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Widener University's online journal of **undergraduate writing** takes its name from the Blue Route (I-476), a north-south highway running through the suburbs of Philadelphia.

The Blue Route is an online undergraduate literary journal run by students and faculty from Widener University. We publish short fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction written by undergraduate writers from any school other than our own. There is a great deal of emerging talent in the undergraduate population, and we aim to showcase that talent in our journal. We pay our contributors \$25 upon publication, and work hard to provide our contributors with a professional publication experience.

Our staff has an extremely thorough process of reviewing submissions. We read each submission blind, without the author's name or gender, in order to evaluate each piece effectively with minimal bias, focusing on its content and the skill with which it has been written. Our entire prose staff reads every prose submission, and our entire poetry staff reads every poetry submission. We meet and discuss each piece, believing that this is the best way to give each submission fair consideration.

We encourage undergraduates from any major who have done creative writing in any of the genres we publish to submit to us. We also extend a welcome to readers from all walks of life, who are interested in all these writers have to offer.

Cover image by Samuel DeVecchis

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Picasso's Muse

Garrett Lemery, Flagler College

Cold glasses depict time
through condensation.
Shaky knees staring across
stained, summer rusted
coffee tables—
our talks similarly
stale, bitter off the lips.

Always knew to never bring
roses for a weeping woman.
A few unwatered days
angry footsteps will shake
shriveled petals gracefully to the ground; a long gaze
shows ripe girls
layered stages of fading
into fruitful women.

Did Dora Maar crush the thorns
of a bouquet when she sat
as his model in despair?
Oil on canvas,
encompassing muse of a sex
blooming/fighting/dying
through history.
Grateful to become that pure
fertilizer for future flowers,
a hopeful world.

*Dora Maar was Pablo Picasso's mistress who, in 1936, posed as a model for his painting *The Weeping Woman*.

Archaeology

Lindsey Lucas, Missouri Western State University

From the stacks of crumbling
water-warped pages
on my grandpa's basement shelves
I uncovered and brushed off
a thin clinging layer
of dust and cherry cigar smoke
from a pile of yellow-edged
National Geographics.
They were like Incan mummies
preserved in that dark space,
their spines unbroken,
wrapped with spice and holding
new discoveries like
small treasures in their shriveled
paper-thin hands.
I sifted through them,
marveling at the glossy photos
of haunting eyes and street-corners.
My future was full of shutters
and frozen smiles, full
of markets and dusty feet,
fresh figs and carved elephants.
The covers slowly lost
their sharp corners and colors,
the yellow fading to soft gold
in the bright light of my room.
The knee-high pile leaned against
my bed until I was old enough
to drive past airports.

Stability Through Motion

Lauren Reagan, Stephen F. Austin State University

The waterbed in my parents' room
is the most stable thing I know—

every movement sends waves across the gray
surface, an action spurring an equal reaction

like Newton's laws and the way
my mother's eyes send back

answers in ripples, messages in bottles,
love letters in response to the secrets I spill.

Physical therapists find stability through motion
and patience; she puts on scrubs each morning

to help patients learn how to use their bodies
again, to understand the muscles and bones

holding them together. In the evenings, I, too,
earn stability through motion: we rock and talk

and it's always been this way;
everyone tells me I look like my mother.

I got her blue eyes and the dark circles
under them, but also the chasing of light:

I hand her my brokenness, and she answers
God, cry for my brother

and she says *progress*, tell her about picking up
my drunk best friend at five

in the morning, helping her up the stairs and tucking
her into bed, how caterpillars work and work

to earn their wings and die, on average, two weeks later.
She offers carpals and metacarpals, though her specialty

is in shoulders and legs;
she only studied a human heart in a jar for eight weeks

in college,
but she knows it well.

I don't understand the chemical imbalance in my brother's brain
or how skin holds us together like fabric, how the waterbed

never popped when I fell onto it over and over.
When I see only shadows, she guides me toward light,

When I whisper *Moth*,
she says *Butterfly*.

