

# SCOPE

A photograph of a tree trunk with two yellow and black striped ducklings. One duckling is perched on a hole in the bark, and the other is hanging upside down from a branch.

Volume VI • 2016

UT Southwestern Arts & Humanities Journal

# SCOPE

## University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Arts & Humanities Journal



Untitled  
by Tyler Ellis Smith

This is a photograph of a black-bellied whistling duckling leaping out of the nest for the first time. He is probably only a few days old at the time, yet he's leaping into the unknown. So many times during medical school, I have felt like I was leaping off into the unknown.  
-Tyler Ellis Smith



# **SCOPE**

**Volume VI • 2016**

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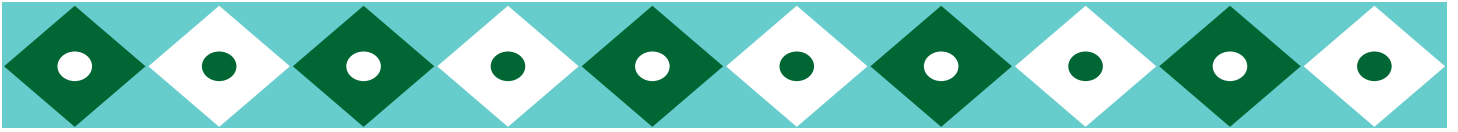
James Wagner, M.D.



# Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the sixth issue of SCOPE, the arts & humanities journal of UT Southwestern Medical School. This issue features a diverse collection of works in visual arts, nonfiction, fiction, and poetry that reflect the thoughts and growth of our medical students as they journey through different stages of their medical education.

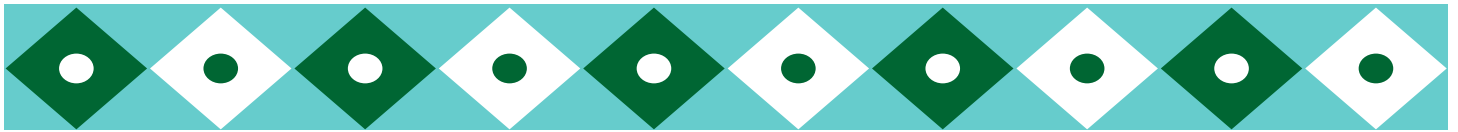
The SCOPE team would like to thank the authors as well as the faculty reviewers for contributing their time and effort in the production of this issue. We hope our readers will enjoy the works and experience the compassion, empathy, and emotional struggles together with our students. These are elements often forgotten in medicine, and we hope our readers will be reminded of how vital they are to our profession. We also hope that SCOPE will inspire further interest in the medical humanities and motivate more people to express themselves through the arts and humanities.



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## The Sea of Red

*By Paul Rizk*

I do not know the time, nor do I care very much.  
Walking onto the balcony, I am greeted by a thick haze  
Topped by a hint of color above.  
Below, a small detachment of ants dutifully works away  
Unaware of what is about to transpire.  
The light slowly grows, even despite the haze  
Yet, there is no sunrise.  
At the horizon, it is dark and deeply obscured by  
Sand in the air.  
“This may not be worth being up early”  
but I wait  
Then without warning, a small arc appears high above the haze.  
It is not magnificent, it is not pure, but it is.  
As time stamps on, the arc grows, and burns brighter  
Burning away the haze before it  
And in its ascension becomes  
Purer  
Brighter  
Radiant.  
The remainder of the sky begins to fill, overfull with the beauty of the sun  
Newly discovering itself  
Newly forging its path into the day  
Newly alive.



# Words That Are Hard to Say

*By Benjamin Weia*

When that person is not there  
I think, this I must say or this I must do.  
The question I haven't asked,  
An apology owed,  
The three words, I love you.

I know if I don't, I will regret.  
But face to face or phone to phone,  
The chance never seems to arise.  
Wait, the time is still not right, wait  
and blink, I find myself saying goodbye.

The flow of conversation goes nowhere near  
my carefully practiced lines.  
They linger on my tongue, trapped  
And shoved  
By words easier said and much more light.

Why is it so hard?  
To simply say what matters.  
I examine my pride  
and rationalize my fears.  
On my knees I plead, at times fighting tears.

And so time passes...weeks, months, a year,  
Still I have not said it,  
Those questions I have not asked.  
Frustration festers in my heart  
as present guilt trickles into past.

The time isn't too late is it?  
There must be more chances!  
More failures, more doubt, more shame...  
No. I can, I will find a way  
to say those words that are hard to say.

# In the Coliseum

*By Emily Marquez*

“Do you have any trouble falling or staying asleep?” I asked.

He thought back to the night before. Lying on the cold hard floor of the shelter, shoulder blades pressed into the concrete, long legs curled up so as not to touch the man sleeping at his feet. The lights that flickered on and off. The snores of strangers echoing through the hall all night.

“I don’t sleep well,” he told me in the clinic.

He had been a star. First in high school. Top college football programs had fought to recruit him. They came to his practices at school, then his home. They sat down to dinner with his family. They made him such beautiful promises, each one more fantastic than the last. His mom had cried tears of joy for her baby that had grown into the tall, broad-shouldered athlete. The one whose hands could encircle the ball and carry impossible catches up the field at superhuman speeds. The one that they marveled at, the one they adored.

In college, he was a god. Every party was thrown in his honor. His impossible feats on the field brought the whole campus together. Later, the recruiters for the professional teams, the big leagues began to come around. They loved him for his big hands, his quick feet. They made promises too. And how could he know then what he knew now? How could he imagine the stadium lights ever dimming, that a star so bright could burn out? So he signed, without a moment’s pause.

Besides, what exactly did he have to go back to? What opportunities were out there for him? Sure, he had passing grades. Pass to play. But his major hadn’t been chosen to provide practical, well-paying job prospects. It had been chosen to encroach the least on his demanding practice and game schedule, and he wasn’t about to settle for life in a cubicle after the glory of the stadium lights.

