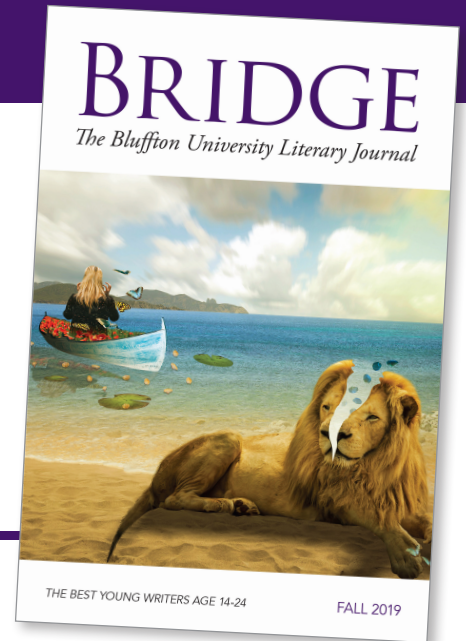


# BRIDGE

*The Bluffton University Literary Journal*



## ODE TO EROSION

Alexia Kemerling

Every summer,  
I measure the dwindling length of the island, with  
worried footprints in damp sand, count  
turtle nests garnished with yellow caution tape, see  
the shadow of my grandmother's ghost in every tide pool.

The first time,  
we discovered the shrinking it seemed, impossible  
to tame the sea, but I knew that wouldn't stop us, from  
piling sandbags into mountains of denial at the island's edge, meanwhile  
we watched with helpless grief as my grandmother's mind faded as, fast  
as the pelican's sharp dive, beak first into the water, nothing  
to do but clasp her shaking hand careful not to tear her tissue paper, skin  
keep a calm smile on the surface of my face despite the, unavoidable  
emptiness in her eyes when I whisper her name with love.

Years later,  
I still remember her surprise, then unease, every  
time the distance, from her to ocean, grew  
smaller and smaller as the tide erased the shoreline. Maybe it had, always  
been this way saltwater, licking  
her toes, engulfing her chair, leaving  
behind rings of rust that at first seemed harmless, enough  
but erosion is a slow violence.

In the midst of it all,  
I slowed my steps, refused to acknowledge that my walk was getting, shorter  
each summer as the waves crept over the sandbags and I, hesitate  
to admit I closed my eyes as rapacious waves, swallowed



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is a writer, runner, and activist from the heart of Ohio. She wears hearing aids in both ears and is somewhat decent at lip reading. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in creative writing at Hiram College. Her work has appeared in *TIMBER Journal* and *Mud Season Review*.

first street, second street, six blocks, two homes, I  
never said goodbye to the sunrise or, expressed  
my love for the smell of her banana sunscreen, I  
never kissed her brain, for fear of smudging, any  
fragile memory. I never longed for land until it was too late.