



Magazine Report
by
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December 2009

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Fact Sheet

Magazine: Another Chicago Magazine

Web Address: www.anotherchicagomagazine.org

Address:

Another Chicago Magazine

P.O. Box 408439

Chicago, IL 60640

E-mail Address: ContactACM@gmail.com

Founded: 1985

Current Editor: Barry Silesky

Fiction Editor: Jacob Knabb

Frequency: Twice a year

Contributor Payment: A complimentary copy of published issue as well as a year's subscription to the magazine.

Unsolicited Manuscripts: Preferable

What They Publish: Fiction, Poetry, Creative Nonfiction, Word and Image Texts, Satire, Interviews

Submission Guidelines: Another Chicago Magazine publishes work that goes "beyond the artistic and academic to include and address the larger world." Include byline, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail on the cover letter as well as on the manuscript and include a self-addressed stamped envelope with the genre of your work in the address.

Mission Statement: "Another Chicago Magazine strives to publish work by writers from varied backgrounds and with varied experiences, and we welcome work that looks beyond the artistic and academic to include and address the larger world. Our view of small press publishing requires that we print not only the work of established writers, but also that of writers whose merits have not yet been discovered by mainstream publications and their audiences."

Why I Chose Another Chicago Magazine

My first experience with Another Chicago Magazine was an online story by David Sedaris published in issue #20. I am a big fan of David Sedaris and I stumbled on the story by accident. It was typical Sedaris work, shocking and hilarious and touching; and it lead me to Another Chicago Magazine. After that first story I browsed the limited archive they provide online and fell in love.

Another Chicago Magazine manages to be eclectic and shocking without carrying that feeling of pretension I found in so many other literary magazines. The pieces featured by the magazine run from an interview with Allen Ginsberg to the aforementioned piece by David Sedaris to a story by Lina Ramona Vitkauskas that involves a quadruple homicide (more if you count the dog's rampage) by a married couple who hire hit men who then fall in love with the people they are supposed to murder. It is pieces like that - quirky, well written with a driving story – that makes Another Chicago Magazine a gem in the literary magazine market.

Story Reviews

Issue #47 (2006: 1)

An Algerian Like You by Elizabeth Bloom Albert is a first person story in a domestic setting. An unnamed and unseen narrator dictates the story of an Algerian man who moves to France for unknown reasons. The man takes a variety of jobs while attending Engineering School but, after a series of setbacks, drops out of school and takes a job as a hotel clerk where he spends the majority of his time outside of the one room apartment he rents with three other Algerian men. Then one day an American couple and their daughter come to stay in the hotel. The Algerian is instantly attracted to her, “An angel was standing at the front desk.” He helps them with their bags and for the next few days lives in an agony only experienced with a first love. At the end of the trip Angela, the American girl, and the Algerian sit down to a glass of wine. There he struggles to tell her he loves her, instead learning that she is engaged to an Algerian who was a taxicab driver in Grenoble. They spend some more time talking and the girl goes to bed. Then the story takes on a stronger tone as the narrator writes that, “She was the one I was jealous of.” The story takes a subtle shift at the end as we learn that the narrator was at one point romantically engaged with the Algerian.

I enjoyed this piece mainly because of the freshness of the style. The story starts out sounding like it is in second person, “You carried coins in your pockets wherever you went so that you could give alms to the poor.” but, by the use of sentences sprinkled throughout the narrative, the first person point of view is clearly established. This gave the piece a letter quality to it. I almost felt like it was a speech the narrator had orated to herself over and over throughout her life. *An Algerian Like You* is bittersweet, but in a way that keeps it from being too cliché. There is never any mention of heartbreak, only the sad story of an unnamed woman recounting the story of an Algerian she had loved.

