

Reflexions



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Contents

	FICTION	
Veronica Hackethal	<i>Restoration</i>	44
Megan Patrick	<i>In Response to Virginia Woolf</i>	33
Chris L. Tang	<i>Soho</i>	27
	NONFICTION	
Sarah Chambers	<i>The Harvest Team</i>	13
Joclyn Gordon	<i>A Story He's In</i>	19
David Hellerstein, MD	<i>The City of the Hospital</i>	4
Michael Rosenbloom	<i>The Man with the Shadow in His Brain</i>	37
	POETRY	
Dave Anthony	<i>Wake</i>	26
Kathryn Butler	<i>Two Poems</i>	11
Daniel Eiras	<i>the gravestone</i>	31
Allegra Gordon	<i>Two Poems</i>	2
Georg Herlitz	<i>Two Poems</i>	23
Pamela Mazzeo	<i>Two Poems</i>	24
Lisa Schneider	<i>Or maybe tomorrow</i>	42
Eli Swanson	<i>Two Poems</i>	41
	ART & PHOTOGRAPHY	
Christopher Adams	<i>Internal Iliac Guarding Her Nest</i>	Front
Dave Anthony	<i>Faith's Table</i>	49
Lionel Berthoux	<i>Leaps</i>	10
Annie S. Birnbaum	<i>Veiled Bjork</i>	3
Becky Chandler	<i>Journey Through the Gobi</i>	41
Daniel Eiras	<i>Female Geography</i>	22
Hillary Glenn	<i>The Girl</i>	15
Yvette Gonzalez	<i>Early Shadows</i>	32
Pravien Khanna	<i>Quartz</i>	17
Grace Liu	<i>The World as a Grid</i>	36
Peter "Buzz" Marcovici	<i>A Brooklyn Couple</i>	30
David Parris	<i>Lieberbaum</i>	Back
Rebecca Rajfer	<i>You're a Snake</i>	16
Dennis Santella	<i>Sediment No. 26</i>	43
Sarita Shah	<i>Brooklyn Bridge, September morning</i>	18
Ephraim Tsalik	<i>Cape Peninsula, South Africa</i>	17
Mark Vitale	<i>Circe's Spell</i>	16
	CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES	50

Allegra Gordon

Small Things 1

I love soft sounds, she said.
The sound of towels brushing past,
of filaments incandescing and
water on glass slipping down,
of someone's hands combing up their own hair –

and from this I took her to mean
that she wasn't frightened
by nighttime shapes in the mirror and crumbs
in the bed, and things left unsaid
as I always had been.

So as we lay there wrapped in dark sheets,
our bodies warming the space between,
I saw how the sound of her breath
on my pillow was so full and sweet
that even the window panes pressed in to listen.

sarah, in remarkably good spirits

hold hope in a rolling tumbler
glass cubes clinking, splintering
silver into gold, a perhaps
unfolding on your tongue.

yesterday, broke your foot in a comic collision:
cute bicyclist slams chrome-hubbed jeep –
bike crushed like ice, spectators puddling,
and red clotting at the shoulder of your new spring sweater.

now, set and casted,
you sit and sip,
leg raised like a banner,
a white flag of irony;

you slip a lopsided
grin and look down
into it. the summer still glints,
waiting in the translucent bottom.



Annie S. Birnbaum. *Veiled Bjork*. Embossed aquatint with lithocrayon and drypoint on paper.

The City of the Hospital

I.

Do you know the Italian writer Italo Calvino, who wrote a book entitled *Invisible Cities*? I read *Invisible Cities* during medical school, and have never been able to get it out of my mind. A strange book, *Invisible Cities* consists of enigmatic tales that the young Marco Polo tells to the aged emperor Kublai Khan. They sit in a garden in Venice, and day after day the young traveler entertains and diverts the elderly man with accounts of the marvels he has seen.

Marco Polo tells of Isidora, “a city where the buildings have spiral staircases encrusted with spiral seashells.” And Zaira, the “city of high bastions.” There are Thin cities, Trading Cities, and Continuous Cities. Marco Polo tells of cities and the dead, of cities and the sky, and cities and desire.

There is Diomira, “a city with sixty silver domes, and bronze statues of all the gods.” Yet the special quality of the city, writes Calvino, “for the man who arrives there in a September evening...is that he feels envy toward those who now believe they have once before lived an evening identical to this and who think they were happy, that time.”

Clearly, these are no ordinary cities.

Take for instance the city of Laudomia.

Like Laudomia, every city has at its side another city whose inhabitants are called by the same names; it is the Laudomia of the dead, the cemetery. But Laudomia’s special faculty is that of being not only double but triple; it comprehends, in short, a third Laudomia, the city of the unborn.

This of all Calvino’s cities is the city of the hospital—hospitals contain not only the living and the dead, but also the unborn—the present and the past and most of all, our future generations, the hopes of our species.

In recent years, in thinking of the doctor as writer, Calvino has increasingly come to my mind. I was born in Ohio, and spent my first seventeen years in a suburb ten miles East of the Cuyahoga, our ever-burning river, a Midwestern Styx, but really I am a creature of the hospital. Like many if not most of my physician colleagues, I am what you might call a “hospital-ian” or “hospital-ier.” The same might also be said of many nurses and techs and other medical workers, who exist only as pale rushing shadows outside of the walls of the hospital-castles where they spend their true lives.

And as a doctor who is also a writer, it is the hospital more than

any particular city or town or suburb that is my home—and the subject for my writing. The city that I write about is the city of the hospital.

As the child of two doctors, a pediatrician and a cardiologist, as one of six children, I grew up in waiting rooms, in ICUs, in labs. Dad and Mom were always pulling their cars into various Doctors’ parking lots, and rushing inside past Security, their long white coats billowing. We kids would be sliding down long slick corridors after them, and trying out wheelchairs and crutches, and gorging on candy the nurses gave us. We passed endless hours in Dad’s laboratory, playing on his exercise physiology equipment, and in Waiting Rooms of Mom’s pediatrics clinics. It was a childhood spent in exploring a vast city. A city of many hospitals. Sunny Acres, Mt. Sinai, Babies and Children’s, Rainbow, Lakeside, the V.A., Metro Hospital—we saw them all. They formed the constellations by which we navigated the actual city of Cleveland in which the rest of our neighbors lived.

The brightest star, the Polaris of our night sky, was University Hospital, or UH, where Dad had his research lab. We spent innumerable Saturdays and Sundays at UH. At night, we shadowed him (sometimes willingly, sometimes reluctantly) on emergency calls. We saw heart attacks and resuscitations, and rats strapped to dissection boards, and human hearts floating in large flasks, and crying wives.

UH is where the writer in me began.

Thus, the doctor-writer in the hospital is Marco Polo in Venice, telling Kublai Khan of his travels—whomever Kublai Khan may be. A teller who is by default an actor in his own tales, the doctor-writer cannot help but bear the burden of autobiography: “This is what I have seen.” Secondhand tales fade remarkably fast. And so, from my first day as an infant lying in a pediatric crib somewhere in Babies and Children’s Hospital, to my first day unzipping a body bag in anatomy class 21 years later, and for three decades since, I have lived much of my meaningful life in the hospital.

I have stood between the legs of women in gynecology clinic, I have wandered the tunnels deep under the pavement in Manhattan, connecting one seemingly disparate building to a vast web of others. I have stumbled upon thieves sneaking out of laboratories with their loot of tape recorders and expensive cameras concealed under trench coats, and have barged in upon naked lovers—doctor and nurse—embracing in a communal shower near the On Call rooms. I have seen patients killed by angry doctors who claim they are just “putting in a central line,” I have seen patients miraculously saved by angelic doctors, I have seen babies born, some perfect, some cruelly deformed, lacking ears, or with clefts and twists of their lips and noses, or blue-faced from the confused chambers of their hearts. I have been summoned by nurses at odd hours to come and watch an old woman

take her last breath, when the dawn of New York shines over the East River and tugboats make their way toward Hell Gate. I have seen a pool of blood in the psychiatric waiting room where a deranged man stabbed himself through the heart. And from the Board Room of my current hospital, I have seen a plume of smoke rise down the Hudson River, setting the world askew. Where I have been within “the hospital” must be deduced from all previous hospitals where I have been.

Eventually, having been in just one room of a hospital, most doctors can imagine the rest. Just the way a paleontologist can reconstruct an entire organism from one fossilized tooth, or a molecular biologist can weave an organism from a twist of DNA, we hospitaliers can deduce the whole from the part.

At the end of *Invisible Cities*, the ancient emperor Kublai Khan is led to a surprising realization.

“Sire,” [said Marco Polo], “Now I have told you about all the cities I know.”

“There is still one of which you never speak.” [responded the Emperor.]

Marco Polo bowed his head.

“Venice,” the Khan said.

Marco smiled. “What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?”

The emperor did not turn a hair. “And yet I have never heard you mention that name.”

And Polo said: “Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice.”

The hospital is thus an infinity of cities, a concatenation of living stories of all its existing brethren. And forgive me if I share one strange realization, inspired by Italo Calvino: Every hospital, no matter how grand or how modest, contains every other hospital. Yet every hospital is unique.

II.

Now, one might say, what types of hospitals are there? Never mind the usual categories of private or for-profit, community or academic—any writer knows that hospitals differ in more profound ways.

As I see it, there are bashful hospitals, and bragging hospitals, angry hospitals, and crushed hospitals, there are complacent hospitals and ingratiating hospitals, and imperialistic, warmongering hospitals. Then too, there are timid and contrite hospitals, which practically apologize for healing anyone. Hospitals as a species incline towards pride—they feel compelled to boast how many beds they have, and of the glorious exploits of their inhabitants, the warrior-researchers and the explorer-entrepreneurs within. And of the lapidary wonders of their petty principalities, each princeling with so many millions of grant dollars at his command.

