

The Mistake of the Psycholinguists

Karla Bennion

They say people nominalize too much.
We tell ourselves, "I am in pain,"
instead of simply, "I hurt."
"Pain is not a prison you're locked in," they say.
"You hurt because you choose to hurt,
and you can choose to not hurt."

They are wrong.
Pain is a small metal capsule or container
implanted just behind my heart—
I feel it when I breathe or swallow.
Painted gray green (the paint peels),
Cold and rusty,
It's filled with bitter liquid
distilled from blood or gall or tears.
It precludes singing, running, or dancing
And stops me from saying certain words.
I don't think it is poisoning me.
I can still live years
with it there in my chest.

As she lay under the knife
and the fetal monitor slowed to silence,
he prayed, "Bless the baby,"
and was poured full of love and peace
and reassurance.
But the baby was dead.
God demands the long view.

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