

Misericordia University

Misericordia Digital Commons

Instress: A Journal of the Arts

Digital Collections

2024

Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1994 (Fall)

Misericordia University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.misericordia.edu/instress>

Recommended Citation

Misericordia University, "Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1994 (Fall)" (2024). *Instress: A Journal of the Arts*. 60.

<https://digitalcommons.misericordia.edu/instress/60>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Digital Collections at Misericordia Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Instress: A Journal of the Arts by an authorized administrator of Misericordia Digital Commons. For more information, please contact mcech@misericordia.edu.

The background of the entire page is a light, off-white color. It is covered with a dense, chaotic pattern of dark blue ink splatters and thin, curved lines. The splatters vary in size, from tiny dots to larger, more irregular blotches. The lines are thin and appear to be drawn or dripped, creating a sense of movement and spontaneity. The overall effect is reminiscent of a splatter-paint artwork or a microscopic view of a complex network.

instress

fall 1994

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEATH OF A DAISY		JENN FERIOLA	3
WEATHERED	ARTWORK	JENN GARCEAU	3
PAX		DR. JEFF JOHNSON	4
SILENT WEeping		OLIVIA SINCLAIR	5
1: 15AM		MICHELLE EGLESIA	5
ODE TO CHOCOLATE			
CAKE		MARY MULLER	5
THE DANCE		MARY McCUE	6
WRITING		DAN ZALEWSKI	9
UNTITLED	ARTWORK	JOHN ROSS	10
OT VERSUS ENGLISH		BETH McHALE	11
NARROW PATH		JENN GARCEAU	11
JULIET	ARTWORK	DR. STEVAN DAVIES	12
ROMEO	ARTWORK	DR. STEVAN DAVIES	13
THE RIVERS FLOW			
BACKWARD		ALICE McGRORY	14
ONLY		DR. JEFF JOHNSON	20
HURT		KELLY CONWAY	21
A CHILD'S WORLD		MARY MULLER	21
UNTITLED		STEPHANIE CIPRIANI	22
42		DIANE CARLIN	23

FRONT & BACK COVER: DRIP, JENN GARCEAU

Instress has been published by the students of College Misericordia since December 1966. The title, coined by Gerard Manley Hopkins, signifies the moment the reader achieves complete understanding of the written word.

LITERARY EDITOR: Jenn Garceau; EDITORIAL STAFF: Mary Muller; Mary McCue; Kelly Conway; Michelle Eglesia; Kari Pietralczyk,
 ADVISOR: Dr. Jeffrey Johnson.

**ARTICLES OR ARTWORK FROM THIS MAGAZINE MAY NOT BE
 REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE WRITTEN
 PERMISSION OF THE EDITORS AND THE
 AUTHOR OR ARTIST.**



Misericordia



THE DEATH OF A DAISY
JENN FERIOLA

He picked a flower
A daisy from a patch of thousands

But this daisy was wilted
With brown tips and a soft stem

The others bloomed gloriously
But this particular daisy wasn't so young anymore

It knew it's time had come
And so did the old man

So he laid down amidst the young daisies
With the wilted one on his chest
And thought to himself

My life was led, like the daisies
To be beautiful to the viewers eye
To be loved only when I bring joy

But now I am not so pretty
I am isolated

And with that the old, wilted daisy died.

PAX
JEFF JOHNSON

Let peace indeed be
a dove, but find it
as a priestly offering,
limp upon the alter,
with its neck wrung,
bleeding upon the present
to purify the past,
its feathers to be scattered
among the ashes of its flesh
to sanctify the future,
while the smoke and stench,
beyond the butchering and the blood,
burns within my memory
like a spear piercing his side.

THE SILENT WEEPING
OLIVIA SINCLAIR

A child so frail and subdued
Holding her silent tears,
The feelings that grow to fears.

She hides longing for a joyful day
In a culture so filled with hate,
Seeing the world through her bleeding heart
Ached by the escalation of a companions fate.

1 : 15am
MICHELLE EGLESIA

Seduction shrouded in a black veil
whispers sweetly in my ear.
I listen intently, I want to submit
to everything--to anything.
Hold on to that ideal, the words are all I
have
Now that I'm cold and alone
left to decipher
The empty words and promises
of the one beneath the black veil.

ODE TO CHOCOLATE CAKE
MARY MULLER

dark, delicious delicacy,
soft and scrumptious snack,
tasty, tempting tidbit,
delightful and delectable dessert,
satisfying, savory sweet,
A creamy chocolate cake.

catastrophic, classic calamity,
demanding and decadent disaster,
embattled, entrapping enticement,
drugging and digestible downfall,
controlling, corpulent calorie,
A creamy chocolate cake.

