

Spring 2017

# Zephyr: The Eighteenth Issue

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ZEPHYR  
18<sup>th</sup> issue  
spring 2017

the university  
of new england's  
journal of  
artistic  
expression



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If a nation loses its storytellers,  
it loses its childhood.

**PETER HANDKE**

# ZEPHYR

THE EIGHTEENTH ISSUE / SPRING 2017

*the university of new england's journal of artistic expression*

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# A DEDICATION

This year's edition of Zephyr is dedicated to the members of UNE's Arts and Media Council. Without the dedication and support of these members throughout the academic year, we would not have been able to produce this wonderful creative magazine.

The Arts and Media Council has always worked hard to ensure that the UNE community has access to and funding for the arts including writing, theater, music, dance, photography, and more. We thank the Arts and Media Council for their hard work in keeping the arts alive for all of the UNE community to enjoy.

*Thank you!*  
*Zephyr Staff*



## Piano

Melissa A. DeStefano

I awake to your chest  
glazed in sunshine  
the curtains letting in  
just enough light to see the jagged edges  
of your sculpted jaw smiling  
the morning into my ears  
laced with freckles  
reflecting off the picture frames on my piano.

I can't play, but I used to.  
I'm tone deaf, but I'm rhythmic.

I'll poke at the keys like they're your rib bones  
and hope it sounds the same as your breath  
on my neck  
your ivory teeth whispering "I love you"  
through the gaps in our pillows.



Melissa A. DeStefano

## **A Torn Sail**

Linda Labbe

My life as a child had troublesome waves  
a torn sail, which a solid mast saved

Apart for a time on a windblown sea  
if the sails would mend, together we'd be

Had the mast been broken, or even weak  
the future of our family would have been bleak

Long times had passed while we were apart  
but together always, in each other's heart

The core of our family, a mast good and strong  
once back together seemed nothing was wrong

But those days set out, in each our own craft  
hearts all broken, sails luffing aft

Hoping for directions from the stars and the sun  
praying our ships unite, our family become one

But the sail was torn and needed to mend  
wishing from heaven a miracle would descend

As time went on the ocean gave fight  
still each little craft kept the others in sight

Time and patience the sail had been saved  
together again through the troubles we've braved



Patti Genest

## Loss

Leslie Ricker

cold comes,  
                   penetrates,  
                                   dictates movement and loyalties,  
 how far do I go  
           into that bitter freeze?  
   cold comes  
                           alive beneath the trees,  
   creeps animally  
                   into the deepest dens,  
   even protected bodies spend  
 considerable calories  
           in their wish for warmth  
   "the sun shines hard,  
           .....no effect  
                   .....on crusted snow like stone,  
 .....sitting all winter wondering  
 .....in retrospect  
           .....if cold need be endured alone;  
 .....whether waiting for rays more direct  
 .....or whether the weather is boss,  
 .....good heat is a deep  
 .....and private loss"



Alanna Sachse



Emma Gabriela Howe

## Once Upon A Park Bench

Stephen Johnson

The Midnight stillness creeps inside  
washing like a steady wave  
over the lone Bench  
upon the lone Occupant

An inky Blackness  
both ominous  
and perpetual

But he does not stir  
this lone Man  
upon the lone Bench

Even as the flickering streetlamp  
illuminates the stalking Shadows  
of unknown fears  
deep in the gloom

But closer they loom  
toward this lone Man  
alone upon the Bench



## Red Party Dress

Will Blastos

I wake up in the soft sheets of my bed. I'm told that they are red, but that word holds no meaning with me. I stand up and feel the grooves in the hardwood floors with my feet. That's all I know of the floor: its knots and its grooves. I grip the wooden stick that I use to navigate the world, though I hardly use it in my penthouse apartment. To me, fifty stories up is the same as fifty stories below. They all look the same to me. These halls and rooms never change like the world around them. I stand by the cool smooth glass that overlooks the sea. This view I am told is spectacular, but what does that mean? A warmth caresses my face. The sun I assume. How I wish I could experience its brilliance. I think to myself how this day will pass like every other, and how every day in the future will be the same as this. I stop thinking about this because it saddens me. Instead, I try to imagine what red is. I imagine what makes the view from my window spectacular. It is these small things that keep me afloat in this sea of darkness.

I wonder how my life would change if I could see. I would be able to drive instead of be driven, to walk without a stick to lead me, to watch a movie. I walk away from the window, away from these dreams because I realize that they are only dreams. I wander through my apartment slowly. I imagine that I am wading through a crowd at a party. The music plays and I dance skillfully on the floor. A red party dress catches my eye, or is it the woman in the dress that I notice? I approach her, her eyes catch mine, and we move towards each other. I reach out to touch her hand, and I fall forward. I fall through her because she is only a figment, a soft dream in a rough world. My body hits the ground, but I barely notice. The pulsing in my head is a lullaby. Sleep engulfs me.

I awaken to the soft patter of rain on the window. I lay there on the floor for what feels like an eternity. My headache ebbs, and I open my eyes. I expect to see what I always see, nothing, but instead I see the popcorn ceiling. I rise to my feet and scan the apartment with my eyes. Is this a dream? Is this another one of my fantasies? Somehow I know that this isn't a dream or a fantasy. Somehow I know that this is real. I walk, no, I run to my bedroom to gaze upon my red sheets. In my bed, I search for the texture of my sheets. I find the smooth satin and admire the color's intensity, but also its warmth. I sit on my bed and stare at the red sheets for what must be an hour. I remember the spectacular view. I wrap myself in the sheets and stumble over to the window. I see a mass of water rushing up the soft sand of the beach. Its hue is truly spectacular. I smile to myself. The view is everything they said it would be. The red sheet falls from my shoulders as I turn and walk to my front door. I open the door and walk down the hall, taking notice of the carpet, the same color as the sea.

