0:00:00.720,0:00:14.940

Thank you, thank you Marion, thank you Ros, who

looked after me for the first two years, and thank

0:00:14.940,0:00:22.620

you to this University for having a tradition of

inviting outsiders in to speak. I feel it's a real

0:00:22.620,0:00:28.860

proof of your belief in free speech that you've

allowed me to ramble on at you for four years

0:00:30.240,0:00:37.080

so thank you for that and here's my last

lecture Counterblast! (a manifesto for poetry).

0:00:37.740,0:00:45.900

I'll start with the Blast manifesto which was

published in 1914 as part of a new artistic

0:00:45.900,0:00:55.620

movement being improvised by Wyndham Lewis. Blast

was an explosion of statements set out in bold

0:00:55.620,0:01:04.200

typography in a tone of advert mixed with rant and

chit chat and signed by R Aldington, Arbuthnot, L

0:01:04.200,0:01:13.320

Atkinson, Gaudier-Brzeska, J Dismorr, C Hamilton,

E Pound, W Roberts, H Saunders, E Wadsworth,

0:01:13.320,0:01:23.280

and Wyndham Lewis himself and it began like this:

Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the

0:01:23.280,0:01:30.300

centre of this town! We stand for the Reality of

the Present—not for the sentimental Future, or the

0:01:30.300,0:01:38.520

sacripant Past. We want to leave Nature and Men

alone. We do not want to make people wear Futurist

0:01:38.520,0:01:46.140

Patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue

trousers. We are not their wives or tailors...

0:01:48.000,0:01:56.640

and it went on. Blast was already a counterblast

firing back at the futurist Manifesto which had

0:01:56.640,0:02:03.180

roared into print in 1909 like this: We

want to sing about the love of danger,

0:02:03.180,0:02:10.320

about the use of energy and recklessness as

common, daily practice. Courage, boldness,

0:02:10.320,0:02:16.560

and rebellion will be essential elements

in our poetry. Up to now, literature has

0:02:16.560,0:02:25.080

extolled a contemplative stillness, rapture,

and reverie. We intend to glorify aggressive

0:02:25.080,0:02:32.160

action, a restive wakefulness, life at the

double, the slap and the punching fist.

0:02:35.520,0:02:39.840

This irritable genre quickly spread.

0:02:41.340,0:02:48.000

In the following years there were manifestos

for realism, surrealism, cubism, vorticism,

0:02:48.000,0:02:56.280

dimensionism, rayonism, purism, orphism, dadaism,

cerebralism, cannibalism and everythingism.

0:02:56.880,0:03:04.680

There were movements against pasta, movements

against looking and speaking, no more looking,

0:03:04.680,0:03:13.800

no more speaking declared Tristan Tzara who also

acidly said a Manifesto is a communication made

0:03:13.800,0:03:20.640

to the whole world whose only pretense is to

the discovery of an instant cure for political,

0:03:20.640,0:03:26.640

astronomical, artistic, parliamentary,

agronomical and literary syphilis.

0:03:27.840,0:03:35.760

It may be pleasant and good-natured, it is

always right, it is strong, vigorous and logical.

0:03:37.740,0:03:43.500

So be it. Counterblast is a

Manifesto in that tone of voice:

0:03:44.160,0:03:53.040

strong, vigorous, logical, pleasant and always

right. Counterblast expresses a personal

0:03:53.040,0:03:59.460

conviction as if it were everyone's or at least

by frequent use of the pronoun 'we', it implies

0:03:59.460,0:04:05.580

a gang of poets with the same opinion ready

to materialize the slap and the punching fist.

0:04:07.140,0:04:14.040

Manifesto, we bring you this

Italian Declaration of impatience.

0:04:15.120,0:04:23.880

Manifesto, we speak on behalf of me this

inmost thought made mediterraneanly clear.

0:04:25.620,0:04:31.800

Counterblast, we deliver a poetry

lecture in response to blast

0:04:32.340,0:04:40.020

because blast blesses the sea and it blesses the

ports and it blesses England industrial island

0:04:40.020,0:04:49.440

machine pyramidal workshop discharging itself into

the sea but it never once mentions the rivers.

0:04:52.440,0:05:03.780

So we will speak about rivers, but rivers are

things which are and in common with all things

0:05:03.780,0:05:11.760

which are they include the reality of the past

and the reality of the future as well as the

0:05:11.760,0:05:20.580

sacripant sentimental present. Rivers are more

than glimpses and more than noises, they are more.

0:05:21.660,0:05:26.280

And we discover that we have to swim

for a long time in a river to begin

0:05:26.280,0:05:33.300

to feel that we are feeling its peculiar

river flesh, and yet it is more than that

0:05:34.980,0:05:40.320

because its peculiar river flesh keeps

pouring in from the catchment more water,

0:05:40.320,0:05:47.580

more silt, more sewage, more brominated

flame retardant, more bleach, more diesel

0:05:48.420,0:05:54.000

so then we have to live for a long time in the

catchment of a river to begin to feel that we

0:05:54.000,0:06:02.760

are feeling all the acreage contained in the

word 'river'. Acres of reeds and ragged robin,

0:06:03.480,0:06:13.020

acres of grasshoppers, aphids, rats and cattle and

acres of imported cattle feed and sheep dip. Acres

0:06:13.020,0:06:21.720

of car parks and milk spillage and cotton buds

and wet wipes and yet it is more than that because

0:06:21.720,0:06:29.400

then we glance down at the hand carefully writing

the word river at the top of the page in blue biro

0:06:29.400,0:06:37.920

underlined and our hearts flutter as we see the

inky water and the watery hand that writes it

0:06:38.640,0:06:45.780

and we find we have to live among hands for a long

time, shaking them and holding them, to begin to

0:06:45.780,0:06:53.220

know what a hand is and how small a tributary

it is off the main body of water of the human

0:06:54.540,0:07:02.700

and after all humans are dark inland pools

full of anguish and panic-stricken love,

0:07:02.700,0:07:10.740

they are more than glimpses and more than noises

they are more and that is where poetry begins.

