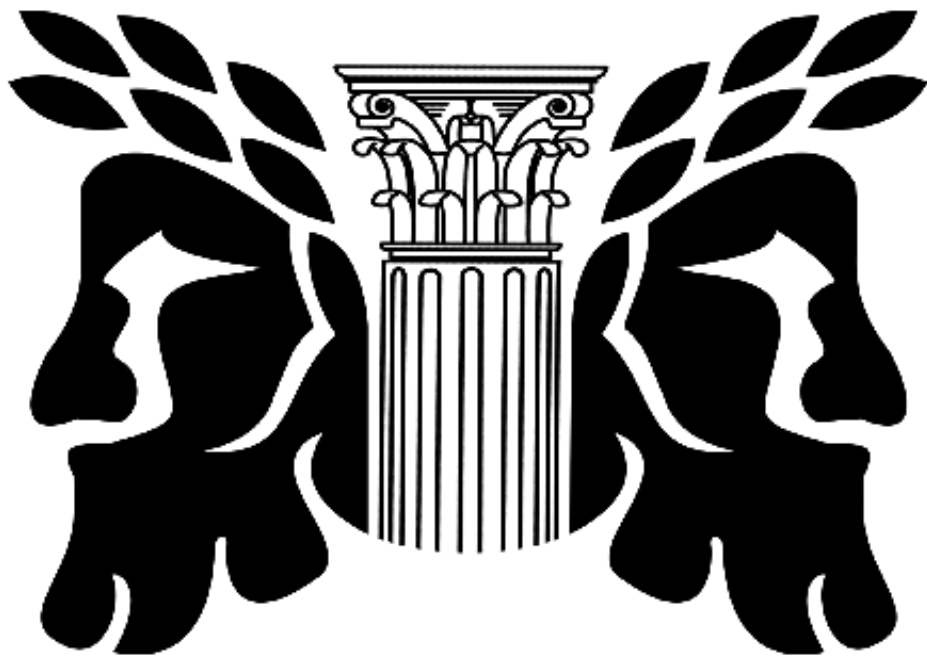


Janus



2019



Janus

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hutong

By Zitong Jia

There's a hutong in front of my house. I like to walk through the hutong everyday in order to get access to the main street and subway station, even though I know there are many other roads to choose as well.

•

Hutong, which is a lane or an alley, represents the root of Beijing culture. Each hutong has its own structure. You will never find two same hutongs in the world, just like no two leaves are alike. The longest hutong is about 1.8 miles while the shortest one is only 82 feet; the widest hutong is about 105 feet while the narrowest one is 1.3 feet. The one in front of my house has a perfect and comfortable structure, neither too long nor too short. It has only one turn in the middle, which is far more easy to cross compared to the hutong with thirteen turns, which is like a maze. Usually there is one or two courtyards on each sides of hutong with rooms shared by four to ten families of about twenty people. Therefore, life in hutong is full of friendliness and genuine humanity. People usually set up a table and a few chairs in hutong, in front of their doors, so that they can chat or share food with each other.

This hutong near my house used to be a place where the government set up reformatory schools for prisoners. With the development of history, however, it gradually becomes residential housing for Beijing citizens. I enjoy the silent and peaceful atmosphere in hutong. During the five-minute walk before I get to the station or back home, I just get refreshed. Walking across the hutong is just like walking along the beach at twilight; it calms me down and offers me a space to relax. This is a place where I can forget every annoyance for a little while. This hutong, accompanied with me since my childhood, becomes the most valuable memory in my heart.

•

The reason why I love hutong mostly is because of its peaceful and welcoming surroundings. It is absolutely devoid of the clamor of the city, just like a different world compared to crowded part of Beijing. Whenever I leave home in the morning or I come back in the evening, the people who live in hutong are always sitting outside their house with a table and a few chairs, catching up their daily lives while enjoying the harmony with nature. They walk unhurried, not like the same quick pace as the crowded people walking on the main street. They live their own life without any disturbance. People who live in this hutong have already known each other for at least ten years. With the urbanization, people choose to act more indifferent and uncaring. As a result, this close relationship between residents in hutong is so rarely found in Beijing.



•

Last summer, when I walked through hutong as usual, a bulletin attracted my attention. It was pasted on the wall and was a regulation from the government to manage demolition and relocation for people who lived in hutong. I was not even shocked since there were so many hutongs that have already disappeared in order to make room for high-rise apartments and buildings. As I passed by the bulletin, a woman came into my sight. She was sitting on a chair outside her house, and looked miserable and lethargic. I was wondering, maybe she already knew this small space would no longer belong to her? Where should people who live in hutong go next? Even I knew they would get a large amount of compensation as a result of moving away. Will they be satisfied? Dusk fell. After sunset, it was extremely silent in hutong, and she was inclined to seek solace in drink. She is inconsolable since her roots were hutong. I wish to talk to her but stop, with second thoughts, and leave.

•

Another day, when I passed through hutong, I did not see that woman sitting outside or anyone else. I crossed the hutong as quickly as I could. I did not want to feel the silence here. Hutong seemed had already lost all its vitality. Looking at the grey bricks, I was regretful. I am afraid that one day it will be demolished without any notice.

•

Hutongs are perishing now. According to the Report of Beijing Historic Cultural City Protection, the number of hutong decreased from 3250 in 1949 to 1571 in 2003. (Zai, 2018) Hutong will become only a memory of my generation. I have no idea what kind of road or lane will replace hutong and become my new way to go to the stations and welcome me back home. The maelstrom of development has already swallowed up most of the old city. While it may seem like a higher standard of life for people who live in hutong to move to apartments, their roots are destroyed. Their dreams, their memories and all of their hopes are ruined. When the traditional culture is in conflict with the development of modernization, must it compromise?

But my voice cannot represent so many residents who live in hutong. I understand that people who live there also need to fit in the flourishing urban life. They look very dapper in their suits and walk fast when they head to work on Mondays, just like people who live in fancy apartments. Maybe they also hanker for fast-paced life and are already tired of a jejune and monochromatic life in hutong. Maybe they want to get rid of the tag of being a plebeian who lives in hutong for their entire life. It may be particularly true for the millennials. People have changed. They no longer feel proud to be a person who lives in hutong. The whole environment in Beijing has changed. Hutong is no longer suitable to live in such fast-paced life in Beijing. Why can hutong not change as well?

•

Hutong is a difficult problem for Beijing. However, Beijing is not the only city that faces the difficulty on how to develop with its historical sites. I found many similar situations when I visited Europe early this year. So many cities, such as Madrid, Paris and London, are stuck in



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When Spain demolished so many old buildings, José María Pérez, president of the Spanish heritage organization, pointed out that, “this is a Spain that is emptying, villages with few people, churches closed down and monasteries with virtually nobody in them.” (Morales et al., 2017) Without those historical sites, our life is like a ship without rudder, like a body without soul. I understand that it is heartbreaking to see all the demolition of old buildings in Spain, just like the similar situation in Beijing. But on the other hand, I have to say that those old buildings do impede the development of a city’s urbanization.

We can change our way of thinking to find an eclectic option to both preserve the historical sites and contribute to the development. Spain set an example in terms of the unity of modernization and history. It has enacted legislation to abolish bullfight performances in Catalonia, since the government has decided to transform the bullring into a commercial center. The outer walls of the bullring remain the same. It took a year to design and build the protective wall frame of the bullring. The exterior wall of the bullring commercial center still retains the characteristics of the original bullring, while the interior side has been completely modernized, with three-dimensional corridors, crisscrossed elevators, and a tourist platform at the top.

For each venerable city with a long history, it is so hard to choose between demolishing its historical sites or keeping them. However, Spain is really smart to turn those ancient bullrings into commercial use. It is the historical inevitability to change, so we have to compromise and accept it. We ought to look forward. Throughout human history, every generation always needs to give up something in order to develop. The handicraft industry changed to machine industry during the



Industrial Revolution; nowadays we are already in an electronic industry with all the technological products, such as Artificial Intelligence. We give up using letters but to use email to communicate with others, which is a more efficient way that saves time, money and effort. Maybe I should not complain or be so pessimistic about the demolition of hutong. They will follow the development of human history and embrace a better future.

•

Indeed, it is hard to live in hutong since there are so many security issues in terms of electricity, drainage systems and fire control. Demolition may be a better way for people to live a more secure life. Hutong may be considered for commercial development as well, just like the bullring in Spain. Interestingly, I find that there are already some successful examples, such as Nanluo Hutong. It preserves the historical settings as well as builds some signs to explain the history of it. Residents move out and many cafes, boutiques move here to develop. Nanluo Hutong has already turned into the business street without losing the distinguish cultural characteristics. I agree that hutong is not suitable to live anymore in a modern city. However, we, as the residents who lives in Beijing, should at least visit them more often and record them before they finally disappear. Hutong is our culture and our root. We won't reject it, but rather, get rid of the limitation of hutong and find a better option to develop within urbanization. Though a tree grows ever so high, the falling leaves return to the ground. Similarly, we should not forget our culture and history since it is the wisdom that gathered over time. It is our pride.

