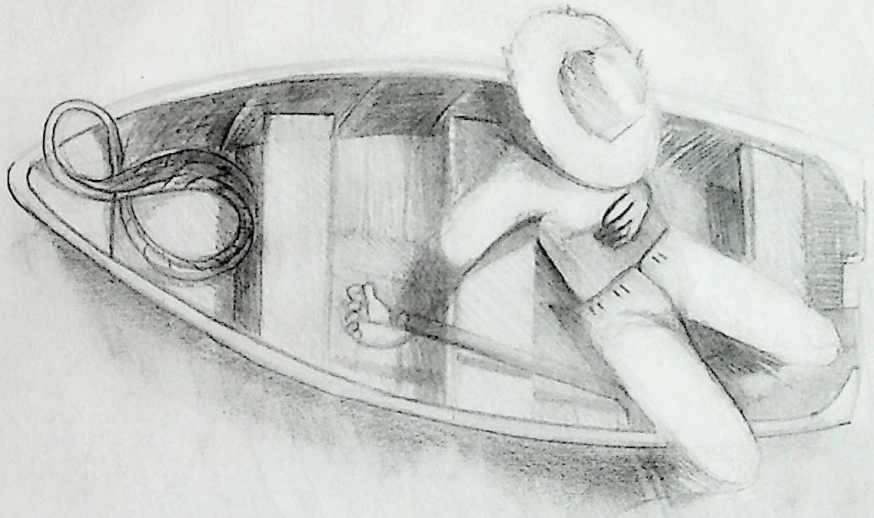
# GROUNDSWELL



# Groundswell

Spring 2007

**UB's Magazine of Literature and the Arts**

**Featuring Fiction, Poetry, Non-Fiction, Art, and Photography**

## Fiction


| | |
|---|---|
| Nikolus Cook | Redbird.....9 |
| Ryan Gelguld | Purgatory Opening.....20 |
| Angela Barbier | The Pull of Darkness.....30 |


## Poetry


| | |
|---|---|
| Danielle Barse | Drinking Time.....7 |
| | Fat Girl.....28 |
| Nedjine Marcel | Your Deepest Fear.....18 |
| Angela Barbier | Gods of Old.....19 |
| Jennifer Marine | The Day to Come.....35 |
| Kyle Stadelhofer | Morning Resources.....36 |


## Non-Fiction


| | |
|---|---|
| Ellen Roberts | Confessions of a Meat Eater.....24 |
| Chris Clarke | Some Things Never Leave.....37 |


## Photography


| | |
|---|---|
| Tara Minopoli | Haunted.....8 |
| | Caffeine Love.....13 |
| | Foam Toes.....26 |
| Heather Weber | Grand Canyon Through Glass.....23 |
| Ashley Koval | Piano.....15 |
| | Lids.....33 |
| Britney Angers | Light.....31 |
| Chris Clarke | The Hands of Belfast.....40 |
| | Linda Clarke.....45 |


## Art


| | |
|---|---|
| Nikolus Cook | Gumdrop.....10 |
| | Realization.....19 |
| | Tortoise.....25 |
| | Conundrums.....36 |
| | Chase.....48 |
| Hernan Restrepo | Café Amour.....21 |
| | Stargazing.....29 |
| | Memories.....47 |

Letter From the Editor:

From the earth itself, a new *Groundswell* has arisen, and I present to you our re-inaugural Spring 2007 issue. The students have focused on both real and fictional experiences, blending the boundaries of poetry and narrative, personal essay and short story. If there is a theme that emerged from the students, it was their struggle against death, deception, alienation, and personal demons. I was surprised at the consistency of this motif that crossed boundaries and genres, and pleased that they have expressed those struggles in the written and visual arts.

However, I was not surprised by the number of quality submissions we received. The University of Bridgeport's variety and diversity of student accomplishment is well known. I am pleased to provide a forum for a few of these efforts.

I would like to thank the advisory board who helped make the assessment process easier, and all the contributors who made this issue possible. I look forward to the 2008 issue and encourage all of our talented students to submit next year.

- Eric D. Lehman, English Department

**Drinking Time**

A cosmopolitan of jet streams
have crossed over in the ripe sky;
we live apart with our identities,
we tango together with charisma,
separate wires of souls:
art, wit, music, and comedy.

We merge our tangled interests
consumed with narcotics and wisdom,
we triumph over jealousy and tears
with laughter that echoes through the ocean.
Memories freshen our consciousness,
as the rope of future nears and splits.

These coffee lives intertwine only to be torn
apart by the ticking essence of time,
and I am left to finish the story.

- Danielle Barse

"Haunted" by Tara Minopoli

# Redbird

By Nikolus Cook

A red breasted bird sat listlessly gazing at the branch of a tree across the street. There sat a young, slender creature naively twittering songs about how nothing ever really changes. The belly of the red bird burned as he edged back and forth on his lonely switch. He stared hoping, as one always hopes when looking at a beautiful woman, that she would feel his eyes and turn to stare back at her admirer. She did no such thing. She crooned on while he lovingly tortured himself, still working his way up and down his branch in nervous jumps. He fluttered his wings, hoping the sound would catch the butterfly that was her attention. She still did not look. She did, however, rustle the feathers of her neck in that cozy little way that birds often do. His tiny defenseless heart leapt.

It was spring and there were the slightest fringes of flowers seeping through the hard buds on the trees. The buds obscured the red little bird's view of the sky, the ground, and everything else besides the perfect ornament, delicately placed in a tree across the street. Her song had long since ended, but the ears of a little red bird whom she did not know burned, and would continue burning forever, from a song she naively sat singing. Hidden in an array of infant flowers, a little red bird sat waiting for fate to fulfill itself. She was waiting, too. It was spring and she was a lovely girl who just turned of age after a childhood spent on fairy tales. She was waiting for a gallant man to fly to her with a whirlwind in his wake. She wanted desperately for her life to be retold again and again to young hatchlings as an inspiring tale of love. She wanted very little else.

Meanwhile, on a branch across the street, a red-breasted bird sat gazing listlessly at her. He had had the idea to sing a song of his own to impress his silly muse. He could not think of a song

more perfect for the occasion than a lovely sonata his father used to sing to his mother. The song was melodic, he thought, to convey his sensitivity; the notes were strong to convey his masculinity; and the words were romantic, to convey his true affection. He cleared his throat to sing. He inhaled, his chest rose, and let out a vagrant note that hit the air sharp. The song he sang sounded nothing like the song his father sang; it broke and splintered under his quavering voice. He stopped suddenly. He knew how bad it was. He tried to sing a second time but very quickly stopped again. Across the street, perched on a branch, a feminine bird tried to ignore a song being sung somewhere close to her. The song started with a shrill "qyu-eek". That, she thought, must be the only word the bird could remember. He did after all sing nothing else of the song.

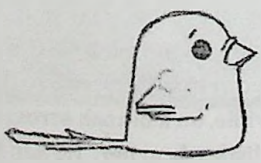
In a tree beside hers sat a scarlet champion watching her intently. Seeing the discomfort in the young, slender creature's face, the scarlet bird swooped down beside her and the following conversation ensued:

"It seems like our neighbor knows no other words to his song," chirped the champion.

"I was just thinking the same thing," the ornament laughed, "and what a horrible song it is!"

"Indeed. I doubt very much he has had formal training in singing."

"Well, that's obvious. Are you a singer yourself?"



