

# GAMS

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## 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](http://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!

# Table of Contents

Flying: Thoughts on The Force Awakens Zoe Kaplan	4
Serenity Through Hell Robert Kahil	8
Los Angeles in four cantos Rebecca Petchenik	10
A Lesson in Forgetting Clove Davenport	14
American Ifrit Moria Goree	16
Surreal Rebecca Petchenik	18

# Flying: Thoughts on The Force Awakens

Zoe Kaplan

When I first saw the Star Wars movies in the third grade, they took over my imagination. I made up countless stories in the universe, about a smuggler who was Han's older, cooler sister, Mace Windu (who I maintain survived his fall out of that window), and a Jedi knight who jumped ship with her padawan when she realized the Republic was failing. I fought against my brother with our crummy plastic lightsabers--mine was green, his was purple--and destroyed him more often than not. But it wasn't until I started reading the expanded universe novels that I really found my place in the Star Wars worlds.

There's a character named Wedge Antilles who we first see in A New Hope. He and Luke are the only pilots in their squadron to escape the battle with the Death Star. Luke goes to Dagobah to train as a Jedi. Wedge keeps flying.

I followed Wedge through his adventures during the war, and with every page I read, I knew in my heart that this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to fly an X-Wing in the Rouge Squadron, and face the insurmountable odds with joy in my heart. I wanted to banter with the boys over the comms, my R2 unit whistling in the background. I wanted to cover Luke as he took his force-guided shots. I wanted to defend the good left in the galaxy. If I went down, I wanted it to be in a beautiful ball of flames, and I wanted to take a dozen TIE fighters down with me.

I don't ever remember specifically thinking that this was something a girl couldn't do, but I did notice that it was something that girls didn't do. There were no female X-Wing fighters in the movies. The Rouge Squadron is a boy's club.

That's why I burst into tears when I first saw The Force Awakens. That face, squashed between the helmet and the orange jump suit--that was a woman's face! And a woman's voice! I don't have the words to describe the bursting in my heart. It was like finding a piece of my that I didn't even know was missing. All I could do was hunker down and pray that she'd survive the fight. And when she did, I only cried harder.

I found out later that the pilot's name is Jessika. We don't know much about her yet, but there are rumors that she'll have a more prominent role in the next movie, and she's almost certainly going to have a novel or two written about her. She's everything I wanted to be growing up. Characters like her should have existed long ago, and they should have been role models for little kids like me, but at least the children who are growing up now will have Jessika to look up to.

As for me, I will never forget the feeling of seeing her on screen for the first time. Really, there's only one way I can describe it.

It felt like flying.



# Serenity through Hell

Robert Kahil

Deep in the well,  
I found the bloody pools of Hell.  
Down into darkness I fall,  
Where I then try to stand tall.  
In blackness I knew  
There was no serenity through Hell.

I found only pain  
But I try to fight.  
All is in vain  
Trying for the light.  
As my soul and spirits drain,  
There are eyes of bright.  
A passage has cleared  
For serenity through Hell.

Fire I must embrace  
In the beauty covered with lace.  
Your voice is a guide  
Against the deadly pride  
Of the Black Bell.  
You begin to tell  
My dark heart of  
Serenity through Hell.



“Follow me my love,  
I am the bright dove.  
Where I take you  
Only a few  
have gone.  
It’s a bright land  
Along the black sand of Hell.  
My love please take my hand.  
So I can take you,  
For serenity through Hell.”

There are no angels in Hell,  
You can’t tell?  
Is my soul not to sell  
To get serenity through Hell?

“No my love, you have been found  
By a soul that is sound.  
It is the love by which you are bound.  
Now don’t fear and flinch  
Take my hand and clench.  
We will find you Serenity through Hell.”

# Los Angeles in four cantos

Rebecca Petchenik

The 13 hills that circle the Rome of Century, where the desert oilbirds squawk and play, overlook the skeleton of the mountain god sprawling where he lay down to die when the Savage no longer worshipped him. In the hollows of his rib bones the ramshackle ghettos of pornographers and the wizards of idea are stacked. Method from far away behind the Warrior's River have crossed these places to frolic amongst the wreckage of this new Byzantium.

..

