

Through Damp Muslin

By Rodolfo Villarreal-Calderon

You bathed before my visit
With fine mists from formaldehyde bottles
After which I would shower
With coarse droplets from a single spigot,
Our aim the same:
To prolong our current conditions,
To be prepared for our next interaction.
Because what really separates us
Is far thinner even than the fabric
Other anatomy groups place over your face.

I cannot thank you
As I know not whether to address
Your face,
Staring supine under warm searchlights upon this frigid metal table
Or your brain,
Now separate lobes soaking in several cylinders
Or your heart,
Still snug between your lungs.

So, I thank your memory
As you who made this decision
Years prior to my first arrival and your final destination,
You who imparted this ultimate and most private gift
And did so
Facing posterity,
Brain pedagogical,
And heart warm,
Snug between your lungs.

Rodolfo Villarreal-Calderon is from Mexico City and after immigrating to the United States as a child, grew up with one foot on each side of the border, balancing both sides' languages, cultures and identities. He is currently thoroughly enjoying writing in his spare time while being an internal medicine resident at Boston University Medical Center—where he will continue to stay, as a Medical Education Fellow. He would like to have a dog to warm his feet as he writes but for now as writing companions, has two plants. Which he regularly over-waters. He previously had four plants.

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