

Author Guidelines

by Mitchell Grabois

WHY WE LIKE IT:

We love the escalating, sanctimonious wrath in this brutally funny over the top counter punch to the by turns all too often condescending, obsequious and sometimes just plain bizarre submission guidelines that confound and harass both neophyte and seasoned writer alike. The balance Grabois strikes between humour and invective is faultless.

Do not send short stories that turn out to be all a dream. Do not send stories in which the climax is the gruesome death of the protagonist or her pet. Do not send poems featuring birds, feathers, flight or the unbearable lightness of being. Don't send us any poems that crassly exploit nature.

Do not send poems lacking elevated language. Do not send poems that are funny but not poetic.

Do not send poems whose accounts of shattered childhoods play on our heartstrings. Do not send poems that are agricultural. Do not send poems about deer in your fields. We don't want to hear about storks or red-winged blackbirds. We don't want to hear about all you have lost.

Don't tell us about your captain raping you when you were in the Merchant Marine. Don't give us any material that comes from your ugly soul. No memoir poems featuring drunkenness and debauchery. No automatic writing or "channeling." No recycled mythology, western or eastern.

No hate. No excesses of love. Nothing you would have written for your mother in elementary school. Nothing from your fucking diary or journal. No diatribes against your ex-wife or husband.

Nothing praising Jesus, especially: no *Jews for Jesus* propaganda. Nothing we would find in a pamphlet in a toilet stall in a Greyhound bus station. No poems about your travels on Greyhound buses. No poems whatsoever about “looking for America.” No poems about hunks you met on the train and had brief affairs with.

Do not send us illustrations, especially those of underwear models with six-pack abs, especially if they are photographs of the hunk you met on the train who fucked your brains out in your state room. No “Hallmark” sentiments. No fancy fonts, *please*. No bizarre spacing or other “experimental” work—we’re no longer in high school. No poems from high school students. No poems from high school dropouts. No poems from people who fancy themselves Kerouac or Bukowski. No poems from women who would like to fuck dead poets.

No poems with a cover letter that reveals you as a rank amateur, moron, or douche bag. No poems about your pet, alive or dead. No poems about your experiences on crack or meth. If you’re not Aldous Huxley, no poems about your LSD trips, good or bad. No poems about your paranoia after smoking too much dope.

No poems bashing your mother or father. No poems bashing your ungrateful children. Come to think of it no poems at all. Keep your lousy poems to yourself. Please.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

As to what inspired this story I cannot top the FLEAS ON THE DOG editors' description in their WHY WE LIKE IT paragraph. I think that the immediate stimulus was, at the time, recently having completed a poem about the birds on my farm and, looking for a magazine to send it to, ran across an Author's Guidelines section warning me off.

There is no group of individuals more blessed than the editors of literary magazines. They play a vital role in providing venues for writers' work to be read—they help keep literature alive. But sometimes some of them get a little crazy. Re-reading this piece, I remember that I have seen many, if not most, of these prohibitions in actual 'Authors' Guideline' sections. My intention when writing this piece was classically satirical.

One of my weaknesses is that it's nearly impossible for me to identify my stylistic and literary influences. I've read thousand or tens of thousands of novels and short stories that I've admired, and I'm sure that many of their styles/techniques are reflected in my work. Some of my favourites when I was just starting out as a writer were (in no particular order): Vonnegut, Bukowski, D. H. Lawrence, Faulkner, Saroyan, Chinua Achebe, Mary Gaitskill, Borges, Robert Bolano, John Fante, Ethan Canin and poets William Carlos Williams, Gary Snyder and Bob Dylan.

BIO:

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over 1500 of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for numerous prizes and was awarded the 2017 Booranga Writers' Centre (Australia) Prize for Fiction. His novel, *Two Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychobeologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and as a print edition. His poetry collection, *THE ARREST OF MR. KISSY FACE*, will be published by Pski's Porch Publications in early 2019. He lives in Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.