



*Iris: the art and literary journal*  
The University of North Carolina School of Medicine

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Cover image, "Praying Hands," by Laura Wiser

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## Editor's Note

In April 2020, the writer and activist Arundhati Roy described the pandemic as a portal.

*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.*

*We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.<sup>i</sup>*

COVID-19 has stretched healthcare systems and humanity in unprecedented ways. We hear the fibers of our society tearing, shifting, groaning. As we enter the second year of the pandemic, we continue to confront uncertainty and find new communities and relationships, sources of inspiration and joy, like weeds growing in sidewalk crevices. We forge beginnings.

*Iris* is an art and literary journal which calls the University of North Carolina School of Medicine its home. Like many journals led by medical students and trainees in ever-demanding fields, this journal has moved in and out of activity since its founding in 1997. The pandemic, the political crisis, the fight against racial violence, all fueled the resurgence of *Iris*. We saw healthcare workers across the field, from students to faculty to staff, turn to art for respite and reflection. We saw an opportunity and necessary gap that needed be filled to provide a platform for sharing experiences, revelations, and voices of strength.

Issue 11 of *Iris* is our portal. It includes poetry that grapples with time, essays that navigate the fundamental experiences of caregiving, and even a witty script which captures political tensions within the pandemic. There are photographs that carry loneliness and drawings that remind us of hope. This issue is our portal from past to present into our journal's revitalization and a portal between our contributors and our readers.

Thank you for opening this issue and taking a moment to pause, read, and reflect.

- Yoshiko Iwai for the Editors of *Iris: the art and literary journal*.

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<sup>i</sup> Roy, A. (2020, April 3). Arundhati Roy: 'the pandemic is A portal'. Financial Times. Retrieved September 14, 2021, from <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>