The elevator opens. The walls are covered in intricate patterns. I peer at the panel with illuminated buttons, but the symbols are strange. I close my eyes and read the braille on top of each button. I press floor one. When the door opens, the grand lobby is abuzz with sounds and people. Their voices merge into a symphony of white noise. They wear shirts of different colors and dresses in elaborate patterns and designs. My eyes come to rest on a red party dress. Or is it the woman in the dress that I notice? Our eyes meet.



Michaela J. Kenward



Kyle A. Sillon

## Happy Birthday

Melissa A. DeStefano

We stood out on your balcony and you said, "See that gull? It flies higher than you ever dared to. I never understood why you let time trap you like you do. Always here, always there, but never really anywhere, never connected to anything. Punctuality over sentimentality."

And I cried. Spitting bubbles through the gaps in my teeth, I bit my tongue, wishing it were yours. Maybe it was your stupid face or your stupid voice or your stupid cigarette burning holes in your lungs, but I wanted to leave you. I couldn't figure out which of us was living more, living better, and I had never been so confused in my entire life.

I said you were an asshole, and you said I was a bitch, and then we kissed. That's when I realized that this is how life goes. People have so much power and can be so unaware that every breath we take impacts someone else. We push and pull at each other like puppets and when the day is done, we wonder why things aren't the way we anticipated.

But it's just life, and things happen in unexpected ways. It's an ever-changing, evolving turn of events and experiences that take us to new dimensions and lead us away from home and make us question God and misunderstand everything around us. We have no control over space and time and life and death; the perception that we do is a mere figment of imagination. In reality, it's all just in our own heads. We can make ourselves believe almost anything.

So I spit on your shoes and said your mouth tasted like the blackness I never wanted myself to get lost in, and you kicked my shin and said, "Maybe you'll live more years than me, but I've already lived more than you ever will."

The stars were covered by a thin film of fog that night, and I couldn't help but think that I had never seen the moon shine so bright. I wanted the stars to follow your toes through the crevices of my soul. I wanted you to remember what it felt like to be 5 years old, running along the beach at dusk hoping to find the last washed-up starfish so you could sleep guilt free knowing you saved a life that day.

If there's one thing I can tell you about life, it's that at 23 years old, I already know it is too short. There's one important thing attached to that detail, though, and that is to never, ever let the idea of an ending deter you from creating the best story ever known. Your story is bigger than time. Live your life the way you want, all the time, and be grateful for the things that make you happy even when you are sad. You are not responsible for anyone but yourself and as much as you wish you could, you cannot save everyone.

If ever you get lonely, sad, lost, and mistaken, take the time to sit. Relax. Look. And then look closer. Dream. And then dream bigger. This is your time, all the time. Stop running with the clock and staring at the ceiling. Let go. Smile, cry, laugh, and never, ever forget that this world is beautiful, and so are you. Go.



