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*Robert Morris
University Literary
Magazine*

Rune Literary
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2022

ABOUT

Rune is a literary journal produced annually by Robert Morris University students. The journal accepts creative work—poetry, prose, photography, art, etc.—from the Robert Morris University community as well as the greater Pittsburgh area. The journal aims to recognize local writers and artists through its publication.

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Poetry

Generations

after Jane Wong's *Tenants*

By Christine Aikens Wolfe

I need to intuit new gods. Kids in public school, 6th grade

study Greek myths. We do not. Catholic education.

My mother, in the 50s, makes fruit Jello for Aunt Sister Mary Jude

who visits likes Jello calls eating artichokes a moral
waste.

Will Halloween cookies arrive from Great Aunt Lenore

in Detroit? Or will she & her beloved Don Wolfe visit in person?

Lenore and Don meet in their twenties, but their families forbid marriage,

He – Catholic, she – Protestant. He moves away, back years later

writes a note to the school where she teaches “Are you my lost
Lenore?”

She calls. “Don, let’s marry on Saturday.”

In their sixties, they build a home

with a tiled fireplace

To Thine own Self be True.

Mom makes macaroni & cheese Fridays, fish less frequently.

Children get a glass of wine at Christmas / Easter turkey or lamb & mint
jelly.

No mention of generations before their grandparents

no tales from across the sea. No potato famine, no typhoid ships

no starvation walks from Roscommon to Cork to board a
ship.

Mom speaks of grandparents in Chess Springs, PA they farm.

Irish immigrants left New York for dangerous work on the railroad

her family left railroad life for something better

she never says Like what they left in County Cork.

Dinner conversations. Mom & Dad rehash Saturday bridge games

we girls listen or describe snowy sled-riding

or answer a question about school grades (all A's expected).

Books allowed at breakfast & lunch dinner for family talk.

I say, “Please pass the milk” and Mom jokes

that her friends know our house by all the milk bottles on the porch.

Mom sings lullabies we love them

Baby births span eight years.

Even as teenagers, we request:

“Sing East Side /West Side” or Tura Lura Lura or Winken, Blinken and Nod Please”

Mom complies.

Shouting is only girl-to-girl, each sure she's right. Or tears if reading Little Women.

Another sister hugs the crying one.

Adults are different.

No kissing seen, few arguments. That's for the bedroom.

Grampa, my mother's father, outlives two wives, dies when I'm nine.

Two other grandparents die before my parents marry; and my father's mother

dies when I'm six months old.

In 1961, I leave Our Mother of Sorrows Elementary. Enter Westmont
Hilltop

only teachers speak to me. At home I warble do
homework play

board games, pinochle, jacks / jump-rope with three sisters.

My parents' home has wallpaper, a piano sisters who bond

but everything to be a secret outside the family: uncles (secret drinkers)

or divorces (not discussed), two uncles marry into our family then
desert my aunts.

Not 'til college do I flower go tripping discover
parallel universes

my Irish heritagemysticism / synchronicity land held in
common in the West

where Irish is the first language the Gaeltacht – I embrace all faiths.

Today, I take a spirit-bow shatter inhibitions / secrets

I tell forbidden family stories

I discover other gods.

My Perpetrator

By Hossam Al Sidran

Last night, my perpetrator was wed.

And I stayed here,
in this dark
room,
gripping on the sides of the bed.
My flavorless screams fade into a dreamless pillow.
Nobody heard him
ripping my youth,
and jewels,
and leaving me bruised.
Can't they hear me
now
while the widows sing of him and
Her?
Do I blame them? Should they have known.
Do I blame you? Should you have suffered.
Let the steel steep till the force of flesh shown.
Do I blame her? Should her fruit bear his poison.
Or I blame his mother,

but he is never to blame.

How could I? not when he's had a good life and it's his big night.
How could I? not when his big night is with the daughter of the prince. How
could I? not when everyone is dancing.

What did I do with my life to earn that, or what did he do to me?

Radical Eye, Tumultuous Life

By Joan E. Bauer

Logline: Italian-born photographer is torn between Revolution and her art.

Characters: Tina Modotti. Edward Weston, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, a Marxist professor, a survivor of Spanish Civil War. (See 'Reds')

Opening: Modotti's sudden death after dinner at Pablo Neruda's house.

Heart attack or murder? Then flashbacks—

Tina in her uncle's photo studio in Udine, Italy. She works in textile plant to support her impoverished family. Casting: A younger Salma Hayek?

Tina arrives in San Francisco's Little Italy where she models & begins acting in Italian language theatre. Meeting with Dorothea Lange?

Discovered by D.W. Griffith, Tina goes to Hollywood where she appears as femme fatale in silent films. Re-enact some clips?

In Bohemian LA, Tina meets photographer Edward Weston. They become lovers & move to Mexico. Who should play Weston?

With a Graflex, Tina masters her craft. Affair with Diego Rivera.

Deep friendship w/Frida Kahlo, defying category, arm in arm.

From Modotti's photographs: sea of sombreros, worker's hands,
typewriter, calla lilies, cactus. Hammer & sickle?

Tina joins the Mexican Communist Party & becomes Stalinist agent.

Expelled from Mexico & flees to Soviet Union. Climax?

Tina works tirelessly for the Comintern. In Spain, relief worker & spy.

Implicated in death of Revolutionary fighters? Too much of a downer?

Closing scenes: Return to art & Mexico, mysterious death. Final image:

Modotti's 'Hands of the Puppeteer.' Too symbolic?

Cinematography: B&W homage to Neorealism? Palette of earth tones?

Sample dialog: 'I cannot solve the problem of my life by losing myself
in the problem of art.' Too philosophical?

Ears

By Charlie Brice

What a strange design these cauliflower protuberances

on the sides of our heads that add

two superfluous orifices when audition could have

occurred every time we opened our mouths.

Little hearing receptors should have been lodged

in our throats where that squiggly thing is.

We would have had to listen before we speak—what

a better blueprint for human discourse

that would have been!

