**Curator: Ioana Morpurgo**

**AIRBORNE PARTICLES**

**- a collective poem (spring-summer, 2020)**

Don't surrender your loneliness

So quickly.

Let it cut more deeply. *(Hafiz, C14th Persia)*

1. From your chin drips not blood but wine

As outside the birds warble:

The World is ours now.

In quarantine you have words.

So, cheer up oh Hafız for you had no world but words

Even if nobody understood what you wrote but the birds.  *(Gökçenur Çelebioglu, Istanbul, Turkey)*

1. I hear the kestrel and the koel calling in streets

emptied of screeching, braking cars. The stoplights

blink red, tapping out a virus alert.

Might that be a coded verse from you, Hafiz,

a password to a gate that we could each open

in our different scripts, our separate solitudes?*(Ranjit Hoskote, Bombay, India)*

1. God stays on the internet watching the human insomnia

as the subworlds in the computer drift at extreme speed.

Nights are carbonized as all nights,

meanwhile days are sweaty because of utopias and lifebuoys.

Give me the perfect word to match in a poem for everybody,

give me the new language for sharing seclusion. *(Ruxandra Cesereanu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)*

1. Is the tree alone

with its shadow cast by the moon on the humming earth?

Is the moon lonely up there

when the waves wash the back of a whale?

Solitude is an etude with an attitude

to find the cosmic WiFi emitted from Buddha’s router. *(Yasuhiro Yotsumoto, Yokohama, Japan)*

1. I look out the window down the dark stairs

towards the frozen shadow.

I'm on a journey

that questions the walls,

a journey that is

the silence between two thoughts*. (Elisa Biagini, Florence, Italy)*

1. Running out of the room to the empty balcony

Running between the walls of my mind, are my gym exercises for today.

Collecting the letters from my brain into silent words is my weapon.

Now I can join the revolution

ready to fight the invisible coronated dictator. *(Menachem M. Falek, Mevaseret Jerusalem, Israel)*

1. Friend, which revolution do you speak of?

Surrender! *Inti biss Inti biss* – only these four walls

speak your language. The ceiling sound-proofed

against kestrel and kite,

the codes Coptic, undecipherable –

Look – the floor swells in the wake of a rubber boat – *(Abigail Ardelle Zammit, Lija, Malta)*

1. Rubber made of fossil blood that noble creatures

Were juiced for by ignoble critters who drive limos

All around a planet's nightmare doomed to last

Very little days and few disgusted oceanic crusts

Cut open for the rubberletting and the sailing glitter

Of a prow that no prowess provoked but a stern necromancer (*Pedro Larrea, Forest, Virginia,USA/Spain)*

1. So would you prefer to be out there than in? Whose brain

would you choose for a night like this, Hafiz — whose madness

to hold close, closer, whose voice to twist into your own as the water in the pipes turns

slowly in the walls, as your eyes learn to peel back

this thin ceiling, seeking kestrels, but always finding

these strange eyes blinking back? *(Alice Miller, Berlin, Germany/New Zealand)*

1. Blinking seems to be all we can do

in the wake of the last boat that has left, sailing

into a cruise ship graveyard, bodies stacked like makeshift

hospitals, miracles ventilating in cities where

nobody gets tested, so nobody stays positive. Hafiz,

what do you see when you are gasping for air? *(Marc Nair, Singapore)*

1. And when the last boat has left

you sit there like a letter in a misspelled word

circled with red by the proofreader. And you see

a long red arrow stretching from you

to the place you belong. Which is now a blank space. *(Kārlis Vērdinš, St. Louis Missouri, USA/Latvia)*

1. Filled spaces divide like cells; everybody is gardening. Everybody

is clapping, each clap dividing into another clap.

A new meme circulates of kestrels

delivering advice from a podium.

