



Reflections during COVID 19 lockdown: A poetry diary

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With contributions from:

Helen Job

Gill Jones

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Introduction

Poetry has always been a powerful expression of the human condition, especially during challenging and difficult times. The Covid-19 pandemic is an extraordinary period in all our lives and an unprecedented moment in the longer history of the NHS. The poems shared here by Rajan Madhok and his friends span a huge range of topics from health to nature, from politics to faith, from death to life. Each poem portrays a perspective on life in lockdown, providing an opportunity for reflection as well as capturing our shared living history. NHS at 70 is delighted to host this collection of work – listen here to some of the poets reading their work.

www.nhs70.org.uk/story/reflections-during-covid-19-lockdown-poetry-diary

Stephanie Snow

Director of NHS at 70

Background

This anthology started as something to do during the lockdown and some friends agreed to indulge me – and for which I am grateful.

I am no poet (unlike other contributors) – in case it was not already clear! - and what is inside are random thoughts ‘penned’ as they occurred to me. The brief to the contributors was to provide own poems that came to them during this period, not necessarily commenting directly on Covid as the lockdown was also a chance to reflect on life. The poems are listed in the order in which received and written, and partly reflects the (my) mood and events.

Unlike Meera who is in India, rest of the contributors are from North Wales. To complete the Wales flavour, there is a final poem by Karen Owen- a renowned Welsh poet. One other thing, except for the two young’uns – Meera and Karen – others are let us say over 60!

For the record, the period covered is 23 March 2020 when the lockdown was announced till 11 May 2020 when ‘cracks’ started appearing with confused messages from different nations of the UK; how and when ‘Normality’ will return is anyone’s guess. To quote my hero – Forrest Gump – “That’s all I have to say about that” and so it is time to put this anthology to bed, for now anyway! To Be Continued – who knows?

**Poems by Rajan Madhok, unless individually acknowledged by name.*

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Use the time well

For catching up
with jobs not done
For making up
with lost friends and family
For tending to self
physically and mentally
No putting off stuff anymore
Things must be done

There was no guarantee
of seeing another day
It was thus, is, will be
Use every moment
now more than ever
love, laugh, give thanks, help needy
connect and be part of the whole
before going down in the hole

I am alright

Nervous euphoria and relief
no major pre-existing conditions
under 70, living in country
well provided, staying fit
But who knows for whom the bell tolls
Russian roulette, no one is safe

Two Jack Russell's

Two Jack Russell's at my feet and
The patter of rain on the window
No walk for us today
As we listen to the wind.
Too cosy by the fireside
Too comfy on the chair
Too sleepy to move or stretch.
Beyond our little world chaos reigns.
Queues form and tempers fray.
Here in our enforced seclusion we are safe, content,
And only just aware that for some
This day will be their last, for others
Their misery has just begun.
Markets in meltdown.
Businesses in free fall.

But here, a coal or log falling unexpectedly
Is all that jolts us from our slumber?
And yet, in a small corner of my mind
There lurks the feeling that all is not well.
We are only one germ away from possible disaster.
One inadvertent touch or breath
Could leave us fighting for our lives
So we enjoy our cosy idyll,
Aware but outwardly untroubled.

Helen Job

Corona Virus

Down in an underwater bed
Strange fish swim past to shores unknown,
The seascape's changed, the shoal has fled.
Bleached coral's now a field of bone.
A creature hides inside its lair
And fears what drifts down from above,
Miasma, mist, cloud of despair,
It's safer to stay still, not move.

Kick hard, rise slowly through the wave,
Fight back against the undertow
And clinging weeds. Time to be brave,
The tide will lift us from below.
Keep looking up, towards the light,
Until in air, at last, breathe right.

Gill Jones

Setting example

Maybe old but there is life still
full of curiosity, passion, laughter
keen to explore new places, people
need to love and be loved
to help and receive in gratitude
to make a difference, albeit small
doing what we can with what we have
not complaining but setting example
of not getting defeated, living well
and dying with dignity when time comes

Ground Hog Day

No need to rush
we can laze around
afterall it is Sunday
except it is not
days blurring into each other
with COVID 19 lockdown
But it is jolly good thing
to have the down time

Bare Necessities

Where to walk
which film to watch
what to cook for dinner
dare I have a drink
where is that book
tough decisions daily
but surprisingly energising
when life reduced to basics
Could get used to it?

