



2021

Pandemic

Kari Wergeland

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Recommended Citation

Wergeland, Kari (2021) "Pandemic," *The North Meridian Review*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 20.
Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/thenorthmeridianreview/vol2/iss1/20>

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Kari Wergeland, who hails from Davis, California, is a librarian and writer. Her work has appeared in many journals, including *New Millennium Writings*, *Pembroke Magazine*, and *Chariton Review*. Her chapbook, *Breast Cancer: A Poem in Five Acts* (Finishing Line Press, 2018), has been named an Eric Hoffer Book Award Finalist. Meanwhile, her long library career has taken her into libraries up and down the West Coast. At some point in all of this, she served as a children’s book reviewer for the *Seattle Times*.

Pandemic

Stave churches were built in Norway
before Black Death opened its eyes
and lumbered over cities,
leaving the streets littered with dead.
Long staves took a long time to cure.
A father would start the process—
a son might finish,
watch the church materialize,
resemble a Viking ship
with menacing dragons on each end
to ward off evil spirits.
They meant business.
1000 churches built in time
to take on the plague
but only a few edifices survive.
These remaining vessels shift and creak
with the rocking of time—
wooden engineering holding firm.
It’s an important voyage for those used to steel,

plastic – stone even –
for people who have never experienced a pandemic
until now.

Getaway

On the road,
first public restroom
after 10 weeks of sitting in my own germs.
Someone holds the door open –
gratitude I don't have to touch it.
A bare hand shoves coffee out
the drive-through window.
Miles later,
I observe few masks in the grocery store.
Highway curving alongside the sea.
I pull into the driveway,
slip into my tiny shelter
like a hermit crab
with suitcases, laptop, groceries, books.
I plan to buy a puzzle
from the friend who sells gifts.
Spray the knob before locking up –
rub it down.
When I take my masked walk,
I spot what followed me here
dogging my attempts to soar,
I bow to the horizon,
go back inside
wondering if this shell
will take on the clam's jaw.