

## When Rhodies Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd

When rhodies last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
the do-si-dos of sun, earth, and moon  
passed largely unnoticed as time made  
its inexorable creep toward the now.

Nothing stood frozen; nothing locked in place;  
the world woke and stretched and pushed anew;  
the gray broke more and more to blue;  
cycles spun inside cycles like the clockwork  
of a pocketwatch passed generation to generation.

But this year, socially distant banditos wait,  
    carts loaded with Fritos and  
    other American essentials;  
workers, deemed not important enough  
    for a living wage, are far  
    too important to stay home,  
    so take shallow anxious breaths  
    thinking of their children;  
saviors dressed as Apollo astronauts,  
    or in handmade hazard  
    gear more Halloween  
    Lightyear than Aldrin,  
    give gloved solace  
    to gasping wild-eyed;  
while a jack-o-lantern man with  
    an orange Crayola face and  
    the charm of a tantruming  
    toddler berates, castigates,  
    insinuates in a daily demented  
    diatribe mistaking venom  
    and vitriol for virtue  
    and overnight rating  
    numbers for leadership;  
and refrigerator trucks line glass and steel  
    canyons, condensers clouding  
    the morning air like exhales of  
    landlocked leviathans,  
    like the hard puffs  
    of ancient locomotives  
    with their silent cargos  
    awaiting the journey  
    into an empty oblivion.

Still.

This year, too, daffodils once again toss  
    their heads in sprightly dance;  
dandelions with golden hearts spread  
    their yellow fingers in the sun;  
the loveliest of trees hangs with snow  
    from Washington to Kyoto;  
magnolias light their fingertip candles  
    with faint lemony sweetness;  
kits and cubs emerge from dens  
    to gambol in new green grass;  
fawns struggle to learn the silent  
    ways of their mute mothers;  
goats repatriate a Welsh village to scabble  
    up rock walls for tender hedge tops;  
the canals of Venice settle and clear;  
Angelenos see the San Gabriels near;  
and the firmament over China lights  
    travelers on a new spice road.

As always, the rhododendron by the back gate  
is first to offer buds waiting to explode yellow  
inflorescence, followed by the purple and white  
of the front sentinels, then the neighbor's delicate  
pink to be spied from the side window.

This swirl and swell, this flurrying dance  
and advance of growth and reclamation,  
begs the questions of what is the true deathly  
virus and disease, and what the lasting cure?

– Jeffery Greb