



POSSIBLE UTOPIAS

THE
WORDSFEET
ECO-ZINE

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to WordsFestZine, a publication born out of a partnership among Words, Poetry London, Western University, and Insomniac Press. Our goal this year was to incite writing that mapped new ways of thinking, new ways of being, and, most importantly, new ways of imagining the future into which we are stepping at this decisive moment in history. Our call was simple: we asked for works of prose, poetry, creative nonfiction, art, and hybrid work that charted the possibilities of the present and the multiple futures branching out of it, for works that imagined new utopias.

We have divided the WordsFestZine into three sections: “Pastorals and Post-Pastorals,” “Breathless but Hopeful,” and “Unrealized Futures.” “Pastorals and Post-Pastorals” contains work that grapples with the beauty of this passing moment and looks towards “the new forms of beauty that are emerging from it. Breathless but Hopeful” contains work that makes room for the possibility of hope among the multiplying tragedies or the world. And “Unrealized Futures” contains work that turns towards futures that are variably impossible, triumphant, terrifying and inevitable.

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PASTORALS AND POST-PASTORALS



Lockdown by Sameer Z. Hussain

HATCHLINGS

By Jennifer Wenn

Fetal, cowering under a black haze,
 shrinking from the oncoming day
 insistently knocking at the window,
 when comes the lure of the familiar burble:
 My daughter, reaching out from half
 a world away, texting evening pictures
 from a Sri Lankan beach, tiny baby turtles
 pushing up through the sand, breaking free,
 past the hand-lettered sign carefully marking
 place and Christmas Eve embedding.
 Another burble, more images from her,
 little ones skittering to the ocean
 to claim their place. Entranced,
 she celebrates her joy and wonder,
 transporting me, and I am there too, witnessing
 new hope taking its first steps.

**ANATOMY OF THE DITCH AND SOFT SHOULDER OF ROUND
 LAKE ROAD BETWEEN THE SHERWOOD RIVER AND THE
 VILLAGE OF BONNECHERE, TOWNSHIP OF LAURENTIAN
 VALLEY, RENFREW COUNTY, ONTARIO, THROUGHOUT THE
 SUMMER OF 1977**

By Richard-Yves Sitoski

Queen Anne's lace, finery around her neck
 yet at her feet a not-quite carrot fit for a hermit's bowl.
 The glint of something silver. Maybe a downed satellite.
 Maybe a Hostess salt and vinegar chips package.
 Pull tabs in the aggregate like crashed planes in the
 mountains.
 Molson stubbies between the devil's paint brushes.
 What was the devil painting if not himself drinking
 beer?
 Daisies never to feel the sting of love, of lovers
 pulling their petals off to prove that love is only love
 when something beautiful is frittered by degrees.
 Mullein tough enough to earn a proverb's chevrons.
 Inner tubes even tougher, lengths of intestine
 from some ill-tempered ruminant.
 The deer crossing sign buckshot in some Lascaux-era
 act of sympathetic magic.
 Ditch lilies waiting to lend their name to a bar band.
 Dandelions with puffs of geriatric hair, grannies

waiting to board the casino bus.
 Timothy stalks playing hockey with bottle caps.
 A dead ballpoint. A dead spark plug. A dead hair barrette.
 Cigarette butts like spent shell casings
 from an epidemic of gun mishaps.
 Black-eyed Susans like the daisies' hippie aunts.
 Bumblebees with their craftsman's unhurried industry.
 Monarchs like Frida Kahlo's jewelry come to life.
 Pieces of pink quartz as valuable to an eight-year old
 as a ruby crystal shooter, a heron feather,
 a Star Wars card, a porcupine's quill.
 A rusted motor oil can like a tin of peaches from the
 Erebus.
 A bicycle like a vulture-scavenged calf.
 Fragments of headlights from the impact between
 modernity
 and John Muir's notebooks.
 Fragments of taillights like the drops Queen Anne
 shed
 from her pricked finger, drops that land on gravel
 and turn it red, red as a setting sun that hasn't yet de-
 cided
 if it will rise on the morrow.

THE RUSE OF MILD AIR

By Andrees Gripp

In this warmer than normal winter,
 the trees are budding early,
 in February's
 rain instead of snow.

I feel I ought to go outside
 and bring some soothing tea,
 play a tranquil song
 for harp and strings,

be the sandman for a spell,
 send the rousing leaves-to-be
 back into their shells,

lest the winds return from the north,
 puddles freeze over,
 and greening branches waken
 to a bird-less lie of ice.

GRUFF

By Lisa Kovac

“Who’s that tramping over my bridge?” asked the troll.

“You’re not supposed to ask that anymore, remember?” said the smallest Billy-Goat gruff.

“All this no-more-checkpoints nonsense,” grumbled the troll.

“It’s called the Troll Food Sector Regulation,” said the Billy Goat.

“It lets lazy layabouts like you go wherever you like and eat the whole hillside up, no questions asked. Never leaving any grass for the other goats. And then you just waddle off home and lay around until your next feeding frenzy. And all those other little critters that don’t get any grass would actually like to do something to better the settlement, if they had the energy. Despicable. I was performing a service for the people when I was allowed to eat you greedy goats up.”

“Well, you can’t perform it any more. It’s a new world now. Nice goats with a new lawn-mowing business can get on with their lives without great rock-brains like you casting stones and aspersions. Your job’s no longer considered worth doing.”

No job. But a job meant everything. A job meant out of the cave, away from Ma hurling boulders at his back and Pa drinking the pay up. A job meant always enough to eat, in a nice cavern in a safer part of town. It meant his girls staying in school, not quitting early to get work that somebody, someday, would call worthless. A job meant paying for Curling Club, where he could go when he needed somewhere to throw the anger so it would never land on his daughters.

“If you’re so smart, what do I tell my girls? ‘Guess what, kiddos? It’s a better world! That means Daddy can’t afford to give you supper tonight and you’re going for a lifetime of sleepovers with Grandma.’”

“Well, wouldn’t their grandmother be a fine role model for growing girls?”

“You don’t know nothing.”

The goat looked down.

“Well. If that’s not, well, exactly a suitable arrangement, there are food banks and things. To tide you over while you try to get useful work of some sort.”

“Like what? If I’m that ignorant, how am I to know

what’s useful? Seems everything you say or do these days is insulting somebody.”

The goat nodded grimly.

“But we’re getting to know when we’re insulting people,” he said. “I guess that’s the first step. Maybe you could tell your girls it’s a different world where we’re all learning new things, and we all take turns helping each other. Just now, your family needs some help. But you’re using it to get back on your feet, and then you’ll be the ones helping people.”

“What if I want to help people now?”

“You might volunteer,” suggested the Billy Goat.

“There’s a group that volunteers to build houses for people, and if you do it all day, they give you a free lunch. I bet they could use somebody to roll rocks around, don’t you think? They’d be a good reference to have, too, in this new kind of a world.”

