Spring 2019

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The Crew
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Harrison Gerrard – Social Media Manager
Moxxy Rogers – Copy Writer

Editors Note
Pathos Literary Magazine's staff sorted through the most phenomenal poetry, prose, and artwork this quarter. I am always stunned by the sheer creativity that comes from Portland State University students and this issue has been no different. While each work in this issue explores different topics, emotion, and imagery, they all engage us in diverse thought.

Pathos is proud to be a collaboration of voices from students from all majors, identities, and walks of life. We appreciate all the talented writers and artists who take advantage of the creative space this magazine provides to our community. You are an important part of facilitating connection on campus.

If you are a fan of Pathos Literary Magazine, please let us know! Whether it is submitting your work, hanging out with us at events, or engaging with us in person and online - we want to hear from you. You are the driving force behind this magazine, we truly couldn't do it without you. Without further ado, I am proud to present to you this amazing collection of work from your peers.

Cover Art: Elisa Hung
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lack of patience cannot produce a painter,
but it can produce a poet
words are easy to quickly shift:
paints take too long to dry
before you can add the next layer
He hopped in a spaceship,
And saw that she was sailing it,
An artist with her funny words like a sunflower,
They didn't die,
But they did live,
When he asked how,
She wrote on the wall,
"Everybody is a wreck and a butterfly,
Which doesn't make much sense now, but once an old white man says it, you'll believe it"
So he listened and he walked backward in a circle until he was a ball of yarn,
Standing there in his bones,
sexism groaned and shook history,
a ferret in a cage, dissolving under her electric thrum
Blindness steeped out of him,
6 to 8 minutes like chamomile,
Until his ruminating chilled to a stop,
And his eyes opened when he felt the pale earth through his calluses,
"I've never smelled a mountain,
But one of these Fridays,"
He whispered
And she smiled and yawned and kept running,
While the Spirograph sky turned,
Emptying day right straight down a tunnel through a drain in the night,
And the Honest stars moaned,
Erupted into hieroglyphs,
Preached to her
Fresh Tortilla
by Juliana Tattoli

We are standing
in the kitchen
& the smell
of warm tortilla
is risen
via stovetop.
They are the best
with butter,
says my mother,
excited,
who was taught this
by her own mother,
in a Texas childhood.
Weight, Wait, and Wade
by Eve Echternach

Barren and wasted
with sand blowing
and pounding
between my nails, cresting my hair,
bloodying my knees.
I have too much
weight.
His fingertips
plunging into my milky
skin, altering me pale.
Necks damp with salivating
kisses, hands tight and
wet with salt.
I need him
to wait.
Palms are calloused,
dry and cracked, memories
of pink-budded blisters.
weight piling
on padded fists,
I am feeling static
rise towards my thighs
while holding this weight.
Please, wait.
I'm growing so tired
so limp
wishing that he'd wait
because I have all this
weight coiling my limbs,
wading in my head.
I think,
I thought to wait.

Coppery saturation pouring
and pooling between my
toes. Thinking I needed to
suffer and
to wait.
His voice is so loud,
booming and ricocheting
off walls and membranes.
My voice still so quiet,
evaporating into misty breaths
lost in puffy clouds because
I wait with the weight
weighing me down until
nothing can sound
from my airless tongue.
I think about
how his hands feel
looped and tightly wound,
flattening my ribs,
cloaked by lovelishness.
And how I wait,
steady and fixed –
eyes on the ceiling,
waiting for the weight
he puts on my chest
to stop.
To think,
I waste away, waiting –
Waiting for the sharpening tones
to dull as they slice
my swollen, rosied lip.
Wading in malaise –
weights wrapped round my
ankles by emerald satin meant
to sink.
To wait as the spine tickling,
azure, blackness
weighs on my body.
Weight packing me
into a tiny speck.
A bleached stain in a gurgling current.
He told his father to never call again and hung up the phone. It would be two years before his father’s sudden, unexpected, and gruesome death. But he did not yet know this; the memories were all he knew. Without being aware of it, he thought that he knew everything, but would only realize this folly when gazing on the still and lifeless tuxedoed corpse of his father. Something about the maroon handkerchief stippled with white set against the professional, yet disquieting, rouging of the dead father’s cheeks would at that moment enlighten him. He didn’t yet know that, though.