Time to be jolly

Doom, gloom, human folly
price to pay, repent
seek forgiveness
change now for the future
daily barrage of wise words
inspirational, motivating

B***** it says she
snatching phone from my hand
just making one depressed
rather have jokes, laughter
I know what needs to be done
and this ain't the time

Quarantined

Glad to have the family
around them at home
away from the bustle of city
fresh air, rural setting
but have to wait two weeks
in the separate annexe
before can hug the grandchild
so near yet so far

Poor doggies

Not their usual routine
out only once
no lingering with friends
sniffing, running around
instead giving wide berths
dragged away when near
Our mess and they pay

Thanks to Corona

Closer to God then
not exactly but closer to self
things falling in place
having confronted death
learnt how to live

Living with and Listening to me, myself, I

She said to me, you must love me first and well,
So you can love others well.
She said to me, you must be kind to me
As well as kind to others.
She said to me, you must recognise my skills, gifts, talents and achievements,
As well as recognising them in others.
She said to me, you are beautiful too,
As well as everyone else.
She said to me, I demand you start with me, myself, I,
So you can then give more generously to others.

She said to me, all I need is your time and attention, do not push me aside.
Then you can give as much time and attention to others as you want and are able to.
Remember I am always here

Julie Lloyd Owen

What a joy

And the world has opened up
full of life, colour, sounds
birds flying, animals wandering
trees blossoming, flowers springing
wind carrying birdsong and
indeed sound of silence
all taken for granted in the past
and now in your face
Open your senses and
be delighted with small things
but with a big difference

eGroup Epilogue

'Hello!' is not heard much of late
'Cheerio!' is no more frequent,
Taking care of what becomes our fate
Means isolation is now quite decent.
That's not to imply we're insular
It's to dodge this b****y bug –
More insidious than 'flu it is by far
To risk exposure's just for the mug.
Those of us now confined to home
Are really the luckiest few,
Exposure is greatest for those who roam
Or taking care of me and you.
Give a special thought for those who toil –
Even better a Thursday clap!
Covid isn't choosy whom to embroil
Its fast redrawing the social map.
Remember! Death is permanent
No chance of time rewind,
Boredom's a s*d I won't dissent
But there are diversions for every mind.
Letters to write or a phone to lift
Now that life has become more slow,

Chance for good friends, if you get my drift,
Start 'Hello!' and sign off 'Cheerio!'.

Robin Hill

Poetry group during lockdown

Not everything is cancelled
The sun is not cancelled
indeed it is shining brightly
Reading is not cancelled
indeed more enjoyable
Smiling is not cancelled
indeed even if you tried
as one reads the poems
sent by fellow poetry lovers
full of fun, life, celebration
during our virtual session
each sitting in own garden
savouring poems, weather, friendship
Hope is definitely not cancelled
made of sterner stuff
we will overcome this too
and soon.....

Poetry is all around you

Gazing out of the window
waiting for inspiration
watching sheep grazing
lambs running around
green hills under bright sun
still air, trees opening up
birds flying across skies
gathering for chinwag
around feeding station
with start of summer time
And so life goes on regardless
Like poetry in motion
Right there, in front of you

Joys

Taking time
unknown luxury
when in fastlane
now necessity
to fill the long day
coffee never tasted so good

Corona

As a World War loomed
We kids prone to hop
Down Eastwood Road
To Spender's Corner Shop.
Having sweated for pennies
As a behaviour sop,
Our gleeful mission
Was to booze on pop.
Glass bottles of fizz
With a captive top
Really did the biz
To the very last drop.
Eight decades on
The world in a strop
Anything labelled 'Corona'
Would be sure to flop,
Yet that was the nectar
We would thirstily mop -
Then a respected brand
Which we wouldn't swop..

Robin Hill

Nature's Response

Wild animal trade for profit sake
Has shown itself a huge mistake,
Remedial steps we need to take
Or ready ourselves for a massive Wake.
Humans immediately must refrain
From treating Nature with disdain

Or else inevitably we'll sustain
Increasing waves of viral pain.
Animal to man virus leap is dire
Single case the initial multiplier;
Infection mounting ever higher
At lightning speed 'til the world's afire.
Borders meaningless, or wealth or class,
The invisible contagion shown to pass
Globally to infect mankind en masse.
Not acting NOW far worse than crass -
Strongly too, we can't be meek,
For worst to suffer the poor and weak
Without effective voice to speak
Truth to power, or protection seek.

Robin Hill

No excuse

Still together to gather
joy, knowledge, love
physical isolation no barrier
to connecting humanely
caring, sharing, celebrating

Corona explained

Give me cock-up over conspiracy any day
no dark theories, secret societies
only poor folk carried away
in mindless, relentless struggle for survival
enough money to fill belly, clothe
driven by 'smart' ones outdoing each other
to be bigger, richer, more powerful
now all f***ed, never mess with nature

Glimpse of death

Forerunner, trailer
certainly focussed minds

stripped to basics
making transition easier
should it happen
Maybe death not that bad
just another stage
in soul's journey
But do not bring it on just yet!