Rebecca Kryceski



Brianne Gaudio



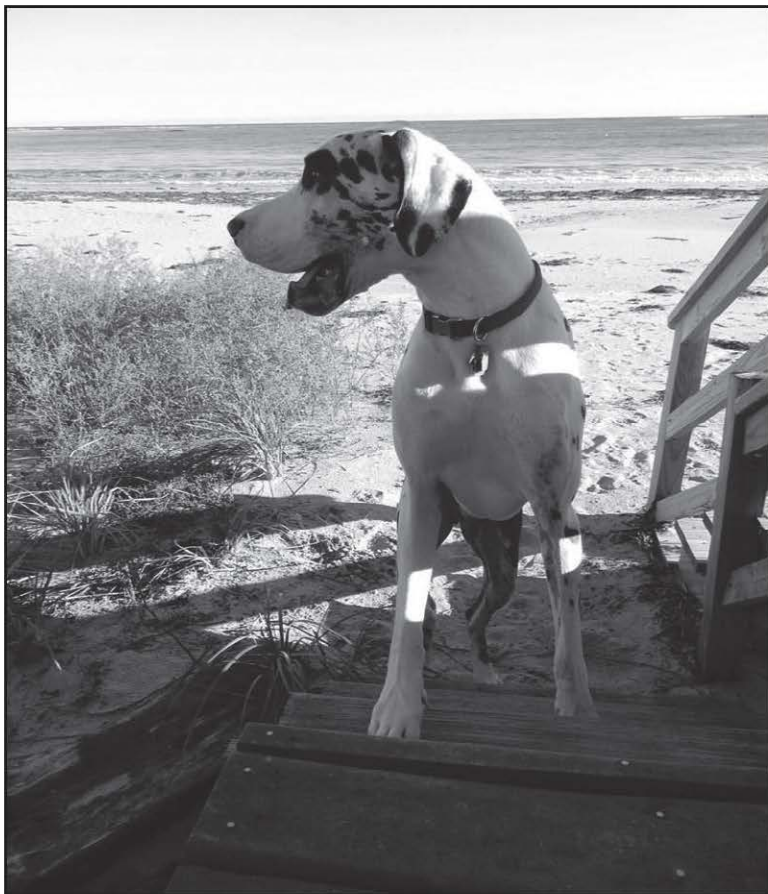
## **Fire Of Life**

Mary Johnson

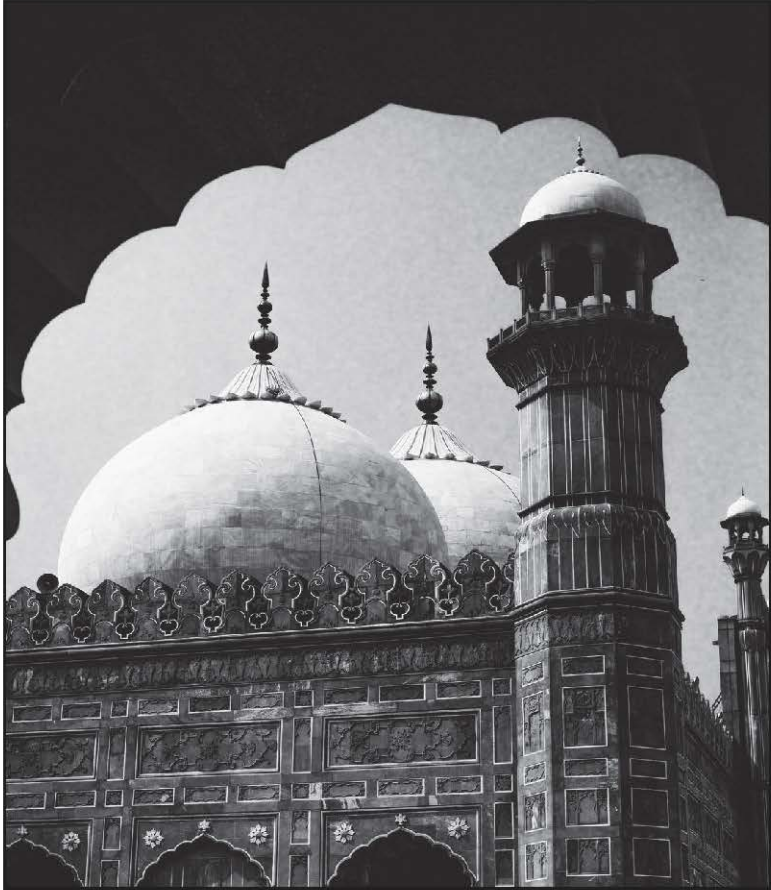
The shadows that danced on my wall as a child have now turned to light.  
The leaves that were shed when I fell in love as a young girl have cleared my view.

I've seen the hearts that beat around me and make this community strong.  
Every year, our people grow stronger and show all the things they can do.

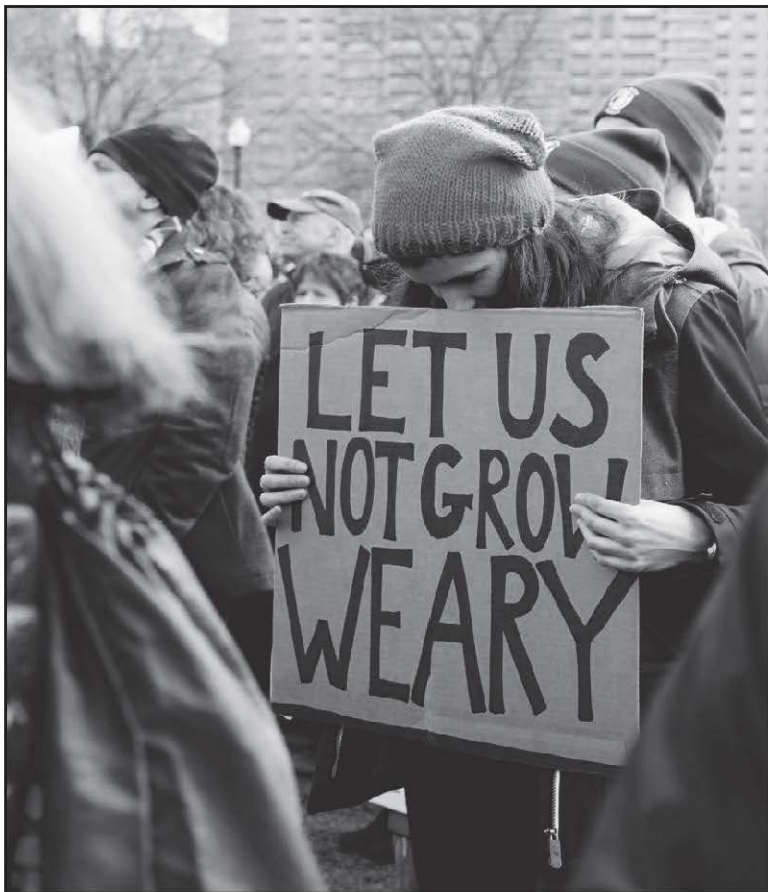
This is such a special place for so many reasons and I'm so glad to be a part of it.  
Destiny brought me to Maine to truly live—my torch that has been lit.



Maggie Hackett



Areeba Tirmizi



Caraline Flaherty

## Lure

Linda Labbe

The rain poured down that bright moonlight night  
He knew he'd soon be taking flight  
Our Dad had passed years before  
But Ron said he was there, a heavenly lure

The rain poured down on that bright moonlight night  
He was sure he'd seen a heavenly sight  
We knew that meant he'd soon go too  
How soon, no one really knew

He'd speak a few words and drift away  
Just little snippets of what he wanted to say  
We all had words our hearts held onto  
Our love for him, we're sure he knew

The rain poured down on that bright moonlight night  
Shown shadows through the curtains caught and held  
his sight

He looked at us and said, you're drifting away  
None of us knew just what we should say

Our tears poured down on that bright moonlight night  
His breathing labored, then no more fight  
He'd accepted he would be going home soon  
And Ron would shine alongside of the moon



Maddy Ouellette



Samantha M. Waters

## **I'd Rather Be Happy Than Right**

Paul Cornell

### VERSE 1

Maybe I'm wrong to think that love is all we need.  
Maybe that's simple and naïve.  
Maybe I'm wrong to think that peace is possible.  
But that's still what I believe.

