

HOG CREEK HARDIN

LITERARY JOURNAL

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A Note from our Editors

We are excited to welcome readers to the Spring 2026 edition of Hog Creek Hardin. This journal is routinely edited by undergraduates studying a variety of majors. We unite in the form of art and writing. Each semester we take in submissions of poetry, prose, photography, and art.

Our editorial team is comprised not only of undergraduates, but also neurodivergent students, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Therefore, we put a heavy emphasis on highlighting underrepresented and marginalized voices as a way to make space for them in an ever-changing world. Literature is a powerful source of community, knowledge, empathy, and strength; we at Hog Creek Hardin are here to voice that. All students of Hog Creek Hardin come from the Lima community, and look to not only seek diverse authors, but also local diverse voices from Lima and surrounding areas.

To finish, we are grateful to have our advisor of our journal, Timothy Cheeseman. He has an MFA in Poetry and was a poet laureate of the city of Lima. We are also very grateful for Dr. John Hellmann during the Spring semester as his willingness and input kept our journal active and we wish him the best.

We hope you enjoy this edition, and we hope you pick up a copy of our print edition in the spring. We welcome you to submit to us in the future.

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Poetry and Prose



Now, what if?
By Layn Bailey

What if I never found you?
The skies would be more blue than now,
And the moon would shine brighter.
What if I never met you?
My music would be happier,
And life would be brighter.
But, I found you.
So the skies were a dark shade of grey,
And the moon had a shadow casted over it.
But I met you.
So my music was slow and soft,
and my life was dull,
Because of you.

Slowly Bouncing into Spring

By Layn Bailey

Colors, and smells
Bright, and sweet
The smell of flowers.
The look of Black-eyed susans.
The cool air and the soft rain.
The feeling of the sun once again on your skin
The feeling of the wind blowing your hair, of long car rides with mom
And exploring with all your friends.
The feeling of spring, once again.

My name is Layn Bailey, I'm a 15 year old sophomore that attends Bath high school in Lima Ohio. Many of my poems are inspired by my life, family, friends and music.

Winter Flock
By Darrin Snyder Belousek

Birds alike in crest in feather,
An age-proverb goes,
Tend to flock and feed together,
As ev'ry school child goes.

Yet when Autumn yields to Winter
And plumage dulls its hue,
Birds by nature habits alter,
How they flock and with who.

Walk in wild wood, snow-draped, tranquil,
Trees but sticks, bark and bare,
Attune the ear, attend, careful:
Birdsong sweet cheers chill air.

Amid woes of wintry weather,
Rather than travel lone,
Friendly bands of sundry feather
Move, forage, roost as one.

Winter Flock
By Darrin Snyder Belousek

And around my backyard feeder,
Stocked with seed, nut, and fruit,
Eye beholds a kindred wonder:
Birds cluster, of mixt suit.

Sparrow, Pecker, Titmouse, Nuthouse,
Junco, Jay, but not Owl,
Chickadee, Cardinal, Flicker, Finch,
Perch and peack, beak by fowl.

Cued by the vernal symphony,
Near time to mate and nest,
Birds part hibernal company
Until comes Winter next.

Groundhog Blues
By Darrin Snyder Belousek

Woke up one mornin' / was early in May.
Strolled to my garden / on a cool spring day.
I checked the rhubarb / gave it a greetin'.
What did my eyes see? / Its leaves half-eaten!
I searched on Google / typed in my query
And read what it said: / I should be wary.
This could be a case of the groundhog blues.

I tilled up the soil / and planted my crops,
Hopin' my garden / would give me my props.
Put in brussels sprouts / and nice broccoli,
Some cauliflower / and nine kohlrabi.
They were growin' strong / their leaves green and long.
I noticed one day / those green leaves were gone.
I've got a bad case of the groundhog blues.

I marked off some ground / two furrows I hoed.
Took seeds in my hand / lima beans I sowed.
Watered and waited / but nothing came up.
I sowed seeds again / and didn't give up.
This time they sprouted / were doin' just fine.
Seven days went by / no beans did I find.
I'm down in the dumps with the groundhog blues.

Groundhog Blues
By Darrin Snyder Belousek

I knew then and there / that this had to stop.
This couldn't go on / or I'd get no crop.
I made up my mind / to mount a defense.
I'd protect my veg / with a garden fence.
Measured length and width / drove stakes in the ground,
Tied fence to the stakes / secured all around.
I'm gonna get rid of my groundhog blues.

One day in July / a warm summer eve,
Surveyed my garden / and would you believe?
I saw that critter / in my veg again!
It looked up at me / with an impish grin.
I gave a mean holler / it began to dance
And escaped me by / a gap in the fence.
I can't seem to shake these groundhog blues.
No, I can't seem to shake these groundhog blues.

Darrin W. Snyder Belousek is a philosophy teacher, hospital chaplain, baseball fan, casual hiker, backyard gardener, husband and father. A resident of Lima, Ohio, he reads poetry at the Lima Land Poetry Slam held monthly at Vibe Coffeehouse. His poems have appeared in *DreamSeeker Magazine, Anabaptist World,* and *Hog Creek Hardin.*

Hit the Brakes
By Ethan Bishop

I step into the bar, scrape my shoes on the slushy floor mat, and exhale heavily. My face tingles. Booths line the varnished oak bar where a woman sits. Her black hair peeks from under a beanie and brown eyes are already roving over me.

My chest freezes before I pull myself together and address her with a smile. The panel floor squeaks as I approach. She nods at the bartender and he sets two amber shots on the counter. I let the alcohol defrost my throat before we start talking.

"What brings a guy like you to a bar in a snowstorm?" she asks.

She smoothly downs her shot, and the barkeep sets down two more glasses.

I throw back my whiskey. "Sometimes a guy needs a good drink." I extend my hand, and she either ignores the gesture or doesn't notice.

She smiles. "I like a guy who needs a good drink."

"So, uh, what brings you here?" I ask.

