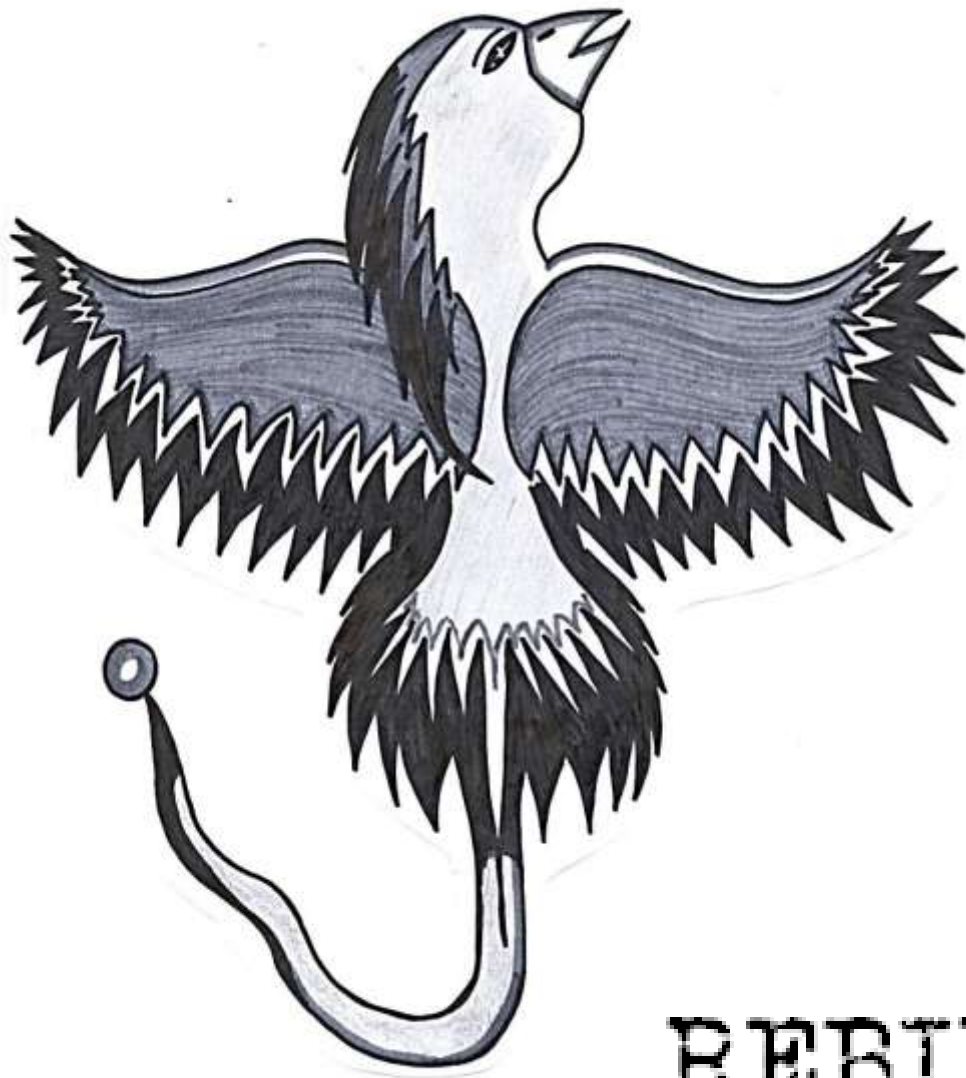


# PHOENIX *NOW* ISSUE 2

a publication of  
The Phoenix Literary & Arts Society



## REBIRTH

## Phoenix Now is...

...an “art noir” style of magazine. In today’s “high definition” society, we provide a stark contrast to that world. The ‘noir’ quality is evident in everything from the black and white print, to the old typewriter style font. Each issue may deal with anything from the darker aspects of humanity, to topics and ideas which explore the human condition and humanity’s struggle. Our goal is to shed light on subjects and ideas that sometimes go “unnoticed” by mainstream society.

**Phoenix Now** is free to the public, is distributed to and available at all MATC campus libraries, and is also available online.

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### **Contributors:**

- **Phoenix Now Logo by:** Brandon Haut
- **Front and Back Cover Art:** Kwame Grayson
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Group Poem by: Jason Kolodzyk  
Brandon Haut  
Tasha Levy Hollerup  
Richard Plevak III  
Elise Boucher

**"Narcissistic\_culture.com"**

1. He writes his own news with large, sullen eyes that swallow  
whole towns, larger than lives,  
And blends what he "knows" with the things that he thinks through the  
headlines and news-feeds and patterns of ink.  
But it is nothing, in the scheme of things. Nothing that his sullen eyes  
have seen and nothing that his clouded ears have heard  
That make him write with such fervor,  
Such passion as the candle burns down to dim.
2. She smells his passion, inhaling fumes from the soaked, bleeding coffee  
filter,  
discarded with his crumbled thoughts, his day's work undone.  
What did it all amount to? They, the people, read him, but, she thinks,  
do they hear his empathic scream? Is it worth listening to?  
And yet, she sits—day in, day out, scratching notes, messages, tapping  
keys,  
Focusing on the dripping clock, on her taxi and her fiancée. And she  
thinks,  
Is this the only place I'll go? Or can I upturn the shredded paper soil  
and late-night roots, and grow beyond the page's fog?
3. They stumble in circles like whirlpools, pulling the mists behind, eyes  
clouded and cold  
and drowning in the ice they make, the shards that stab their hearts  
Life-force dripping into the soft snow forms the words of their  
struggle:  
*This cycle will not end*  
*It will be born again with you, with another, unknown*  
*Pain and love will always be visible to us*  
It is the pattern that pulls them together, threatening to tear them  
apart— again



**What Tree May Come**  
by Elise Boucher

**Meet the Contributor, Elise Boucher:**

She likes to create. She creates a lot of things.

