



SEQUOYA
REVIEW

Whether it's been through words or lines or paint or a digitally-rendered image, UTC has a remarkable legacy of devotion to creative expression. Before writing this letter, I spent hours going through the archives in the Special Collections at Lupton Library, reading through thirty-five years of *Sequoia Reviews* and its precursors that date all the way back to the thirties. So much has changed in our school, our city, our world, and the aesthetics of these journals reflect that. There were times that they disappeared altogether — yet every time, someone came along with the passion and vision to revive our publication, sometimes under a new name, but always for the purpose of sharing the best we have to offer.

When there was no money from the University, students were still publishing their thoughts, typing and copying and stapling them together so they could be passed on. Now we have a slick, bound book that our art team spends countless hours designing, a staff of more than twenty people selecting and editing the print and the digital editions, and the full support of the English department, publications board, and other campus groups.

After four years of influence — first as a contributor, then a staff member, and finally editor — this is my last entry in the *Sequoia Review*. With this time, I've had the privilege of watching fellow writers develop their craft. I've seen a first-time submitter receive an honorable mention, then make it into print the following year, and now their latest piece has been voted staff favorite. I've also seen authors expand their artistic range: poets submitting creative nonfiction, short story writers publishing a fantastic poem, some even crossing forms between visual art and literature.

As artists, we worry about losing our audience. Is poetry dead? Does anyone read short stories anymore? But I think the *Sequoia Review* is a testament to the tenacity of creativity. We will continue to imagine, for the imagination's sake, and to share our unique vision.

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INTERVIEW WITH ROBIN HEMLEY

Katie Christie

Robin Hemley's latest book *Do-Over* was released by Little Brown in 2009. He directs the nonfiction writing program at the University of Iowa and also teaches at Vermont College. He has published seven books of nonfiction and fiction, most recently *Invented Eden: The Elusive, Disputed History of the Tasaday*, which was a Library Association's Editor's Choice Book in 2003. Hemley co-edited *Extreme Fiction: Fabulists and Formalists* with Michael Martone, and wrote *Nola: A Memoir Of Faith, Art And Madness*, which won an Independent Press Book Award for Nonfiction.

DO-OVER IS A VERY INTERESTING IDEA
EXPERIENCING KINDERGARTEN, SUMMER CAMP,
PROM, ETC. ALL OVER AGAIN AS A FULL-GROWN
MAN. WHERE DID THIS IDEA COME FROM?

I'd been talking with students about things we wish could be redone and my first thought was summer camp, which was a really miserable experience for me. So what if I could go back? I pitched it to several publications and *New York* magazine eventually published it as "Big Man on Camp" which is still available online. The experience was so fun and interesting I thought I could do a whole book of these. My agent agreed, and Little Brown published it.

WHAT KINDS OF RESPONSES HAVE YOU GOTTEN
WHEN YOU TELL PEOPLE WHAT THE BOOK IS
ABOUT?

Overwhelmingly positive. A lot of people have said that they wish they had a chance to do things over. You can't really do things over, you can just set it up the way it happened the first time and try and change the way it happened. It doesn't change the past, but it changes the way you think of the past. It makes you confront things you've left behind.

YOU'RE A VERY DIVERSE WRITER, FICTION AND NONFICTION, SHORT FORM AND LONG FORM (I EVEN REMEMBER HEARING A LITTLE POETRY AT YOUR READING WITH THE PRAGUE SUMMER PROGRAM). DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE STYLE?

I like everything. I love reading poetry — in some ways it may be my favorite form — I just don't do a lot of them. Shorter forms are probably my favorite to write. Novels can be just endless labyrinths full of sinkholes when you're trying to write them.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT FORM A PIECE SHOULD TAKE?

Depends on how much I want to transform the idea. When you put anything down on paper you're transforming it — the writing is the experience. For instance, my short story "The Warehouse of Saints" was inspired by an anecdote someone told me in Europe of how the trade for religious relics was so lucrative, people were counterfeiting them, so I wrote a story about someone selling fake bones of saints. I'm Jewish, it couldn't have been from my point-of-view! Other ideas are more memoiristic; they're anchored in my life. If I'm investigating something that's meditative, it's an essay, but if it's dramatic then it's a story.

SPEAKING OF PRAGUE, YOU TRAVEL A LOT, TEACHING AND READING AT SEVERAL PLACES THROUGHOUT THE U.S. AS WELL AS HONG KONG, AUSTRALIA, FRANCE, LITHUANIA, TAIWAN. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PLACE YOU'VE VISITED?

It's almost impossible to choose a favorite. I love travel and I really love all of these places I've been to. They're all stimulating and they're all full of different, interesting people.

WITH ALL YOU'RE INVOLVED IN, HOW DO YOU KEEP UP WITH ALL YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

I guess I have a fair amount of energy. And I'm good at compartmentalizing. When I'm teaching, I'm thinking about teaching and I don't let myself pay attention to the other things.

DO YOU WRITE EVERY DAY? DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER "WRITING ROUTINES"?

I try to write every day, although sometimes it's just impossible.

WHY DO YOU STAY INVOLVED WITH BEGINNING WRITERS, WORKING WITH STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA AND ALL OVER THE WORLD?

I see it as a part of the contract I have as a writer/teacher. I wouldn't be in the profession if I didn't enjoy the interaction with students and the notion of passing something on to people, helping them. I had some good people who helped me when I was starting. It's fun to have some positive influence on the younger generation. Though not all beginning writers are young and I think that's great too.

DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR WRITERS TO STAY IN THE ACADEMIC AND/OR PUBLISHING SETTING?

No not at all. If you can get by without it, that's good. The best job for anyone is one that gives them the time to write. Academia in some way is a modern-day version of patrons, like the Medicis in Florence. But it's not the only way. Certain academic settings can be quite a drain and publishing's no better, dealing with other people's work. For me it's good because it gives me structure and I love the interaction with

students. I've got some great students I really enjoy working with but there have been times when I've been really overworked and drained by academia. Would I retire tomorrow if I was given enough money? Probably not.

WHERE WAS YOUR FIRST PUBLICATION?

When I was seventeen I published a couple poems in a magazine from Grand Forks, North Dakota called *The Main Streeter*. Just a tiny little rag but it meant a lot to me. It's a very exciting moment, the first time you see your name in print.

WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

A lot of grad school applications. I'm the Director of the Nonfiction MFA Program at the University of Iowa. When I can find the time, I've been reading an excellent collection of essays called *My Misspent Youth* by Meghan Daum.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?

I've got a book coming out soon from the University of Georgia Press called *The Field Guide for the Immersion Writer*. It's all about travel and writing through immersion in the experience. And I also have a short story collection *Reply All* releasing next year from Indiana Press.

NOTHING BUT THE SAME
Trenna Sharpe

My mother's ex-boyfriend asked her
to marry him once a week and she said no
each time, which I thought was smart and she thought
was a promise that love works harder if it's easier to lose.
He sang songs about it at night in front of thousands of
people in a hundred different cities, but really, there's
nothing transcendental about stepping away from your home
to talk to strangers. Sometimes I turn onto our old street
without realizing it. My mother says this is normal.
Just a way to talk about how the world shakes a little
bit with every slammed door. I don't know how I feel
about that. Marvin Bell says life's a kick and a-kicking,
so I worry about the world melting beneath us as we dance
jerkily through each other's lives. I've never been a good dancer.
I brush my teeth. I take out the trash. I take my aspirin
and I wonder if my doctor isn't really trying to kill me.
I can't hear out of my right ear anymore, which isn't good
if you believe in those cartoon angels that sit on shoulders
arguing about your life and where it should go. No matter.
I'm sure that somewhere in Nashville someone is singing songs
about loss. How it just is what it is, same as everything else.

TRENNNA SHARPE

Trenna is a senior, English: Writing Major at UTC. She has published poems in *Poetry Miscellany* (2008, 2009, 2010), *The Sequoya Review* (2009, 2010), and *The Working Poet: 75 Writing Exercises*; and a *Poetry Anthology* from Autumn House Press (2009). She is a 3-time recipient of the Ken Smith Award for Poetry at the Meacham Writers' Workshops, and received the Thelma Styles Igou Poetry Award from the UTC English Department in 2010. She's not this boring in person.

BILLY RITCHIE BRIEFLY DOUBTS HIS GENIUS

Billy Ritchie

I took up painting for a night.
My single brown line broke
down, fracturing the colors backward
into the stop-motion intro to a children's
show I saw late one night after everyone
left when I said I was tired but I was
lying because I just wanted to be alone.
There are people whispering outside
my room. The dripping faucet beats in time
with their hissed esses and everything
you ever said to me cracks the window.
I kick off the covers. My ears pop.
Surely your body is denser than mine.
Surely you've been growing inward
as I've been doing the opposite.
I try to paint you with what little I know
about horizon lines and points of origin
but I've only been doing this for a day
and my colors keep breaking down
and pouring onto the floor.
I'll never understand how your eyes
burst from shadow. How your skin
is the color of morning. You stand
singing in the window as if you're
trapped, but you're not trapped, you've
been outside and come back in
because it was cold out, and the wind
hurt your eyes.

BILLY RITCHIE

Billy Ritchie is a junior in the University Honors program at UTC. He was published on the Sequoya Review website in 2009, the 2010 print edition, and the 2010 online fall edition.