You crack open the last tin of Strongbow

and tilt its huntsman’s arrow towards the sky *(Nicky Arscott, Llanbrynmair, Wales, UK)*

1. But in our current sky

you are just a stranded cloud

an ulcer wounding the blue

Alone now in this Limbo

wear the rags of memory

reap nature's rage *(Vasilis Pandis, Corfu, Greece)*

1. In thousands, migrant workers march home — hungry footsteps on empty highways

accentuate an irony — ‘social distancing’, a privilege only powerful can afford.

Cretins spray bleach on unprotected poor, clap, bang plates, ring bells, blow conches, light fires

to rid the voodoo — *karuna*’s karma, infected. When shall we sing our dream’s epiphanies, Hafiz?

My lungs heave, slow-grating metallic-crackles struggle to escape the filigreed windpipes —

I persist in my prayers. *I’m afraid of Him.* Hope, heed, heal — our song, in present tense.

*(Sudeep Sen, New Delhi, India)*

1. Happy beings are extremely dangerous. So let us be happy -

let us sing under the happy sky which crushes us so tenderly,

let us dream our most beloved dead,

let us be what the sky dreams of when it feels as fragile & desperate

as the humans it crushes. (*Radu Vancu, Sibiu, Romania*)

1. We push back the walls

And erase the tally marks

And build a window of words

With a view of the sky’s beating pulse

We fill our lungs with life

And we dance over the veins of Death. (*Roja Chamankar, Austin Texas, USA / Iran)*

1. Self-isolation is a question of growth

as flowers on the mountain surrounded by stones look for a hole in the ground.

Compare Socrates, who never left Athens,

John Climacus with his Ladder of Divine Ascent

or Christ on the Cross embracing all the world with his outstretched arms.

Self-isolation is when the purpose of vertical is a support or fate.

(*Tsvetanka Elenkova, Sofia, Bulgaria)*

1. Lines up and down, lines across, guidelines and headlines

turn me against the handle to my own front door,

converge on a garden gate I no longer fully trust.

Even my shoes are not above suspicion. I’m careful,

out shopping, to step between the airborne particles.

Socrates, Hafiz, Christ let this be over please. *(Horatio Morpurgo, Bridport, England, UK)*

1. And yet back home I find an unexpected form of belonging

as I glance, smilingly, at my own face at a virtual party

with my dearest friends doing the same:

sharing, together, our most intimate smile –

the one usually reserved

for the mirror’s eyes only. *(Juana Adcock, Glasgow, UK/ Mexico)*

1. There was an outer world once. A school for my emotions.

They believe what they’ve learned there not from me.

I don’t introduce them to my friends – they don’t know how to behave.

If I had kids maybe I wouldn’t become obsessed with emotions.

So I sent them to my lover on Sundays, they like how she cooks. *(Efe Duyan, Istanbul, Turkey)*

1. Would you play Ticket to Ride with me?

It is a game with blue and red and yellow little trains.

I see the river Mississippi from my train. Now I see the river Ob in Siberia, and the river Ii in Finland.

All equally far, all equally alive. I read about rivers, I read about water.

I see a spider between two window panes. It sees me here in my room, it sees the birch tree outside.

Light green. *(Riina Katajavuori, Helsinki, Finland)*

1. I look at my unemployed hands, which stopped working

Real became more real, more touchable

Like an old song, scent or angular form from "then"

Still feel between now and "then", between all security lines

Drawn here last night. It looks like a distant constellation

From my steamy window, from my dock *(Radek Kobierski, Katowice, Poland)*

1. There is no “then” or again

only many versions of “now” in this futureless frame of existence.

If all my nows could be measured for meaning,

hold it against the last litre of detergent

study the brand I trusted, to wash my hands of

the memory of purposeful touch. *(Melizarani T.Selva, Subang Jaya, Malaysia)*

1. But there is no such “detergent“ that can clean collective memory of freedom, in this “Waste Land“

turned into a concentration prison, where freedom of movement has working hours

and people are imprisoned in special camp-quarantines .

The virus of fear is released from the speakers and it spreads (“dramatically”) fast through social media,

patrols in front of the building entrances like guard dogs between the barracks, in the “past”.