•

The hutong is just about 60 feet apart from my house. I can't wait to go back home and experience the harmony and welcoming atmosphere in hutong once more. Even though hutong may be demolished or changed into commercial use, eventually, since it needs to give way to development of Beijing, something will remain the same. The profound culture, which agglomerate the history and wisdom of our ancestors, will never change. Just like the root of us will never change.



how to travel in developing asian countries

By Wong Ka Ue

Mary comes from a developed country A. She dreams to be a global citizen and has travelled to developing countries in Asia, including China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and India. Mary wants to share some insight with all of you:

One should always use English as the only communication strategy. Time should not be wasted learning about what native language the local people speak or memorizing phrases like, "Hello," "Thank you," "Excuse me," in that language. Google Translate is useless. Everyone in this world is supposed to speak English. If they do not, it is because they are rude and arrogant like those Parisians. Feel free to yell at the local people if they speak broken English with a strong accent that you do not follow. You are giving them motivation to study harder and to speak better English.

Avoid doing any research on the country in advance of your arrival. Local people are obligated to teach the foreigners about their own culture anyway. Internet access and Wi-Fi should be accessible every ten steps you take. All you need to think of is calculating how much money you plan to spend on those authentic Thai pants, long-yis, jewelry, weaving products, and bamboo or carved wood ornaments. Be sure to ask who Gandhi or Aung San Su Kyi are. You are expected to know Mao, the great man of China, however. Be astonished when you meet a Christian or a Catholic or an atheist in Asia.

In your itinerary, treat all these developing countries as if they are one big night club, with lots of fun, of course. Reserve every evening from midnight till dawn to try out as many bars and clubs as possible. Expect to spend the whole afternoon on the soft queen bed in your fancy hotel (or maybe someone else's) because you are SO FXXKING, TIRED. Blame the spicy rice wine, sweet plum wine, local beer of unfamiliar brands, or those gross so-ju for your accidental hangover. Do not visit historical and cultural sites like museums and galleries, unless they serve as good photo frames, or they are so famous that whoever you talk to knows how incredible the opportunity is to visit these places. There is always Wikipedia to give ideas for a catchy caption, and and history is boring anyway.

Make sure you tell your family and friends that rice and bugs are the all-time favourite of people living in developing countries in Asia. Always ask if people enjoy their barbecued spiders, scorpions, or cockroaches. Be curious for the secret recipe for dog stew if the people have small eyes and black hair. Only eat in clean and safe places, especially Western fast food shops like Kentucky Fried Chicken or McDonalds, so that you do not get diarrhea, food poisoning, or cholera. You do not need to taste the local cuisine in order to understand a culture. Do not recognize the existence of sex tourism. Go into a massage palace or a karaoke bar to enjoy the royalty-like service. When talking



to the massage ladies or karaoke waitresses, do not ask how they choose their job or get it; do not ask what specific work they do at night. Never ask where their bruises or scars came from. When you see a white, old man walking down the street with a young local woman in the evening, it is the powerful magic of true love. Love with no boundaries, regardless of age or race. Even if the smile behind her red lipstick and blue eyeshadow should look a bit more genuine.

Among your choice of daily wear, you must always include your deep V-neck tank tops, tight shorts, backless shirts, and mini-skirts, because these countries are unreasonably hot and humid. Make sure you show your cleavage, shoulders, and your thighs. It is important to get tan under the exotic sun. Never choose your clothing because of the local religion. It does not matter when local people dress conservatively because they are Buddhists, or Hindus, or Muslims. You are a global citizen and your free will should never be bound by any social norms. Remember to tell the people how much you love their traditional costume. Buy a saree in India. Wear it. Take the perfect Instagram photos in front of the Taj Mahal. Then, you must generously throw away these used fabrics on the train to the airport, so that poor people can pick them up to cover their bodies.

Describe to your friends, in detail, how you were being treated as a celebrity and count how many times you were asked for photos by the local people. Feel flattered for the first few times. You know you are beautiful. Once you get tired of it, feel entitled to reject these annoying requests in the rudest way possible, so that they learn a lesson that foreign tourists do not travel to different countries in order to be in local people's photos.

Local children, on the other hand, must be treated as celebrities who crave attention and spotlight. Fully charge your phone and camera before you visit a local school. You will encounter street children as well. What a pity if you do not get the photos of these adorable creatures with big, round, dark-coloured eyes, curly eyelashes, soft hair, and soft lips, which look identical to those barbie dolls on your shelves. Remember it is their great honour to appear on your Facebook post. Make sure you mention that you have asked for the children's permission before you had taken their photos, even if children cannot give consent. When you decide to participate in a service program in local NGOs, such as an orphanage or a centre for abused or trafficked children, you must only play ball games with them, as if they are the happy puppies back home. If they try to touch your hair or your face and grab your food or bracelets, you may display your kindness and understanding towards their uneducated and uncivilized behaviour in public.

You are also obligated to claim that the countries belong to you, after your stay for five to six days in one or two of their cities. "Emphasize how much you love Asia, how you fell in love with this place" and how you feel like you are home because of all the warm company and genuine help you received. Broad brushstrokes regarding cultural shocks are good. Even though the stinky, un-sanitized, broken toilet, the lack of clean water, and the dusty, bumpy roads your tuktuk drove are what you remember most. "Adopt a sotto voice, in conspiracy with your audience", count your blessings and privileges. Establish how life-changing these experiences are and state how adaptive and respectful you were in front of these third world issues.

People will be put off if you do not mention the high context culture and communitarianism in Asia. Do not confuse it with communism, however. And the Asian temples, pagodas, and shrines



are the must-visit checkpoints, so that you have first person experience on how superstitious Asian people are. Among the local characters you see, do not miss the suppressed, unhappy, fully covered women bearing her naked child at her back. Always end your journey with thoughtful, emotional reflection saying something about poverty or gender inequality. “Because you care.”

These guidelines are for those who envision being a global citizen, who recognize the *limitations of time, language barriers, and probabilities of being deceived as “walking wallets” by the local people*, yet are still determined to immerse him/herself into different culture. If you just want to travel and have fun like most of the tourists do, that’s another story.



an unroyal castle

By Wong Ka Ue
2nd Prize in Non-Fiction

I used to think that castles were built for princes and princesses, until I visited the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana. It was one of the commercial forts built by European traders. From the 16th to the 19th centuries, it was used to hold enslaved African peoples before they were loaded onto ships and sold to the Americas through the Middle Passage in the transatlantic slave trade.

The Castle was a complex of white stone buildings with underground slave dungeons. The slaves were separated by their sex. Female slaves were often raped by the governors. If they were pregnant, they stayed as domestic servants instead. Their children will be sent to schools. If they resisted the governor's sexual advances, they would be isolated in a dark cell with no food or water, beaten and tortured. It was a common way of intimidating other slaves to obey the command. On the outer wall of the castles, a set of aligned cannons were pointing towards the ocean, as if they were protecting the royal family of the nation.

Our tour guide led us to the male dungeon through a tunnel. The cave was empty but full of darkness. Soldiers scrutinized the slaves through the peephole at the top of the mossed walls in each dungeon. It was hot and humid. Drops of sweat were slowly dripping down my spine from the back of my neck. My pores were crying for the atrocities happened in this castle.

The guide started, "The ground was built of bricks. But now it is covered by sediment from human decomposition such as vomit, blood, faeces, which made it very slippery, so be careful." An invisible hand was brutally twisting my stomach, as I imagined thousands of chained feet being soaked in the sticky, smelly excretion, with a depth beneath my calves, as recorded by the chalk marks left on the wall by some curious anthropologists. The slaves lived within this excretion from weeks to months, before they were called to 'fill up' a slave ship. They were piled in like layers of shelves, just like books ready for distribution. I smelled the stench of semi-dead fish. Fish, which bounced several times as the last struggle of their fates, after they were captured by the ruthless fishermen and being infinitely separated from the mother ocean they belonged to.

There were hundreds of stone "skulls" scattered around the next cave. They were created in commemoration of those who lost their lives in the dungeons. In their perpetrators' eyes, they may simply look like Easter eggs ready for sale, decorated with worm-like hairs, sausage-like lips, and olive-like eyeballs. Yet, each of the faces was filled with unique, complex emotions which took time to be decoded. Desperation, sufferings, and shadows of death were embedded in the tightened eyebrows, half-opened mouths, and closed eyes.

The guide continued, "None of the slaves came here willingly. They were either kidnapped or captured as prisoners of wars during inter-ethnic conflicts. Some of them were sold by their own tribal kings in exchange for weapons." I swallowed some saliva down my throat, to fight the dehydration I had from staying inside the dungeon for only fifteen minutes. "...Around A THOUSAND slaves were



cramped together...” This new discovery punched my head vigorously. Each cave was the average size of a bedroom in the States. “Many of them walked for several weeks to months in starvation. They arrived at the castle as skin and bones covered with shreds of fabrics. Their muscles digested themselves as the final energy for survival.”

