

## **FSH 2020 2**

**I found this to be a near-perfect essay. The author uses the disturbing metaphor of a crow unexpectedly devouring a goldfinch on an urban sidewalk to reflect on the sudden upending of personal and professional lives by the coronavirus pandemic, the shattering of certainty, and the pervasive vulnerability we all feel. The author introduces the metaphor in a controlled and effective way, using her craft to first create a scene of tranquility and beauty, a charming bird nibbling crumbs on a sidewalk, only to interrupt it with a devastating slaughter of said bird by a larger, more predatory bird. The metaphor continues to weave through the essay in an illuminating way as the author describes the disintegration of family normalcy and routines and the sudden chaos of pursuing patient care as the virus rages. She describes early care of a possible COVID patient without protective gear, concluding "we did the best we could with the information we had," a stark reminder of how fast the pandemic landscape is changing. One of the most important insights comes when the author confesses "I thought I was a crow, but I realize I am a goldfinch." The illusion of control, the apparent safety promised by knowledge and biomedical technology, are irretrievably gone. Returning to the metaphor, the author writes that not only have the comforting seeds the goldfinch nibbled vanished, the sidewalk itself has disappeared. We are all in freefall.**

**The writing in the essay is strong and confident. It is filled with vivid imagery and non-clichéd language. The similarity of the words corvid and COVID are unsettling but effectual. Unsettling in that we, as family hominidae, prefer being the predators, not the prey. Effectual in that it suggests we actually have a lesser, more fragile place in the ecosystem, and we would do well to remember this.**

### **Comments to Author:**

**Bravo! This is an eloquently crafted, moving essay. The fortuitous similarity of corvid and COVID makes for an ideal metaphor. The way you confidently weave the metaphor of goldfinch and crow throughout the essay is effective and revelatory. The image of the predatory larger bird devouring the charming smaller bird is memorable in its unexpectedness and finality. It sets the stage for identifying with the complete disruption of life as we knew it, and the unenviable prospect of settling into the future as vulnerable victims of forces beyond our control. The descriptions of the chaos of family and work life are instantly familiar. The writing is vivid, strong and confident.**

**I enjoyed this essay immensely, even as it made me tremble. I have no constructive criticisms, only admiration.**