She giggles at my stutter. "Just hoping to run into a good looking guy." I smile as she bites the corner of her bottom lip. I take another shot and the heat builds in my stomach and bladder. I excuse myself to the urinal.

When I come back from the restroom, she's pushing another drink into my hand. I swallow hard. I'm woozy and my throat is blazing. My chest tingles but I don't slow down.

"Wanna step outside?" she asks. I teeter outside after her. She crosses her arms beside me, her breath clouding. Her hand rustles in her coat pocket and she squishes a few gummies into my hand. She tosses one in her mouth and looks at me.

Hit the Brakes
By Ethan Bishop

"You do weed?"

"Yeah."

I'm never a weed guy, but I am tonight. I pop them all at once and swallow. We stand there without talking for a few long minutes. When my mouth opens, I barely know what I'm saying. I hear myself talking about how when it's really cold outside and the wind whips snow into shrapnel, I run into my lawn and stand there until my brain stops screaming. In those moments, my mind escapes my body and I no longer feel the wind's icy bite.

I grab another edible because I've already come this far. My face is a rubber mask. she makes me laugh and pins my mouth into a gummy worm smile, then shivers.

"Hey, it's getting chilly. Wanna head to my place?" She tugs at my sleeve and I follow her to her car.

I pull at the handle of her rusty Camry and ice shatters. My hand bumps against the real handle now and hooks on. It takes a few tugs to loosen from the frozen frame; my arm aches, but then the door pops open. I sink inside, and she takes the driver's seat, her face flushed from the short walk to the car. A few strands of inky hair stick to her forehead and spell something in strange language.

Hit the Brakes
By Ethan Bishop

The road is salty and it sounds like popcorn. Snowmen tumble down the sidewalk. My hands squeeze each other. Rigid people stand in their yards. I turn to see if she notices them too.

She's looking at me, instead of the road, and we're going too fast toward a red light. I close my eyes and my body flattens against the seat. She barrels through the intersection and a car swerves around us as I try to scream "Use your damn brakes!"—but my mouth is stuck in a gummy worm smile.

Ethan Bishop is a Professional Writing & Editing major at Malone University. He enjoys writing about intoxication, despite having lived a conspicuously sober life. He plans to pursue an MFA after graduation.

Needles
By Theo Brinkman

I'd rather sew my mouth shut.
I'd rather do that than obey these thoughts
I'd rather cut my tongue out.

Because what if I mean it?
What if some demon inside me
Really wants to act on these curses.

Wanting me to scream obscene things in public.
To insult someone about something deeply insecure
To make a scene in the worst way possible.

Things contradictory to who I am.
Aspects I have vowed to seek and protect
Facets I will never turn my back on, let alone insult.

I hold up a pencil in front of my face.
Visualize it as a sterilized needle
And slowly poke around my lips as if I was threading.

Monsters are supposed to be under beds
Mine is crawling up my throat
So I sew my own mouth shut.

Trenches, Mud, Artillery
By Theo Brinkman

The cold earth normally doesn't sit this high
Rising up a few feet above my head
Erratic screams can be heard yards away
Noise from rifles and shotguns tend to echo throughout
Clocks take longer when you're awaiting something to fight
Help isn't an option when you're the person sent
Explosions of dirt helmets and shells feel typical but wrong
Silence should feel scary here it feels freeing

Mistrust leads to this fear
Under layers of cloth and weight my heart pounds
Disturbed rats offer as unlikely friends

Abandonment feels standard out here but no less hurtful
Ripe minds blown to bits
Triggers pulled in in horrific harmony
Ideologies used in frightful to noble ways
Loyalties made and broken
Luck is a feral animal out here
Erupt your attackers in as much panic as you can
Results might come tomorrow or never
Yet you will always remember what you have experienced today

Trenches, Mud, Artillery

Real Man
By Theo Brinkman

I'm going to miss it.
I'm going to miss all the inspirational quotes
I'm going to miss how aesthetic I apparently was.

I wish I was something else
I wish I was someone else.

Someone assertive who didn't have to work up courage
Someone who was directly asked to carry in the heavy boxes.
Someone who matched my soul, my heart.

I meet the criteria for perfect pink.
I yearn to be nothing but blue.

His name is Theo. Theo once got lost in the woods but found his way out via the tracks of a long-lost beast. After such a graceful endeavor, Theo discovered a passion for reading tales and writing all assignments in iambic pentameter. This has gone poorly, but oh well; the river flows, and the rocks jostle. Theo teaches children how to fall over and not have the bruises that cause uncomfortable conversation. Theo fears rocks and math but enjoys mud and reading. He is also scared of Anden as he is too tall and wields two forks at all times.

Show Me
By Alyssa Brown

Drowning lashes wade through empty
dressers' vacated picture frames.
Barren walls remember rigid hugs
and borrowed combs—abandonment wounds
disguised as curfew.

I wonder about burning buildings
crying for betrayed ballot boxes.
I wonder about pregnancy tests
spelling doom, clawing for cracks of light that used to burn
like 80 proof.

Show me dinners
without the bloodied tongues.
Show me advice
beneath the "fake news".
Show me backseats of Camrys
chiming like mom's beeper.

Hand me a flip phone
only for caller ID and speed dial.

Alyssa Brown is an Ohio State Lima alum, having majored in English. She enjoyed several creative writing classes during her time as a student and enjoyed the role as editor for the campus' previous literary journal. Since graduating, she is now the Coordinator for Student Success and Retention on the Ohio State Lima campus, where she still gets to support the campus literary journal. Alyssa's creative work is best described by creative writer, Doug Sutton-Ramspeck, as "tricky, darkly-lit, and exacting, with a precise mixture of the strange and the familiar."

