Copyright 2013 of Spires
Volume XIX, Issue I
012345 First Edition 67890

All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,
including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and
retrieval system, without prior written permission from Spires and the author.

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 Dotting (Webster University)
Back inside cover: TOP:Untitled by Gavin Schmitz (Washington University in St. Louis, 2016)
BOTTOM: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
Summer Stewart
Michelle Targeon
Claire Salcado

Love Poem: Keepsakes....................................................5
on the way home .................................................................6
Sweet Tooth.....................................................................8
On The Nature of Fiction and My Demise.........................9
broken feathers ruffled wrong ......................................12
Universe.........................................................................13
La Bibliothèque Nationale de France............................15
The Librarians of West Bucket ......................................16
Blood Brothers...............................................................21
Sisters...........................................................................21
Summer nights...............................................................22
The Recollected Body of Saartjie Bartman.....................24
The Hand You’re Dealt....................................................27
At The Door.....................................................................28
riot................................................................................29
Forming Memories........................................................32
The Eighth Continent.....................................................33
Let’s Get Coffee Sometime............................................34

ART

Dante Migone-Ojeda
Steph Waldo
Rachel Hrobon
Gavin Schmitz
Charlotte Greenbaum

Untitled...........................................................................7
List..................................................................................14
Untitled........................................................................15
Untitled........................................................................16
Funeral Games 1, or Fur is Dead....................................31
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: keep-
sakes 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. 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.

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, gummi 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

On the Nature of Fiction and My Demise

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. 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 the last ones to leave the 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 I tell you 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 another hand, shaking with a murderer’s adrenaline, and we unify in my final fleeting words.

It was so late; we had been the last ones to leave the restaurant. My eyes struggled to process the image of him staring at the road...
I shoved more and more violently as more of my flesh was torn to the unfeeling air. I tried to cover myself to hide myself from the torrent from the cold, from him. I closed my legs to my naked chest. I was a fetus in a shard womb, cowering from the foreign chill. He was a rusty coat hunger, jabbing blindly, maliciously, at my tender, uniformed body. I wasn’t a special and beautiful human life; I was unwanted, the unfortunate result of untainted 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. Hearing 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. But, you may argue, would that not defeat the purpose of Me As The Writer? Perhaps. But then, belligerent you may argue, why would I ever write such a thing. Reader, I had to. I had to.

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.

Briana 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
The Librarians of West Bucket

“...”

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:

- “...”
- “It was written long ago, ah, it might have been true.”
- “Do not talk back to me — when I see your mother tomorrow, I will tell her.”

Lee Ann slammed the door behind her.

So small was the town of West Bucket that, for many decades, it possessed neither a park nor a library. After the 921 Earthquake in 1999, the town had a library built on the ruins of the city hall. It was a point of civic pride: West Bucket, its citizens having risen from the ashes of the ruins, had a library built on the ruins of the city hall. It was a sign of true progress.

As a rule, the library of West Bucket did not carry fiction. It was not a matter of content — any sort of content, no matter how vulgar or outrageous, was fine as long as it was true. But, the sort of content, no matter how vulgar or outrun, was not carried. The librarians simply could not cross. To facilitate non-fiction reading – and it was a boundary the librarians simply could not cross. To facilitate non-fiction reading – and it was a boundary the librarians simply could not cross.

The librarians in West Bucket did not hold with conventional shelving systems. They shelled according to category — philosophy, biography, science, poetry, classics, history, cooking and miscellany. Within categories, books were shelved by importance in the eyes of the librarians: this is real.

They called Ah Lian over to confirm.

“Ah Lai added, ‘Ah Be jumped like a young rabbit in piles that came up to Ah Be’s nose. Half of them were copies of the same book of poetry — classical Chinese poetry by a Japanese writer.’

“...”

To her dismay, Ah Be found that the classical poetry section had grown overnight.

Poetry books spilled from the shelves onto the ground in piles that came up to Ah Be’s nose. Half of them were copies of the same book of poetry – classical Chinese poetry by a Japanese writer.

“...”

Confucius came before Zhuang Kui-Shek, but after Oprah.

Lee Ann, grumbling all the while, shielded by spine color — light to dark — and so disturbed the universe.

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.

“Aiya!” Ah Be leapt back. Ah Lai pecked over Ah Be’s shoulder. Ah Be said, “Your grandchild left his lizard toys all over the place again.”

Ah Lai pointed at it with a book, “No toy, I think this is real.”

They called Ah Lian over to confirm.

“When I was a child, all my friends read novels. I told 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. “...”

Ah Lai came to the bottom of the pile.

“It’s true,” said Ah Lai. “I raised so many children—not even mine. I would know.”

Shelling cart in tow. Ah Lai pointed the way to another shelf that, Ah Be.

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

“...”

The three librarians retreated with murmurs of victory.

“...”

Along with shelving fiction, the librarians of West Bucket did not hold with conventional shelving systems. They shelled according to category — philosophy, biography, science, poetry, classics, history, cooking and miscellany. Within categories, books were shelved by importance in the eyes of the librarians: this is real.

Conversely, they shelled according to the importance of the librarians:

“...”

