
POETRY | SPRING 2023

Anatomy Lab

By Katherine White

Greek to me, those first cadaver weeks:
branches of the aortic arch
snaking, sinuous, into neck and chest
trachea corrugated like collapsible garden hose
nerve ganglia strung like grimy pearls
along fibers fine as upholstery thread
the gallbladder's deflated green-black balloon
abdominal muscles rippling, crisscrossing—
their pattern beautiful, their color
reminiscent of old ground beef.

Greek to me, too, my mother
in her bed on the oncology ward
sinking and fading into the sheets
bloating as her kidneys shriveled
yellow skin shiny-smooth to the touch
exuding the smell of failing flesh.
She breathes in short gasps
at longer and longer intervals
soon to be herself a πτώμα, *ptóma*:
cadaver.

Katherine White, MD, aka Kay White Drew, is a retired neonatal physician and lifelong writer. Her work appears in print journals such as *Bay to Ocean Journal*, *This Is What America Looks Like*, *Pen in Hand* and *Grace in Darkness*; and online journals including *The Loch Raven Review*, where her essay was nominated for a Pushcart Prize; *Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine* and *Maryland Literary Review*. Her memoir, *Stress Test*, will be published in 2024 by Apprentice House Press. She lives in Rockville, Md., with her husband.