

**McSweeney's** – Print Issue

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What They Publish: Fiction

Submission Guidelines: Unpublished fiction stories of no particular length. May include a brief cover letter. If sending via mail, include SASE. To submit via e-mail, send manuscript as a Microsoft Word attachment, with subject heading “submission” or “story.” Use specific file name, not “McSweeney’s Story.doc.” Include contact information on each page: name, mailing address, e-mail.

Description of Publication: Layout is spectacular: artistic, colorful, and professionally bound. Published quarterly. \$20 to subscribe. Contributors have varied experience – from well accomplished to current MFA students.

Prose Per Issue: 100%

Prose Reviews:

*Black Hoodie* by Roddy Doyle is a close first-person narrative in a domestic setting. The narrator and his two classmates – Ms. Nigeria and not-Superman – create a mini-company, Black Hoodie Solutions, for a school project, in which the three work as “theft consultants,” stealing goods from stores around Dublin before returning them to explain the ineptitudes of the stores’ security services, as a result of stereotyping. The narrator (wearing a black hoodie), Ms. Nigeria (of African descent), and not-Superman (in a wheelchair) are caught “shoplifting” and taken to a police station, where the narrator, to impress Ms. Nigeria, accuses an officer of racism after the officer makes several derogatory statements to her. After Ms. Nigeria’s father arrives, the three are released and Ms. Nigeria takes the narrator by the hand, perhaps a clue that everything has turned out well for the main character.

While the “outcast boy looking for a secret love’s affection” is well-traveled territory, this story is a fresh take on the subject matter. This could be a result of the complexities involved within the plot itself. But the driving forces behind the story’s success are the casual, conversational language and the use of quick and subtle humor, which save the story from being too melodramatic.

*About As Fast As This Car Will Go* by Shaun Vestal is a close first-person story in a domestic setting. Zach, a boy about to finish high school, reunites with his father, Reed, who has just been released from prison. Before long, however, Reed returns to a life of alcohol-induced crime and Zach, desperate for attention, resorts to being his father’s right-hand man, learning the skills of thievery. The story ends with the two driving a tan-suited hitchhiker to a deserted country road where they intend to rob him, with Reed instructing his son to “hold the gun like you mean it.”

The story pulls tightly at the reader’s heartstrings. It seems as if Zach had a chance to make something of himself, but the use of intimate dialogue and an abundance of sensory images, help to confirm that there isn’t much hope for the boy as long as his father is still in the picture. Each sharp, well-crafted sentence is another hint that it might be too late for Zach.

Rating: 6; McSweeney’s is an impressive publication. While all the contributors are published, some much more than others, the journal seems to be dedicated to finding and exposing emerging writers, a few of whom are current

MFA students. Though the competition is growing, emerging writers would find publication within this journal to be quite rewarding.