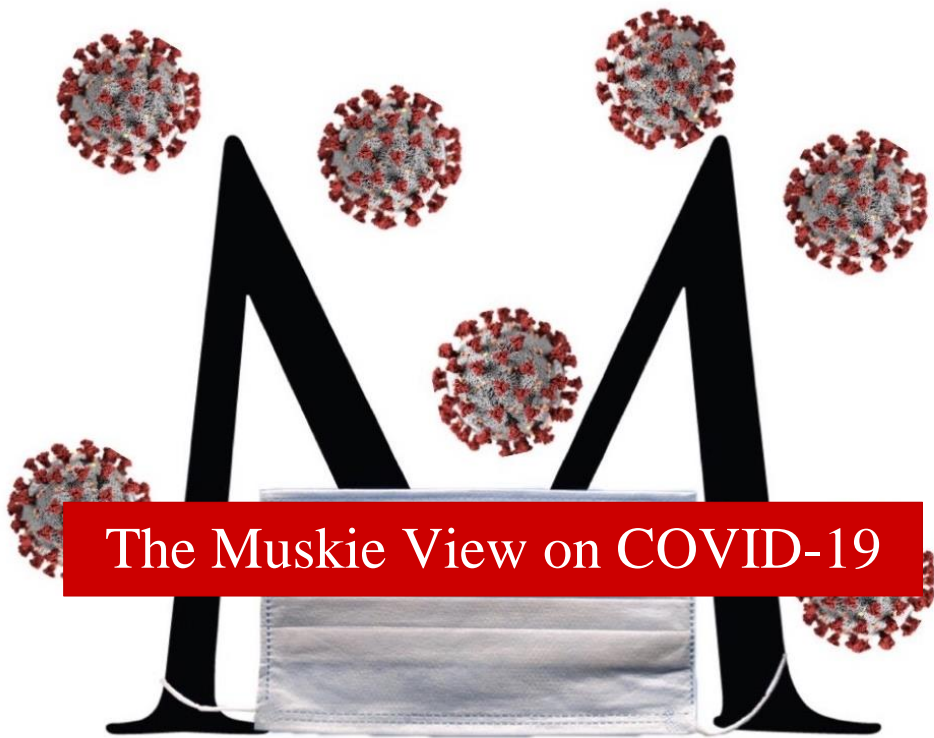


THE QUARANTINE DIARIES



The Muskie View on COVID-19

Presented by Muskie Press

On March 10th at 4:10pm, an email from Dr. Susan Hasseler shook the campus. Students were given 3 days to pack up their lives and head back home. What we thought would be 2 weeks became 3 months of uncertainty as the world paused and COVID-19 took over. Muskies were evacuated from campus and people all over the globe were forced to stay inside. Our lives became encased in an online fortress. A lack of social interaction and toilet paper haunted us for months and Tik Tok became our only comfort. Chaos erupted as emails were ignored, assignments were turned in late and graduations became slideshows. This is the modern-day Titanic and we are all the violin players continuing to play as the world sinks around us. During this time of fear and uncertainty, people discovered a sense of gratitude, beauty, and determination... These are their stories.

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Best Before 3/13/2020

Catherine Schultz

The milk is spoiled.
My pantry is only filled with moldy food.
If I leave
my safe haven
I could die.
If I don't, I'll starve.
Suffocation or starvation,
which choice is better for me?
I'll pick suffocation—
at least then I may be able
to get some help.
I leave for the store,
which was usually busy
but is now an empty graveyard.
I walk the empty aisles—
the only food I found
was best before 3/13/20.

Haiku

Dr. Joseph Nowakowski

No students around.
Governor said stay at home.
Just me and the cats.

Tulips are blooming.
Most daffodils were frozen.
Weather can't decide.

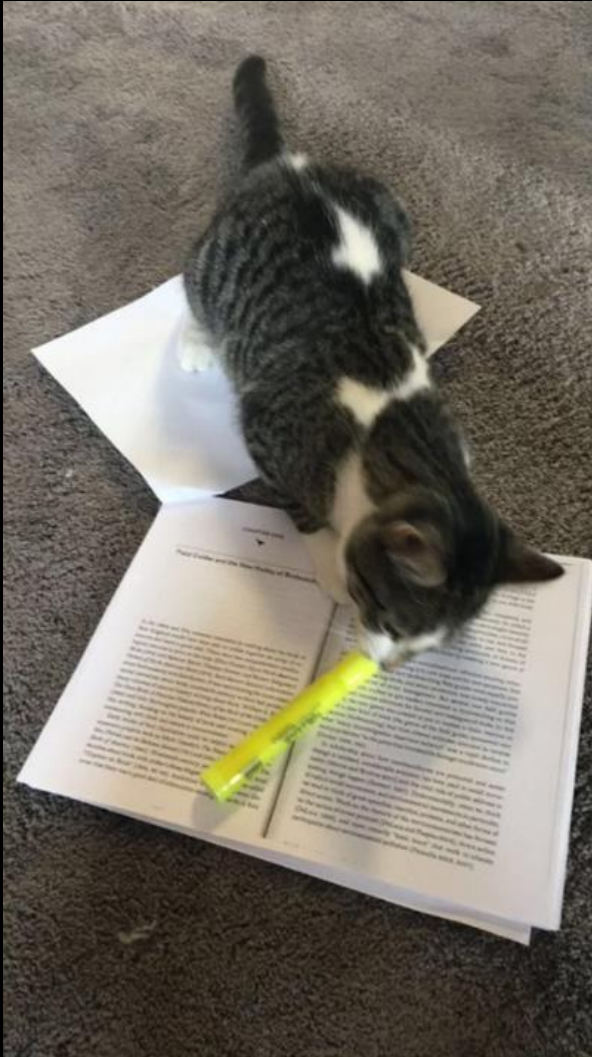
What to watch tonight?
Netflix, Hulu, Amazon.
What's that? Oh, a book.

Daughter back from school.
Dinner for two, not just one.
Different tastes, though.

Home with Nicky now.
Does he always sleep that much?
Not even a cat.

Catching up on chores.
Got the brand-new curtains hung.
They are too damn long.

Watching *Green Gables*
Next: *All Creatures Great and Small*
Sucker for wholesome



Shadow Helps with Homework
Nerissa Smith
 Photograph

My Work Buddy
Tanya Biggins
 Photograph



Ode to Pre-Corona

Sidney Martin

Habits broken months ago—
sleeping late,
or until the birds cawing
becomes an incessant alarm,
a drumming reminder of
staying inside another day;
bored eating,
raiding the fridge, pantry,
freezer, pantry again, contemplating,
snagging the Lay's,
mouthing a handful before
checking the fridge,
freezer, fridge again,
and going back to bed;
and two naps a day,
waking from a foggy haze
to dazed thoughts and
dried drool pooling your pillow—
return with a vengeance.

Thoughts from My Quarantine Induced Runs

Jillian Taylor

This apartment complex is so much larger than I thought it was. There are roads and sidewalks and buildings that I never knew existed. It's interesting how you think the world is huge and you're getting comfortable with that fact but then within your small little community, there's more than you knew.

More people in this neighborhood should take walks and spend time outside. I get why people want other people to decorate. It makes it more interesting for those of us outside to look at. They live in the house, so they don't have to see it as often. But those of us out here do.

On the same note, you can tell which houses are lived in and which are not. It's not always easy to tell, but with time, you can pick up the hints that clue the attentive outside world in. There are no cars out front. That's a big indicator. There are no curtains or blinds in the windows. Some people decorate outside, and others don't so it's hard to distinguish but it can become clearer if you look deeper. The ground hasn't been walked on, it's cleaner here. It rained yesterday, there should be muddy shoe prints. Some sign of recent life.

Leaving out the back door seems safer. I often have that persistent feeling most women do about how to be safe in the evenings, outside and alone. This way people don't have to know I'm leaving. But there's something about sneaking off into the night, appearing suddenly out from the back fence onto the thin, darkened sidewalk, looking both ways, picking a direction, and going without any more thought. Just slipping away quietly.

Should I be worried that I want to disappear sometimes? Especially these days.