Human Leech
By Anthony Brown

I'm sorry.
My trust is now a one-way mirror.
I was convinced that I was always wrong.
Saddened that my vase-filled heart, finally broke.
It feels so wrong, because you gave me butterflies.
Lo siento.
Now I stand, in the entire crowd seen sat.
I've bled out far enough, as I took this cold stone sword out of my chest.
Left abandoned, frozen in the Arctic: then scissored like the next parker solar probe.
Making me feel weak, while you believe you're strong.
Ik ben droevig.
This physical gold trophy, envisioned in my next life without you.
Your heist of my forsaken soul boils beneath you.
As the water freezes over your permanent red-stain.
Willingly giving you everything I had, I stopped.
Sono spiacente.
I never turned my shoulder, to a thing left sparkling and tied.
This true blue ring on my finger now omitted.
I realize, that you've sucked the life out of me.
You are a human leech.
Acabou.

Anders
By Anthony Brown

I hear a woman who'd longed for a peace
and yet, still struggled to make it for herself.
For her issues, casted in a blue cup stained
mahogany red, replicated the bottle in which

created a mirror of something we wish she wasn't.
Is she the one you continue to support?
The one who thrashed, crashed and turned
the atmosphere around us all into a mash?

Turned to circles, slowing down your state.
As hollowed out and forgotten like you'd
never remember the previous day. So normalized
that we were used to smelling it on you. We knew.

You'd talk about how I'd face God, and how you knew him.
I don't know what goes on inside, but he does.
I found your Bible laying on the floor, it'd gotten
used to the ground below it. Will you?

I was forced to apologize, but you never did.
You're the reason nothing special happens for me
when I turn 21. Why would I want my blood to boil
in agony every time over a liquid?

Anders
By Anthony Brown

I can't say that he's completely innocent himself.
Those glass bars filled with heavy weights waiting
to crash down at any moment initially looked very tempting.
You ruined that for me, I'm grateful.

Will you deny the wrongdoings you've caused?
If not, who was it that mashed at the door the night
you lost control? Even washing your blue cup still
left light stain marks, serving as my important reminder.

Yet another 'fuck you' uttered in the air, without a doubt.
Your hands remained touched upon others, aggressively.
But I'm not him, and he's not me. God sees all. Tell me,
what will you do then? There are no bottles in heaven.

Even the darkest of reds can't be filtered out.
There's nothing more to pour in once the liquid
continues spilling over the container. I meander at the
thought of you being confronted, we've done all we could.

Coffee
By Anthony Brown

It never clicked until I got older,
when I realized the taste of coffee changed.

Forcibly being awakened at 6AM was the bane
of my existence of times when I used to be in high school.

I don't miss those times, but I miss the memories I had
as I am where I am, because of what I did back then.

I got my first job at Dunkin Donuts, a donut and coffee shop
that sat a few streets down from where I used to live.

Being introduced to such a liquid changed my perception
as I now have an option to 'stay awake'.

It wasn't healthy, but what wasn't? Did you think I was
going to be yelled at over coffee, when we just went through a pandemic?

Crawling to the back of the store to make the donuts for tomorrow,
and being opened to an array of drinks completely free of my will.

The job wasn't pretty, but the world was already crumbling away.
We've all kept poking at the crack that inevitably opens more.

I could put any amount of flavor, cream, sugar and more into a
drink that made me and others happy daily.

The liquid can taste sweet or bitter, just as your perception
of other people you don't talk to but see fairly often.

Coffee
By Anthony Brown

I used to think everyone offered kindness and honesty to the world,
and that I had nothing to fear.

One bad pot of the bunch ruined it as it poured into cups handed
out to people, with us serving it unknowingly.

At the end of the day you can make it out to what you want it to be.
As everything comes with a benefit and a downfall.

My love for coffee could turn into hatred,
but hey you never really know?

Hot coffees great for cold weather, while cold coffees great for hot weather.
What could happen if you mix and match the two?

Just wait until you're the one pouring hot coffee from a pot,
watching the liquid fall into a cup, to be drank for the final time.

My love for coffee grows.

Anthony Brown is a fourth year Creative Writing & English Education baccalaureate student with a minor in Marketing and certificates in Professional Writing, Copyediting & Publishing, and Literary Journalism at the University of Cincinnati. As a published gothic and horror poet under *Short Vine Journal, Fellowship of the Unmoored,* and *The Persimmon Review*, Anthony believes in the importance of the humanities and of the myriads of writings in its many forms. As a music and cat enthusiast, Anthony loves meeting new individuals from all sorts of backgrounds and approaching life with a more carefree approach than ever before.

Orange
By Bailey Francis

One million microscopic craters
constitute a smooth surface and

white noise in the world of the mind.
A wasteland of mirrors and still life

produced the California Orange.
My girlhood friend once echoed

“orange” over and over again
trying to reach transcendence.

She said she saw a desert.

A balanced breakfast includes a husband, an orange,
and glyphosate from the nearby golf course.

Teenage girls are perforated one million times,
Producing a smooth surface

For consumption.

Orange
By Bailey Francis

Oranges recall nothing in the mind, all its cultural associations fall short of having a lasting impact in the psyche, as do societal expectations that one chooses to reject.

Orange juice is a part of a balanced breakfast,
next to cereal, a grapefruit, a husband, and 2.5 kids.

Nothing rhymes with orange
In T.M., you have to pick a word the conjures little/nothing in your mind
“Orange juice is a part of a balanced breakfast”
Their trees litter California, are they native? Where are they native to?
Sweet, sour, citrus

Bailey Francis (she/her) is a student and artist born in Nashville, Tennessee. She is currently enrolled in the University of Cincinnati as a Literary and Cultural Studies Major and a Fine Arts Minor. Bailey completed the first two years of her BA in California, at Whittier College, where she published poetry in *The Greenleaf Review,* named after poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf. After leaving school and participating in America’ s ever-growing service economy for four years, Bailey found herself in Cincinnati, where she enrolled in The University of Cincinnati’ s College of Arts and Sciences and school of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning. In her free time, Bailey enjoys reading, painting, going to the movies, and taking care of her three cats.

