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I like that this poem is about a home visit. I like including the perspective of a medical student in the journal. I like that it references literary tradition, and one of our great physician-poets, John Stone. The writing overall is quite good, the rhythm and cadence affecting, and the difficult life of this patient is well-observed and acutely felt.

Comments to Author:

I like the second person voice, very personal and immediate. I like the way this poem echoes John Stone's famous Gaudeamus Igitur, which of course itself reflects the cadence (if not the substance) of the 18th c. poet Christopher Smart's poem in praise of his cat Jeoffrey. You show you understand you are working within a long literary tradition, which is very nice!

The content of the poem is moving, and shares how powerful and humbling an early patient encounter can be.

You have some beautiful images, such as the one where "practicing empathy" becomes like "pomegranate dust" in your mouth. Lovely! Also lovely is the way you continue to work within that metaphor of seeds and pomegranates.

I found the stanza about Emma to be the least compelling, it struck me as a bit trite. "Perfect" seems too prosaic a description for this woman's experience. Try to make this memorable moment at the beach more compelling

The line in which you dream about canoeing seems a little off-base in the context of the poem. Are you suggesting perhaps that you would like to "escape" from this complex home visit into such a grotto? I recognize that "dreaming" is a theme you develop both in the next stanza and later in the poem (patient dreaming of the grotto; her "dream-self") so maybe just try to enhance the sense of longing or yearning that I sense in these lines. Also, if you are indeed referencing the beautiful and mysterious blue grotto in Capri, you might want to add the word blue, just to help out your readers a bit!

Finally, I struggled a bit with the next to last line, "you prefer to see them for their bodies." The meaning here seems unclear. Are you contrasting the wasp bodies with the body of the patient that has failed her? I'm not sure the adjectives that follow convey whatever you are saying about bodies well enough. Perhaps instead of adjectives, it is how the wasps are using their bodies - i.e., an image - that will resonate more with the reader.

Overall, a beautiful poem that lingers in the mind.