In the hospital, everyone, whether glorious or humble, has a job, a role, an assignment, everyone is the member of a clan, a tribe, an order, a union, a brotherhood, an association, a fellowship, a cell.

Everyone in the hospital has a job—except the writer. There is no job assigned to the writer. The writer (especially if he or she is a doctor and possesses the proper computer-scannable ID card) wanders through the city of the hospital in awe, advancing invisibly in wonderment. Such shiftlessness is essential to being a writer. Even though the doctor has a job, many jobs, each with its own rules, the writer is free to see anything, to travel anywhere. And at his own peril, to say anything.

William Carlos Williams, the doctor and poet, wrote in his *Autobiography*:

The city of the hospital is my final home. You bring into it what you are, what your forebears were before you, first-generation Americans in many cases, who bring Europe with them also, peasant Europe with all its kindness, greed, cupidity and its despair.

Williams has set the stage in many ways, at least in America, for those of us who consider ourselves doctor-writers. We take our cues from Doc Williams. As he puts it, “My own conception of the job has been to consider myself a man in the front line, in the trenches. It’s the only way I can respect myself and go on treating what comes to me, men, women and children.”

In recent decades there have been a growing number of us who consider ourselves to be doctor-writers. We are a varied lot, from Richard Selzer, Oliver Sacks, Sherwin Nuland and Lewis Thomas in the older generation to Abraham Verghese and Perri Klass in ours. We too consider ourselves in the front line, in the trenches. For the most part, we write of patients, procedures, operations, disease. Occasionally we say a few words about our colleagues. Only rarely do we write about the palaces we inhabit for the major part of our waking lives. Our predominant mode is socialist realism, though at times we veer into Victorian melodrama. We don’t dare to be oblique or ironic or fantastic or post-modern, as we are burdened with sincerity.

This I believe reflects the fact that we are early generations of doctor-writers and are just beginning to explore the cities where we live.

*

Any city, after long enough residence, becomes invisible to its inhabitants. A new hospital is a new city, briefly incandescent in all its peculiarities. Medical students and residents, all doctor-in-training, have the marvelous advantage of moving, or “rotating” from one such city to the next. Always a newcomer, an immigrant, a transient, the student is startled by the mundane, and astonished by the callousness or the compassion or miracles he observes. Then, eventually, fully

trained, he forgets what he has seen, except in occasional nightmares. The doctor-writer is commanded not to forget.

In the city-hospital of Floginia, where abandoned children sleep in the hallways in take-out pizza boxes and sit in elevators comparing their genetic anomalies while hiding from the Rounds of statuesque pediatricians, the doctor-writer must take surreptitious notes. In Vog, the hospital of warrior-princes, where every orderly holds an MBA and a PhD and is preparing a biotechnology IPO, the doctor-writer must sneak through hallways, observing after midnight as recombinant-DNA laboratories clone new insurance products. In Bagnisto, where all patients arrive a day too late for successful intervention, and where tubes are inserted just slightly too hard, and where every tumor is misdiagnosed, the doctor-writer must slide through the blood-soaked hallways and memorize what she has seen, since her Palm Pilot has ceased to function and shows only print-outs of her deepest fears. In Skibu, the hospital of compassion, the doctor-writer observes careful intravenous infusions of informed consent, and in the evening, when the pounding of the ethics factories temporarily ceases, is overcome by the wafting scents of some strange syrup which can only evoke the memory of packing unfinished violins into suitcases for flights which are leaving in less than an hour.

And so it is with my new hospital. My old place, where I had spent nearly fifteen years, had practically disappeared by the time I left it. Yet here, the hospital in which I arrived a little more than three years ago, everything is as fragrant as Skibu, as astonishing as the traveler's sad dawn half-dreams of Floginia. As a student of this hospital, a new arrival, I am accorded special privileges. I am escorted through the research pharmacy to see where they "recapsulize" the drugs used in research studies. I follow behind doctors into laboratories and clinics, I am escorted through nurses stations and into patient rooms. In the company of the Chairman, I advance into the old research building, opening doors that say "Hard Hat Area," using a master-key to open offices and storage rooms and disused walk-in refrigerators which hold everything from ancient computers and research files to the odd baby carriage.

No longer a lowly medical student, no longer a junior attending doctor, I am now senior, I am now "Administration." I sit in meetings with Research Chiefs and Unit Chiefs, I review serious incidents, I draft policies, I am driven to meetings in Albany. Most strikingly, I am on the Space Committee (the place of real power, I am told), and am quickly initiated into the urgencies of researchers with grants and graduate students and research clinics, how deeply, how urgently, they yearn for wet labs and magnetically-shielded rooms and negative-80-degree walk-in refrigerators. And offices for their new students, and most urgently, storage space for the endless records and files and

data that they produce! Indeed, I am like a dusty traveler who has been stripped of his ragged threadbare clothes, who emerges from solitary confinement to be adorned with royal raiments, and who is escorted into the center of the royal Court, and handed a sceptre as well. "Here," they tell me, "Rule!"

Prepared by William Carlos Williams to be in the front line, in the trenches, I need to reassure myself that this too is a kind of doctoring. Here, though, I am a doctor in the way the first mate on an ocean cruiser is a sailor. Gazing down from the high deck of an enormous ship, I try to move us through the water, avoiding reefs, ruins, white-water, hidden shoals. It is hard to turn the course of an individual patient's life but even more daunting to turn a vast moving city like this one.

My old hospital, downtown, was a shambling, earnest, threadbare place, shuffling in embarrassing sincerity, until the fateful day it decided to reinvent itself as a hawklike predator, and began to lose its way. My new hospital is a jaunty hospital, its sleek green prow pointing up the Hudson River. It is moored to the main block of its mother ship by two lucent sky-walks that stretch over Riverside Drive, sky-walks which, one suspects, may fall aside at any minute as the entire edifice rockets ahead into the heartland of America. This is a research hospital, a palace for new discovery about the brain and the mind.

In my new job I am a student again, wandering in and out of offices and wards and pharmacies and laboratories as I did when I was ten years old. Being new, I have license to ask anything and go anywhere. And so I perceive, as I wander through the palace, that Williams does not tell the whole story. It is not only a matter of the battleground and the trenches, being the doctor-writer, not any more. It is something more astonishing and baffling, something never before described. It is as miraculous a city as any ever visited by Marco Polo, more fantastic than the imaginations of Italo Calvino. And those of us who are doctor-writers need to find a way to tell what it is that we see.

I was born in a hospital, of course, and spent my childhood in hospitals, and continued my education in a dozen or two other hospitals, and visited my dying father and my dying father-in-law in hospitals and rushed to the hospital for the birth of my three children. And I estimate that before my final visit to the hospital, I will have spent over one hundred thousand hours in hospitals. A life of hospitalization. So indeed I am a hospitalite, a hospitalier, a hospitalian. So many hours and days and nights and early mornings in those quiet corridors and those hectic emergency rooms, and those crowded nurses' stations. I know my way through a hundred hospitals.

Yet I cannot claim to understand hospitals any better than any first-time hospital visitor. The essence of the hospital still eludes me.

The only thing I am sure of is that all hospitals are one. The

architecture may vary, the personalities and attitudes differ, and yet there is only one Hospital. That is why doctors say, "I am going to the hospital"—not unlike the way a confirmed alcoholic will tell his wife, "I need a drink." The singularity is correct. "Hospital" cannot be plural. There is only one Venice. And though every hospital is irreplaceable and unique, there is only one Hospital.

In his 1943 book, *Poemas*, Jorge Luis Borges writes:

I felt Buenos Aires
this city I thought was my past
is really my future, my present;
the years I have lived in Europe are illusory,
I have always been (and will be) in Buenos Aires.

For me, this is the case with hospitals.



Lionel Berthou. *Leaps*. Photograph.

Kathryn Butler

Rush Hour

He savored solitary things: fingers
fastened about a leather briefcase
handle, his eyes and weight focused
in line with hubcap sparks and a medley

of steps. Safer to spin in the surge,
he thought, secure in staccato motions,
unaware of the clouds cycling and pulled
thin with the clatter. (He did not care for sky.)

A single leaflet loosened
from his folio, skittered translucent
over the pavement. He tracked its flutter
to a child marveling at crystal

specks in the sidewalk. In the distance,
his arms reached from the brink of Empire
State, two, three, fifty decades
past, his mother's perfume clinging

near his ear. He stretched beneath
the rail, shedding red sweater threads
as he balanced city pulp in his palms,
as the verse rose, wordless and ripe. . . .

He batted away abandoned wisps. A flat panel
of Hudson walled him in, and he marched on,
jaw set, skyscraper glare stinging his eyes.

Brianna

She slurps milk and ignores
her accordion straw. A mustache
mottles her lip, and I wait

for a backhanded wipe of chill-
white beads, but she sips
more – clinging puddles suit her.

Weary of Nesquick, she stirs
sprinkles, then glitter,
then I scramble for glue,

sequins, yesterday's newsprint
and coffee grinds. She glops
all into a sparkle-sticky

muddle, then lifts a spoon
for me to sample, but the monitor
beside her clacks and beeps –

I uncoil an infusion line
to loosen bubbles stacked
like marbles toward her veins.

Later, I feel her smile rise
as she rakes my hair. Her fingers
twist and fumble, knotting, content

to comb me for the catwalk. I pretend
to return her twirling, my hands
flitting above her delicate scalp,

and the bitterness presses away
my vision. But Brianna grips
me, guides me toward purple

crayons, her mother's laughter.
Ignoring her straw, she braids hair
and licks her mustache free.

Sarah Chambers

The Harvest Team

Every first year medical student at Columbia is given a remarkable opportunity to carry the “transplant beeper” for a day. If called, the student goes on a heart transplant run with the harvest team. Today was my day. I sat in my small dorm room, beeper clipped to my belt, trying to read. As my classmate had reluctantly handed me the beeper before class that morning, he told me that no one had been called for four days. I was reading about the anatomy of the leg when it finally beeped.