He trusted his body to be strong and to take the hits. He had gotten up every time, even the minutes he blacked out, the events that were more numerous than he really liked to count. They had sat him on the bench, and asked him if he was ready to go back in. Whether he was or not never entered into his mind. He was afraid to go back in, to reenter the ring after being laid out. But he was more afraid of the cold metal of the bench. First, the anonymity that came with sitting there. But more so the hunger in the eyes of the boys who frequented the bench, the ones that circled him as if he was the carcass and they the buzzards. So was he ready to get out back out there? Yes. Always yes.

The first thing he had noticed was the headaches. The pain was like a knife of fire in his head. He played through it; he had been playing through pain for years, it made no difference. But then, the coaches began to pull him aside, and he knew things were getting bad. Where was his focus, where was his attention? He studied the complex formations, the plays over and over in an attempt to compensate. He drew them out on slips of paper, which he inevitably misplaced. His mind felt like quicksand, everything he put in was lost. The disagreements with other players that were becoming more frequent and ever more violent. He was losing his grip, he knew he was.

His shoulders still slammed, but into the wrong players. His legs still pumped, but no matter how fast he could fly down the field, he could never seem to place himself to make the miracle catch anymore. Or even the mediocre catch, if he was being completely honest. His hands fumbled the ball,

his feet tripped over themselves. The crowds began to curse his name. It is an ugly but altogether too common human trait to love to watch a hero being stripped of his medals even more than to watch them being pinned on. Soon their faces morphed and twisted into a wild pack of hyenas, waiting for the slaughter. They smelled blood.

The last blow was his mind playing a dirty rotten trick and betraying his body altogether, the body he had so much faith in. It was one of the most important games of the season. Out of nowhere, he lost voluntary control and dropped on the field into a pile of twitching muscle. His body convulsed, a grotesque orchestra of uncoordinated and violent movements. The seizures had begun. His career was over.

No one understood. Not even the doctors, with all of their knowledge and degrees. They had shown him the picture of his shrunken and damaged brain. They had told him it was over. That he wouldn't play football ever again.

Even though it was all so crystal clear now, how empty all of the promises were, how transient and conditional the love of the people could be, it didn't cure the wanting that haunted him at night and stole away his sleep.

He settled for a job training young athletes, young men with dreams as big as the sky, just like his had been. He thought it would take him back to a happier time and place, but it only opened up festering wounds. After a few months, he quit.

His drinking quickly spiraled out of control. Then one night, he sought out the blinding lights for the last time. Except they came not from stadium lights overhead, but from blazing headlights as he stepped out into oncoming traffic. He was ready for them to slam into him like all of the opponents he had bested before. He braced his body, planted his feet into the asphalt, and tilted his body forward, tucking his head down. Instead, they swerved around, and he escaped unscathed.

We finished up the interview.

I was unnerved leaving the room. He had made me a keeper of his story. The story of a gladiator, crowned by the people in the coliseum with laurel, and placed up on a dais for all to admire. A warrior who had come so very close to tasting his freedom, to walking out of the coliseum to settle in a quiet place.

I wondered how to present this story to my attending. How to present any objective information at all. I knew what the crowds had done. I had never literally been a part of the audiences that cheered him on. Or of the juries that looked away and tossed him out when he ceased to be of entertainment value. But I also could not fathom, as a society, us ever being able to make this right. I was disgusted not only at what had been done, but also at what could never be undone.

All I wanted for him was a quiet street. A tire swing hanging from the pecan tree in the back. A wraparound porch out front, filled with the sounds of his children playing. His mom and his wife watching over them, as he cooked out in the back. A place far, far away from the crowds of Rome.

Instead, we gave him contact information for a nearby rehab program.

I hoped the shelter across the street had a working phone.

## My Broken Lengua

*By Herbert Rosenbaum*

Disculpe mi español-  
my broken lengua

me siento guilty for the robotic “hola”  
that escapes mis labios  
cuando i introduce myself  
and proceed a preguntar such intimacies  
about sus funciones corporales:  
vómito?  
evacuaciones?  
orina?  
<< cómo se siente hoy?>>  
that one-liner sin conexión o empatía  
que todos los doctores seem to know...  
<< bien>>, responde,  
porque sabe we couldn't understand any-  
way –  
la complejidad de su dolor.

it is as if language barriers are reduced  
to mere algorithms ...  
to heart rates and blood pressures...

es frustrante  
porque estoy aprendiendo una lengua nue-  
va  
so you don't have to  
para recibir ayuda when you need it.  
no sé por qué a veces hablo sin esfuerzo  
and other times nothing comes out...  
lo siento, pero estoy tratando  
i swear.

Disculpe mi español-  
my broken lengua

but you are helping me piece it together.  
sí - juntos!  
poco a poco,  
estoy aprendiendo  
cuando  
me pide por una taza de hielo  
para su boca seca  
y conversamos por primera vez  
sobre las cosas importantes.

su paciencia y confianza en mí son regalos.

durante su estancia  
el trabajo es mío. no suyo.  
debe ser cómodo en mi hogar.  
Bienvenidos.





# Sunday Obituaries for the Incompletely Deceased

*By Bethany Johnston*

At the end of the day, Mr. H's right foot, now currently attached to his shin like it should be, would be neatly severed, placed in a red plastic biohazard bag, and be on its way to pathology to be entered as a surgical specimen. From there, where that piece of Mr. H was headed is a mystery. The student distinctly remembers wondering if they allowed them to bury their feet or have them cremated. Would it get its own headstone? Would we grieve the death of his limb? Some say a wacky old sentimental donor from the west endowed the hospital with a plot of land where people who met this early, partial death might send lost pieces ahead of themselves to rest. Others swore that if you cared enough to look, and wanted very much to find it, you could open the Sunday Paper to the space between pages A3 and A4. If the wind was right and the daylight gold, if you wished very hard and turned the page just so, you could find the Obituaries for the Incompletely Deceased.

It was all nonsense of course.