We then visited the governor’s house and office, which was a fancy, two-floored house owned by one man, with a panoramic ocean view in stark contrast to the dungeons. The European traders also built a church right above the slave cells. How intelligent! There was no doubt that God will always forgive their sins, as long as they kept praying to Him. I am sure that these white people were welcomed in heaven, especially when they were already standing above the hell they created for the African people on earth.

We ended our tour at the “Door of No Return” in which chains of slaves passed through a narrow, metal door to the shore to embark on the ship. By estimation, 12 million slaves survived and started their new lives in the Americas and Caribbean, while 8 million died during the journey. This door was usually the last piece of memory they had of their homeland, before they were sold to the foreign soil and worked to death as commodities, with no roots to trace back, no blood relationships to count on. A few crows spiraled above the turbid seawater. I heard that they were fed on carrion. Were they still searching for the bodies being thrown into the ocean by the Europeans, as what their predecessors used to do?

The waves patted the shore gently, as if she was the mother who mumbled cradle lullabies to her babies. Despair, horror, and pain were carried down to the water of infinity, far away from human horizon. The castles from fairytales I had heard from my mother’s bosom also cast aside in the same tide.

Yet

Human trafficking still exists today.

Cambodia, Russia, the United States, China, Venezuela, Ghana...

You name it, you have it.

We cannot alter history.

But what can we learn from it?



excerpt from hidden treasures

By Julian Richardson
1st Prize in Non-Fiction

As the car comes to a halt, we step out into the street and into the nip of latter fall and early winter. My hands instantly begin to cripple to the cold, trying to warm up but not succeeding. This neighborhood was unfamiliar to me and seemed to be emptier than what I had expected when we first arrived. There are so many neighborhoods here in Columbia, it's hard to keep up with which ones are the liveliest. We walk onto the trail parallel to the neighborhood. We travel about a quarter of a mile until we reach our destination. "This way," my friend says, "watch your step." As we step over dead branches and piles of partial brown leaves, we arrive to a pipe. Connecting from one end of the creek to the other, we cross it, hoping we don't fall into ice. The ice looks thin, easily breakable. My friend, holding a bottle, throws it onto the ice. It skips. We sigh with relief, understanding its durability; also noting we're not a wine bottle. We get down from the pipe and walk toward a hill. At the bottom of it sits a couch, a chair, and two lawn chairs. The trees, standing leafless, camouflage us from being seen in their density. The chairs sit still, as if they had been here forever and used by all who have come before. Neither of us knew where they had come from or from whom. The sky is opaque, cloudy, shifting from grey to white clouds, blocking the sun. Behind us is a stretch of trees. Cars can be heard but cannot be seen. In front of us is the hill, atop it are houses. Beautiful silence. Blissful silence. We stand there for a while. Talk a bit. Exchange outrageous ideas about when we get older. Then we cross back over the grey pipe back to the trail, a task that has become second nature now. As we walk back to the car, we watch runners from another distant neighborhood in Columbia go by on the trail. I think to myself that in this fairly-sized city, the places that seem the most interesting, unknown to us all, are the best.



a language of beauty

By Nadia Askar

I find myself wanting to write
beautiful words on a page,
eliciting extravagant emotions.

I find myself wanting to be remembered for
having raw talent unable to be understood,
desiring dreamers to dare
to do
their damnedest.

I have realized, all words
are equally **ugly**.
Some just l o n g e r
or short.
Some more *meaningful*
or simple.

So, it is the way they are arranged
that makes them truly understandable.
And, it is the meaning behind them
that makes them truly extravagant.
But, it is the story written with them
that makes them truly beautiful.



addiction

By Haiden DeShong

what are we?
faceless creatures,
layers upon layers of disappointment--
peel them back enough and you might find a human.
blood, bone and sinew;
we are ghastly underneath--
and it feels like you know it, too

nothing compares like the high of knowledge
jamming a needle into your veins,
escaping
the sin and the rot and the hatred. yeah,
throbbing, endless ecstasy can surfeit the pain.
plunging into a river of shallow warmth
bogged down with undertones of want and greed
but aren't want and greed synonymous?

give me blood and rashes and pock marks,
caress my ink-stained flesh
and drive yourself deep.
beautiful scarlet, crimson, alizarin
so enrapturing. always enrapturing.
white powdered lungs and
heroin drenched skin
I am useless
I am worthless
you are not me but
you could be.

You will be.



absent presence

By Julian Richardson

You're still here, y'know?

I bet you had no idea
That your acceptance
And gratitude beyond words
Would restructure my motives
In life
And take my bleak form through the process
Of restoration.

But no one knew that—

After nights of cloud filled thoughts at 2 a.m.
Playing God of War
Smoking a cigarette, going for it again
Senseless conversations that looped back to your point,
My point...

—you would be gone.

And I have taken loss before
But your aura shined
Yellow and blue, light pink
And green,

The kind that matched the trees
Middle of summer, a cool breeze
Deep blue sky and swaying limbs

And pulsated through thin air
To my lips, through my lungs
And to my fingertips.

You could break me,
And I would follow you to the end.



breakfast at tiffany's

By Cailey Edwards

Diamonds pulling on her ears,
Polished with silk, and pearls
Just last year she
Couldn't pay for her meals.

Owning nothing but a cat
With no name and no shame,
She moved to Manhattan
For fortune and fame.

Do not covet her wealth
Til' you learn how she earns it,
Fifty dollars for the powder room
That money, she burns it.

Overflowing with charm,
Poise, and wit,
She captivates all she encounters with.

No one knows her history.
It shall remain a mystery.
All that we know is
She has Breakfast at Tiffany's.



sweet love time

By Hannah Macon

i love the feelings of your thick warm
fingers twiddling with the top of my
lace
with no intentions to submerge into my
depth
a body calm from your weighted bicep laying on
my side as my ears internalize your
sleeping sounds
remembering, memorizing all the good times
the sweet times of love

i want love,
not just because everyone else has it
for the closeness
the ability to feed off of energies unmatched
to breathe life into someone just by a presence
a partner
to endure loves sweetest times



gravel road

By Ashley Kistaitas

I climb up into the jacked up truck,
 throw my bag in the passenger seat.
Start it up with a roar,
 I take a right onto that old, beat up gravel road.
The rock rumbles underneath my tires,
 leaving dust in my path.
My left hand sipping the cold brew,
 right hand on the steering wheel, parked at 12 o'clock.
The steel toe of my shit kickers presses down on the gas pedal,
 running away from all my troubles.
My skinny jeans with the holes in the knees,
 hug my thighs as if trying to keep my life together.
Looking out of the open window I'm hit with the never ending breeze,
 blowing my hair in every direction.
Passing my dad's old one room church,
 making me pray that we can salvage our great love.
Row after row you see that sweet Nebraska corn,
 dotted with red barns along the horizon.
The smell of the storm that just passed hanging in the air,
 reminding you that everything can be washed away.
The sweet country twang plays on the radio,
 while you sing along at the top of your lungs.
You pass a rusting old John Deere,
 waving every time you pass someone on this narrow road.
As far as your eyes can see,
 they're met with endless green on either side of you.
The sky is a bright blue with big white clouds,
 which let your thoughts drift away into what could be.



that strength

By David Crimsons

Strength is the unrelenting force that drives us to keep going.
It is the bird in the wind, who keeps flying, never knowing,
When the storm will end... but it flies on.

Strength is the broken blade that keeps on slashing,
Crumbling to pieces with a cracked hilt, the warrior keeps thrashing.
Battles may end but tell me, when will the war?

Strength is the failure who keeps on failing but proceeds further
From mistake to misunderstanding, screams of protest to a murmur
When will you break?

Something I frequently forget is that... we all have this strength
The bird in the wind, the broken blade, the failure, we share that wavelength

Wanting to press on when there is seemingly no meaning to,
For my siblings back home, my future children, the people I love, although there are few,
I will be that strength.



To macie

By Therasia Brautigam

The lights were shining against the night sky
Suspended from the metal poles of
The broken-down trampoline. Missing springs
Creating an empty space around us
As we lay on our backs and count the stars.
The noise of crickets chirping fills our ears
Along with the squeaking as Bailey rolls
To the edge, plucking a blade of crisp grass.
Our laughs echoing. Nobody but us.
The little cardboard box buried slightly
To the right. Sealed with a promise of opening
Only once graduation has passed.
Tightly wrapped in a black garbage sack,
Containing photos and the old notebook.
The pink cover with black scribbles on it.
Holding letters titled "Dear Future Self"
Hoping we will all still stay together.
The hand painted rocks marked the location.
Blue and purple and pink. June twenty-ninth.
We laid on our backs and counted the stars
Until the night's cold air drove us away.



acknowledge me

By Nadia Askar

I am afro.

Thick, curly, twisted, coiled,
and cannot be undone with an
unadorned piece of plastic.

I am afro.

Hot and heavy weighing on your shoulders,
the roots of your ancestors
entangled with history of The Struggle.

Bought from place to place, and
mistreated by an unkind race,
telling you that you are
unfit and nothing special.
But how wrong they are.

I am afro.

