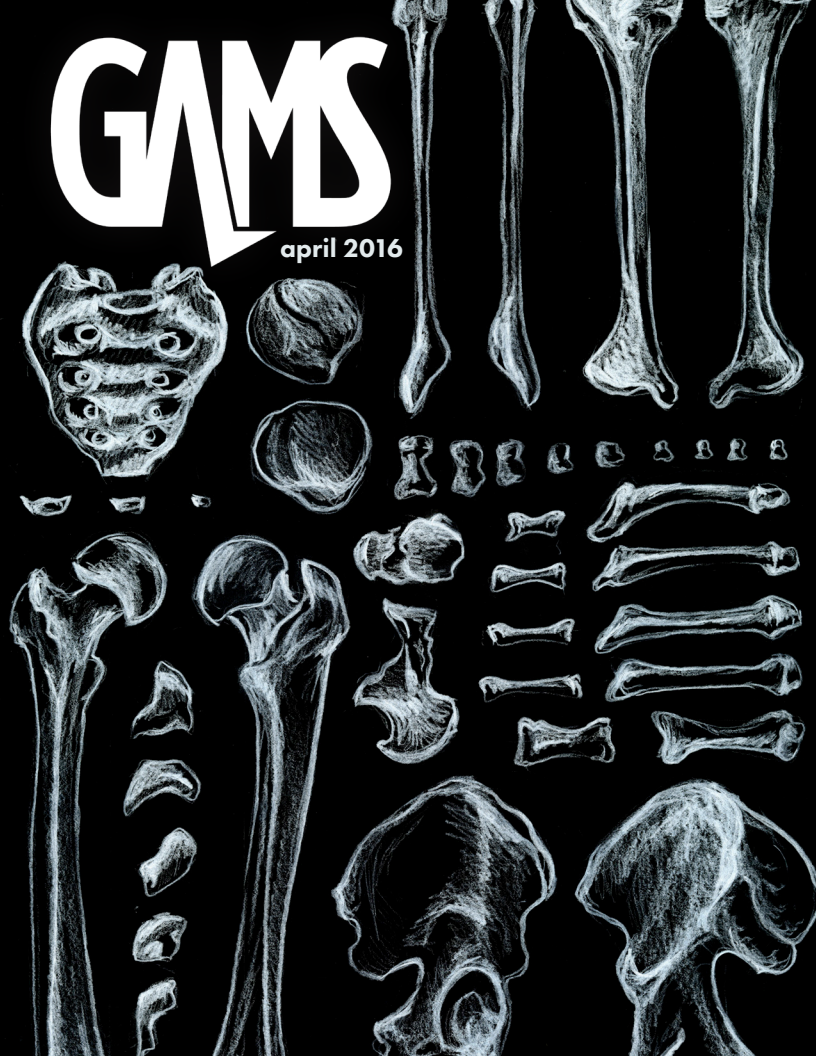


GAMS

april 2016



About Us

GAMS is a feminist, LGBTQ+ positive, trans-inclusive, mildly radical, pseudo-intellectual literary zine based at Appalachian State University.

We publish an issue every two months, both as a hard copy to be distributed around our campus and as a .pdf file which is available on our website, **gamszine.com**. Each issue includes a mixture of short stories, poetry, essays, comics, and visual art. Donations and submissions are both welcome - see the back page or our website for details.

And happy reading!

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Editor's Note:

In honor of Trans Day of Visibility, which was April First, this issue features only writing and art created by transgender and nonbinary people. For those of you who haven't encountered the term before, a transgender person is one whose actual gender - the gender they perceive themselves as - is not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. A nonbinary person is one who doesn't fit within the established gender binary. They are neither male nor female, or they oscillate between the two. Another term you'll encounter is "cisgender." This refers to a person whose actual gender does match the gender they were assigned at birth. I am the only cisgender person who will be contributing to this issue, and then only through this note. Our own Managing Editor, Max Johnson, provides more information in their "FAQ" section, which follows.

Some of the work featured here is specifically about being trans, and some of it is about any of the other aspects of life that we typically discuss in GAMS. We want to recognize the artistic talents of this underrepresented group, and we hope you will love this issue as much as we do.