In a bare patient room in Parkland Hospital, Dallas, Texas, at 5:00 AM on a Saturday, there was a large hospital bed with a couple of white sheets. It was heavy. The rails were up. An IV pole with two swollen bags of clear fluid stood beside it, a mechanical beeping overlaying the soft whirring of the pumps. There was a hospital light behind the bed. It was set low, behind the thick plastic headboard out of view, lighting up the wall and crowning the bed - the impression of a soft, pale halo. Mr. H reclined in the bed awake. Enter the awkward student, in a yellow plastic gown, blue surgical scrubs, and lavender gloves. Her hair was tossed into a flimsy childlike bun on the crown of her head. She squatted down to her ankles by the bed and spoke, "How you feeling?"

Mr. H. spoke solemnly, "I'm alright... yuh kno'."

"Did you get some rest?" the student asked.

Mr. H. not looking up sighed heavily, "Not much."

His gaze was down; hands timidly clutching his sheets below his chest, motionless. The student placed her gloved hands side-by-side on the mattress and waited. There was a moment of heavy, slow silence between them. The beeping and churning of the pumps made four cycles.

"It's hard, yuh kno'... I had a lot of good times with that foot... I can't play football no mo'...."

He looked up quickly, "Not that I've played lately, yuh kno', since I lost my toes, it's just..." He looked surreally down at his foot. "I can't play anymo'...."

"I am so, so sorry, Mr. H.," said the student, feeling silly she had nothing better to say as she crouched there by the bed, gloves side-by-side, in that awkward yellow gown.

Mr. H. looked up, suddenly bright, "Ahhh, it's alright. I seen alotta people get around without they foots! They do fine. I seen alotta people do fine."

“Yeah!” blurted the student, at once inexplicably bold.

“It’s what I gotta do to get well, yuh kno? If it’s what I gotta do, it’s what I gotta do.”

“Like the doctors said, ‘life-over-limb.’” said the student.

“Yeah! ... that’s what they said, ‘life-over-limb.’”

The next morning, when the student came in with her too-big purple gloves and her clumsy yellow gown, Mr. H was asleep so soundly in his bed that she didn’t want to wake him. Just then, in the golden light of Mr. H’s window, as the dust filtered in and out of the beams, she noticed the Sunday Paper lying open on his tray. And then, feeling suddenly quite bizarre, the student reached out her hand, wished very hard, and turned the page.

*Mr. H.’s right foot passed away Saturday afternoon at 12:05 PM, after a long battle with diabetic sepsis. Mr. H.’s foot is preceded in death by his toes, and he is survived by his right thigh, left leg, abdomen, thorax, upper extremities, and cranium. Mr. H.’s foot enjoyed jumping up and down off the fork-lift at his place of employment, as well as carrying Mr. H. from place to place. He worked with many kind socks and shoes over the years, and will be remembered as a diligent and faithful caretaker of Mr. H’s steps. He will be missed dearly by his lifelong associate, Mr. H.’s left foot, whose favorite memories together included football in the park and propping up on the ottoman after work. In lieu of flowers, the body encourages kind notes to be sent to Mr. H.’s left foot, who will be carrying on Mr. H.’s steps without the assistance and company of his lifelong companion. Mr. H.’s right foot will be buried in a private ceremony with family and friends. Mr. H.’s heart wants to encourage the members of Mr. H.’s body that things will carry on in good time, and that all will be well in the end – even if it is a little awkward at first.*

Across the tray, up to his chin in warm sheets, Mr. H. sighed peacefully in his sleep and dreamt of a place out west. His father was weeping in his Sunday best. His mother recounted the story of his very first steps, while friends from the rec center huddled 'round in heavy coats. It was there on that soft plot of land with very green grass, among the lovely statues made of stone, that Mr. H began to grieve.

Somewhere far off, though very nearby, the student was watching the first glow of catharsis come softly to Mr. H’s face. She smiled to herself as she looked on, hardly noticing the leaves of the Sunday Paper drift closed. She backed carefully out of the room and pushed the door quietly to. With a deep breath she turned, gave a polite nod to the nurse at the desk, and took off down the hall. If Mr. H could soldier on, then so could she. Even if it was a little awkward at first.

And that was not nonsense at all.

## **Temptations**

*By Tyler Liang*

Let her facets plagiarize  
The Northern lights  
all at once neither  
of dissolution nor solubility

From her eyes  
let radiance pour,  
vice and vacuity  
eclipsing suns, stars

Let her shoulders  
defy vertical symmetry,  
those of any symmetry;  
let others be sinfully broken

## **An Atheist Tale**

*By Tyler Liang*

The bullet penetrated his skin  
breaking the dermal packaging,  
moving aside the epithelial tissue  
like how a nail screws into butter.

The hole located in the  
lower lobe of the left lung  
isn't lethal.

What's killing him is that  
the bullet scraped his left atrium,  
the erythrocytes being sucked  
into a void called the thoracic cavity.

Internal hemorrhaging will cause the brain  
to lose oxygenation and soon  
he'll be in a coma and die.

Heaven?

Hell, if I know.



Untitled | *By Kelly Lawson*

## Winged Evening

*By William Prueitt*

The evening is quiet but for rustling falling leaves  
Paper thin kites, twisting free in round delicate spirals  
Piling up brown and yellow amidst the underbrush  
Crunching underfoot as I push heavy on the earth

Beyond the woods a river winds out to the horizon  
Slow flowing silver, a fine thread in the vast amber valley  
And all above the great wild sky opens its fine smile  
Clouds vermillion-pink, burning proud before they pale

Twilight comes as a whisper, gently dimming the world  
A black dotted chevron moves against purpling sky  
Another appears not far behind, then another, another  
Fowl returning, dressed for the evening rendezvous  
Broad wings on the wind, descending to bended river  
Circling low, feet spread, gliding just above water  
Sliding in fluid with an easy whoosh and flap  
Group after group the feathered tribe comes to land  
As though they have spent every evening of life  
Gathering together on this wide shimmering river  
Floating shadows joined amidst the waning light  
Watching day melt like glass into reflecting water  
Such wondrous things meandering under the sun  
Doubtless and ephemeral, untroubled pilgrims  
Drifting mysterious and full in the darkening valley  
Veiled as is eternity in ever ungraspable passing beauty

