Fall Fête
2022 Benefit to Support
BELLEVUE LITERARY PRESS

HONORING
Jan Vilcek, MD, PhD

Special guest Francine Prose
CONGRATULATIONS JAN

With deep appreciation for all your contributions to the Bellevue Literary Press from your friends & Board colleagues
Dear Friends and Supporters of Bellevue Literary Press,

Thank you for being part of this evening’s celebration of BLP and its many wondrous books. One of the joys of being on the press’s board has always been that board members have early access to the books. I can’t wait for the next in-person board meeting, when the books will sit on the table, delicious piles of them, waiting to be riffled through, tempting us to forget about the meeting and just sit there and read in shared but separate worlds of great writing, profound insights, and sheer pleasure. What a great board meeting that will be!

That’s the delight that good books bring. And Bellevue is all about good books: books that are beautifully written and push the reader to explore new ideas, new ways of thinking and experiencing the world. It’s not that other publishers don’t also want to do this, but publishing has become so commercial, so lacking in magic and stardust, that profit tends to precede everything else. If it’s not likely to make money, it gets passed over. You may have heard this from us before, but ours is a profoundly important position to take in a world where money has come to symbolize worth.

I’m happy to say the larger world recognizes the importance of what we do. Just this year we had two books longlisted for the National Book Awards; we had Andrew Krivak’s book, *The Bear*, chosen as a National Endowment for the Arts “Big Read” and offered to organizations across the country; our books are on many “best of the year” lists; and we are regularly reviewed in all the major book review sections. There aren’t many independent presses that can match that.

I hope you will revel in the attention and plaudits along with me. And I hope you will continue to support BLP because it’s your support that makes it possible for this small but mighty press that stands for the value—the necessity!—of art and ideas to continue to produce exceptional books. Please consider an additional donation to BLP to follow up on your ticket purchase. Or a small monthly donation. Or a larger one during our spring fundraising drive. Whatever you can do, whenever you can do it, will be deeply appreciated and will help us continue to produce the brilliant books we can’t wait to read.

With thanks and appreciation,

Gloria Jacobs,
President of the Board of Directors,
Bellevue Literary Press
Congratulations, Jan, on your well-deserved honor!

BLP is fortunate to have the support of such a brilliant and successful man . . . with such a gentle and generous spirit.

Daniel Ray
This Evening’s Program

Welcome
Andrea Louie
BLP Board Secretary

Introduction
Erika Goldman
BLP Publisher and Editorial Director

Tribute to Our Honoree, Jan Vilcek
Francine Prose

Remarks by Jan Vilcek, MD, PhD
Honoree and BLP Board Chair

A Special Message
Gloria Jacobs
BLP Board President

Closing Remarks
Andrea Louie and Erika Goldman

Music provided by
Q Morrow, guitar, and Sam Trapchak, bass
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Jan T. Vilcek, MD, PhD, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Microbiology at NYU Langone Medical Center, earned his degrees in Bratislava, Slovakia (then Czechoslovakia). He is among the earliest researchers of interferon, and of another regulatory protein called tumor necrosis factor (TNF). Dr. Vilcek’s work was instrumental in the development of the anti-inflammatory drug infliximab (Remicade®), the first member of a new class of therapeutics widely used for the treatment of Crohn’s disease, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and other chronic inflammatory disorders. Dr. Vilcek has published more than 350 papers in scholarly journals, and he is co-inventor of 38 US patents. In 2000 Dr. Vilcek and his wife established The Vilcek Foundation, whose main mission is to honor outstanding contributions of immigrants to the sciences and arts in the United States. He received NYU’s Albert Gallatin Medal, is an honorary alumnus of NYU School of Medicine, and Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He received the J. E. Purkynie Honorary Medal from the Czech Academy of Sciences, and the Outstanding American by Choice Award from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. He is an honorary member of the Learned Society of the Czech Republic, recipient of the Gold Medal of Charles University in Prague, and recipient of honorary degrees from the Comenius University in Bratislava, the CUNY Graduate Center, and NYU. In 2013, he received the National Medal of Technology and Innovation from President Barack Obama. In 2016, his memoir *Love and Science* was published by Seven Stories Press.
In 2016, I volunteered in the grassroots aid effort at Idomeni Camp in northern Greece, where thousands of asylum seekers were sleeping in tents in muddy fields. To combat the misery there, small-scale relief teams had mobilized to provide aid. Along with hundreds of others, I distributed supplies like bread, diapers, and sweaters.