CREMATORIUM AT TEREZIN

Laurel Jones

This poem's been hiding behind the walls, under beds,
creeping along the sidewalk, staying in shadow.
It is dirty. It reminds me of day-old fish
in the dumpster — opalescent eyes rolled back,
no longer any reason for the catch, only rot is left.
It is grumbling — its belly is empty. I am still,
quiet. It passes by. I wait. It eats an apple and I
know this is a feral animal — there is blood in its teeth.
I imagine the flesh it took, how it must
have felt in the mouth, against the molars.
It dances in a circle of light and I try to tell it:
It is becoming cold here, the wind has taken off her shoes,
there are pearls of dew on your hair, flowers should
not be picked, and you are so, so beautiful. But this is a lie.
I tell it: I love you like I love the birds that sing in this place.

LAUREL JONES

Laurel is a junior at UTC who loves baking, singing, and all things chocolate-related (except for white chocolate because it's not real chocolate anyway). She hates it when people don't use their turn signals or when two different songs are playing at the same time. Right now she is contemplating the inversely proportionate relationship between her intelligence and proximity to baby animals.

MAYFLIES
Abby Fletcher

You always told me
that mayflies were just female mosquitoes —
big and slow with cellophane wings
and pine needle legs
which you picked off
mindlessly.

I never believed you.
And I didn't believe you when you said that a man
who put a gun to his temple
and pulled the trigger
would never hear
the sound of the gunshot.

But,

it turns out you were right
on both accounts —
not the facts, necessarily,
but the sentiments, for sure —
the realities you planted inside of me.

Your playground anger aged me,
scared my organs
into early decay,
overwhelmed by the weight
of adult fears
Aging, I acknowledge,
is just the strengthening tension
of a thread,
progressively tightening
like the trigger of a gun
under the pressure of a dead man's hand
or the leg of a mayfly
between an eight-year-old's dirty fingers.

We're all just waiting for the
snap.

ABBY FLETCHER

I am a sophomore in the UHON program at UTC. My major is environmental science, and I am considering a minor in creative writing.

OUT OF THE BODY

Benjamin Duvall

You know, after three months, I'm still not used to meeting people Online like this. My kids can do it all day, but that's just how things go. A decade ago we were worried about children spending too much time in front of the computer, and now we're worried about them spending too much time inside of the computer. How long out of the body is too long? I wonder if my brother is right, if we will do away with bodies completely one day. He's doing just fine without his.

That's why we're here tonight: to talk about this whole body thing. I'm sure most of you know someone who has given theirs up, exchanged their physical life for a digital one. You've all seen the moral backlash, anyway. They like to throw around that phrase on the news: "physical suicide". Well, while they've been bickering about "Is it still suicide if the soul sticks around?" I've been putting together this little meeting. I think everyone deserves to know how this whole mess started. You deserve some honest discourse at the very least, and this is the only way to get that anymore. I think that's why politicians are so terrified of Uploading. They know how hard it is to lie without a body.

There are a lot of people who want to speak tonight, but before they do, I want to talk to you about my brother. After all, Thomas is the one that started this new life Online. There is a certain large company that would like you to believe that they were the start of it and they have the advantage in that regard because their version of the story is more endearing. They have successfully rebranded the internet and now they're selling Uploaders at three hundred bucks a unit. My brother made the original one out of spare parts.

The world that they're trying to sell you is one of wonder and joy; of adventure, beauty, and endless possibility. I'm not saying that world doesn't exist; the fact that so many of us have jumped Online like this shows that it clearly does, but it did not start that way. Thomas didn't go Online for lofty reasons, seeking new plateaus of thought and consciousness, or whatever they're saying in the commercials.

His reasons were considerably more selfish and human. He wanted to escape, to put the world behind him. He wanted to be left alone. Imagine his surprise when we all followed him here.

* * *

If I'm going to talk about my brother, then I should mention our father. Thomas is his son in name, mind, nature, everything. Dad taught him that it was better to run from your problems than to face them; better to lose yourself in a computer than spend time with your wife. Dad even showed him how to leave the body behind, in one way or another. Paralysis is a pretty good reason to get out, I think.

We all have reasons for leaving our bodies. My body is stout, alcoholic, and has a heart condition. It's very nice to be out of it, if only for a little while. It gets difficult to breathe in there. My brother knows a bit about that; his body was stringy and asthmatic. He got that from our mother, though now I suppose he has given it back. We had his body buried next to hers in the cemetery in the middle of town.

The last time I saw my brother in his bones was three months ago. I'm a general contractor in Virginia and I made time off to swing down here and catch up. Thomas and I never spent much time together; he is a recluse and I like working in the sunshine. I grew up on the streets making trouble, and he grew up in the study with dad. He was in that study when I came home and that's where he left his body, too. All of his equipment is still in the house; I can't stand to tear any of it down. Maybe one day we'll make it into a museum or something.

Let me tell you a little bit about the house. It used to be our parents, then it belonged to Thomas, and now it's mine. It's a little brick bungalow, about 1500 square feet, nothing fancy. I must have liked the style, because it's about the only type of house I build, though I typically go a little bigger than 1500. That was the other reason I came down to see Thomas; I wanted to buy that place off of him and renovate it. I showed up with all of my gear, ready to measure every

angle, and never even got started.

I ran away as a teenager, ran to escape the loss of my parents, and I hadn't been back to the house since. Until I saw Thomas's station wagon in the driveway — Dad's old station wagon — I thought it was a different place. There were antennas and solar panels on the roof, wires on the eaves, and boards on the windows. The porch was hidden under a shantytown of computer cases and the driveway was not much better. I stepped out of my truck and a lawnmower clipped my door. It was tracing a course around the yard, carefully, steadily, without a driver.

We have always had a lot of computers around the house. Dad worked for IBM and Thomas inherited his obsession for electronics so I expected a bit of a clutter. I didn't expect a server hub in the hallway or a surveillance center in the living room. Every wall was dotted with monitors, every bit of hardwood carpeted with wires. There was no external light in the house, only the glow of screens and the sharp blue of LEDs. Thomas's voice filled my head, came from the equipment and the air.

"David," he said. "Come cut me loose. I'm in the study."

The study had been the center of my father's universe, his office and fortress. Once Dad lost his body in the accident, Thomas commandeered the room for himself. In Dad's time it was a place to unwind, a place to play and think and tinker with electronics but my brother had turned it into an experiment. The floor was covered in notes and drawings, sketches of the human nervous system and equation after equation. The screens on the walls showed similar things but they didn't deal in drawings. They were getting their data live — live from my brother's veins.

Thomas was strapped to a chair in the middle of the room. I can only call it a chair because it had a seat; the rest was a twisted nest of wires and metal that stretched around the walls. The wires crept under the seat, over his shoulders, around his arms. I tried to speak but couldn't.

"You look good," he said. When he spoke, the equipment pulsed and hummed in tune. "You put on weight. I haven't been eating. I don't think I need to eat anymore." He held up a pair of pliers. "Help me get these out before they're in there for good."

"Thomas," I said. "Thomas." The air was full of static. "What is all this?" I started pulling wires off of him but found that they were part of his body. There were blue lights under the skin on his neck and arms. I touched them and I didn't know what to do.

He reached for one of the wires in his neck, yanked, and yelped. "This way isn't working. It's too invasive. I want to go in there, not the other way around." He snipped the wire and winced. "It hurts now. When they snap, it feels like getting hit with a ruler."

I stopped his hand. "You can feel the wires? Feel them?"

Thomas could feel the wires and the machines on the other end, could hear CPUs like the beat of his own heart. That might sound a little bit like what we experience here, Online, and maybe it is, but here we have the convenience of leaving the body behind. My brother was still very much contained in the flesh, only now there was less flesh and more electronics. He was thin down to his bones and angles, and he twitched, and shook, and typed on the air. I began to cut him free, wincing with the slice of every cord. His skin was pale, blue.

"When is the last time you went outside?" I asked.

He tilted his head. "Is the mower broken again?"

"I...no. No." I met his eyes, saw lights in them, looked away. "We will get all of these out. Then you're going to eat something."

"I'm not hungry. I haven't been for a week or so. As long as I'm plugged in, I'm alright."

"I'm trying to unplug you here. That's the whole idea." There was a large cord running into his lower back, and I reached for it. "I don't know what the fuck you've done to yourself, but we're going to fix it."

"Hey, no," he said, and grabbed my hand. "I'm telling you, I need

that one." His grip had no power but there was a strange and sharp energy in it and it made my spine shake.

"I'm taking it out," I said, and did so. It didn't need to be cut; indeed it was a normal power cord, mated to a socket on his back. As soon as I removed it, he slumped and began to cough. I panicked, and dropped the cord before hurriedly plugged it back in. It shocked me as I did but I did not feel it.

Thomas jerked up and a blank look came over him. The lights across his neck and arms went out and then blinked on in sequence. He yawned and the clarity returned to his eyes.

"Did you just boot up?" I asked.

"I need that one." He stood up and fell back down, "I haven't done this in a while."

"Stop. I have to stop." I looked around for another chair, sat on the floor. "I can't...what is all this? Are you trying to kill yourself? I'm not going to let you follow Dad."

My brother's face twisted itself into knots. "Dad got stuck. I don't want to follow him. I am trying to get to where he was going. Anyway, Dad only had the one electrode in his neck. I've gone a bit more...in depth than that."

