



Taylor Walworth
Magazine Report

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Fact Sheet

Print Magazine: *apt*

Web Address: <http://apt.aforementionedproductions.com/fiction/>

Address: Aforementioned Productions
70 Commercial Street
Boston, MA 02109

Email Address: Contact through website form

Founded: 2005

Founding Editors: Carissa Halston, Randolph Pfaff

Current Editors: Carissa Halston, Randolph Pfaff, Robin E. Mørk, J.F. Lynch (art)

Frequency: Weekly online publication; annual print issue

Contributor Payment: Print issue contributors receive a copy of the magazine; no payment for online publication

What they publish: Fiction, poetry, art, interviews, reviews, and *apt* comparisons

Submission guidelines: Work must be submitted through Submishmash. For print issue consideration, only one submission will be accepted per reading period. These submissions must not exceed 5,000 words. Online flash fiction submissions must not exceed 1,000 words, and all pieces must be included in a single document.

Reading Period: The reading period for the print issue is March 1st through September 30th. Submissions sent outside that period will be deleted unread. The reading period for online publication is October 15th through August 15th.

Response Time: Within four weeks.

Cost: \$5 for print issue

Availability: <http://aforementionedproductions.com/links/>

Why I Chose *apt*

When I found *apt*, I was in a bit of a time crunch - it was nearly Thanksgiving, the press editor I'd contacted had yet to respond to me, and I was getting pretty concerned that this project might not get finished on time.

After making the decision to switch over from a small press to a literary magazine, I took to New Pages and *Poets & Writers* and quickly found *apt*. And I loved it.

As I began to read some of the more recent stories posted on the website, I was struck by the overall poetic language, and how each story, in its own unique way, seemed to strive to answer questions and concerns about humanity, and how our interactions with each other can affect the course of our lives. It's the sort of subject matter that has always intrigued me, as I am also very attracted to human relationships and tend to write about those relationships in my own work. *apt* publishes the sort of high-quality work that I am currently working to achieve.

I became even more interested when I discovered that the founding editors of *apt*, Carissa Halston and Randolph Pfaff, also founded a small publishing press, Aforementioned Productions. This way, I not only got to learn more about literary magazines, but also a publishing press, which had been my original plan.

Comparison of Issues Over Time

Writers			
M:F	5:2	4:1	4:1
Protagonists			
M:F:Unclear	4:2:1	3:1:1	2:2:1
POV			
1st:3rd:2nd	3:3:1	2:3	3:2
Writers' Credits Book:Magazine:First*	Information not available	1:3:2	2:4:1*

*Where noted, some contributors have had books published and had their stories appear in literary magazines.

It is clear that *apt* has a tendency to publish more male writers than female writers; apart from the first issue I read, which had seven contributors rather than the customary five in later issues, there is one female writer for every four male writers. I'm unsure of whether or not the protagonists' gender follows in accordance with this, though it did seem that most female protagonists were written by female writers.

There doesn't seem to be a heavy distinction between first and third person point-of-views; the two balance each other out in most cases, with no heavy reliance on one or the other.

Additionally, *apt* seems to prefer established writers as opposed to emerging writers, especially those with stories previously published in other literary magazines.

Prose Reviews

ISSUE ONE

Can You Really Sleep Like This? by Chris Akeley is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. The protagonist, George, is a middle-age insomniac who is separated from his wife. In the time that has passed since their separation, George has taken to breaking into her house on nights when he can't sleep and sitting in the living room until morning or until he is scared away. This night, George is caught by his young daughter, Christina, who is incredibly fond of her father - admitting that she wishes he "wouldn't be gone" - and also suffers from sleep troubles. Though Christina acknowledges that George is not welcome, she insists that he stay, telling him that they can sleep on the couch and that he can sneak away in the morning. George is tempted to agree to this plan as it means spending more time with his daughter; however, realizing the moral implications, he encourages her to go to sleep, promising that he will stay until morning, face his ex-wife and reveal his late night jaunts to her.

At first glance, the connection between the characters posed in this story is apparent in relation to the title: all three suffer from sleep problems. George is an insomniac, Christina admits to not being able to sleep some nights, and George's ex-wife - who is never seen, but mentioned frequently - is said to take sleeping pills. However, George's troubles are the most compelling of the story, as they touch on an underlying morality issue. Akeley presents a man that is subtly tortured by the guilt of a damaged marriage; though few specifics are given about George's marriage prior to the start of the story, he does acknowledge that it ended because of his lies, and he has only lied since - namely, he has never told his ex-wife that he breaks into her house at nights while she is sleeping. The change that George undergoes throughout the course of the story - from a man who has only ever lied and suffered because of it, to a man who can finally accept the necessity of telling the truth - makes for a pleasing moral.