Best wishes,

Zoe Kaplan

Editor-in-Chief, Ally

Trans & Gender Non-Conforming FAQ

By Max Johnson

How do I treat a transgender person?

With respect. Like a human being. It's all we want. Listen to us. Trust that we know what we're talking about. If you're cisgender, don't speak over us. It's not complicated.

How do you know you're transgender?

Each individual person defines what their identity means to them. They're the one who gets to decide how they want to present their identity, what pronouns they want to use, and what name they want to use. There isn't a check list of traits someone has to have to be transgender (that includes whether or not they've transitioned and whether or not they've chosen to have surgery).

Are you sure you're transgender?

Yes, we're sure. And even if we weren't, it's none of your business anyway (unless you want to take me out on a date, in which case, I'll tell you all about my gender).

What's your real name?

The one that person chose. Their dead name/birth name/legal name, if they have chosen to go by a different name, isn't relevant. Their chosen name is their real name.

When are you going to transition?

It depends. Some trans people may choose not to medically transition. Others may choose to have surgery but not go on hormones, or vice versa. Many have to meet government-mandated requirements in order to change their gender marker if that's what they choose to do. How that person decides to transition (or not) and the reasons why are up to them.

But pronouns are hard...

It's hard for everyone at first. As long as you are willing to learn and undo the automatic assumptions your brain will make about someone's gender and pronouns most transgender and gender non-conforming people will be forgiving of mistakes. Don't get defensive if they correct you. At the same time, apologizing profusely for your mistake makes the situation about your guilt and not the transgender individual's comfort.

Just quickly correct your mistake and move on. Ask if it's okay for you to use their pronouns depending on the situation, and follow their lead.

Non-binary genders sound made up.

Gender is a spectrum just like everything else. We don't assume that people have either blue eyes or brown eyes. Many are somewhere in between. The gender binary is a damaging social contrast imposed by a heterosexist and cissexist culture. The terminology may change, but the fact that non-binary people exist won't.

What about biology?

“Biological sex” isn't as binary as most people think it is. The XY chromosomes aren't the only chromosomes that determine sex characteristics, and many people (probably many more than we know about) have intersex characteristics or chromosomes that aren't “typical” for their outward sex characteristics. These people don't need to be “corrected” to one sex or the other. Primary and secondary sex characteristics, and what your chromosomes look like, don't determine gender.

But isn't singular they/them grammatically incorrect?

Nope! The singular use of “they” was declared Word of the Year in 2015 by the American Dialect Society, making it officially part of our (extremely malleable) language. Whether you realize it or not, you use singular they all the time. We don't say “I think someone left his/her umbrella” in vernacular. Using they/them/theirs instead of the traditional he/she as a gender neutral pronoun in speech and writing is more inclusive because it doesn't exclude gender non-conforming people.

Isn't allowing trans women into women's bathrooms dangerous?

Not at all. The number of cis men “dressing up” in order to assault cis women in bathrooms is exactly zero. Trans people, trans women in particular, are more likely to be assaulted by cis people in bathrooms. Trans women are real women, and it's unsafe for them to be forced to enter men's bathrooms.

Why is everyone getting so upset about these “bathroom bills?”

We’re just trying to go to the bathroom and be on our way. Bathroom bills are deliberate attempts to restrict the rights of transgender people. They can also carry along provisions that strip LGBTQIA+ people of other protections, such as not being fired from their job for being something other than heterosexual and cisgender. The fight didn’t end with marriage equality.

What do you love about being transgender?

We have cool hair.

We’re fashionable as fuck.

It’s punk rock

You get to make your own self

We have a strong sense of community

We challenge traditional perceptions of sex and gender

High Heels for They-Them

by Jessie Carter

He likes the sleeves of his button up rolled up,
His fore-arms are toned from years spent with swords,
She likes her jeans well fitted and comfortable,
Her legs are as strong and hard as the steel she trains with,

They like high heels.

Originally worn by him to look tall,
Now worn by her to please them all,
They are confused.

Are they...the same?

How can he be she and she be him?
This is not what the world taught them was right,
She is on the left, and he on the right,

Right?

Right...

Wrong.