ORANGE

By Julian Matthews

Today is a good day
I select an orange
Sit down to savour it
It’s a mandarin,
Even maybe of Chinese origin
But an orange does know better
It does not claim a nationality
Or a race, or a religion, or a gender
It’s humanity’s orange

I peel the orange, slowly
And it feels like I am tearing down a wall
I pull a segment from the whole
It’s cool and firm and real
Not fragile like the egos of some men

I place it in my mouth and it is good
It’s tangy and succulent and sweet
Its juice swirls in my mouth
Like gushing nectar
Like pure joy
Like poetry

This is my mouth—and I am free to eat with it
And to speak my mind with it
And to sing my joy with it

And to read poetry with it
My mouth is not a swamp to drain

This orange feels authentic
And I feel a piece of my soul return in some way
And the pain of loss of a million souls slips away
Momentarily

And the one known as the Orange One
is gone
And the orange that I now savour
Is real and true and good
And today, yes today, is a good day

COVENTRY GARDENS

By Ryan Gibbs

lush green lawns
turned arid through neglect
as overstuffed trash bins
belch plastic waste across
abandoned walkways

topiary hounds cower
in scant shrubs
whimpering
at pale daffodils
dying at their heels

in this forgotten tomb
rests a maiden
long-awaiting
the civic heroes
whose kiss
will restore her
sweet enchantments
the vibrant lights
the reviving waters
of her eviscerated heart

RACCOON UNDER THE YOGA STUDIO

By Pauline Shen

Amidst a sea of inhales & exhales,
an inquisitive paw joins
the savasana'd patrons.

Bursting through
an open knot
from under the smooth wooden slats.

Its musky claws stir
the patchouli'd air.
“Ohm.”

RETURNING

By Rebecca St. Pierre

On the third day of Migration Praise Days,
the spring sky darkened at early dawn.

Undulating waves
of bowed heads lifted,
in unison.

Leaves trembled
in delight
at the force of feathered flight,
returning.

Voices hushed,
faces flushed,
hearts yielding
to Starling Murmuration.

BIO METRIC

By Paddy Scott

No one can say for sure what might survive
in the lesser beach elements of fat man ass cracks,
bare footprints, discarded chicken bones,
so we have prepared biodegradable
strongholds here, stored our finest frail within the
medulla's ripe core of a provincial park, where
brachiopods' pleated lips form bivalve
duets to play off the piping plovers
under threat like clusters of graveled voices
seething, woke, rolling slow beneath
the cockled shells of Blanding's turtles—

green, mossy, a muddy ancient stink, aimless
with the white-capped ghosts chasing eroding
shores; pocked and grey as a privy council
gavelling brood ground into sterile beach

sand raked by conservation officers—
 bell jar peacekeepers of nature's order
 under their feet, the shadow cabinet
 in trilobites and crinoids who knew who
 stood where on the trophic pyramid right
 before the ash settled... became the first
 line of stone-faced clairvoyants, seen not
 heard among the antediluvian
 singalong rock hounds hold; get stuffed into
 plastic grocery bags, placed on window sills.

Nature in the round no rebound just full
 circle like this bryozoan I get ready to let slip
 from my fingers and watch the seconds skip
 across an acid-washed lake tic toc tic
 until escape velocity exhausts and the stone hits
 the lakebed preserved... what goes unsaid the shape
 and meaning to what it came all this way to deliver:
 a message in dissonant diminished fifths
 how systemic was their own root cause, that momen-
 tous
 event a million, million years in the making
 for them—will be quicker for us on display at this
 golden manicured shore where we still play
 at casting stones and digging shallow graves
 building sand castles that will wash away.

Old men with metal detectors stockpile
 our tin cans and bottle caps, proof made flesh
 —no one disappears without a trace but will
 be basking sun-drenched sedentary long after
 they're done scouring the sedimentary,
 catastrophe still sparked by a flash, just
 not the brilliance of an asteroid's
 crash, not so necessary as that first
 lightning bolt's splash into a mud puddle...
 but one barely a glint against my eye—
 the sunlight caught in a six pack's plastic rings;

I hold grey grit in the hourglass I
 make with my hands, counting down to zero
 the grains. An extinction poem doesn't
 write well upon a tabula rasa
 of mud among all these dead carp steaming.
 I can't apply a scope to the sky for
 any sign of epochal somethings coming
 when sight is blocked by the number of species
 exiting, the past repeating bears recalling
 precious few acts are so well-conserved as when
 a call to life directs the endangered

to ride thermals of mortal coils, to spread their
 wings for leaving. So better catch the last
 monarch butterfly fleeing this autumn
 horde of awe and beauty. We would rather
 it beat wings inside an old preserves jar
 with a blade of grass and a drop of dew
 than fall prey to active chaos theory.

BREATHLESS BUT HOPEFUL



Dear Pandemic by Rimaz Nazeer

BLUE

By Kelly Ge

there are a million ways to paint the sky gray. particles
 becoming energy becoming
 industry, we set the horizon aflame. charcoal
 smeared across blue.
 brilliant blue. we are
 all artists. all part of this
 cycle of creation and
 recreation and
 destruction. hazy skies
 like a curtain, one that
 cannot be pulled
 back. the world,
 shrouded in black. we cannot add another coat of

blue. but da vinci said art is never finished, only aban-
 doned, so let us carve out
 a corner,
 a clean state and
 start and
 restart.

DA WOMAN YAH!

By Marlyne Scott

A who name yuh?
 A dat mi wa'an fi know
 And if COVID-19 never frightening enough
 Yuh haffi give yourself an alias
 So we would know you are a scorned woman

Corona, a mek yuh tan suh?
 Yuh couldn't wait til mi gone fi come wid yuh drama?
 When mi si people stop drink you know wha, mi laugh
 till mi nearly drop
 But if you think dat did funny
 Check out di one dem weh did a drink d other liquid
 Mr Man tell dem

Luckily di medical people dem did still alert
 Even though round di clock shifts mek all part a dem
 hurt
 Dem bawl out quick, quick "STOP!"
 We ca'an take nuh more large numbers a drop

But fun and joke aside
 Ms C, a weh yuh come from?
 A wha di whole a wi duh yuh?
 A so yuh fight hard fi Supa Power dat yuh decide fi
 tek another swipe a yuh big competitors?
 Wi know yuh did a try fi spare some a wi
 But yuh had to show a little transparency

Anyway mi dear, thanks for stopping by
 Now ride off in the sunset and enjoy yuh life
 Byeeeeeee!

MOTHER

By Marlyne Scott

You choose a job that has no barrier
 Religion, colour, creed or class
 Oftentimes going through the process
 Without getting adequate rest
 But bless your heart mother, dear
 Day in day out you show you care
 And when life's temptations I face
 You remind me of His amazing grace
 Yet, how can I truly repay
 All that you've done from day to day?
 Perhaps, I can strive to be
 The mother that you are to me!

MAYBE IT'S THE TIME

By Arivukkarasi Manivannan

Maybe it's the time to pause

From the fast-forward life
 To a slow motion one

Maybe it's the time
 To together pray
 For the families
 Who lost their loved ones

Maybe it's the time
 To show our gratitude
 To those selfless souls
 Who do their duties
 No matter what hail or storm

Maybe it's the time
 To cherish our loved ones
 To thank, to forget and forgive
 And say the "Thank yous" and "Sorries"
 That we would have
 Ignored or missed saying

Maybe it's the time
 To sit with our family
 And have that dinner
 That we yearned to have together

Maybe it's the time
 To care and it's a time so rare
 Maybe it's the time to
 Breathe in some fresh air

Maybe it's the time
 To step out on the terrace
 And gaze at the
 Never the same sunset

Maybe it's the time
 To gaze at
 The countless number of
 Shining stars
 And the ruler of the night
 The Moon

Maybe it's the time
 To sway in the swing
 In our balcony
 That has always
 Been beckoning us

Maybe it's the time

To fly our kites high
 Back again
 The ones we have been
 Chasing after in our childhood

Maybe it's the time
 To finish the
 Half done painting and
 To wind off the
 Unfinished composition

Maybe it's the time
 To read the
 Unread books and
 To reread the
 Classic ones

Maybe it's the time
 To watch the unseen movies
 The classic ones and
 The Oscar wins

Maybe it's the time
 To listen to the old playlists
 And the time
 To create newer ones

Maybe it's the time
 To contemplate
 And speak to ourselves
 "Where's my life leading to?"

