

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 “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 Viet Nam. 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, 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.