Unfinished business

Will, paperwork, friends and family
bridges built, hatchets buried
everything up to date, heart at peace
free to focus on here and now
not the bucketlist of few months ago

Countryside living lessons

Lambs bleating, sheep baaing
occasional neigh with horse rider and dogs
woodpecker on tree, sparrows chirping, and the cockerel
the distant drone of tractor and the muck spreader on the fields
and the list grows as she keeps pointing out on daily permitted walk
never realised how 'noisy' the countryside is, but isn't that lovely
senses being woken up uncluttered by the city sounds
Tomorrow's lesson will be local wild flowers
walking through 'primroses lane'

Restlessness

And it creeps up
same old same old tiring
surely something one can do
list made, start phone calls checking
and before one realised the day was over
May be that in itself was worth it, not bad saving self
someone must be around to pick up the pieces afterwards

Coming near you

The numbers keep rising
and getting personal
with people known affected
slow march of death
coming closer
like the distant band
making way to your street
becoming louder slowly
Do you put ear plugs in
dive under the duvet or
keep living, get on with things
jobs still to be done

Its politics

Could not stand him
selfish, philanderer, liar
do anything to get his way
surely bring the house down
all sacrificed on altar of ego

Sitting vigil, scanning news
praying for him and family
day three and still in ICU
but then out of danger
and hostilities resume ergo

Hypocrites

Praising the heroes
praying for recovery
heartfelt condolences
and so the cliches go
But why asleep on job
not acting on time

No going back

Will life resume
where left off
matter of time
Maybe as lessons not learnt
history full of examples
Or maybe not
as you can show the way
Donot lose the hard won
peace, love, humanity
Recalibrate the world

Feeling gloomy

Not easy to avoid
with surreal life
eerie surroundings
not prepared for this
fall prey, brooding

Not easy to avoid
hitting the bottle
stuffing sweets
gorging on inane SoMe
anything except facing it

But easy to avoid
with a good partner
to pull you up when down
taking turns with each other
and feeling groovy

Grow up

Frontline healthcare workers battling against odds
Poor daily wage workers starving without work
Scientists running against clock to stop the onslaught
Families mourning losses made harder with isolation
Supply workers and technicians running essential services
What do you know of the fear, sadness, anger
taking shelter in your rural abode, complaining of inconveniences

Shopping, Week Three

Yesterday I found some latex gloves
'Great' I said 'I can go shopping'.
So off I set and reached the store,
Joined the queue and chatted in line.
An old man joined us midway
Not at the back as he should.
No one said anything. We smiled to one another.
There's no rush, nowhere we need to be.
We know the shop will have everything
We need and more.
We are learning the art of patience and tolerance
Now we are threatened.
I shopped – a big shop - so that my trip would ensure
We ate properly and for several days.
At the back of my mind I had a fear.
Next week this may peak and then what?
My garden is tidy, my shed transformed into a summer house.
We have enforced leisure. Time to do those jobs
We put off until we have done all the things we do
To fill our time and now discover its all unnecessary.
People who normally face a long commute are working from home.
People who attend meetings abroad are meeting and chatting on Zoom.
Zoom. No one's zooming anywhere these days.
Our privileged lives in these verdant isles,
Our comfortable homes, filled with technology
Allow us to continue our existence with little heed to the rigours of some.
We are told of the horrors – migrants dying.
Workers on low wages in India making their way back to family.
And dying in the attempt.
How dare we grumble if there are no loo rolls.
And what was all that about anyway?
No. Here in our little world, these islands we,
The lucky few, have a threat we can't control
But living as we do, we know our deaths
Will probably be in comfort at home.
We lucky few, we middle class, well fed.

Helen Job

Morning time week three

Opening the phone
dreading messages
from near and far
family and friends

sinking feeling
then relief, nervous laughter
Tea time thinks dry mouth
Alive for another day

Call it isolation

Weekly screen time
going up on the phone
lifeline in these times
totally connected
infact more than before
Imagine Robben Island
and give thanks

Celebrating festivals

Easter was cancelled
Passover was cancelled
Today Baisakhi also cancelled
But are they really
Or a wake up call
to reach for the spirit
beyond commercialisation
to enrich our lives

What the

New pandemic
muddle through
inbetween price paid
then business as usual
until next one
And they call it progress

False summits

And then it was three weeks
out and about, friends, cafes, pubs
life getting back to 'normal'

managed to scrape through
relief tinged with some sadness
for those who paid the price

Not quite, not over yet
need energy to stay cooped
fill time, discover new joys
have hope and stamina
keep buggering on
and on.....

