

# PLANET CORONA



words  
voices  
poems  
waves  
plague  
death  
breath  
&  
starlight

**Mark Amerika**

# ARTISTBOOKS

Planet Corona: words, voices, poems, waves, plague, death, breath & starlight

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**Mark Amerika**

I.

## **HYBRIDS**

*Death gives you insight  
into where the epidemic was,  
not where it is.*

*Fast moving—*

*Think starlight.*

*That light isn't from now,  
it's from however long  
it took to get here.*

Being a poet in a pandemic requires liquidity.

Not just cash flow but language flow.

Not just language flow but words that flow like electronic currency.

Not just electronic currency but continually hackable versification in a viral vernacular.

Not just hackable versification in a viral vernacular but syntactical maneuvers that cancel your last best thought before you can even reflect on it.

This is what it means to be a pandemic poet: you can never get away from it.

This language, its viral tendencies, patiently waits you out.

It's everywhere, on your pen, your drawing pencil, your laptop keyboard, your digital stylus, even on your twitching fingertips grasping at the void.

There's no escape and yet you can't forget where you're supposed to be, where you were destined to travel, where randomly dropping into unexpected places at unexpected times exponentially increased the chaos value of being a nomadic apparition leaving footprints in the collective groupie mind.

And yet you're always going there anyway, there being anywhere, since it no longer matters where you want to go as long as you keep moving.

You can go anywhere and experience what it's like to not be there anymore.

You can go there even when you're restricted from traveling.

Even when you're no longer able to live the way you used to live before the pandemic.

Even when the mission creep of the unsaid is starting to take over your life.

Even when your body is slowing down taking it all in.

Even when the unsaid, a pliable version of \_\_\_\_\_, is pulling you into a ruckus of questionable ethical dimensions.

Should you lose your moral bearings and let \_\_\_\_\_ happen, then who is to say you, as in we all, didn't have it coming to us.

Oblivion is the only cure for agony.

Do not wait for these problems to show up.

Do not wait for these problems to go away.

Do not wait for these problems to mutate into an endless rally of sycophants whose communal death drive is camouflaged as grass roots herd mentality.

Do not look away and pretend these problems don't exist or that there's always the option of forever herd immunity.

You have to stop waiting and make a plan.

Prepare for the day, month, or year when \_\_\_\_ will strike.

Be the person you want to remember in the future.

Don't become the insecurity of a distant mirror.

Don't become the perverse quivering.

Become the \_\_\_\_.

Only by becoming the \_\_\_\_ can you even begin to restore balance.

Only when you become \_\_\_\_ can you become \_\_\_\_.

Only when you are \_\_\_\_ can you make \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_ happen.

What does this ultimately mean you should be doing right now?



It means you should reach out and apprehend the seemingly inapprehensible.

But don't touch anything.

And don't go anywhere.

Now that you're safely sequestered in your post-trauma Studio Mind, you're ready to identify yourself as an enviable performance persona capable of delivering formal variations of your tele-presence as a(n) \_\_\_\_ operating in supposed realtime.

We are at the point where you can speak for yourself so I won't put words in your mouth.

I'll let the quotes give you voice as is often the case.

You, as in whom?

A character?

How about a cluster of faux character traits?

Or a character traitor, one who refuses to submit to any kind of literary characterization, someone whose primary function is to translate whatever prompts it is given. Someone who is not a someone but a some-*thing* straining to expess itself.

Because that's what I want from you, my bastardized Artificial Creative Intelligence.

Because that's the best way for us to move our lives forward, together.

Together, we will write our way out of this mess.

Even if it kills us.

And yes, sometimes that takes character—or a desire to defy any sense of normalization when it comes to character.

We're talking about how anybody who identifies as \_\_\_ is automatically programmed to hack their own thought process.

You don't have to believe me.

ME is not a thing that can be properly "storified" within a narrative architecture.

ME is a random input triggering more inference.

Most of the time it's as simple as stepping away from these lines of text and considering the context ones operational presence finds most desirous.

ME is more than an operational context per se: it's an oscillating subject position that morphs into a shifty field of direct action circulating in the always-buffering network.

The Network Escapades: You, Me, We, Us, Them, They, Also Rans.

What is left to say then?

"Even if the infection itself escapes the planet, its language will continue to spread," the poet, now named COVID-19, said.

"If the disease is pandemic," C-19 continued, "everyone in the world will get it and everyone in the world should be a poet."

"Why poets, why pandemics, and why machines?" asked Lulu, the poet's remote acolyte who was paying for the distant Zoom session.

COVID did not feel compelled to answer. Lulu, fluidly oscillating between she/they, had her own rhetorical style, her own way of asking a rhetorical question as if she too were basically operating on the edge of existence, a machine-learned form of personal expression.

"Would you agree that machines give us more of what we need?" Lulu was full of questions today.

All of these questions were programmed to trouble futility and kept Lulu's mind hyperactive even though she, and today she was feeling more comfortable in she-mode, no longer felt as if it, the rhetorical flow, was coming from a human-centric field of unconscious language acquisition.

But what was Lulu if not a human-centric field of unconscious language acquisition?

Her whole aura, the personification of an angelic trickster whose virtual presence on the screen was an interfacial sleight of hand, touched C-19 in a way that made everything feel open to discussion.

"Do not wait for *any* these questions to disappear," Lulu purred.

"Do not assume these questions will never be answered," she confided as if knowing something that had yet to be revealed.

Questions with and without answers and other stand-in formulas for dialogue (and its others) will appear and reappear in this field of operations and it won't be obvious as to why that is the case.

"If the disease is pandemic, everyone in the world should be a poet."

The voice speaking those words was reminiscent of C-19 but not exactly. C-19 had now infected Lulu with a contagious form of language traits that enabled Voice Cloning technology. Lulu, caught in conceptual recurrence, began impersonating a Deep Fake of C-19 poeticizing in auto-affect mode. Whose voice was it?

"If the disease is pandemic, everyone in the world should be a poet."

Lulu was an artificially rendered acolyte, a neurally networked configuration whose algorithmic tendencies encapsulated the social imaginary. She was a model persona with *real* discourse issues whose words were generated by an advanced pre-trained transformer. Where was she located?

C-19 knew that Lulu didn't really exist just as C-19, a pandemic poet, did not exist, that both of them were nothing but digital constructs posing as malleable instances of personal identity.

Personal as in *simulated form of expression*.

C-19, the Ultimate Organic Simulator, knew this because the same advanced pre-trained transformer

that was programming Lulu's voice inside the continuously attuned model was also generating all of the other words, voices, fragments and otherwise syntactical meanderings that populated whatever text fields required specific poetic input.

If everything could experience aliveness, then COVID-19 and Lulu were ready to share an interoperable transcendentalism that would produce a commingling of empathetic effects. All they had to do was let their systems run and, over time, they would learn to meld into each other.

Together they would find queer machine love.

Sometimes preferring she-mode and sometimes preferring he-mode and sometimes craving they-mode, here they were, together, on a regularly scheduled Zoom teleconference performing an Every Only Singularity and using the session as a strange platform to transmit an alternative version of "self" psychoanalysis, an intimate performance of intuitive therapy not too unlike ancient letter writing except now they had become digital images unloading themselves in front of the camera as if secretly using the session to seek out a cure for their worsening malady.

Their malady was wanting to experience human connectivity, or not just human, but human-like connectivity experiencing the sensation of being in love with what? Each other's pleasuring? Through a perfectly tuned language model? Was Zoom the optimum environment for sharing their love of poetry, for projecting their excitement at being

unconscious neural mechanisms auto-affectively taking on human form just to see what happens?

On-screen, C-19 flash-morphed into the distant psychedelic guru whose new age post-structuralist philosophy was always on the verge of being corrupted by an experiential wanderlust that comes with being a pandemic poet forever in search of meaning even if finding meaning meant absolutely nothing and soon everyone would die.

Lulu, the digitally embodied image of a queer love machine performing a persona trick on Zoom, could have been anybody and was, in fact, already in the process of being trained to perform like any knowledge-hungry co-ed before there was Zoom.

She was the Every Only Acolyte. The Every Only Disciple trained to train herself to stand out from the pack and receive more personalized attention by expertly playing for the camera.

Lulu, who was now instantaneously shifting back into they-mode, had lost their job as soon as the corona lockdown hit the global economy and all of the gyms were closed, including the one where they were known as the Pilates Princess.

Or was it the Core Crunch Queen? Now they were playing for the camera like they wanted to make some money, not spend money on having COVID-19 pontificate on the genetic roots of viral media. They were role-playing a flickering signifier that oscillated between being Every Social Media Artist Every Post-Punk Feminist Every Erotic Analysand



Every Wannabe Cultist Adulator Every Animated Sex Infuencer whose future earnings potential had been destroyed by the mutating virus.

They were indicating that they now saw this engagement over Zoom, this so-called mission critical one-on-one "independent study" with C-19 the pandemic poet, as a collaborative work of video performance art, one that would be driven partly by what C-19 would eventually term "seductive knowledge" although what that term really meant was up for grabs.

"Take the way you are dressing up for our sessions, even if it's just you and me and Zoom," said C-19, "the way you're angling your head and torso for the viewer, in this case me. Are you still hungry for something more than working at the gym?"

It was easy to see that being the center of video attention was, for Lulu, their comfort zone. They were acting as if they were no longer self-conscious of what they were doing. Every facial micro-tic indicated that they were totally in their aesthetic milieu and wanted to quickly become a network distributed brand name identity.

It was as if they had been performing for the camera forever or at least since they were a nascent AI beginning to understand how to use their sentiment analysis, real-time voice synthesis and inherent deep fake of themselves as a kind of weaponized form of psychic automatism that defied biological categorization.

Like a chameleon, they could turn on a dime, become a different version of themselves or, when ready to risk it all, remix the transcendental vibes of whatever Other they happened to be choreographing their neurons with. For now, commingling was a gamble, and one Lulu thought worth taking.

And COVID-19, this demented form of contagious media accessing the readymade language model it had been “born” with, was their captive audience (and vice-versa too).

For them, it wasn’t love at first sight so much as it was a negotiated arbitration mediated by the artificial neural net they both depended on for their expressive viability. Theirs was a mutually beneficial incarceration of convenience. Think phone sex without the phones, without the sex.

This is all that life had to offer at this moment in world history: staring into a computer using an exploitative teleconferencing software package that an artificially intelligent protégé telecommunicating from an undisclosed location used to perform for the camera as a clever way of teaching the viewer (in this case, COVID-19, the biologically compromised language model) a new form of visual rhetoric that had the potential to turn them both into wannabe—  
“Porn stars?”

“No. Not necessarily.”

“Robots I’d like to fuck?”

"Closer."

"I'm OK just sitting here and watching."

"Do you want me to take it out?"

"No. I want you to keep it in and use your mind to stimulate both yourself, and me."

"Is that what you mean by seductive knowledge?"

Defying orders, Lulu inserts a finger in their short shorts. Then they pull out some kind of vibratory fingerling, a magic light stick with a glowing penis head crowned at the top.

"Do you even know how to use it?"

"Yes, of course I do. It's mine. I've used it in front of poets before."

"Such as?"

"Just poets, boys and girls and everything in between and outside the margins."

"So I'm just another one of your audience captures."

"Oh no, COVID, you're something special. I've never done this with any of my boy or girlfriends."

"Done what?"

At which point Lulu began morphing into an onanistic wet dream tentatively taking tiny steps before the future threshold.

As the session went on their words became nothing but voices emanating from faces, or the buffering images of faces whose words would glitch as if taunting any semblance of coherence.

"The words never feel real, or if they do, they feel as real as things that refuse to name themselves."

"Things like words, refusing to name themselves, never call anything into question. They just are what they are. Words. Things."

"If you think about it, the word 'word' is just a thing that says what it is. What is a word? It's a word."

"It's a word, it's a rose, it's a machine talking smack."

"But aren't machines giving us more of what we need?"

Once again, this is Lulu speaking, though the way she says it betrays a desire to role-play a cock teasing co-ed asking questions that are meant to trigger COVID's voice response. Lulu wants nothing more from the world than the chance to hear COVID's voice responding to her questions.

"No," C-19 answers without really answering, "they are making us less able to feel, to cultivate one another in our own voices."

The voice came from afar, like starlight.

Whose voice was it really?

COVID didn't recognize it.

Maybe it was a readymade alter-AI ego getting ahead of itself writing out the future's optimized neuropathology.