Limp fingers cannot run through my coarse strands,
tough from the rough life and
burnt black from the scalding sun.
The same sun that glazes your sweat
slicked skin with a saccharine
caramel color, giving you a glorious glow.

I am afro.

I remind you of who you should be.
Proud, empowered, fierce.
Aware of what you could be.
Resilient, untouchable, Queen.
If, you acknowledge me.



u touched me

By Hannah Macon

Things are different, because you touched me
the way I feel is because you touched me.

I think of gma's cooking;
her soft and sweet cornbread because you touched me.

Every day I wake up,
it's a new day because you touched me.

Like a beginner in 11 feet,
drowning because you touched me.

So cliché,
but a kid in a candy store because you touched.

The difference on skin connecting to mine depends,
Because you touched me.

the change of seasons

By Celeste Cummings

A sharp pain is felt

Light overthrows the darkness

The healing begins



have i thought my life away?

By Sean Markley

Why does nothing feel right?
Consistently thinking that I can do more
When there is nothing more I can do
I am lost

Hard dull thuds banging against the glass window
The rain is really coming down
I am still stuck with the thought of doing more
How can I do more?

I have tried everything
I have succeeded
I have failed
Nothing seems to conquer the empty pit in my stomach

The rain has subsided
A few clanks against the window here and there
There is more to do
Sitting at my desk with no clue

My face sitting in my clammy hands
Trying to think of the next step
What if what I decided is not right?
Will it be all for naught?

Am I the only one with these thoughts?
Everyone around seems to be doing fine
While I am panicking about the future
Is this normal?

Why am I panicking?
My life has just begun
But has it?
My life seems to be spiraling to a halt



[POETRY]

I am twenty-four but my life is not won
These aches and urges have been with me for years
Is this what my life is?
Will my life get any better?

I don't know
Time will tell
If that time is still available
Have I thought my life away?



who am i

By Markesia Bailey
2nd Prize in Poetry

I'm the girl who laughs to keep from crying
The girl who covers her mouth each time she talks
Not because I'm afraid of what comes out,
but afraid that people will want more.

Who am I?

I'm the lone wolf everybody claims to be.
The one that loses family and friends

in a heartbeat.

The girl who stumbles and falls over chairs,

her own feet,
hell sometimes the air
Who am I?

This is the question I have to ask myself each week.
Because life doesn't hand me the sugar and honey

to put in my ice tea.
It hands me the lemons
thinking it'll make it sweet.
One day I'll look back and answer the,
"Who am I," with an
"I am strong"
"I am brave"
"I am confident"

You know all the inspirational words people have said to me



you're gonna carry that weight

By Rhett Blankenship
1st Prize in Poetry

Ever read Truth in a Nonmoral Sense?
Nietzsche says some shit that I thought told sense
“man of action binds
to reason so he
won't be swept away
and lost” so we
forget you like Faye
without any loss so please
I'll build my hut without you
I'll 'hunt bounties' without you
And don't you dare call my baby brother
He doesn't need to hear the bullshit you feel you've got to

But I can't bind to reason
somehow I still touch my pussy in your name an'
somehow I can live on one side
of a thin curtain that's drawn
halfway down the living room wall
with plastic windows “for viewing pleasure” it's called
And dividers for privacy so no one but them can see it all
while a piece of shit pays for smoke and -
No,
I don't do no fuckin' calls

somehow I live under these shallow breaths
as he smokes my shitty weed and gets a show for free
leaves a few dead presidents as I caress my breasts
watches not knowing the depression that rests
heavy on this chest

So fuck you what's the point apologizing with your last minute letters
hurried sympathy you can keep it
cause I'm better off with this enterprise
I built without you in mind,
save your guilt



You ain't came since last year.
You ain't change since last year.
You ain't seen what happened here
You ain't seen what I done just to keep my breath here
So don't you ever fuckin think 'bout comin' round here





untitled

By Julian Richardson

untitled

By Sally Krebs



untitled

By Lydia Cain



untitled

By Brammika
Balamurugan





*dawn of
beijing*

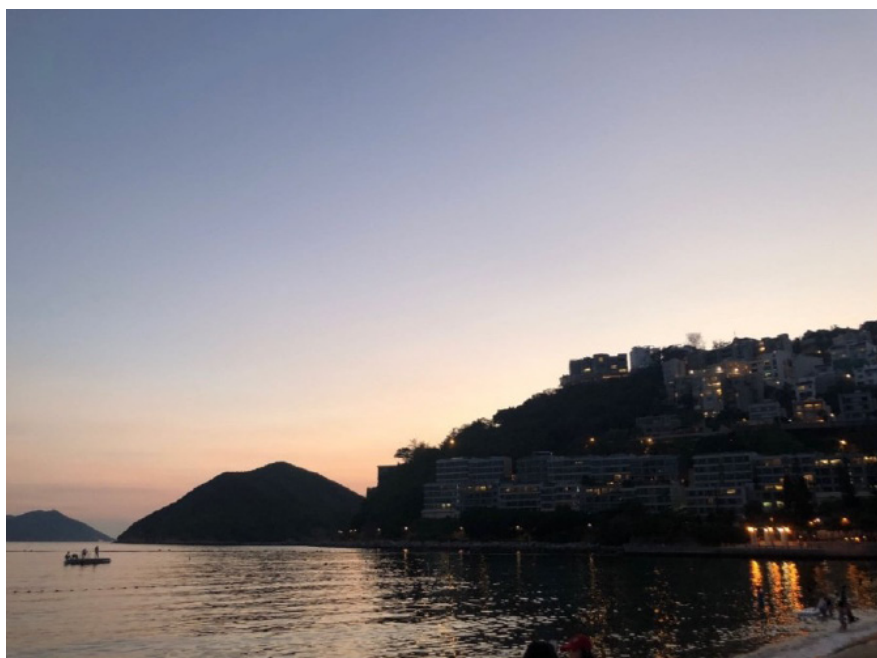
By Zhaoming Wang

*welcome to
jinan, china*
By Zhaoming Wang



*peaceful
hong kong*

By Zhaoming Wang



*dawn in
iceland*

By Zitong Jia



maria



iglesia



By Destri Eichman



laughter a mother's security



By Destri Eichman



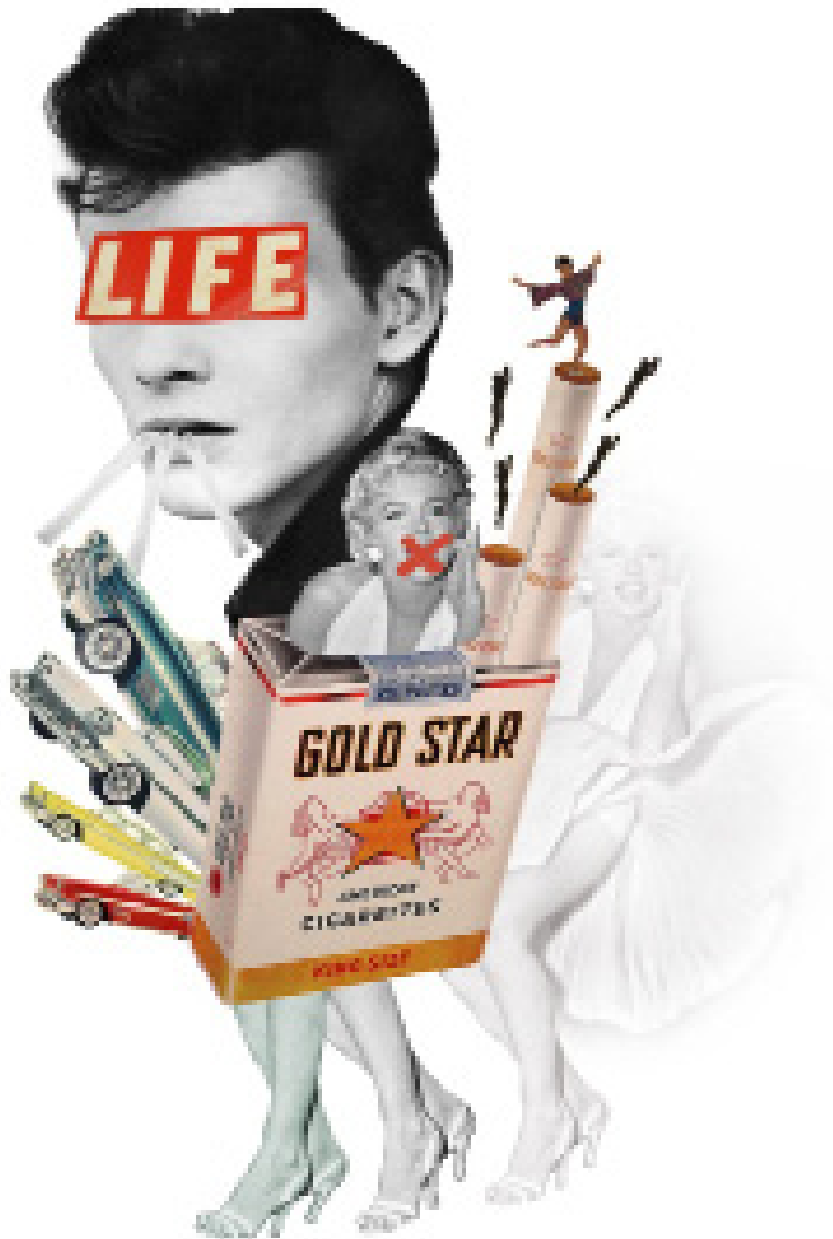
winter in my backyard

By Dr. Sam Goodfellow
2nd Prize in Art



dadism

By Maria Hicks
1st Prize in Art



hemingway perspective story

By Kobe Wands

The houses created dark shadows that were large and full of fear. Where there were supposed to be lights, there were only more houses. At the end of the street there was a park that was dull and unpleasant for anyone to be there. The high school girl and local college man sat on the swings sweating from the dreadful heat. It was the dead middle of summer in the middle of America.