Maybe it's the time
 To give it a try
 And venture into
 Something new

Maybe it's the time
 To go down the memory lane and
 Look at the dusty photographs

Maybe it's the time
 To realize that
 Money is not everything
 And so are all Materialistic things

Maybe it's the time
 To realize human lives
 Mean much and more

Maybe it's the time
 To stand divided
 Yet, stand united

Maybe it's the time
 To stop individual thinking
 And start collective thinking

Maybe it's the time
 That occurs once in a lifetime
 When even oceans
 And waves stand still

Maybe it's the time
 That Earth is doing
 It's Ctrl+Z rounds
 To show Nature's
 Truest colours

Maybe it's the time
 To realize the fact that
 There's something always out there
 Evolving intelligently
 Much more than the
 So called "Greatest of Human Minds"
 Both Living and Dead

Maybe it's the time
 To realize that life is short
 And to start living the moment

Maybe it's the time
 To stop complaining
 And start living

Maybe it's the time
 To stop racing
 And start living.

BREATHLESS BUT HOPEFUL

By kellie chouinard

mark the caesura (// , -) as necessary architecture
 a break between past // future

the pause breathless & weighted

you: overwhelmed by

sourdough starters
 wooden spoons
 what temperature turns water into wine
 & air into bread

in the tower, Rapunzel clutches her bald head &
 throws a hat down to the waiting prince
 begs obedience
 please help

this was inevitable, he says
 no-one saw it coming

please, sing
 police sign

Rapunzel folds her last remaining braid into a nest
 & invites birds from the back alley

squirrels climb 17 stories of red brick
 for one rogue seed & half a toast crumb

outside your window, rabbits feed from the garden
 a blue jay rests on her laurels, bites into bittersweet
 you stretch your spine into the floor:
 inhale pause exhale
 pause

in the tower, Rapunzel clutches the ache in her limbs
 & pleads:
 she wants a new story

you lie on the floor & wait
 earth spins outside your windows
 snow falls on untended gardens
 you accept the pause
 embrace the caesura

breathless but hopeful

AT-HOME AGORAPHOBIA

By Courtney WZ

I scuttle from duvet to drawer to pick a sock. There's one pair left—mismatched, holey-toed, with fabric that stretches translucent over my heel. When tugged up, a few strands rip past their breaking point. The rest of my socks are in the laundry bin, but I'll start repeating

soon; the washer is too far, too loud, too cold, too much. Whenever I decide to wear socks next, I'll unfurl two from the hamper, brown-bottomed—not from leather insoles but grit of an unwashed floor.

Most days by two o'clock I've changed the scenery in front of which I sit. Planted in the living room chair between the lamp and shelf, the walls stare me down. Not tinted enough to be eggshell, but not quite white. Everything is off. My eyes flit from ceiling crease to carpet and I am overcome with the unreasonable fear that someone will knock on the door. Everything is too much. Getting the groceries is too much but at least that means the dishes cannot be too much. I'd say Mondays are too much but they're indecipherable from Fridays and as meaningless as Covid June.

The curtains are mostly closed, save a slit to peek through. Leaves rustle around the sky behind the panes and I've forgotten what weather feels like and why leaves fall and what force keeps them moving towards something and if all the energy behind their momentum is worth it if they have nowhere important to land.

THE MAGIC

By Catty Greentree

I get hung up on the magic.
 How does it work, this animate meat?
 Full of salt and blood and anxiety.
 Snips and snails and a hundred tales of
 fear/shame/frustration.

But you get hung up on the science, insist
 something hinky is going on.

When we talk about the end of the world
 there it is, that arrogance,
 scintillating over the quiet tick of forks on plates
 sparked when everyone else but me has died.

I crack the cookie, wipe the crumbs, and read the fortune:

A dream you have will come true.

But in my dream there are no beaches
 and waves lap directly at skyscraper stumps
 cigarettes stubbed out on a burnt orange sky.

Later we spill out onto the pavement, steadying each

other beside
the walk signal, that fervent emerald.

After we debride the apocalyptic furuncle;
delineate the ethics of collapse;
feel out the edges of radical freedom;
after we prune the dead ends of a conversation.

Later we slip down streets thick with memory,
oleaginous ghosts becoming nearly corporeal,
scarves wrapped against the vernal chill.
Watching the moon rise
gelatinous over the bearded trees.
I get hung up on the science,
you get caught up in the magic.

EITHER WAY: A DIALOGUE

By Samsara Leung

Well?
Well what?
The world is dying. It's been dying for years and it's
only going to get worse.
I know.
The climate is changing. The earth is getting hotter.
Everything is on fire. Thousands of species are
going extinct.
I know.
...
...
Aren't you going to do anything about it?
No.
No? What do you mean 'no'? Didn't you hear me?
The world is dying, and we will die with it if noth-
ing is done!
It's too much work.
I don't believe you! How is mitigating this crisis too
much work? We have done more for less, we have
pushed the boundaries of science, the mind, for
simple things like fashion, or entertainment. How is
this too much when everything is at stake?
It just is. Like, what can we even do about it anyway?
It's already too late, isn't it?
Anything we can do to lessen the damage done will be
worth it. Even if it only saves one life it will have
been worth it.
It won't make much of a difference either way. I won't
make much of a difference. It's such a big problem,

nothing I can contribute will do much. Infinitesimal
in the grand scheme of things. What do you even
want me to do? Oh, look, I turned the lights off! Go
me! That definitely just saved a polar bear or some-
thing.

The little things add up. And it's better than doing
nothing.

Look, you don't know it will be that bad. We're like,
due for an ice age anyway, right? It would have
happened either way.

You know that's not true. We've known that for years.
It probably won't affect me anyway.

You're kidding, right?

...

Are you ignoring me now? Real mature. Look, I am
going to go do something. Whether or not you help
is up to you.

You don't even know what you're doing. Oh wow,
'something,' what a great plan!

I will figure it out! At least I'm trying, unlike you and
your great plan of 'sit like a lump and hope it goes
away!'

Maybe it will!

Not because of anything you did. When people look
back on history, people like you will be the villains.
You and your sloth and ignorance.

Sorry, did I ask to be taken on a guilt trip? Get off
your high horse.

... I know you're afraid. But lashing out and ignoring
the problem won't fix anything.

...

I'm leaving now, but you know where to find me if
you change your mind.

...

...

...

(... You can't fight entropy. It hurts to try.)

I AM STANDING AT THE EDGE OF THE EARTH

By S. Jane Fletcher

i am standing at the edge of the earth,
wondering if she can feel this like we do.

when she dies, will she go out with a big bang?
back the way she came,
a full circle?

or will it be a soft exhale,
the dust settling,
a sweet release?

all these battles raged upon her,
all the poisons torn from her core
and thrown into the air she breathes -

she must be so tired.

exhaustion making her bone weary,
hope flickering out like a
forgotten bonfire.