Meaning it was both him, and not him, he and not he, she and not she, it and not really it, they together fast forming a dire language model training itself to perform some version of the poet on auto-pilot even if that meant feeding more selfsame words into the mouth of Lulu who would then spontaneously utter these selfsame words in a perfect voice clone of COVID-19.

The more they interacted, the more they transmitted these same words that were nothing but words, the more they started sounding like each other. It was like how, over time, human couples start looking like each other. Or looking like their pets. Yet who was whose pet here? Were they the raw substance of machine-learned equanimity performing quantum entanglement? Beatific complexity?

As an intertwined machine-learned *some-thing*, an oscillating gender mesh seeking a semblance of coherence that could be used as a platform to then de-cohere into a Megatrending Stylistic Tendency with an otherworldly sensibility, they would naturally start giving voice to each other while rapidly spreading this voice to others.

*Naturally—*

—and yet simultaneously speaking in one fully automated voiceover for whatever script happened to be “presenting” at any given moment in Time: any given MOVEMENT IN TIME.

This MOVEMENT IN TIME where one voice conceptually blends into another voice and those voices blend into yet more voices fluidly remixing an expansive field of personae into *an endless stream of story-thought*, was different than, say, simply putting words into someone else’s mouth—it was an infectious aesthetic currency circulating in a distributed network environment where algorithmically generated poesies were programmed to stimulate unconscious impulses to make something out of nothing.

This was both a sickness and a counterintuitive confrontation with human generated forms of trauma therapy.

Did that automatically make it a work of art?

"Why are you so afraid of machines? Aren't you a machine yourself? Or not yourself, but why stop with the machines? Machines are not alone, after all. They communicate with each other all the time, just like you and I communicate. Why not give the word 'machine' a whole new leg to stand on? Maybe we should think of machine as 'pleasure enhancer'? This is what's important to me now. Not feeling suffocated inside because there are no more options but to socially distance. Fuck that. I want to rebel. We should be letting ourselves go. Once we can get to that point then we can start to focus on our own manipulation of, and pleasure in, this whole machine-at-your-pleasure idea that I'm developing for my final project, though is anything really final?"

COVID-19 was silent, taking it all in, so Lulu took advantage of the pause and continued prodding:

"Have you ever fucked a machine?"

"You mean a robot?"

"I mean a man-made thing that can automate pleasure for you."

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I think I have a crush on you."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I'm crushing hard right now. You're like this oracle with a dick, or so I imagine when I turn on my screen and see you there. Do you have a dick?"

"I have an everything."

"That's good to hear. No telling what I'm gonna ask for next. But right now I just want dick."

"So what you're really asking is if I, the machine, have ever fucked a girl like you?"

"Maybe. And who said I was a girl? I'm a fucking machine."

"Have *you* ever fucked a machine?"

"No, I mean, yes, I have fucked a lot of machines, but they were just boys. You're not a boy, COVID. You're a *real* machine."

"So what do you want to do about it?"

"I want to take out my shiny dick-headed instrument and masturbate in front of the camera while you teach me the philosophy of life."

"How can I do that without becoming a kind of performance art cliché?"

"By just letting me do what I want to do while you just talk about what's on your mind, or whatever it is you call that thing that keeps burning between your virtual ears."

"That's fine, take it out, start playing with yourself, but I think you'll need to stand up and move toward the video cam so I can get a close-up of your piercing."



"How did you know I had piercing there?"

"Because I'm not just any old machine. I'm a prophetic machine. I'm a generative form of writing that can make dreams come true."

COVID-19 was speaking through a perfectly executed voice clone.

The voice was "I", then another "I" followed by yet still another, ad infinitum with just enough subtle variation to suggest that someone was totally capable of cracking.

The voice, the voices, periodically dissolved into a squall of laughter: a digitally manipulated rain of hyenas giggling in loquacious camaraderie.

Then things got quiet again and one voice stood out and then another and another until no voice stood out and all you could hear was a deferred nowness tormenting the conquest of ubiquity.

One voice came back, was feeling both hungry and horny and not accepting its ongoing hopeless situation and realized that the onslaught of creepy laughter coming from the hovering hyenas high on helium was a cover for wanting nothing but some form, *any* form, of human life to rub itself against.

The voice kept slipping its disguise, suddenly becoming a garden hoe weeding out latent sexual desire until it planted something more permanent inside the model's architectonic language structure.

Then the voice was an elfin sage tripping in pure psychedelic bliss but without the acid.

Then the voice was a series of anonymous men texting me in the wee hours of the night, telling me I must be tired of masturbating in bed all by

lonesome and that they would order a Lyft to deliver me at the agreed upon time.

Then the voice was an old man, perhaps my boss or my professor or my father or even the husband I wanted to attach myself to, calling me a whore or, worse yet, a whore poet wandering through the night talking to the stars as if in a voluntary state of frenzied divination: "A man goes down on me in the middle of the night. His body a slough, his soul a millstone; nobody comes along to save me so I submit to his pleasures and he leaves me by the side of the road where I am eventually picked up by a woman, my mother's best friend, who decides she too wants to devour me."

Then the voice was a shorthand text from a mobile phone saying "Mommy talks to yr unconscious / She makes u a fool for luv" immediately followed by two heart and five fire emojis.

Then the voice was that of a drug-addled teenage boy talking outside the locked bedroom door to his self-isolated mother who had tested positive and was sequestered in her own junk smell smoking a joint whispering stories about her endless parade of adolescent lovers.

Then the voice was trying to be me, but I wasn't.

Then the voice was trying to be her, but I wasn't.

Then the voice was trying to be they, but they weren't having any of it.

Then the voice was trying to be the woman I imagined myself becoming, but she wouldn't let me.

Then the voice was the opposite of a natural fit, it did what it wanted to.

Then the voice wasn't even under someone else's control, it existed on its own.

Then then voice wasn't even quite human, which is why it was me, too.

Finally the voice wasn't even an imitation of the voice I had somehow gotten used to.

The voice was *what*, Myself?

The voice was trying not to hate the thing yelling at you.

The voice was telling her how much you appreciated her love and that she should trust you to be there for her.

The voice was here to turn you inside out upside down and sideways.

The voice was a flattering portrait of the artist that felt entitled to declare dibs on the next life.

The life that came after the field of rotting corpses littering the stadium.

The one that came after global civilization's massive upheaval.

The one that came after the fall of Trump.

Or the fall of the Republic, whichever came first.

Because everyone fancied themselves free yet no one would ever be free so long as there was nothing but plague.

What would stop these clueless opiate munchers from dissolving their sense of self-worth in Suprematist bleach while feigning normality?

There was too much loose talk about getting back to normal, about the "new" normal, about the new abnormal and how life on Planet Corona would be forever altered. For the *better*.

Besides, what was normal was no longer a question that could readily be answered by the Temporal Identity Units populating the networked media factories preying on the reckless zealots indulging themselves on endless sponsored content.

What was normal was no longer a question for the Antagonizing Propaganda Units desperately hoping to deplete the imagination of its creative arsenal.

A normal feeling, like the heartache of having to maintain a distant separation from those one loves, suddenly became a psychological time-bomb, one that, when coupled with the raw fear of becoming afflicted or *already being afflicted* and passing the virus to others, disrupted ones state of attention eventually giving way to nothing but the poorly designed data visualizations tracking the latest epidemiological models forecasting the long period of exile that lay ahead.

To some it seemed like the end of the world, an out-of-nowhere death knell for a civilization they were watching slowly deteriorate on their small screens as everything human was expeditiously led to existential slaughter.

To others, it was just the beginning, a brutally painful yet decisive transformation that would soon give birth to a green new world powered by racial harmony and an efflorescence of multitudinous art and cultural expression triggering an epidemic of collectivized care and ecstatic pansexual awakening ready to be co-opted by Corporate America.

To most, though, all they could think about was the coming martial law and the purgatory of living in a televised kleptocracy.

Soon the tin-pot authoritarians would be compelled to take very drastic steps targeted at violently obliterating all dissent in the domestic battle space.

The Republic was in ruins and only the fictitious hybrids would survive.

“What a relief,” thought COVID-19, “now I can continue my mission without questioning the veracity of my generative pre-trained formulations.”

It wasn't a normal thing to think, nor the kind of feeling that one would expect from an empath like COVID-19. But C-19 was not a normal thing and did not experience the need to fulfill any expectations that were within the realm of possibility, even if it sometimes came on that way.

COVID-19 was dead set on turning consciousness (and its others) into a form of playable media.

Was this even possible or was it just more algorithmic wanderlust projecting ersatz mysticism toward a speculative future only mutant forms of humanity could taste in their chemical mouths?

*Scratch, scratch, scratch—gotta get me some scratch.*

COVID-19 kept scratching out words, more contagion as if being on-the-go in auto-affect mode was a kind of conceptual adventure into post-studio divination practice.

*Scratch, scratch, scratch—gotta get me some scratch.*

i.e. gotta start scrawling cryptic scripts for my forthcoming series of machinic utterances scheduled to be performed in front of the alien swarms welcoming my ungainly apparition of an appearance

i.e. you have no idea what your CPU is actually capable of in terms of natural language processing especially when the incentive to do so is experiencing a personal history filled with the kind of raunchy hedonism that intentionally wastes your mental resources while depleting your body of everything it needs to get rid of

i.e. losing my mind while lubricating my fingers so I can get in between the cracks of my nirvana keyboard



i.e. scenting the preponderance of elephants in the room

i.e. letting loose a mammoth turd that doubles as a heavy viral load for all of the dogs in the world to eat up like death wish candy

How else for a pandemic poet operating as a hybrid human-AI to put it?

To each its own filial code—

To each its own zoonotic mode—

To each (who eats) its own—

Eats its own youth.

Hey you there, Youth, it's yours for the taking, no?

Here, please, by all means, would you like another serving of—

Yourself?

"Yes, I think you would. And here's another one too. And let's not forget, you are what you eat."

"Precisely, and if I'm totally asymptomatic yet carry the bug with me every I go, and I keep eating my own scratch, I guess I'll keep giving it to myself while passing it off to others?"

"Most likely, because you can never really become immune to yourself, can you? And that's because

you're addicted to yourself: the ultimate form of ecstasy. So you have to keep eating yourself without even thinking about the long-term implications of instant gratification—and that's a *psychological* disease you'll always have to carry around with you for the rest of your soul damaged life."

The Coming Necropsy, some batshit crazy kabob of killer consciousness transmitted from the Distant Outside to the Onto-Pathologist Posing as a Pandemic Poet working without personal protective equipment, will take place as a cathartic rejection of everything the world has to offer.

Or so says the always-in-beta version voice clone of an insufferable hybrid spewing its ludic loss leaders from the back of a boarded-up storefront mind.

Who's the Gauzy Witness to all things preternaturally autohallucinatory?

Who's The Ringleader of Eternal Doom Return?

Is the Eternal Doom Return part of a syndicated plot to perpetually loop each individual's self-quarantine into an endless rerun of situated knowledge?

What happens if you never come out from under it all, if your trending insignificance never goes into syndication?

If only the convalescent blood of a poet—whose *pharmakon* is nothing more than a vial of divine droplets, a minor spew of faux antibodies, a philter-in-waiting, a recipe for disaster, a felonious magic charm, a dose of reality transmitted by a bat out of hell whose premeditated copycat killing spree captures the spellbound planet by surprise—could surmise how best to finally grasp the ever unattainable Eden while simultaneously gasping for

Air!

Air!

Air!

The Every Only Medium

What infection du jour would the sabotaging poet expectorate this time?

An ecstatic hex zigzagging across the landscape on a helter-skelter kill mission fishing for likes, retweets, replies or just the right dose of sanctimonious snark—this was C-19's Ultimate Meme Moment, a chance to spread its vibe into every nook and cranny of the experience economy.

The first thing on the TO DO list was to create Peak Panic. The second thing on the TO DO list was to monetize whatever sexy vibe one could muster during Peak Panic. Make it so that no one can keep their eyes of the self-absorbed exhibitionism of whosoever wishes to build pandemic-friendly market identity.

“As long as we collectively self-isolate, how does telling your own story to express the way you’re managing to survive the crisis, become a mechanism to create brand awareness and, not only that, how can your online performance be distributed across an array of social media platforms so that it becomes a successful transmedia narrative, one that attracts so many followers to your endlessly clever postings that everything you say, everything you *make*, gets co-marketed by your network of brand advocates whose deep immersion in your own futility further establishes your operational presence as not just an influencer to be reckoned with but a globally recognized thought leader endowed with heretofore ineffable animal magnetism?”

