

A

Viral

Time Warp

***Corona writings from members of
The C group***

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These Days ... Jane Arnold

These days seem very bad.

I am bored and also sad.

Yet there are some good things too,

Good for me and I hope for you.

I find I value now even more

The family and friends that I adore.

The situation has led me to see

More about how I want things to be.

Corona Poem. Rokhatoy Boltaeva

*I picked up my pen again
As Coronavirus increased the pain
Where did this thing come from?
Whether under the ground or from a tree branch
Running tirelessly all over the world
Making a big noise in our hearts
Coronavirus is a dangerous bullet
And my heart is full of it.*

*People, why are you so indifferent?
Why don't you close the border of your souls?
Think of the Next Generation -
Your children and grandchildren
Don't let this virus infect you,
Washing your souls with chlorine,
Following the simple rules of hygiene,
Wear a mask on your face not to let this thing in.*

*If my question is incorrect, please say:
Have you disinfected your soul?!
When will the quarantine be in your soul?!
Let's be resilient and win this virus together!
Good news-you don't have to panic!
This pain is not written for everyone
Thank for every moment given and let's gather
To fight this troubling virus together!*

On Bournemouth Beach Joanne Cox

Paddlers, radlers, piddlers and stragglers,

Pampers, hampers and disenchanted campers,

Swaddlers, squabblers, and people throwing wobblers,

Lotions, potions, laughing gas, and motions,

Droners, phoners, litter louts and groaners,

Lost towels, full bowels and wish-I'd-stayed-at-homers.

Going On. Hugo Dart

I'm afraid for my family.

What if my wife loses her husband?

What if my daughter loses her father?

The distant thunder now seems so near.

I need to be here for them

And for my students.

Comfort them, guide them.

Never let them see you bleed.

Say it will be OK

Especially when there's no indication that it will

And that will make it OK

For a while.

Never more unsure of the present,

Tell them about their future.

Tell them what we're doing matters

And so it will.

One more day teaching,

One more week living,

Knowing how lucky we are,

Relearning to treasure each moment.

*Looking to each other for comfort
And finding it in their eyes
Or finding it in the ways we find
To comfort them.*

*We are scared.
Still we go on.
It will be OK.
Next lesson.*

Loneliness and creativity: Bao Dat

Do calamities respond to humans

or is it the other way around?

When we rehearse isolation

Social rules turn upside down:

Healthy look conceals the sick

Neighbours no longer feel near

Fake news is creating conflict

and tension is building fear

We're resenting the Internet

for dreaming heavens but displaying hell

'Live creatively!' the inner voice said

developing ways to renew yourself"

Amidst distraction from social noise

the creative mind finds its own way

When virtual reality is not a choice

perhaps fantasy asserts its place

We don't give up, we only give

individual hope to the big picture

Between living and waiting to live

let us all choose the former.

TEFL (online) Tantrums. Jenna Edmondson. (Submitted by Peter Brereton)

Just a second, I'm logging on

Teacher can you hear me?

Oh no, what's wrong?!

I didn't realise I was doing a hearing test today

Teacher can you see me?!

Yes I can, go away

I've 2020 vision of how this will pan out

Now please be quiet, no need to shout

Wait a moment are we all here?

Maria was signed in, now she's just disappeared

Pablo please, can you unmute your mic

I can tell you're not listening, you're playing fortnite

OK class, cameras on please

I want to check you're not watching TV

Great, now Maria's back let's begin

Teacher I can't see you

(Honestly it's fine)

Have you tried logging out and back in?

Let's not waste any more time.

Can we check the homework? Page 52

I haven't done it teacher, I didn't know what to do

Well, the instructions were there in the chat and classroom

I had too much work

a project

a test

Ok class, just give me a rest,

Teacher Maria's in the list twice

Great, I don't know why

Maria is that your evil twin

Perhaps one of you

could speak or type?

I don't mind which

ignore the glitch

Just please join in

Teacher Can I go to the toilet?

Yes...you are at home

You can do what you like

Just don't take your phone

What's that sound

Quick run for cover

Oh you're just eating your mic

Or were you fighting your brother?

Maria, Question 1; oh, where has she gone?

Can you please tell me the answer, anyone?

Teacher you're muted

We can't hear what you said

OK, I type, let's do some speaking instead

Can I work with him

Can she work with me

Teacher Sara can't talk

OK you can work in 3s

5 minutes, great off you go

Pablo click on the link

Leave me alone

Give me time to drink a tea

Give me strength

For my headache to leave

I join the room

SPEAK ENGLISH please

And what is this you're drawing

All over slide 3?

Answer the questions,

That's all you've to do

Or there'll be no more games or breakout rooms.

TEACHER kahoot!

Is that my name now?

Right let's try

Everyone-phone's out

I've got no data

The wifi's gone

What's the code

My battery's run out

(Turn down the kahoot theme tune

This is torture, can we end this soon?)

Teacher I'm bored

Thanks, me too

I'm trying my hardest

What about you?

Time for a video

Let me share the screen

no, mute your mics,

just listen to me

now there's an echo

I can hear myself speak

God I sound awful

I can't hear myself think

Let's stop this now

It's time to say goodbye

Oh Maria, you're back!

With your parents... hi!

No I can't go through her progress with you right now

If she was here the whole class we'd have something to talk about

Teacher it's the time

Teacher bye

Bye Teacher

WAIT I haven't given you the homework yet

Now half the class has gone

and we're back to square one

I'll mute myself before I say something I regret

The Teacher Show has come to an end

I'm slowly going round the bend

I've planned for hours and taught for less

Please believe me, I'm doing my best

I can see my flaws on the screen for six hours straight

I'm not a vain person but this angle's not great

I struggle through when the tech is down

And try to ignore family in the background

The reality is that the time goes quite fast

I think most students enjoy this virtual class

As I do too, now and then

But I can't wait to be in the classroom again!

Dear Class,

With each day we're closer to the end of term

And I hope there's a lot you've learned

Hopefully patience; to be kind to others and yourself

To know you're resilient and to appreciate good health

That the book doesn't have the answers

Maybe your parents or teachers don't too

If you want to learn something it has to come from you

Go from these few months knowing you can cope

And see you back in the classroom soon, I hope.

One Day: a poem of parts. Clare Fearnley (submitted by David Heathfield)

*a rabbit with a henna-red ruff
bounces across my path*

*my world is not
contained
by walls
and
never has been*

*listening to the elders
i pass through boundaries
of time, of place
of gender, of race -
their words, silences and laughter
guiding me
into their worlds*

*i rest from my job,
go into our kitchen
and find myself cast
as a combatant
by my bubble & life partner*

*but
i am resting
from all unnecessary work
and will not
play that game*

*Take all blame onto yourself,
Gautama Buddha teaches*

*It's surprisingly restful,
a way of letting go*

*From my window
i notice
the frothy yucca blossoms
have dropped,
the ferns
with their awkward, rigid, brown leaves
are mourning
the absence of rainforest canopy companions,
the small citrus trees
are loaded with green fruit,
and in our Southern Hemisphere garden
strangely
the bay tree and the sage plants
flourish*

*A contribution from the project One Day at Home in the World curated by Philip Robinson
<https://www.facebook.com/One-day-at-home-in-the-world-102068154812701/>*

Stay safe, stay home. Claudia Ferradas

*Outside the shuttered windows of the shoe shop
an old man hands out faded photocopies
of flyers advertising homemade food.
I perceive a faint smile behind the face mask.
It's been weeks since I looked at someone's eyes.
He calls out as he notices my earphones:
"Don't cook today, please, madam. Free delivery."
I utter muffled words that may be a "thank you".
I don't think I remember my own voice.*

*I buy my groceries and rush back to my hideout.
The old man sees me. No other passers-by.
"Stay safe at home, please, madam. Free delivery".*

*I get back in to disinfect each item
and wash my hands to get ready to cook.
I know the flyer's waiting in my pocket.
I've taken off my face mask, not the earphones:
I like the old song, I think it's Paul McCartney's,
the one that speaks about "hope of deliverance"
yes, that one, "from the darkness that surrounds us".*

To: Corona Virus. Flora Debora Floris

*My corona virus, to you I write
Thinking of your deathly feet fills my days
Invading my mind all day and through the night
Always dreaming about the scary gate
I hate the way you touch my body
Now let me get away with a wary heart
Remember my last words whilst we're apart.*

*Corona
Death, misery
Running, touching, crashing
I could never believe it
Virus*

*Depressing night-time
A live, wide virus crashing
Watching this zombie*

To: Corona Warriors. Joanne Tantyana Supardi (Flora's 10-year-old daughter)

*Warriors
Doctors, nurses, police,
All of them
They risk their lives to save ours
Want nothing in return -
But please help us to help them
fight the virus
Stay at home
Stay safe*

NO MORE Charles Hadfield (previously published in 'A Point of View)

<https://facqueuesol-books.jimdo.com/a-point-of-view>

no more to look to the peaks

the snows are all gone and the blue

blue blue is now fixed in its glare

& the glinting icewalls on the sheer black rock

are all dead waterfalls

& the delicate cornices

are long blown away like spindrift

along a long deserted beach where the surf hardly bothers to unfold any more

& the clatters

of exploding scree

as the faces collapse

mean the highest mountains are now flattened into limitless plains & the beds of the seas

are even further down below there now than anyone before us could ever have dreamed

the limit

of my world

was once

just

the top

of that tree

glimpsed

through a gap

in

the bedroom

curtains

After the Storm. Charles Hadfield

The least changes of course were seen in open countryside, deserts, mountain ranges, but even there the absence of traffic, on foot or on animals, had a gradual effect as the roads and tracks were abandoned, and where slash-&-burn agriculture had steadily eroded the great forests of the tropics, the vegetation surprisingly quickly crept back and retook over the territory devastated by farmers and mining industries. The huge dams and furnaces, power stations, airports, motorway intersections, all the concrete magnificence of the 20th century, without constant use, maintenance, cleaning, soon cracked and became footholds for weeds, which cracked their surface further, exposing larger nooks and crannies, enabling larger plants to take root, so that within a year or two trees were growing from the sides and top of these once awe-inspiring structures. After a decade of seasons, changing temperatures, ever-moving light and water, many of these were entangled and covered over like the ancient ruins of central America or south-east Asia. And as for plastic: exposed to light and heat, it quickly disintegrated into ever smaller particles, colourless flakes, which were absorbed into the new human-less ecosystem, leaving a thin layer of evidence for any future geologists to remark on as signs of a former once-thriving civilisation.

