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Title of Journal: *PANK Magazine*

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Editors: M. Bartley Seigel and Roxane Gay

Web Address: www.pankmagazine.com

What they publish: “Whatever you want to share.”

Submission guidelines: Via Submishmash, they have a general submission portal, “1,001 Awesome Words,” a “tip-jar” submission, where the author can get future discounts or just submit for free (a la Radiohead’s “In Rainbows” download format), and essays about writing.

Description of Publication: an edgy monthly online magazine featuring high-quality poetry and prose, as well as a yearly print issue and novella-eque “little books.” They seem like a great place to submit experimental works of whatever length, and they provide editor’s feedback as often as possible.

Prose per Issue/Annually: approximately 24 works (including poetry) per issue, with sporadic special issues and random posts on the blog, means about 300 works per year.

Prose Reviews:

Men With Own Tuxedos by Bess Winter is a realistic story which takes place on an independent film set. The story is told in first person, almost conversationally, describing the narrator’s task of hiring men with tuxedos to be extras for the “brilliant but impatient” director’s film. Via Craigslist, the narrator amasses an army of men in tuxedos, who turn out to be horrible actors and begin crying when they see their female counterparts in velvet gowns. The men in tuxedos are desperate, sad, and faceless, and when the narrator tells them “if they couldn’t get happy they wouldn’t be paid,” all but one of them leaves.

This story is deceptively simple and funny, though I’m not quite sure I get it. The quick exaggeration sets the tone for the piece: humor surfacing in the sadness, paradoxical complexity through simplicity. “Men who own tuxedos must have terrible luck... Maybe this is what makes them so sad. I pouted, out of sympathy. I took a photo. Those tuxedos must have been expensive, originally.” This little image of the narrator pouting out of sympathy strikes me, and the idea that the tuxedos were bought for much happier occasions than an independent film is the main point of the piece, for me. They can’t feign their old happiness. The narrator pauses on the last man in a tuxedo standing, “a bald man in a powder blue tuxedo. His shoes were scuffed and his tuxedo was wrinkled, but his face was clean and unlined. He said he thought he could stay and get happy, if we wanted.” And his staying behind is sad, too. Is it possible to take too much out of a piece? To add feelings and tones that aren’t there? This piece is so short, and the first time I read it, I didn’t have any thoughts about it. A second read either helped me see it, or helped me make it up.

How We Keep It Fresh by Christian TeBordo is a surreal story in an urban setting. Told in first and second person (“You put on the sexy French maid outfit. I put on the denim jacket and the horn-rimmed glasses, then taunt you, saying you look more like a Mexican.”), the story streams through a dozen

drugged-out sexual fantasies until it climaxes (yikes) inside of “a big, boozy girl with wide hips and rosaceous cheeks.” This being a humorous work, it is our job to decide what is literal and what is figurative, where the author is pointing us.

From the start, we’re on a rollercoaster ride. The plot is really just an assortment of instances between “you” and “I” that become more and more depraved, less and less grounded in realism. The story goes off the rails a few times, the funniest one being, “I knock on the front door and try to compose an alluring smile but I’ve blown a gram and a half of cocaine and my mouth won’t stop twitching. I knock again. I knock and knock and knock. You never answer, because you are somewhere else, jumping out of someone’s cake in the bikini you sometimes wear over your clownsuit.” It makes for a ridiculous image, but the story never really recognizes anything about itself other than its own inanity, even with the bizarre “rebirth” at the end, when “you” and “I” crawl inside of the big, boozy girl—are we dreaming?—and “When the doctor arrives, he says it will be a breech birth. What the stupid doctor doesn’t understand is that we have no intention of being born again.” The funniest part of the story is the ending coupled with the first line of the author’s bio—“Christian TeBordo has published three novels.” I wonder what those look like?

Rating: 7. I like PANK. They appear in many interesting author’s bios and publish consistently fresh material. Their site is cool and their archives are clear and easy to access—a surprisingly difficult thing for some magazines to do—and I look forward to the day when I write something weird enough for their consideration. Not that it HAS to be weird, just that I think it helps my odds.