

Beloit Fiction Journal Market Sheet

Title of Magazine: Beloit Fiction Journal Issues (or dates published): One issue per year; Spring Reviewer's name: Ashlyn Wheeler

Managing Editor(s): Chris Fink (Editor-in-Chief), Maya Furukawa (Managing Editor, 2015) October 2015

Web Address: <http://www.beloit.edu/bfj/>

What they publish: The Beloit Fiction Journal publishes literary fiction on any subject or theme, but does not print genre fiction, pornography, political tracts, or religious dogma.

Submission Guidelines: One can submit works of fiction ranging from one to sixty pages in length from the first of August to the first of December only. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable, but only one story should be sent at a time. Online submissions are through Submittable and cost three dollars. Mail submissions are free, but must always include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Submissions are acknowledged within one day on average.

Publication: (experience of contributors, contests, frequency, price, design/production quality, etc.) The current issue's price is ten dollars, and past issues are seven. The circulation is between 600 and 1,200. The journal accepts new writers as well as established writers in the field of contemporary fiction, though most contributors have significant publishing credits. The journal publishes one issue each year, usually in the spring. The current contest is the Hamlin Garland Award for the Short Story 2016, which ends on the first of December this year. The prize includes two thousand dollar award and publication. It is judged by Nickolas Butler, the author of *Shotgun Lovesongs*. The journal has a high design and production quality.

Prose Per Issue / Amount of Published Annually: On average, fifteen prose stories are published annually in the journal.

Patterns: Most of the stories are past-tense, but there is a fairly even variety of both first and third person point of view. The average page count for the work tends to be around fifteen pages, though most are on the shorter side. Most of the stories are about relationships, ranging from married couples, children and their parents, to inmates and officers, and many have a gritty sense of irony, betrayal, or disintegration. The stories tend to not have a perfectly tied-up ending, but rather one that is to be interpreted. The reader is often left with a strong feeling of what comes next, or how the emotional impact affects the characters, rather than a trite conclusion that answers all questions.

Rating 1 (Overall): 9. The diversity of voices, forms, and overall content makes this journal exciting and interesting to read. The quality of the work is consistently high quality, polished, and thought-provoking. Thirty years later, the Beloit Fiction Journal still stands true to its initial goal of creating a space where "only the quality of the story matter[s]." The journal's

McNair (with input from Jotham Burrello)

painful and beautiful stories give its readers the guts of what it is to be flawed, to be overcome, to lose what matters, and to find it.

Rating 2 (For emerging writers): 4. Though the journal says it accepts new and emerging writers, of the three most recent issues, only one of the contributors, Rachel Groves, had never been published before. Most of the others have been published in magazines such as *AGNI*, *American Short Fiction*, *Crazyhorse*, and *The Missouri Review*, just to name a few. The rejection rate is just over ninety percent, and the distribution is, on average, a little less than 1,000. Only fifteen stories, on average, are published per year. There is no payment when published in the journal. There is, however, a very high quality of editing, and the journal itself is very pleasing to look at, hold, and read. As a fiction-only journal, the BFJ is in the minority among other literary journals that publish three genres, so it publishes the best of the best in fiction. It only accepts the highest quality of writing, which is evident in their issues.

“After the Big One” by John Searcy, published in the 2013 issue, is a bleakly told short story in a post-apocalyptic, mostly interior setting. The narrator, who remains nameless in the piece, struggles with his fading memory as he is locked away in his home with the woman he lives with, who is also never given a name, as the world is desolate and dying outside. As weeks turn to months, the man and woman begin to forget the names of household objects. A crib in a spare bedroom is referred to as a cage; the knife in the kitchen drawer is called a nail. Their everyday actions, like making meals from the canned goods kept in the basement, become forgotten. They lay in bed at night and he doesn’t understand why there is a deep urge to touch her. They no longer speak to each other, and one day the woman goes outside, and when she returns, she is close to death. The story ends with him leaning his ear to her lips, trying and hoping to hear a sound, but nothing comes.

