



Volume 13, Issue 2

August 2020



**Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020**

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Special Issue:

Creative Forms of Writing in the Age of Covidocene

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Nikoleta Zampaki.....5

ARTICLES

The Rime of the Modern Mariner

Paul Lindholdt.....7

POEMS

A Poem in the Age of the Coronavirus

Jabri Abdelhafid.....12

The Future in Spite of it All	
Mary Newell.....	14
A World Woke Fresh	
Mary Newell.....	16
Conceding to Gravity in the Leap	
Mary Newell.....	18
Lockdownshifting	
Natalie Joelle.....	20
Staying Connected	
Katharina Maria Kalinowski.....	22
Without Breath	
Maria Andreadelli.....	24
Clock Mechanism	
Maria Andreadelli.....	26
Old New Word	
O. Alan Weltzien.....	28
Coronavirus Aria	
O. Alan Weltzien.....	29
Covid-19 in Manila	
O. Alan Weltzien.....	31
Social Distance	
O. Alan Weltzien.....	33
Insomnia in the Time of Coronavirus	
O. Alan Weltzien.....	35
Higher Consolation	
O. Alan Weltzien.....	37
When Today is no Longer the Same	
Vanessa L. Haddad.....	39
Ταυία	
Miltiadis Ntovas.....	41

Άσπρη Miltiadis Ntovas.....	43
Χαϊκού Miltiadis Ntovas.....	45
Μείναμε σπίτι Nancy Giovanoglou.....	47
Χαρακώματα Dimitris Papakonstantinou.....	49
Ένας Παράδεισος όπως τον θέλω εγώ Christos Tsiailis.....	51
Η Λανθασμένη Εκτίμηση Christos Tsiailis.....	53
Ω, Άνθρωπε Eirini Mathioudaki.....	56



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Introduction

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Keywords: Creative forms of Writing, Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19

Introduction

Humanity has lost the real sense and the COVID-19 outbreak affected the entire world. This global pandemic situation has touched our life in some way or the other, forcing the senses of uncertainty, anger, isolation and depression.

Poetry and prose offer a sigh relief to the pent up feelings of the stress and crisis. It is fundamental to share the emotions and ideas with others through creative forms of writing. This special issue unites many and variable voices around the world regarding COVID-19. We aim to sensitize and create a community around the current situation. The contributions are descriptive of the creative writing that reflects the interrelationships within the ever-shifting, endangered ecosphere. This special issue addresses nature as the sea in which we deep and drown. Contributors offer readings of a diverse prose and poems. While addressing preconceptions about the categories of pandemic writing and reimagine the notions that have been central to pandemic discourse.

This special issue makes the compelling argument that pandemic / COVID-19 should be read as the coextensive with the current literature and it is essential reading for any scholar or student who is working on contemporary literature, creative forms of writing or environmental studies today.

It is our hope to gather voices which will sound as natural and unite the world against any threat that could be disastrous. The contributors offer strategies and forms of communication that are crucially needed to deal with the today's concern about COVID-19.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

The Rime of the Modern Mariner

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Note: The essay is a chapter of the book in progress entitled *Interrogating Travel*.

The Rime of the Modern Mariner

One need not be an ecologist to be averse to cruise ships. Simple solicitude for human health is enough. In February of 2020, millions watched in fascination as the *Diamond Princess*, a cruise ship holding the standard capacity of 2,666 passengers and 1,045 crewmembers, was quarantined during an outbreak of coronavirus. Novelist Gay Courter, a passenger who had yet to be chastened by the severity of the pandemic, called her stately cabin “a rather posh penitentiary.” The ship’s pastry chef was “the real hero” of that shutdown saga, she said. He kept her well-fed. The ship’s two-week quarantine resulted in more coronavirus-infected passengers than if they had been disembarked immediately. After the passengers were evacuated in Japan, they faced a second quarantine at Air Force bases in California, Georgia, or Texas. At least 712 of the 3,711 passengers and crew were infected, and nine died. Mokoto Rich, writing for the *New York Times*, dubbed the vessel “a floating epidemiological disaster.”

A similar ordeal scared and sickened passengers aboard the *Grand Princess* on a trip to Hawai'i. It embarked on its outing on February 21, 2020 – after risks from the sickness already were well known. Its 3,500 passengers, as is typical of cruise ship clientele, bent toward the upper end of the age scale, the most vulnerable epidemiologically. Officials learned, using contact tracing to track the movements of the nation's first virus victim, that she had crossed paths earlier with others who had boarded the *Grand Princess*. Test kits were dropped to the boat by helicopter to avoid contact for the medical crew. Forty-five people were tested. Nineteen crew and two passengers scanned positive, and at least one hundred more showed symptoms.

The family of one elderly passenger filed suit. Their suit said the company's day-to-day operations demonstrated it had never contemplated or prepared for infectious diseases. Condiments were self-served. Bridge games continued, players handling the same decks of cards every day. After the panic began, infected crew members began to deliver meals to the rooms.

One 86-year-old passenger, Rex Lawson, escaped unharmed. When his children told him they never want him to board another boat, he said it will be hard to pass up the free consolation cruise the company offered him and his wife for their distress. Mr. Lawson will have to go it alone or find another partner, though. His wife has refused to board another cruise ship again.

In a sign the pandemic will have lasting impacts both on language and on travel, Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, likened college dormitories to the colossal holiday boats. The close quarters caused Hartle to name dorms "land-locked cruise ships." Neither colleges nor cruise lines stand to benefit from the comparison. The big boats have come to be shorthand for everything that can be virally hazardous due to throngs.