My writing has often explored themes of migration, but my experience at Idomeni unnerved me, forcing me to rethink everything I knew about how we help the displaced. Why, I wondered, had so much responsibility for aid fallen on the shoulders of a bunch of do-gooders who just happened to show up? My search for answers resulted in a book, All Else Failed: The Unlikely Volunteers at the Heart of the Migrant Aid Crisis, which Bellevue Literary Press will publish in March.

This explanation of why I wrote the book also explains why I’ve written all my books, both novels and nonfiction. An idea—maybe a question, maybe a story—captures my attention, and I end up digging into the subject for years. The economics of this endeavor don’t make a lot of practical sense, but books have a value beyond the financial. I say this as a writer, of course, but, more importantly, I say it as a reader. I love books, and I need access to a wide and provocative range of them: not just bestsellers, but also books that will reach small, distinct audiences—novels, poetry, and narrative nonfiction—books that illuminate history, science, and myriad other subjects, changing the way we view the world.

The revolutionary thing about BLP is that when Erika Goldman and her colleagues talk about “value,” they aren’t talking about money, either. Sure, they’re thrilled when their books sell well, but they focus on the intrinsic quality—a work’s success as literature, its humanity, its ability to delight us and expand our views. This kind of publishing is, by nature, a labor of love. It is expensive and difficult, but also essential to a healthy society. We need it.

Here’s the truth, though: BLP is a literary nonprofit. It cannot survive on sales alone. Your financial support will help it continue to flourish. As much as we need this publishing house, it needs us, too. Please make a generous tax-deductible donation to Bellevue Literary Press today.

As a lover of books, I thank you.
The Josef & Anni Albers Foundation and Le Korsa are proud to support Bellevue Literary Press

Our agricultural cooperatives in rural Senegal allow women to put food on the table
On the subway ride home, there were delays on the F train and I had to get off and transfer to the C. I don’t usually take the C train. The walk from the closest stop is still about half a mile from my apartment and less populated and on a darker street, so I avoid it. But that night, I had no choice. As I waited on the platform for the train, I tried to think of all the ways I could be better. I could go to the gym more; I could go to the gym at all. I could volunteer again at a hospital, the way I used to in high school. But I hated it then and I only did it as a way to spend time with a boy I had a crush on for about a decade. He wanted to volunteer at Children’s Hospital, so I did, too, even though I spent plenty of time there already. As a patient, I hated volunteers—especially the woman and her Dalmatian who used to go from room to room dressed the same, asking if you needed a little love and remarking to me that a smile was really my best medicine. My mother would kindly usher her out of the room or lie and say I was allergic to dogs. I love dogs, which is why I think putting green glitter eye shadow and tutus on them is cruel. “You should tell her she can’t come in because she’s terrible,” I would say, and my mother would laugh.

When I volunteered, nurses would send me into the rooms of patients who were younger than me and had similar heart conditions. Mostly, I would listen—to what they were afraid of, the worry about scarring, etc.—and nod my head. Kids don’t talk about death much. They talk about maybe something going vaguely wrong during surgery or the scar they’ll have when they wake up, but they don’t talk about maybe not waking up. It’s sweet, I think, because even in hospitals, most of them haven’t learned death yet. I was careful not to say things like “Cheer up,” or to beg for smiles, or to mention the gravity of any given situation. Sometimes we just played a board game and they’d ask me my age. Sixteen. And they’d ask me if I had a scar. Yes. And the girls would ask if they could see it. Sure. And the boys would ask if I knew how to drive. Yep. But it was hard for me to sit on that side of the bed knowing there was really no difference between us and though I’d been lucky thus far, my luck might slip out from under me at any time and then that damned lady with her Dalmatian would be there knocking on my door. So I
asked the volunteer coordinator if I could be transferred to the Natal Intensive Care Unit. There, nobody needed my advice, and it was enough just to be comfortable around a lot of tubing and blood and to hold the babies whose parents couldn’t be there to hold them all day as mine had. I could do that again, I thought as I boarded the C train. I could hold babies.