In this story, objects are focused on, their physical qualities described so that the reader knows what they are, but the narrator does not, which is amplified through the first person point of view. The fleeting memories of the objects’ purpose and names are one of the driving forces of story movement, showing fading knowledge and awareness when one is cut-off from the world. The use of models serve to show the mundane routine of the characters’ day, and the feeling of being trapped. The repetition of the gray, impenetrable smog outside the home also gives the effect of desolation. The story is effective in not only the concept of setting, but also the emotion that comes from seeing the disintegration of the characters’ relationship. It strips them down to a bleak loss of hope, and in turn, they lose their purpose in life, losing what makes them human.

“Shore Up” by Phil LaMarche, published in the 2013 issue, is a simply-worded, child-narrated story told through 10 short instances in a utilitarian setting. The narrator is a young boy who, while traveling from home to home, is told about the world through the words of his very subjective father. His father, who he refers to as Pa, tells him the women who live above them are tramps and sluts, but the boy met one in the hall once, and she was very nice to him. An old woman takes them in and tells them to call her Nanna, and even though the boy wants to call her “Misses Tuck”, his father tells him to do what she says so they can stay. He learns about death when Pa tells him that his brother drowned in a basement flood, and Nanna says that he is with Jesus. The boy gets baptized when Nanna tells him that he is a heathen that will go to the Devil if he doesn’t clean away his sins. One night his father is feverish and drunk, cursing and spitting, so the boy lays on his lap, dips his fingers into his father’s beer can, and baptizes him, telling him, “It’s okay.”

The story is told in a first person point of view, so the world around the characters is given through the view of a child who is trying to make sense of it all. The child’s voice is achieved through repetitional phrases that the father speaks, and the often incorrect use of grammar. Each short instance has dialogue within it, which serves to show a concrete representation of how Pa’s words are shaping the little boy’s understanding. The story is effective due its unvarnished and simple description, allowing the reader hear Pa’s words, and see his gestures, but also have the freedom to interpret what is beyond Pa’s voice, and how the boy’s own thoughts and understandings are his own built, innocent truth. The structure of this piece sets it apart from others in the 2013 issue, and strengthens the journal, by offering a different form that breaks away from the traditional or expected. “On All Fours” by Dominic Viti, published in the 2014 issue, is a realistic short story in a broken, domestic setting. Bill has been recently been divorced by his wife, Nicole, for her yoga instructor, Ken, who he had found having sex with her doggy style, on all fours, in their bedroom when they were still married. Not being able to get it out of his mind, Bill resents Ken, and is jealous that his son, Jaden, spends half his time with him. One day, he gets a phone call from Nicole, telling him that Ken got injured at the beach and needs a ride to the hospital. Since her car was in the shop and she wouldn’t be able to get him until later since she’s going for a run with a friend, she asks Bill to do it. He reluctantly agrees, bring Jaden along with him for the ride. They pick up Ken at the beach, and Bill makes him hobble on his sprained ankle to the car through the sand. On the ride to the hospital, Bill learns from Ken that Nicole was going for a run with, Barry, her first husband. Bill has a sudden realization that Ken’s trusting nature was very much like his own while married to Nicole, and knows immediately that Nicole is cheating on Ken. Bill knows that soon Ken will know what it feels like to be him.

This story has a strong awareness of gesture throughout, which is effective in showing the emotional reasoning behind a moment or movement, rather than plainly telling it. The third person point of view is subjective to Bill's voice and understanding, using sarcasm, feigned disinterest, and intense focus on other people's flaws, all being seen through the lens of his own misfortunes and fault. This, specifically, is a way that shows character change. When Bill figures out about Nicole cheating on Ken, he is able to connect his own life with Ken's, when he had previously hated and mocked him. He is able to feel empathy for another. This story has one of the most concrete endings in the 2014 issue, showing a pivotal revelation and how that made an obvious change in character. "Luck" by Casey Pycior, published in the 2014 issue, is a plain realistic story in a social, rural setting. Collins, an officer at a state prison, is told to get the ingredients for death-row inmate's last supper. Hamlin Rankin, the inmate, will be the state's first execution in twenty years. He has asked for pan-seared sea bass, filet mignon, one can of RC, one bag of barbecue potato chips, and a peanut butter cup. Collins sets out to find something similar to these requests, but because of the small town they live in, it is difficult. He sits in a fast-food lane for awhile, debating on getting Rankin a random order, but then decides to leave to find something closer to what he wants. He comes to a small bar and restaurant called Cliff's, and is lead to the back kitchen. There he meets the chef, who he guesses was once a convict, due to the way he holds his body and that he flinches when he sees him in uniform. The man agrees to make what he can, and has Collins take the food for free, rather than pay for it, even though he tries. With the leftover money, Collins buys several lottery scratch-off tickets, which he hides underneath Rankin's food. He imagines Rankin scratching away at them, testing his luck for the last time.

