



Rune

A red graphic featuring a white silhouette of a tree with its roots extending downwards. From the top of the tree, a flock of birds is shown in flight, moving towards the right. The word "Rune" is written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the graphic. To the right of the word, there is a small white silhouette of a person sitting on a bench or a similar structure.



Robert Morris
University's
Literary Magazine
2010 Edition

Rune Student Committee

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Front Cover:
(Top) *Untitled* - Christopher Rossitto
(Bottom) *Eyes On the Future* - Julie Nelson

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I've turned to poetry again, at forty-two. Now
 Ticking off friends like a physician
 Ticks off symptoms.

The pious one numb with the death of
 his only child.

The devoted one slashed by a parent's
 betrayal.

The gentle one slowed by multiple
 sclerosis.

The exuberant one assassinated by the
 gun in his father's mouth....

Promise
Scott Leff

We were the chosen,
 Born with the post-war promise of America
 Great golden in our hair.
 Tanned (before ozone depletion),
 Well-fed (before cholesterol),
 High-achieving (before down-sizing),
 Idealistic (before... Now).

Rock and roll's gone gangsta rap.
 Come hear our keening.

Aunt Eleanor told me to marry a rich man as she slipped her bed sheets, husband's dress shirts, curtains through the mangle in her tiny two-bedroom house. I thought her husband was a rich man but maybe not then. "It's easy to love a rich man," she said. "Just as easy as it is to love a poor man." She taught me how to play solitaire—just in case.

In time, her houses grew in size until she found herself in a hotel in Venezuela where she bought amethysts to send home, delighted in carnival as folks threw water-filled balloons at each other. He kept the books for the steel works, then took her home with deadly cancer. She loved him, I guess. He never recovered from her quick death.

When I Was Ten
Ann Curran

From A
Misogynist
M Yanko

He hit her today
He never did before
At least not with his fists
Her daughter saw it all
We could see it coming
When he hid the phones
Classic spouse abuse
Really almost corny,
Until you see her face
Something about the mother-in-law,
Coming from Wisconsin
Bringing her a plane ticket
Bet she doesn't go
Bet she says "it's my fault."
Bet I'll discover

I've no respect for women.

Last fall I walked the long corridor of the Park Hyatt. Considered the marble floors that have felt my body's weight at nearly every age.

On the metro, my brother and I listen to the commuters swap stories from a collective childhood spent on frozen ponds. We reach out subconsciously and touch our faces. The scar below my bottom lip. The cut beneath his left eye.

This spring I watched his mouth bend to accommodate the long and short vowels that disguise his native tongue.

Waiting beneath the streetlights along Rue De la Montagne, we engage in unacknowledged moments of code-switching, our language something not entirely our own.

We watch those familiar green signs change from miles to kilometers.

We hear "Oh, say can you see," and we sing, "The True North strong and free." My navigation of Yonge Street on the way to buy lunch is an exercise in muscle memory.

But the man at the deli asks where I am from and I can only reply,

Je suis Américain

The syllables fall from my lips, and I suddenly, but suddenly understand what it means to be lost in translation.

My brother's only now realizing the fever of patriotism: In Montreal he stands awkwardly, as if afraid to reveal some imaginary American flag draped over his back, the stars and stripes running the length of his shoulder blades. In a southeastern state along the shoreline with his friends, he hesitates to remove his shirt, afraid to reveal the maple leaf burned into his chest.

Untitled
Suzanne Grove

*Haitian
Wedding*
Angele Ellis

This painting's daubs of sunlight
(the art dealer said)
were made at night
under fluorescent tubes.

Now Port-au-Prince is in darkness
slashed by searchlight
crumpled walls
chalk-white bones.

Against my wall
a pink patchwork cathedral
and palm trees
flaunting sea anemone fronds.

Twelve crosses in an acrylic sky.

The pale bride towers
over her dark groom.
Somber priests
stare like icons from perfect arches.

The couple's golden getaway car
foreshortened
floats above running saltwater
a miracle

like Christ striding toward his astonished
fishermen.

The big one in my parents' backyard that looks like a Tyrannosaurus toe and that we're always expecting to blow over in a thunderstorm and crush the swimming pool.

