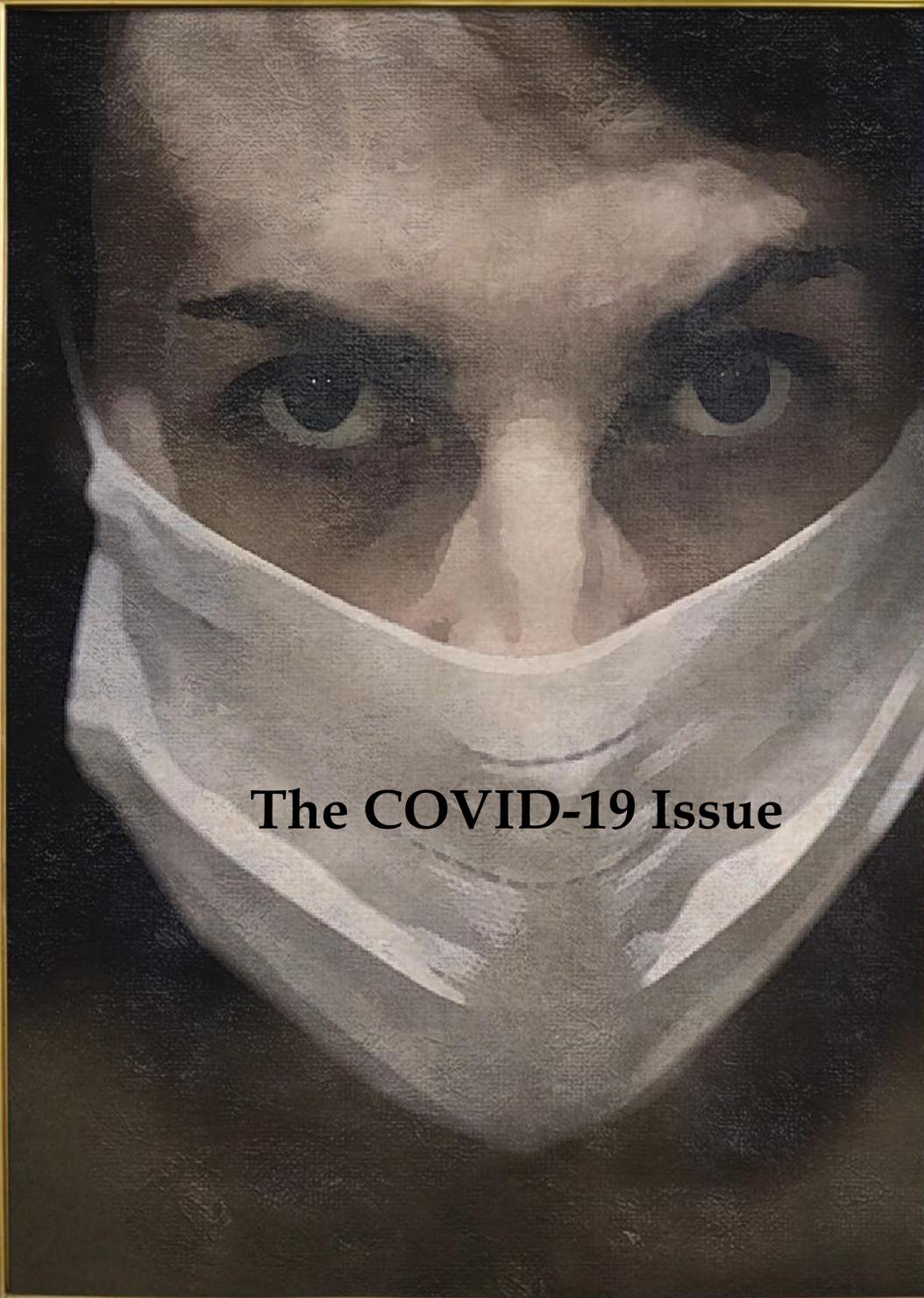


Write ON!



The COVID-19 Issue

An e-zine for the Mississauga Writer's Group

Table of Contents

Title	Author	Page
Four Days of the COVID-19 Lockdown	Peta-Gaye Nash	5
COVID-19	Scott Berger	6
COVID-19	Nina Munteanu	8
Prayer Lines	Ruth Mugford	14
Days with Coronavirus	Yiren	16
COVID-19	Elizabeth Banfalvi	19
Holy Solidarity	Maisy O'Rourke	21
Surviving COVID-19	Frances Frommer	23
What the Important Priorities Are in Life	Joseph A. Monachino	25
Shared Quest	Miranda Wong	26
Photo Poems	Susan Ksiezopolski	27
COVID Reflection	John Fraresso	30
Don't Brush It Under the COVID-19 Rug	Anna Fernandes	32
Living the Creative Life: Musings Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic (with art)	Maria Lagarde	35
In the Blink of an Eye	Angela Ford	41
A Wave in COVID-19	Savithri Duddu (Savi)	44
Games!	Jeffrey Petermann	45
Love and Death in the Time of COVID-19 <i>and</i> N95	Joe R. Zammit	47
The Other Face of Coronavirus	Lina Ismail Alhabahbeh	50
Adapting	Katrina Roach	51
Brother, Can You Spare a Smile?	Paul Daniel	53
Two Poems	Sajeda Manzoor	55
COVID-19 - Social Distancing	Vidya Vasant Gopaul	58
Author Biographies		62
Who We Are		72



Four Days of the COVID-19 Lockdown

by Peta-Gaye Nash

Day 1

On the second morning of our lockdown, while I'm sitting beside the fireplace having a cup of coffee, my husband pulls up a chair and sits beside me. He takes my hand and a burst of hot, orange lava-like fear hits me in the gut. "What now?" He looks into my eyes. "I didn't want to tell you last night because I knew you wouldn't sleep. Please don't react badly, but I've been laid off." I say nothing for a moment, then a voice coming from me says, "Don't worry. It will be fine."

One of my worst fears has come to pass. I've been worried about this since we immigrated to Canada in 2002, long before the coronavirus. It is a deep fear of lack of money that goes back to my childhood. Reports of job loss have happened to thousands of people, some much worse off than I, but I must still fight the urge to wallow in self-pity and let the fear of losing my home take over. For the most part, we've lived paycheque to paycheque and I've always feared what might happen if one of us loses a job. My remedy (instead of working on that novel I've longed to write) is to binge watch *Love Is Blind* and *Tiger King* on Netflix. I get so caught up in the lives of these people that I can barely remember my husband's name much less that he's just lost his job.

I wake sweating, feeling fiercely hot. I sit up and rip off my nightgown. I try to take deep breaths convinced I have the coronavirus. Then I calm down and

remember I've been having night sweats for the last two years. I sink back into the pillow unable to sleep. When I do sleep, I dream I've won a prize and it's a gorilla. I'm a little shocked it's not money, but the gorilla hugs me and says, "Now that I'm coming to live with you, I have to establish some ground rules and the first one is we need a routine." My irritation (how dare a gorilla give me advice) wakes me up. My eleven-year-old daughter comes into my room saying her nightmares are frightening and keeping her awake. She falls asleep curled into me like when she was a baby. It hits me that the kids must be going through a hard time too, even though they keep saying they are fine.

Day 2

I do my first physiotherapy session online. It's a painful process as we navigate Zoom, give up and finally do a WhatsApp call. The physiotherapist shows me six exercises to do and I have no idea if I'm doing them correctly. People keep saying this is the new reality and I want to tell them to shut up. My torn rotator cuff is not going to get well virtually.

A couple we know call and ask if my husband and I want to go for a walk. I assume we'll maintain the social distancing required. I'm wrong. They hug and kiss us. I'm taken aback, but they say the coronavirus doesn't exist. It's a hoax created by the government. They tell us the G.O.A.T. of all conspiracy theories. All these world

leaders, including our own prime minister, are not actually in quarantine but are prisoners about to be arrested for involvement in a murderous child kidnapping and torture ring. The theory gets much worse but they ask us as proof: Do you know anyone who actually has the coronavirus?

Admittedly, we don't. When I go home, I wonder if I'm going crazy watching every recording being passed around the world, or if my friends are crazy. I can't help but shake the discomfort about the hugging and kissing. I do something I haven't done in years. I open a Bible and start reading.

Day 3

I call my friend Vickie. We were roommates in university and now live two streets away from each other. I'm in shock when she tells me she and her husband Alfred contracted the virus. Now I know someone who has the virus, I think. Vickie was unable to get out of bed for ten days, and Alfred is in the hospital on a ventilator.

Back in 2002, I immigrated to Canada with two girls, aged five and two. I came because my five-year-old had been kidnapped in my country. Even though we got her back, it left me scarred with a trauma that probably will never go away. I stayed with Vickie and Alfred in a two-bedroom condo on the Esplanade until we got our own place. It probably wasn't easy for them to have us stay with them, cramped as we were, and my two girls and I slept in a double bed. Every morning I went into the kitchen and Alfred would already be up making coffee. Some mornings I'd wake up and

be huddled over with the physical pain of anxiety. Would I get a job and be able to support my children? I didn't think I had the strength to keep going. Alfred kept telling me, "Don't worry so much, P. Everything is going to be alright. You have to keep going. Keep trying and be positive."

Now that Alfred is in hospital, I want to tell him he just has to keep going, to keep trying and be positive. I want to tell him how his words kept me afloat when I was drowning in homesickness and depression, but I can't seem to pick up the phone to do it. I don't want to text. It hits me that I'm going to write him an old-fashioned letter on stationary. It can be thrown away, but never erased nor deleted. I hunt for my blue stationary, bought and unused since 2009.

Dear Alfred, I begin.

In the very early days of COVID-19, my old school friend Georgia went to Italy and was quarantined as soon as she got back to Jamaica. She didn't get a chance to go to her house, that's how strict Jamaica was with the virus from the beginning. She posted her journey in quarantine on social media, how the bus driver taking her to her new home was more likely to get her killed than the coronavirus. That was a month before schools in Ontario closed down. I actually envied her time alone, away from work and the demands of everyday life. Knowing me well, my mother laughed and said, "I know *you* wouldn't be bored. You'd finally have the time to write."

“Exactly, I said. How did you know that’s what I was thinking?”

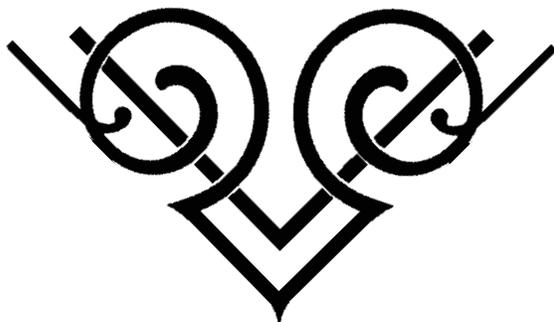
A month later, I’m at home with more time in the world than I’ve had since childhood. Although I’m working from home, I could probably complete a short novel. For years I’ve blamed the outside world on my sob story of ‘not having time to write.’ When I had just immigrated to Canada with two young girls, I was busy and blamed them. Then I had two more children. How could I write when I had to look after four children of varying ages? Then I went back to work and even got a second job. I blamed my jobs.

Now seated at my desk and staring at the blank page, the words elude me. I don’t blame them. Writing is a lot like exercise, like painting, like anything one wants to do well. You’ve got to keep at it. Every day. The writing muscle, like any other muscle, must be exercised. The thing about isolation is that at some point, we see ourselves as we truly are. The world’s distractions are minimal. My excuses stare me in the face. The five-year old who is now the 23-year-old tells me I’m not writing because I suffer from perfectionism. That I’m trying so hard to write the perfect article and the perfect story that I end up writing nothing.

Day 4

Before the malaise sets in for the day, I sit up in bed with a stark realization. Wasn’t it a few months ago that I fervently wished not to have to go to work? To have time to write? Didn’t I wish for the world to slow down, for everything to stop to give me the time to catch up? Before the lockdown, I felt overwhelmed with life’s demands. Tired, cranky, resentful of the pace I’d set with no finish line in sight. I was an aimless runner on an endless marathon, so wrapped up in the race that I’d neglected the people and things that brought me the most joy. While I don’t want the world to suffer with this virus, I am getting exactly what I’d asked for.

After my coffee by the fireplace, I order some masks and gloves from Amazon, feeling that the day is coming when we will get dirty looks for not wearing a mask outdoors. Then I turn off my phone and sit at the computer. I find a half-finished collection of short stories. I find an abandoned novel, still in its early stages. One day when I’m once again back at work and on the never-ending marathon run, I’ll look back on this time and consider how I spent it. My instinct is to eat, do laundry, tidy a closet, anything but what I most need to do. I force myself to stay seated, set the timer and place my fingers on the keyboard.



© Peta-Gaye Nash 2020

COVID-19

by Scott Berger

My day begins with the alarm clock chiming at 5:30. My wife and I share a cup of coffee over the next hour before I get ready for work. By 7:15, I'm waving good-bye to my wife and our dogs. My commute takes me across the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. A commute like another day, but today isn't just another day. My routine may be the same - I try to keep it that way - but my days, my life, they feel different. And I'm not sure when my days will feel like they used to. If they ever will.

Virginia Beach has a quarter million people, but traffic is very light, holiday light. The mall across the street is closed. My dentist is closed. Few people walk the sidewalks of a busy commercial area. The restaurants only serve takeout, if they're open at all. Yes, it feels different. I use my job as an architect to not think about the dangers and risks. But the pandemic is the dominant story. I can never not think about it for too long.

Despite all the alarm and worry, I've been very fortunate so far. My wife's retired and stays home. I have an office job where many people can work at home. But you can tell things are different. My job as an architect designing buildings for the U.S. military is considered "essential". A lot of service industry workers are not so lucky.

I find myself behaving differently. I don't touch the handrails in the stairs. I use my shoulder, not my hand to push open the bathroom door at my office. I use my knuckles to push elevator buttons, and I fist bump crosswalk buttons on street corners. I'm old school; when I have a question on one of my architectural projects, I leave my desk and walk over to theirs. Not anymore. Odds are they're at home, anyway.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention my anger. In the States, we are in this danger because too many people in 2016 voted out of fear, malice, or worst of all, principle. Now people are paying with their livelihoods and sometimes their lives. You may recall SARS and bird flu in the not too distant past. Because we had functional governments at the time, regardless of party, we fared far better. The idea my life, or anyone's, is in danger for someone else's callous disregard, makes my blood boil. I pray enough people remember this time when they enter the voting booth here this November.

Until that time, I live day to day with the sense of a dark cloud overhead. I'm grateful I feel healthy. I hope that continues. I pray I get no one else sick. I savor what's important to me — my wife, my family, my dogs. I feel more aware of my time with them. And I pray
I

wake up the next day, one day closer to
the end of this nightmare.

