

Unfuturing

no. 1

Summer 2024



Unfuturing

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Editor's Letter</i> | 2 |
| From the Archive | |
| <i>Foreword to Thomas More's Utopia</i> William Morris | 4 |
| Nonfiction | |
| <i>Cultivating the Revolutionary Imagination</i> Rowan Glass | 8 |
| <i>Guiding Questions</i> Solarpunk Surf Club | 12 |
| <i>Interview with</i> Clean Air Club | 14 |
| Poetry | |
| <i>Dear Society</i> Noam Audrid | 20 |
| <i>What makes you think you can govern me?</i> Noam Audrid | 22 |
| <i>Ambassador of Homosexuality</i> mk zariel | 24 |

Unfuturing

Issue 1 (Summer 2024)

Edited by Fay Lyssa Fabry

Design by Fay Lyssa Fabry

Inside cover illustrations by Ilya Hourie

Copyright ©2024 by individual contributors

unfuturingzine.com

Editor's Letter

Utopia has long been the container that has harbored promises of liberatory change. For the dominated, exploited, and oppressed, the radical visions presented in the art and literature of utopia have kept alive the dream of a better world. Stemming from the imagination, utopianism has often positioned itself someplace and somewhere else, holding the future open for us to realize new and different ways of life.

But the future has become increasingly difficult to picture: the compounding crises of climate change, neoliberalism, and resurgent fascism continually redefine the present while suppressing our collective ability to imagine any alternative. The traditional terrain for utopia has buckled for the marginalized in a world where catastrophe and everyday life blend seamlessly. As a political horizon, the future has all but disappeared, giving way to the continual dystopia of our present.

Utopianism has sought to adapt as issues of survival and struggle in (and over) the present have drifted to the center of political practice. Prefigurative politics, ways of claiming and remaking space, and an emphasis on the here-and-now have come to shape both theory and

action. As the Out of the Woods writing collective has put it, if there is “no future,” then the radical demand becomes “utopia now!”¹ Another world is no longer something to be realized somewhere and sometime else; if what we write, draw, or produce in between might achieve something, it is the exploration of new forms of solidarity and resistance in our lives today.²

Unfuturing is an invitation to carry out this task: imagining radical change, rooted by the question of what utopianism means when the future isn't centered, isn't relevant (we're trying to survive right now), or is unimaginable (due to ecological crisis, etc.). What creates ruptures in our pervasive sense of dystopia? When white academics claim that community gardens or queer bars are utopias, does that track for you? What places, spaces, or actions give you hope within the present? This zine collects diverse answers and explorations—both in form and content—for those looking to contest the present, rather than stake out claims to the future.

As a reader, you are invited to sample from this small collection as inspiration to make change, adapting it to meet the needs of you and your community as we all seek to recover possibilities for a new, or different, world. It starts now.

[1] Out of the Woods Collective, *Hope Against Hope: Writings on Ecological Crisis* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2020), 145-47.

[2] Bell, David M., *Rethinking Utopia: Place, Power, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2017), 62.

Foreword to Thomas More's Utopia William Morris (1893)

Ralph Robinson's translation of More's *Utopia* would not need any foreword if it were to be looked upon merely as a beautiful book embodying the curious fancies of a great writer and thinker of the period of the Renaissance. No doubt till within the last few years it has been considered by the moderns as nothing more serious than a charming literary exercise, spiced with the interest given to it by the allusions to the history of the time, and by our knowledge of the career of its author.

But the change of ideas concerning 'the best state of a publique weale,' which, I will venture to say, is the great event of the end of this century, has thrown a fresh light upon the book; so that now to some it seems not so much a regret for days which might have been, as (in its essence) a prediction of a state of society which will be. In short this work of the scholar and Catholic, of the man who resisted what has seemed to most the progressive movement of his own time, has in our days become a Socialist tract familiar to the meetings and debating rooms of the political party which was but lately like 'the cloud as big as a man's hand.' Doubtless the *Utopia* is a necessary part of a Socialist's library; yet it seems to me that its value as a book for the study of sociology is rather historic than prophetic, and that

we Socialists should look upon it as a link between the surviving Communism of the Middle Ages (become hopeless in More's time, and doomed to be soon wholly effaced by the advancing wave of Commercial Bureaucracy), and the hopeful and practical progressive movement of to-day. In fact I think More must be looked upon rather as the last of the old than the first of the new.

