

Geometry

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Axiom: we are points
scattered along the same

quadrant. The curve
of the graph is steep,

rising in jags
and spikes. We disperse.

We obey the lines
and arrows on the floor.

The length of a room
is the circumference

of the world. We falter
by degrees, minute

by infectious
minute. The air skims

on tangent against
our skin. Refusing

stasis, the human
body is a vector.

Theorem: there will always
be distance between us.

Multiple Choice

The citizens were ordered to stay at home

- a. to flatten the curve, which kept rising and rising.
- b. as intervention to the addictive loop of routine.
- c. and dwell on the minutiae of their lives via social media.
- d. for an indefinite period, not unlike an open-ended prison sentence.

A checkpoint is a node

- a. between two places during a lockdown.
- b. of demarcation that divides class lines.
- c. that often creates bottleneck traffic.
- d. and a roadblock and the spikes of a rampart.

The homeless

- a. had no choice but to remain at the threshold of shelters.
- b. faced fines or were arrested for failing to comply with rules.
- c. laid bare on the streets, the poor sardine-packed in the slums.
- d. are all of the above and none of the above.

Anyone could become a killer

- a. especially the police.
- b. just by coughing in a crowded train.
- c. given a blade, rope, or bullet.
- d. in the unmasked face of survival.

It was a different world

- a. which has closed in on itself.
- b. but also somehow the same, seen behind a pane of glass.
- c. emptied of its possible futures.
- d. that emerged from the wreckage.

Swab Test

“These days I sometimes catch myself wishing to get the virus—in this way, at least the debilitating uncertainty would be over.” —Slavoj Žižek

We look at the world through a window, Žižek,
and witness how it has turned into a desert
of the real. I have never seen the streets
so barren, a wasteland haunted by the doppler
siren of an ambulance. We are troubled
and seduced by this song. We breathe the vital,
perhaps contaminated air, through a mask.
Yesterday, a nurse in a hazmat suit
inserted a swab deep into my nostril.
It felt like she was straining to reach my brain,
scrape the gray matter’s convoluted surface.
Still we wonder if anyone has access
to what we think. I listen to the neighbor’s
footsteps and wait for the call, handed out
as judgment. Left alone, the mind conjures
all possible pasts and futures. We return again
and again to the terror of the present.
It is a room, Žižek, where your voice loops
and echoes. It stuns the body into inertia.
The screw tightens; the blade glints with each
irrevocable hour. Once, I could not face this sharp,
simple fact. Today, I no longer wish
to be spared. We are most afraid of silence.
We ache to hear the breaking of glass.