My ears are giving me trouble. Suddenly they began

to itch. It feels like something's caught

in them, maybe a hair or a tiny ocean of water.

My doctor says my ears are too dry, that I should

stop washing them. My mother told me to wash

my ears. She showed me how to scrub and rinse them,

how to bend over on the left, then on the right,
to drain them. Ten years ago, another doctor
commented, not unjudgementally, that there was

“a lot of wax” in my ears. I became super vigilant,
added a Q-tip swab to my after-shower routine
to make sure my ears were wax free. My mother

told me that if I didn’t wash my ears, I’d grow potatoes
in them. What will I do with those shrubby
plants sure to emerge in my auditory canals?

What of the crows and other birds that will perch
on my earlobes waiting for a chance to peck
the delicious fruit awaiting harvest in those ugly growths

on my head? Will my doctor prescribe the medical
version of Weed-Be-Gone when I go deaf
from those thick stalks sticking out of my ears?

Wanted

By Jay Carson

Witty, attractive, charming, magnetic
may not have been in my vocabulary,
but at 15, I knew
the concepts and thought
I had them all.

Seeing a high school classmate in a barber shop
I went in and started my usual witty banter.
After about 15 minutes
the barber said sharply to me
“Don’t you ever stop talking?”
And he was my barber
whom I paid.

Some years later I was being kind
to a girl who didn’t have many dates.
She ended one of ours by saying

“This just isn’t working out.”

I thought

it was working out fine.

Yes, I was also rejected from
my choice fraternity
and told once to not
go into my usual political rant
when entering a posh key club.

But the worst was spending a Spring break
week with a college classmate who told me
years later, when I reminded him
of our great time together in Kentucky,
“I don’t remember you being there at all.”

“The power to see ourselves as others see us?”

You can have it.

Winged Voracity

By Amy Ganser

I have a hunger

She bellowed

Into the black abyss

A churning yearning

To do more

See more

Be more

Craving for course correction

Voracious for victory

Over silent sameness

Ravenous for newness

And then

Somewhere in the sea

Where violent motion

And sudden stillness meet

She stared at the stars

And pondered the possible

She devoured the dream

Of a future yet to be

Satiated, she adjusted the rudder

And sailed onward

Into the unknown

Black Things

By Donna Greco

Grandma says: *black birds and black cats bring bad luck.*

I only know, that I love all things black:

the eyes of the Barred Owl, the river on a moonless night,
the head of a loon.

Once, I cried dark oceans.

Now, a clear stream
honors sadness, doesn't drown me.

Hollow bones of birds,
nothing like my own.

I cannot fly.

I escape with my voice.

An onyx crow,
having lost its murder,
caws to the open sky.

Favorite Objects

By Moriah N. Hampton

Favorite Object I

The yellow woven-back
rocking chair faces the window,
sunlight spilling over its entire
frame. At any moment,
someone may sit and lean back
in the chair, the rockers rolling
down and peeling up
from the hard-wood floor.

But no one comes.

The rocking chair remains
empty the entire afternoon,
its purpose served.

Favorite Object II

A wreath hangs
on the wall,
made of twigs, tightly
bound, their ends
jutting out, nearly pulling
apart the hole in the middle
before filling it in.
It's nothing spectacular,
sold for a buck at a yard sale,

except it is.

Favorite Object III

The sunniest window
in the house is home
to the jade plant;
its stems climb
the glass all winter
long, growing
thicker, stronger;
several even turning
brown like the soil.
Nothing can keep
the jade plant
from expanding
beyond the space
already claimed.

Favorite Object IV

The crystal vase
gathers little dust,
full of multi-colored
bouquets on the dining
room table, sure

to catch anyone's
eye the moment
they walk into
the room.

It's much too nice
for this place, a
keepsake for
the "better" life
she imagined
before she learned
when to throw
it away.

Grey Matter Gladiator

By Scott McDanel

In times of unease or distress I tend to study my own brain

And in my research I have made an unusual discovery.

Tucked between my eyes and the mind's, an old colosseum

One which I never knew, yet was always a participant.

For I am a gladiator, not one of the physical plane

Who instead of fighting lions, or whole menageries,

Makes opponents of emotions and bad memories

My victims are countless, my victories even more

The cerebral emperor even smiles upon me

So tell me dear reader, with all these triumphs in mind

Why does it feel like I haven't won at all?

Nightfall

By Randy Minnich

The sky is turning peach to purple.

Saturn sparkles in the midnight blue beyond.

Silhouettes of poplar, pine and willow

ink upon the fading day the many ways to be a tree.

Snow is chalk dust on the slate-gray lawn.

The neighbor's roof—a stark black

triangle. In brown, some sparrows flutter

in the naked tangle of forsythia.

One by one, down the street,

windows light in cozy golden rectangles

that veil—the flicker of the evening news:

impending war, dread of disease.

The walls seem strong, the doors are locked.

Still, I worry...Oh stop it! The sun
has been setting for four billion years,
and yes Nature does love catastrophe:

after the meteor, *T. rex* was gone
but sparrows thrived.

Poltava, Ukraine, 1919

By Dora Odarenko

Thursday was the day my father said

“It’s time now. Go.

You’ll leave the horse with us. And Anna.

The way will be too harsh for her,

A fiancée is now a luxury.

Your boots and back and will are strong.

Here’s a ruble, a compass for your soul.”

A lifetime later, only coin and words remain.

The coin, in those next months,

too small and precious to trade

for tea or for bread.

I cannot share the other words that night

or Mother’s touch that tried to reach

deep beneath my sleeve.

Why speak of pools of light or samovar

that gathered us as one
or the cross that held a blessing
for all who passed beneath our door.

The furrows of longing cast shadows
as I walked into that night.

The verticals of barns my last sure guide.

Claimed by mud and wind and emptiness,

I found my way to Prague

and there began to flesh out

sunken cheeks and choices,

never turning back.

Aware

By Alana Palmer

I feel I do this to myself, I'm toxic and I know it.

I lie and I cheat but I still cry every week, like I'm the victim.

I'm the perpetrator, the instigator, I create my own pain just to put others at blame.