Many American vacationers cut their travel teeth on the TV show *Love Boat*. It began in 1979. The disco beat of its theme song echoed "Copacabana" by Barry Manilow from 1978. The "Love Boat" lyrics promised more than most vacations could deliver. "Love, exciting and new," the lyrics began. "Come aboard. We're expecting you." The personal touch, the direct address, proved inviting in ways few other shows had tried. "Love, life's sweetest reward. Let it flow. It floats back to you." The lyrics cast the ship as a moveable feast, a mobile Bali Hai, an ecosystem of reciprocal exchange. "The love boat soon will be making another run," the song assured its listeners. For many elderly passengers, another run might be a long time coming. Even the corporations themselves admit that industry-wide changes cannot be calculated or foreseen. Carnival Corporation's stock price fell in two months from near \$60 a share to less than \$13.

Mass-media entertainments had primed audiences to sign on for cruise-ship excursions. Ten years before *Love Boat*, in 1969, the musical fantasy film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* starred the comic actor Dick Van Dyke. That sleeper of a movie ironized cruise liners in delicious ways. Its standout song "Posh!" riffed on the word as an acronym for "Port Out, Starboard Home." The false etymology, the linguistic mythology, positioned savvy travelers between England and India as booking the port side going out and the starboard side coming home. Alternating the left and right sides ensured the best scenery both coming and going. The movie's mockery of travel lies in the scene where Grandpa Potts (Lionel Jeffries) broadly struts in colonial puttees and bellows "Posh!" Aloft oversea in an outhouse, he mistakes it for a luxury state room in a seagoing vessel.

Being towed through the air by a dirigible, Potts kicks open the shithouse door and sings, “This is living, this is style, this is elegance by the mile!” Massified audiences could guffaw at the spectacle’s slapstick more readily than they could appreciate the irony of the lyrics. Potts, a delusional veteran of British India, hollers and gestures “Oh, the posh posh traveling life, the traveling life for me! First cabin and captain’s table, regal company!” Not only is he mistaking a toilet for a stateroom; he is boasting falsely and loudly about his enviable attainments. “Whenever I’m bored, I travel abroad, but I do it stylishly.” His boast foreshadowed customers of love boats like the *Diamond Princess* a half-century later, some of whom proved doomed.

The TV series *Love Boat* and the movie *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* both brought to popular consciousness the possibility of heading out to sea for luxury short-term voyages and vacations. Duped audiences thronged to the siren call of live entertainment and all-you-can-eat buffets. In the next four decades, the largest cruise ships grew one-third longer, to 360 meters or 1181 feet; expanded their widths to 60 meters; and doubled passenger totals to an unsustainable 5,400.

Had passengers on the *Diamond Princess* or the *Grand Princess* in 2020 read Paula Becker’s account in her study *Overbooked*, they might have thought twice before signing on the line for cruises. Consumers – Becker pointed out with solid evidence – had every reason to be chafed. They bear hidden costs for drinks and gratuities, predatory pricing for bling at foreign ports of call, and starvation wages paid employees. The Carnival Corporation owns both boats.

Cruises also offend the environment by contributing to climate change. “The air pollution from just one of the docked giant ships,” Becker writes, “is the equivalent of 12,000 idling cars every day.” The average tourist cares little about pollution, of course. Part of the charm of being aboard those behemoths of the sea has to be the forgetfulness they bestow. I would not know, for I have not been on one. Patrons are encouraged to leave behind their terrestrial cares and create fantasies of love and abandon. And, of course, that is what vacations do – allow people to vacate their day-to-day concerns. Among the many forms of tourism Ms. Becker dices, she reserves the sharpest contempt for corporate cruise lines. Our hearts darken at the sight of cruise ships.

Those big boats clot ports at many of Earth’s most beautiful spots. In a figure of speech adopted by every pundit during high coronavirus time, the ships are mobile petri dishes. When travelers no longer dared to take a chance on Asia, hungry cruise lines shifted to Alaska to offer screaming deals. By early May 2020, Alaska routes also closed through summer. The methane each boat generates is always unseen. It is a greenhouse gas that “traps eighty-four times as much heat as carbon dioxide over a 20-year time frame,” the David Suzuki Foundation says. Methane’s main causes are fossil-fuel production, distribution, and use, at 33%, followed close behind by livestock farming at 27%. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; methane, not at all.

In a wishful fantasy I am not shamed to share, cruise ships would drop to the bottoms of the seas – after people were evacuated first, of course. Oxygen-deprived in their sea-floor tombs, those hulks would sequester forever the rich deposits of carbon and methane they contain. My bad scenario will never unfold, though. Each ship costs an average of \$260 million to construct.

Nathaniel Hawthorne inspired my wishful fantasy. In his 1846 tale “Earth’s Holocaust,” he imagined a busk festival. The ceremony originated with the Creek people. In that rite, useless,

damaging, and outworn goods were heaped and burned. In Hawthorne's appropriation, Anglo-Americans kindle up the fire. Americans sick of civilization hope to rid Earth of every category of injustice by incinerating symbolic objects. They begin by torching the crowns worn by royalty and the coats of arms that aristocracies display. They conclude by kindling weaponry and other tools of mortal punishment such as gallows. The purgation brought about by the busk festival let the Indigenous people forget grudges, forgive debts, and regenerate community. Maybe the coronavirus will have positive long-term consequences that no one yet is able to foresee.