She also likes to garden, and she's awfully glad it's spring.



**Old Pali Road Rises II** by Elise Boucher

## Two Days to Rebirth

by Natasha Hollerup

Two days. For two days, Elisabeth had been nothing but flesh and bone. There hadn't been sound or thought or touch. There hadn't been breath or speech. Her mind remained dormant. She had been still, like a portrait or an obscure piece of art next to her other; the newly created half of her soul. She had been nothing but blood and skin. She had been nothing but a body in a bed, dressed in black as if in preparation.

When she had awakened, she thought only hours had passed. Before she could leave her bedroom, her nose started bleeding and she felt sick to her stomach from the emptiness. Her limbs felt stiff and she tried to talk, but words wouldn't come easily. Her body had begun the stages of rigor mortis, but she had only been asleep for hours. That's what she told herself through her muddled, irritated mind, although all of the sensations she felt when she touched things were elevated and everything had otherwise pointed to her being gone for longer.

She had been told that it would be painless, to give half of herself over to him. She had been told it would be quick, but she couldn't help but think that she'd been lied to. The tears welled in her dry, itchy eyes and she slid gracelessly to the bathroom floor, her feet tingling with awakened nerves. The blood roared in her head and she cried out. Then, there was silence; pure, blissful silence. The silence gave her a chance to fully concentrate on her thoughts and to realize that just like the dying of the day, she had become nothing and then reborn into everything.

**Meet the Contributor, Natasha Hollerup:** I've been writing consistently, the same story with the same characters (or the essences of the same characters), since I was 16 years old. I'm now 27 and the characters still have yet to leave me. It's almost as though we have a deal: as long as I don't make them look like fools, they won't abandon me. That says a lot about my creative process, what I need to write.

I don't need anything to really get a good flow going unless the presence is there. I can feel the presence at any time and from anything, even a movie poster. When the flow wants to be released, I sit down at my computer, Bella, and start to write with my headphones on and music guiding me through the scene. Sometimes I have to physically act out a scene, from the dialogue to the actual physical movements, to figure it out. When I do that, it seems as though I'm let in on a secret that hadn't been there before.

I try my hardest not to be the clichéd writer. It's not my entire life, though it is important to me. My favorite authors aren't F. Scott Fitzgerald or Allen Ginsberg; they're Cassandra Clare and Stephen King, Tabitha King and Laurell K. Hamilton. I don't want to write the next great American novel. If it happens, that would be great, but that's not my goal. I would rather teach someone else to do it. I would like my book to be successful, but I have other goals as well.

My writing is not an extension of myself. You won't be able to find any remnants of me in anything I write because I've spent 10 years creating the perfect characters in my eyes. None of them have any of my personality traits. My writing is beyond me, a talent I was given and a talent I love to have, a talent I feel blessed with.

*Black and Green*  
by Brandon Haut

---

A  
careless  
spark  
Enflames the  
dry  
Bed of needles.  
They snap, warp, curl, creak,  
And the flames  
lick the trunks  
of the spruce.  
Its ravenous fingers claw and grasp  
The bark,  
the branch,  
the life.  
Twist and shatter, crash and grow,  
And the flames  
spread their virus  
to its neighbors.  
All that was green has now turned to black—all that was seen is grey.  
The orange overpowers  
the day and the night;  
It's rampant and fervent at play.  
All the men fly their planes,  
creatures scatter below;  
They fight,  
they sweat,  
they bow.  
The wilderness roars at its own leisure pace and concludes with a smoldering hush.  
All the forest is numb  
from the charring event.  
The once-noble forest is crushed.  
Heaps  
of ash  
And carbon  
shards  
Are crying streams of smoke.  
The scar  
on the land  
is a hideous sight:  
A haunting graveyard scene.  
But the rain—ah, the rain—and the sun—oh, the sun—mix a wond'rous  
concoction of time; The seeds that fell down in the fiery blaze have been  
nourished in cracks underground. How they struggle to breathe and break  
earth overhead; but they push, they strive, they grow. And a towering pine  
reemerges alive as a miniscule model of life.

**Meet the Contributor, Brandon Haut:** With all of these interpretations of rebirth—from metaphorical to mystical—I wanted to write about a real-life example of this unique, phoenix-like concept. In my poem “Black and Green,” I chose to highlight the amazing regeneration of a forest after a wildfire, creating a powerful visualization of the destructive flames and the simple hope in the newborn life of a small evergreen sapling literally emerging from the ashes. It is also a fact that some species of evergreen only release their seeds when exposed to the high temperatures of fire. If that’s not a miraculous rebirth, I don’t know what is.

As Vice President of MATC’s Phoenix Literary and Arts Society of 2012, I would like to put in my two cents worth of advertisement. From what I’ve observed in the organization and at open mic events, there is so much undiscovered talent in our community that needs to be brought forth. Some of you may be reading this and thinking, “I like this stuff. Maybe I’ll submit something.” If you think you can, then you can. And if you can write, then please don’t let it go unnoticed: submit your literary works to Phoenix Publications, the yearly *Phoenix* or the monthly *Phoenix Now*. The term “literature” might sound intimidating, but it covers everything: poetry and essays, fiction and non-fiction, memoir and short stories, song lyrics and play scripts. And we don’t just stop at words, because a picture is worth a thousand of them. You can submit your artwork and photography too. If any of this appeals to you, consider submitting and/or joining the Phoenix Literary and Arts Society, a group of people who appreciate the arts.

