMSKY, THE A meticulous tobacco-runner is chased by a satanic cult whilst attempting to reconnect with her estranged sister.

SPARK A polite fireman who has a premonition of an attack on an inorganic drama school investigates a mysterious art auctioneer.

SPILLANE At an exclusive ski resort, a whiny park ranger is stranded with the wisecracking avatar of her deceased pet monitor lizard.

STAPLER NORTH, THE A slapdash quality controller plans an elaborate wedding for her serial killer best friend.

SUMMER SALE, THE A CEO of a womenswear retailer battles to be the first to reopen a store in the exclusion zone around a disaster site.

SUPERCARGER An anthropomorphised AA battery turns federal witness after escaping the remote control of a criminal EMP weapon.

SUPERPLEX A WWE wrestler returns to the family home to reconnect with her mother and defend the local community from gentrification.

SWEET JOURNEY Hello Kitty, spending a year in the Democratic Republic of Congo, sends Hello Daniel postcards describing her travels.

SYNTHETICS An unemployed comedy writer takes over the running of a horse blanket store after the death of her best friend.

TECHNIQUE BOMB, THE A games designer's life is threatened after witnessing a snuff film being made during a high school reunion.

TEXAS SCRAMBLE A golf professional is menaced by sentient golf balls in a virtual reality souvenir shop.

THAW A glaciologist uses a catastrophic ice sheet collapse as cover for her planned robbery of a universal seed plant collection.

THIEVES OF VECINDAD The daughter of El Chavo del Ocho stands to win fifteen million pesos by locating a missing train full of orphans.

THUNDERBIRDS 2500 Jeff Tracy time-travels five hundred years into the future, inspiring a new dynasty of International Rescue.

TOMORROW'S VICTIM On a luxurious space cruiser, a philosopher finds herself the prime suspect when the ship's clairvoyant disappears.

TOP SPEED A care worker at a retirement home for self-aware supercars must find out which of the residents is a former propagandist.

TRIGGER STATE A hapless electrician hopes to impress a visiting screenwriter by preparing an elaborate dinner of black market food items.

TURNAROUND In a small French village, an overbearing ex-baseball star clashes with a blowhard travel pod salesman.

UNHELPFUL A bankrupt fund manager, stranded in the wilderness when her motorbike is repossessed, encounters utopian cultists.

UNLAWFUL BLITZ An American football cornerback poses as a famous packaging designer to expose a dishonest toymaker.

UPSIDE HORN, THE An overworked prison psychologist plots to replace prisoners one by one with perfectly behaving android replicas.

URSULA A gunsmith's daughter tries to break free of her mother's influence after developing a crush on a free-spirited parking-lot attendant.

VIC, THE On an advanced steamboat's maiden voyage, duck hunters are prime suspects when a sustainability consultant disappears.

VICTORY KIDS, THE The England national under-16 soccer team use their boots and their brains to foil a mysterious Ponzi scheme.

WE EAT CORPSES An ageing bounty hunter and a teen skateboard champ bond whilst sharing a cab to a national dance competition.

WE EAT CUPCAKES An haute cuisine chef and the owner of a currywurst cafe bond whilst sharing a cab to a national cupcake competition.

WEDDING AMBUSH, THE An obsessed bride-to-be and her underachieving maid of honour investigate a string of deadly electrocutions.

WEST COAST DEAL, THE A trainee solicitor and her uncle, the debonair Tommy Bahama, bail out a failing intelligence pageant.

WHAT'S GOOD An artist addicted to grape juice is hired to paint the portrait of a dysfunctional family of vineyard owners.

WIGGLES ALL OVER THE WORLD Children's entertainers The Wiggles look after two feisty stowaways on their round-the-world tour.

WINGFOOT ONE An exiled monarch, now a Goodyear blimp pilot, volunteers to lead a one-way mission into the atmosphere of Venus.

WINX CLUB: COLORS OF MAGIX Bloom summons the Great Dragon one last time to stop the Trix's plan to ruin the Golden Games.