I fumbled clumsily with the beeper, then reached for my phone and dialed.

“I’m the first year with the beeper today—you just paged me?”

“We have a heart,” the resident said. “Be outside the hospital at 5:30 sharp. Wear scrubs. If you’re late, the ambulance will leave without you.”

Climbing into the ambulance, I was painfully aware of the sharp creases still in my scrubs. But after the airplane and a second ambulance ride, when I was rushing into a Connecticut hospital carrying a cooler filled with surgical equipment, scrubs were the last things on my mind.

I imitated the surgical resident as she ritualistically donned a cap and booties, and followed her lead in pulling on gloves. I tried to burn the cardinal rule into my mind: If you’re not scrubbed in, never touch a surgeon or anything on a blue cloth. If you do, the heart is ruined.

On our way to the OR, we flipped through the chart. The donor was a three-year-old child; there had been a car accident. I barely had enough time to comprehend the words on the page when we pushed through the doors of the OR and took our places around the table.

The liver team had been there for a couple of hours. All they were waiting for was our team to cross-clamp the great vessels. I stood at the head of the table, peering over the blue cloth that tented the anesthesiologist, and praying that I wouldn’t lose my balance. Below me, our surgeons dissected out the heart. There was barely room for the two teams to work.

“You’re a first-year, right?”

It was one of the surgeons on the liver team.

“Come down and take a look at this...we have some interesting findings. How far have you gotten in Anatomy? Know about Meckel’s diverticulum? Look....” I looked.

The heart team called the cross-clamp in at 9:45 p.m. Both teams worked furiously now, in a race against the degeneration of death. The heart can only last a few hours outside the body until it is unfit for the recipient. Caught in the hurricane of activity, a clinical self whom I had barely known before this night watched, fascinated, as the organs were painstakingly dissected out. I helped to prepare the potassium solution as the heart, less than half the size of my first, was fixed and put on ice.

*

There were chicken fingers and mozzarella sticks waiting for us on the airplane. As I sat down I realized how hungry I was. We all dove for the food. Between bites I gulped down a Coke—I was going to need the caffeine.

At the door to the next OR, I said goodbye to the harvest team. After seven hours they were headed home—they'd seen this all before. For the second time in a night, I experienced a moment of shock as I saw the size of the two-year-old body on the operating table. The surgeons were already at work, and once again I took my station with the anesthesiologist. There would be no tours this time.

With intense precision, the skilled and practiced hands stitched a heart into its new body. I focused on the little boy in this room, knowing that there was nothing to be done for the child on the other table. For the ten people here, this room was all there was.

Other hands worked their magic around the surgeon. The pulmonary technicians monitored the monstrous looking heart-lung machine and answered my awed questions with a mixture of pride and amusement. The anesthesiologist's eyes flicked between monitors as she seamlessly integrated information from countless displays and coolly administered the drugs needed to maintain the blood pressure, the heart rate, the blood saturation. Between orders she quizzed the third year med student: "What would you give here? Why shouldn't I give him this? Is this reading within normal limits?" Here and there I caught a word or phrase that I knew.

At 2:15 a.m., they stopped the heart-lung machine and a different, new blood flowed through this tiny heart for the first time. And there it was, weak but unmistakable—the first beat. There it was again, but now stronger. The heart, taken from ice, was beating anew. But it was too fast, the blood pressure was shooting up. Orders were barked, drugs were given, numbers were shouted, and finally relief replaced the well-masked panic on the faces around the table.

It was another hour before the surgeon turned over his instruments to the chief resident: "You can close." And he rolled out of the swinging double doors.

It was after 2 a.m. when I walked back along New York's streets, arriving at my dorm room where books were still open on my desk

and clothes were left in an untidy pile on the floor. I stepped out of my crumpled scrubs and stood under the shower, letting the steamy water bombard my senses. I could still feel the wonder of that first heartbeat, could still see the small body that had been given such a gift. I saw too the other body, the little child who had given it. And I cried.



Hillary Glenn. *The Girl*. Photograph.



Mark Vitale. *Circe's Spell*. Photograph.



Ephraim Tsalik. *Cape Peninsula, South Africa*. Photograph.



Rebecca Rajfer. *You're a Snake*. Photograph.



Pravien Khanna. *Quartz*. Photograph.

A Story He's In



Sarita Shah. *Brooklyn Bridge, September morning*. Photograph.

I am in love with a colorectal surgeon from Manhasset, but I won't always be. I will instead fall entirely in love with a statistician from Brooklyn, but not until I get out of here and move closer to his office.

The calendar reminds me that today is August 31, Friday, which of course makes me wonder about the British way of doing things. No one opens their mouth and says "thirty-one August," but still the British and even some Americans who were educated in those kinds of schools insist on writing the date in that peculiar, seemingly backward way.

I have been here for ten days according to the bracelet on my wrist. I am afraid it will fall off and then where will I be? Surely no one will treat my frequent nausea without the proper identification. I think I might be mistaken for someone, or worse, no one, and then who will have the packing in their wound changed while mine is left to fester?

"This fatty stuff keeps coming out of it," according to Dr. Sardinha. She seems to think that poking at it with wooden Q-tips will improve the situation. "I'm so sorry we're torturing you." Only male colorectal surgeons who smell nice and wear rubber shoes are allowed to torture me. I smile, keeping this secret to myself. This makes me a good patient.

The person in the next bed is a Christian. I know this because two of her visitors are unable to stop talking about Jesus. They also say "thank you" a lot, even though no one in the room has done them any favors. I find this relevant because she seems to have the medical problems of a through and through Jew.

Having the gumption to bring this up, I do. My theory is not new to her. If she were younger she might have an internal hookup like me, but then again, she is married and I am not, so go figure. The exit point of stool is obviously not what attracts a man. Her time in the hospital now is thanks to kidney stones. Her husband's time in the hospital is thanks to her kidney stones. He must love her a lot.

My Christian roommate suggests that I write a "Dear John" letter to my boyfriend for, among other things, leaving me alone here in the hospital. My first boyfriend's name was John. This one, only my third relationship, but by far the longest, is with a man named "Jim." Maybe I will write a "Dear Jim" letter. Jim's family calls him Gib. Having been introduced to him as "Jim," I've never felt comfortable calling him Gib. It feels forced. That means I will never get to be a part of his family.

Whenever I force things, they get stuck. Just look at my intestines.

I made a deal with the handsome surgeon. If I don't vomit, he won't stick a tube up my nose, down the back of my throat, and into my stomach. That really shouldn't be difficult. To be sure I hold up my end of the deal, I am wearing jeans and a tee shirt in lieu of a hospital gown because the clean gown that Kathleen the nurse gave me to put on after my shower had several green stains on it. Thinking about that for too long might make me vomit. I will tell this to the handsome surgeon in the morning and he will laugh. I am reminded of Mr. Faciano in 12th grade AP English turning on me and asking, "Can't you take anything seriously?" I would like to be taken seriously. A resident came in earlier and told me that he can tell by the look on my face that I don't need pain medication. I told him that I minored in theater as an undergraduate.

I remember the first time I got yelled at in grade school. I continued to talk even after Ms. Fero rang her cowbell. I remember her position almost exactly. She was leaning against the teacher's closet, so marked, and even identifiable when open because it had a mirror placed at grownup's eye level inside it. I was seated at the Balloon Table, across from Danielle Grady, who had a perm.

"You've got a whole class here waiting for you to stop talking," and at "whole class" Ms. Fero gestured with her hand to remind me of where the whole class was. I went home and imitated that gesture, yelling at imaginary students and pretending I was queen. It felt nice.

The second time I got yelled at in school, Ms. Fero was absent. The black music teacher whose name I can't remember was the substitute for the day, the same one who once accusingly asked me why there isn't an "e" in my name. "Ejoclyn," I wondered. "That doesn't make sense."

Because we were small and so were our bladders, K-211 had its very own bathroom, also fitted with a mirror placed far above our limited view. I went to the bathroom during story time and forgot on purpose to hold the door behind me when I emerged. As I was returning to the rug, the door banged loudly and Terence O'Rourke—the kid who once made in his pants and then I asked him how he got peanut butter on his shoes—got scared. "Joclyn, you MUST remember to hold the bathroom door so it doesn't bang and scare your friends." I was quietly confused, mostly because I HAD remembered; I just didn't.

The third time, and by far the meanest, was when Mrs. Abramowitz ripped up my art project, a mimeographed tree that I'd glued some leaves to, because I'd forgotten to write my name on the back. I forced myself not to cry, and thought about telling Mrs. Abramowitz that I had in fact written my name, but I used a white crayon so there. I decided not to because then she would say that white crayon only shows up on black construction paper and they don't have any more in the supply

closet because the fifth graders used it for cat masks.

I wake up very disappointed to still be in the hospital. I would have been less disappointed if someone had told me what was going to happen. I wouldn't have been disappointed at all if I knew I was only about a month away from meeting a statistician in Brooklyn. I usually like to know that something exists before I am comfortable thinking about it. This is why I don't think about how the statistician from Brooklyn is really from Massachusetts, and that he studies birds from Argentina. I don't know that I will one day laugh when someone catches me in a fixed love-stupor and says, "Mike Russo isn't from Argentina. Mike Russo is from Massachusetts."

A statistic is a number that summarizes, organizes, and makes understandable a body of data. I will learn that from the statistician. I will long for him to make sense of my body of data. Much like the handsome surgeon, he too will be married and will be unavailable for delving.

The statistician and I will become friends, however, and on one of our many walks through the parking lot, he will wonder aloud if there is a point in our lives when we decide based on feedback from others whether or not we will show our intelligence. I will immediately be reminded of my hospital dreams, specifically of Ms. Fero.

One time it was a spelling day and Ms. Fero asked us each, in turn, to spell a word. How excited I was when I learned that my word was to be "apple." I thought that I had the best word ever because it had two "p"s and Matthew Horowitz never spelled words like that right.