And although they were shitty I didn't have to stay but I chose to.

Losing feelings and leading them on, just to feel sad now that they're gone.

Why do I do this to myself? When did my self respect fly out the door?

Honestly I'm not really sure, I have a good heart but sometimes it's impure.

They Could Have Had Something

By John Repp

They could have had something,
Dottie & him. He was white, she black,

which mattered to both of them
(“both of him” jockeys for position there),

but that’s a guess in both directions,
as always. She was his work wife,

he the husband laying out hoagies
& chips (& cleaning up!) once

or twice a week. Such good
talks! No guesswork there.

the pure sky world to come

By Judith Robinson

stroke upon stroke wait til

the pump

falls still and stops

give me ground a stone a stalk

a place firm

to stack

hard grief

that goes down wild

splits the rib cage

white bone raw red

black blood crusts a soft core

where Hope once sat

witless Hope pours

light like a child

spills milk

God if you can hear

help me it hurts to stay

where trees blood and eyes

are so worn so full well

known this may be too much

and no more this may be want

of the pure sky world to come

Ode to What Was

By Delainy Seech

Long ago life was lived
From the land and from the sea
Years gone and years to come, mother nature gives and gives
To all of her children, you, them, and me
The world used to have supplies aplenty, and more
Trees bore fruit, and folk could take what they'd need
Take mercy on the poor
For all we have now, is gluttony and greed
We sit back and watch
Helpless as oil spills into the sea
Pour your gin and your scotch
End of the world party starts at three
How nice it'd be
To return to a time
Where all of us could just be
Without paying a dime

When water was free
And nobody was told
That they needed that degree
To earn the privilege to grow old
So I'll keep to myself
With my reusable straws and sustainable glass jars
While those with the wealth
Fly away to the stars
They ruined our Earth
And stole away what once was
We've been robbed since birth
Our generation left abuzz
Trying desperately to figure out
How to return to what was

Ming Dynasty Cats

By Mary Soon Lee

Who guarded the northern border
of the Middle Kingdom?

Who patrolled the Long Wall,
marched its myriad miles?

Soldiers, yes, but what of them?

Mere men, mere smell-lame men,
night-blind, tailless, clawless,
heedless of the Empire's peril.

Cats the first and last defense
against repeated incursions
of malevolent marauder mice,
barbarian rat battalions.

And if they asked for pay,
it was little enough:
a few paper scraps to shred,
silk to bandage their wounded.

Why We Need the Humanities

By Joseph Szalinski

They are disciplines
more often criticized.

Regarded as impractical
when knowledge is monetized.

Supposedly fruitless pursuits
with academic leprosy.

And this harmful approach
puts the humanities in jeopardy.

These programs are vehicles for change,
they wield influence over policy.
and when their lessons are applied,
life improves in quality.

There's certainly more to study
than business and STEM.

Every area of study's equal;
one isn't better than the rest of them.

Yes, our degrees are valid,
our efforts should be recognized.

Instead of us being talked down to
and being vilified.

True, we need math and science,
especially in a period of the latter's illiteracy,
but proficiency in one's native language
is a skill that helps considerably.

We learn to ask questions,
to think and act critically,
use creativity to solve problems
that may have arisen deliberately.

We can apply the lessons learned
into other modes of thought.

Humanities have been around awhile,
unless we forgot?

The study of other people and cultures
makes humanity more inclusive.

By understanding others,
we become less abusive.

The past will be forgotten,
unless it's preserved.

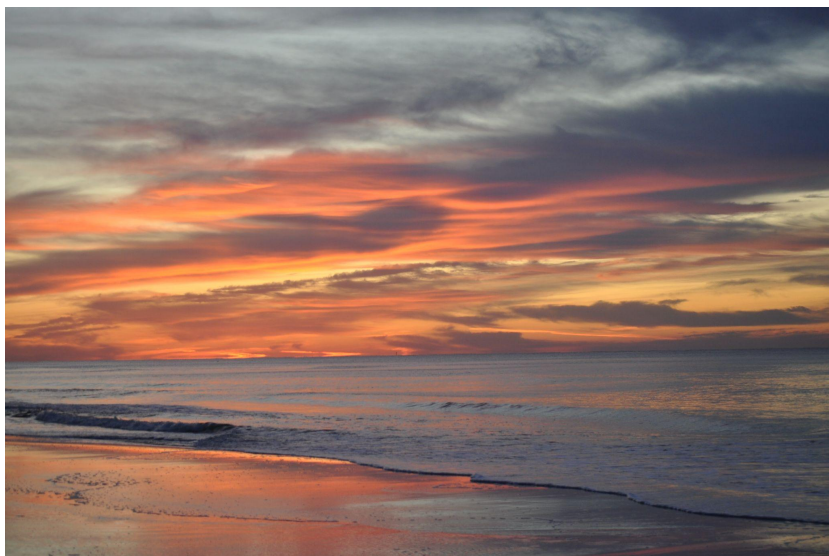
For if mistakes are repeated,
our fate is the one we deserve.

Contemplate grandiose notions

and weigh ethical questions.
Art is not just from us, rather,
we are art by extension.
Studying the human experience
allows us to find similarities.
There is merit to our studies,
as they are the greatest charity.
Keep in mind, most employers
look for those who can communicate
as effectively as possible,
problem-solve and collaborate.
Incorporating the humanities
permits a greater balance,
a well-roundedness,
marked by unique talent.
By thinking differently and deeper,
it provides a greater range.
Art helps acceptance of marginalized groups
by prompting social change.
The humanities are still pertinent,
still useful, and still practical.
Within is a reflection of us...
isn't that magical?