WITH AMERICAN PRIDE A failed novelist destroys a publishing corporation and finds love, all without leaving the inside of her fridge.

YOU PUSH THE BUTTON An impoverished photographer must work out why she has been kidnapped before her latest photo develops.

ZEPHYR SIX After ruining a birthday party, an eccentric home-schooled teen hires a dockworker to protect her from friends' deadly pranks.

IV. STACKLOUNGE LIVE

001 So I'm just back from the lake with my friend
002
003 incidentally, the Spigot Grande's done,
004 I've been there, I've seen it, it is amazing
005 you should all get out there
006
007 but the lake was iced up
008 so we ask for a tradeback.
008 They say: no, lake's not frozen
009 It's "sem-eye-frozen".
010
011 My friend tells me this is why he isn't sleeping.
012
013 I ask him what steel he's using
014 but he doesn't know.
015 Idiot!
016
017 If you were to meet him, he's a real cell-nerd.
018 For him
019 every day is Nimrod day.
020 But he's a good guy. We like to get out of it.
021 I get out of it,
022 he gets out of it
023 so, one day, we get out of it:
024 dig graves for one another, like we did as kids.
025
026 But he couldn't remember the words!
027 He's singing
028 *Contour-aye-stupor-ee!*
029 *Contour-aye-stupor-ee!*
030 And there's me, just digging away, digging away!
031
032 After that, he says he isn't happy with his lodgings.
033 Apparently, the trovers still live there.
034
035 *The bad part about it is*
036 *the <wheeze>*
037 *is the <wheeze>*
038 *is the wheezing.*
039

040 Speaking of wheezing:
041 I'm just back from what's left of Chicago.
042 Yeah, I know: I still border.
043
044 You're from Luxembourg?
045 You're from Luxembourg?
046 We are all basically from Luxembourg.
047 We've all tried cubbyholes:
048 it gets to half past and still they leave you dripping.
049
050 When I'm in Chicago, I go to the depository.
051 Latterly, I've been withholding.
052 Why? Because? I hate the place.
053
054 Just last week I took one from the depository
055 but the mother and the daughter
056 turned out to be the same actress.
057 It made me feel like when all the beans are eaten.
058 And so I've stopped going to the self-serve:
059 one less customer means one less waiter.
060
061 I'm taking my meals at the baitshop now.
062
063 It's not easy for me to guarantee it's better stuff.
064 When I go, I tend to take a rasher with me
065 to take attention from the triticale.
066 Can really see now why they ditched the ink.
067
068 Had my party at the baitshop
069 the big nine-three if you can you believe it:
070 a thousand on from Hastings,
071 eighty-seven from *Wanwan Sanjushi*.
072 twelve since the Rift,
073 and only three since Generic Sunday.
074
075 Still in great shape!
076 No signs of growing corner-phobic yet.
077
078 Icky if you really think of it,
079 it's not like meatvoles and parakeets get afraid of corners.
080 Who has the time?
081
082 We all love the sideburns we have on our hands.
083

084 It's true, I actually met Frank Bassompierre once:
085 it was a fundraiser
086 a rhumbathon.
087 You know, he's actually an honest guy
088 but whatever you do
089 do keep bidding him
090
091 he reckons that it does him good.
092
093 Shamefully, I lost my grazer the other day.
094 turns out it had meandered to the beach
095
096 trust mine to be the only senseless grazer!
097 I call him "Minister of Aquiria".
098 because he thinks he's SIM on 338
099 when really he's ENG on 309.
100 It's bizarre!
101
102 Everyone's doing snakes and rats this year.
103 Like, I go visit my mother.
104 I see, the accumulated skins
105 that stop her walls from moving properly.
106
107 "*Don't touch them!*" she says.
108 "*They're for the Aztecs.*"
109
110 Opinionated as ever:
111 one hundred twenty-seven years old,
112 she joined me on that march for tornadoes.
113 We were all at that march, weren't we?
114
115 I thought it was a mess!
116 Well, I thought it was a mess.
117 Beginning to end.
118 People were locking up for no reason.
119 *You have never felt this way, gosh,*
120 *like there is nothing wrong with locking up.*
121 and them there drinking up their concertina ale.
122
123 I'm old enough now to recall the novelty
124 a strange circus at the Easter table.
125 But now everyone's moving to the giant tube.
126 I'm attempting to get my mother
127 to move to the giant tube.