In 2020, in an image that might have arisen from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, many cruise ships became ghost ships. Turned away from port after port, they drifted in search of spots to dock. Carnival's *Costa Luminosa*, rebuffed at Savona in Italy, floated in anticipation of Italy's ports reopening. The *MSC Fantasia*, its outing cancelled, effectively held hostage its 1,338 passengers outside Lisbon in Portugal. The *MV Columbus*, owned by Cruise and Maritime Voyages in the UK, got stalled in the Andaman Sea of Thailand for weeks till it undertook 7,842 nautical miles to return its passengers to England. Once they could disembark from those ghost ships, many passengers traveled on commercial flights. In the process they endangered flight attendants and restaurant employees. Some twenty cruise liners became *navis non grata* during the period when the virus preoccupied the world. In the 1798 Coleridge poem, the ghost ship drifts through fluctuating fog and drought as penance for the mariner's having shot an albatross.

Backlash was predictable and swift against international precautions that prevented ships from docking in 2020. Merchant mariner Mikhail Voytenko tracked the outrages in his Fleet Mon blog. Free-market champions like him blamed government overreach for hampering free assembly, free speech, and free trade. It was all a scheme, they said, to limit marine commerce.

Availing themselves of legal loopholes, every American cruise ship except one register in foreign nations. They license in countries with laxer laws – Liberia, Panama, Bermuda, Malta, Italy, the Netherlands. They court American customers while dodging American regulations and laws. Should catastrophe occur or a pandemic happen, remedies and rights for Americans may prove difficult to apply. Cruise lines are “part of an industry that paid an average tax rate of under 1%, which is well below the required 21% tax rate in the United States.” Nonetheless they applied for financial relief in 2020, claiming they needed economic shelter for their employees who might be otherwise laid off. Legal scholars call foreign registries “flags of convenience.”

The phrase is fraudulent on its face. By means of legal ambiguities, the companies in fact register in jurisdictions that have lower taxes and that do not oblige them to abide by U.S. labor laws. Paula Becker, whose book *Overbooked* appeared in 2013, interviewed employees aboard the Royal Caribbean-owned ship on which she cruised. Some of those employees told her they earned only fifty dollars a month. They had to rely, accordingly, on customer gratuities to get by.

For those in the upper echelons of the cruise-line industry, there is plenty of good money to be made supplying tourists with the amenities they crave. The world's largest cruise line, Carnival Corporation, comprises nine “brands” – AIDA, Carnival, Costa, Cunard, Holland America, Princess, P&O Australia, P&O UK, and Seaborn. Headquartered in Miami, it is incorporated in Panama. Chairman Micky Arison claimed a personal worth of \$5.3 billion USD in early 2020 and

was the owner of the Miami Heat NBA team. He is also a friend of President Trump, who conscripted him in his “Great Economic Revival” industry group on April 14, 2020.

Miami-based Walker & O’Neill lawyers specialize in maritime law. “I don’t think the C.D.C. has protocols in place,” the firm’s James Walker told the *New York Times* in late March about the handling of the coronavirus crisis. “Everyone is scrambling around trying to figure things out. It seems to me kind of a Mad Hatter type of environment . . . no one is taking the lead.” Walker publishes *Cruise Law News*, a blog on “Everything Cruise Lines Don’t Want You to Know.” It dishes dirt on the love-boat industry. That dirt includes violations of air-emissions laws, illegal discharges within national parks, paint particles both on dry dock and in the water, and court-required monitoring of repeat offenders. These are only a few of the items the law firm lists. In an industry that hosts more than twenty million people every year, an apologist might rationalize that accidents will happen. A less forgiving view would hold tourism as an industry responsible – a largely unregulated trade whose various appendages are elusive. Reporting on the impacts of its segments, though, is one small way of holding that industry accountable.

In that trying spring of 2020, two Carnival cruise ships motored for a fortnight with coronavirus patients aboard. After being turned away from South American ports, they were allowed to dock in Florida following a long negotiation. Local officials feared that caring for foreigners would divert needed resources from their own region where virus cases had spiked, but finally the *Zaandam* and the *Rotterdam* received permission to vacate passengers at Port Everglades. Four elderly clients had already died on the *Zaandam*. Dozens were sick. Carnival said forty-five mildly sick passengers would stay on board, but it needed ten people to be shuttled to a hospital for care. It also acknowledged that some 6,000 of its passengers were stuck at sea, stranded and at risk of infection.

The rumble of cruise ships and the roar of jet engines were still polluting the air when Canadian editorial cartoonist André-Philippe Côté drew a seriocomic cartoon on March 18, 2020. In the foreground, a tatty bearded castaway on a desert island is pressing his back against the trunk of a single palm. His face is grim. He is trying to hide. Behind him, a cruise ship looms. Coughs emanate in French from its several decks. “Keuf! Keuf!” they sound out. “Keuf! Keuf! Keuf! Keuf!” The cruise ship carries on. The castaway manages to escape a hazardous rescue. Time will tell if the public develops the intelligence to stay away from cruise ships in the future.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

A Poem in the Age of the Coronavirus

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

A Poem in the Age of the Coronavirus

- (1) As the rainforests turned the page...
- (2) to calm down the indigenous rage.
- (3) A new virus gave no warning...
- (4) to the engines which were still turning.
- (5) Was it the animals' revenge in the marketplace...
- (6) against meat-eaters without grace?
- (7) Or was it the Lab's intention...
- (8) to create a world of apprehension?
- (9) Governments worked day and night...
- (10) and there wasn't a single flight.
- (11) Doctors and nurses took the lead...
- (12) despite the pandemic's high speed.

