SPIRES
TWO THOUSAND THIRTEEN
AUTUMN
SPIRES

intercollegiate arts & literary magazine

- autumn 2013 -
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Critics, however, are welcome to quote brief passages by way of criticism and review.

Front cover: Untitled by Eliot Head (Webster University, 2015)
Front inside cover: 911 by Steph Waldo (Washington University in St. Louis, 2016)

Back cover: Untitled by Rabid Arts Collective: Gregory Davis, Tyler Harris, Ethan Meyer, and Hannah Deitring (Webster University)
Back inside cover: TOP: Untitled by Gavin Schmitz (Washington University in St. Louis, 2016)
BOTOM: Untitled by Eliot Head (Webster University, 2015)

spiresmagazine@gmail.com
spiresmagazine.org

LITERATURE

Justin Kinnear
Zandra Ruiz
Eric Huang
Brian Forney
Julie Belle Webb
Adam Martin
Lexi Cary
Jessica Yang
Justin Kinnear
Brian Baker
Sarah Roth
Daniel Chi Cook
Claire Eden
Rory Harrison
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Love Poem: Keepsakes
for VK

Rub me down with your honey-suckle scent so I don’t forget what heaven smells like and pardon me while I bite your fucking lip so your smile will be bright red and numb for the next three days. The early bird-song banter outside your open window is white noise next to our purple pillow talk. Sun-kissed skin and black hair is all you wear as you whisper pluck out your blue-green eyeballs and give ‘em to me: keepsakes in a mason jar, half-filled with orange peel potpourri.

Justin Kinnear
University of California, Los Angeles ’13
on the way home

evidence of rain bursts
in the lights of a tunnel,
even white flashes

each drop shocked
and shining, crowding together
and shivering

a body of water meets another,
they feel for each other
and fall

weight multiplied
and pulled like
dead balloons

their legacies are the hands of monsters

their brothers glitter
in patterns of movement
like new york on the hudson

when fog smothers the yellow moon
and the sky grows soft,
plum and passive

the sky a quiet woman

to bear the city’s
madness

her face washed,
starless,
a dead-lit wine

the hudson voices:
an even tapping
on its surface

the grip of current like a rushing fabric

a bed of mirrors
broken, rearranged
and glowing.

Zandra Ruiz
Rutgers University ’13

“Untitled”
photograph

Dante Migone-Ojeda
Washington University in St. Louis ’15
In approximately 1,800 words, you will be a murderer. In fact, by reading just those first eight words, you have knocked over the first of several dominoes in a complex Rube-Goldberg-esque sequence, which will ultimately lead to my demise. Even in glancing at the first word—whether by interest or obligation—you have begun to kill your emphatically unnamed narrator. By the end of this piece, I will be dead, and it will be entirely your fault.

The truck smelled of spilt booze and exhaust hiding in a thick haze of cheap cologne. The odor was undeniably masculine, even overpoweringly so. I still crinkled my nose every time as I sat in the tattered leather passenger seat. Cold night air poured in through the cracked windows and raised goose bumps on my thinly covered skin. He always kept it cold.

Now, that is not to say that you will physically take a knife to my heart or a gun to my head. Indeed, that is not even a possible outcome, as I am merely the sum of words on paper. However, as each of these words passes under your eye and is processed by your temporal lobe, I come one word closer to my death. So whether I go by vicious brutality or sly trickery, it is ultimately your fault for having read the words which kill me.

A vague sports announcement crackled through the ancient radio, more static than voice. The odor was undeniably masculine, even overpoweringly so. I still crinkled my nose every time as I sat in the tattered leather passenger seat. Cold night air poured in through the cracked windows and raised goose bumps on my thinly covered skin. He always kept it cold.

On the Nature of Fiction and My Demise

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A vague sports announcement crackled through the ancient radio, more static than voice. I watched him passively as he drove, my head resting on my knees hugged to my chest. He drove with his left hand, his right draped across the bench seat. His arm wasn’t necessarily around me, but as we hit potholes and patches of otherwise torn road his fingertips grazed my shoulder. He didn’t seem to notice. I pretended not to notice too. I pretended that it was an accident when I scooted closer as we rattled through a larger pavement defect.

