Pathos

Winter 2012

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In my first-ever letter from the editor, I observed that even though we never impose any sort of theme on our call for submissions, they always seem to emerge from the work we receive. Cloaked in subtle turns of phrase, repetitions, and trendy en-dash placements, a wily editor can discern a loose metaphysics of the will to submit.

I think this term was no different, but you see, I just finished a class on Freud and his seminal Interpretation of Dreams, so I am quite aware of my predisposition to see things where there is perhaps nothing. In reading through the work this time around, I kept picking up on hints of the Freudian dilemma: I am myself, I am not myself—the nagging existence of a consciousness that is somehow not one’s own. And yet, this isn’t any great discovery. In observing someone’s work, we are encountering another consciousness: that of the artist. They are giving us a projection of themselves, and we in turn project ourselves onto it. I am myself, and I am not them, but I can see myself in them. For Freud, this all has something or other to do with the fact that, as children, we all secretly want to murder our father and sexually possess our mother. Well, I think Freud is full of shit, and that there is a deeper anxiety that drives artistic expression than mere sexual dissatisfaction.

By giving form to our thoughts, we attempt to discover this anxiety. It is through art that we might catch a glimpse of that other self within us, the mysterious motivating force of the unconscious. We are afraid of what we might see, but we are also afraid not to look. We have to look. But then again, maybe I’m full of shit too. Maybe I’m looking too hard for what isn’t there, like an addict combing the carpets. But I defer to you, dear reader. Take a look at the splayed minds within, and tell me if I’m crazy.

J.E.

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Helio My Name Is
M. A. Tait-Condie (Tas)

Percentage of Americans who believe they are going to heaven: 73.8%
Hell is a town about 50 miles from Detroit
The Great Lakes are: Superior, Michigan, Huron, Ontario, and Eerie, but the Sea of Tranquility
is found on the Moon
Dipsomania is an insatiable craving for alcoholic beverages. Oenophobia is the fear of wines
Women tend to crave chocolate. Men tend to crave salt and fat. 8 hours after you quit, your
blood oxygen level returns to normal, but right now you’re 1 cigarette closer to lung cancer
Percentage of all statistics made up: 85.7%
The average person laughs 13 times a day. The average American is overweight
If I could shed my skin, I’d lose about 20 sq. feet and 6 pounds
Liposuction patients lose an average of 10 pounds of subcutaneous fat, but my dish ran
away with my spoon
The tonsillectomy is the most common medical procedure. After a nogginectomy, a cockroach
can survive for 9 days before it starves to death. Doesn’t even need any ice cream
Remarkable
Armadillos can contract leprosy, and turtles can breathe through their butts, but the percentage of
all facts that are made up on the spot is 43.7%
A hairsbreadth away is ¼ of an inch
After death, the hair and the fingernails continue to grow grow grow
Growing mad as a hatter, a hairsbreadth from a goose with no gander, and just about
crazy as a loon
Some nouns of assemblage: a crash of rhinoceroses; a business of ferrets; a shrewdness of apes; a
confusion of officers; a skulk of foxes; a glare of housecats; a glory of unicorns; a
stiffy of adolescent boys
February 18th, 1930 marked the first flight by a cow
on an aeroplane. The milk that cow produced during the flight was put into containers
and dropped with parachutes over St. Louis
I’m a liar, but I promise that’s the truth
A broken clock is right at least twice a day, but it’s still flawed 100%
of the time
We are not the center
The Earth revolves around the Sun 1 time every 365 days, but the Sea of Tranquility
is found somewhere
around the center left of your ribcage
Hello My Name Is
M. A. Tart-Condie ('96)

Untitled, Megan Stumpfig
Undoing

Adam Collins

There are acres in the way you move, a foundation in your stance – toes cutting through the grass, heels rocking, carving a home for us. I think I heard us here years ago, back when courage was a thing we slung over our shoulders and vanity was etched in the crevices of our palms. I heard us like eggs frying, heard us like the heavy sigh of dust resting finally, heard us like the old Indian prayers running down the gutters. But now, ground broken, walls put up, courage is a thing found in the bottom cupboard – a jar collecting pennies. This shanty was built too soon.