I never knew how much I valued my busy life until it was all taken away from me. I need routine. Structure. It's vital. Maybe I'm trying to keep that routine in my runs. Sure, it seems boring to people. The people that say "you just get up and go to work and come home and eat and go back to bed and do it all again. What's the point?" I used to be one of those people. What's the fun in always knowing exactly what the next day would hold? I'm an anxiety-ridden control freak, so it makes sense I would feel more secure with a routine. I had to learn this though.

Going to sleep at 4am and waking up at 2pm still tired, wanting a nap by 4pm is how I learned. I learned that this is not the way to live. I haven't learned how to change this yet though. I feel like I'm unlearning my entire life. I'm forgetting how to wake up before noon. I'm forgetting how to smile. I get up and I don't know what clothes to live in for the 24 or 36 or 48 hours. Sometimes, I forget—

Is it Still a Hoax?

Gracie Collins

My aunt and uncle
Said it was all just a hoax.
They continued to make so many jokes
About the rubber gloves and the piles of Clorox wipes.
They mocked the people in their face masks.
It was all just fake news they said.
Weeks on weeks of self-isolation
But to them it's not real.
This enemy is invisible.
They didn't seem to believe in the invisible.
Weeks of refusing the social distancing
Has gotten its revenge.
My aunt lies in a hospital bed.
She can't even see her husband
All because they couldn't stay inside.
They are still in denial.
They are convinced it is something else.
No matter how many people tell them.
It's invisible, there is no proof.
That's what they tell themselves.
Refusing to be wrong.

Personal Observations During Isolation

Dr. Robert Sharp

“Life comes at you fast.”

It’s one of those jokes that forms the basis of a thousand online memes. They are often accompanied by a series of images where a seemingly normal event transforms into a hilarious (or brutal) moment of horror. Imagine a video of a cat minding its own business as it turns the corner only to come face to face with an alligator, the final frame showing the cat five feet in the air as it leaps in a random direction, hoping for the best.

In the first week of March, I was putting final touches on a planned study abroad experience to France. One of my colleagues and I were going to give students a once in a lifetime experience in Paris and beyond. He was in Europe at the time, leading a Spring Break trip to England. I saw the cases appearing in the news. I keep up with such stories, because they always provide good examples for my Biomedical Ethics class. Looked like another H1N1 or SARS. I hoped that it wouldn’t harm too many people in Asia, even as I assumed we could limit its spread. But cases were popping up across Europe already. I worried for those on Spring Break. Were they aware? Were they safe? Meanwhile, Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of England was intentionally shaking hands to show how safe everyone would be from this new disease.

As I write this, Johnson is in the Intensive Care Unit, fighting for his life.

Life comes at you fast.

One month has passed since I was thinking about whether we would still be able to have a May Term trip to Europe, but it seems like a year ago. I would only see my students twice more before we were separated for the rest of the semester, communicating only through bits of data that filter our ability to emotionally respond to each other when we most need it. And I am left to wonder what human connection will be like when all this is over; how will it have changed? Will we finally realize that our paths have always intertwined or pretend this never happened?

Life comes at you fast.

We walk in isolation, but never quite alone,
Bearing shared worries that we never really own.
Face Revelations on the road to Damascus,
Awaiting something or someone to unmask us.

Idealize the Quarantine to Write

Jake Bourget

Excluding the strains and pains created from schoolwork, and finishing undergrad online,
The quarantine has provided me with an ideal amount of time to write.

Ideal being equivalent to what seems like infinity.

There are perks and irks about this newly formed state of a world.

Discouraged social gatherings and closed-down businesses.

People are forced to follow taxes and payments without a stable end in sight,

While most have the addition of no income from a job.

Idly waiting for prolonged expectations of unemployment checks.

Cushioning and prepping my tax return to be spent on more than just chipotle and pencils,

Hoping I don't have to divide it into my next few months of quarantined rent.

The amount of staring and judgement from eyes is impeccably annoying

It's almost like you are crazy for not covering your entire body

At least I'm not one of the overly cautious and potentially viral
germaphobes laughed at in public.

Random gifts and supports from people who can afford to do so,

but seeing the basic needs and necessities ignored by others who are obligated to do so

The amount of free time is making twitter and Instagram seem insignificant,
as each day passes by

The only possible negative that would be in the increased amount of time given to thinking
about all the online work and how overwhelming it can become when fixated upon

Again, I am thankful and delighted with the amount of writing time I have been able to take
advantage of.

Hopefully, I can find an ending within my writing, while we wait for a real end together



Brilliance in the Storm

Jim Dooley
Photograph



Deserted Quad

Muskingum University Tennis
Mixed Media Photograph

Untitled

Dr. Karen Dunak

When this all began, I looked around the house for something to read, someplace to go, something to take me from this. As I looked at the piles and piles of library books yet to be read, it was clear to me I didn't want non-fiction. In this house, though, if I'm looking for fiction, there are primarily books I've read or someone else's collections of books I don't particularly wish to read. But, because we are a people who keep too many things, there are some old books from respective college courses (literally, from another century), and some of those are not mine and are still new to me. This is how I came to read *The Color Purple*.

How embarrassing for me never to have read it before. And yet, here we are.

I told my husband I needed something to distract me, and that what would distract me was this book. As I was early into it, he asked, "How is it?" and I said, "Depressing." We all make our choices.

This was a good one.

I think right now I have felt anxious and without power, frustrated, and angry. Those feelings are not necessarily about the global health crisis, but more related to how the pandemic has laid bare the flaws of our system, government, and administration as I'm not sure these things ever have been laid bare. For me, a book that is about perseverance and faith and forgiveness in a world laced with systems designed to destroy a person's humanity came along maybe at exactly the right time. The fact that this is also a book about injustice and rage and how best to express that rage also ticked some boxes for me.

Andrew Yang tweeted that we won't be the same after this. I hope not. If we emerge having learned nothing, then what was the point? I think it's easy to be pessimistic about people and their inability or unwillingness to change. But that's not true of everyone. The people of Alice Walker's book are nothing if not open to change, even if it is only eventually, and their willingness comes late, and their change is inconsistent, or sometimes infuriating. We don't have to be as we were when this began, and if there's a way we wished to be better, maybe this is our chance. If I am looking for comfort at this time, I take some from that.

A Letter to my Dear COVID-19

Brooke Wilkins

Oh, where to start... COVID-19, you have become a figure in my life overnight and I have a feeling we will be spending a lot of time together. I've seen you visiting my neighbors and people around me but have been just fortunate enough to not be home when you stopped by. I'm sure you'll be back to try again though; I'm just not sure when. Somehow, you have turned the world upside down in a matter of a week. Or at least my whole world. You got me booted out of my amazing classes where I can interact with my admirable professors. And my friendly classmates. You canceled my plans with my sorority sisters. People I look forward to seeing every Sunday. While I will see some of them when this has passed, we will miss important milestones with our graduating seniors and for our college lives in general. I am angry with you. Not only all that, but you took my job away for three weeks, at least. My job that I love so much that I look forward to going to. Where I have little faces greeting me, reminding me what sweet childhood is like. I had to hug them goodbye for three weeks, and them not even know it. You did that. You are not my favorite thing right now. You took away my interaction, my structure, my schedule. I usually get up at six in the morning and work and have class and hang out with friends and don't get home until eight or nine. Then I go to sleep and wake up and do it all over again. Yeah, it's a lot and I always said I needed a break, but I was thinking more like summer break, not whatever this is. I need structure, without it, I get stuck in my mind. I need distractions; I am an avid over-thinker... and this situation is a breeding pool for anxiety. You are ruining everything...

But maybe you aren't. Here I am, trying to see some positives in your appearance and in these gifts you bring. Yesterday, I read a book. I have not read a book since high school, I think. And I *love* to read. So, you are giving me more time for that. Thank you, I guess. And my significant other lives two hours away, meaning I only usually see him on weekends, for two days tops. Now I get to see him for at least two weeks, as I am staying at his house for the internet, and some company. I am a person that really enjoys my alone time, which I am getting heaps of while he is still attending work (for now).

But even with these few good things you've brought, I still see the bad in you. While you have merely affected physical aspects of my life, I know you are affecting some people more. I have watched you take the lives of too many people. You have torn lives apart. That is what makes me sick. If I have to take classes online for however long, then fine. But if you end up taking anyone close to me, I will be devastated. I can't even imagine how those already suffering feel, and I hope I don't have to. You've made your mark, but I think it's time for you to go. And don't bother stopping to ring my doorbell any time soon, I won't answer.