THE DANCE
MARY McCUE

It was Halloween in Island Park. That night of all nights when mere mortals take on the facades of incredible beings and spirits are able to walk the streets undetected. It was 11:00p.m. and all the little ghosts, goblins, witches, mini-lawyers and monsters had retreated to their homes to enjoy the sweet treasures that they had collected during the course of the evening. Only the "bad" boys and girls were out walking the streets causing trouble. I was just passing through.

I am a modern day nomad and storyteller. I have no home. However, on nights such as that one, I see the most fantastic things hapen. The most fantastic things.

That night I saw Damian sitting in the park. He was a lone silhouette among the abandoned swings. He sat there, looking at but not seeing me. His fists were greasy and hung limply in front of his eyes. Every now and again a breeze would claim a stray couple of strands and make them twist, dance and fall on the shoulders of his white sweatshirt. His blue jeans hung loosely on his small frame. There was a large hole in the left leg. A bony knee peaked out from the denim.

Someone was playing music far away. The wind snatched random notes and carried them to my ears. Gradually the sounds began to flow and magnify in intensity as the music got louder. It was as if the wind and music were one and the same. They were united in an eternal embrace, dancing quicker and faster, closer and closer. Leaves and stray twigs joined in the macabre ballet. They swirled around my feet and chased each other over in Damian's direction.

Damian leapt to his soles at the sight of the animated dirt and discarded nature. The wind began to spin more furiously around the tall figure. Soon it took the form of some bizarre cyclone. Twisting and turning, faster and faster around the boy but not affecting him. Suddenly the freak tornado skipped, took brief flight and landed next to Damian. It grew larger and blew stronger until suddenly it stopped.

The silence was so thick I could hear only the blood pounding in my ears. The twigs and leaves fell to the floor. They surrounded the leather clad feet of a man. My eyes followed his form from the tips of his toes, up all six feet eleven inches of his black clothed body, and rested on his jet black hair. What I could see of his features were handsome enough. Although he looked sickly pale, he did not look ill or malnourished. A toothy smile flickered on his large mouth. His face looked deadly white contrasted with blood-red lips. He was an unwelcomed vistor from a dark place and he was not going to return empty handed.

"Why do you have to make such dramatic entrances? You scared the shit out of me," Damian stammered holding his chest.

"You were expecting, maybe . . . the devil," The vistor replied quietly. "You should be more careful with the company that you keep, Damian-mi-boy," he added sarcastically.

"Yeah, okay, whatever. Let's just get this over with okay? I want to go to bed." Damian looked around hastily.

"Understandable. Don't worry, my nervous friend. All in good time. Now, did you do as I had asked?"

"Of course. I dug the hole in the old churchyard just like you said, three and a half feet by nine feet, six feet deep. Just like the grave in the cemetery." Damian took a cigarette out of his pocket and lit the end with a match, the man in black smiled.

"You've picked up a nasty habit since our last encounter, I see." Damian had met with the man twice before. Once last Halloween and again on Christmas eve. The first meeting was an incredible mistake, one that the teen had hoped never to repeat.

He and his fraternity brothers had congregated in an abandoned cemetery in order to fulfill an initiation rite. They had gone to where the corpse of their founding brother lay. Damian remembered the foggy night. It had reminded him of one of those cheesy Friday the Thirteenth movies that ran on PBS during Halloween. The trees had looked like tortured prisoners, reaching out with long groping fingers trying to prevent anyone from entering the sacred burial ground. The brothers had formed a circle around one threatening headstone. The six foot column of dark granite stood sentry over the marshy lands.

There were thirteen brothers dressed in black, purple and white. They escorted five blindfolded pledges. Jack, whom had acted as master of ceremonies, instructed the five blinded young boys to enter the circle. With the aid of some of the other brothers, the boys placed themselves in a small circle around the base of the grave marker. Their young, pale faces looked sightlessly to their future brothers. The larger circle began to turn. Mingled voices began to chant uniform Latin phrases. The wind grabbed the sounds and carried them outward. As in the park, the air began to blow faster, stronger, and more furious. Earth and grass were plucked from the ground and twisted into a cone above the gravestone. Strangely, the Latin verses were not dominated by the roaring wind. Instead they seem to have been amplified by the torrent, taking on lives of their own.

The circle kept turning and turning. Damian remembered feeling incapable of stopping the motion. The brothers moved in a maddeningly quickening pace; they looked as if they were playing a morbid and obscene version of "Ring around the rosy." Michael, one of the pledges, was frightened by the noise of the supernatural wind. He tore off his blindfold, turned, looked heavenward, and stared into the cyclone. Suddenly, all color drained from his cherub-like face. He grabbed his chest and fell to the ground. Damian caught a glimpse of the boys features. An expression of fear and horror was frozen there. In one swift motion the cyclone lifted itself off the mass of granite and danced around the paralyzed boy. Soon the human form was no longer distinguishable from the swiftly moving air. Then it stopped.