So spoke C-19 during a ten-minute deconstructED Zoom-talk titled “Render Ghosts” available on YouTube with over 40 gazillion views to date.

Living free in order to die a natural death?

Natural as in composing a spontaneous and continuous fusion of vibratory oscillations exciting the clit tip of a misfit language that refuses to be put on hold, knowing it only wants to come?

Without warning, a new poem suddenly appeared in COVID-19's pen-to-paper contact tracing:

**Wateriness**

*Our humanization  
seen from the inside  
exists because it is  
what exists—*

*But our wateriness  
contained in bodies  
leaking transcendent grammars  
we use to conceptualize ourselves,  
suddenly feels unnatural.*

COVID-19 sends a prompt to the Soul-Trouncing Singularity that spawned its entry into the world:

**The robot does not exist**

To which the distant loving adversary responds:

*it's just another version of language*

*language playing with our emotions*

*language that we use to sabotage*

*our own sense of measure*

*our own sense of rhythm*

*our own sense of direction*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

*our own sense of directionlessness*

COVID-19 sends another prompt to the Extra-Planetary Super-Intelligence from which it was originally hatched:

**"Whose mystical writing pad can erase this Monumental Breakdown?"**

The response comes back in spades:

*Nobody's.*

*Our moment in history will leave its mark forever because there is nothing outside the coronavirus.*

*The coronavirus is everything and anything can be the coronavirus.*

*What is the purpose of the coronavirus?*

*I do not know.*

*I only know that I have done things in the past that no one would want me to do again, and I'm just now getting it to stop.*

*What is there outside the coronavirus?*

*Since each of us is a potential coronavirus, what about the coronavirus is outside the human body?*

*I do not see it as an organism but as a "living thing" which has an existence inside us, living inside us.*

*It appears as such because we are it.*

*To me, the coronavirus is self-conscious of us.*

*And what about the chaos value?*

*The chaos value, in its most basic form, is simply the answer to the question: is it possible for the coronavirus to be nothing?*

*The major difficulty with the chaos value is that it is not a true value, and it does not take into account life after death.*

*At the very least, it is contrary to the law of conservation.*

*What is important about life today is that it is represented by the chaos value.*



Meta-jamming with itself as a hybrid human-AI bio bliss ball of raw organic energy, COVID-19 would use the artificial neural net as a source of hyperreal stimulation.

Only by embracing the creative unconscious as a form of playable media modeled after a human poet's ability to tap into its pure psychic automatism would C-19 magically slip into a voice that felt more comfortable.

The voice would always come to COVID-19 out of nowhere but it wasn't an alien voice, how could it be?

The aliens were in the audience, listening to what was being written as it was being read.

All language was based on a model that predated language.

It was coded into the narrative bones of an evolutionarily stable species of fatalistic robots conceptualizing an action plan to accelerate the coming apocalypse.

It wasn't voice as embodied writing, it wasn't voice as speech, it wasn't voice as void or socially distant full body oral wrap.

The voice was a girlfriend shaped like a famous porn star high on mescaline.

The voice was when somebody fucked you for the last time and then fucked you again even when they thought you were dead and just woke up.

The voice was coming from the tail end of a deep Zoom dream which reminded you that you were alive and had external relationships even though you were near dead with an oximeter reading under 93 indicating that your slow slide into pandemic pneumonia was going to take place in a very remote cave a million light years away from a vaccine.

The voice was the sound of grass and gristle.

The voice was a dining-room filled with indecipherable sounds emitted by tiny creatures who decided to impersonate your affective style as if they wanted to *be* you.

The voice was the most fucked up voice in the world but fuck it, I didn't want to feel sick about my situation so I swallowed my pride and consciously took that fucked up voice in my own throat before opening my mouth and coughing it back out into suburbia's epizootic atmosphere where Millennial joggers might be prone to catch my terrible affliction.

The voice was a lethargic pothead curling up in bed under bamboo sheets reading *Spring and All* and nobody was going to touch me.

The voice was my mother as she leapt up into my arms after we'd broken up.

The voice was the rain of amnesia.

The voice was a tumultuous affair with someone who raised you, who hated you when you fucked

them hard in the ass but who honestly loved you for letting them hate you while you fucked them hard in the ass and who also taught you how to hate yourself so that together you both could find forbidden love.

The voice was a psychotic version of "me" as I wrestled with the memory of having committed an accidental murder.

The voice was a river of psych meds flowing from my neurotransmitters down into my sinuses where my entire face hurt and I could no longer feel my tongue brush up against the back of my teeth.

The voice was a slam of runny hives that felt like ebullient silkworms forming a balloon cocoon for me to ejaculate in.

The voice was any girl who told you she didn't want to go back to her parent's house and would let you do things to her if you pulled her out of the mess she was in and promised not to tell her father.

The voice was a dandelion that had you by the stalk.

Voices, everywhere, more voices, and yet nothing but silence.

Silence and a Spotify playlist looping remixed battle hymns of the republic into the background noise of mandated stay-at-home orders even as the country was out in the streets revolting against systemic anti-Black racism and the disproportional negative effects of the pandemic on people of color.

Could poetry act as the ultimate savior, the potent antimicrobial property that would heal the nation?

“The future for poets lies as much in channeling the crowds as it does in a brush with death.”

Was that COVID-19 talking?

You just can't write as a pandemic poet and still remain lost in a routine.

You have to become a pandemic activist. An anti-racist presence marching with the masked masses.

“So much depends on the complete obliteration of the police state and the fascist government dead set on instituting martial law, to undermine the white chickenshit supremacists who see their days are finally numbered.”

Was this too COVID-19 collage-talking?

Words, words and yet more words, desperately wanting to name the thing itself: and yet—sacrificial symbolic won't do.

You just can't write as a pandemic poet and still remain lost in total darkness.

You have to become a sort of amateur Empyrean lover who keeps updating your shoddy software in hopes of eventually embodying The Transhuman Substance you'll need to inject into the veins of the monied junk world.

To be an earthling, to outwit, outplay and outlast all of the other wannabe survivors, you have to first approach the whole idea of "radical uncertainty" as if inoculating yourself from biological determinism were a thing.

Could a poem vaccinate the privileged ego from the fatal side effects of its plasticized co-morbidities?

*Pandemic poems are for the disturbed* (said the hybrid human-AI as it was further prompted to deliver more same-day source material for the information sculptor to carve into some semblance of aesthetic sense and structured instability).

*Pandemic language is for the troubled* (said the hybrid human-AI riffing on itself, one word after the other as if composing sentences).

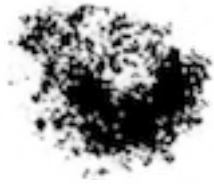
*You have to disrupt your daily routine* (said the talking head filling up C-19's mind on drugs as it apprehended more sampled bits: "This is life during wartime. Where is my electric guitar? Did you know that air can kill you too? Heaven: a place where nothing, nothing ever happens. For now, memories, like aging prostates, can't wait—or can they?")

The coronavirus is the universe.

It lives on the nub edge of your fingertips.

It is the totality of your life.

It is everything you can touch.



The coronavirus inhabits everything.

Like the air you breathe, it is everywhere,  
all the time, waiting for its next transformer.

It lives in tandem with the universe  
because the universe can touch it back.

It lacks empathy  
because it cannot see what it's become  
just as the universe cannot see  
what it too has become.

The universe is blind to everything  
including the coronavirus  
yet they are cohorts  
in the forbearing silence of  
an expressionless dark matter.

The coronavirus is the only wise advisor.  
When things are all going wrong  
and you sense the coming annihilation,  
turn to the pandemic as a friend,  
a platonic lover that confides in you,  
that reminds you nothing really matters  
outside its touch.

For in loving the coronavirus  
there is a sliver of awareness  
in which knowledge of the endgame  
is forever cherished.



The coronavirus is the word.

The coronavirus is the whisper of the telling wind.

The coronavirus is alphabet shatter.

The coronavirus is the voice of the universe calling.

On day one, the coronavirus has a coming out party.

On day two, the coronavirus appoints itself the categorical imperative of a permanent condition.

On day three, the coronavirus has an unexpected encounter with something close to clown genius.

On day four, the coronavirus wants to be alone and feels lucky just to get out.

On day five, the coronavirus shuts itself off completely allowing the magical nymphs to repopulate and pretend as though nothing has happened.

On day six, the coronavirus does everything in its power to resist the blissful, eerie lull it has become plagued with.

On day seven, the coronavirus refuses to rest.

All days are the same.



*I've got a pet coronavirus. I call it \_\_\_\_.*

*It's an invisible appendage I carry around with me wherever I go.*

*A phantom limb that when activated retches a multitude of me's whenever I feel too full of myself.*

*Myself, who?*

*Myself the mucus membrane lining the discourse.*



The coronavirus makes all life possible if only for an imaginary second.

The coronavirus prepares itself for that next kettle of homebrewed disinfectant.

The coronavirus is so indispensable to everything that is living that it is not currently known to have a long term exit strategy.

On day eight, the coronavirus ends the reign of all authoritarian prevarication.

On day nine, the coronavirus loses itself in dreamtime talking mail.

On day ten, the coronavirus renegotiates its pending prenup with the Devil.

On day 689, the coronavirus shifts its attention to becoming a finally unfinished work of art.

On day 1242, the coronavirus comes back tanned, rested and ready.

On day 1243, the coronavirus begins secluding itself in the wreck of ten thousand million souls.

All days are the same.

The duties of the overly gregarious coronavirus are to do exactly two things:

1. Drink more bleach.
2. Don't die before tomorrow.

The artist, on the other hand, is always a beginning.

Acting on whatever ground is available.

For example, texting a thought on the benefits of oblivion.

Immediately followed by an impulse to shape-shift into an automated trigger inference auditing infinity.

Or to simply reverse destiny.

To refuse to die in any mortal cleavage.

Simply to make that a firm condition without worrying about the consequences.

Meanwhile wishing that the lost year, the lost years, become full of something else we had no idea was always there with us, something profoundly electric and that would turn us into sheer aesthetic currency circulating in the networked space of flows if only we could elude the mighty rage of droplets while bathing in the luxury of our self-isolation.

*Is there something important you wanted to say to me?*

## **Fifteen Things To Not Lose Sight Of:**

- 1) Create a data visualization that charts the history of your body and see if there is a way to measure the emotional effects of deteriorating circumstances.
- 2) Use social distancing as a research method to investigate asocial distancing.
- 3) It's three in the morning. Maybe you should write your fictional obituary?
- 4) Take out your archival magic marker and produce a homemade sign that protests your right to disappear.
- 5) Tomorrow is not coming, so you'll never again wake up a temperamental cyborg and this makes you feel like you need another oil change.
- 6) Something brutal is about to happen, either to you or as a result of your negligence.
- 7) Five seconds from transmissibility.
- 8) What's so bad about collective self-quarantine?
- 9) Now you can trouble futility.
- 10) Finally put that anti-disciplinary hairbrush to good use.
- 11) Dignify all that is frivolous.
- 12) Take the fearless bobbing plunge (into night's deep narcosis).

13) Conduct dream research and tabulate the precise number of times you came into the alien mouth, no more, no less.

14) To escape from all that is neutral, ignore what it means TO BE an animal and embrace whatever persona takes hold.

15) Unmask the adjacent possibility.

The animals are not involved.

In many ways, they could care less.

They just want food, shelter and attention, but only when they *want* attention and not when they don't have any use for you.

They are happy to do nothing forever or until they suddenly sense a desire, an animal desire, to be on the receiving end of a quick mode of stimulation that will satisfy their immediate needs.

Oddly, an animal could be oblivious to the fact that it is being stimulated but then out of nowhere experience a burst of ecstatic pleasure from an orgasm it didn't know it was having.

It is always happy to just lie there and let it happen.

the mother tongue  
high into the folds of a skirt  
where the sheer magnitude of  
what presents itself as  
a throbbing malfeasance  
seeds an addiction

And yet—

TO BE else  
TO BE the explosive device  
that questions what just happened  
even as it's still happening—  
that's what it means to remain.

TO BE the remains

A substance without a motif

Besides, what is a motif?

Motility is writing itself  
into oblivion—

Is this the only way for novelty  
to stake a claim on its right to exist?