Sincerely,
A Heartbroken College Girl

A Shelter's View of Corona

Hannah Tillotson

You don't see what I see.

Confused eyes searching
for the family that abandoned
them.

Uncontrollable shaking
as we take them
to a room full of unfamiliarity.

You don't hear what I hear.

Endless howling for the home
and the people they've known all their lives.

Cries that cause a need for trazodone
just to survive behind the bars you've
so willingly placed in front of them.

You see millions falling sick
from a disease once unknown
to the world.

You hear that the virus can survive
on your family member's fur.

Hundreds of thousands
are surrendering their *beloved*
furry family members
out of a misled fear.

YOU ARE

the ones transmitting the virus
NOT your fur babies!

3 April 2020

Hey Muskie Press & Muskie Student Body,

I guess first things first. I sure miss you guys as I sit out here in my basement in Claysville (6 miles south of New Concord). The John Prine (old folk singer currently on a ventilator) songs I play on my guitar are a little prophetic and certainly poignant. Each morning when I get up and see the sun and the start of new day, I have to remind myself that this is not a dream—but reality. Nature happens, and this time we are on the receiving end. The scientist in me suggests that we should not be necessarily surprised at what is happening, but Ingold, the human being, is having a hard time absorbing all this. You guys are young and strong and resilient with hope and lots of light at the end of the tunnel. Still, nature indiscriminately happens. Nature doesn't seem to care what we think or believe or how much or little faith we have. Nature doesn't care if we are family members, mothers, fathers, sons or daughters, good or bad, conservative or liberal, hard-working or chill. This is a time to come together.

I am proud of you guys for making these diaries happen. You are instilling some hope and purpose in our otherwise upside-down lives. There is hope you know—great hope. Look at the awesome heroes on the front lines, young and old, risking their lives every day to save others. These people have been exposed to some of the greatest stress imaginable and continue to carry on. This gives me faith indeed—faith in the human spirit for sure (this may also be how God works—through awesome people everywhere).

One thing I've always had faith in are fighting Muskie students. I've seen for many years the absolute determination, resolve, hope, and compassion that Muskie students possess. We will persevere one way or the other. We will cope and help each other and lift each other up. We will play music and listen to music and sing and keep moving forward. This is our choice, and I know you good Muskies will continue to rise to the occasion and to lift spirits. From Claysville, my boy Donny shouts out. He misses you, his friends, incredibly. My wife Robin shouts out as she works 10 hours a day, it seems like trying to keep up with lesson planning for the Muskies at JGHS. One good thing you can do, and Professor Bil Kerrigan would attest, is get out and check out some birds. They will most definitely lift your spirits. Until next time

Danny Ingold



Transmission 6
Dr. Vivian Wagner
Painting

Dear COVID-19

Smith Hickenlooper

Dear COVID-19,

Well, here I am. I've stared at the same spot of water damage for hours on end, time and time again. Home wouldn't feel so much like a trap if I could go somewhere during the day. If I didn't have to worry about the other people in my home. But this invisible enemy has turned our homes into cells, families into cellmates, and parents into guards. I've pondered going back to my old job at Amazon just for something to do. I've had the same arguments in my head, deep cleaned all my guns and cars. I've done 85 prison style workouts. I took up painting and boxing. I am very quickly running out of things to do. Because I am an extrovert with ADHD, this whole situation is awful and my worst nightmare.

There have been some upsides to it all though. It has given me quite a lot of time to get things done. Those prison workouts are giving me a revenge body that is gonna terrify a lot of people. I feel more motivated to prove the last two games I played—both of which I started in—weren't just a fluke. I managed to finish ranked 131 in the nation out of 300. Next year is gonna show that I am a real competitor. I wanted to go against the teams in conference and beat them into the ground. Next year is the year I do that. Now is when I win games by putting in work and grinding.

You took my season, my seniors' last year, my palooza, my friends, my semester, my happiness, and you replaced it with things much more destructive to you than what you took from me. You gave me hate, motivation, drive, and will. You are not going to break me. I will not bend the knee to you and your bullshit. The world will not either. As a race, humanity has been through worse than you and we will endure. We will not be snuffed out; we will not allow ourselves to be destroyed by you. It is all against one. We will beat you, come hell or high water.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do and it would not be wise for you to interfere.

Yours Truly,
Smith Hickenlooper

P.S. If you so much as look at my grandparents, I will personally make it my life's mission to destroy every last particle of you. I will shred you down to incoherent bits.

Ignorance was Bliss

Kayalani Cloe

Let's go back to January
When everything was still brand new.
We were making plans, holding hands
going to the gym, skipping class
because we could.

When the only fear we had was
graduating and getting enough
done before May.
We never thought we'd see

Our last party,
Our last formal.
Our last campus date,
Our last class.

If I knew then what I know now,
I'd stay on campus on the weekends,
Stop complaining about the parties,
Make the walk across campus
to Montgomery Blvd
because I'll never be
10 minutes away from my friends
ever again.

I took advantage of the little things.
Spent more time complaining
less time enjoying
every moment I was in.

I wanted so badly to go home.
Who would've thought
That middle of nowhere campus
was home.

Quarantine Outline

Kamryn Smith

Week zero:

I pack my car full of clothes, because I am not sure when I'll be back.
Approximately 5,000 deaths.

Week one:

Each time I log into Outlook, there are at least five emails. Don't even ask about Blackboard.
Approximately 10,000 deaths.

Week two:

I go back to Muskingum, but only to get the rest of my things and move back home.
Approximately 24,000 deaths.

Week three:

I rearrange my room. My bed is now in the right corner.
Approximately 51,000 deaths.

Week four:

Happy twenty-first birthday to me. Good thing we have a hot tub.
Approximately 95,000 deaths.

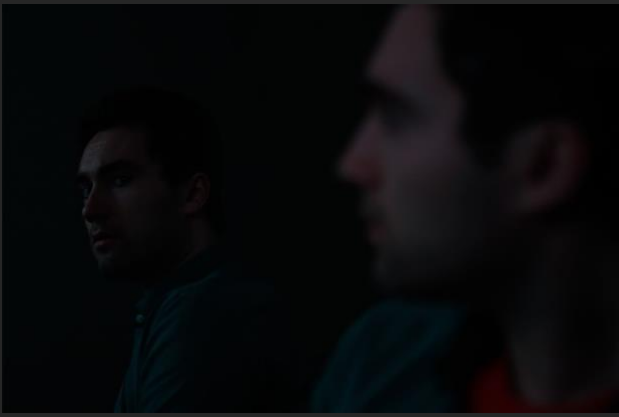
Week five:

I write this.
Approximately 145,000 deaths.

How many more weeks?



Isolation I
Matthew Triola, 2019 Alumnus
Photography



Isolation II
Matthew Triola, 2019 Alumnus
Photography

Dear Diary,

The three days after my long drive to North Carolina gave me time to draw insights I had missed before and during the trip. My anxiety blinded me. Would any state borders be closed? Who knew. Would I be able to go inside the gas station for bathroom breaks? I sure hoped so. Would I be stopped and fined for non-essential travel? God, I hoped not.

The drive, which typically soothed me into a dreary state, felt different than ever before. Until Virginia, I didn't see more than six cars on the interstate at any given time. Through all big cities, a sense of abandonment soaked the roadways. The scenic overlook in Virginia that I had always enjoyed gazing upon felt different but looked entirely the same. Knowing that hundreds of people sat in their homes in fear added more complexity to the budding trees in all stages of bloom. The mountains, tall and invasive, felt more like a trap than ever before. Were the mountains more intrusive to scare me away from their people, or were they trying to protect me from further states? It was assumed that the recent windstorms knocked large boulders into gullies on the side of the road, but I wondered if the mountain had released fragments of itself in warning of what was to come.

The Sheetz gas station entering North Carolina mirrored the emptiness of the roads. A handful of people scattered the store and kept a minimum of six feet away from each other. Nobody exchanged friendly smiles or looked at me for any reason other than judging my health and proximity to them.

