

PERIPHERAL VISION MAGAZINE

FALL 2008

a journal of literature, art and culture

Stephen Brooke,
editor and publisher



Peripheral Vision Magazine
Issue 2, Fall 2008
<http://peripheralvisionmag.com>



a production of
Insolent Lad Media
©2008

4803 Peanut Road
Graceville FL32440
<http://insolentlad.com>

CONTENTS

3. the editor's desk

Welcome to the Fall '08 *Peripheral Vision Magazine*

4. essay

A Little Character, Please by Sherrie R. Parnell

6. poetry

Two Poems by Stephen Brooke

8. essay

Poetically Speaking by Stephen Brooke

9. short fiction

Lightning by Branford Perry

13. essay

The Remodernist by Stephen Brooke

16. contributors

THE EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome to the Fall 2008 issue of *Peripheral Vision Magazine*, our sophomore outing. Here is a thank you to all the readers of and contributors to our premiere issue; We felt that it came off well. Or, at least, promising enough to keep us going.

Where many online magazines and similar enterprises fail is after the first issue or two. The publisher loses interest or can't find enough time. The material submitted proves insufficient or there is lack of readership and feedback. The publication lacks purpose or direction.

We are here for the long run, even if it means writing much of the material myself. We could have wished for more good submissions this time around but it was not unexpected that the material would be sparse. After all, *Peripheral Vision* is still new and has not attracted much attention yet.

So, this second issue is a bit on the lean side. We hope to have more content next spring.

We also remain committed to the basic concept of the magazine, the return of meaning in the arts. This is why we refer to *PVM* as a remodernist journal. There is more in this vein in an essay I wrote for this issue, *The Remodernist*.

The Fall '08 edition also features more thoughts on the processes of writing, by Sherrie Parnell. This time around, Ms Parnell delves into character development.

Branford Perry's work appears again, with another short story, *Lightning*.

Please enjoy the latest *Peripheral Vision* and feel free to write us with ideas, comments or material for publication. We would love to feature more reviews, as well as new and fresh fiction and poetry.

Thank you and read on,

Stephen Brooke
editor and publisher, *Peripheral Vision Magazine*

Mr Brooke's desk is a large wooden one he found at a flea market

ESSAY

A Little Character, Please

Sherrie R. Parnell

The hero of the novel you're reading is racing across town, trying to beat the clock but he's lost. With time ticking away, he comes across a hot dog stand in the park and asks for directions from the bun-slinging guy. So far in the story, you know everything about the hero that the author has revealed to you, but what do you know about the hot dog stand guy? He's only a minor character, yet you should be able to get a glimpse of who he is from how he's written into the story.

As a writer, I spend a great deal of time developing my major characters and their supporting cast. Each detail of their personality is thought out and plotted, as is details of their appearance, home, work and even their favorite color. For a long time, I didn't bother with the single paragraph appearances of minor people like waitresses, salesmen and even those passing by on the street. Yet, scenes involving these type of characters have always been difficult for me to write. Then it dawned on me as to why I couldn't get their scenes to blend in with the rest of the story. I hadn't developed these characters prior to the scene.

When I develop my main characters, I use a series of questions and answers and sometimes even use those online astrology sites that give free horoscopes detailing character features and flaws. Once I get a true feel for my characters, I am ready to insert them into a plot and let the story write itself. But this type of developing takes time and I really don't want to invest this much effort into my minor characters. Yet, now I realize I should.

My "walk-in" characters don't receive the same Q & A treatment as my major characters, but I try to get a good feel of them such as who they are, what brings them to this place in the story, what kind of mood are they in and how will they react when approached by the character. Even if some of the details of this person aren't written into the story, as the writer I know them and will write the scene with a zest that will show within the words of the scene.

If a story is worth telling, then you should also take the time to create a world just for this story, so the characters will be at home when you write. If the major characters deserve so much attention, so does the setting. Does the street your hero lives on have

continued on next page

A Little Character, Please, page 2

trees? What kind? Is the town small? Does he live in a house or an apartment? Is it decorated or sparsely furnished? These questions deserve thought and your characters need these details so they become three-dimensional in the reader's mind.