"Who me? No, I'm afraid I could not even sing a decent lullaby. I had the fortune of hearing your enchanting song not long ago though, and I wonder if you wouldn't come with me to a private garden where I might enjoy it again?" The hero moved a little closer to the wildly blushing girl. She stared at her feet, smiling in a way that only birds can smile, and accepted the offer in an almost inaudible "yes."

Across the street a hoarse, red-breasted bird sat listlessly gazing at two little shapes in the sky getting smaller.

A man walked briskly under a branch supporting a red-breasted bird. He had his hands deep in his pockets, his bony shoulders were pointed forward in a hunch, and his book bag jostled on his back, throwing all the contents against each other. His wavy hair fell close to his deep set eyes. After crossing a street, taking a right, then a left and a few more crosswalks, his apartment building came into view. The steps of the homely residence hall were easily conquered by his spindly legs

"Hey," said his roommate, found on the ancient couch in their room. Ryan unraveled the scarf wrapped around his neck.

"Hey, Sheb. Do you know where I left the Priest? I'm going to be so late."

"For what? It's four. Nothing ever happens at four. Why are you wearing a scarf?" Ryan checked his watch.

"No way. This has got to be like the fortieth time."

"That's what you get for wearing a wind-up pocket watch. You art junkies have got to be more practical. Get something made within the last five years."

"You grungy drunkards have got to start cleaning the apartment. Look right there. No, behind you. How many cans is that?"

"One less than it would take me to care," said Sheb as he curled up into a lazy ball on the sofa. "You're just angry because you're alone. No one wants to cuddle an idealist. Accept the world and its faults, my friend, and the world will accept you and yours."

"Yes, drunken sensei. Anyways, I'm taking a shower."

"Don't."

"Why?"

"You should accept your dirt, little one."

Ryan grabbed a neatly folded towel sitting on top of their micro-fridge and his shower bag. He left the room and climbed a flight of stairs to where the communal showers hid behind a series of warped, swinging doors. The stall started blasting icy rays but settled itself into a cool, steady rain. That was the best it ever got, so Ryan stepped in. One could never hope to soothe their aches in there. He crowned himself with shampoo and rubbed it into foam. He lathered his bony being with soap, and brushed his smoke-stained teeth. Rinse and spit. After drying off and putting on the same clothes he was wearing before the shower, Ryan meandered back into his apartment.

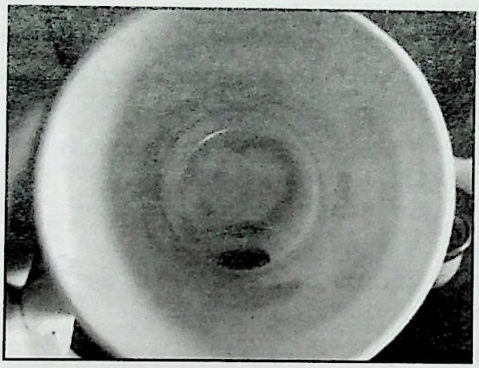
He took one bottle from his micro-fridge and set it on a stack of books. He popped the cap using a lighter which he then used to light a cigarette. Ryan took a long drag and sat down to lace his shoes.

"How much gel is in your hair?" Sheb said, staring at Ryan with one eye. He was laying in the same position he had been in when Ryan had left the room.

"Just enough." Ryan stood up and took a swig from the bottle he set down, "I have to look decent for work."

"I put the Priest in the bathroom," Sheb mumbled, rolling over. "You should probably leave now to hit the five-o-five." Ryan reached into their closet sized bathroom and pulled out a large black case by the handle and set it down near the door. He tied his scarf around his neck, grabbed his luggage, meandered back out then down the stairs and out onto the street. After fifteen minutes devoid of any mental activity, he walked through hissing automatic doors into the train station. He walked out to the tracks and sat down on a bench, opening the hard, black case. He lifted a seasoned guitar from it which had had the word "priest" written on

it in delicate, gothic calligraphy. The tail end of the "p" and "t" drooped very low and curved slightly left; the tails' strokes ended with ellipses to make the word "priest" resemble a heavily stylized beamed eighth note. Ryan had spent a lot of time designing and painting it. Ryan noticed that the paint had begun to crack a few weeks prior and since then has treated his guitar more carefully.



"Caffeine Love" by Tara Minopoli

He pulled a lone guitar pick out of the Priest's large, formidable case and began to tune his instrument. There was nobody around. He checked his pocket watch which read "6:30," dismissed its faulty guess, and walked further down the platform to check a large, looming clock hanging on an adjacent wall beside the ticket counter at the end of the platform. 4:55. Only ten more minutes, he thought. He sat back down on the bench he left his guitar case gaping in front of. He looked around. Nobody was around except for an exceptionally placid character hidden behind wire-meshed glass down at the ticket counter. Ryan drummed his fingers on the Priest's empty belly. He checked whether the guitar was still in tune. It was. He looked back at the ticket counter. The clerk was either reading or staring at his hands, Ryan could not tell which; the counter blocked his view of anything below the ribs. The clerk had a vexingly dry look, either way. He either hasn't

realized that what he's reading isn't in English or is trying to figure his fingers out, thought Ryan. This thought slightly amused him. "Trying to figure his fingers out." Ryan took a piece of torn notebook paper and a pencil out of his pocket and scribbled the idea down.

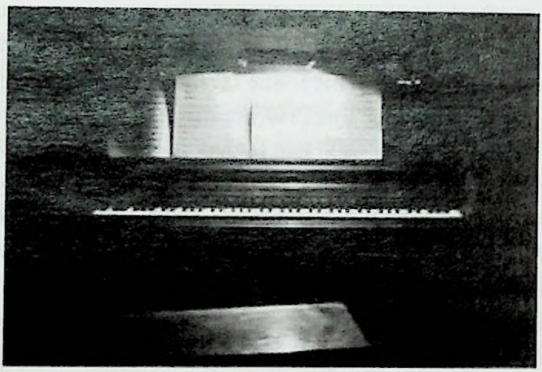
Ryan noticed a faint clicking that became slowly louder and clearer but did not look up from his scrap paper. A woman walked up to the ticket counter, stood there for a second while she exchanged one kind of paper for another, and walked to the edge of the platform to look out in both directions.

"Due to technical problems, the five-o-five train from Westford will be delayed," spoke an indifferent voice from a speaker overhead. Ryan groaned and rubbed his forehead. He kept his head down. Staring at his shoes seemed to be the best thing to do. He had not noticed the woman humming, but humming soon became quiet singing and Ryan finally saw the slim woman perched nearly on the edge of the platform. She stood rocking back and forth on her small feet, staring at something in the tracks but not really seeing it. Ryan could not always decipher the words to her song, but from what he could hear he thought it was a haunting song about fate. He scooted to the edge of the bench to try to hear her better. She brushed her auburn hair back behind her shoulders with her fingertips. Ryan stared. Her slight composition made every impatient gesture adorable to Ryan. He lingered. She stopped singing.

"What's the name of that song?" Ryan said softly. The woman did not turn around, she hadn't heard him. Ryan blushed like a stove-top, telling himself how ridiculous he was. "She didn't even hear me; I'm such a nervous wimp. Come on, Ryan, come on." Coughing never helps settle a quivering voice box, as Ryan had just found out. "What song were you singing?" He forced the words from deep within his stomach which was turning, not quivering and therefore better to speak from. She turned her head and peered over her shoulder at him from behind her hair.