Being that this is fiction and by the very laws of short fiction writing I must have a continuously flowing plot in the shape of a bell curve skewed left, I suppose I should do away with these philosophical interjections entirely. However, seeing as I have already broken the fourth wall and given away the surprise-twist ending, I will avoid such customs of English literature overused to the point of cliché. I will also avoid the tedious action of naming Me As The Narrator, because it doesn’t matter if you know me. Though my tragic tale may jerk emotions or even tears from you, the deepest connection we may ever hold is that of a murderer and his victim, or, more-over, a reader and a doomed protagonist.

He was taking me home. We had been at a downtown restaurant. It was out of his way, but he told me he didn’t mind. He laughed when he said it.

It doesn’t matter if I have hair like yours or values like the ones you were taught, our connection lies in that you continue to read. You must trust me because you receive no other versions of the truth. You must pity me because you tell me I am good, and I tell you I am suffering. You must reach out to me because I reach out to you, and in our mutual reaching, we touch one hand, shaking with a victim’s fear, to an other hand, shaking with a murderer’s adrenaline, and we unify in my final fleeting words.

It was so late; we had been at a downtown restaurant. It was out of his way, but he told me he didn’t mind. He laughed when he said it.

Swirl to me how your day was, wafflecone, I’m all banana split, chocolate quips. Let’s share spoonfuls and eat with toothpicks, I’m listerine intently and pinky promise I’m vanilla and coconut, not strawberry for you.

Amaretto you do, gummy bear, I don’t care; I’ll fumble a thousand spoons and spill the coffee, cream and all, if it makes your mouth open like at the dentists’ and laugh like maraschino. But please, wafflecone, do excuse my eyes for following your tongue, I might be less strawberry and more red velvet for you.

Eric Huang
Cornell University ’14

Sweet Tooth

Swirl to me how your day was, wafflecone, I’m all banana split, chocolate quips. Let’s share spoonfuls and eat with toothpicks, I’m listerine intently and pinky promise I’m vanilla and coconut, not strawberry for you.

Thank you though, cupcake, for wondering why I was eating only the small blueberries—the plump ones are princess food for princess you. And another snickerdoodle thank you for turning cherry when I said I was macarooning for you.

Amaretto you do, gummy bear, I don’t care; I’ll fumble a thousand spoons and spill the coffee, cream and all, if it makes your mouth open like at the dentists’ and laugh like maraschino. But please, wafflecone, do excuse my eyes for following your tongue, I might be less strawberry and more red velvet for you.

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It was so late; we had been at a downtown restaurant. It was out of his way, but he told me he didn’t mind. He laughed when he said it.
I stood more and more violently as more of my flesh was burned to the unfeeling air. I tried to cover myself to hide myself from the horrid, from the cold, from him. I cursed my legs to my naked chest. I was a fetus in a sliced womb, covering from the foreign chill. He was a rusty coat hunger, jabbing blindly, maliciously at my tender, unformed body. I wasn’t a special and beautiful human life; I was unwanted, the unfortunate result of unwanted lust.

It is inevitable. You can’t stop it. Now that you are here, the only options for me are death and said worse-than-death. The only way to prevent it is to have never begun reading it. No, you may argue, a friend or a stranger may have read it and may tell you about it and you and I will be thrust into the same situation. Iaring a story is the same as reading one. It is the entire experience of storytelling which must be stopped in order to save Me As The Narrator. By, you may argue, would that not defeat the purpose of Me As The Writer? Perhaps. But then, belittler you may argue, why would I ever write such a thing. Reader, I had to. I had to force you to think. I had to force myself to think. To wrap one’s head around fiction on the nature of fiction, fiction which transcends the bounds of reality, is to reach a level of thought before unachieved. And in reaching our collective brains stretch further, perhaps eventually to transcend the genre of genre, the necessity of necessity, the unpredictability of the unpredictable. And, I As The Writer ask You As The Reader, would that not make for a more interesting and beautifully-written world?

I am the shattered remains. When he was through with my vulnerable body, he seized my head by the hair and thrust my tear-streaked face into the dash. He was super-human in his strength as he forced my head through the window. My fragile skin stretched and tore against the sharp remnants of glass still intact with the frame of the window as he shoved me through the small opening. Between my ragged breaths and his grunts of force I could hear my blood splattering on the ground. My skull cracked against the bloody pavement. I smelled my own metallic blood, heard the rumble of a truck’s engine, felt the tire crush the bones of my right leg. I lay there, still somehow horribly alive hours later, as a trucker roared to avoid me. To him I was a deer. To him it was an accident.