Photography & Art





Sunrise by Renee Augustine



SpaceX by Cameron Bakaj



Sidney Crosby by Cameron Bakaj



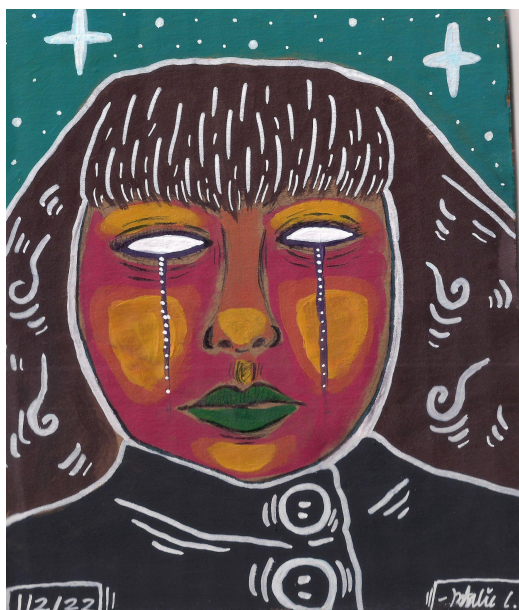
Moon by Nicole Brautigam



“White Flowers” by Nicole Brautigam



“City” by Natalee Calfo-Carroll



Self Portrait by Natalie D.C.



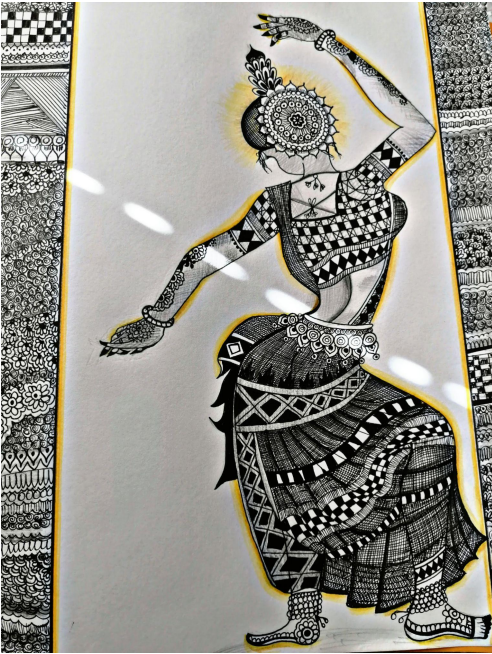
Sunset in Mexico by Melina Dimatteo-Snyder



Love in the Hourglass by Megan Johnson



“Castle” by Rianna Morris



Indian Classical Dancer by Sharvani Padisala



On the Radar by Nick Romeo



Cherry by Nico Scalise



“Red” by Ian Singendonk



Pittsburgh by Caitlyn Wood

Prose

The Most Loyal Friend

By Danielle Connors

Marcy moved slowly about the house, her joints aching as she went. Each step she took was careful - avoiding the obstacles in her way, making sure not to disturb those resting nearby.

Making her way to the first room, Marcy enjoyed the silence of the night. She could hear animals rustling in the bushes outside - likely the family of bunnies that had taken residence in the vegetation by the front porch—but she ignored the sounds now. She would deal with that later.

She reached the doorway of the first room and paused. The elderly woman that lay in the bed was unaware of the eyes watching her. In sleep, her lined face was free from pain, and the soft breaths that left the woman's mouth broke the stillness of the room, offering Marcy comfort. The woman often woke throughout the night, sleeping restlessly if at all, but for now she was settled. Marcy sat for a few minutes looking into the room. Each movement was careful and practiced as she rested her body in the doorway, performing the duty of a faithful guard. For a moment Marcy thought she sensed another body next to hers, leaning against the doorframe, but she disregarded this possibility. She knew better. Nothing bothered the sleeping woman now, and Marcy would come again when the woman called out in her sleep. The woman would not be alone. Her guardian would ensure she was not.

Though reluctant to leave the woman, Marcy continued on, moving to the next occupied room. This room was littered with obstacles, and Marcy had to move around the objects carefully. She followed in the phantom footprints that lingered on the dusty hardwood floor. This route had been mapped out long ago. Standing in the entrance of this room would not suffice. The figure curled in the bed could not be seen clearly from the doorway. The bed was pushed against the wall, and the room contained

shelves overflowing with books, pictures papering the walls, and a desk with small stuffed animals lining the top. More of these stuffed animals littered the occupied bed, and some were scattered haphazardly on the floor. The toys had likely fallen while the girl in the bed slept. Marcy knew this girl well, and she would have never knowingly allowed the toys to remain alone on the cold floor.

The girl had grown and grown for as long as Marcy had known her; though still not quite as much as the boy in the next room had grown. Marcy thought with a certain melancholy of this boy. He had long ago put his toys away in boxes and had stopped shoving his monkey—his best friend—into his bag before he went out the door. Marcy hoped the girl never put her toys in a box, but she had also lived long enough to know this hope was more than likely futile.

The girl breathed evenly in her sleep, with a smile on her face as she hugged a stuffed rabbit close to her chest. Marcy didn't have to wonder if the girl dreamt; the smile on her face was indication enough. This child wouldn't wake crying. Tonight, she was free from the nightmares that often plagued her.

Marcy stood near the bed for a moment, looking longingly at the soft pillows and warm blankets snugly tucked around the girl's form. She wanted to join the girl in her slumber and allow the softness of a bed and the relief of dreams to whisk her away. But instead she turned from the bed and left the room, continuing her task.

A boy slept in the next room Marcy entered. He could barely be called a boy any longer—his long legs now hanging off the end of the bed. The harsh lines of his face and abrasive tone that often characterized him during the day were absent now, leaving behind a man who—in sleep at least—knew nothing but kindness. Abruptly, he shifted in his sleep, as he often did. The movement would have been disconcerting to some, but Marcy knew the routine by now. He would roll over onto one side before rolling back to the other. He would only wake when the sun rose and light slanted through the window. By then he would never know that anyone had checked on him while he slept in the dark.

She turned then, making her way back down the hallway to the room where a couch sat against one wall; a tv and table against the other. A dim light filtered into the room from a nightlight in the bathroom nearby. Though her vision had long since blurred at the edges, the nightlight provided just enough light for her to arrive at her last stop of the night.