Creating a plot is easy to do, but making the story leap to life is more involving and very difficult to accomplish. Take the time to make every character--major or minor--stand out and give your story the atmosphere it deserves. Your readers will thank you for it.

Sherrie Parnell is a writer and Southern belle. This is her second essay on the nuts and bolts of writing to appear in Peripheral Vision Magazine.

POETRY

two poems by Stephen Brooke

Pieces of the Moon

I am drunk with silken wine
laid soft upon the night;
oh, throw me pieces of the moon,
I'll fly them like a kite.

Cover me and I shall you
in skies of satin sheets,
as all the stars of heaven sail
away in morning's fleets.

Midnight's heady air pours out
its violet serenades;
oh, sing me pieces of the moon
before our zephyr fades



continued on next page

Two Poems by Stephen Brooke, page 2

Uncertainty Principles

I believe that for every butterfly
in Brazil that changes the weather
there is another in Poland
to put things back as they were.

The one from South America is bright
and flashy and gets all the attention.
Poster-bug for chaos theory, it flutters
its wings and we expect surprises,

changes, hurricanes at Christmas.
And where are they, all the promises
of uncertainty? Tucked beneath
the wings of some drab spoil-sport

on the other side of the planet.

The poem Pieces of the Moon was originally published in the chapbook of the same name by Stephen Brooke (available from Insolent Lad Media) ~ illustration by the author

ESSAY

Poetically Speaking Stephen Brooke

What is poetry? Language? Emotion? Metaphor? These and more, I suppose, and perhaps indescribable, save through the language of poetry itself.

Can you imagine the first poems? Did our ancestors gather around the fire, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years ago, and find poetry even as they discovered language? They may have had but a few words, but I'm certain poetry was in man's soul even then. Did one chant the name of an animal they hunted? That would be poetry.

Language is forever tied to the poetic, for both are born of metaphor and symbol. Our entire ability to reason, to recognize mortality – time and our place within it – relies on such symbolic understanding of our world.

Prayer can be poetry. Maybe all prayers are, by their nature, for they yearn for something more than we have in our earthly existence. Growing up Catholic, I am well aware of the poetic element in the mass. It exists, however, in all religious expression. We sing in church (most of us) to better communicate with our god.

But then, every song, even the worst, tritest, pop, has an element of poetry. We learn early on that there are things we can't express in normal speech and so we seek other ways to 'say' them. No wonder there are so many love songs!

Love poems, as well, are a staple. Lost love, yearning love, the gamut of emotions involved in love, can often be expressed through metaphors – the symbols that help us make sense of, to understand what can be a very complicated part of life.

There is much bad poetry out there. Personal poetry – it may serve a purpose for the writer but fails in communicating anything worthwhile to the reader (or listener). I suppose it has given poetry a bad name over the years but the fact that we recognize it as bad shows that we have a desire for the good poem, the one that says something and says it well.

For poetry is indeed all the three things I named it: language, emotion, and metaphor, all of which are entwined to the point where it is difficult to say where each begins and ends. A good poem is a knot one can pick at for quite some time!

SHORT FICTION

Lightning
by Branford Perry

June feared storms. This shouldn't be surprising as she had been struck by lightning three times in her life.

I didn't stand too close to her during bad weather.

We were doing a show down in Trenton, at the old train depot. Arts and crafts, that is, June with her silver jewelry, me trying to sell my paintings. It seems that every town that has an abandoned depot tries to turn it into some sort of community center or museum, something that will bring shoppers to what is usually the not-so-nice side of town.

Craft shows are often a part of that. It wasn't really the sort of venue where I should be showing the artwork. Wrong time of year, wrong sort of advertising, just the wrong place altogether. Better to spend ones time and money on the shows in larger cities, the ones in the artsy downtown districts. But June wanted to do a show with me – thinking it would be something new and exciting – and it was close to home.