Our “today” and our “tomorrow” are what the gods of propaganda will announce.

*(Dejan Matić, Belgrade, Serbia)*

1. Time - stilled, yet so elastic. Were you to ask me

what day it is, I might fumble, uncertain of

what you mean. Was April the cruellest month?

Now the gods of propaganda would have us believe

tomorrow's "the day" - urging us to resume, repossess, redress,

when there's still so much to undo, unleash, unlearn. *(Nadia Mifsud, Lyon, France / Malta)*

1. What day is it then? Go on. What May is it that comes, what may?

What surrender, what crush of river whine, what orchestral yawn?

More whatever blessed Bulmers then [thank god the Dizzy Hunter delivers] and

Let us aloudly wonder *What apple swells inside to grasp the elasticity of desire?*

We know who knows nothing, who knows the sound of one hand clasping

A bouquet of hemlock… Listen… the door handle turns for thee. *(Greg Koehler, Texas, USA)*

1. The blackbirds in the yard are on their second clutch of eggs.

The pigeons, sparrows, and blue-tits strut, skip and flit as becoming

to their size and station. Inside we have a prime minister

perched on an invisible branch. He speaks to us alone. This is your yard,

he tells us. Workers return in the cold wind. They too are invisible. *(George Szirtes, Norfolk, UK)*

1. Mid May already the sun is not the same

Eighteen bodies in pieces on the railway tracks

Too hungry to walk simply fell asleep, deep is this night

A freight train runs over, Corona still far behind

A girl child is born on the roadside, the mother still walks for another twelve miles

*(Savita Singh, Delhi, India)*

1. we need not stay

return with me to the Garden

birds there sing a different tune

*teshuvah!* they sing, return

beloved, surely You hear *(Gabriel Rosenstock, Dublin, Ireland)*

1. I will be gulping chilled water from the palms of my hands

tap water which I savour

and drink on and on and savour even more

and through this comes my awareness

to the flavour of reality

and the ephemeral *(Zadok Alon, Mevaseret Jerusalem, Israel)*

1. We can still find the time to read a hundred or so books

Burst into song about fifty times

We might still even find time to meet

And kiss in front of everyone

What do you think – if we did all that

Would the 22nd century come any sooner? *(Olja Savičević, Island Korčula, Croatia)*

1. Don’t believe what you think

This small world that lies inside you is too big to fail

Looking for borders you will never cross

Because there is no end and no beginning

You are floating, so swim *(Michaël Vandebril, Antwerp, Belgium)*

1. And nothing’s too small—

a midnight touch, a healthy kick inside the womb, teeth in your mouth, a bowl of steaming rice.

Say it: Gratitude. Cut your loneliness with its song.

The cotton sheets, roof, your breath… even this pen on its last stretch of ink.

*(Sholeh Wolpé, Los Angeles, USA)*

1. Profound is solitude in two glasses of wine - a ruddy horse and a white horse.

Nothing is as it seems to be, when you have it all and no one to share it with.

Soon it will rain and the doors will be shut - those inside are in, no others will make it,

Two glasses of wine, a black horse in the jug - I now have it all, but no one to share it with.

*(Arian Leka, Tirana, Albania)*

1. After the rain I look ahead in the field.

Suddenly, I’m no more alone:

a butterfly waits for me, in the grass.

I look at her, waiting she keeps quiet,

without flying - so that nothing changes

on the other side of the planet. *(Nuno Júdice, Lisbon, Portugal)*

1. The sky is grey, it’s going to be a rainy day. Enjoy it like a blossoming honeysuckle shrub. Long curly branches stretched out to the sky in prayers. It will soon be Pentecost. Get rid of fear and loneliness. Enough of this exile. A breath of fresh air. A good walk in the morning. Happy feet, happy heart. My mask is smiling broadly. Yes, I’ve put a smile on it. My smile for you, passer-by.