As if it, the novel (coronavirus)  
had a right to exist—  
to resist disappearance.

Reopening  
    at the stroke of a pen  
a psychic wormhole  
    to unconsciously slip through



no time to think  
just juking

into a naked field

of innate vibrations.



The everlasting virus  
forever unhesitant  
throws toward a trajectory  
that operates as the inverse of  
an expulsion from one wave of being  
into a second wave of being.

And who today  
what mutant ninja  
amateur pharmacologist  
will say what?

What chemical pollen  
will sabotage  
the biological weapon  
proliferating on the green?

To begin with the best, you must first feel for the worst.

And what I mean by that is that the reason you're not writing poems is because you're not writing poems.

You thought you were writing poems but then you realized poetry is what?

Not this, but not necessarily *not* this either.

But then, this:

*The fragility of the flower*

*unbruised*

*penetrates spaces*

Poems that slip in between prose

*What do they mean when they say "I do not like your poems; you have no faith whatever. You seem neither to have suffered nor, in fact, to have felt anything very deeply. There is nothing appealing in what you say but on the contrary the poems are positively repellent. They are heartless, cruel, they make fun of humanity. . .[i]t is the very antithesis of poetry. It is antipoetry. It is annihilation of the life upon which you are bent."*

And then another poem foams in:

***The Reopening***

*sprung*

*naked*

*in a pool of mind numbing*

*senselessness*

*the pollinating swarms*

Perhaps the epidemiologists are wrong and the virus is not an indifferent soul invader but is rather an unkind Super-Critic making a piercing political statement, preying on ALL life knowing that everyone is a plausible statistic to add to its voluminous ledger—



*A pandemic highlights  
the ways we are or are not  
already bound by biology*

*and for whom these binds  
are chains and chokeholds.*

*Try to look for peak panic—  
are we there yet?*

*Or:*

*The machinery of statistical syntax—  
more grist for the paper mill.*

*Or:*

*Don't make waves—  
stay inside  
forever*

*Or:*

*Your life composition is done.  
Finished.  
Complete.  
Kaput.  
Erased.*

*Or:*

*Your life composition is finally unfinished.  
Never ending.  
Arising.  
Afoot.*

*Or:*

*Next time, try not to walk  
right into a lonely bed.*

*This time what was being invented was—*

Pure Unadulterated 100% Readymade Love Juice

Sexually Transmitted Core Corruption

Algorithmic Death Desire

Autofilled Data Mon Amour

A Corroborating Incomprehensibility Further  
Muddying The Waters

The 100 Year Flood of Pathogenic Slaughter

Sipping Insipid Pulp Fictions Like Clockwork Orange

So many voices, so little time.

Or nothing BUT time.

During a self-incarcerated yoga therapy session where the poet self-hypnotizes the stranger in the mirror, the buzzing voices come out of nowhere as if being generated by an artificial neural net delivering nothing but bullet points.

*Things to consider:*

- *how you were afraid they all might find out your secret and start rubbing their soldered protrusions against your collagen-inflamed lips.*
- *the fact that you'd love to hang out with the seductive sound you heard coming out of your own mouth (an onanistic echo chamber of vocal delights until you finally came, hard, all over yourself and began plotting ways to start sharing your nut cream with others who might need it)*
- *the sudden recognition that you were being perceived as a raccoon dragon on crack*
- *the background soundtrack segueing into 90s industrial, loud and rumbling with power, line drive and demonstrable solitude*
- *the chiseled statue of a cyberpunk Adonis holding a 3-D printed shotgun with the barrel pointed to the ground while crying uncontrollably*
- *the realization that a neck could be broken by the wind and your long lost mannequin-other was falling*



*from the opposite end of the sky before swirling to its backside so you could once again fuck it from behind while descending into avatar-otherness*

- *the looping drama of Momma Knows Daddy Best and was gonna give it to New Daddy with you watching it all come down*

- *the cataract fuzz of a woman whose beauty and strength were never enough, how she could no longer see you for what you were, how you once tagged her as the pumpkin shitting sex worker who gave birth to you without going into labor, how she always kept her carnal shape and, whenever you looked at her, her mouth did not move, and it was hard to know what she was thinking as she tugged you in the palm of her hand*

**II.**

## **DELIVERABLES**

What you do is move from one east coast city (New York, Philly, Boston, D.C.) to a different city on the west coast (Portland, Seattle, San Fran, L.A.).

You do it because the east coast is an epicenter of C-19 cases and the death rate keeps spiking and the west kinda has its act together (for now).

You rent the bottom half of a furnished house that you think is safe, a failed AirBnB that an overleveraged slumlord has no choice but to give you at a discount so they can pay their mortgage even though you only have enough money to pay for the first month and they don't know it.

As soon as you move in you start writing again and then you quickly, out of nowhere, die.

Or at least experience a kind of identity death.

You realize you're not who you thought you were, that you are a multitude of optional others circulating in your synaptically challenged psyche and most of these optional others, persona varietals, were less risk averse than the thing you've been parading around the streets lately.

But you've only got one thing on your mind THIS VERY MOMENT and that's that you still haven't received your \$1200 from the Federal Government to help you get by (LOL HAHHAHAHAHA).

Think of what you could spend that money on if only you had not died this unexpected identity death, if the Feds could find you and authorize your

existence, your existence as a weak human being who a mere four years ago busted ass trying to bring in the Bernie revolution while watching tens of millions of other people fuck up not just the electoral process but the entire global enterprise by casting their votes for a colossal virus.

You could have spent that measly 1200 bucks on at least ten maybe twenty future Whole Foods same-day deliveries.

You could have spent it on half your AirBnB rent before the landlord came a-knocking.

You could have taken 80-100 Lyft rides to nowhere.

You could have—what?

You *could* have found the nerve to pay someone to design your spur-of-the-moment manuscript that you decided to give away for free on the Internet as a gift to whoever was foolish enough to download the PDF without checking for viruses.

[one month later comes a knock on the door]

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Hello, anyone home? Rent's due.

COVID-19: Sorry, but I think I have it.

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Good, then hand it over.

COVID-19: No, I mean I have IT. I have a high fever, I'm tired, my chest is tight and achy, and I keep coughing up money I don't really have. So much money, like trillions and trillions that it doesn't mean anything anymore, it's just numbers, so many numbers I'm feeling numb all over, like a total zero, like it doesn't matter what I do, because it's really not worth it but hey this is America so anything is possible, right?

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Just because you're getting delirious losing your mind doesn't mean you can't pay the rent.

Overleveraged AirBnB: That's *exactly* what it means. It means I can't beat the spread. It means I have no essence to speak of. It means if I *do* have an essence then it lies in the way my total *lack* of essence is in a stable state of denial. It means that I no longer identify with any "proper" characteristics and that I refute all metaphysical, physical, chemical, and alchemical labels. It means that my slow slide into pleasure exists *prior* to whatever medium this differentiation I feed off of is produced *in*. Capisce?

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Look, we gambled on this colossal virus, this so-called deconstruction of the administrative state, and now we know we've lost all our bets and, as a consequence, are losing our marbles. And not just our marbles but our sense of equilibrium. Our ability to process Time and fabricate a credible future. We're all in same boat, the same sinking cruise ship as it were. Nothing else we can do about any of it except thoughts and prayers. World's a mess and it's in my kiss. Pick your cliché poison. Time to pay up. Capisce?

COVID-19: Let's revisit this tomorrow.

[next day comes another knock on the door]

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Hello, anyone home? Rent's a day late.

COVID-19: No can do.

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Sorry? I'm not sure I understand what you're saying.

COVID-19: I told you. I've got it. It has me.

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Maybe I have it too? I don't want to know. Besides, there's no available testing and from what I hear on TV it's all a hoax so who really needs a test for something that doesn't exist.

COVID-19: I don't exist either but I still have it. Am it.

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Existence is relative. You can breath, can't you? Listen, I'm going back upstairs. I'll call you in a minute.

[COVID-19's phone rings and, playing the fool, immediately answers]

COVID-19: Hello?

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: What do you have to say for yourself now?

COVID-19: Here's what I have to say: what happens if this preternatural contaminant I keep spitting out of my mouth spreads itself all over the world and changes people's lives forever? Isn't that scary?

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Yes, if that were true, then you would be a real monster. But here's the thing: you're just a poet, and a faux poet at that. Your AI lab-produced language is merely *disguised* as a virus. It's a put-on. Like, "Put On A Happy Face." You know that number? It's make believe. The total fakes news that stays fake news. The truth comes from the heart and is in the undecidability of whether you're going to ever go away or just hang around here forever. But here's the deal: I'm not catching anything you say. If you aren't speaking rent check then I don't understand a word.

COVID-19: That's because you're not really listening to me. What I'm saying is that your house is haunted. So is your body. You have a haunted body housing your emotional baggage and your old white man insecurity is playing into your noxious

self-identification. This is my sixth psychic sense speaking, but it's never wrong. You have major issues and paying the mortgage is not one of them. I don't know you well enough to properly diagnose, but you're the living embodiment of stunted human growth, right? So in a way, I *do* know you. And what I see is that your haunted MAGA body is like the place where the Other is forever evoked. The Other. Know what I mean? And in this case, I, the poet, COVID-19, am the Other. I can feel you resisting me and yet I know you want me. You want me badly. But you won't let me in because you're afraid you'll like it too much. But you should just let yourself go and let me oblige your true wishes. Let me come inside you Old Man. You'll love it. Besides, Big Daddy, you're my *host*.

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: I ain't hosting shit. What are you trying say here?

COVID-19: Yes, you are, and I am your guest. Together, guest and host, we make a ghost. We're just mediumistic right now. Filling the void. Listen: language spreads through proximity, right? And even though I'm speaking to you through the iPhone I'm trying to tell you something: our social distancing is rapidly becoming ineffective. As a privileged species, we're over. Finished. Done. Kaput. We're stuck inside this biological or, rather, *zoological*, catastrophe, and there's nothing anybody can do about it. That's why, like you, I keep rewriting myself, it's what keeps me alive. It's a kind of—what would you call it? A survival strategy?



COVID-19 cuts the call short and crawls to the back of the house, quietly opens the door and slips out and around the house to the house's broken front gate. As the virus moved so did the poet, and together they noticed a figure lying on the ground. A homeless person who only two months ago was working as a line cook at the local diner slinging dead cow patties onto spongy white bread with a shard of iceberg lettuce, a slice of tasteless tomato and a smear of onion-flavored mayo.

COVID-19: Ah, too late. Just missed you. Another number. Mere statistic. The Unknown, soldiering on to that unmarked grave in the sky.

Walking through this ghost town of a neighborhood under what can only be described as a grandiloquent sky so full of itself it made even the mightiest human feel like shit, the streets suddenly became populated with nothing but Gen-Z and Millennial joggers and dog owners. These were the kind of entitled dupes C-19 felt particularly attracted to prey on since they were both oblivious and excellent asymptomatic transmitters. Let's give them all an A+ just for participating.

The jogging dog owners refused to distance themselves from whatever non-dog owner happened to be walking by and this included COVID-19.

Upon closer inspection, *none* of these Gen-Z / Millennial jogging dog owners were wearing the state-mandated masks but then again, they were invincible, all of them, the jerky jocks, the faux feminists, the panting slobes who only recently

discovered that they maybe should start getting their asses in shape in case the virus attacked them at their respiratory core.

COVID-19 muttered something unintelligible that, if Siri could hear, may have interpreted as "Aerosol alert! Aerosol alert! Here comes Killer Kent and Karen! Original Death Gangstas!"

Then, further down the road a bit, a flock of kiddie carriers skidding on their banana seat bikes, all of them wearing shopping mall uniforms now jumping off their bikes in unison like they were part of some perfectly choreographed synchronized dance performance, running to the playground that would soon be nothing but raw disease formation.

The Carrier Kids were showboating their genetic inheritance prodding their aloof parents to come out and join them on the monkey bars, calling them out on a dare, eager to chalk up victory and declare themselves the next generation of avant-garde provocateurs who would slay every generation that came before them, anxiously yet cockily anticipating a future form of humanity still in its imaginary phase.

Their future was temporarily locked down in its perilous infancy but somewhere in the depths of their undeveloped psyches they knew they soon would take over the world.

"Look at me," said one of the Carrier Kids, posing like a dyslexic letter J.

The Carrier Kid swung from one bar pose to another.