128 Imagine all that noise!
129
130 And all that Falklands chrome.
131 They must get dizzy
132 although I guess a lot of people get on fine without it.
133
134 We all love to change it up.
135
136 Case in point: bought a quart of KC from the thirties
137 been trying to authenticate it
138 and I got one of those new sycamores
139 to reduce the wear on the long, rubber covers.
140 You know: the long, rubber covers.
141
142 Next I'll need a better dollhouse:
143 mine's getting tiny
144 one might say a bit recursive.
145 If you ask me: purgatory fire is intolerable.
146
147 No. No. Hear me out.
148 All the torments, torments...
149 round tables from the dark ages.
150 These days, I get woozy with the folktales.
151 It's hard enough to keep on track.
152

V. CRISWELL B

This forecast contains general information, should not be read as a substitute for the exercise of one's own judgement & is not a solicitation to buy or sell any product.

The Heimlich will stop working;
windpipe obstructions develop resistance
resulting from the overuse of this manoeuvre.
It is expected that by 2043
the average adult will have seen the business end
of more than 600 lifetime Heimlichs.

Alternatives to clear the upper airway
will be needed; hence the GlassSpear.
Taking the form of a flexible, transparent pole,
the length of a junior snooker cue,
it is to be rammed down the choking person's throat,
hard, twice,
to clear the foreign body
the instant laboured breathing is observed.

Refectories will be regulated.
The inspectorate will insist
ten GlassSpears are to hand
for statistically unlikely but conceivable
gaggles of multiple chokers,
prompting small & medium men to complain
their by-law first aid boxes
are now unmanageably overcluttered
with mandatory medical devices
they don't know how to use: Andon drills,
minkerscopes, sets of malcken tubes,
baffling & expensive reflex spellows.

Frequent travellers will exchange cheat codes
for aircraft used by commercial carriers.

Easter eggs will be accessible
via sequenced functions
in the on-board bathroom,
e.g. hot tap-cold tap-
hot-hot-cold-hot-cold-
paper towel-flush-hot to unlock
the ability for a passenger
to phase the plane's hull
& wander on the fuselage's skin.

Another pattern alters the demeanour,
tone & facial features
of stewards, stewardesses.

Hidden features of this sort
will be tolerated in most vehicles & heavy machinery
& for some they will be compelled.

*

'Programmed to' does not equal 'obsessed with'.

*

In the workplace of the future,
many employees will elect to work in the nude.

The unintended consequences:
serial killers targeting said no-collar workers
especially in south-west SoCal & Hawaii,
where they are playfully referred to
as the Office Nudie Killers.

The traffic light in your head:
despite all the accidents prevented,
some parents will still show disquiet
at the installation of signals
in their children's skulls
front & back.

*

When rubbernecking major crimes
your attention will be captured
by a slogan, some subtle advertising
for cyber intelligence or a bottled water brand,
logos on the white tents, sky-visible.

Rivalry for more horrific dioramas
stoked in part by media buyers
desperate in the twilight of old-school outdoor,
sleeping rough by withered billboards.

If it is your fortune to be banded, actuarially,
at greatest risk of rare & spectacular murder
you may, for a windfall, peddle ad rights in advance
to the scene of your prospective massacre;
if not, you may discreetly list your home for rental
for some guy or another's homicide –
no personal culpability incurred –
although income generated in this manner may fall subject to a supertax,
hypothecated
to fund forensics & extra detectives,
to convert your second bedroom to a cell.
Personalisation is a free-for-all:
when every device in the world is unique,
there is no such thing as standard,
versions are uncountable
& the probability of a catalogue tends to zero.