Just as I opened my mouth to start spelling, Ms. Fero said sharply, "Don't repeat any letters. Leave that to me."

That certainly didn't make any sense. Ms. Fero couldn't have meant that I should say that "apple" is spelled "a-p-l-e." Did she think I was Matthew Horowitz? I began spelling and almost as though she could read my thoughts, she cut me off as I began my second "p" and snapped, "I said don't repeat any letters."

I tell the statistician that maybe if I had a different makeup, that incident would have been it for me and school. I really try to impress him with my theory, but he just laughs. He will later say that I am smart and will write glowing letters of recommendation on my behalf, but still, I feel as though a moment of a possible reason for falling in and out of love with the handsome surgeon, if only to have a dream of twenty years ago, is gone in a second. I am not in kindergarten anymore. I am in twelfth grade and Mr. Faciano is yelling at me about never being serious when I need to be.

Now I am in the hospital and no one will give me Demerol because I smile. I conclude that it was right for Ms. Fero and Mrs. Abramowitz and Mr. Faciano to yell at me. Like how hands to the throat is the

universal sign for choking, maybe no smile is the universal sign for pain. It only follows that it is just for the resident to hold out on me and for the handsome colorectal surgeon from Manhasset to laugh at everything I say.

When I do get out of here, I will move to Brooklyn to live near the statistician's office. If I only knew that, then I would be less disappointed. I am trying not to throw up, but not to look too healthy, either.



Daniel Eiras. *Female Geography*. Photograph.

Georg Herlitz

CNN

Roaring iron preybirds flicked across the TV
dropping bursting flame along the Tigris.
Tracers arcing upward in the nighttime,
rising like the sparks of campfires
burning ancient domes and date palms,
I shifted on my sofa, muted the remote,
poured a Diet Coke.

Valentine

The curve of your neck and the flow of your hair
fitted the arrow and drew on the string,
but you were blind to me,
and more than I could dream of.
And then when you smiled at me suddenly once
tore in my body the stab of the dart,
and now my gut knows why
they paint him as an archer.

wish fountain

Saturday morning (rainy) in the Met's
Chinese garden
fountain dripping

I'm not at home checking the mail

red-orange admission clip
the meticulousness of the floor stones,
roof tiles, cedar lattice

little girl with red boots, blue sweatsuit
still as a stone watching the goldfish

redhead with a turquoise hair scarf
laughing gentle, easy
orchids, white with gray-pink streaks
granite flecked black, brown, stain

I don't want to leave

little girl, standing up
and pointing to little boy in front of the goldfish pond:
"Daddy, he doesn't think fish die"
Dad, sorry but honest: "oh...well, yeah, they do."

everyone's faces are beautiful
I want to be the girl good news
would make me

Winter Solstice, for Jules

we're heading home, past midnight
I stop at the blinking red light
the sand in the pavement ahead is glimmering
awakened by the full long night's moon.

you ask me a question about the movie,
but my mind's somewhere else
and it takes me a little bit to hear you.

It's just you and me, girl, I want to say smiling goofily,
but your hair's a different color now, auburny.
I'm not sure you still respond to goofiness.

it's just you and me, girl, what would you like to do tomorrow?
you're home for a month and we haven't really talked

(I flash back to this afternoon's conversation:
I know you want to go to the Whitney
but the city on my only day off?
you've always been gentler
I'm still more selfish, it seems)

then you're laughing because
the traffic light's gone yellow
and we keep sitting here even though no cars are coming
like it's the most hilarious thing you've ever seen

it's a cold laugh, like metal in the mouth.
this is what Dad said to expect
that I was mean and cold my first year of college too
he says it got better

the amber blinking manic reflects off the green hood
a nightmare Halloween clash
so I look both ways and hurry through the light

and even though I'm nervous about
the Whitney and the clashing and the laugh,
it fades a tiny bit when we're alone on an empty, familiar street,
past our old school, past the house with the azalea bushes we love

then the light of the Yule moon
paints everything ivory, but soft

Wake

We're at the corner of George and Charlotte, room temperature pints in hand
(that's the way the Irish drink it)
Stephen's hands are dirty, he's been working a lot lately
and he's still wearing his flannel shirt
My hands are warm and fragile,
built for setting fractured bones I think
I follow the curves of his thick fingers around the rim
and remember baiting lines in the summertime

Stephen says red is the colour best preserved by memory
Wisps of red hair, red dress,
spiderwebs of rosacea strung across blushed cheeks,
carved in our minds as a scalpel would carve fair skin
I tell him that sometimes I wish I were Superman
beaming my rays into her broken cells,
then curl my lips and drop my gaze into the
fault lines of the oak table
Our hearts beat, and we lift our amber chalices
I take two big gulps because I'm lagging
half a pint

Soho

Jeans, cotton white shirt, and a dark tie. He sat close to the back
with his hands folded under the table. He seemed relaxed, or thought
so, but every so often he would tighten, or the trumpet would squeal
and just his legs would tense. In the silence between the music, he
could feel his breathing, and he was sure that everyone else could feel
it, too. He had taken a pair of Scotches, and he was feeling weathered.
He thought about the ring in his pocket, its intense fire. He had held
it up in the sun, and it had shone like a star. It burned at his side, this
box that held all his secrets and promises.

This was a place for swimming in jazz, brilliant and unkempt.
Here was the high-winded squeals from a trumpet played by a man in
earrings, ringing staccatos of the pianist in the mild blue shirt, a stringy-
haired man's wailing tuba reminiscent of going under a wide, wide
bridge—the kind of music that is felt in the deepest pit of the stomach.
Between the lull of one brassy decrescendo and the jaunty flare of
the next trumpet, the clatter of dishes would come up like unexpected
applause. Behind the blackened window, a neon sign hung, blazing in
electric indigo the name of the place. It was so unlikely a place, and
like so many others. It was utterly Soho, the second floor of a Buddhist
temple, and some blocks from Chinatown.

There was a pair of legs under the table that were more slender
than his own. In her Navajo sweater and with a leg folded up casually
under the other, she looked like a sparrow, a leg tucked under its
feathers against the cold. He began thinking about how her legs
looked when they danced together, her hair woven into the music
like some Indian tapestry, keeping them warm. How unforgettable,
the way she pulled in and then spun out, her dress unfurling like an
umbrella. He started rehearsing his sentences silently. Should he go
down on one knee? Should he fix his tie?

Around the room he could see a few men still in suits and attired
for business, an old man in gabardine with a woman wearing a pink
shawl, a few men with blond hair cut very short who, for the most part,
looked very much the same. In the far rear, tables nobody used were
collecting dust. The thick curtain separating the kitchen failed to keep
out the noise of the dishwashing. A lady with red hair sat in the back
talking to a few businessmen and sipping from a tall glass. She was
wrapped in a black dress that made her look like a torch.

The drummer drummed a final beat and tapped the high hat soft

as drizzle. He felt the room reverberate slightly to the tone. He looked at her and she smiled, and clapped for the band. Now, ask her! He tried to open his mouth, but he could only manage a dry scratch from the back of his throat, and she asked him whether he had said something and he said oh, the band was great and smiled and just then at that very moment he remembered he still had dimples like a babe, and his smile melted into a childish grin as he clapped. He watched the musicians raise their instruments and take short bows. He fixed his tie. He watched the red-haired lady get up on the platform and kiss the drummer on the lips and begin talking to him, holding a martini in her hand.

He felt a nudge on his calf; his Navajo sparrow was nodding her head toward the door. "They were so good, Jeremy. I'm so happy that I came," she said. The crowd was standing, picking up their things, and wading across the room to the exit, under the neon sign.

"Karen... okay, let's go," Jeremy said.

The exit door was open, and it had started raining; water leaked part of the way into the atrium. The members of the band were putting away their instruments. They were drinking from glasses, grinning and joking with each other and some girlfriends.

Onstage, the red-haired woman had stiffened, and her hair started to quake behind a wave of harsh words. She made open-handed gestures and pulled her hair over the top of her head a few times. The drummer was trying to calm her, but she was not allowing him. The waiters walked stiffly, cleaning the tables at the fringes of the audience, taking their time far from the stage, taking quick steps past the stage when they had to.

Karen walked to the door and held it open with her body while she tried to open her umbrella with her hands. She slid it open and pulled it over her head and went outside. Jeremy hurried out and ducked under the umbrella, and the door fell closed. They stood on the cast iron steps that led to the street.

"Maybe we should call a cab first, Jem," Karen said.

From behind the door came the sound of shattering glass and the dull percussion of heels across a wooden floor. There were voices, a silence, more talking. The talking approached the door.

"I'll have to break a fifty," Jeremy said. "All I have is a fifty and loose change." He looked at the door.

The door was covered with the club's bills of advertisement, graffiti, stickers with inverted pink triangles. Behind the door, a woman was shouting about a bitch in the East Village. Didn't he think she'd see him, she was screaming. She was throwing obscenities. She was stringing curses like a train.

"Let's just catch the uptown bus. That's Broadway right up there, right? There's probably an awning we can stand under," Karen said.

Jeremy nodded and tried to smile.

They started down from the metal landing and listened to the hollow sound of their heels on the iron steps. They stepped onto the asphalt of the empty alleyway and listened to the bottoms of their shoes splash the rain on the sidewalk. The rain sounded like popcorn popping against the trash cans and plastic bags as they walked toward the yellow carbon lamps. Behind them, the heavy iron door they had just come from snarled open again and slammed. A pair of heels ground harshly into the iron as they came down the steps. Quick and distinct they were, heels on asphalt, a sharp sound fading behind the rain.

The drops of water grew larger and the sky felt like an undertow at the beach. Jeremy pressed into Karen and thought maybe he should wait until morning. It would be better in the morning, when it was brighter, sunnier perhaps. He put an arm around Karen and squirmed the other hand into his pocket. He played with the velvet on the hatch over his fingers, opened and closed the lid, and opened it again. In his pocket, he took the ring out and slipped it onto his little finger to feel how it felt. He slid it off again and put it back into the box and closed it again.

