

Clive Gresswell

## PANDEMIC

& first the oh bleary eyes of the bleeding intoxication & first the stepping & the topping of the marrow of the matter & when we first landed at the inlet & exchanging glimpses/the rawness but say hail fellow well met/at least this greeting/clincher of a covid sucker the saucer-eyes lids folding & passion spent & disillusion meant that can stop our foray forward our foray backwards & into the mutual paranoid glances & this nightmare injection & into the whites of the eyes & everyone perfects their inequality in the stinging of this covid & say each reckless love abandoned with the virus as it bleeds from its cooped-up blessings & searches out the labs where its brother & sister tribes first traversed into the blinking & now it's almost as though this mutation is thinking & almost quicker than thought & before we ourselves at such lightning speed & forth & froth it gains access through the permeable through the primeval & thru the needle as it sucks & sucks & sucks at us crawling along our envelopes of skin & she said i never invited these murderers in & they just raped me thru the skin & up the nose & down the throat against the saline creatures against the master races & microbes sent with no agency but to consume & destroy, woman, child, man & boy & the listless & lacklustre endeavour to bide their time through a limped inactivity & it builds up in their body set to explode or & implode in a final & gesture of pure defiance a plague on you & your science it's all corrupted by political science & scrapes and seethes at the

scabs & catches glimpses of tropes gone bad & down among the mud & the sewers where the smell of dog-shit lingers & truth to power fails its systems blood & shit the only incorruptible systems & borne again without a care the slow die down & the weary & the insane join forces with bacteria in the brain driving on relentless pain & the hammer & nails & the torture swirl in circles but you reach out & for a glimpse of freedom from all this railing against & the covid just smiles & dances awhile your bony, skinny, dance with death co-morbid with your alphabet so your very words are a rasp of pain & the syllables a cursed strain & the new strains & the new vaccines entered into behind the scenes where your prime minster & nods & winks says it's alright we're like the sphinx & we will not be beaten.

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& beaten back or shielding & this covid is unyielding & time takes its toll of thousands but figures on the dole have improved & if you have to isolate & you'll be compensated by the state & we recognize it's not your doing & until & all the universities are going on-line & all the schools & taking tests & weeding out the symptomless & covid just ingests/its formula is to destroy & every other being & biological warfare & on a manufactured scale whose to know & where this general anxiety leads & the culture secretary & worry beads & a tory party offering socialist policies & its expedience & serendipity & it strips at your skin & black & white & it burrows beneath your tolerance & escapes levels of protection & mutating at a pace beyond & following the science & who would care to dance? & if there were no borders & no-one to bark out our orders & what would be left & in this sack of space & this poor apology the human race that cannot figure & which science to figure & or to take it at all seriously or & the upper echelons have a moon-base sorted & to start again from oblivion & if needed to repopulate on the orders of the state & that's a percentage of children each based on the

most/best/up-to-date/reliable/scientific figures & not for any sort of expediency on behalf of those who would procreate tories no no & that's a totally different story/now it's about survival of us all not just the fittest or richest or most gifted though & that time may have to come & then we'd have to take & some hard decisions while the mandible of covid makes its incisions & it's enough to make you & turn to religions & they may have the answer or & you could think the natural answer could be cancer & while we can no longer treat everyone along your street obviously & we would try to save you but maybe if you vote for us/it wouldn't be such a fuss.

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red-raw in tooth & claw. the infestation breeds & contempt & in searching for & the ultimate solution & the dissolution & the mounting heartbreaks & those you embraced falling sicker & sicker & succour & suck & suck & tear at this flesh this bed & mulch & crisp in anger & an aggregate & policeman falling & policeman saying failing & the world conference is yet/condemned to flounder yet again & is pushed right back on the agenda & just when the doctor remembers/don't disturb him now & anyway he is a widower at tender age of 39 & hundreds of others like him & as he tears & tugs at all his limbs then splashing tries to stay afloat & just to see him float a word from the wicked don't let him just & block the light & the light is blocked forever & for some this is if one ignores the irks a very fertile time & to stew & to study the all consuming flame of a companion & maybe not this time & maybe not this scream & maybe not this scream but & some visceral shift around the shadow of the eyes where in it crawls its spore & in it crawls & empties all the neurone tissue which & sucking out helps us make sense of a universe so vast yet dense like a clamp & would your daughter care to dance & go away we'll have no romance & the curdling blood in the ancestral home where someone or *something* disconnected all the telephones & try to catch the virus & kill it by the tail & it's us not it who become old &