They wear their sleeves rolled up, to show off the years'
worth of battle scars disguised in the words, Freak, idiot, and
hermaphrodite,

Their jeans are fitted because they believe their body is beautiful
no matter how many times they are called slut, whore, or bitch,

They wear high heels because they will never fit into your pretty
little box,

Their edges are as sharp as swords and will cut through the
walls you make,

They will stand taller than the rest,

They will stand for everything that is right,

They will wear high heels and be nothing but themselves,

For they are me,

And I am them.

Tracks

By Rebecca Petchenik

Somebody told me just the other day
That I'm still dreaming, thinking that it won't be this way again
but with a swing of the bat i'll make a point tonight
because i'm running on gasoline
and my fingers are stained with nicotine
and I just might be drunk in your passenger seat
with the satisfaction of hitting the pipe
still fresh in the holes in my teeth

you can pass out in the parking lot of the Pentecostal church
but I don't have time to sleep
because i'm made of ashes tonight
i'm made of embers and, baby you're made of the river
i'm still on fire for you waking up like i'm dope sick
shivering and shaking pleading for a fix
because the train tracks running through the graveyard
match the track marks running through my arms

but I promise i'm over it
I promise that I won't get fucked again
but I still can't sleep
so instead i'll make some new friends
who don't hate my guts
half as much as you do

there's still trash on the floor
and integrity in the gutter
dreadlocked nihilists saying fuck the law
because nothing spells hope like nothing to believe in
dying young and miserable
just like my own personal Jesus Christ

Headlights Chapter 3: Jeep

by Max Johnson

Note: This is the second installment of a continuing series. Chapter 1 and 2 are available to be read on our website, gamszine.com. Chapter 4 will be published in June 2016.

The Jeep bounced over a speed bump in the road. It creaked and rattled like an old house in a storm. Gem landed on her tailbone in the back, gritting her teeth. Beside her a duffle bag sprang open, spitting wooden stakes, jugs of water, and a silver crucifix onto the bed of the Jeep. All of it looked like it could've come straight out of an episode of Buffy. The smell of blood lingered thick on her tongue. A knife, half hidden under a stake, flashed in the slat of light streaming in between the Jeep's frame and the driver's seat.

“Is this shit for real?” She said. “Seriously?” She tugged at the ropes digging into her wrists, eyeing the red handle of her axe sticking up next to the vampire boy's torn jeans. Gem wriggled onto her knees so she could look the boy driving the Jeep in the eye.

The scars on his neck stood out in the sunset light streaming through trees laden with golden leaves. He glanced at her in the mirror, his eyes wide and filled with light.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “But you tried to kill my boyfriend!”

“Your boyfriend’s a vampire,” Gem said. “Aren’t you people supposed to hunt them?”

“Maybe I’m adopted.”

“Yeah, well you’re still a Hellsing.”

“It’s just a stupid legend,” the boy said. Gem glanced at the axe.

The Jeep turned away from the sun, following the road into dark forest. A chill crawled up Gem’s spine. She licked her lips, watching the rearview mirror. The moment the boy’s eyes darted back to the road she flopped back on the duffle bag, grabbed the knife, and cut the rope around her wrists. Knife in one hand, she dove over the pile of month-old Taco Bell debris scattered between the front seats and grabbed the axe. The boy driving swore and reached for the knife. Gem twisted her wrist, knuckles white on the knife’s grip.

The Jeep swerved, narrowly missing a tree trunk as it plunged into the soft shoulder and fishtailed back onto pavement. Burning rubber mixed with drying blood in the cab. Gem let go of the axe and rolled onto her back so she could brace herself against the seat.

“Bart, help me, goddamn it!”

Bart shook his head. He was pressed as far into the door of the Jeep as he could get, one hand pressed over his mouth, the other one holding gauze to his still-bleeding cut. The blood ran like water. It wouldn't clot. Gem pulled her hand free from Hellsing's grasp. He jerked his hand back with a gasp. The stench of stale blood turned sharp. Gem caught sight of Bart's eyes, pupils dilated like a cat's, just before he squeezed them shut.

“Bart, hold on,” Hellsing said. “It's going to be alright, just—” Gem grabbed the steering wheel. The Jeep skidded off the road and rocked to a halt in the ditch, bumper half-buried in the soft bank. Gem pushed Hellsing out of the cab and slammed the door behind them.