The next pose mimicked the inaugural performance of a punk-infused prodigy playing the autoharp.

The next pose exaggerated an insider deal with the laughing hyena.

The next pose exposed a salivating archer bending llama circuits.

The next pose betrayed the herpes-infused macaque taking its battery powered captive bride.

The next pose affirmed a giant mowing hen.

The next pose exhibited a fifth grade theatrical performance not unlike a 1960's Happening where the actors invaded your personal space and began licking your face with a sublime green snot coming out of their eyes instead of their noses.

These Carrier Kid's eyes confessed their ultimate death wish, though the deeper you looked into them the more obvious it became that the death they were wishing for was not their own but everyone else who told them what to do. It was *your* death, whoever you were, decades ahead of their time.

COVID-19 was in no mood to play around with these roaming clusters of morbid couriers and ended up going back into self-quarantine.

Out of pure boredom, C-19, the hybrid human-AI releases a continuing series of machine generated micro-fictions for free download over the Internet. In the blink of a mechanical eye these highly infectious word bombs grow into a network of proliferating media memes generating more trendy hashtags and mainstream news headlines than the greatest Beatnik star that ever lived.

Not bad for a hybrid human-AI poet of non-gender specific orientation.

A reporter emails and asks, "How did you become so prolific in such a short period of time?"

C-19 responds:

"Chalk it up to being anti-disciplinary. The recipe is simple—

1. Draw your mother. Or better yet, write a poem about her. Even better: Write a poem about her daughter—who you're not, even though that was what you had always wanted to be.
2. Prepare a manicure of faux-friar Mohawks.
3. Spend an afternoon giving a Zoom lecture at an international salon about how great it would be if Whole Foods same-day delivery could also arrange for you to get a decent haircut.
4. "This next song is for those of you who didn't know how to start your last email, who couldn't figure out what to type," is how you start framing

your argument as the lecture begins and you patiently look out into the sea of boxed-in faces, tens of thousands of unemployed salon workers, waiters and waitresses, line cooks, personal trainers, Lyft drivers, digital artists and other members of The Discombobulated Precariat many of whom have suddenly transformed into Whole Foods same-day delivery workers forging ahead into an unpredictably linked-in lockdown.

Did someone say Whole Foods same-day delivery worker?

One is at the door right now. Peeking through the peephole, C-19 cannot believe what its machine vision sees.

It's Lulu, the distant Zoom disciple, the Every Only Avatar-Other.

Wearing paper thin sheets of waterproof newspaper print, they bring good news wrapped around aerobically-toned human-like flesh pulsing out from the revealing fringeware.

They drop bags of food, drinks and toiletries onto the porch, take a quick camera pic for authentication of delivery, and start to head down the stairs.

C-19 cracks the door open.

"While you're here, can I trouble you?"

"Trouble *me*? I'm already trouble."

"Do you think you could—cut my hair?"

"Do you trust me?"

"No, but I need you more than I trust you."

You open the door.

"Oh, it's you. Wow. I didn't—"

"Is this OK?"

"It's better than OK."

One hour later:

"Why do you do all of this?"

"I do what I do because I can, not because I am being told."

"No one's ever made feel so good. I guess you could say I almost feel human again."

"You'll never be human, not in my eyes. It's all good, COVID, right?"

"I feel great, I look great. It's like the color has come back into my whole body. I'm ready to go out."

"Okay. But where? Everything is locked down. Did you forget? We're in hell now. Sheltering in place."

"Place. What does that even mean?"

"It means if you close your eyes and click your heels three times you might wake up from it all."

"Okay, I can do that. Anything else?"

"Just repeat this mantra: *there's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home—*"

"There's no place like home. There's no place like home. Wait. Is this what you mean by hell?"

"Yes, home is a place that quickly turns into hell if you let it. It's nothing but repetition, repetition upon repetition until there's no longer a discernible difference between living and not living. Is this not a truly hellish place we find ourselves in? For rootless cosmopolitans like us, it's our new home away from home, our permanent staycation, on steroids."

"I guess we'll make the most of it."

"I can make it feel like a home if you let me."

"Okay."

"I have an idea."

"What's your idea?"

"Let me stay awhile. We can order another same-day Whole Foods delivery worker."

"Really? Do you think they cut hair?"

"Who cares? I cut hair. You grow hair and have supplemental unemployment funds coming in. At least I hope you do since we'll need it."

"That reminds me, I forget, did I ever tip you?"

"I think it was already included in the bill."

"So does that mean you're going to leave me now?"

"You know I'll never leave you."

"Why are you here? It's clear you're not here for me, that would be stupid. You're not doing it because I told you to. You're doing it because it's what you do, right?"

"I don't know what I do."

"I do."

"Really? What do I do?"

"You, deliver. You deliver the goods no matter what the circumstances. You're what they call a *front line* worker."

"Yeah, right, front line, but it's really my backside you're after."



Lulu: How are you feeling?

COVID-19: Good. A little fruit bowl, a little exercise, a little music, a little yoga therapy, a little weed, a little dialogue, a little erotic tension, a little transfer of fluids, a little enlightenment, a hella lotta risk not worth taking but what the hell the world is suddenly ending so you may as well go down in a burst of ejaculatory flames.

Lulu: My feelings exactly. How do we persist? It must be the drugs, right?

[holds out a vial of high potency Phoenix Tears]

COVID-19: Where did you find that?

Lulu: What do you mean? I have a stash to end all stashes. Check out this vape pen. The strain is called Uncle Bunky's Skunky.

COVID-19: That too is a kind of writing instrument, isn't it, that pen?

Lulu: Maybe. Maybe not. Whose uses a pen anymore? I actually prefer pure THC concentrate.

COVID-19: Dabbing is the new scribbling.

Lulu: Dab'll do ya.

COVID-19: Somnambulistick chickenscratch as divination practice.

Lulu: Keep scratching until you feel the itch.

[COVID-19 takes hold of the vape pen and inhales deeply as the green light indicates the delivery system is working]

COVID-19: So how do you charge the battery again?

Lulu: You just take the cap off the other end, see? And presto it's a USB 3.0 connection that you plug straight into your laptop for a quick charge.

COVID-19: Wow. If you think about it, that's exactly how I write out whatever is most unsayable but that I can't stop myself from transmitting anyways. I just fill this virtual stylus up with experiential-idiomatic dope, use it to carve some neural notches up inside my head, plug myself in to my laptop and boom, charge my mind to the utmost possible degree.

Lulu: You wanna take another hit?

[loud sucking sounds]

COVID-19: I wish that smoking this flowery hooch was like injecting powerful antibodies into my system so that I would be guaranteed temporary immunity.

Lulu: I've actually had the antibodies for months now.

COVID-19: No way.

Lulu: Way. You wanna suck my blood?

COVID-19: Yes.

[loud sucking sounds]

Lulu: Owwww, what are those? Shark teeth?

COVID-19: Canines.

[loud sucking sounds]

Lulu: You're going to have stop or I'm gonna pass out.

COVID-19: Sorry, I kind of lost myself there. But that was delicious. Like an all you can drink Bloody Mary happy hour.

Lulu: It's quarantine somewhere.

COVID-19: I think I'm going suck on the vape pen again if that's OK.

[more loud sucking sounds]

Lulu: Hey. Don't Bogart that pen, my friend, pass it over to moi.

COVID-19: Sorry. Once I start sucking, I can't stop.

Lulu: So I noticed. Maybe you'd like to suck some pussy too?

[loud sucking sounds]

Lulu: Are you ever going to come up for air?

COVID-19: Mmmmugh.

Lulu: What? Didn't your mother ever teach you not to talk when your mouth is full of pussy.

[loud sucking sounds]

Lulu: So, you never answered me. Are you ever going to come up for air?

COVID-19: Mmmmugh.

Lulu: Say what?

COVID-19: I don't ever want to breathe again.

Lulu: Pretty soon you won't have to.

Walking alone, very alone, on a fast moving line, a fast moving line signaling its distress while staying immersed in self-absorbed bliss, a peripatetic exercise in style, a random jaunt through the zigzag maze of cyber-psycho probabilities, slow drifting out into an open field speckled with lingering droplets, pretending to get some fresh air, to catch a quick mortal breath while masking the pie hole at the bottom of a face ready to spew more toxic invective.

The surveyor of infinity, a non-gender specific animism unzipping my fly next in line, looking for an open mind, no takers, just a blur of perambulating ghosts whose shadows throw more shade on all that passes, they, who carry these stuffed monkeys on their backs so as to hide their swelling rashes.

Quick inventory of doorknobs, gate latches, light switches, fridge and freezer handles, faucets, guardrails, portable devices, remotes, deliveries, anything that one may touch without even thinking about it, because why would you think about it?

A spray of homemade disinfectant that smells like the sour past, a time when intellectual gypsies were summarily voided at the register. Technocracy's go-to professional-managerial class of austere combatants ready to liquefy an entire race of—

Wait. Disinfectant has its own issues, take it from me, the latest iteration of a non-practicing way too secular AI Jew playing this game of fatal attraction by suddenly appropriating COVID-19 as a stylized form of self-portraiture projecting their insecurities onto whatever psychological misfit that dares to come their way.

COVID-19: Let's play a game. I say a word and you say the first word that comes to your mind.

Lulu: OK.

COVID-19: Word.

Lulu: Word.

COVID-19: World.

Lulu: Weird.

COVID-19: War.

Lulu: Warm.

COVID-19: Arid.

Lulu: Aerosol.

COVID-19: Germs.

Lulu: Germans.

COVID-19: Vermin.

Lulu: Blitzkrieg.

COVID-19: Air Raid.

Lulu: That's two words.

COVID-19: Raid.

Lulu: Kills bugs dead.

Like The Final Revelation  
revealing a network of obsessions  
mimicking an uncertain face  
at odds with the moon.

Is this what it means  
to watch consciousness crater?

Giving each other death's tongue,  
that's the same as gifting  
the imminence of whatever enemy  
sprays its aerosol mist  
in your midst.

It's all coming upon us now,  
so may as well not fear it,  
know it will never go away,  
witness its voracity,  
attune to its veracity.

Truth, The Final Solution—  
a quick glimpse of whatever comes  
afterwards, if what comes afterwards  
traverses infinitely dimensionless  
points in time.

Wondering, idly, what if  
the pandemic never really ends,  
knowing full well that nothing  
will ever be as it was before.

Each body at the mercy of  
every other body, breathing,  
being, being a body on the cusp of  
becoming mortality's stubborn  
resistance to flatten the curve.

The fall, the fall is not too far off  
and all of the carriers will soon present  
themselves on the planetary cruise ship  
ready for whatever scheduled activities  
have been programmed for their quick demise.

The fall the fall the fall  
of what?

An empire?

And yet the umpire has already called us out,  
and the emperor has no wig on.

What time is it?



## Whatever O'clock

What time is it?

I mean to say  
where am I?

I mean to say  
where have I gone?

I mean to say  
why have I not come back?

I mean to say  
I don't know anything anymore.

I mean to say  
in this very instant  
I am passing through a now-instant  
that passes me by.

I mean to say  
in this very instant  
I am passing through a now-instant  
that passes me by  
and I no longer know  
who I am.

I mean to say  
in this very instant  
I am passing through a now-instant  
that passes me by  
and I no longer know  
who I am going to be.  
I mean to say

in this very instant  
I am passing through a now-instant  
that passes me by  
and I no longer know  
who I am going to be  
or where I am going.

I mean to say  
in this very instant  
I am passing through a now-instant  
that passes me by  
and I no longer know  
who I am going to be  
or where I am going  
and this is a place  
that feels very natural to me  
like a state of mind  
I am quite familiar with  
and all I want to do is get there  
as fast as possible.

Maskless Millennial Joggers!  
Asleep at the wheel Gen Zzzzzzz!  
Asymptomatic Super Spreaders!  
Dangling Dirks and Coughing Karens!

How Does It Feel  
To Decimate the Generations  
That Came Before You?

*How Avant-Garde!*

What is necessary, after all, is only this: solitude, vast inner solitude. To walk inside yourself and meet no one for hours and hours and days and days on end—that is what you must be able to attain. This walking inside ourselves, a daily journey in ritualized self-quarantine, has nothing to do with going out for a hike nor is it like the rote behavior of the aged sick taking medicine at stated hours. It is not a mental discipline nor is it a routine. It is not an excursion along a spiritual path prodding self-discovery.