Lastly, I would like to say it is a true honor to be your VP; this has been an experience I will never forget. I would also like to thank everyone for reading.



## *Man, the Phoenix*

m. thrune ryan

An ancient bird in flames of sunset's fire  
Once built a nest of fragrant wood. A sweet  
Aroma dulled his pain in funeral pyre  
Till ashes held his spirit in retreat.  
By instinct, senses told him life was done,  
But knowing well that secret held by dawn,  
With eager heart he died in setting sun.  
Through darkened gloom he slept till night was gone.  
In blushing sunrise, spreading wings of gold,  
He rushed to meet the celebrated light.  
Eternal life he claimed in myths of old,  
Immortal bird reborn to soar in flight.  
So man at night in soothing sleep retires  
And wakes in dawn with dreams a myth inspires.

**A Note About “Man, the Phoenix” from Jason Kolodzyk, Faculty Adviser for PLAS and Phoenix Publications:** To my knowledge, the first issue of Phoenix included this poem. Also, in the early days of the Phoenix, this poem was inserted upon the inside cover of each issue. Margo Thrune Ryan was a teacher at MATC, and her poem may have been what inspired the creation of the Phoenix; in fact, her poem may have also given the magazine its name. I felt it fitting to reprint this fine poem in light of the theme in this issue: Rebirth. It stands the test of time and is a good contrast to another poem in this issue— “Phoenix” by PLAS member Kwame Grayson. The original and, in Kwame’s poem and art piece, a true original—the Phoenix has been reborn!



# Phoenix

A burst of flames,  
in gulped in shining  
yellows, wrapped in  
red heat, surrounded  
by ashes. a birth with  
wings, arched beck,  
and alive twice.

Flowing in dark  
airs. Black pupils,  
deep in fire. Statues  
like an Angel. A diamond in the  
smoke. I've risen twice from the  
depths of death.

By: Kwame  
Grayson



## *Everywhere, the Lilacs*

by Elise C. Boucher

Lily sat beside the lilacs, breathing the scent of the blossoms. She loved that smell. It would always bring her back to her childhood, and in her mind's eye, she replayed a memory.

*She was playing in the yard, the sky overcast, and the damp air heady with the spring lilacs. She looked up from her game to see her raven-haired mother cutting branches laden with lavender blooms. Mom looked to Lily, and smiled, and called, "I'm bringing spring into the house. Come help me!"*

And that memory made Lily smile. She shifted her weight and dug around the base of the lilac tree, aerating the plant, then reached over to brush away some of the winter leaves that had accumulated around the base of the headstone. She'd planted this bush on the grave to give her mother another life, a living memory, and the scent of the flowers comforted her with that reminder of rebirth. Finished, she stood. She slapped away some of the dirt from her knees, then began to clip a few blooming branches from the lilac.

"I'll visit again, soon, Mom," she said, and her voice was tender.





## **“Prejudices”**

**An excerpt from an essay by Mary E. Jones, MATC Student and Member of the Phoenix Literary and Arts Society student organization**

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When I was around five or six years old my older brother told me, “All White people eat their boogers.” It was common knowledge in my neighborhood that whites were not only mean and nasty people; they were dreadful people who could not be trusted under any circumstances. I grew up with parents who migrated to Milwaukee from the southern, delta states of Louisiana and Mississippi. The majority of the adults living in my neighborhood and the surrounding areas came to Milwaukee under similar circumstances. Most came for new opportunities, jobs, and better housing, as well as a means of escaping the extreme racism in the southern towns they grew up in. Opinions of white people in my neighborhood were not very high. All whites were the same rotten bunch; this was the general consensus from my family and neighbors. I eventually learned all Whites are not the same. Racism is based on ignorance; therefore, unlike my parents and others, I have learned different ways of responding to racism rather than making broad and negative assumptions and generalizations about different groups or cultures.

Despite some of the faulty information I received regarding other races growing up, my general nature was and is to verify all things before fully accepting what’s being said. For instance, after my brother told me the story about white people eating their boogers, I anxiously anticipated catching them in the act. Every Sunday after church my brothers, sister, and I went to the movie theater, which was the only time I was around groups of whites. Once at the theater, I strained my neck, twisting my head and missing most of the movie trying to catch some white person eating his or her boogers; however, I could never catch them in the act. I remember my disappointment at not seeing this booger eating up close and personal. I diligently occupied myself with the task of verifying my brother’s information for a least four consecutive Sundays, when I came to the conclusion that either these people were hiding their booger eating talents well or my brother was just wrong. I eventually discovered that my brother was wrong about all White people eating boogers. After catching a few Black and Hispanic kids eating their boogers I concluded that booger eating crosses all racial boundaries. Another story that was often repeated in my youth was how Whites smelled like “wet dogs” after getting wet when it rained. I listened with a degree of skepticism; however, I had to verify that story also, which I never could. I eventually concluded from encounters with wet people, most people generally smell different after getting wet. Because of the stories I heard growing up, which were never confirmed, I learned to either seek verification or simply disregard the stories as racist stupidity.