### CHORUS

We can argue our differences  
Long into the night,  
But I'd rather be happy than right.

### VERSE 2

Maybe I'm wrong to see my brother as myself,  
To see each stranger as a friend.  
Maybe I'm wrong to think love makes all possible,  
And that love will never end.

### CHORUS 2

We can argue philosophies  
Long into the night,  
But I'd rather be happy than right.

### VERSE 3

Maybe I'm wrong to make believe that I receive  
Each and every thing I give.  
Maybe I'm wrong to think that I will never die,  
That it's wonderful to live.

### CHORUS 3

We can argue theologies  
Long into the night,  
But I'd rather be happy than right.



## **Chase Your Dreams**

Kayla Burdick

Don't let anyone stop you from  
Completing your goals and  
Becoming who you always wanted to be

Don't let the work load slow you down  
Study hard and put in the time  
Get the grades you need

Work harder now and less later  
Think about the future and your job  
Travel the world and see everything it has to offer

Take adventures of a lifetime that you'll never forget  
Never have regret in life and  
Don't dwell on the past because it won't do any good

Only the future can make us happy now  
That's why it's important to not quit  
Do it for yourself not others



Kerrie Snyder

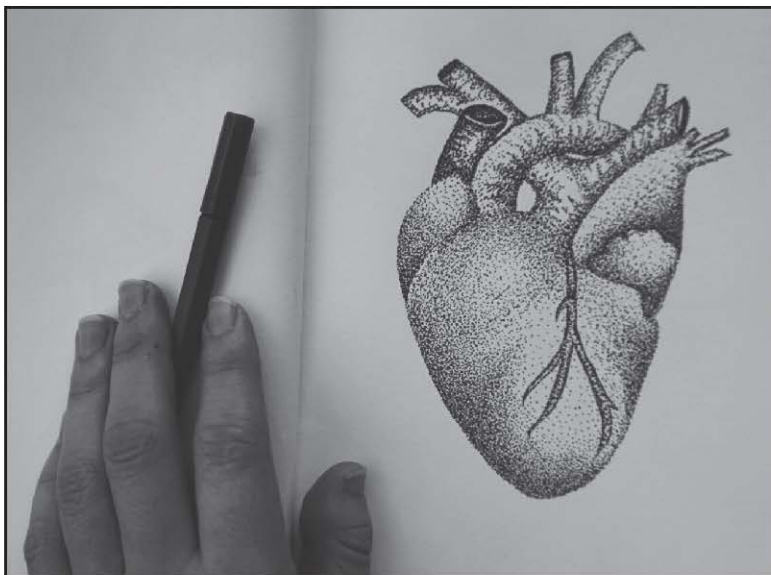
## The Secret Goldfish

William Blastos

The young boy stands in his room. The walls a shade of pink, he picked it himself. Not caring that pink is for girls, he likes it. He walks towards the closet door, painted bright blue. The door knob was gold, it didn't match the one on his bedroom door, a fact that kept him up some nights. He turns the gold door knob and steps into the closet. Climbing the shelves all the way to the top. He rummages through neat stacks of sweaters and rows of old stuffed animals, searching for his piggy bank. Painted nearly the same shade as the little boy's room. It didn't match. He kept it in the closet so that no one would see. Every night he would take the bank out and add the day's change to his growing fund. He pulls the plug from the pig's belly and forty quarters fall out. He keeps only quarters. Dimes, pennies, and nickels irritate him. He counts out the quarters making sure he has ten dollars, humming a nonsense tune. Upon reaching quarter number forty the young boy replaces the piggy bank and puts the quarters in a small wallet, exactly the same shade of pink as his walls and today's tee shirt.

He places the wallet into the back pocket of his blue jeans and starts out the door, making sure to close his closet door tightly. His mother lay passed out on the couch, her migraines rendered her unrousable some days. He considers pausing to wake her up, to tell her he loves her, even misses her. Instead, he exits, closing the front door quietly, so as not to wake her. The pet shop was four miles from his house. Biking wouldn't take him long. He pulls his red Schwinn bicycle out of the shed and climbs onto it. The red paint matches his shoes perfectly. He admires the scenery as he bikes, the blue sky and the seemingly endless rows of houses in his suburban neighborhood. Each one painted the same shade of navy with the same white picket fence in front. The boy turns into the parking lot of the pet shop in town. Parking his bike as if it were a car, taking one whole space. As he walks in the door, he pulls out a small polaroid of a lamp. The lamp in the photograph was a bright orange, the perfect shade to match with a goldfish. Making a beeline towards the fish section, he bypasses any possible distractions. He gazes into the tanks, each containing a goldfish. Comparing each fish's scales to the orange lamp in the photograph. After ten minutes the boy chooses a fish. The scales matched the lamp perfectly, at least in the photograph.

