



2024

2024



# LETTER & LINE

*Issue 14 Winter 2024*

## CONTENT WARNING DEATH & BUGS

### *Editorial Staff*

Sarah Cashen  
M.J.L Fanucchi  
Sean Fields  
Haley Johnson  
Katelynn Leonard  
Oscar Nieves Lira  
Grace Pendergrass  
Nadia Reyes

### **Cover Art**

Gray René S.

### **Faculty Support**

Megan Savage



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You Are The Light  
*Jessica Fevie Hernandez*

# Editors' Note

Consider the following, my dear reader: there are two things that will surely emerge when you request literature and art from folks in the Pacific Northwest. Forget the evergreen forests, frosty mountains, playful rivers, and endless rain, no, no, no. Forget our iconic bridges and winter festivals. Instead, inside this issue, death and bugs steal the spotlight. "Why?" you might ask. Because all rots eventually (*I blame it on the weather*).

Welcome, once more, to the 2024 Winter edition of our online literary magazine *Letter & Line*, a space designed by us—your PCC student editors for our wider PCC community—to share, and to showcase their prose, poetry, photography, and artwork. If you are scrolling through the pages of this magazine, we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with our peers and bring these excellent examples of their art to your eyes.

Likewise, we want to extend our gratitude to the courageous and talented voices who entrusted us with their work. They are the protagonists. We hope that their unique experiences in this issue reflect the varied makeup of our diverse community. You are the reason why now, more than ever, we consider the value in publishing literature and art. While we wait for all to rot eventually, we can still feel *something like joy*, looking at a *messy picture of a cow* or a *toad*, getting *warmer* sharing with a *friend*, in a *cocoon* of blankets, a *psalm of sempiternal love*. Enjoy!

**Promising that we aren't secretly bugs,**  
*The 2024 Winter Editorial Staff*

# What Friends Are For/ Sacred Chats

*Sparrow Lattanzi*

On a night when I feared  
my heart was turning into a graveyard  
a friend nurtured my mind with these words,

“I’d like to be part of some rich soil. Busy with worms, ants, caterpillars, leaves, trees decomposing, mushrooms, lichen, fungi...doesn’t that sound wonderful. Birds singing, pulling worms out of the soil. Deer nibbling on spring shoots, new growth everywhere. Lovely.”

she followed with this soul enchantment,

“If I am fortunate to be allowed to become part of a forest floor maybe near a particular tree then when it’s ‘your time’ you can sit, lean, stretch out right there too. I would be honored to have you ‘rot’ in the same place as me.”

I felt the freshness of flowers blooming in the bed that is  
my chest.



# Autumn Tears

*Sean Fields*

I cry autumn tears,  
a bittersweet meeting; summer-hot anger and winter-cold  
despair.  
my anguish comes in between these two seasons  
leaving me with no recourse but to bundle myself in light  
comforts  
and drink the pumpkin spice latte of my regrets.



Spring  
*Sparrow Lattanzi*

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# Cocooned

*Dylan LeMay*

*Content Warning: Death, Body Dysmorphia*

Ava loved being a caterpillar. She spent her days eating and hiding underneath the large plants. She knew where the best leaves were – rounded edges were sweeter than the jagged ones – and which branches provided the most cover while she napped. It was easy for her. She was used to her routine. And she was good at it. Tediously practiced trails made avoiding dangerous predators simple. Inch by inch, she stayed as low to the forest floor as she could. She knew that the sky had many dangerous things flying around, and she wanted to stay safe.

Every day, she'd make her way through her trail, glancing at the sky, and to her favorite Alder tree. Her body wiggled effortlessly up the trunk. She could feel the rough bark under her belly as she climbed. At the top, she had previously chewed off a piece of the bark, which left a smooth opening for her to sit comfortably. There, with her favorite leaves, she'd eat and watch the sunset. "I want to be a caterpillar forever!" she shouted. All the other caterpillars couldn't wait to turn into butterflies and fly away. They all had places they wanted to go, things to witness, and experiences to be had. But those things scared her. Ava only knew how to find good leaves and crawl up trees, and in fact, she reveled in it. The world was so big, but down on the forest floor she felt like she was part of it.

