

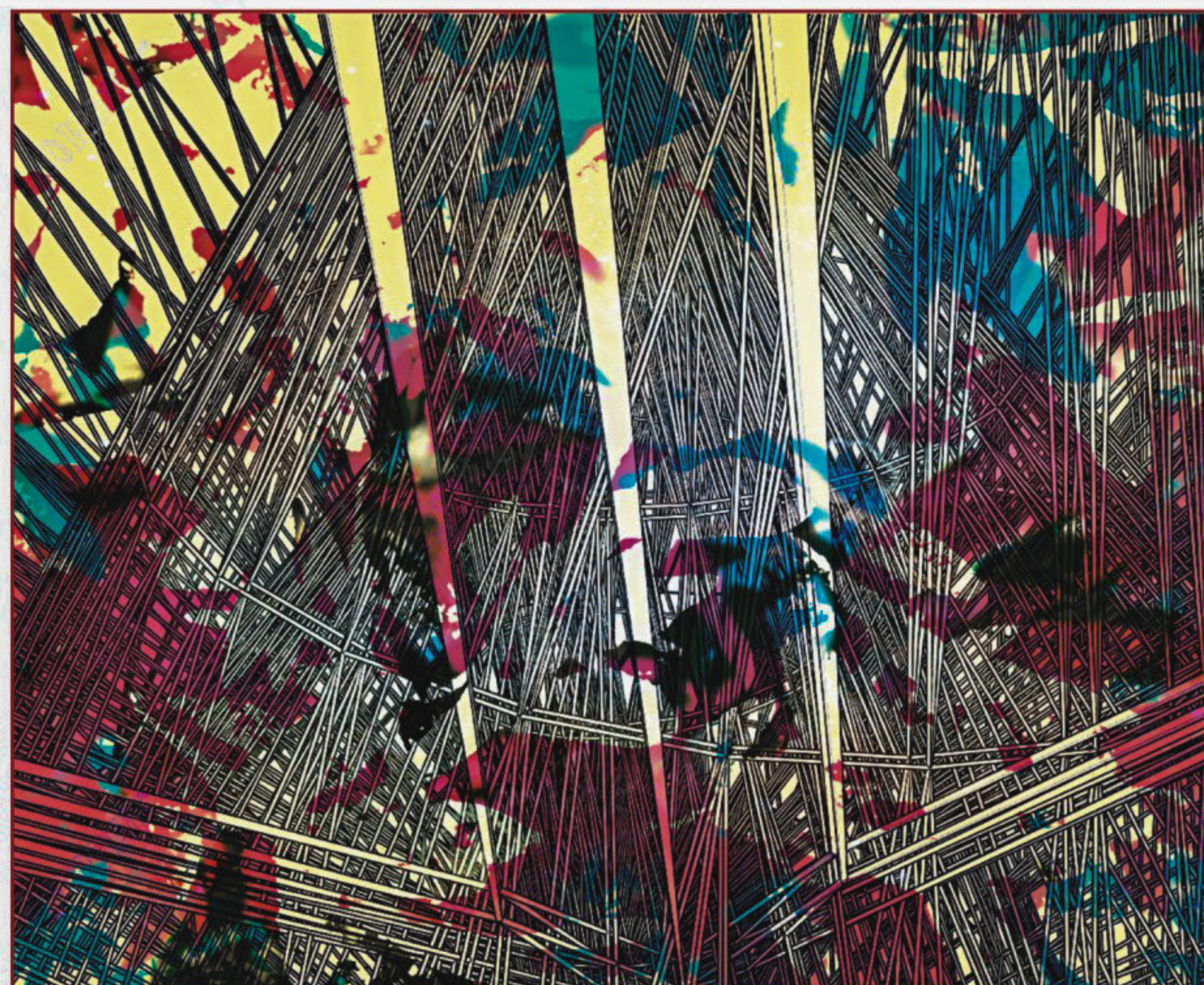
You were never born to die in **mint** condition

