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Zephyr: The Sixteenth Issue

Zephyr Faculty Advisor
*University of New England*

Sarah Fleischmann
*University of New England*

Megan Totten
*University of New England*

Cassidy Bayen
*University of New England*

Alexandria Makucewicz
*University of New England*

See next page for additional authors

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Welcome, wild North-easter!
Shame it is to see
Odes to every Zephyr;
Ne'er a verse to thee.

CHARLES KINGSLEY
Letter from the Editor 5

WRITTEN

A Dream at Sea 6  Melissa DeStefano
The Well 9  Jerome L. Wyant
To Move Forward 13  Sarah Fleischmann
Fine Maine Day 16  Leslie Ricker
The Steeple 18  Jerome L. Wyant
No Sun Today 20  Leslie Ricker
Bodies 24  Melissa DeStefano
Novaeangeliae 27  Ruu Weist
A Lonely Tune 30  Linda Labbe
Hymen, Oh Hymen 39  Jerome L. Wyant
The Ultimate Journey 45  Linda Labbe
McDate 49  Melissa DeStefano

IMAGES

Footprints 4  Henry W. Powell
The Dock 8  Kristina Carlson
Calla Lilly 12  Patti Genest
Chicago 15  Suzie E. Oh
Riverhurst Farm Dawn in Winter 17  Patti Genest
The Sunset 22  Suzie E. Oh
Young Love 23  Michelle Pellegrino
When Day Turns to Night 26  Patti Genest
Roots 28  Alanna Sachse
Natures Perfect 29  Linda Labbe
Life Lessons 31  Michelle Pellegrino
Gorilla 32  Michelle Pellegrino
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiger</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Michelle Pellegrino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mangrove Cuckoo</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>David Hague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror Mirror</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Linda Labbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Henry W. Powell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Melissa DeStefano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterfall</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Alanna Sachse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertex</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Suzie E. Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wind Up</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Linda Labbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirty Puppy</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Michelle Pellegrino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoned</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>David Hague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunflower with Hummingbird, Sweet Spot</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Patti Genest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Wall</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Alanna Sachse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Fall</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Michelle Pellegrino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acadia</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Patti Genest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Quiet Place</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Alanna Sachse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushkill Falls</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Alanna Sachse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower 2</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Kristina Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainy Day Spider Web</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Suzie E. Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Kristina Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Metalwork</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Suzie E. Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower 3</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Kristina Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snail</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Melissa DeStefano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stillness</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Henry W. Powell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Banana Scavenger</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>David Hague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bean</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Suzie E. Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Southwest</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Suzie E. Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sail</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Suzie E. Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness is Key</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Michelle Pellegrino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Glory</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Patti Genest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Letter From the Editor

Sarah Fleischmann

I would like to dedicate this edition of Zephyr to the Zephyr editorial board and, most of all, my Junior Editor, Megan Totten. This year has been a transitional stage for Zephyr as the new online submission process took flight. Despite the ups and downs, we have a final product that was created thanks to the help of all involved.

I would like to thank you all for sticking through the process and look forward to making next year’s publication of Zephyr the best one to date.

"The moment you feel like giving up, remember the reasons why you held on for so long"
A Dream At Sea

Melissa DeStefano

In the middle of Nowhere,
lost in never-ending black sea,
an adventurous boy awoke,
tangled in knotted rope on a tall ship.
He was surrounded by sleeping pirates
whose loose clothes flapped in the breeze.

The sails above him shook with the breeze,
cutting through the air of Nowhere.
One sail sagged lower, to the pirates’
dismay, falling limply to meet the deep sea.
“How do you fix the sails on this ship?”
the boy yelled. One pirate awoke.

He looked at the boy, confused, and declared, “The breeze, boy. You use the breeze! In Nowhere, everyone can hoist a sail!” The boy stared at the pirate and replied, “I don’t know how I got to sea!” This startled the sleeping pirates on the deck of the ship and one by one they awoke.

“Men, you’re awake!”
said the first pirate, excited. “The breeze is rough, and we’re down a sail, on a pirate ship in the middle of Nowhere!”
The men chuckled heartily, hoisting a mended sail up over the sea. They chanted in unison, “Heave, ho, we are pirates!”
The proud pirates
were so loud, they awoke
the last lazy one. He drunkenly took his sea
legs aboard the main deck. A slight breeze
nearly knocked him down. "Nowhere,"
he slurred, "is the place to be. This ship
is my home, and pirates are we!" The ship
rocked wildly as the boy watched the pirates
in disbelief. He was cold, sick and scared, and grumbled, "Nowhere
is not the place for me." Then he awoke,
to a subtle, open-window breeze,
clenched his sheets in both palms and whispered, "I see no sea."