"Oh," she said, blushing a little herself. "I thought I was alone, I'm sorry".

"No, no. It was, uh, really pretty. Your song I mean." Ryan fiddled with a ring on his pinky finger. The woman smiled a little but turned her head away. For a while she didn't say anything, just smiled. Ryan stared at the ring on his little finger while he twisted it, taking the woman's silence to mean that he had just made a fool of himself.



"Piano" by Ashley Koval

"I'm sorry," she finally said. Ryan jumped a little at this. "I'm a little embarrassed; I didn't know anyone was there."

"I didn't mean to startle you. I just really liked the song you were just singing." Ryan was surprised at his own ability to speak clearly. "Where does it come from?"

"It's interesting that you would ask where and not who it comes from." The woman said, turning more towards Ryan.

Ryan smiled at the chance to say something smart. "The song sounds older than the invention of copyright infringement." She giggled; so did Ryan's pulse. "Back when a song wasn't restricted to the man who discovered it." Philosophy, Ryan thought, now I must seem intellectual. He momentarily

contemplated his accidental statement and figured he could agree to the notion that music is discovered and not written.

"My mom used to sing it. She was kind of folksy and played the guitar while she sang us to sleep," she said through a slanted smile. "I don't know who wrote it, or where it comes from, though."

"Let's just give the credit to your mother, then." He nervously scooted up the bench.

"Will you play me something?" She asked.

"Um, sure." Stage freight turned his ribs into fingers that clutched his lungs. "This is one I wrote." I should have said discovered, he thought. "Um... I wrote this a few years ago, when I was at a crossroad in life and had to make a big decision. I didn't know what my priorities were, and didn't know what to do... Um, so anyway here it goes." Ryan strummed the guitar with his thumb to check if it was still tuned. Then, with his long and nimble fingers, he began to pluck at the individual strings. He scrawled a mysterious song into the air that seemed to spiral through the highs and lows. The melody started to crescendo when a sickly twang announced itself loudly. The woman flinched.

"Oh, woops. I guess my strings are old," Ryan bumbled quickly. He exaggerated his look of surprise and held the broken ends of the top guitar string in faux amazement. "Well, I guess I plucked too hard or something." Ryan chuckled swiftly. He fumbled within the pockets of the guitar case, knowing that there was no replacement string. The woman said nothing, she just shifted her weight from one leg to the other. It would have been silent if not for footsteps growing slowly louder, and a soft mechanical hiss.

"I'm sorry, I-" Ryan started.

"Oh, it's nothing," interrupted the woman. "I liked what I heard, though." She smiled hesitantly.

"However much that was." Ryan frowned down at his hands resting on the Priest. "I don't think I have-"

"Melanie!" A voice interrupted. "You're still here!"

Melanie and Ryan both turned to see a man in a slick business suit emerge from the long entrance hall. He walked swiftly, then jogged a little to get up to her and grabbed her shoulders. They had a hushed conversation that Ryan only caught scarce words from.

"Train mumble mumble late," said Melanie.

"Mumble lucky," replied the man. "Since mumble mumble thinking about you." These words were apparently skillfully crafted, Ryan thought. Because Melanie looked relieved, thoughtful, and dreamy all at once.

The approaching train drowned out the man's next sentence completely but it led to them holding each other's hands. She said something back to him. He whispered something back. There was a pause in the conversation, then he nodded his head in the direction of the exit and said something with raised eyebrows. She nodded. Ryan watched them walk out of the station, the man's arm around Melanie's shoulder. The man looked back for a second and his eyes met Ryan's. He bent over a little to say something to Melanie, of which one solid word was audible. "Staring" he said.

The two of them disappeared into the hallway as the train door opened and droves of people pushed to get out. Ryan sat there still hot in the face from breaking the string, watching people glance quizzically at his empty guitar case on the ground and then at him who was not performing. Ryan put the weight of his head onto his palms and closed his eyes. He listened to the aimless noise that passed by him, and then he heard two small coins hit the bottom of a guitar case.

**Your Deepest Fear**

Being surrounded by numerous people,
affluent and diligent people, people
that pass by when everyone's voice amplifies,
talking about what they do and who they are,
taking pictures of them from left to right,
rushing to take autographs. You stand there
wishing you were one of them; suddenly
you start reminiscing about your life,
how acerbic and void it is, meaningless
and wasted. You are a base and subtle person,
a person who is judged as an awful enemy,
but deep inside you know that is not really you.
You have character within waiting to outgrow,
but you are not willing to give yourself a chance,
because you are scared of changes, your deepest fear.
Tears fall down your cheek, your heart
is crushed, you feel abashed by who you are,
because you think you are worthless.
With pity you turn around and walk away.

- Nedjine Marcel

## Gods of Old

From on high the gods watch.
Perched like hawks they wait
to interfere. But it is *they*,
who inflict the most damage.
It is *they* who take those closest.
*They* lord over even the mightiest
of men. The sisters weave their webs
of torture and pain. We are but flies
to these unrelenting spiders.
They will not release me
until my body shrivels and mind decays.
Lies, torture, heartache shall precede
the sweet, icy chill of death.

- Angela Barbier

"Realization" by Nikolus Cook

# Purgatory Opening

By Ryan Gelgud

He lay there dazed, his eyes slowly clouded. He felt the convulsions as the blood was forced from his body by his own beating heart. He felt a slight pat on his cheek; his head lolled slowly tracing the source.

"Greg, Greg, come back please, oh god, someone HELP!"

Cries and panic was the only audible response to him, the sounds of fear, shock and confusion. He coughed as his throat tried to clear the well of blood it had been forming. That was all he could, taste, touch, smell was blood, his own. His own surrounded him; he bathed in it as death closed in around him.

He felt a warm touch on his arm, he was getting cold, so cold. His failing eyes blinked to try and see the shadow over head. He got a fleeting view of the girl amid the white lights, ceiling tile and cloudy corneas.

It was Jenny; he smiled in his thoughts seeing the straight brown hair fall into her pale and perfect face, though it was crumpled up in a worried look of anxiety. He now noticed how much her eyes shone when they were wet with tears. He had always been entranced by her brown hazel eyes. He worked up enough energy to smile as she held him in her arms.

That was his dream, that the two of them could hold each other at a night's end, being with this girl with whom he had so blindly gained an attraction to. He planned to tell her that night after their opening night in the school play; he began to

rehearse it in his mind again, but stopped quickly realizing it was hopeless.

A fit of laughter ripped through his brain as he realized the irony of the beginning coming from the end.

He managed to gurgle through his flooded windpipe a simple thank you, though it came out as nothing more then a whisper. He forced a smile one last time as his eyes faded to white and finally went dark, seeing the last thing that gave him joy. His body gave one last violent convulsion as his heart beat for the last time he went limp and his brain ceased.

"Café Amour" by Hernan Restrepo

His eyes blinked open to slats of sun streamed through the blinds. He rolled himself up on his arms seeing the green lights glow 7:20.

"Damn, I can't keep doing this." He let himself fall onto the bed, letting the springs help throw him out of bed. A small shiver ran through him as his feet touched the floor. He ripped through his drawers as he dressed himself, quickly stopping himself. A dull ache resonated from a spot on his chest. He rubbed the spot and felt something foreign, something that should not have been there. Slowly lifting his shirt and wincing in pain, he looked in the mirror and saw nothing but his own skin.

