

Foreword

The *Bellevue Literary Review* strives to showcase writing that appeals to both medical and non-medical audiences. We have published work that explores themes relating to illness and health, as well as stories, poems, and essays that portray insights into the human experience. All five editors are writers; two are physicians and three are not. We have varied backgrounds in law, theater, biochemistry, marketing, nephrology, academic medicine, publishing, fiction, essays, and poetry. This variety in perspective among us creates lively debates and a journal that, we hope, reflects a range of sensibilities.

Illness is a transforming event, apparent to doctors and lay people alike, affecting not only a patient, but also a world. Disease changes one's family, network of friends and even caregivers. Few live in isolation; we have a lasting impact on one another, although we may not be aware of the exact nature of this influence. When a person copes with illness, a web of complex relationships emerges, and these can be filled with loss, anger, affection, hope, and appreciation. Illness often brings about the coming together of strangers. These relationships create the stories that shape our thinking. Writing about them can help give meaning to the narrative of our lives. One of the pleasures of reading is entering into a writer's universe and broadening the scope of our own experience.

In this issue of the *Bellevue Literary Review*, we are pleased to present work that reflects the interplay of individuals and their wider world. In the beautiful *High Water Mark*, Suzanne McConnell delves into the intense emotions of a 43-year-old woman struggling to become pregnant and how this quest affects a trip to Venice and her marriage. Robert Oldshue's *Home Depot* provides a quirky portrait of a working class family coping with a daughter's abnormal pregnancy.

Mental illness can have almost as profound an effect on family members as it does on a patient. The young girl in Susan Henderson's *Wishers* attempts to make sense of a household that has become gloomy because of her mother's depression. In the elegant *Return to Lincoln*, Louise Farmer Smith writes about another mother's depression and its impact on her husband and son; however, her characters are traveling in a horse-drawn wagon and live in the Oklahoma territories of 1889, when treatment for mental illness was far different than it is now. Lisa Rosen's poem, *In Suicide's Tracks*, considers a friendship redefined by loss.

Several contributors to the *BLR* examine the relationship between caregiver and patient. In her moving essay, *Fissure*, Debra Anne Davis recounts her experience with the medical profession after being raped. David Watts invites the reader to share a doctor's perspective in his two essays as he ponders treatment choices and a sudden emotional attachment to a patient. Sarah Hannah's *Night Nurse* reflects on the arduous emotional and physical demands of nursing. In his poem, *Doctor, Please*,

Peter Marcus offers startling images of patients and their symptoms. *A Roomful of Christmas* by Scott Temple and *Songs From The Black Chair* by Charles Barber describe the unexpected connection that can arise between caregiver and patient in a hospital and a homeless shelter.

We are delighted to publish new work by Alicia Ostriker, Gloria Kurian Broder, Cortney Davis, Hal Sirowitz, and many others.

In this issue of the *Belleme Literary Review*, illness becomes a catalyst for change, and people influence one another in ways that reshape lives. The writer Paul Theroux has said, "Fiction gives us a second chance that life denies us." Perhaps all forms of writing do this. As always, we hope you enjoy our selections.

Ronna Wineberg

Fiction Editor