The Thinker by Rosalind Brackenbury is a third person, plainspoken story in a domestic setting. An older man and woman, both unnamed, meet at a train station in France and after they decide on a restaurant down the block, order wine with salmon and talk about the events in their lives. After eating they go to his hotel room then to the man’s art studio where he shows her his sculptures. She falls in love with one that depicts a woman who “...was thinking: not about sex, not about a man, but about herself.” The man notices this and gives the woman a miniature bronze replica of the statue.

I hesitated at first to say the story was told in the third person because at certain points throughout the writing switches to second person. The story is told from the woman’s point of view throughout but during certain passages, “You went in through a glass door, over a doormat, into a foyer where brass keys hung on a row of hooks.” the piece shifts into the eyes of the woman. This gave the story an intimacy that could not have been achieved if it was told purely in third person, yet kept the distance that is impossible in first person. Ms. Brackenbury managed, by the artful use of both, to craft a story that pulls you into an unnamed character’s life and allows the final passage, “They kissed, once, briefly upon the lips, and it was different, as the bronze figure was different, as the present was different from the past and yet contained it all, cool and weighty as bronze, small enough to be held in the palm of the hand,” to ring in your head far after you finish reading.

Issue #48 (2008: 2)

Accidental Spousal Murder by Lina Ramona Vitkauskas is a third person story set in a domestic setting. The story is of a husband, only ever referred to as 'husband', who hires a hit man to kill his wife. After weeks of surveillance the hit man realizes that he loves the wife and when he is ordered to attack he instead admits his love and he and the wife fall passionately into each other's arms. The wife also hired a hit man and the wife's hit man killed the husbands' hit man. The husband returns to the house only to find his wife and her best friend, Jennifer Tilly, making love on the kitchen counter.

Unbeknownst to the married couple Jennifer had hired a hit man to kill the husband and as the hit man strangles the husband the wife and husband look into each others eyes and realize that they are both still in love with each other. One of the dead hit men's guns goes off and kills the husband, and the wife screams and Jennifer Tilly's hit man goes into shell shock and sprays the room with bullets. The story continues with a bloodthirsty pit bull murdering five people, including the married couples child and a nanny, and ends with Jennifer and a policeman alive clutched to each other on the bloody kitchen floor.

The first time I read this story I was dismayed, mainly because there is no actual story. It is a 'Kill Bill' like blood bath that is supported only by the author's grotesque use of violence. After multiple readings, however, I started to enjoy the piece. In a sense I learned how to read it. Being so used to traditional story arcs stunted my ability to enjoy this piece. Ms. Vitkauskas blends engaging writing with a humorists' knack for capturing the ridiculousness in a very simple, though bloody, story.

For You, For You I Am Trilling These Songs by Kathleen Rooney is a first person story set in a domestic setting. One summer, Kathleen Rooney took charge of a number of high school summer Democratic Party interns. Ms. Rooney starts by introducing them to grammar and sentence structure but is forced to start with the basics of work ethic and common decency. The struggles Ms. Rooney faces in helping the interns achieve the slightest improvement mirror the struggles she faces in her own life and the story ends with a dozen or so interns lambasting a die-hard Republican with 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' and Ms. Rooney, "...in Whitman's America."

This story captured me from the first page, "I want to live in Whitman's America...Instead, I live in Orwell's world." Kathleen Rooney uses Walt Whitman and George Orwell, two classic writers, to introduce a character who decides to spend a summer wrangling a group of interns instead of making change in the world. This small part of Ms. Rooney's life is told in a straightforward way and that allows the story to move between humorous and heartbreaking at will. Well written and concise, this is an excellent piece that contains social critique with an engaging plot.

Issue #49 (2009: 1)

Where Everyone Gets Laid by Amber Dren is a third person plainspoken story set in a domestic setting. Pearl is a little girl confused about sex. In the story she encounters her parents in bed naked, an older girl's pubic hair, the notebook of a girl who is, "...gonna let him stick it in me.", and a party where she scribbled pubic hair on a girl her uncle was drawing. At the end of the story Pearl decides that the only way to get it done would be to get it done, which she attempts with a neighbor boy, Dimples.