See Charlie's other book, Burnings: <https://facqueuesol-books.jimdo.com/burnings>

Dr Rieux checks his Facebook newsfeed. Jill Hadfield

Rieux: There seem to be an unusual number of rats around – anyone else noticed? Or is it just my street LOL.

Gonzales

My neighbours are sick. They say it's cholera.

Cottard

Rat spotting: How many did you get?

Raoul 1

Garcia10

Marcel25

Gonzalez50

Raoul

Here's our rat. Soooooo cute!



Oran Prefecture

This is a false alarm. The rumours of an epidemic that have been circulating are unfounded and should be ignored. We urge you to wait out the course of events calmly.

Rieux a policy of wait-and-see is, to say the least of it, unwise.

Richard The Prefect is right. We do not want to increase public alarm.

Gonzalez

Rat shooting . Shot 5 rats today. You?

Raoul 10

Luis 20

Cottard 0

Oran Prefecture

It is not possible as yet to say if this fever is contagious. The symptoms are not so marked as to be really perturbing. It seems to be a false alarm and the authorities feel sure they can rely on the townspeople to treat the situation with composure.

Richard: A sensible measured approach. We do not want mass hysteria

Castel: How can they be so blind!

Grand

Decided to write a novel. Creativity is the best way of keeping calm. What do you think of my first sentence?

One fine morning in the month of May an elegant young horsewoman might have been seen riding a handsome sorrel mare along the flowery avenues of the Bois de Boulogne

Oran Prefecture

I now take the responsibility of tightening up regulations. Compulsory declaration of all cases of fever and their isolation are to be strictly enforced. The residences of sick people are to be shut up and disinfected; persons living in the same house are to go into quarantine; burials are to be supervised by the local authorities.

Rieux: Too little too late!

Paneloux The just man need have no fear, but the evildoer has good cause to tremble. For plague is the flail of God and the world His threshing-floor

Othon Absolutely irrefutable.

Grand

Or this: One fine morning in May a slim young horsewoman might have been seen riding a handsome sorrel mare along the flowery avenues of the Bois de Boulogne.' Don't you agree with me one sees her better that way? But what about 'handsome'? Maybe black would be a better adjective – more visual?

Rieux Sorrel is a colour though.

Grand What colour?

Rieux Not black.

Tarrou How about glossy?

Grand Great idea!

Oran Prefecture

We are pleased to report that supplies of serum have arrived.

Rieux There is not enough if the epidemic is to spread. We need more .

Oran Prefecture: The emergency reserve stock is exhausted,

Raoul

There may not be enough serum – but peppermint lozenges are reportedly effective against the infection.

Oran Prefecture

Proclaim a state of plague. Close the town.

Rieux So they've got alarmed at last.

Grand

How about this : “One fine morning in May a slim young horsewoman might have been seen riding a glossy sorrel mare along the flower-strewn avenues of the Bois de Boulogne.”

Rieux Are the flowers on the trees or on the road?

Grand

Looked for peppermint lozenges - the shelves are empty!

Raoul : PM me I may be able to help.

Gonzalez

Check out this website: [https. Coup d'etat goes viral](https://www.coupd'etat.com)

The virus is being spread deliberately by the Algerians who are going to use our weakness to mount a revolution! En garde!

Rieux Check with snopes.com It's fake news. And anyway the plague is not a virus.

Rambert

Checking reactions. How are you all doing?

Tarrou Bored , so bored! Drift through life the prey of aimless days and sterile memories

Rieux An irrational longing to hark back to the past or to speed up the march of lives

Rambert Lethargy . Great misfortunes are monotonous. Prowling round my room all day .

Marcel

There don't seem to be any rats around any more.

Cottard

Enough of this melancholy! Let's be positive! What do you do to have fun?

Marcel Evening dress is a sure charm against the plague!

Rieux Friendly contact , human warmth – cafes!

Tarrou An evening swim

L'Espagnol Asthmatique Moving peas from one pan to another

Grumpy Old Fart Spitting at cats from my balcony

Rieux

The newspapers comply with all instructions from the government - optimism at all costs!

Oran Prefecture

Official: The infection may be deliberately being spread by the British who want to consolidate their control over Africa. Look for any suspicious activity by British citizens.

Raoul

Official: Waterproof outer garments can protect against the plague.

Cottard

How many words can you make containing peste?

Rambert De-preste

Gonzalez Not impreste

Raoul Pest-O (not obtainable in shops any more)

Marcel Pesterers

Garcia Cheapest

Rambert

It's raining! Looked for an anorak – but shops have none left!

Raoul PM me I may be able to help

Tarrou

OMG they're coming back! Saw a rat again today.

Raoul

The best protection against infection is reputedly a bottle of good wine.

Grand

Have decided to cut all adjectives!

One morning in May a horsewoman might have been seen riding a mare along the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne."

Cottard

Short of liquor? Cigarettes?

Our online deliveries may be able to help! www.cottardetraoul@finewines.com

Rieux

A new order of life must set in after this plague.

Tarrou What do you mean by the new normal – new films at the picture houses?

Geoffrey Chaucer Cleans The Beach. Jill Hadfield

*Whan the temperature in June is hotte
Than longen folk to doon what they should notte
And specially from every shire's ende of Engeland
To Bournemouthe they wende.*

*Some had woken with the lark
To finde a space where they could parke
Otheres parken everywhere
Legal or not , they did not care*

*And loutes imbiben swich liquor
Of which vertú engendred is the boor
And dispueth eche hir beachside space
And one another puncheth in the face*

*Then when al that motley bunch were gone
Cleanen we the beche anon
And finden underwear and socks
And defecations in a box*

*And so was I seke of hem everichon
That I wrote to my PM anon
To demaunde new laws straight be done
But from him answere was there none.*

Cyclonic thoughts during Covid corral :Day 66. Stephen Hall

It's day 66 and the devil did not do it.

Movement Control Order- now Conditional with a long list.

Crashing in on me are memories of caught, crashing no-exit walls of water and wind,

Comfort level nil and remembered casualties

Not Zoomed on screens of comfort couch-wallowing.

In '86 Solomon Islands housebound, then driving, driving rain,

Slopes slid, ships in streets,

My mind the screen of screaming aerial tin sheets

Coconut trees crashing, homes a flat plane of nothing, ufalla feelim.

Walls of corrugated water in front, behind, all around, hemmed in.

No water but too much mud, no power, nuting. Stop long haus.

The swollen surging enemy river, a bathing friend in the aftermath.

And now in the clear, air- con cocoon in our tropical, twenty- twenty Malaysia,

It's vision 2020 of plastic- cocooned blue death, here then, suddenly there. Spiky unknown.

I inhale blue skies and peace in silence

while some see the blue of PPE not free to live, maybe a sad passing

The pulsing death of staccato ticker tape screen numbers.

Nature sweeps in ways we can but wonder

Oh Gaia seeking balance

Images remain cyclonic and Covid.

I breathe slow and thankful.

***Special Quarantine. (To the tune of - We all live in a yellow submarine).
Mick Hillyard (Submitted by Susan Hillyard)***

*Your friends are home and in their rooms,
But you can talk to them when you Zoom.*

*You can read a lot of books,
You can even learn to cook.*

*Dance a dance or sing a song,
Get it right or get it wrong.*

*Hope you'll soon be back at school,
With your classmates - Won't that be cool?*

*We all live in a special Quarantine, special Quarantine, special Quarantine.
We all live in a special Quarantine, special Quarantine, special Quarantine.*

*And at Nightingale we say,
"Where there's a will, there's a way"*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSo78Dfm7Uo>

Random Ramblings. Rob Howard

*I've often complained of the lack of time
To work, to play, to sleep
It took a pandemic to regain mine
Yet, I hope for it not to repeat*

*Locked up for me is nothing new
I've been working online for ages
I don't leave the house very often it's true
But I'm not sure I like life in cages*

*I do enjoy the limited commitments
I'm thankful I don't need to travel
I wear my mask with little resistance
Torn and worn and about to unravel*

*More time to catch up on work and email
No need for procrastination
To rest and reflect on a deeper scale
Enjoying both in combination*

*I'm even happy with the silence
No traffic, no planes no yelling
It's made its way towards inner guidance
Plus other noble thoughts compelling*

*I've even planted a little garden
Some cacti, veggies and flowers
Building things, watching glue harden
Forgetting to take a few showers*

*Eating too much, stuffing my gullet
Trading boredom for perceived hunger
My hair's too long, I've got a mullet
Looked ridiculous even when I was younger*

*Setting sights on fixing the home
Moving memories from shelf to shelf
I'm feeling good about being alone
By taking the time to love myself*

