We’re five minutes into the future, or maybe a lifetime. The calendar seems indeterminate here. Poet Tracie Morris and choreographer David Thomson walk slowly barefoot to the other end, following a white line down a road they can't see. Morris begins reciting from the script she calls a poem collection: “When the buildings split, the big ones, lots of things went with them. Like luck.” A young woman in a black suit and hat leans in. “But there’s an escape,” Morris explains later. “It feels like the axis tilted in a way. Because now the world is off.”

Tracie Morris looks ahead to the past

words, revealing their plasticity and their internal music. Here, to cop a phrase from Dr. Dre, it creeps to the mid like a Buddha. In Snoop Dogg Dogg, for example, she seems content—the hyper-Southern rural vocal intonation rubbed right up against the hyper-technologically-driven urban innovation. Then Backstreet Boys just waxes on. With the redundancy, the Caribbean intentions, but also the urban African American inflections, it just has a lot of layers going on. Rekem was a huge influence. Huge. Because he introduced internal rhyme into pop-culture and not just a regular pattern, but in a seemingly improvised pattern.”

Morris begins ruffling on words or syllables. It’s the classic avant-garde project, really testing the limits of language. “So things that were hard to talk about, too dramatic, too epic or striking to work in two dimensions (the page) became sound poems. Several of them ended up at the 2002 Whitney Biennial.”

If there are contexts in which poetry is not meant to be transparent,” says Morris. “You have to read in a different way, think about the resonances of the words. It’s not restricted by adherence to syntax and grammar. It can break away from those tropes because there’s something more fundamental about language that isn’t cut off.”

Afrofuturism is a case in point. Much of the language seems opaque. For example, the passage above about how the “buildings split” continues “Pale Pilots, anybody outta Phily doesn’t talk. At the 125s on the push-button call.” Like the hose on a hydrant. An effect.

If the meaning’s a bit slippery, well, Morris has made her case for embracing the difficulties. But not necessarily. In Afrofuturism, poetry is just part of a multimedia context, so there are other kinds, too: video, a live band, Thomson’s choreography plays the only other character, a muse/trickster, and direction by Laurie Lipton’s Glass Cactus.

Morris was delighted to find that Carlos was not expecting her to explain the poetry. Carlos’s own pieces are similarly abstract. She, too, braids ambiguity, mutability and possibility into her texts, as more facts can’t invoke the proper spirits.

“We’ve done a lot of excavating about what the work really is.” says Carlos. Not that it’s saying something other than what Morris intended. According to Carol’s, “It’s saying more.”

Afrofuturism runs through May 24 at the Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, 212-598-7593.