0:07:12.780,0:07:22.080

So this Manifesto begins as a Manifesto

for poetry and poetry is itself already

0:07:22.080,0:07:30.600

a Manifesto since its purpose is to manifest a

deep thought, deep enough to generate a form.

0:07:33.000,0:07:41.040

Like the spirals of the inner ear shaped

by sound, or a stoop shaped by shyness,

0:07:42.780,0:07:50.640

honeysuckle by hawk moths or laws by crimes

whatever keeps mattering makes a form.

0:07:52.980,0:07:59.580

Dante who thought deeply in Italian formed his

whole poem around the deep thought of light

0:08:00.360,0:08:06.540

and every line is lit by that decision

in a patient exposure of his character

0:08:08.280,0:08:15.240

while Frank O'Hara who thought deeply

in American invented personism meaning

0:08:15.240,0:08:20.340

every poem must be shaped towards one

person as if spoken down the telephone.

0:08:23.580,0:08:32.220

This Manifesto is shaped around profusion because

once when we were eight, or at least when I was

0:08:32.220,0:08:40.020

eight, I stayed awake all night trapped by a

bedroom and then dawn came and opened the trap

0:08:40.020,0:08:47.760

and huge white clouds out of elsewhere floated

past and I was suddenly released from the trap

0:08:47.760,0:08:56.340

and released from one stuck self into a series of

hurrying other selves which went on and went on

0:08:56.940,0:09:04.020

and went on. That's why Counterblast is

an advertisement for all those ancient

0:09:04.020,0:09:10.380

poems which seemed to spring from

some deep principle of profusion.

0:09:12.600,0:09:23.160

At least that is our declaration. There are two

kinds of poetry not mutually exclusive though

0:09:23.160,0:09:31.980

occasionally problematically out of balance.

The poetry of scarcity and the poetry of supply.

0:09:33.120,0:09:38.880

Counterblast is not a Manifesto

for the poetry of scarcity that

0:09:38.880,0:09:46.620

serious circumscribed interior terrified

voice of aloneness which we call lyric,

0:09:46.620,0:09:53.280

although there is occasional muchness in

lyric and there is also much lyric in epic.

0:09:54.600,0:10:01.920

But this is a Manifesto for the poetry of

muchness which we find everywhere in Homer.

0:10:04.200,0:10:11.460

Because once we slept outside in a garden or

at least I slept outside in a garden and I

0:10:11.460,0:10:18.300

might have looked at gardens before but I had not

noticed what else a garden is other than surface.

0:10:19.740,0:10:29.040

Gardens at night give off not the image

of growth but its form which is a kind of

0:10:29.040,0:10:39.240

multiple... multiple-minded grammar, exponential,

crystalline and impossible to sense through lyric.

0:10:41.760,0:10:47.160

We don't know yet what to call this

quality it doesn't feel like aloneness

0:10:47.820,0:10:54.180

it feels more like an algorithm for

profusion and we find it in Homer.

0:10:55.860,0:11:05.160

We love Homer, we love the profusion of Homer,

we would like to discover the inmost manifesto

0:11:05.160,0:11:11.220

of Homer meaning the mattering which

makes his fall and claim it as our own.

0:11:13.380,0:11:23.520

At least that is our declaration. Nevertheless we

bear in mind Allen Ginsberg's account of visiting

0:11:23.520,0:11:33.420

Pound in his 80s. Pound, who had such a clear

mind so unstoppably manifesting its deep thoughts,

0:11:34.080,0:11:39.480

came upstairs folded self in

chair, hands crossed on lap,

0:11:39.480,0:11:46.740

picked at skin, absorbed then quietly

rusty-voiced like an old child said

0:11:47.640,0:11:54.780

the intention was bad, that's the trouble.

Everything I've done has been an accident,

0:11:54.780,0:12:03.120

any good has been spoiled by my intentions the

preoccupation with irrelevant and stupid things.

0:12:05.700,0:12:13.680

Let it be clearly declared manifestos are often

preoccupied with irrelevant and stupid things.

0:12:15.000,0:12:21.480

Often they are documents not of deep

thought but of panic and adjectives.

0:12:22.620,0:12:28.020

Here is a Manifesto full of adjectives

written by an Austrian architectural firm

0:12:28.020,0:12:33.120

to accompany a steel frame suspended

in the air with flaming gas jets.

0:12:34.740,0:12:40.440

We want architecture that has more,

architecture that bleeds, that exhausts,

0:12:40.440,0:12:47.280

that whirls and even breaks. Architecture that

lights up, stings. rips and tears under stress.

0:12:48.000,0:12:55.920

Architecture has to be cavernous, fiery,

smooth, hard, angular, brutal, round, delicate,

0:12:55.920,0:13:08.520

colorful, obscene, lustful, dreamy, attracting,

repelling, wet, dry, and throbbing, alive or dead,

0:13:09.300,0:13:20.280

if cold then cold as a block of ice, if hot then

hot as a blazing wing. Architecture must blaze.