My head was running slow. "He got stuck? What do you mean?"

Thomas looked at me like I had only then entered the conversation. "What do you think actually happened to him?"

"He worked himself into a stroke and was paralyzed. You were there."

"Yeah, were you? Weren't you curious about IBM paying for all of his hospital bills?"

"They paid his bills? Why? God, how much else did I miss?"

"It's what you get for running away. Do you know what a brain-to-computer interface is?"

I picked up one of the wires from the floor. "I have an idea."

"IBM was researching it. It's the next big thing, controlling your

computer with your mind and all that. But they're all external. They want to put the computer in your head. Dad was really into it." He looked around the room, shuddered at the cold. "After we lost mom, he put all his time into it. He was in here for years."

"So what does all that have to do with the stroke?"

A nervous energy took Thomas in force. "There was no stroke, David. Dad was trying to connect the brain to the machine. Along the way, he found a way out but he got stuck in between."

I could not sit still. "Out? Out of what?"

"Out!" Thomas cried. "Out of the body."

• • •

I couldn't get my brother to eat, couldn't even get him to leave that room. He didn't use the bathroom, didn't breathe or blink much while he was plugged in. His entire life, at least his physical life, was contained in that house. He was trapped in his body, a body that was trapped in a world he did not understand. Thomas has never fit in with other people; he's been too afraid to go outside since he was five. He wanted to escape into the world he knew, the online world, our Online world. He spent all his time there, made all of his loves there.

"Her name is Sherry," he said as he tinkered beneath the skin on his arm. "We've been together for a couple years now. She's a huge computer nerd; I can talk to her about my work and she can actually keep up."

I couldn't watch him. "Have you met her yet?"

"Oh, she lives in California." He squirmed and came up with a bloody piece of metal. "When my work is done, I will go see her." A smile touched his face when he said it, the first I'd seen since I arrived.

"Then I can finally leave all of this behind."

My eyes fell on one of the screens on the wall, the one that tracked his heart. "I don't think you'll make it out to California." His pulse was steady, but the rhythm was all wrong. The flow of power to the room

jumped for a moment and he coughed and coughed.

"My body won't," he said. "But when I'm done, I won't need it anymore. It's done its time."

"What are you going to do? Let's say you do get out. What then? What happens to your body?"

Thomas was silent for a long time. "I don't know." He looked at his hand, opened and closed it a few times. "I don't want to return. I want to leave and not look back." He met my eyes and was my kid brother again. "But I'm scared."

"Scared you won't be able to let go?"

He shook his head. "Scared I'll lose myself. The body is so important. It has to be. Why else do we have them? If I leave my body behind, will I leave myself behind?" He put his hands on his chest. "How much of me is this? I want to do away with the flesh. I want to trash it. But I can't. It has always been there for me, it has always been me. That's why I'm trying to get away. But if I do, what is left? Who will I be then?"

I didn't have an answer for him. I felt sick being in the house, sick and helpless and lost. When I left, I told him that I would be back in an hour but I ran away. I got in my truck and I ran away and that made me sicker than anything. It still makes me sick. I am a weak man; if you give me a crisis of family, I will run from it. Dad rubbed off on me too, I suppose. I shouldn't have run when we lost him and I shouldn't have run from Thomas. I should have stayed, and then maybe he wouldn't have...I'm sorry. Can we break for a moment? Thank you.

• • •

I'm back. I needed to go Offline for a moment. Yes, I'm alright. We're just getting to the hard part. Thomas tells me that I shouldn't worry about it anymore, but I can't help feeling responsible. I should have taken him to get help. He is right, though. Let's move forward.

The Uploaders that are on the market today are functionally identical to my brother's original. They sell them as helmets — that way

they can charge you extra for the headphones and visor you don't need — but my brother's was a glove, and I am using that same glove at this moment. It could be a boot or a girdle; it doesn't really matter what it is, so long as it has access to a couple good nerves. Two little pricks and you're free to leave the old bones for a while. Thomas explained it to me and I still don't know how it works. It's a miracle, as far as I'm concerned.

He came up with it while I was away and sent me a message, presumably while he was inside the internet. It was incoherent, garbled with notes about senses joining and strings of numbers. I didn't understand it until I went Online myself and read it there. It was a song. Yes, I can see most of you have had similar experiences. It is a common thing. I wanted to sing too, once I had lived inside a video and tasted text.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Thomas's fears of losing himself when he went Online were unfounded, as all of us know, but he didn't really notice. He had other things on his mind. As soon as he got over his initial wonder, he went straight for Sherry. She understood him, she believed him. Better yet, she wanted to join him. Thomas told her his dreams, shared the design for his Uploader, fell for it every step of the way. After about a week, someone came to join him Online. It was not Sherry. Sherry was a real person, a real person on IBM's payroll, who spent two well-paid years seducing all of Thomas's secrets out of him.

The woman that joined my brother Online was testing IBM's version of his equipment. She didn't like him, indeed much of the company's staff didn't like him, for he could do with home equipment what they could only imagine with expensive tools. So she pretended to be Sherry and broke his heart. Thomas made a decision then. Fear had fueled his grip on his body, fear and love and hope. There is nothing like that electric passion in the chest; it is unique to the body, cannot be remade here. These things were gone for Thomas but they remained in the flesh, entrenched in the fingers and gut. He left me a message that night, the last I ever heard of his voice. He asked me to come say goodbye.

I got there in the middle of the night, found Thomas in the study. He had hung himself with a rope of wires. On his hand was a glove with cords running to a nearby computer. He was smiling.

“Unplug that old thing,” a voice from the computer said. “I don’t need it anymore.”

Slowly, gently, I carried his body down, pulled the power cord out of his spine. His lights were out. I stared at the corpse for a moment, didn’t find my brother there.

“Now put that glove on,” the voice said. “And come say hello.”

I had to pry Thomas’s fingers apart to get the glove off and I found a picture of our father clenched between them. I slipped the glove on and saw that there was something written on the back of the picture. I flipped it over, felt two pricks on my wrist.

“OUT AT LAST,” it said, and I was.

BENJAMIN DUVALL

I am in the Creative Writing graduate program, aspiring to teach writing at the college level (and to write excellent fiction, naturally.) Sometimes I just have to get the sci-fi out of my system.

30 LIT

PAP-SMEARED: A TEN MINUTE TRAGIC FARCE

Jennifer Manning

HADRIENNE, pacing back and forth Center Stage, plays with a writing utensil — her only prop — on a dimly lit, seemingly vacant stage.

HADRIENNE

(Suddenly stopping)

My vagina hurts.

(Beat, then returns to pacing)

No, scratch that.

(Pause)

My vagina...burns. Yeah, that's good. It's passionate. It's perfect. We'll go with that. Okay, going with that. My vagina burns, like a... what do they burn like? A yeast infection — no — fuck. Okay. My vagina burns...like a flame in evening, wakefully flickering.

(Beat, then pace)

No, no. Too gentle, too flamboyant. Scratch that. Let's see... My vagina...is... It is...a flower?

(Beat)

Hell no. Definitely not. It's...

(Pause)

Nothing. I have nothing. I can't do this. I can't write women. I can't. I am one, but I cannot do it. My female experience has been a male experience, and if I write about that, women will see it — or me — as anti-feminist. But if I write about my vagina, or anything traditionally feminine — basically the things about being female that make me feel female — people will see it as embracing the characteristics that marginalized women in the first place. Or, further, they'll criticize it for being just another witless imitation of Eve Ensler — a facsimiled cervix of all the lips and clits she's anthropomorphized in her brilliant monologues, her brilliant collected works, her brilliant HBO special, her

fucking brilliance. And if I do neither — or even both — I'll still have to face being measured against the canonized female playwrights — Beth Henley, Marsha Norman, Lorraine Hansberry, Susan Glaspell, Caryl Churchill. Then, because of that, I'll be measured against the Sirs of the theatre. And — you know what? Fuck it. Because here's the truth: if I write anything, anything, because I am a woman, I'll get flak for it. Either way, I'll have failed my gender, because women who expect everything are inevitably disappointed by others, and women who expect absolutely nothing inevitably disappoint themselves. It's a zero sum game. So now, all I can do is tell my non-script-worthy vagina to exit Stage Right.

HADRIENNE almost reaches her exit when she runs into a likeness of herself, HADRIENNE TWO, who is returning an ink pen to her purse.

HADRIENNE

Pardon me.

HADRIENNE TWO doesn't respond. HADRIENNE takes a brief, second look.

HADRIENNE

Trippy.

(Continues walking)

Talk about facsimiled cervix.

Lights go up on a woman upstage dressed in scrubs, holding a clipboard. She is dull and desensitized.

FEMALE NURSE

Hadrienne.

HADRIENNE stops, looking upstage.

FEMALE NURSE

(Quickly, and in a droning tonality)

Hadrienne. Hadrienne. Hadrienne.

HADRIENNE

Who the hell are you?

FEMALE NURSE

We're ready to look at your vagina. Again.

HADRIENNE

Excuse me?

FEMALE NURSE

(Walking away)

This way.

HADRIENNE

I don't think so.

HADRIENNE TWO follows FEMALE NURSE, unaware of her other self through the entire scene.

HADRIENNE

Hadrienne? Wait.