Concussed

Cynthia Conte, Tusculum University

Shake a fishbowl and the fish stays near the center. Water waves, but the fish floats around, not hitting the sides. *It's such bad weather out there, why did I go out?* Passenger seat, windshield, sheet of water, blur. Squeaking sound of a hand dragging across the hood of a car. Umbrella and mail blow across ice. Goldfish can live in very cold water. Eyes turned to the sky, unblinking. *Wake up.* Stumble, stumble, fall, voices muffled, under water. Goldfish cannot close their eyes. Mouth slack, she doesn't see you. Goldfish cannot close their eyes. Pick her up off the ground. Sweaty palms, dizzy, constriction. *Why did I why did I why did I... go out there?* Shake a brain hard enough and it won't be the same for awhile. *Don't let her fall asleep.*

FEVER DREAM

Jenny Wu, Emory University

I. THE MAN IN THE LAKE

You said you wanted
 to open your eyes
 underwater
in Venice,
 "where the people live."
 —This is how you fall asleep,
I suppose, or not,
 having counted all the exits
 and decided, No,
I will stay here.
 Another is to take
 a walk through the woods.
You have the gift of clairvoyance,
 a book of poems for the dead.
 Tonight: Catullus V.
What I thought was a shadow
 attacked me and swallowed me
 in its leafiness.
Where there is space
 there are recurring paths
 confounding the idea of space.
There are forms that weigh
 as much as a handful of dark blue grapes
 but cannot be weighed.
—It's not that I see the Ogre,
 or hear him
 at night,
dragging his scrotum across the floor.
 Your idea of running away
 didn't get you farther than the state line.
Suddenly there you were,
 sitting on my bag next to the
 octagonal skating rink
with the white Christmas lights,

eating my sandwich
with a bandage on your hand.
In every memory we crouch on the shore
of Lake Michigan,
lighting Turkish cigarettes.
It hurts to breathe in smoke
but the lake is on fire.

II. THE CUTTING OF THE LOGS

Yelling after the invisible gardeners,
"Give me back my leaves! My
lichenous branch!
You, necromancer!
You, coincidence!"
O...
Strophe of air, stumps of trees,
disappearing wind.
In time we'll become
those two white horses,
two long faces, dapper and dumb.
In time I'll drink the rain
from the bottom of a boat,
my hands clutching pine needles
as the leaves fall
onto my autumn wool
and stick.
I open my eyes underwater
and marvel at the denizens of the pond,
murky and green,
to whom
I am the worm,
I am the worm,
I am
neither fish nor frog,
the connoisseur of mud and lumps,
where I found the princess of rue
banished in her shadows. They fell over her like skins
and furs.
I wrote a song for mine
who creeps into the boughs
and gets closer to the blooming chrysanthemum
than I ever could.
I cannot fall into the folds of the petals.
I cannot disappear beneath the sheets
without my shoes giving me away.

For me a vision of Sītā, woman on the folded page,
 opened miraculously, giving very little.
 Vision of Nirṛti,
 something-power, something hair of flaming gold,
 "Pours the Ganges on Viṣṇu's foot."
 Aye, why make rivers when nothing floats?
 —Our arms and legs are necessary.
 So are curses, ecstasies, words with
 magical consequence.
 These are mankind's showpieces,
 mankind the artist,
 politely removing his hat in death's antechamber.
 The moon rose
 during the day
 and hung there.
 All this light—even from only
 half a moon!
 Too often I have trampled
 over the half-roots,
 half-running from the land of Nod,
 here meaning, Cain's punishment,
 but also
 as a joke
 meaning sleep, for one nods off.
 Last night rain slapped against the broken tiles,
 like a crowd of immigrants eager to cross
 into the country of sound—
 their bodies become sound. And so it is.
 I will wait for your word.
 But I will begin by searching
 through all my pockets.
 There is something. There is something
 on the list of food to buy,
 before the tomatoes.
 —Tell me: the things I live for
 have nothing to do with life.
 Shall we play?
 Shall we battle against the odds?