0:13:21.780,0:13:30.480

In the same over excited and pleonastic mood,

Counterblast suspends its voice in here like a

0:13:30.480,0:13:39.960

steel frame with flaming gas jets. Counterblast

floats through here like a cavernous, fiery,

0:13:39.960,0:13:49.800

smooth, hard, angular, brutal, round, delicate,

colorful cloud. Like a drunk woman at a bus stop,

0:13:49.800,0:13:59.100

Counterblast mixes up its similes because

simile is the very form of profusion.

0:14:03.360,0:14:15.180

Homer, that profusive poet, saw a hare inside a

simile lying under a leafy, thick-haired thicket.

0:14:16.800,0:14:21.660

It was daylight and rays of

sunlight filled the middle air

0:14:22.860,0:14:30.600

but as if that daylight had been dark night,

Homer saw through surface to the structure of

0:14:30.600,0:14:38.760

relations which held that hair in the center of

its fear at the periphery of multiple other worlds

0:14:40.020,0:14:47.940

like an elderflower composed of florets, each

of which has a centre but is not at the centre

0:14:48.840,0:14:57.300

like a starling surfing on a wave of starlings

like a moment in a lecture being this moment.

0:15:00.420,0:15:07.620

In his three-day Manifesto for similarity, Homer

declared that Menelaus walked back through the

0:15:07.620,0:15:16.560

battle peering this way and that, like an eagle

peering this way and that which they call the

0:15:16.560,0:15:25.500

sharpest-sighted of all winged things under

the sky whose highest eye the quick footed

0:15:25.500,0:15:33.300

hare lying in a leafy thicket can't hide from,

when it suddenly plunges to put out the life.

0:15:36.000,0:15:38.520

Like an eagle peering this way and that

0:15:39.120,0:15:47.400

which they call the sharpest sighted of all winged

things under the sky whose highest eye the quick

0:15:47.400,0:15:54.900

footed hare lying in a leafy thicket can't hide

from when it suddenly plunges to put out the life.

0:15:56.940,0:16:05.280

It actually forms crystals in the mind to read

those words with all their overing and undering

0:16:05.280,0:16:14.220

exactness. The sky in that simile has two skies,

an air at the top of which an eagle is floating,

0:16:15.000,0:16:21.600

and an ether which over tops the air and in

the world the far side of Menelaus we've just

0:16:21.600,0:16:28.620

witnessed Zeus in the ether clearing a cloud

out of the air under which Petropolis is lying

0:16:28.620,0:16:36.540

under sharpest sight lines of weapons so that

it feels as if that hare whose name is exposed

0:16:36.540,0:16:42.180

at the end of the line, like the name of

Patroclus with all its liquids drained,

0:16:42.960,0:16:52.440

Ptochs, is now in two places at once and

this is not some kind of literary cleverness,

0:16:53.820,0:17:02.820

this is just a picture of a world in which thought

happens outside the head, thought in that world is

0:17:02.820,0:17:09.780

one of the things that are and it floats through

multiple frames in a lattice work of likeness,

0:17:09.780,0:17:16.980

like air, like cloud, like thicket, like

hare, like life breath, even as it vanishes.

0:17:18.720,0:17:24.480

And if you listen carefully you can hear

the sliding device which separates and

0:17:24.480,0:17:31.980

joins those frames a small correlative word

sometimes it is like and sometimes it is as.

0:17:34.620,0:17:40.200

Ladies and gentlemen like the body

of Patroclus, dead and alive, hot,

0:17:40.200,0:17:47.280

cold, cavernous, fiery, smooth, hard,

angular, stuffed here is the very hare,

0:17:48.540,0:17:57.660

Lepus europaeus, already blasted and

Counterblasted. Slit from the throat to the feet,

0:17:58.500,0:18:06.780

the thin coat stripped from the bones, washed,

soaked in salts, pickled, tanned and drawn

0:18:06.780,0:18:14.940

down carefully over a wooden or wire form, the

form being the configuration of a hare's parts,

0:18:15.900,0:18:21.780

although in hare language the form also

refers to the shallow depression in which

0:18:21.780,0:18:28.020

a hare crouches by day with flattened ears and

when it ups and runs you can see its body shape

0:18:28.020,0:18:35.160

printed on the grass stems like a mezzotint,

that's what we call the form of the hare.

0:18:38.520,0:18:45.960

But when Homer thinks of form his word is morphe

and he says that morphe is radiantly visible

0:18:45.960,0:18:53.220

around the head of a good speaker so that when he

walks through a city everyone looks at him. Like

0:18:53.220,0:19:00.720

once in a city we saw a birdman, or at least I saw

a birdman, standing on the pavement. From the neck

0:19:00.720,0:19:07.980

down he was ordinary in shabby coat and trousers

tucked into socks but his head was missing,

0:19:08.760,0:19:15.900

he had pulled a grey stocking over his face, no

eye holes, I think he could see through the wool

0:19:15.900,0:19:22.500

and he resembled the gray neck of a pigeon

or the shadow or beakless spirit of a pigeon

0:19:23.100,0:19:28.200

and he was standing in a circle of

crusts on which pigeons were descending,

0:19:28.740,0:19:37.080

staring out of all sides of his head like an

eagle. He was seeping out sight in a great

0:19:37.080,0:19:43.920

upheaval of wings and eyes with a bamboo cane

in his hand, a rabbit snare looped at one end

0:19:43.920,0:19:52.920

like a beak by Heath Robinson trying to lower

this snare over a feeding bird but the bird,

0:19:52.920,0:20:01.080

equally all-seeing, just sidestepped, pigeon-toed

or jumped in a flap to another place or upwafted

0:20:01.080,0:20:09.600

onto a rooftop and this went on for a long time.

