



# Quick FICTION

A Literary Magazine Report by Greg Frohbieter

May 2009

Table of Contents

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Fact Sheet                       | 3  |
| Why I Chose <i>Quick Fiction</i> | 4  |
| Comparison of Issues             | 5  |
| Story Reviews                    | 7  |
| Interview                        | 14 |

Fact Sheet

**Magazine:** Quick Fiction

**Web Address:** <http://www.quickfiction.org>

**Address:** *Quick Fiction*

P.O. Box 4445

Salem, MA 01970

**Email Address:** [staff@quickfiction.org](mailto:staff@quickfiction.org)

**Founded:** 2001

**Co-Founder, Editor-in-Chief:** Jennifer Pieroni

**Co-Founder, Publisher:** Adam Pieroni

**Frequency:** Biannual

**What They Publish:** Fiction and prose poetry, 500 words or fewer

**Submission Guidelines:** Create an online author account on their Web site complete with an author biography and contact information, and submit a story using their online submission form.

One story per document submitted. Up to three stories can be under consideration in a sixth month period. Upon publication *Quick Fiction* obtains First North American Serial and/or Electronic Rights for 120 days after publication. If work has been previously published specify title, volume, issue, and/or date of the publication or Web site where it originally appeared.

**Average Unsolicited Submissions per Issue:** 1,000+

**Percentage Unsolicited Submissions Published per Issue:** 2-3%

**Reading Period:** Year-round

**Reporting Time:** 3-6 months





**Contributor Payment:** Two copies of published issue

**Cost:** Single Issue - \$8.00, One Year Subscription (2 Issues) - \$13.50, Two Year Subscription (4 Issues) - \$24.00, Lifetime - \$150.00

Why I Chose *Quick Fiction*

I found *Quick Fiction* sitting among the hoard of other literary magazines at Quimby's, and it jumped out at me. The interesting cover art and small, square format of the book reminded me of all the children's books my mom used to read me when I was a little kid. That memory was more than enough to make me buy the magazine, and when I finally opened it up at home I wasn't let down with the style and strength of the stories inside. They're all extremely short, but most of them contain that great kernel of story in them that good shorts have to have to make them complete and effective stories.

Comparison of Issues

|  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of Stories                                      | 25  | 26  | 29   | 25  |
| Authors: M/F   | 15:10   | 14:12   | 17:12  | 16:9  |
| POV: 1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup> | 12:2:11   | 16:0:10   | 19:1:9   | 15:0:11   |
| Author Experience: Established/Emerging                | 18:7  | 16:10   | 21:8   | 19:6  |

In my study of these four issues of *Quick Fiction* I noticed a few things. It is evident that the magazine publishes more first person point of view stories than third or second person point of view stories. I think this has a lot to do with the form of the stories in *Quick Fiction*. Flash fiction requires such a small word count for stories to develop and work in that the stronger authorial voice of first person lends credibility to a story sooner. I also noticed that there were always more men publishing stories in the magazine than women. I think this is more representative of the writing world as a whole than some sort of bias the magazine could have, especially since the magazine is edited by a woman.

The stats of nearly every literary magazine that has been profiled for the publishing lab's Web site show this trend too, and it leads me to believe that there might just be more men submitting to literary magazines than women. The magazine also shows that they're willing to publish an author more based on the merit of their story than the credentials they have because each issue has a nice number of emerging authors. I think part of this also has a lot to do with the

fact that all *Quick Fiction* publishes is flash fiction, and this form of writing has been embraced by emerging writers who are cutting their teeth in the graduate and undergraduate programs writing short stories. My basis for an emerging writer in these stats is someone who has been published twice or less in smaller publications and is possibly still in school.

## Story Reviews

**Issue 11, Spring 2007**

*Balloon Girl* by Angela Jane Fountas is a fantasy story written in a rhythmic, almost poetic type of prose. A balloon girl floats above the land bouncing up and down with crimson birds with yellow beaks who nest upon her head. She is spotted one day by a prince who wonders about her and has her summoned to his castle. She will not answer his questions. When the prince becomes king he tricks her into coming back by making the birds all nest on her at once. He locks her in a room and the birds peck at her releasing her of her air. He opens the door again to find her alive but severely unhappy.

This story is a great piece of flash fiction. The setting of this magical land can be gleaned through the great descriptions of the main character because she's a girl made from a balloon we gather that this must be a fantastical land. People don't just float around with birds on their head in the everyday here and now. It's an enjoyable, fun, and short read.

*First in Line* by Mary Beth Caschetta is a domestic story written in a subjective third person point of view. Ms. LeChance is a five-year-old girl. Ms. LeChance's first name is Mary and she has a dead twin brother named Gerry who died of asphyxiation at birth. She doesn't use her first name because it rhymes with her dead brother Gerry's and prefers to be called Ms. Her mother has good days and bad days. On good days young Ms. LeChance goes to school, and things are nearly normal. On bad days she doesn't go to school, and her mother is inattentive to her. All the townsfolk talk about is how sad her life is, and the story ends with Ms. LeChance realizing the state of her life and not turning and waving to her mom as she meets the school bus.