The use of models, like the men in Cliff's who all watch Collins hesitantly, him being called "New Guy" by the others at the prison, and the conduct within the prison, is effective to show how the outside world reacts to those in uniform. It shows control of time and power by presenting two different major settings and the kinds of people and the things they do within them. The story lacks in emotional description, but rather shows the reader the choices Collins makes, presenting interpretations of what his actions mean. There is a strong description of Cliff's and of the chef, which really are the two most fully described elements of the story. This, too, serves to show the difference between the inside of the prison and the outside world that bends around to the laws. This ending isn't satisfactory in a conventional sense. No character shows great change, nor is there a sweeping, summarized lesson spelled out for the reader. There is, however, a feeling that goes beyond the obvious or cliché. The story presents the thought that time is out of everyone's control, and that it can't be stopped, and that death is inevitable, no matter what. "The French Horn" by John Mandelberg, published in the 2015 issue, is a realistic short story in a domestic setting. R. meets Gilberto, his girlfriend's half-brother. The man barely speaks, and is inside most of the day in his tiny room. R. is immediately fond of Gilberto, and when he learns that he can play the trumpet, he is excited to offer Gilberto a french horn he had bought years ago but never learned to play. He brings it over later that week, and Gilberto is in awe of it. He learns to play it quickly, almost expertly. Long after he and his girlfriend break up, R. still thinks of Gilberto, imagining him playing for women on the street, getting out of the old house he shares with his aunt. Years pass, and R. sees Gilberto as a chef while on a date. He is thin now, and owns a business, and R. couldn't be more happy seeing him so successful, feeling like somehow had something to with it by giving him the french horn. A week later, he sees his ex-girlfriend, who tells him that the chef wasn't Gilberto, that he had died years ago. R. goes to the old house where Gilberto had lived, and buys the french horn back at an estate sale.

The first lingered image is the physical description of Gilberto, which is effective in showing who will be the most important character in the piece, even though the point of view is mostly seen through R.'s perspective. The strong awareness of pacing throughout the story serves to show the passage of time and to heighten the important things and people. The use of exaggerated speech when R. talks to Gilberto shows the lightness Gilberto brings out of him, and his eagerness to watch Gilberto do well. This is accomplished through repeated emotional descriptions and exclamatory sentences. The focus on the french horn as a characteristic and dramatic object is a physical representation of the theme that objects hold memories and can last long after death. This piece gives a clear ending, stating the point that the story has been building up to.

“Jim and Nancy” by Anthony Spaeth, published in the 2015 issue, is an intricate short story in a domestic setting. Jim, a talented carpenter, and his wife Nancy, an artist, buy a small house in Lawndale, which has a large attic space that runs along the entire length of the house. Up in the hot attic, Jim sets up his studio. One day as he drives along the road, he finds a vintage, wooden mannequin out by a dumpster. He manages to get the two-hundred pound mannequin into his car, and takes it upstairs to his work space. He leaves it in his chair, and hides, wanting to scare his wife, but when she comes home, she takes off her clothes and lays herself across its lap. Over the next few days, taken over by inspiration, Jim carves at the wood, and creates a mantelpiece out of it, carving Nancy into the same position she had been in when she first found the mannequin. The mantelpiece is said to be in an estate home today, and the quality of the work and wood make it so it will be there for another thousand years.

This story revolves around the mannequin in many ways, as it is the central, pivotal object. It is the first image that is lingered on, from its shape and size to its heaviness. Its presence causes some kind of awakening in both Jim and Nancy, his being more artistic, hers more primal and sexual in nature. The couple had been drifting apart in the story, speaking less and less, interacting only when eating dinner, but in the moments where they are both interacting with the wood, they become alive. This was an effective way to show that change in them. There is also a constant awareness of spatial relationships, which builds the small place around the two characters, and also serves to create the distanced atmosphere between them.