



McSweeney's #15

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McSweeney's began in 1998 as a literary journal, edited by Dave Eggers, which published only works rejected from other magazines. But after the first issue, the journal began to publish pieces written with McSweeney's in mind. Soon after, McSweeney's attracted works from some of the finest writers in the country, including David Foster Wallace, Ann Cummins, Rick Moody, Heidi Julavits, Jonathan Lethem, William T. Vollmann, and many new talents.

Today, McSweeney's has grown to be one of the country's best and largest-circulation literary journals. The journal is committed to finding new voices, publishing work of gifted but underappreciated writers, and pushing the literary form forward at all times.

McSweeney's publishes on a roughly quarterly schedule, and each issue is markedly different from its predecessors in terms of design and editorial focus.

McSweeney's #15 Details

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From Reader Review McSweeney's #15 for online ebook

Adam says

My interest in this installment of McSweeney's was mainly for the contemporary Icelandic literature, of which there are about 150 pages here--including both novel excerpts and short stories. Unfortunately, none of it is especially memorable, and a few of the longer pieces so bored me that I didn't finish them.

However, three pieces were of moderate interest; that is, the stories were very nearly... *about* something! They at least had a strong scenario at the back of them to give your imagination something to chew on. These three were: "My Room" by Bragi Olafsson, "A Rush of Wings" by Porarinn Eldjarn, and "Interference" by Andri Snaer Magnason. Also, for the English stuff, Benjamin Rosenbaum's "Orphans" is an amusing, and every-so-clever little riff on the *Babar* children's books.

Sarah says

So it turns out I'm not that into 90% Icelandic fiction. The non-Icelandic stories were great. Before you get all up in arms and call me anti-Icelandic I would just like to point out that I have several Bjork albums.

Molly says

I bought this at Powells in Portland, and still haven't read it. An entire issue on Icelandic modern literature, which is pretty cool if you ask me--darkness, madness, drinking, violence. All Laxness wrote about was sheep.

Felicia says

I'm finding McSweeney's perfect for BART riding. Each story lasts from two to four rides, and there's not the anxiety of where I left off and how much rereading needs to take place to catch up, because short stories are so, well, short. It's been a while since the short story genre appealed to me, but now that I'm back in a commutery lifestyle, they are back to being perfect. Commutery in the sense that someone else is doing the steering. Which tells you nothing about the stories and more about my state of life. The stories were decent. I liked many of them. The Icelandic flavoring is lonely, but not cloyingly so. Good for those of us who have spent the bulk of our lives in some state of loneliness, so can relate to a tech of it but don't need a battalion of heartbroken ghosts parading about in print.

Mike says

Many of the stories were good, but I only really loved two: "A Precursor of the Cinema" and "Uninvited". It gets an extra star for making me think about the concept of the citizen artist--as described in the introduction

to the Icelandic half of the book.

Carla says

Interesting collection... half of the book was the traditional mix of authors and the other half all authors from Iceland. The Iceland half felt foreign in some ways, although I'm sure most of that was my knowing their source. I liked the folktale quality to some of the stories and some were the usual McSweeney's fare and fit right in.

Christina says

The second half of this issue of McSweeney's is all Icelandic fiction. I liked getting to know a (very) little about Iceland's literary culture and style, and my interest is piqued. I'd love to read more by these authors. Otherwise, we have the typical high-quality writing and beautiful book design I've come to expect from McSweeney's. Sure, there are stand-out stories, and subtler ones, but no real duds here. Short fiction is so refreshing sometimes.

I really am just a pretentious McSweeney's fangirl.

Heather Pagano says

Exactly what I'm looking for out of a McSweeney's issue- every story was vivid and memorable. Not that I liked each and every story, but they all grabbed my attention and gave me to a unique experience or perspective, and many characters or situations still pop up in my mind weeks later.

Paul McCann says

At this point I'm figuring out how to read these things. I stopped reading a selection from a novel called "Uninvited" - just a mess. I barely finished the story about an underground room.

The first story, "Precursor to the Cinema" by Steven Millhauser, was a standout, as was "Interference" from */LoveStar/* by Magnason. */Nerve City/*, another selection from an Icelandic novel, was also one of the better ones in this collection.

Eric says

This edition of McSweeney's featured my first published short story in many years. *MIDNIGHT* is a satiric and very sanguinary parable about an imagined meeting between a trade unionist and Joseph Stalin. But its political commentary is about the rough equivalence in terms of motives and methods between the extreme right and the extreme left. The conjuring tricks of the Commintern and the Hoover Institution are not that

different. It's ironic that this story appears in the "Icelandic Issue" considering what pure market capitalism did to that island nation.

Brian says

Would read again.

Eric Hinkle says

Really cool book! The first half is short stories from mostly American authors, and the second half is contemporary Icelandic writers. That section is the real highlight of this collection. It's exposed me to a lot of fascinating writers, and I've gone out and bought about 8 books from those authors already. A lot of the stories are extracted from their novels, for some reason, but it's a great introduction to what is currently* happening in Icelandic fiction.

*I guess this was published about 10 years ago, but I digress...

Kerri says

Like any collection of short stories from multiple authors, this one was a mixed bag, but I did learn that Icelandic authors are not ones I will be seeking out in the future. This issue redeems itself with a few standouts that I think I particularly appreciated because it's been so long since I've read a truly imaginative story. Steven Millhauser's *A Precursor of the Cinema* was an engaging and creative read, as was the last story, excerpted from *LoveStar*, by Icelandic author Andri Snær Magnason. Roddy Doyle's *I Understand* was pretty good too, but I was already a fan.

Clark says

I remember feeling worse about this issue after finishing it than I do now. The second half (the Icelandic fiction half) dragged a lot more than the first half. It was very uneven and the best Icelandic stories were still slow starters. Still, "America", "Fridrik and the Eejit" and "My Room" were excellent. The American half was similarly uneven. "Manifesto" might be my least favorite piece in any McSweeney's. Blech. However, "A Precursor of the Cinema" was haunting and gorgeously wrought. I was completely absorbed by its tone and the storytelling was absolutely masterful. More please. I also really liked Roddy Doyle's piece and "Midnight" by Eric Hanson. Nothing too exciting about the packaging although the cover art was nice.

Charlotte Kartz says

Not my type of book. Some of the short stories were interesting, but i also found some of them hard to get through, and it almost made me want to skip the short story because it lacked my attention....