Before the transplant, my parents took me to see an abbot. They’re both rabbis and my mother had a habit of taking me to every healer who rolled through town while I was growing up. Mostly, they didn’t work, but sometimes we had miracles. The abbot was not a healer, though, my parents said; he was just a holy man. We sat in his office, my mother, father, and I. He asked me if I had any questions for him or for God.

I was tired. I had been waiting a year already and I was declining in health and sanity. I asked the abbot if it was okay not to know if I wanted the heart to come. I asked him if it was okay to sometimes smoke cigarettes in Vermont with my boyfriend, if I couldn’t do that anymore when the new heart came because it wouldn’t be mine to destroy, the way this one was. I asked him if it was okay that I had thought about it a great deal and I did not want to know the donor or think of them every day because I liked the person I was and I didn’t want to risk losing myself to an organ. I asked him how I could deserve the heart better. I did not cry. My parents were quiet.

The abbot was soft-spoken. He wore wire-rimmed glasses and had white hair. He stayed still when he spoke, occasionally raising his hand to point to nothing in particular. “I think,” he said, “that these are good questions. It’s good to ask questions. But now that you’ve asked”—he raised his hand—“you can rest. You need a new heart, you’ll get a new heart, and the hardest part, God willing, will be your waiting. So perhaps you give up. Give it all up to God.”

The words we use to describe the sick, how we praise those who put on a brave face, how I received extra stickers and lollipops when I did not cry as a child, how we call people who don’t complain “strong” and often compare illness to illness and then say, “It can always be worse.” We demand gratitude. The abbot offered me a way out of that narrative, a silver branch to lift me out of the thinking that things could always be worse, a break from a crushing kind of gratitude. Give up. I imagined myself sinking to the bottom of a great body of water, not swimming, and not able to breathe until I reached the bottom.

The night before the call came, I sat in the passenger seat of Joey’s green minivan, a defibrillator vest strapped to my chest and an IV in my arm. I cried so hard, I started to gag. “I want it so bad,” I said. “I give up.” She repeated it was coming over and over again as she rubbed the part of my back not taken up by the vest. My heart was beating very fast and there was a beeping from inside my bag—a warning that the vest would shock me in
fifteen seconds if I did not press the right button on the battery pack because an arrhythmia might be pending. I dug around in my bag and could not find the battery.

“Adina, don’t be funny. Adina, please, find that fucking battery.”

“It’s trying.” I laughed.

I found it with a few seconds to spare and the pack was quiet once again. I turned to Joey and apologized for scaring her.

I always thought dying would feel worse. I thought there would be more pain, I thought death would be clear. When the surgeons removed my old heart, they said I was lucky my liver wasn’t failing, I was lucky to be alive; I couldn’t have waited any longer. “Thank you,” I said to everyone in the hospital that week I recovered. Thank you, thank you, thank you, compulsively, like a tic, until thank you was the only sound I made in exhalation before sleep.

It was nearly midnight when I stepped off the C train and started walking down the platform toward the Washington Avenue exit. I had my headphones in and I was listening to Otis Redding’s “That’s How Strong My Love Is” on repeat.