A man smiled down at her from a picture on the wall. His lined face and white hair showed his age, and a smile stretched across his mouth. She stopped deliberately in front of the picture—laying down and crossing her paws in front of her with a soft whine. As Marcy looked up at him he seemed to look back at her, and she let out a small bark, careful to be quiet enough not to disturb those who rested throughout the house.

She let out another bark, growing louder now, chancing waking the sleeping humans as she delivered her nightly report. “I finished our job for the night. Did I do good?” As always, she received no audible answer from the man she looked up at, but his eyes answered her with a resounding “yes.”

She knew he wasn’t coming back. He’d left one day without bending down to pet her as he normally did before leaving her for the day. When he didn’t turn to her with a smile or loving reassurances she had suspected something was wrong. And that night, when he wasn’t there to take up his post and walk with her from room to room, she had known. No one looked in on the girl or tucked her into bed while placing each stuffed animal carefully around her sleeping body. And when the elderly woman woke that night and made her way precariously to the bathroom, no one was hovering nearby, waiting with their hand on her back in case she stumbled. So the second night without him, Marcy walked from room to room on her own.

Now, laying on her stomach, Marcy let out a small huff, her eyes never leaving the picture. He wouldn’t have left his post as guard for no reason. If he could have, she knew that he would have come back. So she wouldn’t let them go unprotected, Marcy took his place, and followed his path where she could still see his footsteps, night after night.

On this night, Marcy continued her report:

“Everyone is alright. Hailey dropped her stuffed animals on the floor again. I can’t pick them all up like you used to, but she still has her bunny with her. I’ve never understood why she likes it, but I have to admit it’s soft. Jack is tossing and turning as always, but I’m sure he’ll sleep through the night. Sarah will wake as she always does, and I’ll go to her when she needs me.”

The self-appointed guardian concluded her report dutifully, waiting as always for a response—receiving none. His eyes seemed to follow her as she shifted though, and she convinced herself that the smile on his face was in response to her fulfilling her duties. She nosed at the ground, wishing she could follow him to bed and settle on the warm blanket at the foot of the bed, as she had every night, for many years. Instead she settled more comfortably on the floor, letting her muscles release their tension and rolling onto her side. Her legs fanned in front of her, but she positioned herself so that she could still look up at the picture.

“Don’t worry,” she thought, attempting to console him even as she drifted to sleep. “I look after them now. You don’t need to worry about us.”

Blink

By Natalie D.C.

Blink. You're 2. Fists larger than life smack and shove you against a floor laden with patterned scarves. You can barely glimpse the Sun, just a warm haze percolating through the layered canopy of cloth teepee-d above this dank room filled with tough ottomans and even tougher boys. You wonder where your parents went.

Blink. You're 3. Head heavy with the threat of sleep, you skitter across the hardwood floors of a house almost like the one you'll grow up in. You slump atop a makeshift bed, a spot of warmth on this cold ground. You feel the toasty snuggle of your mother's strong arms against your small waist. In retrospect, she's pregnant.

Blink. You're 6. The car door slams behind you as the Moroccan palms above sway in the balmy breeze. You hold a woman's hand (Mom's? your aunt's?), obediently ambling your way towards the cacophony awaiting your small, yet-to-be-broken family at the beach's shore. You fight the urge to run.

Blink. You're 8. Cars cruise by on a quiet intersection near the pier. The traffic light across the street turns red, the little white man starts walking. You start walking too, and so does your grandmother, your family not far behind. Head pivoted ninety degrees, you stare, transfixed, as Grandma hobbles across the freshly-paved road. You wonder to yourself, *what would happen if she got hit?* Stomach dropping, you fall in a ditch; your father scolds you, Mom nurses the scratch on your knee. You catch a glimpse of Grandma, yards away, safe, peacefully looking out at the beach, none the wiser to the morbid thought still lingering in your mind.

Blink. You're 10. The fluorescent lights of a soon-to-be-torn-down Kmart beam down. You run towards the cheese section, elated. This is your favorite part of the store, if not for the rare chance to sink your teeth into a grilled

cheese sandwich at home, then for the treasure trove of helium balloons that adorn the corner of the aisle. You look up at the colorful Made-in-the-USA plastic floating above, fists yanking at the ribbons that tear at the seams, and you think to yourself—for the last time (in this country, at least)—*I never want to leave.*

Blink. You're 12. Sticky, evening air wafts through your open bedroom window as *Adventure Time* blares from your decade-old TV, the sweet taste of a V8-flavored popsicle on your lips. You watch Finn be disbelieved on screen; something vital snaps inside you. Midnight, you wake up in a makeshift bed in your parents' air-conditioned room, your sister sound asleep beside you. You mimic her breaths when Mom barges in, hysterical, whisper-screaming a thought, a warning, a curse: "*How will we pay our taxes when we're dead?*"

Blink. You're 16. An airborne deathtrap to nowhere and everywhere groans around you. You groan inside it, your head hovering above a porcelain throne as you spit up the last of the sauteed spinach you had before leaving for the airport that afternoon. The toilet automatically flushes—suctioning away any hope you had of a peaceful journey—and you look up at the mirror—your red visage staring back—and say "Fuck" for the first time. Your mouth is bitter—from the word or the vomit it's hard to say—but not as bitter as it will be when you say that word again seven months from now, on a fateful, hateful day.

Blink. You're 18. There's two red vertical lines in your knee and a razor in your hand. It's all coming back to you now.

Let's Go, Fighting Vikings!

By Mackenzie Hill

Taylor and I met up in the locker room before the game. It was empty; the basketball players were warming up on the court. Taylor was dressed from the neck down in our school mascot costume with the head wedged under his arm.

I stared in disbelief. "I can't believe you agreed to be the mascot," I said.

Taylor rolled his eyes. "I didn't have much of a choice, Bailey. The mascot from football season was in some freak accident, and Coach Franklin wouldn't stop harassing me in history class today."

I nodded, leaning against a locker. "Freak accident?" I asked.

Taylor shrugged, slipping the head of the costume on. He was dressed as our school's mascot, The Fighting Viking. He retrieved a fake axe from behind a row of lockers and brandished it in front of my face.