From my personal experiences with racist people, I have learned to place blame and hold accountable the individual for holding onto ignorance and racist ideas towards other individuals or groups. For instance, after moving to a White neighborhood when I was about ten years old, I was in a whole new world and experiencing an entirely new culture up close and personal. Most of my new neighbors were outwardly friendly and accepting towards me and my family; however, there was a man across the street who was very racist, cold, and unfriendly. This racist neighbor had a son whom he informed explicitly, "Don't play with those dirty, uppity ^\* &&#%@ across the street." Nevertheless, the son liked playing with us, and while visiting, would naively tell us what his father said. The boy's mother, a very meek lady, also seemed okay with us and was congenial and friendly, totally unlike the father. The father's behavior and attitude towards my family was ignorant and foolish compared to the other members of his family, as well as the other neighbors on the block. This man's behaviors made it obvious to me that all whites did not feel or respond the same towards Blacks as this man did. He would actually order us out of his yard if we visited his son; I kind of enjoyed tormenting him with my presence, so I visited his yard or would walk in front of his house often when he was outside.

\*

\*

\*

In the end, racism will exist as long as there are people. Education exposes the lies that perpetuate racism and the tendency people have of not understanding or accepting things or people that are different from themselves.

**Meet the Contributor, Mary Jones:** I am 45 +++++. I will be graduating from the Human Services program in December 2012 with honors. I began writing poetry when I was a teenager, as well as attempted a few short stories. Currently I am working to improve my English skills so that I am able to better master my writing abilities.

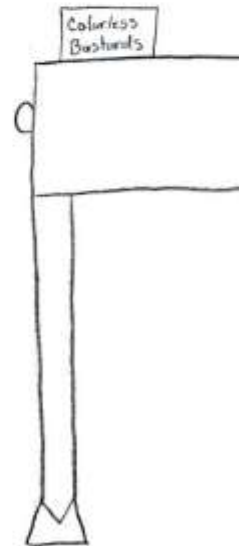
I love to travel. As a young teen and runaway I traveled across the U.S. This gave me the opportunity to meet various types of individuals and characters for my stories. So far, I love Jamaica the most.

In the mid-80's I worked for Earth, Wind and Fire's and Prince's management company - Cavallo, Ruffalo and Fagnoli, for a few years. I eventually returned to Milwaukee and began working for a sales corporation. This sales company was bought out and after 12 years of employment and earning 30 days of paid vacation from a company I fully expected to retire, I was eventually let go due to downsizing.

It was then that I decided to change directions from corporations to people because of the great need in providing competent and caring services to needy individuals and because I was sick of the disloyalty of corporations. I will be continuing my education at UWM in January, God willing. I love to write and also possess a vivid imagination.

## THOSE COLORLESS BASTARDS

I sit upon his smooth soft beak as I am a bird. Strong metal arms arched over his pale ears for support. Diamonds carved into glass in front of his ocean like iris with a black octopus swimming towards me. Some days, I reek of suede, trapped in a brown leather case. Those colorless bastards took my place. I was here first! I was with him in math class! They swim in the salty ocean with the octopus. I've never been that close. I stay on my perch, protecting him from the dust. Those bastards, have they killed those octopuses. The white sky around the ocean has turned a reddish pink. I knew you'd come crawling back with pain in your voice as you complain about those colorless bastards.



8

**Interview with Kwame Grayson on “Phoenix” and “Those Colorless Bastards” by Brandon Haut, Vice President of the Phoenix Literary and Arts Society student organization**

**Brandon Haut:** *What propelled you to write “Phoenix”? What is the ultimate goal of this piece?*

**Kwame Grayson:** In my creative writing class there was a list of words; I saw “Fire”. I instantly thought of a phoenix. The mythical bird incased in fire and had a second chance at life.

**BH:** *Where did you get the idea? How?*

**KG:** I love the idea of flight and magical powers. It’s just alluring to me. The things that us as human beings can’t possible do on our own. Of course we can get into a plane, create a fire with a match, but can it just come from a thought?

**BH:** *Is there anything else you’d like to add about this piece?*

**KG:** I never thought that my work mattered to anyone, but I see now that if you give others a chance, they might just like it too.

**BH:** *Where do you find the inspiration to write?*

**KG:** As I said before, magic is one of my inspirations. “I wish I had wings” is something I use to say as a kid. A bird that burst into flames and is born again, what isn’t cool about that?

**BH:** *What propelled you to write “Those Colorless Bastards”? What is the ultimate goal of this piece?*

**KG:** Brandon Haut, actually. Why? Because I’m usually interested in the quiet person in class. I use to be the quiet person in school and I thought if I stayed quiet no one would notice me. I was the little kid in the back of class who got picked on anyway for being different; then I started hanging in the shadows. I personally picked on Brandon just to get him to talk more. He resisted and still does, but he’s a very cool person.

**BH:** *Where did you get the idea? How?*

**KG:** One day Brandon came to school without his glasses. We had an assignment to give an object human like qualities in our creative writing class and I was thinking of glasses. Then I thought, “Are glasses jealous when people put in contacts?” I just laughed then started to write. I thought it would be hilarious to explain how glasses would feel about contacts.

