

The Seattle Review

Magazine Report
By
Mark Knippschild

May 2009

Table of Contents

- Seattle Review Fact Sheet - 3
- Why I chose Seattle Review - 4
- Issue Comparison - 5
- Seattle Review Prose Reviews - 6
- Interview with William Bernhard - 9
- Lasting Thoughts - 11

Fact Sheet

Type: Bound magazine

Primary Editor / Contact Person: Colleen J. McElory

Mission Statement: The Seattle Review is a magazine that has kept faith with the common and uncommon word and are looking for stories to share that faith.

Address: University of Washington
Padeford Hall, P.O. Box 354330
Seattle, WA 98195-4330

Submission Guidelines: Mail all prose to the address above. All manuscripts must be no more than 4000 words, as well as having the authors name and address.

Web Site Address: <http://www.seattlereview.org>

Publishes: Fiction, Non-fiction, and Poetry

Reading Period: October - May

Reporting Time: two to four months

Author Payment: none

Founded: 1978

Frequency Per Year: biannual

CLMP member: yes

Why I chose the Seattle Review

I first came across the Seattle Review in the current edition of Literary Press and Magazine Directory, and among the others I was researching for this project, the Seattle Review oddly stuck out to me. After visiting their Web site and reading their mission and history statement, and seeing the massive amount of issues they've put out over the years, I decided to give them a shot.

Issue Comparison

| | Vol. 29 Issue 1 | Vol. 25 Issue 2 | Vol. 23 Issue 2 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Prose : Poetry | 14 : 42 | 3 : 27 | 8 : 22 |
| Prose Writer M:F | 3 : 11 | 1 : 2 | 2 : 4 |
| POV 1 st : 3 rd : 2 nd | 9 : 4 | 3 : 0 | 4 : 3 : 1 |

One of things I've noticed from this is that the majority of the authors in the Seattle Review are women. Even within the non-fiction and poetry sections, women seem to be the majority of the ones published within the Seattle Review. Another similar thing that I've noticed with the table is that the majority of the prose publish is in first person. And what's interesting is that the many of the first person stories are from the women authors, while most of the third person stories are from the men.

One of the first stories that I've read from the magazine was *Double Bed*. It was about two sisters, with complete opposite personalities who are forced to sleep in the same bed. After reading other stories I determined that the Seattle Review seems to side with first person narratives over third person. Also, the themes of family and rejection are very common in the stories the Seattle Review publishes.

Prose Reviews

Volume 23, Issue 2

Calculators by Morris Smith is a third person narrative set in a school in Africa. Temple Museisei is a very polite and friendly headmaster of this school in Zambia who seems to always be spoken over by his assistant, an American, Miss Daniels. Throughout the story, Miss Daniels seems to take it upon herself to know what's best for the school, especially with American visitors who had brought a package of school supplies. In the end, Miss Daniels decides it's best to lock up the package until Mr. Museisei finally speaks up and decides to use what's in the package immediately.

Objects and opposites are what move the story along. Both of the main characters, Temple Museisei and Miss Daniels, have complete personalities. While Mr. Museisei is more low key and likes to steer away from confrontation, Miss Daniels is described in the story as "crafty." She thinks she knows what's best for the school, even though she's only been there a couple months. The package is the main purpose of the story, it is what creates tension between the characters and makes Mr. Museisei eventually stand up to his assistant.

A Heart of the Hard Wood by Tracy Miller Geary is a first person narrative that alternates between the present and past. The unnamed girl narrator begins the story by wondering why her half brother, William Oak, and her mother's boyfriend, David, have seen the ghost of her mother and not herself. The story then goes into the past with the narrator explaining why her mother left her father and her, why she gave birth to William Oak, and how she became diagnosed with Leukemia. At the end, when the story goes back to the present, the narrator comes to terms about not being able to see her mother's ghost on account that her mother left so early in her life and had, for the most, become a ghost to her for already.

What really works for this story is the reader is given a full overview of this narrator. Also, nothing is completely revealed right away. The way the plot alternates between the narrator discussing the past and present makes the reader want to push on and read more about what happened next, and this works especially well with Miller alternating between time and place.

Volume 25, Issue 2

Bestemor by Kathryn Elligson is a third person dream story set in a small seaside town. The story is about a woman named Elisabeth Hanson, who has just recently been put in a wheel chair. While viewing the crows in her daughter's back yard, Elisabeth reunites with a woman she feels she has never met, but resembles her dead sister, Karin. Elisabeth is then taken on a dreamy journey throughout her town. The Karin-look alike takes her up on tops of steeples, showing her a child with golden strands of hair, and even her own family, only to end up in the same place she was at the beginning of the story: her daughters back yard.

The dream-like images are what really make up the story. Throughout the story we are given descriptions of the dream-like images above like: "For a moment Elisabeth mused absent-mindedly over the view, looking at the small church yard with its rows of crosses, then over toward the pier where the boats would return soon." Descriptions like this really makes the story rich with detail and movement, but at times seems to confuse the reader with its overuse of detail, and not enough actual story plot.

Double Bed by Gwendolyn Gross is a first person story set in an unnamed suburb, about two sisters who are forced to sleep in a single bed because their mother "doesn't believe in credit." Throughout the story the narrator, who is the younger sister, chronicles her older sister, seventeen year old Ceila, about her habit of dating older men and how her own less interesting existence can only get the attention of Tilty Edgars, a boy she constantly refers to as pizza face. By the end of the story, Ceila finally reveals to her sister that she lost her virginity and while sleeping ends up kissing her sister in her sleep. After that the two finally get single beds.