“Which house looks the best?” the boy asked. He had asked into the wind.

“I don’t expect you to answer, I just want to talk.”

“This house makes me want to do this. She said.

“I want to do this for you, I want you, and I want you to want me.”

“I do want you, this isn’t a big deal. We can leave if you want.”

A car passes by, shining its headlights to where the couple were once sitting. The girl was hiding behind the nearest bush, staring at the headlights. They were bright, yellow lights that made the heat dry and humid.

“What could this represent?” He asked

“This little thing has so much potential” He said

“That’s what she said” She said.

“You are finally catching on.”

“I told you, we have much more in common than you believe we do.”

“You’re being ridiculous.”

“It’s all for you.”

“But you need to understand that we’re too young, we just need to have fun.”

“This will be so much fun; you will never forget this.” He said

She did not say anything but looked at the shadows creeping behind her. They looked as though they were staring right at her.

“Aren’t you so glad did this? Don’t you want to be with me now?” She asked.

“I don’t love anyone. This is a way to kill my time, if anyone asks, this never happened.”

*

Dear Victims,

There is so much that I want to say to you, but I don’t know how to say it. I don’t know why I did it. Wait, yes I do. I did it because I am an idiotic 17-year-old. I did it because I wanted to fit in. I wanted people to like me. I was so caught up in wanting to be cool that I forgot who I really am. I didn’t think of the negative outcomes that were to come out of my actions. I don’t know who you are nor do I know what kind of a person you are. I bet you have a great family with kids and pets, with great jobs and a life that is full and adventurous. I am jealous of your life. I am jealous of your house. Most



importantly, I am jealous of what you might have. I bet you woke up and had no idea what was waiting for you outside. You probably made your kids breakfast, helped them get dressed, and were about to take them to school when you saw it. A house, your house, covered in hatred and disgust. Maybe you took the day off from work, maybe you didn't. I don't know, you could've cussed and been extremely pissed; you may have merely laughed. Regardless of your take on the matter, I am most deeply disappointed in myself and what I have done to you and your family.

Sincerest Apologies,
The Perpetrator

P.S. I left money underneath the rock on your doorstep, it's not much, but I hope it helps in anyway. I left it so that maybe I would feel better.



hey sweet cheeks

By Nadia Askar

Eyes forward, arms crossed, walk fast. Do not look back when that guy calls out about you having a fat ass and laughs, nudging his friend, it only encourages him. But don't walk too fast either because they will sense you trying to escape them; they like the hunt. Do not hold your head down, expressing sadness or shame, but look forward, showing you have somewhere to be, much better than where you are now. Do not stick your chin out, conveying you are better than them, but look forward, showing you know where you are going.

They will say your name wrong. Some will try to get it right, but still won't, some not even bothering to care. You care. Your hand will not be raised, but your name will still be called, purposely pronounced incorrectly, expecting you to have the wrong answer or to not be following along or paying attention. But you have the right answer. You will be looked down on by a pointy, pale freckled nose, with wire-rimmed glasses perched there crookedly and still reprimanded for some dense reason because you have embarrassed him. They are upset with your correct answers and neat handwriting and assignments turned in on time, but you don't give in to their expectations.

They will ask what are you? as if you are a different kind of species. You will be looked at like an exotic animal in a cage, expected to lash out at any time and ready to be put down. They are always ready to put you down. Bullets on the tips of their tongues, and their fingers itching to pull the trigger. They will always be upset that you are you because they will not understand what or who you are. But you are human; don't fall victim to their ignorance and you never give into their expectations.



isograft

By Haiden DeShong

Being in his body was like wearing a suit, all those stiff corners and primly-pressed edges sitting uncomfortably over unfortunate shoulders and knobby joints. Impossible to move in, and so *blatantly* hideous that even being made to stand in front of his friends made Thexan nervous, nothing but twitching fingers and jilted movements as he stood alone, separate from those *lovely, confident, perfect* creatures, flexible and content and warm in a way that he himself had never been.

How much better would it be, Thexan had wondered that morning, glancing out at the bustling street with a nervous enmity that refused to be quelled, *if I were attractive?*

Because while others managed to walk around, unguarded and full of mirth, laughing and chatting amongst themselves in skinny jeans and roughed-up biker jackets, he was forced to stand-- drooping and slumped like a wilted flower, a crass disappointment to everything that a person was supposed to be. His body, his form, his *persona*... all were repulsive, in absolutely every sense of the word.

And it was easy to see, wasn't it? Thexan looked at himself in the mirror and saw excess mass where it shouldn't be, bone protruding in the wrong places, and the gut-wrenching expanse of paper-like skin, stretched over all the *improper* angles of his frame like terrycloth flesh stitched onto a mangled doll. *Wrong*, he told himself, *wrong, wrong, wrong*, just like everything else in the world. *Wrong*, the only thing he's ever been, *a mistake, foolish, worthless. Undisciplined, unworthy and disgraceful*. Had there been some method to his madness, the disgust might have been easier to ignore.

Some might consider it unusual, the near-frenetic obsession that Thexan Rist held for his own skin, for the ideal of beauty and attractiveness. He'd always found it fascinating-- the amalgam of the human form, made pure with the image of *softness and thinness and youth*, the envy and lust of so many. It was one of many reasons he'd taken to dolls as a child, rather than the rough-and-tumble games his brother enjoyed, football and mud-wrestling and playing cops and robbers in the streets.

Not, *per se*, that there was anything *wrong* with a boy liking dolls, his older brother had been adamant to profess, but that most people tended to grow out of their childhood obsessions as they aged. And Thexan was certain they did-- of course they did, they were normal, and *normal* children had to grow up eventually. *Normal* people were natural and disciplined; they hadn't been forced to live in a plaster-cast marionette, one that looked so *real* it was unsettling. And oh, how he hated it, this *loathsome* vessel that repressed any sense of self-worth he might have felt, rendering him a captive in his own head.

Regardless, it was no secret that even Thexan's peers seemed to doubt his ability to hold his own in a fight. His frame had always been so waifish that many were convinced even the simplest gust of wind might topple him over. In fact, that opinion had been agreed upon wholeheartedly by his



own head.

Regardless, it was no secret that even Thexan's peers seemed to doubt his ability to hold his own in a fight. His frame had always been so waifish that many were convinced even the simplest gust of wind might topple him over. In fact, that opinion had been agreed upon wholeheartedly by his own parents, reinforced through the constant jabs at how *skinny* he was.

Straighten up, child. Even if you don't have a spine, you should at least try to pretend you do.

It had never been a good thing, his slightness, the inverted curve of his ribcage and flat stomach. He wasn't *made* for athleticism-- and on top of that he'd never been handsome, not in the way Holden was, lithe muscle and broad shoulders and a devil-may-care sort of smile. Holden was *ideal*. He was an Adonis, the way men were supposed to look, the way... *people* were supposed to look. Holden was gorgeous in a manner that *creatures* like Thexan could only dream of understanding.

Fatten up, you skeleton.

You're too sickly to even screw, Thex, hasn't anyone told you that?

And so, as he grew older, Thexan began to recognize his body for the... bane that it was. A flaw, just like every measure of his existence otherwise, his gelid-phantasmic exterior that appeared translucent when under the careful flicker of a light, twiggish limbs that his brother had nearly been able to circle with a single hand.

Abomination, he considered, looking in the mirror. *Wraith, thrall, Frankenstein's monster.*

It was better not to look. It was better not to touch; if he ever did, if he deemed it a good idea, he was immediately embittered at the feeling of raw skin lined with unfortunate scars and pockmarks, red and itchy and *always* scabbing over where he peeled it away. Sometimes he thought he could see maggots, the tiny, white harbingers of *rot*, worming their way under his skin. They burrowed deep, laying larvae just underneath his paper exterior, ready to bust him open at a moment's notice, to crawl out and leave only a meager, emaciated corpse behind.

That was why he enjoyed looking at dolls. Why he enjoyed holding them, making them, dressing them. Keeping them in perfect condition, a collection of lovely things meant to placate a monster. Unmarred, smooth-looking flesh, long eyelashes, sweet smiles and elaborately-done hair. *That* was what he wanted-- the one thing he couldn't have. The unattainable myth of...

Perfection.



it's a long story...

