

Inviolable

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🔊 Audio

Listen to Dr. Ginsberg read this poem.

[NPub.org/2e5c7v](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC605294/)

We know nothing of the secret life of brain,
even as it propels ideas onto this page,

only what essence evaporates when the nectar
of blood is blocked, or parts are excised

and discarded. If we could hike its ruts and ridges,
rappel down serpiginous arteries and veins,

nothing more would we know of the 3-pound
melon floating serenely in its sterile sea.

Cut it, magnify it—the mystery deepens,
as when a fox eludes the hounds. Shock it

to elicit a twitch, lobotomize, sever
its callosal bridge. Isolated from its 5 senses

brain withers like cornstalks in a drought.
At autopsy, this vibrant, pulsatile organ

wears death's gray cloak. Listen to the pathologist
pontificate, measure and weigh, pluck out a tumor

that rendered this human unable to recognize
his mother's face. There's simply no way

to interrogate what cannot be seen from inside
brain's domain—no way to take a head and spin it

in a centrifuge, hoping to float nubbins of what
makes it tick. Appreciate the cortical mantle

snug as the polar ice-cap, that presses the brake pedal
to control baboon impulses waiting like lava

to overflow. At war, clad in chameleon's skin, brain
barter virtue, enables men to batter, shatter, impale

without a shudder. Where will you take us
eons from now? Will our urges be purged or must we

remain cunning as crows? We revel in high tech's
genetic code, but the secrets of cerebral splendor

stay locked in time's strongbox, inviolable
and light years remote. Everything we are, the skull

contains—forests and oceans of love and hate,
the quest to delve beyond what is said, dreams to fly

to another place. Brain, teach us to love our unlovable
selves flawed as gemstones forged in rock, forgive

the carnival masks we wear that hold our worst
nightmares of stick men, at bay. By all means,

connect the dots, probe for the seeds, chemokines,
and stars hidden in this infinite garden. Ephemera

become more opaque as answers disappear into
questions, and questions erupt

in a geyser of laughter—something cosmic
that chains us to the knowable place.

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