One day, on her way back home, she took a detour to see her friends. She scrunched happily through the dirt and over crunchy leaves. She loved the way the forest looked and felt from down there. She moved carefully, making sure to feel every step. But when she got to the rose bush, she paused. "Where is everyone?" she asked. Looking around, the bush seemed especially bare. She looked deeper and saw cocoons tightly wrapped. "No... It's too soon." She took a breath and felt an instinct kick in. Maybe if she ate a bunch of leaves and didn't stop to rest, her body would feel like it's a caterpillar and she wouldn't need to change to a butterfly anymore. She felt like this is what she needed to do.

She raced down to the nearest tree. The dirt swiftly moved out of her way as she dug into the ground with each push. She climbed up a small branch and went to work. She ate and ate. She ate until she was full and then ate some more. Finally, after being physically unable to stuff another piece in her mouth, she stopped. Letting out a large belch, she celebrated her victory. "Now I'll have enough leaves to be a caterpillar forever!" She was proud of the effort she put in. The sun fell lower in the sky, pulling her eyelids down with it. She felt she deserved a break. Caterpillars nap, so why not?

While she slept, she felt her body writhe back and forth. An immense pressure filled her dreams. Flashes of blues and whites danced before her, followed by a bright light. She could feel cramps in her body, and when she woke up she felt different. She opened her eyes, but could not see anything. Everything was dark. She could feel her body tightly trapped and panicked. She tried biting what was holding her but couldn't move her mouth. Ava forced a small hole and slid her way out. The light emerged as she dragged her body through the rough threshold. Her back felt soft, almost fuzzy as it scraped against it.

She stood there, struggling to gain her footing. She could see her legs were longer and slender now. She felt light and

didn't know how to balance on her delicate new feet. Hair had grown on her body and all over her legs. She tried to walk, but the weight of her new wings felt awkward. She felt bigger. She was bigger. She slowly flapped her wings, stretching them out, trying to get a little comfort. As she flapped, the wind picked up and she was lifted into the air. "No!" She screamed as she was pulled higher.

Up in the sky, the world looked so far away. And she felt far away. She extended her wings, hoping to just float back down slowly, when a bird swooped down. It barely missed her as she cascaded down. Twirling in the air, she saw her favorite tree. Tears welled up inside her as she desperately tried to roll towards it. Crashing into the side of the tree, she landed on a branch high up. She looked around and could not see the bird anymore. "I knew trees were safer," she sighed. Catching her breath, she looked at the branches below. On one, she saw a small piece of bark removed. Delicately, she gripped her feet on the bark. Her body was lifted up and she glided across without feeling a thing. The tears finally burst out and she started to cry.

After her descent, she sat, defeated. Out of breath and out of options she turned to her leaves. She leaned her head over and tried to bite. A long, thin tube shot out of her mouth and she screamed. She felt around with her hands and was silent. She didn't have a mouth anymore. She couldn't eat leaves. Ava sobbed and stabbed at the leaf with her face until, exhausted, she collapsed.

When she woke up she felt cold. She looked out into the sky. The other butterflies were darting around, doing flips and turns. Ava was jealous. She hated the other butterflies. And she hated herself. And so she'd sit there, on the branch, day in and day out. She cried every day, forcing her face through countless leaves until she'd fall asleep holding on to whatever pieces of being a caterpillar she had left. Until one day, she didn't wake up.

Land of Toads  
*Jessica Fevie Hernandez*



# cow pov

*Sam Galster*

Why do cows wear bells?

Because our horns don't work. Because these days  
cows can drive cars & Christ can ride a bike, we  
flip off our peers with single toed hooves &  
pierced tongues, pink hair, & hit grass with  
dense chews. Shake that fat ass while you  
trespass. YOACO! As they all say,  
You're Only A Cow Once, before metamorphosis  
into a juicy

red inked

Burger. Mmm they say as they  
wolf me down like I'm little  
red riding hood. I'm conscious in  
your Big Mac, stay cautious I might  
pierce your tongue.