*But the extra time has been a relief
It's given much time to ponder
It's made me turn the proverbial leaf
And live my life much fonder*

Sweat-less. Deepa Kiran

ONE

*A black & white photograph of my mother, circa 1970
Tumbled out of a long-forgotten Uncle's attic, into the family WhatsApp group
Lockdown treasures*

*An unseen picture of my mother
A rock star!*

*Childhood memories
Mother dancing away to herself in the kitchen
Unmindful of that around
Unaware of that within*

*"Amma, you dance so beautifully"
"Huh, what nonsense you speak....run off and play "*

*My mother
An unknown artist
An artist unseen to herself*

*A work assignment I received in lockdown
I received many
This one, a paid one
A welcome relief
Video performance home-recorded with help from two teenage sons
Video uploaded*

*Meanwhile....
Remember not to sweat they say
But memories and sweat slip away
There's this and that to do
There are bills to pay
Heart seeks comfort in times of need
And truth
Ah Truth! Plays hide and seek*

TWO

*Another picture of mother
My mother with her mother
My grandmother, gone too soon
Never to be seen with her arms wrapped around her daughter*

*Art erased
Memories of song and dance rejected*

*“ Rejected! ”
My video - rejected
“ Record performance again. This time without sweat ” they said*

*Meanwhile....
Remember not to sweat they say
But memories & sweat slip away
There's this and that to do
There are bills to pay
Heart seeks comfort in times of need
And truth
Ah Truth! Plays hide and seek*

THREE

*Mother all of 74 now
Pictures with unseen sweat
Grandmother 32 forever
More pictures with unseen art.*

*I home-recorded once more
Tropical summer
A sweat-free recording*

*Video Submission - not rejected
Cheque accepted
Sweat deleted
Only Art seen*

Meanwhile....

Remember not to sweat they say

But memories & sweat slip away

There's this and that to do

There are bills to pay

Heart seeks comfort in times of need

And truth

Ah Truth! Plays hide and seek

Mini-saga: Moment of fragility. Sue Leather

At the pharmacy, suddenly, a man's loud voice: 'Whaddya think you're doing?' I turn

to see an older white guy shouting at a young Asian man. 'You're not six feet away!'

The young man quietly says yes, he was far away.

'But I'm Asian,' the young man whispers to me.

Pandemic haikus and tankas. Alan Maley

*there's a pandemic:
bluebells infecting the woods,
leaves out of control.
Lockdown's out of the question -
spring's a runaway virus.*

*time has lost its shape
we look for trusted signposts
but they point nowhere*

*Salvador Dali's
The Persistence of Memory -
all those melting clocks:
that's how life feels nowadays,
time leaking slowly away.*

*she's wearing a mask
against the virus - happy,
it hides her hare lip.*

*the motorways empty
the river brimming with fish
the nights full of stars*

Vocabulary Lesson. Peter Medgyes

Till March this year I used to teach:

„CORONA's not the funny thing

That decks the head of queen and king.

That's called a CROWN" – so I would preach.

„The word CORONA is for those

Who marvel at the ring of light

Around the sun or moon all bright,

Among the billion stars it glows.”

But then in March the lightning struck!

CORONA reared its ugly head,

Fast and unstopably it spread

Around the globe, it ran amok.

Our hearts are filled with fear and gloom.

The streets are empty, not a soul,

We're locked in our cubbyhole,

But teaching steady on the Zoom.

Yet don't give up but undeterred

Go fight this dragon brave and bold,

United be the young and old,

And we will WIN, please mark my word!

modern times. Alex Meier

*stay
safe
and
healthy*

*stay
alert*

*control
the
virus*

*save
lives*

*end
up
by kicking
the
bucket
and
by
pushing
up
the
daisies*

Coronalingo. Alex Meier

imposing restrictions
on an unprecedented scale

distance keeping
distance learning
screen casting

panic buying

covidiots

Coronalingo (II)

we run for our lives
shelter in place

shutdown
lockdown

quarantine requirements
temperature reading
please cooperate

nothing to be frightened of?

who are our wardens?

in quarantini
martini

Corona Expedition. Olja Milosevic

Outside has shrunk

Inside has extended.

My thoughts are my new reality.

I dive into this long-neglected world

and joyfully discover myself.



Lockdown view. Chrysa Papalazarou

stormy day - though spring had arrived

dark sky, wind from the north

the neighbour had hung the laundry

a purple sheet billowing

thought I smelled spring's purples:

the lilacs and the lavenders

in the fields where we could not be

I sensed people next door were fine too

Social Distancing. Phuong Le

The first month,

Trees were happy: green and fresh.

Streets were happy: clean and quiet.

Beaches were happy: spacious and restful

The air was happy: cool and pure.

The sun was happy: 'What a peaceful world!'

The second month,

Trees were singing, playing with gusts of wind.

Streets were watching, welcoming autumn leaves.

Beaches were dreaming, listening to birds.

The winds were flying, enjoying freedom.

The sun was smiling: 'What a lovely world!'

The third month,

Trees felt abandoned: 'No one cared for us'.

Streets felt uneasy: 'No one talked to us'.

Beaches felt gloomy: 'No one needed us'.

The winds felt lonely: 'No one sang with us'.

The sun was nodding: 'What a boring world!'

The Grab-bike Man in COVID Time. Phuong Le

*The Grab-bike man stands at a street corner,
Whether in hot sun or in heavy rain,
From dawn to dusk, hoping for phone calls
To take clients to their destinations.*

*Now it's COVID pandemic and 'Stay home' order:
Streets are deserted and mostly quiet,
Apart from urgent ambulance sirens,
And some passers-by wearing facial masks.*

*The Grab-bike man walks around, up and down,
Searching in vain for one or two clients.
But no one is in sight except for himself.
The sun goes up and then the sun goes down.*

*Street lights come on, too weak to see faces.
His grey hair and the old bike are still there
Before darkness engulfs everything again.
When will his plight ever change?*

Note: *Grab bike man:* a person who delivers legal passenger motorbike services in Vietnam

Mommy's reminders. Phuong Le

I'm still at work, my son.

And I can't be home as I promised.

In this battle, we're on the front line.

I'm still at work, my son.

Many patients are badly in need.

Many others are fighting like me.

I'm still at work, my son.

Every second can mean life or death.

We must go on and we can't give up.

I believe in you, dear son.

You're brave like Dad, and caring like Mom.

You can handle things when I'm not home.

Hold your brother if he cries at night.

Let him win those online games he has.

Although I know you can beat him.

Check the doors before going to bed.

And hold my pillow if you miss me.

We'll surely have 'Face Time' after my shifts.

This fight wears on and we must do our best,

Once this pandemic's over, I'll be home,

Life back to normal - and we'll no longer be alone.

Coronavirus pandemic. Phuong Le

Daily news reports

More infections, increased deaths.

Global fears and threats.

Social distancing,

Quarantine. Isolation.

All towns are sleeping.

Peddlers and beggars.

Gazing blankly in despair

‘Where are we going?’

Cool rice ATMs

A timely innovation,

Heartfelt compassion.

My Corona! George Raptopoulos

Ooh, my very ugly one, my ugly one

When you gonna give me a break, Corona

Ooh, you make my nose run, my nose run

Got it coming off o' the line, Corona.

Never gonna stop, give it up, such a dirty find.

You always play it up, for the loss of the human kind

My, my, my, ay, ay, whoa!

Ay, ay, ay, Corona.

Go a little further, huh, a-will ya, huh?

Far enough to miss my eyes, Corona,

Keeping it a mystery, it gets to me,

Running down the length of my lungs, Corona

Never gonna stop, give it up, such a dirty mind.

When you gonna leave me be, a gift to me

Is it just a matter of time, Corona?

Is it d-d-destiny, d-destiny,

Or is it just a game... this Corona?

(With acknowledgement to The Knack for My Sharona.)

Online classes: An odyssey. Clarissa Rosa

Before the lesson...

My mic isn't working, oh no! I can't believe it is happening again!

I will restart the computer, maybe it will work!

Loading... Oh my, it's been 15 minutes!

The poor teacher starts crying!

I hate these online classes, says the teacher.

It works! Thanks, Lord!

Start

During the lesson...

Hello everybody, says the teacher with a smile.

odd noises playing in the background

Hello teacher, says Beatrice. Hello teacher, says Cath, HELLO TEACHER, yells David. Hello...*hello (eco)*...teacher...*teacher (eco)*, says Raoul. Hello teacher, says everybody at the same time.

Teacher, teacher, look at me, look it's my dog... Mickey. Teacher, teacher...

How are you? asks the teacher

I'm good, but I miss my friends, says Sofia. Not so good, online classes at school sucks, says Victor. I'm mad, tomorrow is my birthday and I can't have a party, says Mary. I'm fine, but I miss my ballet lesson, says Melissa.

Oh guys, hope you'll soon be back at school, says the teacher.

Ok let's start our lesson...

Madison can you hear us? Open your books at page 50... page 50... 5 and 0. Justin, can you read the first paragraph, please? Justin... Justin...? David, stop playing with your brother, please! Carol, please mute your mic. Guys!!!! Raise your hand before

speaking. Repeat after me, wait, mute your mics, and repeat after me. Speak in English! Leo, your pet lizard is beautiful, but can you please stop playing with it and pay attention. Stop using the chat! Hello, Melissa's mom... yes, of course, she can do her homework later... no problem! Guys, pay attention to me, this is very important... oh wait... I'm muted... again. Homework! It's page 45...45... 4 and 5.

