

Pleiades Market Sheet

Title of Magazine: *Pleiades* Issues (or dates published): Winter, Summer Reviewer's name: Ashlyn Wheeler

Managing Editor(s): Phong Nguyen (Editor-in-Cheif), Kathryn Nuernberger (Poetry Editor), Matthew Eck (Fiction Editor), B.J. Hollars (Reviews Editor)

Fall 2015

Web Address: <http://www.pleiadesmag.com>

What they publish: The journal publishes fiction, poetry, and essays, and dedicates half of each issue to small-press book reviews.

Submission Guidelines: *Pleiades* welcomes unsolicited submissions of poetry between August 15 and May 15 of each year, submissions for prose (fiction, essays) during the months of July (for the summer issue) and December (for the winter issue) only. For poetry, submit 4-5 poems per submission. For fiction and essays, submit only one story at a time. If one is interested in submitting a book review to be considered for the PBR, query B.J. Hollars in the months of July or December. Submit only through *Pleiades*'s online submission manager. The journal does accept simultaneous submissions, but asks that you notify them immediately if a piece is accepted elsewhere. Editors' Prizes of \$100-\$500 are awarded to exceptional poems and stories within each issue.

Publication: The journal accepts new writers as well as established writers, though most contributors have significant publishing credits and have appeared in journals such as the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Ploughshares*, *EPOCH*, and the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, just to name a few. Back issues are six dollars, and the current issue is twelve dollars. A yearly subscription is twenty-five dollars. Contests include the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Poetry Prize and the Robert C. Jones Prize for Short Prose. The journal is published biannually. *Pleiades* has a high production quality with a clean and polished design.

Prose Per Issue / Amount of Published Annually: On average, there are five fiction pieces, three essays, and thirty-three reviews per issue. Annually, there are, on average, ten fiction pieces, six essays, and sixty-six reviews published annually. Overall, one-half of the journal comprises poetry, and the other half comprises prose.

Patterns: Fiction tends to be around ten pages in length, though some pieces are as short as three pages, and some as long as twenty. Most of the stories deal with the boundaries between the real and the imagined, dealing heavily with dream-tellings and imagined scenes. The incorporation of still, flat images, like photographs or stand-still memories, and vibrant, live, moving images, are often in the stories, creating various dimensions of imagery and description. The stories tend to move through scenes with characters' awareness of past and future, and their own struggles with how they got to be where they are, or how they're going to get where they want to be. Most of the stories, overall, deal with the examination of the human mind, and aren't afraid to play with form, time, or structure. The reader is often left with a strong feeling of what comes next, or how an emotional impact will affect a character, and the reader can therefore deduce their own ending from having a strong immersion into the story, rather than being given a trite conclusion.

McNair (with input from Jotham Burrello)

Rating 1 (Overall): 9

The contributors are playful with forms and voices, and willing to take risks with structure and content. The stories make you think, without confusion or disenchantment, about the big questions in life about permanence and perception. *Pleiades* features both established and emerging writers within the same pages, which allows the reader to move between various styles, ideas, and aesthetics, and to read a mixture of voices from different literary backgrounds. By including many small-press book reviews, the journal is dedicated to literary conversation.

Rating 2 (For emerging writers): 6

The journal has a less than two-percent acceptance rating, which makes the competition fairly high for an emerging writer. The magazine is, however, a good, solid place to start a career, and most of the other names in the journal will have extensive and impressive previous publishing credits. The writing is strong and daring, giving the magazine a great array of talents and ideas, and it would be a big deal to make it into this journal. The design is sharp and pleasing to the eye, and the book is clean and readable. This is a great place to submit if work is thoughtful, sharp, and brave, and is a strong home for those interested in writing reviews.

“In the Time of the Parachute” by Kate Crosby, published in the Summer 2014 issue, is a child-narrated story in a school setting. The narrator is a young girl who, through instances playing with a parachute, learns about belonging and order. During the last Tuesday of every month, the unnamed narrator and the rest of her all-girl class get to play in the gym with a parachute. The girls scramble around each other, mixing up the order in which they had walked in previously, the narrator always at the end. One day under the parachute, she and three other girls make a pact to be friends forever. Another day, one of them pulls her hair, and they leave her underneath, alone, crying. Another day, they play innocently under the parachute while the space shuttle Challenger explodes in the sky. That night, when she learns of what happened, she thinks of the flap of the parachute, the scuttling of their feet, and the rhythm in her teacher’s steps, rather than the burning bodies in space. The next day at school, as they always do when coming back from the gym, they sit down, going back to their studies, and pick up right where they had left off.