- (13) People of the world hibernated...
- (14) and to their families got acquainted.
- (15) Either by hook or by crook...
- (16) many have learned to cook.
- (17) The Earth will never be gone...
- (18) if justice is rightly done.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

The Future in Spite of it All

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

The Future in Spite of it All

Ripples say ice melts too fast.
When did duration unzip?

Face down on sod, cold as
unburned coal, a plantable future

To molt like butterflies, who
count on spring's clemency

or flash spectral, alight like
hummingbirds, hover and sip.

Mind writhes like a misplaced possum:
rivets, sieves ether from particulate.

Blue shows up when you need it -
a sky patch with dragonfly blip.

Auguries gush through acrid rain.
Frayed nerves await the glisten.

Crow crosses path, without comment.
Nothing outshines the awkward gaze

of a bear returning his almost-bride,
who, after all, chose to stay human.

Note: A number of Native American stories refer to species mutability between bear and human.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

A World Woke Fresh

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

A World Woke Fresh

Awake at 5 with birdsong blend.
Swallows - their world still viable -
snap at insects near the swamp.

Queen Ann's Lace like cumulous
on stalks; mixed with the reeds,
milkweed, sustainer of monarchs.

Bluetime: drizzling, certain to drizzle.
Stormtime coming slow, but certain.

Somber cloud clot hovers to south.

*My love, if you were here
you'd lure me back inside:
enticements rivaling sun.*

Insurgence of rising daylight
gilds the tall grasses below
taut cloud skin ready to burst.

*Lulled in a tangle of limbs,
moments of borrowed time;
after, we'd rise with smiles -*

Dawn lips peel to platinum streaks.
Heavy drops echo through the marsh,
damping the steady hum of peepers.

*We'd occupy the morning
as if the world woke fresh,
rerieved of slippery slope.*



Volume 13, Issue 2
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Conceding to Gravity in the Leap

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Conceding to Gravity in the Leap

Always in danger of falling, we
resist gravity with every step.
We swerve around encumbrances,
leap pot-holes, charge or tiptoe forward.

Conceding to gravity in the leap,
we hop-scotch or pirouette,
impulses tuning to an axis of intent.
To honor our arrivals and abiding:

For all that leaps and lands with a spring,
fugueing with gravity and levitation,

for all in free fall that
rights itself sunny-side up -

For all that catches the upswing,
imbibes the delectation of capaciousness
but keeps the green connection,
buoyantly poised before entropic tumbling -

Remembering gravity, we
sustain our gravitas in moments of elation,
pausing to praise, to soak in reams of silence
not circumscribed by earth's deep nurturance.

Remembering the etheric call,
we savor the starlight nourishment,
offer its overflow to others,
refrain from straining to possess it.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Lockdownshifting

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Lockdownshifting

ground to a halt

crush your corporations with a mild touch

gleaned from the ongoing epidemic

unintended benefit -- blue skies

*can't come down
it's in the air and it's all around*

industrial emissions

keep ya love lockdown, ya love lockdown

wash your hands clean of this

an allotment

the right temperature to shelter

largest scale experiment ever

*fever got me aching
fever yea I burn forsooth*



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Staying Connected

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Staying Connected

the pause after knowing
the space between two daisy leaves
the awkwardness at the end of a phone call before hanging up

is not the time to
Think about Paul Celan
and his infecting crown woven
through sleepless dreams
through tearless eyes
through the waiting for a stone to bloom
through the time for time

for more places
than there are trees in a season
for more deaths
than there are words for natural pain
for changes that happen
linearly, in vapour trails only
gathered under by-standing clouds

that don't expect copyright marks
that don't fear autumn
that don't grow unlimitedly without turning
back into sheepless airs
that refract multi-coloured skins
that wake in the light shells
that know like the Seine
hope is a privilege for some
 changes
 all

smiles will be visible
rainbowed drops
 folding into each other

on starved I love you-not petals

when time is the space between connections
 the call to water a stone till it blooms
 the touch with a world built on
 a reason
 to be
 how



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Without Breath

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Without Breath

Breath is officially confined now.
It's become something acceptable.
Once, it was us
- the oppressed,
By who knows what -
And we were holding breaths
Hiding breaths
We were low breathing
With strain
Discreetly
Our heavy, clumsy breath
Not to bother anyone

And we were repeating
All the time
How nice it would have been
Whether we could breathe carefreely...
What a deep sorrow,
But suddenly something changed:
The wind went down
The fresh air was hidden
The direction of the Earth was reversed
The poles moved
Birds and fish everywhere
Dolphins all around
As we all had become so many
Integrated into a mass
That does not breath, does not want to
That has not ever breathed
Hiding and scared of
Something we had never feared
When we were struggling to keep our breathing.



Volume 13, Issue 2
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Clock Mechanism

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Clock Mechanism

The mechanism is clockwise.
It has intensified its function
Faster, louder
I do not need to hark myself anymore
To look to the left, to look to the right
Whether people are listening
They go on, I can see them well
By the virus with the swords
To pierce the inside pocket
Someone on his halfway
Another before the threshold or on the stairs
To fall

And I, by the wear and tear of time
Along with a thunder and suddenly
By the virus like a sharp rain
That deeper and deeper penetrates
Inside the void of the world
I will scatter some dawn.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Old New Word

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Old New Word

Say the word, “pandemic”
Say it three times
Stress its middle syllable
Admire its symmetry
Recall the prefix “pan-“
Means across the board,
The whole shitaree,
You and me.