Beauty softly danced in the flicker of red lamps on back streets where warlocks gambled for stones of consequence. Agony lingered on when the song was through, tapping his fingers against the linoleum bar top, Beauty still gathering her tips. Her tobacco and Novocain swagger colored the atmosphere with rueful temptation. The hound of Barons stood cross armed at the door, passing judgement as easily as kidney stones.

When Agony begged the bartender for a concoction, the flush of spasms burned his arteries with sinful delights only known in hushed whispers to clergy and seasoned whores within hours of each other.

...

Stoned and Bored,

I witnessed the collapse of an empire cease for a moment  
to watch the sun sink into the far western bay.

I spoke low.

But I was immediately hushed for fear of waking the  
angry beasts about us and ruining the moment.

Out in the distance,

A dozen lights, each one the machinations of man to spite  
the means of gods, hovered paused, flickering and fading  
in the dark orange air.

I witness here,

In the graveyard at the edge of the world, the twisted iron  
ghosts of businessmen and wanderers limp about in the  
sky at night.

....

The smoke from my lungs mingles with the rains as I pray to be judged by an angry and jealous god, for I'd rather be judged by him than by you, the goddess of chaos and yellowed teeth. The winter kisses softly on a Wednesday morning in the final weeks of the year. My long flown kin waits anxiously for our arrival in the metropolis of gladiators and starlets where angels sell their wings for breast implants and a primetime slot. Far away, in the city of discord in the oldest mountains in the world, the rain bounces off your windshield somewhere on the highway, where you shepherd drunkards across a blacktop river of perdition, all of them dreaming of saving the world.

# A Lesson in Forgetting

Clove Davenport

I wish to forget. Forgetting is a beautiful thing, for ignorance, as they say, is bliss. I say this, and its ironic quality shakes me to my soul. I am the master of remembrance. Me, with my nick-knacks and pictures and clippings. My inability to let go borders on neurotic. I hold on to the past like a hawk holds onto its prey.

I cling to my memories and clutter and junk as if a robber is waiting to snatch them. There's nothing obviously special about my memories. I have pain and love and firsts. I have sunshine and hope and death. And somehow, I've taken to defining myself in terms of my memories—a sum of my history rather than a wild lottery of what I could become.

I want to forget. Not in the sense that I want to leave my memories behind, because I love them. Even my years in middle school, embarrassing though they are. I like them because they're mine, not yours, not his, not hers.

Mine, now and forever, no one can take them or own them but me.

No, I want to forget whatever idiotic lesson I learned somewhere along the line that I am a sum of my life. I want to forget the power the past has over me. A lesson is one thing, but power is different. The past should teach, not control.

We are all the product of our histories, not the sum. They created us, but do not define us.

In fact, nothing defines us. Nothing. I'm serious; nothing "defines us." Because shifting, growing, changing, moving things can't have a definition. You'd be different by the time anyone wrote a definition anyway.

So I'm learning to focus on the lottery going on inside me—the lottery of next's and after that's. I'm learning to throw my money into the pot and be endlessly surprised at what I get back. I'm learning to remember that my past might have shaped me, but it did not define me or my limitations. Hard though that lesson is, I'm learning it.

# American Ifrit

Moria Goree

They are the burning ether the second children of the sun. Their birth is an ignition their death an extinguishing

It is they we have bound up in the wires & the factories the who guide the fate of the machines

within their kingdoms of fire they reign over the electric avenue & the wailing marches; they wisper madness into the minds of wealth in a language that is steam hiss & secret

The Jann says to the young girl “it is okay to hate yourself when you’re drunk” she then scrapes the words on the wall a full drunkard

The Jinn in the form of Max Torkelson tells my young self of the nature of skinwalking then walks into the bonfire

The Shaitan amidst the orgy spins the waning strands of their insecurities into worried looks and limp dick lack luster experience of over drunk college students



The American Ifrit grand scribe of the coal mine; talker to the pundits. wanders among the dynamos;whispers in the ears of rock & roll; who lay with Hendrix, Joplin & Twain; set fires in the hearts of metal; set love in the hearts of the hip; burnt out the willing wailers with heroin, sex, & intrigue