I was asleep while you danced the fields alone, sowing seeds with your pirouettes. I became accustomed to the morning bringing you wrinkles, dew clinging to your crows feet, because your work is never finished. You play the part of the rain, the sun, scarecrow, the bee cross-pollinating (you’ve created a new hybrid), earthworm, consumer. Your one man show draws quite the crowd – sagging fence heavy with the weight of those many hands. Then, they come knocking. Soon, they will seek handouts. But our spot of earth is eroding. The door creaks with indigestion. The panes let go of their windows. I took the hands from the clock and watched the termites eat the floor, even while the linens stayed fresh. But I closed the blinds long ago.
The Untold Story of the Dirty Bess
Cory Mimms

The boat rocked, creaking as she swayed, her nets coiled and her crab traps stacked on the deck. The sea was steady now, a sleeping infant after a long rage. The four crew members eyed each other, their cards stowed away. There would be no games played in the cabin tonight.

Grimes poured a shot of warm whiskey and watched as its surface shifted in the tin cup. His heart had stopped pounding but his hand was still shaking a bit. He picked up the cup and poured the whiskey under his graying mustache.

"I'll have one of those, if you don't mind," Burroughs said. Burroughs was younger than Grimes by a decade and at thirty-six was once again the youngest man on the boat.

"I think we could all use a swig," Donald said. Donald Simmons was the only man on the boat that didn't go by his last name.

Grimes nodded slowly and then asked Eugene if he would drink with them also. "Can't think of a good reason not to," Eugene said, shaking his head in bewilderment. Donald fetched three more dented tin cups. Jiggers of whiskey were flung back, sandwiching the quiet like bookends.

Alone at the helm, Morey stared out at the water. It sloshed the glimmering moonlight aboard the ship in uneven waves. The boys back at the tavern wouldn't believe him if he told them what had happened. Hell, he didn't believe it himself—he couldn't. The only proof had jumped overboard, and the Dirty Bess was one crewman less than when she left the shore.

The radio crackled, calling Morey back in from the sea that sloshed in his mind. "This is the SS Lincoln. We are closing in on your coordinates. We'll be there in ten, Mike. Do you copy?"

"Dirty Bess reads you," Morey said into the radio and hooked it back on the receiver. He snatched his captain's hat up and breathed a cold sigh.

Below the deck, the men passed the bottle around again. Only grumbles of thanks left their beard-framed mouths. Dull sound rolled down the steps followed by the captain walking through the door. The men looked up from their cups, but none of them spoke.

Morey looked at them. They looked like frightened old men who should be sitting in nursing homes, not strong fishermen. Morey spotted the bottle. He normally didn't care if the men drank a bit, as long as they could still perform their duties, but it would look bad if they were all drunk when the Coast Guard arrived.

"Put the bottle away, Grimes," Morey said.
"We're just having a bit, Morey. Leave us alone, after what we saw today I think we deserve it," Grimes said.
"The Coast Guard is on its way out. They'll be here any minute and they'll want statements from us," Morey said. "So put the bottle away before you're slurring."

Grimes stared at the table. He finished his drink but didn't pour any more.
Burroughs turned to Morey. "What are we going
“Tell them the truth,” Morey said. “The storm came on hard and fast, the young man fell overboard while we were pulling in the nets. We called the Coast Guard as soon as we could get reception.”

The men all looked at each other. “So, we just leave out the fact that we were trolling in a storm? Or that one of our nets—”

“We started pulling in those nets as soon as the storm hit us,” Morey said, cutting off Grimes. “We were prepping to ride it out.”

The four men stared at Morey. Eugene finished his whiskey and set it down next to Grimes. Grimes looked at Eugene sideways, and Eugene nodded for him to pour another drink. Eugene was the oldest among the crew, older than Morey by five years. Grimes grabbed the bottle, ready to pour another round.

“Put it down, Grimes,” Morey said.

“We can’t sweep this under the rug, Morey,” Eugene said. “We can’t just ignore what we saw.” He looked around the table for support but found little. “We need to tell them the truth.”

Morey shook his head. “They’ll think we’re all a bunch of raging-drunk crazy old men, Eugene. Besides, what did we really see today?” Morey said, but left no room for an answer. “We tell them the truth they need to hear.”

“And who’s going to tell the kid’s family the truth,” Eugene said. “Are you going to tell his wife what happened? Huh, Morey,” Eugene urged, drawing out the O in Morey.

“I’m protecting us all on this one. You must know that—all of you,” Morey said. He sounded tired.