Volume 13, Issue 2
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Coronavirus Aria

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Coronavirus Aria

In Italia in the evening
instead of *passeggiata*
folks gather on their balconies
lean out and lift their voices
sing "*Il Canto degli Italiani*"
in harmony or rise
with a pop tune or beat
their improved drum kits,
flare spatulas on pot lids.

Hospitals clot with patients
who force tough choices
on drooping physicians while

cemetery and crematoria staff
work overtime. Too many bodies,
bleak bubonic echo.

Instead of telling stories
like Boccaccio's affluent youngsters
who quit Firenze to repose
in the quiet countryside
dotted with olive groves,
apartment dwellers step out,
apart but a part as they
erupt in song and rhythm
for each other, a cacophonous
"*Va pensiero*" against the new
black death. Their voices float
and knit in the night air,
defy the virus.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Covid-19 in Manila

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Covid-19 in Manila

We sit in my daughter's
 air-conditioned apartment,
 the big front window
 festooned by potted plants

within the gated compound
 threaded by gardens and pools
 and a trellis and Japanese pond
 thick with koi

within Bonifacio Global City,
 upper-class enclave inside
 metro Manila's broad sprawl
 of shacks and narrow lanes

as the city closes down
by Presidential edict driven
by an invisible virus: no
restaurants, no domestic

flights then restricted
international flights then no
taxis or Grab's then no
walking or bicycling or "loitering."

Addicted to our phones, dread
mounts with each ping's
disclosure and we wait
in the cool air and wait;

the mutating virus approaches
and our bodies tilt, absorb
the dark updates and we
question the world before

a wealthy friend's chauffeur
picks us up, drives through
uncanny unclogged streets
to Terminal One and our

hasty exit home while
the virus surges ahead,
faster than jetspeed.



Volume 13, Issue 2
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Social Distance

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Social Distance

Who would have thought?
 Wide space too far away
 to nod heads together, easy
 over coffee beer or food,
 or to touch or make love:
 buzz phrase, unplanned currency
 and oxymoron that governs
 our new norm, safe distance
 beyond coughs or sneezes
 range but removed from one
 another, reduced to smart phones
 and computers that promise
 we're a part rather than apart;

If we're social creatures

though some aren't, we live
against our grain when we
huddle at home away from
face-to-face in class or office
or store or brewery or café
or city park or campfire
or choir room. Is 6' enough?
Should it be 12'? "Social distance"
strains against itself, hygienic
safe zone wars against our nature,
constrains our movements,
demands we damp down desire
because getting together might
sicken or kill us though staying
put taxes our hearts so we seek
other colors in our same gray days.



Volume 13, Issue 2
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Insomnia in the Time of Coronavirus

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Insomnia in the Time of Coronavirus

For decades Mom said, “I don’t sleep
 a lot.” I ask, “What do you do?”
 “Lay there.” “Why don’t you read
 at least?” “I don’t want to get cold.
 Brrr.” Her shoulders tremble
 in accompaniment.

Now I lay awake, sleeping
 through the night a distant memory.
 The quilt and soft top sheet
 heat my mostly naked body,
 a stout pillow cushions my
 head in my turning. I still
 myself, quiet my breathing
 but minutes race past

the last pit stop.

I step into my home office,
close door, bury myself in current
book, return to my soft prison.
Shift sides silently, finger
an itch, push down sheet's
edge a fraction, relax relax

yet pandemic spreads inside,
rubs against my willed calm
and I can't reach a new dream,
the old cuckoo clock strikes
half hour and hour in the stairwell,
witness to my waking;

I yoga breathe until I finally
step onto a street with friends
unknown to one another
who sit in a sidewalk café,
close, cradling coffee cup
or beer glass, and I rest
where no Covid-19 flourishes
until I wake again.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Higher Consolation

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

Higher Consolation

When I'd walk home from the office
 roiled by a meeting or angry colleague
 or student, I cut between sidewalks
 in front of the dorm and the Tobacco
 Roots shine thirty miles away, lift
 me and I rise and walk its crest.

In this dark time I pan our valley's
 rim, eyes trace familiar ridges
 and higher peaks behind them
 and I remember the T-shirt, Life
 begins at 10,000', a credo that rings
 loudly now as I walk empty streets.

The mountains and rivers indifferent
to pandemics and my yearning, they
nonetheless call me more than ever:
their aging mocks my own while
mortality shouts us all down: sun
warms high rocks, snowy or bare blue,

and I fly to them and lose myself.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

When Today is no Longer the Same

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Keywords: Pandemic Poetics, COVID-19, Creative Form of Writing

When Today is no Longer the Same

The world is over.
 I know it's not, but...
 At least, my world is.
 Being alone for so long,
 Is much to ask of anyone.
 Trapped, in such a failure.
 While much of the world moves on,
 I am without my family, joy, or contentment.
 In its place, just enough energy
 To survive the same day,
 Until it is no longer the same.
 Someday to bond, to laugh,
 And to appreciate
 All that I didn't.