He shrugged it off as the pain quickly dissipated. Grabbing up his comb, Greg sped towards the bathroom. Some minutes later he tromped down the stairs and headed for the kitchen, He looked out the window as the sun slowly rose and the gray of the twilight was being beaten back. He looked over at the wall clock, 7:37, his timing was as he expected. He poured his usual bowl of cereal, and ate it with his usual haste.

Throwing the bowl and spoon in the sink hearing the usual twang and ting of the metal on metal, he grabbed up his books and yelled "bye mom, bye dad, see you later," not thinking anything of the silence that came as a reply.

The door slammed shut as he strutted down the steps and headed for the bus stop. The springtime air and warm sun felt good on his skin. Greg yawned a bit standing there, seeing the bus roll down the hill, eventually stopping, he climbed up the steps and headed for his usual spot, he looked up to throw his bag down.

"Jenny? What are you doing here?" Jenny was sitting there in his usually empty seat, a small look of shock and nervous sweat surfaced on his face. Greg slowly sat down and gave an uneasy smile towards her. A giggle was her only response to all of this. As he sat down the bus began to roll down the hill again as it had so many times before, except now with Jenny on board.

"Grand Canyon Through Glass" by Heather Weber

## Confessions of a Meat Eater

By Ellen Roberts

I am a meat eater. I am an animal lover. Is that possible? I believe it is possible, since that is how I describe myself, but how hypocritical am I in saying so?

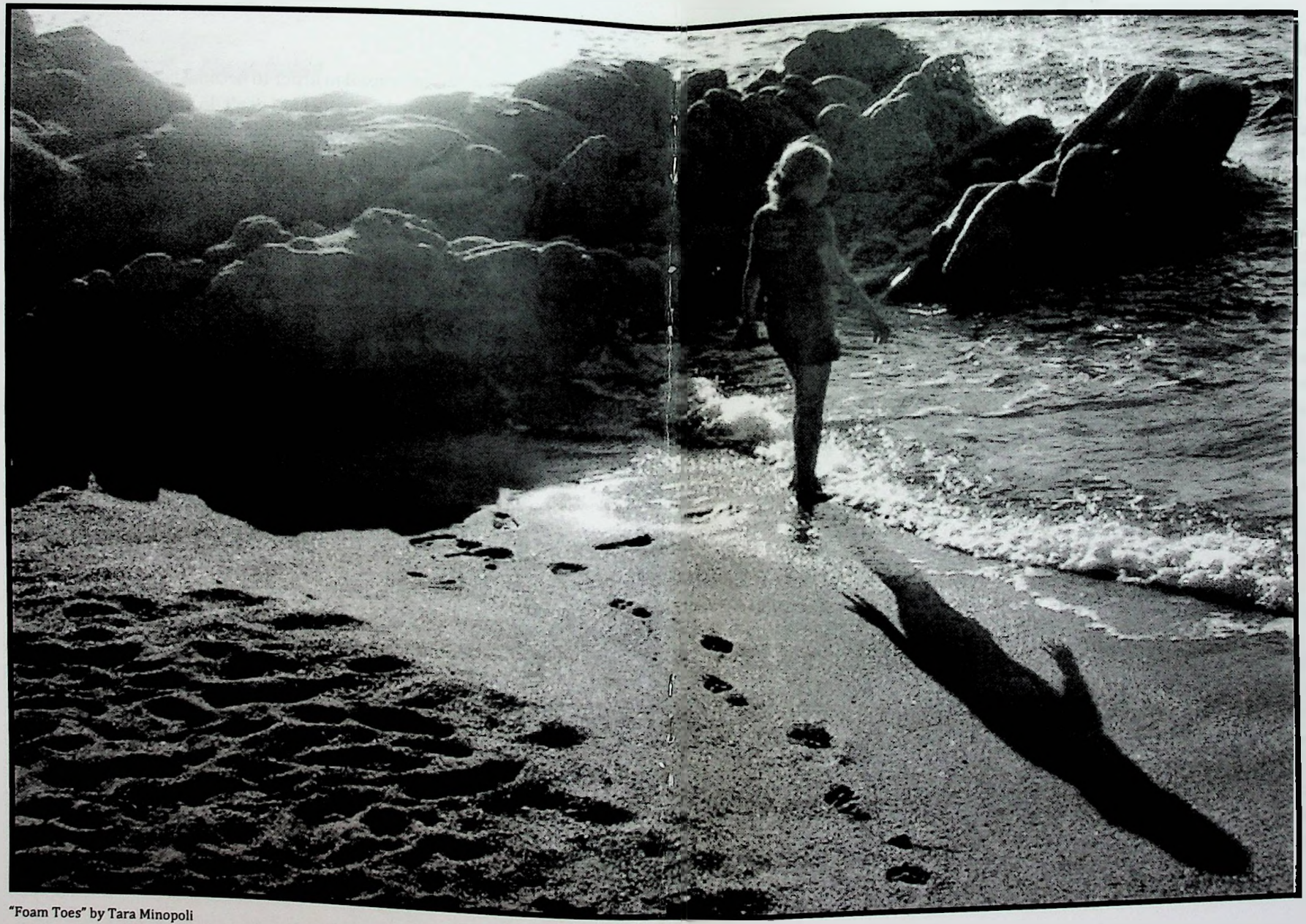
I have never really considered eating meat to be a moral choice. As I grew up, my parents cooked meat for dinner. It smelled good, it tasted good, and if I didn't eat it I probably would have ended up eating cereal every night, so I ate it. I've always known where meat came from—pork is from a pig, beef is from a cow—but in the process of eating I've never made a conscious connection between food and animal. When I see a cow, it's a cow. When I see a hamburger, however, I don't see the cow that it once was but only a hamburger. On the other hand, if I knew a piece of meat came from a human, I don't think I would be able to separate it from a human. In this way, not only do I give animals less consideration than I give myself or another human being, I give animals virtually no consideration at all. For this reason, I could be considered a speciesist. Is it possible to love other species if you are a speciesist? Might a racist white person love a black person? Could a sexist man love a woman? I think it would be possible, although the love might be questionable. I don't love my cat the way I love my mother, so maybe there are species-specific types of love.

Just as I separate animals from the meat that I eat, I also separate what I read about animal cruelty from what I do in my own life. I am opposed to animal cruelty, but at the same time I am supporting an industry that in many cases provides extremely poor conditions for animals, causing them pain and ultimately their deliberate deaths. When I read about conditions

in which animals are raised in order to become food, I feel sad and sometimes even disgusted, but I don't do anything with those feelings. Instead, I just brush them off with a superficial belief that there is nothing I can do to stop it. I think a lot of people do the same thing. I could stop eating meat and continue to lead a healthy and happy life—I don't need meat to fulfill any nutritional requirements or even to feel satisfied. Even though I know there are benefits of vegetarianism, I have never really felt like putting in the effort to make such a huge lifestyle change.

The philosopher Peter Singer compares animals to people with severe disabilities, or "human vegetables." I never really thought about these people as having any rights, and really what rights do they have? I really can't come up with a convincing argument for why we should keep someone around who is unconscious, unable to move or speak, and completely unaware of his or her surroundings. I can come up with many objective arguments against eating meat, but I still do it, and I can come up with little to none about keeping a human vegetable alive but would still have difficulty in saying that they should die.