III. STILL LIFE WITH ABSENT OR IMAGINED OBJECTS

People die, and,
 as far as we know,
 they do not come back.
 Somebody mastered the mermaid song,
 made sure the painting was on straight,

bought gumbo,
 and was first to sense the new death.
 Somebody rinsed the stucco,
 made sure the calls were returned,
 bought rhubarb,
 and was first to sense the new death.
 A door slams,
 and in the fog,
 a straw hat is floating,
 getting smaller.
 This is the Rook.
 It may cross the King,
 castling long, O-O-O.
 This game! Glacial,
 here meaning, not cold,
 but slow.
 Like darkness descending,
 like a debate about metal-
 working,
 the essentialism of unlikely
 materials.
 You leaned closer to me.
 You were a lonely stucco churchwall
 leaning leaning leaning.
 I thought, Who dares
 dance on my grave,
 and will they waltz?
 Sing to me?
 A silent dance is the saddest of all.
 Sometimes what we think is dancing
 is not at all.
 It is a game of chess
 played with imaginary pieces so why not blood?
 Too chaotic?
 I have asked it
 to stop for a moment,
 and it can.
 We can eat not from skulls
 but from seashells,
 not from seashells
 but from smooth pebbles,
 not from pebbles
 but from the surface of water itself.
 The master of the house
 shakes
 his servant

And points at the floor he swept:

"See this?

 This is good!

 This is very good!"

Winter picks its bones clean.

 Feverish,

 I felt its forms pound directly on my back
and thought that the walls would break.

 Feverish,

 I carved with a knife
the symbols of falsity and vainglory
 and forgot who carved them on my door.

 You said, Begin the war,
but let the war confuse you.

 Run headless through the war.

 Let the ocean's warm breath
deliver more than the day's blood,
 more than enough for life
 and this procession of ashes
we call life.

 You went to see the god of death
 and he said,
Come ride in my chariot. I will show you
 The farmers carving boats for the flood.

IV. THE ANSWER

A man carried a light
 down every wrong street,
 chasing someone
who will not come back.

 Yelling,

 "Why is your hair so long?

What were you trying to show me
 in the mews of Cannstatt?

 What was beneath
the bandage on your hand?

 My friend! My Hell!"

 Hell fades longingly into the white.
What was that thing before it started burning?

 Ask the fire and the fire shall giveth.

 I read Catullus to the graves
and listened for your exit.

 I wanted to show you
 the pleated lungs
of a dying crab.

I wanted to show you
a forked road that didn't divide the body in two.
—If I carried a light for you
and you asked me to wear a blindfold.
If I carried a light for you,
and you asked me to swallow your secret.
If ever I carried a light—
your pyre, your path—
We are only pushing the dead forward.

V. FIRE ON DRIFTWOOD

This is the lake.
This is the moon's dead image.
This is the white foam of love.
I never said
that the body was free.
I only said it stood alone,
and chased away shadows alone.
How many shadows in a day?
You got bored
and invented rules like
The ground is lava.
The water is poison.
Time exists or does not exist—
it doesn't matter.
The Age of Enlightenment
is over.
But someone forgets
and winds up a metal bird.
What secret was whispered and how far will it travel?
The night is the catcher.
The moon is the keel.
Now that all the butt-ends have blown on their way,
bitten down to firmament and firmament gray,
I've come to say yes!
I've come to say yes!
I've come to proclaim for my true-self:
I am the rivers that call forth my name.
I am the child of the opium-eaters.
And yes, we were ripped apart, he and I,
limp lionthings in the deserts of Africa,
where we sat in the sand
as careless of each other
as children.
And now the fever

with its one thousand ordinances
reads on through the night.
I don't love books.
I don't love anything
smaller than a bed.
—We paid the savant two-pence to play Holst.
—Egret! I said.
Come back and tell me winter isn't
over!

Moths Beat Themselves to Death Against the Lights

Natalia Mujadzic, Stephen F. Austin State University

You had maggots squirming
where your eyeballs should've been,
and you were missing more teeth
than any man of twenty-six I'd ever met,
but I focused my eyes on your perfect nose
and listened when you spoke, because your steady
voice surprised me. I asked what happened,
you said *what happens to all of us*,
and I left it at that.

You didn't scare me. I watched
my own body cloaked in your deteriorating
skin in my sleep for the last four years.
You wore yours like a shell. We sat
on train tracks waiting for the slow-
approaching hum of a locomotive, ran red lights
every chance we got. You shook with adrenaline
and told me you saw scars on my cheeks.
I said *bullshit*.