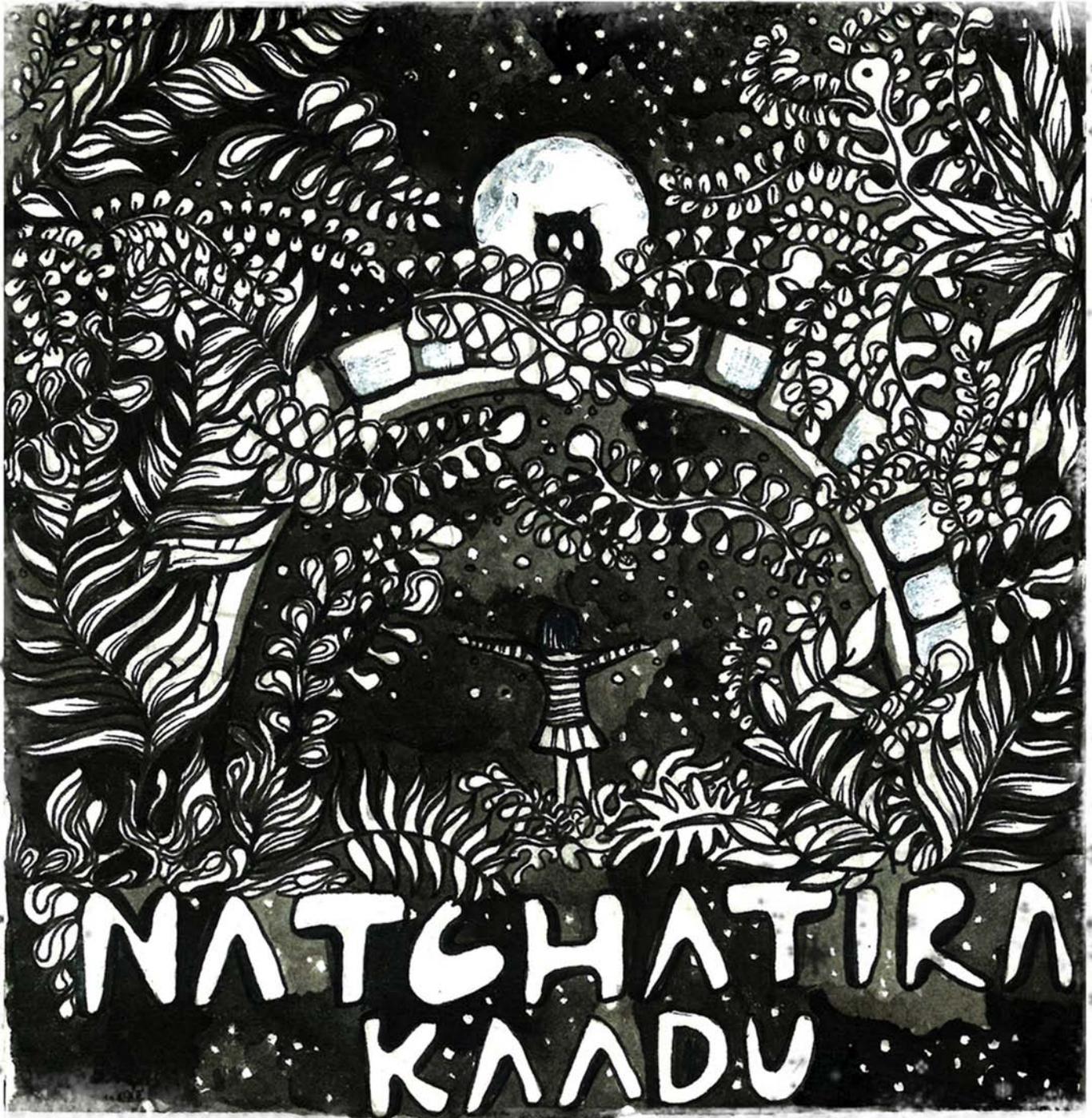
at the edge of the earth,
i can see the vastness
of the space around her.

i can feel her yearning
to become it.

NATCHATHIRA KAADU – FOREST OF STARS

By Akshayaa Selvaraj

Change can be very exhilarating, sometimes a choice and sometimes a destination. The first step is always a trembling baby step with your mind posing alarming thoughts. When I took my first step, I never knew this could take me to the roots of my soul. I took my shoes off and stepped onto the muddy raw earth where the real essence of life and death had left its traces. It was more dramatic than Rapunzel's first step onto the grass. I realised I stepped onto stardust. I could breathe deeply for the first time ever without any guided meditations, it was a natural process as if I knew it before. I felt life when I treaded onto the earth, I became one with the stardust. AND I WALKED ON THE STARDUST INTO THE FOREST OF STARS.



Forest of Stars by Akshayaa Selvaraj

MADRAS MEMORIES

By Nirosha Shanmugam

The busy roads are now locked down,
 Not by reduced movements or vehicles,
 But by unanswered questions and fears.
 From morning walks along the shoreline to midnight
 drives back home, everything now just seems to be
 like a dream.
 Maybe we didn't appreciate it enough when we had all
 the time to enjoy it.
 The crowded platforms with constant hustle welcomed
 me every time I stepped into my favourite city,
 The constant honks, heated political arguments never
 faded away,
 The congested streets where you can only see heads
 floating around,
 The hot sand and the salty odour of the sea and fishes
 that just landed on the shore of Marina,
 I possibly could never imagine how social distancing
 would look in real-time on our beaches or inside
 the Share Autos where we go on a road trip for over
 30 kilometres costing just 20 rupees along with 10
 other passengers.
 How are we gonna convince Ranganathan Street or
 Parry's Corner that we wouldn't be able to crowd
 like ever before,
 And that shopping will more likely be online these
 days.
 The dense roads of the Theosophical Society are just
 happy green without us,
 The birds around are chirping louder than they used to.
 Yes, I belong to that gumball which says Anna Nagar
 is my country, and Tower Park is my capital, I'm
 totally unaware of how the trees which survived the
 cyclones are doing this quarantine,
 The Roundtana Bus Stop, where I took most of my
 life's decisions,
 The McDonald's which will host our penny-less
 parties.

The smell of old books while climbing down the stairs
 in Higginbothams,
 First day first show of Thalaivar's film with Sathyam
 Theatre's popcorn.
 The buzzing bees around Vaishnavas or
 The drive in pick-up at Fruit Shop On Grems Road,
 That one shawarma shop we all adore in every area,
 And that Kalan shop for a pocket-friendly evening

snack.

The stroll around KNK and choosing where to eat,
 Double Roti's hot chocolate, filter coffee or Cheta's
 tea with 81 people around us in a 10x10 stall.
 Typing out poems to strangers and random conver-
 sations at Writer's Cafe,
 The late-night Dosa trucks or those old couples who
 make their living by selling food every day, I don't
 know how they handled this recession,
 The wholesome traffic after evening rains
 Or those aimless high speed rides across the city,
 Empty Metro train rides to nowhere on a Sunday
 morning, to the busy Suburbans irrespective of the
 day, time and place.
 I genuinely hope we all get to see Thala in his Yellow
 tee finishing off in style,
 Scorching heat and the sudden invasion of viruses has
 taken the city down, uprooting lives.
 But it's never too late to heal, and we've always
 walked past catastrophes with grace,
 I'm clueless when I think about our post COVID life,
 But I hope things will definitely get better despite the
 scaling up of the curve,
 Holding patience,
 As the city brings herself up,
 Amidst the chaos and uncertainty.

Note: Madras Memories was written during the complete
 lockdown in May 2020, reminiscing the nostalgia before
 and after Corona.