The river ripples silently, flowing without hurry  
Past distant cliffs, old trees above ancient sandstone  
To know this brief moment of sight and wonder  
To gaze softly on the strange and subtle miracle

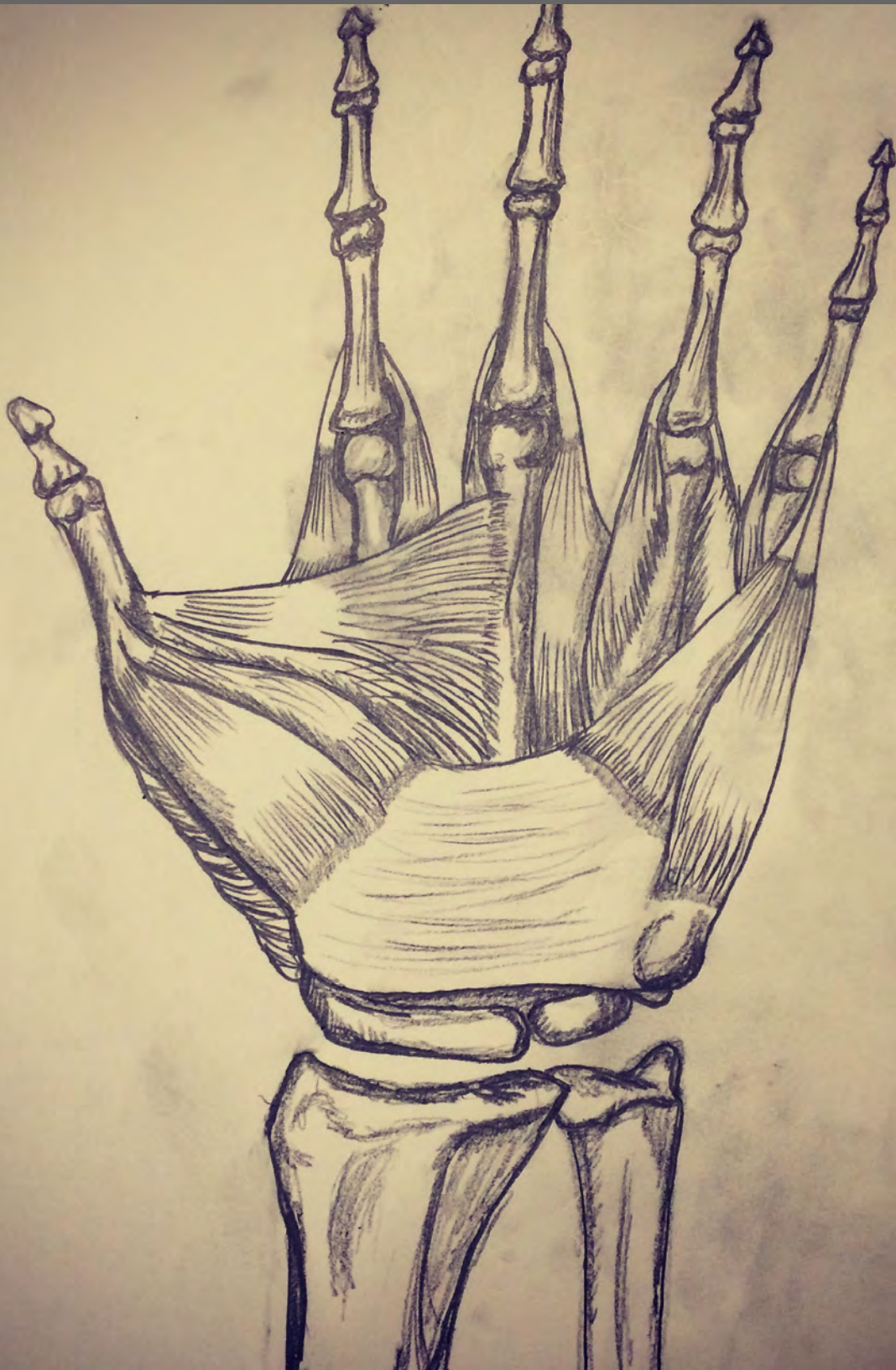
How I wish I could sit here longer, more often  
Where no sound breaks on the cool breeze  
Watching this world of simple harmony and stillness  
Clinging to the final bits of light as they fade





Untitled | by Tyler Ellis Smith





## To my cadaver:

*By Shruti Singh*

The first time I saw you,  
you were still intact,  
Bare, yet covered in skin,  
I took off all your layers,  
to uncover what's inside.  
I got to know your body,  
but I never quite got to know you.  
I got to look inside your heart  
but I never quite got to feel what it experienced.  
I got to look inside your head,  
the origin of your thoughts, your personality  
but I never quite got to listen to those thoughts.  
And yet you taught me so much  
without speaking at all.

Looking at your tattoos,  
I tried to find meaning in them.  
I tried to come up with stories behind them,  
My attempt to give life to the dead you.  
The first time I held your hands,  
I imagined who those hands had touched,  
I felt somewhat uncomfortable.  
When I saw the scars of your disease,  
I imagined the pain you must have felt,  
I felt my heart get heavier.  
In those moments, I could picture you alive.

And when I looked down, I was cutting into you,  
I was pulling you apart, and you didn't say a word.  
They told me you were my first patient,  
How could I do this to my first patient?  
It felt so inhuman to break your bones,  
To disassemble the pieces that made your body.  
I was reminded that you wanted this,  
You wanted to teach me, gift me with this privilege.  
You wanted me to learn,  
But, knowing all this didn't make me feel better.

You have indebted me with a debt I can never repay.  
I can only value the lessons you have taught me,  
I will always remember you,  
You were, and always will be, my first patient.