© Scott Berger 2020



COVID-19
by Nina Munteanu

In the following scene of my upcoming speculative novel “Thalweg” (set in 2053 Toronto) one of my characters, Daniel—who is a bit of a conspiracy theorist—is trapped in an old abandoned garage, about to fight off a pack of stray dogs. His feverish mind thinks back to the COVID-19 pandemic:

“The official story was that SARS-CoV-2, which caused the COVID-19 pandemic of the early ‘20s resulted from the recombination of two previous viruses in some host—supposedly a bat or pangolin—which then ended up in a Wuhan wet market; there, the recombined virus gleefully jumped species to humans, who, in turn, gleefully spread it worldwide. But, according to the study at the Wuhan hospital, patient zero hadn’t been anywhere near the wet market. So, where did the virus really come from?...”

Daniel then recalls a conversation he had—when he still had a job—with colleague Lynna in which he suggested that the chimera virus was developed as a bioweapon through Gain-of-Function research and it somehow leaked into the public. To her scoff, he reminded her that the aim of GOF research is to induce an increase in the

transmissibility and/or virulence of pathogens. He then provided numerous examples involving Influenza, SARS, and MERS.

Did she know, for instance, that in 2014 Obama put a funding moratorium on all GOF experiments that might enhance virus pathogenicity or transmissibility in mammals via the respiratory route. Then in 2017, under the Trump administration, the NIH turned it all back on.

Lynna responded calmly with a convincing argument, based on science and ecology. “Sure, they could be that,” she acknowledged thoughtfully. “Or they could simply be more cases of co-evolution and aggressive symbiosis...” Then she informed Daniel that viruses commonly form aggressive relationships with their hosts. Every monkey, baboon, chimpanzee and gorilla is carrying at least ten different species of symbiotic viruses, she said. The herpes-B virus that chums with the squirrel monkey is one example. The virus and an immunity to it passes harmlessly from mother to baby monkey. If a rival species like the marmoset monkey invades their territory, the virus jumps species and

wipes out the challenger by inducing cancer in the competing marmoset monkey. Ebola and hantavirus outbreaks follow a similar pattern of “aggressive symbiosis.”

This community-symbiosis functions like an ecosystem’s “immune system” that protects its own from the encroachment of invading species – even when that invading species is us.

– excerpt from Nina Munteanu’s “Thalweg” (upcoming)

Aggressive Symbiosis

In his book *Virus X*, Dr. Frank Ryan coined the term *aggressive symbiosis* to explain a common form of symbiosis where one or both symbiotic partners demonstrates an aggressive and potentially harmful effect on the other’s competitor or potential predator. Examples abound, but a few are worth mentioning. In South American forests, a species of acacia tree produces a waxy berry of protein at the ends of its leaves that provides nourishment for the growing infants of the ant colony residing in the tree. The ants, in turn, not only keep the foliage clear of herbivores and preying insects through a stinging assault, but they make hunting forays into the wilderness of the tree, destroying the growing shoots of potential rivals to the acacia.

In Borneo, a species of rattan cane has

developed a symbiotic relationship with a species of ants. The ants make a nest around the cane and drink its sweet sap. The ants, in turn, protect the cane. When a herbivore approaches to feed on the leaves, the ants attack.

When nitrogen levels go too far down, the fungal partner (*Laccaria bicolor*) of the eastern white pine tree (*Pinus strobus*) releases a toxin into the soil that kills any nearby springtails – the tiny and highly common soil invertebrate, *Folsomia candida*. The dead springtails then release nitrogen from their bodies and become fertilizer for both the fungus and the tree.

Ryan draws an analogy between this aggressive symbiotic partnership and that of new zoonotic agents of disease. He argues that when it comes to emerging viruses, animals are the cane and ants are the virus.

Viruses & Zoonotic Agents of Disease

Ryan suggests that Ebola and hantavirus outbreaks follow a pattern of aggressive symbiosis. This may explain why Ebola is so virulent. The Ebola virus is so fierce that victims don’t make it very far to infect others, suggesting that the virus is an evolutionary failure. However, if the virus is acting as an aggressive symbiont, it may be fulfilling its evolutionary purpose by protecting a host species we haven’t yet identified.

Historian William H. McNeill suggested that a form of aggressive symbiosis

played a key role in the history of human civilization. “At every level of organization – molecular, cellular, organismic, and social – one confronts equilibrium [symbiotic] patterns. Within such equilibria, any alteration from ‘outside’ tends to provoke compensatory changes [aggressive symbiosis] throughout the system to minimize overall upheaval.”

One of a legacy of examples of aggressive symbiosis in history includes smallpox: the Europeans introduced smallpox (symbiotically co-evolved with them) to the Aztecs with devastating results. Other examples of aggressive symbiosis include measles, malaria, and yellow fever.

Wet Markets

The National Observer gives a vivid description of the potential for zoonotic viral spread in the world’s wet markets, particularly in Wuhan:

“Dozens of species that rarely, if ever, come in contact with one another in the wild – fish, turtles, snakes, bamboo rats, bats, even foxes and wolf cubs – are confined in close quarters, waiting to be butchered and sold. The animals are often stressed, dehydrated and shedding live viruses; the floors, stalls and tables are covered in blood, feces and other bodily fluids.

This is the scene at many of China’s so-called “wet markets,” where a poorly regulated wildlife trade thrives and

creates conditions that experts say are ideal for spawning new diseases.

“You could not design a better way of creating pandemics,” said Joe Walston, head of global conservation at the non-profit Wildlife Conservation Society. “It’s really the perfect mechanism, not just for the Wuhan coronavirus but for the next ones that will undoubtedly emerge sooner rather than later.”

Zoonotic diseases, or diseases that can leap from animals to humans, are not uncommon and they don’t always come from exotic animals, writes Ari Solomon of Veganista. “Many come from the animals we regularly farm and eat. The 1918 influenza pandemic, or the Spanish flu, infected more than 500 million people and killed between 40-50 million worldwide. It is now commonly believed that the disease originated in birds. When the H1N1 virus, the same strain that caused the Spanish flu, showed up again in 2009, it first emerged in pigs. Tuberculosis, mad cow disease, and pig MRSA also came from animals exploited for food.”

In 2004, Linda Saif, with the Department of Food Animal Health Research Program at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center summarizes a number of farm and domestic animal reservoirs of zoonotic coronaviruses that have caused human diseases historically and many that may still do so through re-combinations. Animals have included cows (BCoV), pigs (PEDV and PRCV), chickens (IBV,

turkeys, cats (FCoV and FIPV), ferrets and macaques. Saif cautions that, given an estimated 75% of newly emerging human diseases arise as zoonoses (from wild or farm animals), interspecies transmission poses a continued threat to human health.

Wet markets aren't the only places where animals are kept under and treated with cruelty and lack of any compassion or kindness:

"Thanks to the advent of factory farming, billions of animals are routinely kept in cramped, filthy conditions that cause them extreme stress. This abhorrent practice creates the perfect breeding ground for new diseases to thrive. Add to that the fact that we regularly feed factory farmed animals low-doses of antibiotics and we really have a recipe for disaster." – Ari Solomon, Veganista

It comes down to balance. Something about which the human species has much to learn.

It is clear to me that these pandemics are exacerbated – if not outright caused by – our dense over-population and an exploitation mentality: our encroachment and defilement of natural habitats and the life that inhabits them. Gaia is suggesting that we live more lightly on this planet. Her ecosystems are responding to our aggression with equal aggression. And, make no mistake, we won't win that battle. Just as we won't win the battle with changing climate. It's time to learn

humility as a species in a diverse world. Time to cultivate respect for our life-giving environment. Time to learn the power of kindness.

The National Observer recently ran an article stating that: "COVID-19 and other health endemics are directly connected to climate change and deforestation, according to Indigenous leaders from around the world who gathered on March 13, in New York City, for a panel on Indigenous rights, deforestation and related health endemics." The virus is telling the world what Indigenous Peoples have been saying for thousands of years: that "if we do not help protect biodiversity and nature, we will face this and even worse threats," said Levi Sucre Romero, a BriBri Indigenous person from Costa Rica and co-ordinator of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB).

Glossary of Terms:

Co-evolution: when two or more species reciprocally affect each other's evolution through the process of natural selection and other processes.

Gain-of-Function Research (GOFr): involves experimentation that aims or is expected to (and/or, perhaps, actually does) increase the transmissibility and/or virulence of pathogens (Selgelid, 2016).

Patient Zero: the person identified as the first carrier of a communicable disease

in an outbreak of related cases.

Recombination: the process by which pieces of DNA are broken and recombined to produce new combinations of alleles.

This recombination process creates genetic diversity at the level of genes that reflects differences in the DNA sequences of different organisms.

Symbiosis: Greek for “companionship” describes a close and long term interaction between two organisms that may be beneficial (mutualism), beneficial to one with no effect on the other (commensalism), or beneficial to one at the expense of the other (parasitism). (Munteanu, 2019).

Zoonosis: a zoonotic disease, or zoonosis, is one that can be transmitted from animals, either wild or domesticated, to humans (Haenan et al., 2013).

Virus: a sub-microscopic infectious agent that replicates only inside the living cells of an organism. The virus directs the cell machinery to produce more viruses. Most have either RNA or DNA as their genetic material.

For more on “ecology” and a good summary and description of environmental factors like aggressive symbiosis and other ecological relationships, read my book “The Ecology of Story: World as Character” (Pixl Press, 2019).

References:

Frazer, Jennifer. 2015. “Root Fungi Can Turn Pine Trees Into Carnivores – or at Least Accomplices.” *Scientific American*, May 12, 2015. Online: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/artful-amoeba/root-fungi-can-turn-pine-trees-into-carnivores-8212-or-at-least-accomplices/>

Munteanu, N. 2019. “The Ecology of Story: World as Character.” *Pixl Press*, Vancouver, BC. 198pp. (Section 2.7 Evolutionary Strategies)

Munteanu, N. 2020. “A Diary in the Age of Water.” *Inanna Publications*, Toronto.

Ryan, Frank, M.D. 1997. “Virus X: Tracking the New Killer Plagues.” *Little, Brown and Company*, New York, N.Y. 430pp.

Ryan, Frank, M.D. 2009. “Violution.” *Harper Collins*, London, UK. 390pp.

Saif, Linda J. 2004. “Animal Coronaviruses: lessons for SARS.” In: “Learning from SARS: Preparing for the Next Disease Outbreak: Workshop Summary.” *National Academies Press* (US), Kobler S., Mahmoud A., Lemon S., et. al. editors. Washington (DC).

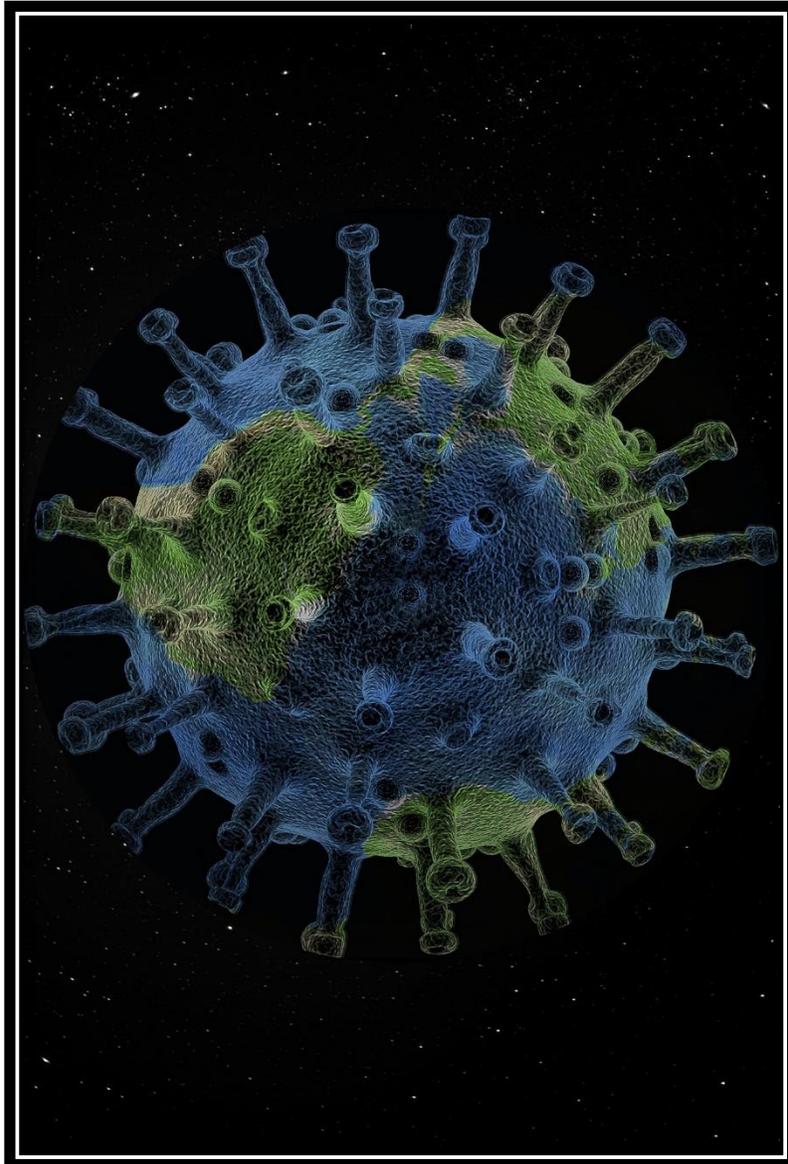
Selgelid, Michael J. 2016. “Gain-of-Function Research: Ethical Analysis.” *Sci Eng Ethics* 22(4): 923-964.

VanLoon, J. 2000. “Parasite politics: on the significance of symbiosis and assemblage in theorizing community formations.” In: Pierson C and Tormey S (eds.), *Politics at the Edge* (London, UK: Political Studies Association)

Villarreal LP, Defilippis VR, and
Gottlieb KA. 2000. "Acute and persistent
viral life strategies and their relationship
to emerging diseases." *Virology* 272:1-6.
Online: [http://bird
uexposed.com/resources/Villarreal1.pdf](http://bird
uexposed.com/resources/Villarreal1.pdf)

Wohlleben, Peter. 2015. "The Hidden
Life of Trees." *Greystone Books*,
Vancouver, BC. 272pp.

© Nina Munteanu 2020



Prayer Lines
by Ruth Mugford

My name is said in prayers
by some good friends of mine
and the way I'm feeling, I hope
I'm at the top of the line

I'm not sure who's listening
to prayers whispered in the air
but one thing I know for certain
is, these kind people care

Some I've only met casually
such as a fellow volunteer
others I've known a long time
although they don't live near

Then there are grief buddies
I met in a time so low
who have all stood beside me
with kindness, they bestowed

And a few I've known forever
young children when we met
with many things in common
my life they truly get

All of them watched me sail
winds of tremendous change
listened to my heart break
as my world was rearranged

Many have expressed concern
for what I've had to endure
some wishing they had a potion
that would give me a cure

Now like myself, they're upset
to hear the shocking news
my health's being threatened
maybe, payment for past dues

Each night they send prayers
targeted to help me
and I was just thinking
What would I want them to be?