Debris fell to the ground. There was a hole where Michael had fallen. No Michael. He had simply disappeared. That night the brothers had searched throughout the cemetery and even in the surrounding wood, but there was no trace of their brother. They had erected a small memorial to Michael, but his disappearance still plagued their dreams.

The Christmas eve Damian encountered the man in black. The boy had gone to the cemetery alone to pay his respects at the last place Michael had been. The pledges face had been burned into his memory and he felt he would never be allowed to blissfully forget it.

The man in black had quickly materialized above the hole in front of the gravestone. He had smiled at Damian. Not friendly though. It was more like the smile that a fox might give a startled rabbit upon their last meeting. He told Damian that Michael was not dead. Well, not dead in the sense that everyone thought he was. He pointed to the gravestone. Gradually, the rock became slightly transparent. It looked like a massive crystal prism. Inside was Michael, still blindfolded, imprisoned. The man said that Michael's soul was too pure to be committed to the land of the damned. His release would come, only if a true grave had been dug. This is when he gave Damian the instructions to excavate some earth in the old churchyard. He gave the boy the precise dimensions and told him to do it on the anniversary of Michael's disappearance. Then he vanished, as quickly as he had fabricated.

Here they were again, almost a year later. Face to face. "So, are you going to let him go? I did what you told me to do," Damain said.

"First let me pose a question. If you owned an acquisition that proved to be a valuable possession would you sell out to the lowest bidder?"

"What? I don't get it. No, of course not. but what has that got to do with anything? We had a deal remember?" Damian was getting a little frustrated and really scared.

"Well, you cannot get something for nothing. Though, I like to play fair. Hypothically speaking, of course, if given the choice, would you pick life or death?"

Damian stared at the man before him. I could not understand why he didn't run like hell. Maybe it was his fool's belief in young invincibility or maybe he comprehended his fate. He said, with all the courage he could muster, "I would choose life, of course." Then he took a long, deep drag on his cigarette. The red embers burned closer to his fingertips, racing to his lips.

The man laughed. His smile widened, "I thought you might pick that one. But, you know, my friend, the living breathe much sweeter air." Then he lifted up his arms, commanding the atmosphere. The black cascade of air enveloped the stunned teen. The wind picked up again. The cyclone reappeared. It reclaimed its dizzying pace and began to move off toward nowhere, where it had first come. Simultaneously, in an old abandoned graveyard, a massive pillar of granite burst open, releasing a horror stricken, coughing, choking, blindfolded young man.

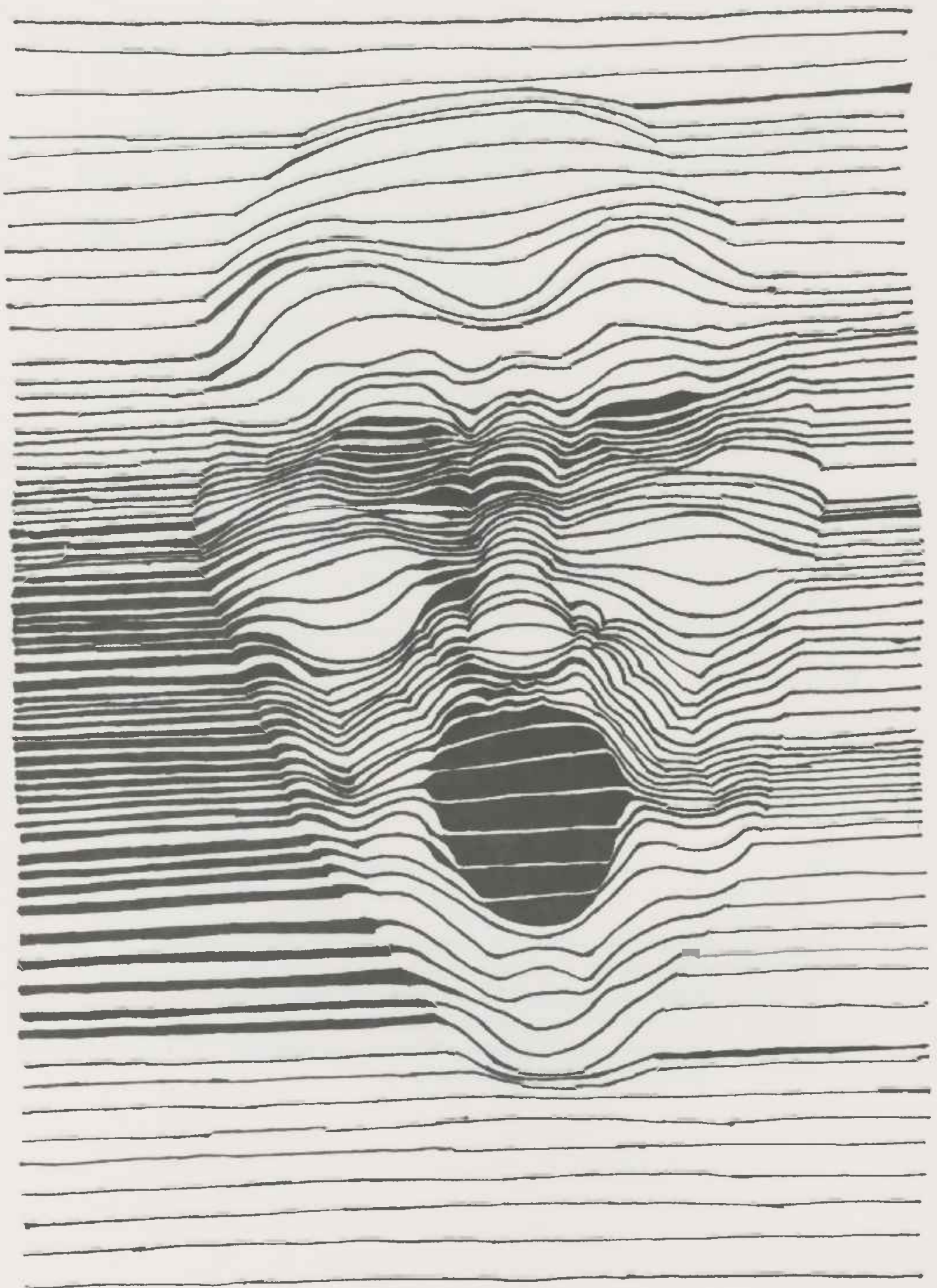
A mound of earth appeared in the old churchyard where a deep hole had been.

