

Excursions

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Essays: Research in Times of Chaos

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The World Needs to Heal

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The World Needs to Heal

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Social distancing,
Stay 2m apart.
More than the distance is killing us,
The isolation is breaking our hearts.

Everything has stopped,
Everything has closed.
The world is not used to being at a standstill,
And it shows.

Wash hands, sanitise, wear a mask,
Stay home, but only go out if necessary.
Work from home, but only go to work if necessary,
Wash hands, sanitise, wear a mask.
Classrooms and lecture theatres are idle,
Graduation gowns have not been worn.
Campus accommodation has been vacated,
While pre-paid train tickets have been torn.

Covid-19.

Although everything in the world stopped,
One thing did not come to a halt:
Research for the PhD researcher;
Research never “closes”, by default.

When books are the lifeblood of your research,
How can one research when libraries are closed.
Journal articles are difficult to access,
And books are expensive to buy?

Deadlines, word count, edit,
Delete.
Type, read, edit,
Delete, undo, delete.

Covid-19.

A PhD is already wholly independent and very isolating:
I, therefore, have been “self-isolating” since my degree began.
Now the whole world is doing it,
Now I’m more isolated than people understand.

I sit in front of my laptop,
To edit my thesis, see my supervisors and to teach.
Life is entirely virtual,
Yet, the irony is that at times it can still be difficult to stay within reach.

The mental chaos is draining, it's difficult to keep up.
My inbox is full, and my eyes are heavy,
These unprecedented times are accompanied by unprecedented changes,
But change is coming – it's slow... but steady.
Right now, the world is poorly,
It's in a bad condition.
But one day the world will smile again,
This is just its detox.

The world is healing.

Once again, researchers will sit side by side,
Research progress and conferences will be the topic of conversation.
We'll hug, shake hands,
As PhD research returns to its normal formation.