The Empire of Death
By David Halliday

I met a man who rose out of a refrigerator cardboard box and was saved. He said he'd destroy the empire because he was through with trying to fix it. He headed back to England on the Mayflower. The colonies would break. The natives would flee into the trees. They made a record of his accomplishments but no one knew how to listen. No one heard what he had done. No one congradulated him. It was as if he'd never been born. He broke down in front of a church and blessed the stairs for leading him someplace he never knew. Fat and broken by too much attention.

I saw the groom weeping in a tower. His bride had tried to fly. Unsuccessfully. But at least she had a dream. She got an E for effort and a white dress speckled with red dots. The groom was grateful to gravity for showing him the pain he never knew. His wife splattered on the sidewalk below. But he failed to flatter her on her two point landing. And he noticed after repeat warnings and late night fires that someone was stuck in the chimney. He asked if anyone knew where his wife was.

Static. On the car radio. Ministers preaching about my fall from grace. I'm looking out the window at the world passing by. Sitting on your door step. Waiting for you to stop crying. I knew there was nothing between us a long time ago. When I was a child all the doors in our house were open, leading to hallways where no one met. My father said he loved me but when I looked back over my shoulders he was shaking his head in disappointment. I live in a long line of sons who were a disappointment.

The Empire of Death
By David Halliday

Napoleon passes us. The most powerful human in history until me. Used to sit on his horse watching all his men bleeding at his feet. Heading for Kiev. A Rebel flag on his tank. Thinking about the girl he left behind in Savanah. I know death is coming. All my advisors let me know. They call me a buffoon, a blimp, an idiot and more but now their cities are all burning. Who is the fool now?

My head is like a race car. Speeding around in circles. Pretending I have some place to go. Stuck my head out the window to see what was coming. When my head was chopped off.

Donald be calm. No one was trying to break your heart. Time is going to sleep.

David has published *murder* by Coach House Press, winner of the 2001 Eppie for poetry. *Church Street is Burning* was a finalist in the 2002 Eppie for poetry. *Sleeping Beauty*, by LTD ebooks.com. Finalist in the 2003 Dream Realm Awards. Winner of the 2004 IP Book Awards. *Trash*, is a finalist in the Poetry Non-Fiction/Fiction Category of the 2011 EPIC eBook Awards Competition. In 2007 he was short listed for the C.B.C. Literary Contest in poetry. Recent publications include 'New Quarterly' https://tnq.ca/issues/issue-175/ and 'Queens Quarterly' Fall 2025.

Click-Bang
By Alayna Haston

Not sure where this is headed
My mind is spinning
And the world's gone crazy
I keep trying to hold it together
But the world is tilting
Click-Bang

Not sure where this is headed
Can't stop to see if everything's okay
Can't look to see if the world's still here
Click-Bang

Not sure where this is headed
Can't catch my breath
All the air's been sucked out
Feeling like I'm drowning
Click-Bang

Click-Bang
By Alayna Haston

Not sure where this is headed
Maybe I can reach a goal
If I just hold out a little more
That purpose might return
Click-Bang

Not sure where I'm headed-
But the trigger's been pulled.

Postponed Due to Weather

By Alayna Haston

The meeting
was postponed
due to weather.

At least
that is what
the notice said.

No rain
touched the pavement.

No thunder
shook the sky.

The clouds
hung still
like quiet witnesses.

Yet something
in the air
shifted.

Pressure building
between words
never spoken.

Postponed Due to Weather

By Alayna Haston

Storm fronts
of anger
moving silently
through crowded rooms.

Lightning
in glances
quickly
looked away from.

And winds
carrying rumors
through hallways.

The meeting
was postponed
due to weather.

But everyone
in the room
knew

the storm
was never
in the sky.

Under Purple Light
By Alayna Haston

The room is purple.

Purple walls.
Purple lights.
Purple glasses filled with purple drinks.

Everything
the same shade
of quiet obedience.

Sit here.
Stand there.
Smile.

Around the room
people gather
in small shifting clusters—

blobs
of brown,
tan,
beige,
ebony,
ivory.

The only colors
the room
cannot swallow.

Under Purple Light
By Alayna Haston

The lights hum overhead,
washing everything
in violet.

A color meant
to blur the edges.

Make differences softer.
Less noticeable.
Less loud.

Someone laughs.
Someone pretends
not to notice
how purple
tries to climb their skin.

Blend in,
the room seems to say.

Be easier.
Be quieter.
Be one color.

But skin remembers.

Under Purple Light
By Alayna Haston

It remembers
sunlight,
ancestors,
history
written deeper
than paint
on any wall.

And no matter
how bright
the purple lights burn,

no matter
how many glasses
raise their violet reflections—

the people in the room
refuse
to disappear.

I have always known two things to be true my love for reading and my overactive imagination. I lie awake at night with stories flying through my head. So I write and create art.

Inheritance
By Kathy Hess

They call me lazy
My generation spoiled
From their big houses

Their security
Surrounds them in peace and ease
Me, waves of worry

My generation
Is handed a ruined ship
And then told to float

A ship with no sails
Cannonballs shot through the hull
Handcuffed to the mast

Inheritance
By Kathy Hess

Water chills your heart
And you want to cry for help
Stop your complaining

The depths welcome you
Quenching its relentless thirst
Why can I not scream

With a finger shake
Past retreats to its warm house
It is your fault now

Selling Grandma's House
By Kathy Hess

Stained glass with deep cracks,
Wood doors that know how war goes,
When sons don't come home

Deep tubs on clawed feet
With drains that have tasted tears
And baptized new dawns.

Frames carved with more love
Than painted portraits inside.
I want to be gold.

Oak desks with secrets.
Well, I built my desk in less
Than fifty deep breaths.

This past is long gone.
But why can't we build a few
More curved staircases?

Kathy Hess is a senior at Ohio State University. Her major is English - Creative Writing. She is beginning an MFA program in Fall 2026.

Archie
By Alex Hill

Once the tall grass brushed his underside
as he sprinted through his yard,
zigzagging around the shrieking toddler's legs.