You know now what will happen. You still know nothing about me, only that I am dying. Whether or not you have felt something for me, for these formulated ink marks on paper, I am dying.

The gust from the truck rolled me into the drainage ditch. My final, shaking breath seemed to shatter my rib cage. I died a very painful death.

And it is entirely your fault.

Bruna Forney
Ohio State University ’14
It was calculated that the universe will end in some tens of billions of years when a tiny particle bubble pops and another universe from inside our own expands at the speed of light pushing out the old while birthing itself.

I said I'd like to think that prediction has already been made and come to pass in infinite universes that began and ended before our own, that we are an alternate universe not in a simultaneous sense but in continuation. I said that since matter can't really be destroyed it's possible that who we once were originally in an older ended universe is distributed throughout the entirety of our current reality in our natural world, in space, in the zero-field of thoughts.

You said maybe that's why we feel inexplicably attached to some things because they used to be parts of us and other beings we cared about and, anyway, matter is formed from the brain indefinably and if all these random circuits we are can make a person with feelings the possibility must be there for matter to combine and recombine in ways that allow for consciousness elsewhere. We're not only bits of dinosaurs and trees but also everything that has been in those other universes, things we don't even know about, that existed and have since coalesced to become things we connect with.

And though neither of us were or are scientists, we both knew this felt right and that it was unlikely we would be together to see our hypothesis tested anyway but, at least, it was something promising. And we loved the finality of our universe, and how death is a coy gift which it holds for us.

And I felt as if I understood the pleasure of a metal bat smashing a wooden mailbox and splintering it into the air, that of the bat and of the box.
In Winter a trio of elderly men gathers to wait on the deck at sunset, between the four towers at the new library in Paris.

My aunt, the artist asked in learned French what was coming, and they answered with an invitation to wait.

Then, magnificently, the starlings swept in to remind her the sky goes just as low as one’s eyes,

And that this place was not yet theirs despite the indelible sky-frame of steel.

Now the late-Summer still is pregnant with the memory of those black calligraphy strokes through the bare air,

And my footsteps are fluttering pages above a city rendered bonsai by dusk.

La Bibliothèque Nationale de France

“List”

Steph Waldo
Washington University in St. Louis ’16

Lexi Cary
University of California, Los Angeles ’13
Parents either agreed with the policy or did not care enough to argue. After all, elders were to be obeyed or, at the very least, humored. If their children grew up reading non-fiction, what harm was there?

The library was run by three old ladies: Ah Lai, Ah Be, Ah Lian. All had grown up and grown old in the small town of West Bucket. They had raised their children, their children’s children, and even other people’s children. Families had come and gone in their lifetimes. Everyone in West Bucket was connected to the librarians in some way or other.

In their old age, they served as West Bucket’s first and only librarians. Each had their reasons for marking fiction as off-limits: “Why do I not like fiction? I tell you, if you always look at clouds, you will trip over stones in your path.” Ah Lai said one day to her grandson as he sat on her knee.

“Why use library money to buy lies, eh?” Ah Be said to a cousin visiting West Bucket on holiday. “Isn’t it better to fix the benches outside?”

In an attempt to dissuade her daughter from majoring in literature, Ah Lian told her daughter, “When I was a child, all my friends read novels. I said to my father, ‘When you go to Taipei, bring me back some novels.’ You know what? He pretended to mishear me and brought back classical poetry. He was a good father to me,” she said. “I have never read a single novel.” To Ah Lian, that fact alone was responsible for her faultless character and strong constitution.

So, the local library carried plenty of classical poetry, art books, philosophical tracts, reference books, and biographies, but no novels—nothing the librarians deemed fictional. They felt it was their civic duty to protect the children of West Bucket from the corrupting influence of fiction.

A few days later, Ann came marching into the small library, cup in one hand and paper bag in the other. “Lee Ann, no drinks in the library,” scolded Ah Lai from behind the check out counter. “How many times do I have to tell you?”

“Look, Ah Lai,” Ah Be crouched to pick up a book and waved it in Ah Lai’s face. “Ah Lai, I found a stack of books to join Ah Be in speculation. Resting against the window, she said, “Someone forgot we have a donation box, maybe?”

“No, I looked up yesterday,” said Ah Be. “No way to get in.”