*(Doina Ioanid, Jilava, Romania)*

1. Even if the air is transparent as memory and if new subtle birds haunt our minds, our exile is stubborn as never. It taught us to cross the savage rivers at any moment through stormy or peaceful weathers, darkness or yellowish visions. We have a secret labyrinth that communicates with the earth beauty,

where animals, trees and human beings are elusive. No way to impose us social isolation, we are present in any breath of life. As we are invisible to those who guide us into distress, we can dance nude and bright as thousands of suns. We can share the sacred fire of our feet travelling silently from one to the other. *(Michel Cassir, Paris, France/Lebanon)*

1. In the cold spring, cut deeply into this Pennsylvanian hill by the lake,

I crouch in front of the cast iron wood stove, just like he did

in the six months he had here.

Now it’s me and the fire, and the action unfolding in flames.

One hardly needs permission to be by oneself.

Now I have it. *(Irina Mashinski, LordsValley, PA, USA/ Russia)*

1. it’s early in the morning and empty streets,

soldiers, police, check-points, all tension

my dog has no sense for isolation, we try to escape

slowly we smuggle to the park ... and the forest behind

deer are watching us curiously, pheasants, rabbits,

we are calm ... finally *(Brane Mozetič, Ljubljana, Slovenia)*

1. children with swift feet jumping from behind

the bushes, we entirely forgot the children

not even six years old, playing: I-wanna-be-a-virus-too

wearing surgical masks for no other reason but

'cause everyone does;

and still: they are not scared, they sing through the fabric (*Andrea Grill, Vienna, Austria*)

1. of etiquette. it has entered my dreams: again and again

I retrieve my hand from the hands of friends and strangers

when we accidentally forget the rule of no handshakes

and I wake up feeling the touch of human skin

lingering in my palm like the unwelcome memory

of an old embarrassment  *(Sjón, Reykjavík, Iceland)*

1. I catch myself staring at his 6-fingered hand. At the other’s leukoderma as he handles the eggs.

Known men, unknown vendors, their itinerant bounty fills my open sacks. Deranged by sudden

beauty, I want to weep or kneel, to thank each person thrice. Lalu. Abaji. Kallappa. I have forgotten

the sequence of obedience. I stand too close, hold too hard. At noon I am the only walker along un- bridgeable gaps. What changes hands is the crush of notes, the currency of lines. Ripened fruit.

Bitter gourd. Amaltas all over the roads, blood all over our hands. They crowd me, each dying, alone. *(Sampurna Chattarji, Thane, Maharashtra, India)*

1. Loneliness, my friend,

are you still here in this old house with me?

This morning  I walked into the empty room

and saw your breath disappear from the window  *(Arjan Hut, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands)*

1. My friend, we are always alone without loneliness -

molecules of a total human being. The Great Hack

has closed and opened our arms-doors, but what disappears disappears

to reappear where the sound of things is deep

like backbone of buildings, which press

with roots the earth and the void, void and earth (*Maria Grazia Calandrone, Roma, Italy*)

45. lately I've often had the same bad dream

my elderly mother disappears disappears

to reappear where the sound of things is deep

come here my son – she tells me – to hear the spring

to smell the flowers in my garden

I can’t, mother – I reply – because I'm wearing a surgical mask (*Ivan Hristov, Sofia, Bulgaria*)

46. we try forming an opinion or at least ourselves around it

but it keeps slipping through our fingers like every

distance and fact and number and heated speech given by the

lack of presence – punctuation divides us seamlessly while

sourdough is the only one learning everything about us

by seeing what giving up truly means *(Csilla Hajnal Nagy, Istanbul, Turkey/Hungary)*

47. I walk alone under the setting sun –in a memory–

feeling the touch of tar, receiving the fading light.

I caress my children in their sleep, miles away, I sing for them.

I’m learning how to access other consciousness in the distance.

Deep and ephemeral is the cup of solitude.