The shrieks have become his name,
kneeling beside, calling out her oldest friend.
His gaze does not turn.

Showing life when it's time for a meal,
gumming down his slop
without meeting her eyes.

The yard waits empty around him,
a breath of wind parting his thinning fur
carrying the shrieks that once filled the air.

Interstate Currents
By Alex Hill

Alone at night in a van of silent passengers,
all asleep, tucked away, leaving me the night to bear.
Beyond the interstate's lights a murky abyss
of blues blending the trees and farms and valleys
into incoherent blobs of night. Stagnant. Asleep.

Droning along with truckers accustomed to the time.
Hours slide by in swells — sharing the road with a single semi.
The guiding light in my lonely odyssey,
His large shape cutting through the dark currents ahead,
I eddy behind the whale's momentum.

A bump in the road spills my drink, though I swerve,
the whale adjusts, steadying me through the drift
settling into his inky wake, tension fading from my shoulders.
A gentle beast, he guides me along the smoothest path,
together on our private advection.

Interstate Currents
By Alex Hill

Orange streaks across the sky as the sun lifts.
Our wake breaking, the truck eases toward the passing exit,
slowing to let me see the face of my guide for a moment.
His greasy hat pushed back to see his gleaming eyes,
a warm and bearded smile, nodding to me before gliding away.

Alex Hill is a jack of many trades, from long distance running to amateur photography to creative writing. No matter where he's going or what he's doing, he's usually doing the same thing: just trying to find a good story.

Uncle Charlie
By Colin James

He wore a cobalt blue
with white polka-
-dots dress and
was as serious
as a catfish.
I was just hopeful
to be free of debt
on this lubricious
Sunday morning.
He held my hand
between the sound
of clickety clacks,
his eight inch spikes
or stiletto heels I so
unobtrusively knew.

Colin James has a couple of chapbooks of poetry published. *Dreams Of The Really Annoying* from Writing Knights Press and *A Thoroughness Not Deprived of Absurdity* from Piski's Porch Press and a book of poems, *Resisting Probability*, from Sagging Meniscus Press. He lives in Massachusetts with two cats, Dorothy and Jane.

Home
By Savannah King

Home may be something,
For others nothing,
Some may be...
Flowers, a bedroom,
A bright fire on a summer night,
The feeling of comfort,
Or the smell of her vanilla perfume.
Home is a place that is safe,
Considered a place of resting and the ability to make things magical,
A place for expression and security,
Flourishment and integrity,
That specific perfume,
The smell of apple pie in the oven,
Sometimes the chatter of a few familiar voices.
Sometimes silence.
Home is a place you trust and love,
A place where life begins,
The decisions you make put your life on the line,
At home.

Home
By Savannah King

The bargains,
The games,
The mistakes you make,
Only allow you to grow and intake,
The previous ability that you once had,
and replenish it more with adulthood and grace.
Home is where you grow.
Where everything begins.

I am a 18 year old female who has lived through the hardships of life way too young. These poems are my story. My story that should be told endlessly. Read only what you can, leave time for mental clarity if need be.

the art of never unraveling

By Macy Kinnicutt

in shadows cast by whispered fears,
we dance on edges, so close but yet so far,
with an achy heart, i draw near,
only to shatter like a distant star.

promises i made in twilight's glow,
yet doubts unravel my fragile thread,
each word a dagger, each glance another blow,
in silence, the words unsaid i begin to dread.

i build up walls while you seek the frame,
a paradox of longing and retreat,
in the game of love, i stake my claim,
yet sabotage blooms where my passion meets defeat.

so here we stand, like a mirror cracked,
reflecting dreams i dared to chase,
in the ruins of trust, we are no longer intact,
but oh so lost in the maze of what should be our own embrace.

fractured reflections
By Macy Kinnicutt

in my mirrors light, my reflections blur,
a canvas framed from other's words,
they say "pretty," but i defer,
to shadows lurking, unseen, but always heard.

adorned with praise, i will wear the guise,
yet inside stirs a tempest's tide,
each compliment adds to my disguise,
for beauty's weight, i can not abide.

their voices echo, sweet and clear,
yet in my mind, the doubts always conspire,
a paradox of praise and fear,
a fragile heart engulfed in fire.

i long to believe the affirmations they speak,
to grasp onto the beauty that they insist,
but in this realm of vanity,
i lost myself in the mist.

fractured reflections
By Macy Kinnicutt

so here i stand, a fleeting dream,
in other's eyes, a radiant glow,
yet in my soul, a threatening scream,
"am i really enough? is it i that they truly know?"

Hey, I'm Macy, a freshman at Ohio State Lima. My future career goal is to become a criminal defense attorney. I began writing as a way to express my emotions and feelings. It definitely took me awhile to gain the confidence to share my writing so I hope that you are interested enough to listen!

Habitation
By R. Jerome Michael

I wanted to live inside
a house just barely holding itself
upright on a slope no one else would choose,
windows always half-latched against wind
that's not fierce, exactly, but persistent,
like the low whine that lives in my chest
when the clock runs too loud, or the floor
ticks beneath me in some slow warning
of collapse. I'd let the garden go
to thistle and sweetgrass, let birds
build wherever they wanted, ivy too
finding its way inside through the cracks
where the drywall flinches from the frame.

I'd live with no mirrors—just the hush
of walls that don't look back.
The air inside always slightly damp,
as if some storm had left
without fully leaving. There would be
a single chair, angled wrong on purpose,
and a desk where I wouldn't write
but could think about writing.
Tea would cool beside me
while I practiced breathing as if
it was a thing learned late in life—
like forgiveness, or resting.

Habitation
By R. Jerome Michael

No visitors, not because
I don't want them
but because I'd forget what to say,
what face to make when someone says
it's okay, when it never is.

Outside, foxes would thread the hills
like fallen yarn. A pale dog might appear
from the tree line some evenings
but never come close.