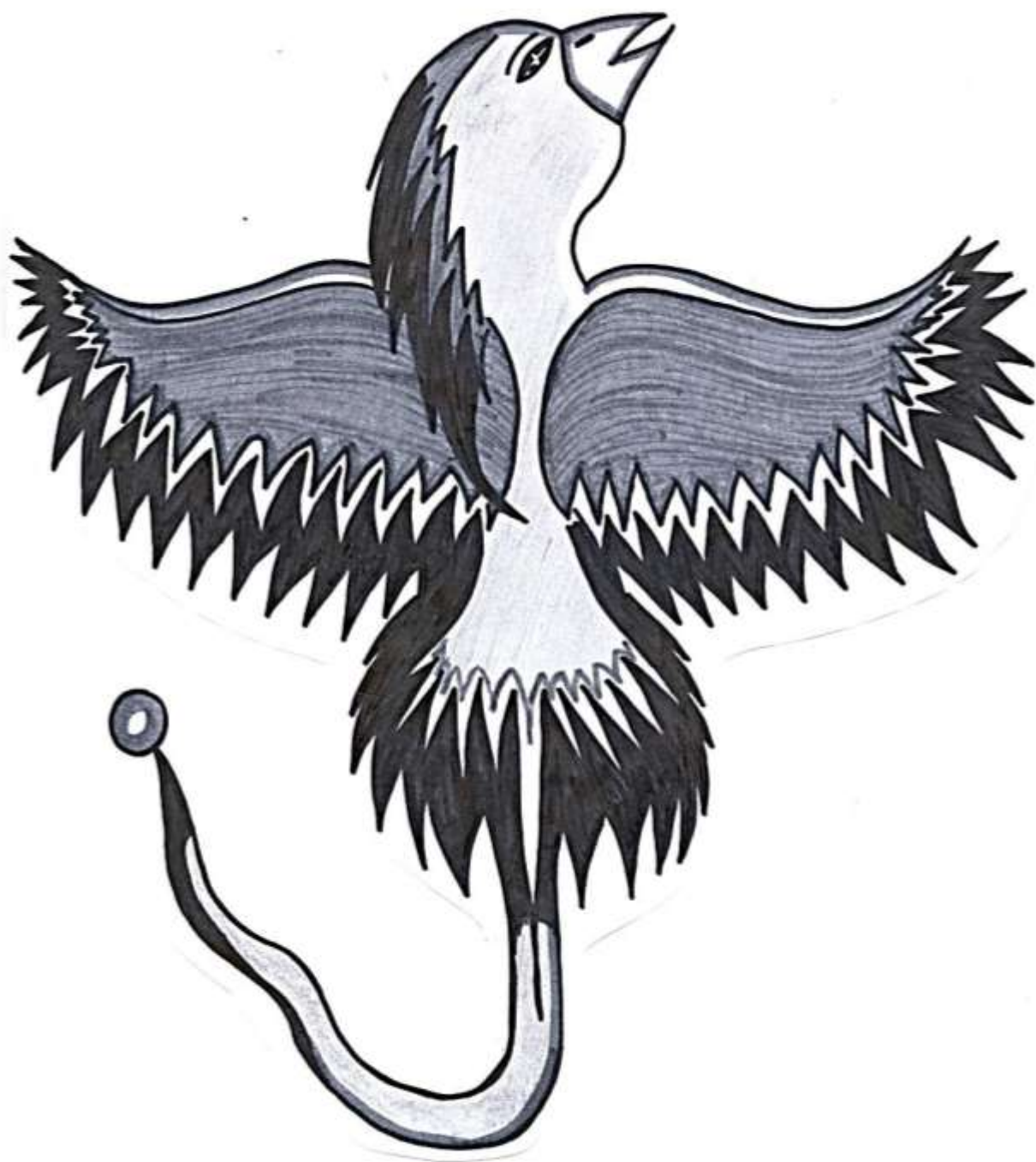
**BH:** *Why do you surround your poems with drawings?*

**KG:** Everyone has their own style and I've never seen anyone surround their poems with art. I really like to be different from people because if everyone was the same, things would get boring pretty fast. The art around my poems, I believe, gives anyone a clear picture (even though in my stories I like to leave people guessing). Most of the poems I've read, I would have to interpret them in my own way, I think the art (in my eyes) helps others to see what I see when I read it.

**BH:** *Is there anything else you'd like to add about this piece?*

**KG:** I really love to draw and color with pencil, not to many people like the pencil, but I do. When you make as many mistakes as I do, erasers are your best friend!





**Meet the Contributor, Kwame Grayson:** I love to draw using pencil and I love to draw on my poetry. I really think I just love to be different.



**Vessel Awaits**  
by Elise  
Boucher

**Meet the Contributor, Richard J. Plevak, III:** To me writing is a form of expression that is an outlet for all the frustrations of the world around us. The things that anger us, the things that scare us, even the things that bring joy to us can be used for the betterment of the world through the use of words. It is this thought that makes me write, and also be a better person. In short, I am a kind, generous, and all around fun loving guy.

## An Excerpt from My Life

by Richard J. Plevak III

### Chapter 8: My Love

He tried to rise once more with all his strength this time, and fell to the ground as an arrow pierced his shirt inches away from his heart. He laid on the ground, arrow protruding from the shirt, and looked around the blackened place, glad for any sign of the attacker; he could see none. Examining the arrow, he noticed that the shaft had a strange glyph on it that seemed to portray a horned giant bathed in flames being shot on all sides by little arrows that were nicks in the wood. Surprisingly these nicks didn't affect the strength of the wood in any way, and the feather was a marvel upon itself. The colors of the feather were mesmerizing: reds, blues, greens, and even strange colors that he knew not what the names were, but all were appealing to the eyes.

Yet he noticed a female figure that strode triumphantly out of the woods and she was also quite appealing. The figure wore no armor, wearing only simple clothing that one might make out of anything at hand, just like the clothing he had on, for she was the same height as he and only a few items in this area of the woods would be suitable for such clothing. On her these clothes gave her a divine look as each fold that moved seemed to cling to her frame just to be able to touch the radiant skin beneath a bit longer, and when it did finally wrinkle away, it only seemed to become darker and more solemn till the next movement brought it right back to where it had been before. Her hair was golden and shined with the intensity of the sun, a sun which was not allowed to disobey its master whom kept it in a tight scarlet colored ribbon and it seemed a crime by itself to diminish this body, this goddess. It was her eyes they were the deepest shade of green that he had ever seen in any living thing and he was lost in them. Even as she bent over and plucked out the arrow, he was lost in her eyes and could do nothing to move and stare at her with a vacant face. Quickly leaping back as she noticed that he still took breath, she drew a short knife from a sheath upon her side, and stood poised for the strike. Even as she was poised and ready to take his life he didn't care— just to touch her beauty as he passed would be bliss. Even as she stood death glowing in her eyes he could not help, but love her.

