

Writing In The Time Of Corona

REFLECTIONS FROM MAPW STUDENTS

Writing in the Time of Corona --“Little Gems”

(an excerpt)

By Denise Boivin-Iassogna

From what I have been reading, people are having more vivid dreams during this time of social isolation. Phew. I thought I was the only one. I have felt like I am on a psychedelic, hallucinatory trip. Maybe our collective minds are trying to make sense of the chaos we see on the news every evening. Being confined—bombarded with frightening images, sewing masks, staying indoors, meeting new neighbors but staying six feet away from them, being afraid to touch the wrong surface at the grocery store—all of these phenomena are playing tricks on our psyche. We are forced to turn inward – become more contemplative, cautious, exploratory, rambling, fearful, and yet free. I would not be surprised if there was a new genre of literature borne during this time.

This experience has connected us to our ancestors, those who also had to endure hardships, plagues, illness, fear – but probably not in the safe confines of their homes with electricity, running water, heat, light, streaming movies, and a means of connection to the outside world as we are doing today. It is a strange dichotomy, so I am trying to savor the experience while gutting it out at the same time along with the rest of humanity. I look for the good – the online symphonies created, the 7 pm applause for healthcare workers, the rare hugs, smiles and success stories from doctors and nurses, feeding elderly neighbors, spontaneous dance parties. sidewalk chalk, hearing children playing, walking dogs, my younger daughter learning to bake bread, my older daughter having weekly Zoom dance classes, my husband home for Easter for the first time in about twenty years, having a driveway picnic with my mom, Facetime holidays.

All of this is a rambling tribute to the goodness that may still come out of this awful time of disease, sickness, death that has ravaged the world and made us prisoners in our own homes. And, as a writer, being thankful for having an outlet for the thoughts that occupy our minds and the reassurance that we will all get through this and maybe someday write about this topic that will inevitably be the subject of countless novels.

from Graduate Studies in the Time of Coronavirus

<https://mlagrads.mla.hcommons.org/2020/04/>

by Peyton Sibert

At the beginning of March, COVID-19 did not seem like a problem in Metro-Atlanta. My partner, however, who resides in South Florida and has had a plan for the zombie apocalypse for as long as I've known her, told me to stay safe. While I was working at my university's writing

center five days later, my campus announced that face-to-face classes would cease for two days. Nonetheless, I still did not grasp the gravity of the situation until that evening when I witnessed the type of mass hysteria that I thought only existed in movies at the local supermarket. Dented cans and discarded items were tossed onto the otherwise empty shelves. People tried to avoid human contact, despite their carts serving as bumper cars in the aisles. Suddenly, my partner's worries did not seem outlandish. Shoving my shopping list into my pocket, I grabbed the last loaf of overpriced, organic bread and searched for cans that were not too dented.

For another week, the coffee shop where I also work stayed open; I washed my hands incessantly. When a temporary closure was announced, I was grateful because my fear grew with each new report of cases. When my campus announced that the rest of the semester would be conducted online, I secluded myself in my apartment. As a graduate teaching assistant, I adapted to tutoring solely online and have begun to wonder what I will do as the instructor of record if this continues into the fall. Planning my units for my first semester of teaching is daunting enough without having to consider a global pandemic.

I have been reworking my unit plan, planning my capstone, researching Ph.D. programs, and reintroducing myself to the importance of mental health. At a time where I could allow my anxiety to control everything, I am challenging myself to become mindful of my stress by practicing daily yoga and walking around a local cemetery. The cemetery offers a level of peace that I cannot find in my neighborhood. The silence overpowers my worries, so that I can embrace the beauty of nature and the seemingly perfect marble gravestones. Although I hope to soon engage with others face to face, I am appreciative of this time of solitude, when I can delve into my thoughts about teaching, as well as reflect upon what I can and cannot control in my academic future. I never would have imagined that COVID-19 would make my partner's plan for the apocalypse feel like a reality—despite the lack of zombies.

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from Graduate Studies in the Time of Coronavirus

<https://mlagrads.mla.hcommons.org/2020/04/>

By Jonquil S. Harris

Three weeks ago, life as I knew it changed personally, professionally, academically, and worldwide. I was slightly relieved when we received the call from my employer that we would be shut down for approximately two weeks. I would have a moment to catch my breath and focus even more on what brought me joy—my graduate studies. The excitement I find in being around like-minded individuals as we discuss our craft and our future as professional writers and gaining invaluable insights from professors and advisors makes the 90-minute commute to my university seem brief.

Then the reality of the pandemic sank in, and it took a week before my anxiety wore away. I couldn't help but think about me or my family members becoming sick. I acknowledge my

privilege during this time. I have a full-time job with benefits and sick and annual leave; and I have full capability to work from home until we return to a new normal. That new normal is what I cling to get me through this. Just as I am now working remotely from home, I am also attending classes remotely. I miss being in the same room as my colleagues and bouncing ideas off of one another so openly and freely. Viewing one another on split screens, trying to determine who should speak next, or losing each other to shoddy internet connections is not nearly the same as being in one another's physical presence.

However, I am thankful that we are still able to connect in that way, and I am now thinking even more broadly about what community means. I have seen the power of social media to aid freelancers and creatives in the way of fundraising and virtual book tours and readings.

I miss spending time with my parents, then having a long embrace before we leave one another. I miss engaging with my colleagues face-to-face. Virtual calls can only reach so far. But at this time, I worry less about being productive and more about persevering. I am thinking of resting while in a state of unrest. I am thinking about the impossible being possible.

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