"Should we walk uptown or down? It's about the same both ways," Karen asked.

"Let's go downtown. Maybe we can pick up some food nearby."

He felt the wind blow under the umbrella, clean and new. Manhattan smelled fresh only after a hard shower. Across Broadway, a liquor store flashed neon lights hard into the night. A few people were walking fast in the rain. The wind died down, and suddenly, he could smell Karen's hair.

"Oh my god!" Karen cried out.

The wind had gusted in under the umbrella and inverted it, blowing it out of her hand. Jeremy tried to catch the umbrella, but it ripped from his grip, leaving him with a cut on his palm, and the umbrella tore down the street like a kite. It got caught in the traffic and when it came out from under the cars it was mangled. They looked at it, and then they remembered the rain and began running, slicing through the rain as quick as they could to reach the shelter. Karen started to laugh, and it sounded as fresh and pristine as the wind he had felt under the umbrella. Her hair sagged in the rain and her hand was tight around his fingers. They ran past strangers, some who looked back, others who merely glanced, wearing the same unfeeling façade they'd always worn.

The rain hit Jeremy and Karen in their eyes and their ears, and it fell on her lips and trickled into her mouth when she laughed. He was running out of breath and when he opened his mouth the rain entered it and drenched his half bewildered tongue. They were running like the

express, and for a while he didn't think about the ring. His mouth fell wide and he laughed into the air, the night and the sea of water blinding him. He turned for a moment towards her face, her eyes reflecting the deep amber light of the city, before the rain got to him again, and he thought of all the things that seemed and never were.

Clean and new, the rain trailed behind them until even the sodden beggars looked up from their shadowy corners and watched.



Peter "Buzz" Marcovici. *A Brooklyn Couple*. Photograph.

Daniel Eiras

the gravestone

snow

(falls
and covers
the frostbitten grass

like a white sheet

sheltering everything
against the sunlight as it
dies)

lightly

(through the trees—
like a pastor's benediction
in light

illum
inating

the fall of
white forgetfulness

that accumulates)

on
the
gravest

one.



Yvette Gonzalez. *Early Shadows*. Photograph.

In Response to Virginia Woolf

She lay curled in a chair, book in hand. He sat intense at his computer, several feet away, drafting another page in the thesis that would never end. Their eyes met for a moment. He twisted his face into a look of annoyed frustration, and she responded with a sympathetic smile and returned to her book. He was no more annoyed than she was sympathetic. His work consumed him in a way that she never could. She was content to be overpowered in that way, to waft in the shade of its presumed importance. She burrowed deeper into the collar of his vest; his scent was reaffirming.

"Mrs. Ramsay," she thought, "What is your first name? Can you remember or have you been swallowed so completely by your own beauty that even your identity has become an insignificant detail?"

And so she rebelled against this woman, this ghost whose faded impression had come to represent the lost paradise of ideal femininity.

"Maybe inside your brightly lit house you have carved out the illusion of perfection but, outside, the world has outgrown you. We choose not to barricade ourselves from the violent onset of time, nor to wrap a shawl around the intrusive head of reality and pretend that it, too, is up for interpretation."

She looked up and watched him still absorbed, graphing this data or analyzing that statistic. (It was all the same to her.) She admired his focus, his intensity, but would never herself possess it. Her emotions colored all of her convictions. Breathing in deeply, his scent confirmed her particular distaste for anything concrete.

"How dare you, Mrs. Ramsay?" she thought to herself. "How could you pour yourself out to him like that? Empty yourself to satisfy his selfish vanity? You weren't thinking about *us*... years of struggle and daily insecurity to make up for that one action. Rallies, protests, and congressional bills to rectify the damage accrued at just one of your dinner parties. I refuse to reclaim you, to submit to you, to be walled in and then drained like an empty plaster cast of a woman. Is that your contribution to the world, your beautiful, hollow shell? But at least, for the most part, you carry your own handbag."

She looked up. He had whispered her name, quietly but insistently. Would she please set his margins? High irony, as he was the one who always set their boundaries. She asked him how this page (weren't they all the same anyway?) was coming along. His face lit up as it

always did whenever she expressed an interest in the one thing that possessed him fully at that moment. She felt as though she were admitting defeat, conceding to be prioritized on his ever-expanding list of responsibilities. There she was, numbered somewhere between his thesis and his laundry. She felt demeaned—a warm feeling, and oddly comforting. His smooth voice lulled her into contentment. She loved to watch him talk.

“But Mrs. Ramsay,” she thought as he spoke, “why do you continue to endure? The more we try to detach from you, the closer you appear, taunting us from your window.”

He was still carefully explaining the intricacies of melatonin and its relationship to the world as she knew it. She set his margins.

“You were stripped of your innocence during the Great War and left, cold and naked, to harden in poverty. You survived only to hurl yourself (you always were self-sacrificing) into a barrel of gunpowder detonated all over Germany. You died in that war. And I emerged from beneath the wreckage of devastated cities and decaying values, small and trembling, but resilient. Now strong, I openly condemn you, a tribute to my own restless insecurity and guilt-ridden pride.”

He was still speaking, growing more and more excited by the word. His thesis had reached seventy-seven pages and he assured her that he was not yet finished. Potentiality was always so important to him.

“Who are you, Mrs. Ramsay?” she wondered. “Each day I smash your image into a thousand pieces and each night I want only to put my head in your lap and let you console me. If I have progressed so far beyond you, how can it be that you are still content and I continually searching? I could never find fulfillment in a pile of fruit or a basket of yarn, no matter how much I may want to.”

He had stopped speaking and was looking at her, expecting encouragement or perhaps the affirmation of his very existence. She wholeheartedly gave him what he needed. Wilting slightly beneath his gaze, she wove her very self into the fabric of his brilliance and the brocade of his aspirations. He, suddenly sustained, returned to his work with a renewed aggression. She pulled his vest, several sizes too big, more tightly around her and returned to her chair. She knew that he could never love a housewife. He did need some challenge.

“Who am I, Mrs. Ramsay?” she asked, suddenly desperate. “Each day a little more of me is worn away by equations and mechanisms, by erosive conflict and unsatisfied desires. I am squeezed into a mold that is both male and female and at the same time neither. Compliance must make room for self-sufficiency, sentimentality for objectivity. And what remains? A deformity, Mrs. Ramsay, an abomination. Unlike you, what endures from my actions is an underlying tremor of uneasiness, a risk that haunts my life.”

And so she rebelled against herself, her inadequacy. She questioned the purpose of her evolution. Towards what did she strive? She had lost all hope of ever being Mrs. Ramsay somewhere in the garden or perhaps on the playground, she could not recall.

The clicking of the computer keys gradually became discernible from the cacophony of her thoughts, and she looked up at him. His concentration was evident from the abused stirring straw that now lay submissively between his lips. She realized that she would never be able to concentrate like that, her mind impenetrable to the demands of intrusive images and impressions.

“Mrs. Ramsay, could you ever understand me?” she thought, now frustrated. “I exist in that medium you refuse to see—reality. I have no beauty to insulate me from the world like a cocoon. I cannot extract only the most joyful images to add into my luminous fog of existence, no matter how skillfully I may cut. People are more than objects to be arranged; they have form and detail. In *your* world, evils such as poverty and disease are seen only through the light that they reflect off of you. In my world, they must stand alone and exposed to be judged. I, in turn, exist in the light that shines from them.”

She raised her head and saw him look away quickly. She smiled to herself. Why did he always pretend that he hadn't been looking at her? She imagined that, to him, any sign of vulnerability was unacceptable, as if the world would come crashing down on him if he ever gave the impression that he cared for her. Would he remember this moment the way she would? Of course not—for him it had never existed in the first place.

“What does this mean to *him*, Mrs. Ramsay?” she thought. “By your definition, I am not able to love as you do. I could never be his perfect complement. We overlap in some places and leave gaping holes in others. You would say that we create only dissonance, the sound of two notes struck entirely too close together. But Mrs. Ramsay, there is a strength in that reverberation, an acknowledgement that the chord is struck by choice, to amplify the richness of both our lives, rather than by any kind of necessity.”

She noticed that he was beginning to pack up his books and shut down his computer. He asked her if she was hungry yet. She smiled at him. She knew that his mind already was racing beyond this moment, dissecting the next crucial problem destined to engage all of his mental capacities, if only for a split second. And so he lived, jumping doggedly to ever-higher pinnacles of thought. He left behind him a trail of discarded accomplishments. He took with him only a handful of memories, the fittest refugees from his hasty experience. Her book bag looked heavy he told her, did she want him to carry it?

She breathed in deeply one last time, attempting to inhale with his scent the seeds of timelessness. The spell broken, she got up slowly.

“Yes, Mrs. Ramsay,” she thought impulsively while gathering her things, “I see you there in the window, but I refuse to reach out for you. It is as fine as it will ever be. But do know that your beauty will always be my anchor.”

She gave him her bag.



Grace Liu. *The World as a Grid*. Acrylic on wood.

Michael Rosenbloom

The Man with the Shadow in His Brain

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

– T.S. Eliot

When I first saw Jose G in the Harlem Hospital ER, I was amazed at how much younger he was than our other neurological patients. He had been a college student in the Dominican Republic and had only recently settled in the United States. He was a 34 year-old man with a solid, wiry build who smiled perpetually. “*Yo tengo un crisis*,” he said to me. “I have a crisis.” His sister who was also in her 30’s stood anxiously beside the bed, her hands tightly folded.

In the past three months, Mr. G noticed that each of his legs had stiffened up like two pipes and that he needed assistance with tasks as simple as walking to the bathroom. He recently began requiring a cane to move around the house. In addition, he complained about how much weaker his right-sided limbs were compared to the left side. He demonstrated this discrepancy by seizing my wrist with his right arm, squeezing tightly, and then switching to the left arm. “*El mano derecho es mas debil*,” he said. “The right hand is weaker.”