# PostPartum

*Sam Galster*

*Content Warning: Postpartum Depression*

*Dear woman, it is not poetic to suffer.*

A woman lounging on her chaise with a swollen stomach; a rhythmic pound in her large chest, undertones of television like tinnitus in her ears. Compassionate. Raw. Purity. A baby born so beautiful, her baby is none of these things. A woman bound to her chaise; blankets now heavier than bone, a pulse that pings dull. Flaky skin, empty eyes, empty stomach, her baby is not hers. Her baby keeps returning to the past; no one is there anymore, she keeps opening doors, doors to desolate seaside homes. Loud wind but no breeze, she bathes in salty black tar that falls from her eyes. I haven't been real in months. She climbs hills shaped like swollen bellies, dreamy chartreuse covered in clovers, there is a black rectangle on top. She leaves a note at its perch, she falls into the black rectangle of nothingness. *I wish*

*I never knew you.*

OPEN







# Mrs. Butterworth doesn't love me anymore

*Grace Pendergrass*

Snuggle me in your blanket of lavender scent,  
As the Capri Sun shines down and the hole from the KoolAid man  
lets in the breeze,  
shining on shimmery My Little Ponies tromping  
in the fresh cut grass,  
Tide fresh sheets blowing in the gap,  
Chips Ahoy crumbs waving from the porch steps  
and falling into the sidewalk cracks,  
And as all of the littles run and play,  
running the past away.  
Don't you see,  
Sunny D bright summers, just a lil duller,

Because Mrs. Butterworth never loved me.

# Costumbre

*Mayrim Vega*

Your mamá would write your name on servilletas and fold them, the stranger says. She's always had that costumbre. Let me see your dedos, and your feet, my sister says. That's our norm during pinky promises. Crossed fingers, the only thing that could break such sacred promesas. You were five years old, and your dad had recently passed, she says. Mi Mamá believes in witchcraft. A couple años ago, one of our family members was under a spell, they had a sapo, my Mamá said. The story ends with someone passing away. Now Mamá says we must be cuidadosas. I still have the napkin with your name on it, the stranger says. Una servilleta with my name etched on it ha vivido por 14 años. Un artefacto del pasado. She's always had that costumbre.

# WIP

*M.J.L. Fanucchi*

Dear Diary,

It's day 7 without Adderall

I sleep in a pile of freshly laundered but unfolded clothes

For breakfast I had a kiwi, unpeeled

Homework is due yesterday

Perhaps I'll go back to sleep if I can stop bouncing my legs





Messy  
Dylan LeMay

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# colder;warmer

*Maria Castaneda-Cruz*

*colder.*

*internal almanacs*

*shifting*

*in the wind,*

*turning*

*with the*

*rise*

*and fall*

*of the fog-hooded moon.*

*w a*

*r*

*m e r*

hot cider and steam  
cleansing souls;  
lifting sullen spirits;  
bringing fragrance  
without bloom.

our busy streets

are now a bit busier.

the rain on those streets makes

commutes a bit trickier.

the way it forms rivers though,

by the bank—the cold sidewalk

makes up for it, easy,

as does the wind's dialogue.

the way the earth turns—

it's a wonder to me.

we live lives as the leaves turn

to orange from green.

from the way the squirrel scampers

to find winter's meal,

to the way the moon glows—

traditions of steel.

as the weather grows warm,  
how I miss you, my storm;  
I am empty  
without your sweet petrichor, and  
your thunderous cry.  
oh, I so wonder why  
some you find curse you to dry.

well, the thirst you have quenched and  
the windows you've kissed and  
the showers that pour from your skies

have made me think—  
have *allowed* me to think—  
and so here, I have opened my eyes:

as the weather grows colder,  
the hearts of those bolder—  
the spirits who hold onto peace—  
turn a shoulder

to the cold

and the scary,

for they'

re bold and not weary  
and they see that,  
it also gets

*warmer.*

# Sudden Orphan

*Sarah Cashen*

“I hate this place.” You don’t know how often you had to say it, reiterated in every tone and language you knew.