Stometer (1)**

Six says he in the morning
on zero to ten scale
from chilled to suicidal
in fourth week of lockdown
Gonna be a bad day
so she gives him the red T-shirt
to remind her to leave him be
to work it through and
brings him a cuppa

Sixth extinction will have to wait

And they rose with one voice
angry, sad but determined
demanding the sea change
for kinder, fairer world
from mercenaries and snake oil merchants
forgetting lessons from history
ten deaths news but millions statistics
the uproar died, mankind survived
and nature retreated
defeated yet again by wily humans

Cupid Corona

Two lonely souls
caution to the wind
threw lot together

for mutual support
to survive lockdown
Lived happily ever after
time will tell but good start
Begins well ends well

Mended fences

The moment when things fell in place
one simple comment, epiphany
past is over, no need to worry
permission, forgiveness, wings to soar
minds focussed by adversity
love, life, loss much clearer
free now and both better for it

It could be worse

Actually not socially but physically distanced
God forbid a tech virus to finish what Corona started

Back to life

Slowly, stealthily, surely
patience short, testing times
for parents, lovers, families
food, films, banter, games stale
what will be will be
extra walk, shopping trip, meeting folk
abnormal now new normal
yawning, stretching, shaking off
like on Sunday morning
readying for the weeks ahead
slumbering monolith stirring

Fast draw

WH Smith at midnight
queuing for latest Harry Potter
when they were young

staying awake, excited, waiting
delighted with book in hand later
Later interest shifted to concerts
Jackson, Prince, Springsteen
short window online, quick or lose it
Recall children (tho adults!) now
as mother searches supermarkets sites
for the next slot for food delivery in city
earliest being two weeks, fingers crossed

Back to basics

Want something to eat
yes or F*\$£%@g no
thats the choice

Keep calm

Important to keep going
still here for a reason
clear when time comes
cant control past
but can shape future
make your own luck
just when all is lost
comes the ray.

So, Hoover again
refold underwear, socks
tidy the garden
readjust book shelves
sharpen pencils, clean desk
take out colouring book
play piano, do washing up
cook and eat slowly, watch TV

Golly is that the time
Good night
Repeat... and repeat...

Surreal

Care home patients, blacks and minorities
not just in hospital, numbers rising
people dying, politicians blaming, defending

workers with no choices carrying on
The background app running in my head
constant, noticing but not feeling
like the war in distant land
being watched on TV
addicted, news surfing, clutching
numb, helpless, ?selfish

Know thyself

If I survive
I will
...love everyone
laugh more
help others
work hard
get out more
enjoy small things
give thanks
not complain.....

Now put this aside
and read it in 2021
Good luck

Remedy

Bugger clapping
stick head out window
howl twice daily
hit punchbag
then LOL
beats cabin fever
works wonders

Covid 19

A time for remembering.
A time for forgetting.
A time for renewal.
A time for goodbyes.
A time to love.

A time to bury hate.
A time to get annoyed
With all the platitudes
And stupid 'It'll all be lovely afterwards'.
No, it won't. We're human
And therefore frail.
Or even flaky.
But even if just some of us
Stop being greedy
Things might, might just change.
Small steps.
One day at a time.
Spread the love.

Stay safe.
F*** off!

If I hear 'stay safe' or 'things will be better' one more time I will not be responsible for my actions. Grrrr.

Helen Job

Girl power

Women leaders = safer countries
across the globe overall
many reasons why and esp
atleast half decent brain
unlike that 'idiot' across the pond
inject disinfectant, for God sake
especially where sun dont shine
join the loooong queue

Wake up call

Sheltered from harsh realities
medicine glamorous profession
things happening to others
until now, as COVID no respecter
paying the ultimate price
growing list of fallen heroes

Nothing new, was ever thus

recently seen with HIV, SARS, Ebola
true vocation re-emphasised
profession and society waking up
re-establish mutual contract
each dependent on other

Its the economy, stupid

Chinese goods and students
not wanted, need not apply
What do you reckon?

Brave new world

Slow is fast
less is more
enough is enough
good enough is fine
Having touched limits
time to retract, shrink
go in not out
physically and mentally
But do it with a smile
not a penance!

All changed, changed utterly

A terrible new reality is born
hard to comprehend, past is gone
different places, people, practices
work, leisure, worship
nothing the same again
dystopia or utopia, up to you

Guilty OAP

Freed from daily grinds
roof, food, basics taken care
no money worries for now
product of benevolent state
climbed up and pulled ladder after

bequeathing a new, complex world
squandered opportunities of our age
found short by history, my generation

All so wrong

Evoking deities, spiritual leaders
mustering the necessary empathy
even for the most wicked
daily meditation, mindfulness and calm
All easier said than done
as another message pops up
of carnage unleashed by one man
in the supposed greatest nation
impotent rage, sad for friends in USA
Will always be able to fool enough
to oppress the majority
sad tragedy of mankind

Stometer (2)**

Two today, almost chilled
nothing changed outside
lockdown goes on, no respite
but all changed inside
wiser, calmer, clearer
can not change reality but
can change self
It just is, get this

If nothing else

Cured nose-picking and bogey eating
stopped spitting, clearing throats, teeth picking
no standing close, unwashed wafting
started handwashing especially food handlers
saved from those phoney kisses
limp, bone-crushing or forever handshakes
Count the blessings