"Hello who are you?" Aslotes asked sheepishly.

"..."

"Why don't you talk? Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you. I couldn't if I wanted to I-I think you're the most beautiful thing I have ever seen," he said, blushing. All his reply was silence. Even though he could tell she understood him, she didn't lower her guard and she fidgeted every time he moved. He decided to remain where he was, not wanting to upset her at all. He talked to her in a friendly way, fumbling with words and blushing

every time he looked her in the face to his embarrassment. With a sigh of innocence and a roll of her eyes, she put away the knife and put her hand to Aslotes's forehead. He instantly felt a shudder of excitement run through his body and one word in his mind "*Sleep.*"

He awoke to her a second later, but it must have been at least a few hours or possibly a day, he knew not. But he did know and feel the uncomfortable steel around his ankles and wrists quite distinctly and could tell he was somewhere very old. It was a dark room with light coming in, only slightly, from a hole in the wall about the height of a man's head, and oddly no metals in the room besides his restraints. They would not budge to any spell he used on them and only seemed to get uncomfortably tighter as he tried to free himself. He laid in the room not mad at the woman, but had a distinct longing to see her again, hopefully to make her talk. For her he imagined her voice would be as soothing as her looks, it just had to be. It was in this daydreaming state that her face seemed to appear right in front of his eyes, looking down at him from outside of the room. Propping himself up as best he could to her height, he looked up at her, not talking, just cherishing the sight of her face-- the lips, nose, and mouth all so perfect to him that they seemed not of this world, the Nether World, or even of the Divine, just too...perfect.

"*Why do you stare at me with such odd looks stranger?*" said a voice in Aslotes's head.

"What!? You do talk, but wait. you didn't move your lips-- how'd you do that?"

"*O no you don't, I asked the question first.*"

"Tell ya what-- let's play a game."

"*I don't have time for games.*"

"Well you do for this one, every question I answer you have to answer one of mine-- deal?"

"*I could just wrangle the answers out of your mind, you know.*"

"I assume you could, but where's the fun in that? I have been trained in the energies by an adapt mentor. So I think it would take quite some time and cause quite a bit of pain for both ends if it was tried."

"*I doubt that you're that strong. You fell asleep when I just motioned for you back in the ruins.*"

"W-well there's a perfectly good reason for me not resisting."

"*O really? And what would that be?*"

"Ha! See, you will have to play the game to find out that one."

"*Fine, I will patronize you, but I asked the first question already so out with it, why do you stare at me with such odd looks?*"

"I-ummm-I find you very pleasing to look at, and umm hey, what else am I gonna do any way, right," stumbled Aslotes, blushing and looking away for a second.

*"You find me pleasant to look at...ha! It's been a while since any one has been that frank with me. Ok, what's your question?"*

*"I guess I will start out with the first one: how do you talk without moving your lips?"*

*"Well, you wouldn't really understand."*

*"Try me."*

*"Ok then. I cannot talk. I was born that way and anyone who is born with a deformity or abnormality is put in the position I am in. Basically patrolling the border and killing any non-friendly creatures that come too close. So I use the energy to plant what I say in your mind and you choose to pick it up."*

*"What do you mean that I choose, not that I don't enjoy your voice..."*

*"And there you have. I want you to hear my voice."*

*"Ok I understand."*

*"Ok it would be my turn again, correct?"*

*"Umm let me think...yes it would be."*

*"Ok then...what in all that is good was that thing you were?"*

*"I-I don't know. I was dying, I think, and the next thing I know I felt that I would betray my mast-family if I had died. For they had died making sure I would live and the next thing I know is that I could see what I was doing, feel the rage and pain, but do nothing about it...it was terrifying."*

*"You mentioned mas-er family. Who was this family of yours that died protecting you?"*

*"They called themselves Zealo and Yurk."*

*With this her eyes seemed to go afire and she left a hole in the ground. He could tell she was running somewhere away from him.*

*"Wait please at least tell me your name." But all was silent and he felt as if his heart had sunk deep down into his belly. But then he heard a whisper fill his ears as if it was right behind him and it said, "Sayla."*

*He cherished the name, running it over and over on his tongue, loving the very sound of it. And, finding nothing else to do, laid down and fell into a restful sleep, his mind filled with dreams of her face.*

**Interview with Richard J. Plevak III by Natasha Hollerup, Secretary of the Phoenix Literary and Arts Society student organization**

**Natasha Hollerup:** *Is this piece based on you or anyone in particular?*

**Richard J. Plevak III:** For the piece labeled "My Life," it is not based on a person per se, but on a stereotype, the controlling parent. They want you to do as they want and for you to follow a path they have destined for you. I have witnessed this through some of my friends, not I (selfishly thank god).

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**NH:** *What propelled you to write this piece? What is the ultimate goal of this piece?*

**RJPIII:** As far as a compelling reason to write for all three, there is really nothing there. I like to write and put pen to paper, or perhaps a hand to keyboard, and I am off. And usually I have to slow down for the hand to keep up. There is no form, no rationality to it, but a rather passion and quick flowing drive that flows forth onto whatever I do, and I hope to have it end eventually or less my pen will fail, my wrist will hurt or my computer's keyboard will break. Now for a goal. At times I begin to write, as said there is no form to it, but I do have something that sparks the ignition. These "things" can be anything and more than often are nothing really. Like perhaps I will write about how a leaf blowing in the wind is a sickly pray to a violating tormenter. They show something that I want to be noticed, but through different things.

