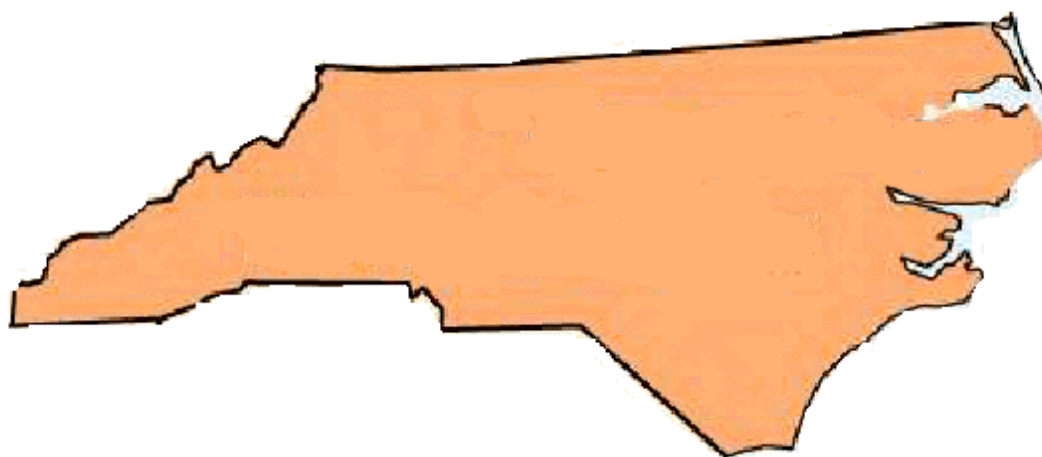


# The Greensboro Review



A Report by Santiago Martinez

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## Fact Sheet

**Magazine:** The Greensboro Review

**Founded:** 1966

**Editor:** Jim Clark

**Web Address:** [www.greensbororeview.org/](http://www.greensbororeview.org/)

**Address:** The Greensboro Review  
MFA Writing Program  
3302 HHRA Building  
UNC Greensboro  
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170

**E-mail Address:** ANSeay@uncg.edu

**Submission Guidelines:** No previously published work accepted. Manuscripts up to 7,500 words are accepted along with an SASE to the above address. To qualify for the Spring issue, manuscript must be postmarked September 15<sup>th</sup>, postmarked February 15<sup>th</sup> to qualify for the Fall issue.

**Simultaneous Submissions:** No

**Format:** Print (some selected stories may be posted online)

**Reading Period:** Year-round

**Frequency:** Biannual

**What They Publish:** Fiction and poetry

**Reporting Time:** 3 months

**Circulation:** 800

**Emerging authors in each issue:** 10%

**CLMP Member:** Yes

### Comparison of Issues

	<b>Issue 82</b>	<b>Issue 83</b>	<b>Issue 84</b>
Prose : Poetry	7 : 11	7 : 13	8 : 13
POV, 1 <sup>st</sup> : 2 <sup>nd</sup> : 3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 : 3 : 0	3 : 4 : 0	4 : 4 : 0
Writers, M : F	6 : 1	4 : 3	4 : 4
Experienced : Emerging	6 : 1	3 : 4	6 : 2

From the table above, you can support their claim that they will choose the best fiction regardless of credentials. The points-of-view, as well as male and female voices, are nicely mixed. Their issues do tend to lean toward experienced writers, but the ratio in issue 83 supports the fact that they are open to writers with a shorter list of published work. There is usually one writer per issue being published for the first time.

## **Why I Chose Greensboro Review**

I came across this magazine while browsing through newpages.com and skimming through its CLMP profile. Two things caught my eye. From the Web site, their claim as "honoring the finest writing by both established and emerging talent" informed me that it would include an array of voices. Secondly, its editorial focus in the CLMP book is, "We want to see the best writing, regardless of theme, subject, or style."

A literary publication with a nice balance of openness to fresh ideas and emerging writers while simultaneously keeping standards high and an objective focus on quality writing appeals to me. After reading the issues, I could see a clear standard for the writing which offers contrasting styles and voices.

## Prose Reviews

### Issue 82

*Dan Buck* by Don Waters is first person story in a domestic setting. Dan is an egotistic runner who prides himself on his routine, his looks, to pretty much everything. His nemesis, a Czech named Vitus Hajek is his greatest challenge, trailing somewhere behind in the race. He makes his way through grueling heat, describing various difficulties such as slicing a foot blister with a razor blade and keeping himself busy with the plot of *Crime and Punishment* playing out in his head. At the end of the race, he sees Vitus appear which leads to a verbal spat. We find out that Dan and Vitus are in a relationship, and are arguing about commitment.

