



Quarantine Spring

an anthology of poems,
photos and artwork
by FASoS staff and
students during the
COVID-19 lockdown



Preface

This collection has been produced by staff and students at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) during the COVID-19 crisis in the three months of March, April, May 2020. The idea for the anthology was inspired by this quatrain, written by Paul Stephenson, and posted on Twitter:

Look,
I Zoom in
And I Zoom out
But can I really focus?

Sally Wyatt saw this late one evening, and responded with the first line of a limerick,

'There once was a tutor on Zoom'.

By the next morning, John Parkinson had added a second line,

'Who tried to teach Rousseau and Hume'.

Sally added a third line, John a fourth (see p.48 for the full limerick), and so the idea for a collection of poems and writing inspired by the lockdown came into being.

We put out a call to everyone in FASoS, students and staff, reminding them that poetry can be a source of solace, both in its reading and writing. We pitched it as a competition, but were keen to reward everybody who was willing to take part.

FASoS staff and students responded brilliantly and produced some amazing things, with some people writing poetry for the very first time. Students sometimes felt they needed to add footnotes, so clearly we have trained them well (perhaps too well) in academic writing.

Many people are writing poetry in English, when it is not their first language – a very brave thing to do. They sent their poems, saying, ‘I wrote this in Greek/German/Polish and then translated it for you’. Reflecting the multilingual composition of FASoS, some non-English words remain, including some new words that have entered the lexicon of English speakers living in the Netherlands during these months, such as ‘hamstering’.

We later extended the competition to include photos, drawings and other artwork. Every week, we shared one entry in the newsletter for staff and students, encouraging people to continue to write, draw and take photos. The creativity continued to flow.

It is clear that the COVID19 crisis and the enforced physical isolation opened up new forms of intimacy between and among staff and students, as we obtained glimpses into people’s homes, met their children and their pets, saw their partners bringing coffee. Everyday domesticity was part of the ‘new normal’, and we wondered how often people were doing their work while still in their pyjamas.

Dialogues opened up between people, as one poem prompted a response from someone else. This is particularly evident in the limericks collected here, which also testify to the way in which Twitter became a common space for expression and communication. They explore the impact on education and work and speak of a yearning for touch, intimacy, movement and contact.

For those of you interested in reading more poems written during the crisis you might be interested to visit the poems that have been archived by Manchester Metropolitan University as part of the ‘Write Where We Are Now’ project (<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/write/>).

We are grateful to the FASoS Faculty Board for financially supporting the production of this booklet, but most of all we are grateful to everyone who contributed. It has been a pleasure during these sometimes bleak weeks to receive poems, drawings and photos.

*Sally Wyatt
John Parkinson
Paul Stephenson
Eva Durlinger*

Paul Stephenson

The geography of europe

All things begin with a river, I suppose –
the Thames, the Seine, the Rhine, the Rhône.

All things begin with a bottle of Côtes du Rhône,
Côtes de Blaye, Côtes de Bourg, Côtes de Bordeaux.

Not to forget Côtes de Provence. And Provence.
And Piedmont and Tuscany, Liguria, Lombardy.

All things end with Lombardy, I suppose –
With Lombardy in jeopardy. And epidemiology.

And in somebody. In some bodies. In bodies.
All things end on the floodplains of the Po.

Spring, and you know, the usual thing

Blossom on windscreens, windscreen wipers.
Blossom on bumpers, atop the tread of tyres.
A carpet of blossom in the space between cars.

A blanket of blossom on fag packets, dog ends.
Pink blossom petals like confetti on dog shit.
White blossom on a green disposable mask.



Anna Harris

'Homemade "Without Liberty" Masks'

Paul Stephenson

Wolvendael (valley of the wolves)

All that spring the park was open
but the benches strictly out of bounds.

Dark green, they necklaced the park,
staggered up along the gravel path.

Cordoned off with police tape –
blue-and-white strips in Vs and Ws.

As if an incident. As if incidents.
Each the scene of a recent fatality.

People with dogs walked past them.
Breathy joggers puffed past them.

Like something had happened there.
No stopping. Nothing to see. Moving on.

Serena Rosadini

Reality in quarantine

is like a sour-sweet tangerine:
a frozen, rugged sphere floating,
social-distancing-promoting.
UM emails updates day by day
to those who leave and those who stay.
But disruptions might come handy:
you can play the Tinder dandy,
bake a cake, cut your hair,
hang in there, no despair!

