

The Invention of Ether

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Source: *The North American Review*, Vol. 305, No. 1 (Spring 2020), p. 4

Published by: University of Northern Iowa

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45456049>

Accessed: 01-07-2025 18:30 UTC

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## James Hearst Poetry Prize

KATY AISENBERG

## The Invention of Ether

*October, 1846, Boston MA.*

In the red brick city, under the blue glass dome  
Twelve doctors removed a tumor from the woman's jaw.  
The only sound was their occasional organized chatter  
And her easy breathing.  
The day they first used ether no one knew  
How much we would have to forget.  
All over America citizens opened their mail  
Ripping their triumphantly new American stamps.  
They had no thought that their civil country would suddenly split in two  
Like a woman laboring to bring forth an unwieldy child.  
They walked to the bank with gold firm in their hands.  
Buildings stayed balanced with no particular thought  
To the slight sweetness in the air, the small hiss of gas  
As souls escaped into the atmosphere.  
The world was a white and sunny ward.  
*There is so much to remember to forget,*  
She murmured before sucking deeply from the glass tube  
And counting to three under the blue Bullfinch dome.  
Dr Morton controlled her breathing, Dr Warren proclaimed  
*She feels no pain.*