It didn't take much time for me to set up my tent, that lovely summer Saturday morning, put out a table for June's trinkets, hang paintings on my racks. Too little time, perhaps; I'm used to organizing and doing things myself and, although I did my best not to show it, June was mostly in my way. I tried to share the experience because I was, after all, in love. Still, it's in my nature to be efficient and self-contained.

So, there was an opportunity, after setting up, to look over some of the other displays. It would be a while before the potential customers showed in any numbers. A few spaces down from ours, an older woman in dark attire – pretty much the regulation artist uniform – was setting up jewelry cases. "Good morning, ladies," she cheerfully greeted us with a wave of her multi-ringed hand. At that time of the morning it was probably still real cheer. "Let me know if I can help you with anything."

It wasn't the first time I'd been mistaken for female, being small-boned, long-haired, and fond of wearing aloha shirts. If she recognized her mistake, she didn't correct it before we moved on to the next vendor.

continued on next page

Lightning, page 2

We were both in flowered aloha shirts that day and wearing fanny packs, to boot. "I'm sure they suspect that we're lesbian lovers," I told June. "I'm the cute one in the couple, of course."

June gave me *that* look. She never really appreciated my humor.

I don't think she liked the whole idea of me being mistaken for a woman, either, nor my 'who cares' attitude about it. The truth is, I may be insecure about a great many things but my masculinity has never been one of them.

It was truly a beautiful day. It was also a summer day in Florida which meant a good chance of rain, wind and storms later on. I knew about such hazards and had a well secured and covered set up for art shows.

Too well covered, perhaps, as it got pretty hot under all those plastic tarps as the sun rose higher. Not much to do about that, though, so I just sat and smiled at the browsers, hoping one might become a buyer. A long shot, to be sure, but I was used to this sort of waiting game.

June, on the other hand, was new to the outdoor show experience. Soon came boredom, followed closely by complaints. "You should talk more to people when they stop."

"Maybe." I wasn't going to argue the point, though I know folks like to browse in peace, more often than not. Nor am I known as the most talkative person around.

At any rate, I didn't talk more to people when they stopped. Instead, I engaged June on the subject of the teenage boys playing energetic punk-pop on the old depot platform. "Sound a bit like Green Day," I offered.

She didn't know who Green Day was. Our conversations took such turns too frequently, I'm afraid.

I'm afraid, too, that June wasn't finding much excitement in our day's outing. She abandoned me, after a while, to stroll about and gossip with other exhibitors. I sat and watched the clouds multiply in the afternoon sky, first only a few puffballs, then larger cumulus towers and mounds, shifting from white to ever-darker shades of gray.

continued on next page

Lightning, page 3

From the west, out toward the Gulf of Mexico, came a subdued rumble, sensed as much as heard. The breeze was picking up some and the chill of rain was in it. Well, it was about time to pack it up for the day, anyway. Sales had been few – prints, some small pieces of jewelry – but folks had picked up our flyers and cards. Maybe something would come of that.

June was nervous. I suppose I had never taken her fear of lightning very seriously; I love lightning storms myself, not that I would stand out in a field during one. That, however, was not my concern at that moment. I wanted to get our stuff under cover before the storm arrived. Trying to break down the display and getting it stowed away in the wind and rain is an experience to be avoided, yet all too common at outdoor shows.

Having gathered our equipment into orderly groupings – with June once again getting in the way of my all-too-obsessive routine – I went to get the truck from a parking lot around the block. I pulled it into the last parking space before the corner, not really that far from our exhibition space.

"Oh Bran, just move it forward," said June, "and let's get done quickly." She seemed quite insistent that I should park illegally.

And I, just as adamantly, refused to park in the turn lane. After all, it would save, what, fifteen or twenty feet of distance? "This will do fine," I replied. "Let's load up."

Light rain was sprinkling and the occasional thunder rumbled, still relatively distant. "Oh, come on. Please. I want to get out of here."