"At least the axe is pretty cool," Taylor said, passing it between his hands.

We were interrupted by knocking at the locker room door. Coach Franklin peaked in and scowled when he saw me. "Really, Bailey? The boys' locker room?"

I didn't waste my breath answering him.

"Come on, Fighting Viking!" Coach Franklin hollered. "The crowd needs you out there!"

Taylor jogged out of the room following Coach Franklin. I stayed for a minute before following. I could hear the crowd's cheers getting louder

and louder the closer I got to the gym. I assumed their excitement was because of Taylor's antics.

I stopped at the opening to the gym and leaned against the wall. I smiled as I watched my best friend run around the gym in that ridiculous costume.

The buzzer sounded for the game to begin, but Taylor didn't leave the gym floor like he was expected to. Instead, he stood frozen in the middle of the court. The audience became deadly quiet as they watched his strange behavior.

"What are you doing, kid?" Coach Franklin hollered, approaching Taylor, who stood stock-still. The overhead lights flickered, and a shallow breeze swept through the room.

Coach Franklin pushed Taylor's shoulder. Taylor moved forward one step before turning to face Coach Franklin, his back to the crowd. The fans couldn't see what was happening, but my view at the entrance of the gym allowed me to see the entire scene unfold.

The axe in Taylor's hand began to glow an eerie green. The glow seemed to spread up his arm to encompass the entire mascot costume.

"Get off the court," Coach Franklin demanded, but his voice had a slight edge of hesitation.

Taylor lifted his axe above his head and brought it down with full force into Coach Franklin's skull. The axe was no longer harmless foam, but cold steel. It sliced clean through Coach Franklin's head and didn't stop until it reached the base of his neck. Only then, did Taylor dislodge it from his victim and face the shocked crowd.

Chaos ensued from there. People shoved and pushed each other down the bleachers. Only the strongest managed to make it down the steps without falling or being trampled by others. I stood by the door as the mayhem unfolded.

Taylor moved with an agility I've never witnessed before. He injured and beheaded fan after fan without slowing down. People started to flee out of the gym entrance. They pushed me further into the gym and closer to Taylor.

Taylor followed the mass of people exiting the gym. He walked straight past me. He didn't focus his fury on me, but he did turn his head towards my frozen form.

I stared into the large eyes of The Fighting Viking, but I couldn't see Taylor's soft, brown eyes. It was like a foreign force had taken possession of Taylor and wiped clean his humanity. I didn't recognize my best friend.

He looked away from me and continued to follow the mass of people.

I could hear screaming in the hallway. I knew Taylor would kill them all.

Gone Fishing

By Romella Kitchens

Going to get myself a hound dog someday.

One with the large, sad brown eyes.

One folks have done forgot at a dirty animal rescue.

I am gonna heal that dog's abandoned heart and put him in the tub and wash him.

I am gonna sing sweet songs about cornbread, flowers and

June Bugs to that dog then, dry him off.

I'm gonna name that dog what he wants to be named, even if it is simply "Otis Brown."

I'm gonna look into his watery eyes through the pain and find his authentic, "Who."

That dog is gonna play even if he is 90 years old.

He is gonna howl-sing to my guitar strumming.

He's gonna see all people aren't mean, not all people will hit him because helping them hunt and kill things scared him and he hid in the bushes.

He is gonna jump up and eat a dog taco in mid-air during a happy walk to happy places.

He is gonna get tired of being held.

He won't be put down ever.

God will come fetch his soul. But, while he lives I will combine my soul with his and one day I will get

a gentle friend and we will go driving into the
Pennsylvania country with that sweet dog and he will run the fields green
and wild.

We will sit at Lake side discussing poems as the dog courts a butterfly on
his nose.

“Gone Fishing” the sign will say on my door.

“Gone Fishing. Call me on my cell phone. Not coming back until we are
smiling.”

But, we won’t catch any fish.

We will feed them and pet them at lakeside.

That dog won’t be used as an enemy of human beings or
animals. He won’t track someone from slavery to freedom.

His soul will be freed from the soul of persecution.

I read many poems which are written about people leaving
animals and calling it freeing them.

I read many poems any animal in the poem ends up dead, murdered
as a new perspective on the human relationship with other living creatures.

I read yet I protest these perspectives.

I rebel against these cruel ideologies .

There. It is a dog. I relate to its soul, its dreams.

And, we have gone fishing.

Gone fishing for healing, integrity, for a better world.

Battlefields

By Rachel Rauschenberger

What is life without pain? What is joy with no sorrow, life without living, breath with no breathing?

The words that we use to define the most basic things can be ripped and swallowed into mere shreds of their meanings. It's the very same way that lives can be taken at a moment's notice. The way the sun beams may dance across a field of grass that becomes stained with blood with each passing second. The way metals meet leathers. Kevlars meet weapons. The way the dirt and grime of a city street, or the mud of a battlefield can become so ingrained with a skin that it feels as if it's grown there. The muddy metals of armor coated in browns. Rain pouring down from the sky as if the world herself were weeping for the loss of good men - honorable men. History believes the winner but the losing side never gets a chance at redemption. They are taken from and taken from and no one will know their side of the story that led them to their platings.

Soldiers standing in a field of battle, looking at their brothers in the eyes and knowing their death is to come. Standing shoulder to shoulder looking at their last sky. The wind washing around them and pulling them to something more. Guiding them to protect their lands and their lives. Their families back at home, the innocent. The rain running down their bodies and washing away the blood and the pain of sorrows from long ago.

One last sunset. One last sunrise. One last breath.

Campfires of bonding and camaraderie turned to fires of oil and screaming. No more jousting and games. Now it's real weaponry pointed and aimed. Shredding through protective layers and tearing through flesh.

Blood spraying into the air and covering the skin and armor of friends and enemies alike.

We were born to die were we not?

