

CALYX (Winter 2007)

Reviewer: Stephanie Cudo

Editor: Beverly McFarland

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Address: CALYX, P.O. Box B, Corvallis, OR 97339

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What They Publish: Poetry, Short Stories, Essays, Visual Artwork, and Book Reviews

Submission Guidelines: Accepts work from women only. Prose and poetry submissions accepted every year from October 1 to December 31; artwork accepted year-round. Prose should be typed and double-spaced, no longer than 5,000 words. Must include a SASE and a brief biographical statement, no more than 50 words. No electronic submissions accepted. All submissions must have artist's name, title, and phone number; name should appear on each page. Simultaneous submissions are allowed.

Description of Publication: Published bi-annually. Attractive, professionally-bound journal. Artwork published on glossy pages. Short stories are literary fiction; no genres. Annual poetry prize contest.

Prose Per Issue: 25% prose. Averages four to five prose pieces each issue.

Prose Reviews:

The Chemical Nature of Things by Naomi Benaron is a first-person, poetically told, realistic story in a domestic setting. The narrator works the night shift at a mental illness hospital as a certified nursing assistant. She is studying to become a doctor. As she goes about making sure that every patient is in his or her own bed, none of the silverware from dinner is missing, and they have actually swallowed their pills, she remembers the alcoholic craziness and suicide of her mother. She continually compares things to the electrons of atoms in elements, always wondering if the element of lithium would have saved her mother. When a girl comes in at 3 a.m., she is covered in self-inflicted cuts, and she blames the narrator for her imprisonment, though it was her supervisor's fault. The narrator remembers her own history with self-mutilation and wonders if the girl will be okay.

The structure and order of the story allows the reader to learn enough information at the right time. The connection between the narrator's past and set goal in life is strong and allows the story to progress. Because of her past, the narrator is able to identify and reach the patients in ways that her supervisor cannot, especially when she curses herself with the girl as she curses at her in the end of the story.

Eating Cake by Annie Weatherwax is a first-person, plain spoken, realistic story taken place in a domestic setting. The narrator, Missy, recalls when her brother Tommy was killed at age 16 for being gay. Miss Willowbee, a large woman who is the religious matriarch of the town, was the only one who voiced her distaste for who Tommy while the rest of the ladies in town sympathized with the thought of losing a son. When Miss Willowbee's car breaks down in front of their house on Tommy's 17th birthday, she comes in, and Missy forces her to eat the cake Ma has made. She points her Pa's gun at her the entire time, wanting to shoot something, her parents not stopping her. She ends up shooting the cake at her Ma's insistence.

Throughout the story, there is a strong sense of place; the descriptions of the town and the relationships between its inhabitants give the reader the close-knit feel of living in that small town. The characters seem very round and well-developed. Missy's defensive stance of her brother is unconditional and arrogantly humorous, giving a personal feel to the story.

Rating: 5. I greatly enjoyed this journal. The stories I read had subject matter that interested me, and they were told in a compelling way. The quality of the work was high, and the journal itself is very well put together and presented. Most of the contributors have been published before, but there were one or two first time publications in this issue. I gave it a higher rating because only about ten prose pieces are published in a year. But everything else makes me optimistic about this journal, and I would consider it an achievement to be published in it, not to mention reachable.