The further into North Carolina I got, the less regard people had for the stay-at-home order. While there was less traffic than previous trips, it was still a formidable foe in my fight to get home.

I wonder if the lack of fear in these people is a strength or a weakness. Is it still becoming real for them? At what point will they realize that they can succumb just like the rest of us?

With deep concerns,
Sidney J Martin

To the Women of Muskie Press,

I am 82 years old. How am I coping with this time? Well, I made it through World War II and will make it through this. My grandma died in the flu of 1918 so that is sad history.

But more to the present time. Actually, my days don't change much during this awful time. I retired from nursing years ago.

My nurse daughter lives with me and I worry so about her as she goes out every night to take care of elderly nuns in their nursing home. But I have her nervous little dog to keep me company. I worry about my son and family in Minnesota, my other son and family here in Dubuque, Iowa, and my daughter and family in Ohio.

My day actually is somewhat as before the virus. I get up. Listen to the news...read the paper...do the crossword and email to my out-of-town kids. I love jigsaw puzzles and T.V. is my best friend. I am a sports nut but since that is gone, I watch a lot of Lifetime movies.

Always happy endings there. And of course, I never miss the soap opera. They must have filmed way in advance.

I take walks around the neighborhood every day as usual and know all my neighbors. Say hi or just wave in passing.

I do miss my wine time a couple times a week with a couple special neighbors.

Our grocery store has early times for elderly every day. I want to go again but I am having trouble convincing my daughter that I will be safe.

This is a bad time in this wonderful world but eventually we will get through it. The robins are back. And the finches are singing in the mornings so that is a happy thing.

And I am so thankful for young people like yourselves that are doing something so interesting and positive.

Peace and love.

Barb Varley

Untitled

Tanya Biggins

This is definitely a stressful, weird, and uncertain time in our lives. I am, however, so grateful to have the opportunity to work from home, to continue to support Muskingum's wonderful students, faculty, and staff. Not everyone has been able to keep their job, and that surely adds a layer of stress to so many. I find myself worrying about those folks, wondering what they are going to do to get by, praying that this all ends soon and that somehow, we all will come out better and stronger in the end. I also wholeheartedly believe that the measures Ohio has taken have made a profound impact on our daily lives, and that we, as a whole, are saving lives every day by staying home as much as possible.

For me, staying home this much has been difficult. I am a people person, motivated and driven by the part of my job that allows me to connect with so many, particularly our students. I miss our students so much but have made the effort to stay in contact with them as much as possible. Still, there is something lacking from my daily existence, and it's our Muskies. I am a busy person, a mom, a full-time employee, and a church musician. I accompany students in our local schools for many events. My daughter keeps me busy with her activities outside of school, such as art classes, Girl Scouts, and choir. This sudden break in my daily life has been an adjustment, to say the least.

I'd be lying if I said that this wasn't hard. It is sometimes mentally draining and brings me moments of anxiety that are unlike any I have felt before. I worry. I worry about those people who are out there working every day, my husband included. I worry about my parents, who are in their 80s, and am deeply bothered by the fact that I am staying away from them, even though I know that it's what is best for them. At the same time, I find moments of peace and clarity.

I have had extra time with my daughter, time that isn't spent running here or there. I've been able to talk to her through the day about so many things. I have stopped several times and realized how lucky I am. I'm safe and healthy, I am working, I have this time with my daughter, and have a chance to, as the old saying goes, stop and smell the roses. These are things that I am consistently grateful for, and that helps get me through each day.

On a lighter note, sometimes the extra time I have is very productive. I've cleaned closets, gone through clothes—those kinds of things. I get excited over silly little things like boiling eggs and having none of them break. This time has forced me to see everything, even the small stuff, in a new and different light, to appreciate everything around me, what I have, and who I am.

The best part of working at home is that other than my daughter, I have my work buddy Whisp, our beloved pet who is loving every minute of us being home. She loves the extra attention and love she is getting throughout every day, and I'm glad to give it to her!

I am praying every day for the health and safety of us all and looking forward to coming out on the other side and being able to enjoy the many things we take for granted every day—all those things that have been cancelled and postponed. It's okay, it's okay to stop and breathe, it's okay to have moments of panic, and it's okay to feel anxious. We will get through this!



Peace Out Muskies
Kayalani Cloe
Photograph

Nonstandard Procedures

Dr. Vivian Wagner

How do we survive?
It begins, maybe,
with breakfast,
or doing taxes.
You may need
to pet a cat or
walk a dog,
and at some point
it might be in your best
interest to look out
the window at
snow, falling.
The guidelines
are in flux.
The best you can do
is maintain some
distance from rigidity.
Check back for updates.
Or, maybe, don't.
The day will show
you the way.

Hold On

Dr. Alisa Neeman

Hold on a little longer
To the sweetness of the night.
The pups are resting
peacefully
Before the morning's light.
Hold fast to warmth and
comfort
As you lie between the sheets.
None knows how many days
they'll get
Before that final sleep.
Oh, just a little longer,
Hold reality at bay.
For now, the world is perfect;
We wish we could but stay.
But now the eye is open.
The mind begins its tasks.
Steady now, shoulder at plow.
What more can one world
ask?

Quarantine Thoughts

Nerissa Smith

Quarantine Thought #326484:

Quarantine must be related to the boy you met on Tinder who ghosted you after three weeks because they both leave you feeling depressed and alone.

Quarantine Thought #324566:

Quarantine is like an extended version of Lent because we're forced to give up things we don't want to for an extended period of time.

Quarantine Thought #325487:

Let's face it. We are all gonna emerge as overweight, depressed alcoholics when this is all over.

Quarantine Thought #329876:

A direct quote from my 17-year-old sister: "I have a sports bra on, so I'm motivated to do something today."

Quarantine Thought #325981:

I've never craved Bdubs and Tlaq so much in my life. I'm tired of eating groceries.

Quarantine Thought #326598:

I swear if I have to watch another Lifetime movie, I'm going to scream.

Quarantine Thought #325475:

Is anyone else at the point where you're just lying in bed staring at the ceiling because you're tired of being on your phone?

Quarantine Thought #329575:

Quarantine has made introverts realize that being stuck at home is not as glorious as it once was.

Walking in New Concord

Dr. Jane Varley

I have always loved the outdoors. Nature—defined for me by mountains and rivers—has been a guiding factor in my life decisions. Taproot memory: twenty years ago this spring I drove from the Columbus airport to my interview at Muskingum. Do you know that spot on the interstate, where the flat Midwest is left behind, and you enter the hills of the Allegheny plateau? With that change in landscape I thought, *I can live here*.

I like to walk. I am not among the champion walkers of New Concord, like Jim Dooley or Walter Huber, or a woman I've never met, though I know her name is Emily. I am a more casual and moody walker. If I want exercise, I go down past the stadium, around the lake, up the long hill to Walter Hall, and down to Main, where I can stretch the distance by going to the town limits and beyond. If I want trees—if I want to seek the sensation famously described by Henry David Thoreau, "I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees"—I continue past the stadium into the Hollow. You can cross through to the pond by the middle school, or you can loop up to the soccer field and re-enter the woods of the northwest campus. Walking in the woods of New Concord is a simple pleasure for me but also holds a deeper resonance, evergreens speaking of forests in Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot range, hardwoods speaking of the mountaintops of Craig County, Virginia, where Gary and I lived long ago. Each tree, each little trickle of runoff—I experience them in the present, and they allow me to remember other beautiful places.

Enter Covid-19. Now, I don't walk as much. Like so many people, I have lost my connection to the regular rhythms of a day, a week. My student Jillian Taylor wrote, "I feel like I'm unlearning my entire life." To unlearn, to turn away, to stand still, as if the forward movement of our existence has stopped cold.

Many hours a day I stay in the Writing Room, as we call it, in our house on Montgomery Boulevard. Old kitchen table is my desk. Faux leather office chair. Books, carefully selected for the WRB (Writing Room Bookshelf), bowl of Chimes brand ginger chews, thousands of manuscript pages from the 30+ years of my writing life. Comfort. Stimulation. Productivity. Occasional inspiration. Before Covid-19, a few hours in the Writing Room with creative pieces would make me feel good. Now, the room is the place I do *all* my work. Eight hours in this chair is the daily norm, and I often feel I'm not getting enough done.