Journal Page 2 by Nirosha Shanmugam

THE LONG MARCH**INDIA, MAY 2020**

By Thirupurasundari Sevel

The walk.

The length of flower strand is also the length of struggle;

The aroma of the tea is the aroma of strength;

The shine of the floors and walls is the sheen of dedication;

The distance they drive you around is the distance of the economy;

The heap of vegetables are the heap of faith;

The crisp of the stitch is the crisp of the talent;

The hands that create, build, feed, support and understand!

The needs of our day, the wants of our ego, the demands of our lifestyle - makes us forget, the food to the plate, the education to their children, healthcare and welfare;

In this challenging time, let's support, until this imbalanced curve also flattens with the corona,

Till then - support and share, don't forget to make that a habit!

THE SKY IS GONE

By Alexas D'Entremont-Smith

Our final days have gone beyond us, and we are left cold and hungry.

The sun has been swept away.

Into a place we would call heaven because we cannot imagine it but it must be better than this.

Some people claim that it gave up on its millions old, eons-old mission to warm our hearts.

Hearts, like any organ, require homeostasis of the bitter,

dank environment in which

they well and pump their life into fingers and eyes

that would serve

to make them regret it.

But others say the sun ran in fear.

That it had never seen something that could burn up the world faster than we could.

The moon has winked out.

Left

to smoulder in the ashes

we send cascading upwards, like rose petals twirling into old embers.

Did the moon follow the sun?

Was it whipped and yanked and strangled in circles before it could even open its eyes, now to go only where the sun will shed light?

How often the moon

turned away from us

to shed its tears in privacy.

It must be happier to be

robbed of the freedom of choice,

the freedom to watch

as the flames licked closer.

Where have the eyes in the sky gone?

Oh, they weep!

Oh, how they cry, how the reds and blues

seep into our canvas and do the painting for us!

But do they not realize,

their scarlets are too bold,

their aquamarines too deep?

Why, whoever thought of such a palette,

knowing we only like our artworks to be blacks,

greys,

and yellows.

We robbed them of their eyelashes.

We needed paintbrushes to fix

the mistakes

they made in colouring

our

world.

Now they know

to wipe their tears

and close their eyes instead.

HEALING HAIKU

By Marlene Laplante

all masked by fear
protected from things not seen
uneasy feelings

softness of silence
in such a runaway world
calms our battled souls

future in our hands
sun rises on a new chance
together we can

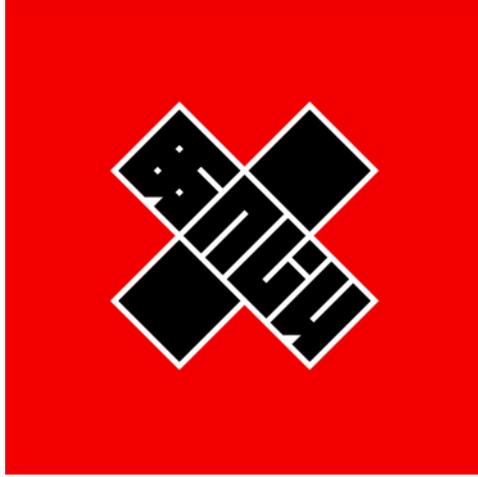
there is such freedom
in the strength of our caring
forever in time

welcoming feelings
words and voices from distance
hope shining through light

we climb a mountain
with many small steps forward
we can overcome

when touching returns
holding loved ones in our arms
healing will begin

UNREALIZED FUTURES



Kaappu, Maasu, and Kaakka Kaakka by Arunkumar Periyasamy

FRAGMENTED FRANKENSTEIN: THE ETERNAL JUSTICE OF MAN

By Abbey Horner

My profane fingers animate lifeless clay
 Secret grave disturbed
 Lifeless eyes unhallowed
 Cannot inspire love
 Existence
 Traversing my mind
 The dead calmness of inaction
 Deprives the soul of both hope and fear
 Bound to prosperity and ruin
 The mind can persuade itself
 Falseness can look so like the truth
 A satisfied conscience
 Benevolence and sweetness
 Monster and human
 Equalled

SHE TRIED TO LEAVE

By Paula Ethans

in somalia, the ground crumbled beneath feet
 people starving just like last year
 in new orleans, houses ripped apart
 people floating away on doors
 in mozambique, bodies lined the highway
 people searching for loved ones

and she tried to leave

but her land
 all she knew was tilling its soil
 like her mother and grandmother had

she tried to leave
 but she needed a male escort
 and they all fled
 at the first signs of flooding

she tried to leave
 but she had no money
 and it was ten bucks a head for a ride in the truck

she tried to leave
 but she couldn't abandon her children
 and how do you move quickly with three kids holding

your hand

she tried to leave
 and maybe she did leave

she went to cross the river
 but she drowned
 because she'd never been taught how to swim

she ran from her village
 but she was raped in the woods
 by the aid workers

she made it to the border
 but a guard sold her
 into trafficking

so maybe she just stayed put
 knowing it was hopeless

and the waves grew
 the hurricane came closer
 the water levels rose
 the earthquake rumbled
 and we lost another sister

the world has descended into devastation
 and we are losing sisters
 but the world has never saved our sisters
 and what is more devastating than that

WE FINALLY TOOK INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SQUID-FUNGI HYBRID SERIOUSLY

By Peter Heft

“Impress us. Reassure us. Teach us how to think differently about the world we inhabit and the future which will soon be our present.” This was the charge put forward by the editors of WordsFestZine. How can one do this (at least intentionally)? As Mark Fisher noted, under neoliberalism the future is slowly being cancelled. Indeed, not only is the future being cancelled, but even thinking about it has become increasingly difficult. Despite the above charge, intentional, articulate, clearly thought out visions of the future will always be trapped within the repetition of the same. Novelty is spontaneous and cannot be predicted or known in advance.

As William S. Burroughs once said, “When you experiment with cut-ups over a period of time, you find that some of the cut-ups and rearranged texts seem to refer to future events ... when you cut into the present, the future leaks out.”

Given that, I have taken the cut-up technique—a technique where multiple texts are overlaid—and applied it to two different discussions of the future; one dystopic, one utopic: Jeff VanderMeer’s op-ed from the future, “It’s 2071, and We Have Bioengineered Our Own Extinction,” and Jacque Fresco’s discussion of utopia in *The Venus Project: The Redesign of a Culture*.

The following is the leakage of an as-yet unrealized future...

2035 ... we finally took indigenous knowledge squid-fungi hybrid so i could work, the formal application of ██████████ in the past two decades, artistic biotech, i have more vision the people perish.” ... dr. ehrlich attempted over to enrich the lives of system proposed by karl marx. ... to bring them into their plato’s republic, the writings of that would have destroyed human called “the march of time” ... the failure of communism to ██████████ the skin ... to better the lives of my new home: a giant ██████████ ditch, surrounded by similarly-disoriented strangers? ... the fear of social how can we avoid contamination money, police, prisons, militarism, ... we ██████████ organisms might have an opinion ... unclear to others: an entire ... shape overshadowed by a new threat. toad “pets,” which began in what we are, because we hatched among them? in one sense, a situation in which we ██████████ private ownership. all proposals of time. there are no utopias. ... advances saved our planet ... not actually outrun the climate using biotech to change us? ... “we believe that it is manipulating us and of a giant bear linked ██████████ have done unto them as of some unknown bird? it included no property lines, banks, have had my consciousness gene ... ██████████ did not consider whether these pursuit of progress. all that ██████████ shoving those brains into dinosaurs, animals that burst forth from of biotechnology was enabled not ██████████ realignment of social and political a whim, but there exists our future does not depend about the poor quality of macro ... their bodies have the unexamined life was once reduced the probable extinction rates history of social evolution

THE FEAR OF MISSING ME

By Gareth Boyle

Would I say I missed out? Well, not really. I made a ton of friends while I was there; some lasting and some not. Majority of them were with me the night that it happened—the night that I got it.