This was in lockdown. It was not a performance,

0:20:10.560,0:20:19.080

it was hunger. And the air seethed as if Homer

had woven morphe around him in which multiple

0:20:19.080,0:20:26.460

bodies remained separate but their hunger mingled

so he stood there between species like the Birdman

0:20:26.460,0:20:33.600

at Lascaux drawn sketchally in the crack of a

cave, a fantastic hybrid in bird-mask wielding

0:20:33.600,0:20:41.280

a staff whose pommel was a bird. And if you can

picture those two matching but not identical bird

0:20:41.280,0:20:49.020

men suspended in the air above us with flaming

gas jets either side of a mighty steel frame

0:20:49.620,0:20:56.040

and radiating from each Birdman a secondary

frame of rotating birds, and radiating from

0:20:56.040,0:21:03.000

each bird a circle of crusts, and radiating from

each crust a tired baker opening his oven at four

0:21:03.000,0:21:08.220

in the morning so that a night walker smells

it as she passes and feels suddenly hungry

0:21:08.220,0:21:16.260

and remembers the Birdman. Then you will have a

sense of the teetering architecture of morphe.

0:21:16.800,0:21:22.980

Architecture that has more, architecture

that bleeds, that exhausts, that whirls and

0:21:22.980,0:21:31.500

even breaks, whose structure is not steel,

it is stronger than steel, it is simile.

0:21:35.280,0:21:42.480

We declare that simile is not an image it is

an architectural form which holds multiple

0:21:42.480,0:21:50.400

images together but not quite together.

We declare that Menelaus was like an eagle

0:21:50.400,0:21:57.420

but the preposition allowed the eagle to be

also itself, meanwhile the hare was not like

0:21:57.420,0:22:04.380

Menelaus but it was fixed to the same frame as his

likeness, bleeding and whirling in the same blaze

0:22:05.460,0:22:13.320

and we declare that this simile was made of

something stronger than steel it was made of

0:22:13.320,0:22:19.560

the tiny joint work which surrounded Menelaus

like a thought in which Homer could see the

0:22:19.560,0:22:29.880

self of Menelaus held in a structure of other

cells and this cloud of comparison, this crown

0:22:29.880,0:22:39.900

of compassion, is the radiant form of epic which

Homer calls morphe and we call it a manifesto.

0:22:41.220,0:22:48.900

It is a Manifesto for likeness, it

is a spacious sense of other selves

0:22:50.340,0:22:58.260

it is an architecture for profusion it is the same

tiny joint work as links one verse to another,

0:22:58.260,0:23:05.700

it is like, it is like huge white

clouds blowing over from elsewhere.

0:23:06.660,0:23:15.000

It is like a pivot or suspended frame with

gas jets on which the whole Iliad turns. It

0:23:15.000,0:23:22.500

communicates one mind to another, it floats over

to Patroclus in the form of a hare and later it

0:23:22.500,0:23:28.680

floats out of Priam like an exile and Achilles

forgives him because he looks like his father

0:23:29.220,0:23:34.320

and perhaps also he looks like

Petropolis who was also an exile.

0:23:35.460,0:23:46.020

We like this word 'like'. It is a stitch between

things and the Greek for stitchwork is rhapsody.

0:23:50.700,0:23:55.320

Manifesto for stitchwork written in

Dutch for the feminist handwork party.

0:23:56.580,0:24:01.740

The feminist handwork party is a political

feminist artist movement that is dedicated to

0:24:01.740,0:24:07.380

studying, repairing, speaking, patching up,

unlearning and mending. We want to restore

0:24:07.380,0:24:13.020

the disturbed relationship to our immediate

surroundings and a damaged world as a whole. The

0:24:13.020,0:24:19.920

act of repairing textiles plays an important part

in this because it is an exercise in slowing down,

0:24:19.920,0:24:27.300

embodying and transforming. Through this

we are connecting with the underexposed

0:24:27.300,0:24:33.600

long-standing history of women in which

textile production was a daily reality.

0:24:35.640,0:24:44.820

There is no end to these declarations of

optimism and anger. We remember the Stitch

0:24:44.820,0:24:49.620

and Bitch society which used to gather every

month in a Devon Village so that friendships

0:24:49.620,0:24:57.660

could be mended and unmended. We remember the dark

room where women of Normandy studied, repaired,

0:24:57.660,0:25:03.900

patched up, unlearned and mended the Battle of

Hastings and turned it into the Bayeux Tapestry

0:25:05.160,0:25:13.860

and we remember Helen in her chamber weaving

a great crimson cloak with a double fold and

0:25:13.860,0:25:22.140

stitching into it all the agony of the Trojan

War so that six centuries later a Manifesto was

0:25:22.140,0:25:31.020

published by Hipparchus concerning the stitchwork

of all that trauma and here it is quoted by Plato.

0:25:32.820,0:25:39.900

To show off his wisdom Hipparchus made a Manifesto

of his many impressive achievements especially

0:25:39.900,0:25:46.560

his being the first to bring to this country the

verses of Homer and he made a law that rhapsodes

0:25:46.560,0:25:54.540

at festivals must proceed through these verses

in sequence by relay as they still do nowadays.

0:25:55.620,0:26:02.220

Rhapsodes must proceed through the verses in

sequence by relay as they still do nowadays.

0:26:04.440,0:26:12.780

Rhapsodes were itinerant poets trained in the

grammar of improvisation. Rhapsodes performed

0:26:12.780,0:26:19.560

epic in stitched sections. [...] meaning song in

Ancient Greek and 'rhaptain' meaning to stitch.