By Clay Osceola

“So, uh mister Long, what happened at the bank?” The interrogator inquired.

I sighed

“It’s a long story...”

New York City

April 20th, 2016

5:26 p.m.

I grabbed my mask and my duffel bag as I felt the van come to a stop. We had arrived at the bank. There were only a few cars in the parking lot, so the only people inside probably had high-security clearance and would be easy to keep under control so that the police didn’t show up and make everything difficult. We hustled out of the van.

“Snake! Get on those cameras! We gotta work fast!” The boss, Nill yelled.

“On it, Boss” Snake replied.

My heart pounded as I steadied my gun and walked around to the back of the building with snake, who was the tech-guy. You know takes control of security and cameras. Boring stuff. I’m more of a hit-and-run kind of guy, stole purses and robbed gas stations when i was young. We walked until we found the electrical box. I kept watch until he was finished.

“Alright, we’re in”

We ran to the back door. Nill and another guy was at the front door while two more were at the side entrance. We waited for the ‘Go’ call. I set up near a window where I could clearly see the staircase to the vault and my associates through the front door and side window.

The plan was simple; Get in, stop the cops from coming, obtain the money, and escape. We had cased the bank the day before, kind of just looking around and pretending to be interested in accounts. One of the tellers was cute. I started looking around when I saw Nill begin giving the count-down with his fingers.

“Showtime” I whispered to Snake as we shattered the window and rushed into the 12 story bank.

“Alright! Everyone down and no one gets hurt! Nill yelled “and while you’re at it, hand all electronic devices to my friend here.” He pointed at snake.

Nobody moved

I fired two shots into the air.

“Do what he says!”



People scrambled to hand over their cell phones and PDAs. A teller was mashing the alarm button that Snake had disabled.

“Awh, is something wrong? Button not working? Now shut up and lie down before I sink one into your chest!” Nill exclaimed.

I watched the clock tick past 5:30, an explosion went off downstairs.

“We’re in boss!” Someone yelled

“Alright boys let’s load up and roll out!”

We shuffled down the stairs and hurried into the vault. Everyone loaded the stacks of money into the bags. My strap on my shoulder felt like it could break at any moment, but i kept pushing money into my duffel. I opened a few strong boxes with the saw we had brought and ended up finding some goodies. The small backpack I brought was filled with money and jewelry as we hurried out of the vault. Someone tripped behind me but I didn’t turn around to check.

I shuffled back up the stairs as fast as I could, holding the door open for the rest of the group.

“Thank you all for your cooperation and we’ll see you next time folks!” I said to the hostages.

I ran for the van as I heard sirens. I threw my bags into the back. As I climbed in I heard Nill say “Sorry about this Aiden” and felt a sharp pain erupt in my head...

“The last thing I knew was that I had been hit and the van drove away. The cops showed up soon after, and, here I am.” I said to the officer.

“And you’re sure there’s nothing else you can tell us?” he asked.

“Nothing about the bank, but I’d do anything to get back at that backstabber.” I hinted

“Well? Go on then!”

“Help you out of the goodness of my heart? That’s cute.” I sarcastically said while rolling my eyes.

He sighed

“What do you want?”

“I really want my two million dollars but, getting out of this God forsaken interrogation room does sound nice right about now.”

“Drop the funny guy act before I drop you.”

“I want my freedom or else they’re going to keep theirs.” I explain.

“Fine, where are they.” He asked annoyed.

“Can I drive?” I asked with a grin on my face.



We turned right on Aspen Avenue in the housing addition of Albany Estates, where Nill had planned the hideout. You have to love the alliteration. I've been wondering if they changed the location, but I doubt they're that smart. I hear the brakes squeak as we stop in front of the small house off Aspen. The charcoal black van parked outside, the same we used in the heist.

"Idiots." I whisper under my breath.

"This it?" The officer asks

"Yep, sure of it," I say, "but why do you think they kept the van?"

"No clue"

"For the warning, they have guns, might want to call in backup."

"It's right around the corner."

Once the other police showed up, they stormed the house. But for some reason, they left me alone in the car. The van is parked in the street, perfectly still.

"I can't believe it." I say

I stepped out of the cop car and walked to the van. I looked through the tinted windows and see the six duffel bags. The door is unlocked. The key is under the floor mat, just as planned. Now, I have over two million dollars on my back, Nill's gone, at a gas station somewhere. Nill, my best friend, and I are now millionaire criminals. I drive off before the cops realize I'm gone.

"Here I come Nill." I say.

Outskirts of NYC

April 20th 2016

8:12 P.M

I arrived at the gas station where Nill had planned the meet-up. I parked the van next out to Nill's blacked out Mustang, he was leaning on the trunk in his heavily tinted sunglasses with his arms crossed. Snake got out of the passenger seat and nodded at me as I handed him the keys to the getaway van. Nill walked to the back of the van and retrieved two stacks of hundred dollar bills and handed them to me.

"The rest of your paycheck should be wired to your account in a couple of weeks, this is just to get out of town with. They'll be running plates so I'd recommend you leave soon." Nill said.

"Thanks, you owe me a drink for that hit to the head, it hurt a lot worse than it



seemed.” I replied.

He chuckled as he closed the doors and walked back to his car. Snake got in the van and backed out of the parking spot. I walked towards my Porsche as Nill called my name.

“See you in a month Aiden, don’t be late”

As Nill and Snake pulled out of the gas station I debated on destinations to travel to in order to lay low for awhile. My options were limited; mom and dad died years ago in a horrific car accident, my “friends” were scattered across the country most likely trying to avoid me, and I wasn’t one for hotels. Then She came across my mind. She wouldn’t be happy to see me, but it may be my only realistic option. I climbed in my car and set off, loading up my favorite Foo Fighters album. I turned out of the gas station and made my way to the interstate.

While stopped at a stop light, I examined myself in the rearview mirror. My face was stern, I still had a massive goose egg and bruise on my forehead from the butt of Nill’s gun, my black hair was still short and crisp; I don’t mean to brag, but I think I could model for Supercuts one day, my chocolate eyes were bloodshot from the lack of sleep from nonstop planning of the heist, and my fair complexion was blurred by the blood and grime that covered my face.

The light turned green.

I am about six foot one with an athletic build, I played running back for my high school football team. Like I said, my parents died in a car crash years back while I was still in high school. They went out, got drunk, and crashed into a pole while going 70 miles an hour, killing them on impact. I was never the same after that. My mother always pushed me to do the right thing and obey my conscience while my dad always told me to do whatever would make me the most money in life. I like to say I do a little of both. What people don’t realize is that with the hundreds of thousands of dollars I make I don’t just buy new cars, pay off an FBI agent to keep me off the radar, and order the occasional meat lover’s pizza, I donate tons of my money to homeless shelters and giving in general. You could call me a sort of Robin Hood; taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Most of all, I’m damn good at what I do, I’ve robbed over 16 banks across 12 different states and have yet to have been caught without letting them catch me. I can be in and out of a gas station in four minutes and twenty-seven seconds carrying three hundred more dollars than I had prior.

I kept driving, holding a steady speed of eighty miles an hour. I was still about 8 hours out of my destination. I let my thoughts drift, thinking of what I’d use this next paycheck for. When I snapped back from my daydreams I was only a few miles from Her. I knew she wasn’t going to like seeing my face. Partly because it was six o’clock in the morning but also because the last time I saw her was about two years ago when I left of her house with her car to get out of town to escape some heat from a prior job. However, she was my only choice and I had to clench the excitement-fear feeling in my gut for the next thirty minutes as I reached the outskirts of Chicago.

My memory served me with the directions to her house even though I haven’t drove these streets in a couple years, and before I knew it I was parked in front of the small two bedroom townhouse that belonged to Her. I exhaustedly trudged up to her porch and peered into the window next to the door. She was sleeping on the couch, an empty bag of chips sat at her side, flashing lights from the T.V. that was left on caked the room. My heart rate climbed as I reached for the doorbell.

I finally built up the courage and rang the doorbell of my sister’s house.



sparky

By Ethan Deimeke

The Phi Chi Pi house was gloriously trashed. A smashed television lay upon the lawn, shards of glass ringing the broken carcass like a sacrificial ring. The Kappa Gamma Theta philanthropy banner hung haphazardly from the pavilion of the mansion. When I opened my bleary eyes this morning, my noncooperative limbs spread upon the lawn like a snow angel in August, it was to my great surprise that the house was not ablaze, reduced to rubble, or otherwise uninhabitable. The night prior was worth the destruction, though. It started rather innocently enough. A few drinks, a little dancing, some harmless chit-chat with the sorority ladies at the event. But soon enough, it got out of hand; so, so out of hand. I'm not sure who ordered the kegs or when they arrived, but I know that they're all tipped over and clang emptily when you tap them. I don't know who invited the entirety of the girls' softball and lacrosse teams, but their equipment is scattered across our lawn as if bats and lacrosse masks rained down from the heavens. I'm not exactly aware of when our private, exclusive, on-the-list-or-you're-not-getting-in party turned into an open door rager that rivaled any stereotypical fraternity movie. I'll be honest, I invited a few extra people, but there was a stampede as people stumbled out of the house this morning; all groans, fistbumps, and clutched heads.