He only knew that his father never seemed to love or approve of him the way he wanted. His father never encouraged, only discouraged. His father made a young boy go about hungry and in ratty clothes to save money that he would eventually spend on Hawaiian vacations in retirement. His father taught him words like “bastard”, “son of a bitch”, and “prick” by shouting them. His father demonstrated the meaning of other words such as “back-hand” and the feeling of an airborne, and mostly empty, liquor bottle colliding with the back of a six-year old cranium.

These things he knew of a surety. In his young man’s arrogance carried well past youth, he thought he knew even more - the framed slips of paper with names of universities and two- and three-letter acronyms after his name proved this.

And yet he learned something new when he reached the head of the line at his father’s wake and viewed the old man’s corpse with the barely contained, simmering rage of four decades. As he looked at his father’s lifeless face, a sight he’d imagined every day with what he thought was vengeful glee, something unexpected happened.

He learned something. He learned that his father’s dead body was no likelier to say, “I love you”, than it had when living. He learned that in thinking of the estrangement as punishing his father, he had gotten it all wrong.

He learned that the carefully nurtured rage of a lifetime comes to naught at the very moment he expected vindication.

He learned that after all that, he only wanted the sad, pathetic, vindictive old man to open his eyes and hug him the way he never had. He learned there was no going back. With this realization he lowered his head to hide his face and walked away from the casket.
anglefish, after mary ruefles “argot”
by Mira Collins

1.
the lake is empty, full of hooks and casts left carcassed
dry space leaking twigs and dust
here we are, coercing life into a dead thing
still fishing for wishful thinking, one last lick from the loch.
there is no fire without release
and god, did we exhale it all.
blowing into our bones like trumpets;
a wheeze. where is our pity?
“when i say trout i mean you,”
i mean us,
i mean dinner is served and we’re swallowing ourselves.

2.
“when i say trout i mean you,”
i mean my eyes are closed but i know this tide,
that this current runs along the ridges of your tongue–
there’s so many soft ways to say this.
I’ll bubble-babble backwards until i find my words
give you my last gill and then some.
we’ve basked in enough light to last a lifetime
and another, and another, and another
did you tell god about us?
did you say thank you?
Sustenance
by Dana Lopez

I am not sure if it is more strange that I look or find
god in the shapes in dirt or
patterns in gnarled tree bark or
the backside of someone's denim jacket on the other side of the cafe.
What about the mystery of existence is found at the bottom of a coffee cup,
or a powdery red rock formation in Sedona?
I love a crafted deity or statue as much as any other bewildered
reaching human.
Lately I find god powerfully present in
a ravenous and bloodied heart or
a pliable porous mind with an aftertaste of transcendence.
Un-apologizing wounds in the dark where-
I learn to carry the unspeakable quietly, side by side with you, sometimes in
a text
The holding on and breathing and picking up the bananas at the store
is enough on most days.
Is it god in the trees that form a circle around the running trail by my house?
Looking up, I wonder who doesn't worship this way?
Rigid shoulders unclench under such a sky.
Hidden Groves
by Spencer Garfield

Take my hand and soar with me
in aircrafts never flown
We'll stroll barefooted through the dirt
along the soil unsown
Swim beside me underneath
the cryptic depths below
We'll discover entities
in realms beyond our own
I can drive the caravan
up through the hidden groves
The journey is far scarier
when one must go alone
New alleyways and continents
are hard to understand
But this world can be ours, my love
If you'll just take my hand

Proselytizing esplanade lurker
by Cole Miller

the man with the big
sign and mega phone
had a huge Christian bible with the fore edge painted gold
tucked into his hip
like a gun
Stand by the Clothes Line and Feel the Sheets
by Andrew Faulkner

I got up and went to the bathroom, taking the book with me.
I walked right to the counter, and set it down beside the sink.
I looked into the mirror:

Do you even believe in ghosts?
I'd be a fool not to - -
though I'm not so sure they're...
Ectoplasmic, or transparent.

Are you afraid of ghosts?
Sure I am.
We're all afraid of some part of ourselves.
And besides,
if they prove themselves,
then I've turned my back
on everything True.
I can't do that a second time.

What is a ghost?
Alcohol
- - and someone you knew
before you knew yourself.
Do you think you will ever be a ghost?
I'm already a ghost.

What makes you a ghost?
Alcohol
- - and some people I knew
before I knew myself.