Apart from what was yet alive in him of medieval Communist tradition, the spirit of association, which amongst other things produced the Gilds, and which was strong in the Medieval Catholic Church itself, other influences were at work to make him take up his parable against the new spirit of his Age. The action of the period of transition from Medieval to Commercial Society with all its brutalities, was before his eyes; and though he was not alone in his time in condemning the injustice and cruelty of the revolution which destroyed the peasant life of England, and turned it into a grazing farm for the moneyed gentry; creating withal at one stroke the propertyless wage-earner, and the master-less vagrant (hodie 'pauper'), yet he saw deeper into its root-causes than any other man of his own day, and left us little to add to his views on this point except a reasonable hope that those 'causes' will yield to a better form of society before long.

Moreover the spirit of the Renaissance, itself the intellectual side of the very movement which he strove against, was strong in him, and doubtless helped to create his *Utopia*, by means of the contrast which it put before his eyes of the ideal free nations of the ancients, and the sordid welter of the struggle for power in the days of dying feudalism, of which he himself was a witness. This Renaissance enthusiasm has supplanted in him the chivalry feeling of the age just passing away. To him war is no longer a delight of the well born, but rather an ugly necessity, to be carried on, if so it must be, by ugly means. Hunting and hawking are no longer the choice pleasures of Knight and Lady,

but are jeered at by him as foolish and unreasonable pieces of butchery: his pleasures are in the main the reasonable ones of learning and music. With all this, his imaginations of the past he must needs read into his ideal vision, together with his own experiences of his time and people. Not only are there bondslaves and a king, and priests almost adored, and cruel punishments for the breach of the marriage contract, in that happy island, but there is throughout an atmosphere of asceticism, which has a curiously blended savour of Cato the Censor and a medieval monk.

On the subject of war; on capital punishment; the responsibility to the public of kings and other official personages and such-like matters, More speaks words that would not be out of place in the mouth of an eighteenth-century Jacobin; and at first sight this seems rather to show sympathy with what is now mere Whigism than with Communism; but it must be remembered that opinions which have become (in words) the mere commonplace of ordinary bourgeois politicians, were then looked on as pieces of startlingly new and advanced thought, and do not put him on the same plane with the mere radical of the last generation.

In More, then, are met together the man instinctively sympathetic with the Communistic side of Medieval society; the protestor against the ugly brutality of the earliest period of Commercialism; the enthusiast of the Renaissance, ever looking toward his idealised ancient society as the type and example of all really intelligent human life; the man tinged with the asceticism at once of the classical philosopher and of the monk: an asceticism indeed which he puts forward not so much as a duty, but rather as a kind of stern adornment of life.

These are we may say, the moods of the man who created Utopia for us; and all are tempered and harmonised by a sensitive clearness and delicate beauty of style, which make the book a living work of art.

But lastly we Socialists cannot forget that these qualities and excellencies meet to produce a steady expression of the longing for a society of equality of condition; a society in which the individual man can scarcely conceive of his existence apart from the Commonwealth of which he forms a portion. This, which is the essence of his book, is the essence also of the struggle in which we are engaged. Though doubtless it was the pressure of circumstances in his own days that made More what he was, yet that pressure forced him to give us, not a vision of the triumph of the new-born capitalistic society, the element in which lived the new learning and the new freedom of thought of his epoch; but a picture (his own indeed, not ours) of the real New Birth which many men before him had desired; and which now indeed we may well hope is drawing near to realization, though after such a long series of events which at the time of their happening seemed to nullify his hopes completely.

1893.

Cultivating the Revolutionary Imagination

Rowan Glass

“The assumption that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking.”

—Murray Bookchin

A leftist truism has it that “it’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism,” and for most people most of the time—even many anti-capitalists—this remains essentially true. The social and economic conditions of life, and the ideological systems that both reproduce and justify them, are such that our imagination is severely constrained, not just politically but ontologically. Under these conditions, and quite by design, futures that do not in some way imply the substantial continuity of current conditions are scarcely possible to imagine; utopia is dead.