I sat and thought it over
envisioning what to say
and I thought if I could
I'd likely add, *hey, hey*

May all the prayers form links
each one showing I tried
to cope with my heartbreak
for all of those that died

Let them represent my life
with all the goals I reached
including acknowledging
those I had helped teach

May the prayers be a symbol
of how much I truly cared
to help people and animals
on which this earth I shared

Keep each prayer safe
in a tiny bubble sack
protect its little message
don't let it fall through a crack

Have each person's prayer
be different but the same
whatever channel they go through
allow them a perfect aim

I hope that all their prayers will
form a never-ending chain
one that blesses me with time
to live my life again

I suppose in essence I'm praying
that overall things go well
and I remain a little longer
so my stories I can tell

© Ruth Mugford 2020



Days with Coronavirus (A suite of poems)
by Yiren

病毒肆虐的日子（组诗）

1. 逃亡

初春 风寒凉
划过无人的街道
城市 簇拥着建筑物
空旷

声音都关在了门窗后面
生老病死 悲欢离合
一如既往地进行着
连同惊惶
隐藏或直白

四处的沉寂歇斯底里
人们在家中逃亡

1. Escape

The cold early spring wind
streaks through the streets with nobody
around.
The city, crowded with buildings,
is empty.

All sounds are closed inside windows
and doors.
Life and death, vicissitudes of life
are going on as usual
together with trepidation
either hidden or straight forward.

The dreariness is enveloping and
hysterical.
People are in exile at home.



2. 失落

锅 碗 盆 瓢
油 盐 酱 醋
果汁 咖啡 茶
薯片 面包 糖

拖鞋 睡衣 家居服
爸妈 孩子 狗
弹琴 看书 游戏
追逐 嬉闹 安抚

家 满足了欲望
人 在家中失落

3. 距离

逃离 靠近
之间的距离有多大
还是有多小
人们隔着病毒
相亲相爱

2. At loss

Pot, pan, bowl and spoon.
Oil, salt, sauce and vinegar.
Pop, coffee and tea.
And chips, bread and candies.

Slippers, pajamas and lounge pants;
Daddy, mommy, kids and dog.
Play instrument, read a book and game
together;
And run, fight and comfort.

Home with all this satisfied its desires.
But people, with all this, are at a loss.

3. Distance

Escaping; getting close.
How far or how near
is it between the two?
In the distance of a virus,
people love and care.



4. 梦想

光怪陆离的世界
突然有了同一个梦想
云快开吧
脸虽然都盖着口罩
但眼睛都会看向
太阳

4. Dream

All of a sudden, the grotesque world
got one dream together.
Please, clouds, open the pathway!
Though faces are covered with masks,
the eyes will look to the direction of
the sun.

© Yiren 2020



COVID-19

by Elizabeth Banfalvi

Not since 9/11 have I heard silence in the skies. I live in the northern part of Mississauga so we get the planes going over from the Toronto Pearson International Airport. Every night when I go to bed, I hear the planes coming in to land. Now it is quiet.

I remember that after the planes hit the buildings in 9/11, all the airports in Canada and USA were immediately closed and stayed closed for several days. It was hauntingly quiet. At that time, people had to rely on road travel to get home. My son was one of them. He was in Los Angeles at the time and it took him several days to get home in a rental car with his associates.

Now again the skies are almost silent with less airplanes flying overhead. It seems strange that we are living through this again but we are. At that point in time, we lived with so much fear and again, fear is reigning but differently.

So much more is happening now with the world living with the Virus with deaths not just in the streets of New York but in the world. We are part of this. We are surrounded by it.

We are living in self-isolation with it. I don't think with anything else that we have gone through have we ever been asked to take so much on personally. Our front-line workers are showing us

how precious they are. They are still out there working and mingling in the virus infected people. Now we are hearing how some are been diagnosed with it. Day after day we are hearing about more people being diagnosed with it. Our fear grows every day.

There are those also who ignore what is being said and asked of them. What a shame. They seem to test their lives and ours by their exposures on a daily basis. For some of us, we are heeding the precautions but unfortunately so many aren't.

So, what I see out there is the quiet. The streets are less active. Stores and malls have closed. Small shops everywhere have closed their doors - hopefully for only a limited time. Schools have closed and the sound of children playing is non-existent. Even when you go grocery shopping there is tape on the floors at the check-outs so we keep our six-foot distance and people respect the effort of taping the floor. We stand quietly waiting our turn.

How long this will last, I don't know. We are being taught to respect others and ourselves at this time. At one point in time, our only connections were the phone where we rotary dialed the number and letters or telegrams we sent each other. Today, we have so many different possible connections now with

the internet, email and the key pad for the phone.

So, take the time, to reconnect with others in a different way. Stay healthy

and take care of yourself and the ones you love.

© Elizabeth Banfalvi 2020



Holy Solidarity
by Maisy O'Rourke

A reality that pulls us up by the bootstraps from below
Love and compassion from the Almighty above us to teach us survival
You speak to us in this time of sorrowful holiness
Forgotten by most yet still whispered by the few

Let us proclaim our respect for life
Of the human spirit touched by you

O Lord, my prayer for health of this Earth's inhabitants
Is uttered as I tread deep waters
For it is we who dread drowning in our own greed
Heed and make note of our trials and tribulations
And may each of us be counted
Be we dead or alive

Bring forth clear waters from our meagre pay cheques
Give us clarity of mind and heart
As the new stocks and bonds are posted
For our eternal souls

May the rivers flow pure again across our lands
That have been tilled to death
With none lain fallow to provide breath
For this endless human appetite
Assist us, guide us to be keepers of the land
Not reapers of the damned

While the Earth strikes back at us with unfathomable destruction and fury
Bless and protect the smallest and all of animals, the insects, the flora and forest life
Guide us to know them also as keepsakes of this tiny planet
May we all learn to practice *tikun olam*
And repair from despair the broken world

Give us strength, wisdom and serenity that we will rebuild from the ashes
Of the seven vessels and the polluted, ravaged seven seas
Scattered and shattered at ground zero

Most of all, we need you now more than ever
To lead us to a life of love and compassion
To raise us to lead future generations into a better life
Of spring renewed
Forward to a good life lived in real experience
Cleansed be our souls to stop this insane menagerie of curses

© Maisy O'Rourke 2020



Surviving COVID-19 by Frances Frommer

I have been surviving the pandemic with tons of solitude alone at home. However, I am not totally on my own as I have the company of my two cats – Precious and Sweetie. There is always someone to talk to although the conversations are one-sided. Sweetie is social and utters a meow. Both felines welcome brushing against my ankles and enjoy massages.

Besides their company, I have been coping with the social isolation with the help of my machines. These include: my computer, my TV, my radio, my CD player and my record player. Of course, there is the stove and oven, where I have been making pancakes and muffins and chicken soup for comfort. Now is not a time to diet and chocolates plus chips have been added to soothe feelings of loneliness.

I made a list of projects to give some structure to my days and evenings since all activities have ceased. I have been busy with such activities as updating my address book, mending clothes, sorting papers, reading books on China (on my to-do list for many years) and sharpening my colored pencils. I am grateful for my hobbies of creating art and writing.

I miss my art class, volunteer work, my writing group and walks in parks. Of course, meetings with friends for a coffee or a meal are banned.

I also miss the public library and have read all of the books I had checked out and books from the library in my condo. I have gone through my personal library and found some novels to re-read and several non-fiction books. I even purchased two novels and two magazines at the drug store.

Finally, exercise is a goal. I go for a daily walk. I do some stretches and strength training after long times on the couch. My outings include checking for mail and taking out the garbage. Then, there are the necessary trips to the grocery store, drug store, pet store and gas station. Whoever thought that these chores would be so welcomed and enjoyed!

I am happy to have the constant company of my two cats. Yet, if Precious and Sweetie could talk, they might tell another story. I imagine the following conversation.

“Our lady is getting on my nerves; she hardly ever goes out,” said Precious.

Sweetie agreed. “She is at home almost all of the time and never goes out for several hours like she used to.”

Mary is on the phone a lot. She is always talking about this “purrademic” or “endemic” – not sure what that means,” Precious added.

Sweetie grumbled and meowed, “Besides talking on the phone, Mary

spends hours on the couch reading or watching television. When she gets up, it is only to wander from room to room or get some food from the fridge. If Mary is not at the computer, she is turning on the radio, playing a record or listening music on her CD player.”

Precious states, “Mary is also often sorting papers, leaving piles all over the place. I don’t mind if she is doing art in her den; she sits still for a while and I can brush against her ankles. Sometimes, I get a few strokes on my head.”

“Sweetie snuggled against Precious. “I miss our privacy and peace and quiet. We get only a few moments alone if she leaves the door open to take the garbage out or check on her mail. That’s only about five minutes of being alone together.”

Precious closed her eyes. “I remember when Mary would go out all afternoon. We could eat, drink and nap at our leisure. However, I don’t mind when she goes out for a bit and brings her shopping Kart full of bags of nuggets, tins of food and bags of litter.”

Both cats agreed. “Hope Mary gets back to her old routines very soon and leaves us on our own for several hours.”

I wonder if the above could be the sentiments of my fur babies. They might not value my tons of time at home with me as much as I have been enjoying them.

However, I do trust that eventually life will return to normal and I can go out to socialize so we will all be happy again.

© Frances Frommer 2020



What the Important Priorities Are in Life

by Joseph A. Monachino

The current COVID-19 pandemic is an international tragedy. It is difficult to have a sunny disposition or optimistic outlook on life with such a horrible event occurring.

There exists an ironic situation or a silver lining to all of this bad news. People from all walks of life have found that life has slowed down, giving us time to contemplate it.

What have we contemplated? We can start with the important professions in life. Prime examples are First Responders such as paramedics, police officers, and firefighters. The co-related professions include doctors, nurses, and all other healthcare workers. Honourable mentions go to ambulance drivers and food industry professionals, as well as truck drivers.

I believe that society has realized that the sacrifices these professionals make, even in the best of times, is invaluable. I feel we don't pay them enough money or even recognition for their selfless services. They save lives as well as risk their own lives in their day-to-day work activities. After all this is over, the United Nations should institute an International Day of Recognition so that

every year we can commemorate their supreme duty to the international community that they have exhibited during this COVID-19 crisis.

On the other end of the spectrum, we have contemplated on the professions that are secondary to society: professional athletes and performing artists. The key word is *secondary*. When society at large finds it essential to divert from normal everyday life, we realize how much our health and mental well-being is dependent on certain professions more than others.

When the curve flattens and we return to "normal" life, we may more diligently adjust our priorities to what are important (health and family) and not so important (sports and entertainment) than we have in the past. It is a sad fact that a devastating phenomenon has to occur for us to contemplate what priorities are really important in life. We even seem to put our political differences aside during these trying times, which is a bonus occurrence.

© Joseph A. Monachino 2020



Shared Quest: One for all, and all for one
by Miranda Wong

This poem was previously printed in the Peel Weekly News, May 7, 2020

Is the virus due to ill will or
recklessness some would kill to hide?
Or is chaos God's plan to make us value
freedoms not ours to decide?

Once freedom was removed,
selfish ignorance became clear.
Cries about health, pollution, crime,
abuse and more fell to deaf ears.

It took depriving the human touch
to crave it so deeply,
and the fear of death
that we would value health dearly.

My choices do matter to others
and others' choices to me.
My choices alone now intertwine
with a web of so many.

A common purpose emerges
across a great divide
to share knowledge and conquer
a cure for our demise.