# Pearl from a Patient

*By Sonam Dilwali*

Recently, I shadowed an endocrinologist. Following him on rounds, I quietly listened to the fellow present the case of a one-month old boy Sam. The boy was recently admitted for an abnormal reaction to an infection. After analyzing his lab and imaging results, the medical team found that Sam's pituitary gland and optic nerves never developed properly, deeming him the diagnosis of septo-optic dysplasia.

The team then continued to outline the plan for his immediate and long term care. I found myself, in the background, comparing what I had learnt in class to what was being discussed by these experienced clinicians. I was feeling great because I could recall all the relevant biochemical pathways – feeling on top of the world because I could identify what medications could compensate for the underdeveloped pituitary gland. Within a few minutes, we moved on to discussing the next case and I followed along - continuing my self-examination of my medical knowledge.

After the presentations ended, I followed the medical team to the patient rooms. When we entered Sam's room, I immediately noticed his anxious parents, looking hopeful but distressed as we approached them. Within seconds I was distracted, seeing Sam, this ball of complete cuteness sleeping so peacefully. From my perception of what we had discussed earlier, I thought this encounter was going to be easy. I could merely focus on Sam's cuteness and smile. We just needed to discuss the diagnosis and the relevant medications with his family, and they would be well on their way. As I listened to the attending deliver the diagnosis and its implications, I realized that I had overlooked many aspects that were gravely discouraging for Sam's future.

In the presentation room, Sam was just another case for my learning. Now, all of a sudden, there were three complicated lives at stake: not only Sam but also his parents, who looked as if they were living their worst nightmares.

Sam's parents must have had so many hopes and dreams for him. With each of the explanations given, it seemed as if these dreams were being shattered one at a time. "Sam will not be able to see well and we cannot fix it; Sam will not be able to tolerate physical stress and will have to be given shots every time he gets sick; Sam may not develop properly and may struggle in school..." After this last one, I saw the mother simply phase out of the conversation. I could tell she had stopped listening. After a minute, she asked cautiously, "so is he going to be mentally retarded?" The attending responded, as sympathetically as he could, "We just don't know, we will have to see as he develops." I realized I had never considered this possibility during the clinical presentation. In a world where most parents dream of their children surpassing their own success, Sam might not even live a life at par to what his parents were living. The attending tried to shift the situation into positive light. He optimistically stated, "it's good we caught this early..." and "...with the right tools, we can make sure Sam has the best future possible." But he, and now even I, could tell this wasn't enough. Sam's parents seemed devastated. The attending said he would return after they had some time to digest all this information, but we knew this would take them a long time, possibly even a lifetime.

As we left the room, I couldn't help but think about how naively I was fixated on recalling the biological aspects of the disease and not realizing their grim implications. I suppose that is why we medical students are at most doctors in training, and I probably always will be, as I attempt to balance the science with the art of medicine. Sam, no matter how underdeveloped he might eventually be, has already positively impacted at least one life mine.



*“Children may not understand why they feel bad, what is happening to them, what the future holds for them, and people who can empathize will help them thrive in the future.”*







**Altered** | *by Agnelio Cardentey*

## eleven/ 19

*By Cayce Smith*

In my right white coat pocket there is  
my stethoscope, a book of poetry

In the other, pens leaking ink  
blue, pink, green  
and some scribbled observations:

During rounds—  
Fifteen year old boy with a past medical history  
of obesity, presenting with hypertension.

The attending doctor says,  
“The problem  
is that there is too much of him.”

Physical exam significant for previous self-harm.

How many times will he believe  
that there is too much of him  
before  
there is nothing of him?

“How do I get rid of the scars?”  
he asks.

Love, I think—  
this web of scars  
maps the beating heart  
of God.

# Anticlimax

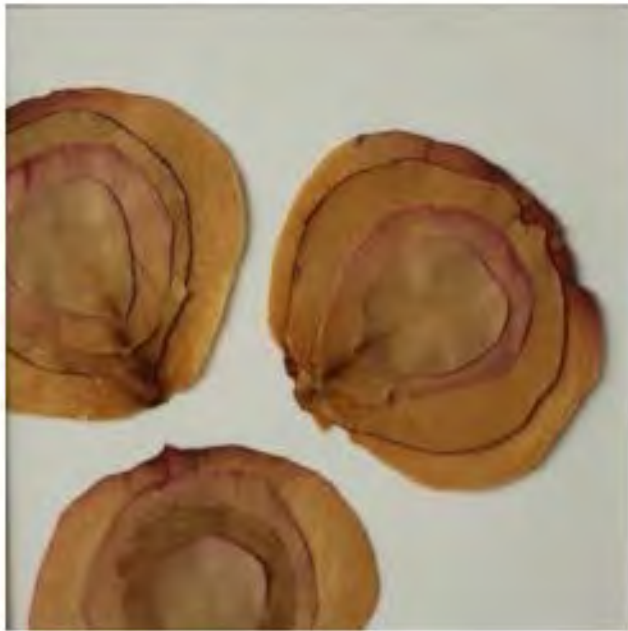
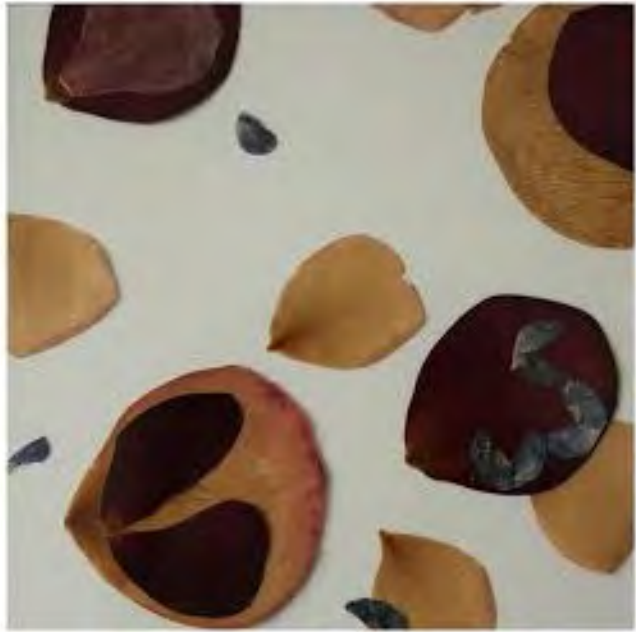
*By Jenny Lau*