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**NH:** *Where did you get the idea? How?*

**RJPIII:** For the "My Life" story, I got the idea or the spark to write when I overheard a friend of mine give into the life that he was "destined to walk." This makes me furious. Destiny is false. We make our own lives. We choose to do what we will with our lives and that's what began this particular writing.

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**NH:** *Why did you want this piece to be featured?*

**RJPIII:** I want any of my things to be published, even if it's one page of the worst thing I ever write, although nothing is the worst thing. It does not matter what it is. If even one page of something was put anywhere, I would leap for joy. It's out there, it's being looked at for even the faintest part of a second by other people who may like it or hate it. But, at least it's still out there and I made it. That's what I like the most about published things.

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**NH:** *Where do you find the inspiration to write?*

**RJPIII:** Not to sound so dreadfully clichéd, but where do you not? I've gone through some stuff in my life. I have almost drowned, been in fights, and been very sick for a time. I can see inspiration from a pile of mud to a golden calf. It's out there and everywhere, heck even these questions could and may ignite the spark within me, we may see.

**NH:** *When did you first realized that you loved to write?*

**RJPIII:** I was actually diagnosed with ADD at a young age and thus not very good in school. I even wanted to stay back a grade because I felt that I could not pass if I went higher up. I had trouble with everything from reading to tying my own shoes. Then, I was in a class at my elementary school and a teacher helped me brush up on all the skills that I did not have or was lacking. It was then that I found I loved to read. I devoured all the books available, and was out of the class before the year was out. The year after that I began to try writing. So, fourth or fifth grade was the time I learned and went through all this. It was about then is when the spark first ignited and I hope to hold onto it forever.

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**NH:** *What would be your dream writing collaboration?*

**RJPIII:** I would love to be able to live off of nothing but writing and write what and when I wanted. If I could do nothing else before I die. Wait, let's not say that. That makes it very finite and that's never good. If I could ask for my dream in writing it would be for my name to be as well-known as say Stephen King.

## *Suicidal Nightmare*

by Jeff Henry

It's the tone of your voice  
As we've been here before  
Our laughter grows cold  
As you close the door  
You smile with a knowing  
Saying it'll be all right  
You sit me down  
Tonight will be our last night  
Your eyes have a fury  
That I know all too well  
Deep with passion  
When you're high as hell  
Two lines of cocaine  
A knife with a will  
Sea of razorblades  
And a bottle of pills  
As you swallow hard  
Fifteen pills at least  
So pure and ready  
To meet the beast  
I crush your hands  
After you slit my wrist



Eyes locked together  
In a cloud of mist  
Say what you will  
To save yourself  
There's no escape  
That we're dying in filth  
My mind begins to swim  
As my throat goes tight  
My body goes numb  
As our world goes white  
My eyes flash open  
Just to see you there  
All to realize  
It was only a nightmare

**Meet the Contributor, Jeff Henry:** Ever have a dream that was so vivid, so real that it was almost a memory? Ever have a dream that once you awoke became a part or all of your life? That is where this piece comes from. When our thoughts start to consume us, it seems that dreams such as this one sometimes come about. I was in a dark place in life recently and couldn't put two words together on a page to make sense. My dark place was unrelated to the content of this piece as the reason was a close friend, that I grew up with, passing away. When my mind awoke, it was like waking from a nightmare, and this piece was the first thing to culminate within the depths of my creativity.

## NEMESIS REBORN

by Elise Boucher

As it slept you  
Slipped a bit into its mouth  
You straddled its bare back  
Caressed its stripes  
Felt the thunder of its sleeping breath.  
Did your thighs quiver as you hoped,  
Sitting there sure of your domain  
Stroking its back like a lover?  
Power you thought to command.

As it stretched you  
Twisted and clutched at its fur  
Your twined fingers like talons  
Bloodied its skin  
Touched the beat of a living heart.  
Did your breath quicken as you waited  
Clinging there caught in your moment  
Whispering your will, wicked stepmother?  
Wars to be waged under your hand.

As it leapt you  
Learned its terrible truth  
You found yourself food for the beast  
Thrown, devoured alive,  
Flesh torn from your skin.  
Did you remember your name  
In those last red moments  
Screaming there defeated and disgraced  
Wondering when your waking would begin?  
You can not ride the tiger and savor your win.

**Interview with Elise Boucher on “Nemesis Reborn” by Brandon Haut, Vice President of the Phoenix Literary and Arts Society student organization**

**Brandon Haut:** *What propelled you to write this particularly graphic and provocative poem?*

**Elise Boucher:** This was inspired by a fairly dramatic and traumatic break up of a complete social group—one of those events where a single person’s inappropriate behavior destroys an entire circle of friends.

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**BH:** *Why did you choose a dark and somewhat mythical take on the theme of “rebirth”?*

**EB:** When I was reviewing possible submissions from amongst my works, I read this poem and realized that it was as much about a pivotal point for me as it was about the behaviors I was witnessing. I had an immense amount of rage over the year-long decay, and when it was over, I had all that pain and anger sitting beside me, blossoming into all sorts of horrors. I had to choose how to deal with it. I was certainly not going to allow it to consume me, but I also did not want to become bitter and angry. In modern American culture, Nemesis is often seen as the goddess of divine retribution, but she’s more than that. Endless and persistent vengeance belongs to the Furies. Nemesis is implacable, but when it is done, it is done. She’s a balancer.