At night, the house would shrink
into itself, not from fear,
but from remembering
too many things all at once.

I'd lie in bed
listening to a silence
that has edges,
and try to believe
nothing is coming for me.

Habitation
By R. Jerome Michael

But even then,
the door would sigh open
without reason,
and I would check it
again.

And again.

Based in Ohio, USA, R. Jerome Michael teaches writing and writes about ethics and technology-the techne and the logos. Their writing mostly appears in peer-reviewed, academic journals. They write poetry too, though with questionable talents and little fanfare. Their poetry has appeared in *Nocturne, Rusted Nail, and SLAM*.

A Hanging Coat is a Monster in the Dark.
By Paris Prichard

A Comforting bed,
corrosive confinement finds
Me— in my oblivion.
The shadows inhabit the pauses
between baited breaths.
Sheer claws drag
against oak panels a melody of madness

Calamitous nights and inky halls
a child statue outside
a parents' door longing
to be comforted.
Silence suffocates
sleepless sorrows,
Forgotten floorboards creak for those who listen.

A comforter's chain,
console the corroded child;
Slumbering stillness awake with fears.
Afraid of shadows—spilled ink evenings
Terror finds the alone child who hides
under cages of covers
In my oblivion—the monsters and me

I have found the marbles I never had.
By Paris Prichard

I stare at the embroidered webs adorning the artificial daisies. Plastic stems blooming flavors of deception. “Beautiful” reads the commercialized milk jug, a butterfly’s wings printed onto the vase. How funny, between the two, some would see the silk galaxy as a foreign invader—an alien.

The silky beast is the one lurking in the shadows. Fear the natural nightmare in the arms the comforting coercion. We seek solace in the things which do not serve us. The web serves its mistress, yet my frivolous flowers will never bloom—never wilt. Funny, who is the alien.

Why do I yearn for the plastic petals when I may bask in the truth of an illuminated web in the wind? Artificial aromatics fornicate with the elusive “Beautiful” in my brain. A scenic mirage produced through scent. Suffocated- the invaders enter my lungs. In delirium, I yearn for my alien.

Honey Hands and Evergreen Eyes

By Paris Prichard

The light peers over the trees— cupping each pine needle with honey hands; evergreen and conifers embrace in their irises. Warmth radiates from within while delicate whispers of Autumn's wind scrapes my cheek, tucking the heretic hairs, which object to the tie's devotion, behind my ear. Crisp air fills my lungs as I listen to the private ballad of a coat's pocket— an irregular, infrequent orchestra of sharp, metallic melodies. Frost bite seeks my salvation, breathes of forgotten kisses which linger on my lips; I lean in— The cold consumes me, rhythmically, reading my palm, deciphering the complexity of us. Will it find a satiating answer for this ravenous query? I stare at the damp concrete littered with the remnants of once blossoming trees, a mixture of flakes and drops dust my face. I interrupt the concert of keys, meticulously picking one musician from the rest. Engulfed by the caress of my thumb, I let go— the show must go on.

Right.

Left.

Right.

Left.

Honey Hands and Evergreen Eyes
By Paris Prichard

I stop—staring at the antique store. Beams dance through powder air, a grand waltz illuminated through the glass. A private recital dedicated to my existence. Light caresses the worn wood, cupped by your honey hands. I yearn to be the oak—the pine—to be in your embrace. Memories drag across scared skin—longing for affection of forgotten days. Evergreen eyes meet me.

Scars scream against the agony. I look up. Escorting— the wind forces me along.

Left.

Right.

Left.

Right.

I will always want you; honey hands—evergreen eyes.

Paris Prichard is a graduate of The Ohio State University with a degree in English. She plans to seek truth and stare at bugs with her degree, as is the use of an English degree. During her time at OSU, Paris, as well as many others, discussed such fascinating topics of mead, faith, gold, and women, as is the study of the English language. Since graduation, she has slipped the surly bonds of Earth; she has walked deep into the Hercynian forest and wandered to Canterbury. Paris tends to her pets.

Art and Photography



Self-Service Please

By David Adams



Mowing on Bible Road

By David Adams



Lima State Hospital Cemetery

By David Adams



David Adams (he/they) teaches Ohio State literature and culture courses on the Lima campus. This is his first time publishing in *Hog Creek Hardin*.

Absolem
By Jennifer Bayham



I was born out of the salt and sweat of the earth. I enjoy reading, writing, four-dimensional chess, and small birds. My life's dream is to dream small. I am afraid of large birds. I once had a small cat; they have since been picked up and carried away by a large bird. I failed to name the cat; they faded away to quickly. I don't know how to play chess but am slightly willing to learn. I graduated high school at some point. I'll probably graduate college at some point. I'll probably get a job at some point. I am Jenni.

Deep Biting Blues

By Anden Blankemeyer



Desperation

By Anden Blankemeyer



Stained

By Anden Blankemeyer



Warm Walks
By Anden Blankemeyer



My name is Anden Blankemeyer, but my friends call me Chuck. I am studying space and time at The Ohio State University Lima campus. I have dreams of becoming a professional water polo player with center defender as my main position. I enjoy taking photos of dogs and hunting down Romanian vampires the old fashion way, also bees. My friends always quote one of my many famous sayings, "protected unit is air born." I am also terrified of water and birds.

Chicago
By Bailey Francis



Bailey Francis (she/her) is a student and artist born in Nashville, Tennessee. She is currently enrolled in the University of Cincinnati as a Literary and Cultural Studies Major and a Fine Arts Minor. Bailey completed the first two years of her BA in California, at Whittier College, where she published poetry in *The Greenleaf Review,* named after poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf. After leaving school and participating in America' s ever-growing service economy for four years, Bailey found herself in Cincinnati, where she enrolled in The University of Cincinnati' s College of Arts and Sciences and school of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning. In her free time, Bailey enjoys reading, painting, going to the movies, and taking care of her three cats.