0:26:20.460,0:26:24.720

It's probable that even before the laws

of Hipparchus there was already a code

0:26:24.720,0:26:30.060

of courtesy which encouraged rhapsodes to

stitch their performances together so that

0:26:30.060,0:26:35.580

by the time of the great Athenian festivals it

was easy to carry a whole epic between them,

0:26:35.580,0:26:42.180

even 24 sections of epic performed over three

days and it never fell apart into tatters.

0:26:43.560,0:26:47.880

That does not mean there was

no rivalry between rhapsodes,

0:26:47.880,0:26:54.660

one effect of this competitive collaboration might

well have been the homeric simile joined to the

0:26:54.660,0:27:00.480

story by a sliding device which enabled each

rhapsode to add his own picture to the poem.

0:27:01.680,0:27:08.040

There are 288 similes in The Iliad

and each one reads like a rhapsode's

0:27:08.040,0:27:14.040

personal act of graffiti sprayed onto the

story. At least that is our declaration.

0:27:18.120,0:27:24.420

Manifesto for stitchwork written

in retrospect for the rhapsodes.

0:27:27.060,0:27:34.440

Rhapsody is a similest movement that

is dedicated to studying, repairing,

0:27:34.440,0:27:43.380

speaking, patching up, unlearning and

mending. Our Manifesto is for the small

0:27:43.380,0:27:50.160

words of the great poems by means of which

multiple minds may be stitched together.

0:27:52.260,0:28:00.420

Our Manifesto is for similarity which is the

form of profusion and it is not the same as

0:28:00.420,0:28:06.900

metaphorism which is the form of one thing turning

into another or symbolism which is not a form

0:28:06.900,0:28:14.700

but a convention of one thing being collapsed

into another because similarity is not imagery,

0:28:15.300,0:28:22.620

it is architecture. Similarity is the

architecture of the plant world which

0:28:22.620,0:28:29.340

ramifies and modifies its stems, first into

leaves then into flowers in order to multiply.

0:28:30.000,0:28:36.240

Similarity is not a literary device, it

is the natural architecture of the mind

0:28:36.240,0:28:42.420

which evolved alongside plants in this

place of supply which we call the Earth

0:28:43.620,0:28:49.980

and we declare that Ezra Pound had profusive

tendencies and was one of the clearest thinkers

0:28:49.980,0:28:58.080

of poetry but we would like to argue one point

with him. He claimed that the primary pigment of

0:28:58.080,0:29:06.960

poetry was the image but it is not the image,

it is the grammar, which in its interaction

0:29:06.960,0:29:14.040

with the meter composes the melody and in its

interaction with the thought composes the deep

0:29:14.040,0:29:22.920

structure of perception, which is otherwise known

as imagination. Imagination is deeper than image.

0:29:24.660,0:29:31.980

We declare that modernism with all its isms was

essentially a lyric voice because it described the

0:29:31.980,0:29:40.260

problem of perception rather than the profusion of

being and we declare that the epic form starts in

0:29:40.260,0:29:48.600

an act of faith that both other things and other

minds exist and that this courtesy derives partly

0:29:48.600,0:29:54.300

from the manner of its performance and we declare

that stitchwork runs its thread back from the

0:29:54.300,0:30:00.060

terms of rhapsodic performance to become a stitch

between frames, between scenes, between images,

0:30:00.060,0:30:07.920

between verses and yet also these performances

were only made possible by the stitchwork of

0:30:07.920,0:30:17.880

story which is itself the inflorescence of the

Earth's stitchwork. In view of which we suggest

0:30:18.540,0:30:24.840

that instead of endless poetry competitions

this University would do well to establish a

0:30:24.840,0:30:30.300

festival of rhapsody every year in which not

only students but administrators, porters,

0:30:30.300,0:30:36.120

gardeners, cooks, actors, dancers, guitarists,

politicians, sweepers, butchers, bankers, tinkers,

0:30:36.120,0:30:42.180

tailors, engineers, dancers, management

consultants, digital systems architects,

0:30:42.780,0:30:50.220

future Prime Ministers and the homeless all

stay up all night to carry between them one

0:30:50.220,0:30:58.680

of the great stories which stitch us together and

apart and that further each session of parliament

0:30:59.340,0:31:04.620

ought to begin with all MPs performing one of

those stories, which derived from the ancient

0:31:04.620,0:31:10.740

rules for Kings since the modern rules for Kings

are no different and they state that because of

0:31:10.740,0:31:19.620

mortality the king is similar to the citizen and

that further there ought to be a constitution

0:31:19.620,0:31:27.720

written in verse which affirms that everything

alive is similar. We declare that this would

0:31:27.720,0:31:34.260

alter the imagination and as Ted Hughes says,

what alters the imagination, alters everything

0:31:35.100,0:31:42.300

because the imagination is the deep structure

of the image of the human self in relation to

0:31:42.300,0:31:50.640

other selves and it is problematic when poetry

chooses to neglect that. Let imagism be the

0:31:50.640,0:31:59.520

poetry of surfaces, rhapsody is the stitchwork

of relations, at least that is our declaration.

0:32:01.860,0:32:09.660

But this Manifesto tone is hard to keep up and

after a while our declarations become too right,

0:32:10.500,0:32:14.700

too good-natured and logical

and we need to take a breather,

0:32:15.780,0:32:25.560

especially since aloneness is one of the great

pleasures in life. To sulk, to be misunderstood,

0:32:26.880,0:32:31.620

to consider oneself inferior and

for that very reason superior,

0:32:33.360,0:32:40.620

to grieve, to brood, to dream, to yearn

and to look up from this aloneness at

0:32:40.620,0:32:47.820

an incomprehensible world and boldly snip the

stitch which holds everything together so that

0:32:47.820,0:32:55.440

the mind flats off like a tatter in the wind.