To stand for what we believe in and nothing more, nothing less. To fight for our rights and wrongs because people may take your life but not your heart. They may lay claim to lands but not souls. Blood flowing through wounds, fires raging in the fields, screams and fighting. Rain and blood and sweat together. A cacophony of sound and sight and smell. Words so eloquent that men can stand tall. Know that though this may be the last day they see the earth it is a good one. Though it is full of what many consider to be harmful and foul they are together and they are proud.

Pride. A funny thing, a fickle thing. Something that drives lords clothed in rich colors and fine jewelry to stake claim to more than they own or deserve. Cobblestone streets and cobblestone castles. Hay bales and farms, lanterns and laughter. Clouds that cover the sun streams as they shimmer to the earth. Warming the blades of grass that once housed a bloody war. Blades of grass and thistle weeds rubbing and brushing in a summer's breeze. No more harsh edges or clashes of swords. No more screams of trampled soldiers or shouts of pain.

Every day a new sun, every day a new start, a new chance. A probability of warmth and sun, a chance of life. A life with pain and suffering but also laughter and light. A heart with scars but full of love. Soft edges and warm clothes in winters. Gentle flurries of snow rather than blizzards. Red noses rather than frozen corpses. Gentle laps of water over a raging sea. Flowers and nature filling the air over the sweat and iron of crimson liquid that fed the soil that now holds plot to plants that feed the new world.

To look out into a sea of blues or a field of greens and see the colors of a war to come. To look upon the sky and the clouds and know they may be the last ones you ever encounter. To smile one last time or to laugh at a captor as chains clink around your wrists and ankles. To know pain and suffering but every joy the world could possibly have to offer. To see the ships sails billowing in the wind or the flag of a nation flapping gently in the breeze. To have warm molten metals to be forged into great weapons or frozen swords laying crusted with sea salt and blood in a frozen crimson tundra.

What is life without pain?

A world where grays rule the world. Pain may hurt, it may burn and itch and claw at every bit of your insides, but pain is a color. A color so bright and so powerful that it can light the world by only a small dose. Pain will bring a new day. Paint a new sun and give way to life.

What is life without pain?

No life at all.

Two Thefts

By Michael Simms

When I was in college, I committed larceny twice. Forty years later, I still feel pleased by the first theft and ashamed of the second.

I was living with the lovely Linda whose smile could light a room. She was generous and kind, an excellent cook, and loved the idea of being in love with a young unpublished poet. Her love seemed boundless, and I couldn't believe my luck. We barely got by on part-time jobs, college loans and handouts from our parents, but we were young, so being broke was just fine... until Christmas came. At the end of the fall semester, our little apartment looked sparse with no tree or decorations to brighten the darkening days.

On the last day of an evening class, my best friend Sam and I were walking back to my place, and I was telling him how broke I was and how inadequate that made me feel, not being able to buy even a small gift for Linda. We cut through a dark parking lot behind a convenience store. In a corner of the parking lot, out of sight of the store clerk, stood a pile of Christmas trees. They had probably been unloaded from a truck at the end of the day and would be lined up in front of the store windows the next morning for sale.

I looked at Sam, and Sam looked at me. We quickly walked over to the stack of conifers, grabbed one from the back of the stack, and hurried off the lot. There was a railroad track that ran behind the convenience store where it crossed the interstate on a high bridge, making a dangerous shortcut to a park, and on the other side of the park was the apartment where Linda and I lived. Without discussing it, Sam and I knew that if we crossed the railroad

bridge, no one would follow us. We had to step carefully because there was no surface to walk on, just crossties with two-foot spaces between them. A few months before, my creative writing teacher, who was also my advisor, had jumped off this very bridge and been hit by the cars below. He was the first person I'd ever known who committed suicide. Later there would be others. This image was in my mind as I looked between the crossties under my feet and saw the cars flying by forty feet below.

Trembling with terror and angry at myself for risking my life for a petty theft, I stepped off the bridge onto solid ground. Sam and I slid the tree across the wet grass of the park, past the swing set, and arrived at my front door. We told Linda we'd found the tree in the park, and she treated it as a gift from heaven. Although I haven't seen Linda for many years, I still sometimes remember how her face lighted up when she saw the tree.

A year later, Linda and I had broken up. I was full of self-pity, drinking heavily, angry at everyone and everything. One evening, Sam and I were at the Knox Street Pub a few blocks from my apartment. We drank a pitcher of beer, but we were too broke to buy another. We sat there, glowering, feeling sorry for ourselves when the couple in the booth next to us got up to leave. A ten-dollar bill lay on the table.

I looked at Sam, and Sam looked at me. Without saying a word, we moved over to the booth, and I slipped the ten in my pocket. The waitress, a nice person who was regularly propositioned by the drunken clientele, came over to the table. Her pretty green eyes scanned the table, and not seeing what she expected, she ran out the door, presumably to ask the last customers to pay. She came back in a few moments, looking at us suspiciously. She asked whether we'd seen a ten-dollar bill on the table. Sam and I looked innocently at her and shrugged.

With hurt and confusion in her eyes, she asked us what we wanted to drink. We ordered a pitcher of beer. When she brought it to us, I paid for it with the ten-dollar bill I'd stolen. In a feeble attempt to salvage my dignity, I told her to keep the change. She was furious, but she knew there was nothing she could do, so she took the money to the bartender and spoke to him with her back to us. The bartender glared at us over her shoulder.

Sam and I drank the pitcher of beer quickly and left. We never spoke about the incident again.

For a long time, I felt ashamed. About ten years later, I was in the old neighborhood and happened to drive by the Knox Street Pub. On an impulse, I went in. Since I'd stopped drinking by then, I sat at the bar and ordered seltzer water. I saw the waitress on the other side of the room, wiping tables. She was older and heavier now and somewhat beaten down by the years. She obviously didn't remember me—probably just one of many men who had taken advantage of her.

I walked over to her, handed her a twenty-dollar bill, and said that she had been kind enough to help me years ago, and I wanted to repay her. I was too ashamed to tell her what really happened.

