Winter 2019

Pathos, Winter 2019

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EDITORS NOTE://

While Pathos doesn't explicitly choose a theme for each edition there is a common thread throughout the magazine. This connection is the human experience and, more specifically, the experiences of Portland State University's diverse student body. Each of the pieces you will encounter in these pages are submitted to us by PSU students. These are their words, art, and voices. Thank you for sharing them with us.

It has been expressed to me by every member of my team that the reason they choose to work for Pathos is purely out of love. They truly are the best of the best, not only in their jobs but also as people. It is both my greatest sadness and greatest joy to see each of them move on from this publication to bigger and better things. Their passion for literature and art is the driving force behind this magazine and for that I am forever grateful.

Sadie Jordan, Editor-in-Chief
Juliana Tattoli, Copy Editor
Sloane Ackerman, Graphic Designer
Harrison Gerard, Social Media Manager

CREW://

Cover Art: Metro Feels by Colin Davis
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URBAN LOVE SONG
Sophia Valdez

Darling, take a walk with me
and see the things we pass.
Look upon the glistening dirt
and all this broken glass.
Come and see the fireworks
illegal in the park.
Come and see the digging beasts
that scuttle in the dark.
There’s another world out there
with gold beneath the grit.
Take a walk with me, my dear
‘cause baby this is it.
The chipping paint and crusty lawns
will build foundations strong.
These poster bands and bleeding hands
are gonna right this wrong.
So come and write this wrong, my dear
and see what we can do.
‘Cause when the world decides to go
I know I’ll stay with you.
“TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND...”
Jessie West

5
Count the grey flecks on the 16 doves in the ash tree.
The arch where we made our own rain.
Table set to tea for two, but it’s too cold now.
The dead and drying vines threaten from the fence.
Mug of coffee, still warm.

4
Fingers frozen against glass pains.
Tangles of hair twist and tickle red ear tops.
Blankets wrapped around shaking shoulders.
Bite of concrete on skin.

3
Revved engine trying too hard on back country roads.
Rustling from the compost.
Someone, somewhere, is mowing their lawn.

2
Petrichors thick from the last rain.
Aging dog with the sunshine teeth grinning.

1
Too much cream
Stay and have some juice.

a glass of hot tea.

What are you hoping for?

TOHEAL.

Stay and have some juice by Munir Khalil.
THE PLATEAU
August Amoroso

Now,

I invite you to traverse
the plateau,

Caroline.

Astride your bicycle,

along Grayback Road,
grinding gravel,

falling
into
a cumulus - consumed
horizon,

sky Blue beyond
cyan,

beyond reason.

And, I miss you

and, I love you
and, this is...

only

my idea of you.
LIMBO
Nia Musiba

We're walking the space between our souls
Tiptoeing around the facts, avoiding the hard truths
And so, death becomes a personality trait
Until we find enough strength to let things lie.
Mourning is worn on our sleeves,
And we grieve daily
Over him,
And our childhoods.
Over the sun,
The clarity,
And any semblance of comfort.

This period is for change and for transition.
Sticky and sneaky it will creep in slowly.
It will be the itch in our sides
And the pain in our knees.
It may snap us in half
So that we have the chance to fill ourselves with a new light
Before we become whole again.

It will be worth the wait.
A LIST OF ANXIOUS THINGS
(AFTER SAI SHONAGON)

Claire Golden

Ordering food at a restaurant is like fighting a bear. Adrenaline spikes through the system, your heart speeds up, you contemplate running away. What if you can't find something you like? Then, of course, there is the matter of actually placing the order. What if you order it incorrectly? Or what if, God forbid, they're out of the ingredients and you must make another decision on the spot?

Being in the elevator with other people. It is difficult to maintain the required three-foot space bubble when packed into a tight space with strangers.

Getting off the bus only to find that someone else has gotten off at the same stop, then having to gauge your pace so as to not look like a stalker.

Leaving a store without buying anything, all the while feeling eyes on you like someone is about to accuse you of shoplifting.

Entering the school cafeteria and immediately feeling all eyes upon you while you try to ascertain where the line starts. Then, scanning the crowded cafeteria for an empty seat, and if there are none available, trying to find a table with the least number of people. What if you sit too close to somebody else and they feel uncomfortable? What if they're saving a seat for somebody?

It's like an algebra equation with too many variables: impossible to solve.

Shopping in stores is anxiety-producing. Who needs skydiving when making decisions is the biggest adrenaline rush you'll ever get?

Waiting in line at the grocery store. Shopping is difficult enough without a shopping cart to contend with. It's like driving on a road where nobody is required to have a license.

Going up to the counter and fumbling through one's purse for the right amount of money, flinging coins, credit cards, and dollar bills everywhere.

