

## Three Poems

Raphael Salise

Dear City,

I am writing to you on a whim, to tell you that the situation is already out of hand. The air outside is thick and heavy, our breaths are calculated, our days numbered, numbers, decreasing, depleting. It is only a matter of time until

we are wiped out of existence, like  
a silent asteroid, a thief in the night.  
It is only a matter of time until  
we run out of ink. Tonight

the wildfire has died out, and the crickets have stopped singing.  
The thieves will reap the bullets they have sown in our infertile soil

say graces, in chorus, over dinner, over bloodshed  
say *amen*, say *drink your fill, you filthy cannibals*.  
say that faith still works, then pray with your hands  
tied, or behind your head. No one is there to listen.

The animals have escaped captivity, now roaming free in the metropolitan jungle. Chaotic, yes. Prophetic even. An ostrich runs on two frail, too frail legs. The ostrich is a prophet taking it to the streets. It screams, so scream back. Ostrich. Ostrich. It is only a matter of time until

tomorrow becomes today and today becomes yesterday until  
tomorrow comes, we run back and forth endlessly until  
tomorrow becomes a word that becomes a number.

Dear City, how many tomorrows do we have left?

## for simon

say *nation*—but only once, at the start

say tomorrow will be different

say otherwise, tomorrow will have

no difference

say people are not people, they are decimal places

say amen, second coming, red crucifix, preyed for us

say accomplice, say ignorance, nothing accomplished

say fire at close range, closed case, gasoline

say poor, many times, your household word

say West Philippine Seize, in prostration

say projected / parabolic / pause-phobic

say shut up, shut down, *in media's rest*

say face-to-face-the-face-to-fascies

say blueprint . . . nothing follows

say we're prepared.

say this speech is better heard without sound.

in the middle of a pandemic

i am overcomplicating things  
but perhaps—  
if we had met sooner  
we would not be the same as we are  
if we had met later  
we would not be the same as we were

but here we are, pondering  
watching the waves drown our feet  
standing on opposite shores  
we are lost in an endless loop of time

*whichever way we read this narrative*

we are lost in an endless loop of time  
as we stand on opposite shores  
watching the waves drown our feet  
but here we are, pondering

we would not be the same as we were  
if we had met later  
we would not be the same as we are  
if we had met sooner  
but perhaps—  
i am overcomplicating things

*in the middle of a pandemic*