The one up on the hill in the neighbors' yard, where I used to sit for hours on my favorite branch and watch the world from above.

The one up at the end of the street, where I clung on for dear life as my little sister climbed over top of me and went clear to the top like it was nothing.

The big ol' pine in Rusty's yard that I'd climb during Release and peer out through the opening way up high.

The ivy-covered one in the woods in the back that always looked like a monster at night.

The umbrella pine that whistles in the summer wind and under which I'd sit with my pencil and notebook and write stories.

The one that fell down in the woods and that my father cut with a chainsaw and that we carried up, log by log, to stack on the wood pile.

The ones up in the woods off Center Drive that were bulldozed one summer while I was away on vacation in Texas.

The towering giants that stand guard over my office, and make me feel like I'm somewhere off in the Rockies.

The twisted, contorted one in my front yard that we bought when she was born and brought home in the car, and which is growing just as fast as she is.

The big, gnarly pine that it replaced, which Dad had cut down as a "surprise" while we were gone, and which we still had to pay for. The two twin pines and twin crabapples in my folks' front yard, of which only one crabapple remains.

*The Trees of My
Life*
**Valentine J.
Brkich**

The one in my backyard that PapPap planted oh so many years ago.

The black walnuts that drop grenades every other year that shoot out from underneath my lawnmower, and that the squirrels tirelessly squirrel-away for the winter.

The little ol' pine that my neighbor violently ripped out of the ground with his bare hands as I stood by, shocked, chainsaw in hand.

The ones along Third Street dressed in white lights under which my daughter pauses to touch the "ABCs" on their plaques as we stomp along the brick sidewalk.

I wonder...what trees may come?

Raven
Jay Carson

A pitch black arrow thrust
from Akhenaton's bow, a god's
chiseled hieroglyphic from a time
when greatness was shared with beasts;

lightening swift slate spear
shot from dazzling day through green
tree leaves, dives steeply.

Picking over dead brown prey.
Still he is raven,
from rat to rook to Ra.



Another day sweeps by
 Colorless, quiet, numb
 Another day drifts by without perspective
 The messenger is sent away again

Too weary from his travels and too different in
 his tongue
 Too misunderstood by the Lady and too
 neglected to stand up
 Too far away and too radical in his Sunday
 routine
 The messenger is sent away again

Liberty
Kevin Williams

Everyone knows the Lady, while She cares
 only for Herself
 She once welcomed Her messenger with a
 proud hand to the sky
 She invited him inside, promised him gold,
 and kept him safe
 Now She hides Her visitor in the darkness of
 Her torch's shadow

Only Her affairs will matter now
 As another day sweeps by
 Without the weary messenger,
 whom she has sent away
 once again.



Utter disconnection
 reality was of course known to be pointless,
 but this other consciousness which showed
 promise
 seems to be but an illusion
 so many troubled young minds
 confused and alone only further outcasting
 potential comradery
 is it selfish to consider a dandelion for a rose
 if the dandelion is a shade of red
 in a sea of yellow
 or does its very nature prohibit higher thought
 it's simply bleeding and bleeding
 but this is nothing extraordinary
 nothing that would amuse the sun
 nothing that would stir a number two pencil
 just a flower aware of its singularity
 unable to change its exterior
 changing slightly to pink
 soon to be a blank sheet of paper

Pink Dandelion
**Andrew
 Dickson**





Haikus
Amanda Dzurek

My cinnamon bun,
a gooey and round spiral,
looks like a spring snail.

A strong gust of wind,
breaks free the dandelion,
Like our dreams—scattered.

Untitled
Scott Leff

No black in rainbows...
that's nature's way of saying,
life continues on...

The Nice Nazi
**Valentine
Brkich**

I saw a Nazi today
Rollin' down the road
In full Nazi regalia
A lost soul
An alien from another world.
(An alien would have startled me less.)
Did you steal through a tear in time
Mr. Nazi
For some devious purpose?
Because if you did...
But wait
What's this?
You stop
To let a man and his dog
Cross the street.
Not very Nazi-like
If you ask me.
But that's a good thing.



