

Ploughshares

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Ploughshares Fact Sheet

Magazine: Ploughshares – Print Journal

Web Address: <http://www.pshares.org>

Address: Ploughshares, Emerson College, 120 Boylston St. Boston, MA 02116

E-mail Address: pshares@emerson.edu

Founder and Current Editor: DeWitt Henry and Peter O'Malley

Frequency: Tri-quarterly, published in April, August, and December.

What They Publish: Short stories, personal essays, memoirs, and poetry. Novel excerpts acceptable if self-contained.

Submission Guidelines: Unsolicited manuscripts accepted during reading period. Mail with business-sized SASE one prose piece or one to three poems, unless submitting electronically, and must be addressed to corresponding editor. Poems must be individually typed, single or double-spaced on one side. Prose should not exceed thirty pages. Previously published work not accepted. Simultaneous submissions acceptable.

Reading Periods: August 1-March 31

Contributor Payment: \$25 per printed page; minimum \$50 and maximum \$250.

Cost: \$24 for one year (three issues), \$46 for two years (six issues), \$27 for institutions. Add \$12 per year for international subscriptions.

Circulation: 3,600 paid, 6,000 total. Average print run: 7,500.

Why I chose *Ploughshares*

Sitting in the Borders café one afternoon, I decided to browse a section of independent literary magazines, for play and not for work, and in doing so stumbled upon a few that caught my eye—not as in their covers with flashy artwork or anything, but I had flipped through the pages and saw that some published a high concentration of fiction and some poetry, and one that hooked me almost instantly was Emerson University's *Ploughshares*.

Disregarding the caliber of writing that appears in *Ploughshares*, I was immediately attracted to the length and amount of fiction. I picked up the most recent issue, Vol. 33 Nos. 2 & 3, released in fall of 2007. I saw that not only was this issue a fiction issue guest edited by Andrea Barrett, but also that the pieces were lengthy. This caught my eye, as I write long short stories. I checked the submission guidelines and saw that nothing over *thirty* pages was acceptable—none of that 5,000 word maximum most other journals are requiring. This was certainly my kind of journal.

With the first story, I was hooked and wanting more. *Ploughshares* publishes more fiction—and *good* fiction, at that—than any other journal I have come across to date. The authors are not always prominent, nor have I heard of the majority of them, but their stories are captivating and moving. This is a journal emerging writers can aspire to.

Comparison of Issues Over Time

Ploughshares is a literary journal that is exclusively guest-edited. Though it regularly publishes literary fiction and nonfiction, some of its issues contain both prose and poetry. I am under the impression that the managing editor Robert Arnold makes a decision about what to publish in an upcoming issue, and informs the future guest editor of the contents of the issue. In browsing Columbia's collection of *Ploughshares* issues at the library, I have come to find that the majority of issues published are fiction issues, with fiction/poetry issues appearing sporadically.

Within the fiction issues, a large amount of the stories published are 15 to 20 pages in length and are often told in the first person point-of-view; the stories seem to possess unique voices, conveyed most effectively through first-person storytelling. The third-person POV stories are just as interesting, but less prominent. I have, however, come across third-person stories that, by far, surpassed the stories told in first-person, and even in past issues have encountered flash fiction pieces that stuck with me after reading them.

With the issues that are *not* fiction issues, the magazine usually has the subtitle “Stories and poems edited by” followed by the name of the guest editor. The poetry is dispersed throughout the magazine, and not as prominent as the fiction, but the magazine is, after all, primarily a fiction magazine—I would expect the fiction to overshadow the poetry in any issue.

Story Reviews

Vol. 33 Nos. 2 & 3 – Fall 2007

Reunion by Karen E. Bender is a third-person, heart-wrenching tale set in a domestic environment. The story involves a woman named Anna Green and her attendance at a high school reunion that turns violent when one of the attendees turns the reunion into a situation akin to a high school shooting. Anna is panicked and scared, and finds solace only in the eyes and words of her high school sweetheart, Warren Vance, even though she is already married with a child.

The story is told in pieces and scenes, shifting back and forth between Anna's internal thought and feeling and the events actually taking place before, during, and after the shooting. The reader quickly connects with Anna as a character, and will find it extremely easy to sympathize or empathize with her even after the story is finished.

Republican by Bret Anthony Johnston is a first-person short story that takes place in a domestic setting. The story follows the main character, Julian, through his adventure of getting a new job at a shady Mexican restaurant called La Cocina, falling for one of his coworkers, and dealing with the constant tears of his father, who was left by his mother two years prior for a “better” man.