As I walk down these roads,  
the last star comes out and winks at me.  
I think of weariness  
and the secrets of the soul  
lying deep within us,  
waiting to be discovered.  
Yet, the physical body decays  
minute by minute,  
And I may never know  
if the last breath I draw  
will be my last.  
When I look at others farther along the road of life,  
I cannot help but feel sorry  
For their time must come soon...  
But perhaps I do not understand the mysteries  
of aging, of acceptance, of rest.  
Lying awake in the stillness of the night,  
I wonder if the rest of my life will be an  
Anticlimax  
Compared to now.



Floating Pagoda | by *Lawrence Aung*





*“Each piece represents a system studied during the first year of medical school: Cardio, Neuro, MSK, and GI. If we search for a profound meaning in these pieces, we could ponder the continuity between us and the rest of nature. The idea we are as much a part of nature as nature is part of us. When you break things down, we are made of very similar components - cells. Eventually, our physicality meets the same end: we decompose and become part of the earth again. This mortality is reflected in the flower petals themselves - although seemingly frozen in time, they have no life left. “*

**Untitled** | *by Hali Nguyen*



# Colorful on the Inside

*By Janie Cao*

In the first couple of months of medical school when the rush of finding friends was still at peak, I floundered into a friend group with the medically correct name of “Bundle of His” (also known as the Bundle). The group started when some Jesus-loving students decided to have lunch together every week. Somewhat desperate for friends, I readily accepted an invitation to join. Through that seemingly trivial decision, a part of me changed.

As an Asian immigrant who grew up in schools that took pride in their ethnic diversity, I was accustomed to interacting with classmates clothed in myriad skin tones. From Highlands Elementary School to Rice University, racial heterogeneity was as close as the person a seat over. It felt natural to do homework with someone who looked different from me, and it did not strike me as odd to hear my classmates conversing in Chinese, Spanish, or a language that I could not even name. In that world, I defined diversity by the colors we wore.

It did not take me long to see that I stood out in the Bundle. Among the fifteen or so sitting under the trees that first meeting, I was one of maybe only four who were not white. My eyes saw homogeneity, and my mind concluded that there was little I could relate to with those peers. But because we had Jesus in common as Christians, I decided to stay in the group.

The weekly lunch meetings continued as the days rolled on, and then something happened. People began sharing their stories. From those vignettes, I started seeing a plethora of colors where I thought only white had existed. People I assumed to have been born and raised in Texas have actually lived abroad before. People I expected to speak one language were actually bilingual. Some whom I had labeled “white Christian conservative” actually struggled with understanding politically conservative Christians themselves.

Besides the Bundle members, I was a surprise to myself. I would never have said that all white people are the same, yet the way I reacted to my friends’ tales told a different story. I had approached the Bundle instinctively associating a homogenous skin color with a homogeneous worldview, and I found myself vis-à-vis with a diversity that was more than looks. The definition of diversity that I had been carrying in my back pocket for so long proved inadequate.

That’s not to say that appearances are now suddenly irrelevant. Like a dear friend once said, “The root of diversity is internal, but physical differences often reflect differences on the inside,” so I think the allure of physical diversity will always be there for me. I just need to remember that, sometimes, people may be more colorful on the inside than they look.

# Surrender

*By Jenny Lau*

There's nothing much to say anymore  
in the spaces and time between  
Save our regrets about the silence,  
Ever prevalent, between us  
I can't say how much I've been broken  
or the cracks and contours of my soul  
All I know is: I've been hurt time and time before  
And this time is no exception.



# Start the Kettle

*By Herbert Rosenbaum*

bolt the doors! lock them twice!  
perhaps She will not come!  
in such ignorance we find joy so temporary,  
shaming and belittling Her  
in our foolish feints to dodge Her.

we synonymize and mislabel Her,  
costumed and ill-depicted.  
Her presence is removed from our minds.  
we cry that Her name will not pass our lips;  
the Ostracized Outcast is unabashedly unwelcome

wake up! wake up unto new life! wake up, i beg!  
you - who perceive this Woman as a Thief most vile  
who will steal your finest jewels  
tell me:  
what thief makes Herself known to all?  
what thief knocks and rings the doorbell?  
are you so blind? open your eyes!  
She is no source of fear!  
mistreat Her no more!

She is a mere constant - like gravity.  
She greets us, one and all:  
our shared Mistress  
in the end of the big chase  
sheer surprise  
or sobering self-retreat into Her arms.

She will be terribly apathetic  
so long as you are too of Her existence.  
of course She shows up unexpected and uninvited!  
we provide Her no directions to our house -  
which way do you prefer? how should She find you?  
is it easier to take the highway or the side roads?

These thoughts might molest the mind,  
strip the soul, and harrow the heart -  
but they need not.

if She must come,  
plan ahead.  
start the kettle.  
invite Her into your home when She arrives,  
whenever that might be. She is busy, remember.  
offer Her tea, and be a good host.  
for, yes, She comes for you,  
but may you go in peace with Her.