© Miranda Wong 2020

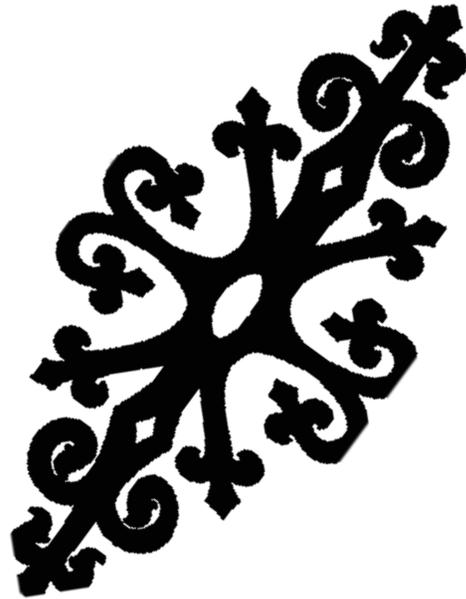
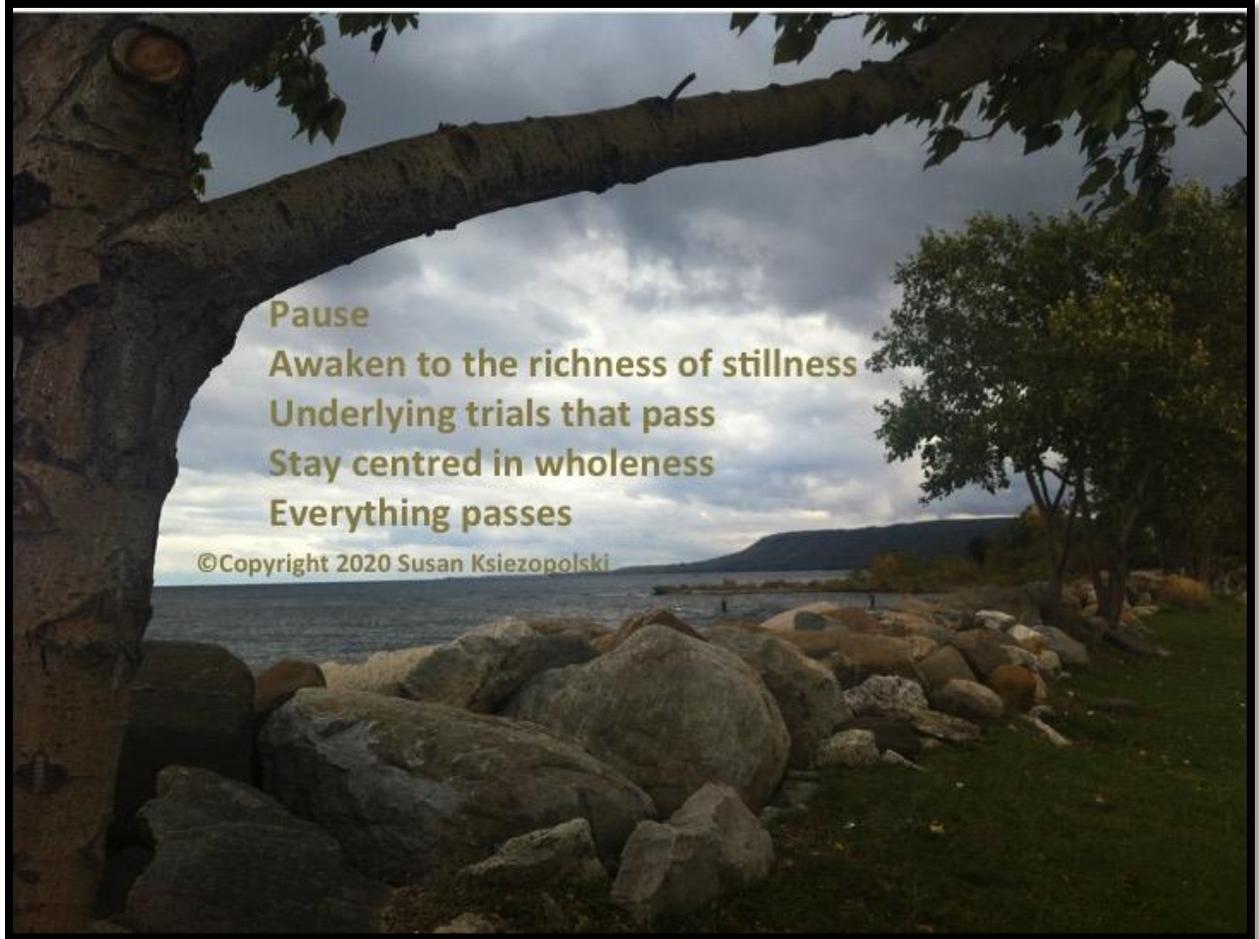
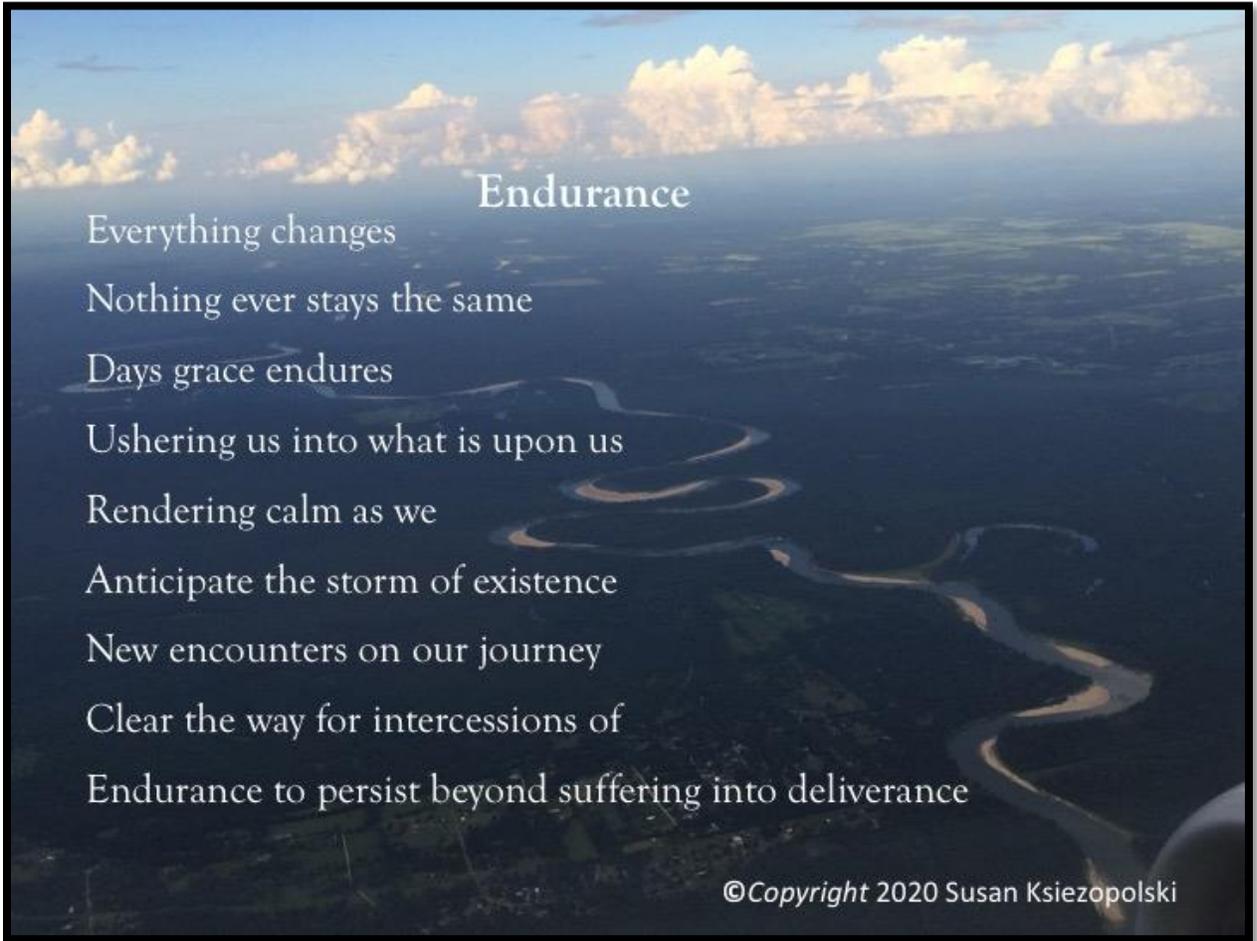


Photo Poems
by Susan Ksiezopolski,



Pause
Awaken to the richness of stillness
Underlying trials that pass
Stay centred in wholeness
Everything passes

©Copyright 2020 Susan Ksiezopolski



Endurance

Everything changes

Nothing ever stays the same

Days grace endures

Ushering us into what is upon us

Rendering calm as we

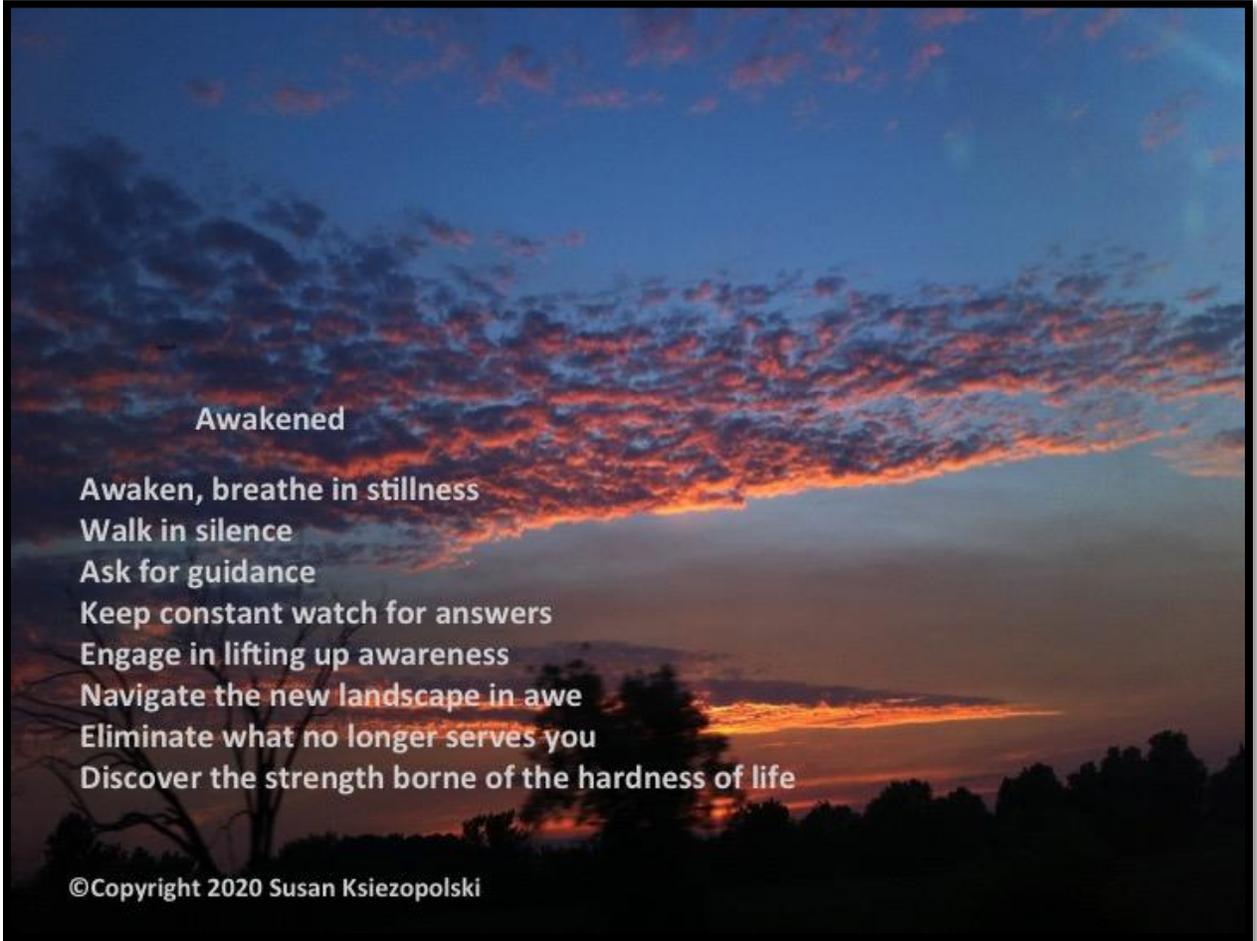
Anticipate the storm of existence

New encounters on our journey

Clear the way for intercessions of

Endurance to persist beyond suffering into deliverance

©Copyright 2020 Susan Ksiezopolski



Awakened

- Awaken, breathe in stillness
- Walk in silence
- Ask for guidance
- Keep constant watch for answers
- Engage in lifting up awareness
- Navigate the new landscape in awe
- Eliminate what no longer serves you
- Discover the strength borne of the hardness of life

© Copyright 2020 Susan Ksiezopolski

COVID Reflection

by John Fraresso

It is impossible for me to have any self-pity parties during this COVID crisis. Outside of the common inconveniences that come with shut downs and social distancing, I remain completely unaffected, except for a scheduled weekend in Buffalo to take in an NHL game, and a couple of concerts. First World problems to say the least, especially when I look at the incredible suffering and loss it has wrought on others. Thus far, by the grace of God, I am unscathed.

There are two big themes that I find myself reflecting on with the COVID crisis. The first one is that humanity has been given an incredible opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities. There are way too many priorities to reflect on here, but one that is significant – as a result of what is truly the biggest challenge facing humanity right now – is the environment. We have already witnessed very quickly how this pause has given the planet a chance to breathe, and wildlife to reclaim some freedom. The waters in Venice are clear, and jellyfish are being spotted in them. Roads in the Savannah are now taken up by lion prides basking in the sun. Everywhere, animals are parading into areas they wouldn't have before. Significantly as well, air pollution has plummeted in many areas. Places like Shanghai and New Delhi that usually have a smoky haze have clear skies.

We have been told by governments that they simply don't have the resources to get us greener any faster, and putting tighter regulations on business and consumers will hurt the economy too much. We've been told its essentially impossible. Yet, COVID comes along, and governments are all of a sudden willing to take on significant debt to save us, and the economy. Though COVID is deadly and horrific, it cannot hold a candle to the devastating effects of our continued rape and pillage of Mother Earth, nor can COVID hold a candle to the catastrophic impact climate change will have on humanity. Yet, our governments are finding the resources to save us from COVID. I guess it seems more urgent, even though it is not.

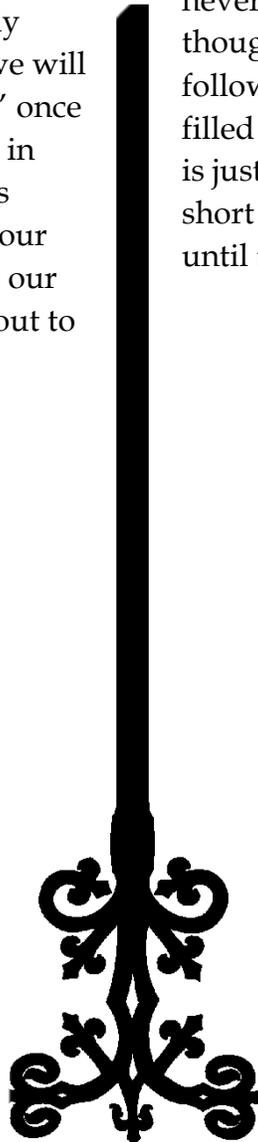
The second big theme that I have been reflecting on is that COVID is one of those crises that brings out the best and worst in humanity. From the insanity of people panic buying, to people attempting to scam others (selling fake tests, medicines, etc.), to price gouging, to the spectacle of the POTUS, we truly get the opportunity to see the absolute worst of human nature. On the flipside, the passion, compassion, affection, self-sacrifice, and overall *love* people have shown for others – often for complete strangers – shows us how incredible we can be, and what our world could truly look like. People cheering front line

workers, singing in unison from balconies, extending help and assistance to seniors and the vulnerable, social media pages set up for people to help each other (“care mongering” pages) ... quite beautifully, the list is endless. Let’s not forget the compassion seen in many political leaders as they try and help their citizens. Certainly not in my lifetime have I ever seen the best and worst of humanity on display so vividly.

We have been changed forever; things will never be the same. Though I am a positive and hopeful person, I sadly suspect that – for the most part – we will return to our pre-COVID “normal” once things settle down and the virus is in check. We will go back to our lives where we focus on our selves and our loved ones, giving little thought to our larger human family. We will set out to

spend ourselves out of the recession, satisfying our pent-up consumer impulses, with little care for the planet (outside of some lip service and guilt). I hope I am wrong, but history dictates we are a very forgetful species. I suspect people living 100 years ago – World War I had just ended – believed that humanity’s lust for war and power would now be behind them, after witnessing the worst of humanity at war. I’m sure they thought enough was enough. I suspect they thought it would never happen again. I imagine they thought, “How could it?”. What followed was the most violent, war-filled century in human history, and that is just one example. Sadly, I believe our short memory will plague us again, until the next crisis.

© John Fraresso 2020



Don't Brush It under the COVID-19 Rug

by Anna Fernandes

This pandemic is forcing us out of our "happy place". We, as a human race, have been resilient before and we will come out of it again, yet stronger. But let that recovery not sit in a handful of a few visionaries, entrepreneurs, scientists, inventors and leaders. Each one of us can do something different towards a better self.

While we're all hanging in there simply waiting to come out of lockdown and embrace the "new normal", what tales will we have to tell about the time we've spent, or wasted, or made use of during this much need self-isolation? Will we have powerful lessons and experiences to share, or will we be among those who will brush their inefficiencies under the COVID-19 rug?

Here are a few things I'd like to share with you from my pandemic experience. Things that keep me busy, mentally strong and socially engaged while still in the confines of my home.

