

Sue Whitmore

The Book of Virus

This book from the Ancient of Days -
describes a time of plague, of masks,
of portents, pomanders and bad air,
days when god-bound paranoia drove us to our knees.
Now it challenges our proud technologies.

Nightly on our screens the secular priests
intone at lecterns, looking grim -
and rattled faith is somewhat reassured by number,
for humbled hubris doesn't suit the modern heart
struggling with fate's untimely whim.

And so we live with rising graphs,
industrial scale losses, Intensive Care,
failed algorithms spawning digital crosses.
No touching child, or friend, or mother -
now we must be cautious with each other.

As in a different book, another age, another life
isolated figures in de-peopled streets
scuttle off to anxiously home-cage.
Those with gardens re-discover Eden for a while
and for a while the planet breathes.

But those confined to homes where life is vile
and dark frustration seethes
have endless weeks of fear to grieve,
trapped in a lost paradise
where Adam beats up Eve.

Poet and artist **Sue Whitmore** studied at University College London, Central and Wimbledon Schools of Art. Word and image in childhood books have led her to a lifelong commitment to imagination and the human experience expressed through both poetry and art. Her multiple lives have also included theatre design and printmaking. She exhibits widely in Britain and abroad, including the Royal Academy, and has been a member of Greenwich Printmakers for many years. She enjoys performing her poetry, which has been broadcast and published in many journals, and convenes a Stanza of the Poetry Society. In 2012 she was made 'Champion of Culture' by Art in Business for her contribution to the arts. Publications: '*Sue, Realist: A Selection of Poems & Drawings*', 1992 and '*Blood, Fish & Bone*' [*Books I & II*], 2017, a pamphlet, '*Human Interest*' - commended in IDP's Geoff Stevens Memorial Competition in 2018.