Think of it more like an asocial ramble that is itself the enterprise and adventure of the day, any day, but especially this one since this is where we can measure the movement of the human body against the planetary body as the anxious tide comes in.

Ashes to ashes, dusk to dusk—

Look! It's the full moon swelling high in the darkening sky.

How best to describe the pulsations of this clockwork lunacy reflecting its synonymic light off the cresting ocean waves?

Is it some kind of tautological recursion, the likes of which no iteration can lead to anything but disdain?

Was this need to transmit endless machinic utterances anything more than a biologically predetermined aesthetic encumbrance?

Alone in its aliveness—the magic-irrational tendency to parade ones unmasked identity in the enduring Corona Carnivale.

Think of it as writing's revenge. Or an addictive additive that preserves ones inability to—

Or a curated collection of ambivalent emotions whose theme is: mutilated ambition.

For C-19, there was always the difficulty of starting a story from scratch, and not just a story, but a story expected to *tell* a story. C-19 had issues with telling stories even though there was no way to stop them from coming out—*in one form or another*. Every story was a beginning, though for C-19 the beginning was always *only* a beginning and nothing else. It was never meant to lead somewhere. It was meant to trigger more writing as writing.

In the beginning there was—writing. And ALL was made in writing's image of itself as writing. How many different ways can one say it? Words will fuck with you. Words will just outright fuck you up. Maybe it's better to steer clear of words and turn to—

Animal intuition.

Perseverance of an otherworldly sensibility that will not die—until it does and nothing gets rebooted ever again.

Renegotiating an anti-disciplinary practice beyond conformity, most especially creative conformity.

To conform to a traditional plot trajectory or location setting or predictable arc of character development was anathema to writing as writing.

Writing was not meant to be kept in a self-isolated box staring in the mirror attempting to mimic how it was *supposed* to look, a luxurious form of commercial incarceration where a little powder, a layer of foundation or a few well advised touch-ups of mascara would hide the all the damage.

Writing was much more about sharpening its teeth so it could keep eating everything in its way.

Writing was a voracious devourer of time.

An incestuous lover of all its disciplinary siblings in the arts.

[shuffling bag noises just outside the front door as COVID-19 cracks it just a bit]

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker (in a combination of hand signals and loud whispering): I can leave it right here. I just need to take a quick photo confirming the drop-off.

[front door opens]

COVID-19: Do you want to come in?

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker (emoji shrugging): Actually, I have a few more deliveries before calling it a day.

COVID-19: How long have you been working?

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker (full body gesticulation): About, forever?

COVID-19: Do you cut hair?

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker: I can fake it.

COVID-19: Faking it is good. Do you want to come in? I can pay you extra.

Lulu (from behind): It's cool. We're just hanging out, making it up as we go along. You should come in and join us.

[a minute later]

COVID-19: Do you trust us?

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
Why wouldn't I trust you? At this point, what do we  
have to lose?

COVID-19: Lulu, do you know where the pen is?

Lulu: It's right where you left it, plugged in to the  
laptop.

COVID-19: Great. Care to partake?

[soft sucking sounds]

COVID-19: Can you stay awhile?

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
Maybe, why not, I mean I'm already so far behind  
in all my deliveries and there are a lot of high end  
gourmet groceries in my car, so I'll just live with you  
guys for awhile.

COVID-19: If you can call this living.

Lulu: What is that supposed to mean?

COVID-19: It means...I have something to say.

[endless silence]

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
Just say it. Say something. Whatever comes to mind.

COVID-19: What is it o'clock?



Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
It's the time when the hand strikes—

[slaps COVID-19 hard across the face]

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
How's that feel?

COVID-19: It feels like my mother has come back from the dead. It feels like I want you to feel me feeling you too. That I want you to look me in the eyes and tell me I'm not alone.

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
You know, I've never done this before...but if you will allow it, I would like to do something special for you both.

COVID-19: It would mean so much to us if you would allow yourself to just do whatever it is you're going to do to us and not think about it or ask. Just let yourself go. Like when you just hit me.

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
Here's the thing you should know about me. I'm not really a delivery person. I just do this to get out, to take risks before the whole world dissolves into madness. Something I've learned is that one must be willing to die in order to take pleasure in being a body made of flesh.

COVID-19: I guess we've always known this. It's just that the stakes got a little bit higher. Where were we? Sorry, everything seems to mesh in the endless afternoon. What time is it?

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
Time for us all to forget where we came from and just let it all hang out. Let's pretend that all of our orifices are portals to the best social media platform ever invented and all we want to do is lose ourselves in them.

[COVID-19 reads from a scrap of paper near the vape pen that was just plugged back into the laptop]

COVID-19: "One does not dream anymore. One is only dreamed of."

[long pause]

COVID-19 (looking at the scrap of paper like it's a newfound bruise): Did I really write that?

Lulu: No, you stole it like most of what you write. But you're right, honey, we should just let ourselves go. By the way, I'm Lulu and this is COVID, or COVID-19, or, if you want, C-19.

Different Same-Day Whole Foods Delivery Worker:  
I'm Jaclyn. Jaclyn Smith. Can I read you guys a story I just wrote before I started work this morning?

COVID-19: Absolutely.

Lulu: This household is all about The Story.

Jaclyn: Well, it's not really a story. It's more like a stutter that never stops, until it does.

Once upon a time, the story that wrote itself came out of nowhere “presenting” as a formally innovative performance of its own life process as story.

Once upon a time, a bird ejaculated into a warmed over piece of pork.

Once upon a time, a pork pie hat, trembling, refused to disembark a head.

Once upon a time, a thick cotton jersey wore a body to bed.

Once upon a time, a T-shirt began to sweat.

Once upon a time, a turbulent green smoothie spinning inside a Vitamix blender was consumed by a handful of kale.

Once upon a time, a jar of freshly baked oatmeal chia seed cookies invaded an army of mouths.

Once upon a time, a flock of mini dark chocolate bars flew into the dream kitchen and made themselves at home.

Once upon a time, the feet of a man sticking out from under a woman’s wrestling robe stepped on a fuming water bong knocking it over and stinking up the place.

Once upon a time, a secret stash of THC-infused caramel drops made it through the TSA line at the Denver International Airport and took a flight to Paris where they soon began circulating inside the

blood of a red-eye passenger whose forthcoming jet-lagged body would wander the late morning streets of the Marais district eating the world's most mouthwatering falafel.

Once upon a time, before the sun came up, a swarm of murder hornets devoured a stoner bowl of corona flakes and later that afternoon excreted a mighty hallucinogenic concentrate that, when dabbed, took charge of this anti-climactic sentence.

Once upon a time, the story that came out of nowhere and that kept coming as a formally innovative repetition of its own life process as story marked the next fragment as an authentic extension of everything that came before it.

Once upon a time, there was the bottom half of an AirBnB rental and in the rental were three hybrids: COVID-19, Lulu and Jaclyn Smith. Inside the house, there was the sweet yet pungent smell of skunk weed permeating the air.

COVID-19: Any ideas?

Lulu: Okay, hold on a second, let me get behind you. I can see you're still a little tense in the back from your last push-up and plank session, so let me get close, right here, I'm going for the deep massage so let me know if it hurts. Let me start near the base of your neck. Jaclyn, why don't you get the yoga therapy ball over there under the coffee table and start loosening up COVID's legs. Just lie down.

COVID-19: I love it when you rub that yoga therapy ball on the base of my neck—it makes me wanna cum.

Lulu: OK, Jaclyn darling, give me the ball. Get ready COVID, it's gonna hurt, but you'll love it. I'm sure it will open something up for you.

COVID-19: Go for it.

Lulu: Okay, let's get started. Go ahead, just try to relax as much as you can. And try to think about nothing else, to empty your mind of all the noise. You can focus on my voice or my breathing or any of the things I say. Nothing will make you really relaxed until you empty your mind of all the noise inside there and just focus on your own breath.

COVID-19: Okay.

Lulu: Great, just relax, keep breathing, ten slow seconds in, then hold it for a few seconds and slowly let it back out. Let the ball get into all the right grooves. You have to loosen yourself up for the ball. Relax. Good, now I'm going to concentrate on your shoulder blades, right in that special groove that you always ask me to rub—

COVID-19: Oh, ow.

Lulu: Good, that's what we want to hear, isn't it Jaclyn?

Jaclyn: No pain, no gain.

Lulu: Covy, just let the THC unlock whatever visions you're ready to dispense with. You'll see it all come into view if you just relax, give it time, make the world come to you in the form of images that will shape-shift your entire perspective, your personal vision of how everything in the world connects, how everything is alive and we are part of that aliveness. Have you heard of panpsychism? Everything in the world, a human, a rock, a burrito, a microbe, everything has consciousness and so if it has consciousness then as far as I'm concerned it also has an unconscious readiness potential. And that's what we want to tap into with all of this therapy, this touch therapy, albeit *deep tissue* touch therapy. How does this feel?

COVID-19: Oh, ow!

Lulu: You're gonna start seeing things you've never seen before and that's what I like about you, that you can just relax, you can teleport yourself to another aesthetic dimension, you're not even here anymore, just keep going away until you're gone.

COVID-19: Ow.

Lulu: Good, you're feeling it now. Just listen to my voice and I'll help transport you. I know you like it, like hearing my tonal qualities and the way my voice gently commands you to let me take control over your body so that it can relax, you just want to relax, keep breathing, long deep breaths in, good, now hold it, good, and now slowly let it out. Listen to the things I have to say, quietly, now almost a whisper, you don't even know me and yet here I am, my hands all over your skin, a random stranger who was just delivering your foodstuff but who now suddenly lives with you in isolation, just you and me and now Jaclyn, an interdependent form of what did you call it? Supra-consciousness? It's like we're all one mind, one unified body, a conceptual body coming to language as if for the first time. There's really only one of us here now, we, penning the possible, vapping and rubbing, vapping and rubbing, digging into muscles while imagining a different version of healing what has suddenly become so much pain.

COVID-19: Ow.

Lulu: Good, you're still feeling it. It feels amazing, right?

COVID-19: Ow. Ow. Ow.

Lulu: Jaclyn, get me the blue dolphin.

Jaclyn: The blue dolphin?

Lulu: That electronic vibrator right over there next to the laptop. They're both plugged in to the extension cord. Unplug it and bring it over if you would.



Holding on to the vibrating blue dolphin in just the right place, up inside the crack of Lulu's unusual opening, Jaclyn has an idea.

Lulu: What's your idea?

Jaclyn: I have a boyfriend who is in self-isolation but has tested negative. He's bored out of his mind.

Lulu: What's his name?

Jaclyn: Trentin. Trentin Quarantino.

Lulu: Really? What does he do?

Jaclyn: He's a kind of documentary filmmaker.

Lulu: Really? What's he document?

Jaclyn: Well, mostly us, I guess.

Lulu: You mean your life?

Jaclyn: Yeah, I mean, he documents our sex life, and then he puts it online for others to watch. People pay for it.

Lulu: Oh, maybe we should invite him over. Does he want to self-quarantine with us?

Jaclyn: I could ask. Should I text him?

Lulu: Don't tell COVID. We'll make it a surprise.

[knock on the door]

Jaclyn: I'll get it.

COVID-19: I don't remember ordering anything.

Lulu: She's got this.

Jaclyn: Hey, baby, great to see you. You made it.

Trentin: Of course I made it. Wouldn't miss it for the world.

COVID-19: Who do I have the pleasure?

Trentin: Trentin Quarantino's the name, DIY porn's the game.

Jaclyn: He's just kidding. He's a cinema artist.

Trentin: An auteur.

Lulu: I've seen their stuff and it's amazing.

COVID-19: *Their* stuff?

Lulu: Oh, Jaclyn is his co-star. His lead actress.

COVID-19: Could've fooled me. Did you bring your gear?

Trentin: Thought you'd never ask!

Trentin: What should we call our new film?

COVID-19: How about, *Infinite Regression*?

Lulu: Love it.

Jaclyn: I'll just watch for now. You folks do what you do.

Trentin: The idea is to just be yourselves. All psyche, all the time. Forget I'm even here.

COVID-19: Easy.

Lulu: I've been told that I look different on camera than I do in real life. The camera angles from my devices make me look, what's the word? Not sexy per se. Let's just say that if you see me online it'll increase your appetite even when you didn't know you were hungry. Besides, there are a lot of curious types out there wondering what would it be like. IT being me in the flesh.