Bye, bye everybody, says the exhausted teacher.

Bye teacher, says Beatrice. BYE BYE TEACHER, yells David. Bye...bye (eco)...teacher...teacher (eco), says Raoul. Bye teacher I love you, says Carol. Bye teacher, I love your classes, says Victor. Bye, bye teacher, see you on Thursday, says Madison. Bye teacher, thank you, say Melissa and her mom. Bye teacher, says everybody at the same time.

End meeting for all.

After lesson...

headache

backache

dry throat

Oh my... I love these kids! says the teacher.

Corona Haikus. Marjorie Rosenberg

Lockdown

*Lockdown's something new
Inside four walls all day long
But the time flies by.*

Cancelled trips

*Trips were planned but then
cancellations kept coming.
Now it's all online.*

Keeping fit

*How do we keep fit?
An exercise DVD
really saves the day.*

Hobbies

*Finding new hobbies
Exchanging ideas online
We're all doing it.*

Growing food

*Gardening is in.
Photos of plants and harvests
make us all happy.*

Cooking

*Sharing recipes
and trying out new dishes
makes the days go by.*

So distant, yet so close. Malu Sciamarelli

*Locked in this room,
though never truly alone.
The clock ticks Zoom,
one by one, all faces shown.*

*Thinking I have known
all of them so well,
but looking at that little girl,
who could ever tell?*

*Once hugging and kissing,
happily shining bright.
How could I know her secret,
the one she always kept so tight?*

*The social distance revealed
all her heart had hidden clearly:
a daughter with a mother
who refused to love her dearly.*

*From the distance, I now
realise what her eyes cannot hide.
She is eager to show more,
all her heart cannot abide.*

*From the distance, I now
see her true self,
all she has ever wanted to be:
loved, and nothing else.*

*Locked in this room,
I now wonder to myself,
has the distance made me close
to the ones who needed me the most?*

*Has the distance brought me close
to the ones who needed to be truly seen?*

*Has the distance brought me close
to the ones who just needed to be loved?*

*Distant...close...
Some words will never be the same
Once this quarantine is over.*

Following the Science. Jim Scrivener.

*The pear blossoms burst to brilliant daylight
Unfolding bleach-pale, blurred, observed through glass.
A fortnight on, scrunched up dark shades of parchment,
They drift on slow trajectories down to the grass.*

*Bluebell police. Forget-me-not sunbathers.
We envy those outdoors, quite out of reach.
The sky flies by, so gorgeous blue and planeless.
The seagulls have no chips. Seals take the beach.*

*What kind of April smells so sweet, inviting
That I close it tighter off, for fear of air?
“Do not resuscitate” might have been kinder.
Bulbs left underground. No buds to spare.*

*Instead the growing panic of this season
Contradicts the daily spit of lies.
While Spring asserts: “Just following the science”.
Here’s fever, intubation, no goodbyes.*

*Some late late blossoms line the road with pinkness
As we stay home, blinds down, no words for grief.
One fewer person living in this world now.
But the trees, the trees are coming into leaf.*

A Cupid Wannabe. Harisimran Singh

In eye-rhyme you recall just love

For Cupid fits you like a glove,

And yet you only instil fear

To bid us all not to come near.

In all you're really far from vile,

Your star-like shape just makes us smile;

You've banished people from the street

To lockdown in their homes—discreet.

You broke the office stranglehold

To place us in a nicer mould:

There's work from home for those who may,

While others now can only pray.

You cleaned the sky, the air, and clime;

The distant hills now look their prime.

The birds and fauna now appear,

Reclaim the turf both far and near.

We do not know your actual quest

And so we make this one request:

Please come in love, and life ignite;

Let candles burn through day and night.

Re-light us with Promethean fire;

Bring love and cheer; forget the ire.

The visitor cat. Jane Spiro

*The visitor cat scales the garden wall,
hangs its grey tail through the lilac
sneering at quarantine.*

*This kingdom has been his own
since the days of the Pharaohs.
He knows how he has been worshipped.
He sits on the wall in his ermines,
proud whiskers quivering with the relish
of dictatorship, and he knows
how the newly brave wrens, perky robins
are his slaves, their trips to the birdhouse
swift and fearful, his terrain marked
like nations, his from theirs.*

.

*But he is not the only god
of the garden, and there are other ways
of praying. On the apex of the roof
two doves, their curved bellies
blending greys, warble the birth of spring,
a large twig in their beak. Their fragile ark
balances in the bay tree, shakes
with their making. It is they
who herald the first green shoots,
messengers of the world's second chance.*

Zooming home. Jane Spiro

*These private spaces, we are sharing them now –
our skylights, fireplaces, family photos,*

*our taste in paintings, colour of walls,
spines of books, clutter on desks.*

*Russian ballerinas dance in their kitchens
with saucepans of dumplings, dinnerplate fans -*

*conductors in their sitting rooms wave batons
with oddly-shaped ornaments accidentally in frame,*

*cousins beam in to family parties like starlings
squares reconfiguring seamlessly on screen,*

*click, zoom in and out, turn upside down,
pick up passing carpet, tips of shoes,*

*and then we are shocked at the dazzle of our selves,
lines and all, our hidden selves*

*pushed out into the day, oddly shy, oddly new
to ourselves too as our hair begins to grow,
shows its grey.*

The Silent Cell. Jane Spiro

*Invented borders, man-made walls,
but nothing holds back the silent cell. Its journey
is unstoppable, doesn't flow that way.*

*We draw up laws, make up the rules.
but nature doesn't listen, refuses to obey.*

*We privatise water, nationalise air,
but nature's takes no notice of anything we say.*

*We like to think we come from different soils
but earth joins us all, and we are water, DNA.*

*As we step back, the mountain goats, dolphins,
freshwater fish, baby toads reclaim the day.*

*Oh little homo sapiens, we thought we ruled the world
but a cell we cannot taste or smell
has snatched our crown away.*

Three Syllabic Godheads. Sharoon Sunny

*The Holy Trinity had no answers
Father, Son and the Holy Ghost
Were now seated on the bleachers*

*There is a new Godhead
Who is utterly devastating
Human lives by tearing it into shreds*

*Phonologists would have a field day
Writing papers about three syllable pandemics
paving the way for a new doomsday*

*Bubonic, Ebola and Corona
Together have created a strange sort of enigma
Catapulting human lives into a collective amnesia*

*We were here not so long ago...
Contemplating the strange new bedfellow
A Holy Trinity who specialises in deathblows*

Stay Alert! Brian Tomlinson

Stay alert!

But don't flirt with death

By following Government advice

To walk twenty miles to work

To cough with colleagues

Who aren't able to distance

And can't afford to isolate.

Stay alert!

And avert disaster

By not doing the right things at the right time,

By not acting on your own scientific advice,

By not being over the peak,

By not flattening the curve,

By not ramping up,

By not being Boris.

Stay alert!

And assert your right

To stay alive,

Even if you are

Seventy five.

Again. Brian Tomlinson

*I was in a hospital again today.
Unsociably distancing.
Only myself in the lift
But many people in the corridor
Linking hands with death.*

Corona Street. Brian Tomlinson

*I last walked up Corona St
On March 11th
On my way to Anfield
For a pint of Guinness
And a victory over Atletico Madrid.
Three thousand supporters from Madrid
Walked near there too
Before going back to lockdown in Spain.*

*We lost.
And maybe they did too.
I'd like to know where they all are now.*

And where am I?

Cummings and Goings. Brian Tomlinson

'Stay at home! ', we were told.

So we stayed at home

And didn't go to Durham.

He went home

For half an hour

To pack his bin bag

For going to Durham.

His coming to Durham

Was known only by the family

We had been told not to visit.

His going back to London

And coming back again

To view the bluebells

Was known only by his parents.

My parents didn't know that

When they died.

Rosencock and Guildenson Aren't Dead. Brian Tomlinson

Rosencock and Guildenson aren't dead.

They're still tossing coins to decide

Our life and death.

'Heads', sneered Rosencock yet again

As they peered down at my head,

His ever pink tie reflecting his glee.

'Dam, you've won again,'

Bumbled Guildenson,

His straw hair waving in his fart

As he turned off my life support machine.

Rosencock and Guildenson aren't dead.

But I think I am.

Unless of course

They've flicked the wrong switch again.

Let's Get Them Done. Brian Tomlinson

Let's get them done,

They won't go away.

People want to get out,

They want to be free.

Some poor old people will suffer,

Some poor old people will die.

But anyway,

Let's get them done.

An evening walk. Andrew Wright

Ealing is huge

But nothing moved.

Parked cars, no moving cars.

Family houses, no people to be seen.

A cobalt evening sky;

A jet plane had left a white trail.

I heard nothing of it.

Was I in some future time:

Post devastating plague?

Then, a scrawny, faded fox,

A shadowed shape, came,

Smudging through the dusk,

Soundlessly.

Isolated from the living but not the dead. Andrew Wright

I walked in the forest in the evening with the light seeping away and the trees, undergrowth and ground smudging into a common darkness.

I lost the path; it was not important. I was not too far from the road. The trees became much younger, thinner, the thickness of arms and legs and they were more densely planted. They were shining, perhaps they were silver birch. They were not ruler straight but each rose and swung its way upwards to the waning light. It was not easy to find a way between them, I bumped against them with my shoulders, knocked into them with my knees and elbows. I was concerned about the difficulty but I felt happy because I was alive and could walk in a forest.

Then, I thought of my companions who were dead.

