

Waiting Room

I go
weekly
biweekly
even triweekly
and wait for my turn
with other regular irregulars,
a platoon of veterans of conflicts unknown;
however,
although we are all regulars,
we are all strangers,
and I look straight ahead
and refuse to make eye contact
because these veterans are looking for any excuse
to strike up their peculiar colloquy for which I have no taste.
I am alone: they are gray
and grey and with canes
and spots and sport shirts
and ace bandages and wheelchairs
and I watch CNN or Fox News
and hold down the bile from the chatter
and the chatter
and then my name is called.

Sometimes
my divestiture is ineffective,
and I am caught and forced to feign interest
in this in that and the other,
and then my name is called.

Sometimes
a pregnant Latina will sit
clutching an order for prenatal tests
or a child's hand,
and she will never be caught and forced to engage.
I have to take prenatal vitamins,
and I wonder with whom do I share the most in common:
the gray and the grey or the pregnant Latinas?
All the receptionists know me by name
and I know my answer.

– Jeffery Greb