(Gesturing for her attention)

Your name is Hadrienne too?

FEMALE NURSE

Experiencing any problems with your —
(*In an irritated manner*)
vagina?

HADRIENNE

You can't see me, can you? That means —

HADRIENNE TWO

Actually, I have. I've been —

FEMALE NURSE

Tell the doctor.

HADRIENNE

No, not a dream. But not a memory either.

FEMALE NURSE

Height and weight?

HADRIENNE TWO

5'5". 125.

HADRIENNE

125? Oh! I must be writing this.

FEMALE NURSE gives her an inquisitive look.

HADRIENNE TWO

135...

HADRIENNE

Yeah, 135 sounds better.

FEMALE NURSE

(Writing on her clipboard)

140.

HADRIENNE

Or this is a nightmare.

Both HADRIENNES follow FEMALE NURSE to stage left where a giant jar of petroleum jelly sits on the floor. Adjacent is a cheap wooden table (possibly made from Oriented Strand Board) facing upstage. A strip of white paper runs down the center of the table with a tattered gown thrown over it.

FEMALE NURSE

Remove your clothes. Put on the gown. Lie on the table.

FEMALE NURSE leaves.

HADRIENNE

Can you believe her? The nerve. The zombie. She's been completely numbed by the anesthesia of gynecology.

HADRIENNE

Science...

HADRIENNE TWO

Science...

HADRIENNE

The whole pelvic examination process was designed by a man in a male-dominated field. And it shows. I mean, look at the table. Look at this. They treat the vagina like a fucking textbook.

(Clicking her pen)

A textbook! Now we're getting somewhere...

HADRIENNE TWO

My vagina is not textbook. Not this time.

HADRIENNE

It never is. Never will be. Because no two organs are identical. Just like people. Just like men and women. Equality should be celebrated in our differences, not our similarities.

(Playing with her pen again)

Oh, that's good. Really good. I like that...

Without much thought, HADRIENNE TWO begins removing her clothes.

HADRIENNE

What, you're just going to follow orders?

HADRIENNE TWO

Well, they're the experts, not me.

HADRIENNE

Yeah, just like an expert: employing fear tactics, isolation, violation. And you, of course, are far too trusting. I know that because you're me, and I'm too fucking trusting.

HADRIENNE TWO

Better to be a good patient than a bad one.

HADRIENNE

Yes, better to be stoical about the vagina than inquisitive. Look how far that's gotten us.

HADRIENNE TWO

(Looking at the worn gown.)

I can't believe this.

HADRIENNE

Great, we've reached the recognition part of abuse, the moral of this narrative. So put your clothes back on, and let's —

HADRIENNE TWO puts on the gown.

HADRIENNE

Oh, great, we've reached the denial part of abuse. My ovaries are doing cartwheels for your abstinence.

HADRIENNE TWO climbs onto the shoddy exam table.

HADRIENNE

Am I really writing this shit? It's like you're a lab rat or some kind of inconvenience. Might as well apologize after you do your own pap smear.

HADRIENNE TWO is struggling to get comfortable. Her legs hang off the table, slightly spread, feet nearly touching the floor.

HADRIENNE TWO

I'm a lab rat. Caged, but open for experimentation.

HADRIENNE

You are caged! What do you think tampons are? "Oh no! She's leaking. Let's plug her up and shut her up!" It's all so farcical.

Enter THE DOCTOR and FEMALE NURSE, both wearing full, rubber Hazmat suits (or budget equivalent garbage bags). FEMALE NURSE is carrying a clipboard and a speculum, which look miniature to the oversized costumes.

THE DOCTOR

Hi...

FEMALE NURSE

(Looking at her clipboard)

Hadrienne.

THE DOCTOR

Hadrienne. I'll be fishing around in your vaginal area today.

FEMALE NURSE

And I'm here to make sure that what he does is legal.

HADRIENNE

The ol' bait-and-switch. Lovely.

THE DOCTOR

Let's get to it then.

FEMALE NURSE

Spread your legs, please.

HADRIENNE TWO spreads her legs.

THE DOCTOR

Book her, Danno.

The two share a laugh.

THE DOCTOR

That joke never tires.

HADRIENNE

Well that explains the gun in your pants...

FEMALE NURSE then grabs a large fuzzy blanket from underneath the table. It's gigantic and awkward.

HADRIENNE

And nothing like a wooly mammoth to cover her insecurities.

HADRIENNE TWO

What is —

FEMALE NURSE

(Placing the blanket on HADRIENNE TWO)

Drape this over your legs and stomach.

HADRIENNE

Yeah, put it over your face while you're at it. They only want to see one of yours today.

HADRIENNE TWO

(Unfolding the blanket)

It seems a little big.

THE DOCTOR

Well, it's either that or "Don't look down!" And we can't have you falling off the table now can we?

THE DOCTOR chuckles while placing a chair at the foot of HADRIENNE TWO.

HADRIENNE

More of a mild jump.

HADRIENNE TWO covers her stomach and legs with much difficulty. FEMALE NURSE is putting an excess of petroleum jelly onto the speculum.

HADRIENNE TWO

Should we go ahead and discuss the problems I'm having?

THE DOCTOR

What sort of problems?

HADRIENNE TWO

Well, I've been having these pains in my pelvis, like really sharp pains.

THE DOCTOR

(Inattentively, pulling the chair closer)

So, menstrual cramps.

HADRIENNE TWO

Not really — well — maybe. No. They're not menstrual. Just, they're different. I've also been bleeding between periods and that's never happened to me before. Is that normal?

THE DOCTOR

(With a look of revulsion)

Mm-hm. Sure. We can talk about all that later.

FEMALE NURSE pulls in a light from off stage. It matches the dramatic spectacle of the other costumes and props for satirical affect. She places it on HADRIENNE TWO, making THE DOCTOR seem “in the dark.”

THE DOCTOR

Okay, I think we're ready.

(Putting his head under the blanket)

Smile nice and big for me... Okay. You'll feel a little pressure...

HADRIENNE

I'd like to know how "little" pressure he'd feel if I poked and pushed and played with the back of his eyes by putting my fingers in his mouth.

HADRIENNE TWO

(Visibly uncomfortable)

It hurts more than usual.

THE DOCTOR

Speculum.

FEMALE NURSE hands him the oozing speculum.

HADRIENNE

I thought you were here to make sure nothing illegal happened! What is wrong with you people?

HADRIENNE TWO

(Recoiling at the insertion of the speculum)

Ouch!

HADRIENNE

Ouch!

FEMALE NURSE

Calm down.

HADRIENNE

You're hurting me!

HADRIENNE TWO

It really, really hurts.

HADRIENNE

Why am I writing this?!

THE DOCTOR

There we go.

(Coming out from the blanket, holding a wiped-clean speculum)

Finished and pulled out. We'll send the swab to the lab and you'll get your results in a few weeks.

HADRIENNE TWO

Did everything look okay? Do I have cancer?

FEMALE NURSE

You'll hear from the lab.

They exit.

HADRIENNE

But my vagina hurts!

HADRIENNE TWO

But my vagina hurts!

Cue 77 Blackout.

END

JENNIFER MANNING

I have nothing to say about myself except — oops — I've already said too much.

GOD'S BLIND SPOT
Hayden Smith

In the waiting room on the second floor of the hospital, sitting in these cheap waiting room chairs, I try not to think about the pain in my balls. I try to read a month old *People Magazine* to keep my mind busy.

The lady that lives next door walks in. Her six-year-old, Emily, is the same pale white she's been since she was three months old. She seems to spend more time here than at home, due to some sodium disorder or something. Every time she goes back home she starts vomiting and passing out. The church is always praying for her and making Ms. Coulyer dinners so she can take Emily to the hospital. She cries and hugs them and thanks them for the attention. The attention always seems to cheer her up. Then she takes Emily to the hospital where she almost immediately recovers. Reverend Johnson said the prayers worked.

But then it's back home. Back to vomiting. Back to the hospital. More prayers. She heals. Goes back home. Back to vomiting. Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

"Mr. Pala," calls a nurse. I stand and follow her down the hall.

"Dr. Stanko will be with you in just a moment," she says as I sit on the table with that awful paper that never completely covers the disease-infested leather.

My roommate, Jaron, took another girl home last night. I saw her drunkenly stumble down the hall. She looked cute. He's lost more weight in the past two months than Jared ever did on his Subway diet but it seems to be helping Jaron get girls that don't look like they take their clothes off for money.

"You remember that Kelsey girl that rejected me a few months ago when I was fat," he said over coffee this morning.

"I remember your sick obsession with her."

"Well, I totally fucked her last night."

"That's cool. I guess whatever sickness you have is helping you avoid those dirty, STD-filled strippers you used to screw. It looks like

it's killing you though."

"I've been shaving my pubes so I can wear my pants lower and show off my hip bones."

"Those hip bones may be helping you in a dark bar but in the light you look like a corpse."

"A skinny corpse," he replied. "I feel like hell, but it might be worth it to get pussy like this."

"You're such a pig dude. How much weight did you say you lost?"

"I'm not a pig. What was it you were bitching about yesterday? Your nuts hurt or something?"

"It's the absolute worst."

"It's probably because you don't get laid enough. Seriously, come out with me tonight and find a girl to help you relieve the pressure."

