## HUMANITIES

POETRY

## String theory

 ... As small as the sound of a human conceived the god in Delphi, mouthing the words ... tuning the strings with the squeak of the wooden pegs ... — The Throne of Labdacus, Gjertrud Schnackenberg

All night, you laboured at home, left early for the hospital. I entered the birthing room, an obstetrician who knew too much. The fetal monitor welcomed me; an empty *Isolette* nearby.

Earlier, you'd asked, "Why the heplock?" and I said, "Anything can happen." I watched the nurse struggle to find a vein, heard "Dizzy,"... ran to your side.

Where were you when I called, doll eyes staring forward, wrist cold, pulseless as I waited in silence, but for the tick-tock of your baby's heart.

The room cleaved in that moment into a place of possibilities, one of many held before me, as if gazing between mirrors, ourselves reflected again and again, each a different outcome.

In one, a code was called, doctors and nurses swarmed. An anesthetist found a vein, restored your blood pressure and you awakened. In other rooms, you did not.

Richard Bronson MD Professor, obstetrics, gynecology and pathology Stony Brook University Stony Brook, NY

CMAJ 2011. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.101865