It is uncomfortable to be made aware of inconsistencies within myself, and I hope that through further study I will be able to think more critically about my own moral views and be able to solidify and justify them. Although I have started thinking about it more, this internal dissonance has not been enough to conquer my taste buds. I will continue eating meat and loving animals, as contradictory as that may be.



"Foam Toes" by Tara Minopoli

## Fat Girl

My bright yellow sneakers
Clashed with my light blue shaggy pants
As I sat gripping the leather bound Charles Dickens
While my fat vibrated over the brown plastic seats

I hated awaiting my destiny as the yellow doors
Screamed open and we were pushed off
Like cattle

The warm faces that approached me
Made my stomach curl and I wanted to purge
The silly smile swept across my face
The disgust crept away between the crevasses

The crowd of soft friendly eyes that embraced me
Challenged my disgust towards their friendship

I was the jolly fat girl
14 and disgusting
I was their ego boost
Always there to listen to the woes and worries of their synthetic lives
I made them laugh with my quirky chuckle
I was saturated in warm thin bodies

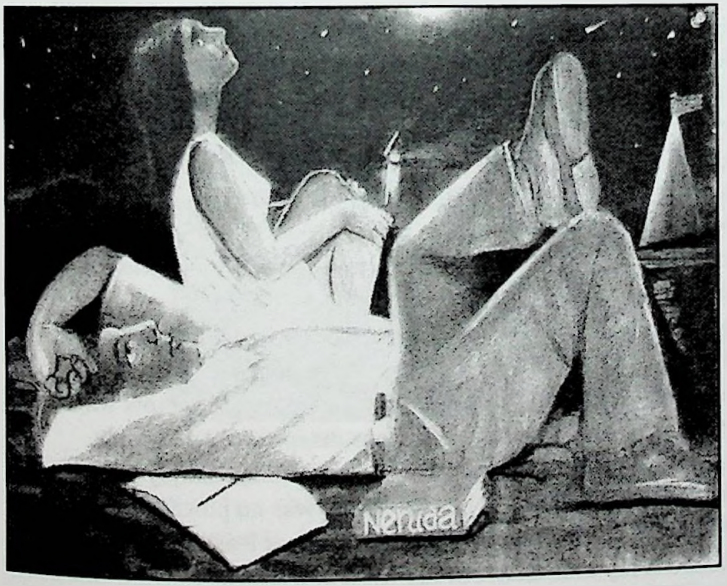
Then with a change of events
I overcame the blubber and turned to their side
I was no longer the jolly fat girl
Mono took a toll on my body and I disappeared for two months
The phone never rang

## Groundswell

Emails were never received
Flowers were never sent

I was dead to them
Nobody wants to be friends with the ex-fat girl
She's a threat to their lives
Thin and still laughing with a quirky chuckle

- Danielle Barse




"Star-Gazing" by Hernan Restrepo

# The Pull of Darkness

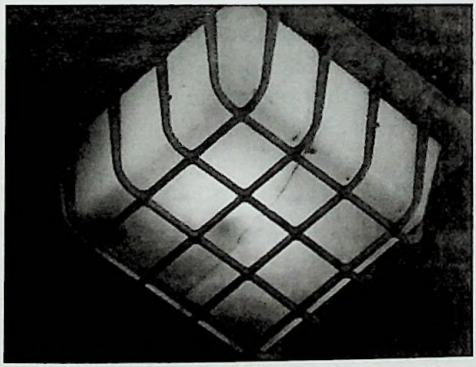
**By Angela Barbier**

Every day my mother would yell at me for no reason. Her words were so harsh that I would have to beg the gods for the strength not to cry. They answered my prayer every time. At first I thought that was a good thing, but I soon realized it was a burden. The pain normally released by crying internalized into this intense rage that I could not discharge. The rage continued to build until one night I found a way to release it. My mother had ordered pizza, for the tenth time that month, for dinner. She ordered pizza for dinner at least six times a month, every month. Just because my dad's Italian and we live in a town full of paisans does not mean that we need to live off pizza. I was fourteen and after having that food shoved into me for ten years, I couldn't take it anymore. I could not eat another slice of pizza. It was nauseating! So, I got into a yelling match with *mommy dearest* about it and when I got so angry I could have killed her, I ran upstairs and locked myself in the bathroom. I sat there staring at the tiny purple and pink butterfly wallpaper, writhed in anger. I hated that woman so much; I didn't know how to stop the anger that consumed every ounce of me. Then for some reason I looked up at the shower. There was a brown, disposable razor sitting on top of the door tracks. I took it in my hand and just stared at it. It was a double-bladed razor, the kind made before moisturizing strips were popular. At the time, I had never heard of cutting or self-mutilation, but somehow when I saw the razor—my cognitive functions disappeared and some other part of my brain took over. I did not think, I simply pressed the blade into my flesh and pulled. There was no pinch as it broke the skin, no pain as it dug into my arm. I cut at least ten times on the inside of my arm, between my wrist and elbow.

When I was done, I washed the razor and put it back where I got it. I was about to clean the cuts when my sister knocked on the bathroom door. She begged me to come back downstairs for

dinner. I told her I'd be there in a few minutes and she left. There was no peroxide in the bathroom to clean the cuts, so I doused my arm with Calgon body spray. That stung like a son of a b**** and completely numbed my arm...probably because the number one ingredient is alcohol. So I put on a sweatshirt to cover what I'd done and spent the rest of the night in silence.

The next day at school I wrote John, my best friend, a note and told him everything. I shouldn't have done that because he took the note to my guidance counselor. Naturally, I got called out of class and dragged to the nurse, who naturally had to check me to see if I was telling the truth in the note. So naturally she found the cuts. Then I gave her some bogus story about them being from my sister's new kittens and the woman actually believed me. She said the wounds looked at least a week old and there was no way they could have been done the night before. Thank the gods for Calgon body spray.



"Light" by Britney Angers

Unfortunately, the nurse's diagnosis didn't stop the school from calling my parents. Later that night, after dad got home, him, me, and *mommy dearest* had to visit the principal. He gave my parents a copy of the note, but he whited-out everything bad I said about my mother. He was a nice guy. When we got home, dad and I didn't outright discuss what had happened, but that was the night

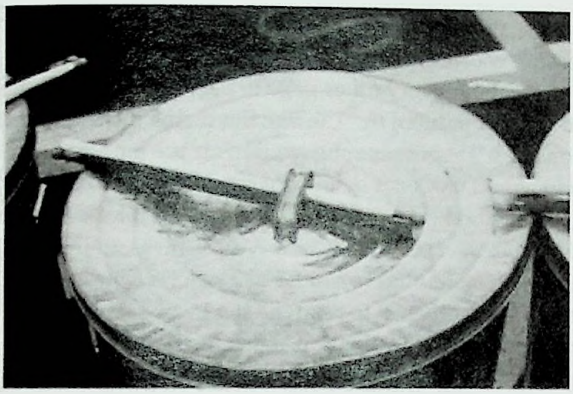
hand...what a trip that b**** was. She decided to ignore every single thing she had just been told, including the fact it was *her* fault and instead she blamed John. Yeah, because it was entirely *his* fault that I cut. It truly amazes me what that woman will believe to take the blame off herself. She even tried forbidding me to see John. He was the only good thing in my life so of course I didn't listen. So she continued to treat me like s*** and be a moron, and I just went right on cutting.