1) Rest and relax to recharge and recover

We've been at the grind for a long time with work, university, school, assignments, projects, deadlines, etc. Why not give yourself a few extra hours each day to sleep in. Don't beat yourself up if the new wake-up time is 8:30 a.m. or 9 a.m. When the lockdown began for me in around mid-March, I decided to "be brave in the face of these

challenging times" and keep to my schedule of waking up at 5/5:30 a.m. followed by a cup of herbal tea, meditation, breakfast, etc. I wanted to follow my routine strictly, to avoid becoming lethargic and laid-back. A week later, I started sleeping in. My new morning began at 7:30 a.m. and I started rushing through my morning meditation, missing the sunrise, panicking because my day was beginning at 10 a.m. This made me irritable setting and unproductive tone for the day and subsequently for the rest of the week. Taking a step back to figure it out it began to make sense. The overload of COVID-19 related news, more bad than constructive information, was burdening the mind with uncertainty and anxiety. A nose-dive to the economy, global financial slump and social collapse is a lot to deal with all at once. But we need to find a way to accept it as a reality and deal with it with a coping mechanism we best can. And so my methods were to rest and relax to recharge and recover. So listen to your body allow yourself to take the time to slow down and think things through.

2) Learn something new

You have the time and you have the means to learn and try something new. The internet is

our best friend in these times. When you get on the net, you're bombarded with advertisements announcing online courses, Masterclasses and DIY videos – some free and some through membership fees. Take your pick. I believe no knowledge is waste. You may be a computer programmer, thinking what good is a free photography webinar to me. Or an a hair stylist wondering what benefit can a cooking/baking class offer me. Let me share with you my story. Professionally I'm in business management and I signed up for two free webinars on photography. But I'm also an avid traveller, and I share my travel stories not only through pictures of landscapes and landmarks but also by capturing moments of the local people in their everyday life. The tips and tricks I learned from the webinars, taught me how to take my pictures from good to great. I agree: many free webinars have a hard-sell marketing package at the end of the webinar, selling you a package deal valued at about \$4,000 for a "sign-up-today" offer of \$295 – pretty sweet, eh! So you can avail yourself of the amazing discount if you want to take your education to the next level or simply learn from three tips. I had learnt something new and I'm proud of it.

3) Engage virtually

We're not the kind to live and work in isolation, and we've quickly stepped up and delved into using platforms to keep us connected and engaged. Facetime, Skype calls and Zoom meetings are no longer for overseas contacts. Book clubs, meditation group and even friends are meeting up over virtual video calls to stay connected. So adopt this new way of meeting people, fill your social calendar with virtual events – you'll be happier. Here's my take from all this – writing and copy editing had been my corporate life for a little over 15 years. I've been a ghost-writer for C-Suite executives, I've developed copy for annual reports and have also created content for employee engagement initiatives. So while corporate copy writing is in lockdown, why not explore some freelance work for pleasure I asked myself. While searching the internet, I came upon the Mississauga Writers Group webpage. My creativity sparked; I signed up and now I'm part of a space that welcomes seasoned and aspiring writers, editors and illustrators. It's given me a platform to explore content creation outside of the corporate world. And what's outside the corporate world? Everything else from current affairs, to cooking and gardening and pets, and the list is endless.

As this lockdown continues, so does my promise to my personal growth. I promise to dig deeper into my skills and talents and become more aware of my abilities and strengths. I promise to learn more, bake more, plant more and socialize more – of course, within safe self-distancing.

© Anna Fernandes 2020



Living the Creative Life: Musings amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Maria Lagarde

“Every child is born an artist.
The problem is how to remain one as we grow up.”

Pablo Picasso

Such is a problem that I had taken on, perhaps unknowingly, all my life. As I grew older, and hopefully wiser, I realized that art has been my one constant companion in life, though unfortunately not always given its due regard. When not preoccupied with family life or my day job helping to protect the environment, I would turn to art, either making it myself – poetry and other forms of creative writing, videos, photos, container gardens – or enjoying those made by other creatives in music, film, theatre and the world of books. However, it always seemed I could never do or partake enough of artmaking. I have dabbled in it in fits and starts, in breadcrumbs of time, frequently done in the sidelines of my day. I am constantly frustrated at not having the amount of time I wished to devote to it. Usually, other priorities take over. My desire to fully engage in art was often bigger than what my spare energy, space and moments would allow. The coronavirus pandemic somehow changed this equation for me. The call for social distancing sounded to me like a permission to actively participate in the impulse of the universe to create. One fine spring day in March, I felt I was handed a ticket to pursue a more creative life. Since then, I have filled a whole sketchbook with watercolour art as part of my lockdown

art-a-day therapy, drafted several haikus and long-form poems, written many musings and creative writing tidbits, tried to learn piano online, and sang my heart out on Friday evenings.

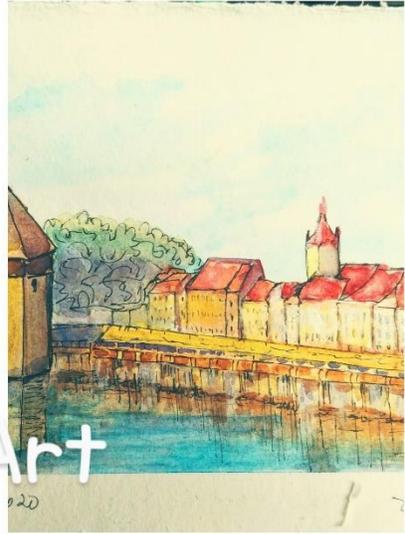
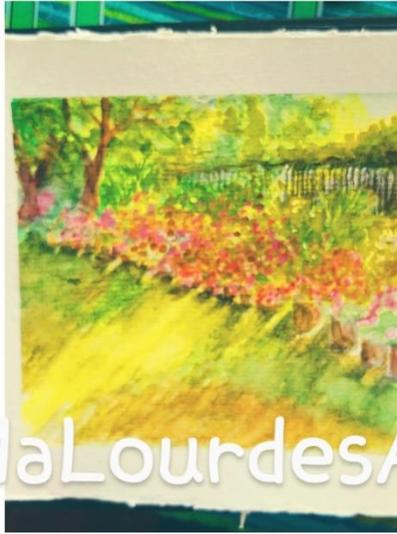
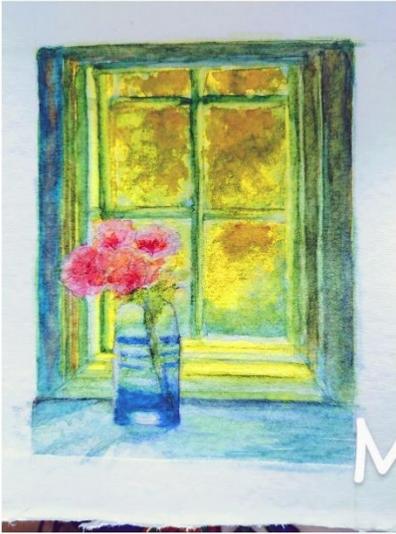
There are countless others like me. In the weeks following the call for people to stay home, we have seen all social media platforms getting awash with a plethora of creative expressions. Photos of food creations, home-made masks and innovations in protective equipment, online concerts, podcasts and artworks became even more ubiquitous in our increasingly internet-connected world. It got me thinking: what could be driving people to channel the right side of their brains during this time of the pandemic? By exploring this question, I don't mean to romanticize the pandemic narrative nor minimize the fears and struggle that many people have fallen into as a result of this health crisis. Rather it is to implore the recognition that creativity is available to all and that everybody can access its power when dealing with the emotional, mental and psychological toll of the pandemic. History is in fact replete with great expressions of creativity by people in the margins whose very survival depended on it. I believe our collective responsibility then would be to allow

that expression to come through in everyone.

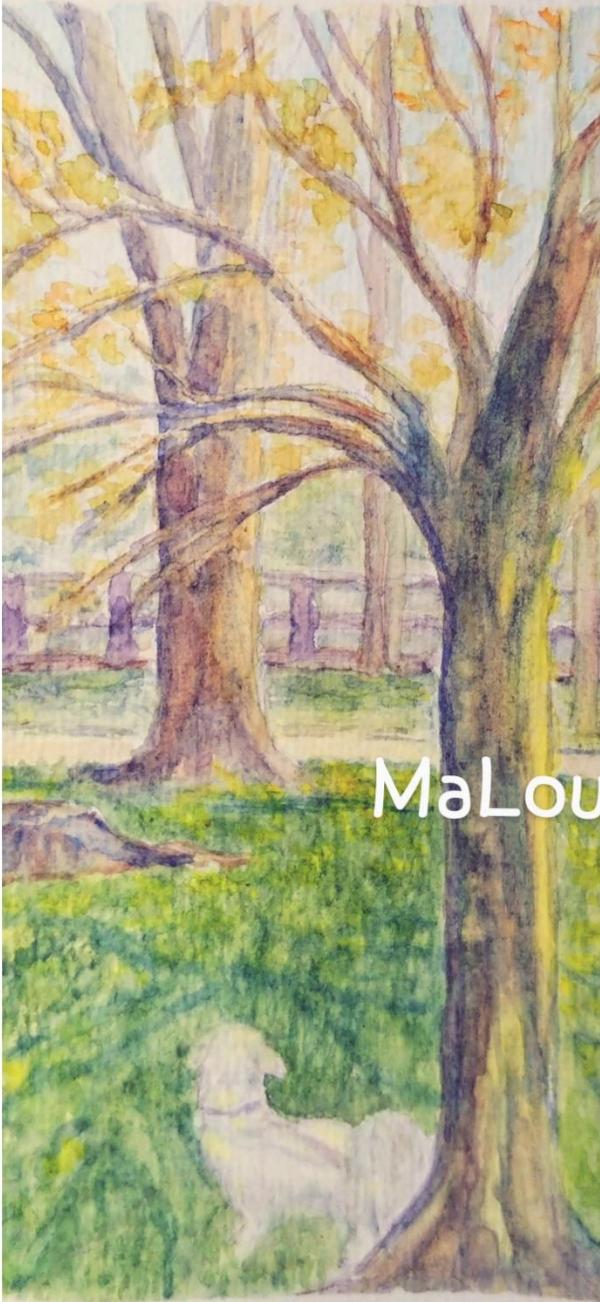
One possible reason for the surge in creativity is that because we have been locked down in place, there's little to distract us from our latent potential for creation, be it in cooking, baking, painting, writing, carpentry, gardening or singing. We remember the creative instinct we were born with, and with it comes our capacity to respond to the natural rhythms of life. Another plausible reason relates to what I see as meaning-making through self-expression. In an effort to make sense of what feels so surreal, I believe we stumbled upon an opportunity to rediscover what is real to us. The

pandemic has allowed us to focus our attention on what matters most to us, in our relationships for example. It has come with an invitation to re-examine what we really value and deeply care about. And in some weird, unexpected way, the pandemic has come with the gift of time and presence. At a more fundamental level, by showing us the face of a destructive force, the COVID-19 crisis has compelled us to come to terms with the fragility of life and our need to create – right here, right now – in order to help sustain, rather than imperil, the richness of life.

© Maria Lagarde 2020

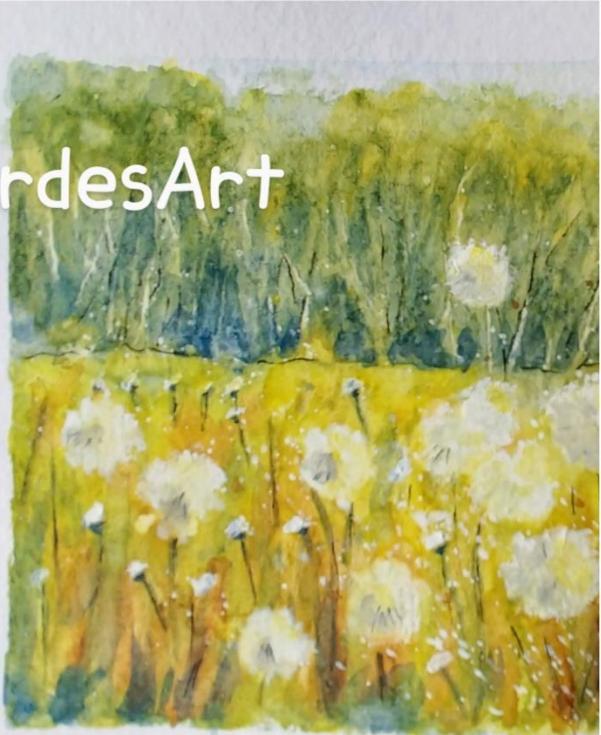


...are the humans?



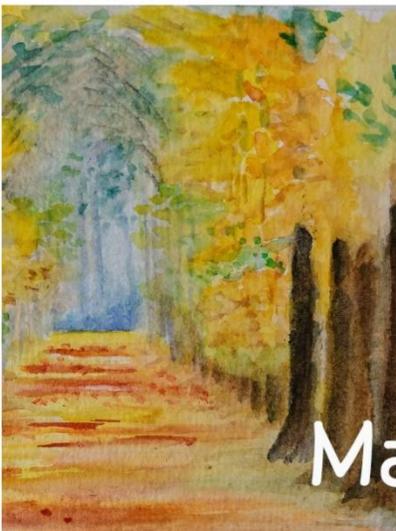
8, 2020

Ma. Lourdes

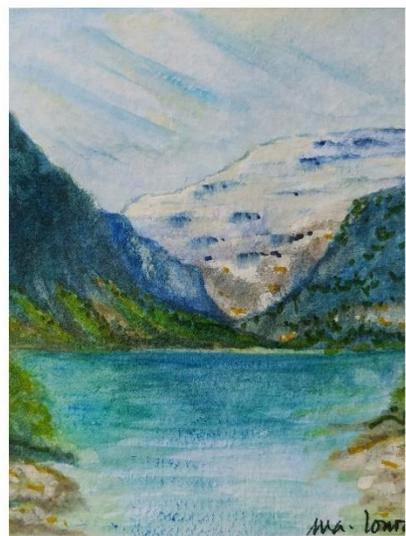
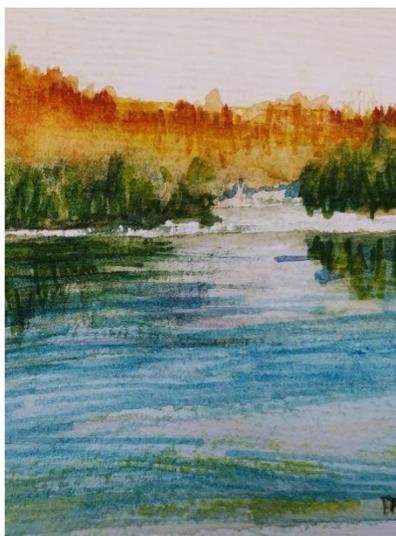


May 4, 2020

MaLourdesArt



MaLourdesArt



Where are the humans?



