The Role of the Literary Journal in Publishing Noncommercial Fiction
AWP 2020

Moderator: J. A. Bernstein
Panelists: Laura Cogan, Ronna Wineberg, Gilad Elbom, Oscar Villalon

I. Moderator remarks and introduction (five minutes)
II. Panelist remarks (20 minutes)
III. Probable questions (25 minutes):

1. Lionel Trilling remarked in 1946 that the “little journals” had the job of keeping the powerful figures of the literary establishment “a little bit uneasy.” Do you think literary journals still do that? How?
2. What are the major differences between commercial fiction and literary art?
3. How do you go about selecting work for inclusion in your journal? To what extent do you select fiction that resists the formulas of commercial storytelling?
4. Do you ever see the goal of publishing noncommercial fiction as running counter to the goal of diversifying literature or accessing non-traditional audiences? Or do you think the goals automatically harmonize?
5. Do you feel pressured to publish commercial work or work produced by commercial authors?
6. If so, how do you balance these concerns?
7. How, if at all, do you think the landscape for literary fiction in small journals has changed in the last ten years?
8. Where do you see that landscape heading?
9. Do you think digital media has furthered or hindered the effort to publish noncommercial fiction? How?
10. Do you find yourself promoting noncommercial authors or stories? What are the challenges you face in doing that, and what have you learned?
11. What advice would you give to those looking to submit fiction to your journal?
12. What other journals do you most admire, and why?

IV. Audience Q&A (remaining time minus two minutes)
V. Closing remarks (Two minutes)