"Nothing sounds less appealing. I'm going to the doctor today. I think that'll be a little more effective."

"I bet he'll tell you the same damn thing," he said. "Maybe I'll swing by my doc too. I'm fine with losing thirty pounds in two months but I feel like I have the flu or something."

"I bet he'll tell you that you got HIV from one of those girls with daddy issues."

"At least I'm getting laid enough to keep the goods from hurting."

"You're such a fucker dude," I said, shaking my head.

"You are right, good sir," he said, setting down the empty coffee mug and moving towards his bedroom. "And on that note, I'm going to go get rid of Chica."

Stanko is about eighty, eyebrows grayed and growing out in every direction, and more hair in his ears than on his head.

"What's the issue," he asks, pulling his stool closer.

"Well," I pause. "My," I motion to my crotch, "That hurts."

"I see. Well I need you to take your pants off so I can feel for abnormalities."

This is how I wanted to spend my afternoon. With an old man staring intently at my testicles.

“I think I’ve found a torsion, Mr. Pala.”

“I knew it. I have cancer.”

“No no no,” he says, moving away and motioning for me to pull my pants up. “A torsion is like a twist. You have a vein that has been twisted, cutting off the blood circulation.”

“So I have a twisted nut?”

“Basically,” he says. “There isn’t really an antibiotic for it. Just avoid movement for about a week and let it fix itself. If you don’t let it do this it’ll turn into gangrene, so stay on the couch. Also, I’m going to write you a prescription for some pain relievers.”

Sitting there, reading the STD symptom and anti-smoking posters, I await the prescription. Midway through the description of syphilis, the nurse enters.

“Alrighty,” she says without looking up from the chart. “He’s written you a thirty-day prescription for Percocet. You can take these every eight hours —”

“Charlotte! We need you out here,” cries another nurse from the hallway.

“Excuse me just one minute,” she says, handing me the prescription on the way out.

For several minutes all I can hear is people screaming medical terms I’ve never heard. Finally someone says, “Call the time of death.”

I walk out into the hallway. Through the crowd of blue and green scrubs, I see Emily’s body on the ground. Reverend Johnson will be upset that his prayers didn’t work but I guess these things happen. It could be worse. She could still be alive. She could live long enough to have her heart ripped out from one failed relationship after another. She could be twenty-five, working a shitty job that has nothing to do with what she got a degree in. She could end up like me. She got off

easy. It's probably time for me to go home.

On the couch, I pop another Percocet. I'm watching some miserable sit-com. The kid says, "Smooth move, Ex-Lax." Canned laughter. They should sell that on late night infomercials. "All the fun of people laughing at your jokes without the inconvenience of having to be funny."

The kid says, "That went well," and Jaron walks in.

"Do we have any alcohol? I need a drink." His eyes are solid red. He looks like he might have been crying.

"There's a bottle of Jack in the freezer. Will you get me a glass too?"

"Get your own."

"If I move around too much I'll get gangrene in my balls and they'll fall off."

"So I guess you went to the doctor today," he asks, returning from the kitchen with two glasses full of whiskey.

"I basically have a twisted nut," I say. "You know Ms. Coulyer that lives next door?"

"Is her kid sick again?"

"She's dead."

"Oh." He pauses. "How's her mom taking it?"

"I haven't seen her. You going to go comfort her or something?"

"No." He takes a large drink from the glass. No chaser. "You remember joking about me having HIV?"

"Yeah."

"You were almost right," he says, staring into the cup.

"Oh." I pause. "Are you going to call the girl from last night?"

"Maybe. I probably don't have her number."

"Does she have yours? Maybe she'll text you or something."

"I gave her a fake one."

"Do you want a Percocet?"

"Yeah. It goes well with alcohol." He takes it with the rest of the glass.

"You know it's basically curable now?"

"Yeah."

"And even if they can't treat you, it takes at least twelve years to, you know."

"Kill me? Yeah I know. The doctor told me all this. He also told me that the odds of a straight male getting AIDS is one in five million."

I just stare at him, unable to think of anything to say. Sometimes it's better not to try to empathize. Sometimes there's no comparison.

"I finally lose enough weight to get hot girls and it's turns out I'm killing them."

"Hey man, I mean, it's like secrets. If you've got it, might as well spread it."

"Which one of us is a fucker," he asks, almost with a smile. He goes to put the cup away and I turn the TV to the news. Couldn't hurt to watch someone else's misery.

"Shocking news about a local woman," says the Joel Osteen look-a-like behind the desk, with his perfect white teeth and his thousand-dollar haircut. "We go now to our own Cindy Meade with the story."

"I'm going to bed. I just needed to tell someone," he says from behind me.

The camera cuts to the shot of a young brunette in front of the hospital.

"Hi Todd. Behind me is St. Anthony's Hospital where six year old Emily Coulyer died this afternoon."

"Hey wait," I call after him. "They're talking about the girl from next door."

"The shocking part here, Todd, is that police have found evidence to suggest her own mother has been intentionally causing the illness that killed her daughter. No word yet on the motive but psychiatrists are looking into it."

"That's fucked up," Jaron says.

"I remember this from my Psychology class in college. It's called Munchausen's by proxy. It's where a mother makes her child sick to get attention."

"Congratulations. You live next door to a murderer and your roommate has AIDS. We live in God's blind spot." With that he leaves. Maybe to call the girl, but probably not.

I pop another pill with another shot of whiskey and turn my fading attention to the TV. Now it's talking of silly things like the failing economy and celebrity suicide. Don't they realize how silly it is to be concerned with all of these things? Haven't they seen past trying or caring? Ms. Coulter killed her kid and Jaron has AIDS. And maybe I should be grateful that I only have a twisted nut but goddamn I'm tired of this pain in my balls.

HAYDEN SMITH

Hayden Smith is a nineteen-year-old writing student at UT Chattanooga. He moved to Germany at the age of three, where he grew up reading philosophy under a tree in his backyard. He finally moved back to the United States in the year 2000. At this point, he felt that he might also have things to say, so he started writing. Then he found that he didn't really have any philosophies to write, so he switched to fiction. He proved to be a little more talented in this aspect anyways. In his spare time, Hayden also plays marimba at Chattanooga Independent Indoor Percussion Ensemble.

52 LIT

PUTTING IT IN WRITING

Vanessa Parks

I have already chosen to forget this,
even as I take out my pen. I like the sound
of things being scratched out, the tugging
of my nails on my scalp. One day I might end
up like Laura, who wore an ill-fitting wig
because of things like this.

One hundred dollars an hour just to
be told I should meditate more often.
I'll stand outside in the snow and be
conscious of my breath, the same way
I can see Laura's scalp.

This is how we form ourselves,
bound by a self-destructive manifesto.

I keep unraveling this all, pulling
at the hem of my dress, crossing
all this out from the margins.

VANESSA PARKS

Vanessa is a junior from Collierville, Tennessee. She writes because she loves language but feels claustrophobic when thinking about the limitation of verb tenses. She likes airports, cotton fields, and the way old quilts feel on her feet. She supports a woman's right to choose between leggings and pants. You can spot her listening to 90's pop music on her iPod, carrying a bag full of textbooks and a thermos full of Maté.

54 LIT

REWRITING THE ELEMENTS

Martha Hunter

Russian and American scientists have discovered
a new element near the Volga River today
and we are all pretending that it doesn't exist.
The newspaper reported that it just keeps getting
heavier and heavier. No one has stepped up to
claim it. It doesn't have a name. No one wants
something that reminds them of everything else.
To escape, scientists will become astronauts and jump
into space, feel the lightness, move freely the way
my grandmother wishes she could move her hands.
They would never send an older woman into space
unless she was the sister of someone dead and
important. And Walter was only her husband
who flew planes that never went close to space.
He flew to California instead, delivering packages
that were heavy enough for the whole world to
stop answering the door, fearful that another pound
would make its way into our lives. Soon, we will
all deliver packages just to get rid of our own,
going door to door like Girl Scouts or scientists
on the run. And soon, no one's door will ever open
and we will all learn to play poker or Monopoly
because it kills hours and we can sit in our sweats
and laugh about the whole world dying at home.

MARTHA HUNTER

I am a junior at UTC with a double major in English and environmental science. I hope to go into environmental law or discover something cooler along the way. I plan to continue writing past college as it has greatly enriched my life.

56 LIT

SOFT HANDS
Gavin Cross

As I look at the wine glass in your hand grown soft,
The piano, faded brown, grows old and crumples under dust.
You kept Grammys on the shelf once, didn't you?
The way you typed notes on the piano like a writer.
But you no longer remember the taste.
Something we have in common.
Another unfinished story in my lap
Begs for words I once wanted to write.
They now fall through my mind before settling, neglected.
The dust on the piano.
I'm afraid I'll forget the taste of a ten cent pen between my fingers.
I'm afraid the words will ferment in my mouth.
I'm afraid that if I don't finish the story in my lap,
My mind will become a trophy case of empty shelves.
So I look at you,
As you take another sip,
And vow that I will never have soft hands.

GAVIN CROSS

From a university known for its award winning literary writers and caffeine addicted genre writers, I'm best described as a mutt. Sitting in the back corner of the coffee house with my vanilla milkshake, I slave away at literary fiction too plot-driven to be literary, and genre fiction too language-driven to be genre. I'm in literary Switzerland. But I'm okay with that.