After several minutes of furious shelving—leaving books on the floor was disrespectful—Ah Be and Ah Lai came to the bottom of the pile. “Anyway!” Ah Be leapt back. Ah Lai pecked over Ah Be’s shoulder. Ah Be said, “Your grandson left his lizard toys all over the place again.” Ah Lai poked at it with a book. “No toy, I think this is real.” They called Ah Lian over to confirm.

“This is a salamander,” said Ah Lian. “So it was under a pile of books!”

“Huh, for sure,” said Ah Be. “But, see, not squashed flat at all.”

Ah Lai added, “Ah Be jumped like a young rabbit when she saw it.”

“My daughter-in-law fed me tonic chicken yesterday,” said Ah Be. “The librarians took a moment to appreciate the invigorating wonders of tonic chicken.”

“Since you have tonic chicken in you, can you get the salamander,” said Ah Lian. “Lately, my back has been so sore—”

“Ah, don’t throw it out,” said Ah Lai. “My grand-
Ah Be said. “Just more trouble.”

It happened. “If you would just undo young Lee Ann’s shelving, I can go back to sleep and we can all forget this happened.”

Ah Be leaned closer, squinting. “You can’t be— you are too slimy to be a dragon.”

The dragon said in a low grumble, “My nest was disturbed for the first time in the eleven years. I was not prepared for company.”

Ah Be narrowed her eyes. “Overnight visitors are prohibited. You must leave.”

“The size change is only temporary,” said Ah Lian. “There’s more of it than before.”


“You are too slimy to be a dragon.”

Ah Be leaned closer, squinting. “Humans are so hard to please,” hissed the dragon. It shuttered one eye, and then the other. “The library will be showered with prosperity for a week. That is proof enough.”

“Make sure there is no rain tomorrow—tomorrow is your grandson’s field trip.”

“Is it the one to the glass museum? Good place to visit,” said Ah Lian.

“Sunny it will be,” the dragon said. “In return, I expect my home to be restored by evening.” It oozed into a crack in the wall beside the shelves and disappeared.

“Ah, you have caught me out. I tried to put my nest back to rights and ended up with more books!” The dragon swished its tail. “I am a dragon, not a librarian. But, I’m sure we can work out some sort of deal.”

The librarians huddled beside the window to confer.

“No overnight visitors,” said Ah Be. “This is policy.”

“No, it might be good luck,” Ah Lian insisted. “Get a promise—it can’t stay for free,” said Ah Lai. She turned to the dragon. “Give the library good luck.”

“Easily accomplished,” said the dragon. “Will that be all?”

“How do we know?” said Ah Be. “Give us proof.”

“Humans are so hard to please,” hissed the dragon. “I am a dragon and this is my nest.”

“The poetry section got bigger,” acknowledged Ah Be. “Get a promise—it can’t stay for free,” said Ah Lai. She turned to the dragon. “Give the library good luck.”

“Easily accomplished,” said the dragon. “Will that be all?”

“How do we know?” said Ah Be. “Give us proof.”

“The library will be showered with prosperity for a week. That is proof enough.”

“Wait,” said Ah Lai. “Make sure there is no rain tomorrow—tomorrow is your grandson’s field trip.”

“Is it the one to the glass museum? Good place to visit,” said Ah Lian.

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Blood Brothers

for Jesse

We are barefoot boys with knives and potatoes in our hands with a bowl of water at our side. As skins fall you study my practiced movements and ask how’d you get so fast?

The smell of supper slips like summer through the screen door, our mother hums a song and stirs as our sisters help her. The blade cuts your finger and blood drips to the skins below and you ask why do they call us half-brothers? —questions our absent fathers should have answered. Quietly I prick my finger to show how we are the same.

Sisters

for Jennifer, Valerie, and Lindsay

Growing up in the bottoms, we watched the river rise to doorsteps of mobile homes, homes that never went anywhere, hoping floodwaters would move us to the faraway reveries where all our bottled messages had landed. Our hands made a human chain (blood is thicker than water) and we crossed flooded streets toward the tree house. I helped all three of you and then you helped me. Soaked cutoff jeans dripped slow like mother’s milk and down below ripples in the water lived before dying to become the blue. What if the water doesn’t stop rising one of you said, how will we get home? I will carry all of you on my back.

