

Winter 2021

## Pathos, Winter 2021

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# pathos



LITERARY MAGAZINE  
WINTER · 2021

WINTER TERM  
2020 - 2021

**CLAIRE MILLER**  
*Creative Director*  
*Interim Editor-in-Chief*

**AVA PHILLIPS**  
*Copy Editor*

**CHLOE FINDTNER**  
*Social Media Manager*

Dearest Reader,

Winter tends to drag by where I'm from. It's cold, it's dark, and overall easy to get lost in. All the more reason I get excited to see the grass begin to peak through the snow. Surprising how resilient our earth can be. Puddles begin to clear, flowers begin to bloom, and the trees grow leaves again. And it happens every year. Great right?

I hope that this issue brings you that same feeling of wonder. The authors and artists featured have proven their own resilience in creating sensational works that we now get to share with you.

One last thing—I'm pleased to announce that we have filled our Editor in Chief position for Spring term! Bret Steggell will be taking over and I will be returning to Creative Director. Special thanks to the Pathos team, our authors and artists, and you, reader, for sticking through our tumultuous transition.

All the best,

  
*Claire Miller*  
*Creative Director*  
*Interim Editor-in-Chief*

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FRONT COVER:

*WHEN ENGAGING  
IN CONVERSATION  
ABOUT MENSES*  
S. RISE

BACK COVER:

*ETERNALLY  
FLOURISHING*  
BRIT TADDEI

## **TOWERS**

*Kurtis Matthew Russell*

The first time you share a bed, you switch dreams  
signals crossed like old radio stations  
and you become towers hailing moonbeams.  
Before sleep, she leans over, shows you memes  
and you speculate at her creation.  
The first time you share a bed, you switch dreams  
and she lives in your head rent-free it seems.  
It's the ultimate time-share vacation.  
And you become towers hailing moonbeams.  
And in the night, you wake with a supreme  
scare. One day she'll die, and then what, cremation?  
The first time you share a bed, you switch dreams  
and that means nightmares too, the fears that gleam  
from the corners of imagination.  
And you become towers hailing moon beams  
whose waves communicate in moans and screams  
but whispers too. Love is information.  
The first time you share a bed, you switch dreams  
and you become towers hailing moonbeams.

**HEAVIER THAN STONE***Bethany Umbarger*

Been feeling lower than the deepest sedimentary layer  
the memory of his body on me heavier than stone.

He built himself into a tower of duplicity disguised as tenderness  
casting shadows for trauma to thrive.

Stack the sediment over my bones and let me fossilize  
maybe layers of limestone and shale can outweigh the thought of his fingertips.

“Why can’t you just get over it?”

Like it’s so easy to shake the gravity of losing one’s autonomy  
having something taken that was not freely given—

learning what was supposed to be love was really manipulation  
and carrying scars carved into the recesses of this gray matter.

So crystalize my insides and keep stacking soil on top.  
I can’t live with this weight forever.



*Morning Surf*

Noah Brown  
35mm Film Photo

**LIKE A PLANT***Bethany Umbarger*

If only I could be small like a seed.  
Barely there.  
Too tiny to even notice among the dirt.  
Watching life on a miniscule scale;  
A microcosm of organisms dutifully performing  
their underappreciated tasks  
as germination springs unnoticed.

If only I could be a plant.  
So minute. So unassuming.  
Delicate new life explores the tenuous grasp of sentience.  
But existence is not born from nothing.  
Family is a concept familiar in nature.  
Fungal filaments and root networks  
a symbiosis like synapses firing.  
Let hyphae bridge my brain matter.

To be so harmonious.

Voicing kindness can help plants grow.  
If spoken to gently, I could be a conifer.  
Forests take shape under a canopy of connection  
and affection, until  
finally,  
I am green and ancient and mighty.  
I have survived disasters of Mother and man.  
I can grow despite the storm  
survive despite the drought.

I am strong like a plant.



## NEUROPLASTICITY

*Sonia Comstock*

my brain is soft and chewy

like  
clusters  
of old bubblegum

or stretched play doh  
with dry, cracked edges

globes  
stringing down  
like flaccid plastic

thick sticky icky  
gooey, gluey  
treacle trickling down  
my spinal cord

black filth  
oozing through cracks  
oil rising through silt

slime  
sliding up and down  
my veins

slurping marrow  
from empty bones

bloody muck  
coagulates  
into creatures  
that slither up my throat

and suffocate me.