Truly, emotionally knowing,
How fragile, and how rare,
Such moments can be.
When today is no longer the same,
And my heart and my mind
Are no longer heavy,
I wish to understand
In more shades of gray,
With more depth than ever,
More love than ever,
More empathy than ever,
To reconsider what has meaning
Through being stretched
To my absolute limit,
Alongside everyone



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Ταινία

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Keywords: Δημιουργική Γραφή, Ποιητική Πανδημίας, COVID-19

Ταινία

Της ζωής τρανός εχθρός,
μαύρος κορωνοϊός.
Θάνατο στη ζήση σπέρνει
και τα όμορφα αποπαίρνει.
Φέρετρα τον ακλουθάνε
και θανατικό σκορπάνε!
Και ο Έρωτας λυπάται,
όταν το κακό θυμάται.
Κοινωνίας οι ταγοί
μας μιλάνε με οργή.

Δίκιο-άδικο γυρεύουν,
κι όλο μας απαγορεύουν.
Να 'σου κι οι πολιτικοί,
π' άλλα λεν, εδώ κι εκεί.
Πότε φυλακή μας κλείνουν
κι άλλοτε μας κατακρίνουν.
Η ατομική ευθύνη,
ευκαιρία τρανή τους δίνει.
Περιορισμούς να θέσουν
και διαδηλωτές να δέσουν.
Τα σχολεία μαύρη χώρα,
απαγορευμένη ώρα.
Πότε κλειούν, πότε ανοίγουν,
κορωνοϊούς τους σμίγουν.
Σμίξαν ιταμοί ηγέτες
και πολίτες που φοβούνται.
Κορωνοϊού οι κέτες,
που απλά μόνο λυπούνται.
Εταιρείες πολεμάνε,
για το εμβόλιο παλεύουν.
Τρις ευρώ όλο ζητάνε,
για ό,τι φάρμακο γυρεύουν.
Αποδείχθηκε το φαύλο,
σε μια τέτοια κοινωνία.
Αντιφάσεων και ελπίδας,
γκρίζα απόρρητη ταινία.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Άσπρη

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Keywords: Δημιουργική Γραφή, Ποιητική Πανδημίας, COVID-19

Άσπρη

Θλιμμένη όψη της απογύμνωσης, των νεκρικών ζυμώσεων τ' Απόλυτου τ' αγέρι.
Σημείο και Αρχή του μηδενός, απάνθρωπων εκκλήσεων στο φως των συμφερόντων.
Ιός-αγύρτης, θάνατου ο προπομπός, έσβησε το χαμόγελο στη γη των Ποιητάδων.
Έσβησε και του Έρωτα το φως, τα όμορφα προσπέρασε με τη σκιά του τρόμου.
Απόλυτο ψεγάδι η σιγή, μα και συνάμα οι αντίλαλοι και η ψευδολογία.
Έσκυσα στο πηγάδι των νεκρών, ντύθηκα τ' άσπρα δόρατα και τη γαλάζια μάσκα.
Παππούς-αγύρτης, μαύρος τώρα τριγυρνά, αόρατος ο Χάροντας χαρίζει τη σκιά του.
Άγγελος δίχως φως, θανατερός! Του Σατανά η επίγνωση, στο γένος των Ανθρώπων.
Επίγνωση της «δόξας» του κακού, όταν η ζήση χτίζετε σ' απόλυτα σκοτάδια.
Ελπίδας μόνη δύναμη; Ο Νους! Για λύση ομπρός στ' άναστρα σημάδια της Αβύσσου.

Προτάσσουμε της Γνώσης την Αρχή, του Λογικού τη δύναμη, το θάρρος ν' αγαπάμε!
Χαμόγελο μπροστά στη συμφορά. Ο Νικητής του θάνατου, στολή ντύθηκε άσπρη.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Χαϊκού

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Χαϊκού

Σκιά νεκρική,

μηδενός η Αψίδα.

Άμορφη μορφή.

Ιός της σιγής,

συμφοράς Απόλυτης.

Χάροντα σκιά.

Φέρετρον ανάσα,
Άπειρου ρινίσματα.
Θάνατου Αργώς.

Φυλακής μορφή,
Δαίμων ο αόρατος.
Τρόμος δίχως φως.

Ο Χρόνος κλαίει,
βάρβαρη απογύμνωση.
Των Πολιτισμών.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Μείναμε σπίτι

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Μείναμε σπίτι

Καλυμμένα στόματα, βλέμματα γεμάτα ρωγμές

κι ένας κόσμος γυρισμένος ανάποδα,

προσπαθεί να βρει ξανά τα βήματά του.

Ανάμεσά μας μία μάσκα: *τη φοράς ή σε φοράει;*

Όσοι λατρεύουν τα προσωπεία,

προσαρμόστηκαν πιο εύκολα στις αλλαγές.

Βλέπεις, η κοινωνία νοσούσε πριν τον Covid-19.

Λύγισα στην καραντίνα γιατί ήρθα αντιμέτωπη με τον εαυτό μου.

Απολύμανα χέρια, σκέψεις, συναισθήματα

κι είμαι έτοιμη πλέον, να τυλιχτώ με τα χρώματα του καλοκαιριού.

Τα φιλιά κι οι αγκαλιές που κάποτε πνίγαμε στη συνήθεια,
σήμερα, έχουν αποκτήσει άλλο νόημα.

Κι αν ο εχθρός είναι αόρατος,
τουλάχιστον, ας κρατήσουμε την ελπίδα ορατή.

Κι αν ο φόβος συντηρεί κάθε λογής αρρώστια,
σταγόνες αισιοδοξίας ας φυτρώσουν στην ψύχη.

