

An Anthology of Pandemic Poems
by OPA Members

Sponsored by
the Executive Board of
Oregon Poetry Association 2020

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**Oregon
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Association**

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FOREWORD

“As an OPA board member, having read through these poems, I can attest to the quality of writing. I am amazed at the variety of subjects these poets have tackled. Some of the poems directly reflect the scourge of the virus in costs of human life and suffering. . . I also noticed that many of these poems were celebrations, able to juxtapose the beauty of Nature surrounding us in a time of upheaval.”

—Susan Morse, OPA Executive Board Member

During the pandemic we have all had ample time to write. In response to these unprecedented times the Oregon Poetry Association is publishing this Pandemic 2020 Anthology. All the poems are by OPA members. We are happy to present this stunning artistic and historic document.

While the pandemic raged, nature thrived. Spring burst into summer and wild animals roamed our backyards. We poets weeded our gardens, baked, tended our children, and wrote poetry. We observed our neighbors from afar, adjusting to the new social norms, not touching, and drawing cautious breaths behind our masks. We were lonely and fearful, furious with the slow lack of government response, though few of us reflected our frustration in our poetry.

A few months ago, wildfires swept through Oregon, burning some of our homes as well as entire communities. A pall of thick smoke blanketed our state, making it even more difficult to breathe. At the time of this publication, four hundred thousand Americans have lost their lives due to contagion. Poets in this anthology lost loved ones and wrote of their grief. We have suffered through a tumultuous political upheaval and yet we continue to write poetry.

Dale Champlin, Editor

Liberation Theology

by Jo Van Arkel

The day will come when
we have no use for masks.
They will be shoved to the
back of the sock drawer at first
then thrown out with the
worn socks that have holes
in the heels. Or perhaps
we will wave them in victory,
run into the streets and kiss
whoever takes hold of us
in the abandoned
heat of the moment.

We won't need tape to
mark off our places to stay
safe from one another.
At the very least we will
surely recall how to hug
again like bears dancing
in a bare patch in the forest.
Maybe we will always
select a floor on the elevator
with an elbow though
because—well, germs are still
everywhere and now elbows
are good for something more
than bending an arm,
waving goodbye.

How hard it is to breathe
now though—our muffled
hearts pump, our hopes
flag and your glasses keep
fogging from the steep
flight of stairs.