“What are you doing!” He tried to lunge for Gem's knife. She held it up over her head, happy to find she was almost a head taller.

“Your boyfriend’s going to fucking kill us,” Gem said.

The door of the Jeep creaked open. Steam belched from under the hood. Bart stumbled onto the road, still dripping blood. In the daylight he was no longer monstrous; just tired. It was like standing in the same room with a caged lion. Gem’s gut still twisted itself into snakes and ladders when she looked at him, but some part of her brain recognized the slack tired like the end of the world look on his face.

Her grip loosened on the knife. Helsing knocked it out of her hand and onto the pavement. She dove for it. Her elbows ripped open on the asphalt, bringing tears to her eyes. Helsing kicked the knife, sending it flying into the woods. He grabbed her by the hem of her dress and pulled her to her feet. She plunged her boot into his shin. She pulled away, the sound of her dress ripping cutting the quiet evening air.

“Please stop!” Bart said. Gem hesitated.

“You tied me up and threw me in the back of a Jeep!”

“You tried to axe Bart. Twice!”

“Okay, but he’s a freaking vampire.”

“Please don’t call me that,” Bart muttered. He slumped against the Jeep and sank to the ground. Hellsing knelt next to him, checking the gauze on his arm. Bart’s eyes drifted closed again.

“He wasn’t doing anything. He didn’t do anything to you,” he said.

“He tried to kill me!”

Hellsing’s shoulders dropped, like Gem’s words had hit a switch in his spine. Disappointment spread across his face. “Bart, you said you were alright.”

“I maybe lied a little,” Bart said. He didn’t open his eyes.

“Look—“ Hellsing went quiet. The last of the yellow, flickering lights of the high school went out. An engine started somewhere below them in the valley.

“That’s my dad,” Hellsing said. “Shit. He’s coming up here. Everyone back into the Jeep!” He climbed into the driver’s seat and cranked the engine. Bart scrambled to his feet and stood in the road, wobbling so bad a gentle breeze could knock him over. The Jeep growled to life and rattled back onto the road, taking a chunk of red clay with it. Hellsing got out and helped Bart into the passenger seat.

“Look, I’m—I’m sorry about all of this,” Hellsing said, once he was back behind the wheel. “I kind of panicked. But trust me, you don’t want to tangle with my dad.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Gem glanced down the road. She didn’t like the idea of trying to catch a ride with daddy Hellsing. The way kid Hellsing’s shoulders went tight when he mentioned the man’s name didn’t bode well.

Gem grabbed the axe from the floor as she climbed into the back of the Jeep. Bart flinched, following the axe like it might come alive and try to bite his head off on his own. Looking at him still put a twist in her guts, but she knew better. She could look at his face and see more than blood dripping from his teeth in the moonlight.

The road grew dark. The sun gave up and dropped below the mountains. The stars didn’t have the chance to show before clouds rolled in, shrouding the ridge. Kid Hellsing turned on his headlights. It didn’t help much. The fog slipped into the cab, covering Gem’s skin in goosebumps.

“What’s your name?” Hellsing asked.

“Gem, what’s yours?”

“Jax,” he said. “You already know Bart.”

“Yeah, you could say that.” Bart made a small sound in response that Gem couldn’t make out. “Is he alright?”

“He has hemophilia,” Jax said. “It kind of stuck with him after he, uh, you know.”

“That’s ironic,” Gem said. “I thought being a vampire made you immortal?” Bart let out a hoarse laugh. Jax didn’t reply.

The faint sounds of pop music on the radio turned to static. Gem tried to rub the cold out of her skin. It didn’t do much good. They crested the ridge, finally, and rolled to a stop at an intersection. No signs, just the vague sense of great height and open space beyond the curtain of fog. Any one of the four ways ahead of them could drop into nothing, and they wouldn’t know it until they were falling.

“I don’t remember this,” Jax said.

“Are we lost?”

“I don’t get lost,” Jax said. “This intersection doesn’t exist.”

“That’s crazy,” Gem said.

“As crazy as vampires?”