Republican, though not a coming-of-age story, will remind the reader of the trenches of adolescence and the complexities of parent-teenager relationships as well as newly blooming romantic adolescent relationships. Though the premise of the story is sad, the reader will be left with a warmed heart at the end of the story and feeling more than an inkling of hope—if not for every character, than at least for a few of them.

Vol. 31 Nos. 1 & 2 – Fall 2006

Semana Santa by Michael Carroll is a brief, first-person story about an American man who travels to Spain and uses his rail pass to visit numerous cities without paying train fare and meeting people along the way.

The story requires more than one, and perhaps more than two reads in order to come close to understanding the message behind the author's words. Carroll mentions a girl named Ginny, who the reader may think to be a lover, but then the protagonist mentions more than once a display of "affection" for another man, while describing it as an average occurrence in Spanish culture. The piece is mysterious and requires the reader's strict attention for comprehension, but the reader will surely be left satisfied at the end.

Maps by Andrea Avery is a first-person story that takes place in Dickson, a city at the northern edge of the Soviet Union. The protagonist speaks through inner monologue about Dickson being so far from her home in the United States, but sounding like a place that should be near her home rather than in Russia.

This short piece will have the reader glancing over it multiple times to get a concrete handle on the voice of the author and the story being told. Some readers may even be able to relate to the protagonist's feeling of "homelessness" and further connect with the story through sheer empathy. The piece is simple and enjoyable, and demands to be read in more than one sitting.

Vol. 29 Nos. 1 & 2 – Fall/Winter 2005

The Sweetness of Her Name by Jean McGarry is a charming, third-person story told in a domestic setting. In the story, Lina Wrentham and her husband, Buddy, struggle to find a name for their child, settling on Katherine, though she will always go by Carolina, after her mother.

This piece, semi-short for *Ploughshares*, is wonderfully told through McGarry's prose. The third-person authoritative voice tells the story from beginning to end, managing here and there to get inside of the characters' heads and souls yet still maintaining a distance that provides a few of the events that is unobstructed. Any reader of *Ploughshares* will surely agree that this is a piece that belongs in such a journal.

Secret by Maxine Swann is a first-person narrative that takes place in a domestic setting. The narrator recounts a summer that she and her sister Lila played with friends in the woods, battled for territory, and took turns falling in love.

The story has a voice of truth to it that will make the reader believe that what happened in the story actually happened to its author. There is a simple, clear voice and the characters are easily established and more easily connects with the reader, and it is because of this that it is to be enjoyed as typical, cream-of-the-crop, *Ploughshares* material.

Interview with Laura van den Berg

You publish many different mediums. Are there any types of work that you, yourself are partial to? For instance, fiction over creative nonfiction or translation over essay.

Each issue is shaped in part by our guest editors, who bring their own tastes and ideas about literature to the table. The staff editors at *Ploughshares*, more than anything, seek work that is distinctive and accomplished. We tend to publish less non-fiction than fiction and poetry, though forthcoming issues will include more non-fiction than past issues, and we typically don't print scholarly essays or unsolicited book reviews.

Since its inception in 1970, *Ploughshares* has continued to publish high quality work of both established and emerging writers. How does the publishing of "emerging" writers affect the overall reputation of the magazine, if at all?

Publishing emerging writers is an important objective at *Ploughshares*. The act of discovering a gifted writer early in their career and offering the exposure publication in *Ploughshares* provides is a hugely rewarding experience for the staff and guest editors alike. If you look at the contributor's bios, you'll typically see a mix between emerging, mid-career, and very established writers.

About how many unsolicited manuscripts do you receive on a regular basis?

We receive thousands of submission both via snail mail and through our online submissions manager. We absolutely do read every submission (unless the submission is in violation of our guidelines, in which case it would be returned), thanks largely to the group of dedicated volunteer readers that work for *Ploughshares*. We aim to reply to each submission within five months.

Do you get much flash fiction?

We don't seem to run as much flash fiction as some magazines, who make a point of including flash fiction in each issue, but we have definitely published short shorts and remain open to all work that is of true excellence.

It is mentioned in the submission guidelines that you like humor, so would you consider *Ploughshares* to be a genre magazine? And if not, what other work do you strive to publish in each issue?

No, we wouldn't consider *Ploughshares* a genre magazine. We are interested in all kinds of writing and there is often an aesthetic range from issue to issue, thanks to the different sensibilities and contributions of our guest editors. But again, the editors here are most interested in work that is of the highest quality, as opposed to work that fulfills a certain style or genre.