Eugene shook his head. “You’re protecting yourself. You’re protecting your reputation. We all saw what happened today.” Eugene looked at the other crewmen. None of them raised their drooping eyes from the table except for Grimes, who only snuck a curious glance at Eugene. “Frankly,” Eugene said, turning his eyes back to Morey, “after today I’m not sure I want to work on the Dirty Bess any longer.”

Eugene’s eyes drifted back to the tin cup in his hands. Morey sucked in a long breath. Eugene had been on his crew since he bought the Dirty Bess. The day she left the shore without Eugene on board would be a sad day. You don’t mean that, Eugene. We all had a long day. We’re all stressed. Let’s just give the Coast Guard our statements so they can begin their search,” Morey said, turning for the door.

“And we just ignore the … the thing we pulled up during the storm?” Donald asked.

Morey stopped, his back to the table. “Those nets were empty when they hit the deck,” he said. “That’s the story.”
Ebb
Christina Stephens

the mouth of the river is too wide.
it swallows
the seminoles,
the everglades,
the rubber bands on the backs of the hands that tell us stay
those sticky memories that glue themselves to us
like the hot sand we scour for the perfect shells,
it lies gaping.

in spite of its faults i am there
still.
i've left limbs from lauderdale to seoul
and still
i am here
mouth gaping toward the atlantic.

Six
Christina Stephens

the whales swell until
they hang off trees so swollen that
the branches disappear into
the bellies of
novels about sea creatures
trying to write it all down
but
the guitar string
snapped.
Stretched Consciousness, Erik White
Regarding, Richard Omier
Ms. Pinkston was waiting for something. It was a breezy day on the corner of Twelfth Street and Weston. It was a quarter past five, a quarter past the time she had been waiting for. She rolled up her sleeve to check her watch again. She took two steps forward so as to improve her angle while looking down the street. Nothing seemed to be approaching.

Half a block down a boy was selling newspapers. "The Double!" he called, brandishing a fistful of papers. "The Double responds! The President weighs in!"

A man stopped before the boy to purchase a paper. She could not make out his face due to a green bucket hat that he wore clumsily on his head. Hadn't I been warned of my acquaintance's fashion? she wondered. As she watched the man uncrumple a bill from his pocket, her heart thumped harder in her throat.

The man folded the newspaper under his arm, and as he set off toward her, Ms. Pinkston made a spectacle of examining the sky. When she could make out his shape in her periphery, she stole a glance at the man's face. To her disappointment, it was not what she had been waiting for. The man however, did not seem to share this disappointment at the sight of Ms. Pinkston. He walked directly toward her with a friendly smile on his face.

"Do you have the time, Ms.?" the man asked.

Ms. Pinkston frowned at him and crossed her arms. "No," she said, looking back down the street. "No, this is not what I am waiting for."

"But I can see your watch," the man continued. "There, by the roll of your sleeve."

Ms. Pinkston assumed a grave look, and, as though confiding a secret, said to him, "Yes, it is a watch on my wrist. But I can't stand to look at it."

The man lowered his eyebrows as though waiting for her to clarify, but Ms. Pinkston only nodded solemnly to him.

The boy selling newspapers broke the silence, but neither Ms. Pinkston nor the man turned to look at him. "Russia!" the boy called. "Algeria! Our own mayor with the answers!"

After a moment the man removed his hat and said, "I will admit, your watch was not the object of my interest." As if in proof of this, he lifted his wrist to show her his own watch.

"It's just, how unavoidable you are! With that sunflower in your hair the size of a baby. In the middle of Chicago!"

Ms. Pinkston lifted a hand to her forehead, as if to brush the flower from her eye.

"And how impatient you look, always tapping your heel like squirrel for a nut. I thought it must be you were waiting for something."

Halfway down the block one of the newspapers escaped the boy's fist, and with a soft rustling sound, came with the breeze to Ms. Pinkston's feet. The front page flitted playfully in the wind, but Ms. Pinkston could not make out what it said.

"Yes," she sighed, and cast another feeble look over the man's shoulder. "Yes, I am. But for the life of me, I could not tell you why."
My love is deaf – he has taken to
turning out and over
for anyone willing to read to him
the classifieds or Catullus’
plea for a thousand and a hundred kisses.
He plays it back for me with headphones and commentary.
This is what I’m missing
and I’ve already missed so much.

My love is blind – he has taken to
going out, along, and down
for olive skin and almond eyes.
He peels off tattoos
before returning home,
and stares at the mirror in a dark bathroom --
scars glowing, larger every day. It’s only when in bed
that he finally opens his eyes.