Don Water's attention to detail is tremendous. Everything is specific: the temperature, the chafing areas, the dehydration. All of his accounts are given with such detail and through such an unforgiving, narcissistic voice that you just want to smash him over the head and turn away in disgust. But when that twist comes in at the end, it leaves you reeling, and ultimately and strangely enough, feeling some connection with him.

*Menthol and Smoke* by Al Sim is a third-person story set in an exotic setting near the Jitomate mountains. Chuy is woken at 2 am by a call from his irresponsible sister, Frescura, saying she has been arrested. This behavior is beginning to get old to him. He trudges out to find that she was arrested for having sex in the back of a pickup truck, then being hostile with the officer. They bicker about her smoking and her reasons for getting arrested up until they get to her house, where her son, Tomas, greets them. Frescura demands that Tomas take her to retrieve her car.

The characters were developed nicely through dialogue. Chuy's tone was established early on with the phone call, but the conflict between them doesn't intensify until she whips out the cigarette. Chuy asks if she is a slut or a whore, to which she responds, "I'm a slut, Chuy. Happy with that?" Through this you get the roles they play, the unhappy but patriarchal tone of Chuy, and the young, reckless teenage role his sister plays.

### Issue 83

*The Bicycle* by Anne Corbitt is a plainspoken, third-person story in a domestic setting. R.J. and his wife, Donna, often disagree on how to connect with their son, Jason. R.J. claims to have the perfect tool to reach out to his son: a bicycle frame from a Macon flea market which he refurbishes to near-perfection. Jason, however, is more concerned about his newly acquired taste for the violin. While snooping, Jason finds the good-as-new two-wheeler in the shed and takes it out for a test drive, only to be confronted by a pack of bullies. After doing some damage to the bike, Jason returns the heap back home in secrecy. When confronted, Jason does the only thing he's ever done with his father, denied it and avoided the issue.

While the plotline borders on cliché, it becomes secondary when the underlying relationship issues are inspected. Midway through the story, the point of view switches from R.J.'s to Jason's, thus capturing both the internal and external emotional struggles of the father-son bond. Corbitt really knows how to play with the characters' gestures, keeping the reader aware of the activity amidst the dialogue and exposition. At the end, when

Jason lies and R.J. tells him "I didn't teach you to be a liar," you can feel the emotional separation.

*Clutter* by Thomas Derr is a plainspoken, third-person story in a domestic setting. Bracewell decides to purchase a slew of objects (i.e. a baker's rack and a Queen Anne's chair) that make him nostalgic of "moods" he had once experienced. These moods include, as he puts it, "summers and winters gone by, neighborhoods and houses where he had lived, loved ones estranged or deceased..." He gets a call from Eileen, his ex, about a deer which had died and was rotting on her lawn. They exchange merely casual dialogue while Bracewell looks at his old furniture and paint jobs on the walls they once did together. After Eileen breaks it to him that she is moving and they need to divvy up their things, the only thing left to do is fight away the vultures and haul away the corpse.

This could have been an ordinary relationship story but Bracewell's shopping spree and the deer's dead body throw in quirks to layer the emotions. The story bounces back and forth between optimism and pessimism, hope and death, contrasting feelings which dominate the world where Bracewell has found himself. The interactions are very human, laced with both longing and contempt that occur in failed relationships.

## Issue 84

*Lyon, Lyon* by Carol K. Howell is a third-person story in a domestic setting. Professor Lionel Smyth's wife finds him one day hanging half out of the window. Doctors diagnose him as having some sort of clot blocking blood flow to the brain. The clot blocks only one side of the brain, which is why he had half his bathrobe on, one slipper on, one arm and one leg out of the window, etc. When Luba, one of the servants, is supposed to be watching him on a walk, he wanders off toward a fraternity house where he gives a brief dissertation to the freshmen's delight. After thinking he was presenting a stimulating lecture on poetry, he suddenly realizes he's back in the disheveled state. In the end, he once again goes to the window but this time, he makes it to the roof and jumps.

First, I must say that the intro got me hooked. The image of this man flailing out of the window as his bathrobe flapped in the air, screaming as his wife pulls him in, is enough action, conflict, and character to get any reader interested. The close third person point of view works well. Just as his mind is in and out of a state of awareness, we perceive things through his perspective and pull back out to a distant vantage point, detached from his emotions. His random lectures, such as the one on *O Rose, Thou Art Sick* typify the loneliness of Lionel's complex illness.