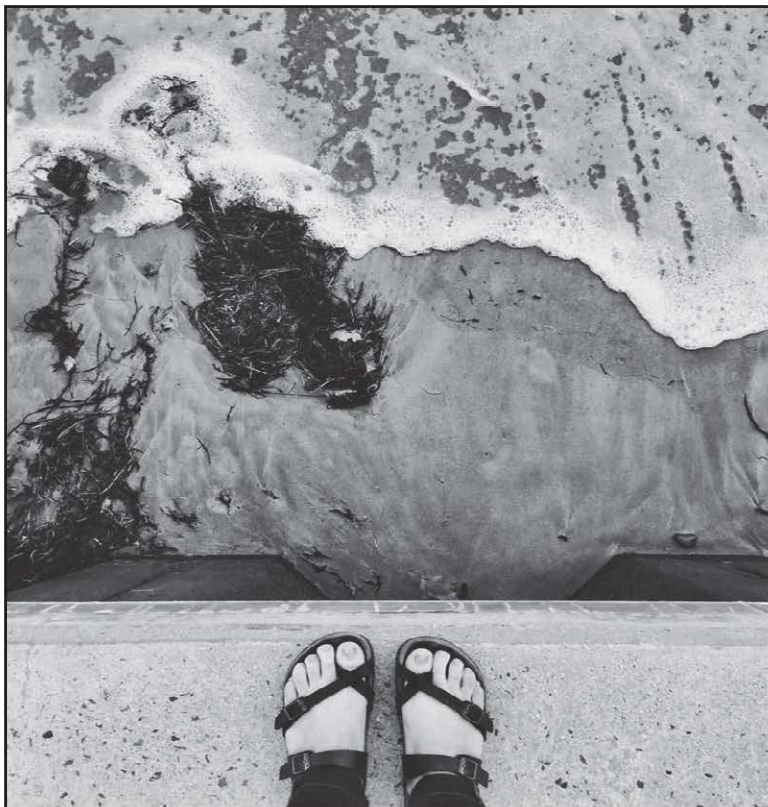
The boy leaves the store, the fish in one hand and a container of fish food in the other. He rides home. Entering the front door quietly, he silently creeps passed his sleeping mother. Again pausing. Again deciding to let her sleep. He turns the silver doorknob on his bedroom door and walks in. Rushing to the lamp, he holds the small bowl up to to compare the colors. His eyes detect a slight difference in the the shades. The boy walks to his closet. He turns the gold door knob and clears a space for the fish bowl. Returning to his bedside table, he carries the fish to the shelf in his closet. Gives the fish some food, and closes the closet door.



Emma Gabriela Howe



Caraline Flaherty



Alex Burdo

## Oblivion

Areeba Tirmizi

In your indecency, I'm the grace  
I am a reality  
You can't face

When the darkness takes over  
When under your skin  
Demons crawl  
When it's all invisible  
And the ghosts howl  
Will you remember me?

I'm the fog blurring your memory in cold  
I'm the chest tearing pain  
To the hands of fate  
I'm the soul, long sold  
When it hurts your head  
Will you remember me?

I'm your morning alarm  
I'm your restless lullaby  
Though I'm long gone  
But I mean no harm  
When the bags under your eyes grow  
I'm the mist, within that flow

When insomnia imprisons your sleep  
Will you remember me?

In your blood, I'm the plasma  
Protecting you inside out  
But in pain, when I fail  
Why don't you shout?

When your heart's in sorrow  
I'm that promise  
Of another tomorrow  
When you're helpless  
Will you remember me?

I'm braver than loneliness  
I'm stronger than depression  
But your laziness  
Is reason to my suppression

When your wings are wet and heavy  
I'm the blow force of the wind  
I'm the sense of your smell  
But you're blank to it  
Like on you, it's a spell

When you see the forgotten  
Will you remember me?

I know your flaws  
Yet I pretend  
Sadly, it's your love  
That you can't comprehend

When the cold rises  
I'm the warmth of your covers  
When the deep sleep hugs you  
Will you remember me?

I'm the plant, born seedless  
I grow from the hair of the graves  
But my affection for you  
Is no less  
I absorb the pressure  
When the gravity pulls you closer  
Will you remember me?



I'm in between the seconds' interval  
This time is yours  
This life's a carnival  
For mine, stopped long before

I'm a drug, neither weed nor meth  
Some crave me, some are scared  
Just so you know, I am death

When your immortality ends  
When all the worldly pleasures fade  
What was the purpose of your existence?  
How much good or bad is taken out the spade

Did you try?  
I'm the second hope  
The rise, run and your life's slope  
The home in your soul  
I'm the dome of faith

When it's all ending  
Will you remember me?



Alanna Sachse



Melissa A. DeStefano

## Respect

Anonymous

You said that you're not used to being respected.  
You said you don't trust me,  
but I didn't notice your ass.

I like your hands.  
I like your eyes.  
I like the creases at the corners of your lips when you smile,  
and I want to hold you while you fall asleep.

I want you gentle; I want you sweet.

## **Coleen Burbeau**

### The Gate

Life is a gate  
It opens at birth  
But then shuts  
At death  
When you're beyond  
The gate  
I've been to the gate  
And back  
I've seen what it's  
Like beyond the gate  
In the place  
I've almost been to  
Called paradise in the  
Sun  
Life comes but once  
A passing moment  
But beyond the gate  
Is forever  
I have seen beyond  
The gate and I know  
Parts of my heart are there  
In permanent paradise  
Waiting for me  
Beyond the gate



Samantha M. Waters

## **A Beautiful Idea**

Molly Wright

Soft as the down of a fledgling's wing  
he said goodbye to me.

His eyes the color of ice  
and epitome of warmth  
slowly forgot to look for me  
as he turned a corner,  
forgot to wonder if  
by some act of fate  
God had picked me up by  
the scruff of the neck  
and dropped me just one block  
in front of him,  
busy and bustling  
but not too busy  
to see him  
and be seen by him.