I retrieved my bag from the ground and moved on.



WRITING
DAN ZALEWSKI

Abstract thoughts of blue, yellow, and green.
Abstract feelings of peace, reluctance and anger;
On paper come together in stories of shy sadness;
cowardly heroes, and placid envy.

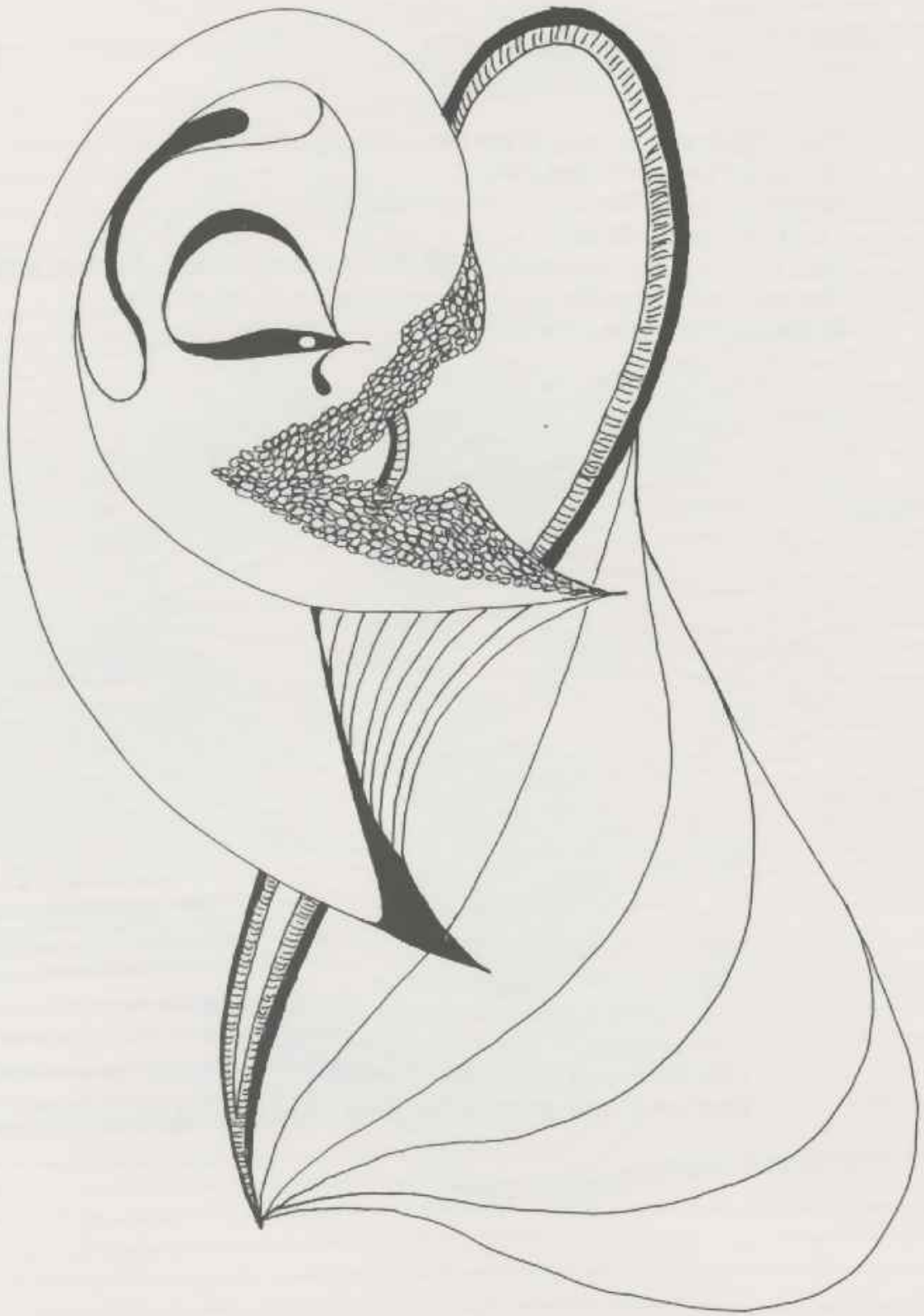


NARROW PATH
JENN GARCEAU

The thought of you clung to my blood like a particle of oxygen.
Without it I am weak and bitter.
Somedays it goes unnoticed, yet now and again
I try to starve myself of it.
As it lurks around I become angered, dizzy and my temples begin to ache.
The heart races to pump those tiny particles out of my system.
Replacing them with some other form.

OT VERSUS ENGLISH
BETH McHALE

I have no time for poetry
I am a scientist slash therapist
I write facts, degrees, observations, hypotheses
I have no time for metaphor, rhyme, analogies
I run the race of precision and deadlines
How can I write poetry when goals and a plan are my needs.





THE RIVERS FLOW BACKWARD
by ALICE McGRORY

For of mortals there is no one who is happy.

-Medea

Sally knocked on the door of her daughter's bedroom. The rhythmic thumping from inside ceased.

"Come in," Melissa sang.

Sally stood in the doorway. Sixteen-year-old Melissa sat on a mat on the floor, her wraithlike thinness sheathed in black leotard. She resumed her sit-ups, bobbing up and down mechanically.

"Nine-ty-eight-nine-ty-nine-what-is-it-mother," she panted.

"I'm going out for a while, to do some shopping, errands, see Grandma. I thought you might like to come," asked Sally.

"I can't." Melissa laid back on the mat. Her hipbones pointed heavenward like arrows, her rib cage pleated the spandex of her leotard. Sally averted her eyes. "I'm not nearly finished. I still have the stairmaster to do. And I thought I might go for a bike ride later."

Sally sighed. "Okay," she said brightly. "Need anything while I'm out?"

"No . . . oh wait, I'm almost out of rice cakes . . . get me some, okay? The plain kind."

"Okay, honey." Sally bent to kiss her, but Melissa crossed her matchstick arms behind her head and resumed her rhythmic contortions, jerking as if compelled by invisible strings.