Jessica Yang

University of California, Davis ’13

Justin Kinnear

University of California, Los Angeles ’13
I watch the snow drift slowly
down like the beautiful ashes of a
thousand burning dreams. In the
muffled dusk of indigent living
sirens sing their vibrato duet to the
bass of a lone dog’s bark and
the *pp-pp-pp* of staccato
gunfire dabs night’s black canvas
with distant circles of light soft to
the touch. I watch a man drift slowly
down a street with one
light his hollow eyes are high and
weeping as he sits on the broken
stair of a sleeping house its door
splashed with orange *EVICTION*
made muddy by shadow. In the
silence I hear the faint bellow
and howl of a late night scene
whose muddled language is only
perforated by *fucking asshole* and
*goddamn bitch* while the last
scraps of voice are flung out of
the tenement window with the
chocolate-brown glass of empty
bottles that flee into one hundred
thousand pieces of something as
they meet the concrete. I watch a
twenty-something gangster write his
message on the side of a
house: the word *CRIME* climbs
out of a can escaping from some
purgatory to tape itself against
corrugated sheet metal while its
hushing as if to soothe a sleeping
child. I watch as the sounds of city
drift over our night.
Though the day’s sun will rise,
Ginsberg’s starry dynamo in the
machinery of our night keeps us
swathed in blankets of chain
links and barbed wires and the
tense tinkling crackle of
shattering windows. I watch the
snow drift slowly down like the
sunlight of summer that does not
fall for us.

Brian Baker
Washington University in St. Louis ’14

*Untitled*
charcoal drawing
Rachel Hrobon
Washington University in St. Louis ’16
THE RECOLLECTED BODY OF SAARTJE BAARTMAN

CUVIER (1825)

Science, science, science!
Everything is beautiful
bloomed up beneath my glass.
Colors dazzle insect wings.
A drop of water swirls
like marble. Ordinary
creeps become malignities
set in perfect angles
of geometry I’d thought
impossible. Few will
ever see what I see
through this microscope.

—“The Venus Hottentot,”
Elizabeth Alexander

TWO EYES, PICKLED; 5 OZ. SALINE SOLVENT; MASON JAR. JARDIN DES PLANTES, PARIS.

Saartje Baartman peered beyond the hull of the ship: beyond the rippled waters, beyond the bloody horizon, towards home, towards Capetown, towards flaxseed and indigo, towards no more mother and no more father and no more lover. They were all gone, like the small farm on which she had grown, and no more home, and no more father and no more lover. They were all gone, like the small farm on which she had grown, no more farm on which she had grown, all consumed by flames. Saartje shaded her gaze and held the arm of the man who stood beside her, Master’s brother, Henri Cezar. She peered beyond the sunset and into the future: with half of the profits this man had promised, she would surely return a duchess, adorned in watered-silk gowns, eating damask plums, brown eyes lit cerulean blue from within.

SKIN, AUTOPSIED AND SAMPLED, BUT N.F. (“NOT FOUND”); ORIG. AT JARDIN DES PLANTES, PARIS.

Before landing in Piccadilly, Henri wrapped her in a giraffe’s pelt. He kept her close until he attempted to sell her to a man who dealt in skins and creatures. He bought the pelt, but not Saartje. She looked questioningly at Henri, who did not know that she spoke in tongues beyond Dutch and Africaans. Henri looked at the man, pointedly, as he grazed his hand along her thigh. He gave it a firm slap. A sharp pain. Saartje gasped. The man shook his head. Henri’s glare was a cage.

TONGUE, PICKLED; 5 OZ. SALINE SOLVENT; MASON JAR. MUSEE DE L’HOMME, PARIS.

London tasted of cabbage and soot. Piccadilly tasted of stale sweat. The circus tasted of old men and swine. When she could not speak, beneath the shadow of Henri’s bamboo switch, she swayed, the world blurry, and tasted. The cage tasted of gin, hot on the back of her

THROAT, AUTOPSIED AND SAMPLED, BUT N.F. (“NOT FOUND”); ORIG. AT JARDIN DES PLANTES, PARIS.

First, the stage of 8825 Piccadilly St. three feet from the floor, chained to the back of the cage, not her voice, but Henri’s, ringing, HOTENTOT VENUS, HOTENTOT VENUS. From his throat, rough words tumbled, casting her body in plaster-gaze before science ever would. LOOK AT HER, he said. SHE IS DARKNESS. SHE IS LUST. SHE IS AFRICA. Saartje learned to lean and sway, lean and sway to the music of jeers and noses whisked into the air. When vertigo overtook her or the scent of the Sapien Pig in the cage adjacent to her cage overcame her, she eloped her thumb and forefinger around a shard of tortoiseshell that swung from twine at her collarbone and looked to the heavens, even if she could not see them.