Normality will come back,
we can already see that:
beyond your sessions on Zoom,
spring and flowers outside bloom.



John Parkinson

**Corona dinner
Maastricht sunset**



Jehian Leupen

Fleeting Moments

Foteini Vakitsidou

SMS

your breath is you
 from there you feel
 with me the same
 how magically simple
 even at bedtime
 the agony
 to breathe
 first of all
 not only that
 hold on
 from the whispers
 from the few vibrations even through the screen
 your breath counts

Julia Walczyk

Reflection on happiness

How to perceive a reception for happiness?
 Take your time to enjoy little things,
 What does it mean?
 Do what you really enjoy doing,
 The answer is simple.
 Well, at least one person will be happy....

Charlotte Lenhard

Hardship and friendship

Denying a crisis,
 Not knowing how to react.
 First response?
 Inaction.
 It can't be as bad as that.

Facing a crisis,
 Learning how to react.
 Second response?
 Action.
 Gotta make it pass more quickly than that.

Embracing a crisis,
 Knowing how to react.
 Third response?
 Interaction.
 Friends make crises more bearable like that.



Anna Harris, Sally Wyatt, Andrea Wojcik
and Harro van Lente

Exquisitely quarantined corpse

Lea Beiermann

A quarantine letter to my parents

I'm holding on to my pen as I write to you. How is the dog and how much has the garden fence grown? Time is a double-jointed acrobat in our house. There's

too much and too little time in the morning, and a faint taste of bland biscuits when I stand close to the window. We left the biscuit tin open overnight and now it's empty.

I glued the birds to the trees in our street, so I could watch them watch me. Time practises somersaults.

Did you see the Pope throw his special prayer at the rain and the sirens last night? The rain streaming down, sticky tears on a wooden Jesus, and I streaming the video.

Just a couple more weeks they say, but I wonder. How many breakneck tricks will our acrobat learn in a couple more weeks?

Pierre Carabin

A cold shower

Every morning under
A cold shower
Oh, what I've said
Before the day,
Everyday
Before I think about it.

Anon

In a stretch of time

a writer's guide
to spinning on a heel
(& around my own axis)

a bird's eye view
on a coffee cup

a guy
sliding by
on a bike
as I cross the bridge

Dora Vrhoci

I Walked with a Cat

This year, April is indeed the cruelest month.[1]
The virus keeps us apart; it separates.

I hear the mellow melody of the bluebird; it resonates.
I hear it as I walk along the streets of Heer.

A cat suddenly appears; out of the blue.
"It's Natsume Sōseki," I thought,[2]
And make that funny sound all humans do
To make these mysterious, mischievous creatures
Stick around.

The cat notices me; it sticks around.
It joins me on my evening walk.

And so we walk,
Together,
We walk along the streets of Heer.

"The streets are eerily quiet," I thought,
"Except for me and the cat."
"They're afraid of the virus," I thought,
"Except for me and the fearless cat."
"We're lawbreakers," I thought,
"We walk less than a meter apart."

An old lady suddenly appears.

She walks our way.

The cat and I move to the right.
The old lady moves to the right.
The cat and I move to the left.
The old lady moves to the left.
The old lady moves to the right.
The cat and I remain on the left.

She gives us a smile,
We give her a smile.
She makes a remark in Dutch.
We give her another smile,
And walk for another mile.
We didn't understand too much.

"Perhaps there's some hope for April," I thought,
And continue to walk along the streets of Heer.

And so does the cat,
As brown as a bear.

[1] The first verse is a reference to T. S. Eliot's poem
The Waste Land (1922). Eliot's poem starts with the verse "April is the
cruelest month, breeding."

[2] Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) was a Japanese novelist. One of his famous
novels is called I Am a Cat (1906). Sōseki is often portrayed as a cat in
Japanese popular culture.

Patrick Bijsmans

Run



Paul Stephenson

This is just to say

after William Carlos Williams

I have used up
the toilet roll
that was in
the cupboard

and which
you were probably
hoarding
for an emergency

Forgive me
it was 4-ply
so quilted
and so ultra-soft

Lilia Raikhline

Blaise cendrars

Le regard lourd mais tendre,
Un peu moisi
La cigarette en bouche
La bouche tiède et pincée
Les rides près du nez
Et les oreilles qui sentent la camomille.