Hafiz, wake up: the gods of propaganda are upon us! *(Nuño Aguirre, Spain/Pretoria)*

48. I swear these rooms are eating me

night by increasing night, *out there*

creeping in at the keyholes and lintels

till on the day that dawn arrives,

the sky’s door at last ajar, I’ll not

have the strength to push it open. *(Jane Draycott, Oxford, UK)*

49. Now that old fraud Time is in your custody.

Soon the rain comes free as if uncuffed

from a madhouse. The shadows of books

frown from thronging shelves. This solitude

is a prayer too loud for God's pity. Try

to swim in it, out of view of the angels.  *(Alvin Pang, Singapore)*

50. dreamt that I was a dog

on tiptoes, softly licking your lips, neck, ears

in the morning my phone was still on

You were sleeping in it - wet and blessed

I found your name and jumped into stanza 20

and promised myself never to go back in my empty bed  *(Madara Gruntmane, Riga, Latvia)*

51. a pale image of yourself inside this eye

with the bulb fully focused on the wall

hanging mirror’s neat reflection while

certain thoughts’ noise humming ears

are stereo-typing bit by bit on this key-

board merged in a stark solid solitude *(Alessandro Mistrorigo, Venice, Italy)*

52. so solid, my dear Hafiz, that

on this slow and never-ending Sunday,

Beauty sits by the window

in her gold and silk and satin clothes

and desperately weeps

because no one will see her. *(Maria do Rosário Pedreira, Lisbon, Portugal)*

53. Yes, she then knocks at my door,

dressed in so many words, so many lines.

She knocks like the wind from the north-east.

But I do not open – I’m not allowed.

I rest against the very thick walls that surround me.

I waste my life dying. *(Immanuel Mifsud, Ħaż-Żebbuġ, Malta)*

54. I will be beautiful for the rest of my life after this. I will be

dangerous, I will be. The voice of a two year old says, *Many things have died*. He speaks of the badger rotting into the river, the flat mouse in the dandelions, the cat who didn’t cross the road and the baby crow, soaked and still in a rock-pool. But this is not what the world hears.

We hear foreign winds against our eardrumbs, in all their raging tongues,

today. And we hold ourselves, knowing that death is in every breath.

(*Siân Melangell Dafydd, Rhos-y-Gwaliau, Wales, UK)*

55. The wind is the breath which carries the birds

that are verbs reminding us in mid-flight:

The words we speak are most foreign to us

if we isolate a wordless self from ourselves *(Yiorgos Chouliaras, Athens, Greece)*

56. for forty days and forty nights. I keep vigil in my study,

circle in square, persevere at my desk, translating my efforts

at annihilation into coherent verse. My Beloved remains elusive.

I crumple yet another parchment and feed it to my lion –

eater of tongues and intransigent lovers. The peacock lays its head

in my lap, dressed in so many words, but I am not distracted.

*(Mustansir Dalvi, New Panvel, India)*

57. Our bodies display the wounds that tear up the world

Our bodies pray stigmatized by the pandemic

We breathe only thanks to the breath of trees

We greet the day thanks to unquenchable hope *(Margaret Saine, Los Angeles, California)*

58. We’re surpassed by the truth about ourselves,

this sum of big and small dark moments.

Our tongue-tied mouth reaches for the world

serene in its otherness. Silence pulsates. Spring is

cracked open like an orange by the feeble fingers of a child. *(Alen Besic, Novi Sad, Serbia)*

59. For still more silence that pulsates.

What doesn’t kill you, just hurts, it was said on the news.

I ask myself if I believe that.

I’ve stood in the rain so often that it starts to feel real.

That silence that pulsates. All the vacancies connected

like a puzzle with an image of a nurse. *(Mathura, Lelle, Estonia)*

60. At first  
 wherever sleep caught my eyes  
 I made my bed,  
 now my dreams no longer return

alone I weep in an empty grave,

restless. *(Eric Ngalle Charles, Leckwith, Wales, UK/Cameroon)*

61. Two little girls

on two neighbouring *dacha* plots

jumping up and down on their trampolines

throw longing glances at each other

across the fence. *(Marina Boroditskaya, Moscow, Russia)*

62. Through the wooden slats that make good neighbours

All the better to love them like thyself,

But I shun neighbours like I shun the Self

Extracted by these magnet hands,

In wind-up scraps and broken code,

offered up, what remains: a light that walks. *(Jordan A. Y. Smith, Tokyo, Japan)*