## GROCERY STORE

*Nanami Fetter*

I stare into the roof's  
ceiling. Everyone in this  
grocery store is my enemy.

The produce aisle is buzzing  
with flies, and one even gets  
into my eye. I bump into  
the asparagus. I pick up  
a jar of lemon curd, but  
my eye still hurts.

The trees are breathing  
and a leaf is hanging in  
midair. A guitar begins  
before the singer  
can finish.

**PRESCRIPTION***Sonia Comstock*

all my problems come in ticky tacky pill boxes  
with imprints of sticky fingers  
from a past life

misery in a cerulean capsule  
melts softly into bloody dust  
and sinks through my veins

and dissolves into my rationale  
and i'm frothing at the mouth  
like a rabid dog with a migraine

and when i'm finished  
vomiting up blue snot  
and hot white clots

i'll let you drill into the back of my brain again  
if you promise to make it stop.

**SILENCE**

*Sonia Comstock*

I cannot enter the silence  
or the silence enters me

slithers into my navel  
like an open envelope

some amorphous existence in the night.

Except you are a not a creature  
only a lack thereof

which is far more frightening.

You will not come visit me  
or kiss my scraped knees

or tell me that you love me

you will not come back to me in the night  
with hot hands

wanting to hold.

There is no comfort to be found  
in the innate state of the universe

no ease in the blackness  
that devours me

only the small sound of my voice  
quavering in the dark.



*Guard*

Taylor Stone  
graphite

## WHEN YOU SAY YOU'RE FAT

---

*Stephanie Lawson*

When you say you're fat, I hear my mother, your grandmother, whispering:  
"Look at that woman—at least I'm not that fat."

When you say you're fat I flash back to 2000, before you were born or even  
thought of, and I hear my sister, your mother, bragging:

"I don't eat much. I don't need to. I don't ever get very hungry."

I told your uncle recently, "I am hungry."

He said, "Nice to meet you Hungry. I'm Jason."

I rolled my eyes and tried to think of a more accurate way to describe my  
want for food.

A search on Thesaurus.com yields a shaming list of synonyms and leaves me  
thirsty for the right words.

The top results:

eager, greedy, keen, ravenous, starved

No. None of these are right. I just want a little bit of food.

Some more results in alphabetical order:

athirst, avid,

could eat a horse, covetous, craving,

empty,

famished, finishing, flying light,

got the munchies,

hankering hoggish, hollowed, hungered,

piggish,

unfilled, unsatisfied,

voracious,

yearning

This list of hyperbole pisses me off. It's all wrong. I'm not greedy nor piggish!

So many humans are famished.

I'm not. I just want a little bit of food.

I flash back to my childhood and hear Winnie the Pooh describe his want for food as a rumble in his tumbly.

And I don't know if I'm remembering it right, but I appreciate how that bear never let on if he felt any shame for his desires.

When you say you're fat as you grab that little bit of belly, and you briefly glance my way to see how I'll react while you giggle innocently yet brokenly, I feel guilty and broken because I have no idea what to say.

But I have to try. I can't be quiet. So I swallow (and almost choke but don't).

I swallow hard and say to you that what we say to ourselves matters.

I breathe deep and swallow hard again.

I push back the tears that well up whenever I take a close look at me in the mirror and I focus on a reflection of me.

I smile and whisper:

"Look at that woman—she has her father's nose and her mother's belly fat and I love her."

The simple affirmation keeps me smiling without meaning to. My simple smile makes you smile, so I go on:

"I love her smile, and the way smiling over time has made these lines like hugs around her mouth, and her scarred knees behind her shredded jeans." I shrug.

I still don't feel like I know how to say what I mean.

But right now, I am hungry.

And I pray that when you say you're fat you will smile and add:

"Like my auntie."

And I pray that when you are hungry you are not confused by the hyperbole the word suggests.

## DEVOURING SMILE

*Grace Wolfe*

The clouds move fast only when I don't record. It's momentous.  
I feel as though I could jump over the rebuilding center  
and meet them  
and reach my hands into their plume and pull and pull and mold and  
shape  
and hold their substance in my palm.  
I could feel the reverberations of condensation, lick the water off my  
hands  
and rub the wet on my jeans.  
They haven't moved since I started writing.