*To Keep Ahead of the Spring* by Thomas Gough is a first-person story in a domestic setting. Clyde, a newspaper columnist, is struggling with raising his kids, Dill and Ra, while being separated from his wife, Sufie. He must deal with the awkward transition from marriage to divorce while maintaining a good relationship with his children and peers. All around him, his old mother, his editor, a young couple he writes an article about, are all separating. He becomes rattled and quarantines himself in his study to work on his love manifesto, of sorts. When he turns in the article, which displays his true, bitter emotions about relationships rather than objective advice, his boss rejects it. He's left wondering why people still try to be in love at all.

The voices of the children are what cement the idea of crumbling love and act as a medium to convey

Clyde's lonely rationale. Whether through genuine-sounding, inquisitive dialogue (such hot topics as bucket swings and penguins at the North Pole) or through touching gestures, such as grasping onto Clyde's mother as she leaves the house in hopes of newfound love, we further our understanding of Clyde's character. In the end, we see that it is all the characters—his mother, his soon-to-be ex-wife, his boss, the couple in the article, and especially, his children—who helped to shape Clyde's possibly misguided yet honest outlook on love.

## Interview with Jamey Bradbury, MFA student and Fiction Editor at UNCG

**Santiago Martinez:** What drew you in to both literature and the publishing world? What role do you play at GR?

**Jamey Bradbury:** Each year two students are chosen to serve as Fiction Editors for the GR. This year, Glenn Lester and I worked as co-editors. I'm a life-long reader, so my interest in literature feels almost like my eyesight, or my ability to whistle; I was just born with it, and beyond that, it's kind of hard to explain. Because I love reading and writing, and because I'm interested in the phases writing goes through to become the best writing it can be, I wanted to work on the GR to get a better idea of what the publishing process entails, and whether it's the right sort of field for me. Also, I'm a grammar freak, and I actually love putting in a comma just to take it out again.

**SM:** GR is a prestigious magazine run by the MFA students. What kind of direct participation do all of you have in the story submission/acceptance process?

**JB:** Our faculty adviser and editor of the GR, Jim Clark, relies on the student editors to go read and assess every single submission we get--up to 1000 per semester. The way the process works for Glenn and me is: We each read half the submissions, ranking each one from 1 to 6, 1 being a near-perfect story, 6 being pretty darn bad. We share the 1s, 2s, and 3s with each other, passing them back and forth and discussing them. We also hand the stories we like best over to Jim, so he can get an idea of what we're finding. Later in the process, we come up with a top 50, and then a top 20, then, through discussion and lots of reading and re-reading, we choose the 7 or 8 stories we'd like to publish. We contact the authors, hoping and praying that they haven't said yes to another journal already, then, once we know we've got the stories for sure, Glenn and I work closely with those authors to get their stories polished and error-free. Jim Clark, of course, has the final say-so in all matters of acceptance, editorial changes, etc.

**SM:** The GR has featured many talented, diverse writers such as Joyce Carol Oates, George Singleton, and Viet Dinh. Yet it also claims to be a supporter of emerging writers. What kind of story qualities would emerging writers have to have to get serious attention?

**JB:** Above all else, anyone who submits to the GR, whether they're well-known names, or young, unpublished writers just starting out, needs to send us their very best work, and needs to display professionalism. Anyone who looks at an issue or two of the GR will know that we publish a variety of "kinds" of stories, but we don't often publish genre fiction. It's important for folks submitting to the journal to pay attention to our guidelines and tastes. But since those tastes do change over time, and depending on the editors, the best bet is to send work that is polished and warrants being read by an audience.

**SM:** How are the stories chosen? What's the process a story goes through during the final submission phase, right up to it getting the okay to be sent to the masses?

**JB:** Once we've accepted 7 or 8 stories and gotten the okay from the authors to publish, Glenn and I divide the stories in half and we each become sort of the primary editor for those stories. On the first couple reads of each of

these stories, we compose query letters that address any large questions or issues we might have; these can be as large as, "What's the motivation for X to do what he does on page 13?" to something as tiny as, "According to Google, Tony La Russa is the manager of the Cardinals baseball team, so he shouldn't be the pinch-hitter on page 12; he should be putting someone else in as the pinch-hitter. We suggest..." etc. Once the author gets back to us and addresses any questions or suggestions in our query letter, we make those changes, then Allison Seay makes first page proofs. These are proofread at least three times; second page proofs are proofread at least twice. The GR has been known as one of the most error-free journals in print, and there's a reason. We send authors the final proofs, then we proofread a few more times, and then Jim proofreads the entire journal right before it goes to print.