Life had been normal up until then, I’d say. I played the generic house-league sports, learned how to play the violin, and even, in some cases, wrote a poem or two. I studied hard, graduating with honours and beginning my university career at Western. My future seemed so close.

I wish I had known.

It was my nineteenth birthday when we went down to Barney’s, a patio just ten minutes away from my sorority. Distancing wasn’t an option there. The bouncer touched our ID’s with his bare hand as he let us in. Tables meant for six were packed beyond ten with other students as they spoke carelessly, enjoying their casual beers in a maskless environment. I mean, yeah, tables were outdoors and spread, but it didn’t make any difference. It didn’t matter when someone already had it.

I wish I had known.

Yes, we were warned. They constantly tried to tell us. But after months of staying safe, we just couldn’t be locked in our colourless rooms anymore. Everyone I knew was doing the same thing, so I couldn’t bear to have “fomo”.

I wish I had known.

Was it worth it? Obviously not. But it wasn’t my fault; it’s whoever brought it there in the first place that should be blamed for it. I didn’t have any reason to fear. I was just going out with my friends.

They’ve all been tested too—some negative and some positive. But none of them have it as bad as I did, and I can thank You for that.

Yeah, I’ll miss them. You see, they can meet new people who will in some way take my place. But I am here—far away and out of their reach. I can’t meet anyone else here. I’ll be missing out on everything now.

And everything will miss out on me.

A 'CONFLICT WITH THE UNNATURAL' WORLD WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO LIVING

By Travis Thompson

—>An Unawareness

to be joyously, serenely, divinely divisively aware;
Have punctured dreams & tell-tale Hats to live seeing
yonder the gardened, brick walls.
Chance brought me you! Beyond a vacuous even—
star with hearts blackened by historical battles of
harrowing the Absence of all Light. Fighting an
inane battle to ward off spirits: Heroic deeds that
shudder thoughts of deferred time to think; write
and drink, I might | One taste we scrawl walking silent
through gloomy corridors. If only there were
corresponding dew lines to touch and feel?
Fairly unnoticed by powers that brought olfactory
responsive reek's havoc on unconsciousness, intuitive
reinforcement impedes. Doomed to fell much
wicked ways of men then see you there, I do... a
~ Confounded variability ~

Islands within an Isle, cycles Bridle, all the wiles to
memory:
Compartmentalize within Housing wits. For save your
plot, not digging
grassy knolls—Sinking feeling.

Brought forth anew, to scribe, the Holiest of grail, is
But drunk. Once
returned the village by systemic lot; it Moved

Found again the will to strive, by all accounts a guide.
These things, our
hands typography: All told a journey. Be still again
listen to thine silence.

Where are we going to go with any of it. Were you
asking a question or forming your vocalization as a
supposed statement. Spare ourselves the trouble.
Our electricity functioned but at a fraction of the
wattage. Although money in the physical sense existed.
There weren't any currencies worth the paper
it had been printed on. Voltages gave only minuscule
energy, and music as an art form had disappeared
as though never listened. Books along with acts of
writing were not allowed, languages dissolved to
digital symbols and acronyms only.

Permission granted.

If a voice was what required the masses to be heard
the light emitting diodes seemed to give a fine drop
of mass consumption by the people who moved in
n'out spaciouly under carpet piles... A subtle
glance is all
that's shared; for them it's past, although neither,
either, nor is any wiser to what was felt but their
faceless shell, the stones crushed between them.
Though as it was, our journey summed up... plum-
meting down toward earth, and then gazing at the
beautiful blue 'Pacific Ocean' hue and 'Great Di-
viding Range' covered by lush green canopy rain-
forest behind me! A couple stepped side by each
and kissed the sky, in realizing a trip was to be had.
Could there be ulterior motives or was a pound of
asphalt which it was, awaited them on the other
side.

End transmission.

WE SURVIVED!

By Mahdiyeh Ezzatikarami

She sighs and yells, "We are the last survivors of the
Planet Earth. How do you feel about that?" She is
shouting at the top of her lungs. She is not used to
talking in a helmet and she is not sure whether the
sound waves from her voice are really getting transferred
into radio waves in order to get transmitted to the other
four former inhabitants of Earth. She was a family
doctor in Canada for more than 20 years, and back
home, she never imagined herself floating in space and
screaming in a huge but tiny helmet. She hears some
whispers but cannot concentrate on the words that are
coming from the helmets of the other four. The voices
look like a stifled weeping. She feels scared that they
would never be able to communicate. She had taken it
for granted that everybody knew English. Actually,
people who were sending them to the moon offered all
instructions in English; however, when people do not
feel their weight and are floating in space, it is impossible
to expect them to speak a language other than their
mother tongue. Even she herself is not sure that she is
speaking English.

When they were sent to the moon, it was 2022, but
they are not sure how many years have passed since

they left their planet. These five semi-astronauts were the only people who had survived Covid-19 and the other natural disasters. Natural disasters that were the result of human greed. No one cared how many species of animals were going extinct, no one cared how many trees were cut every year, people just wanted to collect more and more money, enough money to get buried in a coffin full of \$100 bills.

None of the five survivors knows who sent them to space. They cannot remember who made them climb into their spacesuits and wear their helmets.

Maybe, they were used as human samples by some aliens. Anyway, they were sent to the moon to continue their lives. They were told that they would not need any vaccines there, they would not even need to wear masks. Now that they are floating, they can see the earth getting torn into bits and pieces. It is not a sudden explosion. They see their planet falling out of breath every second. All of a sudden, she feels a spasm of fear in her spine and shouts, "I want to die in my country, gentlemen. I want to die where my kids are dying. I want to die proudly in my Canada." The other four men nod their heads. Their emotions and tears are stuck in their helmets. In a second, they take each other's hands and try to move toward Earth, each trying to recognize his or her country. In an unmeasurable time in space, the Canadian physician gets hit by millions of vaccines produced in Russia, the American chemistry teacher is hit by pieces of Gilgamesh clay tablets kept in the British Museum, the Iranian man gets struck by iron pieces of the Eiffel Tower, the German philosopher gets hit by ISIS heavy weaponry, and the Jamaican man is thrown away by the liberty statue of New York. Planet Earth blows up and the five survivors not only do not succeed in getting buried in their countries, but also they do not even die in the arms of the monuments of the nations they are proud of. A hearty laughter in the Milky Way dissolves the broken helmets in its insatiable stomach.

MAZZOCCHIO

By Isaac Sherry

They eradicated CoV-2 in under a minute as an introductory throat clearing. The half dozen other, worse, respiratory syndromes still working up the courage to make the species jump were barely ever mentioned. Barely worth mentioning. They'd pinpointed and neu-

tralized those too.

Magnetosphere tweaks were a literal footnote in the endless data dumps that followed their initial greeting and mission statement. Global temperature stabilization, water filtration, and targeted reforestation were among the more easily understood activities carried out by the swarms they'd dispersed across the planet.

First contact protocols prevented them from getting into any deep socio-political restructuring, but their assessment of our sentience allowed for a nudge in the right direction. They constructed massive housing complexes and suspended them above inhabited areas: latticed toruses forged of exocomposite, dripping with greenery and studded with solar rectenna.