Time moves between the instances fluidly, allowing the “flap” of the parachute to serve as a scene jump. This helps not only to move forward in time without confusion or too much context, but also serves to strengthen the presence of the parachute and its role in the young narrator’s revelations. Written in the first person point of view, the child-like voice comes through strongly in the presentation of time. She says often that she was lying under the parachute “for what might be days” or “what felt like hours” when it was only for a few moments, happy to be surrounded by friends, or sad because she is lonely and no longer included. There is a strong control of time through these instances, and the awareness of a child’s perception in scene allows slowed time and lingering emotion and image.

The parachute holds an important construct in the story, not only in moving time, but also serving as a dome under which intimacy is built and taken away, serving almost as a community within a community. As the young girl learns her “place” in that school community through social interactions under its surface— while bonding with a group, or thinking to herself— she has a stronger grip on the outside world. Through one place, one important object, she is able to better grasp the greater schemes of the world and her role in it, all relating to her time spent under the parachute.

“Cigarette Stories” by Patrick Dacey, published in the Summer 2014 issue, is a realistic short story told through a collection of twenty numbered instances. The narrator learns what love actually is, building his own understanding and sense of it as he grows from a young boy to a man. He is first told by a truck driver that parked in the lot by his house that if his “prick got hard then it meant [he] was in love.” He loses his virginity to a girl who likes to sleep with offensive linemen, and because she has sex with him, he believes it is love, ignoring her other conquests. His next love is a girl named Christina who he has sex with in an old motel every couple of weeks. Through several more instances, he dates a poet who doesn’t like anything he likes, a big girl who only likes to give him blow-jobs, a Puerto Rican bank teller who only wants him for money. He meets a woman named Kate, and in the beginning of their relationship, it is hard for him to have sex with her, and he can’t keep the same momentum and ferocity that he had before. He ends up marrying her, and begins to learn a new kind of love, a slower, more patient love.

Throughout this story, there is an emphasis on objects and their importance to the narrator’s journey. The first time he sees a naked woman is when the truck driver shows him porn magazines. These images come back to him throughout the piece, as he remembers the erotic and exciting nature in which he depicted “love”.

There is strong, repeated imagery of smoke and fire throughout the instances, which builds the atmosphere and thematic quality of something being hot and vast and untamable, but then fading away and leaving a dark, pungent, barren presence. His misconceptions of love and the wildly skewed view of what true intimacy is affect him later in life.

Sensory descriptions are strong and evident in each and every instance, which puts the reader right in the thick of memory, of scene. Sight, taste, touch, smell, sound are all present in just this short example alone: “Her entire room was painted yellow. I told her I wanted to taste her. Her pubic hair was soft and untrimmed. She smelled like cracked almonds. She was wet and moaning...”

This story, through the structure of instances from a young age to present, middle-age, effectively presents the idea of how the past affects the way people are formed, and how they come to be.

“dissolving newspaper, fermenting leaves” by Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi, published in the Winter 2015 issue, is a plain written short story told in a domestic setting. Margaret Morri is a woman, living in guarded barracks, who tries to feed her cricket, but he always refuses. She spends the majority of her days finding new recipes and making new, intricate meals for him, but still he does not want what she has for him, no matter the effort she has made. He eventually tells her that if she lays him down by her ear while she sleeps, he can eat her mother in her dreams. At first she resists, but he assures her that it will only be in dreams that he will eat, and she agrees. As days and weeks go by, he transforms in to a man every night, and hungers for her other family members, and because she knows they are alive in reality, she lets him eat them. She starts to grow more and more weary during the day, and starts to lose memory, feeling, and general understanding of what’s going on. He starts to feed off her toes, then hands, then other parts of her body, and tells her that because she’s been so loyal to him, that he’ll build her an escape from the barracks. She comes to find, while in her dreams, that she cannot climb up the escape, because she has no limbs to do so.

There are many strong folktale qualities about this piece, like talking animals, transformation, a distant third person narration, and the strong awareness of time passage and grand scheme of Margaret’s choices. This folktale element makes the story stand as a cautionary tale, in a way, about unrequited friendship and empty promises, and the sacrifices made of mind and body when trying to keep a one-sided friendship surviving.

Exaggerated, precise verbs and gestures show the effort put in to the process Margaret goes through to appease the cricket. Phrases containing these verbs — such as: “her arms were branded by flares of hot grease”, “her eyes clouded from lack of sleep”, “boiled fistfuls”— all give the sense of strength spent in failures. It shows the exhaustion that comes from attempting to please a selfish person.