Initially I started cutting to release my anger, but shortly after, the cutting became about something else. I have severe depression and when it took over, I fell into a place so dark it made my whole body numb. I spent hours alone in the void, sitting in my room with the lights off listening to the beautifully dismal sounds of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" and Mozart's "Symphony No. 40 in G minor." The music never helped... nothing helped. So when the void became unbearable and the numbness overwhelming, I cut. It brought me out of the void. I felt nothing, but the blood made the darkness retreat. It had nothing to do with seeing the blood to know I was alive. I knew I was alive, and this is hard to explain, but when I cut, the openings in my skin were like portals the darkness could flow out of. So for a while, cutting was only about disintegrating the depression.

I spent a year and a half battling the void with blood. And I'm not one of those self-injurers who has to hurt themselves daily—I only did it once and a while when I could not lift myself out of the dark. All that time I kept what I did a secret, all the while feeling as though I was going insane. "I felt strongly my loneliness on this earth and sometimes imagined that I was despised by the god[1]." Each day I had to fight the void which is what I call the darkness because it was more than just darkness. It was this thing that sucked me from reality, pulling me into a world where it was black and cold and numb.

---

[1] Quote from Kate Horsley's Confessions of a Pagan Nun.



"Lids" by Ashley Koval

John and Carla, my two best friends, were the only ones who knew about this. They tried to find me alternatives...ways to fight the void without opening my flesh. John even made me start a journal. That was the only alternative that helped. I carried it with me everywhere and when I was at school and couldn't cut, I'd write. This proved to be a mistake. John, the rat, stole my journal one day and took it to guidance. I was called out of class to the conference room where sat my guidance counselor, the principal, the vice principal, the school shrink, and of course my *mommy dearest*. The shrink had my book in front of her. She gave this speech which I paid absolutely no attention to until she opened the journal. She pointed to an entry and said, "When we see things like this, clearly something's wrong." I nearly busted a gut trying to hold in my laughter.

I have known Joe Liaci my entire life and I love him, he's a sweetheart. It's just that at the time I wrote the entry, I was going a bit insane and I would get very irritated very easily. Joe sat next to me in biology and him and this other kid would just annoy the s*** out of me. So this one day, I had had a fight with my *mommy dearest* about ten minutes before biology, which was my first period, and I was in a pretty bad mood. I mean I was in a pretty bad mood that whole year: fighting with *mother* at all hours of the

day, my depression was in war mode, I was cutting a lot, and I was suicidal, which just about every other page in the journal said, except the one that got pointed to. The one the shrink picked said: "I flipped out on the b**** because she wouldn't leave me alone and I hate this world. And Liaci's not helping because he keeps bugging me about copying my homework and bugging me just for the hell of it and he's driving me UP THE FREAKING WALL!" I was really angry at him so underneath that I wrote "kill myself" really big. However, since no one bothered to read the top I was suspended until I could get a psychiatric evaluation. I just found it absolutely hysterical that I was suspended because I was pissed at Joe. And like I said he's a great friend and I actually helped him to pass biology, but it's not like I was going to kill myself because he got on my nerves!

So thanks to Joey, I was suspended. The school sent me home immediately with *mother* after suggesting she read the journal. When we got home, she wouldn't let me go to my room, so I sat on the couch watching *The Smurfs. Mother* sat at the dining room table, reading the journal. By the time she was halfway through, she was crying. She called my dad and cried to him about it. I couldn't help but be amused. She wasn't crying over the fact I cut myself, or even that I wrote I had tried to kill myself. No, what made her cry was the fact that in every entry she was mentioned, she was referred to as "the b****."

She never cared about me.

**The Day to Come**

On the day that fools are enraptured
in fear by superstitious beliefs,
I am thinking about the possibilities
of the outcome of a day that is to come.
Encaptured by a different fear, I sit
and think of how it'll be? Traveling
in the discovery of the unknown,
eventually reaching my desired hopes
or maybe not... This would shatter
the idea of feeling the greatest depth
of that hope. The fear is intoxicating.
Not the activities scheduled
nor who I am performing with,
but the thought of disaster.

It's been a struggle searching
the unknown and if found
it will be difficult to grasp. This day
to come holds no expectations,
no superstitious beliefs, but the fear
of once again not finding
the unknown and failing
to reach my desired hopes.

- Jennifer Marine

**morning "resources"**

scenario: a healthy iridescent caffeine got screen,
document searing by nonexistent term of panic
Deadline full
Article provided glow of a buzz his weary
who may consider succumbing to the temptations

- Kyle Stadelhofer

"Conundrums" by Nikolus Cook

## Some Things Never Leave

By Chris Clarke

My town is a small one – a typical Irish town in a typical Irish area where your next door neighbor could well often be a couple miles away. Oldcastle – a few big curves in the road, a song to God, a feeling of something else to be gotten. It is where my father was born, his father was born, and where his father before was born. It's held more tragedy than triumph but then again that's the typical Irish town. My cousin, Linda – she was born there too. ... *as a result of an accident ... aged 22 years* it reads on our families' stone at the bottom of Ballinacree.

I never went to Caffrey's Pub for dinner, but I figured I had put in a good shift at the quarry and I'd treat myself to a chunk of meat rather than the sandwich packs I'd normally pick up at Cadden's Grocers down the street. Mickey Dillon was behind the counteur. "Mickey," I said. "Give us the burger with the chips meal?" "Cheese with it?" He asked back in that raspy character-like voice he had. "Aye – cheddar please." Mickey was a good character to have behind the bar because, well, everyone knew him.

The 12 o'clock news was airing on RTE One but it was always the same s**** – IRA, UDA, DUP, Sinn Fein, Tiosheach Ahern and his flavour of the week, Good Friday debacle, blah, blah, blah... As I continued to shake my head about the current state of our national news, the stool I was resting my arm on went out from beneath. It was Linda, my cousin. "Hi-ya Chris," she said. "Mickey, give us a platter of chicken goo-shans to go please? I'll snack on them back at work." She winked and smirked at me as she climbed up onto the stool. Maybe because I was already up on a high chair, but I hadn't realized how tiny she looked next to me. "Jerry Noonan'll no like you snacking on the job," I said only to wind her up. "Jerry Noonan can go get f***** for all I care – I'll be working won't I?" Linda was one tough cookie. She was Patsy, my uncle's

oldest of three. She was engaged to a good bloke, James Lynch from Kells, which was about 20 minutes away out the Dublin Road. Linda had a "thick-as-s***" attitude, which came directly from her father Patsy who was known to be stubborn in his younger days. She was brilliant for a good auld chat and was always asking me questions about America and what it were like. Linda loved the thought of living in New York City where I had grown most of my life. "When do you think you'll move back, you don't want to live here forever, do you?" "I dunno yet," I said with severe honesty. I was confused about where my surroundings for the next year were going to be – something that I have continued to struggle with 'til this day. "Well James and I are going to try and get out there after the wedding in November – hopefully you'll still be here, ah?" I nodded with sureness and with her dinner neatly wrapped into a brown paper bag, she was away with a simple pat on the shoulder.

I walked out Caffrey's quite pleased with my decision. It may well have hurt the pocket a bit more, but a happy belly, is a happy mind. The town was relatively quiet for this time of day and I walked off a little of the dinner as I passed up the town to get to my car on the Mount Nugent Road. I took a quick glance in at McDermott's to see the latest trends. I was never a fashionately motivated individual but I do like the occasional pair of trainers. 65 euros for a pair of nice ones – "only" 65 euros! The clock at the top of the square read 1:15 – I was due back to work at 1 and hadn't realised the hour had gone so fast. I turned down the Mount Nugent Road and got the keys out.

