

Tony Holden – Five poems during covid time

Introduction – Covid-19 has made our lives seriously different. This is true for the world and for us personally. Our world struggles to care for the planet; feed the hungry; change the lives of the poor; and be at peace so that all its people can flourish. But this plague – this pandemic – has added another level. And yet our lives continue, and I go on writing poems.

Futures, April 2020

During the plague and the daily deaths
 The skies were often cloudless
 Without planes or sound or pollution.
 They were cerulean blue, and our small garden
 Echoed the greens of the ancient-forest oaks.
 Along our road, bird-song took over
 The empty school-playground – and then
 We waited, for our tears to wash away the tree-pollen
 And then we waited, for humans and cities
 To become more careful and more caring.

Truth-to-tell, May 2020

I had settled down to dying
 [I preferred later rather than sooner!],
 And then Covid-19 kick-startled us
 Into living daily – into being mindful.

So now, I select my poem's words with extra care
 I highlight words like vulnerable, damaged, precarious -
 You see, poems offer safe places beyond the abyss
 Of deafness, vertigo, immobility or madness!

Meanwhile I practise my own spirituality and creativity,
 And, reaching-out, I work for peace and justice

I value those friendships that burn bright.
I celebrate our life together – and then,

I remember a night some time ago
A dream-woman said: ‘The transformed-life is yours,
You are almost there’ – in fact,
We are here, right now.

Used words – for my 80th birthday, August 2020

“We must use words as they are used or stand aside from life”
[Ivy Compton-Burnett]

Mostly I sit, as our world lives through another plague-day,
Previously, neither disease, earthquake, war nor random-killing
Have hit me in the face or ravaged our families; and yet
Here we are, between our daily routine and ordinary-ecstasy.
Here we are questioning, examining, being creative; until
Imagination and meaning fuse into blunt sense.
It is true – I do so desire to say and write this clearly,
To use these words [“as they are used”] – “do no harm,
Love your neighbour, be kind, let peace begin with me.”

Touching, February 2021

We desire warmth in our lives,
Especially in this hard winter, especially
Whilst this pandemic makes people
Die, be ill, feel worn down, blow a fuse.

We desire warmth in our lives,
Even as we enjoy solitude, even as
We make space to practise our creative pleasures,
So, we hunger for the sunlight of people.

We desire warmth in our lives,
As we fit on our masks and look at screens, as
We live each day with our given family -
Yes, yes, we are achingly at home together.

And be at home there, March 2021

To the north – through the window at street-level
Is ‘our’ [bigger-than-the-house] oak-tree –
It grows on Staples Hill and stands tall and branched,
A first step into the kilometres of ancient Epping Forest.
To the south upstairs – we have a view
Of a horizon beyond trees and our commuter town –
A cityscape that includes the Greenwich Millennium Dome,
Embracing London’s diverse millions.
To the south downstairs – we sit out on our patio.
It is our doorway, our memory, our imagination’s store –
To the sea, London, European cities, the Milky Way,
And above us, there is endless cerulean sun-blue sky.