And there he was, the man from the bar, my heart twin; he was on the platform, heading toward the opposite exit, and hadn’t seen me. We’d been on the same train, in different cars. Maybe it also took him an hour and a half to get home. I paused and recognized my choice—I could say something or not. I thought about what Joey said, about how maybe people don’t think in terms of who is more or less traumatized, and how I can’t know what his transplant was like but maybe it would give both of us something to hear him tell the story of it. So when I stepped off the train at a stop I don’t usually go to and he was there, walking toward the exit, I rose up and took my luck’s hand.

“Jesse!” I yelled. “Hey, Jesse!”

It has been my fortune and privilege to get to know Jan and Marica Vilcek.

Your success in the West is an example that given opportunity the Slovak creativity will flourish.

—Ruzena Bajcsy
A Brief and Selected History of
Bellevue Literary Press

2007 – BLP launches its first list from offices in Bellevue Hospital

April 1, 2007 – BLP publishes its first book, Galileo’s Gout
by Gerald Weissmann

“[Weissmann] bridges the space between science and the humanities, and particularly between medicine and the muses, with wit, erudition, and, most important, wisdom.”
—Adam Gopnik

April 1, 2008 – BLP publishes Water, Ice & Stone by Bill Green
John Burroughs Medal for Distinguished Natural History Book Winner

“Nature writing of a very high order. . . . A joyride for those who enjoy deep explorations of logic, human frailty and the laws of nature.” —San Francisco Chronicle

January 1, 2009 – BLP publishes Tinkers by Paul Harding
Pulitzer Prize for Fiction Winner
New York Times Bestseller

“There are few perfect debut American novels. . . . To this list ought to be added Paul Harding’s devastating first book, Tinkers. . . . Harding has written a masterpiece.” —NPR

May 1, 2009 – BLP publishes The Jump Artist by Austin Ratner
Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature Winner

“A beautifully scrupulous, intricately detailed novel about joy and despair, anti-Semitism and assimilation, and like a great photograph, it seems to miss nothing, and to catch its subject in all its complexity.” —Charles Baxter

November 30, 2010 – BLP publishes Written in Stone by Riley Black
(writing as Brian Switek)

“Seamlessly intertwines two types of evolution: one of life on earth and the other of paleontology itself.” —Discover Magazine

April 19, 2011 – BLP publishes The Sojourn by Andrew Krivak
National Book Award Finalist
Chautauqua Prize Winner
Dayton Literary Peace Prize Winner

 “[The Sojourn] helps us experience a distant past that feels as if it could be our own.”
—National Book Award jury citation
May 1, 2012 – BLP publishes **Understories** by Tim Horvath

New Hampshire Literary Award Winner

“Understories is fueled by a wonderfully inventive mind, but ultimately, it is a mind in service to the heart. Horvath’s attention is always squarely on us: who we are, who we have been, and how a great story can transform us.” —Matt Bell

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January 1, 2013 – BLP publishes **The Child** by Pascale Kramer

Swiss Grand Prize for Literature (awarded to Ms. Kramer in 2017 for her entire body of work, including **The Child**)

“The Child is a raw look at the cycles of decay that stalk our lives . . . and the unexpected sources of hope that keep us going.” —World Literature Today

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May 13, 2014 – BLP publishes **The Boy in His Winter**, the first stand-alone installment in Norman Lock’s “dazzling” (Washington Post) American Novels cycle

“Brilliant . . . The Boy in His Winter is a glorious meditation on justice, truth, loyalty, story, and the alchemical effects of love, a reminder of our capacity to be changed by the continuously evolving world “when it strikes fire against the mind’s flint,” and by profoundly moving novels like this.” —NPR

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January 13, 2015 – BLP publishes **The Business of Naming Things** by Michael Coffey

“Like Chekhov, [Coffey] must be a notebook writer; how else to explain the strange quirks and the perfect but unaccountable details that animate these intimate portraits?” —Edmund White

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March 15, 2016 – BLP publishes **A Loaded Gun** by Jerome Charyn

Phi Beta Kappa Christian Gauss Award Short List
PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography Longlist
Firecracker Award Finalist

“A magnetic nonfiction reevaluation of the mystifying, radical, perhaps bisexual, and maybe greatest-ever American poet.” —O, The Oprah Magazine