**Compact Bone Osteons | Patterns on a Walkway**



**Vasculitis | Spring Blossoms**



**Kidney Nephron | Tree Ring**







# Start Again

*By Matthew Tran*

I don't think I flinched when I saw Joe. His surprising weight stretched his summer clothes—a T-shirt revealing an artistic tattoo of a guitar and a line of script underneath, "If music be the food of love, play on." This large, salt-and-pepper-bearded, perfectly bald man looked like he belonged to a biker gang. I walked next to his bed. I was aware of how slowly, almost reluctantly, I moved my feet. It was ten o'clock in the morning. Outside was cold, anesthetic with a wind that did not refresh but blew bitter and sharp. I put my hand out and introduced myself to Joe. Otherwise, I mostly stayed quiet, listening to him and the nurse I shadowed. Joe's voice was deep but soft, his face ashen with a craggy exterior heavy with years. I was glad I wasn't alone with him. But then, the nurse had to leave the room to retrieve bed supplies. And it was two strangers—a new hospice patient, my first patient, and me, a first-time volunteer at Connecticut hospice. What could I say? Where do I start?

Joe looked up and began to speak through his beard.

"You know, it sucks. When you thought you beat it, remission, but really instead it comes back, relapse. Now I'm starting another life here, with cancer. It sucks, you know?"

I dreaded this moment like the way a teacher calls on a student who doesn't know the answer. Soon, I became acutely aware of my own losses—through death or illness, separation or broken relationships. But to a haggard man now surviving in an alien environment, what could I say?

I knew that words mattered. I wanted to say, "I'm sorry things turned out this way," "I know how you feel," or even "I understand." But these phrases sounded like pity and lies.

I stood awkwardly, made an affirmative noise, and moved my head. I didn't know whether to nod or to shake. And after listening to the silence, he asked if I watched football. Thank heavens, I did.

Similar interactions happened often during my early trips to hospice, but I have gradually learned how to understand and, especially, how to find the right words. Knowing that there isn't time to waste with meaningless platitudes, I say, "I'm a hospice volunteer. I'm here to listen and to help." I've learned that accepting death is neither an easy task nor an epiphany; it is a process. My role is to help families and patients through this process. I go to hospice. I sit down. I listen.

What I love most about hospice are not the conversations of dying but the stories of living. After the first awkward meeting with Joe, we chatted once a week about sports, among other things, like the way a son bonds with his father. When I accidentally woke him one morning, he exclaimed, "This is the worst party I've been to!" It felt nice to be in his inner circle, sharing inside jokes and secret codes.

There's a poem called "Wasteland" by T.S. Eliot that encapsulates the attitude some of my friends have toward hospice: "He who was living is now dead / We who are now living are now dying / With a little patience." Perhaps this is how I once felt about hospice—people dying "with a little patience."

The more I chatted with other patients, though, the more the patients seemed to contradict that attitude. Lucy, who sometimes offered Kit Kats, talked about her grandchildren who were studying



to become teachers like her. Dan, too skinny for his size, spoke about how he couldn't have kids with his wife, who passed away a couple of months earlier, but he recounted the way they met on a boat party after the Second World War. Zack, an old, drawn man, talked about drinking fresh milk from a bottle delivered by the milkman and savoring the top, frosty cream layer. Christina, who looked like my grandmother who took care of me during my entire childhood, talked about how she never locked her doors back in the day and how she let her children pursue their dreams. This is how life came alive to me. Hospice isn't a place where people go to die, where hope is already dead. Hospice is a place where we relive the details as grand as dreams to as small as the top layer of frosty cream in milk.

I think it's worth noting that there is a different kind of hope at hospice. This new hope could be the hope of celebrating the next birthday of a child, closing the breach in a troubled relationship, finding inner peace, or the hope of catching the next football game. Medicine has come so far that, instead of prolonging life, it seems to prolong dying. But in these moments, I learn what's most important to patients in their final chapter of life. At hospice, patients talk about their wives, husbands, kids, grandkids—their loved ones. Physically, they don't want to sacrifice quality of life; they only want to be free from pain. Perhaps they wish to share unscripted memories, pass on wisdom, build new relationships, or strengthen old ones. To know, I just ask.

After several weeks, Joe asked me to take him outside into the fresh air. With an OK from his nurse, we helped him hook up to an external oxygen tank and wheeled him out behind the building. With a beach, a chilly breeze, and an ocean before us, I sat on a wooden bench, and he sat beside me in his red hospice chair. We gazed out onto the Long Island Sound, each of us plunged into a wash of remembrance, reliving our memories.

A month later, when I walked up to Joe's room on a winter day, I saw on the door the name of my favorite patient had been replaced. I don't know where he went, but wherever he is, I hope he can watch football and listen to guitar music.

Several years later, long after my time at the hospice ended and now in medical school, I still find myself moving slowly toward a patient's hospital room, reviewing her vitals and previous notes, and double-checking her name—Renee—and the room number before entering. I automatically hover my hand underneath the sanitizer dispenser, waiting for the buzz and making sure Renee notices. As I walk toward her bed, I'm glad to still be a little anxious, a small tremble of excitement before every one of my patient interviews. It reminds me of Joe, and it means I understand what's at stake. I put out my hand and say, "I'm Matthew Tran."

And I start again.





Kyaiktiyo Pagoda | *by Lawrence Aung*

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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**Lawrence Aung**, M.D. Class of 2018, is a first- year at UTSW. He went to the University of Miami for his undergraduate degree. He has an interest in contemporary art and photography. His favorite poet is W.B Yeats.

**Janie Cao**, M.D. Class of 2018, is a medical student who thinks a lot, feels even more, and is still figuring out who she was created to be.

**Agnelio Cardentey**, M.D. Class of 2017, is a third year medical student and decided to draw this after caring for a patient in the Neuro critical care unit. The expression on her face during her illness was haunting and stuck with Agnelio for a while. Fortunately the patient got better and was later discharged home.

**Mike Clark**, M.D. Class of 2018, took this photo on a gorgeous morning coming to UTSW. It is a balance between natural and man-made beauty showing the path forward for a new day.

**Sonam Dilwali**, M.D. Class of 2018, is a second year medical student. Her motivation for this piece arose from her recognizing the stark contrast between didactic learning that comprises most of the first two years of medical education and clinical learning where students become actively involved in the patients' and their families' care. She hopes to keep the lesson of her piece in mind as she transitions into clinical learning as a third year medical student. Her hobbies include dancing, painting and reading.