“Carnaval” by Brenda Peynado, published in the Winter 2015 issue, is a dream-like short story written in a social, tropical setting. Sandra is a subjective first person narrator who is traveling to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic on a cruise for her honeymoon with her husband, Jared. She is initially excited to show Jared the places she had grown up, but once on the cruise ship, she starts to feel uneasy. They, along with the other guests, are recorded and photographed secretly, and slideshows of their day are presented on the television in their room. The guests are all either morbidly obese, or extremely old. After visiting Cuba and then Puerto Rico, Sandra starts to feel like something is wrong. Jared is entranced with the masks and music on the beaches, and the only attention he pays to his wife is sexual in nature. On the last stop in the Dominican Republic,

Sandra realizes that the sand is man-made, that it's the same coast they've been stopping at for weeks, and when she finds a secret room full of props, the other cruise-members corner her, Jared in-tow, and she tries to yell for help, but all that can be heard is the reggae music blasting through the trees.

The repeated imagery at each port — such as the sand as fine as flour, the loud, reggae music, the Jose Frog restaurant, and the lime and green, horned masks— builds a kind of spiral effect, heightening the nightmarish, exaggerated tones and images found during this couple's "vacation." It also helps the reader cue in on the false authenticity of the environment in which Sandra is surrounded earlier than Sandra herself realizes, because she is in a form of marital bliss. The strong use of models with the other cruise-members helps to show Jared and Sandra as new, or as outsiders, until the very end. It builds this strange, vacation-type nightmare, again, with these models and their characteristic gestures, dialogue, and appearance. The repeated imagery also serves to create a dream-like atmosphere, due to the exaggerated and intrusive nature of the images.

Structured in mini-instances and scenes, the story has the flexibility to play with time and character transformation, without losing the reader among the chaos along the way.

"Pitch" by Dustin M. Hoffman, published in the Summer 2015 issue, is a one-sentence story written in a domestic setting. A deck salesman, serving as the omniscient narrator of the story, explains to a customer why she should purchase an Ultra-Syntho-Balsa deck through one, long sentence of dialogue. He talks about her past and great loves: Zander, who promised her a house with horses and cows, and only wanted to touch her; Billy, the gentle boy who never even got to kiss her before dying in the war; her husband, who promised her a stable life, but grew bored of her and forgetful of her pain and sacrifice in raising their two children. The salesman goes on to tell her to imagine herself out on her deck, finally being able to relax for herself, and then tells her he would love her, and says, "...we'll live happily ever after until we don't."

This story goes quickly and poignantly through the life of the customer, all while intertwining elements of the sales pitch. Through one sentence, almost all in dialogue, the story is able to move through time, and give quick, yet visceral descriptions.

Throughout the piece, there are elements of empty words and empty promises exchanged for love and sacrifice, and how it leaves one, or, in particular, this woman, heartbroken and alone. Phrases in the sentence, like: "...because all you ever really wanted was someone who will tell you the truth and stop pretending that love will simply cure all, slap its bandages of star-crossed blinders over your eyes and make everything perfect, when there's no such thing, so why don't we just tell each other the lies we want to hear, and will you take this brochure at the very least..." shows the twisting of the woman's own desires and past with the sales pitch, and again reiterates the truth that people, not just salesmen, though humans are all salesmen in their own right, have tricks they use to sell, to promise things, in exchange for something unreasonable, or unfair.

"The Seldom Scene" by Allyson Goldin Loomis, published in the Summer 2015 issue, is a simply-told short story written in a domestic setting. Marius's daughter Rachel wants to have a family portrait done of them, but he wrestles with the idea because he knows he looks sickly due to his worsening cancer. His wife tells him not to agree, but when he sees how beautiful his daughter is, and how badly she wants the photograph, he agrees. Time moves on, and his condition worsens, and he doesn't want anyone to remember him as a dying man. He tells his wife he hopes he dies before his grandson is born, because he doesn't want the child's only memory of that time to be relating to his death. He soon starts to lose grip on when he

is dreaming and when he is awake, and after some time has great difficulty telling the difference. When the photographer comes, he doesn't smile in the photos, because he doesn't want to be lying. He falls into his wife's lap suddenly, and camera clicks and clicks and then suddenly stops.

Dialogue is used effectively in this story, not only to show the intimate conversations between father and daughter, husband and wife, but also as a mark of change and transformation. In the beginning of the story, dialogue takes up most of the scenes' time, and it is direct, natural, and necessary. As the story goes on, however, the dialogue is present less and less. This shows the change in Marius's behavior, where once he was lively and conversational, and then becomes slow and struggling, where he wants to say things, but the energy needed to say them isn't there. Instead, he sits and watches, remaining attentive to anything that his eyes just happen to land on, whether real or imagined.

There are many contrasting images used between youth and beauty, and sickness and ugliness. Rachel, a ballet dancer, is always using big gestures, using her limber legs to move around the home effortlessly, where Marius can barely sit up on his own in his chair. The imagined image of Marius holding his grandson for the first time shows a great difference in the closeness of death between the two characters. This heightens Marius's struggle with the fact that he will be remembered in all ways, including the time his body is decaying, and his mind is dying.