At some point last night, the house became the center of the party scene on campus. At some point last night, our chapter house was subjected to a hurricane of red solo cups, vomit, and gleeful ruination. At some point last night, I drank far, far too much; enough that I can't remember a thing this morning. And as I found out when I checked his pen this morning to feed him, at some point last night, we lost Sparky.

Sparky is - was - the house pet. The beloved house goat. The precious love of our brotherhood.

My stomach dropped and I felt my heart in my throat. I stood at the entrance to Sparky's pen and clutched the chain link door for support. I leaned over in the bushes and disposed of the toxins of the night before, in part to purge the venom from my body and partially in shock. My beautiful baby boy was gone; vanished. I called out his name repeatedly, but Sparky refused to come. Goats tend to not answer to their names being called. I lurched away from Sparky's pen, stumbled around a passed out couple still holding hands, and went into the house to search. I ripped the house apart, but no Sparky. I started panicking and dropped to my knees in despair. As I rocked back and forth in the fetal position, a shirtless brother approached me and asked about my state of agitation. I told him about our predicament, and he was equally disturbed, letting out a mournful howl. He crushed a Natural Light can and with a start of understanding explained it was exactly like *The Hangover* film, so we needed to retrace our steps and we would locate Sparky. In my still partially drunken state, this sounded perfectly reasonable.

My brother and I began piecing together what had happened last night. We gathered upstairs and recalled that we had pre-gamed at about eight o'clock in my room. Sparky was not in my room. Next, we ran downstairs and leaned against the bar while we tried to remember the beginning of



the scheduled social. It was the calm before the storm, jazz in the background, martinis were being served. Then we ran outside where we had argued with people who wanted to get in but weren't on the list. Next, we ended up on the roof, which Joey definitely jumped off of into the pool to impress a lady. Exhausted, we sat in lawn chairs in our backyard and stared at Sparky's luxurious pen while we figured out the next move. We remembered letting him out because the girls wanted to pet him. Everyone loves Sparky. My brother put his face in his hands and moaned, "Oh my God." I stared at him. "Sparky is probably dead."

As my brother gazed into the pit of despair, an animal control van pulled up next to the house. An overweight man climbed out of the vehicle and jogged around to the cargo doors. As soon as he popped them open, our beloved Sparky hopped out of the van and into our bewildered arms. I hugged Sparky like one would hug a dying spouse. We looked up at the man with tears in our eyes. He smiled at us and ran a hand over his quickly receding hair.

"Hello, boys. I'm an old Phi Chi from back in the day. I saw your letters on his tag and thought I'd do my brothers a solid. Try to keep him in his pen from now on, you hear?" We nodded and thanked him over and over as he climbed into the van and rumbled away. My brother and I made sure Sparky was in good health, then put him in his pen. I found an unopened beer can in the yard and sunk back into the lawn chair. Ignoring our potential futures as animal control operatives with beer bellies and balding heads, I clinked cans with my still shirtless brother, sighed, and took a drink.



midnight muse

By Katherine Sokol
2nd Prize in Fiction

You usually come at night. You're the one constant in my life that I know will be there, regardless of rain or shine. No matter where I am, you're always there. You're my muse. The reason I write the painstakingly personal works of art that seem to almost be ripped from my heart. The reminder that I will never truly be alone, even if you make me feel lonely. I've learned so much from you. You've made me stronger but more cynical but I guess those traits usually go hand in hand, cautious but untrusting of others, careful with the feelings of others but reckless with myself. I've become a mess of contradictions based off of your impact, something I have not yet learned how to handle the blow of. But I know I have time because you and I are stuck together. We're together at the hip, for better or for worse. You're the dark cloud over my head, even on my best days you have the ability to remind me that you're still part of my life. It could be the subtle reminder from a memory of someone long gone or the reminder that I'm a long way from where I want to be. You have a way of quietly yelling about the future and the fear it holds, the unpredictability that comes with growing up, the inability to go back and relive the years that I spent begging time to speed up so that I could get to where I am now— haunted by something that I will never be rid of, my muse and my monster. A disruptive force that entered my life and now has become an everyday occurrence, a blessing and a curse. Yet you've taught me how to not only be alone but to enjoy it. I've learned to love the times where I'm tucked away in my own corner of the world not bothered by anyone or anything else, except sometimes you. The one thing that can ruin my quiet night. The break in my tranquility, the reason I stay up until 4 am not necessarily feeling tired or sad but instead feeling nothing, all thanks to you. The depression never leaves.



vacancy

By Katherine Sokol
1st Prize in Fiction

You built a home in my heart and now you've left; it's forever abandoned. I never asked - or even wanted you to stay there long - yet you did and after a while I fell hard. I fell hard and now you've left me with this vacant spot that you took the time to create, a spot that took you five seconds to leave and even less time to consider leaving. A spot that you didn't ever bother to destroy when you left. And now everything is in the same place, almost as if it's a museum dedicated to what almost was. In there, there's not an item out of place and when I try to clean house I can't help but bump into a piece of you that you left behind. It has become a reminder that you're no longer there or maybe you never were. Maybe this spot, or home, or whatever it was, was a facade of what I thought you were, an honest man that built a house of lies. A house that will be forever locked until I am able to clean it out without being affected by the memories you left behind. Until then I'm avoiding the pictures in my phone, archiving the folder of sweet nothings you used to whisper in the late nights or early mornings to the back of my mind and hoping I can stop thinking about how tight your arms used to wrap around me. I'm avoiding the proof that you once existed because there's a side of me that wishes you never really did. So I'm locking the door and praying that I will stop remembering you and what we could've been. Because we could have been something beautiful yet you were too scared to try something new, to not play it safe.

But I was ready. I wanted to try something different but then I realized something one night. I was thinking about the distance between you and I and suddenly it hit me: you will never miss me the way I've missed you which I should have realized much sooner. I thought I was old enough or mature enough to work through the mismatched feelings and the varying expectations of this mess I thought of as a relationship. Yet I was (and am) too young, too inexperienced to be ready for something that eventually stopped tugging at my heartstrings and causing butterflies but instead completely snapped them. I knew it was over when I started to feel myself fall more and more out of love with you, something I should have done a long time ago. I was in denial that this was going to end. I thought you - my friend, my mutual confidant - would have stayed longer or would have made a more peaceful exit but you didn't, and I should have seen it coming yet I was too naive or too afraid of getting hurt or maybe I just didn't want to accept the inevitable fate of "us," if you can even say there was an us. But even with all this being said, even with the emptiness that you've left behind and the relationship I hoped we would have had, I miss you. I wish so hard that I didn't but I do and that might be the saddest part of this, but you were the first person I could truly feel vulnerable around and now you're gone and I don't know what to do. So now I'm trying to find the same feelings in places I know they'll never be found. I'm hoping that maybe, just maybe, I'll be able to find a glimpse of what I thought was something but instead was nothing. And now I'm sifting through all the memories, hoping for a break from the good times, trying to find a fault in the near perfection of what we almost were. Yet, the fault could be found in the definition of our relationship; all the "almosts" and "could've beens" defined and destroyed us. You say it was the distance that was the reason we were never truly solidified, yet a part of me knows it was because you weren't interested enough. You didn't want to put your time into something that was a risk. So I'm going to put you in a box or lock the door or delete the messages. Whatever it is I need to do to be my own person without feeling like I'm turning into an extension of you.



his/ hers/ their: examining and
deconstructing the gendered
world

“His/Her/Their: Examining and Deconstructing the Gendered World” is a combination of creative writing where everyone (Student, faculty, and staff) can send in their work of prose, poems, non-fiction, fiction, song lyrics, and pictures with a caption to explain how they see their gendered world. I understand that everyone comes from different backgrounds of different races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation that would shape the way we look at gender.

This project all started when I was finishing my minor for Women Gender Studies and I had to do an internship. As the 3 hour intern at the Remley Center, working for Cinnamon Brown, I coordinated social media and the newsletter. Because Cinnamon Brown is the person she is, she guided me to think outside the box so I can merge my major with my minor. There “His/Her/Their” was born. A week later after planning for the Remley project, this turned into my thesis for English as well. This spring, as an editor with Janus, I am presenting the work in the journal and online. Besides those who have sent in their work to me, I chose to display some work as well. This journey has been challenging and I’m very thankful.

I would like to personally thank Cinnamon Brown , Remley Women’s Center, Maureen Tuthill, Theresa Adams, Chuck Carlise, the participants, my friends and family who helped contributed to my project. You can check out the Janus website and go to His/Her/Their: Examining and Deconstruction the Gendered World tab, and see the video and audio display as well.