His hair the color of dried hay in a sunset  
and pretty as fire  
once again received a thorough washing  
without the distraction  
of the young, outline of a girl,  
pretty and new,  
constantly coursing through his head  
like one phrase of a simple song  
over and over  
before falling asleep.

The mind trained in decency  
and accustomed to unaccustomed passion  
was no longer on the verge  
of the electrified insanity  
that comes  
at the beginning of genius  
and the beginning of love,  
and he could fall asleep once more  
thinking of baseball statistics  
and the ironing he had to do tomorrow.

And now his soft goodbye  
has left me with a feathered pillow  
where I may lay my head to remember  
before I fall asleep.  
The sweetest scent of a beautiful idea  
lingering in its fabric.



## **What's It Gonna Take**

Patti Genest

What's it gonna take  
To fix the world we have made  
...The earth we invade

Bad enough we changed  
The air we breathe - rearranged  
The very climate

Polluted the sky  
And soon they will wonder why  
The earth's core has died

As they plant pipelines  
And count their billions - so fine  
As though that defines

Success in their minds  
What's ours is theirs till they find  
They've killed off mankind



Melissa A. DeStefano



Maggie Hackett

## **Time**

Mary Johnson

What is a year in a life?

Is it measured in days and nights, or darkness and light? The way I see it, we all come into the world the same way, and we all leave the same way. No one will live forever, but we act like there's always going to be a tomorrow.

In reflection of those in our University community that have received negative health news, that have suffered loss, and that have just had a hard time being positive each day, let's all lend a listening ear to hear and not to respond and then leave the conversation there. I'm willing to bet that not one death bed has ever been filled by a person who said, "I wish I'd spent more time trying to get from point to A to Z; but rather, I wish I'd spent more time with this person or doing that thing I never got around to."

Tomorrow is only a few hours away. What will you do with it?

## Ode To College: Focus

Alanna Sachse

Breathe in, and breathe out.  
Focus.

Or, don't focus at all.  
Don't focus on the class with the major course load  
Or that term paper.  
Don't focus on that zit that just appeared  
Or what shirt you're going to wear.

Forget about the strain of grad schools,  
Will you get in, which one should I go to, maybe I should have tried applying.

Focus on what you want from all of this.

Where do you see yourself? Not in the next five years, not even in one year,  
But in the next moment.

Are you in focus?  
Or is it a haze

Put an end to all the sleepless nights,  
The tossing and the turning.  
Stop thinking you're doing everything wrong,  
You are better than fine.

The timing may never be right  
So, say everything you need to say,  
Regardless of the consequences.  
Make those risky decisions  
And just blurt things out.

Take lazy days and work days,  
Make plans or cancel plans.

Who cares if your room is untidy  
Or your car isn't fancy.  
Let the dysfunction be your guide,  
It will direct you to new destinations.

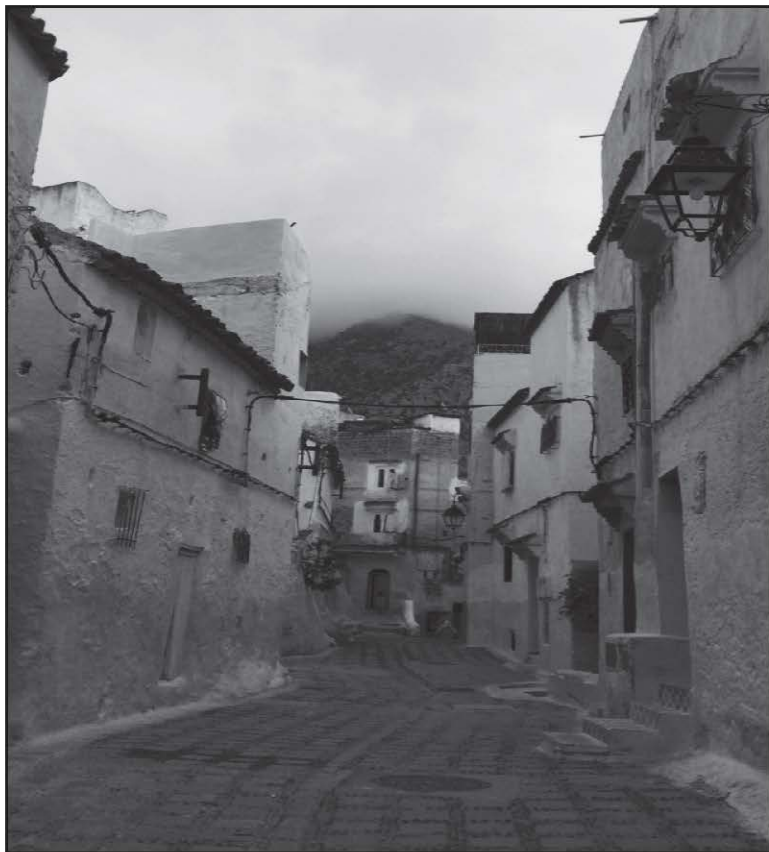
Think fondly of the places you've been, but don't pine for them.  
Don't forget the people you've met and laughed with,  
And stay in touch as best you can.

Don't get caught up in the whirlwind of society  
What you should be doing and what you should not.  
Take a break, and see what you can do without limits.

Are you  
In focus?