I realized there was real panic in her voice, as well as a certain frustration with my ways. Still, I was loathe to pull that truck forward. I've always been a person who respected boundaries and hoped others would respect mine.

But I knew this was no time to explain things, assuming I could explain things at all. Then again, I was also in love with June and men in love do things against their nature. And then do them again.

So, perhaps not as graciously as I might have, I started up the truck and drove it forward. All the while, I was thinking I could already be partly loaded up and fumed a bit that I could let myself be turned from my course.

continued on next page

Lightning, page 4

Now, it was raining harder. And, yes, the thunder sounded more closely, as lightning flickered along the dark belly of an approaching front. We hurried to finish getting everything into the bed of the truck.

"Go ahead and get inside," I told June. "I'll throw on the tarp and tie everything down."

To her credit, June didn't desert in the face of fire, even though I took my time and perhaps tied things down a little more securely than necessary. I could tell she was impatient, none the less, and that she had her eye on the skies.

She probably never realized that it was hard for me to break the rules like that, even little unimportant rules. She never realized a lot of things about me. Right then, that didn't matter to me, as we drove through the storm to my place. We would spend the night wrapped in each other but not really knowing each other.

One thing I do know about her, though.

June finally did find some excitement that day.

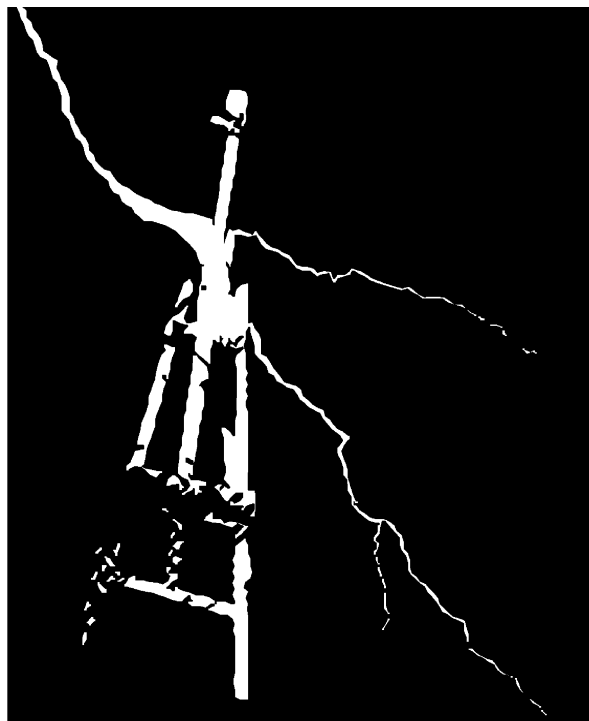


illustration by Stephen Brooke

ESSAY

The Remodernist

Stephen Brooke

IS THAT AN ISM?

It seems that all the good isms are taken. Too many movements, artistic or otherwise, have snapped them up. Only, of course, so they can be discarded in turn for the next *Neo-this* and *Re-that*.

Now we have Remodernism. I'm not particularly fond of this label, as I find it not quite an accurate description of the movement's goals, but suspect that we're stuck with it. Unless something better comes along; I'll let you know if it does!

Speaking of being stuck, the Remodernist name derives from the Stuckist movement, as much as anything else.

STUCK

Great writing appears to change the world but in fact what it does is to reveal more of what the world truly is.

That's a quote I lifted from one of the various manifestos and essays at the Stuckism site (www.stuckism.com). Though 'Stuckism' (and 'Remodernism') is more an art movement than a literary one, I've been aware of and somewhat in sympathy with its ideals for some time. I wouldn't call myself a Stuckist, but I suppose I'm close to it.

