

Retrospective

Category: Poems

written by Jack Coulehan | July 12, 2013

Jack Coulehan

Forty years passed. His body replaced its cells, with the exception of his heart's persistent pump and the mushroom-like paste of his brain. Only scattered synaptic charts of his internship remain, etched in myelin, a few of them deeply. Nonetheless, a dried umbilical cord connects that powerful womb to the aging man, across a gulf as wide as imagination. He doubts there's a thread to follow, a blockaded door to open, or a fusty corridor down which to tread to a solution: those he hurt, the woman he killed with morphine, more than a few he saved. His ally, hope, will have to do.

About the poet:

Jack Coulehan is a poet, physician and medical educator whose work appears frequently in medical journals and literary magazines. His most recent collection of poems is [*Bursting with Danger and Music*](#), published last year. He received the Nicholas Davies Award of the American College of Physicians in 2012 for "outstanding lifetime contributions to the humanities in medicine."

About the poem:

"As I approached the end of my medical practice, I thought a lot about its beginning, especially my internship, which was a traumatic experience. Am I the same person I was then? How does personal identity persist over time? I've struggled with these questions in a number of poems. This sonnet is one of them."

Poetry editors:

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