

John A Maloney

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Title of Magazine: Brick

Editors: Michael Helm, Michael Redhill, Linda Spalding, Rebecca Silver Slayter, Laurie Graham

Web Address: www.brickmag.com

What they publish: Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, essay.

Submission Guidelines: Nonfiction only - *Brick* does not accept unsolicited fiction or poetry submissions.

Description of Publication: Biannual print magazine out of Toronto has many glowing blurbs on their website from prominent writers. Publishes work from established folks almost exclusively, in a handsome square bound journal.

Prose Per Issue: Lots of nonfiction, maybe one piece of fiction.

Prose Reviews:

“Sixty Years of Journal Keeping” by Donald Richie is a first-person essay told in a conversational style. Richie is taking a retrospective look at what journal-keeping means, what it has meant to him, and how he has used the medium to explore both his outer surroundings and, at the same time, his own inner persona. He has lived in Japan since the aftermath of WWII and spent time journaling about his surroundings, the lives of the people recovering from decimation, and the lives of people attempting to crawl up from the rubble. In this retrospective mode, he notices the changes in himself that were less evident during the writing, but that seem to be at the forefront of his entries now.

The piece is rather short, yet it covers (as the title suggests) six decades spent in postwar Japan. As a result, we get a super-speed montage of life as it has evolved in that seemingly short timespan, from imperial old guard Japan to modern McDonald’s-and-maglev Japan. The effect is slightly disorienting yet welcoming, dizzying yet somehow pleasant. It has the disaffected tone of someone who is trying not to let their emotional attachment shine through too much, trying to remain journalistic despite an array of feelings ready to burst onto the page.

“It’s Going to Snow” by Severo Sarduy is a surrealistic tale told in the third person. A ship has come into an unspecified port, stocked to the gills with its cargo, which includes, anachronistically, both big-screen TVs and African slaves. The narrator describes the scene in vivid and adjective-heavy detail, and then zooms in to Firefly, a vague character watching the scene from the dock. As he contemplates the terrible fate in store for him whether he were a slave or a free man, a girl without eyelashes slinks up to him through the crowd. She utters some mysterious phrases, then disappears. A coachman informs a well-to-do lady that the odd atmospheric disturbance is not, as she thinks, “the souls coming back,” but instead an indicator that “it’s going to snow.”

This is a difficult story to parse meaning from, rife with conflicting imagery and vivid scene detached from story. We don't meet the "main character", Firefly, until midway through the piece, and when we alight on his shoulder, we get little to nothing about who he is or why we're there. There is a clear narrative voice looking down with disdain upon the whole proceedings, but in the whirl of imagery and mystery, there is little to ground us in the scene. Overall the piece is intriguing but leaves you discomfited, as in waking from a bad dream.

Rating: 0. Difficult to publish your nonfiction, and impossible to publish your fiction. Good read, though.