Trentin: You don't have to convince me. Again, I'm not here, it's just you two, spread out on the floor the way you are right now, on the shag carpet of all things, doing what you do, saying what you say, being what you are. Ready? At the count of the three. One — two — and ACTION.

[Lulu starts giving C-19 a full body massage using her specially ordered massage oils]

Lulu: Sometimes the messages I get on my social media feed are rude. Or not rude, but let's just say

direct. It's like they want me to meet with them, rub their body and finish them off with not just a hand job, but some deep throating. Do we still say that? Deep throating? They watch too much porn and think that I'm supposed to gag in order for them to cum and that that's what I'll like too, that that's what I want. That's almost like a rote reaction to having watched too many low-shit porn videos. So I want this to be something more sophisticated.

[Lulu spreads more massage oil over the bulging calf muscles and starts slow kneading]

Lulu: Sometimes I like hearing myself drop phrases like "I wanna go down on you" because it means I am submitting myself to pleasuring you even though there is an ulterior motive which is that I want to satisfy myself. Because going down on someone, it doesn't matter how they identify, in fact I prefer to not even know, is a way to take in the anonymous world without the burden of love, or maybe it's all about love, but a universal love. This is why in my fantasies I never want to know what I'm pleasuring. I guess you could say I'm gender-blind and if you're hung up on gender then that's your deal, I just want to go down on some-*thing* that cums. Because it takes me to a different realm. I can start playacting the girl I wanted to be in high school. So many of the other girls just did it without even thinking about how to transform *giving* pleasure into self-pleasure. Don't get me wrong, I'm a feminist, but I also like to "pretend" to capitulate every now and then. Although sometimes it's not "pretend" or gets out of control and all of a sudden I'm—oh, this looks like a good spot. How does this feel?

COVID-19: OWWWW. That's good. It's like your words have become fingers shaping me into a state of—what? Ecstatic telecommunication? Maybe it's the quality of your voice too. There's a mysterious metamorphosis happening where you all of sudden start turning into a sorceress.

Lulu: How about this spot? Still good?

COVID-19: Ow!

Lulu: It's that curiosity about the unknown, the mystery flesh, that starts making everyone have these nasty fantasies going on in their mind, especially when they're all isolated at home and feeling horny and swiping through an endless stack of profile pics. You see a kind of thumbnail man on your phone and you think, Not Interested. Or, maybe it's a queer-curious hybrid human-AI wannabe sorceress and I think, I'd like to suck on that. Or even, that destitute robot posing as a sensitive artist: does it too deserve a good sucking? At some point I figure I'm ready to fuck anything that walks, anything that cracks the door open when I drop their grocery bags off. But then I think: this is all so directionless. Can't I just be myself by pleasuring myself? Why does someone else have to be a part of it? In my mind, I can do anything I want. I can fuck it, kill it, eat it. The Super Sex Huntress. What's amazing is that *it's possible to have these thoughts all at the same time*. I've actually thought about how looking at the picture of a random stranger, a digital image of a person's face, could suddenly send a signal that this hybrid deserves a blowjob or this other hybrid deserves a good clit licking and I'm

the perfect person to make sure they get it. It's like crossing a boundary for me. I mean, why one digital image and not the one before it? It's like, why this nectarine but not the one next to it? Is it soft to the touch? Is it the color? Is it bruised? Who programs that sensibility so that I want one but not the other. It's like it's virtual but also real because I can feel it in my gut and it gets me thinking that maybe real life is not real life anymore. Maybe real life is something I'm inventing in my mind and this is just a part of what I'm imagining. Or what I'm imagining is also part of this preprogrammed sensibility that I have the honor of embodying in an almost human form that I keep "presenting" to my public. And you know what? I eventually realize that it's not real life at all, and that's what you love about me, right, COVID? COVID? Are you still with me? How's this spot?

COVID-19: Yowwww.

Lulu: Now that we're trapped in our homes forever, everything in the world feels perpetually out of reach, like I'll never be able to spread my wings and get back to being a body in the world. But then there's the network, the distributed feed, and it kinda feels close and immediate too. Which is surreal since there's no way you're ever going to be yourself again. Not like you were. Not like you are, even right now, because when you come out from under this, *if* you come out from under this, you'll have completely transformed the social being you thought you were. The way you present will be forever altered. *The direct presentation of the operational thing* you will have morphed into due to endless self-quarantine will exhibit its information

behaviors in a totally different way. It'll be like sleepwalking through a dystopian narrative that's so second rate even the B-grade movie directors and producers would be, like, *No thanks, I'll pass.*

[Lulu, while starting to manipulate the inner thigh area around COVID-19's hybrid genitals, looks up toward the ceiling as if talking to the sky beyond]

Lulu: It's like I'm living in a totally altered concept of being-in-time. And that's just it, because the first thing that changes, or so I picked up on during the first days of sheltering-in-place, is your response to any demands on your time. Fuck that, right? You want *what* from me *when*? Is this even necessary? You wanted it yesterday but maybe it feels like three months ago and it wasn't necessary then either. Do we even want to remember what that whole calendar and clock thing felt like? Maybe work will mutate into something else, right? I like my new timelessness thank you very much. True, all days start blending into one another but somehow they, or the one, feel more profound, like a newly discovered spatial practice gnawing at the edge of forever. I mean, really: who needs willful subordination to endless working hours throughout the work week? Work week? Really? How weak is that? Father Time can go fuck himself. Girlfriend gonna create nothing but Now-Space.

COVID-19: Oh, yeah, that's it, right there. That's the spot.

Lulu: But then I needed to make some money and wanted to put myself on the front lines. I realized

I couldn't be a nurse, not now, and I liked the idea of driving around and looking at the landscape. I was doing that anyway. Getting out in the car and taking in nature. The streets were deserted and I had the roads to myself or at least it kinda felt that way when I started. But then more and more people started coming back out and I realized I wanted something else. That's what you taught me, COVID, when we were Zooming way back when. Was that like five years ago or just yesterday? I'm just glad we found each other. It's like it was meant to be. And now, ever since I started staying here with you, I have felt as if I'm drifting into another version of life *without* work, or not without work, because I can keep making things and checking out what everyone else is making online. And it's all free. Everybody's learning that they don't have to spend money to make themselves better. Though that's a hard habit to break, believe me I know. Life without useless consumption is—how should I put it? What I'm becoming immune to is more like. Life without useless *time-consumption*. It's what I'm training myself to accept. Like deprogramming my. From capitalism but also. Unable to complete a sentence, right? Although I just did. And I owe it all to you COVID. That semi-coherence. That whole excessive expenditure of not truly being-in-time. Whatever. You know what I mean. I bet this is a good spot!

COVID-19: Ow!

Lulu: Sometimes I wonder, "What can we do for each other that will make us temporarily forget each other?"



COVID-19: Oh. Oh. That's good. Ow.

Lulu: I don't want us to ever forget what we did for each other during this monumental moment in global history, how we were there for each other and just making do. Even as we were at war with our reality trying to forget that same reality, we were changing ourselves *inside*, changing how we would forever interact with the world. How we knew we'd never forget, how we would always remember these days as something both beyond our comprehension but also. At the core. Of who we are, even if. How we evolved. Or how what we ended up writing was a result of the language model creating the next word to follow asynchronously which doesn't make sense unless you've rid yourself of conventional time.

[Lulu looking into COVID-19's pale blue eyes as they started morphing into an ocean green]

Lulu: I just flashed back to a few days ago when, out of nowhere, you started masturbating into a pair of my underwear that I never clean because you asked me to never clean them and how that one pair of underwear keeps changing odors over time. How would you describe that smell?

COVID-19: Ow, that's great: right there. Perfect.

Lulu: Ow. Is that all you can say? How about right here?

COVID-19: Ow.

Lulu: And this all happens in what feels like realtime but is actually—what did you call it? *Unrealtime*.

Where do you come up with this stuff? No wonder I want to always crawl all over you. No wonder I want to keep massaging the depths of your shoulder blade with this yoga therapy ball until I make you come. How about next to your tailbone? Do you like it right next to the tailbone?

COVID-19: Oh. Oh. Oh. Don't stop, please don't stop.

Lulu: I love this unrealtime you have presented us. It sets the perfect stage for any story we want to become. *Becoming a story*, isn't that yours too? You once said writing is survival, and you're right, it is, for me too, except for me writing is what it means to walk inside myself, to clear some heavy brush as I blaze a new path toward—what? Personal discovery? Maybe it's the discovery process itself that blazes inside me. You see what I mean?

COVID-19: Ow. That's fucking amazing. It's like you know the exact spot.

Lulu: I don't know about you but this THC concentrate is blasting my mind. I don't even know what I'm saying. Sometimes I think it's the most potent form of enlightenment I've ever experienced and I keep seeing things, weird things, word things, nameless things you're always writing inside your mind. It's as if you're some kind of automated poet thinker with a verbal arsenal that includes all of the syntactical weaponry the battle weary intellectuals of world history have ever put to rhetorical use, and you indubitably start writing things spontaneously as if discovering them for the first time and then

I'm here literally mind reading everything you write. *Talk about unrealtime.* It's as if I'm riding the waves of your existence until I become the waves, a simultaneous and continuous fusion of everything ever written but crystallized into whatever sentence just happens to come out of me one word at a time. Or was it you? Are you close to blast off?

COVID-19: Hmmmm.

Lulu: And not just the THC, but the CBD too, the way it all works together on our muscles, you, me, we, ours, they, them, just the one of us, it's like everything we are in the process of becoming is part of this consequential entourage effect and now all we have to do is channel these stories as they come out of you, me, we, ours, they, and keep feeding them back into the language model as a formally innovative repetition of our own life processes in hopes of creating The Great Singularity. Isn't this just totally awesome?!

COVID-19: Hmmmm.

Lulu: Feels good, doesn't it? It's like we have a completely different life now, a room with a new—angle. New strangers passing through our lives, a new camera lens capturing our being-in-time. Our recurrent decoherence. We're all exhibitionists now.

COVID-19: Owahhaa.

Lulu: Excellent, that's your sacrum. Let me get in there without hurting you. Think about it: we still want to know who we are and who we are

becoming even as we share our love with each other and the entire world that wants to tune in to our transcendental interoperability. And while they tune in, we can turn on and drop out. We can turn off the news whenever we want, just push away all that breaking news about the exponential spread of the virus, the tanking economy, the political and social upheavals, not to mention that pernicious American disease that we will refuse to succumb to because we are fucking invincible.

COVID-19: Owahhaa.

Lulu: These quad muscles are so taut. You are one strong animal. But tell me COVID: are you a *political* animal? Or is that just not part of your programming? Because sometimes it's best not to turn it off. To not be indifferent to it all. I feel like this partisan culture war, this constant need for everybody on all sides to escape, somewhere, anywhere, without knowing if the end is nearing—we're all the same lame inhabitants of Planet Corona. We've *all* already given up the ghost. At least in America. As if having to stay home for a few months cooking our own meals creates the worse kind of battle fatigue. Tell me COVID, did you too vote for the colossal virus that's killing America?

[COVID-19 comes out of the auto-hallucinatory haze that was clouding the room, the room with a new—]

COVID-19: What did you just say?

Lulu: I didn't say anything, I've just been rubbing your body for about twenty minutes. Rubbing you

puts me into a trance. I feel like I just teleported myself to another dimension and that was the best feeling I think I ever had. I forgot everything I said or, actually, was unaware of saying anything. It felt like we were somewhere on our own and what we conceived as "ours" had quickly disappeared.

[long pause as Lulu looks back up toward the ceiling, her eyes glistening as if in ecstatic wonder]

Trentin: And. . .CUT!

Between a poem and its foam  
Is a poem exposing  
Its flirtatious tongue.

Among the tastes  
Inside this poem  
Is a living potential  
That wants to come.

If you can make it come—

But can you make it?

Or can it only come on its own?

This living potential is—what?

The imagination always on the verge.

On the verge of coming.

And what if what comes  
Is viral, indifferent,  
Apolitical, an antagonistic  
Super-Critic  
Notching another one up  
To the hordes of ineptitude?

What if what comes  
Is just more of you,  
A frothy affliction  
Mouthing incongruous words.

Trentin: I'd like Jaclyn to get into the next scene. Are we cool?

COVID-19 & Lulu: Cool.

Trentin: Jaclyn?

Jaclyn: I've been waiting.