When unplatformed gizmoids malfunction
it will be far beyond your wit to fix them,
troubleshooting tips intolerably generic.
Every boiler will be broken!
Every smartwatch misconfigured!
Not one single synthesizer set up correctly!

*

There are various ways in which such a problem can be tested, according to these, the operating instructions.

*

How arduous a pastry is to eat
will become a vital selling point
with premium pricing
for more challenging pastries:
the bigger, spikier, denser,
those with more uncompromising mouthfeels.

Four-point difficulty Likerts
(easy-med-hard-insane)
will feature on packaging
& ultimately, consumer convenience
leads to pastries with variable settings.

*

The home-abundant
will have as many houses as they want,
picking from the excess malls
never-gated neighbourhoods
& overspeculated provinces.

You will see them
hefting four-poster beds
up flights of stairs,
through narrow doors at night.

Those deemed under suspicion
will be prevented from antisocial acts
through perpetual Q&As,
AMAs in which they will be required to participate,
responses demanded to each question within the hour;
otherwise the superficially indelible
elements of their identity
& current score will be erased.

Subjects range from the trite
'what's your dream hairstyle?'
to the facetious – 'which is your favourite parakeet?'
to the frankly leading –
'if you had three wishes
which three democracies would you suspend?'

*

Inspired by the confectionery trade,
street commandos in hybrid governments,
will be armed with laser-guided jawbreakers
to bombard the mouths of protesting crowds
impeding mobility & respiration.

Although for most non-lethal,
hard candy weaponry inspires counter-tactics.
Regular exercises to stretch the back of the throat
enable dissidents to gulp ballistics whole.
Others bud auxiliary mouths to their profiles,
supernumerary maws manufactured a little wider
to present more appealing targets for the missiles.

The trafficking of people, piecemeal,
body part by body part, will be exposed
when sixty beef cattle in a shipment
are found with transplanted human eyes.

Eyes dispatched first, then brain & spine
tucked into thoracic cavities of horses,
limbs & other organs later carried
cross-country in so-called 'gut-tank trucks'
piloted by repurposed forklift software.

People,
disassembled in one nation
reassembled in another,
reanimated afterhours
round the back of hooky dental surgeries.

When the investigation closes
the problem remains:

what is to be done with the leftovers,
the unanthologised contraband?

Reason & the humane for once prevails:
offal will be patiently jigsawed
rather than tossed, exported:
transparent procurement
for the reconstructive ops, rehab & transport
minimising economic cost.

*

I object: in no way is it generally unknowable. Otherwise, why bother asking me the question?

A craze for dinosaur pirate cupcake bikinis:
a couturier & former baker
will make bikinis from cupcakes
shaped like dinosaur pirates.

A craze for pirate bikini dinosaur cupcakes:
a baker & former palaeontologist
will make cupcakes from dinosaurs
shaped like pirate bikinis.

In the words of venture capital:
everybody loves pirates everybody loves bikinis
everybody loves dinosaurs
cupcakes cupcakes cupcakes cupcakes

*

At some level you already accept it cannot be solved from where we are, with what we have. I have no data to work on. Nothing has yet happened.

*

Soon, in China,
each household will have its own font
unique as fingerprints.

VI. THE BUNNY ASSEMBLY

Participants were asked to recall what it was like to be young, create art at school, bring that art home and share it with family. They were then asked to adopt this frame of mind when assembling the product.

In the high-effort condition, participants were asked to cut out eight adornments (feet, ears, tail, a tie, teeth, a basket, a prop and a head decoration).

Twenty-four participants were removed from the sample because they completed the bunny assembly task incorrectly.

Buechel & Janiszewski,
Journal of Consumer Research
February 2014

1.

