

The Furnace Review



Matt Sadowski
Literary Magazine Report
Winter 2009

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Fact Sheet

Online Magazine: The Furnace Review

Address: 905 Michigan Ave. #3
Miami Beach, FL 33139

Web Address: www.thefurnacereview.com

E-mail Addresses: submissions@thefurnacereview.com
editor@thefurnacereview.com

Founded: Fall 2004

Founder/Editor: Ciara LaVelle

Frequency: Quarterly

What They Publish: Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, photography, artwork

Submission Guidelines: Include name, e-mail, and short bio. 7,000 word maximum. Send to submissions@thefurnacereview.com.

Simultaneous Subs: Yes

Reporting Time: 4-6 months

Reading Period: Year-round

Contributor Payment: Currently non-paying

Cost: Free

Non-Profit: Yes

Total Circulation: 5,000 visits per issue/ 64,000 hits per issue

Unsolicited Manuscripts Received: 200/issue

% Unsolicited Manuscripts Published Per Year: 35%

CLMP: Yes

Why I Chose TFR

I first stumbled across *The Furnace Review* during a search for literary magazines in the *Poets & Writers* database. The Web site is simple and easy to navigate. Each seasonal issue is accompanied by a vibrant and interesting photograph. I remember being blown away by *Beautiful Money* by George L. Chieffet and many of the other stories. The crew of TFR spans the globe, an impressive feat for such a small magazine.

Issue Comparison

	Spring 2009	Summer 2009	Fall 2009
Writers Male:Female	3:0	1:2	2:0
Protagonist Male:Female:Both	2:1:0	0:2:1	2:0:0
POV 1 st :2 nd :3 rd	2:0:1	1:0:2	2:0:0
Writer's Credits Book:Mag:First	0:3:0	1:1:1	1:2:0

According to these three issues from 2009, TFR publishes more males than females—three times as much. The sex of the protagonists is fairly balanced though. There were four male protagonists, three females, and one story that had both.

Also, first person point of view is three times as likely to be used than the third person.

In contrast to TFR's value of underrepresented writers, there was only one emerging author published in these three issues out of eight writers. It all comes down to the strength of the writing, not the writer's publication history.

Prose Reviews

Spring 2009

Death in the Oatmeal by Michael Pikna is a plainspoken story in a domestic setting told in third person. Matt Sidlicki, a fifty-year old man, starts thinking of his imminent death approaching. This causes him to see death in unexpected places such as the raisins in his oatmeal (“the raisins staring up at him like the very eyes of death”). While his wife sleeps, he calculates how many hours he spent doing pedestrian tasks such as eating, driving, working, sleeping, and masturbating. Displeased with the results, he goes into his study to masturbate to an advertisement of *Bra Smyth*. But he sees a shadowy figure leap off his roof. He realizes it’s his son sneaking out of the house like Matt used to from the same window when he was younger. His instinct is to follow his son through the study window. While walking, he bumps into his neighbor Stan’s mailbox. He finds the silhouettes of his son naked and smoking with a teenage girl by the river. They’re swinging into the water by rope. Matt’s laugh scares the kids away. Matt attempts to swing into the river but he lands painfully into the water and swims back to find his clothes missing. Matt walks back home dashing into the forest when cars drive by. Stan is on the porch and tells Matt that his son ruined his mailbox. He invites Matt for a drink, ignoring his nudity. They talk about the ends of their lives. Matt finds a robe and pajamas outside the study window, creeps back in and goes to bed. His wife asks him where he has been.

The story flows along briskly, always introducing new and intriguing situations. The third person narration is very close to Matt and does a great job following him and his thoughts through the adventure. The scenes are very humorous and are paired well with the themes of midlife crisis. I also enjoyed the symmetry of the beginning and end where Matt compares his life to a poem: “...because, like any poem...he didn’t understand it.” Matt’s renewal of life and reliving of his nostalgia was heartwarming and realistic.

Learning to Dive by William Robinson is a plainspoken story in a domestic setting told in first person. Vincent calls the narrator, Mimi, six years after they broke up. Mimi is now with Henri, while Vincent’s marriage is deteriorating with Kathleen. Henri knows something is going on between Mimi and Vincent. Mimi recalls how she met Vincent at a coffee shop and eventually posed for a painting at his studio. They broke up after Vincent cheated on her. Mimi and Henri have swim nights on Thursday at the Y, and one night as they’re driving home, Henri asks if she is leaving him. She decides to stay at her parents’. Her mom used to love someone but ended up marrying her dad— Mimi makes the connection to her own situation. Over the course of the next few months, Mimi and Vincent have sex, they go to Vincent’s art show, Mimi gets drunk in a bar and Henri drives her home. She mentally struggles over the two men and decides to meet Vincent at the hotel in the end.