Second and Third All My Life by Katherine Chua is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. The unnamed female narrator is in her twenties, describing herself as “single and free to go as I please” while discussing a recent break-up with her long-term boyfriend. The break-up stimulates a variety of dating ventures with a variety of people - a man with whom she watches World Tournament Poker for eight hours on their first date; a drug addict called Meredith that the narrator dated in high school; and a university professor called John Keys, to whom she is very attracted, but later discovers already has a girlfriend. In some ways, the story ends where it began, after the narrator has broken off her relationship with John, though she hints at a new relationship prospect with a man called Peter, who she meets in an elevator.

The narrator’s relationships are shown in brief flashes of scene rife with visual detail, and I found the use of repeated phrases - such as “single and free to go as I please” and the repetition of time periods since the break-up with her long-term boyfriend (“It was six months and fourteen days since my break-up ...” to “It is now eight months and twenty-nine days since my break-up ...”) - were very effective in keeping the reader plugged in to the story. However, there was very little insight into the character of the narrator outside of her relationships, and I ended the story feeling as though I still knew nothing about her. Additionally, I felt that the story was missing a moment of scene with her ex-boyfriend. Obviously, their break-up was monumental enough to provoke a dating free-for-all, but with little expansion on why they broke up or how the narrator truly felt about it, the reader is left with the impression that she is merely a floozy who flops from one man to the other with no problem.

ISSUE TWELVE

narrow spaces by Kimberly Duncan-Mooney is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. It follows a day in the life of protagonist Beth, a working woman who has begun to suspect that her husband is having an affair after discovering women’s lipstick on the mouth of a gin bottle in their house. Instead of confronting her husband with these suspicions, she proceeds to go about her day, which

includes a stressful trip to the supermarket to pick up canned cranberry sauce for him. The trip is marred by rude employees and fellow customers as Beth muses on her marriage, about which she has been disillusioned for some time. Ultimately, after a strenuous search to locate the cranberry sauce, Beth has a minor breakdown, drops her belongings - some of which shatter - in the middle of an aisle, and departs the store without purchasing anything. Returning home, she puts the “tainted bottle of gin” where her husband can see it, and makes herself a drink.

Though the story was told in third-person point-of-view, I felt that it was very easy to connect and sympathize with Beth as she was plagued by the continued stresses of a day where nothing goes right. The gradual reveal of her unhappy marriage, her husband’s persistent detached attitude, and the build-up of rudeness that Beth is met with at the supermarket all work together to paint the picture of a woman who is conflicted as to whether or not she wants to save her marriage or end it. In this way, the struggle to locate the cranberry sauce serves as an effective metaphor for her relationship to her husband - she can deal with the stresses of the supermarket and continue searching for it, or she can give up and return home to face her husband, ridding herself of her pent-up anger in the process. In the end, she decides on the latter.

A Resemblance by Jason Jackson is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. While on vacation in Montreal with his girlfriend Ali, the unnamed narrator is approached by a young boy and his sister. The young boy asks if the narrator is his father, forcing the narrator to acknowledge his resemblance to the siblings. At Ali’s behest, the narrator stands for a picture with the two, but the boy’s sister is suspicious of him and drags her brother off soon after. Returning home from Montreal, the narrator and Ali break up when Ali discovers that he has been having an affair with a college student; though she moves out of their apartment, she leaves behind the photo of the narrator and the two siblings, which he keeps and displays in his apartment.

Though I found the story to be sweet, I felt that it was missing some very important character details. I considered it to be similar to the problem presented in *Second and Third All My Life*, from the

previous issue - because there was little insight into the narrator's character and experiences prior to the start of the story, I found the situation presented in the story itself to be slightly odd. Why would this man be so willing to claim these children as his family, regardless of their resemblance? Was it because his own family was deficient in some way? It just seemed strange to me that he would be more affected by a photograph of him and two children to whom he is not related than breaking up with his girlfriend.

ISSUE TWENTY-FOUR

Waiting for the 12:15 by Paul Myette is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. Kevin and Lara are a married British couple returning home from a dinner party hosted by one of Lara's friends. Much of the story takes place while the couple waits for the bus that will bring them home; during this time, they argue about Kevin's behavior at the party, which has apparently led Lara to believe that he suffers from a social disorder. After discussing their various insecurities - Kevin's insecurities about his job and how he was perceived by the other men at the party, and Lara's insecurities about Kevin's behavior - the two reconcile and stop off for food.

This story presents one of the most realistic marriages that I have ever seen crafted in short fiction - one that is genuinely happy, but still has its troubles. Kevin acknowledges this at the end of the story, saying, "... two people can't spend their lives together and not argue from time to time ... the important thing is that they wind up on the same team more often than not." Myette seamlessly led the readers through the whole "argument," revealing small details about the character's lives, occupations, and pasts along the way in a way that was not out of place or broke up the scene, but rather flowed with it.