Common sense or what

Habits of life times
roads congested again
in major cities
as restrictions lifted
reporting countries
So soon, on one hand
but why not, on other
the only safe bubble
sanctuary of own car
And they drove on
polluting air, killing planet
never happier than when
adding misery onto misery

Unwelcome guest

Came suddenly, leaving slowly
may return yet, to pick up more
indeed may move next doors
and keep taking liberties
like the pesky neighbours
running out of milk, sugar
no peace, dreading door bell
unless seen off completely
now or forever, make your decision

Your number

If I should die then dont be sad
better me to fill COVID's quota
I have lived, though not enough
coulda woulda done more but
did what I could with what life gave
highs and lows, love and loss
all made possible with dear ones
in increasing numbers as finally understood
the main message, more you give more you get
So fare the well amigos, let me go ahead
and save a seat for you but donot rush
take your time, I will be fine

Too clever

Not just elderly and sick
now turning to fit and even kids
the bug does not discriminate
what COVID 19 wants is its fill
all is fair game, its gotta live also

Not over

Survived and lived to tell
could not be tested
sure it was COVID
convincing self and others
needing that badge
May be good talking point
but nothing to brag about
no guarantee anyway
donot get complacent yet

Say it again, and again...

Always hope for the best
but do not give up day job
keep fit, follow rules, stay safe
for self and others
resist temptation to just try
feeling it is OK
stop being delusional
no one knows this virus
do your bit

Deadly race

And the struggle never stopped
overcame challenges to survive
seduced by the vocational NHS
doing their best for the worst off
in poor communities, Cinderella services
now paying the ultimate price
not respected in life, may be in death
Remember them when this is over

BME HCWs are also human beings

*BME: Black and Minority Ethnic; HCW: Health Care Workers

Hypocrites (2)

Long wait for supremo over
finally back holding reins
baited breath for roadmap
some compassion, honesty
support for key workers
vulnerable and poor

But sadly its politics
Get Brexit Done easier
Beat Covid 19 not so
'jam tomorrow' says magician
the pyres burn and
the people wait

May day, May day

Hard to believe
May already
maybe some respite?
Wonder if May woulda
done better than BoJo
maybe not?
Same old same old
clean sweep needed
hope call is heeded

Missed opportunity

Broken or stronger
your choice
good money paid
for retreats, reflection
in rougher locations
now with home comforts

What adversity
grab the chance

Stometer (3)**

Well, I lied
black dog is back
all meaningless
not worth saving
till the next disaster
no hope for humanity
will never learn
and on and on
... goes the loop

Drat, he is off again
comes the rejoinder
and reminder
remember magic words
F**k, F**kity, F**k
twice or more often daily
either that or
men in white coats
... you loopy loop

Too jolly

Hard to handle
when in dumps
wallowing soothing
you have your fun
let me have my misery
you take the high road
and I'll take the low road
both happy? time will tell

Political football

Used in opposition
abused in power
underfunded, unloved
orphan NHS

envy of the world
only cos of workers
not politicians

Different rules

Complaining as crowds
head to the woods
walking, running, on bikes
dogs and kids in tow
on Saturday afternoon
seeking respite from indoors
Why they all have to come here
But where else to go
and why are you here

Adopt a lonely

That cup of coffee
or meal with friends
(not being a pub man)
putting world to right
sitting, enjoying, talking
simple pleasures thing of past
now know what it feels like
when old and homebound
lonely, anxious, useless

The first thing

When it is over
I will go to
...the church
...the pub
...the cafe
...football match
...cinema
...shopping
...friend's house
...maybe work

But will you go to
march in solidarity

to rise up for change
so lives not lost in vain
not just once
candles and night vigil
the feelgood, done that
and back to 'normal'
but hard slog, ongoing
till the new dawn

Spare a thought (and some money)

No sign of work on horizon
no furlough for self-employed
artists, gig economy,
mortgage holiday welcome
but still must be paid
bills mounting daily
Long, slow road ahead
lonely, proud, good folk
your friends, neighbours
sorting chores and giving pleasure
their turn now, live and let live

We live in hope

Will 2020 be the year
of 2020 vision
errors of our ways
pulled back from brink
times to come
stories around fire
telling grandkids
no more hedonism, selfishness
a better, humane world?

Silence, the Strength

Waves upon waves
Constant, unceasing
Up they rise
Pulled down briefly
Only to garner strength
And rise up again

Do the waves ever tire
Want some respite?
A brief moment perhaps
When they could be quiet?

When the wind does not
Whip them up to frenzy?
The moon does not
Come too close
And the arrogant sun
Ignores them for a day?

The wind, the moon, the sun
Are they the reason
Or some disturbance within
The true for the heaving?