But of course, I *am* getting things done. My teaching is happening in this room along with office-related things that usually stay behind when I lock up my door in

Cambridge Hall. Now I keep three different to-do lists on three legal pads here next to me, and the items are never all ticked off, but I make progress every day. Without the usual balances of work, creativity, and play, my life feels concentrated in this one spot and bound to linear tasks. There is a static feeling to it—which is the opposite of the dynamic feeling I derive from walking around campus, downtown New Concord, and especially the woods.

This is not forever. We will get back to who we are. And there is another kind of learning that will happen, a *re-learning*, to use Jillian's idea, when we get through to the other side and look back at Covid-19. On the other side, we will draw deep, maskless breaths of fresh air.

Right now, it is Saturday, April 11, 2020. 10:45 a.m. I am looking at my lists on the legal pads. Something essential is missing so I just added it: walk.

Frozen daffodils

Dr. Joseph Nowakowski

Frozen daffodils.
And now frost got the tulips.
Sometimes nature's mean.



**When online
classes rule
your life**



**The face I make
when I see all
my classes doing
online
discussion
boards:**

Featuring Faith
Cheyenne Van Gundy
Memes

Diary Entry

Professor Meghan Wynne

April 8, 2020 P.R

I've spent the morning thinking about old men.

I woke to the news that COVID-19 took the life of legendary folk singer John Prine, age 73. Prine wrote beautiful, honest songs about ordinary people facing life's sorrows and boredoms. As a kid, I loved how "Illegal Smile" ended in silly rhymes: "Well done / hot dog bun / My sister's a nun." The song "Donald and Lydia," with lines like "There were spaces between Donald and whatever he said," reassured teenager Meg that we all keep ourselves hidden. When my daughter was little, I sang "Angel from Montgomery" to her most every bedtime. "Is that Iris' street?" she once whispered from her pillow, and I realized that our nearness to a Montgomery Boulevard, where her friend lived, made the angel in the song all the more real for her.

I've been reading about Prine's death on my computer and crying into the handkerchief I keep in the top drawer of my desk. A disposable tissue would no doubt be a wiser move in the time of COVID, but I find comfort in this soft cotton square decorated with periwinkles, the material very thin, almost sheer from decades of use and washing. I came to own this handkerchief about ten years ago, when I bought a box of random household goods at an auction held at my next-door neighbor's on the occasion of his death. His name was John too. He was hard-working, grumpy, generous, wildly frugal, gave my toddler trash-picked stuffed animals that I took from her hands when he wasn't looking. People called him 'the can man' because he collected soda and beer cans from front lawns, frat house decks, dumpsters. Every year, he managed to pay his property taxes with the money he made from recycling these cans.

His place next door is for sale again, its emptiness feeling to me like an extra buffer of safety from the spread of the virus, as if John were still looking out for me, like in the days when he would come by unannounced with half a watermelon too big for him to finish alone. He was like a character out of a John Prine song, "another child that's grown old," an ordinary man who didn't say much but who found value in things others had discarded. He might not understand what the world has come to, or why the death of a singer I never met would have me crying so much, but I know he would appreciate that one of his handkerchiefs is still in use.

City Sirens, Mass Emails, Cat Harnesses

Jillian Taylor

I sit in my room, in bed, and listen to sirens cry out in the distance. I wonder who called them. What they are chasing. Who they are saving. I hear them more often now.

They told me to leave school, so now I'm in a city. I've spent a lot of time here before, but never like this. Now, there's a cloud to follow me around. It lingers over all of us, my boyfriend and his roommates and I — when we turn off our previously-snoozed alarms going off for the third time, as we stare at the uninteresting contents of the refrigerator, as we shuffle up and down the stairs.

We are supposed to stay in. *Stay home*, voices whisper from the news, our social media, the walls.

“Social distancing” doesn't sound like a real phrase to me. I know what it's supposed to mean: keep away from other people so you don't help spread the disease. To me it almost seems like an oxymoron. I know the meaning but listen. “Social” meaning together. “Distancing” meaning not together. Whatever. To me, it is just another phrase I've heard way too many times in the past two weeks.

Two weeks.

It only took one week for everything to happen; the second week we have just been waiting. We got back from Spring Break. I had a day to struggle to get back into the swing of going to classes, then Tuesday afternoon came. The whole campus received the same email. *Due to Coronavirus concerns...off campus instruction...*

We were supposed to be gone for two-ish weeks. The death toll in Italy was climbing still. Then it got pushed another two-ish weeks. Rumors were flying and everyone I knew had their own opinion on what was going to happen. Now, we aren't going back. We left without realizing that was the end of everything.

I feel tricked, caught in the middle of a huge joke that is being played on the world's population. I don't think any of us get it. No one's laughing.

Now, I'm sitting in this bed I'm starting to hate. We bought harnesses for the cats today. We don't have a dog, but the cats like it outside. So, we got harnesses to walk them. Only one fits, the other cat is too fat. Normally, I would return the second harness since I can't use it. The problem is, they declared a higher quarantine level today. The funny part is, they declared this while I was at Walmart, in a much longer line for the self-check-out than I expected to be in, shopping for the harnesses, among other things. So I can't return the harnesses any time soon because I'm not supposed to leave the house. I guess it'll have to wait, like everything else now.

The Woodpecker

Dr. Andre DeCuir

I think the birds will get me through the self-quarantine.

As I sit pounding out lessons on my laptop from Antigone to Auden, I steal a glance out of the window to see who is at my feeder — the cardinal in regal red, the mourning dove in soft gray, the blackbird in glossy darkness. I'm not usually here in the middle of the day to see this splendid gathering.

One day there came a thud at my front door. A downy woodpecker crashed into it trying to flee a hawk. I saw it fly away, without its prey, into the distance. The bird's twisted neck told me I would have to conduct a little burial in the back — until its eyes opened and started to blink.

These are not normal times, I thought. Would any vet's office be open? My colleagues know that my area of specialty is Victorian Literature, and in a panic, I thought of Anne Bronte's novel, *Agnes Grey*. In one scene, the put-upon governess, Agnes, has to decide between putting small birds out of their misery or letting them be continuously tortured by a cruel child. I chose to wait and think and hope.

I made a bed of paper towels in my palm for the bird. With one finger I gently stroked the top of its head and its back. Its feathers were incredibly silky — and of course I talked to it.

I gently raised its head, and to my relief, it did not droop down. The woodpecker, black eyes blinking, started to turn its head from side to side.

Next, I slowly raised its body to check out its legs. One looked normal, but one toe on the other leg was bent under the foot. I lowered the body, took a deep breath, and lifted it again. And then it was gone. The little woodpecker flew out of my hand and landed on the low branch of a nearby tree. I waited, smiled, and then watched it fly out of sight.

Now, when I see a downy woodpecker at the feeder, I wonder . . .

We are under self-quarantine because of COVID-19. I'm not usually home during the day, but I am now. I was on that day.

The birds will get me through this.

Poem Not to be Read to a 2020 Graduate

Holly Cochran

For you, this year was meant to bring closure.
Laughing with your friends, crying on the floor.
Drinking beer on the swing of a shiny day.
Cruising campus singing with windows down.
All the lasts that had unknowingly passed,
A sad goodbye with no graduation.
And now, you must go off into the world,
Full of worry thanks to COVID 19.
But “It will be okay” says your mother,
“For you will know our adult hardships young.”
I know this does not console you now,
But when it’s over, job market open,
Economy built up, and virus gone,
You’ll be ready for anything in life.

Waving: Response to COVID-19

Amber Aitken, 2010 Alumna

My neighbors across the street are in their 60s, maybe 70s. He has Parkinson's and has been deteriorating for years. She smokes like it's a drive rather than an addiction. They love animals and they love each other. I know this because there's something about people who have been cohabitating for as long as they have, who care for one another as partners, and who tend to the other's health needs no matter the toll. They have a language. They're also social creatures who sit on their front porch every evening hoping someone stops by to say hi and "shoot the shit" as they say.

"Hey Tommy," they always say as my boyfriend walks up the sidewalk to my door. "Hey guys. How's it going?" I hear him say. He's engaging because he wants to, because they are kind.