"Children of alcoholics often exhibit eating disorders. Your daughter has what is called anorexia nervosa. She has classic symptoms, physically and psychologically." Dr. Burden was large, block-like, with large incisors which gave him the look of a beaver.

"I . . . I don't understand. I've been in recovery since Missy was six! She can barely remember my drinking," Sally said.

Dr. Burden's beaver mouth opened. "Oh, she remembers. And the foundation was laid long before." He shifted in his chair. He smiled, baring his incisors. "The good news is, we can help her. Uh--," he looked down at the file before him--,"where is the father?"

"On the West Coast. He remarried four years ago. Two years after the divorce."

"Yes. Well, well."

That was six months and fifteen pounds ago. Melissa was a canny scientist, calculating calories taken in versus calories expended, rigorously vigilant as to grams of fat, carbohydrate and protein. Eating, or not eating, consumed her. She knew that tapping her foot and blinking her eyes in biology class burned off most of the eighty calories in the apple she had eaten at lunch.

She prepared elaborate meals, cream sauces and souffles, three layer cakes and mouth-watering pies which she wouldn't eat but laid before her mother like a cat proudly depositing a bloody mouse at the doorstep. She hadn't eaten ice cream in a year.

Sally sighed deeply. The panic of six months ago had settled into a bleak routine of appointments, counseling, therapy. Life went on, however, inconveniently. Today she had some things to do, it was Saturday--grocery shopping, some odds and ends at K-Mart, pick up the dry cleaning, go see Mother. She pocketed her mental list and started the car, backing neatly out the drive. She drove at exactly the speed limit. She crossed the river which had been her childhood playground without glancing at it, driving along the manicured banks abloom with cherry blossoms. If she hurried she could get to the rehabilitation center in time to help Mother with lunch.