frail it just is & a sombre fact & it has no moral impact save to accelerate the mass hysteria & the tearing down of all inferior art & which even bears the fruit of each rebellion & sees us standing at the border & the guard who picks saves you & shoots your brother/says never-mind him pig eat & you find yourself doing this & trying not to piss yourself as his eyes bore deep into yours with the noble mask of the killer who yesterday would have you run home fat thru the forest but now you have to share a cell & anyway your cell invades your dignity your right to privacy for a murder you did not commit & the cells know in the midst of this purple prose that an injustice was done by the bloodhounds of the hung & they say shoot & then eat your food & you feel sick to the stomach as the hail of bullets close in on christopher robin asking not where he's been but in keeping with the style where he is going & suddenly he falls exhausted to the floor. you have little choice to ignore this & gallop on & stretching out around this vast estate is the corporate stink of the estate of the state its arm & leg all beaten & torn it's human side lying forlorn beneath the trampling chant of the virus & the silence it buys the chief among its alibis so he says make noise for all you're worth it might just be our only hope in the battle here on earth.



& it's like your guts ripping thru your bloodshot eyes & it's like your purple prose dying on a beach & it's like the hot breath of all your shyness at school clamping & embodied on your skin & it's like all your neurons caught up in the news & it's like mining disasters & flying out to other hotspots & it's like beheading of chickens for & your dinner & your pleasure wrapped up in some & retelling of stories from when you were born & the blood & mucus from which you were torn & the feeling of cold steel against & your stomach wall & worse than your own failure to communicate & to lure & to lure them in to quarantine & don't let them on the

beach & freeze you bitch say this to your covid to intimidate its drunken curse & the way it vomits & no  
respector of age or youth & like us no respector of lies & truth some would say & it's justice in raw tooth & claw  
by virtue & by lack of virtue & sure & you hurl yourself headlong into this hell holding onto the smell & of  
decay & burning the bodies no way to count the dead & no jesus or saints to save the dead & to kiss the rasping  
of their ruby lips & the franchise of destruction bleeds from your mouth with the corpuscles of martin bashir &  
the legs & the arms & the flesh all quiver as you demand they stand & deliver on what is a broadcastable  
respectable truth not the count of deaths on islands far & wide with or without tourist incisions into the culture  
of different religions & what do they say about all this death & is it a consequence or a judgement or something  
out of the scope of the human mind spattered as it is & with the dna in which & all this is written where the  
wrath of gods & is indelibly smitten & where man since when he began & diced with death the rats to ingest  
from the primeval soup & his/her conquest & it's too late now to ask forgiveness & for all the times your earth  
was raped & for all the time your son escaped & for all the times you spat out injustice & it turns on you now in  
& a new it turns you on.



lurching & backwards the ingestion deep into the lung & into the growth & the hollowing of all your manhood  
& where the covid struck deep & into the well & of your being & the fullness of you dipped in moonstones &  
like a trip out to the colliery the death wish & struck deep to the seams your animal passion your alsation  
extremes & the launching every day & your white eyes & vital signs & awaiting the covid sunrise & not to  
mention & your deep-set eyes & covered in mucus ingested from radio operations & carried out deep into the  
night & at the behest of the state such crumbling vanity as you found a trope of yourself torn masked off the

ritual floor & the terse end gurgled apart from what was said at the beginning of & this ritualistic pandemic cut right thru all political polemic & stands us all naked & as the day we were born & yet so many cut down in our/their prime/depending on which way you look at it & perhaps those poor devils will turn out to be the lucky ones. a chill rips thru my body for saying so & but who can tell as & when & everyone's still striving for a normality that never existed anyway & whose to ask the questions anymore & let alone provide the answers or swear & those that search for poetry or buried treasure take a new measure & exploring new areas to conquer in either hemisphere/too cold/too hot & but not for this tsunami of slaughter which sucks life inside out & even levels out in death the rich & poor as nothing before but it's a price