It's important for me to say they are kind for reasons I tell myself are foreign, but, realistically, they're very familiar. Each time I talk to them, it has been because I've made it a point to go across the street with a beer and visit. That one beer gives me a time frame and sets the expectation. I have to get back to my anxious dog who needs attention, my demanding career, my master's program, and my extroverted boyfriend who talks to strangers. That one beer is nice because they remind me of being home.

When the shelter-in-place order was given, I moved my office desk in front of my living room window. The temperature feels better, the coffee is closer, and I just like working in the space I live. Integration is important to me. Each morning I get up and I take my dog outside. I make coffee and change my clothes to resemble some sense of normalcy. When I sit down to open my computer, I catch myself waiting to see my neighbors. They never disappoint. She drives him to the grocery store every morning to pick up a case of Milwaukee's Best. Drinking it passes their time while they do exactly as I'm doing: sitting and watching people through the window. I've come to rely on their routine as part of mine.

It hit me this morning how scared they must be. A couple who depends on others to fill their days must feel overwhelmed and all consumed with the whys and hows and whens. I'm a lot more like they are than I thought I was, habitually. I am motivated by feeling connected and I enjoy existing in the space between someone's thoughts and their feelings. I feel helpful there and that separation has been an adjustment. I have gone in

and out of anxiety, setting an alarm on two occasions: to wake up in the morning and to tune into Governor DeWine. I've zoned into social media until I realize it's not productive, and I am painfully aware that my grief is not shallow, that it holds a power over me that makes me uncomfortable. I'm avoiding that by doing the things that make me happy: scheduling virtual happy hours with my coworkers, cooking dinner, being a taste tester for the weird cocktails Tommy makes, reading things outside of schoolwork, showering in the middle of the day, etc. The thing I most enjoy doing right now is sitting on my front porch with a beer in my hand and waving at the neighbors while they drink their Milwaukee's Best and hope for someone to walk by.



Tea to Calm Anxiety

Gabbi Blair

Photograph

Scared

Hannah Tillotson

I'm scared,

Scared for the saddened eyes and tucked tails
that I have to restrain
as their loved ones leave
them behind out of misled fear.

Scared for the weathered generations
left to fend for themselves
in a time when they are the ones most at risk.

Scared for the little voices asking
hundreds of hard, unanswered
questions.

Scared for the millions
of lives that hang
in limbo due to a virus
unknown to vaccines.

Scared for the future
that humans have already worked
so hard at destroying.

Scene from “The Quest for Rathmagan”

Ryan VanMeter

After the encounter with the deadly bandits, the party had arrived in the bustling town of Redwater. The town is known for, obviously, what gave it its name: a lake of red water located in Town Square. Nobody knows exactly why the water is red, but it is rumored that the water was caked with the blood of fallen warriors who fought in the area many years before the town was founded. Today, though, the town seemed different. Redwater, usually teeming with people, looked empty.

“It’s so quiet here...” Car’lee whispered to Andmax, looking a bit frightened.

“I know. It’s weird that Redwater would be this way,” Andmax replied as they stroked Car’lee’s hair to try and comfort her.

Andmax felt it was appropriate to look around town and investigate what was going on. The buildings didn’t look run down, but they gave off an unsettling vibe with nobody around outside. It was like a ghost town. The strange thing was, however, that there were people *inside* the buildings.

“What the...? Why is everyone staying inside? It’s not like the air is poisonous or anything,” Andmax wondered to themselves.

“Uh, Andmax? You better take a look,” Fornfox called out.

Andmax rushed over to her and noticed a sign on the door to the local tavern. It said:

Dear Customers,

*This tavern has been closed until further notice due to a new threat on our town: The Shapeless. Shapeless are exactly what they sound like. They have no physical form. You cannot see them, but they can see you. Shapeless are dangerous creatures that will feed on your psyche and make you sick. You do not become sick physically, but you think you are. Once the Shapeless gets you, you have no way of stopping it. It will eat away at your brain as you slowly go insane from your psyche rotting away. After several hours, you will **die**. However, there is one way you can protect yourself from the Shapeless: **stay inside**. It has been discovered that Shapeless cannot open doors, so staying inside is the best way to protect yourself. If the Shapeless get you, isolate yourself as best as you can. Once you’re dead, the Shapeless will attack everyone near you in a 6 ft. radius. If you’re reading this notice right now, you’re already in danger. **Seek shelter immediately.***

~M

“Oh my God...” Andmax muttered under their breath.

"We'd better be cautious making our way through the town. One of us could get hit by one of these wretched things at any moment," Sangrith warned the party.

Mimi jumped into Andmax's arms and meowed, scared. Sangrith led the way, looking for a way to quickly leave the town to avoid the Shapeless. Suddenly, Car'lee screamed in terror.

"I'm burning up! Make it stop!" Car'lee shouted as she began to swing her hatchet around in a frenzy.



Awareness of COVID-19

Jamie Gladwell

Drawing.

In the Middle of These Lonely Nights I Think

Connie Thomas

In the middle of the lonely nights I think.

I think about sleeping, which stops me from sleeping and pray for God to
quiet my mind.

I think of how broken I am and search for every broken piece of me. Praying
for God to please fix my brokenness.

I think of all the good things in my life and how much God has blessed me,
then I pray my thank you prayers over and over again.

I think of the sadness in my life and cry. I just pray God can help me
understand it all, but I know I never will.

And then I think.... how lonely it is in the middle of the night and think
about that.

Only I'm not alone....God is with me.

English Cucumbers, Toilet Paper, and Sour Cream

Dr. Nainsí Houston

While the library is closed right now, we're still working to keep services going for the Muskingum University community, so I'm doing that during the weekday. I do normal work things, but from my home "office," which has been my dining room table, the breakfast bar, and, weather-permitting, the table on my deck.

The hardest part of working from home is not being able to get up and walk around the library, chatting with students along the way. Or not having students pop into my office to say hi or have a more substantial chat about classes, their majors, their lives, or, most importantly, movies and TV. There's a reason I went into higher ed, and it's the students. It's why summer is my least favorite season: very few students on campus. Well, that and I hate heat and must maintain my ghostly pallor. Summers are rather trying for me on many levels.

Because I'm still working, my day has some structure to it. It's when work is finished that I get restless. I no longer have that drive home to decompress or to stop at a store to pick up a few things. My three-step commute from my workspace to my couch isn't conducive to decompressing. Or shopping.

Taking my dog for a walk allows me to decompress. My dog is a happy guy, bopping along the sidewalk. He must think he's better than other dogs, though, because whenever he's barked at, he just looks at the offender with a hint of disdain and keeps on walking. I think he's better than other dogs, of course, but I find it hilarious that he feels the same way, too.

I'm using my mom's sewing machine to make face masks during my lunch break. My mom made almost all of our clothes when we were growing up, but I never learned how to use a sewing machine until about ten years ago, and even now, if it's not simple, I tap out. The face mask pattern is simple and mine are not pretty, but hopefully they can help someone. I have given a few to friends, made sure my parents had them, and then dropped off the rest at a nursing home. I just bought more material, so I'll see if I get any better at this sewing machine thing.

Making dinner is also a way I decompress. When I work on campus, I often get home and just have no motivation to cook, or I've forgotten to thaw whatever frozen meat I'd decided to cook that night. Not a problem when you work from home! I have been playing

with some new recipes, thanks to my new Dutch oven, so that's been a nice way to keep busy. Clean-up time alone keeps me busy.

Every two weeks I do a grocery run for my parents in the Akron area. I feel like I'm living out the war-time shortages my grandparents told us about. My mom dictates her list to me and she's sometimes very specific. This week, she wanted an English cucumber. "I don't know if I'll be able to find that, Mom. If I can't, will a regular one do?" Turns out, the store I went to had English cucumbers and toilet paper, but no sour cream.

I found a recipe for sour cream on the Internet. It will be ready tomorrow.

A bit grim, A touch of ironic

Dr. Alisa Neeman

Behind these windows
We watch as death flies by us
And daffodils grow.