Nothing was ever okay here. The lake licked its shores, like that kid you knew in third grade who always seemed to fail at getting the ranch in the corner of his mouth. It suffered from toxic algae blooms in summer and was too cold to swim in any other time of the year. The oppressive trees were home to woodpeckers in the day and a family of screech owls at night. The silence that followed them was even more obnoxious, yammering on and on in its vast and cruel nothingness.

The bugs never left you alone either.

The first time you came here you stepped on a stray fishing hook and had to limp to the car with six feet of line following you, getting caught on every stick it could possibly find. When your father came to visit you he apologized to the nurse that your silly little city brain didn’t know that real country folk knew better than to step on hooks.

On the ride home he didn’t offer any kind words. You had always remembered him as being warm and wide, smothering you in one arm as he looked at your little foot after you had stepped on a bee. But now he was as cold and toxic and empty as that damn lake he left you for.

“I hate this place!” You screamed it, you beat it against yourself, you had to tell him again. He didn’t hear it for obvious reasons, but it’s not like he would have heard it on



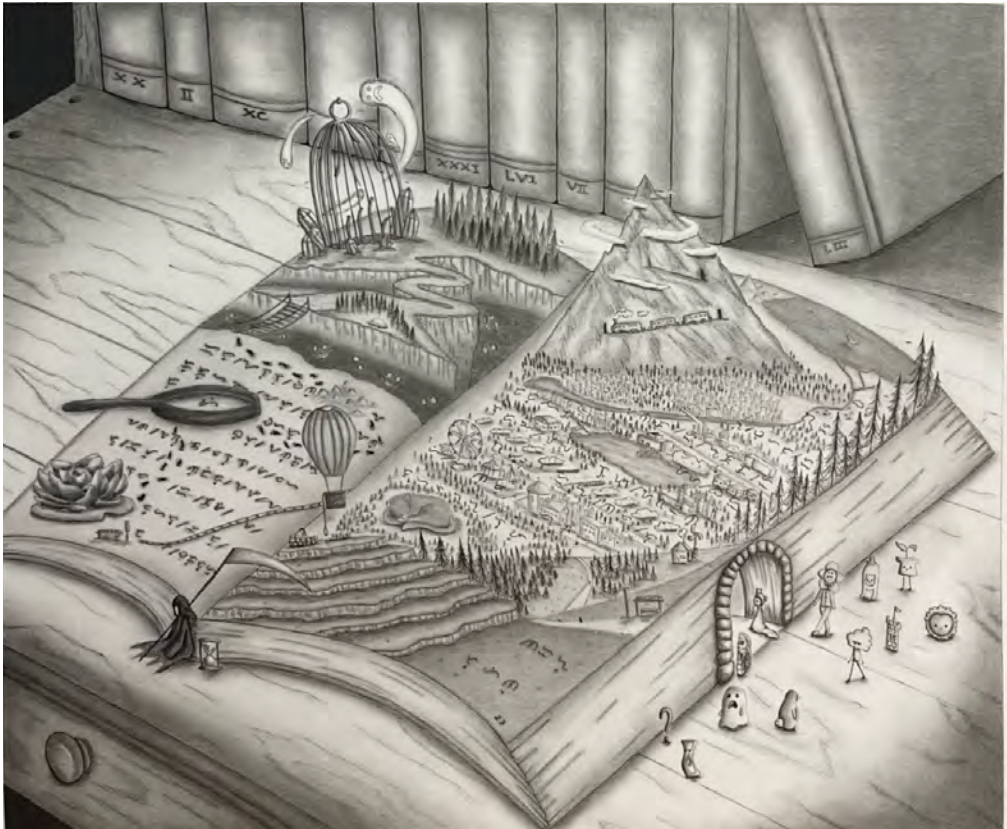
a normal day either. “I hate this place.” You whispered it, you hiccupped it through tears hot with anger.

You stared as the sun dipped below the horizon, her crimson dress trailing behind her, brushing past the mountains as she went. It would snow soon. The lake would freeze. And you’d be off to college in the south before the lake could even dream of giving up her newest secret.

But for now, the maddening smacking.

“I hate this place.” You were tired and the places where the water touched you were beginning to go numb. “I miss mom.”