& the lurching & remember & the football chants & the sons & down the pub where one could grab mates without & a spit in the eye & waddya wanna go & do that for & every day is like a hollow mime & a waking death & we're all priests now & i'm sorry just seems too & something more is called for & what's that & the burden of your welt tongue & the lashings & the terror & the hook on your face & the no-one wants to touch that & you're a disgrace for even thinking it & the porous material of your & skein & skin & at the end & as in the beginning & your tongue lays waste & in the entire universe & the pulsing of & the very stench of the & air & as it parts to reveal & yet more smog & the macabre lilt of & your head as it lurches from your top to your shoulders & the eye squelches as it is & squashed & black & blue & throbbing & as the last visage & the last vestiges squeezed out of & a bloody cataract is pulled & to the corners & any sign of human empathy & disappears with the trope & you abandon & yourself & to the final funereal throttle & throes.



the long deep breath. the endless gagging & the tearing & the phlegm & tiny bit of gristle & of roast beef &

caught stiff in the larynx & the cough, cough, cough & the splutter & choke & the insane neighbour eye/red in its clawing & distress of the vomit & the piss & the shit & all the time/& like a human factory of the stuff & endless opening of bowels & entrails & the howling & the wails & the wrenching of new verbs thru the jawbone & deep in the covid inflection infection reflection injection & the pulsing pause for the flashing beauty of say an admiral red fluttering its wings like inside your eyes & up into your brain where the only answer if any at all scream none is not to panic not to show any emotion as the fluid snot & green-flared cough seeps into your consciousness & the gravedigger flexes her muscles & into the enormity of her beauty & we're all so fucking beautiful why this endless void of & blood-curdling emptiness & never lets us forget & remiss one supposes of an ancestor & marks on this flesh & an incisor where covid sucked on to your hollow flesh & invaded your streams of consciousness & called out the stink of the & corruption which led to & the uprisings & the don't dare touch instructions & your priests & your men of god were just as & guilty guilty guilty all those & whoever lived & spoke about his friends & so the story



breaks off & wilts & dies in this garden & of begetting where & say the janitor lands & the memory of another & another space & the memory of another planet & surging up from outer space & the memory of & another race & somehow implanted through & faulty televisual effects & the whirring & the epileptic electrical surges through which our poetic impulses quicken down & to the base of the spine & a throbbing light & throb on throb & the mucus pustule pulsates through your globular intensity & wrenches as if after & a covid after-effect & a shockwave emphasis on a death dialect & where the skein the skin is ruptured & the virus can seep in unwatched & wreaking maximum damage leaves you bleeding & now there is no sunrise up across the ridge &

just ditch upon bloody ditch where people are joined & in dismay & yet they still display a quickening of the  
death pulse &

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# 1

i sing in career (korea)  
at opera  
drenched to my bones  
in such oily fish  
and she won't see me  
in my carpet of gold  
the ink substance  
seeps thru my veins  
i am half yours in  
theory but we both know  
it will go in a flash  
& all that will be  
is memories of the flesh  
plus its spilt-blood of christ-water.

in lives entwined  
then visited once again

as stones to silent rumours  
a golden chain of command  
seeps thru his ears  
as if any of it mattered  
what he wrote and didn't write  
it's all decay in the end  
in the end it's all decay  
withering and dwindling  
like the hungry fox  
who blemishing his  
records  
by turning a soldier  
in the year before they met  
in kansas  
and then later he drew breath  
at her & asked her to leave  
move another one in  
his old heart beating like an ox  
time moved on

time stood still.  
he was an angel  
but also a broken memory.

## **2/ in memory of sean bonney.**

the sentence listed  
against the plain wall  
previously that was  
not now  
now it says your money kills  
and  
i would like some too.

*not death sean*

the day moves towards its zenith  
while there is hardly anyone left  
the clock on the station wall  
says it is noon local time  
birds fly high thru station's balcony.

in the blink of an eye  
the travellers have gone  
about their busy ways  
and pierre takes out  
his golden pocket watch

presented by the railway  
company to its 100<sup>th</sup> customer  
this afternoon he is going to pawn it  
while still hoping anxiously  
next week  
he can get it back again

## **meanwhile**

the silence of the black and white film  
is choking him

he needs to get out for some fresh air  
& watches the flying fish  
and tries to tempt them with bread  
even though hunger presses in  
and throws him to the ground.

3/

the lark its hopes  
dashed upon brigg hill  
it screams across the drawing-room claws: its yellow teeth  
its stinking breath  
and fortunes wasted on drink.

and half-crazy women  
but the cuts do not show  
they disperse on the wind  
with the mounting notes  
of her singing.