63. In the empty streets,

hearts pull echoes between lights,

and witness silence

surrender to love (*Nathalie Handal, New York, USA*)

64. to blue for the blue Pacific

and time once again to sing:

an angel gave me this crayon

I think I glimpsed

his wing *(Bill Manhire, Wellington, New Zealand)*

65. cling or cry on paper about past chances lovers cities or foes

the different stages: first suspicion of a fuckery too massive for any haiku

second flashes and shadows of missing letters

third isolation equals privilege (what kind of wisdom is that?)

and listed losses form an improvised wave

to soften todays terrific edge *(Robert Prosser, Alpbach, Austria)*

66. On this terrific edge I stand

Waiting for a lifeline

As birds in my ceiling

sing hope in my ears

So, dear Hafiz, I won't

surrender my loneliness so quickly *(Nnane Ntube, Yaounde, Cameroon)*

67. I see your eyes bottomless, welling up

: solitude hanging letter by letter, crawling

towards your tender mouth, your chest.

Salt. Taste your yearning body

swinging, crystals crunching, shining.

A yawning desert, violet. *(Simone Inguanez, In-Naxxar, Malta)*

68. The desert in faraway lands, black drums, a dry tree trunk.

The old solitude – naked, damned, evil.

The city in a new land, gentle violins, a shiny silver screen.

The new solitude – cozy, blessed, fresh.

In me, around me, for me – solitude, unavoidable.

Wanted, no matter dead or alive – wanted alone. *(Milan Dobričić, Belgrade, Serbia / Lübeck, Germany)*

69. Desert means a thick yellow illumination.

The tip of a knife that crawls down the spine of the quotidian –

we accepted it as the taste of this summer.

Our breath is an owl in the betel plantation. *(Subhro Bandopadhyay, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India)*

70. The days unfold inwards as outwards  
       and I keep my eyes on a tiny spider  
       outside my windowpane, I strive to be   
       as lonely and persistent as I weave my web   *(Francesca Cricelli, Reykjavíc, Iceland/Brazil/Italy)*

71. Solitudinal air through the window grills—

a form of speaking to unspeak. You flap

the curtains closed, open—all this daily

expanding and contracting of lung, of breath.

Inscape to outscape: private then social,

the world bending on its one grazed knee. *(James Byrne, Liverpool, England, UK)*

72. It was a time to stare at the mirror

–the veil of travel blown away by static days –

skulls and wings reflected, the poem

struggling to surface, clinging to the frame.

Then prayer crossed the sill of pain, unlocking

phoenix’s cage, to free the word from solitude. *(Zingonia Zingone, Rome, Italy/Costa Rica)*

73. The Białowieża Forest flourished under Göring's control.

All canvases are perpetually quarantined.

The past has never been before.

When the people are gone, God his possessions regains,

the Maasai believe in Kenya.

No one's life is safe beyond the prison bars. *(Yordan Efftimov, Sofia, Bulgaria)*

74. I found out today that the collective soul can be woken up

by crystal clean rain drop over the birch's arms raised up,

yet in our village all birch trees grow into whips

and people drink more and more, not being able to soothe their thirst *(Inga Gaile, Riga, Latvia)*

75. every night, I dusted the wings that were commended to me,

the dream of flying one day, to see the glory of the souled ones

from above. then my mom used to come and check my fever,

saying  "you have returned your body my child" and she’d cover me *(Selahattin Yolgiden, İstanbul, Turkey)*

76. I wander deserts

In search of you, Oh Hafiz.

Dust particles enter my eyes

Surf my tears.