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March 15, 2016 – BLP publishes **The Measure of Darkness** by Liam Durcan

Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction Winner

“Straddling the line between a page-turning mystery and a forensic examination of the relationship between brain and self, The Measure of Darkness marks Durcan as a writer to watch.” —CBC Radio
January 10, 2017 – BLP publishes Talking Back, Talking Black by John McWhorter

“McWhorter offers an explanation, a defense, and, most heartening, a celebration of the dialect that has become, he argues, an American lingua franca. . . . [He] demonstrates the ‘legitimacy’ of Black English by uncovering its complexity and sophistication, as well as the still unfolding journey that has led to its creation.” — New Yorker

October 10, 2017 – BLP publishes Wolf Season by Helen Benedict

Women’s National Book Association “Great Group Reads” selection

“No one writes with more authority or cool-eyed compassion about the experience of women in war both on and off the battlefield than Helen Benedict. . . . Wolf Season is more than a novel for our times; it should be required reading.” — Elissa Schappell

2018 – BLP becomes an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit publisher

February 13, 2018 – BLP publishes A Wilder Time by William E. Glassley

John Burroughs Medal for Distinguished Natural History Book Winner

“Glassley ponders the nature of perception and the human mind, describes the dramatic physical features of Greenland’s makeup and recounts the thrilling adventures of his extended visits there.” — Scientific American

May 1, 2018 – BLP publishes Alpha by Bessora, illustrated by Barroux

Doctors Without Borders Prize

“Illuminate[s] the heart-wrenching journey of a West African refugee. . . . The reader is drawn into the refugee’s experience and shares his agonizing odyssey via the graphic novel’s blunt yet poetic language.” — World Literature Today

May 8, 2018 – BLP publishes Mourning by Eduardo Halfon

International Latino Book Award Winner
Edward Lewis Wallant Award Winner
Guatemalan National Prize in Literature (awarded to Mr. Halfon in 2018 for his entire body of work, including Mourning)


April 9, 2019 – BLP publishes Murmur by Will Eaves

Wellcome Book Prize Winner
Republic of Consciousness Prize Winner

“Beautiful and hallucinatory. . . . From extreme isolation and suffering springs a vision of universal connectedness.” — Wall Street Journal
August 27, 2019 — BLP publishes *From the Shadows* by Juan José Millás

*Publishers Weekly* “Top 10 Books of the Year” selection

“Part surreal comedy, part dark parable. . . . A page-turner of the strangest order, Millás’s debut stuns and entrances. It’s impossible to put down.” — *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

February 11, 2020 — BLP publishes *The Bear* by Andrew Krivak

NEA Big Read selection
Mountain Book Competition Winner
Massachusetts Book Awards Winner

“Gorgeous. . . . Krivak’s serene and contemplative novel invites us to consider a vision of time as circular, of existence as grand and eternal.” — *Washington Post*

March 4, 2020 — BLP publishes *Pain Studies* by Lisa Olstein

Writers’ League of Texas Discovery Prize Winner

“Olstein succeeds marvelously when directly reflecting on her own pain and her attempts to treat it. An accomplished poet, she often uses language beautifully and inventively.” — *New York Times Book Review*

February 9, 2021 — BLP publishes *Come On Up* by Jordi Nopca

Documenta Prize Winner
Big Other Book Award Finalist

“In Lethem’s witty translation from Catalan, the 11 stories [of *Come On Up*] are heartbreaking and hilarious, tender and violent.” — *New York Times Book Review*

May 4, 2021 — BLP publishes *Love Like Water, Love Like Fire* by Mikhail Iossel

Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction Winner
Story Prize Longlist

“Iossel’s marvelous sense of rhythm dazzles the reader. We can’t stop turning the pages of this book.” — *New York Times Book Review*

January 25, 2022 — BLP publishes *Seasons of Purgatory* by Shahriar Mandanipour

National Book Award Longlist
*Publishers Weekly* “Best Books of the Year” selection