Koan
John Lawson

they give you every
thing you ask for; no wonder
you're dissatisfied.

My Game
Face Includes
Mascara
Alissa Dorman

Caged
Kristin Rea

She's pacing back and forth—
lazy, slow-shifting weight
swings from side to side.
Stop! Restless eyes
catch movement—meat.
The tiger pounces,
launching her heavy,
muscled body on her
prey. She eats
with ivory blades
drawing blood that dyes white
fur an unnatural orange

She lifts her dripping face—
tongue slipping between her teeth.
While she licks the last bit,
she turns her head, amber eyes
gazing at the faces
of people leaning like
children, noses pressed,
against the glass.

The tiger bows her head,
looks up at her fence,
awaits her next meal...

In the mirror I see the dour Ernest, my grandfather. I carry his name (and the incipient curve of his jowls). In his photograph: short & pear-shaped, dressed in gray, avoiding the light. I wonder: Did he ever speak to me? And is that him—that German quarter—part of me, that grips tight the passports & plane tickets, insists on driving, while holding the map?

Grandpa Ernest came to Salt Lake from England. His parents from Frankfurt. He built the Bauer Box & Lumber Company. In the Depression he lost it all settled his family to Los Angeles, drove a linen truck, delivered folded towels & sheets.

At age 60, Grandpa Ernest went to France alone, brought back postcards of what he called the Follies Brassiere. He'd been unlucky in love, marrying an Irish soprano, The Voice of the Hudson Showcase, who didn't love him. After forty years of repression & insurgency, he and my grandmother negotiated a truce. When my father would ask, How are you? Grandpa would answer: *All quiet on the western front.*

*The German
Quarter*
Joan E. Bauer

Highland Park
Heather
McNaugher

It has snowed all week, a little each day, getting ready. I'm not afraid. I'm with Dan, his thick legs, his flat chest and penis; his rough man's voice carries up and through the icy branches.

Together we trudge the hills. Dan goes where I lean and veer, left on Heberton, right on Wellesley, down the middle of the cobblestones, or along salted walks. I am steering a beautiful blonde Buick with my elbow and will. Not a talker, Dan talks. I ask him about symbolic logic and off he goes for the next six blocks. I'm committed. I think I must be the first ever to ask this guy anything about himself. I sharpen this thought between my thumb and forefinger, where it catches.

I nod a lot. I ask him why linguistics, what's calculus 6. All over America it's Saturday and women are asking and nodding, hmm? and wow and really?, steering the way.

But it snowed, finally, all week, as if getting ready for me. In the hoary ice-coated azalea hedge is a cardinal, my second today, the quiver and color of heart. And along these back roads, leaded stained-glass, local slate. You're missing it, you blockhead, is everything I don't say.

Overhead is the slow crackle of ice, endlessly melting and refreezing. If static makes a sound like stillness, sssshhh, then God's work here is done, and I'm all ears, listening. I'm listening.

Somewhere in legendary New England,
a closet is perpetually locked.
Two keys divvied between sisters.

Through the keyhole
in the dark,
a pale blue dress
sways on a hanger
like an executed felon.

Faded strawberry juice stains on the sleeves
from a mid-morning snack
devoured beneath the pear tree
or inside the barn.
Convenient alibis.
Sacrifices for an unknown brother's
protection.

The head of a broken hatchet
lies carelessly on the floor, discarded
by guilty fingers.

Spread on the blade thick with father's
abandonment.
Stepmother's intrusion.

And neatly arranged on the shelf,
sits a stack of pea-colored bills.

The Closet
Laura Smith

Bitter Rain
**Judith R.
Robinson**

for Teresa Romanowska-
Lakshmanan

This day could surely
use some wetting down.
The rain gods are trying; they should.

Dank as Hell on Devonshire,
red oaks made over, a black labyrinth
netting the old mansions.
They are trying hard to make rain; they
should.

This day a Polish lady
tiny, dagger-eyed, shrill,
remembered her long-
past youth when she threw
rock-filled snowballs
at wounded German prisoners
on parade at last
in frozen, rubble-d Kracow.

As the iron clouds burst,
reporting how the Krauts bled,
what she screamed:
This is for my father!
This is for my sister!
This is for my Warsaw!