Mr. G attributed his symptoms to a motorcycle accident that occurred 6 years ago while he was still living in the Dominican Republic. He described how a metal pole had punctured his right thigh during the incident, penetrating deep to the bone. Although I reassured him that this event was unlikely to contribute to his current symptoms, Mr. G insisted that he hadn’t felt the same since the accident. He told me that he was concerned about his symptoms because neither he nor anybody else in his family had ever experienced such debilitation in the past.

As I examined him, he repeatedly smiled and broke into inappropriate laughter. He also showered me profusely with praise for my generosity as well as my clinical aptitude. When I tested his cognitive abilities, he struggled with tasks that would be considered elementary by a college student. He calculated $100-7$ as equaling 92. He could remember only 1 of 3 objects after 5 minutes. He copied three-dimensional objects as if they were in two dimensions. When asked to write the first sentence that came to mind, he wrote, “*Una perzona [misspelled] es la carta firme en una familia*.” Translation: a

person is the firm letter in a family. The sentence did not make sense to his sister or us.

When I attempted to test Jose G's field of vision, he repeatedly ignored my command to not move his eyes as I wiggled my fingers on either side of the temples. By the third try, I was astonished to find that he neglected all stimuli originating from the right visual field. "*Nunca sabia antes,*" he declared, surprised at this sudden revelation of blindness. "I never knew before." Such a finding would be more characteristic of a 65 year-old man recovering from a stroke rather than a young, healthy student with no medical history. In addition, Jose G had a leftward-beating nystagmus on leftward gaze.

His motor exam at first seemed unremarkable, as his bulk and strength were surprisingly normal despite his complaints. Yet during the exam, he would periodically clutch his right thigh, howling, "*Me duele las piernas.*" He was having muscle spasms. When I attempted to move his limbs, they were spastic, refusing to budge. In addition, he displayed an overall lack of coordination when I asked him to alternate between touching his nose and my finger. I then tapped each of his tendons with a rubber reflex hammer, and on contact, the appropriate limb would fling violently upwards. Furthermore, when Jose G walked, each leg seemed to pursue its own direction, and he would eventually trip over as his limbs scissored upon themselves. "*No puedo caminar,*" he moaned.

I discussed my findings with the neurology team, and it was quite certain that Jose G's disorder was an enigma. His mental status exam suggested mild dementia and perceptual abnormalities. His cranial nerve exam indicated a possible optic tract/occipital lobe lesion. His motor exam and gait abnormalities suggested upper motor neuron damage with impaired coordination. According to the physical exam, Jose G had to have a lesion so diffuse that it would have to involve the frontal lobe, the occipital lobe, the cerebellum, and the corticospinal tracts! Eventually, we decided that multiple sclerosis was the only disease that could encapsulate all of Mr. G's presenting signs and symptoms.

However, an MRI of Jose G's spinal cord was normal, and there was no evidence of the random demyelination typically found in multiple sclerosis. In addition, the lab tests that we hoped that would lead us to a diagnosis were all unhelpful: CSF showed normal protein/glucose levels without oligoclonal banding (indicative of multiple sclerosis), creatinine kinase (indicative of myopathy) was normal, B12 levels were normal, serum Cu levels were normal (indicative of Wilson's Disease), Anti-Yo and Anti-Hu were negative (indicative of paraneoplastic syndrome), HTLV-1 was negative (indicative of Tropical Spasticity), and RPR was negative (indicative of neurosyphilis).

After Jose G's first week in Harlem Hospital, there were no answers, no diagnosis, no treatment—only undying questions. When I made my morning visit to Mr. G's room, he suddenly began to express concern about his ailment.

"*Doctor, por favor, dígame la verdad,*" he would say. "*Voy a morir? Es serio me enfermedad?*"

"I'm sorry, Mr. G," I would reply. "We just don't know how serious your disease is at this time."

He would then nod his head, express his gratitude for my efforts, and promise to remain patient.

The neurology team decided to perform one more imaging study, an MRI of the brain. When the image was first projected upon the computer screen, an attending shook his head in disbelief, a resident swore with surprise, and the medical students hummed with excitement. A dark cystic cavity occupied roughly one half of the patient's occipital and parietal lobes. The resident dragged the chair of the neurology department into the room who looked at the scan and named it porencephaly.

Although Jose G's MRI manifested a glaring brain defect, it did not seem to account for his presenting symptoms. Perhaps, the homonymous hemianopia as well as the perceptual abnormalities could be explained by the scan, but what about the spasticity, the hyperreflexia, the scissor-like gait, the lack of coordination? The giant cyst did not even touch the motor cortex or the cerebellum. Besides, he probably was carrying the cyst within his cranium for most of his 34 years. Curiously, Mr. G had not experienced any of the typical symptoms found in porencephalic patients, such as paraplegia and seizures, and only recently did he begin to suffer from headaches.

When I visited Mr. G again, he had already learned of the finding. Someone had described the condition to him as "a shadow in the brain" and assured him that the shadows had always been present.

"*Ahora sabe usted lo que es el problema?*" he then asked me. "Now do you know what the problem is?" Such questions had now become an essential part of our morning routine. I apologized and told him that despite finding the shadow, the diagnosis had still eluded us. However, I reassured him that we would present his case at Chief of Service Rounds, and that perhaps the Chief could put an abrupt halt to our nihilistic conversations.

On a breezy autumn afternoon, the Chief of Neurology, the old grandmaster of the neuromuscular junction, the authority of ALS, a man who had his name stamped onto the cloth cover of an esteemed neurological textbook, made a special journey to Harlem Hospital to put an end to the unsolvable case of Jose G. As I presented the case to him, the Chief first began thinking along the lines of multiple sclerosis, following up his assertion with a suggestion of HTLV-1 or HIV. In order

to assist the diagnostic process, we wheeled Mr. G into the room, reperformed the physical examination, and then went downstairs to study the MRI once again. By that time, every muscle in Jose G's body had been stressed, every blood test result had been described, every gyri in his brain had been plumbed, and the entire housestaff suddenly fell silent and shifted their attention from Jose G. to the Chief.

"What do you think it is?" somebody asked.

The old grandmaster of the neuromuscular junction shook his head, threw up his hands, and said, "I cannot say."

After learning of the unsuccessful attempts to decipher the great shadow that blackened his parietal and occipital lobes, Jose G began to grow irritable. He no longer greeted us with his immense cathartic smiles. He demanded that he receive his baths promptly in the morning. He disobeyed the doctor's orders and roamed the corridor on his two spastic feet. After realizing that tolerating the blood draws for the lab tests failed to further his understanding of the disease, he started refusing all invasive tests. Finally, we arrived at a point in which there was nothing that we could do for him except fill out a discharge form.

On his final morning at Harlem Hospital, Jose G gathered all of his belongings into a plastic bag and pulled his cane to his side. His excessive smile had suddenly returned.

He nodded his head and shook my hand emphatically.

"Gracias, doctor. Gracias por todo."

I secretly yearned to continue the conversation, to prevent Jose G from leaving and becoming the one case that got away, but all of our hopes of understanding this patient's ailment had suddenly been quelled. I was not only disappointed by our inability to find a solution, but also sorry for Jose G, who would likely continue to deteriorate from his mysterious disease. I waved good-bye to both him and his sister.

Even as Jose G hobbled out of the hospital lobby, he had yet to be given a diagnosis of the condition that stiffened his legs and caused him progressive weakness. And perhaps the solution to Mr. G's dilemma was as unfathomable and mysterious to the neurology profession as the black obscurity that darkened his occipital and parietal lobes. In our pursuit of answers, we had only come up with more questions: How could he live in the absence of so much brain? Was his disease fatal? Was there anything he could do to halt this degenerative process? All of the answers seemed to have eluded us, perhaps buried beneath Mr. G's occipital shadow.

Eli Swanson

Versailles

Birdsongs flirt with butterfly wings and the masseuse named breeze relaxes the leaves and consequently my soul.

untitled

Summit winds chill my skin yet remind me of the comforting warmth that lives in its absence. I remember my nods to the mountain herds both cattle and ewe. Their large clanging bells are virtually the only trace of mankind.



Becky Chandler. *Journey Through the Gobi*. Photograph.

Lisa Schneider

Or maybe tomorrow

dreadful salmon twilight mocks
a neon pink and concrete wilderness
the highway goes by faster at night

lines of cars with red bumper lights
grind together like teeth along the turnpike
maroon molars and silver canines

because tonight the sky is clear
i can see two stars and a satellite moving across the sky
resolute in imperturbability

man-made moving stars
our contribution to the cosmos

our consciousness sated with words from advertisements
companies jostle on billboards for footholds in our mind

my generation, too tired for ideologies
born after the failure of all revolutions
turns en masse to the material
the last bunker against emptiness

i turn through revolving doors
only to go the same way i went before

wait on line and do as we're told
walk amid beauty as if blind
the final triumph of the scientific

revolutions sag heavy
and explode, overripe, on impact with the ground

there are classes to enlightenment
and the book costs only
twenty-nine ninety-five

inside of each of us
a tight fist of fear
clinging to first inclination
we have grown accustomed to this
shortness of breath

today i will tear down the sky
and turn the world on its back



Dennis Santella. *Sediment No. 26*. Photograph.

Restoration

Things started to change the day the cat fell through the ceiling. It must have been in the early morning, because when Annie woke up the damage had already been done. Nick was nowhere in sight—he was already off to work, or maybe he had never come home the night before. Annie wasn't sure which was the case, but that wasn't unusual. Often, he would come home so drunk that he'd pass out in the easy chair, the TV screen flickering infomercials in front of his sunken face.

At first, Annie didn't know what had caused the hole in the bathroom ceiling. She bent to pick up the broken pieces of plaster, and out of the corner of her eye she saw something streak from the kitchen to the living room, then hide, crouching under the sofa. Without thinking, she knew it was a cat. Which was odd, because how often do cats fall through the ceiling? But something in the way the creature moved, the gracefulness of its arc across the worn wooden floor, gave it away.