And I wouldn't use the label because I do disagree with a few of its tenets, such as the idea that Modernism and Post-Modernism intrinsically differ. I'm with Tom Wolfe on this one: both are essentially based, for better or worse, on the principles of conceptualism. As is all art, to some degree! The Stuckists try just a little too hard to bash what they consider 'anti-art.' Most anti-art may be bad art (and sometimes is so intended), but that doesn't mean it isn't art.

continued on next page

The Remodernist, page 2

Please note that I have nothing against conceptual art, per se, but has anything particularly interesting been done since Yoko Ono's work in the 60s? I do agree that the time is past for the current academic conceptual stuff. It is time to rebuild, to actually paint, to actually craft art of all sorts. Yes, it's acceptable -- sometimes -- to present a piece of 'objective' art and let the meaning be in the eye of the beholder. It can also be rather lazy. If you don't actually have something to say, a discovery to make and share, what's the point?

MODERNISM, PART TWO

Post-Modernism, as I see it, is essentially Modernism, part 2, the necessary successor and antithesis (somewhat) to Modernism. PM, then, is not a 'school' but rather a period and a broad movement.

Schools and 'isms' of that sort – such as Stuckism – are another subject . I think they are important as ways to focus ones art, whether one officially follows or belongs to one or not. Indeed, If forced to categorize myself, I probably would have called myself some sort of Expressionist from the time I left school up until the start of this century.

Neo-Expressionism was big and it seemed the closest thing to what I was doing; my 'heroes' were really painters like Matisse, Rouault and Bonnard. Now I recognize that I was never really quite an Expressionist, more interested in symbol and metaphor (both as painter and writer) than in the emotion of the painted surface.

CONSTRUCTION, DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

But, back to Post-Modernism: much of the early PM work was a bit of rebellion against the way Moderns took themselves oh-so-seriously. It's the difference between Pop Art and the last major Modernist school, Abstract Expressionism. It's the difference between the Beats and, say, Anne Sexton, who was definitely Post-Modern (so obviously being PM didn't preclude being a serious poet). But like Modernism, it has always tended to favor concept over execution, which can certainly lead to shallowness and self-indulgence, not to mention attacks of terminal cleverness. That's something I've been occasionally guilty of myself.

continued on next page

The Remodernist, page 3

I've come across the hypothesis that Moderns thought they had 'all the answers' and that PM was basically saying 'no you don't.' In fact, the whole world these days seems to be saying there are no answers – that the universe is random. Maybe so, but to me the point of the arts is trying to make some order from that chaos out there. Or, if you will, discovering the self (or the world or even God – it's all essentially the same quest, I would say).

Modernism was constructive; Post-Modernism deconstructed.

Anyway, PM would seem to be reaching its end. It had its fifty years, more or less, as did Modernism before it, and has lost any remaining momentum. Hence, the clever but meaningless work we're seeing now and the casting about for alternatives by such people as the Stuckists, the New Formalists and so on. Perhaps we're at or near the point of synthesis, when the best of the Modern and Postmodern currents join to create something great – a 'reconstruction' of Modernism, the Modern equivalent of the High Renaissance. I'd like to hope so!

THE POWER OF MYTH

One goal I have at *Peripheral Vision Magazine* is to reawaken the meaningful symbol, to be a myth builder. The times are changing; the time is right. Whether 'Remodernism' is the correct direction or whether the term even holds any long term meaning really matters little. The thing is to work towards that goal.

Meanwhile, I'll just try to have something worthwhile to say and not worry overly much about those isms.

PERIPHERAL VISION MAGAZINE

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE FALL 2008 ISSUE

Stephen Brooke, in addition to editing and publishing *PV Magazine*, is a writer, artist and musician. He also produces and engineers at his recording studio, **Que Linda Music**.

Sherrie Parnell is a writer/poet from southeastern North Carolina. She has published two poetry books and has several novels in progress. Miss Parnell believes that we all have a story to tell. Her website is www.sipsofsherrie.com.

Branford Perry writes semi-autobiographical tales of the South. His short story *Lightning* appears in this issue of PVM.

*All the material here is the copyrighted work of the respective authors and artists.
Please do not use it without their express permission.*