*Γίναμε όλοι ήρωες αφανείς, στα δύο μέτρα απόσταση
κι είδαμε ξανά το φως, μυρίζοντας την Ελευθερία της Γης.*



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Χαρακώματα

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Χαρακώματα

Ω, πικρό μου έαρ

Θ' ανθίζουν οι αμυγδαλιές, νέφες αθέατες
 σπίθες θ' ανάβει στα κλαριά αφέντης ήλιος
 κι ούτε ψυχή ν' αναπαυτεί στον βαθύ ίσκιο τους
 μήτε βροχή να κελαρύζει σαν το γέλιο.
 Θα 'ρθει η άνοιξη ξανά και θα περάσει
 θα ψαλιδίζουνε το φως τα χελιδόνια της
 κι όλα τ' αόρατα μακριά σαν δώρα άδωρα
 τα θαύματά της στα χωράφια της θ' ανοίγουν.

Κι εμείς σκυφτοί στα χαρακώματα ανίδεοι
όπως τυφλοί που λησμονούν και δεν ελπίζουν
σ' όνειρα άλλων, διπλανών, ωμό τον τρόπο μας
ψηλαφητά με ξόρκια θ' απωθούμε:

Λες και διαλέγουν οι θνητοί το μονοπάτι τους
λες και νικιέται το κακό παραλληλώντας.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Ένας Παράδεισος όπως τον θέλω εγώ

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Ένας Παράδεισος όπως τον θέλω εγώ

Θα μου φορέσουνε μια μέρα το βραχιόλι
κι εγώ θα το δεχτώ κι ας ξέρουν πού κινούμαι
θα το δεχτώ γιατί φοβήθηκα
μην ξαναζήσω επαίτης
και η ελευθερία μου
μην αποκτήσει κέρατα σουβλερά
και ισχυρές οπλές
και μακριά από μένα
στο δάσος διαφύγει.

Θα μου τρυπήσουνε μια μέρα το κορμί
για ένα μικροτσιπ
κι εγώ θα το δεχτώ
για να κοιμάμαι σε κρεβάτι μαλακό

για να αγοράζω καφέ
δίκαιου εμπορίου
για να μπορώ να αγκαλιάζω
να χαϊδεύω
να φιλώ

Μα, όταν πια τους ελέγχους θα περνώ
βλέποντας το φωτάκι
στις στενές πύλες που φτιάχτηκαν για μένα
πράσινο να ανάβει
χαρούμενος και κορδωτός
που είχα υπάρξει υπάκουος
στην κάθε νουθεσία
δέκα άρρωστοι σε ένα μικρό σοκάκι
κι εκείνοι με βραχιόλι
όμορφα τρυπημένοι
θα κλαίνε πεινασμένοι
οικτρά οσφυοκάμπτες
και θα φαντάζονται ταξίδια μου
όπως θα τους τα περιγράψω
κάθε φορά που επιστρέφω σπίτι μου,
αισχρά καλλωπισμένο.

Μη μου φοράτε το βραχιόλι
και μη με τρυπάτε, άτιμοι,
έχω κι εγώ σ' ένα σοκάκι μια γωνιά
να ονειρεύομαι έναν παράδεισο
όπως εγώ τον θέλω.



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Η Λανθασμένη Εκτίμηση

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Η Λανθασμένη Εκτίμηση

δεν υπολόγισαν σωστά το σύννεφο,
ήταν λευκό κι αδιάφορο όταν ξεκίνησε τις επισκέψεις.
Κάποιοι το φωτογράφιζαν,
πληκτρολόγια το αποτύπωναν σε κείμενα ρομαντικά,
πινέλα μεγαλουργούσαν
σαν δεν αναλογίστηκαν η ανατροφή του πόσο περίεργη ήταν,
ούτε με τους γονείς του σκέφτηκαν
να συναναστραφούνε λίγο,
αυτό το περίεργο σχήμα να ερμηνεύσουν.

Ερχότανε και έφευγε,
λίγη βροχή,
(κάποιοι "βροχούλα" την ονόμαζαν)
σαν το ροδόσταγμα σε φίνο λιβανέζικο μαχαλεπί.

Κάποτε, βέβαια, ερχόταν λίγο πιο γκριζο,
μα όλοι καθησύχαζαν ο ένας τον άλλο με αναρτήσεις
«θα φύγει σε λίγο, καλό είναι, τους κήπους θα ποτίσει»
και με τα κιάλια έλεγχαν σε άλλα βουνά τα νέφη
και συζητούσαν με ευφορία
την καθαρή τους, την ανθεκτική αγέλη.

Σε μια ανακοίνωση αιφνίδια,
μαθεύτηκε απανταχού
πως οι μυστήριοι γονείς από το σπίτι τους το διώξαν
με ένα μπογαλάκι αθόρυβο,
(κουρέλια θα είχε μέσα)
να περιπλανηθεί, τον κόσμο να γνωρίσει.
Το είδε πρώτη μια αγρότισσα σαν μάζευε τα ρόδα
παλλόμενο πάν' απ' το εργοστάσιο
να απειλεί να στάξει.

Μετά παρέα το πρόσεξε πέρα στο πανωχώρι,
καθόντουσαν στον καφενέ
σαν όλα σκοτεινιάσαν
το τάβλι στη μέση αφήσανε
με τον καφέ αδιάβαστο
με τη σουμάδα κρύα,
και τρέξανε στα σπίτια τους
εκεί για να κλειστούνε
προμήθειες σαν μαζέψανε
στις μάχες μαθημένοι.