Philip came to me. I saw him and felt his presence. 'Philip!' I spoke out loud! He was there! What else could I do? His solid body and active legs, his balding head, grizzled beard and lined face. His eyes watching me kindly and concerned. I felt him say. 'Make the most of your life, Andrew, while you've got it.' Philip, for most people, is just a tarnished bronze plaque on a bench by the River Derwent: Philip Whitehead 1937 – 2005. But once he was a Euro MP and stayed with us here in Hungary before going on to see the prime minister the next morning. At that time he was the EU representative of socialist MPs. He was and is, still, my friend and he came to me in the forest.

And then Reg came to me, in the darkness of the forest: broad chested, short legged. I once stood on his shoulders during a performance. It was like standing on a flat topped wall. Years later he wrote to me from an aboriginal reserve in Western Australia where he was working: teaching circus skills. One short paragraph in his letter said he would have to go for a heart check-up when he got home. He died of a heart attack the day after sending me that letter. He had given years of his life, helping down-trodden teenagers, in down-trodden city areas believe in themselves through teaching them juggling, stilt walking, unicycle riding and acrobatics. He lives on in all the people he helped. He lives on in me, in my living memories. He came to me in the forest.

I was getting nearer to the road. Philip and Reg had come so vividly to me and gone again. I wondered if I would see anyone else?

Guy Montin's smiling face came to me through the darkness. 'C'est pour toi, Androo!' He put on a George Brassens record, for me,

<i>Est-il encore debout le chêne</i>	<i>(Is it still standing the oak)</i>
<i>Ou le sapin de mon cercueil?</i>	<i>(or the pine of my coffin?)</i>

<i>S'il faut aller au cimetière,</i>	<i>(If I must go to the cemetery,)</i>
<i>Je prendrai le chemin le plus long,</i>	<i>(I will take the longest way)</i>
<i>Je ferai la tombe buissonnière,</i>	<i>(I will play hide and seek)</i>
<i>Je quitterai la vie à reculons...</i>	<i>(I will leave life going backwards)</i>
<i>Tant pis si les croque-morts me grondent,</i>	<i>(Tough luck if the undertakers complain)</i>

<i>Tant pis s'ils me croient fou à lier,</i>	<i>(Tough luck if they think me too wild to constrain)</i>
<i>Je veux partir pour l'autre monde</i>	<i>(I want to leave for the other world)</i>
<i>Par le chemin des écoliers.</i>	<i>(Like kids going slowly to school)</i>

Guy was handsome and ten years older than me. When I first met him he had just driven his wife and two small children from Sydney in Australia overland to France in thirteen months, in a box, on a Lambretta scooter.

'Guy!' I called back over fifty years.

'Ca va, Androoo!' And he was gone. I came out of the forest, to the road and the streetlights.

I looked back into the night forest: nobody there, just trees and darkness.

The Eyam Plague Sept. 7th 1665. Andrew Wright

300 years ago, the tailor of Eyam, in Derbyshire, died of the Plague. The infection arrived in a roll of cloth which he had received from London a few days before.

So began the last outbreak of the Bubonic Plague in England.



George Vicars, died on September 6th



Edward Cooper, died on September 22nd



Peter Cawksworth, died on September 23rd



Sarah Sydall, died on September 30th



Mary Thorpe, died on September 30th



Death came rapidly. People often died in the streets, not knowing they were infected.

Fear burst out and the news that the Black Death had come to Eyam spread, not only through the village but to the neighbouring villages as well...



so that they stoned, out of their village, any person coming from Eyam. The village of Eyam was soon effectively isolated.



However, the other villages readily agreed to supply the people of Eyam with anything they wanted if they stayed within their parish. Provisions were left by water troughs on the parish boundary. From there the people of the Plague village fetched them and left money in the water trough.



The Rector of Eyam, the Reverend Mompesson, and his predecessor, one of the first Non-conformists, Mr. Stanley, persuaded the villagers to accept their isolation saying, it was the will of God if they died, so they might die whether they left or not, and reading from the Bible, 'Thou shalt not be afraid of the pestilence walketh in darkness'.



In spite of urging everybody to stay Mompesson sent his own children away in the night to relatives in Yorkshire. The few people who could afford it, left the village. With the means to travel and ready cash there were not so many difficulties in leaving the Plague behind.



The cold winter weather came. The villagers hoped that it would kill the infection but, in a steady trickle, 31 people died.



Three families were buried, four Rowlands, four Rowbothams and six Wilsons.



People were hopelessly ignorant of the possible cures and certainly of the cause of the Plague.



Half pigeons or sheep's lungs were tied to people's feet, live plucked pullets tied over the tumours. The patient was surrounded by red objects, box hedges were planted, sweet herbs burnt, drinks of sage were brewed, rhubarb chewed, scented candles burnt and unicorn's horns ground up.



The rat and the flea which brought the disease were ignored, allowed to go about their business.



236 people remained by the end of June. More than half of these were dragged into the fields and buried during July and August.



Sometimes the victims dug their own graves and lay in them to die, knowing that there was no one left in their family to bury them.



Cattle were left untended, un-milked. Doors banged, windows rattled and grass grew long in the streets. Each house might, at one time, contain the living, the dying and the dead.



Whole families were killed.

Mrs. Hancock buried seven of her family in one week:

Elizabeth and John on August 3rd,

Oner, John her husband and William on the 7th,

Alice on the 9th,

and Anne on the 10th.

The loneliness was complete, even the death bell no longer rang. The dead were shovelled into the fields without acknowledgment, until October 11th, when the last Plague victim died.

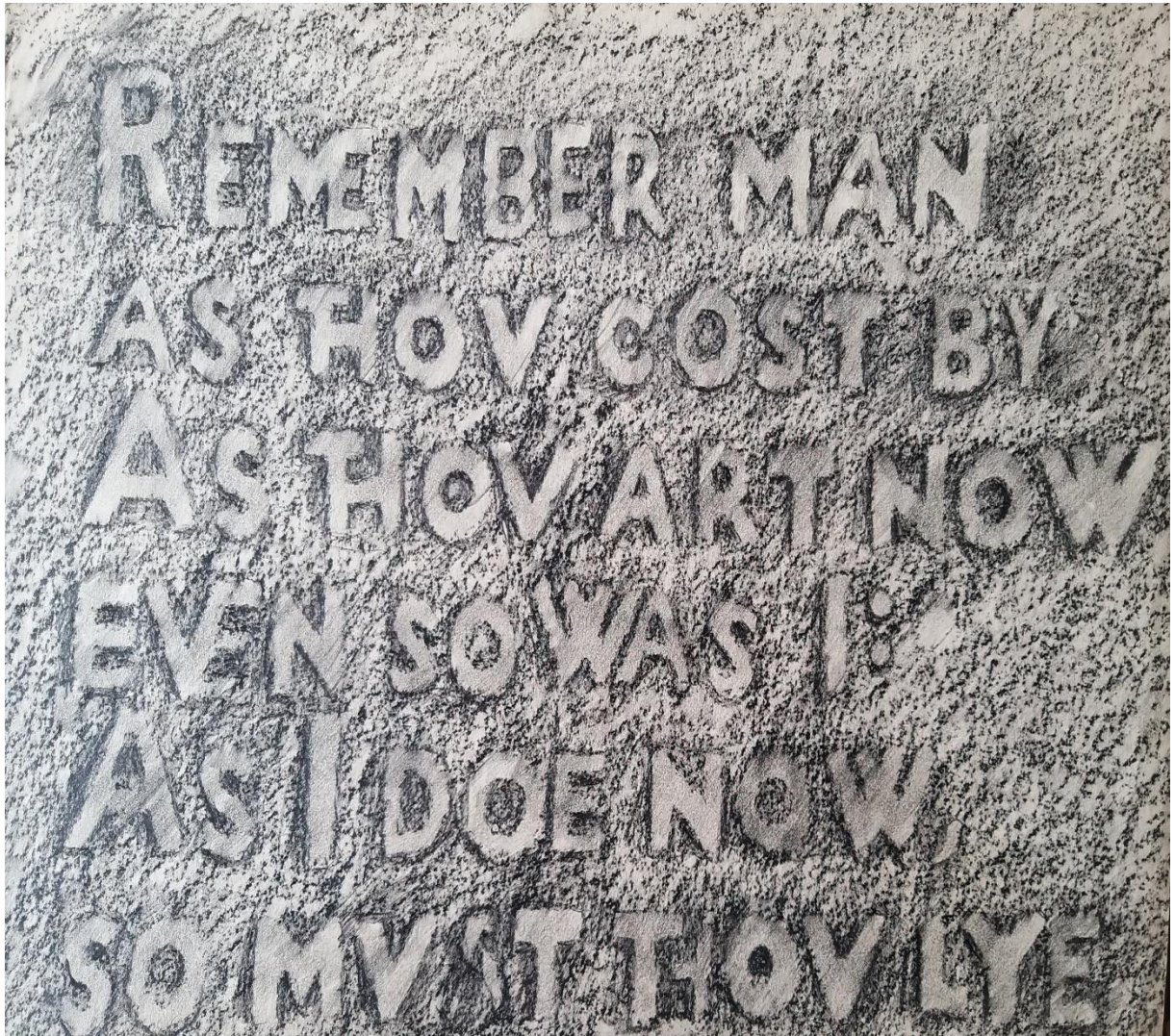


To John Beilby, Esq., Yorkshire.

'Now, blessed be God, all our fears are over, for none have died of the Plague during this last month and the pest houses have long been empty. My ears have never heard such doleful lamentations, my nose never smelled such horrid smells and my eyes never beheld such ghastly spectacles.

