

Telling Time

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Telling Time

Lines from Lockdown

Debbie Pullinger

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Preface

These poems first appeared on my blog, with reasonable regularity, during the lockdown in 2020. Most were written during those months, in an attempt to tell, in all senses of that word, the time. "You are to me ..." and 'The Great Duck Diaspora' had been written previously and were dusted off in weeks when a poem was slow to crystallise. But readers seemed to enjoy the light relief, so I've left them in.

Like most people's experience of this time, this is a very mixed lot, in both mood and measure. And looking back at the poems now – though it's only September – feels like revisiting photos of a long-gone foreign holiday.

All are still on the blog, along with audio tracks of readings and the original reflections.

Debbie Pullinger, September 2020
www.debbiepullinger.com

Silenced Spring

Round town the railing posters still remain,
Like shiny prayer flags flapping in the breeze,
Recitals clean forgotten, plays unstaged,
Classes culled, unfinished symphonies.

The cherry's sparrows chatter unaware,
The darkling thrush still trembles out his soul.
Sing for us now, you creatures of the air,
Until the day our songs can rise once more.



The State We're In

The writing's on the wall,
And across the ceiling.

It's a house of cards,
And no one is dealing.

We're home alone,
Sleeping rough.

That knock at the door
Is likely the wolf.

The rubber hits the road;
The road hits back.

The wheels have come off
And there's no beaten track.

We're off the map
And up the creek,
Without a paddle
And springing a leak.

Worse things happen at sea.
They never said what.

We're all at sea,
Like it or not.

And here be dragons ...
And here ... don't stop.

There's dragons, in fact,
All over the shop.

We're facing the music.
We're taking our chance.

Wait – there's still music?
Yes, there's still music.

It's time to make music
And dance.

Zoom Lens

"Ok, folks, let's make a start."

Sue's on the moon. That looks quite smart.

"Oh wait, are we expecting Rex?"

"I'll reinvite. Can someone text?"

Mike's speaking but his sound's gone dead.

Is Sally in her garden abed?

He's unaware. The chorus swells,

"Unmute! Unmute!" We wave and yell.

He forges on as through a fog.

Is that bairy thing a dog?

"Test your mic, Mike! Test your sound!"

"heLO?" Relief and thumbs all round.

The host continues, "As you know ..."

Then seizes in an awkward pose.

Crikey, look at Nigel's hair.

He sputters in and out. "Oh dear..."

"The internet's quite dodgy here ..."

I'll °°_°°_°°_ laptop °°_°°_°°_ upstairs."

Rooms swirl round. *I feel quite sick.*

"OK, let's see if that'll stick."

Now Jen and Jules begin together.

Zoom's confused. It's not that clever.

So who was in that empty room?

Both retreat. Then both resume.

They urge each other. "Be my guest."

Jules concedes but then forgets

Whatever point she meant to make.

Those curtains were a bad mistake.

"Sorry folks, I've got to leave.

Another meeting booked for three."

Steve is having forty winks.

He's gone. Another broken link.

"Thanks everyone. It's been productive!"

Certainly, it was instructive.

"See you next time." Meeting's End.

So good we're able to attend.



Already

Walking though the meadows, early June,
It seems a thousand greens have been unleashed.
Burst buds, new wings and every strain increased;
Everything we came for – here so soon.
Among the bramble flowers, the tight green fists
And tiny haws – time's stealthy infiltrations,
Then the starlings' minor murmurations
Call to coming mellowness and mists.
All is prequel; all a slow cross-fade.
For longer days to linger here we yearn.
But just as summer finds her stride, nights turn,
Edging out the day: the darkward slide
To winter, where attenuated light
Swells sticky buds and draws the aconite.