AMREETA L. CHOWDHURY

You were never born to die in mint condition.
You were born to explore and ravage every nook and cranny
Of both the world and yourself.
You were born to break your bones, your heart and yourself
In desperate attempts to find your reason for being.
You were born to bruise and scar yourself,
Walk till your knees gave way
On your journey to find the golden city of El Dorado and the silver lining of
your life;
Swim until your skin wrinkled and your eyes burnt
On your quest to find the lost city of Atlantis
And the belief you lost in love and dreams and pixie dust;
Scratch and tear yourself while you dug a hole
To both the centre of the world and your heart;
Sail and swim the seven seas
To find Stevenson's treasure island and Verne's mysterious island
And hope to lose the fear of drowning you held inside.
You were born to travel the world time and time again
Till you believed you could travel it in eighty days with a blindfold on;
You were born to lose Milton's paradise
And on your journey through Inferno and Purgatory
Hope to regain it under Dante's starless skies
As you hoped to regain the love you lost under Gogh's starry ones.
You were born to crack skulls and chip nails
And burn yourself with fire and light as you travelled alongside angels and
demons
And learned to coexist with both.
You were born to tread Whitman's leaves of grass and race through paper
towns
As you hoped again to find all that may yet be real in this world.
You were born to find the chinks in your stardust armour
As you flew past nebulae and quasars with Perry's little prince,
On your odyssey through the history of time
To uncover all the timeless truths no one bothers to look for anymore.
You were born to strain your vocal chords
As you learned to sing with the voices of the mountains,
And splash yourself with colours
As you painted pictures in the sky with all the colours of the wind,
Pictures for Death to marvel at as he went about his daily routine of collecting
souls
And you went about yours to collect memories.
You were born to write till you understood why a raven was like a writing desk
And read till your mind was blown to bits
As you sat through the burning Alexandrian library
And hoped for more poems that seemed to detonate your soul;
You were never born to work a nine to five,
The compass in your head and the map in your heart
Would never allow your restless soul to settle down and wear yourself away
Behind an empty box with a screen.
You were born to turn to dust only after you had conquered the world,
And only after you found out that you can never quite conquer the soul.
My love, you were never born to die in mint condition.



DEFICIT OMNE QUOD NASCITURE



SAGORIKA HAQUE

(everything that is born passes away)

Lights drip off the wall, fluorescent and
fluid, setting the ground afire,
glass spider-webs cover screens; when
they shatter, the shards will take flight.
Thirteen channels of static, forty of
monochromatic bars, the rest but
blackness
(and noise. oh, the terrible, terrible
noise).
Birds a most curious shade of blue drop
out of the sky and into the flames,
camera lenses lose focus; batteries melt
in their cases; cables snap and dance.
Rain comes, but rain does not fall.
Satellites soar to earth; an unplanned
forecast
(a sputter of a stove, a flicker of a light, a
bang, a bang, a bang).

Letters rise off their keys and declare
a war on fingers,
Every button comes to life; rainbows
drench streets; a thousand and one floors
left; do not collect at go.
An orchestra of hissing kettles and
whistling pots and pans set the scene
(for earless beings, they certainly know
how to carry a tune).

Vessels of metal become one with
the ocean; the ocean one with years of
endeavour,
names slip off of tongues, memories out
of minds, faces out of books.
A switch flips, and the world with it.
(the skeletons quiver under their
screams. *the back-ups, too! and their back-
ups and their back-ups! stop staring, and fix
this, goddammit!*)

Trees sway in silence; pillars of
solitude in the field of war,
somewhere a mother screams; they never
printed the baby photos.
Men and women with flags on their
breasts meet in candle-lit rooms, sweat

dribbling into their dress shirts,
shouting and whispering in broken
English; every word a spasm, every
syllable fervid.
(their headphones only of white noise;
after all, no phones to summon
translators)

Companies watch with gaping
mouths as their hopes and dreams (and
stocks, mind you)
crash and burn and disappear; no speck
of dust untouched
Decades of innovation lie in pools of
murky greyness; host now to heels and
dress shoes and knees.
(*might as well have set them on fire, one of
them wail. could've thrown me in for good
measure*)

Yellowed nails jab incessantly at
buttons, but little do they know they've
gone on strike,
figures of blemished flesh buzz around
dead metal boxes, their mouths making
noises with no meaning.
"Why is this happening?" one says to
another, eyes tinged with red. "Is the
world ending?"
(they live in fear of sleep for the numbers
on their clocks have become a's and b's
and q's)

Azure waters lap lazily on shores of
pearly sand and lifeless smartphones,
a man crafts a makeshift guitar from a
shoebox and rubber bands, hands
yearning to be used.
The air hums with cacophonous
strumming and raw baritone song.
(*what are we now?* he croons as a chorus
of crows join him. *oh, what are we now,
what are we now?*)