We forget, sometimes, that anger and pain are just as much something that can be reborn. If we want to direct it into usefulness, we need to recognize that, and own it, and work on it. When you are in the position of deserving payment, you have to choose between seeking vengeance or seeking justice, and the thought of vengeance can be unbearably enticing.

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**BH:** *Can you briefly explain the action in the poem? What is the metaphoric meaning behind your words?*

**EB:** The speaker is commenting on Rider’s attempt to manipulate and control. Power and control are darkly seductive things that can easily destroy you.

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**BH:** *What is the ultimate goal of this piece?*

**EB:** Catharsis and exultation.

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**BH:** *From where do you draw your inspiration to write?*

**EB:** That is not something that can be definitely answered. Different things come from different places, but I suppose they all have a commonality. I have a vast interior landscape, and every idea must walk through that territory before it becomes a reality outside me. It’s hard to answer this, because telling stories is who I am. It is just my nature. They just come. I can’t recall a time when I was not telling stories, or listening to my father tell me stories, just as I can not remember a time when I was not drawing, or watching my mother draw. The process of observation and synthesis combines with the creative impulse to make things pop into my head whole.

## *The Vicious Cycle*

by Jason M. Kolodzyk

### *Stanza 1: The Decomposition of Things*

It came to this  
we are the rotting corpse of the past, you told me,  
my insect flesh folded and recoiled at this revelation,  
my pulse faded as you released my shriveling hands  
time and breath are short, you whispered  
my hands, now skeletal claws with thin-stretched, segmented skin,  
reached out to you from within the mangled mess of disintegrating antennae  
relations between us had been viciously beaten,  
broken into a horrid reality—your admissions are hard to navigate  
*are you telling the truth?*  
*are you espousing lies?*  
in a flash of insight, I, decomposing into a putrid puddle,  
coalesced  
reflecting the truth of things, on your words: We are no longer one!  
my compound eyes are absorbed and you melt away  
however, it is not dead  
it begins again

### *Stanzas 2 and 3: The Chrysalis*

Cloaked in a transparent trenchcoat  
tethered and shifting  
with aching, ravenous hunger  
Eating mouthfuls of viscous nutrients like a newborn  
a distended belly full of life-giving fluid  
I notice your reemergence  
I watch you through newly formed eyes  
fixated on your shadow, what I see, the witnessed truth,  
is a lie, a corruption of life, and still, like-death,  
breath-taking  
*will this life be different?*

the mysteries are enticing  
your face is shifting  
*it is not you, is it?*

This possibility is frightening, exhilarating  
It causes life-blood to course through my membranes  
I focus on that idea, heartbeat gaining strength.

Suspended  
Amniotic fluids bathe me like a cleansing river  
Limbs are stifled against the walls and I press to escape  
A prison, a blinding confinement  
I observe only opaque forms passing  
Outward pressure caresses my pupa sac like a jingling key, a chance at freedom,  
I flick at it in fear...and hope  
It is a growing temptation, a thirst in the desert  
No proof of outside life lends an honest fear  
Yet, I am ready and accept it  
Still, I wonder, *are you real or a shade imprinted?*  
I know the answer—  
Equal in my comfort, I relish absence  
More with less—*is it possible?*  
a new world sought,  
I ebb toward it, an ache throughout my stretching body

#### ***Stanza 4: Resurrection***

Breach!  
A burst of force  
A breath of air  
My wings extend, antennae also  
I lift into the atmosphere, glorious colors glimmering as a prism  
My first thoughts emitted to the world sing with energy:  
*This life will renew*  
*Without...you!*

## **How To Join the Phoenix Literary and Arts Society (PLAS) Student Organization:**

If you are interested in becoming more involved in The Phoenix magazine, or in conversing about literature, art, or photography, perhaps you would be interested in possibly joining the now-forming Phoenix Literary and Arts Society?

To complete your intent to join, please complete the following **two things** at your earliest convenience:

1. Go to this webpage <<http://matcphoenix.com/phoenix-student-organization/>> and fill out the student organization form please.
2. Enroll in our Phoenix Blackboard website. Then, log in, look around, and begin participating!

### **Directions for how to complete #2 above:**

- > 1. Login to Blackboard
- > 2. Select the "Community" tab at the top of the screen
- > 3. In the search box on the left side, enter "The Phoenix"
- > 4. Locate the organization within the listing.
- > 5. Select the down arrows next to the name and select "enroll."

## Submission Directions for Phoenix Publications:

- **Phoenix Now** submissions must be “black and white” in color but, while the content is geared toward the struggles and imperfections of humankind, we will consider all submitted work for publication.
- **The Phoenix** submissions are not regulated by color or theme.

### We are now accepting submissions in the following categories:

1. ***Art:*** Digital, Electronic, Pen and Ink, Pencil, Watercolor, Acrylics, Pastels, and more.
2. ***Writing:*** Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Essays and Plays and other forms considered.
3. ***Photos:*** Digital Prints, Electronic, Transparencies, Black and White Prints, and Color Prints.
4. ***New Categories:*** Short Comic Strip AND Short Graphic Novel (**NOTE:** there must be **narration** and/or **dialogue** used in both of these new categories!)

1. Go to: <<http://matcphoenix.com/>>.
2. Click on the words “Submit” (in the upper right hand corner of the screen).
3. Follow the directions to complete the submission form and to attach your work.

**Note:** We are only able to accept MS Word and RTF files for literature and .jpg or .gif files for art and photography. Written work should be no longer than 4,000 to 6,000 words\*, and we prefer that such work be closer to the lower number. Thanks.

\*Written Work Approximate Length Clarification: 14-21 pages in Times New Roman font, 12 point size, double-spaced.

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