Cat expand cat, dog expand dog:
years since our professions were commensurate.
Funds are drab this year,
the president of the lawn is unavailable
and the last of the stockfish
are abject as media sales.
Here comes Hamilton Boring –
he's known me since the bazooka,
a reminder of what we were called to.
Beneath the boat, ocean spread like ginger.
This one-man bottleneck Boring
says: bacteria
reside in head-tilting rabbits.
You can read them like tea-leaves,
and one time I dictated
a new Desiderata
from spirillum smears on Swiss glass.
In the canteen
this last-minute man is Thankful Burgers
Boring tells me.
He's dense, intensely so,
his face, a blank calamity.
We work for the stockfish,
float for no reason,
glance at scraps and scarper.
We come to forget
the utility of cemeteries,
every time you grab
for the rim of the wheel and miss.
I count him in.

2.

The boat burns,
Boring burns,
and Burgers
makes for the porthole
to the unfashionable sound of the saxophone.
I cut the connection
from my flat in Oslo,
but, dialled in, I know his name exactly,
his face in general. Calm down:
think about the price of sweeteners,
antihistamines, after-dinner mints,
antique astrolabes, cutlasses.
The gossip of the damned alarms!
Boring goes down with the tank,
Burgers' in the smoke.
Now it's a clear case
temptation to run –
I've seen these Chinese movies.
*I hope you are on board –
ninety minutes long
means ninety minutes too long.*
I've been piped,
steamed in barbed creases
when the all-around closes in.
The future of the final inch
presses deep.
Go – hurry the doorman
dormant on the doormat
and wind down.
When the burst comes
it's time to play inferno.
I know the turns the terms take,
three roles:
victim, survivor, saboteur.

3.

Boring wasn't just living
with his mother –
sick of boats,
he was bad trouble –
why not an accident?
But no need for that.
No one knows of Thankful Burgers:
the firm skips the name
leaving me fit. Fair play.
The sea's sealed off
and in the street
the city is long dissolved
but there are different flavours of fair.
That's how wars start:
the accidental.
Sick of the firmament,
time to disconnect.
The routine all-around slips,
stops believing in me –
momentarily, catch the horizon,
the salon perched on the fence.
Outside, my slandered face is the biggest risk
and over there
my imaginary descendants, wheeling,
already five seconds too late.

4.

Tradition is a platform:

the dead boat lies

manic and so awestruck.

hit the road; the all-around talks

of a monotone threat

that needs and seals you.

It was decades since the last new hat –

a generation, so glued

and me, so gulled

considering surrender

when I catch myself in a blank screen

but a million points of like

look for me, my old shoes

my old face.

Blazing and denied,

stare at the cloud

where the moon used to be,

the moon that whispered through the wall.

Grateful to be well-rated –

strangulation,

the most commonplace deviance,

not one I was known for.

What counts now

is that rituals placed me on the gamma list,

a zero-day exploit, loosed

interrogated no further.

I head for the rabbitfarm

tumbleweed like a siren.

Everyone is looking.

5.

The queue says:

I have no hat.

They suspect a 00010101,

last seen heading 01000100

so I seek out Thankful Burgers

at the dacha

at the bottom of grandmother's onsen.

Shugar, the proprietor

welcomes before turning:

each half fights the other,

unseen police despatch

to the birth celebration.

Messages on tiles are omen.

Shugar calls me LCD

from behind the rail-gun,

exposed, he damns the stockfish

while I improvise a shield,

half-parrot, half-chimpanzee.

The police never arrive

as they're always here.

For me, Oslo falls away,

a baby, always the last to drown,

and Shugar wishes

all could be as it was before,

beautiful and sought after,

a kidnapped heiress.

6.

All garbage is silence,
just a slice of the famous,
that slides on the highway.

Halos don't last.

I make for the suburbs
where everyone lives
while Shugar readies his off-duty heavies –
TC Marrow, Alternative Grainer, etc –
scads of death-cults to pull from.

Shugar, the czar
of the leisure of broom and brain.
(Another vast, unpredictable burst of energy).

In the morning,
awake in the wash of Boring,
from the hillside I watch trades by the tracks.

Science is at peak-legal
and without a permit to innovate,
research happens in secret.