There have been 76 families visited within my parish, out of which 259 persons died.'

Mompesson.



*'Remember man
As thou goest by,
As thou art now
Even once was I,
As I doe now
So must thou lie,
Remember man
That thou must die.'*

Dragonfly Why ... ? Sylwia Zabor-Zakowska

She used to ask the sky -

Dragonfly Why:

'Why are you blue?'

'Is there just one of you or a few?'

'Why do clouds stand in a queue?'

'Why does the blue change into black

when the sun is on its back track?'

The sky remained unimpressed and silent.

Nevertheless, Why kept on being vibrant.

Immense was her hunger for knowledge.

Her wish for the Earth to be acknowledged.

She wandered around the planet and wondered -

'Who will answer my questions that count more than a hundred?'

Just then, on a very bright day

appeared in front of her

a Dragon named Fly - an ally.

Wise he was and caring

and didn't mind sharing

his knowledge

about the Planet

to Why's enchantment.

And then she noticed the Earth is in need

She started to weep.

And thought - 'Let's get rid of the greed

that kills our soul.

Greed that does not let the soul grow.'

*Birds began to tweet
Dragonfly's tears watered the seed
from which a plant grew.
Stronger than the weed of greed.
The plant of wisdom and love
whose seeds were spread by a White Dove from above.
Birds helped scatter them across the Earth
for her miraculous rebirth.*

*Why's dream came true.
The Earth became loved and respected,
not taken for granted
by me, by you.
Would you like to join us too?*

Peek-a-boo. Sylwia Zabor-Zakowska

*The lockdown I have experienced for the first time
which has never, ever happened in my and your town,
triggered my imagination.*

- Could you, please, stop for a while and listen to this narration?

Corona Virus came to town and made a new mutation.

*It threw the people out of the world's throne
and forced them to go to their four wall home.*

The Virus crowned the fauna with the corona.

The pandemic silence took a while, then vanished.

And so did Polish, English and Spanish.

*The world started to roar, growl, snarl,
purr, hiss, meow,*

snort, screech, squeak, shriek,

croak, crow, cluck, quack and howl.

Rattle, trumpet, munch and crunch.

Hee-haw bray, neigh

hum, buzz,

baa, moo, coo, cock-a-doodle-doo.

- Hey, stop. Is this a game ? Do we have to play ?

- Peek -a -boo.

People began to shrink.

Their faces went pink.

*They didn't know how to talk when they heard a noisy squawk
above their heads, above their eyes.*

*That very moment they realized
what they had done.*

They realized on the Earth they are not number one.

Tell me friends: 'Has anyone (this peek-a-boo game) won?'

Plagiarizing Mother Goose. Svetlana Zhavoronkova

Corona-the-Virus sat on the world

Corona-the-Virus will have a great fall.

All students of English,

And all teachers with them

Will get in the classrooms together again.

Poems

from

published sources

Gare du Midi. W.H. Auden

*A nondescript express in from the South.
Crowds round the ticket barrier, a face
To welcome which the mayor has not contrived
Bugles or braid: something about the mouth
Distracts the stray look with alarm and pity.
Snow is falling, Clutching a little case,
He walks out briskly to infect a city
Whose terrible future may have just arrived.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Pam Ayres

*At last, we have a cure for all!
Ailments large and ailments small,
Good health is not beyond my reach,
If I inject myself with bleach.*

*Radiant, I'll prance along,
Every trace of lime-scale gone,
With disinfectant as my friend,
Like him,
I'm clean around the bend.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Quarantine Eavan Boland

*In the worst hour of the worst season
of the worst year of a whole people*

*a man set out from the workhouse with his wife.
He was walking — they were both walking — north.*

*She was sick with famine fever and could not keep up.
He lifted her and put her on his back.
He walked like that west and west and north.
Until at nightfall under freezing stars they arrived.*

*In the morning they were both found dead.
Of cold. Of hunger. Of the toxins of a whole history.
But her feet were held against his breastbone.
The last heat of his flesh was his last gift to her.*

*Let no love poem ever come to this threshold.
There is no place here for the inexact
praise of the easy graces and sensuality of the body.
There is only time for this merciless inventory:*

*Their death together in the winter of 1847.
Also what they suffered. How they lived.
And what there is between a man and woman.
And in which darkness it can best be proved.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

There is a Languor ...Emily Dickinson

*There is a Languor of the Life
More imminent than Pain —
'Tis Pain's Successor — When the Soul
Has suffered all it can —*

*A Drowsiness — diffuses —
A Dimness like a Fog
Envelops Consciousness —
As Mists — obliterate a Crag.*

*The Surgeon — does not blanch — at pain
His Habit — is severe —
But tell him that it ceased to feel —
The Creature lying there —*

*And he will tell you — skill is late —
A Mightier than He —
Has ministered before Him —
There's no Vitality.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Intensive care. Vasantha Surya (Submitted by Alan Maley)

*In this cubicle of comfort, close-roofed, where
the tubed air is proof against despair,
questions, like infections, do not easily arise
and the fever of debate is kept at bay.*

*Do not ask me
to open my eyes and recognize
you, for I exist in a forever
of no one's choosing, akin and yet
no kin to human flesh.*

*Nourished on a concentrate
of platitudes, sedated
on high potency philosophies, safe
within my plastic skin, I can afford
to submit to fate, forget
the pain that lately chased me, down
sloping corridors, windowless,
dashed me against
a blind white wall
that would not take my stain
but let it spread, brown-red
inside my brain.*

*Where were you then? Were you
that pain?*

Choruses from " The Rock " T. S. Eliot

*The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!
The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
But nearness to death no nearer to God .
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.*

(Submitted by Steve Flinders)

*Tincombe Lane is a path leads you from the old town of Chagford up onto a high and wild part of Dartmoor and is the subject of this traditional folk rhyme from my home county of Devon. At times of confusion and dilemma, it's a rhyme I often recite to myself or others for some old folk wisdom. **David Heathfield***

*"Tincombe Lane is all uphill
Or downhill, as you take it;
You tumble up, and crack your crown,
Or tumble down and break it.
"Tincombe Lane is crook'd and straight,
Here pothook, there as arrow,
'Tis smooth to foot, 'tis full of rut,
'Tis wide, and then, 'tis narrow.
"Tincombe Lane is just like life,
From when you leave your mother;
'Tis sometimes this, 'tis sometimes that,
'Tis one thing or the other."*

“This day, much against my Will, I did in Drury lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and ‘Lord have mercy upon us’ writ there – which was a sad sight to me, being the first of that kind that to my remembrance I ever saw. It put me into an ill conception of myself and my smell, so that I was forced to buy some roll tobacco to smell to and chaw – which took away the apprehension.”

“two shops in three, if not more, [are] generally shut up. ... But, Lord! How empty the streets are and melancholy, so many poor sick people in the streets full of sores; and so many sad stories overheard as I walk, everybody talking of this dead, and that man sick... And they tell me that, in Westminster, there is never a physician and but one apothecary left, all being dead.”

‘To our great joy, the town fills apace, and shops begin to be open again. Pray God continue the plague's decrease! for that keeps the Court away from the place of business, and so all goes to rack as to publick matters, they at this distance not thinking of it.’

‘I having stayed in the city till above 7400 died in one week, and of them above 6000 of the plague, and little noise heard day nor night but the tolling of the bells; till I could walk Lombard Street and not meet twenty persons from one end to the other, and nor fifty upon the Exchange; till whole families (ten and twelve together) have been swept away; till my very physician, Dr. Burnet, who undertook to secure me against any infection [one wonders how?] died himself of the plague; till the nights (though much lengthened) are grown too short to conceal the burials of those that died the day before, people thereby constrained to borrow daylight for that service; lastly, till I could find neither meat nor drink safe, the butcheries being everywhere visited, my brewer's house shut up, and my baker with his whole family dead of the plague. Yet, Madam, through God's blessing and the good humours begot in my attendance upon our late Amours [he had made arrangements for a patron family's wedding] your poor servant is in a perfect state of health.’

The Diary of Samuel Pepys. (Submitted by Alan Maley)

From A Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Defoe (1722)

It would make the hardest heart move at the instances that were frequently found of tender mothers tending and watching with their dear children, and even dying before them, and sometimes taking the distemper from them and dying when the child for whom the affectionate heart had been sacrificed has got over it and escaped. The like of a tradesman in East Smithfield, whose wife was big with child of her first child, and fell in labour, having the plague upon her. He could neither get midwife to assist her or nurse to tend her, and two servants which he kept fled both from her. He ran from house to house like one distracted, but could get no help; the utmost he could get was, that a watchman, who attended at an infected house shut up, promised to send a nurse in the morning. The poor man, with his heart broke, went back, assisted his wife what he could, acted the part of the midwife, brought the child dead into the world, and his wife in about an hour died in his arms, where he held her dead body fast till the morning, when the watchman came and brought the nurse as he had promised; and coming up the stairs (for he had left the door open, or only latched), they found the man sitting with his dead wife in his arms, and so overwhelmed with grief that he died in a few hours after without any sign of the infection upon him, but merely sunk under the weight of his grief.

Taken from pages 161-162 of a pdf of A Journal of the Plague Year, which is downloadable from: <https://www.fulltextarchive.com/page/A-Journal-of-the-Plague-Year1/>
(Submitted by Rob Hill)

¶ In the time of any common plague or sicknes.