“Seasons of Purgatory unites storytelling subtlety with scenes of visceral emotional impact.” — *Wall Street Journal*
February 22, 2022 - BLP publishes *City of Incurable Women* by Maud Casey

American Library in Paris Book Award Shortlist
Joyce Carol Oates Prize Longlist

“[City of Incurable Women] is poetic rather than polemic, elegantly written and filled with resonant imagery.” — *Boston Globe*


National Book Award Longlist
*New York Times* “Editors’ Choice” selection
Powell’s Books “Best Books of the Year” selection

“Hodges considers the elemental truth pulsating beneath our experience of music and of our very lives.” — Maria Popova, *Marginalian*

May 10, 2022 - BLP publishes *The Bar at Twilight* by Frederic Tuten

*New York Times* “Editors’ Choice” selection

“Engrossing... *The Bar at Twilight* is neither normative nor predictable, and it bears the firm impress of the soul.” — *New York Times Book Review*

August 23, 2022 - BLP publishes *Let No One Sleep* by Juan José Millás, our 100th Published Title

“Everything impresses in this darkly iridescent, utterly captivating flight.”
— *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

September 20, 2022 - BLP publishes *Canción* by Eduardo Halfon

*Kirkus Reviews* “Best Books of the Year” selection

“Bolaño-esque... The detective novel rubs elbows with the campus novel; tragedy cuts like acid through farce.” — *New York Times Book Review*
salutes

Dr. Jan Vilcek

and

Bellevue Literary Press

for their

remarkable contributions

to the arts

and

to

the

sciences.
Dear Jan,
We salute you for your leadership and inspiring example to all Americans!

Lulu & Tony Wang
In honor of the extraordinary accomplishments of Dr. Jan Vilcek

—Kathryn Greenberg
Proud sponsor of the Bellevue Literary Press Fall Fête

We honor Dr. Jan Vilcek, MD, PhD for his longstanding commitment to the literary arts and Bellevue Literary Press.

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CONGRATULATIONS
to Jan Vilcek and
the Bellevue Literary Press

love and science
a memoir
JAN VILCEK

“A great story appearing at a hazardous time in our history.”
—Harold Varmus, Nobel Laureate

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Thank you to our authors and contributors!
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www.blpress.org/books-detailed-listing
Mulberry Tree Press congratulates Bellevue Literary Press on surpassing the milestone of publishing over 100 titles in its outstanding 15-year program.
The Brandt Jackson Foundation congratulates honoree

Jan Vilcek, MD, PhD

and raises a toast to his many years of support for

Bellevue Literary Press.
ARO congratulates Jan Vilcek and celebrates the 15th anniversary of Bellevue Literary Press!
It is truly appropriate that this fête should be dedicated to Dr. Jan Vilcek, an eminent scientist and humanitarian.

His singular generosity of spirit and the broad scope of programs he has developed, nourished, and supported are truly unique.

He has played an important role in supporting Bellevue Literary Press.

It is an honor for us to honor him.

Dr. Jerome and Lois Lowenstein
Sterling Pierce congratulates Bellevue Literary Press on the quality of its outstanding publishing program and the fine literature it produces.
OUR MISSION

Bellevue Literary Press is devoted to publishing literary fiction and nonfiction at the intersection of the arts and sciences because we believe that science and the humanities are natural companions for understanding the human experience. We feature exceptional literature that explores the nature of consciousness, embodiment, and the underpinnings of the social contract. With each book we publish, our goal is to foster a rich, interdisciplinary dialogue that will forge new tools for thinking and engaging with the world.

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BLP is grateful for the support of these government organizations:

BLP is a proud member of these organizations:
Jan,
Thank you
for your leadership
and commitment
to Bellevue Literary Press.

—Mieko Willoughby
The Vilcek Foundation is grateful for the work of Bellevue Literary Press and their commitment to exploring the intersection of the sciences and the arts through literature and writing.