THE MOUNTAIN
Case Duckworth

I

The other side of the mountain
is not the mountain. This side
is honey-golden, sticky-sweet,
full of phone conversations with mother.

The other side is a bell,
ringing in the church steeple
the day mother died.

II

The other side of the mountain
is not a mountain. It is a dark
valley crossed by a river.
There is a ferry at the bottom.

III

This mountain is not a mountain.
I walked to the top, but it turned
out only to be a shelf on the way
to the top. I felt like an unused Bible
sitting on a dusty pew.

IV

A hawk soars above me, over the mountain.
She is looking for home.

CASE DUCKWORTH

I'm a junior at UTC studying English writing. I hope to one day be a copywriter or something cool like that, behind the scenes. People usually describe me as "an okay guy if you don't mind that kind of thing." I hope these poems are treated well...warm milk helps them sleep.

60 LIT

SOPHIE'S BOXES
Megan Maier

Box #1

Label: 1975-1985

Contents:

One coffee-stained birth certificate dated April 30, 1975; with the given name "Sophia Silvano Arieti." Parents "Silvio Arieti" and "Pamela Majors."

One family portrait. There is a dark, tall man with a shadow over his face dressed in a black suit and tie. He is standing next to a petite woman with a small smile and tight blonde curls. She is holding a baby with black curls, dressed in a baptismal gown. Standing next to her is a lanky girl, bearing a family resemblance, about the age of eight.

One drawing from preschool. It's a sun, yellow and lopsided, next to a black circle labeled "moon" (presumably by the teacher?).

One chipped Christmas ornament in the shape of a star with the title "Baby's First Christmas."

One report card from the third grade. All A's except in Reading.

One picture of a birthday party. A young girl with thick black hair sits excitedly in front of a rather plain-looking cake. There are friends behind her, all smiling at the camera.

Four pieces of a postcard (one piece is dated 1985). If you put the pieces together like a puzzle, you see a beautiful Tuscan sunset on the front with a message on the back that reads "Sophia! Sono eccitato per incontrarvi nipote! Ti amo! Grandma A."

Box #2

Label: 1990-1995

Contents:

Nirvana's Nevermind, scratched.

One copy of The Florida Times with a massive picture of OJ Simpson's face. It smells like pizza and a couple of pages have been torn out.

A picture of a busty black-haired girl in a Halloween costume (as Agent Scully) with her arm around a boy dressed as Agent Mulder from The X-Files. Both are holding plastic red cups. Standing slightly behind them is a younger black-haired girl, dressed in an outfit that resembles a reporter. (Upon closer inspection of the photograph, she's wearing a nametag that reads "Lois Lane". There is, however, no Superman in the picture.).

A court summoning to testify against Silvio Arieti.

Three blank job applications to McDonalds, Red Lobster and Taco Bueno.

An acceptance letter from Washington State University and Colorado State University.

A letter in sloppy handwriting. Some of the words are smudged. "My family decided to move Sophie. I didn't want to tell you because I know how you worry. I'm really sorry. Can we try this long distance? Love, Jer."

Box #3

Label: 1995-2000

Contents:

An Alcoholics Anonymous pamphlet.

A list of funeral costs for a Pamela Majors. (It's stained on the edge with what looks like wine.)

A copy of The Seattle Times, dated August 21, 1997. The headline reads: "Shocking Death of the World's Beloved Princess Diana".

A brochure for Seattle's greatest tourist destinations stapled to a map of Seattle's downtown area.

A napkin with a phone number on the back and "XO Garrett."

A half-finished crossword puzzle. The words are clearly wrong.

An empty prescription bottle with a note tucked inside. It's nearly illegible, but signed "Mom".

A collectable silver spoon from Las Vegas, as well as a couple of cheap poker chips.

A receipt for a six-pack of Coors, and another illegible item.

Box #4

Label: 1985-1990

Contents:

Madonna's Like A Prayer record, with the case in perfect condition.

A set of copied divorce papers dated April 18, 1988, with the names "Pamela Majors Arieti" and "Silvio Arieti".

A poem, in pencil, half faded, titled "Mrs. Jerry Pinebaker" with a heart encircling the name.

A picture of three girls, all scrawny, about middle school-aged, all in soccer uniforms. The blonde's face is scratched out.

Madison Middle School's 1989 yearbook. It's mostly empty. One message says "HAGS" and underneath that, in parentheses, "Have A Great Summer!"

A crumpled-up bulletin from the Holy Redeemer Catholic Church.

A pair of light blue crystal earrings, studs.

A movie poster from The Breakfast Club.

A seventh grade report card with three C's, one B and one D.

There's a note in red on the bottom. "Sophie seems to be struggling as of late. Please contact me to set up a parent-teacher meeting."

Box #5

Label: 2000-2010

Contents:

A photo of a blond, blue-eyed baby, reaching up toward the camera, dated January 2001 with the note "Doesn't she look like mom?"

A playbill for Wicked from 2006.

A long lock of black hair, tied with a red ribbon.

Ella Fitzgerald's record Ella and Louis.

A copy of The Seattle Times, dated September 12, 2001; "A Day

that Will Live in Infamy: Terrorists Strike the Two Towers."

A pamphlet for skydiving.

A written statement from a doctor; a copy, from the looks of it.

Requesting permission to go on temporary leave from work in order to receive chemotherapy.

A birthday card with another picture of the blond, blue-eyed baby. She's a bit older now, smiling, and she's got a yellow plastic telephone in her right hand. Inscribed: "Sophie, We're so sorry we couldn't make it! Janie tried to call. When you didn't pick up, she insisted on me taking this picture and sending it to you. I do hope you are doing well. Janie loves you so much. Please, don't hesitate to call if you need anything. We're all we've got, remember? I hope you have a wonderful birthday, sis. Love, Annie."

A receipt from San Juan Island Safaris, Seattle, dated July 2008.

A copy of a will dated June 5th, 2009. It's very short.

One other photo, dated 1965. A young couple is standing outside of a soda fountain, arms wrapped around each other, smiling. On the back, it says "Darling, I'm leaving you my favorite picture of myself and your father. I hope it reminds you that there are, without a doubt, happy times. Love, Mom."

MEGAN MAIER

I'm an out-of-practice science girl, that likes to write, on occasion.

Simply put, I'm probably confused.

66 LIT

CRUISE
Jessica Kitchens

It's my high school graduation and I want to remember it with her being happy. I've decided to do something bigger than buying her the latest Singer sewing machine, cashmere outfit in her favorite shade of blue, Nine West t-strap heels, pearl and turquoise jewelry, or the antique Marie Antoinette dolls that she has always dreamed of owning. Sacrificing for these gifts has never gotten anything more than a nose-up "I deserve these gifts so I need not thank you" reaction. These gifts never get taken out of their boxes anyway; she doesn't care to look at them after discovering she owns them. This time I'm deciding to take a non-material route. This time I will buy us an experience — a cruise to the Western Caribbean. It's late April so I will tell her the cruise is a part of her present. I scheduled it so that we will be in Cozumel, Mexico during her birthday on Cinco de Mayo, May 5th. My birthday was April 26th. I didn't get a card.

I'm also inviting my oldest half-sister, Gina. Because she is twenty years older than I am and escaped my mother by retreating to her father's house as a pre-teen, I have been cut off from her for almost my whole life. I recently found her contact information and manipulated a situation to get her and my mother talking again. I will mend this family.

It's the first day on the cruise and Mother is falling in love with the pool. It gives her an excuse to walk around in her tiny neon bikini, graphically exposing herself. I can hear when she comes and goes because she is the only person wearing heels around the pool. They're the white heels I bought for my middle school graduation. They don't fit her.

After a day full of observation we dress ourselves up with skirts and stones. A labyrinth of carpet tessellations leads us to the dining hall. Three artistically made-up women with glowing hair walk toward us and ask if they can join us for dinner. It's an old woman in her eighties with two daughters about Mother's age. Their spirits touch

me as we walk — gently and playfully. We divide ourselves across the rectangular table. I wonder if they're masking anything. Mother doesn't.

"I want my drink!"

The server comes balancing five drinks on his arms. I don't know if he could have handled any more. He serves mother last.

I try to sleep, but realize my body won't allow it. I get up and go outside to pace around the three levels of decks amongst the stillness that is everywhere but in my mind. I see a chained and locked entry to the stairs leading to the very top of the boat. A sign reads: "Caution No Entry. Extreme Wind Speeds." I slide under the chains and make my way up. When I reach the open top deck the freezing wind instantly slams me against a wall. I can feel the skin around my eyes and mouth peeling. My earrings break away and my clothes try to. Taken over by adrenaline, I run against the wind. The first stride pulls me face-first to the deck and my body is blown back against the wall. Adrenaline still pumping, I try again, this time delicately. I crouch down and slide one foot slowly in front of me, trying to maintain my balance and not be blown back by the wind. Each step takes ten seconds. After a few minutes of this, I turn around and let the wind take me. I try to run to keep up with the wind. I can't keep the pace. To keep from falling, I jump and do something I didn't know I could — I fly. The wind keeps me separated from the wooden deck and though my body doesn't feel weightless like I always imagined, it feels free. I crash on the deck and breathe uncontrollably.