The story is put together in an intriguing way. A description of a good day is given, and a description of what happens on a bad day is given. I had to read the story a couple of times before I realized how sad Ms. LeChance's life must be as a five-year-old girl. The most powerful moment of story comes at the end when Ms. LeChance realizes just how bad her life and her mother actually are. The reader can gather that something has changed in her through the fact that she doesn't turn and wave to her mother when the school bus takes her to school.

**Issue 12, Fall 2007**

*Deadline* by Kim Chinquee is a stream-of-consciousness story in a realistic setting told in third person. A woman is at home cooking steaks for her husband who is off

working. The woman begins to think about how tomorrow she's going in for treatment for a possibly cancerous lump. She thinks of hospital beds and her father who might have died of cancer, and the trip she's always wanted to take to Austria. She continues her daily routine even if she has cancer.

It's a very effective story even at barely a hundred words. The domestic, traditional home-life setting is given through the narrator's preparation of dinner and the obedient way she acts towards her husband. The mention of the thoughts of her father and a hospital bed shows that the narrator has some history with cancer and death in her past that fleshes out the story. Also, the mention of her determination to take a trip to Austria, show the fight she has inside of her to beat whatever comes her way.

### **Issue 13, Spring 2008**

*The Things You Won't Be Doing This Year* by Jeff Landon is a plainspoken story in a realistic setting set in third person. A man thinks of what he won't be doing now that his ex-girlfriend has packed her things and moved away to Ohio. The absence of this relationship has turned him into a fat, drunken slob living with a dog who can't fill any of the void left behind by her leaving him.

I enjoyed this story a lot because it is a continuous string of strong images one right after the other, yet they all band together to tell a sad story. My favorite image is the one at the end of the story because it encapsulates everything that the relationship was for the man which explains how broken he is now that he's lost all that. The author writes: "And don't think about that morning after that party, when the light seemed to settle exactly over the two of you like a quilt. Don't think about her hair in that light, and that one moment when you could tell by the way she looked at you that just this once you looked exactly like the person you had always wanted to be." That has all gone now because she has left him.

*Hitler's Daughter* by Jack Anderson is a plainspoken story within a story. A man is having a few drinks with his uncle when he is unexpectedly told a story about an affair his uncle had with Hitler's illegitimate daughter. The uncle is at first intrigued to be having an affair with someone who was that close to such evil then comes to doubt whether she actually is Hitler's daughter. In the end, he quit the affair because he couldn't get over whether or not she was just messing with him or if she actually was Hitler's daughter.

My favorite thing about the story is the fact that it is a story within a story in a flash fiction format. I thought that something like that was impossible to pull off having such a small word count to work with, but the author does it so simply with the opening line: “My uncle told me this one night. Quite unexpectedly. It was late. We’d had a few drinks. Then, suddenly, he said: ‘I once had an affair with Hitler’s daughter.’”

### **Issue 14, Fall 2008**

*The Shipbuilder* by Michael Meyerhofer is a plainspoken story in a realistic setting written in third person. The narrator’s father rudely crafted a boat of blue velvet glued to a board. The narrator relates the boat to his father’s hard life as an ex-con who worked himself to the brink of exhaustion for his family so they could have heat in the winter and listened to their seemingly pointless childhood stories about schoolyard bullies when he probably could have been sleeping. It ends with the father showing his children his “masterpiece” of a boat, and them being unable to see its importance to him.

This story is another one of those strangely poignant pieces of flash that populate nearly every page of *Quick Fiction*. It’s amazing how the author makes us feel like we know this man and his sons because he writes us a story anyone with parents can relate to. Everyone who has had a good father hasn’t appreciated him and all he does for his family, until long after they should have, and that is the main point of this story. My dad has tried to make me appreciate things he’s done before, and I’ve blown them off just like the narrator and his sibling do. The emotion of a good story like this really hits home.

*The Other Kind* by Thomas Cooper is a plainspoken story in a realistic setting told in third person. Hairs keep appearing in a man’s apartment in the oddest of places. The hairs are from a girl that is no longer in the man’s life. There are two types of hairs the man finds. One long and auburn kind reminds him of all the good parts of the relationship, and the other short, black, and kinky kind reminds him of all the bad parts of the relationship. The ending is left fuzzy because the reader only knows that the narrator never wants to see that other kind of hair again.

I enjoyed the open-ended qualities of the story. The start of the story made me wonder why the man kept on finding and finding these hairs pretty much every time he cleaned his place, and the ending had me wondering why exactly the man never wanted to see those short, black,

and kinky hairs again. There're many answers to that question, and the author lets the readers believe whatever they want to by not giving any more information than he does. I know a lot of readers might be angry not having the answers, but I think an important thing to do is to keep a reader wanting more. The author definitely succeeded in that department.