I remember a poet came to class when I was in fifth grade  
and Mrs. Singer asked us to write something that we could read aloud  
to her.  
I wrote about the clouds outside the classroom window  
(I was always nervous about the five o'clock Colorado thunderstorms.)  
I stood in the back of the class and read my poem to her, propping  
my words with gusto  
as I had seen done on television. She told me I used too many adjectives.  
Dusty old hag.

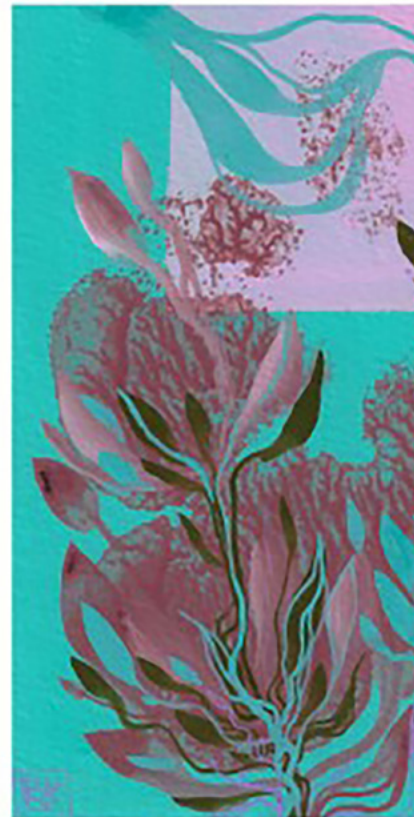
I don't remember her name or her poetry or what else she had  
to say  
but I remember the clouds. They were twisted and dark and they  
churned my stomach.  
But in my poem I compared them to the fur of a bunny,  
to the smoke out of an old man's pipe.  
I made them tangible and warm  
I consumed them.



*Loving Blindly*

Sheina Galgani  
Collage





*Process of Growth*

Brit Taddei  
Gouache and Ink on Cold Press





هچب و ردام (*madar-o bache*)

Taylor Stone  
Linocut Print

**COMET***Nanami Fetter*

Her face glazes over  
looking past my shoulder  
into the purple sky.  
Two white lines fall  
straight down.  
Something has pierced  
my neck.

“A comet,” she says.  
“I thought it was a comet.”

When I pet her  
with the hand that  
killed an ant  
crawling across the mattress  
she flinches.

Where was the debris?

## **DARLING, WE ARE BUT SOUNDWAVES**

*Kelly Zatlin*

Was I counting my blessings before they hatched that November night  
I sat perched on my bed breathing selfishly?  
The chill of the oncoming cold had not yet reached my toes, and even  
When it did it still had a long sojourn to my heart,  
Longer still to my nose.  
And I could have sat silently, satisfied to gush over my prose  
Until the cold did, in fact, disturb this ill repose.

So hearing those cars whiz by endlessly into the night would not  
Stop or rouse my eyes to cease bleeding water into these  
Trembling hands when my youth finally caught up to me,  
But we humans are masters at masquerading.  
In fact, I'm almost positive we show our true selves but once a year,  
Or at least when we find it suits us to without fear  
Of a sudden turning cheek attached to a soul we hold so dear.

I could be strong if I wanted to.  
I could immerse myself deep into the shuddering woods,  
Collecting shattered twigs and otherwise splintered debris left  
Haphazardly by passersby bearing a careless demeanor.  
I could scrape every dead thing off the mossy floor to  
Ameliorate this disease you have been hosting,  
But I know you are still keeping score. And should I  
Counter you with my broken branches, all you'd have to say is  
"But you aren't with the trees anymore."

"But I'm not with the seas anymore,"  
I should have shouted amongst the throngs fling mindlessly  
Before me as I struggled to find someone, anyone  
Who could cure me of my intolerable sea legs I acquired  
Diving into tidal waves and tsunamis hoping I could overcome my  
Fear of drowning.  
I should have shouted,

Because I would feel better without anyone having heard me,  
Having any notion that something shrieks beneath the surface of a  
Pretty face with irises so deeply eroded by suffering, and  
Because I would feel better knowing that not every nuance of feeling  
Has to be shrouded by a metaphor of mystery, and that  
The most precious things in life can be the simplest, and that  
I love you.