My love is broken – he has taken to
tripping up and on
words littering a sidewalk.
Speech like peanut butter, he
pulls them from his pockets,
pulls them from his ears and nose with tweezers,
pulls them from the bottoms of his shoes.
He doesn’t know the difference
between what’s said and what needs to be.

My love is sick – he has taken to
wishing for and despite
a sudden change in weather --
with desperation in his whispers.
He scratches names into the walls while I sleep.
I paint over them each morning
and wash my hands until the soap loses its cherry scent,
because I can never find your name.
bucket drummer, Richard Omier
On the Mantle
Lena Baisden-Tankut

My first breath was supposed to be my only. I was born in the middle of the year in 1952. It was a sweltering summer in Florida. When my mother was six months pregnant, my father found her, unconscious and bleeding, at the bottom of the stairs. At the hospital, the doctor pulled me out, shoved my limp body into a nurse’s arms and left my mother to sleep. When she woke, they told her to go home. The funeral arrangements were set for the following Saturday afternoon.

My father retreated to the basement to drink while my mother cried and paced the front rooms for two days. Her bare feet pounded against the hardwood floors, shaking the faded framed pictures on the mantle. My four-year-old sister followed her from room to room wringing her chubby fingers, her large blue eyes tracing my mother’s mourning march.

The doctor called at the end of the second day. I was still blue and still breathing but not stillborn. On the ride back to the hospital, my mother was angry that they hadn’t called to tell her I had lived through the night. My father reassured her that doctors weren’t in the business of selling false hopes.

It wasn’t a happy homecoming. They said I wouldn’t make it a year. I was four pounds, six ounces, my lungs were underdeveloped, and my immune system couldn’t protect me. Every time a door opened in the house, my mother’s knuckles whitened. Every time a window opened, she slammed it shut. My funeral had been canceled but my mother didn’t ask for the deposit back.

On my second birthday, my mother cautiously began letting fresh air in the house. On my third, she finally asked for the deposit back from the funeral home. Then she learned she was pregnant again.

She paced the front rooms and cried. My eight-year-old sister and I followed her from room to room searching each other’s faces for answers.

It was an emotional pregnancy. Every ache, twist, cramp, spasm, and kick carried with it unspeakable panic. She’d pace the floors with quivering lips, arms encircling her growing abdomen, praying her womb was strong enough to keep the baby inside.

They named my little brother Edward. He waited inside her belly for eight months before he barreled out, screaming. He was massive and furious. He weighed nine pounds, and had a shock of pitch-black mohawked hair. They took him home in a blue bundle.

I was five then, and the tension was obvious even to me. Pictures on the mantle in the living room displayed a happy couple, smiling into the camera. One was of the beach, in bathing suits; my mother leaned into my father. The wind pushed her hair back, and she shielded her eyes. She looked like a movie star. Another was of a card game on a porch. My mother sat in my father’s lap, a cigarette in one hand, a highball glass in the other. My father clutched her thin waist; balanced her on his knee. They were laughing at something off-camera.

I used to stand at the mantle and wish that the woman I saw was my mother. Sometimes I caught my mother standing at that same spot looking at the photographs, and I think she wished the same thing. But the woman in our house had a slim frame, looked hard and angular, her face tough and prone to scowling. Her slit eyes were always scanning for evidence of something to disapprove of, while her hands seemed perpetually poised to slap ours. I’d only seen my mother smile at other grownups.

In the funeral home, thirty-two birthdays later, I remember those pictures on the mantle—a laughing woman I never knew, who I can never know. I see her squinting into the sun, young and in love, sauntering without care into her future; the pictures of a face almost familiar. Looking down into her coffin, it pains me that her lips curl upward, as if in a smile. The faded framed pictures on the mantle said life was better before us, and lying there with her best pink dress on, and her secret, final, little smile, it seems she feels it will be better after us as well.
The Ghost in the Machine is Real, Tracy Mattner
The Penny Pincher
Sarah Currin Moles

The girl sat near the fountain, watching people throw their change in. Some threw them nonchalantly; some held them reverently before tossing them. They all left with a lighter step, though. As soon as they were gone, the girl scurried over and plunged her hand into the cold water. Opening her fist, she plucked a penny from her palm and placed it on her tongue. A flash: "I wish he'd propose."
She selected another coin and put it in her mouth. "I wish my mother was dead."
Another: "I wish I was happy."
She smiled and swallowed.