Book of Life  
*Jessica Fevie Hernandez*



# Something Like Joy

*Katelynn Leonard*

The wind whispers that it missed me  
Crisp air clings, congregating in lungs  
The fresh air foreign  
Thick pines brush my arms like a cat's tongue

Sun filters through  
Pale arms shine under beams  
Dancing a waltz on freckled skin

Something like joy knocks against my chest  
Jubilance a strange sensation  
Wild roses grow between ribs  
My heart aches still

A crow's beady eye tracks me  
Grinning at my humanity  
Like it is funny to him

My hair golden  
My nose red and runny  
I laugh back  
No longer afraid of that humanity



Summer  
*Sparrow Lattanzi*



# Psalm of Laze

*Matthew Albertson*

The granger knows there comes a time  
When steward's fields be best fallow  
Lest earth they tax move past its prime  
Demeter's rest in blessed hallow  
Would that our world be so inclined  
Yea, see beyond sleep's indolence  
In rerum natura one finds  
More verdant spring post-abeyance  
O sing we now a canticle  
Of slumbering, of rotting tracts  
Of days spent lackadaisical  
That downtime seen instead as tact  
You'll rise, revived, fresh-faced, unvexed  
So yon, repose, Arturus Rex

# The Diagnosis

*Kristy Schnabel*

“Do you have any friends?” asked the doctor.

“I don’t like women,” said my mother matter-of-factly, as if disliking half the population was a normal thing.

The words echoed around in my head. Her response explained a lot and evoked a memory. When I was eleven, my best friend’s mother slapped my mom’s face by the swimming pool in front of everyone. Perhaps this explains why she’s so nasty to me now, a woman, even though I uprooted my life and flew cross-country to answer my stepfather’s cry for help.

The doctor was assessing my mom’s sociability, probably on a checklist she had just consulted. My mom, stepdad, and I sat side-by-side along the putty-colored wall of the doctor’s office. The odorless, prefabricated building felt temporary, like an afterthought. Mother exuded defiance—she had something to prove by sending me packing back west. Stepdad and I sat with hunched shoulders and crossed limbs.

Getting Mom to the doctor at all was a miracle. She claimed to be a Christian Scientist now, a faith she never mentioned until old age demanded medical attention.

The young female doctor sat across from my mom. She turned to acknowledge my presence with questioning eyes. *This may be my one-shot deal.* “What we have here is undiagnosed dementia,” I said. I’m unsure if I was offering an arm to a first-time ice skater, or throwing a non-swimmer into the pool, but the time for dancing around the situation was over.

My mother's head whipped around faster than a hand on a hot stove. "What?" she asked. I didn't repeat myself.

The doctor nodded. She heard.

After ten years of observing Mom's strange behavior—sending my husband moth-eaten sweaters for Christmas, walking into her kitchen of thirty years and saying she didn't know where anything was, and repeating the same questions over and over—I knew what the diagnosis was. Still, we needed the medical community to concur to move forward with options.

"Are there any concerns we should know about?" the doctor asked. She glanced first at my stepdad, who on any other day is impossible to shut up, and he sat silent. It was questionable how much he was hearing, but he was good at reading lips.

When the doctor looked back at me, I used the hand gesture for drinking with my thumb at my lips and my pinky extended upwards. My mom couldn't see me. Turning back to my mother, "How much alcohol do you drink?" My opinion of the doctor was improving.

"Three point two," my mother answered.

*What the hell does that mean?* Later, I figured out this meant 3.2% alcohol. Like a politician, Mom had side-stepped the question. Clever.

The doctor nodded and ignored the non-responsive answer. My stepfather missed the opportunity to weigh in. He recently told me that she drinks a 6-pack each night.

"I'll send the nurse in to take your blood." Once again, I think the doctor understood my concern that she has vitamin deficiency due to alcoholism. "Then she'll ask you some questions, okay? I'll pop back in after." She left.