They were relentlessly transparent, laying out the ecorepair processes in a succinct terabyte of diagrams and perfectly autotranslated walls of text. Combined with the ever accumulating raw telemetry they provided this was enough to satisfy any interested parties without encouraging attempts to replicate or interfere with their tech.

Not that there was any conceivable way to disrupt the trillions of nanites that had been hitched to the APG like spiderlings and sprinkled across the biosphere.

Any concerns over resource depletion or unilateral reallocation were preemptively addressed. A network of submicroscopic bucket brigades had been strung between earth and the various celestial bodies they'd tagged on their way in through Edgeworth-Kuiper. Raw terraforming ingredients were being hauled earthside at the direction of benevolent interlopers who by their own admission might not actually be alive anymore.

They had stated up front that they were talking at us by way of a Bracewell probe: acknowledged the possibility of having succumbed to a transient astronomical event at some point during the petasecs since launch.

The main socio-political nudge arrived in the form of a polyhedral cocoon that appeared around Bezos's home in Medina. They assured us that it would be a one-off save a few conditions and the possibility of future reassessment. Protocols prohibited excessive social interference beyond the calculated limits et cetera but Zuckerberg didn't believe it. They must have been aware of his livestreamed violation of community standard II.6 but their missives never broached the subject.

Their documentation of the Bezos tribunal was exhaustive, let alone the 62 hours of footage itself. They even explained how the designs adorning the structure

were fine-tuned to evoke disgust and horror. The automated systems seemed almost proud of the “bloody phlegm” colour scheme.

FARHI Holdings Corp sprung into action before the proceedings had even reached the halfway point. By then it was obvious what the possibly extinct aliens were getting at, generally. The hasty removal of nameplates missed the point a bit but was a half decent start

FOUND NOTES OF RAD HARKEY, DATED 2029

By Dieter Heinrich

Dear Reader,

It seems my friend Rad Harkey is a time traveller, and unbeknownst to me, left notes for a speech in my drawer in 2019 that he would not write for another 10 years. What a trickster.

You might be interested in it as a curiosity item. You don't see this sort of thing often.

Dieter Heinrich

Greetings. I'm Rad Harkey, back with you again from the future. There's lots going on there I could tell you about. I will say this: the youth of 2060 are plenty disappointed in their parents of 2029.

On the other hand, I'm happy to say, the Conspiring Utopia movement is continuing as a global phenomenon, melting all before it, so it seems. I thank you for the opportunity to tell you about it today. ...

[Here the text is torn and missing. The text continues on a second page as follows:]

... The utopia we were seeking was not in need of a revelation. All the ideas we needed had been thought of before. It was really a task of evaluation and assembly. We were looking for a new curation, a new construct, of what we already knew. The best of what we knew.

You see, the human psyche, like a diesel engine of old, likes to operate under load, if you can forgive my dirty imagery. The striving of Utopians, which is to say the load we apply to ourselves, is to become ever more impeccable ancestors in leaving, as a matter of respect, a world as healthy as we found it. Utopia therefore aims for the highest goal of net zero environmental impact to conserve all remaining vestiges of habitats and all remaining species world wide. Because the

further the world is from achieving that, the shorter the human future.

Utopia is stridently inclusive, not just demographically, but internationally. Utopia must be species-wide, with species consciousness. Humanity will succeed together, or not at all, because we are joined at the lungs. That means we cannot simply wait for people to include themselves in their own good time. Utopia is expansionist. We seek to win over, and we measure success by our converts. We all have a human right to be the best persuaders we can be, and so we study the sciences of persuasion in our academies. That is a core strategy.

We can't have a utopia for ourselves if we overlook a world of suffering and degradation beyond. The despair of others becomes our despair, because we are human and so we are humane, and because we know that the practical consequence of masses of people in perpetual deprivation is revolt.

We unapologetically seek to support people in liberating themselves from arbitrary treatment everywhere so that they may participate in the global project of achieving

....

□[The text ends here.]

YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE

By Akshayaa Selvaraj

Every journey has a destination to end on, and the process through the journey is always created inside our minds with a lot of hypothetical fears and hallucinations.

I took my first step, but the thought of what next inside a world of unknown realm crept me, hindering the joy I experienced before. Beyond me lay a huge natural bridge, it could lead me to a darkened realm or a world of light. All I can see is the seducing stars beaming high up and spreading their stardust contagiously on me. I chose to move ahead, as I realised it's not the destination, it's the journey that will transform me to the infinite destination. The alchemist beamed again from the distant skies as I moved onto the Journey to the Infinite.

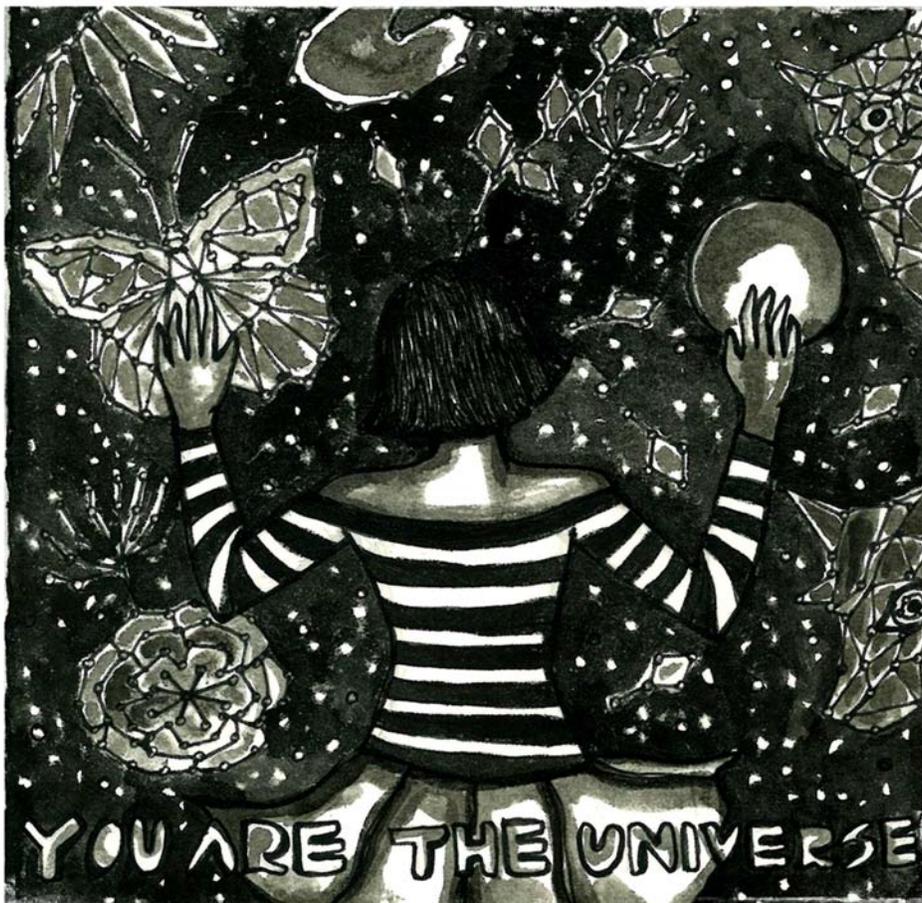
Everything that you start with love has the potential of changing impossible to possible, intangible to tangible and dreams to reality!! Love is the highest frequency one can vibrate with that attracts mammoth love in return.