Annie peered beneath the sofa. At the back, amongst the dustballs and discarded beer can fliptops, Annie saw two eyes, one green, one yellow, glinting at her from the darkness. She made a kissing sound—which is what she used to do as a child when she wanted to pet the neighbor's cat—and said in a high-pitched coaxing voice, here kitty, kitty, kitty. But this cat was too terrified to forfeit its cover. So Annie went to the kitchen, opened a can of tuna, and set it in front of the couch.

Then she went to work cleaning the mess in the bathroom, worried that she might leave a scrap or two, which would anger Nick. He always seemed to notice things that she missed. Apparently, the cat had splashed smack dab into the toilet, because it and the surrounding tile were sopping wet. Pieces of plaster and flimsy styrofoam-like ceiling material littered the room and floated in the bowl. The cat must have crawled in between the floorboards and gotten stuck there. For months, she'd been noticing an ever-widening ring of water damage from the bathroom above, weakening the spot where the cat had fallen through.

When Annie finished cleaning, she walked into the living room to see the cat crouching ravenously over the tuna. It was really an ugly creature—a calico alley cat just out of kittenhood. Streaks of black, yellow, and orange gave its hide a mottled, spray-painted look. And

there were those bicolored eyes, as though it were made of parts haphazardly glued together by a kindergartener. Annie petted the cat, and when it purred, she smiled and felt a glimmer of warmth.

She walked around the apartment building, knocking on doors and asking if anyone had lost a pet. No, no, no, she heard again and again. So the cat was homeless, and part of her liked the idea of giving it a home, even though she knew Nick would disapprove. When she returned to her apartment, the cat lay dozing on the sofa, in a ray of sunlight with a self-satisfied air, as if he'd staked his claim to the place and there was no arguing about it.

But the light on the answering machine blinked red-hot and insistent. Annie pressed the play button. "Annie, this is Dr. Johnson. I'm calling to tell you that the results from your tests were positive. Please call us as soon as possible to discuss the details."

Annie had had a pregnancy test a few days before. When she'd heard the word "positive," a spark of excitement lit her heart. But this would complicate things. She and Nick weren't married. But part of her hoped that he'd be excited about fatherhood, that this baby would change things. Maybe now they would stop fighting, maybe now he would stop drinking, maybe now they could stand on firmer footing.

Annie looked down at the cat and said, maybe you were a messenger. Now we can be a family—a new baby, a new cat, a new start for Nick and me. The more she thought, the more excited she grew. She rehearsed how she would reveal the news to Nick. Nick, guess what, you're going to be a Daddy. Or Nick, guess what, I'm pregnant. Or Nick, guess what, *we're* having a baby! Yes, that last one was good. She liked the *we* part, but it also scared her—she sensed that Nick would hate collapsing them into a *we*. Still, she *wanted* to say it.

She and Nick had been together for six years, and it had been rocky almost from the beginning. They'd met when she was only eighteen. Her father hadn't approved of her dating a man nine years older than her, but then her father hadn't approved of much anything that Annie did. And when he wasn't disapproving with his mouth, his fists were doing it instead. Her mother, spirit broken from the same treatment, didn't—or couldn't—have the strength to intervene. So when Nick asked Annie to move in with him, she jumped at the chance to escape Southie.

Nick's place was a small one bedroom on the ground floor of a building just outside of Inman Square. The apartment was set just a few feet back from Washington Street, the main truck route from a nearby freeway. The big semis rumbling through Somerville into Cambridge passed so close that they'd rattle the windows. Annie had met the landlord only once, and when something broke Nick would curse, then haul out his toolbox. In the winter, they bought clear plastic

window sealer from Walmart. Annie would tape it to the edges of the windows, then use a blow dryer to shrink it. For the rest of the winter, the windows would glisten like brownies wrapped in cellophane.

When Annie moved in, she felt like Nick was her savior. But it wasn't long before he started getting annoyed at her for almost anything—leaving her hair in the tub drain; leaving dirty dishes in the sink; not knowing what to say at the right time, or worse, stammering with fear when she did speak. Nick would snap at her, spit it out woman, if you got something on your mind, you damn well better just say it. But when she tried, hesitantly, he would rebuff her, say that she was wrong, stupid, had rice crispies for brains.

Then he started hitting her—but only when he was drunk, and at first he only shoved her. She quickly learned to steer clear of him when he came home drunk, but sometimes it was unavoidable. The next day she would show up at work with a great purple-blue welt searing across her arm, or a shiner swelling her eye near to closed. It wasn't anything she couldn't explain away by blaming her own clumsiness—she'd fallen and hit her head on the side of the coffee table, or slipped on the icy stairs, and boy wasn't this Boston winter a killer? No one ever prodded her for details, on account of the fabled Beantown reserve—you mind your business, I'll mind mine—and she didn't volunteer them.

Annie had thought of leaving Nick, but she had nowhere to go. And she was afraid that if she did leave, Nick would lose control. He'd told her that if she ever left, he didn't know what he would do, maybe kill himself (or her—the unspoken fear). But there were also quiet moments, when he would look into her eyes. Then she would feel that he really did love her—he just wasn't good at showing it. And she would think, no one has ever looked at me with such love, such longing. Then she would convince herself that the beatings would stop. But they never did.

That evening, Annie waited on the sofa, a plaid blanket wrapped around her knees, the cat purring on her lap. Her heart was bursting with the news, her mind preoccupied with thoughts of the future. Nick didn't come home until midnight, and the minute he walked in the door, Annie could tell he'd been drinking. She smelled it in the vinegar on his breath, and detected it in the angry glare of his eyes, which darted straight to the cat.

"What the Hell is that fucking thing doing here?" Nick growled.

"I, uh, it f-f-f-ell through the bathroom ceiling," Annie whimpered.

"I don't want no goddamn smelly cats around this house, you hear?" Nick blasted, and in a few steps was beside her, his six-foot four-inch bulk towering above. He bent down, and grabbed the cat by the neck.

"Nick, d-d-don't do that!" Annie said. When Nick touched the cat,

Annie had felt a protective instinct so immediate that she'd uttered the words without thinking. But she knew she should have kept quiet—Nick's eyes flashed red-hot fury. He threw the cat across the room, where it thudded against the wall, then scurried away.

"Are you tellin' me what to do? Are you bossin' me, you no good piece of shit?" Nick ranted. Annie lowered her eyes, kept silent. She knew that if she said anything now, it would only make matters worse.

"I'm talkin' to you, you cheap whore. Think you're somethin' special? You ain't nothin' but a goddamn sack of shit, that's what you are."

And that's when his fists started coming, pummeling her like a hailstorm. She rolled into a ball, didn't fight it. But then she remembered the baby, the baby! For a fleeting second, she nearly screamed, don't hurt the baby! But the words stuck in her throat. Yet the second she recalled the baby, her body experienced an electric momentum, completely instinctual. She rolled off the couch and ran to the kitchen, grabbing a heavy iron skillet from the stove. She'd never defended herself against Nick, and when she grabbed the skillet she could see his anger work into white-hot wrath. And precisely because she was so unaccustomed to defending herself, she faltered. That instant of hesitation was her undoing. Nick grabbed the skillet and beat her across the side of the face, then across the back as her knees crumpled and she fell to the floor. He bent down, hitting her belly and face until her sight grew blurry, then black, and she lost consciousness.

When Annie came to, she was already hemorrhaging. She could feel the warm, sticky blood like hot honey between her legs. Too scared to call out, she gradually, painfully, eased herself onto an elbow. It was quiet except for the cat's whimpering, and she realized Nick had left. Unable to stand, she slowly scooted across the floor to the phone. Too humiliated to ask a neighbor for help, she called a cab. As she waited, the cat rubbed against her and looked at her as if to say, I'm sorry. Annie didn't have the strength to pet it. Through swollen lips she said, it's not your fault, but you'll have to leave now. She opened the door and shooed the cat away. No tears spilled out of her eyes—she felt numb.

At the hospital, the list of injuries read like that of a traffic accident victim: broken nose, fractured right jaw, three lost teeth, broken wrist, four broken ribs, partial loss of vision in one eye. The doctor stood by her bed and said, apologetically, I'm sorry ma'am, but we couldn't save the baby. Annie stared straight ahead, her face so swollen that she couldn't move it. It hurt to breathe. He shuffled his feet awkwardly, and said, well, uh, I'll just let you rest, and then he turned to leave, but paused and thought better of it. He reached out, patted her good

hand, and said gently, don't worry, we'll take care of you. We'll fix you up good as new. Annie still didn't respond, but the words registered: we're going to take care of you. But how in the world could *they* help *her*?

She was in the hospital for almost two weeks, and Nick never came to see her. She noticed delivery boys arriving with flowers for other rooms, but hers remained empty, undecorated and sterile. She tried to avoid thoughts of the lost baby, but they swirled in her mind like the wild winds of a Nor'easter. The doctors had said she could still have children, and wasn't that a relief, they asked. But nothing, no one was a relief to her. In her mind, she said over and over, he killed his own baby, his killed his own child. He killed his own baby! He killed his own child!

On her third day, a group of medical students and the doctor entered her room. They stood above her, discussing her case and looking down at her. Twenty-four year old white female, domestic violence, multiple fractures... she tuned out the details, but could feel their gaze. Their eyes seemed accusatory: why did she put up with it? She kept her lids lowered, didn't meet their eyes.

On the fourth day, a social worker arrived. She said, we can help you. Do you want us to help you? Annie didn't know how to reply. There are places you can go, safe places, the woman continued. Finally, Annie looked at her, unblinking and wide-eyed. I can't leave Nick, Annie said. He'll k-k-kill me. There, she'd said it. The unexpressed fear, hidden in her mind for years. After voicing it, she felt an overwhelming terror, as if she'd made it more real. Her body convulsed into sobs, pain blistering her broken ribs with the sudden movements.

