

Smokelong Quarterly

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Editor: Dave Clapper, Fiction Editor; Kathy Fish,

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

What They Publish: Flash fiction up to 1,000 words

Submission Guidelines: Flash fiction up to 1,000 words, prefer 400-700 word length, two returns between paragraphs, send anytime, simultaneous and multiple submissions accepted (no more than 3, prefer one at a time), no previously published works, use online submission form

Description of Publication: E-zine, published quarterly (3/15, 6/15, 9/15, 12/15), site looks good, nice graphics throughout including one with each story, easy to navigate, features interviews with all authors. Most contributors previously published. Classy

Percentage of Prose Per Issue / Amount of Prose Published Annually: One hundred percent flash fiction, approximately seventy pieces published annually (15-20 per issue)

Prose Reviews:

Ice by Joseph Young, is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. The subjective first-person narrator is concerned about the fate of a dog stuck at the bottom of a gully. A beefy jock-type approaches, someone the narrator would not usually have anything to do with. The two eventually form an unlikely partnership and go to rescue the dog together.

The story starts with an impossible situation, a poor trapped dog. The dog is just a vehicle, though. The real story is about the narrator and the jock forming a connection for the sake of something outside themselves. The two characters bring out positive aspects of the other. Neither one, on his own, would probably have gone to save the dog. The writer uses internal thought/fantasy on the part of the narrator and dialogue between the two characters to get his story across. There is an uplifting ending; the narrator sees that the jock has a "Christmas heart," a generosity of spirit. The mention of Christmas at the end also ties in nicely to the first line of the story where it is Christmas Eve.

The Mother's Guide to Flight Patterns by Theresa Boyar, is a combination of plain spoken and poetic, a combination of realistic and experimental or minimalism, a combination of objective (mostly) and subjective, and is mostly domestic but also a little exotic in setting. The piece is structured in three sections – each closely observing a moment of play in the life of a small boy and his mother. The meticulous observations of the boy are juxtaposed with flashes of the inner life of the mother. The sections correspond with three seasons: spring, summer and fall.

This piece is perhaps more a prose poem than a story. It shows us three slices of time that are related by their subject matter and tone. The characters are an archetypal "he" and a "she," who I originally thought was a sister, but finally realized was the mother. The work combines the child's activity with some element in the earthly environment: arrival of the birds, marbles as meteors, migration in the fall, constellations. These elements feel metaphorical, as do the contrasts between the child's play and the mother's perceptions. They seem to be telling us something about the passage of time, the perspective of a mother, the mundane at the center of the cosmic. The piece is satisfying in the way poetry satisfies, but if a

reader was looking for characters and a story to follow, he would be disappointed. Works like this add to the range of pieces in this zine.

Rating: 5 out of 10. Smokelong would be a fine place for an emerging writer to get his first work published. They publish about seventy works per year, so the odds are better than some. I also get the feeling the editors are open-minded – they will consider any work that grabs them. The negative is that I do not see many unpublished writers in the issues, though it is difficult to tell from the bios and interviews.