

Signs of life go on as nature's cycles continue to turn

IT is hard to believe that a year has already passed since the breakout of the Covid-19 virus in the UK. A year!

Last March we were suddenly catapulted into the first lockdown, our worlds shrinking within the four walls of our homes.

A year on and the rollout of vaccines has moved at an impressive pace. We now hope for a widening and expanding world, appearing steadily like the longer, brighter days.

Spring is in the air. I am tempted to throw concerns and worries to the wind. However, I think we are being told to proceed with caution... and this is very wise advice.

In the midst of all our human concerns, nature continues to do what it does best.

I was at Duncansby Stacks the other day and marvelled at the fulmars on the cliffs. I always find it invigorating to visit 'Bird City'. All these birds are perched in the



Northern Drift

By Monique Sliedrecht



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most dangerous and unimaginable places to us. They can fly to and from the perilous ledges with ease. They exist within a different law, another universe.

How strange to think that if we all died tomorrow the bees would keep buzzing, the sea would continue to ebb and flow, and the fulmars would keep swooping. They are not affected by the pandemic.

Or are they? Because our whole world is so deeply interconnected. There are many theories about the origin of the pandemic, but some focus on the imbalance between humanity and the natural world.

I watched a documentary film called The Biggest Little Farm the other day. It is about a young couple



Fulmars at Duncansby.

that followed an incredible dream. It chronicles the 'eight-year quest of John and Holly Chester as they trade city living for 200 acres of barren farmland and a dream to harvest in harmony with nature.'

I was deeply moved by their perseverance in the face of enormous challenges and how they even used the conflicts of nature to create a world of biodiversity that was beyond their wildest hopes.

This amazing pioneering experiment has so much to say about the present time, and so much inspiration to offer. It's a great message for springtime!

The film depicts a clear cycle: Decaying

things become part of the nourishing soil. Nothing is lost in the economy of nature. Even predators in the animal world make their own profound contribution to the renewal of the farmland.

Our human lives have cycles too. The pandemic has taught us this in the most poignant way. Dreams die, like the holiday we planned, or the business enterprise we've been forced to put on hold.

A friendship fades through lack of contact... and yet... and yet... something else is always happening, perhaps invisibly, far down in the dark soil.

Life continues to

percolate. Bulbs and seeds germinate. Puffins finish their rounds over the northern seas and eventually make their way back to nest. New seaweed fronds appear on the rocks.

The world wakes up again.

None of this is new. 'What can this Spring say that other Springs have not already told us? And yet, each year, how happily we listen!'

~ Joan Walsh Anglund ~

■ Monique Sliedrecht is an artist and blogger, and has recently launched a podcast called Tales from the North. See www.moniquesliedrecht.com for more details.

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