Confucius came before Zhuang Kui-Shek, but after Oprah.
Ah Be said. “Just more trouble.”

“More classical poetry to shelve isn’t prosperity,” penned.”

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

reorganized the classical poetry and I found peace.

The size change is only temporary,” said the dragon. “But I trust you will understand my proof.”

“You can’t be—

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

“You are too slimy to be a dragon.”

“Sunny it will be,” the dragon said. “In return, I expect my home to be restored by evening.” It shuttered one eye, and then the other.

“Humans are so hard to please,” hissed the salamander. “I am not a salamander.”

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

Ah Lian. “There’s more of it than before.”

“The poetry section got bigger,” acknowledged Ah Lai. “There’s more of it than before.”

“This and that are not the same thing,” said Ah Be. “This and that are not the same thing.”

“If it’s a dragon, then it is difficult to be heard. This is much better.”

“The water fountain spewed steaming oolong tea. After tasting the tea, Ah Lian declared it the rare Lisan variety.

The leaves fell off the dragon’s back. The dragon disappeared.

The following day, cicadas boiled out of the library. They took up residence on the roof and yowled at lunchtime.

A legion of stray cats jumped off the roof of the library and hacked out silken hairballs all over the check-out counter. They took up residence on the roof and yowled at lunchtime.

The water fountain spewed steaming oolong tea. After tasting the tea, Ah Lian declared it the rare Lisan variety.

Ah Lai arrived at the library one morning to find a trio of stone guardian lions panting at the entrance. When she tried to shoo them away from the doors, they dropped pearls at her feet. The pearls were the size of her grandson’s palm and made for good bookends — for some reason, they did not roll. The librarians were relieved when the dragon’s prosperity stopped flowing — diamond cockroaches, while valuable, were unpleasant to come across in the holds section.

Ah Lian’s daughter gathered up the curious treasures and sold them to a pawn shop in a neighboring town. The profits were put into the library fund.

With the sort of tidy thinking that gives rise to librarians, the librarians decided to record an account of all that had happened after their encounter with the dragon. It would serve as a historical record of local events, a testament to the power of dragons and a warning against unprepared shelving.

When the librarians finished, Ah Lai bound the booklet together and placed it on display near the returns bin for all to see.

A few days after her trip to Puli, Ann visited the library with a plate of sliced dragon fruit in hand. “Aunt Mei sent these,” she announced. Slumping over the counter, Ann toyed with the check-out stamp.

“Why spend money on lies, huh?” said Ah Be. “This and that are not the same thing.”

“Aunt Mei sent these,” she announced. Slumping over the counter, Ann toyed with the check-out stamp.

“Aunt Mei sent these,” she announced. Slumping over the counter, Ann toyed with the check-out stamp.

“Why spend money on lies, huh?” said Ah Be. “This and that are not the same thing.”

“Why spend money on lies, huh?” said Ah Be. “This and that are not the same thing.”

“Aunt Mei sent these,” she announced. Slumping over the counter, Ann toyed with the check-out stamp.

“Aunt Mei sent these,” she announced. Slumping over the counter, Ann toyed with the check-out stamp.

“Why spend money on lies, huh?” said Ah Be. “This and that are not the same thing.”
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
Summer nights

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 pop-pop-pop 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 the language of the night. 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 sucking 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 SAAR TJE BAARTMAN

CUVIER (1825)

Science, science, science!
Every thing is beautiful
Blown up beneath my glass.
Colors dazzle insect wings.
A drop of water swirls
Like marble. Ordinary crumbs become malacities
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. MUSEE DE L’HOMME, 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, 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, and no more home, and no more father and no more lover.

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. The man 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. A drop of water swirls like marble. Ordinary crumbs become malacities set in perfect angles of geometry I’d thought impossible. Few will ever see what I see through this microscope.

—“The Venus Hottentot,” Harriet A. Washington

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, swung from twine at her collarbone and looked to the heavens, even if she could not see them.

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

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 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.

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

Sarah Roth
Washington University in St. Louis ’13

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, HOT TENTOT VENUS, HOT TENTOT 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 clasped 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.

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 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 covered in gold leaf, her hair enwreathed in flowers; not exposed, bare, barren.

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 Béré 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 body 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 bones were boiled and her genitals and brain were bottled. The surface of her plaster mold was coated in clear, tough varnish. Glazed in clear, tough varnish.

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.
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 humming bird 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

Daniel Chi Cook
University of Washington ’13

“Untitled”

Gavin Schmitz
Washington University in St. Louis ’16
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-chair, 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 infertility. 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 shore 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 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 it back upstairs I’ll open the doors and I’ll watch as its spiny tail disappears into the silence of a four am city.

I 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 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 and wait for one of the turtlenecks inside to appear in dilated-pupil confusion.

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 how its furless skin and colorless eyes might have faded from richer counterparts and instead of taking it back upstairs I’ll open the doors and I’ll watch as its spiny tail disappears into the silence of a four am city.

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 crept into the pavement; quiet white eye rolling heaven-ward mercy, mercy

(the shatter of cracked windows)

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

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
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

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
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—moxed. 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
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