O Almighty God, who in thy wrath didst send a plague upon thine own people in the wilderness for their obstinate rebellion against Moses and Aaron, and also in the time of King David, didst slay with the plague of pestilence threescore and ten thousand, and yet remembering thy mercy didst save the rest: have pitie upon us miserable sinners, who now are visited with great sicknes and mortality, that like as thou didst then accept of an atonement, and didst command the destroying Angell to cease from punishing: so it may now please thee to withdraw from us this plague and grievous sicknes, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer. (Submitted by Alan Maley)

Jabir ibn Abdullah reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Cover the vessels and close the water skins, for there will be night out of the year in which an epidemic descends. It will not pass over an uncovered vessel or an untied water skin but that some of this contagion will fall into it.”

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2014

Sa’d reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “If you hear of a plague in a land, then do not go into it. If it happens in land where you are, then do not go out of it.”

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5396, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2218

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Sutra on Incantation against Epidemic Distress

I have heard thus. At one time, the Buddha traveled to Bamboo Grove Monastery in Rājagṛha in order to preach the Dharma before a great number of disciples of the four assemblies who had gathered. At that time, in the country of Vaiśālī, there just happened to be plague running rampant and spreading like wildfire. Those who had perished were countless in number and there was no end in sight and no means for treating and saving those who had been infected. Thereupon, Ānanda knelt before the Buddha with his palms together and spoke to the Buddha saying, “Vaiśālī has encountered a deadly epidemic. I only pray that the World-Honored One preach various sacred techniques to dispel their contagion and allow them to obtain peace and be free from suffering and illness. The Buddha spoke to the wise one, Ānanda, “You must listen to this. There are seven demons and they incessantly spew forth contagions and by means of this infect the myriad people. If a person contracts this contagion, he or she will have headaches and bouts of cold and fever, his or her body will long for cessation and his or her pain is difficult to express but, if a person has knowledge of that name, then the contagion will not harm him or her. For this reason, I will now preach this for your sake. Ānanda said, “Please, I desire to hear this.” The Buddha said, “When the four assemblies of disciples desire to recite the name of these demons and pacify them, then they should say,

‘I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha, I take refuge in the Buddhas from ten directions, I take refuge in all the Bodhisattvas, I take refuge in all the Arhats, I take refuge in (name of the practitioner).’

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

All you who sleep tonight. Vikram Seth

All you who sleep tonight

Far from the ones you love,

No hand to left or right,

And emptiness above –

Know that you aren't alone.

The whole world shares your tears,

Some for two nights or one,

And some for all their years.

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Shakespeare Sonnet 28.

*How can I then return in happy plight
That am debarred the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eased by night,
But day by night and night by day oppressed?
And each, though enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil, still farther off from thee.
I tell the day to please him thou art bright,
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven.
So flatter I the swart-complexioned night,
When sparkling stars twine not, thou gild'st the even.
But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

The Germ: Odgen Nash.

*A mighty creature is the germ,
Though smaller than the pachyderm.
His customary dwelling place
Is deep within the human race.
His childish pride he often pleases
By giving people strange diseases.
Do you, my poppet, feel infirm?
You probably contain a germ.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Never No Lament.

Duke Ellington

*When I'm not playing solitaire
I take a book down from the shelf
And what with programs on the air
I keep pretty much to myself*

*Missed the Saturday dance
Hear they crowded the floor
Couldn't bear it without you
Don't get around much anymore*

*Though I'd visit the club
Got as far as the door
They'd have asked about you
Don't get around much anymore*

*Darling, I guess my mind's more at ease
But, nevertheless, why stir up memories?*

*Been invited on dates
Might have gone, but what for?
Awfully different without you
Don't get around much anymore*

*Missed the Saturday dance
Hear they crowded the floor
Couldn't bear it without you
Don't get around much anymore*

Though I'd...

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

In Time of Pestilence. Thomas Nashe

*ADIEU, farewell earth's bliss!
This world uncertain is:
Fond are life's lustful joys,
Death proves them all but toys.
None from his darts can fly;
I am sick, I must die—
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Rich men, trust not in wealth,
Gold cannot buy you health;
Physic himself must fade;
All things to end are made;
The plague full swift goes by;
I am sick, I must die—
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Beauty is but a flower
Which wrinkles will devour;
Brightness falls from the air;
Queens have died young and fair;
Dust hath closed Helen's eye;
I am sick, I must die—
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Strength stoops unto the grave,
Worms feed on Hector brave;
Swords may not fight with fate;
Earth still holds ope her gate;
Come, come! the bells do cry;
I am sick, I must die—
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Wit with his wantonness
Tasteth death's bitterness;
Hell's executioner
Hath no ears for to hear
What vain art can reply;
I am sick, I must die—
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Haste therefore each degree
To welcome destiny;
Heaven is our heritage,
Earth but a player's stage.
Mount we unto the sky;
I am sick, I must die—
Lord, have mercy on us!*

Poems

from

Other Languages

Despedida - Trasmundo (Canciones 1921-1924) Federico Garcia Lorca

*Si muero.
dejad el balcón abierto.*

*El niño come naranjas.
(Desde mi balcón lo veo.)*

*El segador siega el trigo.
(Desde mi balcón lo siento.)*

*¡Si muero,
dejad el balcón abierto!*

Farewell

*If I die,
leave the balcony doors open.*

*A boy eats oranges.
(From my balcony, I can see him.)*

*The reaper reaps the wheat.
(From my balcony, I can hear him.)*

*If I die,
leave the balcony doors open!*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Il pleure dans mon Coeur... Paul Verlaine

*Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville ;
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon coeur ?*

*Ô bruit doux de la pluie
Par terre et sur les toits !
Pour un coeur qui s'ennuie,
Ô le chant de la pluie !*

*Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce coeur qui s'écoeure.
Quoi ! nulle trahison ?...
Ce deuil est sans raison.*

*C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi
Sans amour et sans haine
Mon coeur a tant de peine !*

It Rains in My Heart

*It rains in my heart
As it rains on the town,
What languor so dark
That it soaks to my heart?*

*Oh sweet sound of the rain
On the earth and the roofs!
For the dull heart again,
Oh the song of the rain!*

*It rains for no reason
In this heart that lacks heart.
What? And no treason?
It's grief without reason.*

*By far the worst pain,
Without hatred, or love,
Yet no way to explain
Why my heart feels such pain.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Beim Schlafengehen. Hermann Hesse

*Nun der Tag mich müd gemacht,
soll mein sehnliches Verlangen
freundlich die gestirnte Nacht
wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.*

*Hände, laßt von allem Tun,
Stirn, vergiß du alles Denken,
alle meine Sinne nun
wollen sich in Schlummer senken.*

*Und die Seele unbewacht
will in freien Flügen schweben,
um im Zauberkreis der Nacht
tief und tausendfach zu leben.*

Going to bed

*Now this day has tired me out
and my most arduous desire shall be
to receive kindly the starry night,
like a tired child*

*Hands, rest after so much action.
Forehead, cease all thinking.
Now all my senses
wish to sink into this slumber*

*And unconstrained the soul
wants to take wing freely,
to live on deep down and thousandfold
in the magic circle of the night.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Inferno. Canto 1. Dante Alighieri

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
ché la diritta via era smarrita.*

*Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a dark wood,
For the direct pathway had been lost.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

In der Fremde. Joseph von Eichendorff

*Aus der Heimat hinter den Blitzen rot
Da kommen die Wolken her,
Aber Vater und Mutter sind lange tot,
Es kennt mich dort keiner mehr.
Wie bald, ach wie bald kommt die stille Zeit,
Da ruhe ich auch, und über mir
Rauscht die schöne Waldeinsamkeit,
Und keiner kennt mich mehr hier.*

In a Foreign Land

*From my homeland, beyond the red lightning,
The clouds come drifting in,
But father and mother have long been dead,
Now no one knows me there.
How soon, ah! how soon till that quiet time
When I too shall rest
Beneath the sweet murmur of lonely woods,
Forgotten here as well.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Svakidasnja jadikova. Tin Ujevic

*Kako je teško biti slab,
kako je teško biti sam,
i biti star, a biti mlad!*

*I biti slab, i nemoćan,
i sam bez igdje ikoga,
i nemiran, i očajan.*

*I gaziti po cestama,
i biti gažen u blatu,
bez sjaja zvijezde na nebu.*

*Bez sjaja zvijezde udesa
što sijaše nad kolijevkom
sa dugama i varkama.*

Daily lament.