We can help you with him, too, the social worker said quietly, looking through gentle eyes, and rubbing Annie's good arm softly. You tell me what you need, and I'll help you with it. Annie was mystified: what I need? Her own thoughts and wants had been denied for so long that she had simply stopped registering them. The social worker continued rubbing Annie's arm. Well, you think about it, and let me know when you're ready, the social worker said and began to rise as if to leave. Then, a solitary thought formed in Annie's mind, a longing she hadn't realized she owned. Slowly, Annie reached her hand out to the social worker, and said in a barely audible voice, "I need a home."

When Annie was discharged, the social worker and a policeman escorted her to the apartment. The social worker had gotten a restraining order against Nick, and placed Annie in a home for battered women. Annie entered the apartment, afraid that Nick would be waiting there. But they'd arrived at midday, when Nick was usually at work, and the apartment was empty. And clean. When she'd dragged

herself across the floor to the phone, she'd left a wide swath of blood behind, but that was gone. He must have mopped that up, she thought as she noticed a note by the phone. I'm sorry, it read simply, Please give me another chance. I love you, Nick. Her heart swelled the way it always did when he said he loved her. But then she looked at the social worker, at the cop, took a deep breath, and when she winced at the pain in her ribs, she went into the bedroom and began to pack her things.

Her broken wrist slowed her progress, and her heart pounded with the thought of Nick returning. She rolled her belongings inside two white sheets, knotted at the top, then took one long look around, and exhaled slowly and heavily. Was she happy or sad to be leaving? Her mind felt scratchy, emotions tangled and frayed like a ball of yarn batted around by an overgrown kitten. Let's go, she said, and the other two walked out before her. It was only as Annie grabbed the knob to close the door that she noticed her own blood on it, smeared and rusty red. Hurriedly, she rushed to the kitchen, grabbed a rag and wiped the knob, thoughts of Nick's sudden return still tormenting her. But she wasn't leaving one piece of herself behind. Then she picked up her things, faced forward, closed the door, and locked it behind her.



Dave Anthony. *Faith's Table*. Photograph.

Contributors' Notes

Christopher Adams is a fourth year at P&S who at this point may or may not have matched in Derm. For fun, he compulsively mail orders succulents (look for the winter-hardy opuntias on the granite outcropping next to the psych institute...), scrawls out self-incriminating reflections on eggs (older ones posted on www.columbia.edu/~cwa10; site ignored heavily by residency programs it was set up to arouse), and food-shops in chinatown for exciting organ meats...

Dave Anthony, P&S 2006, grew up in Canada and Saudi Arabia. He picked up photography and poetry in high school, most likely because he was too lazy to paint and write prose. *Wake* and *Faith's Table* are inspired by two women whom he unknowingly had a tremendous impact on his life.

Lionel Berthoux got his PhD in Virology from a French University. Currently he is surviving as a post-doc in the Microbiology Department.

Annie S. Birnbaum went to UW, Madison for a degree in microbiology and is currently in the Columbia School of Nursing ETP program. She will have her RN in May.

Katie Butler is a second-year medical student easily distracted by words. She intends to pursue a masters degree in creative writing or literature before the age of 90, but in the meantime her goals are to survive second year and to work toward a career in pediatric cardiology or oncology. Last year, Katie was awarded second prize in the University of South Florida's Medlennium journal poetry competition.

Sarah Chambers is a 4th year medical student, headed for pediatrics. Outside medicine she enjoys exploring NYC, all kinds of outdoor sports, and of course scribbling stories in notebooks.

Becky Chandler is a MPH/MSW student in the Forced Migration and Health track. She has been taking pictures since she was a high school freshman. She worked for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching First Aid at a hospital in northern Mongolia. *Journey through the Gobi* was taken outside of Dalanzadgad in Omnogovi, Mongoli.

Daniel Eiras graduated with a B.S. in Biology from Duke University in 2002 and is

currently a first-year student in epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. His interests lie in clinical infectious disease and long walks on the beach. Photography is a serious hobby of his.

Hillary Glenn is a student at the School of Nursing.

Originally from Texas, **Yvette Gonzalez** was fortunate enough to work and be inspired by San Antonio nature photographer Scott Schrader. She has traveled to Morocco. Upon completion of her MPH in Population and Family Health/Forced Migration in May, she hopes to integrate artistic expression into public health programs and provide education about the realities of health in the field.

Allegra Gordon grew up in Berkeley, CA, and spent the last six years around Philadelphia, where she learned all she knows about bicycle mishaps and water ice. She is a first year MPH student, studying sexuality, gender, and health.

Joclyn Gordon is a first-year student in occupational therapy. She majored in journalism as an undergraduate and did, in fact, minor in theater. Anyone offering free Spanish lessons is invited to contact her at jg2341@columbia.edu.

Veronica Hackethal is a second year medical student at P&S. She draws her stories from observations of the world around her and wonders what it would be like to live inside another person's head and body for a day. In her spare time, she runs circles around Central Park. Sometimes she stops to watch the sky.

David Hellerstein, MD, is an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at P&S and has taught in the Medical Humanities course for second year medical students. His books include *Battles of Life and Death*, *A Family of Doctors*, and the novel *Stone Babies*.

Before entering the field of Medicine, **Georg Herlitz** (P&S 2004) worked as a white collar crime attorney in Louisiana. In addition to writing poetry and short stories, his interests include drawing and painting, acting, miniature figurines, French cooking, and ancient and medieval cultures.

Pravien Khanna is currently in his second year at P&S. Originally from NJ, he attended William & Mary where he earned an Economics degree. Prior to starting P&S, he also completed a masters degree in Healthcare Policy Management at the Mailman School of Public Health. In his spare time he composes piano music and takes photos.

Grace Liu is a second year medical student whose ambition to become an artist was dashed when she found her masterpiece depiction of *House, Flowers, and Sun* in her mother's trash can at age 5. *The World as a Grid* was painted at a stone quarry near Boston, MA.

Peter "Buzz" Marcovici is from Huntington Beach, CA. This year he made the transition from film to digital cameras, as well as being a third year medical student.

Pamela Mazzeo lives on the lower level of Hammer. She enjoys cart falafel, long walks back and forth to the reserves desk, and making found poems from HD syllabi. She's grateful to Mom, Dad, and the balcony crew for their love, support, and chocolate.

David Parris (P&S 2006) is from Marin County, CA. He hopes to go into reconstructive surgery.

Megan Patrick, P&S 2005. "If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people." -Virginia Woolf

Rebecca Rajfer is from Los Angeles, California where she grew up and went to undergrad at UCLA (Class of 2001). She majored in PsychoBiology and decided to become a nurse anesthetist last year. Spending 23 years of her life in LA made her want to go as far away as possible for nursing school... She is in the nursing ETP program (accelerated BSN to MSN) and will finish her BSN in May 2004. Her anesthesia master's degree will be completed in May 2007.

Michael Rosenbloom is in the process of finishing his 4th year at Columbia P&S. For many years, he has maintained an interest in the brain and plans to specialize in neurology. He enjoys writing fictional and non-fictional pieces. Many of his works have been inspired not only by his clinical experiences in NYC, but also by his experiences abroad in Manchester, England—one of the world's most culturally sophisticated cities.

Dennis Santella is a reformed neuroscientist and first year masters student in Environmental Health Science. Enjoys long walks along the beach, Rashomon.

Lisa Schneider is a first year medical student currently living in Alumini Auditorium.

Sarita Shah is currently a Research Fellow in the Division of General Medicine and a student at the Mailman School of Public Health. She is originally from Cleveland, Ohio, completed college & medical school at Johns Hopkins, and moved to New York in 2000 for residency at Columbia in Internal Medicine. She will be moving to Atlanta, Georgia, this summer to begin work at the CDC as an EIS (Epidemiology Intelligence Service) officer for 2 years.

Eli Swanson is a 2nd year medical student from Oregon who likes abalone, bumble bees, crocodiles, dolphins, emus, ferrets, giraffes, hornymoads, iguanas, jaguars, kangaroos, lemurs, moose, naked mole rats, ocelots, penguins, quails, rhinoceros, salmon, tazmanian devils, unicorns, voles, wiener dogs, xenops, yaks, and zebras. Now I know my abc's come along and sing with me!

Christopher Tang is a fourth year Ph.D. student in the Integrated Program in Cellular, Molecular and Biophysical Studies. A native of New York, he has lived in Cambridge, MA and briefly in San Francisco. He graduated from MIT in '97 with a major in biology and a minor in writing. He currently works on molecular modeling (proteins and RNA) using computational techniques, and enjoys writing—if only he had more free moments to do it. When he is not on the computer, he finds time to skate around the city, stopping occasionally to stock up on H&H bagels.

Ephraim Tsalik is an MD/PhD student who has recently completed his Ph.D. work studying behavioral neurobiology in *C. elegans* and is currently back in medical school. This photograph was taken on a recent trip to where his wife, Estelle, will always consider home.

Mark Vitale is a 2nd year medical student at P&S, originally hailing from Brooklyn, NY. *Circe's Spell* was taken this past summer at "el peine del viento" in the city of San Sebastian, Spain.

Reflexions

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ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Founded sometime in the 1980s, Reflexions runs under the auspices of the P&S Club and serves to publish the creative work of the Columbia University Medical Center. It is published once a year.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Reflexions welcomes submissions of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, photography, and art from all faculty, students, and staff of the Columbia University Medical Center. Health and non-health related pieces are accepted. Contact pam180@columbia.edu with questions and submissions.

Cover Design: David Parris and Julian Parris

Front Cover: Christopher Adams. *Internal Iliac Guarding Her Nest*. "Sculpey" clay polymer, stones, dried flora, and potting soil.

Back Cover: David Parris. *Lieberbaum*. Acrylic on canvas.

Reflections



Volume XI
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