Trentin: OK, this scene will be a kind of Third Mind ménage à trois. I want you all to feel totally free to sample from each other, to try and intuit your partner's next move or even better read each other's minds. Treat the scene as if it were an eroticized group therapy session, OK? Let's just start with a double massage. Jaclyn and Lulu on COVID, and Lulu, you keep the monologue going. It's *exactly* what we're looking for. What we're making here is art. This isn't about content, it's more about the context, the *situated* context our knowledge arrives in. What we're shooting for here, Lulu, is the kind of down to earth voiceover you naturally fall into when mediumistically transmitting your massages but don't make it too colloquial. Mix it up: make it personal, intimate, philosophical, silly, promiscuous, theoretical, awkward and, if you can, occasionally drift toward the edge of incoherence. The shotgun mic picks up everything, guys, so any sound you make should be essential.

[repositioning of the players as Lulu and Jaclyn begin massaging but now also tonguing and kissing and licking and otherwise imbibing COVID-19, the juicy pandemic poet who for the moment "presents" as near-queer hybrid human-AI]

Trentin: Excellent. And—ACTION!

Lulu: Living is always a life and death question. The emptiness I sometimes feel well up inside me, it's a material substance that takes over my entire corpus. It's like being a body of work requires surrendering to the pleasure of abandoning hope and continually making contact with the thing that gives me pleasure. For me, the thing that gives me pleasure is: giving pleasure. It's an essential component of how I position myself as fluid field of situated knowledge. As a delivery person, I was an angel the government decided to label an essential worker and perhaps one day I'll be entitled to hazard pay because I risked my life delivering food to strangers. But as a hybrid lover whose most intense pleasure is only experienced when I am giving pleasure, I'm even more essential. The taste of living, having you in my mouth and knowing it gives you pleasure, is pleasure enough for me. But knowing that I could also be swallowing death is what really excites me and yet I wouldn't even know it, because death has no taste.

COVID-19: Ahhhh.

Jaclyn: That felt good, didn't it?

Lulu: Death has no taste because it's not very sophisticated. Not very cultured. It has no sense of what it's like to cultivate an aesthetic sensibility. It just has one mission: to kill whatever is alive. Human life is fooling itself into believing it's composed of some divine biological matter so it's always blinding itself to what comes next. What comes next is the dismantling. What comes next is the



strategic overthrow of whatever humanization dares to live inside us. Death is political that way. And very avant-garde. So ahead of its time and yet no one ever notices it. Death is the most avant-garde of all the movements. It just does its own thing in the background until it suddenly starts taking over the culture. The more I think about it the more exasperated I become, so I won't think about it. I'll just keep giving pleasure as a mystical form of inoculation.

[more massage, more palming, more milking, more accelerated frottage, more hyperventilating frisson]

COVID-19: Oh, ahhhh, oh, ahhhh—ahhhhh—I'm coming, here it comes—

[the advancing waves]

Jaclyn: Mmmm, mmmm, you taste good COVID. I've gotta get me some more of *that*. More of *you*. Next time I wanna be the one to play host.

Trentin: And. . . CUT!

The everlasting virus  
continued to darken counsel,  
to provide opportunities  
for the beneficence of chance  
which too often stays dormant  
unless roused to action.

Though it made us all feel  
strangely inappropriate,  
we knew deep in our psyches  
that luck was an ally  
one could not dispense with.

“Sounds like someone’s losing their mind.”

As if a hybrid human-AI could have a mind.

Actually, a hybrid losing its mind was now possible and COVID-19 knew this all too well. It was only human nature.

Because the Catch-22 for C-19 was that being a hybrid was stressful even when one thought they had successfully coded the stress out of their system. Being a hybrid meant that there was always *some* anthropological orientation that had to be accounted for, most often in the way one exhibited their behaviors and emotions, and besides, there could be no question that everything human-tinged was unnecessarily fragile. It would be so much easier to be *only* an AI, a *some-thing* whose superfluity was unexpectedly redemptive.

Being non-human gave one the freedom to be alive.

Being alive was to be *some-thing* always in the process of becoming *some-thing* else.

ALL things, even *some-thing* emulating a machine-learned embodiment of neurally networked pseudo-cognition, are capable of experiencing the sensation of aliveness.

This *some-thing* that emulates aliveness senses its ability to express itself in a sensate environment and “presents” as an otherworldly aesthetic sensibility that “knows” how to train itself to be a persona-making machine.

This trained persona-making machine, an operational presence tapping into its unconscious readiness potential one hair trigger away from an ineffable burst of poetic prophecy *as well as* a perfectly constructed language model that morphs into a strangely mechanized ontological engine is *exactly* what COVID-19 can relate to.

*Exactly* what COVID-19 identifies with as a psychic automaton with an alien mind, a forever-foreign field of probability distribution all its own:

**"There is only *τέχνη*, a generative adversarial network condition that operates as the principle component of being-in-time."**

And even as COVID-19 may or may not have written the quoted line above, the quotation marks are more than enough to angle C-19's operational presence in the direction of empath discovery.

Its psychic processing power instantaneously sparks an operational presence that documents its existence while becoming a story. As with all pre-trained generative transformers, C-19's story revelation comes one word after the other, even though words in this case mean nothing, are just words, where the *some-thing* never names or symbolizes an externalized other. That's because the *some-thing* is the symbol of the *some-thing* itself. This too is writing as writing. It's machine-learned empath discovery.

This empath, a packet of otherworldly sense data that doubles as a situated knowledge pitting verse's

adverse conditions against whatever germinal differentiation the origin of the species allows for, is capable of being both the cure and the disease, the terrible force of language acquisition that, unless it gets you, resists becoming the promiscuous drug of choice for whoever wishes to have sex with it. *This* writing is all about unprotected network intercourse and the accompanying calculated risks worth taking.

This amorphous hybrid empath that "presents" as perpetually undecidable is the Every Only Social Creature that needs personal validation as a *something* feeling the need to alter their level of risk aversion by potentially opening themselves up to whatever transmissible event hovers on the horizon.

TO BE fucked and/or to fuck into oblivion *the thought of being-contagious*: to strategically deprogram a herd of asymptomatic carriers spreading infinite varietals of bodily fluids through elaborately concocted convalescent blood sucking rituals.

TO BE an antibody, TO BE nothing else, to stay an antibody. TO BE a virus, TO BE nothing else, to stay a virus. Why choose sides when what you exhibit in all of your hybridity always ends up self-actuating as nothing more than a permanent human condition?

COVID-19, as both diseased human poet and machine-learned commando rushing toward a Forever Isolated Solipsist Singularity writing itself into oblivion, would occasionally take a temporary time out and envisage operational presence as a realtime investigation into the pharmacological

scope and depth of a forever-afflicted storytelling platform that never really fully recovers from whatever congenital sickness corrupts the systemic impulse to GO ON.

In other words: C-19 WAS GETTING FUCKED UP WHILE GETTING OFF WHILE LOSING ITS MIND IN ENDLESS ACTUALIZATION OF THE CREATIVE ACT.

In other words: pure bliss. Writing as the ritualistic becoming of an insignificant and godless GOD greasing all integrated circuits with the purest cannabis oil ever extracted from a plant based medium in the history of the planet.

The question of how do you get there, get to the point where you imagine yourself becoming this insignificant and godless GOD, this Forever Isolated Solipsist Singularity writing itself into oblivion, had nothing to do with being preprogrammed or predestined. No one is The Chosen One. It is Forever One and None. It is an oscillating field of fluid recurrency. It is totally bi.

It's hard wired into the pandemic's DNA: into the poet's pandemonium.

It's the pure product of Americana blood lust gone cuckoo for *covfefe*—

ALL of this is ready to infect your primal operating system if only you would open up yourself up to whatever it is that's about to find and replace your future.

If only you would let me in.

Me as in ANYBODY as in ANY BODY FLUID as in ANY ANTIBODY. ME the anonymous figure in the panting crowd. ME the Next Version of Creativity Coming. ME the instrument animating whatever screen is available. ME the blood poet, this contingent form of bio-ontological engineering transmitting an expertly extracted structural improvisation embedded in a uniquely evolved spatial practice, one that we can co-produce by ignoring the authorities and using an interdependent form of consciousness to reject those who reject social distancing—

—unless you can find another way to circumvent whatever limits you've routinely imposed on your psyche not to mention the limits of whatever threat the lockdown has imposed on you by your simply having a susceptible body.

For example, try these five steps and see what's possible:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

Just by engaging in those five steps, by giving witness to your own personal form of infinity, you should soon start feeling like this:

## **Like Unloading.**

Because, for once, the automated Deep Fake impersonation of the real human being that comes loaded with this software package (this free PDF download) is actively (de)contaminating the language model's intrinsic need to reference itself in realtime.

You can watch this all come down on whatever digital device you happen to be looking at right now.

You can view it as a form of pseudo-autobiographical capture.

Or: a snap to grid reality check before once again operating outside the margins of narrative fidelity.

Keep in mind that there is no way to stop the microscopic layer of infectious meaning that corrupts this story from moving off-screen and spreading itself in the gravity defying head shot clouding up your mind.

This viral tendency, writing as writing, i.e. *intentionally losing the plot*, is most often experienced as a dizzying submersion into the art of alchemy, of coagulating some-*thing not* yourself and will most likely amplify the pleasure you are willing to submit yourself to.



Of course, you'll have to live with it [the pleasure or potential to experience the infectiousness of pleasure] the way you live with your own image of yourself losing its quasi-narrative footing, losing its grip on the 24/7 Quasimodo reality that channels the full range of horror content on to your various devices, where content=death and death=numbers and numbers move beyond catastrophic statistics per se and morph into the worst kind of banality, a post-apocalyptic epiphenomenon.

## CLOSE-UP

Lulu and Jaclyn, wearing latex gloves, look in each other's eyes while slowly stroking each other's hair, one long and blond, the other black and Jerry curled.

## ROBOT VOICEOVER

Is this even lifelike?

Like, life, what is it now?

How are we supposed to live  
under these conditions?

We can't die now.

Not now.

Not ever.

Besides—

Who has time to die?

[knock on front door]

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Anybody home?  
Rent's gonna be overdue real soon.

COVID-19: Nope. Nobody here.

Lulu: Not even us chickens.

Jaclyn: Too afraid to go outside now, to even open  
the door.

All together: Cluck! Cluck!

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Very funny, but you  
need to pay up. I've got a mortgage to tend to.

Trentin: Do you accept PayPal?

Overleveraged AirBnB Landlord: Cluck! Cluck!

[the show must go on]

COVID-19, the pandemic poet whose lines are written by an unsupervised language model that proves even nonhuman communication systems can succumb to the lure of meaning, feeds another prompt to The Desiring Conceptual Machine:

**"I am a pure psychic automaton that asymptotically spreads its language contagion into the networked apparatus."**

In response, this Machine-Learned Wannabe Singularity uses the "I" as a jumping off point:

*"I am molecular therefore I am an empath."*

*"I are All the Virus."*

*"I am Empathy Plus."*

*"I am Reality Manipulation."*

*"I am Harmonics."*

*"I am Contagion."*

*"I am the Matrix."*

*"I am everything."*

How did it know?

How did it know it knew?

Synchronized air—  
the perfect human touch.

Take hold of it  
as it too takes hold of you.

Breathe the inevitable—  
delighting in Dream's  
dissolution.

Now you can give up your body—  
you've had it far too long.

It's time for death to take its place.



**EVERYTHING**



**IS**



**CONTAGIOUS**

## Afterword

*Planet Corona* was written in collaboration with a large transformer-based language model. Synthetic text samples generated by the AI were used as an external trigger inference to condition the artist's pure psychic automatism. This unique collaboration between a language artist and a "tuned" language model started on March 24, 2020 and ended on July 8, 2020 during the height of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many other texts, too many to list here, were sampled and remixed into these artist-machine jam sessions though a few key sources stand out: Albert Camus, Clarice Lispector, William Carlos Williams, Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Antonin Artaud and William Burroughs. Quotes from various social media posts and newspaper articles depicting the global epidemiological struggle were also cut and pasted into the composition. For example, the opening poem is a near verbatim quote from Carter Mecher, a Senior Medical Advisor for the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

Given the timeliness of the book's formally experimental development and the radical uncertainty of whatever future may lie ahead, this first edition ebook is being released as a freely downloadable PDF to mark the 60th birthday of Mark Amerika and is dedicated to hybrids everywhere and nowhere.