Surprises. They're something you can't plan for, and therefore something that must be feared. Even if it's a good surprise, how does one properly react?

Taking the bus. What if you miss it? Where should you sit? What if you get off at the wrong stop? All this before even arriving at your destination, which is sure to hold a myriad of challenges.

Text messages. The stomach-churning agony of being left on read and wondering what you said wrong. Because it must be you. It seems everyone else was born knowing how to talk to others.

Conversation is the bane of the anxious person's existence. It feels like everyone else received a class on how to make small talk. How many times can the weather be mentioned in one conversation before the other person loses interest, or worse, stares at you as if you're saying something wrong? The greater concern, though, is how to achieve genuine human connection through small talk. It's impossible. How, exactly, does one go about making a friend? Not an acquaintance. Not a coworker. A real friend. One who could help you battle through your list of anxious things.

It feels like everyone else got a copy of a rulebook that the anxious person doesn't have.
PTOWN CROW PARTY
Jess Shamek

A crow dots the sky. And then another. And then another.
streaming over the river to the west side
night falling flight until a murder appears.
grouped to decide the capital fate of their kin
the sound is a racket of consciousness

I read a scientific article that said
this gathering is a Phenomena

Phenomena like the northern lights
like waking up everyday alive
in a world that works to stamp out life with loneliness

It's happening all over the Northern Hemisphere
on the west coast too Seattle Vancouver Portland

In the big dark northern cities
first they hunt in the daylight
all day with their families
in small groups territory divided
scavenging heavy bristle beaks and feet

But dark starts to fall
and like misfit roommate families on a Friday night
each crow group takes flight
and together they head to the party in Forest Park

On the way they stop in the Park Blocks
and the festivities begin
families separate
and they fill the trees calling

Why
Scientist speculate
Do they do this?
No one can ask. Because we can’t speak crow.

It’s a particular type of foraging behavior
they say raising up a shoulder shrug in conviction

But what if
they’re just looking for good company
is it so hard to imagine a crow would go
to a crow party?

foraging with their friends for arthropods and squawking the
night away
Together, everyone needs a community.

In Forest Park’s dark canopy
I imagine
a reverie
crows calling together
until it’s so late
they roost down beaks tucked
dark eyes and rustling feathers

light begins to seep through canopy branches
and like the daybreak haze
of a Portland house party ending
they shake the dew off their feathers
and fly slowly back across the river
separated still to rejoin to their families
HE IS SAMSON!
Kurtis Matthew Russell

Rags about the eyes.
He is blinded!
Through holes between teeth
he nearly screams
but all that is released
is a limp exhale
wafting wind-like outwards.
Rags about the genitals.
He is humiliated!
Through gaps between bone-fingers
he claws into the air,
and grasps flat nothing.
His only hope: to be freed.
Chains clank clink clunk and this
is not the sound of freedom.
His hair cut,
skin stained,
stink of death & living-rot.
Rags removed.
One can only wonder what it is he might see,
if seeing were possible,
and light,
a friend.
SOUL TANGO
Nia Musiba

i'm undressing you from across the room.
i want to strip you down and sit in front of a mirror with you,
nothing but skin and bones and flesh and the truth,
so our souls can embrace like old friends,
and for a glorious moment
you and i will become one—
twisted tongue and beating heart,
memories spilling onto beige carpet,
dreams dripping down leather lounges.
there, i can say anything,
so my lips will hover beside your ear
about to speak in a universal language only you and i need to understand.

you will nod,
smile,
but eventually
your phone will ring
or the dog will bark
or the mail will come
and we will be forced back into the real world,
shaking hands pulling bodies back on and
i will be confined,
bloated and sweating,
bitten cheeks, raw lips, bleeding cuticles.

i will sigh,
you will crinkle your forehead,
i will tell you it's nothing because
how do i even begin to explain
that worry has made a home in my lungs
and i haven't been breathing for years?
i just want to talk again
without feeling like my heart is going to fall out of my throat,

but here, i am far too afraid to speak,
so i'll bite my tongue
and stare at the mirror
and wonder what color your truth is
under all of those clothes.
"Abuela, Sylvia, will I ever see you without make-up?" I asked.

My abuela, Sylvia, stood in her balcony overlooking First Avenue, the East Village. Her bleached blonde hair styled in a perfect bouffant. Full make-up, fur coat, and fake eyelashes complimented a very funky look. She puts down her whisky on the rocks.

"Not even when I am dead, will you see me without make-up, mijo. What did you get me for Christmas?" she asked with a half smile.

I handed her the lilac box with a white bow on top. She glanced at it curiously. Then she opened it like a bear ready to ravage a honey pot. The contents of the box puzzled her.