Rain comes. Nothing washes away.

When I die it will be spring:
 before dawn, only the dim
 fluorescent above the stove,
 the distant burble of birds.
 I will be alone and calm,
 will survey the graying sky
 like a farm boy setting off.
 I say this, knowing full well
 it might be blood and panic;
 it might be winter. Knowing
 it will not be my choice.

***We Can Never Be More Than
 Friends, You Say***
David Majka

Divergent natures, warring forever.
 Please let me be your lover, come what may;
 You say we're Armageddon together.
 Trouble occurs when tectonic plates grind,
 Loosing Pandora's unstoppable force;
 Free wills, gimlet eyes, and judgmental minds,
 Heralding exhaustion, or worse, divorce.
 Yet even discord yields quite lovely tunes
 As it plays out on the romantic plain;
 Together and apart, love among ruins,
 Kisses and clashes, the sunshine and rain.
 So your charms make you, O ill-struck Penny,
 All the more valuable to me, and thus
 Why deny yourself the pleasures many
 Of becoming Gaia to my Gaius?

Spring
Ziggy Edwards

Goldfish
Shane Spirik

I read your note,
 But pretended like I hadn't.
 I went to your place,
 Even though I knew I shouldn't.

The empty tank spoke volumes,
 Although the room was silent.
 Why have a fish tank?
 If you don't keep anything in it.

You left behind this box,
 Made of four glass walls and
 As transparent as your feelings.
 I see right through it.

You took my goldfish,
 And left behind everything else.
 Filter, fake plants, pebbles all remain,
 In an empty box of water.

I read your note,
 But pretended like I hadn't.
 The empty tank said everything
 You so cowardly, couldn't.

Man is action. I'm the guy on the couch—the guy, the dude, who sleeps on the couch throughout *Half Baked*. A stranger, outsider—content, asleep, in a room full of strangers. Stirring occasionally to eat, piss, or smoke some more weed; even when I'm awake, I'm still sleeping.

My shelves topple with books. Books I can't bear to part with—books I've never read—relics of my inaction. I am Sparknotes personified. Motifs. *King Lear*. Important Quotations. *Gatsby*. Themes. An American Tragedy. Tragic.

I keep three garbage bins—one trash, one paper, one plastic. At the end of the month, faced with the stuffed brims, I throw them all in the outdoor trash together. It's easier. I feel I am contributing.

I argue about politics, spewing feminist theory. I've never protested, marched, or demonstrated. I've never made a sign, never sent a letter, never stood on the corner of Braddock and Forbes. I am a hypocrite—slow cooking pot roast for my husband. I let him teach me about yard work, machinery, and jump daintily onto a chair when I spot a bug. I load the dishwasher, scrub the toilets, and reign supreme over my suburban Cape Cod. Each gender perfectly relegated to its traditional role. I call him big bear and fake my orgasms like a good girl. I am the destructive female.

I have a cherry mahogany guitar that I don't play. I love the way it looks leaning against my closet wall. I keep an Italian dictionary for all the times I've never been to Italy and for my community college Italian class--a class I've never attended. I paid a hundred dollars. It was two miles away. I call friends, initiate plans, then text last minute with a migraine, flat tire, family emergency. I'd rather sleep on my couch.

When did I go to sleep?

July 21, 2002.

Michael died.

I was half awake when Emily called.

And I don't know that I ever woke up.

The Guy on the Couch
Kelly Kaufmann

Beneath The Memoirs
Alexis Zickefoose

Far cast the diamond eyes,
A shadow possesses the weary heart.
Making way to cracked sidewalks,
And chipped porcelain skin,
To feverish highs,
And empty halls.
The flutes no longer play,
And children no longer sing.
No flowers bring to me their joy,
But wilt under lovely hands.
Why? O why,
Do thy demons haunt me so,
Beckon to my darkened moon?
Do they cry, as I have cried,
Or bleed as I have bled?
No, they do no such thing,
And cackle malevolence.
They gnaw, to the bone they break,
Cheery grins of distaste they bare.
Bring to me my sorrowed breath,
To aid me,
Destroy me,
For I have nothing left.

