

Title of Magazine: **Jersey Devil Press**

Issue: # 24, September 2011

Editor: Eirik Gumeny

What They Publish: New and previously-published fiction in the form of flash and short stories, as well as creative nonfiction. They prefer pieces that are funny, quirky, offbeat, or absurd to those that are melodramatic. Avoid tales involving vampires, mobs, and/or student-teacher sexual encounters, unless you plan to start a rejection-letter collection. They are currently in the market for flash pieces inspired by Bruce Springsteen lyrics, featured in their “Brilliant Disguise” section.

Submission Guidelines: Send work through Submishmash, along with a 100-word bio written in the third-person. Simultaneous and previously-published submissions are accepted, at a maximum of one story at a time. If rejected, wait a month before submitting again. The journal has a strong desire to publish strong female voices, pieces that take a lighter view of the world, and experimental fiction that aims for whacked-out and crazy.

Description of Publication: Recently updated, the site’s simple design, bannered by a glaring red graphic of a devil’s profile, is edgy and easy to navigate. Its voice is modern and sharp, the caustic humor coming through even in the submission guidelines, where editors warn, “Any violation of these rules will most likely be met with a severe and perpetual frowning upon and potentially a cursing of your name. Also, a rejection.” The magazine publishes online and print journals once a month, plus free downloadable PDF files. The press encourages the absurd and strange, with stories ranging in style from the language of text-messaging, to stories told from the POV of a dog. Both established and emerging writers are found here, splitting the playing field almost evenly each issue. The site offers links to book recommendations, as well, with readable excerpts online.

Prose per Issue/Annum: Five to six pieces per issue, sixty to seventy pieces per year.

Prose Review:

An absurdist, first-person piece of flash fiction, Samuel Snoek-Brown’s *Colony* is set in a young four-person house, which slowly gets infested by famous authors. The story begins with Hemingway busting into their kitchen, banging away on a typewriter as the narrator, his girlfriend, his friend Jake, and his brother all try to figure out how the writer got there. Before they can decide what to do, the house is further swarmed by Walt Whitman, Gertrude Stein, Kerouac passed-out drunk in the backseat of their car, Dickens scribbling away by candlelight, and a flood of others, until finally, the narrator and his housemates decide that the best way to deal with all these imposing writers is to sell them. They start a business in which they sell tickets to watch the writers at work. The business expands, so more room has to be made for the new authors pouring in, until the narrator is finally squashed away in his room with all the furniture that will no longer fit in the house. Finally fed up with his lack of space, and the fact that his girlfriend is having an affair with Ernest Hemingway, the narrator throws all the furniture out the window, scattering the crowd below. When they disperse, he turns around, and is comforted by the new state of his room, a moment in which he has finally found “an empty space, plenty of light, and a little quiet in which to write.”

The absurdity of this story is heightened by the author’s use of voice and specific details. Each writer gets his or her own speaking style, whether it’s Gertrude Stein plowing through the front door, “squat, domineering,” and professing to the room, “The light in here is terrible the light is wan. The light is the light and needs to be lighter;” or

it's poor Dickens, apologizing for sitting on his milk crate, saying, "Sorry, everywhere else was taken." Hearing them speak gives life to them in a way that pure concept would not. At the same time, Brown gives details to illustrate how the characters' disbelief coincides and shifts with our own. At first, they believe that "someone was fucking with [them], paying their buddies to put on thrift-store clothes and show up unannounced," but slowly, the skepticism dies away with straightforward, unqualified statements: "Two days later, Gertrude Stein pushed through our front door." In this way, Brown manages to transform the absurd into the everyday, making it relatable, and melding it quickly into the reality of the narrator. By the end, getting rid of these authors becomes as commonplace as moving some furniture around.

Where Did My Balls Go, or The Story of Oliver: A Canine Memoir by Shannon Derby is a reflective, quasi-realist, plainspoken story told in the first-person. It is realist because the language and events are neither extraordinary nor absurd. It is "quasi" because it's told from the point-of-view of a dog, Oliver (formerly Mr. Peabody). Oliver and his brother, Newton, are born on a puppy farm to a dying mother. Oliver tells us how he and Newton get picked-on at the puppy farm, how they get taken away and neutered, how he has to watch his brother leave him, sold to a family out of state. In the end, Oliver gets adopted by two kind lady roommates, and his awful struggles are over.

Much of the humor in this story comes from the reflective awareness that Derby gives Oliver. Ignorant of the human world, Oliver's pain becomes intensified as he has to watch what it means to be neutered, gazing in horror as they extract "something wet and pink" from Newton's body, and only then realizing what it meant: "They had removed Newton's balls! They took Newton's balls and they were going to take mine." By giving him insight into past events, but choosing to tell them in the moment, Derby lets each experience play out with full impact, letting the reader experience Oliver's uncertainty without being confused as to what's going on. In this way, the humor and silliness of a memoir-writing dog is counterweighted by deeper, more universal feelings regarding that loss: "To this very day, I still spend long hours licking myself, trying to undo wounds that are permanent."

Rating: 8. Although looking for a particular kind of style, founded on the quirky and strange, this journal seems to be a great opening for emerging writers and new voices. The work is good without being unapproachable, and since the press publishes once every month, there is a lot of opportunity for emerging writers to get not only published, but bound. Plus, you can submit previously published work, which opens opportunities to circulate your best writing again, while also beefing up your credentials.