Capitalist realism has thereby greatly reduced the scope of the possibly imaginable; it has learned to disguise itself as a metaphysical inevitability that stands outside the particulars of history and culture. We, in turn, have been taught to mistake image for reality. What is at stake here, then, is not what is possible, but what is possible to imagine.

What is the task of revolutionary thinkers, activists, and artists under such conditions? First and foremost—for all political action stems first from a critical imagination, from the willingness to imagine that things could be other than they are—to make possible and bring into being a different kind of imagination: a revolutionary imagination.

The revolutionary imagination is an imagination both wider and deeper than that which capitalist realism conditions us into, one which refuses to take the existing and actual for granted but rather has at its core an unwavering commitment to “the ruthless criticism of all that exists.”

The imaginative revolutionary does not just want to see capitalism and its residues (e.g., racism, colonialism, ecocide, fascism, etc.) be rightfully relegated to the dustbin of history, but also understands that for that to occur—and for liberatory futures to successfully supplant the unfree conditions of the present—not only material conditions but also ideological conditioning must be radically transformed.

By expanding the enclosed imaginative space of capitalist ideology to encompass a far wider expanse of imaginative terrain, we begin to effect the subjective revolution that precedes and enables the objective one. To change the world we must first change ourselves.

How can the revolutionary imagination be cultivated? It begins not with a positive but with a negative operation: by forgetting as much as possible all we think we know about what society is and what it can be. If we take as a given that political “common sense” is only common and only makes sense within the self-reifying ideological bounds of capitalist realism, then it’s clear we must discard commonsensical notions about the world in exchange for an unbridled free-

dom of interpretation. The task then is to derive new meanings from old signifiers—to see the world with new eyes.

No less important than freeing the political imagination is freeing the ontological and epistemological imaginations. We must not only challenge commonplace assumptions about what society can look like but also seek out and advance new ways of being and knowing, both individually and collectively.

Here we can take cues from successful revolutionary movements that departed from a point of ontological or epistemological (that is, broadly speaking, cultural) difference to bring into being new socio-political realities. Not only is another world possible, as another favorite leftist saying has it, but the political realities of movements like the Zapatistas show us that a world is possible where many worlds fit.

The Zapatistas drew on the profound ontological and epistemic alterity—relative to the hegemonic coloniality of mainstream Mexican society—of their Indigenous roots to create a new political reality unimagined and unimaginable within the confines of capitalist realism before their explosive entry on the scene. Perhaps that is why they took the world by surprise; no one saw, no one could see, them coming.

In this sense, by drawing on radically other and highly local traditions of being and seeing to imagine and manifest new political possibilities from below, the Zapatistas demonstrate the power of the revolutionary imagination and prefigure the route we all must take to reshape power in our own lives and within our particular socio-cultural, political, and geographic contexts.

The revolution, when and if it comes, will be local; the old messianic vision of a world revolution sweeping the globe without respect to national, cultural, religious, and other lines of difference—some perhaps insurmountable, practically even if not in the utopian abstract—is less convincing now than ever in our age of increasing fragmentation and differentiation. Consequently, revolutionary transformation will look different everywhere it occurs, taking shape as an ad hoc pastiche, an improvised bricolage, whose parts and arrangements will never be precisely the same here as there.

The task of the imaginative revolutionary and the revolutionary imagination, then, is to critically and creatively interpret local conditions and identify local tools for the creation of authentically and uniquely local political formations.

What are the conditions for revolutionary change? Perhaps a better question is not what they are but where they are. And if my theory is right, they're all around you. The seeds of utopian futures lay dormant in the fallow ground of the present, waiting to be watered by a revolutionary imagination.

Rowan Glass is an anthropologist, multimedia journalist, writer, and filmmaker from Oregon. His research, reporting, and travels have taken him from Indigenous territories in Colombia and Mexico to primary schools in Senegal, Kurdish restaurants in Greece, and music festivals in Morocco. In all his work, Rowan endeavors to help tell engaging stories about underreported people and places through incisive research and creative endeavors. Whether at a keyboard or behind a camera, at home or in the field, Rowan is always looking for the next chance to apply his skills to both creative and socially impactful ends.

