

COVID-19

A DOGGEREL ON A DODGY INTRUDER

Text by Dr Oon Chong Lin



Ubiquity – that’s your name
To all the cluttered world proclaim:
A conqueror of both land and sea
From far Anhui to the Zuider Zee.

A hitch-hiker’s life has been your lot,
But truly alive you surely are not!^a
Astride the world you avidly range
As RNA strands that can ceaselessly change.

In a battleship or a Dreamliner
You cruise the wild blue yonder
With a smorgasbord from which to feast
From the captain to the very least.

And which has been your favourite inn?
A flying fox or a pangolin,
Or, better still, with meals thrown in
A helpless, luckless human being.

Chloroquine and its ilk can do you no harm;
Remdesivir may exert its own little charm.
The rat race is on for a vaccine supreme
That comes with honour, high fame and esteem.

Now premiers and presidents are all on their toes,
The ballooning ill cases just add to their woes,
And while lockdowns may succeed in stopping the rot
A teetering economy is often their lot.

So, are you a love child without a name,
And are you synthetic as politicians may claim?
The whole world awaits your total demise –
Expunged, blot out and ne’er to arise! ♦

Notes

a) Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan in their book What Is Life? (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995: 23-4) maintain that “viruses are not ‘alive’. They are not autopoietic. Too small to self-maintain, they do not metabolise. Viruses do nothing until they enter an autopoietic entity: a bacterial cell, the cell of an animal, or another life organism. Biological viruses reproduce within their hosts in the same way that digital viruses reproduce within computers, a digital virus is a mere program ... Like language, naked DNA molecules, or computer programs, DNA mutate and evolve; but, by themselves, they are at best chemical zombies.”

Dr Oon, a diagnostic radiologist for more than 65 years, has been verifying since young. He served as SMA’s Honorary Treasurer for a couple of years when the late Professor Arthur Lim was the Association’s President.