Breathing by Ross Rader is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. The story centers on Jackie Crawford, a young woman who refers to herself as a "monster," conveying specific moments of scene in Jackie's life: the death of her father and her attempt to save him by performing CPR; a job interview for a secretarial position she didn't get; a car accident that took place when she was nineteen,

the “closest I’ve come to truly dying”; and helping an uncertain young man rob her house. The story ends with Jackie philosophically wondering about the many changes in her life, and how people will perceive her and talk of her when she’s dead.

Although it’s never specifically stated or touched on apart from when she is referring to herself as a “monster,” I spent the entire story wondering about Jackie’s sanity. For example, when she’s discussing her car accident, she says, “After the accident, I fantasized that maybe I’d be paralyzed. I played out my life, imagining myself in a wheelchair. Coasting down ramps at Long John Silver’s. A ride attendant cradling my crippled body onto a roller coaster.” Because the story was told in first-person and each event was told out of order, with certain details of events jumbled together - for example, Jackie will begin discussing her job interview, segue into a comment about her car accident, and then return to the topic of the interview - the narrative gave the impression that Jackie is not all right in the head. Admittedly, I was not entirely bothered that the story ended with little resolution regarding this matter - namely, it was never explicitly stated whether Jackie was sane or not - because the lack of resolution added to the intrigue and chaos of the story as a whole.

Interview with Carissa Halston

Co-editor of *apt magazine* and co-founder of Aforementioned Productions

Taylor Walworth: What made you decide to start *apt*?

Carissa Halston: Randolph Pfaff (the other co-founder of *apt*) and I decided to start the journal because he'd always wanted to work on a magazine, and the only magazines I knew about were literary journals, so I suggested it and he agreed. *apt* began as an online venture because we knew we would be learning by trial and error before moving to print. It's a lot easier to accept your mistakes when they're easily fixable, rather than a thing you've literally paid for and then need to fix and pay to replace. Our ultimate goal was to have a print journal, so it was nice to celebrate five years by holding printed copies of *apt* in our hands.

TW: What occurs during the editorial process at *apt*, from the time you receive the submitted work to the time it's published in the magazine (if it's published)?

CH: All our submissions are filtered through Submishmash, an online submission manager which allows us to leave comments on pieces, vote for or against them, assign them to each other, etc. When we do argue about a piece and it results in a standstill, our associate editor, Robin E. Mørk, graciously steps in and her vote breaks the tie. Otherwise, it's pretty straightforward - one of us reads a piece and says to the other, "This is worth reading," or "I'd like to take this." For online publication, we read and respond to submissions within seven days. Pieces submitted for print publications go through a similar process, though the turn-around time is four weeks because we receive more submissions for print than for online submissions.

Regarding online publication, we proofread each piece, choose an accompanying image, and post it. We publish one flash fiction piece per week.

For print publication, we go through each accepted piece, editing by hand (easier to catch mistakes on paper than on screen), then we make the changes and send them to the contributors for final approval.

TW: What sort of techniques have you employed to market the magazine and attract readers, and which have proved more successful?

CH: We do use Facebook and Twitter, but the thing that has worked best for us has been holding in-person events. I host a quarterly reading series in Cambridge called Literary Firsts and we usually have 45-60 people come out for each reading. It's rewarding to see that there's an attentive audience for interactive, engaging literature and people are reminded that they're part of a community. For those who aren't in the Boston area, we post all the readings online, so using Facebook and Twitter to plug the readings also helps us to promote *apt* since quite a few of the readers have been writers whose work we've published. It's important to me to work with local writers because it improves everyone's quality of life, not to mention having a supportive group of artists creates a welcoming atmosphere for those who didn't necessarily go to school to study their craft, but still take it seriously.

TW: On a personal note, based on your biography on Aforementioned's website, you seem to have accomplished quite a bit in the literary world, having written a novel, written and directed your own plays, founded a press, and become the editor of a literary magazine. So far, which has been your most rewarding experience?

CH: I love every part of what I do, but writing fiction is what ultimately fuels me. It's the only work that is entirely mine (though half of it will eventually belong to a reader), and, at the end of the day, I prefer autonomy. Well, perhaps that's too glib, but if I hadn't had my own work published online, I wouldn't have wanted to start a literary journal or a small press. So, one informs the other. That said, the sense of accomplishment I feel when I finish a draft (especially when it's a final draft) is the most rewarding thing I've ever been lucky enough to wrestle from life.

TW: Can you touch on how the general mechanics of a publishing press differ from that of a literary magazine?