Amber Dren crafted a hilarious story that still fights to have a larger meaning. Pearl is a wonderfully created character, believable and naïve, and Dimples, her neighbor, is a likely accomplice. The story builds well with Pearl learning more and more about this elusive, "getting laid", and Ms. Dren does a good job at building the relationships between Pearl and Dimples and Pearl and her mother. At the end, however, Pearl muses, "...if her mom would ever really wake up." That line, had there been more of a growth in the relationship between Pearl and the mother, could have been gold. There is an inherent sense of caring between mother and daughter, but I needed to see more of it for that last line to truly hit.

Comes after Cato by Donna D. Vitucci is a third person story set in a domestic setting. Robert receives news of his grandson, Cato's, death. As Robert sits in the funeral and listens to the pastor and other family members talk about Cato he reflects on Cato as he knew him; a good looking, no-good boy who was never able to grow up. As the funeral service ends, Robert feels a wave of nausea "...he was getting to be old friends with." He leaves the chapel and rests on a gurney like bed and there waits until the service ends.

This story is an excellent example of the old adage less is more. Using just under six pages, Donna D. Vitucci allows the reader a full glimpse of Cato and Robert and, more importantly towards the end of the narrative, the relationship between them. With subtle use of internal monologue such as, "Kid had busted up so many automobiles, and other shit, it was a miracle he got out of high school alive." Ms. Vitucci captures the grief and anger of a Grandfather at a wayward Grandson. By the careful placement of such judgments, Ms. Vitucci gives the reader enough of a connection with Grandfather and builds the relationship between the Grandfather and Grandson in a way that the final line, "His hands squeaked against the leather-like cover as he leveraged his feet to the floor, slowly, slowly, and the adult diapers he'd wrapped as a make-shift buffer inside his pants tore from where they'd adhered to his legs, allowing the sores their stagnant, copious weeping," unexpectedly grabs the reader and resonates beyond the page.

Interview with Editor Jacob Knabb

Casey Harding: What did you see as your greatest challenge(s) when you came on as Managing Fiction Editor at Another Chicago Magazine?

Jacob Knabb: The biggest challenges were organizational, and random. For instance, we had a solid system in place for reviewing submissions, but the subscribers list had dwindled due to neglect and poor record-keeping.

CH: What do you see as the future of ACM? Are there any plans to increase its online presence? Where do you see ACM in 5 years? 10 years?

JK: ACM will be growing over the next five years. We are in the process of revamping the Web site to include Web-only content and to host a massive archives section that will feature everything we have published since 1977. I am loath to go all-digital, as I love print, so we will fight that as long as we can. I have no ambitions to become as monolithic as a publication like Granta, but I can see no reason that we can't establish a stronger presence nationally. We are also doing more and more events and I want to focus on this as well.

CH: How many submissions do you receive per issue?

JK: Too many to count.

CH: What is your editing process for ACM? Do you suggest changes to stories that you like but think need some revision?

JK: ACM does indeed suggest changes and will work with a writer for a very promising piece. It isn't the rule, but isn't that rare either. We do also tweak for style and copy edit mistakes. Still, the vast majority of what ends up in the magazine comes from the slush and is not altered much from the way it first appeared.

CH: What do you see too much of, and what would you like to see more of?

JK: I see too much of pieces about relationships crumbling. Many authors don't write this well, yet many lean on this sort of material for their subject matter. Also, fishing. There are too many fishing stories. As an interesting aside, Barry Silesky (the former and longtime editor of ACM) published a bunch of very sexual poems a decade ago or so. He was into erotic poetry for a bit. As a result, ACM gets these runs of really sexual submissions from time to time. As you can well imagine, this is both a blessing and a curse.

CH: Most of the writers published at your magazine have been published elsewhere. Does that in any way sway your decision in their favor or do you look at all work from an unbiased perspective?