**Bethany Johnston**, M.D. Class of 2017, loves storytelling because it is absolutely fun. She wrote this short story based on a patient from her surgery rotation. Knowing an amputee is one thing, but meeting somebody about to become one is something else. They processed that loss together. She'll never be able to share her first amputation experience with any other patient, and she'll never forget him.

**Jenny Lau**, M.D. Class of 2018, is an MS2 who enjoys writing and reflecting on life. Her poem "Anticlimax" is one of her reflections, an evaluation of her own life as a high schooler passing into college, wondering what the future would hold. Her poem "Surrender" explores the nature of relationships, including her complex feelings of loss and the experience of growing apart from a best friend.

**Kelly Lawson**, M.D. Class of 2019, graduated from UT Austin with a BS in Human Biology, and she is now a first year medical student. Kelly enjoys painting with watercolors because the inability to completely control the fluid paint reminds her of the importance of flexibility. She loves watching a painting take form, especially when it's not exactly as she planned it.

**Jessica Lee**, M.D. Class of 2019, grew up in Mississippi, where she attended the same school for fourteen years before matriculating to Rice University. In her free time, Jessica enjoys photography and writing. Jessica's photographs are inspired by her hometown, as well as shadows and lines.

**Tyler Liang**, M.D. Class of 2019, writes his poetry in contemporary free verse with a special affection for playing with white space and poetic architecture. His first poem, "An Atheist Tale", is a commentary on the numbness of death to physician scientists and the role of faith in the passage of death. "Temptations" is an ode to beauty. Tyler's hobbies include basketball, eating, and Netflix.

**Emily Marquez**, M.D. Class of 2017, is a third year medical student from West Texas. She is interested in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. This story is based on an experience she had on her rotation in that field.

**Andrew Ngo**, M.D. Class of 2019, is interested in pediatrics and enjoys running and photography. Andrew got into the hobby after seeing Snopes and Emil Parkalis' photos on instagram. Andrew mainly takes pictures of anything that catches his eye.



**Hali Nguyen, M.D.** Class of 2018. The first year of medical can be tedious, but Hali enjoyed learning about the human body by delving in layer by layer in anatomy and seeing how it functions by studying the cells laid out on slides in histology. Hali hopes this little series reminds you of the little joys you find in med school, like finding an eosinophil for the first time or discovering beauty and order in what once seemed like a confusing array of purples, pinks, and blues.

**William Prueitt, M.D.** Class of 2019, grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and wrote this poem after an evening on the Cimarron River in the countryside near his hometown. It is an attempt to capture the feeling of nature.

**Paul Rizk, M.D.** Class of 2018. While I was on vacation in Egypt, I got up early to watch the sun rise over the Red Sea. I had been practicing mindfulness, and took this opportunity to really pay attention to the sunrise. As I watched the glorious process unfold, I likened it to the journey through medical school that at times can be dark and seemingly worthless, but proves to be worth it in the end.

**Herbert B. Rosenbaum, M.D.** Class of 2017, is a proud native of San Antonio, Texas, an alumnus of The George Washington University, and a third year medical student at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. His medical interests include family medicine, primary care, geriatric medicine, medical politics, and end-of-life management. He is also interested in perfecting his Spanish to eventually serve the underserved Hispanic community. Mr. Rosenbaum urges his physician and medical student readers to start meaningfully addressing the elephant in the room (and perhaps American medical culture's biggest failure): death and dying - a common subject of many of his creative works and critical essays.

**Alvand Sehat, M.D.** Class of 2019, wanted to be an artist for the longest time before he decided to become a doctor. Now he can do both.

**Shruti Singh, M.D.** Class of 2019, graduated from UT Austin. Poems are a way for her to express her feelings. She has been writing poems since she was ten. This poem was inspired by her experience with her cadaver.

**Cayce Smith, M.D.** Class of 2018, is a lover of all creative doings and thinkings. She enjoys art, photography, poetry, social and political issues, and all things God and healing. Her poem seeks to explore how medical language and culture functions to reduce complex social, political, economic, and intimately personal human experiences to within a quantifiable biological framework. It suggests that in contrast to pathological categorization, our wounds are actually sacred spaces from which we ultimately derive the most meaningful strength, healing, and connection with others.

**Tyler Ellis Smith, M.D.** Class of 2016, has been photographing wildlife and landscapes since 2006. Tyler was born and raised in San Antonio and attended UT Austin where he earned a B.S. in cellular and molecular biology. He then came to UT Southwestern where he is currently in his fourth year and will be going to New Orleans for neurology residency.

**Matthew Tran, M.D.** Class of 2019, is a first-year medical student searching for answers. He wrote this piece to record the memory of his first patient interview at the first American hospice several years ago. Writing this piece allowed him to put down emotions, thoughts, frames of mind, and atmospheres associated with those early memories of hospice that weren't quite crystallized at the time.

**Wendy Tsai, M.D.** Class of 2017. During Wendy's third year clerkships as a MS3 this year, she realized that doctors offer much more than treatment. "Something to Hold Onto" is a teddy bear composed of research articles. Taking care of children and adolescents is not only by means of medical knowledge (represented by the research articles) but also by compassion and supporting children emotionally. Children may not understand why they feel bad, what is happening to them, what the future holds for them, and people who can empathize will help them thrive in the future.

**Ben Weia, M.D.** Class of 2018, enjoys learning and thinking about the human experience, which is often characterized by literature, art, and film. His poem is an expression of the struggles and regrets he has faced with not communicating certain thoughts to his brother, parents, and friends. Those thoughts have to do with showing love or asking about their fears, feelings, and other deeper questions to better understand them. He hopes to show that if you have felt the same difficulties, you are not alone.

**Chelsea Zhang, M.D.** Class of 2019, is a medical student who loves poems and blossoms.

*“To understand fully the human side of science, we must think of scientific achievements as we do of artistic achievements. Indeed, they are, at best, of the same kind. . .”*

*– George Sarton, from The Study of the History of Science*