

Painted Bride Quarterly

Issue No. 79

Editor(s): Marion Wrenn, Kathy Volk Miller

Web Address: <http://www.pbq.drexel.edu/>

What They Publish: Poetry, fiction, essays, reviews, and artwork.

Submission Guidelines: Up to five poems, fiction no more than 5,000 words, essays and reviews no more than 3,000 words. Does not accept preliminary submissions via e-mail. Submissions must first be sent as hard copy to:

Painted Bride Quarterly
Drexel University
Department of English and Philosophy
3141 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Description of Publication: Non-profit, online magazine, affiliated with Drexel University. No payment for authors. Most, but not all issues have themes that are posted on the site several issues in advance. Issues are posted quarterly, print anthology is published annually. In addition to being able to read the pieces in issues past and present, *Painted Bride* is also very active in hosting readings for their writers/poets that are recorded and posted to the site as pod casts.

Prose Per Issue: 20%, current issue has eight stories.

Prose Reviews:

Snap by Miah Arnold is a plainspoken, magical realist piece set in a domestic setting. Told in the first person, the scene is set with the narrator sitting in the office of “the tailor,” which is reminiscent of a dentist’s office. She has made the appointment with the tailor because her soul has turned black, and the tailor’s profession is to go inside and clean it out. Two assistants turn into a purple, slimy essence and jump into the narrator’s body, then force her out and blow her skin up like a blimp, so that the tailor can fit inside comfortably to get his job done. Once out, the narrator slides into a temporary body for the remainder of the procedure. With only his legs sticking out of the narrator’s body, he questions her about decisions she has made, actions she has taken, and thoughts she has thought but not said – all of this he can see from inside. The story ends with the tailor finishing the cleaning and the narrator jumping back into her own body, at which time the tailor instructs her to take a shower before she leaves and make a follow up appointment with the secretary on her way out.

I tend to be a fan of the strange and off-kilter, and Miah Arnold’s story is just that. Her voice is that of a contemporary, female Poe. Her images are exquisite and extremely vivid: “...*the tailor, hooking his fingers into my nostrils and pulling me to a fast ninety degree position.*” And her descriptive details almost made me wet my pants. One of my favorite lines in the piece is, “*The tailor reminds me of a demonic chicken.*” Miah Arnold’s dark humor and tendency towards the oddball state of mind make her someone I definitely plan to look for in the future.

Things Left Behind by Birdsall is a plainspoken realistic story set in a domestic setting. The narrator is taking her younger half-brother (who she does not know that well because he is from her mother’s second marriage and she is nineteen years older than he is) to a museum devoted to the Donner family. Before the trip, her mother informs her that Danny’s therapist says that he is terrified of his mother dying. She finds out that at the age of eight, he still sleeps in his mother’s bed and also has a nutritionist. When she asks why she has to drive him an hour and a half away to a museum about “*The people who ate each other,*” her mother explains that he did a project on them for school and has been interested in them ever since. At the museum, the narrator and her brother speed through all the exhibits and spend most of their time talking about how the narrator is old enough to be Danny’s mother, and the differences between how she was raised and how Danny is being raised. After a grand total of seventeen minutes in the museum, they make their way back to the car for another hour and a half drive home, and don’t say much.

This story is lovely. The imagery is beautiful and very strong – she describes the salt flats of Utah on their way to the museum as “*a desert frosted in salt.*” The story is also very realistic, Birdsall does not over-do it with some sort of meaningful conversation between the narrator and her younger brother, because he is an eight-year-old after all, and only has the attention span of a child.

Rating: 7. *Painted Bride Quarterly* has been around for a substantial amount of time – this is their 79th issue, meaning that they are not likely to burn out any time soon. The layout is professional, and the writing wonderful. Although they did not seem to have an opposition to emerging writers, it did appear that the majority of their contributors have had several publications already.

Julia Reimers

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