Yet I won’t surrender so quickly

To find the words that decipher my loneliness. *(Ro Mehrooz, Rohingya, Myanmar/Bangladesh)*

77. gale of glittering wings

a tongue flicks the tulip’s eye

scent and sight unbind

I was alone in the crowd

this solitude thrills with life *(Waqas Khwaja, Atlanta, Georgia, USA/Pakistan)*

78. Heat in an attic room, and the nights already  
 drawing in — how will we remember  
 this year when it was more convenient  
 for summer not to come, and yet it did?  
 As still as in a desert, time  
 glides seamlessly from March into July. *(Richard O’Brien, Birmingham, UK)*

79. Butterflies and flowers forget

the flow of time, July

or March, feasting or

flaunting nude, but not nude,

unfazed by millions of

human hermits ad interim. *(Meifu Wang, Taipei, Taiwan and Seattle, USA)*

80. Not aware of time, waltzed above a stream,

flapping its wings, free from the screams of cities,

then rested on a beam in the garden’s splendour of sunshine and of song

like a bird in a nest pecking at spilled seed,

with wings that kiss the petals of flowers,

of beauty and freedom, more precious than gold. *(Ayo Ayoola-Amale, Accra, Ghana/Nigeria)*

81. The truth is – I can’t cancel time, can I?

It feels now as an odd form of happiness

Not being able to move, to speak, to touch.

Frankly, we all desired it, deep inside.

Amid writing this a ladybird came,

Spun on her tiny toes and – flew away. (*Miroslav Kirin, Zagreb, Croatia*)

82. There is no time only clocks. No beginning…this poem began before I was born…

No beginning…this poem will keep speaking beyond and be spoken until…

My Oglala Sioux friends (‘’the original people’’) believe that a person doesn’t die

Until the last person who can remember anything about that person dies

‘’If there is enough blue in the sky to patch a man’s pants it’s going y be a nice day’’

My dead mother continually says her dead mother’s grandmother says when we see.

*(Craig Czury, Wileks-Barre, Pennsylvania, USA)*

83. It's better to think deep, not far

and not lift up mine eyes unto the hills

when I live on the plain

or page through the days as though

they were nature descriptions

delaying the plot. *(Agi Mishol, Kfar Mordechay, Israel)*

84. I like to sit in the room with an open window and be touched

by the breeze; not your touch but still welcome in this strange

disquieted world. It’s June, past solstice, the year already looking

towards its end as we all do, from the moment we’re born; who

can we trust now but old friends: water, light, breeze. *(Jenny Lewis, Oxford, UK)*

85. they said tomorrow was another day

but tomorrow is today

and no one can breathe

it sounded like a joke at the beginning

July was far away but today is July

where are we going to ? *(Djimeli Raoul, Kwanzaa, Cameroon)*

86.  I asked myself three things: “If I am not Hafiz, who am I?

If I am only Hafiz, am I not chopped liver? And

Why eat one etrog now, when

Adjusting for inflation, I could eat ten tomorrow?”

But Hafiz answered me, “You, my friend, are a deep fake

Created in the image of God. Now pass the etrog.”  *(Zohar Atkins, New York, USA)*

87. Coming from the islands of Bob Marley’s rising sun,

Etrog would not be enough. Perhaps a drag on *ganga* would do.

But a quiet walk in the woods wakens senses.

I hear trees speak and birds whistling in choruses.

And Bob Marley, the companion, in my head, says,

“*don’t worry about a thing, everything’s going to be alright.*

*(Althea Romeo- Mark, Basel, Switzerland / Antigua and Barbuda/ US Virgin Islands)*

88. No nightingale sings afresh in a post-crimson-rose world because there is no man*kind*, oh Hafiz, only cruelty has survived these scorched human ruins. Civilization, insulated by empathy, encapsulates the dying trees and plastic paved sees with words and nothing else.

So, shall we seek past the whomping, through the whamming, beyond the whacking waves which will follow in exploring the wuthering paths of pre-post-continuous confinement, my dearest Buddha? Or will you, dearest Buddha together with Hafiz, both just hum static noise at the moon via a bad WiFi signal?

