

**Vestal Review** Issue: 42

Editor: Mark Budman

Web Address: [www.vestalreview.net](http://www.vestalreview.net)

What they publish: Flash fiction.

Submission Guidelines: Vestal Review uses an online submission management system to receive submissions. Stories should be no longer than 500 words. Reading periods are from February to May and August to November. Work will not be considered if submitted in December, January, June or July. Only two original pieces will be accepted per author within a reading period (two consecutive issues). Simultaneous submissions are permitted if the author informs Vestal immediately upon being accepted elsewhere. Your title should be comprehensive and original without summarizing the story, (and Vestal isn't particularly fond of one-word titles.) You will be asked to sign a contract for first rights if your work is accepted, and payments are made out to the author via Paypal. Vestal accepts "Most genres, other than children's, syrupy romance or hard science fiction, are accepted, and we love humor."

Description of the Publication:

Vestal Review, established in 2000, is the oldest semiannual publication publishing flash fiction. The quarterly is geared toward showcasing a collection succinct, imaginative short prose twice a year. Vestal often promotes magical and lyrical work that "is so condensed it borderlines poetry." The magazine contends that a good flash "engages your mind not only for the short duration of its read, but for a long time after".

Prose Per Issue/Amount published Annually: 100%. 10-16 stories published annually.

Prose Reviews:

Garcy Leising's *Dulcinea del Rio* is a poetic magic realism story in an exotic setting. It is a first-person narrative bearing a husband's witness to his wife's drowning in the Rio Dulce, Guatemala. A romp of otters sinks their teeth into a flailing woman, plummeting her into the dark waters the tour guide says belong to the "River of Death." After drunkenly repressing his wife's drowning, her husband becomes convinced he is morphing into a fish because an organism swam up his urethra during the tour. He hurriedly returns to the water and searches for his wife, hoping to turn into a school of fish to swim her back to shore. She has unfortunately already become a goddess of otters.

At a first glance, Leising gives us a short scene that doesn't offer any answers, unless one accounts for the story's imagery and symbolism provoking intense afterthought of what it all means. Employing extended metaphor, Leising lyrically depicts a tragedy suggesting a heroine can die within the first sentence "On vacation in Guatemala, my friend was swimming in the Rio Dulce when three giant river otters grabbed her, pulled her under, their teeth stretching the edges of her nylon/lycra composite bathing suit, and she was gone." Leising gives us a scene of a recreational tour transformed into an intransient swim through a happy purgatory in the depths of a riverbed. Since the piece is told by a friend who never was there in the minutes before her death, the story voices resentment of her husband who wishes to change in order to save her, but it too clearly too late.

*Brit Lit* by Joseph Rathgeber is a plainspoken, second person narrative in a domestic setting. A World Lit professor discovers his otherwise droll lesson plan on the Romantic poets of yore spurns endless irrelevant questions

such as, “Why does Keats look like a girl?” The professor, in attempt to inspire his students, paints the Romantic poets as revolutionaries, which ignites his students to become dissidents outside the classroom.

Rathgeber uses humor and satire to make the trials and tribulations of an English teacher endlessly amusing. Rather than directly stating what is lacking in the education system, the author gives us a hyperbolical how-to of how to teach by the book and what impassioned teaching can do. The pace of *Brit Lit* is rapid and rhythmic, showing the reader how quickly things can transpire within a paragraph, while giving the narrator a helpless tone until he finally resolves to, “You tone it down. You wish your students luck in World Lit.”

Rating: 4. From prior issues of Vestal Review it is clear that the publication includes a different set of contributors each issue, which is encouraging to emerging writers with few clips. However, most issues only include five to eight pieces, which suggests that there is either heavy competition to get published, or the journal has yet to produce a bigger volume of voices. While Vestal Review has a decent legacy of producing flash fiction since 2000, its website is not cutting-edge in terms of design, and I was able to cite several editorial mistakes. Most of the writing is of quality, but at such a slim rate of acceptance, it leaves one expecting more.