Only the surface
Is ever restless
There is calm
In the untouched depths
Pristine and beautiful
A silence, a strength

Isn't it so with the mind too
That sways with every word
Every stray thought
Every perceived insult?

Ignoring the depth
Where there is calm
Untouched and true
Steady and unwavering
Pristine and beautiful
A silence, a strength.

Meera Srikant

Joy, I Choose

I sharpened my nails
I bared my fangs
I readied words
More hurtful than bombs

I frothed in anger
I seethed and foamed

I felt wronged
For revenge I longed

Only then will I rest
My blood become calm
My ego soothed
My fury abated

But will I triumph?
Will that feeling last
Or another hurt
Take its place fast?

When I am gone,
Will this matter?
A year from now
Who will remember?

Oh, the futility, the waste!
To be erased, with no trace
Cherished like treasure
All this venom and hate

I discard this
Like the snake its skin
I won't be its slave
I refuse to give in!

I fight, but not with you
I find better things to do
I soar, I fly, not to be weighed down
I am free to choose and joy I choose.

Meera Srikant

The Path that Forked

The path branched in two.
Leaving her thoroughly confused.

Could she straddle both at once?
Run back and forth one by one?

They twisted and turned
Becoming dark and uncertain

What lay ahead remained hidden
Making her heart fear-laden.

Which one was her destiny?
Which would lead to a dead end?

Would they ever meet or remain two?
Should she worry or go with the flow?

Was the future in her hands?
Or decided beforehand?

She lifted one foot, then another
She walked one path, going in farther!

But the other too travelled with her!
For she carried it close to her heart.

Meera Srikant

A Drop in the Ocean

I walked by the beach
When a drop fell on me
Meeting an untimely death
Vanishing from the face of earth

It set me thinking
How like us it is
One among million
A drop in the vast ocean

Mighty when in a mob
Striving to be more than a drop
To follow a lifecycle
To dry up and then be reborn

To meet its destination
Right at birth
Or to travel far
Crossing several hurdles

Sometimes to reach the goal
At times being waylaid
Coming to an abrupt end
Only to come back again

Does it want to escape?
Blow like the wind?
Roar like the fire?
Be at peace like the ether?

Like us does it too seek
To be something other than it is?
The drops makes me wonder
Are we all the same?

Meera Srikant

How do you solve a problem....

Politics and health inseparable
get one right other follows
caring government, like parents
alert to dangers, making preparations
to keep people safe and healthy

But how is beyond me
brain only goes so far
then reach for the ice-cream
in sunny garden, book in hand
somethings best left for another day

Coulda woulda shoulda

Regret to repent to redemption
enough of pontifications
what exactly are you going to do
how will things change
will you become a better person
will the world be better place
for having spared you

Rebellion

Let them try
'shielding' over 70s
isolation to continue

to save economy
let out youngsters
Not spending days
cooped up, thunders he
more determined and
pedalling furiously on bike
Not giving up easily
still young at heart
age is just a number

VC day

Not killable, must be made liveable
victory over Corona, my a**e
just like peace, hunger, poverty eh
so bloody clever, aren't you

Lifting the lockdown

Design or default
systematic planned
or slow drift, testing waters
Waiting for announcement
much awaited on VE Sunday
six weeks of lockdown
surely time for respite
Sadly no science
buying time, procrastinating
till corona becomes the norm
part of life's rich tapestry
another germ, amongst millions
mourning dead for a while
then moving on

Lockdown

I've sorted my sock drawer,
Then put it all back,
I've tidied the attic,
Such a load of old tack!

The freezer is empty

I've had some weird meals,
Cornflakes with scampi
Just doesn't appeal.

I've done all the jigsaws,
I've cleaned all the brass,
I *might* polish the floors
If the time doesn't pass.

I'm getting stir crazy,
I can't go to town.
Time's getting quite hazy,
It's getting me down.

I heard Boris speaking –
'The end is in sight.'
Except that it isn't –
The future's not bright.

'We're in this together.'
Is what MPs say.
But this is just blether,
It's the poor who will pay.

There must be a bright side,
Though yet to appear,
I long for the seaside –
Well maybe *next* year!

Gillian Jones

Musings on Covid

March was the genesis of Covid, misfortune and privation
Magnificence and beauty assured less deprivation.
For nature as always exercised her nurturing style for spirit and soul
Oft noticed whilst taking the singularly, lonesome stroll.
Daffodils in bloom brightened gardens and verges
Walking in countryside amused by colour and aroma; wafting in wonderful surges.
April blessed with weather so fair and woodlands preparing to change their hue
First brown, then shades of green, some mixed with white ahead of gentle blue.
Delighting the senses, stimulating thoughts and rekindling memory of old
Remembering too more recent connections, some rare and bold, yet none is cold.
Bedevilled by crisis the nation remains halted; our futures postponed
Its impact ambiguous, significant and vast; and, openly, only some groaned.
Footsteps traipsed along pavements narrow, a stile providing access to timely escape

Into wide, open spaces, a bordered field, soon that walking route effortlessly took shape.