10 April 2020

Hey Muskie Folks,

The hours in the day seem to be ticking along a little more slowly than perhaps a week ago. I find myself peeking up at the clock in my basement to see that it's only 9:30 a.m. when it seems like it should be noon. Today is Friday (Good Friday) and normally we would have been on Easter Break. Instead, we're already home wondering and thinking about our fellow Muskie students, professors, friends, and companions. I wonder sometimes about the toll this calamity might be having on our mental well-being. It seems like it is becoming a war of attrition, although the songs of the birds outside my window lift my spirit substantially. I have friends out there in the village who are going about their lives no differently than before this thing began. I cannot understand this and I wonder how or why folks blissfully ignore the science as if being somewhat knowledgeable about this virus is a sin. I wonder sometimes what it takes to break through to folks?

At this point, thank goodness for social media – something I took for granted and usually shied away from just a few weeks ago. Been listening to some tunes by John Prine (great folk singer who passed away this week from Covid-19). Prine lamented in a song about old people (many of whom are the current Covid-19 victims) *Ya' know that old trees just grow stronger, And old rivers grow wilder ev'ry day, Old people just grow lonesome, Waiting for someone to say, "Hello in there, hello"*. These lyrics and the devastating mortality numbers that have come out of NYC and elsewhere forced me to think again about the apparent utter indifference that nature has as it proceeds and evolves around us. I guess I occasionally question what the value of a human life really is. It seems at this point that we're expendable like we sometimes view other plants and animals. Of course, I know this is not true. The love and kindness and compassion that occurs among human beings is one of the great positive forces on this Earth. It is still difficult to reconcile all of what is happening. I wonder if it is okay to not understand? The biology is easy to follow but this goes well beyond that. Maybe I don't have a broad enough perspective – I cannot see the big picture. I do trust that the God of love loves everybody. The souls of the many good people who have died are not forgotten or gone. There is something more, but I cannot rightly put my finger on it. I suppose for me this should be a time (and a week) of trust. I need to trust in something or someone bigger than myself. Sometimes that comes easy but sometimes it's a hard break through.

Anyway, I miss you guys. My family is doing well. I feel for those who are alone. Gonna listen to some more good uplifting music today... maybe some David Wilcox (another folk philosopher). I commend you guys for your good work and for prompting us to think a little. Too often too many people (in my view) substitute faith/belief alone for thought and reasoning. The later can sometimes be hard work. Perhaps the former as well. Have a blessed Easter weekend.

Danny Ingold



CST: Corona Standard Time
Samantha Callahan
Painting

Drive: The Road Most Taken

Dr. Kekoa Kaluhiokalani

The pavement that connects Columbus, where I live, to New Concord, where I teach, is 70.1 miles long, which makes the round trip 140.2 miles. With a Monday-Wednesday-Friday semester, I drive 420.6 miles a week, and a Monday-through-Friday schedule brings the weekly total to 701 miles. An average, non-pandemic-interrupted MWF semester puts 6729.6 miles on my car, or 10,374.8 miles if it is MTWThF. Two five-days-a-week semesters are the equivalent of an annual circumnavigation of the globe in my 2004 Toyota Corolla. Since I started at Muskingum in 2006, I have driven the distance from the Earth to the moon. Should I maintain this schedule until I retire, I will complete the return trip back.

The journey from front door to office door lasts 65 to 75 minutes, which comes to 160 hours on the road per semester. Over that time, I consume 272 hours of podcasts (at 1.7 speed) and 300 gallons of gasoline. If my classes begin around 11AM, I can leave Columbus at 9AM. If I have 9AM classes, I am up at 6AM and on the road by 7:30AM. Regardless of the departure time, I leave armed with a Contigo travel mug filled with tea and my husband shoves a banana at me, otherwise I won't eat until dinnertime. My route goes against the Columbus rush-hour flow that strangles the east-west I-70 axis all the way to Pickerington, but that also means I drive into the rising and setting sun. My Oakley sunglasses grant me untroubled vision and a mild sense of badassery.

Fourteen years of commuting have endowed me with a literacy of the highway. I know where the state troopers lurk, and I keep a few miles below the speed limit to let cars and trucks pass me by and leave me alone. By instinct I know the turns and straightaways and where the highway goes from three lanes to two and two lanes to three. I marvel at the quirky county divisions, like the one that cause me to pass through Licking to Muskingum then back to Licking and then again into Muskingum Counties in just a few minutes. From the rough bumps in the median and the occasional patches of missing trees, I can point out the places where major accidents occurred. Most of the time I don't use cruise control.

As arduous as this commute can be, I remind myself that I decided to live in Columbus and so I chose this odyssey. It is an inseparable part of my professional life, and so it may not be surprising that, to deal with being housebound since mid-March, I inevitably think about that drive in its absence, because of its absence. True, I have benefitted from regaining lost time, but there are moments when I think of the commute not as a Sisyphean ordeal but rather as a lacuna of transgressive solitude. I recall that, over the miles of those daily circuits, I can meditate in my bubble of solitude (for I am

adamantly not a carpooler), and I measure my progress in sips of tea and bites of banana coordinated to be completed by the time I turned onto Comin Street. In the intervening hour, I allow myself the vertiginous thrill of exceeding the speed limit and dodging the lumbering semis as I race through the valleys between mile markers 132 and 141. Some days I play a dangerous game of rewriting a PowerPoint-ed lecture in my head, hoping I will have enough time to add and subtract slides and redesign formatting with just minutes to spare before walking into class, flash drive in hand, ready to go.

In more calm moods, I invoke the infrequent, dramatic cloudscapes that would hug the edges of the horizon, splitting the rays of morning and evening sunshine into an orange-magenta spray that the ancient Greeks reverently named “Eos Rhododaktylos,” Dawn with the rosy fingers. The timing has to be just right, the angle of light just so, the atmosphere just clear enough for Dawn’s rhodochrosite dactyls to manifest themselves, an expansive, luminescent, Impressionist canvas. Even rarer but equally moving is the terrestrial equivalent of that crepuscular light show: the redbud trees that line State Route 40 between Norwich Valley Road and Friendship Drive. For an all-too-brief interval between the bone-breaking cold of March and the piebald blanket of April, their branches fluoresce neon pink, blossoms like stars dotting the arms of a spiral galaxy. Waves of preternatural color arc towards the road on both sides like a pair of cupped, bejeweled hands, all garnets and rubies, the rosy fingers of an earth-bound Dawn warming me on the way to work in the morning and, in the afternoon, gently urging me to hasten home.

Hyperbolic Insidious Quarantine

Jake Bourget

It is almost like all the wishes and prayers of school being destroyed finally came true.
The postponing is a technically temporary date, and the fearful aspect is it could be delayed more.
Instead of making sure I am up on time and walking to each of my classes,
I am sludging around my room, making sure I don't sleep all day or stay up all night.
Exercising seems more than exhausting, and social gatherings are virus threatening.
Routine and obligations are losing their gratuitous holds for every second they're ignored.
1 p.m has become the new standard definition of morning time,
While 4 a.m has become a consistent time to attempt sleeping.
Time ceasing still when accepting the thought of nothing,
Half a day going by reading a chapter with a full page of notes,
Pleased to have the presence of a kitten's parlayed company;
It provides a minimal social interaction I need of sharing the milk with someone.
There is a curiously intriguing essence of freedom to a mysterious sense.
Sleeping in with no daily alarms, and no obligations, except for the ones in the mere future.
There is however, the limitation of never mentally avoiding the losses,
and worked for accomplishments that will be experienced in an altered fashion—
Never not doing school work at the library during my four years at Muskingum,
Never fully having a complete understanding at the aptly correct moments.
I do not feel motivated in my singular rented room.
Procrastination becoming an unusable and suicidal method of handling school work.
The grinds and time stopping assignments of obstacles and walls preventing continuation.
Maybe I am just hungry, sleep deprived, lonely, turning my happy to sad, overly anxious;
Maybe a step outside and a breath of air is the underappreciated action to take.
Or maybe, I am not writing on the page deep enough.

Quarantine Diary Entry

Colton Wilson

Today is another day of being home and trying not to compare life now to life before. Too often I still think about everything I would have been doing with my last semester of my undergraduate college experience. Originally the things I thought about were the big things: Palooza, formal, commencement, celebrating my birthday with my friends along with celebrating their birthdays, senior wills. But the longer I have been home and away from campus, I realize the things I actually miss most are the little things: eating in the dining hall with friends, going to the gym and making small talk with the guys there, seeing the pretty girl in micro lab, elevator Wednesdays with Parker, chapter meeting, telling Dr. Soto-Caban “happy Friday eve” as I left lab on Thursday, Dr. Perera joking with the class before lab, walking across the quad, waving at my fellow muskies. My list goes on, but you get the idea.