The quiet room shouted at us. We sat against the wall and silently waited. In the hallway, we heard voices bustling. With each sound, I wondered, *Is this the voice that will enter the room?*

Mom was brave as the nurse drew blood. Next, the clipboard came out. Here we go. We were about to begin the 30 Question Cognitive Test. *Will this be the pathway to a diagnosis that opens doors to in-home assistance and memory care?*

After years of dismissiveness to my mother's deterioration, her medical provider finally seemed proactive. It took a call to 9-1-1, a visit by the Deputy Sheriff, an ambulance ride, and overnight in the ER to precipitate this attention. Mother became convinced that my stepdad, who attends to her every wish without complaint, was out to kill her. She fled to the neighbor's house in terror. Now, the alarming reality was in everyone's face: Mom had dementia with paranoia.

The test began. "I'm going to tell you five words: face, velvet, church, daisy, red," said the nurse. She repeated them. "I'll ask you these five words at the end of our test to see if you remember them. Face, velvet, church, daisy, red."

Suddenly, my focus shifted.

*Could I remember these words after 30 questions? They're so disconnected. Should I attempt to make a mnemonic? I could feel my blood pressure increase, and my face felt flushed. What were those words again? What if I pictured them? I tried to imagine the nurse with velvet on her face in a church holding a red daisy. Will I remember this after thirty questions? My heart pounded.*

I'm at the same age my mother was when she started having memory problems. My mind isn't as sharp as it used to be. My insomnia doesn't help. *Is that an excuse? Isn't lack of a full night's sleep one of the symptoms of emerging dementia?*

*Maybe I'm looking at my future.*

The nurse left after completing the test. I didn't think Mom did well on the test. However, her sense of humor and stubbornness emerged with the answers revealing her old self.

To “What day of the week is it?” she answered, “I don’t need to know that.” Years ago, when she was with my father, she exhibited passive-aggressive behavior: smoking, getting my ears pierced, and hiding purchases—all actions against my father’s wishes. Now, with the veneer of passivity dropped, only her aggressiveness remained.

The doctor returned. “You got 20 out of 30, which indicates mild to moderate dementia.”

There it was. Silence. No acknowledgement. *Did my mother even hear that?*

The medical community had finally confirmed what we knew. We had a diagnosis. This seemed like a strange and sad victory.

*What were those five words again?*



# Sempiterno Amor

*Oscar Nieves Lira*

In thirteen archaic temples, a chiaroscuro monk imparted seven truths and nothing more, a figure, less corporeal than memory, still, immobile by will, his cloth and expression of untraceable age given detail and depth by the mercy of light's games.

The baroque entrails of the temples anchored us, both in conversation without voice, we spoke with glances, each in a tongue of a different time. He told me his seven truths, one after another. I replied with the only one I'd been granted.

Choreographed morning lights rose, matured into ever present noon, and decayed towards dawn—for the span of a lifetime—before the divine medieval scenes embedded in the stained glasses, acquired a luminosity that colored my apathetic host into reality. Even the capricious phenomenon of light distinguished between the living and the immortal.

Awed by my defiant maxim, he asked:  
“Do you love her because she is beautiful, or is she beautiful because you love her?”  
In every temple my reply remained as epitaph:  
“I love her because she simply is.”

**Matthew Albertson** || [Psalm of Laze](#)

*Matthew D Albertson is a PCC alum currently completing his undergraduate degree at PSU. He first got bit by the writing bug while taking a creative writing class at PCC, and cannot help himself from scratching that itch.*

**Sarah Cashen** || [Sudden Orphan](#)

*Sarah Cashen is a PCC student with ambitions of going into law. She primarily writes fantasy, science fiction, and contemporary pieces of flash fiction.*

**Jessica Fevie Hernandez** || [You Are The Light, Land of Toads, Book of Life](#)

*My name is Jessica Fevie Hernandez, a student in the Graphic Design Program. During my time at Portland Community College, I was awarded as "People's Choice Award" from a Student Art Exhibition: Where Are You Now, and one of my artworks was published in the Alchemy Magazine and with the same illustration, it was published in the 2024 Calendar by the Foundation.*