BRAIN, SEGMENTED AND PRESERVED IN A GLASS JAR; 20 OZ. SALINE SOLVENT. MUSEE DE L’HOMME, PARIS.

Then, a baptism. Cool waters between London and Paris as Saartje recalled the warm waters of the Cape, the curve of the hull on which her home rested, comforting like a mother; sadza, maize porridge, as the sun rose above the horizon, home, home, home. Surface. Emergence. Then, soon, another boat. Henri said, voice low, “We are going to France.” He did not say, “I am going to sell you,” but upon arrival to Paris, he sold her, to an animal trainer named Réaux.

GLUTUS MAXIMUS, CAST IN PLASTER, JARDIN DES PLANTES, PARIS.

In London, in Paris: the masses were enthralled by Saartje’s buttocks. Sketches of her, gluteus maximus expanded from life to paper by three-to-five sizes, plastered newsstands and street-corners in London. She arrived to Paris a celebrity in chains, her buttocks barely concealed beneath a thin apron with which she was branded in all cartoons.

SKELETON, BOILED AND PRESERVED IN OPEN AIR, MUSEE DE L’HOMME, PARIS.

In the spring of 1815, Saartje posed as a live model for a three-day ‘Enlightenment panel’ at the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle. Léon de Wailly, Nicolas Huet and Jean-Baptiste Berré composed watercolors of her figure, while Georges Cuvier, Henri de Blainville and Étienne Saint-Hilaire led a team of scientists. Léon De Wailly depicted Saartje as Cnidian Venus in repose. As he painted her contours, she imagined her heart covered in gold leaf, her hair enwreathed in flowers; not exposed, bare, barren.

HEART, SURGICALLY INSPECTED AT AUTOPSY BUT NOT PRESERVED. MUSÉUM NATIONAL D’HISTOIRE NATURELLE, PARIS.

Long before Saartje’s death, her body was signed away to scientists, her organs parceled to surgeons, the drums of Progress beating in their skulls. Forty-eight hours after her death, Saartje’s body was cast in plaster, her muscles expanded from life to paper by three-to-five sizes, plastered newsstands and street-corners in London. She arrived to Paris a celebrity in chains, her buttocks barely concealed beneath a thin apron with which she was branded in all cartoons.
Let the blinds fall, lay the chips to rest.
You’ve gone back to the alley off Westlake Avenue
where the rats tread to and from tires
of getaway limousines and yellow ambulances
idling on their way to the trauma center,
to the barroom where public angels give the devil’s
sign to the bouncer and the tight-pursed sing
all the way to the hole! Where every game ends
in a recession and every round of empty glasses
is a crisis. Divine intervention is the number
twenty-one. The man in horned rim glasses
keeps a hummingbird on his tie for good luck
and orders gin and juice of nectarine, saying
the only way to gamble is with your heart
up your sleeve and an ace on the table. With the double
bypass scars, Bill raises his ale to the dealer
and asks the standard icebreaker What are you
drinking? the tv ticker cannot drown the clinking
as the chips are laid to rest and the blinds fall.
Bill’s hopes are sinking because his credit score is black
and jack shit is what he’s got, but better risk all
than risk not. He’s a courageous bluffer
so he puts another payment down, the broker
bawls because his stock prices are dripping
down his throat and the banker calls, they’re out
of caviar so he orders beefheart. Papa needs
a new muffler! He baits Bill and the other pockets
into bleeding cash until the bank is rupt
as the arteries are broken, and all the bets
are off. The suits return to the deck.
Bill’s scars are open as he stumbles out
of the cab door and into his bed, holding
his wife’s heart hum under the sheets
and his mouth bleeds to sleep,
I’ve lost you.
As mumbles dry she murmurs I won’t let you go,
until the morning when you can bet
I’ll keep the blinds raised while you’re gone.

The Hand You’re Dealt

“Untitled”

Gavin Schmitz
Washington University in St. Louis ’16

“The Hand You’re Dealt”

Daniel Chi Cook
University of Washington ’13
At the Door

At seven p.m. I take my post at the large glass panels in the marble lobby on Central Park West and wait to fulfill the observably useful part of my job. I open the door, carry their grocery bags and hand them their dry-cleaning. I smile while protecting them from the things they decidedly imagine don’t exist, and I keep the secrets they would rather forget.