Cerien Streefland

The days

The days are all alike
Minimal movement confined to my chair
Staring at my screen
Secretly peeking into personal spaces
Revealing pets and art on walls
While being distracted by myself
Squared in the corner
Of yet another Skype
In need of a haircut

Anne-Sophie Oppor

Groundhog Day

My WiFi connection isn't that great
I say as I click on Zoom.
Y'all start without me, I'll just sit and wait
and then I put it on mute.

I check the weather as if it would matter,
and put on my cowboy boots.
Maybe next year I'll be able to wear them,
outside of this tiny room.

It's 3am so I should go to bed,
Sike! I'm already there.
I grab my 3-day-old banana bread,
that I made in Corona-despair.

The timer resets and it's the next day,
the groundhog is screaming Hurray!
Is it Friday yet? Cause I need to rest,
quarantine is, frankly, the best.

Paul Stephenson

The Future Is Never Worn

The dry cleaning is clean and ready
and never collected, the carousel
never switched on to do its rounds.

The navy blazers are never hung
on the back of conference chairs,
never released from the see-through wrap.

The cotton blouses are never buttoned,
the dress shirts unfolded, their cuffs
never cufflinked or sleeves rolled right up.

The wire hangers are never bent out
to unblock a pipe, or to deftly release
an inside lock. And the hanger's strip

that cushions a pair of charcoal slacks,
its cardboard camber is never pulled off.

Sjoerd Stoffels

Tanka

In the city
one sees the symbols
of our current society.

But wheat and poppy show
how nature remains indifferent.



Marjorie Platero Martinez

Love in the time of corona

after Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 'Love in the Time of Cholera'

It's late February this year, not too long ago,
 I'm finally preparing for my trip to Mexico.
 I'm packing my bags with all the usual items,
 but I stop, and I think:
No, this time is different unfortunately.
I need a few things to help keep me healthy.
As I pack wipes, sanitizer and a mask, just in case,
 I stop, and I think:
 Is this really our new reality?
 Reports look grim, but how bad can it be?
 We've survived similar times, we'll beat this one too,
 so I stop, and I think:
I hope this trip will be just like the time before,
when I was still the only one he could adore.
 I drift off to sleep, there's no time tonight,
 to stop, nor to think.

The day has finally arrived.
 I travelled for 24 hours straight and survived.
 My excitement and nerves are so overwhelming.
 I stop, and I think:
Don't worry, relax, get out of our head.
 And then, the hotel lobby doors open straight ahead.
 He looks exactly the same – a tailored suit and that look in his eye.
 I stop, and I think:

Every time we're together, it's like no time has passed.
We fall back into patterns that ensure this love will last.
 As our days together come to an end,
 I stop, and I think:
I'll be back again soon, no need for a long goodbye.
 He drops me off at the airport, it's time to fly.
 We hold back emotions because now is not the time
 To stop, nor to think.

Once I'm home again, in the refuge of my apartment.
 I check the news and my feelings turn to disappointment.
 The borders are all closed, there's no going back for a very long time.
 I stop, and I think:
We should have hugged each other a little bit longer,
I should have told him that he makes me feel stronger.
 Regret sets in as I realize that could have been our last goodbye.
 I stop, and I think:
Will our love survive this tragic time so far apart?
We'll connect online every day, trying hard to reassure the heart.
 If we both make it through unscathed, we'll be together again next year,
 but we stop, and we think:
Life will never be the same again, and neither will we.



Benjamin Deffner

Quarantine paintings



Quarantine Spring



Elsje Fourie

My first pandemic

every day started like this a long time ago
 I don't want to go to opvang I said
 and then mama talked about the friends the playground the
 songs the juffies
 you'll have so much fun she said
 her mouth looked happy but her eyes looked sad.

but yesterday I said I don't want to go to opvang
 and she looked at dada
 you don't have to
 maybe for a long time
 I still say it some mornings but now I know the answer.

now we go for a walk every morning
 I found out we have a big field near our house
 with dogs and sheep and sheep poo and plants that make
 you really itchy
 but mama doesn't let me touch the dogs anymore
 or walk next to their people.

I didn't know how high you bounce on the trampoline
 when dada jumps with you
 I didn't know mama was so good at hide and seek
 she can find me even when I close my eyes
 I didn't know how fast my bike can go down the hill
 when I don't try to stop it and put my legs up instead.

some days the sun stays behind the clouds
 and then mia reads to me

mama and dada let me use the tablet a lot now
 but I like it more when we all get under a blanket and watch a
 movie together
 sometimes I put my head under the blanket too during the scary
 parts
 but then everyone hugs me.