Do you have any ghost stories?
I'm... Many, I'm sure.

Tell me one.

It's about a boy who could not sleep.
I know this boy.
You do.

...

I took Swensen back up, asking her again
what ghosts were and how to love them.
She answered me in whispered fragments,
puffs that in the corner of your eye
almost looked like someone you knew,
someone you could recognize in a mirror.
American Traditional Cowboy Boot by Casey Helmick
Easter Box
by Olivia Rollins

About two weeks ago, my mom sent me an Easter package. She always sends special treats on holidays, and she always ships them in old boxes she finds in her garage. This one—the Easter box—looks especially beat up. The top is sunken in and gummed up with layers of packaging tape, and at least one address has been written directly on the cardboard and then blacked out with a Sharpie. But the original address label remains in the upper left-hand corner: it says “Leonard Paul McVey,” and it’s dated January 4, 2007. On the side of the box is printed “BD 2oz. (60ml) Syringe: Catheter Tip.”

I remember syringes. I remember they were often filled with orange liquid—I think it was methadone—that my stepdad would inject directly into his stomach tube. I remember one time something went wrong with the syringe or the stomach tube, and somehow this orange liquid ended up splattered on the ceiling in my parents’ bedroom. I remember giggling at the absurdity of it and saying gleefully, “There’s meth on the ceiling! There’s meth on the ceiling!” because I didn’t understand the difference between methadone and methamphetamine. I think this was in the old house, so I must’ve been five or six. But would I really have known about meth when I was five or six? Things are so unclear, and yet at the time it was clear to me that normal families did not have narcotics splattered on their ceilings.

I knew there were a lot of drugs. I knew that at one point he had thirteen different prescriptions (or was it fourteen?), but I didn’t know what most of them were for. I didn’t know how many different medications the human body could tolerate, and I didn’t ask. I knew that during the bad period, when he developed a habit of flying into rages at my mom and me for no apparent reason, his doctors decided to tweak his prescription for antidepressants. I knew it must be depressing to have cancer, and to have it for so many years, and to never be able to talk right or eat anything through your mouth ever again, but I didn’t think about it much.

I knew he had to grind up all his pills in that little pill crusher with the blue cap. As a teenager, I would look at that pill crusher sitting on the counter with the fine dusting of white powder still coating its surface, and I would think to myself, If I were to lick the powder off, would I get high? My mom always joked that all the drugs we had in the house would be worth a fortune on the streets.
I knew there were intricate procedures for keeping all the medications straight, for turning them into a liquid solution that could be injected, for keeping the stomach tube clean and for replacing it with a new one every so often. But I didn't know the details. For years and years I would sit at the kitchen counter eating my dinner and see him standing by the sink, crushing the pills, mixing something in a little plastic cup, gargling and choking and spitting into the sink as he attempted to clean out the narrow, painful, irradiated mouth that remained to him. I hated it when he did that—I hated the gagging and the choking and the way he would use his ever-trembling thumb and index finger to wipe the saliva from the corners of his mouth. I would sit there at the counter, seeing him and not thinking too much about the details, but thinking instead about horseback riding lessons and training bras and whatever boy I liked at the time.

When it came to death, I knew there were intricate procedures for that too—the hospice nurses explained them to my mom over the phone, and I heard everything indirectly. I knew there were circumstances that prevented my sixteenth birthday from being a celebratory occasion, but I didn't know if I had any feelings about that at all. Six days later I knew he had died, because suddenly there were a lot of people in our house and they all said so, but part of me didn't know for sure because I never saw the body. I didn't want to—that would've been too many details.

I took the recycling out today, and when I came back inside I realized the box had been missed again. I had meant to get everything, but somehow it had escaped my notice for the second week in a row, and so there it was—sitting on my bedroom floor under its layers upon layers of Sharpie marks and tape, proclaiming, "Syringe: Catheter Tip." I looked at it and sighed. Having just made the trip out the door and down the stairs and across the parking lot to the dumpsters and back, I determined that it wasn't worth doing it all over again for just one box. I decided I would let it stay there on my floor for one more week, or perhaps two, and then maybe I would finally remember.
Inauguration Day Wallpaper by Victoria Daisley
Selah
by Andrew Faulkner