JK: We could care less where someone has been published. It doesn't mean squat, and sometimes reveals a lot about how the author views us, since some will send us 2nd or 3rd tier stuff, feeling that we'll accept it simply to run a piece by an author like that. We don't. This is a stupid plan.

CH: What should all writers know before submitting a piece to a magazine? What usually lets you know that an emerging writer hasn't submitted before?

JK: Look, this is the most hackneyed piece of advice, but it is utterly true: read the publication and see what they like. If you don't like the stories/poems/etc in that publication, then they won't like your writing. Simple as that.

Keep your cover letters simple and to the point: Don't include photos of yourself and your dog. Don't list every single place you've been published. Don't include a summary of your story or articulate your goals in composing the piece.

Move beyond the notion that your work is somehow precious and invaluable. There is a rule that is hard and fast and has been proven to be true time and time again. Poor and/or inexperienced writers feel that their work is invaluable and perfect. They will not take kindly to criticism. They are pretentious for no real reason. These sorts of writers always include a large SASE (Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope) with enough postage to mail all of the submission materials back to them, rather than a simple envelope for a rejection slip. Learn that your work will likely be rejected and that most of your submission materials will end up in the recycling bin. Being an artist is being rejected.

CH: What advice could you give to all the emerging writers out there praying for their first publication? What do you expect from a story when you read it?

JK: Write good stories. Ask yourself, 'If I found this story after flipping open some publication at random and read the first page or so, would I keep reading it?' If the answer is not 100% yes then your story isn't finished. I look for both literary pieces and also good stories. The two are not mutually exclusive, of course, but there are pieces in ACM that fall under both categories. I publish both of these types.

CH: Do you solicit authors for their work? If so, why and how often?

JK: Yes. Often. I do not publish every solicited piece, however. I do so because I like to let a person know that I dig the work and would like to have that author send work to us.

CH: What's the exhaustive, unabridged reading and editorial process at ACM?

JK: Slush comes in the mail. We meet each week and read it. Our goal is to eliminate poor work. The work that is left is kept around as keeper worthy. Genre editors then comb through that selection and winnow it down to pieces with real potential. We then meet as a staff to discuss those pieces. From that discussion, final choices are made.

CH: In a November 5th Times article titled, “The Internet is Killing Storytelling”, Ben Macintyre wrote, “The blog is a soap box, not a story. Facebook is a place for tell-tales, perhaps, but not for telling tales... Very few stories of more than 1,000 words achieve viral status on the Internet.” What changes, if any, have you seen in written submissions with the rise of the Internet? Also, how do you feel about 'flash fiction'? Is it doomed to the same fate as the 8-track or does it have lasting potential?

JK: Personally, I think viewpoints like that are utter bollocks and I think people who espouse these sorts of ideas are full of beans. Sophistry, I say. Sounds pretty and seems right but isn't, really. The Internet is not killing anything. It is opening things up. It is providing new mediums for storytelling and new challenges to storytellers. The blog, in its original state, is indeed a soapbox. But, boy, that sure ignores an awful lot of change, doesn't it? The Internet is dynamic and shifts over time. Blogs do an awful lot more than that clever turn of phrase would portend. At the moment, there is a paucity, perhaps, of stories over one thousand words in length. I somehow doubt that it will stay that way. Print affords certain pleasures that the Internet cannot achieve. These are tactile things. We can cart them around. Relish them. Use them to your advantage. A lack of creativity and originality will lead to the death of anything.

Comparison of Issues over Time

	Issue 47	Issue 48	Issue 49
Writers Male:Female	10:3	6:5	3:6
Protagonists Male:Female:Unclear	9:3:1	4:4:3	5:4
Writers' Credits Book:Magazine:First	7:4:2	9:1:1	1:7:1

It is clear from this breakdown that Another Chicago Magazine caters to the already published, though after the interview with Jacob Knabb I believe that the disparity in published versus unpublished writers is more due to the quality of writing than any bias. There is no real break between male and female writers, nor between the genders of the protagonists. Again, I believe that this is due to ACN's dedication to quality writing.