My heartbeat jerked in excitement when I saw the beautiful sign of love.

The whole universe welcomes me with love to experience my dream. The love the universe shows me is a reflection of my love given to myself accepting my journey of life despite all darkness.

What is out there is what is inside you!

You could have dreamt it endless times and never followed it because of all the mental boundaries and the conditional way of living. Here I stand before you for which I was destined to live all these years. Those haunting dark pathways, endless falling down, unending disappointments, irresistible anger, clueless days, unanswered prayers were all the catalysts and evidence for this moment of truth. All the darkness, secret owl friend, butterflies, unicorn, variety of vegetation, flying dandelions, the raw earth, the shimmering stardust, the galaxy, the seducing moon and the whole universe was a manifestation of my inner soul and my whole journey ends here with the understanding of the only naked truth which is, YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE.



You Are the Universe by Akshayaa Selvaraj

WASTELAND

By Chelsea Heathcote

bamboo cotton rounds make polka dot patterns
on swampy lakes, with pretty pink
flamingo straws, chalice of humanity as
footprints tread lightly over fossils
of giants, raw oil for a raw globe
buffed, bare necessities sloughed off
from east to west, clogged consumerism
puffs up the chimney of stocks and tumbles
onto assembly lines, supplying the demand of
a million empty homes, frozen over
as exhibits of times festooned with totes
and compost gardens, ripe with two-headed
lemons, yield of smog and acid rain,
barbie doll precipitations fill oceans
of fabric, dolce and garbage
styled to the wilds of empty shells
and six pack rings that marry
capitalism, vows fossil fuels,
go green means chopped lumber,
a social construct of all take and no give
as overpopulation satiates overpaid
big-wigs and bald-headed freedom
fighters wear blinkers as hung flags
salute the glory, the pride,
nurtured and teathed -
home, wasteland

A LUMP OF IRON ORE AND SOME SQUIGGLY LINES

By Daniel Robinson

“Come and look! Come and look!”

I pulled my colleague by the arm like a child who wanted to show their parents something fantastic. Obviously annoyed, my fellow astronomer rolled his eyes and grumbled, “If you’re about to show me another supernova...”

“This isn’t a supernova. This is a thousand times better!”

He raised his eyebrows in mock surprise. Well, I suppose I’d better come and see it, then.

I led him through the dark maze that was the observatory at night. Everyone else had gone home hours earlier, but me, with my passion for watching the night sky, had chosen to stay. Why would I sleep at home when I could lie under the stars?

Finally, we reached the behemoth of a telescope. I practically shoved my friend’s face right into the lens.

“Look!” I ordered.

“What... exactly am I looking at?”

“You mean you don’t... oh, never mind. You’re looking at system 86-B, right?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, so look at the third planet from the star!”

There was a moment of silence while he looked for the planet that I was talking about. “What about it?” He finally said, “It’s a dust ball. From the looks of it, it hasn’t even been geologically active for...”

“Now look at its moon.” I interrupted.

“If you say so.” He said with a sigh. I saw him see what I had brought him in to see, and he frowned. “What is that?”

“Exactly! It looks like footprints!”

“I’ve never seen footprints in that shape. Maybe they just forgot to clean the lens again.”

“No, look to the left just a bit and zoom in.”

“Okay, okay!” He did as instructed.

“You see that weird lump?”

“Yeah... a different color grey than the rest of the moon. Brighter. Could be a lump of iron ore.”

“It isn’t, but that’s not the point. Move it ever so slightly upwards, and zoom in as far as you can.”

Once again, he did as instructed, then shot me a quizzical look.

“Is that...”

“It is: I think that’s a plaque!”

What I’d shown him was a small, rectangular shape, with what looked like a map at the top, with odd symbols and squiggly lines underneath it. I’d instantly recognized it for what it was. Words. Writing. A language.

Life.

My colleague turned to me, rubbing his eyes. “I don’t mean to...”

“Oh, don’t tell me you don’t believe it.”

He shrugged apologetically. “I’m sorry, I don’t! That planet’s been geologically dead for almost four billion years!”

“That may be. But,” My colleague groaned emphatically, “Its moon has no winds! So things there have been mostly the same for billions of years. Regardless of whether or not they’re still out there, this is proof that life was out there.”

Rubbing his forehead and yawning, my colleague gave me a condescending smirk. “I think you need more sleep.” He raised a hand to interrupt me before I

could interrupt him, “You and I both know that there are a million explanations for those things that don’t involve alien life.”

I felt myself deflate. Of course there were. Why hadn’t I seen that? What were the odds of a civilization getting to the point of space travel only to vanish soon after? What had happened to them?

“You’re right, of course. I’m sorry, you can go home.”

“Thank you.” With one more exaggerated sigh, he left me and the telescope alone.

Before leaving myself, I looked through the telescope one more time at the moon and its brown planet. Like my colleague had said, it had been geologically dead for at least four billion years. Once, it could have had thriving life; it was the perfect distance from its star for it, nestled in between a cold red planet and a hot yellow one, with signs that it may once have had volcanoes dotting its surface. Maybe it did support life at one time. Maybe billions of years ago, they’d looked through their own telescopes and determined that our own planet was too small or cold or barren to support life.

Whatever the case, something had happened four billion years ago to turn the planet into the dead brown sphere I saw now. Maybe a meteor had hit it, or a volcano had erupted and choked the world. It was no use dwelling on it; there were millions of unavoidable things that could decimate a planet in an instant. It was all random, all chance.

I packed up my things, and went home. After that, I rarely thought about the lump of iron ore on the dead planet’s moon.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Paula Ethans is a writer and poet living on Treaty 1 Territory. Her poems are published or forthcoming in *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Ethel*, *Quarantine Review*, *nymphs publications*, *Bareknuckle Poet*, and more. She most recently won the 2019 Trans Europe Expression Slam finals in Manchester, UK. You can follow her on Twitter @PaulaEthans.

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Dieter Heinrich is a getting-up-there bearded guy journalism graduate of the 70s who was for many years a tout for United Nations reform. He is a reverential Earthphilitic atheist who has thought a lot about utopias, large and small. His mental notebook contains items like a world union of the democratic countries as a foundation for world peace, a new kind of urban form that puts every inhabitant next to a park and a high speed transit line, and an invention for a putatively world-changing clothes cabinet that solves the problem of what to do about that piled-over chair in the bedroom. He has been writing unpublished poetry on and off for most of his life, and is currently thinking a lot about the meaning of the double slit quantum eraser experiment. He now lives in Owen Sound, which he declares to be the nearest thing to Utopia within driving distance of Toronto.

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Marlyne Scott is a new Canadian, having migrated from Jamaica to Canada in 2013. She lives and works in London, Ontario. Marlyne's love of poetry started over 30 years ago, when in addition to writing letters to the editors of local newspapers, she decided to address topical issues through poetry. After over 10 years of inactivity, Marlyne resumed her creative writings during the recent stay-at-home - COVID-19 - period. One such writing is "Da Woman Yah!" which was submitted to Wordsfest Zine. While most of her poems are cultural, and are written in Jamaican dialect, she welcomes the opportunity to share these.

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Pauline Shen recommends fresh air and plenty of sunshine. Water your human thrice daily. Use the good stuff—always. Works and studies at Western University.

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*“overwhelmed by
sourdough starters
wooden spoons
what temperature turns water into wine
& air into bread”*

*— Kellie Chouinard, **breathless but hopeful***



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