That too is part of the long-standing history

0:32:55.440,0:33:03.180

of textile production in the course of which

rhapsody comes to mean the opposite of rhapsody.

0:33:05.460,0:33:13.740

1639: Rhapsody, an exalted expression or feeling

marked by extravagance of idea and expression but

0:33:13.740,0:33:20.340

without connected thought or sound or grammar.

I don't know what Hipparchus would say to that.

0:33:21.240,0:33:27.960

1764: Rhapsody a literary work consisting

of miscellaneous or disconnected pieces,

0:33:27.960,0:33:31.860

a written composition having

no fixed form or plan.

0:33:33.120,0:33:42.000

1837: Rhapsody a miscellaneous collection, a

medley or confused mass of things. 1880: Rhapsody,

0:33:42.000,0:33:48.000

an instrumental composition enthusiastic

in character but of indefinite form.

0:33:49.380,0:33:58.920

1915: Rhapsody on a windy night, portrait of the

wind-driven tatters of the mind by T.S Eliot.

0:34:01.380,0:34:11.520

12 o'clock along the reaches of the street

held in a lunar synthesis, whispering lunar

0:34:11.520,0:34:19.260

incantations dissolve the flaws of memory and all

its clear relations, its divisions and precisions.

0:34:20.700,0:34:28.740

Every street lamp that I pass beats like a

fatalistic drum and through the spaces of

0:34:28.740,0:34:37.020

the dark, midnight shakes the memory

as a madman shakes a dead geranium.

0:34:40.620,0:34:51.000

This 20th century rhapsode observes its own strict

laws about tradition and the individual but they

0:34:51.000,0:35:00.180

are not the laws of Hipparchus. This rhapsode does

not compose in shared light at a crowded three-day

0:35:00.180,0:35:07.620

festival, is not legally required to wait his

turn to listen and speak in sequence so that a

0:35:07.620,0:35:16.920

narrative may be collaboratively carried. Instead

this rhapsode strolls alone through light, first

0:35:16.920,0:35:26.400

moonlight, then street light whose information is

all interior. Three sets of eyes are shown to this

0:35:26.400,0:35:32.580

rhapsode, first the twisted eye of a woman in a

doorway, then the empty eye of a child pocketing

0:35:32.580,0:35:42.300

a toy, then the feeble, unseeing eye of the moon.

Strange, dark night with no connecting fibres,

0:35:43.800,0:35:51.000

like the glass eyes of the stuffed hare, these

anti-sense organs reveal not other selves but the

0:35:51.000,0:35:59.460

poet's own self over and over because the law of

this poem is not likeness but delicious sceptical,

0:35:59.460,0:36:08.280

cussed, introspective, frightened, aloneness

whose similes are hallucinations not stitches.

0:36:10.500,0:36:13.860

The dangers of such work are

obvious, said Ezra Pound,

0:36:13.860,0:36:20.220

quietly, rusty-voiced even in his 30s already

manifesting his opinions like an old child.

0:36:21.000,0:36:26.640

One must be certain that one's mental character

and idiom are sufficiently close to the norm to

0:36:26.640,0:36:32.160

be comprehensible or significant. In this

respect Mr Eliot is near the borderline,

0:36:32.160,0:36:39.480

his temperament is peculiar. It is sometimes as

remarked heretofore almost bafflingly peculiar,

0:36:39.480,0:36:46.380

but on the whole it is the average hyper aesthetic

one with a good deal of introspective curiosity.

0:36:47.340,0:36:55.380

That's Ezra Pound. Rhapsody on a windy night was

published in the second edition of Blast which at

0:36:55.380,0:37:01.380

least proves that hyper aesthetic introspection

was not so peculiar as to find no readership.

0:37:02.160,0:37:08.280

It is, I repeat, one of life's great pleasures

to stroll the streets at night, melancholy and

0:37:08.280,0:37:14.940

cut off and surrendering to confusion. Street

lights throw flat shadows in front of you as if

0:37:14.940,0:37:21.360

everything were merely cinematic and you catch odd

disconnected sentences out of windows and a man

0:37:21.360,0:37:25.860

stands bleeding in the road saying, I could

have smashed him but he had such long arms,

0:37:25.860,0:37:31.020

they were so long, they must have been the longest

arms in the universe and if it's raining and you

0:37:31.020,0:37:39.360

shut yourself deeper and deeper into your coat

then all these images will remain retinal effects,

0:37:39.360,0:37:46.080

not imaginal effects and you'll wander back

home and make a Manifesto of symbols because

0:37:46.080,0:37:51.660

to symbolize is to assume that humans have to

fabricate connections because they don't already

0:37:51.660,0:37:59.220

exist or if you do make a simile it will be a

paradoxical picture of the mind not working even

0:37:59.220,0:38:07.260

as it brilliantly does work. Midnight shakes

the mind as a madman shakes a dead geranium.

0:38:10.560,0:38:18.420

The culmination of the genre of the dead geranium

is the genre of the artificial geranium when

0:38:18.420,0:38:24.540

instead of walking the streets at night you

sit in your room typing into chat GPT 'write

0:38:24.540,0:38:31.740

a poem about an eagle and a hare in the style

of Shakespeare' and what you get back is this:

0:38:34.740,0:38:41.580

On a morn of golden light, when spring had cast

her gentle kiss, a hare did gambol cross the glade

0:38:41.580,0:38:49.140

in search of sanctuary's bliss. For high above

with piercing eye an eagle watched his prey, his

0:38:49.140,0:38:56.100

wings outstretched he ruled the sky and sought to

seize the day. The hare with instincts honed and

0:38:56.100,0:39:03.120

sharp did sense the danger near, his ears alert,

his limbs aquiver as dread did turn to fear.