CH: For the press arm of AP, Randolph and I usually have a more personal interaction with the authors. We want them to feel comfortable and, most importantly, happy with the final result, but we also want their projects to benefit from their decision to work with us. So, in the case of poetry, we'll consider the order of the pieces being presented or the inclusion of one poem over another. We have a prose collection that will come out within the next year or so and when the time comes, Randolph and I will work with the author on minor revisions until the project is where everyone wants it to be, which often results in some long days leading up to printing deadlines. The situation may not sound ideal, but those are changes which we were happy to make because it's a signal that everything else is running smoothly. If we're scrutinizing the minute details, it's obvious that we've made it through all the other heavy lifting, as it were.

TW: Then, more specifically, how do your personal responsibilities -- especially in terms of what's expected of you as an editor -- differ between the two?

CH: As an editor, when I'm working on a piece for *apt*, I do not often edit for content. I will edit for word choice, for grammar -- I'll proofread, of course -- but I will not remove something for the sake of flow or narrative voice. I make that distinction because I believe that most writers who send work out expect their stories to be published in the condition in which they're sent.

TW: How has your personal writing career affected your editing processes or vice versa?

CH: Unquestionably, editing other people's writing has made me a better editor of my own work. Revision, like any activity, improves with practice. In the early years of *apt* (first fifteen issues, give or take), my title was Contributing Editor, so I contributed a story or poem to every issue, which I took seriously because it required me to keep a strict deadline. I didn't want to only read other people's work and let my own output fall into disrepair. The best part of having work in *apt* every other month is that I

can look back and see the way my work changed -- subject matter, word choice, ambition. It's a transition I didn't know was occurring at the time, but like any young writer, my work changed with what I read and, as I mentioned above, my ability to revise improved due to all the other editing I was doing.

TW: What do you personally expect from an editor?

CH: I expect two things from an editor. 1. Acceptance that I will revise and revise and revise. 2. Enough sense to know when to rein me in (as in, when it's time for me to stop revising). This is especially important with something long form. I have a novella due out in May and I've finally stopped editing it. *Finally*. Now I need to wait to hear back from my editors on the changes they want to make, which I hope are few.

TW: Getting back to *apt*, I recently read "Terrarium," by Melanie Brown, which was the most recent piece of fiction posted on the website. I was particularly struck by the language of the piece, which was incredibly poetic. What sort of factors do you believe makes a good story -- characters, plot, language, etc.?

CH: Language is nearly paramount in what we publish. Language informs tone which affects meaning and meaning is the only thing that's more important than language. We look for writing that considers humanity and questions what it means when we don't necessarily behave "humanely" toward each other (because isn't that the bottom line of every tense situation in all of contemporary literature?).

TW: Does this ever translate into which stories you end up choosing for the magazine?

CH: A story can be straightforward and affect its reader and we'll appreciate it on that level -- with appreciation often leading to inclusion in the print issue or online publication -- but if you can also make it sound pretty, that's just another foot in the door.

TW: To me, it seems like there are a lot of fads in the literary world, mostly related to technology -- I'm especially drawn to the subject of e-readers and social media sites, which everyone's starting to use to avoid being left behind. As an editor, do you ever feel the pressure to follow along with what other sites are doing, and if so, how do you respond to that pressure?

CH: Regarding e-readers and the rest of that, I'm ceding this question to Randolph, who handles all of our digital formatting issues.

Randolph Pfaff: There is, certainly, a lot of jumping onto the bandwagon so as not to be left behind. In the end, though, each of us only has so much time to devote to what we publish and we should only be doing things in service of the work being put out there. If it's not increasing the audience or benefitting the author, it's a waste of time. Honestly, our online content gets a lot of views and the print issue sells, but almost no one purchases ebook versions of the print issue. We make them available, but there isn't a lot of effort behind ebooks for us.

CH: As an editor, I don't feel the need to adhere to anything that other editors do because, within the small press sphere, we're generally all encouraging of each other's ideas and it rarely becomes a one-upmanship. There are some really inventive ways that individual writers and tech-savvy editors are using on the Internet, like Michael Stewart's interactive fiction site strangesympathies.com or *Electric Literature's* Single Sentence Animation.

TW: Are there any other trends you've noticed?

CH: Book trailers. I love most book trailers I see. I think they're fascinating and, since I have a background in theatre, any mash-up of literature and theatre has a little piece of my heart. But as for trends generally, I hope we're not part of any. We're publishing work that we think is really good and that we want to read. Maybe it's wishful thinking, but I'd like to think we're in a unique place and I'm happy with that.

TW: Finally, what advice would you give to emerging writers seeking publication in *apt* or elsewhere?

CH: To writers in general, be affected by your surroundings. Let yourself be inspired. Revise your work with the same critical eye you lend to others. When you're working on a long project (and you will), work on it every day. Invest time and energy in yourself and your work. If you can swing it, take time to tour to promote your work. Touring was one of the best things I ever did.

To writers seeking publication in *apt*, we love work that is both subtle and powerful. Choose your words well and they'll work to your advantage. When you've written something that moves you, give it a month. If, when you read it again, you're still moved, it's ready.