Broken bits and busted baubles
gather dust on long-forgotten shelves,
rotting on rotten wood,
abandoned
where I once left them for you.
Empty frames; cases bereft of glass
that would have stood clouded by time,
had it not been for my bared fist.
There is none of age's opacity here:
my blood still stains the floor,
still darkens this spent wood.
Decrepitude is reflected in an absence
which refuses all other reflection:
the glass is missing.
The glass is missing.
There I lay as Queen Jane:
I, too, have sighed my last,
decaying like these fruited labors.
These, my children—
though stillborn and coated in filth—
are my greatest legacy.
Look upon my love, my labor,
O great eroded Ozymandias!
Life has left me lifeless—
but on these drooped shelves,
my story, at least, has been told.
Selah.
Chopin’s Preludes
by Van Vanderwall

As the young woman played in reverse sequence through the twenty-four Chopin preludes, the baby tossed about inside her. Stopping for a moment, she placed a hand on her abdomen. What are you doing in there? she wondered. Outside the snow fell, bringing a quiet blanket down to the streets of the city.

Even indoors, away from the snow, sound seemed dampened and less resonant. She liked to imagine that this was the way the strings on the inside of the piano felt. She knew that didn’t make sense; the space in which the strings vibrated was the very opposite of sound-deadening. Something about the thought always came up in her mind, continually suggesting itself to her.

The baby continued to move about under her hand. She looked to the top of the upright piano. A miniature replica of the death cast of Chopin’s hand looked as if in the process of reaching for her, it had laid down to rest and turned to bronze. Its companion piece, a facsimile of the death cast of Chopin’s face, stared up at the ceiling. From the vantage point of the bench, all she saw was the chin—somewhat indistinct and lacking in firmness, like a grassy hill turned on its side.

She closed the book of preludes and stood up with some unsteadiness. Her hand continued to stroke and feel around her belly as she walked toward the window.

Her mother’s heavy steps alluded to her progress to the doorway of a bedroom some ways behind the young woman at the window. The mother leaned out of the door, without stepping beyond its threshold, and furrowed her brow slightly. Her eyes moved from the young woman to the death casts on the piano before settling on a number of letters, parcels, envelopes, and papers on the table. The mother, without intending to do so, produced a small throat clearing sound, like a muffled cough. Across the room, the young woman swayed from left to right very slowly and without discernible rhythm. The mother went back into her room.

The young woman’s hand no longer felt the baby moving. She turned, walked back to the piano bench, and sat down. When she opened the book of Chopin’s preludes, she turned back a page from her stopping place to begin at the piece preceding it. She started to play the piano again, in order to get to the beginning so that she could turn around and go to the end again.
"Witch Bottle"
by Ava Phillips

The dead in me fold paper cranes
into my spine.
The birds knot themselves into vertebrae.
Call themselves bones.
Call themselves pearls
carved too early from the womb.
On my left lung sits a crow—
white and laughing
like sugarcane.
On occasion I cough up feathers.
My esophagus rough as Chantilly lace
after years of learning to be
a bird cage.
Failing to be a home.
Last November I buried ten
eyelashes
and one cat’s claw
hoping my wilderness would find
that grave
and follow the wind back
to my open palm.
My tide-pool limb.
The swans in me keep
a catalogue of such severance—
cry over nail clippings and new moons
in Leo.
Like a taunt they dip their
beaks in blue and write
my name on one of many doors.
In my dreams I stroke the handle
and give birth to June bugs
and fog.
The slow crawling out of me
of slick, flinching wings.
More like a ghost march than
a resurfacing.
The Life and Times of Emarie Majors
by Annie Couch

Her pretty heart kept beating and breaking,
Unlocked for years
’Til she passed away and all her loves came to the funeral in wool suits and said a crusty
goodbye with a squashed store carnation to the love of their life,
And they had all been lucky because only one in ten gets a love like that;
Even her most boring had been epic,
Monkey bars over hot lava when you’re 8 is how her curls fell,
Dragon boats on the river,
A convict’s prayer
She was jumping to your death but seeing the cities and the secrets on the way.
And it is worth it
ATTENTION PORTLAND STATE WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND THINKERS!

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram. We'll be posting work from the most recent submission period, interesting literary events you can check out around Portland, and you can keep up to date with what Pathos is up to.

@PathosLitMag

Thanks again and we look forward to reading your submissions this spring!

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