

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *ghost flower*, a literary journal focused on publishing the work of students and recent graduates of The Ohio State University at Newark. Our mission is to publish what we take to be meaningful work – honest, direct, formally interesting but not overly clever or abstract. We seek to feature work that speaks to us as workers, citizens, students, writers, and members of the human community. Although our first call for submissions was general in nature, nearly all of the work featured in Volume 1, Issue 1 of *ghost flower* deals in one way or another with the issue of belonging – to a family, to a geographical place, to a relationship, or to a generational epoch.

We begin with Sarah White’s enigmatic prose fragment “The Girl Writes.” We felt this was the perfect way to open our volume. The melancholy mood of the piece made us feel as though we were one with the eponymous girl; it provided not only a window into the mind of the writer but also an aperture through which the entire volume might begin to come into singular but related focus. We follow with two very different poems by Jordan Whitney-Wei. “Millennial Reign,” with its repeated chorus and tight couplet arrangement, impressed us not only in terms of its formal concision and experimentation but also in terms of its complicated argument. The image of a generation that “dream[s] alike but drive[s] alone” feels entirely familiar and a bit too close for comfort for the majority of us. “Dumbo Valentine,” on the other hand, seems to tell the story of a thwarted romantic interest. The exact details hardly matter. We love the intelligence of the language and the wit of the irregular rhymes. And besides, who hasn’t felt the bravado and deflation that the poem so aptly portrays?

From the universal of attraction and desire to the universal of memory and identity, our one creative non-fiction selection follows. “Dropping Bombs” by S. Noel touches on the issue of family, addiction, and intergenerational transmission. We loved the clarity of the prose, as though it was scrubbed clean of any sentimentality or resentment. As though it were a personal communication, the story gives us an intimate look inside not only a family’s struggles, but arguably a nation’s, since the grandfather became an alcoholic when he was a soldier in Vietnam. Some of these themes get picked up in the first of three poems by Sarah White. “The Broken Chair” tells the story of a family from the point of view of a broken chair sitting in a basement, “Shoved backward / Into a ringing / Silence.” While on the one hand, this is a story of a disused chair, we felt that its brokenness extends to the family as well. The next poem “The Damn Pill” impressed us with its unique form. Its multivocality—the voices seeming to sound from without as well as within—is spatially represented as sounding from different aspects of the self, the society, and the culture, and offers a 21st-century updating of field poetics. Sarah White’s final poem is “The Desert in the East,” a work that invites us to listen to the political, but more to the point, human sounds of suffering and injustice. The many repetitions of “hush” not only seem aimed at quieting the socio-political jargon that keeps us from perceiving death and destruction, but also seem to quiet the space of the poem itself, allowing us to hear the absence of a child’s laughter, negatively echoing in an empty land.

“The Beast” by Dwayne Raines is a tale of dim recognition. Half flash-fiction fantasy, half first-person nightmare, the story takes us into our own dark recesses and keeps us on the edge of our seat. From genre fiction to Italian fixed form, we segue into “Angel on my Shoulder” by Zachary Colopy. We were especially impressed with the ease with which this poem handles

the villanelle form in which two lines are repeated at exact intervals. Surprisingly, its theme—insistent desiring internal voices—puts it in a rhyme-like relation to “The Beast.” Each suggests that either covertly or overtly we deal with conflicting internal impulses. The next two poems are by Jeffrey Brun. Each is scrubbed clean of artifice and irony. As though influenced by John Keats’s dictum that a “poet has no identity,” “I’m always the shadow in the crowd” speaks to the vulnerability and openness to experience that characterize a certain lyric sensibility. We admired the loneliness of its long lines. “I take in breath” is an unabashed love poem. Its six-line stanzas, in which the poet and his addressee seem inextricably entwined, reflect the interconnectedness of love in their structure as well as their semantic meaning.

Our first longer short-story follows. “Desire,” by Isabella Moreno, is written from a child’s point of view. We especially liked that, although it is structured like a fairy tale, it eventually turns dark. Like many texts in this volume, the ending allows the reader to come to their own conclusion. Much as in the poetry of Jeffrey Brun, “Life’s Blink of Color” by Haley Clyburn sees the world through a hopeful and innocent lens. We liked the way that what begins as a question becomes a statement of resolve. “Watermelon Whispers” by Ashley Eberst follows. We see it as the perfect counterpoint to “Dropping Bombs.” Both pieces deal with difficult subjects—memory and strained and often unconscious intergenerational relations—but from a position of forgiveness and understanding. We especially admire the voice of “Watermelon Whispers,” the way that Eberst is able to move in and out of the consciousnesses of her characters.

Our final two poems offer a contrast. Playing at the edge of lyric and propaganda, Matt Baugher’s “Travel Advertisement 43050” obscures its formal complexity by reproducing the line breaks within a verse paragraph. Like a dark tale for children “Travel Advertisement” leads you down a dimly-lit street and leaves you at the city limit. We close our volume with a poem, another by Baugher, that we love but don’t quite understand. “Inquiry in the Eternal Tourist Trap-*for Mr. Saturn*” evokes a stage play on acid. Its absurdities and acuties felt alive to us, and left us all, happily, in a “green trance.”

In between many of our texts are beautiful images supplied to us by Jeffrey Brun and Sarah White. We are so grateful to them for the excellence of their vision and their willingness to share their art. Without the images and the implicit narratives they provide, this journal would be a lesser thing. A special shout-out goes to Megan Gallaher who created the artwork for the cover. She rushed in at the last minute, saved our butts, and created the perfect cover. Thanks Megan!

Well, that’s it—our first volume. We hope that you will read and share it with your friends. We also hope that you will reach out to us, either by submitting work or simply letting us know how you like the zine. But even more we hope that you yourself will make something – a song, a poem, a story, a photo, a sculpture, a painting. We agree with the poet Wallace Stevens, who wrote that the purpose of poetry is to help people live their lives—ditto music, film, fiction, art of all kinds. But we also think that art can help shape reality. In this way, we offer our small portion of it, located in Central Ohio, and coming directly from our lived experience.

In Solidarity,

The Editors of *ghost flower*.