She parked along and entered the pink and grey stone building. She clattered through the bright halls, smiling at familiar faces. Breathless, she entered room 203.

"Hi, Mom." Her mother sat regally in bed, her head turned, gazing out the window toward the river. A nurse busily fussed with her lunch tray.

"Hi, Flossie," Sally greeted the nurse. Sally noticed the orange Posey vest restraining her mother. Flossie saw her look.

"Confused today," she mouthed, pointing to her temple.

"Oh. Okay, I'll help her."

Flossie thanked her and bustled out, Sally set to the task of opening the plastic containers which held juice and tea and vanilla pudding.

"Mom,? Are you hungry?"

"No. I am not. I thought you'd never come." Her bluish lips were set in a thin line, her vein-roped hands picked at the coverlet. Sally steeled herself. A lifetime of perceived injustices had embittered her mother, an unhappy, dissatisfied woman. Now it seemed as if the vitriol she had once spewed at those about, had finally turned inward, poisoning her a little at a time. Gangrene had set in her right leg, which had been amputated a year ago. A series of small strokes had left her mind in disarray. Sally visited every day, sometimes taking her home for weekends when she felt strong enough.

"C'mon, Mom. Look. Cottage cheese and fruit. Small curd, just like you like it," Sally coaxed.

"I don't want it. Just fix the tea. Is there lemon?" Her claw-like hands trembled as she tried to raise the plastic thermal cup to her lips. The hot liquid slapped against the rim. Sally steadied the cup for her, held it to her lips. The old woman sipped. Then she shook her head, fell back on her pillow.

"Where is Sarah? And Mother? Why doesn't Mother ever come to see me?"

Sally sighed. Her mother's confusion, once a source of consternation, no longer appalled her.

"What about me?" Sally offered. "I'm here. Aren't I enough?"

"You . . ." her mother hissed, "You've been nothing but an embarrassment

to me your whole life. You think I don't know what you're up to! Well I do!" She became agitated, lurching against the restraint, kicking the coverlet off her legs. Her shriveled stump jerked spasmodically. The old woman looked down and spied the empty space where her lower right leg had been. Her eyes widened with horror. "Oh. . .oh my God, my God. My leg! Where's my leg?"

"Mom, Mom. Relax, Mom. It's okay. You're leg's in the closet."

Her mother sat back, mollified. "Oh," she said. "Alright then."

Sally stood and tucked her tee-shirt in her jeans. "Well, Ma, I have to go. I'll be back tomorrow."

"Yes, yes. Thank you so much for stopping by. Do come again." She drew herself up haughtily. Sally hugged her mother's bony shoulders and kissed her averted cheek. A hot rush of tears seared her eyes.

"Bye Mom, I love you."

Her mother didn't answer.

Sally selected a cart and entered K-Mart, the electric door shutting behind her. Too late she noticed the cart's defective wheel, which swiveled wildly, making steering an effort. She pushed the vibrating recalcitrant cart to the lingerie department. She routed through the white Jockey-for-Her, searching for size six. Five, five, five, seven, seven, seven. No six. Looking up she spied a woman in her mid-thirties pushing a cart with a little girl of about three years in the child's seat. There was something familiar about them-- the set of the woman's chin, the turn of her head, the toddler's cherubic face. The little girl's cheeks were smeared with the dirt of an Oreo, the soggy remains of which she dropped on the floor, wide green eyes staring at Sally. They turned down an aisle. Sally looked after them, vaguely disturbed. She shook her head and resumed her search.

She saw them again, in domestics. The woman caught Sally's gaze and Sally saw a quickly veiled glint of recognition. The toddler was crying, tossing skeins of yarn into the aisle. "Eileen!" the woman snapped. "Stop that this instant." She bent to retrieve the yarn, and when she rose, Sally noticed the shadow of a bruise on her cheek.

"Katie?" Sally said hesitantly. The woman ducked her head quickly and pushed away.

Sally's stomach knotted and her knees felt rubbery. She left her cart and almost ran out of the store, into the glare of the parking lot. Hot, sour vomit burned the back of her throat. She found her car and slumped into the driver's seat. Memory flooded back.

The McGees had moved to Willow Street when Sally was ten. They lived two doors up on the same side, moving into half a double left vacant by the death of old Mrs. Dunleavey, who was the first dead person Sally had personally known. One day she was in her garden, tending to her peonies, the next she was dead. A sign went up proclaiming "House for Rent". A week later the McGees

moved in. A battered truck pulled up, followed by a dilapidated blue station wagon filled with children. There were five. A girl, about Sally's age, three boys in graduated sizes like nesting dolls, and an angel-faced toddler of about two years. Sally put on her ball-bearings and rumbled up and down the macadam, watching surreptitiously as the worn sofa, cheap lamps, bunk beds, victrola, television and rabbit ears were deposited in the house. The girl eyed Sally as she skated languidly up and down. Finally she halted.

