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Title of Magazine: Bird's Thumb (online publication)

Editor: Unspecified

Web Address: www.birdstthumb.org

What they publish: Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, essay.

Submission Guidelines: "Dedicated to the discovery and publication of emerging writers," their guidelines for fiction are: 1000-5000 words, no genre fiction, compelling narrative and characters, arresting language, unusual point of view. They accept simultaneous submissions and unsolicited manuscripts.

Description of Publication: Bird's Thumb is a triennial online journal with a simple yet classy design and layout, reasonably easy to navigate.

Prose Per Issue: Each issue contains around 15 stories and a handful of nonfiction pieces, with 3 issues published each year, much of it by new and emerging writers.

Prose Reviews:

"Open Water" by Abigail Rose is a piece of realistic fiction told in the close third person. It's an a la minute account of eighteen-year-old Jago's swim across the English Channel, using mile markers as chapter/section headings. Each mile is either a scene from the present, charting Jago's thoughts and feelings as he makes the journey, or a scene from his past, featuring his diagnosis of Fragile X syndrome, his parents' divorce, his father's arrest for drugs, and Jago's own sexual abuse at the hands of Grant, his father's drug dealer. The final scene shows Jago determined to finish out the swim, just a mile from Cap Gris-Nez.

This piece uses the device of a fixed-distance race to track the course of Jago's life to this point, successfully fusing the various episodes of his past into a coherent flashback-based narrative, taking place during the swim. Strong visual imagery evokes the salt tang of the sea and the sting of jellyfish, keeping the narrative momentum going while Jago swims along. The narrative conceit is a bit pat - compression of his entire life into neat mile-by-mile packages - but it is thoughtfully written and fully realized on the page.

"Eldred and Me" by Pat Harrison is a realist narrative told in the first person. On receiving the news of Eldred's death, Bailey Owens reminisces upon his time in Big Mac Penitentiary in 1973, sharing a cell with Eldred, a lifetime conman who plays guitar and is a kind of sage to the other inmates. The guards in the cell block are unpopular, and one day a bunch of inmates organize a riot, stabbing the head guard, Saylor, and his lieutenant, while holding 19 others hostage. Eldred and Bailey hide out in a saddle tack shop and make love while the riot goes on. A couple of the cons kill one another; the National Guard

is called in and relocates a number of prisoners to Granite, a nicer jail. Eldred discovers that Bailey is not in for stealing, as he'd said, but murder. The story closes with the two men drifting apart, Eldred about to leave for the new prison.

This story's use of dry, dusty, controlled Okie vernacular lends a credible voice to the narrative, propelling things along without commentary. The nature of Bailey and Eldred's relationship - clearly more complex than simple friendship or sexual partnership - is handled subtly, with a detached simplicity that almost hides the wistfulness behind it. Eldred's death has triggered this whole series of remembrances, ruminations on Bailey's own life to this point and his involvement with the people in it, and although he is cold and factual about relating events, the story lets the emotion seep out through the edges.

Rating: 9. This journal publishes emerging writers by the barrelful - it's right there in the tagline. "Open Water" is Abigail Rose's first publication; "Eldred and Me" is from Pat Harrison's as-yet-unpublished first novel *Three Okie Orphans*. Submit your best work now, emerging writers.