

Life in the Time of Covid-19 and other poems...

By Howard Brown

*Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: Here's more from our pandemic of poetry. The first one is as much an engaging narrative as it is posy. If you miss **Like Lazarus** you have no business clicking on our site. I have no compunction not quoting lines from Brown; he is too prolific and a clique unto himself. HS. (Spacing is poet's own.)*

Life in the Time of Covid - 19

What we've taken as reality has become something else altogether; everything turned on its head, so that we find ourselves adrift in an off-kilter, alien world.

Cable news filled with political flagellation, financial markets precipitous, people crowding stores, pushing, shoving, going absolutely bat-shit, as they buy up liquor, groceries and—go figure—guns, ammunition and all the toilet paper in sight.

So, the question becomes one of how you'll choose to meet this new reality:

As a true believer, on your knees, praying for deliverance;

An apostate, believing that prayer is useless, because even if there is a God, he's strictly hands-off, letting things play out as they will;

Like Chicken Little, scurrying about, squawking that *the sky is falling* until you find yourself in the arms of Foxy Loxy, who proves to be every bit as deadly as the virus from which you've been fleeing;

Or, perhaps you'll find that still place within which tells you that life is filled with all sorts of disasters, but things are also in constant flux and, accordingly, this too shall pass.

Yet the question remains, will it pass before you do?

3/29/2020

Like Lazarus

Remnants of yesterday's snow
linger beneath a veil of fog which
obscures the sun; the infinity
which surrounds us now seemingly
reduced to a very close space.

And, like Lazarus, we find ourselves
in a state of cataleptic repose,
impatiently waiting for the great
stone to be rolled away.

2/9/2020

Ineffable

Down the mountain in a
blur; the air crisp and cold;
the sky an infinite dome
of blue; the mind empty,
yet humming like a singing
bowl; the heart luminous,
basking in an ineffable
state of bliss.

Eventually you reach the
bottom, reverse course and
head back up the long climb,
each turn of the pedals now
a struggle as everything
begins to change. Still, the
bliss remains; only the
paradigm has shifted.

3/1/2020

Greyhound

The Greyhound station lies on the outskirts of town, not far from the airport, on a stretch of two-lane, black top, sandwiched in between a long line of rusting trailers and mildewed, cracker-box bungalows.

It's a delusory, single-story affair, the parking lot empty except for a yesterday's blowing plastic bags and empty beer cans, (no bus anywhere in sight) and fits right in with the rest of the neighborhood.

Transience is the word which comes to mind as we pull into the parking lot. As in *I don't want to hang around this f**king place too long*. And, from the look of things, neither does anyone else.

The guy behind the counter barely looks up when we inquire about our bus. But, eventually, we learn what we need to know and take a seat in a waiting room which reeks of Clorox and b.o.

A handful of patrons are scattered about the place, mostly young and grungy, in nasty, thrice-patched pants, hoodies, and partially laced work boots, a couple with earphones, adrift in their own insularity.

Then the bus--long, sleek and gleaming
in the morning sunlight—rolls up to the
back door. And with the hiss of air brakes,
the riff-raff in the waiting room finally
begin to stir,

Then rise, grabbing their back packs and
bed rolls—not a single suitcase to be had
among their number—as the driver steps
down and calls out: *Okay boys, get a move
on, this dog's getting ready to run!*

2/14/2020

Rolling

Rolling down a four lane
blacktop that stretches
across the endless hills of
north Alabama.

Carcasses litter the road; deer,
coyote, possum, racoon, an
occasional armadillo—none
ever knew what hit them.

Beneath a lowering sky, vultures
circle. Right and left, the residue
of last season's corn harvest
bristles in water-logged fields.

Just beyond Burnout Baptist Church,
I cross a stream, its fetid surface
thick with Styrofoam cups and
half-submerged plastic bags.

*Could this stygian landscape be any
more depressing, I find myself asking?*
Then, in answer, flashing blue lights
appear in my rear-view mirror.

12/21/2019

THE POET SPEAKS: *My poetry in general, and these five pieces in particular, arise from everyday life experiences: i.e. coping with the current shutdown of the country due to the corona virus (“Life in the Time of Covid-19”); the uncertainty of day to day weather and its effect on life as the seasons change from winter to spring (“Like Lazarus”); the euphoria of riding a bike down and back up Lookout Mountain, TN on a Sunday morning (“Ineffable”); a visit to the local Greyhound bus station (“Greyhound”); and, the feeling of utter dejection on getting a speeding ticket in the middle of nowhere in North Alabama. So, writing poetry, for me, is very much like keeping a daily journal.*

My favorite poets are Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver and David Whyte, although not necessarily in that order. They say straight out what they have to say, unlike others who hide their message beneath multiple layers of meaningless metaphor.

AUTHOR’S BIO: *Howard Brown is a writer who lives in Lookout Mountain, TN. His poetry has appeared in Burningword Literary Journal, Printed Words, Blue Collar Review, Tuck Magazine, The Beautiful Space, Pure Slush, Poetry Super Highway, Old Hickory Review, Devil’s Party Press, Truth Serum and Lone Stars Magazine. In 2012, he published a collection of poems entitled The Gossamer Nature of Random Things. He has published short fiction in Louisiana Literature, F**k Fiction, Crack the Spine, Pulpwood Fiction, Extract(s), Gloom Cupboard, Full of Crow and Pure Slush.*