

And then we realized that the separation was destined to continue; we had no choice but to come to terms with the days ahead. In short, we returned to our prison house, we had nothing left us but the past, and even if some were tempted to live in the future, they had speedily to abandon the idea—anyhow, as soon as could be—*once they felt the wounds that the imagination inflicts on those who yield themselves to it.* (Narrator 65; italics mine)

And from the ends of the earth, across thousands of miles of land and sea, kindly, well-meaning speakers tried to voice their fellow-feeling, and indeed did so, but at the same time proved the utter incapacity of every man truly to share in suffering that he cannot see. “Oran! Oran!” In vain the call rang over oceans; in vain Rieux listened hopefully; always the tide of eloquence began to flow, bringing home still more the unbridgeable gulf that lay between Grand and the speaker. “Oran, we’re with you!” they called emotionally. But not, the doctor told himself, to love or to die together—“and that’s the only way. They’re too remote.” (Narrator and Rieux 127)

“Don’t mention it, old chap. I’m only too glad to help you. And then, you’re a journalist. I dare say you’ll put in a good word for me one day or another.” (Cottard 132)

The magistrate, who seemed unable to take his gaze off the sky, abruptly dropped his mildly meditative air and stared at Tarrou. “What does that matter? It is not the law that counts; it’s the sentence. And that is something we must all accept.”

“That fellow,” said Tarrou when the magistrate was out of hearing, “is Enemy Number One.” (Othon and Tarrou 134)

“Maybe. But I just can’t stomach the thought that it may last on and on, and all the time she’ll be growing older. At thirty one’s beginning to age, and one’s got to squeeze all one can out of life. But I doubt if you can understand.” (Rambert 137)

It was at this moment, as he walked in the dark streets along which ambulances were speeding, that it suddenly struck him—as he informed Dr. Rieux subsequently—that all this time he’d practically forgotten the woman he

loved, so absorbed had he been in trying to find a rift in the walls that cut him off from her. But at this same moment, now that once more all ways of escape were sealed against him, he felt his longing for her blaze up again, with a violence so sudden, so intense, that he started running to his hotel, as if to escape the burning pain that none the less pervaded him, racing like wildfire in his blood. (Narrator 143)

“It’s not my job,” [Cottard] said. Then with an air of bravado, he added, “What’s more, the plague suits me quite well, and I see no reason why I should bother about trying to stop it.

As if a new idea had just waylaid him, Tarrou struck his forehead. “Why, of course, I was forgetting. If it wasn’t for that, you’d be arrested.” (Cottard and Tarrou 145)

“Courage. I know now that man is capable of great deeds. But if he isn’t capable of a great emotion, well, he leaves me cold.” (Rambert 149)

“Tell me, Tarrou, are you capable of dying for love?”

“I couldn’t say, but I hardly think so—as I am now.”

“You see. But you’re capable of dying for an idea; one can see that right away. Well, personally, I’ve seen enough of people who die for an idea. I don’t believe in heroism; I know it’s easy, and I’ve learned it can be murderous. What interests me is living and dying for what one loves.” (Rambert and Tarrou 149)

. . . by this time, mid-August, the plague had swallowed up everything and everyone. No longer were there individual destinies; only a collective destiny, made of plague and the emotions shared by all. Strongest of these emotions was the sense of exile and of deprivation, with all the cross-currents of revolt and fear set up by them. (Narrator 151)

--the streets were almost empty, and silent but for the long-drawn stridence of the wind. A smell of brine and seaweed came from the unseen, storm-tossed sea. And in the growing darkness the almost empty town, palled in dust, swept by bitter sea-spray, and loud with the shrilling of the wind, seemed a lost island of the damned. (Narrator 152)

The corpses were tipped pell-mell into the pits and had hardly settled into place when spadefuls of quicklime began to sear their faces and the earth covered them indistinctively, in holes dug steadily deeper as time went on. (Narrator 161)

But though they could clearly recall the face, the smile and voice of the beloved, and this or that occasion when (as they now saw in retrospect) they had been supremely happy, they had trouble in picturing what he or she might be doing at the moment when they conjured up these memories, in a setting so hopelessly remote. In short, at these moments memory played its part, but their imagination failed them. During the second phase of plague their memory failed them, too. Not that they had forgotten the face itself, but—what came to the same thing—it had lost fleshly substance and they no longer saw it in memory's mirror. (Narrator 163-164)

Without memories, without hope, they lived for the moment only . . . no denying that the plague had gradually killed off in all of us the faculty not of love only but even of friendship. Naturally enough, since love asks something of the future, and nothing was left us but a series of present moments. (Narrator 165)

For, characteristically, the sound that rose toward the terraces still bathed in the last glow of daylight, now that the noises of vehicles and motors—the sole voice of cities in ordinary times—had ceased, was but one vast rumor of low voices and incessant footfalls, the drumming of innumerable soles timed to the eerie whistling of the plague in the sultry air above, the sound of a huge concourse of people marking time, a never ending, stifling drone that, gradually swelling, filled the town from end to end, and evening after evening gave its truest, mournfulest expression to the blind endurance that had ousted love from all our hearts. (Narrator 168)

