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Review of Troika by Adam Pelzman

Kevin Clouther

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Troika.

By Adam Pelzman.

May 2014. 288p. Putnam/Amy Einhorn, \$25.95 (9780399167485).

Troika opens in a strip club, an unlikely setting for a love story. Author Pelzman plays with reader expectations throughout his debut novel, delaying the introduction of the third member of his love triangle until deep into the book. The payoff is significant and surprising. Pelzman inhabits each of these characters

with an intimate first person, and each point of view sounds authentic, as well as distinct from the others. The front story moves from seedy south Florida to gilded Manhattan, with occasional glimpses into the protagonist Julian's violent Russian upbringing. Although Julian is the romantic fulcrum of the novel, his two love interests emerge as more compelling characters. Pelzman draws Perla, a Cuban American dancer, particularly tenderly, though her introspection grows repetitive and her reactions can be cartoonish. The novel's strongest passages view love and longing through a hopeful lens, even amidst tragedy: "During these fleeting moments of divine inspiration, I believe that somehow I'm going to turn this catastrophe into something spectacular, something joyous and unexpected." —*Kevin Clouter*

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