The opposite personalities of these two sisters are what stand out in the story, with Ceila being more trendy and popular, while the narrator is more awkward and dorky. But even though Ceila and the narrator are opposites, they don't suffer from sibling rivalry and instead to be seem really close. Ceila shows this by telling the narrator her various romances with older men, while the narrator is more private in her thoughts about Ceila.

Volume 29, Issue 1

And Then It All Went Up In Flame by Jennifer Graham is a first person story set in rural Alaska, about a family struggling to save their house and land from an approaching forest fire. Throughout the story, Ester, the narrator, has a hard time struggling to stay focused with watering down her house because she has a fondness for daydreaming. At the end, Ester comes to the realization of why her mother is so fond of trying to save the house; because she doesn't want them to return to the trailer park they had lived once lived.

One of the major themes in this story seems to be family. This theme is most common with the mother and her struggle to try to save their house from a forest fire and is best shown when Sophie, the narrator's older sister says to the mom: "Are you insane? It's just a fucking house. This place has two hours tops." The mother character is also the one who moves the story along, while the narrator and the other children are there to create tension in the story, by wondering why their mother is so keen on staying and not fleeing from the mountains.

Caves by Jessi M. Miller is a first person story set on a depleting farm, about the narrator, Cam, his cousin, Buddy, and his father. The story begins with the death of an unnamed man, whom the narrator refers to as a fag, that Cam's father had fished out of a river back when he was eighteen. The story then goes on with Cam's envy of his father favoring his cousin Buddy, while on a fishing trip. The story ends with Cam disbelieving his father would never fish out a homosexual, and Cam being washed away down the river because of feeling his fathers favored affection towards Buddy and not him.

Cam's envy and jealousy is what moves the story along. It's shown right away with Cam's father taking the side of Buddy and not Cam. What makes the story more interesting for the reader is that the father and Buddy are completely blinded by this. They are for the most part enjoying a day of fishing, while Cam himself is reminiscing of days past when his father did pay more attention to him and not to Buddy. That is until he brings up the murder of the homosexual by saying: "Daddy would of never fished out a fag." In response, Cam's father replies quickly "You don't know about things like that." And from this response, leads to Cam's need to wash away from his father forever.

Interview with William Bernhard

Mark Knippschild: Being that the magazine is part of the Creative Writing department in the University of Washington, what marketing techniques does the staff use to get the magazine over to the east coast, the south, or even the Midwest?

William Bernhard: We don't really market the magazine, although we probably should. It's distributed nationally and can be found in most major libraries. People know about us mostly through the Writer's Market books. We have a small, loyal subscription base. Given the glut of literary magazines flooding the market these days I think we do pretty well for ourselves .

M.K.: Being that the Seattle Review was created in '77-'78, how has the magazine evolved?

W.B.: The magazine has gone through different editorial regimes and each one their aesthetics and criteria to the magazine. The current editor, Andrew Feld, is very much interested in styles of writing that are "of the moment ."

M.K.: At times, do the Seattle Review editors let their own bias get in the way of agreeing on whether a manuscript is worthy of publishing?

W.B.: In the year I've been working on this magazine I think this has never happened. Everyone pretty much knows what's right for our aesthetic and what isn't.

M.K.: Nowadays, with technology becoming more and more advanced, and there are more literary magazines going online, do you think that bound literary magazines will lose their favor or touch? And being that the Seattle Review is a bound magazine, will we ever see the magazine go online in the near or distant future?

W.B.: We are considering an online version of the magazine to complement the printed one. I don't think people are as ready to switch to reading magazines online exclusively. They like the tactility of the page. This could change in the future, but right now it seems like the technology isn't quite there yet. By this I mean screen technology: reading from a computer tires the eye.

M.K.: On the Seattle Review website, I noticed that you have contests for fiction and poetry. Do you get more submissions for the magazine issues themselves or these contests, and why do you think this is?

W.B.: We get more regular submissions than contest submissions by a long shot. The reason for this is simple: it costs money to enter the contest .

M.K.: In my publishing class, we read an article about publishing in a recession. Could you explain if the recession slowed down your magazine, or affected it at all?

W.B.: The recession hasn't affected us YET. We get our funding from the University of Washington and they haven't cut our budget at this point. But, given our state's dire financial situation this might change.

M.K.: What is the most common mistake you've seen emerging writers do when they submit to the Seattle Review? What advice can you give emerging writers who want to submit to the Seattle Review?

W.B.: Send us your best stuff and don't be dejected if we reject you. Getting published in a magazine is very competitive: we receive hundreds of submissions every month and can only accept a small percentage of them. I also think it's almost important for any writer, but especially emerging writers, to read, read, read. That's how you learn to write well. In some ways this is more important than writing.

M.K.: What keeps the unpaid staff motivated?

W.B.: We are staffed mostly by volunteers who love fiction and poetry. They also happen to be in the university's MFA program.

M.K.: What is the first thing the editors look for when reading a manuscript for the first time?

W.B.: The writing needs to be engaging and thought provoking from sentence one. Most of the submissions we receive are riddled with clichés or stock situations. We look for writing that has its wits about it and sets a clear, interesting emotional course. Also, it's a good rule of thumb to actually read any magazine before submitting to it—it's imperative to understand the editors' tastes so that you don't waste anyone's time, both yours and ours .