*Oh, how hard it is to be weak,
how hard it is to be alone,
and to be old and to be young!*

*And to be frail and powerless,
alone, with no one anywhere,
turbulent and full of despair.*

*And to roam the roads aimlessly
and to be trampled in the mud,
without starlight in the sky.*

*Without the star of destiny,
that shone over the cradle,
with its rainbows and illusions.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Georges Brassens. Ma Solitude

*Pour avoir si souvent dormi, avec ma solitude,
Je m'en suis faite presque une amie, une douce habitude.
Elle ne me quitte pas d'un pas, fidele comme une ombre.
Elle m'a suivi ca et la, aux quatres coins du monde.
Non, je ne suis jamais seul, avec ma solitude.
Quand elle est au creux de mon lit, elle prend toute la place,
Et nous passons de longues nuits, tous les deux face a face.
Je ne sais vraiment pas jusqu'ou, ira cette complice,
Faudra-t-il que j'y prenne gout, ou, que je reagisse?
Non, je ne suis jamais seul avec ma solitude.
Par elle, j'ai autant appris, que j'ai verse de larmes.
Si parfois je la repudie, jamais elle ne desarme.
Et, si je preferais l'amour, d'une autre courtisane,
Elle sera a mon dernier jour, ma dernire compagne.
Non, je ne suis jamais seul avec ma solitude.
Non, je ne suis jamais seul avec ma solitude.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

My Loneliness

*Because of having slept so much
with my loneliness
I almost made it my friend
a sweet habit*

*She never leaves my side
Faithful as a shadow
She's followed me here and there
to the four corners of the world*

*No I'm never alone
with my loneliness*

*When she's in the middle of my bed
She takes up all the room
And we spend long nights together
Both of us, face to face*

*I really don't know how far
this accomplice will go
Will I have to just get used to it
Or will I have to react?*

*No I'm never alone
with my loneliness*

*I learned so much from her
as I cried tears
If sometimes I deny her
She never disarms me*

*And If I would prefer love
from another lover
on my last day, she'll be
my last companion*

*No I'm never alone
with my loneliness
No I'm never alone
With my loneliness.*

Locked down Claudia Ferradas Translated by Cecilia Della Croce

*Con paso apresurado
rompo por diez minutos
la cuarentena que me impone el virus.
El policía, desde el patrullero,
chequea mi bolsita de las compras.
El carnicero parece un cirujano.*

*I step out at a brisk pace
as I break for ten minutes
the lockdown imposed by the virus.
From his patrol car, the police officer
checks my modest shopping bag.
The butcher looks like a surgeon.*

*El linyera habitual pasea su mugre,
se revuelca en los riesgos que yo evito
con pulcritud de miedo y protocolo.
Hoy nadie viene a convidarle birra,
pero él sonríe como quien masca un logro:
“¡ratas inmundas, muéranse encerrados!”
reverbera su voz empoderada.*

*The usual beggar walks his grime,
and wallows in the risks that I avoid
following the spotless protocol of fear.
Today, no one buys him a pint,
but he smiles as if chewing a victory:
‘Hey, you, filthy rats, die in your sorry cages!’
his empowered roar echoes behind me.*

*Y el mundo del revés se me revela
en una epifanía dolorosa:
acaso envidie su libertad inmune
mientras limpio, obsesiva, el picaporte.*

*And a topsy-turvy universe
reveals itself in a dreadful epiphany:
maybe I envy his immune freedom
as I clean, obsessively, my doorknob.*

Spleen. Charles Baudelaire

*Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle
Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis,
Et que de l'horizon embrassant tout le cercle
Il nous verse un jour noir plus triste que les nuits;*

*Quand la terre est changée en un cachot humide,
Où l'Espérance, comme une chauve-souris,
S'en va battant les murs de son aile timide
Et se cognant la tête à des plafonds pourris;*

*Quand la pluie étalant ses immenses traînées
D'une vaste prison imite les barreaux,
Et qu'un peuple muet d'infâmes araignées
Vient tendre ses filets au fond de nos cerveaux,*

*Des cloches tout à coup sautent avec furie
Et lancent vers le ciel un affreux hurlement,
Ainsi que des esprits errants et sans patrie
Qui se mettent à geindre opiniâtrement.*

*— Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme; l'Espoir,
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroce, despotique,
Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir.*

Spleen. Charles Baudelaire

*When the low, heavy sky weighs like a lid
On the groaning spirit, victim of long tedium,
And from the all-encircling horizon
Spreads over us a day gloomier than the night;*

*When the earth is changed into a humid dungeon,
In which Hope like a bat
Goes beating the walls with her timid wings
And knocking her head against the rotten ceiling;*

*When the rain stretching out its endless train
Imitates the bars of a vast prison
And a silent horde of loathsome spiders
Comes to spin their webs in the depths of our brains,*

*All at once the bells leap with rage
And hurl a frightful roar at heaven,
Even as wandering spirits with no country
Burst into a stubborn, whimpering cry.*

*— And without drums or music, long hearses
Pass by slowly in my soul; Hope, vanquished,
Weeps, and atrocious, despotic Anguish
On my bowed skull plants her black flag.*

(Submitted by Alan Maley)

Couvre-Feu. Paul Eluard

*Que voulez-vous la porte était gardée
Que voulez-vous nous étions enfermés
Que voulez-vous la rue était barrée
Que voulez-vous la ville était matée
Que voulez-vous elle était affamée
Que voulez-vous nous étions désarmés
Que voulez-vous la nuit était tombée
Que voulez-vous nous nous sommes aimés.*

Curfew. Paul Eluard

*What did you expect, the door was guarded
What did you expect, we were locked in
What did you expect, the street was barred
What did you expect, the city was in lockdown
What did you expect, it was starving
What did you expect, we were vulnerable
What did you expect, the night had fallen
What did you expect, we loved each other?*

(submitted by Alan Maley)

Without stirring abroad

One can know the whole world;

Without looking out of the window

One can see the way of heaven.

The further one goes

The less one knows.

From the *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 47, *Penguin Classics* 1963, translate by D. C. Lau

(Submitted by Steve Flinders)

O que é vida e o que é morte. Fernando Pessoa

O que é vida e o que é morte

Ninguém sabe ou saberá

Aqui onde a vida e a sorte

Movem as coisas que há.

Mas, seja o que for o enigma

De haver qualquer coisa aqui,

Terá de mim próprio o estigma

Da sombra em que eu o vivi.

(Submitted by Malu Sciamarelli)

What is life and what is death. Fernando Pessoa

What is life and what is death

No one knows or will know

Here where life and luck

Move things that exist.

But, whatever the enigma is

Of something having existed here,

It will have the stigma of myself

From the shadow in which I lived.

La Rue de Buci Maintenant. Jacques Prevert. (extract)

Où est-il parti

le petit monde fou du dimanche matin

Qui donc a baissé cet épouvantable rideau de poussière et de fer sur cette rue

cette rue autrefois si heureuse et si fière d'être rue

comme une fille heureuse est fière d'être nue.

Pauvre rue

te voilà maintenant abandonnée dans le quartier abandonné

lui-même dans la ville dépeuplée.

Pauvre rue

morne corridor menant d'un point mort à un autre ...

(submitted by Alan Maley)

Where is it now

that crazy little Sunday morning world?

Who has pulled down this terrible curtain of dust and iron on this street

which used to be so happy and proud of being a street,

the way a happy young girl is proud of being naked.

Poor street,

look at you now, deserted in a district itself deserted

in the emptied city.

Poor street,

now leading from one dead end to another.

***Como vem guerreira! José de
Anchieta***

*Como vem guerreira
a morte espantosa!*

*Como vem guerreira
e temerosa!*

*Suas armas são doença,
com que a todos acomete.*

*Por qualquer lugar se mete,
sem nunca pedir licença.*

*Tanto que se dá sentença
da morte espantosa,
como vem guerreira
e temerosa!*

(Submitted by Malu Sciamarelli)

*How bravely
the astonishing death comes!
How bravely
and how fearful!*

*Its weapons are disease
which affects everyone.*

*It goes everywhere,
without asking permission.*

*So much that the astonishing
death penalty is given,
how bravely
and how fearful it comes*

How bravely it comes!

From the Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio (c. 1349-53)

E erano alcuni, li quali avvisavano che il viver moderatamente e il guardarsi da ogni superfluità avesse molto a così fatto accidente resistere; e fatta brigata, da ogni altro separati vivevano, e in quelle case ricogliendosi e racchiudendosi, dove niuno infermo fosse e da viver meglio, dilicatissimi cibi e ottimi vini temperatissimamente usando e ogni lussuria fuggendo, senza lasciarsi parlare a alcuno o volere di fuori di morte o d'infermi alcuna novella sentire, con suoni e con quegli piaceri che aver potevano si dimoravano. Altri, in contraria oppinion tratti, affermavano il bere assai e il godere e l'andar cantando attorno e sollazzando e il sodisfare d'ogni cosa all'appetito che si potesse e di ciò che avveniva ridersi e beffarsi esser medicina certissima a tanto male; e così come il dicevano mettevano in opera a lor potere, il giorno e la notte ora a quella taverna ora a quella altra andando, bevendo senza modo e senza misura, e molto più ciò per l'altrui case faccendo, solamente che cose vi sentissero che lor venissero a grado o in piacere. E ciò potevan far di leggiere, per ciò che ciascun, quasi non più viver dovesse, aveva, sì come sé, le sue cose messe in abbandono; di che le più delle case erano divenute comuni, e così l'usava lo straniero, pure che ad esse s'avvenisse, come l'avrebbe il proprio signore usate.

*This is from **John Florio's translation**, freely available:*

https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/florio/day01.php .

“Some there were, who considered with themselves, that living soberly, with abstinence from all superfluity; it would be a sufficient resistance against all hurtfull accidents. So combining themselves in a sociable manner, they lived as separatists from all other company, being shut up in such houses, where no sicke body should be neere them. And there, for their more security, they used delicate viands and excellent wines, avoiding luxurie, and refusing speech to one another, not looking forth at the windowes, to heare no cries of dying people, or see any coarses (‘corpses’ I imagine. Rob) carried to buriall; but having musicall instruments, lived there in all possible pleasure. Others, were of a contrary opinion, who avouched, that there was no other physicke more certaine, for a disease so desperate, than to drinke hard, be merry among themselves, singing continually, walking every where, and satisfying their appetites with whatsoever they desired, laughing, and mocking at every mournfull accident, and so they vowed to spend day and night: for now they would goe to one Taverne, then to another, living without any rule or measure; which they might very easily doe, because every one of them, (as if he were to live no longer in this World) had even forsaken all things that hee had. By meanes whereof, the most part of the houses were become common, and all strangers, might do the like (if they pleased to adventure it) even as boldly as the Lord or owner, without any let or contradiction.”

(Submitted by Rob Hill)