The Marid too bright flame who's light blinds these poet's eyes; where the invention sourced it's spark;spinners of the wheels of industry; curators of the capitol with their burning hammers forging the future of wires;turning the underpinnings of nations; granting the wishes of zeitgeist; drowning the small in flammable fuel

now I stutter dark in the bright myre of this burning, swirling city it's higherarch revealed to me with a word

what of the light to say? what of the mud?

we cannot power their engines nor fill their capacitors only djinn can push electron flow

so we fuck make sick cyborg clay pots full of light dreaming of aftermath when the words stop and claxxon roars new sentient sounds into the world wiped clean by war and malfeasance

# Surreal

Rebecca Petchenik

When I'm with you, things tend to get surreal

I personally chalk it up to when we met in the sky in our previous lives. That one time we spoke about things you can't even see. But that was when the me that you see wasn't allowed the dignity of possibility.

Sorry. In the language we speak that doesn't rhyme.

There is no meter or reason in our shared and exclusive speech.

This concept, when we speak of it, is a cruel and pitiable routine played out to snickering crossroads gods and Devils of demonic intercourse.

I digress.

Take the time you came to beg me my aid in finding your skin.

You died a thousand times in a moment, our bodies tangled like tree roots, and my metaphors of fissures and cracks became manifest in leather and peaches.

I gotta say that's pretty unreal.

Or the voodoo papa who lives in a lake, whose artistry is sprayed across the holler like stardust, who you introduced to me, who keeps my secrets even from you.

If you remember, we marched across a two dimensional world for almost never till we came to his garden of crooked spines and bowels of wire.

The trouble we found there could only be carried away across the sea. But the courier needed payment.

A holy trek, he said, must be undertaken.

I had heard of a place where five roads met and divided somewhere low that smells like piss.

As good a place as any, so we went there. It took almost forever, but we made our molasses tribute to the papa's God. And when we saw him, we should have known him right off, but I admit his drunken divinity was not out of place. He was grey from head to toe and in his clutches was a bag of profession.

A thousand knives all dull and dented.

The devil of this foreign land, diseased and dead with no perspective to speak of, but still all bone and sand, careened into our purview.

The rest is just a story.

When you took your long desired pilgrimage to worlds of malice and magic, I put off my dreaming, opting out of sleep for the year.

And when I scribed our tales of contradiction, and even our myths of times we endeavored to sin to the world with shouts and broken bottles, the ones that everyone still knows, that are still wedged between the lines in my eyes, I tried to say who the moon is in the sky for, but it came out like jokes and flies.

I was never very good at being literal.

Even when things get unreal, I'll have to pretend these days of plague rats bidding you forward, climbing your legs, in your awkward, leggy dance of sacred geometry, space ships, and crossed arms aren't the lopsided hunchbacks of invention.

But at least our music was the same color.

These days I've got bones like fishhooks.

And your story robbery, highway thievery, and even the scars in your eyes remind me of the jungle between syllables in the dusty and contrived lies that we pass off as legitimate language wrought across the sky.

I'm sorry I can't tell you how I feel.

But things just keep getting surreal.

But in the language we speak, that doesn't rhyme.



## About the Authors and Artists

Multi-genre writer and renaissance humanist, **Clove Davenport** pursues a BFA in writing at SCAD. She composes and performs poetry, and also writes fantastical fiction and children's literature. In her spare time, she volunteers for a fair trade artisan organization which connects with the artist community while creating positive change for those in need. She aims to publish her novels and use part of the proceeds to support learning challenged youth.

**Moria Goree** is a trans-woman from Asheville, NC, an over-tired wordy stranger who has given to you this paranoid rambling and who hopes you liked it.

**Robert Kahilis** a dog person and will argue about this for hours if you let him. Hobbies include movies, Ted Talks, and walking around the beautiful ASU campus. He is a Queen City kid, through and through. Find out more at [www.blufamingos.com](http://www.blufamingos.com)

**Zoe Kaplan** is a sophomore English major with minors in Biology and Women's Studies, because she likes too many things to choose a viable career path. She has worked for several short fiction publications, including *The Peel*, *Lightspeed Magazine*, and *Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy*, as well as the neuroscience journal, *Impulse*. She loves princesses, cats, books, and punching things, and she's always up for a *Lord of the Rings* marathon.

**J.M. Paris** was born in a specific place and continues to live, doing things and having experiences that are similar to but also different from your own.

**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.

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