

Mocking Birds in Spring 2020

By [Barbara Nimri Aziz](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Our seas and rivers look cleaner; our air feels fresher, quieter; our streets and roadways are abandoned. Panic shopping for household supplies has passed, only to be replaced by lines of mothers and fathers at food banks while UberEats and Grubhub hand-deliver to others at any cost. In U.S. detention camps, miserable crowds are shamelessly left to an undetermined fate while our prisoners and nursing home residents haven't even the solace of an occasional visitor, even at Easter-time and for Eid Al-Fitr.

Every human activity is not only in transition. We dwell in a state of abeyance. With our singular awareness of 'self', we turn to poets, musicians and philosophers to guide us. If they cannot move us forward, at least their voices might ease us through this night.

Ironically, while we wonder and fret, measure and blame, other sentients sharing this earth appear newly liberated. I can't plan a family visit or my book release, but tulip blooms emerge on schedule, their color a deeper, more resolute hue than I remember; bright petals open despite how readily they attract white-tailed deer and burrowing rabbits.

Look there: a fortnight longer than normal, my fickle forsythia bush is clothed in yellow flowers! (So it's prospering.) Clusters of wild fern slowly unfold exactly where they do every year in that corner of the field; even the bothersome Japanese knotweed looks certain to endure, driving upwards day-by-day through mud in the riverbank.

Migrating merganser ducks arrived in late winter, and by the time Covid-19 reached our neighborhood, their nests were readied. Now the males have left their mates to mind the brood while they dash upriver, so swift and low, over the water's surface.

This pattern of normality is reassuring; I should be comforted. I am... to a degree.

Frankly speaking, I'm peeved. It's off-putting that these neighbors of mine seem so unaware of how my routine, all my expectations, all my personal relations have collapsed in total disarray.

Winged creatures are especially annoying, flitting and diving so determinedly outside my window. Even as I refill the feeders to draw them near, I'm miffed by their urgent calls. I awaken to their sweet morning melodies to find my day is still under threat. How can they be so unaware of my fear, my unhinged life?

"Don't you know what's happening?" I whisper to them. "Aren't you nervous about our monster virus crawling into your throats too?"

I don't want all your lives suspended as ours have been. Not at all. But we'd been working hard on your behalf:- building bee hives, lobbying against plastics, chemical fertilizers,

genetically engineered seeds and carbon-based fuels, over-fishing and excessive meat consumption.

That wasn't for us only; it was for you too. We had begun to realize how, with your loss, our demise would inevitably follow. You were the focus of our noble struggle; you were the declining, threatened species down the food chain. Now, when our vulnerability is so exposed, you seem immune, so carefree, mocking us with your twitters and chirps. How can I continue to protect you if my power is undermined, so preoccupied with my own race?

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