He thought, "Sometimes I want to be Nowhere, asleep or awake—
the ship, the pirates,
the breeze, the sea."
THE WELL

Jerome L. Wyant

I miss the well
in our back yard
rustic with woods
like walls around
adjacent our garden grew
watered from the well

A little white well
house with red roof tiles
marked the well site
and kept kids
from falling in

The well had denizens:
some crappies I'd caught
and later a black snake
picked up by the
tip of its tail and
dropped down the funnel
like an elongated plumb
a few portly frogs
whose croaks like
the penitence of souls
echoed upwards
The shaft was deep
thirty feet or so with
vertical stone steep
sides covered with moss
like a beard green
growing down
you could feel
the bucket in free fall
the rope sliding
fast as an eel
thru your hands
burning like youth's fitful fevers

There were times after
fights with my mother
about where I was going
and with whom how late
I was staying out
I wished I could climb
into the old wooden bucket

disappear down the shaft
forever

It would be like slipping
into a time capsule
plummeting
passing stones like years
without even leaving home
starting over a new slate
Now years later
the house has new owners
the well is closed
boarded up my mother
dead and gone and
it does no good
to reprimand
the boy in the man
he wishes now more
than ever he did then
he could ride the bucket
back up and
make amends
To Move Forward

Sarah Fleischmann

The sounds of the violin fill the empty theatre room; the dark room appears even more melancholy with the sadness held in the song. The violinist draws her bow across the strings as she looks out from her position on the shadowed stage. She sees the boarded up windows and the hundreds of theatre seats that are now covered with ghostly white sheets. With the windows covered, no natural light can enter, making the room look grim in the flickering yellow light of the small oil lamp that the musician has lit on stage.

She plays continuously, starting a new song as soon as the last one ends until the songs finally begin to simply blend together. Looking out over the empty seats, she remembers her last performance in that very room and the song begins to pick up in loudness though she keeps her slow pace. She fights to push the memories away with each stroke of the strings but they come in full force with the growing notes and pitches. She hears the flutes and the clarinets pick up the tune like they once did/ Faces appear behind her closed eyes at each part of the old familiar song. However, she knows the images are only in her mind. Still, she opens her eyes, expecting to see the entranced crowd only to be met with dusty air. She closes her eyes again, unable to accept the truth that is laid out in front of her even as her intangible audience attempts to show her what she already deeply knows. She ends her song, savoring in the echo of the last note until she hears the clapping of single hands.
“You haven’t lost your touch,” she hears his voice, his heavy footsteps loud in the quiet room. He walks down the aisle, stopping at the front of the stage; his face barely visible in the small yellow light. He is familiar to her as if they had only played a show together the night before. Yet she feels like she doesn’t know him anymore. She drops the hand that is holding the violin to her side and kneels down to blow out the light, shrouding the room back into its eternal darkness.

“No, but I’ve lost this place.”
Fine Maine Day

Leslie Ricker

"it's a fine Maine day"

how many times have I repeated the phrase?

how many others
    thought I was sarcastic
walking through
    wind and snow and cold?
but I wasn’t
    and I’m not so very bold
        as to spit in the face
        of the weather;
it’s just that, well
    I’m tenth generation
        in a thirty-mile span
from the Maine Coast
    maybe twenty miles inland
who couldn’t, any, tell you
    the reason to complacently stay
on a blizzard-blown
    late December day

I love to stand in it anyway
THE STEEPELE

Jerome L. Wyant

1956, four of us or thereabouts
manned our post in the steeple of the old
Episcopal Church in the town square, Wolcott
Connecticut, all of us explorer scouts.

The pigeons we disturbed exploded into light
outside the open window. Inside we crouched
by twos taking turns with the binoculars
brought to identify airplanes and chart their flight

patterns across our patch of sky, blood red
with day’s descent. Pictures of planes hung
like pin-up girls on the warped white walls,
a rogues’ gallery of airborne furies bled

of colors by successive summers’ wilting suns.
From the steeple we could look down
as from the empyrean on the quaint New England
town and on the countryside for miles around.

Sprawled on the pine planked floor,
we passed around a stubbed cigarette,
taking drags, trying to inhale, blowing smoke rings,
forgetful of apocalypse portended by cold war.
There was no time until scoutmaster Berowne, his bald skull billowing up like a mushroom cloud from the floorboards through the trap door, smelled the incriminating smoke and hauled us down.

Freddie, George, Joe and I—little did we know that outing would be our last together. Leukemia claimed one, a car accident, another. The church and the steeple are still there though.

One still winter’s night many years later (and in a world not at all safer) I returned on a lark, looking for myself perhaps, under a moon white as a communion wafer.