It's Mother's second day at the pool. It's not going as well as the first one. She spent it charging first class frozen margaritas and doggy paddling around in the pool just deep enough to keep her hair from getting wet. Today Mother feels seasick. I escort her to the railing in time for her to throw up. Before we get there, she lets it loose, blocking the pool's exit. I pat her back and get up to search for a hose.

"You disgust me! Acting like I'm infectious!" The cruise staff

stares. We're starting to recognize each other.

Day three. We're at our first destination port in Cozumel, Mexico on Cinco de Mayo. My legs pull me quickly off the ship. Once on the Cozumel dock, I look down to see light refracting through the colors of the ocean to what seems like twenty feet deep. We are instantly swarmed with hawkers selling jewelry with Tanzanite stones. They tell Gina that Tanzanite is more rare than diamonds. She wants one for her birthday in June. She shows me her favorite ring and when she walks away I bargain for it. The hawker says, "Not good for business, but good for friends!" I can see mother in the distance buying a ring. We all meet up, hiding our purchases. We walk down the deck, down an asymptote bordering paradise and hell.

At the beach I recruit a group of musicians to serenade Mother with traditional Mexican birthday rhythms on acoustic guitars and an attractive masseur to rub her down. It seems she may be enjoying herself but there's no way to tell.

While waiting on Mother, I give Gina her ring. She's ecstatic and grateful. I've hardly been able to talk to her because Mother gets jealous. Gina tells me how upset she gets every time she hears the things Mother says, and I try to convince her that Mother has an undiagnosed mental condition. Gina apologizes for not getting me anything for my birthday. The sparkle of the Tanzanite on Mom's finger catches my attention. She gets up thanklessly.

Someone walks by and says, "Wow, your daughters are beautiful."

Mother replies, "That's because I'm beautiful."

I skip lunch and dinner to avoid table tension. When Mother returns to the room, I'm brushing my teeth, attempting to suppress hunger. She's distant but the reflection of her glare is next to my face. Her twitching eyelid becomes the only movement in the room. "Get your disgusting ass out of the way, taking up the whole bathroom."

I go to the ship's club and watch a sea of drunkards make their

way around the dance floor, grinding and drooling. I sneak around, skillfully avoiding their affection, and help girls get away from guys I deem gross. I'm frozen by the bass of Beyonce and Shakira's song, "Beautiful Liar." I escape to the washroom, splash my face with gritty water, find five dollars on the floor of a freshly-cleaned stall, and head back to the club.

A boy immediately tries to lead me to the dance floor. I'm so tense that he can't move me without stumbling.

"Relax."

Though I don't value his words, I find comfort in his innocent grip and succumb to his lead. He's unmistakably a dancer. I'm captive to his twirling hands and gripping arms and people blossom out as we glide across the floor. He tells me his name is Brandon and compliments me. I don't believe him but I enjoy him.

After dancing he takes me to karaoke. He sings "Harder to Breathe" by Maroon 5. I'm trying to pay attention to him but I can't stop thinking about Mother. I become overwhelmed and rush toward the door. He runs after me and insists that he escort me. My neck strains. It would hurt to respond.

We move from the karaoke room to the silent midnight lobby. The sound of our footsteps disrupts the tranquility of the crystal chandeliers. The cold breeze whistles through the windows and textures my skin. The smell of Italian spices taunts me for missing dinner. I realize I'm not nervous anymore and I'm glad Brandon is with me.

As we approach the stairwell, I hear the sound of muffled screams above us. Out of instinct, I sprint up the stairs toward it. I approach the third level where our room is and see all the other passengers in the halls, their emotional and vocal disgust filling the long corridor. "This is ridiculous, I'm calling security."

But my mind easily weeds through the voices of strangers and engages Mother's and Gina's.

"Let go! You think you're stronger because you're a fat whore? I'm going to fucking murder you!"

"Agh! I'm going to fucking kill you first you disgusting bitch!"

I push with flat fists and flexed forearms through the dense crowd until I see our brass room number glare above the door frame. My hands convulsively shake as I scrape the key around the door for the keyhole. I can feel my heart beating through the veins of my left hand. Brandon is holding it. I sneak a shameful glance over my hunched shoulder and focus only on his eyes. The key is in. I let go of Brandon so I can get in without him seeing.

I slide into the room, never turning my face to the crowd, my head turned down. I close the door and keep my hands harnessed behind my back. My eyes lead my head up and I observe the color and smell of blood. Walls, beds, and faces are the canvas — painted fingernails the tool. Black hair frames the scene, and red scalps accent it. Gina and Mother's bodies are locked on the floor next to a broken porcelain lamp and a tumbled night stand. Nothing is audible but the vibrations in my ears.

I snap out of shock and jump in.

"Get the fuck away! This is because of you! Gina fucking attacked me because of you!"

"What do you expect? I can't fucking stand to see you treat Jess like that anymore! She's cried herself to sleep every night!"

They continue to prey on each other until I'm able to disjoin them. We sit panting amongst tears, blood, and vile faces. When emotions build too strongly, they leap at each other, but I remain in the middle so I can push them apart. The pattern continues until they pass out from exhaustion. I scan the room and can map the movement that happened before I arrived.

I sneak to the door and pray the cracking of my ankle doesn't wake them. I close the door behind me and my shoulder blades slide down it until I hit the floor. Security never comes. Everyone is satisfied

by the silence, but their screams still echo through my mind. I feel someone coming and my heart strains to beat in rhythm with their steps. A hand gently grazes over my hot forehead and rakes through my tangles. The other takes hold of my wet hands. Brandon. I allow him to pull me up away from the carpet design I studied and memorized. I lead the way to my favorite spot — the very front of the ship. I can feel both our pulses. Hard, irregular, unhealthy. Out of guilt for his stress, I slip out of his sweaty grip and make him leave.

I climb over the safety railing and maneuver to the edge of the ship, muscles unreliable, chills flowing from ankles to ears. Gripping tightly, I study the turbulent waters and wonder if my numbness would protect me.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF INCORRECT SHREDDING

Daniel Myers

I shuffle my emotions into two piles of papers.
I shred the first. The paper shredder is yellow.
I hate the color yellow because I was wearing
a yellow shirt when I dragged and broke my driver
after I hit that golf ball in the rough which cost me
three strokes and inevitably cost me the tournament.
But that was a long time ago and I shouldn't be re-experiencing
that emotion. Today seems as beautiful as a newborn
black cat. That's not the image I wanted to evoke.
The wind scratches the tempestuous sun,
as a teenaged girl rides her red electric scooter
across the sidewalk. I hope she falls and scrapes
her face. If Helen of Troy would have fallen off
her scooter and butchered her face, then no one
would have hurled Hector's baby off the cliff
to be devoured by rocks.

I look down at the remaining pile
of papers and see that I accidentally shredded the emotions
labeled "Unabated Contentment: Do Not Shred"
I cringe. I spent hours separating.
Hours of work always yield to a moment of stupidity.
I separated the emotions I felt after buying my yellow Ferrari
from the emotions I felt after I wrecked it. I separated
the emotions I felt after my wedding from the emotions
after my divorce. Victories from losses. Deaths from births.
I've read about people who shred the wrong pile of emotions.
They live unhappily for a while until their negativity
impels them to slice their wrists.
Right now, death by slicing seems super swell
until I realize that I am too much of a coward

so I take my remaining emotions and line them up
to face the crunch of the yellow paper shredder's teeth.
They shred as if they were like any other pieces of paper.

And then I feel fine. I turn on the television.
The news comes on. A reporter talks about a mom
who dragged her daughter across the ground
until she died. They found over thirty twigs
sticking out of her right leg. The camera then pans
to a tree. It was a decent tree. The sun cast
a strange shadow against the oak, a shadow
too mundane to describe that will probably soon go away.

DANIEL MYERS

I never possessed the knack for writing anything about me without sounding boring or pretentious or pretentiously boring (which is the worst). So if I ever do something extraordinary which would call for an autobiography/memoir like saving twelve kids from a burning building despite the fact that the fire had incinerated all my limbs, I would hire someone else to write it for me. I'd definitely be that guy. See, I'm rambling.