Solarpunk Surf Club (est. 2020, United States) is an artist collective that creates and curates egalitarian platforms for surfing the waves of still-possible worlds. We elaborate on social ecological aesthetics AKA solarpunk in order to politicize, historicize, and demystify our collective utopian future.

Solarpunk Surf Club has presented projects internationally in galleries, museums, festivals, conferences, libraries, activist gatherings, and forest occupations. Our collective received the Future Art Award: ECOSYSTEM X from MOZAIK Philanthropy (Los Angeles) and a Games for Change Award (New York) for our artist's game, Solarpunk Futures.

GUIDING QUESTIONS for social ecological aesthetics

How does it affirm interdependence?

How does it build autonomous infrastructure?

How does it socialize reproduction and collectivize care?

How does it localize and directly democratize decision-making?

How does it turn consumers/spectators into producers/collaborators?

How does it reharmonize human society with more-than-human ecologies?

How does it fulfill decolonial, feminist, anti-racist, queer, crip, working-class desire?

How does it prefigure a free, caring, and ecological world?



Solarpunk Surf Club

Interview with Clean Air Club

Would you like to start off with a short introduction to what Clean Air Club is and what you do?

Clean Air Club provides free air purifiers to Chicago artists, organizers, and touring musicians so their events are covid-safer. We are entirely volunteer-run and always free.

How has Clean Air Club changed how you view COVID and the future? Given what you've been able to inspire in others, the expansion of CAC's tools and techniques, as well as the community building you've been able to facilitate, do you see the current situation with more hope than a year ago?

When I first came up with the idea for Clean Air Club, I was experiencing the most pandemic despair since the pandemic began. I barely saw anyone masking anymore, nobody was using air purifiers, and my partner had just tested positive for covid. I knew, though, that things could be different. This past year has been a daily practice in making this vision come to life, and it has transformed my understanding of what's possible when you just decide to build a different



model. Part of the hope I feel now is that the power is clearly in my hands—I don't have to beg people to be covid-safer; I just have to build these spaces and people will come.

Four years after the pandemic was first declared, many systems and institutions appear bent on disempowering people in the face of it: both the federal and local governments have ended all forms of mitigation for the spread of respiratory diseases, CDC recommendations have dwindled to avoid effective preventative measures, even the availability of data on infection rates and spreads has become more difficult to access. In the face of continual signaling that we should accept the current state of things as the 'new normal,' have you seen the work you are doing change the

way you, and the volunteers and community members you work with, think about power and what action is possible beyond those institutions?

Yes absolutely. Institutions do a really good job monopolizing the political landscape and positioning themselves as the gatekeepers of our civic life. They keep us on our back foot, always in the position of begging representatives to do the bare minimum. This strategy is effective (for those in structural power) because it results in us voluntarily relinquishing a lot of the power we actually have. And when I say “power,” I mean the creative life force in all of us. I now see that the most effective political actions I can take are direct, grounded, outside of electoral politics, and focused intently on the immense value of all life. I have learned that I need to get out of my own way, to never second-guess, and to allow my power to flourish unimpeded.

Disempowerment also often comes from a sense of isolation: that issues are singular, struggles need to be addressed privately. Beyond building a community of COVID-conscious volunteers and COVID-safer events, how do you see the work Clear Air Club does connecting to other ongoing issues and struggles?

Clean Air Club is a small way that I have attempted to address one issue in a vast sea of interconnected struggles. But the flipside of intertwined struggle is an intertwined freedom, and pulling one thread here in Chicago helps unravel the entire oppressive system (if we pull on it in the right way). I view all forms of oppression as deriving from the core premise that some lives are not worth living in their fullest freedom—whether we’re talking about the disposability of disabled life, the genocide in Palestine, the intersecting ways that gender and race and class position us farther and farther down the hierarchy of “lives worth living.” No struggle is isolated, even when

it feels that way. And so I think politicizing our loneliness is a good place to start, because it is the first step to revealing the fiction of our disconnectedness.