*It's amazing how quickly things change*

I looked up over the football pitch and saw what made my heart take that sudden skip of beat. A column of smoke rose into the sky. It got blacker and bigger. It came rising and rising. From there, events happened like the seconds hand on a watch. The fire station's alarm began to blare and the Gardai's car could be heard coming from the Cavan Road. I can still hear its tires screeching round the bend everytime I walk that road. Guard Hugh Brady saw

me and skidded to a stop. "Get your gear – it's Gleneagel," he says. "Go get the truck and bring water." Gleneagel is the big furniture factory. It lies just out the town next to the football pitch and employs half the town – including Aoife, who I had just started seeing, and Linda Clarke. I belonged to our town's fire brigade but I didn't drive the truck so I can meet them at the scene.

My car needed little coaxing which was rare especially with the brisk, fall September air that was beginning to set in. I pulled up to the front of the factory to black smoke pouring out of every seam of that f****** place. I was happy to see so many workers already outside and Jerry Noonan counting their heads. I pulled on my turnout gear and clipped my radio to the outside of my bunker coat. My best mate, Raymond Heery was already there fully dressed yelling at me that we were going to lose the whole place. I could finally hear the truck in the distance but I looked back at the factory and knew we weren't capable of doing anything. If this was New York, I'd have called in a third alarm off the bat, but this was Oldcastle and Oldcastle is a typical Irish town with typical Irish Fire capabilities. My radio squawked with commotion as our Watch Commander (WC), Gary Burke told Navan (dispatch) to respond all available units in sector-43. That meant that we would get help not only from the surrounding towns like Kells and Castlepollard, but also from towns like Dunshughlin, Navan, and Cavan Town. Jerry Noonan came running up to myself and Raymond waving his clipboard, "We have one missing, gentlemen. Linda Clarke." He said it as if we had never met or heard of her before. He said it as if Raymond and I worked for Engine Company 82 on Intervale Ave. in the South Bronx; where we couldn't possibly know many people. I looked around quickly to see all the people looking at me in my funny get-up. I felt like a t*** because I wasn't doing anything. I didn't see Aoife but it was only a quick look and I didn't want to see her seeing me. I turned around toward the building and radioed to Gary Burke, "firefighter to watch

"The Hands of Belfast" by Chris Clarke

commander." By then the rig had just arrived and Gary was not too far away. I turned to him and told him to speak to Jerry.

Some things in life may change and some things may stay the same but I had to do something. I grabbed my BA (breathing apparatus) and grabbed the nozzle off the rig. Raymond ran to a standpipe and connected up a link hose. I knew I was going to do f*** all with this 100ft line in my hand. I gave the doorway a quick blast of water. Colm Gillespie, who had stayed in the truck up until that moment, climbed out the front seat like the fat sloth that he is. I shouted at him to take the line. He looked disappointed at the fact he was actually going to have to do something. "Jerry, does anybody know the last time they saw Linda!?" I yelled while I pulled my mask over my head. Jerry strolled over to a woman I don't think I had every seen before and waltzed back toward me. "We think she went to the bathroom," he said with little emotion. (His droll voice only amplified his uselessness as an individual – too scared to put his name on anything – even if it meant saving a life – pathetic). I bumped into Raymond as I turned toward the factory. His mask was already on and he held my back as he turned on my air bottle. Raymond was my best mate and I was relieved he of all people was willing to follow me inside.

At first it didn't seem to bad but I suppose that that's usually the way it is. You build up this picture in your head and it blinds you to everything else. But saying that, it could've been because Colm was still whacking the heat away from the front door. The hose line he was holding was only 100ft long so there was no moving beyond the front door with it. I had only been in Gleneagle once before but was pretty sure the bathrooms were toward the back.

We finally got to end of the first wall and made the 90 degree right turn along the second wall toward the back. It then got nasty from there on in. The heat was intense and I could see the sweat dripping off my forehead onto my mask. I'll never forget the way the flames rolled along the ceiling and actually how pretty it all

looked. We kept on crawling and every so often we would have to climb over or duck under some sort of something. Raymond tapped me on my shoulder and signaled to me that the bathrooms were down and to the left – hidden away from the rest of the factory.

The heat continued to drown us and my face was beginning to throb. Every so often I looked back behind us to make sure the fire wasn't going to flash and cut us off from our only known way out. It was all pretty much clear with the exception of radiant heat that had has banked as close to the floor as possible. Then something happened and I really, honestly had the notion that I were going to die. Something on the other side of the factory let go with a boom and sent enormous heat and fire circling the room. I hid my face as best I could into the un-welcoming concrete floor. My eyelids violently clasped each other like a last hug and I made note of every breath of air I breathed in and breathed out. I remember thinking that I was 16 and this was too unbelievable. The thought that the Clarkes' were going to have to bury two grandkids entered my head but it was quickly beaten back by Raymond grabbing at the back of my bottle and throwing me behind him - or what was now in front of him. "We gotta go, we gotta go," he screamed as his mask pressed harshly against mine. There was no protest coming from me and I took one last look toward the back and saw nothing but orange that started at the ceiling and ended at the floor – the place was beginning to flashover. I put my head down and we started to scramble back the way we came.

Scramble was the key word. It felt like and eternity and the heat wasn't letting up. We could see the light from the door so I scratched the route along the wall and made the diagonal detour across the factory floor. Colm Gillespie was still spraying water in the doorway and didn't see us when he accidentally sprayed us. But usually when things like that happen, the mistake is quickly fixed – not this time however. "Colm! Colm!" we screamed. "You're hitting us, you're hitting us you daft c***!" I said with enormous anger.

"You smell over cooked," he replied as we walked by him. I wanted so much to turn round and level him, but it wasn't worth the energy. Raymond went straight to Gary Burke, who was now surrounded by the WC's of Castlepollard, Kells, and I think Cavan Town. "We can't get through," Raymond told them. "Fire's banked down to the floor in spots, sir. Chris and I got as far as we could and something let off so we turned back." Gary looked at me for a second and his blue eyes told it all.

Around the corner guys from Kells Fire Brigade were spraying a hose onto the roof. I turned to Gary, "why don't they throw up their tower ladder and spray water downward?" Again, his baby blues told it all as they sunk and hid in his eyelids – "they don't connect to our hose threads and stand pipes... we're on our own." I looked over Gary's shoulder and I saw, standing by an awaiting ambulance, my family. Patsy looked like he wanted to hear something about anything but no one had a clue on what was happening. I mean we knew the factory was burning down for sure and we knew Linda was somewhere inside, trapped. But it didn't seem real. It was too painless. It was like playing a big match in front of the home supporters but there was no singing, no cheering, no jeering. Then again maybe it was painful because as I looked around and around and tried the little things so as to not feel looked at, that "like a dream" feeling was painfully going away. For the first time in my life I felt lost at the fact I couldn't control the events going on around me.