I crossed the square from where I parked my car, passed the monument of the intrepid Union soldier—frozen in time and perennially free from sin—oh, how I envied him, and looking up at the steeple ensconced in stars, I almost thought myself the boy I’d been.
“no sun today”

Leslie Ricker

soft sunday gray

“no sun today”
eighty-six year old voice
hopes for another ray
of good golden light
before the night;
march first,
the ‘dying month’ has passed,
another winter framed and glassed
for her gallery of memories,
a gallery losing dimension
in the growing shadow
that has caught her,
and she casts another prayer
out to the ‘deeper water’
“no sun today”
the voice believes
darkness can be
the death of disarray,
twilight can be
an awakening change
if well-pondered and chose
and new seasons of life
can open
as worn ones close

“no sun today”
and any leap for light
must jump
back to yesterday
Bodies

Melissa DeStefano

You carved the structure of my bones
into your lungs and breathed
me. I said, baby, don’t leave
me.

Don’t let your feelings escape
the concrete steps that hold your heart up
and don’t forget that we aren’t fog,
hung low like evening glow
on lakes, but we are moving
water. We are rivers
echoing in seashells against my ears,
and we flow like blood through veins
together.

Don’t let your lips get tied
to anyone’s but mine because I need your air
to see, love.
And when my best muscle pumped
clear fluids through my chest,
a dam formed between
us.

But I carved the structure of your teeth
into my tongue and tasted
you.

My cheeks went soft to hear you:
you said your name is ugly—not be shared—
and you are not the type of person
that cares what others think,
but it’s a secret.
Then you said you trusted me
to keep it.
I slid it in my brain’s back pocket,
rubbed your scars like a letter
I’d waited on
for weeks.

I said if I had one last breath
left to breathe, it’d be
yours
to keep.

I am my own weakness—
worn as earrings
through my thickest skin.
You touched my face
with guiltless fingertips,
traced x’s on my eyelids,
and said, shh, baby, don’t speak.

Don’t look at me like your existence is my responsibility
and don’t forget that I am not your artwork,
hung straight on proud walls
gleaming under fluorescent bulbs.

I’ve got holes in my feet from your endless critiques,
but we are imperfection.
We are walking bruises.
We are bodies.
in the eternal interim, the hazy dusk
of stratification, there is spinning and dancing
into the darkening, fertile shade.

tendrils of sunlight pierce the glassy surface
of waves, touching seabirds and seaboats
here to fish rich waters.
Spouts signal in the distance, a blow
and plume of mist and respiration
while our ship, our daily ship, alights on swells
of current in a harried chase of whale breath.

some never appear again.
others linger at the surface, half-asleep
until the green glow of white wings pierces through
the fog of phytoplankton
and, wakening, the giants roll forward
breathe
slick along the surface
breathe
throw mottled fingerprints into sea air
and sink.

every creature lives for admiration
or so we thought, especially of baleen beings
so dazzling, spun of shadow and clouds
“off the port bow!”
the ocean cries, ejecting a rorqual in spontaneous ecstasy
to thunder back into the sun-touched azure
of the gulf (of Maine)
trailing bliss and rapture in its wake.
A Lonely Tune

Linda labbe

As the wind was whistling through the trees
It set a tone with the warm spring breeze
Against the building, a soft sad moan
Sound of a lost soul crying alone
The whistling, the moan, a lonely song
Hearts are broken, loves gone wrong

The moon shone bright in areas of clear
Illuminating the clouds as they drew near
Creating silhouettes with arms out reaching
Then disappearing when clouds aren’t breaching
Outstretched arms longing to embrace
Under the moon’s glowing face

Sitting quietly as the clouds pass the moon
Knowing that the sun will come up soon
Can’t take away from this empty heart feeling
As shadows dance seamlessly across the ceiling
The trees tapped softly as the breeze persuaded
At times upbeat and then slowly faded

The sun came up and chased the moon from the sky
And the slowing wind sent the clouds softly by
Now the room manifest with the morning light
Fashioned a mood cheerful and bright
Changes that gave an air of healing
No forsaken arms shadow the pure white ceiling
She was very ill, confined to bed, and what a better way to lift her out of the depression weighing like an anvil upon her heart than a flowering plant burgeoning with life in its delicate cell-like clusters. “Better than a transplant,” Mellars thought, quickening his walk into the near panic run of a trauma nurse to the florist’s shop a block away.

A diminutive Chinese woman with the ageless quality most Asians enjoy waited on him. She was steely and inscrutable as the Sphinx. Her glance, which he followed, fixed on a peculiarly exotic plant, whose leaves and pale pink petals seemed to shiver, tremble, as if basking in his appreciation.

The deep pink, lavender almost plant, paling at the edges to white, was the pink of a negligee of a beautiful woman, Mellars mused. Its branches cylindrical, slender reeds one could breathe through; its leaves oval, fan-shaped, the size of the palms of a delicate lady’s hands. The lush leaves rose from the base of the plant, then folded over suppliantly, as if prostrate before the beauty of its own flowers. “Phalaenopsis,” she said. “Very, very temperamental. Need water everyday.”