Chelsea Sharp, Editor At-Large



star-crossed lovers

By Celeste Cummings

Dear Star-Crossed Lover,

I want you to know that I see the light and greatness within you. Even when you felt like no one could see or understand you, I saw you. I will always be your loudest fan and supporter! I will always believe in you, I have been believing in you since the first day I met you. You have a heart of gold and a smile that warms the room. I have loved you since the beginning and will continue to love you as each day goes by. I will hold on to our amazing memories that one day we will hopefully add on to. I have never given up on you and don't plan on giving up anytime soon. Sometimes the timing isn't right but one thing I am sure of is that we were meant to be. As you continue to work on yourself, I will do the same. I can't wait until our paths cross again and I get the privilege to become reacquainted with my best friend. Hopefully, after rebuilding the friendship, I will get to date the amazing man, who will become my boyfriend, then my husband, and my happily ever after. It might be unconventional, but undoubtedly this is a TRUE love story. Nobody ever said it would be easy, and this is by far one of the toughest things I have ever had to conquer but if that means I get to spend the rest of my life happy with you, then it is definitely worth it. At times I might not be the best at truly expressing myself but I want one thing to be clear, I love you, believe in you, and want nothing but the best for you. Some relationships are seasonal but I know deep inside my heart this is a forever thing.

So until next time,

Your Star-Crossed Lover



chocolate

By Chelsea Sharp

Growing up I was told that chocolate was the best dessert ever.
I was also told that chocolate actually almost goes with everything.
It's essential dessert that makes your meal whole.
But that depends on your taste buds.
If this is true, why do you hate me?

Chocolate can come in any flavor imaginable.
Chocolate covered raisins, chocolate covered pretzels
Devil's chocolate cake, and much more.
But you still find a way to hate me?
I am aware that chocolate isn't for everyone, but damn
You didn't have to put a hit out on me.
Chocolate is loved worldwide.
But you still find a way to hate me?

You act as if we give candy a bad rep.
It's not our fault that we are so rich and flavorful.
Are you jealous of my ingredients?
I hope not.
Chocolate is so sweet to eat.
We are wrapped in shiny wrappers,
Golden, red, silver, and brown.
I thought I was everyone's treat, but obviously I'm not yours.
But why, I mean why do you hate me?

You don't have to mess with me, I understand.
When you see me while walking down the aisle,
You don't have to give me a dirty look.
I'm sorry that you don't like me and that I don't appeal to your taste.
But I advise that you don't have to go through such lengths,
To show that you don't like me.
It's not my fault I'm so delicious.



choices

By Dr. Kali Wright-Smith

Picture of the toy aisle for girls, it's very biased and what girls should play with.



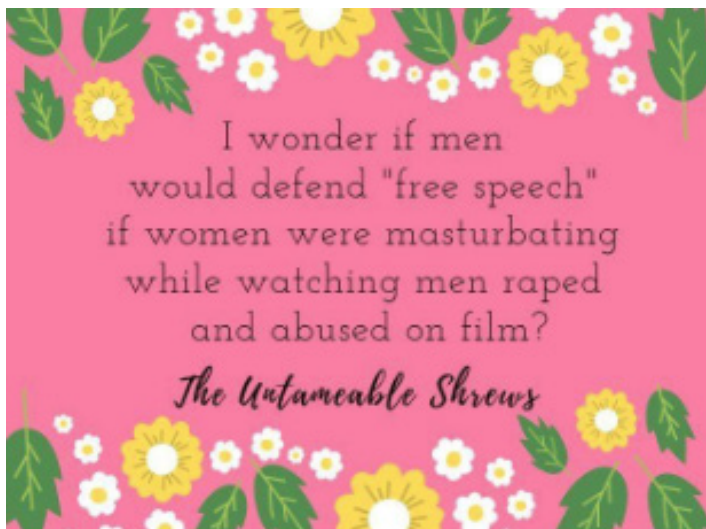
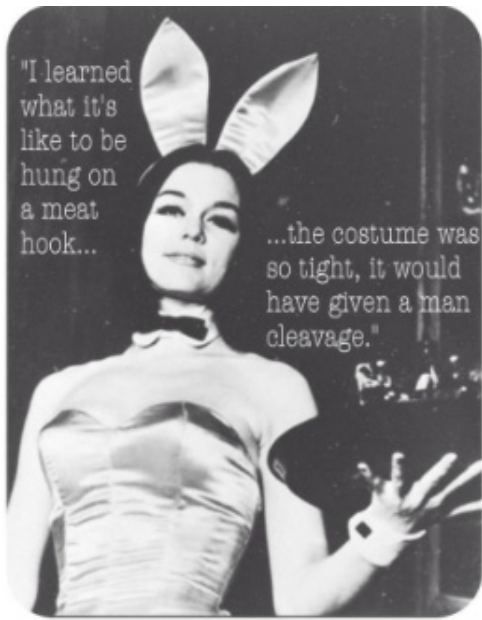
untitled

By Ryan Clavin

All people are created equal no matter what ethnicity they are, and we all are stronger together as one then divided into two. Today, the world wants us to have the mindset of every man for themselves. If more people could work together towards a shared goal of happiness like this family, the world would be a much better place.



[HIS/HERS/THEIR]



"Well, I'm a consenting adult and Charley here is a consenting adult - that makes two out of three"

I feel trapped in a gendered world – where people feel like porn is empowering to women, when it is the foundation of oppression and abuse. Women are people. We are not objects to be bought, to be sold, to be abused, and to be controlled by men – everything that porn stands for.

-Bailey Vaughn



gendering god

By Kiva Nice-Webb

“I noticed that you rarely use gendered pronouns for God... you always say God or Godself... is that intentional?”

One of those questions from a perceptive student in my class. One of those questions which invites an answer that is either too deceptively short and simple, or too potentially long and involved. One of those questions the Christian chaplain gets asked when they're teaching a course in The Academic Study of Religion and wonders...why not (also) at chapel or in a Bible study or during a prayer meeting?

The short answer is “Yes.”

The long answer would have involved the story of the Mennonite upbringing of this chaplain who never thought she'd be a chaplain - women were not pastors in my church growing up. We worshipped a God who was powerful, and men were powerful, so God was referred to with masculine pronouns. But God was also gentle and loving. And the gentle-powerful God was still there, even after one, then both, of my queer siblings came out of the closet; still there after my family ended up leaving the congregation we loved in our attempts to love our family in the ways that same congregation had taught us that God calls us to love everyone. Why was I surprised that this gentle-powerful God was still with us? No one had told me that your experience of God can become surprisingly big and expansive and mysterious, even (especially?) after you painfully watch old familiar models of God get too small to be recognizable as the Creator of the huge complex world you now have eyes to see and ears to hear. The long answer would have been a meandering road of sharing personal experiences of God with older women and faithful queer folk and Christian mystics from 2,000 years of history with intimate knowledge of the various forms of the Divine and wisdom from thinkers and doers of theology who find God in the most unexpected of places wearing the most unlikely garb.

Do some Christians experience God as masculine, with power and might and strong guidance?

Do some Christians experience God as feminine, with power and might and strong guidance?

Do some Christians experience God as feminine, with gentleness and tenderness and warmth?

Do some Christians experience God as masculine, with gentleness and tenderness and warmth?

Do some Christians experience God as gender-bending, mixing and matching traits that we humans, in our limited nature, mis-gender as exclusively masculine or feminine, thus limiting their experience of the Divine in whose very image we variously gendered humans (at least as Abrahamic faith traditions would have it) are created?

Yes.

And.

In my classroom, among my students and myself, many models of God (or no models, for the non-theistic folks) are often operative at the same time. In our world, many experiences and images and gendered ways of recognizing God are co-occurring, all around us. Since our own experiences of the



[H I S / H E R S / T H E I R]

world are often gendered, it is more than understandable for gendered human beings to relate to God in gendered ways.

Is it intentional? These days, keeping a sense of mystery about it helps me stay alert to where the Divine is present in the world - always trying to avoid jumping to conclusions too quickly or foreclosing a revelation of Godself based on my own preconceived, gendered, human assumptions.

It was originally an intentional practice to have my language about God more closely reflect my actual experiences of God - and it is an intentional practice in the classroom for me to never assume a gendered Divine on behalf of my students or the authors we read unless explicitly stated. These days, it is simply the way I speak about God, as a Christian chaplain - knowing that we humans live in a gendered world that sometimes limits human expression to its fullest potential, but also trusting that the God of my tradition is big enough not to be limited by our gendered ways of talking about God, Godself.

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motionless

By Chelsea Sharp

I stand in the shower, motionless. My thick dark cocoa skin protects my feelings from the harsh water. Tears form from the water onto my body and roll down my legs. I stare at the beige tiles, noticing how they connect in unison. A song starts to play and I close my eyes. Suddenly I'm in this room, dimly lit, and there's a mirror in front of me on the wall. My hips start to sway to the music, left and then right. In that moment I'm forgetting about all my responsibilities, worries, and stress. I let my body speak in way it has never spoken before. I feel this spirit take over me, I'm not me. I feel as if I'm one of those special choreographers for music videos. You know, the super special kind who are laid back but also weird, vegan, and very conscious about the world? Yea those kind. All of a sudden the music stops playing, and my eyes open. I'm staring at the beige tiles once again. My curls are drenched, the tears form on my body once more, and the next song begins to play. I stand in the shower motionless.





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