I strolled back to the command post to update Gary on what some of the crews were doing. Navan Fire Brigade put their ladder up and Navan's engine connected into it. They flowed water for about 5-10 minutes but only until the engine emptied it tank water. Kells tried to do the same but of course once they got there stick up in the air, the pumps on the engine weren't working so that was a bust. Raymond clenched an axe and said we should have one last go. He ran down toward the back of the building – to where the bathroom would be. I grabbed a sledge out the back of one of Kells'

rigs. Raymond Heery began to strike the concrete wall but wasn't really getting anywhere. The sledge was heavy but I were mad and I could feel that I were mad. The rest of the sector is standing and watching with a measly 2 ½" hose line spraying the front door while the entire inside is bright f****** orange. "They might as well be f****** pissing on the door, " I remember saying. I lift the sledge and with all my anger and all my strength I slam it against the wall. But, with its anger and its burning fury, it fights back and my hands shake with the force. "This is f****** bollocks!" I try to allow, for a little bit, the throbbing trauma in my hands to subside before trying again.

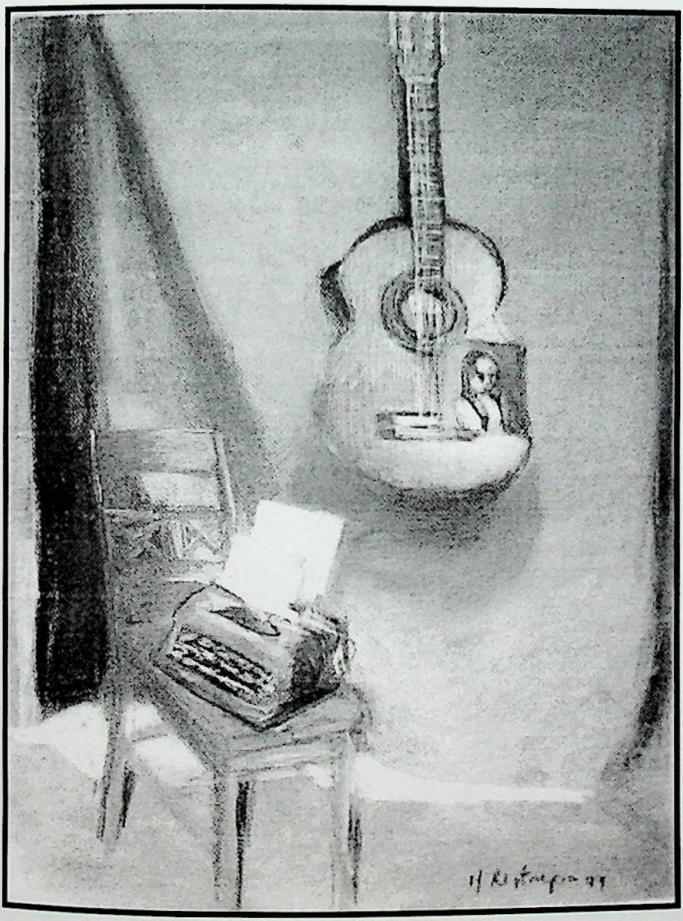
After several attempts at it, we finally broke through to something. We knew we were cut off from the rest of the factory because the heat was less intense. We belted a few more breaches and squeezed through the opening and began to search the room. It was definitely a bathroom but I soon realised it was the wrong one after I banged my helmet off a urinal. Some of the lads from Kells followed us in and we figured that the ladies room was on the other side of one of the walls. The door out was red hot so we kept it shut because we would've burned ourselves raw with the fire searching for fresh air. Judging from where the door was, we figured the wall to the left of the hole we created would be the women's bathroom. With more guys helping the wall was breached faster.
One of the lads forced his way into the room. I followed him in and we crawled around for a while. Suddenly he shouted, "I got something!" I turned round and not realising it but I was close to where he were and knocked into him. He picked up a small figure, but I couldn't see the face. He handed the figure to another one of his crew and they headed outside. I crawled out the hole knackered and totally drained. All I saw were two bare feet which to this I don't understand – what happened to the shoes and socks? Raymond was giving oxygen and one of the Kells lads was pumping the chest – it was a female. Went round to see the face – it was Linda. Her face was covered in black. The medics ran down to

where we were and started doing their thing. They even tried the defibrillator, but it was no use. She was gone a long time ago.

I knelt down behind Linda's head. I watched the medics frantically try to get her to breath. Finally after 20 minutes they stopped. I put my chin on my chest and sunk into my bunker gear like a turtle into a shell. One of the female medics took her jacket and put it over her lifeless upper body and face. They waited with her until they brought the ambulance round – it was a little more decent than to wheel her on a stretcher in front of the entire town and gathering news cameras. I got up to walk back to the front of the factory to see my family. I was in doubt of actually wanting to see them. Uncle Patsy was standing with his wife, Marion – Linda's mother. "Chris what do you know," they tearfully asked. Looked at my other cousin Emma for a second and looked back at Patsy and told him that she was gone. It was the hardest thing I've ever done and I did it like I was ripping off a bandage. I didn't know what else to say and if I did know what to say, I didn't know how to say it. That same lump that makes you take a swallow of saliva comes back everytime I think about it. They all started to cry like chorus in a melancholy song. Emma hugged me while Patsy tried to catch Marion as she collapsed with grief.

Gary Burke sent me home after that, which was nice because I didn't have to try and clean up after the fire was eventually put out at 8:30 that night. I got home around 9 – stenched of smoke and sweat. Everybody was there with my grandmother who began to tear up all over again as I walked in through the door. It was like a domino effect after that and soon the floor was as wet as a road in the rain. After that day, 18 Clarkes lived in Oldcastle and they were all in my grandmother's front room crying and asking questions and just trying to make some stupid sense of it all. Aoife were as well and she grabbed my hand. She noticed an icky blotch just behind my right thumb – it was a burn mark. In all the commotion I hadn't noticed that I had actually burned myself. It didn't hurt – nothing did at that moment. Went out to the back kitchen where she dressed my scar. My father rang from America but I wasn't in a talking mood and I think Aoife accepted that. We both sat down at the kitchen table and took my hand and began cleaning it. Every so often she would kiss my forehead and then my lips and go right back to dressing the wound. We never opened our mouths to one another – we just sat there and listened to the talking and occasion outbreak of tears from the other room.

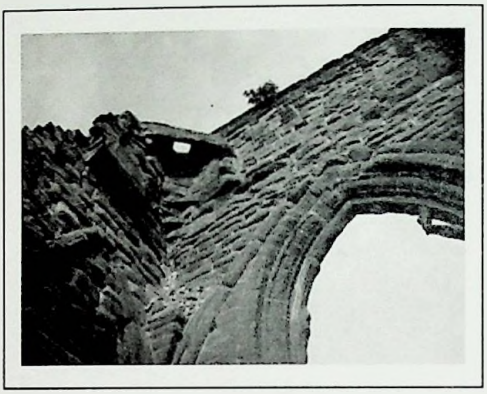
I felt helpless watching and staring as the smoke rose above and chocked the heavens. That night Aofie stayed over and we never let go of each other the entire night. We talked about what happened and she occasionally had to rub her falling tears on her sweatshirt. She said to me that everything was in great detail as if it was happening in front of us. I told her that some things never leave you.



"Memories" by Hernan Restrepo

***Groundswell*** is the annual publication of the University of Bridgeport English Department, intended solely as a repository for exhibiting UB students' best creative work. Submissions are accepted year-round at 165 Dana Hall, English Department, University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT 06604.

***Groundswell*** is made possible through the generosity of the Division of Student Affairs and the School of Arts and Sciences.



# Spring 2007

UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT