

Ballyhoo Stories

Reviewer: Jeffrey Brennan

Editors: Joshua Mandelbaum and Suzanne Pettypiece

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Web Address: www.ballyhoostories.com

What They Publish: Fiction, Creative Nonfiction and Comics

Submission Guidelines: 7,000 words or fewer in standard formatting. Mail submissions to 18 Willoughby Ave, #3, Brooklyn, New York, 11205 (no SASE required). Submissions must, directly or abstractly, pertain to the themes of the upcoming issue.

Description of Publication: Biannual literary magazine with a fairly inexpensive subscription. Cover art is contrasty, phosphorescent and well done. Contributors range from award winning, MFA-holding professors to recent grads getting their first story published.

Percentage of Prose Per Issue / Amount of Prose Published Annually: 95% with the new addition of comic publications / 20 Stories per year

Prose Reviews:

The Organ by Kyla Wetherell is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. The narrative is an objective, close third-person about an old man's last twenty-five minutes before leaving his house to join his wife in a nursing home. While taking occasional, fleeting notice of his granddaughter (who is carefully, yet thoughtlessly boxing up his belongings for a yard sale), he spends his last moments playing his electric organ and reminiscing about his wife and mother, who secretly shared a passion for music. When his time is up, he turns off the organ and leaves quietly.

The physical sensation of music was strong; Wetherell's choice of verbs created a moving, resonating feel of music. I was able to hear and feel it. I think the story is about the callous manner in which the world passes over us. We live, experiencing music, making music, but ultimately our songs are forgotten or bartered away in a yard sale. It was sad, but also inspiring to see this old guy play one last song, a song not written in his music book, before getting ushered out and set to pasture.

Resonance by Jennifer Haley is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. Written in the subjective first-person, it is a story about a woman during a MRI scan. The narrator listens to the rhythms and beats of the MRI's magnets, connecting them to scenes from her life, while a detached technician conducts the tests. Throughout, random doctors and nurses happen through the room and share muted observations with the technician. The narrator is left guessing at their discussions, hoping it is not something wrong in her tests. The story ends with the sounds of the final test sequence, which the narrator likens to a funeral dirge.

While not deeply profound, I think *Resonance* worked as a first hand experience. It captured the thoughts and feelings of a person doing everything, mentally possible, to avoid the fear of a possible brain tumor. From a technical standpoint, Haley is effective in lumping consonants and employing various punctuation and italics for emphasis and rhythm to create the MRI's "music."

Rating: 7. Ballyhoo has proven itself to me as serious, yet unpretentious, in what it chooses to publish. Credentials are not a deciding factor in who gets in. Given that each issue has a specific theme on which they want writers to

focus, I think anyone who reads the magazine can have a good shot at seeing their work published. While it doesn't contain the best literature I have ever read, the stories are sensitive, funny and poignant. I would be happy to be able to claim Ballyhoo on my resume.