I watch at eight thirty as those working in the financial district get home from their leather-chaired, cigar-smoked, mahogany bars, dragging with them the scent of single malt scotch and the feeling of imminent artery blockades. The younger ones still look neat and healthy as the burden of a high-pressure career lingers just above them, ready to collapse in an instant. Their older counterparts make up the tail end of the crowd, slouching under the weight of hedge funds and infidelity. I watch the procession like its a flip book animating the gradual decay of a man and his virility.

At ten, the few babysitters and housekeepers who don’t live in the customary closet-turned-bedroom leave for residents on Jamaica Avenue in Queens: apartments one-tenth the size of the ones they clean. By eleven-thirty, most of those who are still able bodied enough to shove their way through a crowded bar, or attractive enough to gain access to a club after shamelessly flirting with the gate-keeping bouncer, have been drawn to the neon of the city.

The next few hours continue to be defined by that sticky air, with the occasional swift breeze carrying in those who have admitted defeat and called it a night. And as four a.m. approaches I acknowledge the ephemeral shift it brings. Identities are lost to the ambiguity that accompanies these sixty minutes and everything melts, combining to form a vulnerable and gelatinous city ready to split open with the slightest application of pressure. Before four, anyone who I see staggering down the streetlamp-bronzed concrete can be designated by a general lack of inhibition or the scent of gin and vodka that lingers behind them like exhaust from a tailpipe. At five, the sounds of garbage trucks squeezing their way between the narrow side streets of Manhattan provide a soundtrack for the early morning ambition of those who get to the office before the promotion-givers do. But in between these time slots when the city lets down its guard for the night we are left with the crowd, slouching under the weight of hedge funds and infidelity. I watch the procession like its a flip book animating the gradual decay of a man and his virility.

I glance at the large clock behind the marble counter. It tells me I’m an hour and twenty-two minutes from four a.m. It will be the night before I go the cat will appear in the lobby and I’ll see its furless skin and colorless eyes might have faded from richer counterparts and instead of taking on the graying of age they have a particular offensive sphinx cat that will manage to escape their apartment and somehow appear in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns. I’ll bring the alien pet back to their smoky hallway and I’ll ring the doorbell in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns. I’ll bring the alien pet back to their smoky hallway and I’ll ring the doorbell to emphasize their intellect by discussing current events and engaging in philosophical debates. They’ll have a particularly offensive sphinx cat that will manage to escape their apartment and somehow appear in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns.

The memories of Dara will become progressively unfocused as the years go by without new ones to take their place and when they start to fade entirely, I’ll retire from the building on Central Park West. It will also start to become something I don’t recognize anymore and I’ll leave, in an attempt to regain the feeling that I’m part of something again. The night before I go the cat will appear in the lobby and I’ll see that I’m part of something again. The night before I go the cat will appear in the lobby and I’ll see how its furless skin and colorless eyes might have faded from richer counterparts and instead of taking on the graying of age they have a particularly offensive sphinx cat that will manage to escape their apartment and somehow appear in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns. I’ll bring the alien pet back to their smoky hallway and I’ll ring the doorbell to emphasize their intellect by discussing current events and engaging in philosophical debates. They’ll have a particularly offensive sphinx cat that will manage to escape their apartment and somehow appear in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns.

I’ll stare at her, beautiful, and wonder how two people can still love so deeply from memories; ones they flash onto the other like a projector of slides on a plain white screen. I’ll think about how we’ll make new ones eventually, when my day doesn’t start as everyone else’s ends.

As I get older my hair turns from brown to gray to a whiter gray and I’ll get more irritable. The babies I saw as newborns, brought home to apartments that overlook the park, will grow into teenagers and then older teenagers and go to college. The parents will move to smaller apartments or out of the city entirely and a tall, thin couple will be the first of many to replace them. They’ll wear nothing but black and have friends who have similarly chosen to withhold their genetic material from the future of our species, which I’ll appreciate. They’ll gather where the families used to have dinner and they’ll drink red wine and smoke the expensive version of what teenagers hide from their parents. They’ll be encouraged to emphasize their intellect by discussing current events and engaging in philosophical debates. They’ll have a particularly offensive sphinx cat that will manage to escape their apartment and somehow appear in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns. I’ll bring the alien pet back to their smoky hallway and I’ll ring the doorbell to emphasize their intellect by discussing current events and engaging in philosophical debates. They’ll have a particularly offensive sphinx cat that will manage to escape their apartment and somehow appear in the lobby at least once a month. It will solidify like a hairless, bony hallucination and its translucent ears will look like lanterns.