Στην πόλη όταν έφτασε τρανότερο
με τέτοιο ριζικό στη μυστική φαρέτρα
ψηλά απ' τα κτήρια το σώμα μέτρησε
κι ένιωσε πως το έρμα του βαρύ κάτω που το τραβούσε
όλη την επικράτεια θα κάλυπτε επαρκώς κατά τις οδηγίες.
Το μπογαλάκι έλυσε
τα σκούρα, ασιδέρωτα κουρέλια ν' αερίσει
κι έπειτα κάτω στις λεωφόρους περπάτησε
τα νέα πλάσματα να γνωρίσει.

Δεν ήταν ο τρόμος της καταιγίδας
που άδειασε την πόλη απ' τα σκυλιά, απ' τα σκοιινιά,
και τους κινούμενους αντικατοπτρισμούς του ουρανού.
Δεν ήταν ο κεραυνός και ο βρόντος
δεν ήταν ούτε η σφοδρή πλημμύρα.
Ήταν που μάθανε όλοι από διάγγελμα πως το μαχαλεπί
στην πόρτα τους θα φέρει η αγρότισσα
αν καταφέρει το ροδόσταγμα φρέσκο φέτος να βγάλει

και πως κλεισμένοι θα μείνουμε μήνες πολλούς
κι όσοι αντέξουν – όταν το νέφος φύγει – θα εξέλθουν.

Πέρασε γρήγορα ο καιρός της καρτερίας
απ' τα παράθυρα παρατηρούσαμε
να περνούν πλέον σύννεφα πολλά
μα, κανένα τους δεν θύμιζε την περίεργη μορφή
που στον ουρανό επίμονη,
έριχνε ρούχα σκοτεινά τα πρωινά
την μέρα ολόκληρη τα τρεμάμενα σώματα
μορφή να κρατάνε σταθερή,
εφάμιλλη της μονοκτημοσύνης.

Η καλοκαιρία ήρθε επιτέλους στην πόλη.
Κανένα νέο σύννεφο δεν περνούσε πια
όλα είχαν απορροφηθεί από τον περιπλανώμενο επισκέπτη
σε νηνεμία η πλάση
πλασματική ευνομία
όταν έξαφνα ήρθαν
(κατόπιν χαρμόσυνου διαγγέλματος)
οι τελευταίες ώρες πριν την μεγάλη Έξοδο.
Όλοι ετοιμάστηκαν
βάλανε φρέσκα ρούχα λαμπερά
κτενίσανε την άφθονη κόμη
και με το χέρι στα πόμολα
μετρούσαν χωρίς ανάμνηση το μπόι τους
με της πόρτας το ματάκι.
Από τους διακομιστές και τις στατιστικές
μεγάλη η αγωνία μετρήθηκε
στο διασκορπισμένο, κατακερματισμένο
και πολλά λαβωμένο πλήθος
που όπως κάθε νεφικό
πριν απ' την καταιγίδα
δειλά λευκό είτε μαζεύεται είτε περιπλανιέται
πριν ενωθεί με εκείνο το υπερεκτιμημένο όλον, για να φανεί η απέραντη σκοτεινιά σε ένα
συμπαγές σάρκινο κι ανήλεο σώμα που ήθελε τη λευκότητα να προβάλλει ως ευλογία σαν έκρυβε
του καθενός με επιμέλεια την γκρίζα αλήθεια. (Εγώ δεν ήθελα να βγω, έμεινα μέσα, ωστόσο νέο
σύννεφο φανεί, να μην το φωτογραφίσω, να μην γράψω κανένα ποίημα, κι ούτε κάποιο δροσερό
γλυκό να θέλω).



Volume 13, Issue 2
August 2020

Ω, Άνθρωπε

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Ω, Άνθρωπε

Άνθρωπος. Ίσως να είναι το τελειότερο πλάσμα της φύσης.

Γεμάτο όνειρα, συναισθήματα, συνείδηση, ανάγκες... Ανάγκες που για αυτές ξέχασε τι είναι, ποιός είναι. Ξέχασε την μάνα και το σπίτι του, τα αδέρφια και τους φίλους της ψυχής του.

Και καταπάτησε τη γη, που νόμιζε για κτήμα του και πλήγωσε αυτούς που τον λάτρεψαν και ύψωσε τον εαυτό του πάνω από το κάθε τι μέσα σε αυτή την πλάση.

Υπεροψία, απληστία και μίσος φώλιασαν στην ψυχή του. Και ξέχασε τι είναι, ποιος είναι. Ξέχασε πως ο άνθρωπος είναι πλάσμα της φύσης, τρατό σε θεομηνίες, καταστροφές, λιμούς και λοιμούς...

Και κάποτε ήρθαν όλα ένα προς ένα να του θυμίσουν τη φύση του. Και πέθανε, μα ξαναήρθε στη ζήση πιο υπερόπτης, άπλειστος και ανικανοποίητος από ποτέ.

Και τώρα να! Ξανά βρίσκεται εκεί. Στο κατώφλι του λοιμού. Θυμάται σιγά σιγά τη φύση του και φοβάται. Κι αν τον πιάσει ο λοιμός, κι αν φύγει από τη ζωή; Ευκαιρία, άνθρωπε, ο λοιμός, ευκαιρία να ζήσεις, ευκαιρία να πεθάνεις και γεννηθείς ξανά. Φιλέσπλαχνος, ανιδιοτελής, φροντιστής της γης και των πλασμάτων της, αλτρομιστής, γενναϊόδωρος, θεόπνευστος. Να γεννηθείς ξανά, Άνθρωπος!