Because I'm not with the seas anymore.  
And darling, we are but sound waves skittering through this  
Passage of time that has done nothing but deceive.  
We will retreat from eardrums and drift to attics filled with  
Photographs colored with age and knickknacks eaten by dust.  
By then I will have hopefully replaced my heart with a device with far less  
rust  
That functions on more than women's intuition and my altruistic trust  
Of those blessings I have counted so long before they hatched into empty  
shells,  
Leaving me jilted and altogether nonplussed.  
Leaving me jilted, and nothing more than a spec on the earth's crust.



*please remember that being empty is just fine*

S. Rise  
35mm Color Film Photo

**SWEET CHERRIES***Camryn Smart*

With their syruped stems  
and rounded edges.

As red as sex,  
and lips,  
and hearts.

Forever the topping,  
the garnish,  
as sweet as candy,  
but never as sweet as cherries.

Never hidden,  
but never the centerpiece.

Never bitter,  
but always sweet.

Too sweet.  
Stick-to-your-tongue sweet.  
Reach-for-your-water sweet.

And red.

Far too red.



**THE ANACRUSIS (AND HOW IT QUICKLY BECAME USELESS)**

*Kelly Zatlin*

Yes, it was acute, that incision!  
Let it be known that while I was chopping wood you  
Were stranded in that jungle for eight weeks.  
I sent that search team for you, but all they found were  
A trail of blood and tears, thinned by the humidity  
And sheer humility of your person's mystique.

Make no mistake, I tried to find you.  
Once I thought you were a treasure map.  
I counted my steps and planned my desired route,  
But of course you were too convoluted — just a trap.

And yes, you were cute, by description,  
Toiling through the thick air with a weak heart, your  
Feet sinking dangerously into mud stewing with germs.  
I remember you wrote of your utter collapse, certain of your  
Impending death, and though the words were urgent and clear  
I pretended I could not read them; we were not on good terms.  
(Although that, by no means, was my decision.)

Make no mistake, I tried to save you,  
Once I thought you were a life vest.  
I made sure you were wrapped around me,  
But of course you sunk me — I was suppressed.

At this point, I just wish I were mute, that's my vision!  
Though I would still be able to sputter these diatribes,  
Perhaps I would lack motivation, have less willingness.  
Maybe then someone would at last listen, perhaps even you,  
At last grasping the importance of words without sound,  
But how could I know what strength my words possess?

Yes, it was acute, that incision!  
But it bled profusely, and without ceasing,  
Draining me of every drop of desperation from my veins.  
You showered it in gauze, hoping that the pressure  
Would at last draw an end to needless hemorrhaging, but  
I hiccuped, and the vacancy of life in me remains.

**SNOW***Nanami Fetter*

Outside, it hasn't stopped yet  
or looks as though it won't.  
The world is simply wet.  
A flurry, and without worrying  
whether it will show on leaves.  
What we actually see, is the rain  
that comes after this cold temperature.  
(And then the bamboo bending over.)

**NOT HIM (AFTER RICHARD SIKEN'S 'YOU ARE JEFF')**

*Camryn Smart*

1

You and him are in a room. You do not know if you love him or want to be him. You ask him his name, but you do not hear him. Do not ask again. It is in your best interest to not ask again. He does not ask your name. You feel alone, and you think he feels the same, but it is impossible to know. He is impossible to know. He sits on the bed and you join him. He looks at you and you look at him. But you are impossible to know.