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Claire Eden
Washington University in St. Louis ’13
faces with maws
red and fresh;
roiling bodies curled,
wet with the hiss of a
broken fire hydrant.

in their eyes the rage
of cracked forefathers
once beaten with canes
now bowed by the blast
of guns

a perfect stranger
with a black hole
in his cupid’s heart seeping
shards of metal
& the glass that kept
his hopes encased

the neighbors skinned
their knuckles on flesh,
peeling back to the bone
to try to make justice
of chaos and order by destruction

the boy whose life
diapt into the
pavement; quiet
white eye rolling heaven-ward
mercy, mercy

(the shatter of cracked windows)

engulfed in flames
melted like sugar,
sweet the smoke made
their corneas ebb in a
tide of salt

riot

how coy and sharp
the taste of retribution
under searching, pink
tongues swept over teeth,
sharper even than the
shape of a perfect
bullet piercing a dreamy
boy’s pacifist mouth

there is order in
how one human kills another
in the dark and acrid corners
of the night and
in the morning,
the streets always soft and
barely broken,
ghosts of a previous and violent life

Roxy Harrison
Rutgers University ’14
Papa built a tree house in the tallest oak. Carved windows and a door, a wraparound balcony, and wooden table for us to sit around and play cards.

I remember us, all fifteen grandkids, playing year round up in that house, sleeping on summer nights, pretending to be adults, playing go fish or uno, and papa down at the bottom, smoking Marlboro reds and drinking a Budweiser. He would sit there all day, smiling up at us, telling us stories of his childhood.

I don't remember how my mother told me that he committed suicide in the garage, his skin melting off and his lungs exploding—

**Forming Memories**

Summer Stewart
University of California, Davis '13

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**The Eighth Continent**

It is vast and as heavy as all weightless things we bear are—evaporated mother's tears, the musk of a beloved house abandoned, and every syllable we lost or never shed but disintegrating in our purgatory bodies—a rich land as real as any memory.

The color of the people there is earth—burnt meat ebony, the crumbly olive of matter trapped beneath fingernails, baked red clay, pale moon crater rims, stump-umber—moled. But I see some of my people arriving with smooth rice husk skin, with strong hair in only sooty shades, with seed eyes long and liquid, and bones narrowed from straining.

My people all know the same crooning noises our steadfast mothers make; how our stark fathers flush when drinking; the two words for heart: one for the heart pumping plasma and one for the heart pumping passions and pains; the different depths of bowing; the ancient tang of fermented cabbage; and finally we all know slowly the lotus-eaters' dreams.

Our first homeland, our first mother was a she-bear who ate only mugwort and garlic cloves in cave darkness for weeks until she shed her bear skin to become a beautiful smooth skin woman—then wed heaven's prince. She bore him a son, our first king who became a mountain god. We all spoke the same tongue then—gods, humans, dreams, and beasts alike. The only two alphabets we had were of a single tongue and of the body.

Then this new land began borrowing blood from every tribe with no intention of returning its people—at least not as aboriginal as before. Plucking persons as loan words from other languages—painfully and permanently.

We are left here with only echoes of vague music, and smells replicated only in our memories. Our ancestors must sorrow in their sleep as we undream homelands. We shoulder legacies of loss.

Now, on this final continent any one may enter and speak to any stranger and be understood—our skin shades and hair hues smearing indistinctly—while any one's own people become stranded.

Michelle Turgeon
Washington University in St. Louis '13

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LET’S GET COFFEE SOMETIME

There is a certain sadness to you, he muses, tracing his fingertips in delicate circles around the coffee rings stained in interlocking patterns on our rickety table.

Yes, I reply inwardly, with the tilt of my head, studying the slow movements and hesitancy of his hands—yes, there is, and you’re not the one to understand it.

Claire Salcedo
University of Washington ’14

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R.I.P. Bob Reuter
1951 – 2013
Thanks for sharing the scratchy records!

SPIRES
spiresmagazine@gmail.com
spiresmagazine.org