I used to never call Muskingum home. I would even correct my mom when she asked, “When are you going back home?” It actually makes me sad that this was the way I finally realized it. Muskingum was my home. It has been for the past four years. Home is where the heart is. Right now, mine is back in New Concord. Yeah, I am sad that this happened. I had to leave my home, and I won’t ever get to live there again or get to experience the college ending I wanted to have happened. Yet, I am so thankful for the family I found back at home. My experience is something I will never forget and always cherish. Although my time at Muskingum University may be over, it will always have a very special place in my heart as one of my homes.

Hoping Machine

Dr. Jim Dooley

The work I am submitting is not my own, but rather the work of artists that have lifted my spirit to new horizons for many years. "Hoping Machine" was my favorite song from a Woody Guthrie tribute album called *New Multitudes* that came out in 2012. Several years before, contemporary musicians Jay Farrar, Will Johnson, Anders Parker, and Jim James were granted access to lyrics that Woody Guthrie wrote but never set to music. They used their own considerable musical skills to set those lyrics to music and the album was the result. Guthrie's lyrics and songs have given voice to the American spirit for the 80 years. For me, Guthrie's writing has always provided powerful resonance and spark for my imagination. When your call for contributions came out, I knew pretty quickly that this was the piece I wanted to share with the world.

"Hoping Machine"

Don't let anything knock your props out from under you,
Always keep your mind clear, let your plans come out of mistakes.
These are the plans that nothing can tear down
Made out of things that have already been torn down.
Whatever you do, and wherever you go
Don't lose your grip on life and that means
Don't let any earthly calamity
Knock your dreamer and your hoping machine.

Music is the language of the mind that travels --
It carries the key to the laws of time and space;
Lonesome train whistling down the silent wail of wind,
Life is the sound, creation has been a song.
But if you do, wherever you go,
Don't lose your grip on life, and that means
Don't let any earthly calamity
Knock your dreamer and your hoping machine

My Many Thanks

Gary Atkins

“Silent gratitude isn't much to anyone.” — Gertrude Stein

These are extraordinary, and extraordinarily challenging times, yes, but collectively we are managing. The uncertainty brought on by this pandemic, the fear it has created in people, and the sorrow I feel for those less fortunate, create a need in me to reflect on what I am thankful for.

The first list below is of those things in my daily life I am personally thankful for, comforts I confess I take for granted. The second is more for the professionals and public servants I want to recognize for what they do for us all. Forgive me for those I leave out. This is easy and hard, try it for yourself!

I am thankful for (my world):

My health, and for the health of my loved ones. Knowing so many are sick, suffering, and dying makes the minor aches and pains, and routine illnesses seem so manageable.

My home, a safe and comfortable shelter, where it's easy to spend long periods of time, and --as my mom recently reminded me—the people I share that home with, who are easy and fun to be around. We've quickly adjusted, found our respective workspaces, and learned when to interact and when to give peace and space to each other.

My village, my neighborhood, the outdoor spaces I escape to multiple times a day to breathe fresh air, feel the sun or smell the rain, and move my body. I'm reminded of what I've come to appreciate about small-town life in general, but near the top of that list these days is easy access to “social distance”.

My employer, Muskingum University, for providing the opportunity and the support (personal, professional, technological) to work from home, and our campus community—students, faculty, staff, and administration. At a time like this, the bonds we share and the commitment we feel become stronger than ever.

I am thankful for (our world):

Healthcare professionals who put the well-being of others ahead of their own every day, and public health officials who rely on data, scientific fact, and historical perspective to advise us all (even when elected officials do not).

Police, fire, and EMT, who like the healthcare professionals, are dedicated to protecting and serving the public, and are committed to a greater good.

Governor Mike DeWine and Dr. Amy Acton.

The unsung “essential workers” who transport the goods, stock the shelves, prepare and deliver the food, keep the water, electricity, and wireless flowing, and so many other things we count on daily. I hope we remember them as we move forward, and make a point to not just tell them, but show them how valuable they are.

The trusted journalists and tireless reporters who take risks of their own to make sure that we’re all aware, informed, and up to date. I may be watching less news, but I will never turn it off. I need to know, I want to know, and I owe thanks to the women, men, and agencies who bring it to me in multiple formats daily.

Finally, thank you Muskie Press, for this project, this opportunity!
Be well. We will get through this, together...

The Future Book

Catherine Schultz

Humanity had thought that this would just be another virus like the Ebola one—something to be joked about but never taken seriously within their own country. Of course, humanity was wrong to commit such an act—to judge what one virus would do based on a different one, especially since they know all too well that no two viruses are the same. Humanity thought it would be safe from a pandemic; however, this was far from the truth. People listened and went about their normal days as the infection spread until humanity caught on that this virus was deadly and not going anywhere. Panic and fake stories of what this virus could do began to spread, and any little cough or surgical mask could set someone off.

Schools and colleges continued for a while until the CDC announced that to stop the infection, humanity must practice social distancing. Some people of the world were still not taking this seriously, thinking that perhaps the government had created it, or wanting actual proof that it is killing people; others thought that since it would not kill them why should they have to distance themselves from everyone?

Humanity was trying to fight it and had to make some sacrifices for their plan to work. Did humanity survive? Well, that's the thing... The answer depends. How long until people go stir-crazy? How long until people don't have enough money to provide for themselves? These questions are unknown, yet humanity is hopeful that these questions won't get answered just yet.

Though for us who know the answer, we shouldn't write it down just in case someone is trying to read ahead.

Life as we know it may never be the same again.

Quarantine Diaries Editorial Staff

Spring 2020

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Muskie Press was started in January 2020 as part of an English internship teaching students the inner workings of publishing. The internship was offered under the guidance of Dr. Jane Varley at Muskingum University and was funded by the English Department.

Quarantine Diaries: The Muskie Take on COVID-19 was a project that the editors of Muskie Press developed in March of 2020 after Muskingum University was shut down to the outbreak of the Coronavirus. The editors wanted to showcase how members of the Muskingum community were handling quarantine. We reached out to students, faculty, staff, and alumni for submissions. We had a lot of fun working on this project, and we are very proud of how it came together.

Muskie Press would like to thank numerous people for helping with the development, advertising, and distribution of *The Quarantine Diaries: A Muskie View on COVID-19*. Thanks to the office of Strategic Communication & Marketing for advertising the publication through their page. We deeply appreciate all the submissions from professors and alumni of Muskingum University. Finally, we would like to give a special thanks to Erica Lashley for providing us with her painting for the back cover. Along with the back cover she wrote the following:

"Dear Graduates of 2020,

I'm so sorry your last year was taken over by the horrendous thing that is the coronavirus and that your senior year was taken away. Graduating is the most anticipated thing growing up. Graduating is a HUGE milestone to surpass. Just a few years ago I graduated and I remember the anticipation of getting ready and going to prom with all my friends, walking across the stage and receiving my diploma, and of course just getting to say goodbye to that chapter of my life. I got to do it on my own terms. You didn't get that freedom. I had time to say goodbye to my favorite teachers, I had time to make lasting memories with my friends before they moved away to college or just dropped out of my life entirely. You didn't, and I truly cannot fathom going through this and I hope this makes you stronger in some way.

The reason of this post is because of the 'Senior Picture Trend' on Facebook, where people of past generations post their favorite senior pictures. While this may be a fun little trend for people of older generations to post pictures, it's insensitive. Claiming to support the class of 2020 with your senior pictures demeans what the class of 2020 is going through. They don't get to experience what your pictures show. Sure, they got to experience half of their senior year, but not half that really matters. While prom and graduation aren't really important in the whole scheme of life, especially with everything happening right now, they do matter to some people, and that happens to be the class of 2020.

So, to the class of 2020, I hope your lives are full of happiness and optimism despite the circumstances. Don't let this obstacle tear you down. Remember that when life gets hard, just take a deep breath and carry on."