Neckbones
Sarah Curtis and Cheyenne McClain

honey, you’re leaking – I’ll call the nurse –
and I’ll be the little boy, and you the dam, and here is my finger –
and while we wait I’ll hold tight the last half hour and your waist –
and while you breathe I’ll count my nine fingers and each tooth your tongue taps –

and I’ll stand on my tip toes and ripple to ripple I’ll talk to you like water –
and we’ll sit here like four legs and two bath towels –
and we’re one flood too many and one digit shy of your counted grin –
and I’ll just close my eyes at night and hold these minutes –

and you can lean dry against my stomach, my ankles moist against your thighs –
and the nurse will tell us about your nerves and mine will go numb –
and I’ll open my eyes with sun-up and dig for you in my muscles –
and I can see you in open boxes, and I hid pieces of me in that little one –

and the nurse will keep talking about your body like we’re separate –
and until she figures it out I’ll use each minute to tell each rib bone otherwise –
and don’t plan on unpacking me anywhere but here... –
honey, I’m drowning – go tell the nurse.
Ritual
Kasey Jakien

Each morning
There is a ritual.

I wake with the little star.

To boil water for
Tea, coffee,
To sanitize baby bottles.

Every morning
At the same time:

In the summer when
Daylight is steady
And confident as
The face of a coin.

In the winter when
White mist flees sideways
From chimneys
Across rooftops.

My god,
he had the
light of god
in his eyes

Chris Maday

he was
wearing
metal
glasses.
Artist Biographies

M. A. Tait-Condie (Tas)
is a coyote ghost in wolf's clothing
living in the belly of an endangered
whale, where he very much enjoys
the echo. The whale is the only one
of its kind

Kasey Jakien
is a post-bac student in the Speech
and Hearing program. She can be
found taking walks through the
Brentwood-Darlington neighbor­
hood, planting peppers at her
nearby community garden, observ­
ing blast exposure research at the
VA, and studying on TriMet.

Sarah Currin Moles
is attending PSU for a bachelor's
degree in English and a master's
degree in Writing and Book Pub­
lishing. She is the assistant manager
of an independent bookstore. In be­
tween school and work, she mostly
reads, collects comics, and makes
music with her husband.

Graham Stephens
was born and raised in Santa Fe,
New Mexico, and after a long
detour through Florida, ended up
in Portland. He focuses on print­
making, but is a fan of all art. If you
would like to see more of his work,
stop by www.raardvark.com

Chris Maday
was born and raised in Colorado,
at the convergence of the plains
and the mountains. After clawing
his way through the dust and the
dirt, he found himself in the Pacific
Northwest, where he has been
writing, studying English, and
dreaming of America ever since.

Richard Omier
says his photo, "bucket drummer,"
was literally the last one he took
in 2011, on New Year's Eve. And
it got published in 2012. Now his
goal is to take a photo in 2012 that
will get published sometime in
2013.

Erik White
was born and raised in
Salt Lake City. A move to
Portland four years ago rekindled
a passion for creating art, and he
decided to follow his childhood
dream. He works primarily with ink
and paint, but if there's a block of
clay, a sewing machine, or basically
anything in the room, he'll play
with those too. If you're interested
in seeing more, check out his blog
at prayfortherain.blogspot.com, or
email erikwhite@hotmail.com

Christina Stephens
is finishing up her bachelor's degree
in English at PSU. Afterwards, who
knows? Words and images keep her
fed.

Parker Michael Knight
is a founder and officer of the new
PSU student club, Art Practice
Collective, which by NO means
in ANY is even remotely affiliated
with the Art as Social Practice
program. He gives a stellar endorse­
ment of KPSU's Regurgitate Show.

Cory Mimms
is a medium-sized graduate student
in the Writing and Book Publish­ing
program. He works as a fre­
lance writer—from journalism to
comics—and loves to read, write,
run, swim, and ski.

Lena Basiden-Tankut
is a post-bac student at PSU, at­
tending writing classes and ap­
plying for the MFA Program in
Creative Writing. She is currently
working on a feature screenplay,
and dedicating time to her band,
Karrakush.

The Unnamed
Not all artists chose to submit
biographical information. Pathos
nonetheless thanks them for their
artistic contribution, and salutes
their preference for mystery,
anonymity, and the great
unknown.