“Point,” Gem said. Jax got out of the Jeep, leaving it running, and walked as far as the headlights reached into the fog. Gem tapped the radio. The green numbers quivered in her vision, static; 7:03pm. She turned the dial, looking for a station. Nothing but varying degrees of static. Jax got back into the Jeep.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I guess we just have to choose.”

“You sound like you’ve done this before.”

“You haven’t?” Jax smiled.

Gem rolled her eyes. “What if we just went back?”

“I have a feeling we couldn’t if we tried,” Jax said. He closed his eyes and let out a long sigh. He stayed that way for several minutes, long enough that Gem thought he dozed off. He opened his eyes and sat upright, slapping his hands down on the wheel. Both Gem and Bart jumped.

“Alright,” Jax said. “I think I know which way we should go.”

Untitled

By Rebecca Petchenik

I had sex this weekend.

Yeah, it's one of those.

I had sex this weekend. And it was great.

The way her hands fumbled and probed in the dark,
searching my fleshy curves for a spark of love and shame
will be with me forever.

Or at least the next few days.

Her hair, long, blonde and haphazard fell into my mouth
and nearly choked me to death.

And we laughed.

The two of us alone in the darkness.

It had been years since my heart beat for her in an
abandoned warehouse, high on stolen drugs, wondering if
the fire would last the night or the cold would take us both.

And it had been years since her brown eyes like amber set into marble spoke to the deeper parts of me, keeping me sane in a mad world of train kids and heroin addled heroines killing dragons and marking their skin with bic pen ink and the broken ends of guitar strings.

Years since the dextromethorphan fueled frenzies of tears and hopeless abandon, and good sex, oh great sex, sex better than any other before or since.

She came back you know. She came back after the years to tell me she loved me in silence.

She became my word for passion and fire and catastrophe. She became my word for lonely and lonely together. She became my word for cold and hunger and bridges over the highway.

Many times I have found these orphans and given them my pieces. Like her, we careen and explode, we shatter and reform out of soot and teeth. Stronger and harder and with stories nobody will ever believe. Not in a million goddam years.

But when my word for sky and stars still beats on drums three hundred miles away, when my word for music and

river only gets drunk with me over the phone, I'll have sex with someone else. Anyone else.

I'll go find my orphans and my words for lust and forgiveness and fuck every last goddam one of them.

And no matter where.

And no matter who.

I'll still be shaking, coming down, shivering and sweating, hungover and bruised, the weight rolling off in the booze and drugs my body couldn't process into a pool of sloppy wet fuck.

I'll still be looking into amber eyes set in marble, wishing they were yours

About the Authors and Artists

Jessie Carter is a human freshman in college who loves running around with swords, writing, all forms of art, and making short videos. They are aspiring to become a film major because logic just gets so boring sometimes. GAMS is the first magazine that any of their work has ever been featured in. They have their own blog called Life and a Little Bit More, where they rant about social issues and life in general. Jessie's head is chock full of ideas and they hope to continue sharing them with the world through all that they do. They invite everyone to join in on the madness and a game of D&D, if you think you can take it.

Max Johnson is a Physics major with a minor in English at Appalachian State. They've won Nanowrimo three years out of five, but their work rarely sees the light of day. Their best friend is a horse named Buzzy, and they've seen every episode of Supernatural. They love comics, movies, horses, and tacos (not necessarily in that order).

Rebecca Petchenik is a writer, musician, and artist living in Boone NC. She is currently finishing her English degree at Appalachian State University. In the past she has worked with Just Us For All, Appalachian State's own Transaction, and other advocacy groups in the western North Carolina area as a speaker and copywriter. Her passions are poetry and dramatic writing. Her plays have won awards in the past, and her newest short will premiere in Asheville NC in June.

Jess Woods is freshman (ish) at UNC Chapel Hill, majoring in Computer Science and Studio Art. And no, they're not connected and he's not going into graphic design. He has done art for various audio books, and currently works producing art for commission. Jess loves drumming, science fiction, and cutting his own hair, and hopes to one day go to space.

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Want to see your work in print? Submissions are always open! We accept short stories, essays, poetry, comics, and visual art. Go to gamszine.weebly.com/submit for more information.

Got questions? Comments? Want to send fan mail? Email us at gamszine@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you!

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