I know a lot of new words now
 lockdown and dying and conavirus and trump
 is a disease a sickness or is it germs I asked mama the other day
 she made a surprised face and said it was both
 and then said wash your hands.

mama and dada are really tired now
 when its morning time and my mickey mouse clock is yellow
 they still don't want to get out of bed and I have to jump on them
 sometimes mama is in the bedroom talking to someone
 and sometimes it's dada
 I'm not allowed to go inside then
 but sometimes when mia is sad about her work
 and mama or dada is helping her
 I'm fast enough and can go in the door.

everybody cries more now
 everybody laughs more now
 something outside is scary now
 but can you make a face like a silly rabbit now?

Sally Wyatt

Train of thought

I don't sit in a train, checking
my diary, making a list, preparing for the day.
How to make best use of this journey?

I don't sit in a train, reading
the agendas and documents for the meetings.
Are we there yet?

I don't sit in a train, grading
the essays written by my bachelor students.
Have we arrived?

I don't sit in a train, looking
at the leaves change colour, and the water rising.
Will I witness the change of seasons?

I don't sit in a train, contemplating
the joys of interacting with people, ideas, and things.
How much longer?

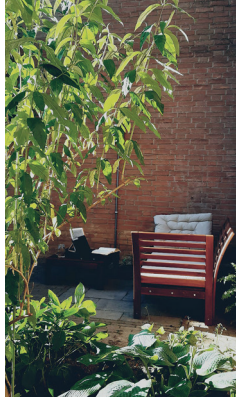
I don't sit in a train, savouring
the anticipation of a journey, the feeling of being elsewhere.
When will I sit in a train again?

Sass Alaia Sasot

Ode to distance

We are
for you're not
a dividing void
but bridge
between breath,
notes, words, particles,
moments,
lying suspended
above ravines,
or arched over
troubling waters.
Horizontal beam
from here to here;
a difficult steep
from summit
to ground.
You can be short
or a tiring span:
A length of cross
whose lengthening
never ceases.
We mistake you for separation,
then blame you for wars
and our deterioration.
How lovers pray
that you're not here,
not knowing how

you make their bond persist.
How we dare to end you
with proximity's law,
only to find closeness
is just another span.
But what would be
without you?
Where would chaos get
the momentum of order?
How would strings shiver
into stars?
Would planets still spin,
just as elegant?
Where would light get
the speed of its beam?
How would cells divide
into a brain?
Would scent still scent
in the absence of your nose?
But you wilfully collapse
under the weight of observation:
movements merging,
melding, fluxing
threads,
ribbons,
orbits,
axis,
flavours
of flow.



Home offices



Danny Adriaens

Downstream

At first it felt unreal,
 like living inside a novel.
 A work of fiction come to life,
 one where you couldn't grasp
 what had really happened.
 The hours just flew by,
 behind a screen where
 love first blossomed.
 And when it manifested
 itself in the physical, we knew
 that we had bitten the apple.
 The appetite kept growing
 as we ate of good and evil,
 and out into a world of pain
 we went, for as long as we could take.
 The weeks turned into months,
 as I felt the pressure growing.
 That giant ego I had sown
 was not made out of stone.
 And then when it crumbled
 I forgot completely who I was -

a part of me had died because
 I had lost myself inside us.
 My love for life went down
 the stream into the darkest sewer,
 and there I met the Serpent
 that I always knew existed.
 Finally it showed its face,
 but I was frozen in position.
 I recognized those eyes,
 which at one time
 had shined
 with tender care
 and unconditional commitment.
 My weapons were not needed.
 Afraid to slay the dragon,
 I knew I could never ride it.
 I took a knee and bowed my head,
 then fell asleep beside it.

Danny Adriaens

The serpent's journey

Deep beneath the earth, the serpent's coiled up in its burrow.
A sudden burst of energy urges it towards a purpose.
It surges upwards slowly, until it emerges at the surface.

He slithers to a pond and sees an image on the surface of the water.
A reflection of his other self is staring from beyond it.
She looks at him in wonder, as the night revolves to dawn.

The sun ignites the sky, and she feels tenderly admired.
Up a hill she walks through mist, as he pursues his new desire.
He follows her, and from within, exhales his raging fire.