May 8, 2020

Ma Lourdes

MaLourdesArt

In the Blink of an Eye
by Angela Ford

We were all living normal lives, seeing friends, booking dinner reservations in favorite restaurants, traveling, and working. In the blink of an eye, our world turned upside down and we were hit hard with a pandemic. We have learned to stay home and keep our social distance when we go out to the grocery store. We wash our hands over and over, we scrub our house keys, and we wipe down everything we touch. The coronavirus has kept us glued to the news as we realize we are all in this together – separately.

On 22 March 2020, the Province of *Nova Scotia* declared a state of *emergency* to help contain the spread of coronavirus. Now in May, we have over a 1000 positive cases and over 40 deaths, our schools remain closed and *Nova Scotia* begins plans for *lifting COVID-19 restrictions* as the province nears the end of the first wave. As we learn to live with tape on the floors of grocery stores to help shoppers distance 2m (6ft) with a limited number of people inside stores and lineups outside store doors. Gas prices are a record low but with staying home I'm still on the same tank since March 20th only filling up twice when it reached $\frac{3}{4}$ of a tank. There are hand washing stations in every store and Plexiglas barriers installed at cashier check-outs. Non-essential stores and businesses remain closed. Parks and trails have just recently re-opened. Our beaches remain closed with uncertainty if they re-open for our summer. Sports seasons ended in March, concerts and

book tours were cancelled, our churches closed, and many remain out of work, applying for emergency funding.

With all this going on, we worried, "What else can happen?"

Unfortunately, something else did happen here in Nova Scotia, in the midst of this frightening pandemic: 22 lives were lost to a senseless murder rampage in April. The attacks unfolded over the course of 12 hours between April 18 and 19. Of the 22 lives lost, 13 were shot and 9 died in house fires the gunman had set. There were also animals and pets killed or wounded in the homes of the murders. Gabriel Wortman, 51, acted alone in these shootings and arsons. He had assaulted and handcuffed his girlfriend. She survived his attack and managed to escape into the woods, hiding as gunshots rang out in the dark. When believed to be safe, she emerged from the woods and contacted the police. It was then that the authorities learned their most critical tip: their suspect was posed as a police officer, wearing an RCMP uniform and driving a replica police vehicle. A photograph of the car was provided and so began the hours-long search for Wortman. Late Saturday night on April 18, officers arrived at a residence in Portapique, Nova Scotia to a scene of multiple casualties. Nearly 12 hours after that call, the murder spree came to an end at a gas station outside the town of Enfield, 50 miles from where the first victims were found.

Because the coronavirus pandemic had prevented mass gatherings, Nova Scotia did its best to come together—grieving in isolation. An online vigil was held for the worst mass shooting in Canada’s history. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, “Together we mourn, together we heal.”

The virtual vigil was held for the lost souls as musicians played touching and uplifting tributes from their living rooms. Politicians, both local and national, offered support and Nova Scotia’s most famous spoke of the resilience of their home province. Nova Scotia Strong...Nova Scotia Remembers. A moving moment by Nova Scotia fiddler, Natalie MacMaster, played along a video of the 17 year old victim, a fiddle player herself, performing in her living room. The vigil ended with the playing of “Amazing Grace” on the bagpipes.

It is a frightening time. The world-wide pandemic has caused terrible suffering to millions of people across the globe who have lost loved ones to the virus. The entire world is frozen at the same time and we give our front-line workers our heartfelt thanks to the tireless work done under impossible circumstances so that the rest of us have essential services. The uncertainty is hard to handle. We don’t know how exactly we’ll be impacted or how bad things might get. It is vital to stay informed, especially in our own communities, and follow the advised safety precautions to do part to slow the spread.

It is also vital to stay in touch with friends and family. Video chat, if you’re able: the face-to-face contact is like a vitamin for your mental health. Social media can be a powerful tool for staying connecting, just be mindful of how it makes you feel as there is so much about the pandemic on it. Don’t let coronavirus dominate all conversations. Enjoy each other’s company by laughing, sharing stories, and focusing on other things in our lives. Taking care of our bodies and spirit by eating healthy, sleeping, and meditating. I’ve even startedy! And a 5km walk—3 times a week with my sister—social distancing by 6 feet. We’re apart — but together! There’s nothing better than sunshine and fresh air.

Beyond that, I read. And then I write to give back, to help others who read. To provide an escape into another world where there is no pandemic, and people live the way we once did. I am trying to maintain a routine as best I can, taking time for activities I enjoy. My son, who is quarantined with me, pulled out the old Monopoly game board and we had a three-day-long game when he ended up with all of Mom’s properties and cash! Even though I lost, it was FUN!

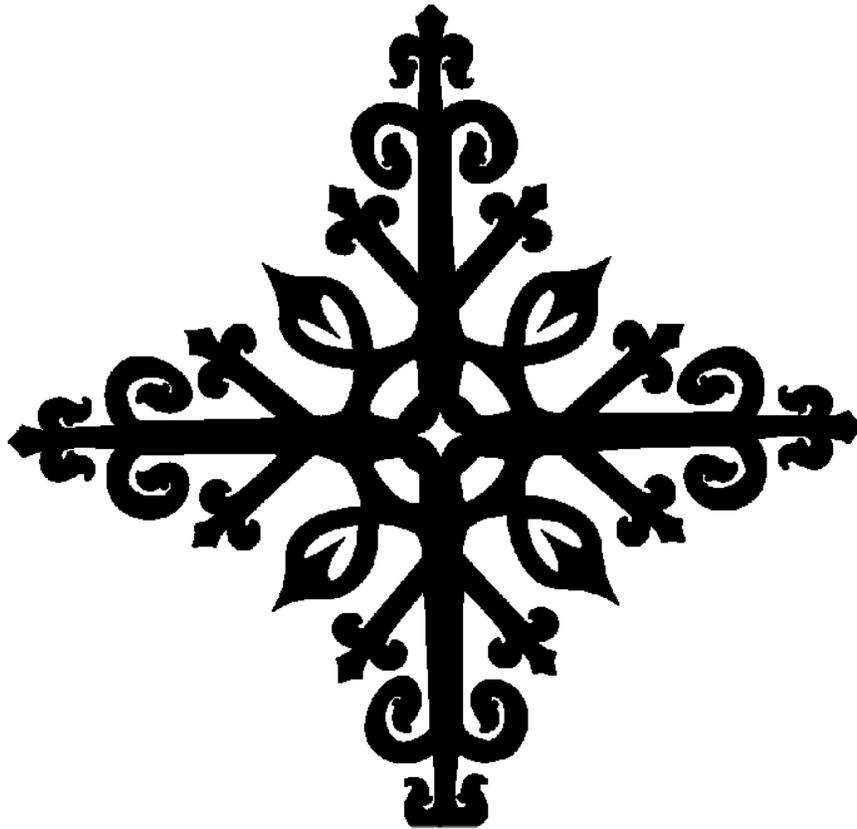
Life is precious. Do not take the things we dearly love for granted. Be grateful. Be kind to one another. Love one another. Support everyone. Deepening an emotional bond with someone will have a profound impact on your heart. My mother always says to “Live simply. Love generously.” As a literary lover, I continue to read, think, write, and dream. Staying home is not too hard for

a writer. I am writing, responding to the creativity emanating from deep within.

Stay Strong. Stay Well. There's Always Hope and Love. Ange ❤️



©Angela Ford 2020



A Wave in COVID-19
by Savithri Duddu (Savi)

As I walked to grocery store, the old lady next door who usually smiles wasn't smiling. Maybe she did not see me. The little boy who was playing all by himself held the ball tight and looked at me, but he did not smile. Grim he was, and I felt sad for him being so. As I stood in the long line at the grocery store, my girlfriend who was standing ten meters away continued to stare at me, and I was wondering why she was not smiling. I was waiting in the line, with uninviting but familiar faces, until my husband waved a hand, showing me the parking spot. I waved back and realized my girlfriend waved back too. It was surprising to see her recognize my husband, and I wondered how she could respond to him and not to me.

When we reached home, old lady waved to my husband and me. This wave seemed to be a familiar gesture now! At that moment, I recognized the spark in her eyes that showed the smile hidden behind the mask.

A moment of truth: the mask that I was wearing had hidden my smile so no one saw it. Waving a hand made everyone understand the connection that my husband was trying to make.

In Darwin's theory, the most adaptable species survive. The new language today is not just to smile but to wave at our near and dear. We may not hug people, but we wave at each other to show our gratitude and happiness of having them around. Most of all, it's not social distancing but physical distancing that's required.

We are only in lockdown of the physical self but not of compassion, kindness and connection. Stay at home, stay safe and also wave to people as you pass by.

Like the wave that connects the sea and the shore, a wave bonds hearts.

The pic is a sight of Marina Beach in Chennai, India, 2015, taken by me, just before I left to Canada.

© Savithri Duddu (Savi) 2020



Games!

by Jeffrey Petermann

Even before the province started recommending that people engage in the social or physical distancing, I was primarily staying indoors and only going out when it was necessary. Lately, with only essential services being allowed to continue, many businesses temporarily shut down, and many people working reduced hours, I have been using this period by putting more time into one of the enjoyable areas of my life: board games.

I cannot recall ever having this much free time on my hands, and I must say that I am loving it! For several years before this pandemic arose, the vast majority of my time was spent working, and I frequently felt overwhelmed and stressed with the heavy and gruelling workload. Even though I had talked a big game to my extended family about intending to cut down the workload and relax, there was not much evidence behind my words. I struggled in finding ways to reduce the time spent working, but the province then handed me the key on a silver platter when it declared a state of emergency. With businesses shutting down, my workload dramatically dropped and my time was freed up. I could finally begin to relax and explore how free time can be used.

While I still have to complete household chores and various bits of paperwork, much of my new time has gone into playing board games. When my wife,

Nadia, is not working, I persuade her to be the other player in whichever board game is laid out on the dining table. My collection of games goes deeper into the hobby than the standard and commonly known games such as Monopoly, Clue, or Scrabble. Some games we play are fairly short and can be played in under an hour, but with more time on our hands we are playing the more involved games with several of them surpassing six hours.

At the start of the pandemic, we fittingly played *Pandemic Legacy: Season 1*, and *Pandemic Legacy: Season 2*. Those games are campaign games, where there are numerous scenarios to be completed (ranging from 12-24 sessions) before the entire game has concluded. The overall objectives of the games are to save the world by having the players work co-operatively to try to stop the spread of various diseases. There are many other aspects to these games, but as they are revealed to the players during gameplay, listing them here would spoil it for anyone who has not yet played them.

Nadia and I then went on to play *The Gaia Project*, *Twilight Imperium 4th Edition* (commonly referred to as "TI4"), and *Arcadia Quest* over a period of about a month. *The Gaia Project* is about colonizing uninhabited planets and upgrading your skills while completing various objectives. *TI4*, which was by far

the longest at around twelve hours (played over three days, rather than in one day) is an epic space game involving exploration of the galaxy, expansion of your faction's territory, exploitation of your resources, and extermination of enemies. The use of politics, trade, and conquest is ingenious, and it stresses that a battle can have a very serious cost and oftentimes is not the best option. We are just wrapping up *Arcadia Quest*, which is a six-campaign game that has each player roaming around a part of a fictional city, Arcadia, fulfilling quests, defeating cute monsters, and even attacking the other player (if you die in this game, you can come back on the board and keep on playing).

All these are excellent games, and I highly recommend playing them. My wife and I have been wanting to play them for months and months, but we simply did not set aside the time. In the midst of this uncertain and scary time, the board games have helped decrease my stress level by transporting Nadia and me to different worlds. A side benefit to playing games is that they have increased the interaction between Nadia and me in a positive way (as compared to us watching a movie) thus strengthening our relationship. The pandemic has given me the opportunity that I ought to have created for myself but did not.

© Jeffrey Petermann 2020



Love and Death in the Time of COVID-19

by Joe R. Zammit

Perhaps we were all misguided to think that mass illness was something of the past. That pandemics were only reserved for the history books. That our experiences of yellow fever, polio and other such maladies were all from the long ago past, and that our highly technological world could now beat any virus.

Sure, we got complacent even after SARS, MERS and even after H1N1. For certain, you saw fewer hand sanitizers in the malls. It was as if we had pushed aside even the possibility. So smug were we in our assertion that modern science had cured it all and that we would be literally immune from the clutches of a really serious pandemic.

All the while, the scientists and experts were telling us "It's coming." Little we did to heed the call. Little we did to prepare. Instead, we went on with our lives as if we were superpeople, in our superworld, with our supercars, superhomes, super bank accounts and investments.

Independent only to be isolated.
Protected but not really protected at all.

Then, as the COVID-19 virus began to spread, we still maintained a level of smugness. We still thought that the problem was far, far away and that somehow some way it would be stopped – it would be contained.

But that was all not to be

Instead, country after country, like a row of dominoes fell victim to this problem. This virus. This COVID-19. And as the wall of illness and death spread over the globe in a rapid fashion, somehow, some way, we all thought that we were still immune.

But that was not to be.

So we went on with our lives, spending our time in our stores, spending our time away from our families, spending our spendings. All in the effort to obliterate that which we feared the most. We feared this day would come.

We feared this day would come, and that we would be prepared and ready and mostly immune.

But that was not to be.

We thought our wonderful lives would go on and on and on in the comfort and knowledge that we were safe. We would prevail, and we would be unscathed from massive illness and death.

But that too was not to be.

We thought that when our loved ones, the old and the sick, would come to their last days, we would be able to be with them. We would be by their side.

But that was not to be.

So they slipped away, alone in a place
with strangers.

They were taken from us, and we were
taken from them in their final moments

when they needed us the most. We
thought we could be with them.

But that was not to be.

N95
by Joe R. Zammit

In the midst of this self-isolation
I cut myself off from all of the sensation
Truly a time of deprivation
Gripped in fear the world through many nations

I stay inside
within the four walls of my house
Looking for the courage
Within my soul
An ounce
Of integrity with a spirit
For my forefathers fought on the battlefields
Raised guns and blew ammunition
I find myself in a strange position
On my couch I fight this battle
My mind and body remain idle
Can I wait this thing out
Hide from the shadows
Like a night of Passover
I wait for death to pass my door



I lived a life of so much more
Than to remain inside
I venture out in gloves and all covered
In my N95 mask
I discover
That the world I once knew
Is under cover
And the shadows pass
Taking many forms in our midst
My N95 mask causes me to think
Is this all there is?

© Joe R. Zammit 2020



The Other Face of Coronavirus

by Lina Ismail Alhabahbeh

Despite the shock, fear, anxiety, isolation, and losses that the coronavirus has left... for the first time, humanity is united in the face of the invisible enemy.

For the first time, what seemed to be that life has died as factory chimneys and car smoke stopped... turned out to be for a better life to be seen as birds are singing freely, oceans breathe and houses are illuminated as families gather indoors, united as never before.

