



PRISM
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Dagne Forrest

BIRDS IN THE VERY EARLY UNIVERSE

*We didn't have birds in the very early universe; we have birds later on. ...
We didn't have time in the early universe, but we have time later on.*

—James Hartle, astrophysicist, explaining the no-boundary universe he and Stephen Hawking proposed.¹

The initial rounded base of the shuttlecock model envisaged for our universe was a place of “pure space” unburdened by time, its dark bell all potential.

What might emerge from the unseen depths before time began? I think of that swiftly expanding frame like a magician's hat, silken black, full of surprises.

A murmuration of starlings, wings tensed, straining: they are competing with comets, skimming the edges of black holes when I picture them, but this couldn't be.

If I'm to picture birds in the very early universe, it was more like an empty theatre, all muffled shadows. The birds would have hurtled from silence to silence.

Nowhere at first to perch as the universe redshifted in its smooth progress outwards. The songbirds mute in their wandering, alighting on stardust before lifting

off in a dark shimmering cloud of pure energy. No dawn to provide a chorus for, no dusk to cue a quiet roosting, yet somehow I can see them creating a perfect space that never existed in the hushed shadows before time.

¹ <https://www.quantamagazine.org/physicists-debate-hawkings-idea-that-the-universe-had-no-beginning-20190606/>

of hatred and violent extremism. For more information, visit www.sarmistadas.com.

Puneet Dutt's collection *The Better Monsters* (Mansfield Press) was a Finalist for the Trillium Book Award and was Shortlisted for the Raymond Souster Award. Her most recent chapbook was Longlisted for the 2020 Frontier Digital Chapbook Contest. Dutt is an immigrant/settler and lives in Markham with her partner and son.

Dagne Forrest's poetry and creative nonfiction have appeared in journals in Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK. In 2021 she was one of 15 poets featured in Canada's Poem in Your Pocket campaign. Learn more at dagneforrest.com.

K Ho is a writer and photographer based in unceded Coast Salish territory (Vancouver BC). Their work has been published in *THEM lit*, *The Fiddlehead*, and the National Arts Centre, and is forthcoming in *Resonance: Essays on the Craft and Life of Writing*. They are completing their MFA in creative writing.

Meghan Kemp-Gee writes poetry, comics, and scripts in Los Angeles CA and Vancouver BC. Her work has appeared in *Copper Nickel*, *Helen*, *The Rush*, *Switchback*, *Tincture*, *Stone of Madness*, *Altadena Poetry Review*, *Anomaly*, *Autostraddle*, and *Skyd Magazine*. She teaches at Chapman University. You can find her on Twitter @MadMollGreen.

Jim Marino's stories have also appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Santa Monica Review*, *Oyster River Pages*, and elsewhere. His short humor has appeared on *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*. He lives in Cleveland, Ohio, where he teaches Shakespeare.

Originally from Maui, Hawai'i, **Connie Pan's** writing has appeared in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Book Riot*, *Carve*, *HelloGiggles*, the *Ms. Aligned* series, *Salamander*, and elsewhere. An excerpt from her novel-in-progress was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. A freelance writer, she currently lives in Coastal Mississippi with her partner and their dog.

Cale Plett is a nonbinary writer who lives in Winnipeg, where they are watching and listening for stories. Their short fiction and poetry have appeared in *Riddle Fence*, *Prairie Fire*, *Grain*, *CV2*, *The Itemz/ Review*, *PACE*, and elsewhere.

Kyeren Regehr is the author of *Cult Life*, shortlisted for the 2021 ReLit Award in poetry, and *Disassembling A Dancer*, winner of the Raven