



Laura Makaltses © Submitted for United Nations Global Call Out To Creatives - help stop the spread of COVID-19.

## PANDEMIC CARTEL

### AN EXTIMATE EXPERIENCE

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It was curiosity, not yet recognised as desire that led me to accept the invitation to join the Flash Cartel on *Pandemic and Being Lacanian*. A Flash Cartel operates for a short duration to explore the individual quest of each cartelisand in relation to a chosen theme. This Cartel operated from April to July 2020, with a total of six meetings.

In three months, my work topic morphed thrice, each time bringing me closer to taking responsibility for my desire. From a normative position of “what ought to be the response of psychoanalysis to the pandemic?” I arrived at a singular question of “as a Lacanian what could be my response to the pandemic?” The process of work we chose where each of us read texts that we could access; exchanged notes on what we were reading in-between meetings; and made a presentation in each meeting of where we had reached with our particular work topic helped us to locate our respective desire. In listening to the presentations of my colleagues and speaking about what it may have triggered for me, I had an experiential understanding of what it means to be alone in one’s quest, yet not isolated.

The role of the plus one which I realised to mean, through my experience in this and another Cartel as that of leading without directing; intervening to help us reckon with the hole in our knowledge without getting traumatised by it; and providing a Lacanian perspective to our impasses without precluding our own individual sense-making, was instrumental in keeping desire alive, even in those times where I encountered my lack with respect to maintaining a distance from knowledge and truth.

In encountering the Lacanian term *extimacy* I found the impetus to proceed with my desire to respond as a student of psychoanalysis to my particular social context. From Jorge Assef’s<sup>1</sup> articulation that psychoanalysis can counter the authoritarianism of the master signifiers the pandemic has spawned by giving subjective experiences of living in times of the pandemic its due place and voice, I drew courage to persist.

1. Assef, J., “We Shall Build Up Again” 31st March 2020, The Lacanian Review Online. Available at <http://www.amp-nls.org/page/gb/49/nls-messenger/0/2019-2020/4147>