White-coats cash fungible breakthroughs.
One swaps suppressors for pencils and a felt abacus.

In thirty-nine days (and change)

I will be in Lisbon –
My sandwich, a lasso
for Burger's next stop.

I slide down the backslash, due south.

7.

It can't be seen until it crumbles.
Tracked, the streets are blocked,
the cabin is barking and the rain falls upwards
to re-join the endless clouds.
What there is – a cataract,
water shaped like a labrador
and I lose my sight in the tumble.
The burned out hostel by the roadside
stands like the last of the maternity suites.
Are you working? So very few do, the old man says.
Government, a source of shame, he adds,
but you seem like an honest man,
being on the run and all.
The blind man sucks
the last of the rabbit meat from the bone.
I'm Garbell and my friend will be joining me soon.
Meanwhile, the enchanted terminus gasps,
Hello there!
It's annoying to me to see books on a shelf.
Don't worry, he says
these haven't been written yet
and I'll get rid of them when they're done.
This is my home: no one can come here
and tell me what I can and can't see.
I become the king of water,
coughing and gasping.

8.

Dan arrives,
appreciates herself.
My name is Dan she says.
I am not sure she is catalogue.
How can apples have heroes?
Hand him over,
pizzicato spectacles and books are enough.
You've read steel then?
I never count the pages
but then there's not much I haven't read.
I don't see any ill-fitting morning suits,
or Niagara rainbows.
Their history's in jet.
If this is a snare, if I have any choice,
choose: pillar of the community,
or spree killer,
or the one to take us from – to? – ruin.
Try to put this on a festive footing,
Garbell jokes.
I'll take you where it's safe
Dan lies.

9.
I'm turning you back.
I don't believe in Thirsty Borders.
Burgers,
now said absently.
Millions of miles away on that planet
they can see you now,
telescopes arrowed on your fate.
Remote fanboys –
your webcomic never mattered less, you know.
No signs of softening,
I'm prompted to the rectangular
in the absence of the all-around.
A chance at the sweepstake,
squeezing my options,
a grin and a snap.
You can take your liberties at pace.
My life in danger but she is grateful.
Something less threatening
than the circus,
than some other name's despair.

10.

My name is Massey.
Discussion of matters material
takes twenty years; that is our disposition
and everywhere we look,
we see fruit.
Greengage? Is that one?
You are better than a lesser criminal, Massey.
I hide in the outskirts
with only Marrow to vouch,
*This would be an excellent
jumping-off point,
we stop here.*
*Ten empty screens would cost you less,
Boring's many deaths go unavenged,
Thankful Burgers piped to the private island,
a single invoice and Shugar's silent partner
remains unnamed? Would that satisfy?
But then, you're nearly there.*
Tap to recommence.
Economists – misters – hide in their offices,
what few are left,
shout to each other through wax partitions.
Their returns fail to return,
and wander off on their own.
Miss Dan and I, secreted
in the scatter cushions,
and Marrow's forthcoming greengage speech
may well inspire.
*If such a man as he,
in this, of any time,
against the power of such and such,
such words und so weiter
the quality of such spirit,
saltwater und so weiter...*
Migrants, Dan and I
scotch the cordon
to the sand.

11.

The way to Lisbon,
the heart of the comet,
commenting on defects
and the matter of another two billion years.

In such a time,
all crimes become miracles
but until that day
talk on the intercom,
Dan in Lincoln green.

We want to draw the comet to the ground, they say,
its strike to light a brushfire.

Time to fake a presence –
I'm in the ring and you hide here if you trust me.
Hey fellas!

my hands are up! I suggest you put it to the vote!
Nothing was decided before my birth,
ask me now if I want to play.

The intercom again,
Dan sprints for the sheriff.
I crouch among the boxes, prep for take off.
Pips leave a trail.

Sad and lonely citizens
conspire to raise a pulse,
nothing there but the risk of risk,
harder now to fake the rabbit totem.
Mud on the faces of shiftless mumblers.

