

Big Ugly Review

Hannah Becker

Editor: Elizabeth Bernstein

October 2009

Web Address: www.biguglyreview.com

What They Publish: Issue 7 contained Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Film, Music, and Photo Essay.

Submission Guidelines: Each issue has a specific theme. Simultaneous submissions accepted as long as you inform them if the piece gets published elsewhere. Reprints are considered for acceptance as long as author maintains the rights. You can enter by standard mail or via e-mail. E-mail must have "Submission" in the header as well as author's last name and title of piece. Word count is available on the Web site, as well as any information on contests and guidelines for formatting. Work sent by U.S. Mail will not be returned.

Description of Publication: Contributor experience ranges from published and acclaimed to new on the scene, and small author's bios can be found organized neatly in a specific category on the site. Editors of the Big Ugly Review pride themselves on "showcasing the best emerging and established talent in writing, photography, music, and film." Overall the bright colors of the site and the very neat layout make the page visually appealing, and also allow for necessary information to be easily located. The online format also allows for the reader to choose the option of listening to the author read their piece aloud. Issues are published annually and organized thematically.

Prose Per Issue: Issue #7 contained four short stories, two contest entries, three pieces of flash fiction, three non-fiction, and four submissions of poetry, as well as several works of film, music, and a photo essay.

Prose Reviews:

Make a Wish by John Jodzio is a plainspoken, realistic narrative in a domestic setting. Danny, a fifteen-year-old, terminally ill boy is spending the day fishing on the ocean with Eusebio, a has-been baseball player turned alcoholic, as his "wish" from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. He immediately voices his disappointment in Eusebio, who was not the player he wished for, but nonetheless they continue out to the open water, seemingly without any parental supervision, on a bright orange Doritos-sponsored boat. Eusebio spends the day drinking and sleeping, waking only to throw a grenade into the water to "fish." At the end of half a day, as the sun starts to set, Eusebio asks Danny if he's ready to go. Danny doesn't respond.

The narrative is simple, told in Danny's strong, jaded voice. There are no wasted words; the descriptions are appropriate to the narrator: "I am drunk and sweaty and I can feel the liquor sloshing around in my gut as we take off. Eusebio points to some seagulls." It feels as though the story is being told to you by Danny himself, and I found the form very effective, though the subject matter isn't one I would have chosen to read for fun. Though it's never explicitly stated, there is an undertone of sadness and defeat throughout the story. The end sums it up, Danny is staring at the sky after realizing how tired and disgusting Eusebio looks in the dark, he notes that the boat is running slow under the massive catch, and, "the stars above us are tiny and flickering, useless."

Black Holes by Nina Schuyler is a plainspoken, realistic narrative in a domestic setting. An unnamed male character sits at his desk, drinking brandy, and tries to work out the scientific problem of how to separate heavy particles from light. He is writing theories when his wife impatiently enters the room, reiterating that they're going to be late to a dinner honoring one of his colleagues. He admires his wife, radiant in a dress that he states was not meant for him, and realizes that there is a vast space between them. For a moment he tries to rationalize this thought

scientifically, before realizing that there is no explanation. He reminisces on the first time he saw her, back in college, before standing to follow her out the door, just in time to see her walking away.

The third person point of view works well for the story, painting a descriptive visual of the scene while still giving the reader the inner workings of the main character's mind. The descriptions are beautiful, poetic ("He hovers over his notepad, breathing in the blue ink scribbles of equations, which slowly transmute into the scent of jasmine perfume.") and allow the reader to be both an observer and an active participant. However, the inclusion of scientific jargon adds an air of legitimacy to the character: "A gas centrifuge might do it, cleave U-235 from 238." The feeling of marital discontent is implied without being too specifically stated, both in the line about how the dress was not purchased for him, and the end when he is explaining his ideas about his newest scientific experiment and realizing that she has already walked away from him.

Rating: I'd give the magazine a five. The specific theme and restricted period of open submission makes it difficult for a writer to fit in a piece of his or her existing work. However, if you're able to somehow work it out, the visual layout and the overall quality of the magazine would make it worth it, and the quality of work is high.