

Foreword

The Fall 2004 issue of the *Bellevue Literary Review* chronicles a range of bodily rebellions, the sometimes colorful and often agonizing varieties in which they are manifest, and the challenges of adapting to them. In *The Plagiarist*, Hollis Seamon creates an English professor, whose staid life is shaken by unexplained heart palpitations. This sudden loss of her body's reliability causes her to view differently her troubled student and her aging dog. Dorothy Wall, in her essay *On Determination*, examines the triumph-over-adversity myths that often frustrate, rather than inspire, those with disabilities. With a disability that is not necessarily visible to most eyes, Wall is able to see how the ever-present threat of disability stirs the anxiety of the "temporarily able."

One aspect of life with a disability that is rarely discussed is sexuality. While rehabilitation programs exist to provide therapy for many of the impairments incurred by illness, there is little guidance in the realm of sex. Catherine Bergart, in *Doing It*, writes candidly about the modern technologies and human realities of creating a sex life in the face of quadriplegia. Stephen Dixon, in the story *Pain*, follows a husband and wife and their efforts to maintain physical intimacy as their marriage incorporates illness and incapacity.

In the story *Working for the Doctor*, Amber Dorko Stopper uses the point of view of a receptionist to examine the relationships among doctors, patients, and office staff. With a wry voice that can be biting in its humor, the receptionist pokes at the doctor, innocuously at first, uncovering some of the absurdities of his life. *Happy Hour at the Children's Museum*, by Jenni Lapidus, features a twenty-something narrator, also with a dry wit, who navigates the intersections of a difficult upbringing, a complicated love-life, the tribulations of being a writer, and the frightening possibilities of what can happen as life grows ever more complex.

Nahid Rachlin, in *Old Injuries*, brings us from Tehran to Texas, where an Iranian woman experiences how the stronghold of the past can overpower the present. *A Staircase in the Fog*, an essay by Robin Fast, also explores the grip of the past, in this case, how a father's dissolution into mental illness permeates the son's life.

The poetry in this issue of the *Bellevue Literary Review* considers the emotional assaults on the human body during the course of a lifetime, sometimes even after. In John Grey's *First Born*, the "marvel" of childbirth shares hospital space with the "marvels in reverse" of cancer, coma, and dementia. Paula Sergi, in the

poem, *Power and Light*, uses concise and detailed imagery to follow the trajectory of grief in the wake of a husband's death.

Linda Tomol Pennisi's pair of poems focuses on her daughter's beginning of anatomy class. *She Makes the First Cut*, and *I Want to Tell My Daughter Not to Name the Cadaver*, encompass mother, daughter, and cadaver, in an unusual, emotionally resonant, triangle.

In the prose poem *Having an MRI/Waiting for Laundry*, Jan Bottiglieri uses sensual connections to weave memories, and finds that these recollections often threaten to recast reality.

Illness, loss, disability, and death all are uninvited guests. Each saps a portion of a person, sometimes unforeseen, often insidiously. Meditating too long on these lurking possibilities stirs an existential angst that can paralyze. But at this moment it is worth appreciating all that is *not* malfunctioning. We are at least "temporarily able" to grasp words on the page, and it is in this spirit that we wish you an enjoyable journey into the Fall 2004 issue of the *Bellevue Literary Review*.

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