Meadows, hillsides, streams, some small brooks, provided stillness, wilderness and calm

Few interruptions from people or dogs, among a herd of heifers; inquisitive, they are no harm.

Dandelion, daisies, dock leaves aplenty fully carpeting a sunny afternoon's ramble
Bleats signal lambs back toward the flock and all the while they play a justified gambol.

Politicians, scientists, epidemiologists unite and appraise The Evidence; divorced
From the scene of this remodelled landscape hushed into peace they had to enforce.
Blossom and blue bells dance to a musical breeze, birds in hedgerows ring out their tunes

April is history, we've walked into May and soon we'll be wondering how we'll welcome June.

So, to final reflections ahead of returning home. The old order so far away on these marvellous days

"Streets are not empty they're filled with love"; retain for the future. New ways. Always.

Moyra Baldwin

Inspired by Covid

Perennial snowdrops flowered, the early spring equinox dawned

Inviting lengthening days

Churchillian-like the Leader asserted Covid lockdown

A slightly wary public was commanded

To Stay home. Protect our NHS. Save lives.

Kitchener's 'Your Country Needs You' interpolation revisited.

The directive that insulted, it challenged our heroic forefathers' hard-fought freedoms.

Panic-stricken shoppers demolished supermarket shelves

A plague. Unknown. Incomprehensible. Indiscriminant.

The sick, the weak, the vulnerable and septuagenarians confined

To homes, houses, flats and apartments

Sorrier victims imprisoned by circumstance to a room, if lucky

Unfortunates share minute meterage with bed, sink and loo

Stockpiled goods for some; hunger, poverty, devastation and destitution others

Opportunities to exploit, cheat and steal render otherwise unassailable seniors to full-blown angst

Fed by journalists' reports; relentless rolling news

A Thesaurus of terms spew in torrents

Abominable, heinous, monster virus, sombre, despairing, pessimistic, bleak
A wretched time indeed
And darkness befalls. Engulfs.

Art galleries, builders' merchants, cafes and depots closed
Astounding silence where once machine and operator hummed in synchronised
production
Servants threatened by unyielding demands. Exhausted. Overwhelmed. Drained.

Then came the weekly CLAP
Wondrous support to nourish spirit and soul. The caring Carers Loved, Applauded
Publicly.
Unity. Love. Affection.
Unrivalled benevolent compassion.
Heroes and critics allied.

And after darkness came the light. The Easter message typified?
Hungry to help. Engaged in charity. Decency arisen midst desolation
Acts of kindness, mammoth gestures. Annexed thoughts of troubled prospects
Young and old joined by in-betweens
Harmonise to thwart Covid victories.

Moyra Baldwin

Corona virus 2019

Corona virus 2019
One of its kind.
Ruining lives, livelihood and liberty.
Oh onerous, offensive
Nauseating, nihilistic
And anarchic attacker

Vindictive, virulent, vicious virus
Indiscriminantly infecting innocent
Recipients. Responsible for reactionary
Uncompromising, undemocratic utterances.
Singularly set out in Statesmen's speeches

2019 Twenty Nineteen is its suffix
2020 Twenty Twenty - Stay home, Save lives. That's the FIX

Moyra Baldwin

What now

It was all shambles
scientists disagreed
public confused
media biased
politicians saving skins
lives vs economy
oppressors vs oppressed
us vs them
the eternal challenges

Cool Britannia

Little testing
late lockdown
no PPE
How difficult was it
Sad for lost loved ones
angry for key workers
frustrated for poor
Not easy watching
the great leader on TV
People get governments
they deserve

Cymru am byth

Wakey wakey
Wales shows the way
time London understood
it speaks for England only
not waiting for Sunday broadcast
master of own destiny

Byddwch Fel Boris (golchwch eich dwylo)

I Langollen eleni,
a'i sôn iach am ein lles ni,
fe ddaeth y doctor gorau
yma i wlad sy'n amlhau
symptomau gwres a pheswch,
anhwylder hy'n wael ei drwch...

Fe wŷr Sais nad feirws yw –
ceir nad corona ydyw
yn erwau'n tir yr haint aeth
yn boen, fel annibyniaeth:
Ond ar awr wan, jyst dros dro,
daliwch i olchi'ch dwylo.

Credwch, fel gwnaeth cariadon,
yn y lân efengyl hon,
ewyn gwyn addewid gau
hwn yw Peilat ein polau;
Waeth o hyd, fel y gwnaeth o,
eilwaith, golchwch eich dwylo.