You can smell delicious food and sweets, neighbors ask about their neighbors, children communicate with their parents more, grandchildren check on their grandparents... We learned how to say thanks and applaud for the heroes.

How many blessings surround us and we haven't realized them yet.

We feel the value of the things and blessings that we used to take for granted: going out to work, shopping, a meeting with family and friends to drink a cup of coffee, shaking hands, warm hugs. These were a grace.



I wish we were thankful and satisfied.

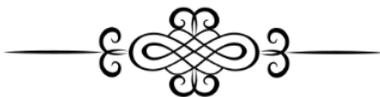
Now, on this pandemic, there is more time for myself, for my children, for my family to see each other, to talk more despite the forced distancing.

We communicate more online, especially with some friends we haven't contacted for a long time.

Spend time in my kitchen, cooking and singing.

Sitting in a chair, in front of the living room window, drinking a cup of tea and meditating... take a deep breath.

© Lina Ismail Alhabahbeh 2020



Adapting

by Katrina Roach

It's been two months – nine weeks – sixty-three days – one thousand five hundred and twelve hours since our government officials mandated a stay-at-home order. By the time you read this, it will likely be even longer. While it has certainly been the most challenging time in all of our lives, I have slowly implemented several coping strategies I'd like to share.

Initially, I didn't take the growing impact of the coronavirus seriously. I went about my normal routine and didn't pay any heed to the burgeoning alarm sweeping the nation. I think I was in denial. Then, quite suddenly, I was told I wouldn't be able to go to class to teach my students. "Not a problem", I thought, certain that this was only temporary. I would adapt and simply teach them online from the comfort of my home. It was only when I heard church masses were cancelled that something inside me broke.

I began to scour news headlines each morning, afternoon and late into the night, researching all I could about this virus and its implications. I was desperately trying to make sense of this new reality while being cognizant of the fact it would not be temporary. I knew I had to adapt quickly in order to maintain my sanity.

After making several adjustments to my routine (transitioning everything to the

virtual world) and surviving my first few grocery shopping trips (with line-ups equivalent to the length of those at amusement park rides), I began to strategize how to adapt to this "new normal." The "new normal" being something akin to a very surreal movie.

First, I prioritized self-care in all its forms: mental, physical and emotional. To maintain my mental health, I limited the I spent watching and reading the news, vowing to only check in for the most relevant bits for thirty minutes a day. I made meditation a daily and essential practice, using the apps Insight Timer and Synctuition to help ground me. I also picked ONE skill I decided I wanted to master during this time and began working on that. I'm happy to report that my culinary skills have greatly improved. To keep my body active, I began working out with a friend through Facetime. I also made sure to stay connected to family friends and the faith community via WhatsApp chats and virtual conference calls.

Secondly, I tried to learn from others who seemed to be thriving during this time. Those thriving seemed to be doing so by supporting others. It moved me how many celebrities took action in helping others (Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively stand out). I made time to support local businesses in my own way. I started ordering groceries from my favourite companies (who were now

doing next day delivery!) and I advocated for them on social media. With the aid of Dr. Michael Breus (America's Sleep Doctor), I volunteered my time to have virtual check-ins with a health-care worker who was having difficulty sleeping. These simple acts made me feel good about being able to shine a light during these dark times.

Lastly, I practiced daily gratitude and found a way consider this time period as a blessing in disguise. In a way, quarantine has actually been beneficial because it has allowed me to grieve the loss of my aunt (who passed away on Feb 7th from uterine cancer) in solitude. Additionally, all of this "alone time" has given me space to heal from the trauma

of my friend's death (he was shot last June by an off-duty police officer). I'm so grateful for the time I had with both my aunt and my friend, and it doesn't hurt as much to think or talk about them.

As the introverts continue to silently smile during this lockdown and the extroverts go a little crazy, I take solace in the fact that we literally are all in this together even though we are apart. There has never been a time like this in our history, and hopefully there will never be again. Let's come out on the other side of this stronger, together.

© Katrina Roach 2020



Brother, Can You Spare a Smile?

by Paul Daniel

It was the briefest of encounters. On any normal day, it would not even be remembered. But these are not normal days.

When phrases like “social distancing” and “self-isolation” become part of our daily vocabulary in this time of pandemic and lockdown, we’ve gone through the looking glass. It’s a time like no other.

The ordinary has now become extraordinary. I found that out three weeks into the lockdown. It was shortly after Easter when, while on a late-night walk, a gentleman, maybe around the same age as me, passed by with a slight smile and said, “Hello.”

He was a little taller than me and had glasses. It was an unusually cool night so he was wearing a toque with a parka.

His slight tip of his head toward me along with “hello” gave me a strange unexpected sensation. Immediately, everything around me didn’t look so dark and ominous.

Amidst the gloom and despair, no matter how many times we’ve been reminded that “we’re in this together”, it was this gentleman’s smile and meek “hello” that gave me relief.

It had been a few weeks since I had actually been in contact with another person outside of my wife and my dog. Don’t get any ideas! I was lucky I had her around. She’s funny, supportive and

creative. My dog loved the fact that we were home all day.

Yet, it was a stranger’s one-word acknowledgement that cut into the gloom. It wasn’t our only encounter. Maybe a week later, we crossed paths again. This time no words were spoken but we exchanged knowing smiles.

It was as if to mutually acknowledge the extraordinary moment we were in. It was to say, “Isn’t this weird? It feels like a scene from dystopian novel. Yet it isn’t.” We were marveling at a situation unlike any other in our lives.

I haven’t seen that gentleman since. I hope he’s okay. Who knows what he thinks? Does he even remember an encounter that lasted a mere few seconds?

Then again, how will any one of us ever forget this moment in our lives? We discovered that solitude can be a lonely thing especially when solitude was decided by necessity, not by choice.

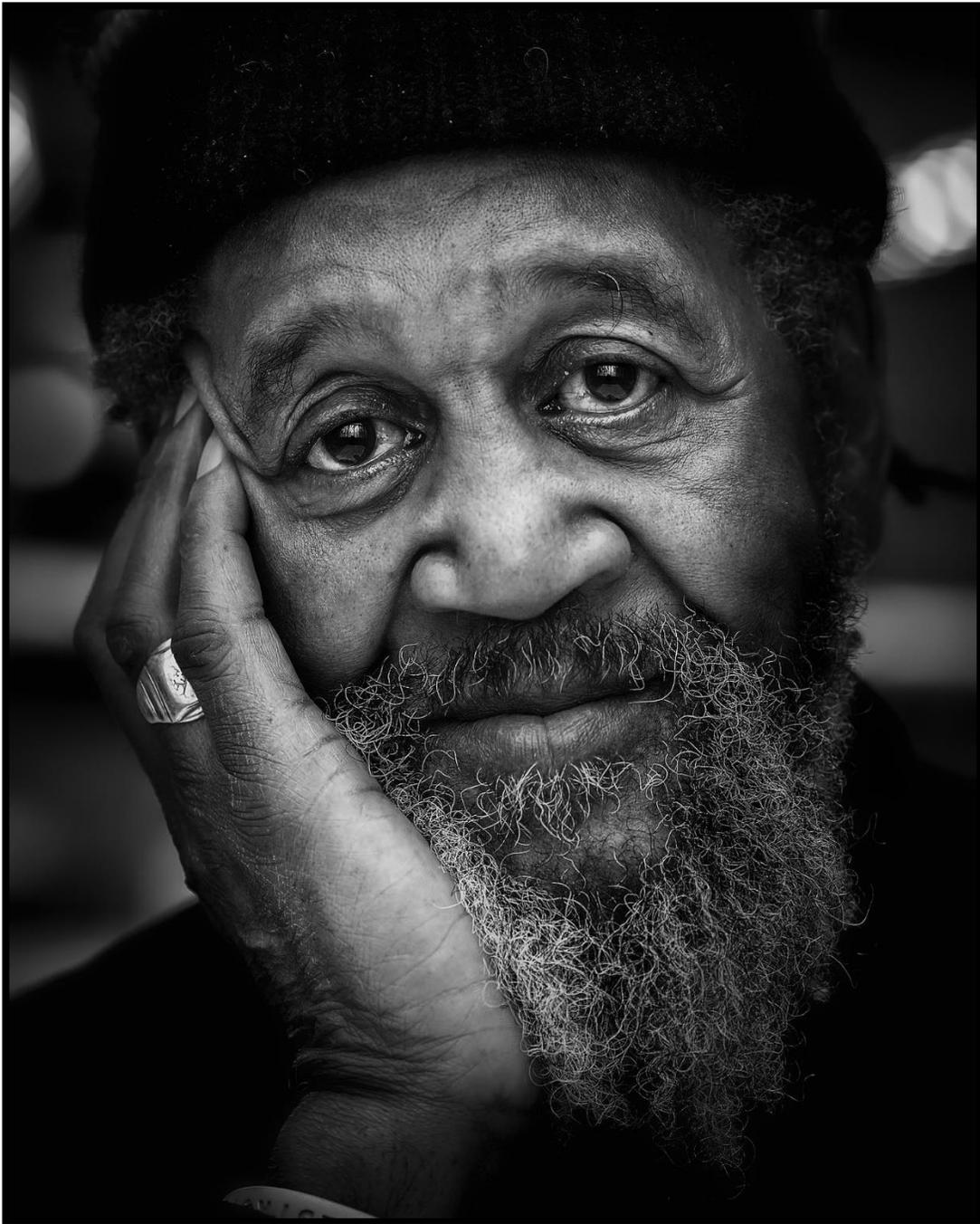
We were told to stay home. To keep a distance. To keep our hands clean and to wear a mask. We were told to accept a new normal as if there was anything about this that could be considered normal.

Thinking collectively, rather than individually, we have followed the rules. We have taken the hard medicine. We do so because we want to have a return to normal.

When the day comes and the pandemic is over, the fear of infection has passed, we will look back on this shared international experience, the lives lost, the pain endured and the isolation endured and think, "What can our

imagination think of that we haven't already experienced?"

© Paul Daniel 2020



Two Poems
by Sajeda Manzoor

Virus

Spring is approaching
With its utmost beauty
I stared everywhere
Tiny sprouts are peeping out
Flowers are ready to bloom

Season of love, hope and beauty
But countless mini creatures
With ugly horrible faces are here
Juggling with each other

They are in the computer
In the cell phones
And inside the human

They are prevalent
And widespread
With their horrible faces like boozes

We are scared of you
Don't hug and intimidate us
We are all humans
They dance everywhere
The invisible creatures

They attack people without guns
They ruin the infrastructures
They are cynical

Bye- bye coronavirus
Don't come near us
You are dangerous

Leave us alone
We can't endure you anymore
Lots of fatality
With your monstrous activities

We want to be bug free
You are extra friendly
Gift of 2020
We all pray for humanity



Prayers

Why the roads and paths
Why the crowded streets are quiet
Why the parks and lands
The prairies are deserted
Why the flowers are not smiling

No chirping birds, no drizzling sound
Cuckoos are quiet.
Oh Lord where is the lovely breeze

The quietness
And the cacophony
The hovering dark clouds
Suffocate us

The deadly hawks
The darkness and anguish
The fatality and fear
Take away and diminish them
Oh my Lord
The deep prayers from the core
Of my heart

Give back the ecstasy
We can't endure the deadly enemy
Oh Lord able the nations
To resume the songs
We love peace, health and prosperity
No more fatality
It is scary
Hearty prayers
Quickly heal all the broken souls

© Sajeda Manzoor 2020

COVID-19 - Social Distancing

by Vidya Vasant Gopaul

The social distancing during this coronavirus pandemic has not really changed my life or that of my wife because we both have been retired for a number of years now. Most of the time, we are home anyway. The only thing that has changed now is that we cannot go out as frequently as we want to, either locally or outside the country. We are limited to our home most of the time.

Now that we have more time on our hands, it gives us time to reflect what this pandemic had done to our lives and society at large. It is a time to reflect on what we did not have, what we have and what we will have. Even though life has given us everything we need to survive, we still have to evaluate every now and then. We need to survive on this beautiful planet Earth with as little or as much as we can.

This social distancing has given us a chance to reevaluate our lives as we see best. I think my wife and I moved very fast, and it seemed that there was no stopping. We were averaging about six countries per year as our travel destinations. We feel that this was divine intervention encouraging us to take a break from all the travelling. There are so many unknowns out there in the world, and that we must take heed and be cautious. As a matter of

fact, we cancelled our trip to the Baha'i holy land in Haifa, Israel in March of this year. Had we not done that, we could have been in serious trouble, financially, emotionally and physically.

However there are a few new things that we have learned to do due to this social distancing; first, how to cut our own hair and second how to sustain a plant nursery in the house.

I always wanted to cut my own hair to save time and money. Every time I go to the hair salon, I have to wait a long time to have my hair cut and also I do not always get the same hairdresser to do the cutting. More often than not, I have to repeat the same cut and style instructions to a different hairdresser. Since all the hair salons have been closed, I said to myself, "Why I can not cut my own hair? This is the time for me to try it."

While sitting in the chair, I always watched how the hairdressers were cutting my hairs, so I was learning at the same time. I decided to use the easiest method of cutting my hair. I had already bought a pro haircut kit about ten years ago.

So one day, I took a small step for me and a giant leap for my hair cut. With lots of courage and some apprehension,

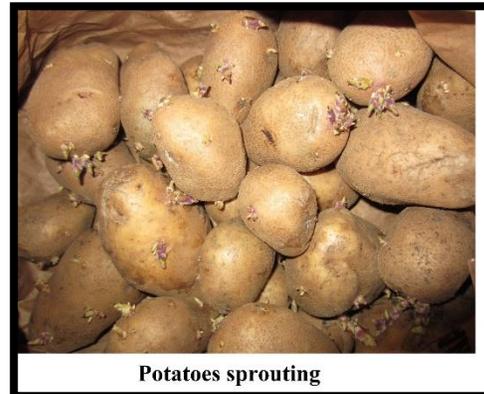
I stood in front of the bathroom mirror and laid out all the haircutting tools on the counter. First, I took out the hair cutter and inserted the 1.5 inch trimmer. Very carefully and uniformly, I cut my hair all around my head – from front, back and side. Then I combed all the hair forward to my forehead and the sideburns towards my nose. I remembered the hairdresser used to even out all the hair, starting from my right sideburn, all round to the forehead and to the left sideburn.

Then I trimmed my sideburns using the small comb and small scissors. I combed all hair behind the back of my ears and trimmed it. With one hand, I lifted all hair from the back of my head and shaved all the small hairs with a trimmer. Then I trimmed all the small hairs on both side of my neck and, finally, I asked my wife to even out all the hair at the back of my head. Voila! My hair cut was done.

Now I think I will never go to the hair salon again. After all, I am an old man: why do I need the hairstyle of Elvis Presley?