He bought the plant. On the way home, on the subway, he cuddled the plant to his chest to prevent it from being damaged or inadvertently dropped. Once or twice, when the subway car braked or lurched, the flowers brushed against his face, their febrile lips imparting kisses. He was suffused in the orchid’s dusky sweet aroma, not as pungent as musk, but intoxicating nonetheless. For a moment, before the subway car doors slid open, Mellars thought he might swoon.
His wife smiled wanly when he showed her the plant. Not terribly fond of plants, she was compliant and too weak, if the truth were known, to remonstrate. He placed the plant on the formica stand beside her bed. After exchanging a few words—he expressed his customary solicitude for her—he turned to leave her room. He was halfway through the door when he had a premonition to turn around. He did and saw the plant; its pink flowers now appeared glowering, almost red as if with a quiet, irrepressible rage.

Within three days his wife was dead. The housekeeper discovered her, prone of the floor. She had knocked the stand and the plant over in her final death throes, probably in an effort to alert someone. When he entered her vacated room, he bent over and scooped up the plant; it still looked as if it might live and, with husbandry, he managed to revive it.

Within a few days the plant began to flourish, especially in his presence. It bristled with life. New buds and shoots appeared. Its flowers stretched amorously out, beckoning, alluring, expectant. For his part, Mellars felt revived too. He could not remember having felt so elated since his wedding day.
The Ultimate Journey

Linda Labbe

Let the breeze gently take them away
   To rest on the ocean in peace may they lay

A romantic wish they planned years before
   To ride the breeze off Fortune’s Rocks shore

Let their ashes sail to sea
   To dance on the waves gentle and free

They’ve lived and loved through all kinds of weather
   Now the ultimate journey they’ve taken together

My Aunt and Uncle in heaven at last
   Along with loved ones who’d already passed

Dear God keep them safe in your care
   And I know in time I’ll meet with them there
Jake Bosma wore his dad’s wrinkled oversized white button-up shirt and last year’s outgrown khaki pants. He sat beneath the golden arches sweating his glasses off his face. The dollar menu glowed behind him like a halo. He suddenly felt embarrassed. He regretted thinking that this date was mc-doable. He knew that Kylie was out of his league, and he was convinced that she could hear his heartbeat from across the red-and-yellow-checkered table.

Kylie Morgan sipped her Coca Cola cautiously, as if she feared what was at the bottom of the straw. She doted on the fact that she was on her first date at McDonald’s and wondered if she would have to admit it to her friends at school. Her fingers danced anxiously across her thighs, and she began to think that Jake would not utter a word the entire night.

Jake doubted himself. With every silent minute that passed, he struggled to think of something clever to say. He desperately wanted to impress the cute brunette seated across from him, but how could he when he couldn’t even speak? His anxiety impaired his voice.

Kylie darted her eyes toward Jake. In one split second, she caught a glimpse of the beads of sweat curling around his jaw, hanging light like cigarette smoke. She saw his wide blue eyes for the first time and then quickly looked downward into her soda once again.

Jake’s hands shook as he reached for a French fry and simultaneously dodged Kylie’s glance. He had barely eaten a thing since they had arrived, and he was beginning to feel downhearted about his idea to take her to McDonald’s in the first place. What he thought would be a dramatic irony of the typical first date model now seemed just the opposite.
Kylie had nothing to do but look around. She was getting very bored, so she began aimlessly peering at the various posters of Ronald McDonald. Her eyes met with Jake’s.

Jake felt hopeless. The more he tried to speak, the more it felt impossible, like there was heavy cotton lodged in his chest. It was obvious that the night was going downhill fast. He held both Kylie’s glare and a French fry for an awkward amount of time before he realized that it had been an awkward amount of time.

Before he could even utter a word, he jerked his elbow, knocking his French fries off the table. He leapt out of his chair and scurried to pick them up one by one, as if Kylie wouldn’t see him if he acted swiftly enough. Frazzled, he hopped back into his chair, leaning his elbow on a stack of ketchup packets that squirted all over his white shirt. He thought the night was mc-doomed. He looked up at Kylie, a deer in headlights, and still offered no words.

Kylie stared back blankly, absorbing the scene. She sloshed a big sip of soda around her mouth for a few seconds. Then she laughed. In fact, she laughed so hard, she spit her soda all over Jake’s shirt. He was now covered in ketchup and Coca Cola. Jake knew this moment would make or break the date. He knew it had gone too far to fix. He knew he was already embarrassing himself. He knew he had only one option: to make a joke of himself. He dumped the rest of his fries over his head. Then he looked up at Kylie, presenting himself as the fool, smiling ear-to-ear for her approval.

A Thanks to Our Supporters

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