Foreword

The Spring 2010 issue of the Bellevue Literary Review opens with the winners of the BLR Literary Prizes—the fifth year of our literary competition. More than 900 writers submitted their work to be judged by Phillip Lopate, Tony Hoagland, and Gail Godwin. The submissions were evaluated blindly, thus it was remarkable to learn that both the winner and honorable mention of the Marica and Jan Vilcek Prize for Poetry were the same person—Amanda Auchter. The styles of the poems are quite different, and this dual honor is a testament to this poet's diverse talents.

Another delightful surprise was the winner of the Carter V. Cooper Memorial Prize for Nonfiction. Joan Kip's thoughtful essays about aging, loss, and growth have graced our pages in the past, and it is a special honor that she marks her 93rd year with the BLR prize.

The winner of the Goldenberg Prize for Fiction, Larry Hill, offers a gripping story about a wounded soldier's return to the barrio in his story "Cocido." The editorial staff thanks the Vilcek, Goldenberg, and Cooper families, the 2010 judges, the writers who contributed their work, and our reviewers who helped read the submissions.

Portraying the complexity of mental illness without falling prey to stereotype is a true challenge. A pair of poems in this issue helps convey the experience with understated imagery. "But you dare not close your eyes, too much concealed/in invisible gases," writes Virginia Chase Sutton, in her poem "On Being Bipolar and the Phenomenal World." Rachel Contreni Flynn speaks of the penetrating effects of mental illness on the sister of the patient: "Even now I dream/of her breath in my hair. I wake feeling/saved, then bitten and torn down."

Characters with unexpected personality quirks turn up in several stories in the issue. M.M. De Voe's protagonist in "The Champion" arrives at her parent's home with a divorce to conceal and a kidney to offer. Her old-school Lithuanian father won't discuss his illness, but will only challenge her to a competitive game of Scrabble.

In Albert Dixon's story, "Stuntman," a surgeon performs cash-only operations in his kitchen because "[h]e wasn't going to let a little thing like revocation of license get in his way."

Resonant philosophical themes such as mortality, love, and trust sometimes arise in offbeat circumstances. In "The Pope's Boutique," by Alison Baker, two elderly women navigate widowhood and frailty while sorting knit shirts in the local church thrift shop. Anna Mirer, in "The Wills of Twenty Strangers," takes us into the medical school anatomy lab, an arena redolent of fear, formalin, and awe.

We are delighted that another crop of BLR writers have made the "notable" list in the top literary anthologies for 2008. Maud Casey's story "Fugueur" was honored in Best American Short Stories, as was Merilee D. Karr's essay "Plant Life" in Best American Essays. "Evacuation Instructions" by Elliott Holt was a notable story in the 2010 Pushcart Prize anthology.

The Bellevue Literary Review continues to mature. We are grateful to you, the reader, without whom this literary journal could not exist. We hope you enjoy the stories, essays, and poems in this issue of the BLR.

Danielle Ofri
Editor-in-Chief