Mae cyfandir ein hiraeth
yn ei sinc, fel yr oes aeth
yn heddwch ac yn weddi
dros gryfhau ein hawliau ni;
Ond gwell, gwell, mewn byd o'i go',
'No deal'. Cofiwch eich dwylo.

Nid oes ateb i sebon
gwên slic, carbolic i'r bôn,
a'r Boris siŵr biau'r sedd
biau nawr pob anwiredd:
Yr un ddwed trwy'i 'winadd o,
daliwch i sgwrio'ch dwylo.

Mae'r NHS? Mae rheswm
y dur rhad? Mae'n bwrw'n drwm...
Gawn ni drwydded deledu?
Chwalu tipiau'n dagrau du?
O'i fynicar ariangar o
un ddeil i olchi'i ddwylo.

Karen Owen

Explanation: 'Byddwch fel Boris (golchwch eich dwylo)' - 'Be like Boris (wash your hands)'. Washing his hands seems to be a recurring theme in his politics and life.

Signing off

'Free for all' from tomorrow
confused messages
neither consensus nor clarity
How not to manage crisis

Be safe, stay 'alert!'
love all and keep laughing
Donot wait for leadership
be the change you want to see

NOTE

A few of these poems have been published elsewhere- see below.

Contact: madhokrajan@gmail.com, but only if you must!



Tribute to the professionals who gave their lives battling Coronavirus
And many more whose names we could not include



Dr Habib Zaidi
Essex



Dr Jitendra Rathod
Cardiff



Dr Paul Matewele
Barnet-London



Donna Campbell
Cardiff



Dr Krishan Arora
Croydon, South London



Amged El-Hawrani
Leicester



Dr Abdul Mabud Chowdhry
East London



Dr Anton Sebastianpillai
South-West London



Dr Syed Zishan Haider
East London



Dr Amiruddin
Wolverhampton



Areema Nasreen
West Midlands



Dr Abdul Alfa Saadu
Hertfordshire



Dr Fayez Ayache
Suffolk



Dr Manjeet Singh Riyat
Derby



Dr P Hamza
Dudley

Poetry diary during COVID pandemic

Hypocrites

Praising the heroes
praying for recovery
heartfelt condolences
and so the cliches go
but why asleep on job
not acting on time

No going back

Will life resume
where left off
matter of time
Maybe as lessons not learnt
history full of examples
Or maybe not
as you can show the way
Don't lose the hard won
peace, love, humanity
Recalibrate the world

Corona explained

Give me cock-up over conspiracy any day
no dark theories, secret societies
only poor folk carried away
in mindless, relentless struggle for survival
enough money to fill belly, clothe
driven by 'smart' ones outdoing each other
to be bigger, richer, more powerful
now all f****ed, never mess with nature

Rajan Madhok is keeping a poetry diary during COVID pandemic with help from friends. Here is a selection: the first is a comment on politicians, second exhorting us to learn and do better, and the third is the pessimistic reflection of our times
He will be happy to receive your contributions and to keep you updated via madhokrajan@gmail.com

THE MAGIC OF LANDSCAPE

And finally below, some thoughts from our fellow Friend Rajan Madhok, on how things are just now. When I received it, I was reminded of our visit to St Beuno's a while ago and its association with Gerard Manley Hopkins. Some of you may remember an article in a previous newsletter about his time in Tremeirchion from 1874 to 1877. It was there, inspired by the local landscape, that he wrote his most famous "nature" poem, Pied Beauty, which is reproduced here as an accompaniment to Rajan's poems, all of them tributes to a vibrant environment that continues to provide us with solace and enrichment.

Unprecedented, surreal, eerie and so on, choose your own adjective to describe the current situation due to COVID 19. Ensconced in our beautiful AONB I feel privileged and protected especially as I hear increasingly disturbing stories from the news channels and friends and family. Easy to maintain social distances and yet enjoy our daily permitted walks and the beautiful hills, something unavailable to millions, and indeed the vast majority of the people in the world. Call it prescient but as some of you will know I only moved to the area not long ago, having been a city dweller and am still like a child in a candy shop, discovering new joys. Here are two tributes to this:

Countryside living lessons

Lambs bleating, sheep baaing
occasional neigh with horse rider and dogs
woodpecker on tree, sparrows chirping, and the cockerel
the distant drone of tractor and the muck spreader on the fields
and the list grows as she keeps pointing out on the daily permitted walk
never realised how 'noisy' the countryside is, but isn't that lovely
senses being woken up uncluttered by the city sounds
Tomorrow's lesson will be local wild flowers
walking through primrose 'lane'

Poetry is all around you

Gazing out of the window
waiting for inspiration
watching sheep grazing
lambs running around
green hills under bright sun
still air, trees opening up
birds flying across skies
gathering for chinwag
around feeding station

with start of summer time
And so life goes on regardless
Like poetry in motion
Right there, in front of you

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut falls, finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim;
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.