The mist evaporates into air, and there he sees her standing.
She stares at him, but then ascends the stairway to a passage.
When she disappears from sight, he clearly hears what she is after.

His mighty roar of rumbling sound vibrates the ground around him.
The entire mountain rings so loud, as if the thing were hollow.
He walks towards the narrow path and knows that few have found it.

The path is as dark as night, but he keeps climbing ever higher.
His eye perceives a beam of light and the divine becomes inspired.
With all his might he pushes through and finally he finds her.

Their tails are strung together, until the two of them are one.
They spread their wings and lovingly fly off towards the sun.
The serpent's journey still goes on, far over the horizon.

John Parkinson

Someone else's skin

I hear
flapping as eggs are fertilised on roof tops and ledges.
There's the spooling up of freight flight engines,
clattering fietsers on cobbles and flagstones,
the sigh of a boiler, a finch's clear chirrup.
Wind and river, the deep thrum of barges
and my breath: a pencil drawn across a page.

I smell spring turned preternatural summer:
dust and light, sub-audible crackle of new-born trees
lambing and lanolin on Sint Pietersberg.

I feel...
uncut, unwashed, unmoored and unbalanced,
chained in a storm of clattering keyboards
in matt aluminium.

I walk down my stairs and out of the door,
checking that the coast is clear.
Is it like this in war time?
Every stranger a danger, every friend a foe?
Hamstering loo paper, pasta, and flour;
slogans on newspapers, shop fronts and bins:
Haw pin!
Haw pin. Don't let them in.

Oh for the touch of someone else's skin.



Sally Wyatt

Balcony

Paul Stephenson

Quatrains in quarantine (28 march-2 april)

Listen, I'm different to how I was
My belly's much bigger
My hair's got longer
I'm not used to wearing shoes

In the era of unwashed hands
We covered our hands
In day-to-day muck
Didn't ever think about them much

It's like just now
When we were all chatting
Like we used to chat
When we'd sit around chatting

Oh it was so good
So good to see everyone smiling
Everyone smiling at each other's smiles
Smiles in the act of smiling

Bernike Pasveer

Home made



Bianca Biavati

The Heart

Zoom limericks I

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who tried to teach Rousseau and Hume
 They then read the terms
 And rules about germs
 And hoped not to descend into gloom

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Two hours solid - and with real va-va-voom!
 But on leaving the meeting
 Their battery depleting
 They were empty and couldn't resume

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Giving a lecture on David Hume
 They got so enlightened
 The students got frightened
 So got up and left the room(s)

There once was a tutor on Zoom,
 Who was mourning the loss of his plume
 He stared at the screen
 Still hoping to glean
 That sense would emerge from the gloom

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Expounding on Leopold Bloom
 They unpacked James Joyce
 So the students rejoiced
 In the slums and the gaslight and gloom

There once was a tutor on #Twitter
 Annoyed at Zoom's glitches and jitter.
 But his verse about #Zoom,
 Trunks and Leopold Bloom
 Made Zoom seem all gold and all glitter.

There once was a train from Liège
 Always hard to find un siège
 It was often out of order
 Forced you out at the border
 Une piège, pas un privilège

There once was a tutor from Amsterdam
 Who formerly rode the train and the tram
 To get to her work
 Without going berserk
 And looked forward to a late evening dram

Zoom limericks II

There once was a student on zoom,
 Talking live from their living room,
 They went on some rants,
 Without wearing pants,
 That's the new norm in times so gloom!

There once was a tutor on Zoom,
 Who never got out of her room.
 She became rather smelly,
 Played Doom and watched telly.
 Till one day she clicked on "resume".

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who gave a class in their swimming costume
 A pair of old trunks
 That seemed to have shrunk
 They stayed seated, one dares to presume

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Four lectures in one afternoon
 Two hours on Cy Twombly
 Turned him into a zombie
 So he locked himself in a dark room

There once was a student on Zoom
 Whose class could finally resume
 They waited an hour
 Their mood went quite sour
 It was Sunday, no need to fume!