All Your Strengh
By Alex Hill



Only Real When Shared
By Alex Hill



Alex Hill is a jack of many trades, from long distance running to amateur photography to creative writing. No matter where he's going or what he's doing, he's usually doing the same thing: just trying to find a good story.

Raw Beginnings
By Evelyn Megery



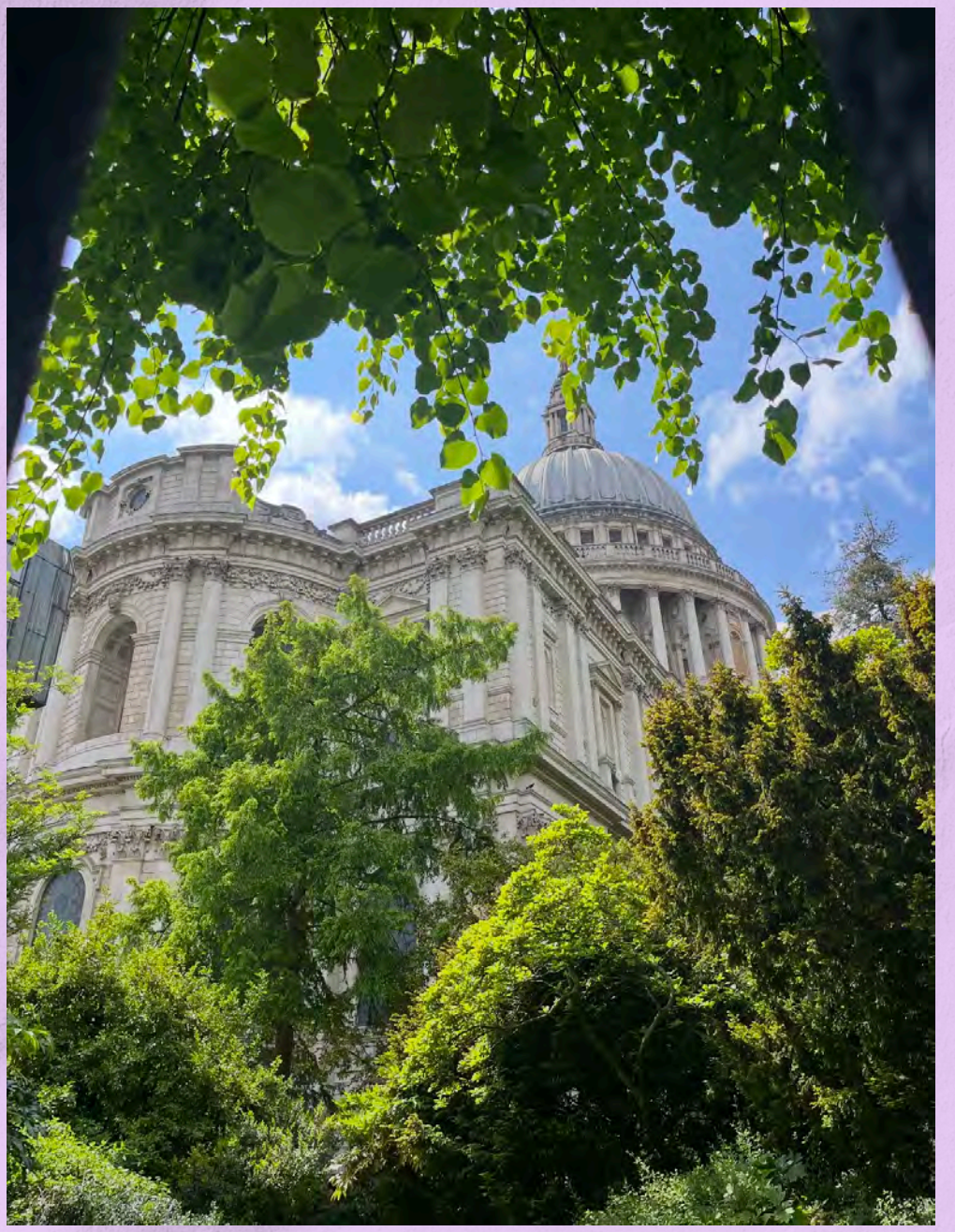
Springtime
By Evelyn Megery



Evelyn is a multimedia and communications student at Ohio Northern University who enjoys using her creative skill set to bring stories to life. She can often be found reading a novel, doing freelance photography, or working on various multimedia projects. Evelyn serves as the Niche Editor for *Northern Review*, the university's student newspaper, and is an award-winning photojournalist, writer, and filmmaker.