Interview

The following is an interview I conducted with Jennifer Pieroni (JP), the co-founder and editor-in-chief of *Quick Fiction*.

**Q:** What does editing Quick Fiction entail on a daily basis?

**JP:** Lots of reading! Sometimes it's daily, but usually it's just when I have the time.

**Q:** As editor, what is it about the writing you read that you enjoy and don't enjoy?

**JP:** Each piece and every issue is different. I tend to like highly condensed poetic work. My husband (the publisher) is always looking for humorous work. But work that is strictly poetic or just silly fluff usually doesn't get selected. Every editor or reader brings their own sensibility to the task. Overall, the work needs to have a narrative line of some sort, something based on human experience that holds the thing together.

**Q:** What's the best part about editing a literary magazine? What's the worst part?

**JP:** We're not affiliated with a university and both of our day jobs are unrelated to literature and publishing, so the journal is what keeps us connected with that community. There aren't many things worth complaining about. This is sort of a hobby job; we chose it because we enjoy it.

**Q:** How much work do you do with writers on their submissions to Quick Fiction?

**JP:** It depends on the work we receive. In some cases we receive 25-30 stories that we want to publish "as is." Other times we don't and we're in a position where we want to work with a writer on specific aspects of a piece before we will accept it for publication. It's usually a conversation. We might suggest edits that the writer doesn't like. In that case, the piece wouldn't be a match.

**Q:** On average how many submissions do you receive during a reading period for an issue? What is the organizational structure for the way these submissions are dealt with?

**JP:** We received 1150 submissions for our current issue (#15). We rarely solicit work and when we do, that work also goes through the same editorial process. We have a small group of volunteers who work with me to read and consider submissions. They give the work a quantitative score (1-5) as well as a more qualitative analysis (what they appreciated about the work, what factors they would cite for not accepting the work.) I review the reader's reactions and usually read the piece too. I then determine if a piece is going to be accepted or rejected. Pieces I would like to accept are usually reviewed by the publisher as well, though not always.

**Q:** What is it about short shorts, flash fiction, or any of its other varied names that originally grabbed your attention and made you decide to make a literary magazine totally focused on this form?

**JP:** I started writing prose poetry and flash while I was a student at Emerson College about a decade ago. After graduation, we decided to develop a print journal that featured these tiny stories because (at the time) there were so few publishers focused on it. Of course, that has changed. But since that time I've never dropped the form. I continue to write it exclusively and the journal is still a huge focus in our lives.

**Q:** One of my favorite parts about Quick Fiction, along with the excellent writing, is the artwork and beautiful book design put into each issue. What goes into figuring out the right design for each issue of Quick Fiction?

**JP:** Thanks! Aside from a few basic considerations, it's really a gut decision. The artwork we select must be square. That's number one. The artwork should tell (or evoke) a story. That's number two. The rest is just about how the work makes us feel. We scout for covers using the internet and always go in with a cold request. We can't pay, so some artists have turned us down, but others have been really supportive. It's always so exciting to get our top choice for a cover. From there, Adam's day job is as a designer, so he knows exactly what to do with a beautiful painting.

**Q:** How do you feel about online-only literary magazines? Have you ever considered doing online issues of Quick Fiction?

**JP:** We've dabbled in it. The print journal already takes so much focus and time that we've never been able to step up the online content development.

**Q:** How has editing Quick Fiction affected your own writing?

**JP:** Editing and writing are really different impulses for me. Editing is really about judging. What is this? What does it evoke? What are its flaws? Do I accept it or do I reject it? Writing is a much more organic and open process that needs to be more about a piece's potential than it's limitations. This may sound very philosophical, but we do get into habits. Some days I am clearly looking at work as an editor and some days as a writer. It's important for me to know the difference.

**Q:** Which literary magazines do you personally enjoy? Who are some of your favorite writers?

**JP:** I love literary magazines both as art objects and as collections of writing. I hate naming names. I guess one of those journals I really looked forward to getting in the mail was Land Grant College Review (for its design and content,) but I'm not sure if it's still around. This year I think that some of the best writing I've been reading in the past year has been online, actually. I'm not crazy about reading content online, but somehow the format seems to really work for prose poetry/flash. I thought the first issue of Sir! Magazine was an amazing debut.

**Q:** What advice do you have to give to emerging writers who have yet to achieve success in the writing world?

**JP:** What is success? You have to manage your expectations and your ambition. Just keep writing what resonates for you and seek out editors who understand and appreciate your perspective and sensibility. Maybe you won't achieve X, Y, Z, but maybe other things will come from writing.

**Q:** In an interview with Wigleaf last year you stated that you were very confident with Quick Fiction's future. What do you see in the magazine's future now? Has the current economic situation affected your operation in any way?

**JP:** Quick Fiction has always been such a small organization we're able to navigate through these sorts of situations. Our sales are a little up this year, but they usually increase a few percentage points every year anyway. I think there's a lot of support out there for the journal and hope it'll just continue to grow.