ARTIST: Kevin Hill

TITLE: *You Breath Like A Machine, and She Takes My
Breathe Away, So I'm Concentrated On Forgetting
You Because You Never Once Thought Of Me*

MEDIUM: Mixed Media

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing

Contrain, nothing will last you
at least not long

The Origins of Modern Art

ARTIST: Michelle Leggett

TITLE: *Teapot*

MEDIUM: C-Shino

MAJOR: 3-D Ceramics



ARTIST: Michael Woods

TITLE: *Concubine*

MEDIUM: Oil on Canvas

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing



ARTIST: Austin Reed

TITLE: *Chicago*

MEDIUM: Digital Output

MAJOR: Graphic Design



ARTIST: Katie Holden

TITLE: *Untitled*

MEDIUM: Mixed Media

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing



ARTIST: Catharine Coll

TITLE: *Something is Coming*

MEDIUM: Digital Output

MAJOR: Graphic Design

NEW ULM SCHOOLS



ARTIST: Sara Rouse

TITLE: *Mindscapes*

MEDIUM: Oil on Wood

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing

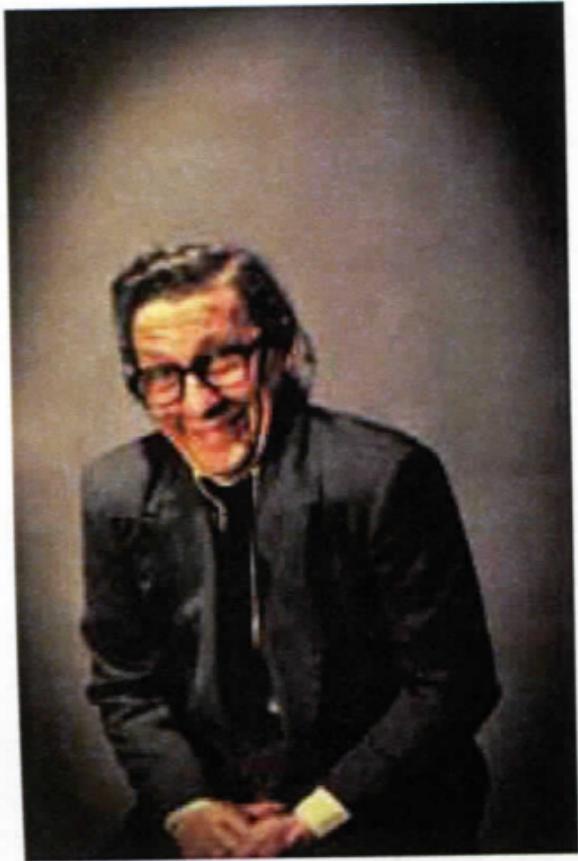


ARTIST: Kevin Swenson

TITLE: *The Directory*

MEDIUM: Digital Photography

MAJOR: Photography & Media Arts



ARTIST: Sarah Leon

TITLE: *Dead Bird Series*

MEDIUM: Oil on Wood

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing

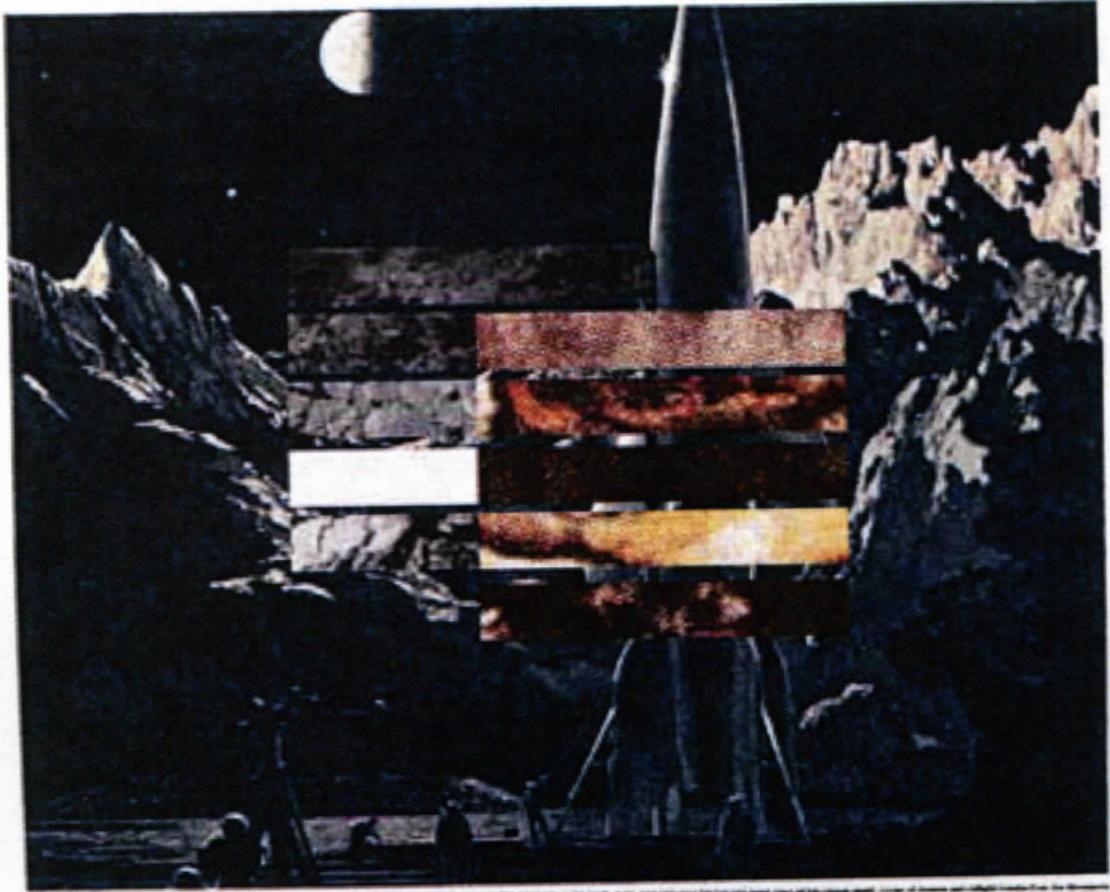


ARTIST: Drew Meyer

TITLE: *When the American Cowboys Sweep*

MEDIUM: Digital Output

MAJOR: Graphic Design



ARTIST: Grant Wood

TITLE: *Zola*

MEDIUM: Charcoal on Newsprint

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing



ARTIST: Laura Winn

TITLE: *The Start of Something New: Six Countries in Twelve Days*

MEDIUM: Digital Output

MAJOR: Graphic Design



BERLIN, GERMANY

Due to some scheduling changes, we were only in Berlin for one morning and one evening. One three-night spent together with our host and a flight to Frankfurt was all we had time for in Berlin, although we had a great group living out in the city, and Morgan made balloon and dinner parties our focus as we. We were all going to say the same, but it was great to find before beginning otherwise.

We arrived in Frankfurt, Germany late and missed our connecting flight, so we stayed a night in Berlin. In a way I was glad for this, as the introduction to a foreign country was from the sounds of a city, and then immediately at that



We left our apartment by the time we reached our hotel, I commented that she had dropped us off on the river, and we took a short walk back to get to it. It was disconcerting to be on the top floor suddenly find yourself in dark, damp woods. The hotel itself didn't have an outside balcony, and was mostly quite modern.

By the time we checked in and got to our rooms, we were relaxed. Despite that we were exhausted, we still had time to go to a nearby bar and hang out with our host and a few other people, though I was the only one in Germany. The wine did us a lot of good, and had been something for days on, and as became a something someone wrote for.

ARTIST: Brianna Bass

TITLE: *Cheese Study*

MEDIUM: Oil on Paper

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing



ARTIST: Robin Seaman

TITLE: *Persistance Enduring*

MEDIUM: Digital Photography

MAJOR: Graphic Design

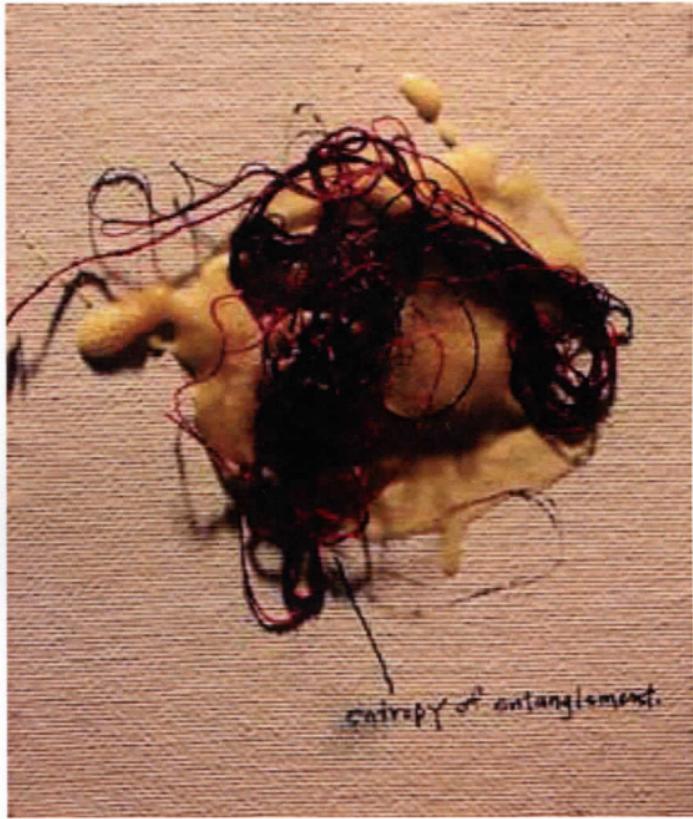
URIN

ARTIST: Gracie Harvey

TITLE: *Untitled*

MEDIUM: Mixed Media

MAJOR: Painting & Drawing



ARTIST: Robert Parker

TITLE: *If I Could Read, I'd Read the Bible*

MEDIUM: Ink Jet Prints

MAJOR: Photography & Media Arts



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Of course, a huge thanks to the brave authors and artists who submitted to *Sequoya Review*. It was a pleasure to read your work and we wish you the best for the future.

And finally, thanks to you, the reader, for choosing this magazine and spending time with the excellent work that has been produced by students at UTC. I hope you enjoyed it!

The Sequoya Review is the arts magazine of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Any student may submit as many literary or artistic pieces as he/she chooses. The manuscripts are reviewed anonymously by an editorial board of staff members. The art is selected in a like manner on the basis of quality and suitability for the magazine. The staff reserves the right to edit the manuscripts for clarity, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

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