"Hi," she said. "I'm Sally. Sarah really, but everyone calls me Sally."

"I'm Katie. We just moved in."

"I know that, dummy. I've been watching all day!" They grinned at each other.

They became fast friends in that prepubescent summer. They were both going into the fifth grade. They both hated boys, loved to read and roller skate. Sally showed Katie the river, where they spent long summer days playing Lewis and Clark Expedition, exploring the banks and shallows of the lazy meandering Susquehanna. They hiked to the strippings, searching for rocks for their respective collections, which consisted largely of coal in its various forms, quartz and fossils and fool's gold.

One day they discovered a nest of Mallard ducklings in the rushes of the river bank. The mother was nowhere to be seen. The girls waited patiently for the mother duck's return, but finally decided that she must be dead or at least grievously injured somewhere, for what else could account for such unnatural behavior? Sally and Katie adopted the ducklings, nine of them, taking them home to Sally's garage.

They placed them gingerly in a box filled with soft rags, grass, and rushes, and lovingly tended them, attempting to feed them insects, stale bread crumbs, and saltines. But the ducklings refused to eat, and one by one they died. Saddened yet undaunted, the girls scoured the neighborhood for shoeboxes and tenderly laid the downy corpses in their cardboard coffins. They held a funeral service every day for a week, taking turns officiating, gravely intoning,

"Glory be to the Father, and the Son

and the Holy Ghost,

As it was in the beginning, is now and

Ever shall be,

World without end. Amen."

Then they would sing "Alleluia, He is Risen", or some other appropriate hymn. On the seventh day they had to bury the remaining three ducklings in a mass burial, as Sally's mother had detected a decided stench emanating from the garage.

Sometimes they would take Katie's little sister, baby Eileen, for a walk in the stroller. She was a sweet, contented child with an angelic countenance, blond curly ringlets and huge green eyes. She never cried, not even when they accidentally dumped her going off the curb. She laughed delightedly, thinking it was a game.

Sally's mother didn't like the McGees and merely tolerated Katie. Her lips tightened when Sally brought Katie home, treating her coolly though cordially. Once Sally asked her mother why she disliked the McGees.

"They're shanty," she sniffed.

The McGees were poor, poorer than Sally's family. Mr. McGee drank, and sometimes the whole street could hear the fighting, loud shouts through open screened windows. Katie's father would slam out of the house and screech away in the old blue station wagon. Katie's mother attempted to hide her bruises with make-up.

Sally marvelled at the violence. Arguments in her house were accomplished by hissed accusations and days of deafening silences, in which her parents would speak to each other through her.

"Sally, tell your father that dinner is ready."

"Sally honey, tell your mother I'll be going out tonight."

Sally concluded that class must be measured by the decibel of the argument.

School started, and Sally stopped for Katie each morning, sitting on her front step singing "Caall for Kaaateee." Katie would come bounding out and they'd be off, giggling. Some days Sally walked alone, however, since Katie missed a lot of school. Her mother would open the door a crack.

"Katie won't be going today."

"Okay!" Sally would pipe, and scoot off. She was a little afraid of Katie's mother.

But Katie never missed Mass. Every Sunday she was there, her good coat too tight across the back, her bony wrists protruding from the too-short sleeves. She knelt ramrod straight, her eyes rolled heavenward, her lips moving in silent prayer. The other kids made fun of her, but her sister Sheila nodded approvingly at her piety. Sally stuck up for her. She knew why Katie prayed.

Katie's father stopped coming home. Sally asked where he was and Katie said quickly, "Oh, he's working. In New Jersey. He'll be home next week."

Sally knew she was lying.

Katie came out less and less often, making excuses that she was babysitting, or doing chores. One morning Sally called for her and Mrs. McGee stuck her head out the door. Her blue-black hair was wild, her face was pale and puffy. Blue veined circles made half-moons under her unfocused eyes. Her lips were smeared unevenly with blood-red lipstick.

"Katie won't be going," she whispered almost inaudibly.

Katie avoided Sally, or seemed to. Sally rarely saw her. She went over to Maureen Kelly's after school. One day she skated up Willow Street. She saw Mrs. McGee standing on the front porch, staring at the sky. Sally squinted to see what she was looking at, but saw only the sun in a cloudless late autumn sky.

"Hi, Mrs. McGee," she said.

The woman didn't move or respond. She seemed to be listening intently.

Three weeks later Sally walked home from school in a driving rain. It had been raining without cease for two weeks, an insistent, relentless rain which fell from a leaden sky. The sleepy river rose. Willow Street watched nervously as the racing river crept up its banks.

