

April

## Awakenings

At six o'clock (or so) this morning,  
they broke out of social isolation,  
their songs a mix of celebration,  
wooing, warning  
as they rejoiced in close proximity  
within a garden edged by trees.

Did I envy them – these starlings, sparrows?  
Yes – for the way they recklessly embraced  
their neighbour's feathers,  
squabbled beak to face,  
swirled into the distance.

Unlike those of us who've bunkered down,  
the grounded human race.

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## Quarff in Quarantine - 2020

And here we are, transported to our fathers' age,  
confined to our eight acres, caged  
within croftland, talking across a neighbour's  
fence in soft  
rain or sunlight. Soon we'll cross

back into their time, speak of hours  
employed on the hydro-dams, bringing power  
to darkened peaks and glens, recall, too,  
Merchant Navy decks,  
years in hotels or service, check

there's enough feed for every brood of hens  
pecking around manure heaps, knowing we  
depend  
on the shit-smeared eggs and plucked flesh  
we harvest from these birds, no longer now  
emmeshed

by all that once pressed hard upon us.  
A new birth and new beginning.  
Different, terrifying, fresh.

## Small Comforts in the Time of Coronavirus

Space contracts. Ferries rust in harbour,  
held at bay  
by governmental order,  
while planes no longer venture near Sumburgh or  
Stornoway.

Soon it's said, there's plans  
to disconnect all railway-lines  
criss-crossing continent or mainland.

Within a few years time,

motorways will disappear.

(Already we see buses roll on empty,  
while taxi-drivers rarely move from first gear  
in the hope that they might see

the prospect of an occupant to fill an empty seat.)

And in that process time expands.

We slow our step, drag our feet  
to journey across islands,

taking hours

to appreciate the wind and birdsong,  
scent of flowers,

the wonders that our ancestors glimpsed

that we thought had gone.