**SM:** Having read multiple stories of the most recent issues, the GR seems to have a certain style about it but doesn't seem restricted to any genre. In writing and submitting to a literary magazine, how much should the author consider the magazine's style and recurring themes?

**JB:** I'd advise a writer to pay attention to the themes we keep coming back to, but it's also refreshing to see something we feel like we've never seen before. Authors ought to keep the journal's style in the back of their minds as they decide what to send us, but first and foremost, they should send us the stories they feel proud of--the ones they feel passionate about. When a story is well-written, and when the writer feels deeply about his characters and the things they experience, that comes through to us as readers.

**SM:** Are there any story topics that you'd almost automatically turn down?

**JB:** As far as topics go, I think the thing we automatically turn down is anything cliché. Then again, if someone can manage to turn a cliché on its head, that might get our attention. I've probably read a dozen first-sexual-encounter stories this semester and flung each one in the 6 pile, but we're publishing a first-sexual-encounter type story that made my jaw drop. So, you never know.

**SM:** What are some common mistakes submitting writers make?

**JB:** The biggest no-no for submitting writers is to just ignore our guidelines. People who send us book-length manuscripts when we ask for 7,500 words or less; people who send 10 stories when we ask for only one at a time; people who send personal essays when we only publish fiction and poetry--these are the people who make us insane as readers, and these are the manuscripts that don't even get read.

**SM:** How is the economy affecting GR? How do you see it affecting the market as we move on?

**JB:** The economy is definitely hard on journals like the GR, and I know that Jim spends a lot of time in meetings fighting for the journal to continue to exist in its current form and arguing with the folks who think it ought to be shrunk down by several pages, or ought to be just an online journal, with no print version. We've definitely felt the funding squeeze this year, especially. One of the most significant impacts I've seen on the GR is publishing stories longer than 20 or 22 pages--we just can't do it, often. Last semester, we had a great story we really wanted to publish, but it was just too long. Fortunately, though, we were able to work with the author to get it down to about

18 pages. That's one thing for submitters to consider, though--stories over 20 pages or so are really going to have to blow our minds, because we just don't have the room or funds to publish 7 or 8 20-page stories.

**SM:** Given the economic squeeze, has The GR thought about coming out with strictly online material?

**JB:** As for having online content in addition to the print version, or having supplemental online material, I think the biggest thing standing in the way there is probably manpower. The staff as it is now is already quite swamped with putting out the journal and running the Creative Writing program.

**SM:** Feedback to submitting writers varies from magazine to magazine. How close is the relationship between editors and writers for those who do and do not make it into the magazine?

**JB:** Some writers will get a sort of form letter that thanks them for what they've sent to us and explains that their submission made our top fifty list, but that in the end, we couldn't publish it. However, there are always a few stories that we feel very strongly about--the stories that make it onto the top twenty list, but don't make it into the journal. For these letters, Glenn and I write very personal responses that tell the author what we liked about the story, and then give suggestions for areas the author might look at in the story as he or she revises, things to think about or ideas for where the weaknesses in the story might lie.

**SM:** As technology influences the way in which we take in our literature and reading habits change in America, how important is the literary magazine?

**JB:** As a die-hard reader of magazines and books, in those forms, I've got to say that I couldn't live without the bound product in my hands. Things like the Kindle and other electronic readers are great for folks who can consume their literature that way, and I feel like there are literary magazines out there that will definitely find ways to be compatible with electronic readers, ones who have already embraced the internet in clever and innovative ways, too. But I need to feel the covers in my hands, be able to turn the pages. As far as the litmag's place in the world of literature, though, I feel that it is indispensable. Where else can young (or older) unpublished writers make the first foray into publishing? Literary magazines are the places where writers can get their first break--where authors who aren't yet known can grab the attention of some editor who will then rally for that author. Read any how-to book about breaking into the publishing world, and nine times out of ten the advice is this: Publish in "little" magazines so you'll have a list of publications you can show to an agent or publisher when you're trying to get your book published. In addition, in a world where even editors at large publishing houses are pressed for time and can't always do the kind of deep, close work they'd like to do with an author, the editors of literary magazines are often known for taking a meticulous look at a story and working closely with its author to make it the best possible writing it can be.