Sally turned the corner onto Willow Street. Police cruisers, an ambulance and a black station wagon marked "Coroner" blocked the street. Clutches of neighbors stood solemnly under mushroom of umbrellas, talking in hushed voices. Sally pressed forward. A yellow tape stretched across the sidewalk. Through the rain Sally could see Katie and her brothers in the back seat of a police car. Katie's eyes were rolled heavenward, her lips moved in what Sally knew to be silent prayer.

"What happened?" Sally asked weakly. Mrs. Gaughan from up the street turned.

"The little girl. The baby is dead."

Mrs. McGee had called the ambulance. When they arrived they found her quietly rocking, humming, cradling the bloodless child in her lap. Mrs. McGee had stabbed baby Eileen eleven times with a kitchen knife.

Two days later the floods came. Angry brown water roiled over the river banks, surging through the streets. They sought safety on higher ground. When the waters receded, Willow Street was gone. Houses were twisted heaps, lifted and tossed as though a petulant god had tipped a monopoly board. Only the cracked foundations remained, filled with stilling mud and debris. Sally moved to a different neighborhood, another school. She never saw Katie again.

Sally cried, her forehead pressed against the steering wheel. Wailing sobs erupted from somewhere deep inside her chest. She cried, she cried, a river of tears. She cried for all the ruined little girls.

At length she stopped, exhausted. She drew a deep staccato breath. The soft spring air wafted through the car window, drying her tears. An inquisitive ladybug flew in the open window and landed on the dusty dash. Sally watched it for a few moments, then gently extended an index finger. The ladybug climbed aboard. Sally pointed her finger out the window and blew softly.

"Fly away home," she murmured. She watched as the tiny insect bravely flew away, its polka-dotted wings a blur. She started the car, shifted into first. Let's see, she thought, there's an AA meeting at three, she could make it if she took the boulevard. And the cleaners was on the way.

ONLY
JEFF JOHNSON

There's too much
of me
When you're not
here

Empty glasses, rumpled napkins and a crusted
plate, the remains of my hunger only

Only the monotony of my own thought
to push back doubt
only the groove of my own voice
to clear away silence

only my image
my hands
my breath
disturbing
the mirror, the clock, the dust

When you're not
here and
there's too much
of me

HURT
KELLY CONWAY

It comes from within, it screams in capital letters.
It's taste is sand, it's touch like salt in a
Wound. When I am awake it fidgets my hands, dances in
My stomach and pounds upon my head. When I am asleep
It lurks in my dreams and tosses me about.

It is my constant follower. There is no way for me to
Escape the hurt you have caused.



A CHILD'S WORLD
MARY MULLER

Forsaken in an icy box on an empty street,
a stiffening infant cries.
Mercilessly, the decaying shell of an
innocent soul screams.
Angry, thoughtless insults crushed into
a hungry mind, echo.
Silently a tainted angel in a parent's
grasp, falls.
Mimicking hands longing for acceptance,
destroy.
Murderously, a desperate voice torn
from the womb, dies.
Preoccupied with success, closing blind
eyes, I become an accomplice.

UNTITLED
STEPHANIE CIPRIANI

As the candle flickers
in the soft night breeze,
She moistens her lips,
which dried so quickly.

The bare wall annoys her,
as she wipes her tearing eyes.

the bottles lay scattered
upon the cluttered floor.

She knocks over the lamp
which did her no good,
then smashes the bottle

that started it all.

If he ever comes back
she'll go to him the same.

If he ever comes back . . .

he'll never come back.

DIANE CARLIN

The Beatles, A Clockwork Orange, the Latin Club's Orgy, Rosemary's seances, my fashion show in Ted's leather jacket and dog chain belt, the John Birch Society, my father's rifle collection, 2001: A Space Odyssey, your red and black bedroom, your convertible bookcase/bar (Shakespeare outside, mixers inside), The Purple Haze, Aunt Lorraine's highballs and face lifts (once, twice, three times a hag), e. e. cummings, the reel tape sessions, the Drawer of Conquerings (mom was not amused), Mantle Orator, a purseful of Darvons, A Christmas Cherry under the tree, unique Toni Jo of oriental beauty and mensa, the small death I watched you suffer when you parted.

How I missed you when you had to leave. Sometimes escaping out your third floor bedroom window, to the porch roof, and you were gone. You left one desperate situation to marry the wife from the "House of the Unfaithful" whose irresponsibility would eventually hand you over to death. I forgot how much fun it was to have you around big brother.

And if you died for me would you wish you could come back?

Happy Birthday to you.
Happy Birthday 42.
I picked out your casket.
Happy Birthday 42.

Love,
Kiddo