Maddy Ouellette



Kyle A. Sillon



## Whirl Wind

Linda Labbe

Leaving the strong arms that held me with care  
Following the breeze, stumbling on air  
I have no directions on which way to go  
Playing and spinning as the autumn winds blow  
A hostage in turbulence, just whirling around  
Wondering now if I'll ever touch ground  
The breeze is much lighter this afternoon  
Tumbling gently now, I'll be landing soon  
Swaying quietly down onto the sand  
A graceful landing, whimsical and grand  
Feeling my story has come to an end  
Not much further could I descend  
A whoosh of wind sent me tumbling once more  
Out of the woods and onto the shore  
Up again now in a child's fingers,  
Admiring my colors his glance lingers  
An autumn bouquet cheerful and bright  
Held in a little hand, fist clenched tight  
Today was amazing, what a time I have had  
Sad to leave home, but now I am glad



Michaela J. Kenward



Linda Labbe



Rebecca Kryceski

## **I'll Give You 50 Years To Cut That Out!**

Paul Cornell

### VERSE 1

I'm like a piece of scotch tape. You can see right through,  
Everything I say, and everything I do.  
I'm clearly transparent, and I'm on a roll,  
And I'm definitely stuck on you.

### VERSE 2

I'm like a light in a socket. I'm electrified.  
Everything's a little brighter when you're by my side.  
You turn me on and off, and then you run and hide,  
And then I'm sitting by myself here in the dark.

### CHORUS

But what I want to know is what the hell are you,  
Because I never seen nobody could do what you do.  
But it's clear to see that you're doing it to me,  
And I'll give you 50 years to cut it out.

### VERSE 3

I'm like a diesel locomotive, movin' down the track.  
Looks like the station's getting smaller every time I look back.  
I'm as serious, baby, as a heart attack,  
That keeps pounding, pounding, pounding in my chest.

### VERSE 4

I'm like a spear, or an arrow, or a knife, or a dart,  
And you can see my point is aiming at your heart.  
I wanna get this going, baby. Once we start,  
We're gonna never never never wanna quit.

REPEAT CHORUS

## VERSE 5

I'm like a hurricane that's coming, coming your way.  
I'm spinning 'round and 'round, and getting stronger every day.  
I'm gonna sweep you off your feet, girl, and carry you away,  
To a place you've never been before.

## VERSE 6

So gather up your things, and get ready to go.  
I never was the type to do anything slow.  
'cause I've heard it said that when it's right, you know.  
And babe, I know that this is right as rain.

## REPEAT CHORUS

## The Noise

Molly V. Wright

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

It's like he doesn't exist once he leaves the classroom.  
I'm not even totally sure he exists there.  
He is quiet until he speaks and  
even then  
there's something constantly subdued in his demeanor.

He's not like the rest of us—angry, frustrated, elated, tired.  
He is in a constant state of neutrality.  
When I sit a mere sixteen inches from him, I can't tell  
if the electrified intensity radiating the air is  
actually his or if it's  
just my own chaos  
glancing off of him like sunlight on  
a two-way mirror.

Even if it did belong to him  
I'm not sure I could name it.  
Potential? Brilliance? Vivacity?

So when he says my name and  
his eyes are the exit from the room with the two-way mirror  
I can almost find my answer,  
I can almost hear the noise.  
But then he leaves.  
The door closes.  
He continues to escape existence.  
And I wonder if  
he's ever been real.



Melissa A. DeStefano





Alanna Sachse



Alex Burdo

## **Riding The Ebb Tide**

Patti Genest

Riding the ebb tide  
Neither carried in - nor out  
Just left to flounder

In a pool of doubt  
Wondering how one got here  
And how one gets out



Melissa A. DeStefano



Samantha M. Waters

## The Shadow

Coleen Burpeau

I stare at the wall  
Blinded by dark  
All I can see  
Is my shadow  
I know that I'm not  
Who I used to be  
Indeed my shadow  
Is I  
I am not myself  
Just a presence  
A ruins  
Of a once thriving person  
But ruins rebuild  
A forest anew  
And start a fresh  
Domain  
So yes I'm a shadow  
Yes I am rubble  
But I know  
Something amazing  
That I am a cornerstone  
For something new  
Better than before  
And that's enough for me



Caraline Flaherty



Emma Gabriela Howe



## Eternal Car Trouble

Melissa A. DeStefano

Over the years, we have driven so many different cars to Maine (and in general) that I cannot even remember all of them. My mom is somehow stuck in a permanent state of having car trouble. First we drove the aforementioned pee-stained mom van for our trips to Maine. This was by far the most ideal situation because it boasted three rows of seats. My mom would sit in the driver's seat, our dogs in the front passenger seat, and my brother, sister, and I would squeeze into the back row (formally called the "way back" or the "back back"), leaving the middle row completely empty. This was because we loved each other so much that we wanted to cuddle and share secrets the entire ride.

For Christmas one year post-divorce, my dad was befuddled about what to get me. This was a common dad problem both pre- and post-divorce. I often received a series of confusing and obscure gifts. For example, one year he bought me a plastic robotic turtle. I named him Fred. Fred was about seven inches long, and he was supposed to be able to respond to me when I spoke to him. In reality, he just flashed his yellow headlight eyes on and off unpredictably while I was trying to sleep and made a series of sounds like he was experiencing a sad orgasm.

As I got older, my dad strategized (aka got lazy). He no longer attempted to buy me gifts on his own. He would just pick me up from my mom's house, take me to the mall, and let me choose what I wanted. Then he would buy my gifts right in front of me, drop me back off at my mom's, and on Christmas morning I would magically have what I wanted. It was unbelievable, really. All of a sudden, Santa knew me so well.

Anyway, one year (I actually think it was the robotic turtle year) my dad got me a TV. It was the year 2000, so don't get over-excited about it. The TV was a chunky black box with a 9" screen and a built-in VCR. It was the coolest thing ever, okay?!