0:39:03.900,0:39:09.360

He darted swift like lightning's flash to tangled

bush and briar while overhead the eagle's gaze

0:39:09.360,0:39:16.320

burned fierce with raptors' fire. As shadows

danced in dappled light, the hare his breath

0:39:16.320,0:39:23.220

ahold, did pray to gods of wood and field and

creatures brave and bold. Oh sprites of Earth

0:39:23.220,0:39:29.220

and hidden groves protect me from above and grant

me shelter in your arms that I may live and love.

0:39:29.820,0:39:36.360

Yet fickle fate with heart of stone did turn

her gaze away and in that moment swift and

0:39:36.360,0:39:43.860

sure the eagle made his play. His talons bared he

swooped down low like thunder's fearsome raw and

0:39:43.860,0:39:49.800

with one fell and deadly strike the hare was his

forevermore. Thus ends the tale of hare and eagle,

0:39:49.800,0:39:56.280

of life and death entwined. For Nature's

course doth weave a path, both cruel and

0:39:56.280,0:40:04.080

divine. And in the dance of predator and prey

the cycle turns eternal, each meeting fated,

0:40:04.800,0:40:10.260

each parting brief in life's great stage infernal.

0:40:14.100,0:40:15.120

It's impressive.

0:40:17.280,0:40:23.760

I wonder why the algorithm has chosen the meter

of Arthur Golding rather than Shakespeare.

0:40:25.500,0:40:31.080

That seems in fact a sensible decision

given that heptameter needs to sound clunky,

0:40:31.080,0:40:38.940

whereas pentameter ought to sound subtle and

human. So far, so good. And I imagine one

0:40:38.940,0:40:45.300

could keep refining the instructions to get rid of

such impossibilities as a hare gambolling in fear

0:40:45.900,0:40:53.220

or fate being at the same time fickle and stony,

but I noticed that whereas a poet sees an image

0:40:53.220,0:41:00.600

sharply before summoning words, an artificial poet

prefers ambiguous images. For example how do you

0:41:00.600,0:41:06.600

focus on shadows dancing in dappled light,

when the shadows are themselves the dapples.

0:41:08.100,0:41:12.480

The language is impressionist

because it is not situated,

0:41:13.260,0:41:20.400

that is the primary rule of AI poetry and it

should not be underestimated. Each time the

0:41:20.400,0:41:27.900

algorithm uses the word 'I' it does not mean

the same situated self that we mean and this

0:41:27.900,0:41:34.200

difference spreads through the grammar altering

first the meaning of 'we' and then the meaning of

0:41:34.200,0:41:40.320

'this' and then the meaning of 'that' and then the

meaning of 'near' and then the meaning of 'love'

0:41:40.320,0:41:44.760

and then the meaning of 'death' and then the

meaning of 'with' and then the meaning of 'like',

0:41:44.760,0:41:52.500

and so on and so on until the poem reveals its

mighty contagious absence in that final line.

0:41:53.220,0:42:02.580

Each meeting fated, each parting brief in life's

great stage infernal. Which is a malicious

0:42:02.580,0:42:08.580

demon's Manifesto with no understanding

of actuality. Why is each parting brief?

0:42:09.480,0:42:14.760

Is it because AI operates in unextended

space in which parting has no meaning.

0:42:15.480,0:42:23.100

Does that imply that death doesn't exist and is

that why the hare is gambolling in fear. Is death

0:42:23.100,0:42:29.400

brief, in which case please decide whether this

is a poem about fate or resurrection and adapt

0:42:29.400,0:42:35.100

the form accordingly since the gambolling

rhyming heptameter implies constraint

0:42:35.760,0:42:42.120

but this poem implies no awareness of constraint

because it is not about things which are,

0:42:42.660,0:42:50.280

since things which are must suffer the constraints

of place. But in the genre of the artificial

0:42:50.280,0:42:56.280

geranium there is no place and therefore no point

of view, no topological self, no resistant other,

0:42:56.280,0:43:02.100

no matter and therefore no mattering and therefore

no meaning, no death, no flesh, no weight,

0:43:02.100,0:43:10.860

no love, no life and most importantly no rules

for Kings and no care for citizens, only pattern.

0:43:12.960,0:43:18.600

So if we are going to alter the imagination

through AI and not end up with artificial values

0:43:18.600,0:43:26.100

we surely need to teach it the deep grammar of

the situated self among other selves and to that

0:43:26.100,0:43:33.540

end we might start by teaching it about living

situated geraniums rather than artificial ones.

0:43:35.160,0:43:37.020

Manifesto for geraniums.

0:43:39.420,0:43:44.700

Counterblast remembers the scent of living

geraniums in the temperate house at the

0:43:44.700,0:43:51.120

Oxford Botanic Gardens maybe 10 minutes walk from

here. You slide the door open and inhale hope.