Are there other ways that Clean Air Club plans (or hopes) to expand, whether that be layered protection, advocacy, organizing, etc.? Are there other community-led projects that you’ve found inspiring, or see inspiring others?

My plan this year is to embark on an advocacy project alongside volunteers with the goal of passing legislation in Chicago requiring minimum standards for air changes per hour in all publicly-accessible buildings. I do not think the state or its institutions is a site of freedom. But they currently have a monopoly on coercive power and I intend to use that in service of our collective well being.

What kind of obstacles does Clean Air Club face? How are you working through them? Are there obstacles you expected to face that ended up not being a problem?

The biggest obstacle Clean Air Club faces right now is a dual and opposing pull from two sides: from those who want Clean Air Club to be more comprehensive in its efforts and thereby (in their eyes) more radical, and those who want Clean Air Club to be absorbed by Liberal corporate entities and thereby defanged. The former pull often comes from people who share my radical politics but who critique in a destructive rather than constructive manner. The latter comes from bourgeois organizations, usually for-profit, who want to burnish their public image through association with a community organization that’s by the people and for the people, but who lack the values and the commitment to our radical politics.

I am working through the first obstacle by trying to listen to the content of criticism even when I disagree strongly with the destructive mode in which it is offered—I rarely reply to it but I do contemplate it very seriously. I work through the second obstacle by periodically reminding myself that any alignment with for-profit entities in Chicago will come at some reputational cost to Clean Air Club, and that what we as a community gain from this alignment must always heavily outweigh that cost.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you for these very interesting questions—they're the best ones I've received in the entirety of Clean Air Club's existence.

Clean Air Club can be found at <https://cleanairclub.org/>
Images on pages 15 and 19 from @cleanairclub on instagram.



Dear Society

Noam Audrid

Dear Society,

Telling me the way to go - never fit myself into your gender
 Confines and even in my disruption their compulsion to fit
 Me into a box flickers behind... shadows. The flames
 Burning my mind, or am I burning. Fuck. Their stereotypes.
 You cannot speak up about anything. Be passionate.
 Rant about ableism and transphobia and they give strange looks
 And yeah girls can do that, but I'm not one of them...
 And my identity of being loud... is this just internalized misogyny...?
 Head and a broken body, too wrong, but I feel no connection to the physical
 Right...?

I guess that's a lie. Cannot be stoic. Only a fragment. If only they
 Could realize they shattered me and stabbed me those very shards
 Every time. Gaping hole in identity within the shifting...
 Runs the river of my identity denser than salt water tears
 Comatose emotion just drifts through the world with the amnesia
 Characterizing half a dozen mental illnesses.

Maybe society would be better if you'd stop fitting us into boxes.
 Boxes that I tried to crumple but only buckled under my weight but
 Never gave way to hell... I'm past caring... we're long gone...
 Cover up the wrong body. Call it the wrong thing. Cover up my wrong mind.
 Call it something else.

Lights and pleasantness. The last of the alphabet and calming herbs
 Burning it all down... Voices and breakdowns. Remember not to be too
 Opinionated. You cannot be opinionated. That's just being annoying
 I hate your ideals... it runs beyond politics. Beyond values beyond all
 Trickling through bloodlines, gurgling brookes and estuaries whatever
 Body of water you learned in your standard fourth grade science textbook...
 Glacial stoic. Eternal pain and maybe one day we can erode it slick or maybe
 That erosion won't be good with too much snowmelt. Burning the past just
 To have a burning future. Burning. It down. Maybe we can talk about some
 Other utopia but we both know not in our life
 Time is running out can we really out
 Live them?

Eyes. Stare back through antiquity. Forgo the jaded and glib rhetoric for us.
 For us. Because maybe we'll reach there. Eventually.
 But we'll be standing on the heaps of corpses. Is that what we really want?
 Another institution built on the corpses. Queer rebel anarchists could be our
 future but
 Somehow the pessimist in me tells me we will fail.
 Alienor for a couple generations...
 Is it just fear or logic speaking? Rants and poetry.
 Borderline breaking down in a wobbly grey trail.
 Forget it. I'll take a disorganized utopia over *this*.

*What makes you think you can
govern me?*

Noam Audrid

What makes you think you can govern me?
When my mind is about to explode and fling
Shrapnel in every direction and into the void
For this soul of mine is weeping, while yours gently
Blow sleeping in the gaze of protective eyes.
Barrage the barricades of your world 'til they tumble
Crumble onto the doorstep of our anarchist utopia?

A ticking fission or fusion bomb around the nuclear family -
I cannot wait until it disintegrates into ash
It never did anything to me - Blood
Lines only weave together pain - Choose
Your own kind over the abstract confines
Of a triple helix with the extra back
Bone of suffering.

The bigotry ebbs and flows through our collective
Memories that we perhaps should forget but cannot
Unsee through flashbacks of those who harmed -
Us, through bricks at glass and break the institution
That hates us - that seeks to eradicate us - Yes
I may be extreme but was that ever a bad thing -
I'll just shine with the light of a trillion photons
Exploding and releasing the energy
Of my ungovernable queer self.

Noam Audrid is a queer neurodivergent artist and poet. Their work focuses on themes of queer anarchism and neurodivergent youth liberation and acceptance. Noam also runs a collective for young neurodivergent people which aims to create materials that express neurodivergence in intersectional and unconventional manners, and they also do autism advocacy work in their local community.

Ambassador of Homosexuality

mk zariel

queers like us ache to carve ourselves starring roles in the pageant called gay rights. become picture-perfect assimilated gays who've never once had an emotional breakdown queers like us can't have problems can we? if we do, you will realize your hierarchies spell death for our chosen family

so queers like us create the illusion of the normal erase the the way a slur not yet reclaimed burns holes in luminous queer skin, our relatives claiming they don't think of us as gay and worst of all, we're free: to be complicit in murder, to marry our oppressors but in three fifths of the country, not all that free from conversion therapy. appeasement is our world— you might even feel—heaven forbid—embarrassed by your gay jokes in the chat if you realized your trolling was more earth-shattering than annoying

we are the palatable queers in stock photos and wholesome tv shows a legion of gay best friends, anti-heroes, ghosts drawn in eternal smiles, then struggle that paints our existence as a tragedy. we don't talk about activist burnout the perpetually stressed lesbians who cry all night to kimya dawson wondering if the day after the revolution they'll finally get to take a deep breath. in your so-called representation, we're too stressed to recall the days when we were preschoolers

who stared at the other girls, feeling like an alien being for aching to sit next to her at circle time and be her world sometimes we still feel like sad gay preschoolers— but we shape ourselves on the daily to win begrudging smiles of acceptance sometimes softly pitying stares, never the bring-down-heteronormativity-with-me-baby kind of love that only queers can have for one another

maybe we can become the queers who declare to straight society we are done being perfect humans.

i am not your ambassador of homosexuality doomed to keep smiling for your straight opinions never discover the liberation i can embrace

not your sob story, not the teenage statistic you trot out at fundraisers in your cheesy suit and tie to make donors to your “nonprofit”

feel straight and self-important. and by the way, i might have even volunteered with you if only you had started an affinity group. but you didn't, and the last time you checked your privilege was never. so today our queerness is everything your heteronormativity stands against— both a revolutionary force and the way my heart bursts into queer love and mild panic when i see any other woman maybe tonight we can do our preschool selves proud: our queer struggle is not yours to claim.

mk zariel (it/they/he) is the author of *Debate Me Bro*, host of *THE CHILD AND ITS ENEMIES*, youth correspondent for the *Anarchist Review of Books*, a lover of multigenerational and inclusive queer spaces, and a trans-anarchist poet and organizer.



Unfuturing no. 1 (Summer 2024)

From the Archive

William Morris *Foreword to Thomas More's Utopia*

Nonfiction

Rowan Glass *Cultivating the Revolutionary Imagination*

Solarpunk Surf Club *Guiding Questions*

Interview with **Clean Air Club**

Poetry

Noam Audrid *Dear Society and What makes you think you can govern me?*

mk zariel *Ambassador of Homosexuality*