So about the cuddling and sharing secrets thing, I lied. Just to clarify, I will always tell you when I've lied so that I remain trustworthy. I'm sneaky like that.

My brother and I took the window seats in the way back, and my fluffy pink puffball of a sister sat upright in her car seat between us like a princess in a throne. (You should've seen her as a child. What a good-looking kid. I say this out of pure envy, which has led me to be bipolar towards her. Sometimes I'm unbelievably nice, and sometimes I'm a huge bully.) Then we would fold down the middle row of seats and recline the way back seats.

For Christopher and I, this meant perfect laying down position for the entire ride. My mom would even stuff luggage on the floor space between the back and way back seats, then cover it with fuzzy blankets so that we could be as cozy as possible. You'd think this was enough to keep us happy for six hours, but for us lavish, royal children it was not.

For the initial trips to Maine, mom would take us to the public library to pick out books-on-tape to listen to on the drive. We listened to *Holes*, *How To Eat Fried Worms*, and *A Series of Unfortunate Events* so many times that I can probably recite them word for word—in fact I'm 70% certain. Go ahead, test me.

By trip number 325, we were bored of these books. Lucky for me, that was the year 2000. If you possess basic reading comprehension skills, then you will remember that that is also the year I received the coolest thing ever! If you have no reading comprehension skills, then I don't know how you are reading this book with any enjoyment, but I will tell you again; that is the year that I received my 9" TV with built-in VCR!

We would've probably stuck the snotty baby in the car seat in the middle row were it not for the necessity of TV-watching during our drive. Instead, we strapped that boxy TV down with a ratchet strap, plugged it into the cigarette lighter with some chaotic wires, and voila! This is the part where I tell you that I pioneered the idea for built in TV/DVD systems in cars. That's right. It was all me. You're welcome.

After the soccer mom days, my mom had a two-door, maroon Chevy Silverado pick-up truck with an extended cab. We tried desperately to condense our mom-van setup to the truck, but without the middle row, it wasn't nearly as awesome. Mom was still driving, the dogs were still in the front passenger seat, but the TV was between the two of them, and Christopher, cute infant, and I were in the back seat. Now that it wasn't our choice, we didn't like sitting together. We had no more secrets to tell. It was squishy. We had no room to put our feet up. Life was really hard for us.

On our 568th trip to Maine, we were crammed in the truck like dishes in a dishwasher, watching VHS tapes with our headphones on and whining about the unbearable conditions of our lives. It was romantic, to say the least. We had made it through congested Connecticut and Massachusetts, sneezed and missed New Hampshire, and Vacationland had welcomed us with its large sign and open highway before the truck acted up. It was burping or something. In my logic, this meant everything was a-okay because like mom always says, "If he's making noise, he's not choking." Mom informed me that this rule only applied to humans. Oh, okay.

By mile 45, we had officially broken down. Mom pulled off into the breakdown lane, and the catatonic children suddenly came to life, popping our heads out the windows and bothering her with all sorts of questions. Car seat queen sucked her tiny thumb and stared with big, beautiful blue eyes as we shuffled about. Apparently we had run out of gas.

Mom was stressed. You could hear it in her frazzled voice. She had some sort of road-side assistance at the time, so she was going to call for help, but cell phones weren't iPhones back then, and we didn't have signal where we were. Mom's solution to this problem was to get out of the truck and start walking down the highway until she had enough bars (remember bars, people?) to make the call. She asked us to stay in the car.

I pitched a fit (something I was extremely skilled at after years of practice and fine-tuning) because the truck rocked back and forth every time a car drove by, and I didn't like it. It wasn't making me sick or anything; I just didn't like it, okay?!

Mom let us all out of the truck on the passenger side and thanked herself for being smart enough to not bring our two dogs this time. She subsequently scolded herself for being dumb enough to run out of gas on the side of the highway. Outside of the truck, she was able to get a whole bar(!) of signal and call for assistance. She sounded like this on the phone:

"I ran out of gas! (pause) I don't know where I am! (pause) I can see an exit ahead of me...it's so close...but I ran out of gas! There's a sign here that says 'Mile 45.' Does that help? (pause) Can you just bring me a can of gas? (pause) Oh, okay. How much? (pause) Great, we'll see you soon. Thank you so much!"

I was cranky as ever by this point. I was likely long overdue to pee, and I also probably wanted a snack. We were standing in long, itchy, thick grass, and the wind from cars driving by was knotting my hair. It was the worst. Just then my mom looked over at us standing there pathetically and tried to make a joke. This is a very common recovery method that she has devised as a de-stressor. This is what she said: "Think of it as an adventure, kids!"

We waited for an eon before a guy showed up in a tow truck. I couldn't believe it. A tow truck? All we needed was a little can of gas. My mom apparently knew about this. I guess road-side assistance is only good for a tow but won't bring you a couple gallons of gas. People these days.

The guy, who I will refer to as Jake, had not anticipated an entire family, and his tow truck only had two bucket seats in the cab. Luckily we only had to drive about a mile. We could physically see the exit ahead from where we broke down. Jake loaded the pick-up onto the flatbed while mom tried to arrange us to all fit in the cab. She sat on the passenger bucket seat with Thumb Sucker on her lap, and I sat on Christopher's lap on the floor by her feet. Good thing we all liked cuddling so much.

Jake climbed in and looked at us as if he wished he had called out of work that morning, so naturally mom said to him, "Think of it as an adventure, kid!"



Jessica Rehrig







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