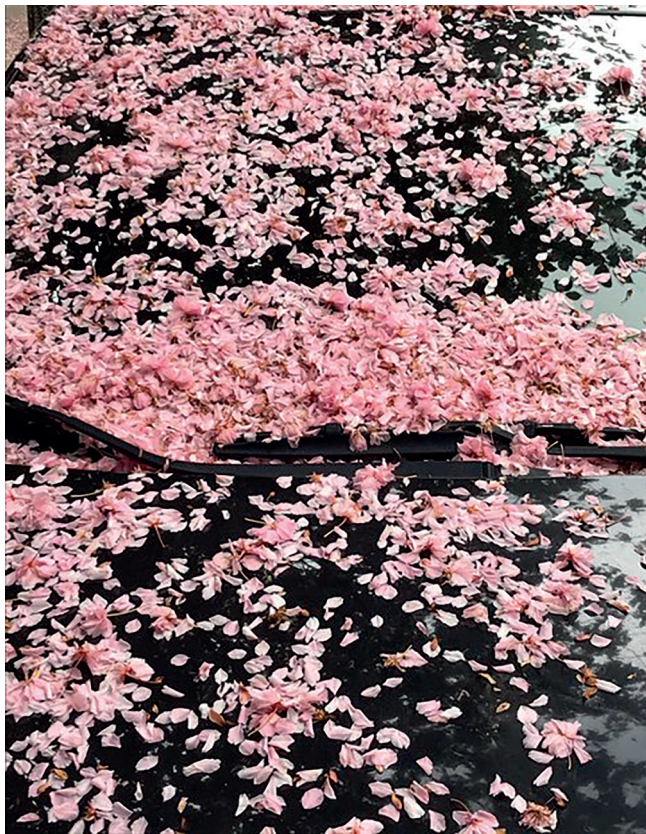
There once was a tutor on Zoom
 In a closet, not much elbow room
 They leaned in and huddled
 But got blinded and muddled
 By the dress shirts on hangers entombed.

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 In a closet, not much elbow room
 They leaned in and huddled
 But got blinded and muddled
 By the dress shirts on hangers entombed.

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who gave a class in their swimming costume
 A pair of old trunks
 That seemed to have shrunk
 They stayed seated, one dares to presume

Paul Stephenson

Covid-19 Spring



Paul Stephenson

Covid-19 Posters

Zoom limericks III

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Sharing insights from downtown Khartoum
 They spoke with a smile
 And a view of the Nile
 Students attentive and Sudanly consumed

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who wore posh clothes and put on perfume
 But no one could smell it
 So they got zero credit
 For their floral and fresh fragrant fumes

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Explaining theory to the room(s)
 But the students were scared
 Looked on blankly and stared
 Foggy concepts lost in the brume

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who'd lunched on an orange legume
 Soon they looked like a carrot
 And talked like a parrot
 'Twas a dodgy veggie consumed

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who wished they were back in the womb
 Yet to be born
 And awaiting their dawn
 As a being, a person, a whom.

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Who cast a spell on all the rooms
 When the magic hour was over
 A quick hat and cloak makeover
 Whizzing off on a witch's broom

There once was a tutor on Zoom
 Unable to think, find headroom
 But it was Monday mid-morning
 And the world was still yawning
 Coffee? Yes! Sugar? Yes, two spoons!!

Zoom limericks IV

There once was a student on Zoom
 Who ate a special mushroom
 Quite the hippie academic
 Living in a trippy pandemic
 Travelling the universe with a baboon

There once was a student on Zoom
 Who lived in times of all-bust no-boom
 Prepped for the 'n-meter society'
 Feeling a lot of anxiety
 Watched spring bloom from her room

There once was a student on Zoom
 Who quite baffled by all the gloom
 Passed her time reading Marx
 To study his dialectical remarks
 Well it'd be sure easier if I was a tycoon

There once was a student on Zoom
 Who felt nothing but impending doom
 She wrote a limerick
 Just as a gimmick
Chaka chaka BOOOOOM

Christine Neuhold

Quarantine spring I

I am locked in, in my four walls,
 Duty calls,
 Zoom is the new hype,
 But many still use skype,
 The magnolias are in bloom,
 I will thus leave my room,
 My steps outside are limited in time,
 I will return when my alarm will chime.

Quarantine spring II

Time has come to a halt;
 Our routines hastily abandoned;
 But the clock still ticks off the minutes;
 Our phones are reset to summertime;
 The parks teem with people;
 Walking metres apart;
 Military marches down the alleys;
 Police cars circle children on bicycles;
 Easter has come and gone;
 Chocolate eggs abound,
 One forgotten, when will it be found?



Home offices



List of contributors

(Alphabetical order by last name)

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