**Kristy Schnabel** || [The Diagnosis](#)

*Kristy Schnabel had careers in accounting, system administration, and virtual assistance, then retired. She currently bounces back and forth between PCC and PSU. She recently got a BA in English at PSU and is now back at PCC studying creative writing.*

**M.J.L Fanucchi** || [WIP](#)

*M.J.L. Fanucchi is, was—and will most likely remain—a transfemme human from Portland Oregon. Raised in the cold, comfortable embrace of the Oregon Coast, where her heart and soul still reside. She writes poetry to understand her own feelings, and writes science-fantasy to understand the rest of the world and the people in it.*

**Sparrow Lattanzi** || [What Friends Are For, Spring, Summer](#)

*A gender fluid (they/them) artist lucky enough to capture wonderful moments every day and express them through many means.*

**Grace Pendergrass** || [Mrs. Butterworth doesn't love me anymore](#)

*A student at PCC, a person who writes poetry, and someone enjoying what writing allows us all to discover.*

**Sean Fields** || [Autumn Tears](#)

*Sean is a student at PCC who enjoys writing and storytelling in all forms. His hobbies include role-playing games, improv comedy, casual (and competitive) tax evasion, dodgewrench (similar to dodgeball), and annoying his beautiful girlfriend.*

**Sam Galster** || [PostPartum, cow pov](#)

*Hi I'm Sam, this is my first year at PCC, and I've been loving the literature classes.*

## **Dylan LeMay** || [Cocooned, Messy](#)

*My name is Dylan LeMay (He/Him) and I've always considered myself a storyteller over a writer. I want to study producing and writing, and create different stories without being tied to a specific medium or genre. As a producer, I want to fight for the artists integrity in the boardrooms and make sure the project gets the time, treatment, and ending they deserve.*

## **Katelynn Leonard** || [Something Like Joy](#)

*Katelynn Leonard is in her senior year of high school and last year at PCC. After she graduates, she plans to earn her Master's degree at Eastern Oregon University, double majoring in technical and creative writing. She aspires to go into technical writing or editorial work, but finds great joy in writing poetry and nonfiction about the things and people in her life.*

## **Oscar Nieves Lira** || [Sempiterno Amor](#)

*Oscar Nieves Lira is a promising young Mexican short fiction writer, poet, and freestyle rapper. Born and raised in the magic village of Tequisquiapan, Querétaro, he is currently based in the beautiful Pacific Northwest city of Tigard, Oregon.*

## **Mayrim Vega** || [Costumbre](#)

*Mayrim Vega is a Latina woman, who is a first generation college student. She currently studies at Portland Community College. She has been published in Cathexis Northwest Press. She writes poetry in English and Spanish. She also enjoys writing short stories.*

## **Kerria Daily** || [Reflection](#)

*My name is Kerria Daily, and after taking a digital photography class at PCC, I fell in love with portrait photography. I was born and raised in Oregon, am a PCC student, and am currently going through the Graphic Design program, but would love to do more photography in the future.*

## **Maria Castaneda-Cruz** || [colder;warmer](#)

*Maria Castaneda-Cruz (they/he/she) grew up in Portland, where he learned to pay attention. They spend much of their time commuting, grateful for walkability and public transportation. He needs to create to keep his neurotransmitter levels non-critical. She is a multi-disciplinary artist, student, and member of the kingdom Animalia.*

## **Gray René S.** || [Cover Art](#)

*Gray René S. is a Graphic Design student at PCC who has a passion for illustration, community, and mental healthcare. Their goal is to graduate from Lewis and Clark with a Master's degree in Art Therapy, and she hopes to continue developing their skills in art, design, and psychology along the way. Their art often features vibrant stylized animals, mythical creatures, and portraits with themes of self-empowerment, mysticality, tenderness, grief, and emotional intensity.*



# Colophon

Front and Back Matter, Footers - Palatino  
Linotype Regular, Italic and Bold

Titles - Palatino Linotype Bold  
Author Names - Palatino Linotype Italic

Body Text - Gill sans MT Regular and Italic  
(*colder;warmer is Palatino Linotype*)

Colophon Title - Monotype Corsiva  
Colophon Text - Gill Sans MT Regular and Italic