It’s interesting how Mimi and her mother’s love lives mirror each other. It plays out like a “what if” of relationships and marriages. The dialogue is very strong and believable in this piece and develops the characters well. For example when the mother

warns Mimi about meeting a man: "And if he had a nice smile, I'm sure you'd overlook the fact that his name was Jeffrey Dahmer." The main characters are all three-dimensional and memorable. The title fits in well with Henri's sport while symbolizing the "dive" Mimi takes at the end risking a relationship with Vincent.

Interview with Ciara LaVelle, Founding Editor

Matt Sadowski: Why did you start The Furnace Review?

Ciara LaVelle: We wanted to provide a forum for writers who were unpublished or relatively unknown. I knew so many talented writers, and it was a way for me to indulge my own love of literature by showcasing quality poetry and fiction.

MS: When the Furnace Review first began in fall of 2004, you had seven employees including yourself. How did all of you assemble?

CL: At the outset, I invited friends and colleagues whose opinions I trusted and who had experience with literature and publishing to join the staff. We were spread out all over the country, so we developed a system of distributing submissions and coming to a consensus about which we'd publish.

MS: After winter 2008, a line on the submissions page "We value underrepresented writers and artists and unique or groundbreaking work," was removed. Why was this and do you feel your mission has changed?

CL: I wouldn't say that our mission has changed so much as evolved. Presenting the work of writers who've been undiscovered continues to be the foundation of our mission, but we don't exclusively publish unpublished writers. Ultimately, we want to present the best work we've read during the reading period, regardless of the writers' history, education, previous publications or lack thereof, etc. So we decided that that line might be leading readers to assume that unpublished or underrepresented writers take priority in our decision-making process. The second part of the line, about "unique or groundbreaking work," simply seemed redundant. Every publication strives for uniqueness.

MS: What advice do you have for emerging writers submitting their work?

CL: Read the publication before submitting. It sounds like a no-brainer, but it's clear from reading our submissions that many of the people who send us stories have no idea what type of work we publish. We get humor pieces, sci-fi pieces, nonfiction essays--genres that have never appeared on the site. It looks lazy, and more than that, it demonstrates a lack of respect for the publication to which you're submitting.

The other piece of advice I have is to be persistent. It's a cliché, but if you're really committed to getting published, you have to trust in your talent and keep submitting. Take others' advice seriously, and work to improve, but don't give up. And don't be shy about inquiring after a rejection--so long as you can take the criticism.

MS: All of your fiction seems to be on the longer side. Your submission guidelines

prohibit stories of more than 7,000 words. Why are most of the stories you publish that length? How do you feel about flash fiction and why are there no flash fiction stories in The Furnace Review?

CL: We'd certainly be interested in publishing flash fiction; we just haven't felt that the flash fiction pieces we've received have been of the same quality as other stories we've published. Flash fiction should be every bit as satisfying as longer fiction, and it's difficult to evoke that response in so few words. But we certainly welcome fiction submissions of all lengths.

MS: How many submissions do you receive quarterly and how do you equalize the workload with your editors?

CL: We receive around 400 submissions per issue. After filtering out the submissions that don't meet our guidelines, the submissions are compiled and sent in batches to our editors throughout the reading period. Each editor reads each submission, and reports back to me with her/his recommendations.

MS: What is your editorial process at The Furnace Review?

CL: After the editors' recommendations come back to me, we'll accept those works that receive unanimous or near-unanimous votes from the editors. Editors also have the option to make the case for publishing any piece that wasn't accepted to the rest of the staff, if they feel it has merit.

MS: How do you balance TFR editorial work with the rest of your life? I hear you are a travel writer, seamstress, and aspire to be on Project Runway.

CL: Ha! Pipe dreams. I do have a day job as a travel writer, and sewing and crafting is a hobby of mine. It can be difficult to balance the day job with my work with TFR, due to my ever-changing schedule. But because I'm a freelancer working from home, I can make the most efficient use of the workday. Ultimately, it's just a matter of prioritizing TFR.

MS: For 2007 and 2008, there was only one piece of fiction for each issue. Why so few?

CL: Every so often, we run into a drought of submissions that meet the editors' standards. It can be difficult, and there's really no reason I can point to for why it happens, but there it is. We were also using a different method of going through submissions that took more time, so we were seeing fewer submissions per reading period.

MS: Since your inception in 2004, under your link to join TFR, it says that all positions for the time being are unpaid, but you're working on changing that. What efforts have you made to pay your workers and eventually pay writers?

CL: We're in the process of applying for nonprofit status. Because it's a volunteer effort, we're attempting to do it ourselves without costly lawyers' services, so it's a long and drawn-out process. But we have assembled a board of directors, and are established as a nonprofit in the state of Florida, where I live. We're now working on compiling all the paperwork necessary to apply for 501(c)3 status with the IRS, which will allow us to apply for nonprofit grants to fund our efforts, including payment for editors and writers.