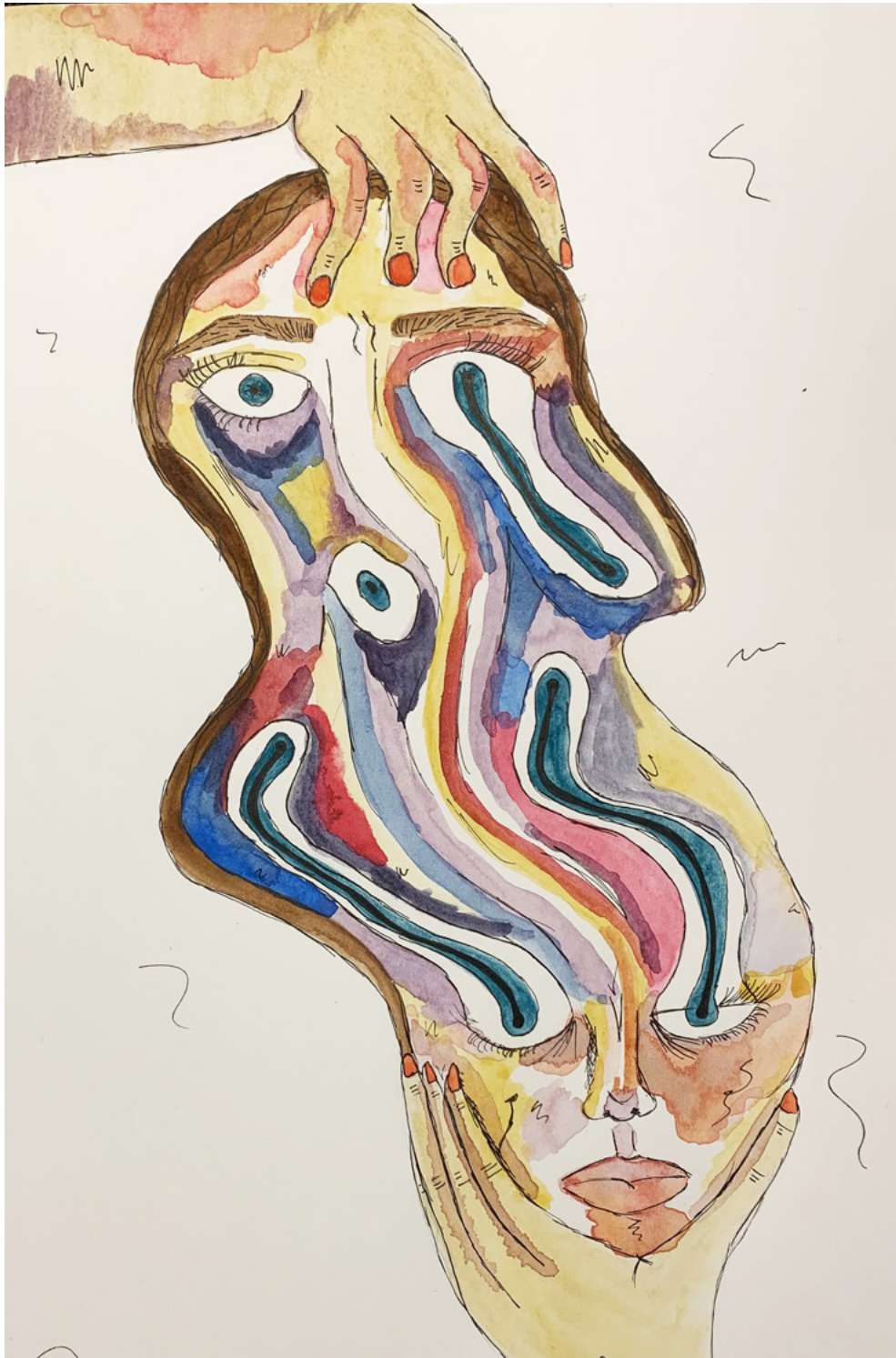
2

You and him are in a bed. You do not know if you love him or want to scream at him. He asks how he was, but you pretend not to hear him. Do not scream at him. It is in your best interest not to scream at him. You do not speak, and he does not speak. You want to ask his name, but you do not speak. You do not want to know his name. You do not want to remember him. You look at him and he is asleep. You hate him and he doesn't care. You hate him and you don't want to be him. Do not be him. It is in your best interest to never be him.



*Hiraeth*

Brit Taddei  
Watercolor and Gold Leaf on Cold Press



*covid haze // melting mind*

Alexandria Gonzales  
Watercolor on Watercolor Paper

**LIFE AS A HIKE***Lauren F Vinson*

Oh, prayers, layers, hide me in the brakes  
of life, bidden into the poison oaks, the reeds,  
into the pines, the poison ivies, and I will bleed  
in manzanita, will be slashed, slaked  
not but by prayers for my own sake.  
This Jesus struggles with her needs  
to revisit overgrown, confusing blind trails, seeds  
of wandering, disillusioned, from the lake  
where blue, sunlit hope lays so very clear  
down to the soft bottom sands  
that allow feet to sink in fear  
as soul-sucking slogs are their demands.  
On the water to sail, to swim, fly out above  
among the trees; to walk concrete,  
enter into screens and type of  
ambitions where I'll rise to float, on sweet  
rivers in breezes I feel, turning away  
from being lost to taking fresh ways.

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.....  
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