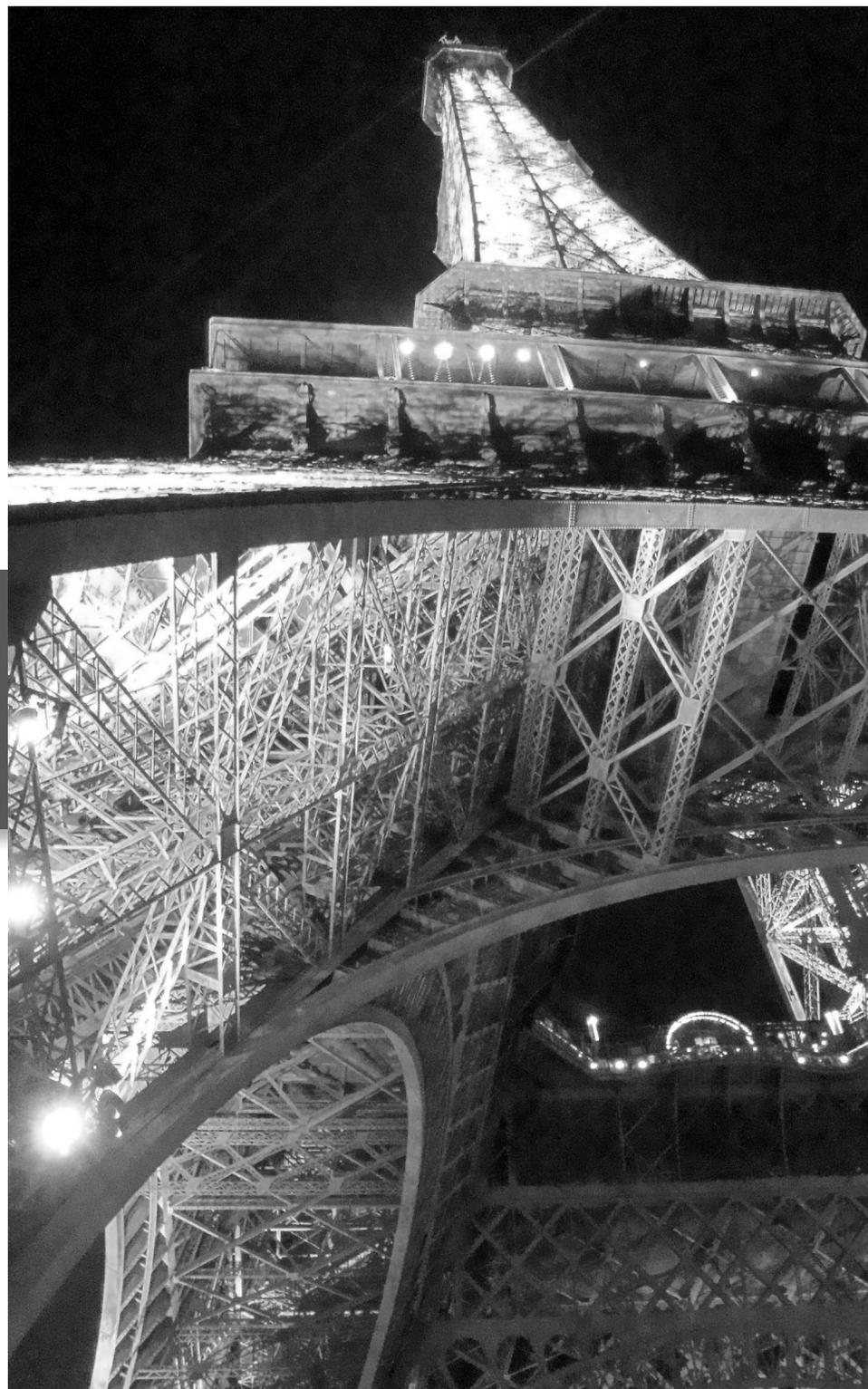
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rune.lit.mag@gmail.com

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 (Bottom) *A Hidden Garden in Canada*-Alexandria Antonacci



La Tour Eiffel Illuminée - Kristen Lawrence

