

Covid Island

Katharina Niemeyer

September 9th, 2020, Covid Island

Dear Marshall,

First of all, I am very sorry for not having written you back all these years. The simple reason is that your letter, written in 1962, got lost in the mail and the postal service found it only a few months ago in some old box. The time it took to get sent to Covid Island, where I live now — well, it still took a few weeks more to get to its final destination. ... Imagine, it sounds just like all these other stories of lost letters in the world. ... Today I discovered with pleasure and curiosity new extracts of your future book, *Understanding Media* — which, of course, is not new anymore. The day you read these words — written in another 'era', so to say — may make you feel either cold or hot, or maybe they won't have any effect on you at all. To be honest, I am a bit uncomfortable with the idea of cold and hot media, not only because Covid Island is more lukewarm than anything else, but also because these contrasts do not seem to work as well as you might have thought they did when you sent me your letter. Personally speaking, media do not really feel to me like extensions of myself. Frankly, I feel more like I am amputated, as you had stated in your text; or should I say that I feel more like I am a boring extension of media, in the end?

Remember, the city is a funny place as Lou Reed reminds us...

No acceleration, no deceleration, no vanishing point,
thrown but not drowned on strange land
You can see the clouds in the sky from your window and
click them away
Blink of an eye, the clouds in the sky from your window
become your new friends
Viral storms of blizzards bursting in from all sides
throughout the day

Long and short stories the blizzards tell make you freeze
While others run systems, breathe steadily in an attempt
to alleviate pains
You surf the waves all day in circles and chains
Blocked and waiting for better times and for the moment
to seize

The flow of bytes and hypes shut your system down
To flatten the curve of the enigmatic crown
It's almost easy for those who work alone from home
Still trying to cluster and to nourish the rhizome

From Covid Island you sing with the birds in your yard
Tweeting tags your neighbor left on your building's
façade
And while you trying to put on a mask to navigate the
blizzard
Your neighbor posts a letter that says don't fall apart
Broken times and systems to change the past? — no way
And as there was neither and never one before
You have to use your window clouds and learn to stay
As patient as the patient hoping for an open door

No acceleration, no deceleration, no vanishing point,
thrown but not drowned on strange land
I can see the clouds in the sky from my window but I cannot
click them away
Blink of an eye, the clouds in the sky from my window are
still not my friends
Viral storms of blizzards bursting in from all sides asking
me to pay

Attention and make the best of my free time — gin, tonic
and lime?
Learn Japanese, bake bread and write a novel of crime?
Click, check and do whatever I could not do before
Or even try to live life that is delivered to my door?

Step by step — I see you getting packages five times a
week
Sent by the amazing Jeff with a quick smile on your cheek
and my newspeak — while watching snow falling down on
the road
We never thought that we would like this slow kind of
mode

And, as I can see from my window at night, you follow
the instant tips
To stay as healthy as my Instagram friends who move
their hips
To the rhythms of the nights and times they spent on
islands
They can now only dream of by listening to their favorite
bands

Alone in the dark, the mouse and the pad help light your fire
That might revive your energy and get rid of your lack of
desire

As you find your courage and brains to stop the denier
Who never asks where the news find their wire

Behind your masks, what is your secret and what is its
shape?

Harassment, hate or rape?

Your garden does not keep you safe anymore

Virality is sometimes good to cry out and loud for

No acceleration, no deceleration, no vanishing point,
thrown but not drowned on strange lands

They can see the clouds in the sky from their windows but
they click them away

Blink of an eye, the clouds in the sky from their windows
are still not their favorite brands

Viral storms of blizzards bursting in from all sides asking
them to endure the grey

While monuments fall, others seem to miss the mall

Surfers forget the window clouds to ride and love

Your other takes on every night with a mask and gloves

To save them — and if possible — to save us all.

Zone of indetermination, conspiracy, contamination of
time

While others would try to find a dime or a rhyme

Future moments stripped away, suspending wishes yet to
come true

Obliged to copy and paste dreams with virtual glue

Baby, I'm on Covid Island — now!