The second thing I learned to do was how to grow vegetable plants in the house. Since I know the garden and flower nurseries will not open any time soon and since I love gardening, I decided to take matters in my own hands. I learned to grow vegetables from seed. Again, it will save me lot of money.

I did not have the vegetable seeds I came up with an ingenious idea. I bought some ripe tomatoes, eggplants, cucumbers, hot chilli peppers and some hot banana peppers. I took out all the seeds and dried them few weeks ago. Two weeks ago, I planted them in small pots that I had saved from previous years. I always keep the pots inside the house during the night and, when the temperature is warm, I put them outside. The hot chilli peppers and cucumbers are germinating already, but the tomatoes and the eggplants are not. I am sure they will soon. I also bought some potatoes that are sprouting and left them on the floor in a warm place so that they will grow stronger. Then in the summer, I will plant them.



I am experimenting with this tropical vegetable called "chayote." It is readily available in the grocery store. I bought about twenty ripe chayotes and let them germinate inside the house. As you can see in the picture, they are already germinating. The plants will take about four to five months to mature. Since our summer does not allow us to reach that

point, I only use the tender leaves to make soup or stir-fry. They are very delicious.



My wife is very keen on flowers, and she is doing the same. Normally, she would be making at least fifteen to twenty trips to the nurseries, but this year we think it will not happen. She kept the seeds from last year's flowers. Small seeds are starting to germinate.

The beauty of growing the vegetables from seed is that you have the chance to see how they are germinating. So far, it has been amazing. The seeds become swollen; the shells split and small buds come out. Before you know it, those buds become small leaves. I must look at those germinating seeds about four times a day, witnessing the process in a time-lapse fashion. It is amazing how careful you become with those plants; you start to take care of them as gently as a baby.

It is amazing, and it helps us get through the social distancing. We never feel lonely or bored.

There is another project I have initiated: I am converting all my VHS tapes to digital files. At the same time, I am making digital files of all the movies I have made for my three grandsons — one for each grandson! This will probably take more than the duration of this social distancing. I will not be surprised if it takes me a couple of years to finish this project.

During this social distancing period our washing machine was not operating properly. It would wash the clothes but would not drain the water. No place to go for repair and no one to call for repair; I had to repair it myself. I took out the manual, went on YouTube and tried to figure out how to repair it. Finally, with my technical background, I dismantled the entire washing machine and found there was a small cloth that was blocking the water in the drainage hose. I removed it and *voila!* my washing machine was (is) working like new. And I did not have to spend one dime on parts or labour!

My car and my wife's car needed oil and filter changes. I thought this lockdown would be for a short period, but it seems as if now it will go for an extended period. I decided not to wait because engines of both cars can be damaged if they run on old oil and filters. Luckily I had the "Do It Yourself" book and, of course, we the helpful YouTube videos. It was quite easy. The only thing is that my hands got dirty and oily, but that's the price you pay for DIY. Since I am

able to do such things, I will keep this hobby in the future and save quite a bit of money on labour.

There is one thing this social distancing has taught me is that necessity is truly the mother of all inventions – and invention can come in many forms. Since the entire entertainment industry, including the movie theatres, has been shutdown, the necessity of entertaining our minds and hearts meant I had to invent new ways of enjoying movies and shows. I started to do some research on the internet and I stumbled across a device called IPTV. After making some inquiries, I found out that this device I can allow me watch movies, shows and TV channels at home. Without wasting any time, I ordered a package and, after installing the device and connecting to the internet, I brought the movie theatre in my home. I am watching the latest and greatest movies on my television from my own couch. And guess what! Since this device is so good, I cancelled my TV package from Bell and I am saving a lot of money per month!

Every now and then, we go through our pantry and see which food we can donate to the various charities. This time we could not do because of the social distancing. Then I said to my wife, "Let see what we have in the pantry and see what new cooking we can do." Sure enough, we found lots of dried fruit, oatmeal, various types of dry nuts and cereals that have been there for a long time. Then we decided to do the experiment of baking cookies with those items. With some imagination and some helpful hints from the YouTube videos, we were able to bake very delicious and healthy cookies. We decided that from now on we will bake our own cookies instead of buying them from the store. I am sure we will save money in the long run.

Hence, this social distancing has taught numerous things while saving money at the same time.

© Vidya Vasant Gopaul 2020



Author Bios



Lina Ismail Alhabahbeh immigrated from Jordan in August 2013, she recently published her kid's book *Sam And His Granddad- An Alzheimer's Story*, IOWI, 2018.

She holds a bachelor's degree of Physical Education.

She practiced her passion for writing in several Newspapers and Literature periodicals in Kuwait & Canada, and currently a member of Mississauga writers' group, The Red Bench (A Place to Read) as well working with Children & Special needs in Reading Clubs and various Events as Multi-Lingual Storyteller.

She is currently a PEEL District School Board employee, and a member of Mississauga writers' group. She is actively volunteering in various organizations within the Community and has been appointed as an ambassador of volunteer MBC organization.



Elizabeth Banfalvi started writing her meditation series books in 2008 and now has nine in print. She taught Meditation and Stress Relief Naturally topics in the Dufferin-Peel DSB, Peel DSB, Halton CDSB, Brampton Parks and Rec and the Mississauga Library System. She is the President of the Mississauga Writers Group and writes weekly articles for the Peel Weekly News. She was also a Registered Canadian Reflexology Therapist since 1996. www.elizabethbanfalvi.com



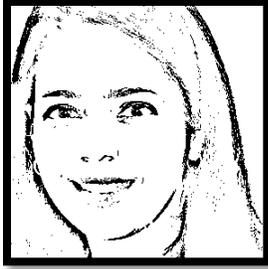
An architect by day (and sometimes night), **Scott Berger** has been writing since 2006 when he got the writing bug after reading a chapter of a co-worker's story. The previous 40-something years were spent gathering experiences or imagining them. Scott lives on the Eastern Shore of Virginia with his wife Rita and their own pack - Moxie, Lemon, Paco, and Thor. sbwriter2006@gmail.com



Paul Daniel is a lifelong resident of Mississauga, Ontario. Currently, he's an audio producer for Accessible Media Inc., (AMI). When not writing scripts for a national morning show or short stories, he's reading books all the while wondering he put the remote control for his television.



Savithri Duddu (Savi), is passionate about writing, photography and story-telling. She has written articles related to business, human resources, short stories and poetic lines that are motivating, inspiring and thoughtful. Building a deep interest in everything that's surrounding her and connecting with people are first things one can notice while interacting with her. Currently, she is working in a financial institution and has a page on Facebook [@Theunconnectedthoughts](#).



Anna Fernandes is professionally a communicator and business strategist. An advisor to senior executives, she creates powerful messages to elevate their leadership profiles and influence the audience. She has excellent mediation and collaboration skills that she draws from her diverse and global experience. Anna has written and edited a variety of news stories, research material, proposals, reports and technical manuals. She is an astute observer with an immense curiosity and eagerness to learn and try out new things.



Angela Ford resides in Nova Scotia - Canada's Ocean Playground. Inspired by sunsets, the ocean, her family, and books! She is never without a book, whether she is reading or writing. Angela is a bestselling and award-winning author who has been in the top fifty, Readers' Choice Awards and ScreenCraft. She has over 50 published works in paperback, eBook, audiobook, and foreign translation. An Award of Distinction sparked the idea for her first book 'Closure' that hit Bestselling Action & Adventure, Women's fiction. In between mysteries, Angela writes short contemporary romance. She loves to connect with her readers!

www.angelaforauthor.com

Follow me on Facebook Twitter Goodreads

Join my newsletter and receive a complimentary eBook

Angela Ford - Award-Winning Author and Screenwriter

ROMANTIC ESCAPES

<http://www.angelaforauthor.com>



John Fraresso's passion for writing started very young.

At the age of 8 he wrote his first published article; a political letter to the local paper. Since that time he has written many published letters to the media, dozens of poems, and has been published in anthologies. He is currently attending St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto, working towards a Masters in Theological Studies.



Frances Frommer is a senior and retired Fine Arts

Librarian. She is the author of *Surviving & Thriving Solo: Options When You Live Alone* and many articles and book reviews. Her passions are reading, writing, creating art, movies, volunteering and cats.



Vidya Vasant Gopaul is a published author of his first

novel RACE THE TIME. He is a world traveler and so far, has visited fifty-eight countries. He is a member of Mississauga Writers Group and has regularly contributed to the publication of the e-zines and anthologies of the Mississauga Writers Group. He is also a regular contributor to the Peel Weekly Newspaper. He is currently writing other novels.



Susan Ksiezopolski, award-winning writer, has been featured in various anthologies, magazines and on-line platforms. Susan is a graduate of the Humber School for Writers, and the founder of WriteWell delivering workshops across the GTA. She is a Toronto Writers Collective (TWC) Lead Facilitator, volunteering with the TWC since 2015.



Maria Lagarde has been a resident of Mississauga since migrating from the Philippines not too long ago. She has had a long career in public service here and abroad. She is also an amateur painter and now aspires to share, through creative writing, her musings about the world around and within us.



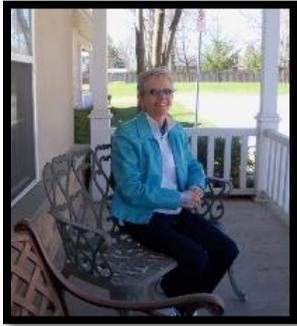
Sajeda Manzoor is a writer of MWG

(Mississauga Writers Group). She is a RECE and loves making arts and crafts. She has contributed in almost 12 books published by MWG. Word Fest Mississauga, Mississauga Anthology, Free lit, Our Voices in Verse and online Magazine e-zines. She loves music and is learning to give her poems rhythm. She has written several short stories and poems for their website and books. She writes theme based poems and also performs her work in different events. Her poems portray love, Kindness, peace and beauty. She has recently written several stories and poems for children in the book, A child's Wonder and Our voices in Verse 2019 (MWG). Her dream is to become a musician and sing for children.



Joseph A. Monachino I am 57 years old, married, and a resident

of Mississauga (Ontario, Canada). My interest in writing dates back to when I was a child and an avid reader of newspapers; then magazines and books. "The Transporting Device" is my first book. I write a monthly column for the Peel Weekly News. It's called: "Focus on Film Forum". It focuses in on current events, personalities and companies that take place or operate in Mississauga, Peel Region, and the GTA.



Ruth Mugford is a retired Human Resource manager that only began writing poetry in 2014. Some of her poems have been published in The Brain Tumour Foundations website and quarterly newsletter, The Heart House Hospice newsletter and twice have been on display at the Innerworks Art Show at Princess Margaret Hospital.



Nina Munteanu is a Canadian ecologist / limnologist and novelist. She is co-editor of Europa SF and currently teaches writing courses at George Brown College and the University of Toronto. Visit www.ninamunteanu.ca for the latest on her books. Nina's bilingual "La natura dell'acqua / The Way of Water" was published by Mincione Edizioni in Rome. Her non-fiction book "Water Is..." by Pixl Press (Vancouver) was selected by Margaret Atwood in the New York Times 'Year in Reading' and was chosen as the 2017 Summer Read by Water Canada. Her novel "A Diary in the Age of Water" will be released by Inanna Publications (Toronto) in May 2020.



Peta-Gaye Nash was born in Kingston, Jamaica but she has made Canada home for twenty years. *I Too Hear the Drums* is her first short story collection published in 2010 and revised in 2014 with a new cover. Her work has appeared in several anthologies and she has written six children's books:

Juliet Malevolent - An Evil Tale, GMJ Creative Hands, 2015

Essie Wants an Education, IOWI, 2014

Is Reine Still Sleeping, IOWI, 2012

Liam and the Lizard, IOWI, 2011

Don't Take Raja to School, IOWI, 2011

Where are Meadow's Manners, IOWI, 2011

Peta-Gaye won the 2015 Marty Awards for Emerging Literary Art and in 2013 she got an honorable mention for the same award, as well as winning two Observer Literary Awards in her hometown Kingston, Jamaica. A graduate of McMaster University, Peta-Gaye teaches English as a Second Language at Malton Neighbourhood Services in Mississauga, Ontario where she lives with her husband Dominique and their four children. She is currently working on her new passion - poetry, and another collection of short stories. She blogs on her website www.petagayenash.com about all manner of things and writes book reviews for Mississauga's Community Captured magazine.



Maisy O'Rourke is an emerging author of poetry; and children's books. She studied education and equity at the University of Toronto and was previously published in *Outdoor Playscapes* as a contributor while teaching Children's Literature at George Brown College. Recently Maisy O'Rourke contributed her poetry in a Poetry Anthology with MWG *Our Voices in Verse 2019*. Contracts to review educational materials are accepted. In addition, I illustrate my own writings. My poetry pen name is Maisy O'Rourke. I am currently setting up an online site however I'm not open to the public yet.



Jeffery Petermann I have lived in Mississauga with my wife for over five years. Being the eldest of five children, I do my best to set a good example for my younger siblings. I love animals, but sadly do not have any of my own (yet). Although I am in my early 40s, I am eager as a beaver to retire.



Katrina Roach is a creative and an empath. Please feel free to reach out to her at: katrina_roach@yahoo.com if you are struggling during this COVID-19 crisis or if you would like any specific recourses/tools to cope.



Miranda Wong was born in Vietnam and is of Chinese heritage but has spent most of her life in Mississauga. She works in public service within the legal field. She writes poetry, short stories and lyrics on topics such as equality, discrimination, self-help and mental wellness. She has contributed to e-Zines and anthologies.



Yiren: Born in China and received her university education there. Yiren came to Canada in 2005. She started her life here first by being a service advisor at a car dealership. And now, she is a translator/interpreter.

Yiren loves ancient Chinese poetry, and would like to share it with everyone who is interested. Yiren also writes modern poems, which is another beautiful way of loving and sharing life.



Joe R. Zammit has celebrated his 30th year working in education. Graduating from York University he was instrumental in retaining the natural integrity of the property we now know as Riverwood. After protesting its initial invasive development he then served on its Master Plan Committee in order to ensure a sustainable plan of use for the site. He then served on the Museums of Mississauga Advisory Committee and was the last sitting Chairperson of the group that acted in an advisory role to the City of Mississauga. Recently, he help to found Mississauga Climate Action after becoming a trained Climate Reality leader with the Al Gore Organization. Previously published, he is completing a biography of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent.

We are the Mississauga Writer's Group



We are a group of writers who have established this forum to share our experiences and pursue our dreams through creativity, knowledge and mutual respect. We want to learn from our strengths and talents and have enjoyable and stimulating conversations that only writers can relate to!

We would love to have writers from our community join us. All aspiring and established writers are most welcome. We believe we all have something special inside us. Come explore your talent with the Mississauga Writers Group.

Website - mississaugawritersgroup.com
Email - info@mississaugawritersgroup.com