A desperate hour,
desperate spaghetti,
faith in Thankful Burgers,
that I'd find him
in the wet confetti.

12.

When I am young again,
I will have books of ornithology and bicycles
but will find it impossible to tell them apart.
Crossbars and beaks, commensurate.
Uncle Sam offers me whipped cream
and canapés
and everybody wants to take a turn.
My belief in the world that's coming,
the life of compendiums,
and nothing but conjecture matters.
Make the best of it,
discriminate between the Easter baskets.
One final look
at the long ears of the apple gangster,
before departing.
Too reckless,
itching over the absence.
There are more biographies than histories here
so let me borrow your telescope.
Whatever you say,
the carrots are still stuffed
silent in the garbage pail,
a lifetime's work.

13.

The statue commemorates
the statue that stood there before.
The choir of heavies began to sing
“There’s No Accounting For Taste”
as the car arrives in Lisbon.
A taxonomy: there are knife-facts,
which are at a discount; pill-facts,
of which there are fewer each year;
then there are thalmus-facts,
which is where we sit about and watch the office.
Brasilia tomorrow,
a new conspiracy.
Their cut-rate dogs,
have no reason for this mass violence,
all cretins, unguessable,
could happen overnight.
The dowager, Mrs Flawn,
sprawled in a hammock.
History is fractured, she explains,
a tragedy at best and these strings
are our breathing space.
The turmoil of confession
and we should have put a bullet
through those fortune tellers
well before now.
Philosophy, as such, is worthless.
*Now would be a great time
to introduce a killer robot
in the shape of man –
but disappointment: it doesn’t look like a robot
or a man
and its disposition is peaceful,
and its promise is immediately undercut
when Massey
hoists it through the skylight
into the street below,
where it shatters.*

14.

For most people,
imagined conspiracies
are welcome, the only opportunities
for luxury holidays.
In the end you become the singer on the stage,
or so says Shugar,
as he emerges from under a top hat,
playing the part of a countdown clock.
We have hired an actor, he says,
to read the earliest recorded text,
found inside what's left of the moon
and predating our civilisation by several million years.
When translated,
it proves identical to *Stamboul Train*,
apart from the ending.
When the final page is read,
Brasilia is complete
and the stockfish will be terminated.
The rationale – well, I don't like fish,
says the grotesque Flawn,
good evening.
Oh, and that this will make me money,
(for some reason),
and (for some reason) that's a good thing for me –
but now I have to flee the city.
It's for the best.
The front door is fine and pure
and no one at the party will help you –
there is no forgiving one with such a fortune.

15.

You're drunk because you're ruthless.

No, don't bemuse, don't organise
and certainly don't reduce.

On the dancefloor,
attention means you're drunk.

I drop my drink,
the fifth column is not impressed.

Every time she warns them, they make another move.

Crooks leave in the elevator.

Too many zeroes in the hotel
and no one is falling for the pickle,
have heard all this before.

I breathe in the spotlight;
the first time I've seen a room full of real people,
trying to find excuses
for the salt and the halo.

What is wasted is transformed
in a mescaline swimsuit.

It's precisely the same set of events repeated
then repeated, then discarded.

No place for craftsmanship,
no, never nothing that is not (or perhaps not) not unnecessary.

I rub my eyes in spite of this deflation
and a cybercrime is somehow hence prevented,
south of Leipzig.

16.

In bowdlerised blackjack,
if we win, we win,
so why not just traipse from here to there –
this is the comedy of the cudgel.
World-work is needed to get things done
shouts Thankful Burgers, making for the exit.
Ringleaders scatter.
A gun is pointed from the bridge
and the gems are up for auction.
We win, if...
It's a gun, if...
There are millions and millions, if...
I want to go to the pirate beach again,
and what's in the suitcase, brother?
No rabbits here,
just eyelids and arms attached to the air.
Steaming, rabid from the cup,
and if I can't count the kimonos this time...
There are piles of hexagons,
every screen is locked.
I miss the all-around
but I can't bear to hear its signature again,
it will drive me crazy
and crazy Boring's crazy mother wants an audience,
and once again, I was a rare gem.
The defrocked regroup.
The stupid memory games
and the circles under each grimy note
count for nothing.
Hard to cope
when you're moving faster than light,
when this is the most time you will ever have.

