

albert goldbarth

UFOLOGY [NOUN, “THE STUDY OF UFOS”]

It would be my prostate surgery
that let me see the thinness that exists

between the worlds — as thin,
perhaps, as the oxygenating wall of a red blood cell;

as thin as the breath between a god and a human being
that worked the bellows inside the lungs

of Jesus, for instance, or Hercules.
The stent that drained the serums from my bladder

into the clinical air of the operating room
seemed as astounding to me as one of those wormholes

science fiction novelists are always suggesting
might connect two galaxies

in a single pulse of starflash. Christopher told me
that, when he was writing a poem inside a cafe

on Fifth Avenue once, he looked up, through the window
to the street, and saw Dev standing in a mix of people

waiting for a bus. *Dev!* — “with that smile of his” —
and so Chris waved and stood to walk on out

with a hug; but then of course Dev disappeared,
he wasn’t there because he’s dead. Or

he was there, *was there*, but on a farther
and unhuggable plane of existence. Then Chris wept;

which, as you know, is a way
of briefly turning the body

inside out. They know this in medical school,
but use a different language. Something keeps

our mind and our epidermis functioning
in sync, although they really *are* two galaxies

with separate legislative understandings of the universe.
In Shakespeare's time, the Church helped ease the weight

of Lent's restrictions by categorizing chicken as "fish,"
and why not? — every solid,

including ourselves, is busy redoing its chemistry
(we can eavesdrop on uranium's famous

buzzy transformation). Just for sleep
and waking, we all require dual citizenship. And where

did I go to, how far did I travel, when
the anesthesiologist cleared the runway? All I know

is: when my wife and I first entered the clinic
and saw the lobby signage, I misread the "r"

of *urology*: "f"; but no, I wasn't there for a symposium
on the saucer people. I was there

for another kind of unidentified flying.