After weeks of chasing oxycodone
with vodka, bridge jumping, and hugging
your back while you sped up to 120 on I-80,
fragments of your perfect nose vanished
until you were left with two flat holes for breathing.
When I asked, you smiled. *You're losing it, kid*. I never
got your name or a goodbye when one quiet July night
something ceased blood flow to your brain,
and you slipped into oblivion, safely home.

County Road 4760, Winnsboro, TX

Emma Pearl Ramsey, Stephen F. Austin State University

Buoyant, we struck out like pioneers,
bright, weightless spirits unaware
that everything familiar disappears.
We posed, smiles like shiny souvenirs
beside the square sign marked, "sold." There,
having struck out like pioneers,
we bought thirteen acres, crowned old fears
gently, in the gold grace of prayer.

When everything familiar disappears—
breathless adventure—the hemispheres
of our existence expanding—will we care?
When, having struck out like pioneers,
the world is widened, and the road clears,
will it pain us, grown older, to stare
while everything familiar disappears?
Will we, hands high—bright-eyed volunteers
—pack our souls in suitcases and dare
to strike out like pioneers,
knowing everything familiar disappears?

Crossing Bridges

Emma Pearl Ramsey, Stephen F. Austin State University

for Grace

You told me you love
the way the bridge over Caney Creek,
sounds like tinkling piano keys,
our wheels rolling over ribbed cement.

I didn't tell you
that the break in sound
from road to bridge
shudders through me
as if I were a train rattling full-speed
over trestle and track.
Or that bridges in general
remind of the long one
between Washington and Oregon
over the Columbia River,
the way we'd try to hold our breath
till we'd reached the other side.

The way we try to hold our breath
until all our pain is over.

I didn't tell you that road noise
sounds like the ocean
and I would rather drown in restless water
than fly over the empty sound
of an endless bridge.

I didn't tell you
because your words,
the notes dripping from your fingers
like rain,
filled the wide mouth of empty sound
with music,
the crash of thunder
and the yellow of lightning,
the sounds of storm
and the stillness
afterwards.

Your words
gave me grace
to stop
and lose my breath,
to be for a moment
off-kilter,
in the music that bridges make.

Contributors

Garrett Lemery is a full-time student at Flagler College and, as of late, has become immensely inspired by the interactions between his peers and himself against the constantly moving current of coastal life. He believes darkness writes better than light, and that the most moving works of contemporary poetry focus on suppressed desires and wishes we struggle to talk about face-to-face. The words of Margaret Atwood, Anne Sexton, and Liz Robbins have most intimately touched his writing style in the past years.

Lindsey Lucas is graduating from Missouri Western State University in December with a double major in literature and creative writing & publishing. This is her fourth semester as social media editor for the undergraduate literary journal *The Mochila Review*, and she is also the cohost of *Mochila Chat*, a podcast for undergraduate writers. In her free time, she blogs, drinks too much coffee, and watches cooking shows.

Lauren Reagan is an undergraduate at Stephen F. Austin State University. She is from McKinney, Texas and is currently residing in small-town Nacogdoches, pursuing a degree in Creative Writing with a minor in literature.

Cynthia Conte is a senior in the creative writing program at Tusculum University specializing in nonfiction. She has served on the staff of the *Tusculum Review* for two years in the roles of Database and Nonfiction Layout. She received the Curtis Owens Award for nonfiction and was published in *Really System*. She is currently working on a collection of essays for senior seminar.

Jenny Wu is an undergraduate at Emory University whose poetry can be found in *Word For/Word*, *dislocate*, *SOFTBLOW*, *storySouth*, *Mangrove*, *Catfish Creek*, *Polaris*, and *The Asian American Literary Review*.

Emma Pearl Ramsey is working on her undergraduate thesis in poetry at Stephen F. Austin State University, in the piney woods of Nacogdoches, TX, as well as minors in Literature and German. Emma grew up on a small farm in the country, and loves all things that grow, whether they are gardens, children, or our own individual knowledge of ourselves and of our place in the world. She loves to take a chaos of emotion and image and give it order through poetry and prose, but is especially passionate about the magic of poetry.

Natalia Mujadzic is currently studying Creative Writing at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, and her work has appeared in *HUMID*, SFASU's undergraduate literary journal.