0:43:51.900,0:43:58.080

It is said that geraniums were created when the

prophet Muhammad swam in a river and hung his

0:43:58.080,0:44:06.360

shirt on a mallow to dry. The mallow courteously

lifted the shirt to the Sun and in return it

0:44:06.360,0:44:13.080

was transformed into the geranium whose leaves

smell of a laundrette in heaven, lemony and dry,

0:44:13.080,0:44:21.180

almost starchy but bright, sharp, mint clean,

hot and vigorously alive. It is said that the

0:44:21.180,0:44:27.540

geranium is a beaked flower named after the Greek

for a crane, geranos, the very bird which Homer

0:44:27.540,0:44:34.020

likens to gathering armies and Dante to lines of

grieving souls carried by the wind. Counterblast

0:44:34.020,0:44:41.340

points out that this bird-like plant if given

a little water will manifest its character in a

0:44:41.340,0:44:48.480

profusion of scented leaves which twist at last

into flowers which whirl their stamens at last

0:44:49.080,0:44:56.940

into a winged vortex of seeds which finally fly

and make more, which make more, and then more.

0:44:58.260,0:45:04.560

In view of which those who stand by geraniums

might well stand next to Wyndham Lewis,

0:45:04.560,0:45:10.800

Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska, not to mention

Aldington, Arbuthnot, Atkinson, Dismorr, Hamilton,

0:45:10.800,0:45:18.360

Roberts, Saunders and Wadsworth and joined their

irritable group shout 'long live the vortex'.

0:45:19.920,0:45:27.360

But what I want to know is why advertise one

vortex when you can choose to advertise thousands.

0:45:27.360,0:45:35.400

Long live everything whose roots and growing tips

advance in searching circles. Long live the spiral

0:45:35.400,0:45:42.960

twists of human muscle and the helical lines on

my fingertips. Long live the funnel spider, long

0:45:42.960,0:45:49.200

live the whirligig beetle who swims in bewildering

circles then she snatches a bubble of oxygen from

0:45:49.200,0:45:55.020

the surface and hides it under her wing like an

aqualung she breathes from it when she dives.

0:45:56.040,0:46:03.420

Long live the path of the microscopic rotifer

revolving along an axis, long live one eel coiled

0:46:03.420,0:46:10.860

around another and blast whatever unstitches

those spirals. Blast fatbergs, blast the steel

0:46:10.860,0:46:17.040

trees of the blast Manifesto which are no good for

shadowing the fish. Blast intensive farming which

0:46:17.040,0:46:23.220

makes too much slurry, which makes too much algae.

Blast maize crops which compact the soil and blast

0:46:23.220,0:46:30.840

with expletive of waterfall every single chemical

that has leached into our rivers including

0:46:30.840,0:46:38.580

brominated flame retardants. He who empties his

rubbish upstream has seen only an image of water

0:46:39.480,0:46:44.640

but Counterblast stands for the syntax of

water which stitches the catchment together.

0:46:46.020,0:46:54.240

Long live the grammar of water. Long live that

long preposition whose linear momentum is soft

0:46:54.240,0:47:00.180

enough to swim in but hard enough to cut hollows

in limestone in which first echoes come to live,

0:47:00.180,0:47:05.940

then bats, the offshoots of echoes who hear the

river upside down through the spirals of the inner

0:47:05.940,0:47:12.360

ear lined with tiny twisted hairs and at night

they meet you in a quiet lane with the news that

0:47:12.360,0:47:18.600

the world is more than you thought, more bats,

more leaves, more water snails suck to stones,

0:47:18.600,0:47:25.380

one on each side of the water, and long live water

which moves by means of two contradictory spirals.

0:47:26.160,0:47:32.700

Long live the rivers, long Live those

turbulent sentences, the Tyne, the Thames,

0:47:32.700,0:47:38.760

the Tavy, the Tor, the Torrage, the Avon, the

Oakmont, the Dart, the Exe, the Severn, The Wye,

0:47:38.760,0:47:42.420

the Spey, the Dee, the Tweed, the Ribble,

the Derwent, the Medway, the Ouse, the Trent,

0:47:42.420,0:47:47.520

the Wye, the Plym, the Axe, the Clyde, the Nene,

the Teme, the Don, the Bann, the Ribble, the Aire,

0:47:47.520,0:47:55.530

the Tees, the Nile, the Seine, the Tiber, the

Danube, the Scamander and the river Dnipro.

0:47:55.530,0:48:04.560

Ther are more of course, more rivers, more

streams, more runnels, there are more. There

0:48:04.560,0:48:10.620

are more than 1,500 rivers in the UK and more

than 3 million in the world. So that now I have

0:48:10.620,0:48:17.580

a choice either I can name and praise each river

in its particularity which by my calculation

0:48:17.580,0:48:27.180

would keep us here for 34.72 days and nights, or

I can try to declare the manifesto being endlessly

0:48:27.180,0:48:35.700

expressed by all rivers which I find in Homer but

I also find it in the story of Annie Edson Taylor

0:48:35.700,0:48:42.480

who fell on hard times having been burnt out of

her home and lost her savings to a clergyman.

0:48:42.480,0:48:49.140

So she decided to make some money by shutting

herself in a barrel with her lucky pillow and

0:48:49.140,0:48:57.540

rolling over the Niagara Falls. Her friends pumped

the barrel full of air and off she floated like a

0:48:57.540,0:49:03.360

hare immobile in a thicket and although she

survived with only a gash to her head she

0:49:03.360,0:49:09.660

had clearly crossed that edge when you come to

realize what you are in relation to other things

0:49:10.320,0:49:16.200

and rusty-voiced like an old child she later

said she would sooner walk up to the mouth of

0:49:16.200,0:49:21.540

a cannon knowing it was going to blow her to

pieces then make another trip over the fall.

0:49:22.920,0:49:32.520

That is the best Manifesto I know of the violence

and frailness and mercifulness and terrifying

0:49:32.520,0:49:41.880

muchness of the natural world which is to say all

things that are, at least that is my declaration.

0:49:43.500,0:49:45.220

Thank you. [APPLAUSE]