"What the fuck is this?" she asked, pulling out the Parliament cigarette boxes.

"It's a month long supply of cigarettes," I replied.

"How did you know I smoked?" she asked.

"Abuela, your smoking is an open secret. Now, that you're eighty-five, might as well light up. What did you get me?" I asked, anxiously.

Sylvia took two boxes that were hidden behind her favorite patio chair. The wrapping had (similar) 'Dia de los Muertos' skulls. Abuela quickly lights up a Parliament and takes a swig of whisky. She watches in glee as I opened the first gift.

"Pens, I love pens," I told her.

"Inhaling the cigarettes," she replied, "I do too. If it weren't for my years working at the Paper Mate Pen factory, we wouldn't have this delightful patio. Open the next box, it'll give you something to write about."

Quickly, I opened the next gift. A plain white box was revealed. I tried to open the plain white box.

"I wouldn't open that if I were you. Your grandfather is in that box." She said, with a giggle.

In shock, awkwardness followed. I stared into the tenements and traffic of First Avenue, avoiding eye contact with Sylvia. Obviously, nobody had ever gifted me a dead body before. She continued to smile.

"You don't look awkward, enough, Diego," she said, with a giggle.

"I thought abuelo was buried in Queens. I remember going when I was twelve," I said, sitting down from shock.

She nodded her head, no. More awkward silence followed. We kept staring at each other.

"Darling, remember back in the fifties when I tried to be an actress? Well, I left your grandfather and my job in New York to pursue that dream of being a traveling actress. We did a traveling production of 'Guys and Dolls' in Mexico City. I met a handsome caballero. Antonio, he was so handsome. A couple tequila shots and I ended up back in Brooklyn, pregnant. Whoops, abuelo thought it was his. I'll cut to the chase, your mama is the product of a few tequila shots, oh, and Antonio."

Different emotions rushed through me. Grandpa Larry raised me. He took me to my first musical, potty trained, and even taught me how to tie my shoes. Not being blood related was devastating. Sylvia and I didn't have the same bond. Then a major realization came to me.

"Shit, does this mean, I'm not a quarter Jewish?" I asked.

"Sorry, honey, you're not Jewish. You are a quarter Mexican, though."
Now you can really celebrate Cinco de Mayo,” Sylvia said, while refilling her whisky glass.  
“I’ve always loved enchiladas. But, wait, how did you get his remains?” I asked.  
Leaping from her chair, Sylvia ran into her apartment. Quickly, she appeared with a box of letters. She handed them to me. I opened the contents. The first thing I saw was a black and white photo of a handsome man. He had raven hair, dark eyes, and a round face. Antonio even had my smile.  
“Wow, this is him, I am guessing,” I said.  
“Yes, we stayed in contact for years. I told abuelo, he was a gay friend I met, while touring. He got very sick last year. I inherited his ranch in Mexico and his dead body. I was a lucky lady. Two men loved me,” Sylvia said.  
“Why are you giving it to me?” I asked.  
“No shit, I’m eighty-five, I need to leave Antonio with someone.” She said. Sylvia fixed up her lipstick. Attempting to show as little emotion as possible, I gave her a hug. Clearly, I was more affected emotionally.  
“I’m going on vacation in Mexico in two days. Tonight, let’s go to that tequila bar on Saint Marks and celebrate Antonio’s life. I can stick him in my big purse. Just make sure we don’t lose him, while we’re drunk,” Sylvia said. Happily, she leaped from her chair. Mariachi music played. I stood looking at the box. It puzzled me. This was my biological grandfather. He’s in this box, I hold. The shock slowly drifted. Excitement was replaced. He would live in my modest studio in Astoria. I no longer lived alone.  
Hugging the box, I proclaimed, “Que viva, Mejico.”
YOUNGEST BAND PLAYS LAST
Christine Claringbold

Red room swarms in fleshy crush
behind my back & splattered boots
the flood outside, the mud entrenched
grind into rug the dirty shoes
peripheral explosion blurs
of wild kids who charge and rage,
churn against my elbows braced –
I let it happen, soak it up:
the bulbs of blaze, the last red three

Last band on my basement stage,
play for me this droning sludge,
this swampy air in underground
box of humid human screams
who waited in a sticky glaze
to pound down midnight metal
they leap and tear the burgundy
shredding powdered petal dust
as flowers peel from the ceiling,
sweating streaks of ghostly skin,
black feathers drip and curl,
their bodies bounce and whirl

off on someone flicks the switch
fuck your fancy light shows, this
is stripped to basics after fog and lasers,
stench of burning plastic
loosens joints and rigid panic
of my guests,
my guests,
dance now and forget.
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Thanks again and we look forward to reading your submissions this spring!

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