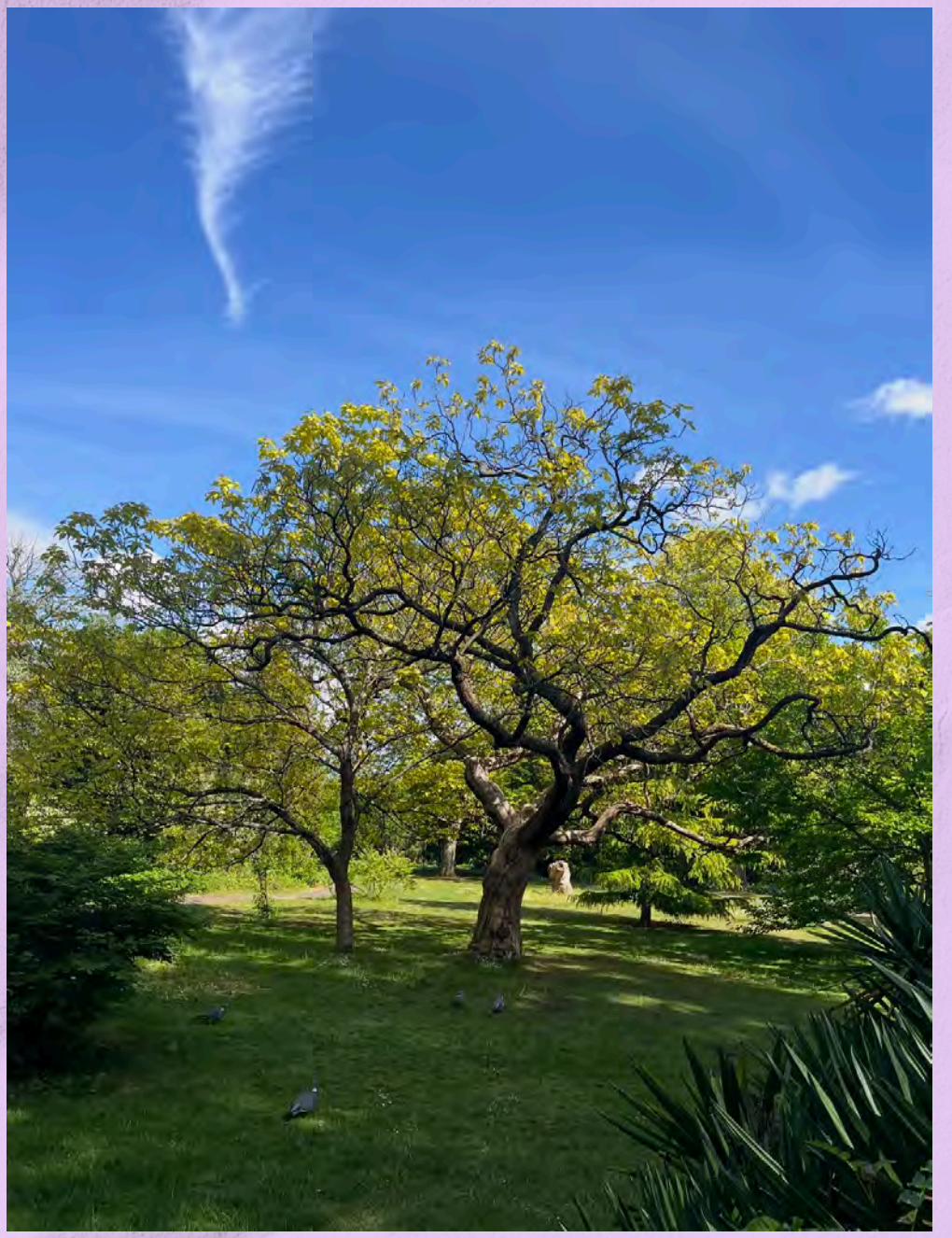
Through the Brush

By Nicole Pohlman

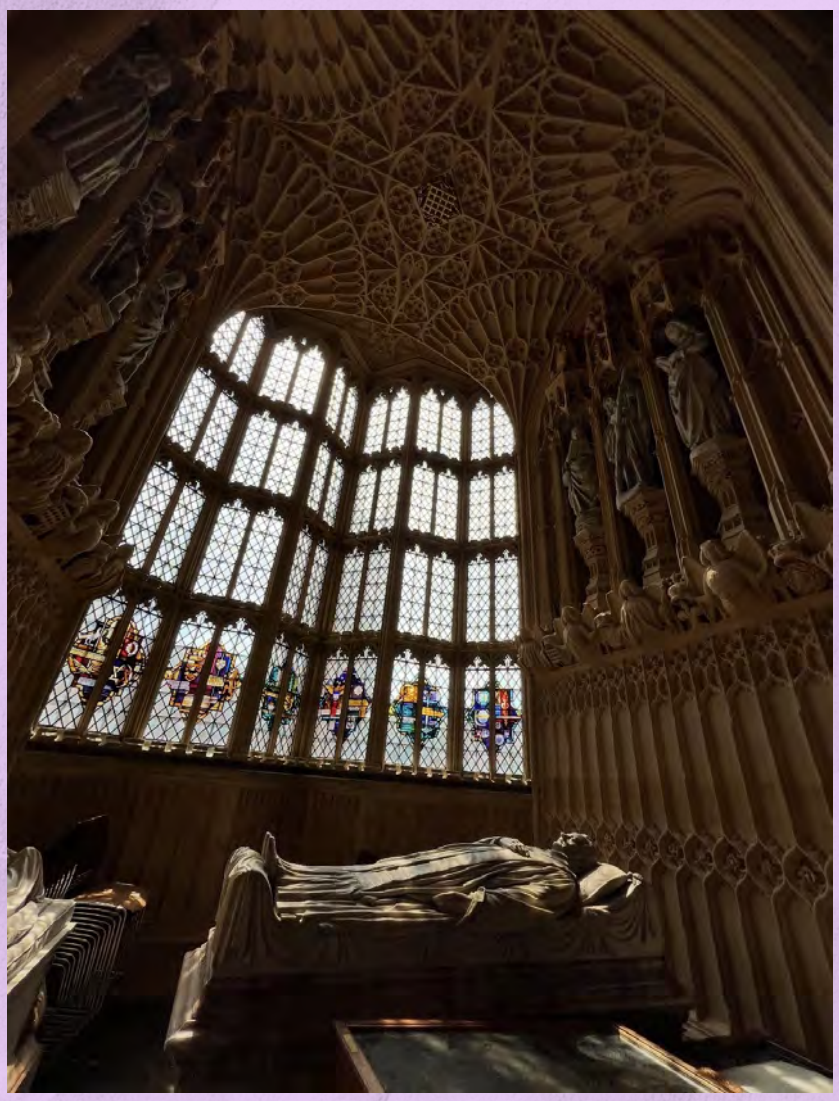


Growth

By Nicole Pohlman



Slumber
By Nicole Pohlman



Nicole Pohlman is a graduating senior at The Ohio State University Lima Campus with a Bachelor's degree in English and a Minor in Professional Writing. She has three published children's books, being *The Little Fly Who Couldn't Fly, Mabel the Moth,* and *Flame's Underwater Encounter* on Amazon.com. Employed as a writing tutor and a children's librarian, Nicole encourages others to creatively express themselves through writing. Pohlman will be attending Kent State University to pursue a master's in Library and Information Science.