*(Philip Meersman, Jette/Brussels, Belgium)*

89. Hafiz, your body was used to the practice of fasting. And Buddha knows,

when we hold our breath the next one tastes like a banquet. Sleep,

a fast of light, but who knows solitude when the internet

twines itself between our eyelids, feasts on our intent, as we hunger

for each other, desire elsewhere than in our bodies.  We

click on links: our nerve ending. Numb, we carry on.

*(Phillippa Yaa de Villiers (aka Amamoo) , Johannesburg, South Africa)*

90. And on: where the calendar hurtles we follow

With stubborn attempts to keep life in one piece,

Engulfed by the bleary gestalt of events

But moved in these wilderness days to be thankful

For bumping of elbows, unwavering neighbours,

And medical science, that art of Apollo.       *(Andrew Wynn Owen, Oxford, UK)*

91. An old woman leaned on a windowsill,

sticking her nose out for the first time this spring,

and a dog in the middle of a deserted street –

the outside and the inside

the lost and the unfound

are looking at each other in the rays of early May. *(Ostap Slyvynsky, Lviv, Ukraine)*

92. So the island without sea views

Sees around the wandering mutt

(Visitor in her waters), waters

Visible: hers in part. But then, again,

The island that has no ocean views, the

Long-standing vexations regarding beach access. *(Alex Wong, Cambridge, UK)*

93. Orchids outside my window used to pretend they were dead

Each time someone tried to touch them

But no one touches them now

Sun’s going down, and dead flies pile up on my verandah

I want to go somewhere but there’s no somewhere

Just this place where the landscape mimics the irreverence of an island

*(Maung Day, Yangon, Burma/Myanmar)*

94. The person in this house, their island a black hole. We try

and break the suction with noise from our side. It is not solitude

when you can’t find yourself. The memory of

touch outside reach. Let’s sit once more,

follow our breath. Hold, hold this, hold each other,

before the rest of what comforts us too goes somewhere

*(Olumide Popoola, London, UK/Germany/Nigeria)*

95. And not knowing we bought entire islands

From the supermarket in case solitude left behind

The products of our everyday – here’s money,

Quickly put gel on it; here’s lack of change,

My impervious normality, the warmth of sanitising decay.

*(Jèssica Pujol Duran, Fremont, CA, USA/Mataró, Catalonia)*

96. And in the middle of the mouth as if it were, in the middle of these months,

fear and contraction of the unexplored, Hafiz, now again,

coming from nowhere, the crystallised flower of the unexpected.

Then we descend towards the encounter, from everywhere,

without anticipation, together,

at this intimate moment of the real, in parsimony.

*(Pedro Serrano, Montreal, Canada/ Mexico City, Mexico)*

97. On the beach, few lights

just a slight movement

everyone in silence

with their loneliness.

Maybe this sand temple

is only inside me ?  (*Stéphane Bataillon, Montreuil, France)*

98. I have seen the kestrels hover over long summer grass

between Tempelhof’s decommissioned runways and the kite-surfers

who ride the air above decaying temples of aviation there

but now I’m grounded down south in a fine winter prison the size of three islands

where sand whispers tinnitus in my ears. Better to share bird words with Hafiz

than tune in to the unilateral declarations of Ozymandias *(Chris Price, Wellington, New Zealand)*

99. Grounded down deep in this soil, the philodendrons

resemble us more than any bird will ever do,

even as we venture out to do some shopping,

no longer possessing mouths or wrinkles,

and so we wonder -  
 will our veiled faces grow a new leaf?   *(Marie Iljašenko, Prague, Czech Republic)*

100. I traffic elsewheres for breath

each wing feather – a razor blade

my shadow cuts deeply across the sea of voices

kestrel of loneliness

gripping hope tight in my claws

to feed to my young and yours. *(Ioana Morpurgo, Bridport, England, UK/Romania)*

Friend, whatever you are, you must not stand still:  
 One must from one light into the other spill. \* *(Angelus Silesius, German/Polish poet)*

\*English version by Gabriel Rosenstock; original language - German

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