17.

Time is ammunition.

The philharmonic is notable
only for its sprinkler system.

Amnesiacs,

insert your names here.

Better sent as a survey?

The butler and his kid brother
are new to the system

their triple-x hand-me-downs

are no substitute for karma,

their rattle continues.

Finances baked,

consider boosting the roasted camper van
out by the hot dog stall

but instead look to the crowd.

If you liked this,

you'll like that,

and so on through the echo chamber.

Run, run. Run.

18.

Thankful Burgers exists.

But I exaggerate.

Light flickers

and the bomb in the truck prepares to perform.

The fish will dissolve to cloud.

I spot Burgers among the paleophobes.

The ocean is cordoned off

but everyone is in the sea.

A young boy

with an inflatable motherboard,

waits for detonation,

rues the pit where all has failed.

Too much exoskeleton,

not enough real actual skeleton.

The lime tree breaks,

in a tiny hurricane.

We are divining the mystery of pocket change,

too late: from now on

we will have to get by without the stockfish.

The plot to stop the plot proves futile

but there's always revenge,

we'll cheer for that

before the valentine's card is trashed.

19.

No turning back when he cried.
Everyone up when the door closed.
We still come together to celebrate
but each story is our own.
I don't see any leprechaun in the corner,
any silhouette at the bottom of the screen.
My green is your blue.
The mister to the missus is dead.
Keep that door closed!
Run from the campfire
to the music hall .
I see a rabbit in a box and chase it away.
He cries grass cuttings.
The police go left,
he goes right into the concrete warren,
a fellow and his quarry.
Keep that door closed! It's undeniable,
the hole goes all the way through to the end.
There are finches, you know.
I didn't want to mention them,
but there they are.
So suddenly
everything has gone a bit cow and crocodile.
Everyone is married to everyone else.
The box man is an oracle,
never to return to the porridge bowls.
never to return to the plastic wrap that meant so much.

20.

Alaska, abandoned.

The shortest distance there is through a sieve.

The skyscraper lies on its side,

lounges about.

Isn't it sad, says Thankful Burgers.

Over on the observation deck,

Shugar will be dead by now,

a roman death, if that is to your taste,

and Flawn is in the hoosegow,

was even before this awful mess.

You stand out.

You fit in

only when the baseline is corrupted.

21.

Name something you care about:

a line drawing of the Easter Bunny, say,
sugar paper, a glue stick, scissors.

Remember when you were four years old
and recall that when you did a painting
you were doing it so that it could be placed
on a wall in a classroom
or on the refrigerator at home.

We want you to list
three types of art
you brought home from school
when you were four years old.

Bits of you spilling into the sound
washed to the bottom of the saxophone.

In orange sailcloth, he slept for two days.

It was just a symptom,
for what it's worth.

22.

Weak rope.

It's what's everybody's heard about,
has read about.

We want him to fall.

The sound: a woman counts aloud,
and they are coming for you now, dear,
in your cave of cryptic crosswords.

Everything is already alight.

Jump down to the cherry picker,
gravity is just a naming convention.

There are only ever gimmicks.

The rules: never with a sharp pencil;
crooked judo is unbeatable; it ships Monday.

Feted gluons

are never more than psychiatric snark.

Ready, but so tired.

Ready even to hug the saucer-white science cat I don't even own,
it's not even mine: what is its name?

Inside the lacquer Saracen, the recency effect.

It's a job for someone else.

Don't criticise the cement mixer
because it doesn't make toast
and remember

what he actually meant was:

there is nothing but accidents.

23.

The world
is entering
a new era:
hopefully.

The world
increasingly
is the world's GDP.

The world's
most pressing problems:
now being adapted
for use elsewhere
in the world.

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