almost utter refusal to place his text in conversation with certain seminal texts, including Sontag’s Illness as Metaphor. If Biro’s book examines how metaphor can help ill individuals express pain, hers argued how metaphor was socially constructed, and harmful to the ill. Biro’s text similarly misses engaging with Kleinman’s notion of “social suffering,” or understandings of suffering gleaned from Holocaust studies and other scholarship around the sufferings caused by war and trauma. His is ultimately an individual-centric argument about pain as an interior experience.

Biro’s primary premise that pain exists beyond and before language is neither unique, nor uncontested. Both Scarry and Arthur Frank have written about the ‘untellability’ of illness. Frank calls this type of illness story “the chaos narrative”: an experience of suffering so immediate, the sufferer has no distance or ability to reflect upon it. Despite these issues, Biro’s writing carries the reader through his ruminations. There are moments of sheer beauty here. Biro writes, “the fracturing of the body’s integrity in pain has its counterpart in the fracturing of the self; as the intactness of the person as a whole..pain involves not only a bracketing of the world (putting out of play, in Merleau-Ponty’s words), but a bracketing of the person.”

The notion that pain puts the body, and therefore the self, ‘out of play’ brings only more fervor to the insistence of narrative medicine/medical humanities upon the role of story in health care—story becomes a way of not only communicating one’s interior experience, but giving (re)birth to the self. David Biro’s The Language of Pain joins rich scholarship in narrative and health care. It does so in beautiful prose and with a careful attention to canonical literary work and visual art. What this reader is left wondering, then, is how to place it. If the book is to be taken as a new voice in the growing field of medical humanities, it seems strange that the work of established scholars is conspicuously ignored. In this light, the book isolates itself in the same way that it argues that pain might isolate the sufferer.

However, as a meditation upon pain, phenomenology, agency, metaphor, imagination, and story, Biro’s new book adds a powerful voice to the ongoing chorus seeking to place narrative and health care in harmony. And as such, it is music to my ears.

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Contributors’ Notes

Mary Akers’ short story collection, Women Up On Blocks, won the 2010 Independent Publisher Book Awards gold medal award for short fiction. She has also published a collection of short performance pieces titled Medusa’s Song and Other Stories. She co-authored a nonfiction book, One Life to Give: A Path to Finding Yourself by Helping Others.

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Adin Bookbinder grew up in Toronto and completed an MA in creative writing at Northwestern University. Her fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in One Story, Seattle Review, Asian Pacific American Journal, and on FiveChapters.com. Adin has been a finalist in Glimmer Train and Iowa Review contests and was nominated for the Best New American Voices anthology. She lives in Chicago.

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Inez Holger tutors high school English and composition while writing about family, aging, and mental health. Her most recent nonfiction story, "Reconciliation," appeared in *Relief* and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is currently working on a novel and a workbook for individuals suffering from depression.

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Dave Zerby earns a living working as a lawyer for a Native Alaskan tribal health organization. His poetry has appeared in the *William and Mary Review* and other journals.