Twenty-Nine

By Natalie Thompson

I was playing Wordle on a Wednesday when Russia invaded the Ukraine. My fiancé came into our bedroom and said, “Well, it looks like the Russia-Ukraine War has officially started. I wouldn’t be surprised if China invades Taiwan within the next month.” I stared at him blankly. What an odd way to find out about a catastrophe. It feels too ordinary when a whole country has just been unceremoniously turned upside down and shaken like a snow globe. I incorrectly typed in my Wordle guess while mumbling “That’s terrifying news. We’ve just jumped from one global crisis to the next.” I turned out the bedside lamp and went to bed.

Throughout the day, news outlets aired content about the war constantly. Civilians that only a few days prior were riding the train to work were now taking refuge in those stations from the impending air strikes. Entire families sleeping on the ground, their duffel bags acting as pillows and pets resting on their laps like blankets. While halfway across the world, my life is largely unchanged. I’m still sending my stupid little emails at my stupid little desk for my stupid little job, while children die, and cities are burned to the ground.

When I get home from work, I carry on with my routine like everything is normal. What an unusual sensation. To be reclining on the sofa browsing Instagram on your thousand-dollar phone and seeing a puppy dressed as a mailman and a sorority girl chugging a mimosa followed by a Ukrainian father saying goodbye to his family for the last time. But isn’t that how it

always is? In an apartment building someone can experience immense joy in one room while someone else can be grieving a life in another. And that's only a microcosm of the world. Joy and grief are unlikely friends.

“If Russian continues its attacks in the Ukraine and invades NATO territory, the United States will be brought into this war. We can only hope that it doesn't get to that point, but you never know with Putin,” says a pessimistic newscaster on television. This comment reminds me of the Greatest Generation and their intense fight in World War II. If it comes time to draft, Gen Z's only combat skills involve meme wars and Tik Tok dances. What will all the influencers do?

I try to put the negativity out of my mind as I go to sleep. I dream of beautiful skyscrapers reaching for clear blue skies on an early autumn day. I see a fireball plummet into those skyscrapers bringing down everything and everyone inside them. The crashing halt jolts me upright. I'm awake and there's no use in trying to fall asleep again. I bring out my phone and play Wordle.

Ironically, today's answer was MOURN.

When Atheists Pray

By Girard Tournesol

Gliding like a ghost, the 747 lifted wheels-up to Frank Sinatra's "My Way"
A moment that wouldn't end — ended — and in the downdraft of those
wings
— I died a little less that day

The desire for absence, cessation, the stoppage of relentless pounding
in the ears is an anguish prayer cannot cease, a wish of death Like a piece
of wood that smolders but doesn't burn, abomination has a way of persisting

Bloodshot-eyes tacked wide open with toothpicks I saw brownshirts,
swastikas,
stiff-armed salutes, white power fists and a congresswomen blame wildfires
in California on Jewish lasers in space God, I can't believe I just wrote that

Like I can't believe I also once loved Journey's "Don't Stop Believing," in
the way
I once loved and believed in my country Blindly I do still love my country
but now differently like a fawn wobbling amongst fern or Ben Franklin
flying a kite

in a thunderstorm; something great could, potentially, maybe, possibly still
happen? or . . .

Things are always simpler before they change
or rather, when The Self can change things can be seen simply as they truly
are

Moose and Squirrel Thwart Bungling Russian Spies, or . . .
Oligarchs Rule The World So it is
with much fondness I'll remember that jumbo jet flying away

with its would-be Oligarch and his bride and settle for dumb luck, chance
fluke, coincidence, fate, odds, the wind and good timing it coincided
with an atheist's prayer

Contributor Biographies



Renee Augustine - *Sunrise*

Renee Augustine practices photography as a hobby in her spare time. She has expanded her love for photography over the past several years and enjoys taking pictures of landscapes, nature scenes, and abandoned structures. Her camera is a staple piece of equipment in her vehicle as one never knows when a photo opportunity may arise. She has photographed all over the country and is excited to continue her journey in photography.

Cameron Bakaj - *Sidney Crosby & SpaceX*

Cammy Bakaj graduated in 2020 with a bachelor's in biology, but came back to get a teaching certification and master's in instructional leadership.

Cammy has always loved art and was in the National Art Honor Society in high school. After starting college, Cammy fell out of doing art, but at the start of the pandemic the spark came back, and now Cammy is creating art almost every day! If you want to see more of Cammy's work, you can find Cammy at Cameron Bakaj Art on Facebook and @cameronbakajart on Instagram. Cameron also takes commissions!

Joan E. Bauer - *Radical Eye, Tumultuous Life*

Joan E. Bauer is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *The Almost Sound of Drowning* (Main Street Rag, 2008) and *The Camera Artist* (Turning Point, 2021). For some years, she worked as a teacher and counselor and now divides her time between Venice, CA and Pittsburgh, PA where she co-hosts and curates the Hemingway's Summer Poetry Series with Kristofer Collins. Her new poetry manuscript, *Fig Season*, is forthcoming from Turning Point in May 2023.

Nicole Brautigam - *Moon & "White Flowers"*

Nicole Brautigam is currently a senior at RMU, and she is majoring in Early Childhood and Special Education. She has always had a love for being outside, taking pictures, doing puzzles, reading, writing, and drawing! As a future teacher, Nicole is always trying to find ways to be more creative!

Charlie Brice - *Ears*

Charlie Brice won the 2020 Field Guide Poetry Magazine Poetry Contest and placed third in the 2021 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize. His chapbook, *All*

the Songs Sung (Angel Flight Press), and his fourth poetry collection, *The Broad Grin of Eternity* (WordTech Editions) arrived in 2021. His poetry has been nominated twice for the *Best of Net Anthology* and three times for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *Chiron Review*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Ibbetson Street*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Impspired Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

Natalee Calfo-Carroll - "City"

Natalee Calfo-Carroll is a sophomore student pursuing a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering at Robert Morris University. Photography has long been a favorite hobby of Natalee's, and Natalee is excited to have the opportunity to explore a photography minor in the future. The photo she contributed to *Rune* is one of her favorite shots that she was able to capture during her recent travels.

Jay Carson - *Wanted*

Jay Carson taught for many years at Robert Morris University where he was a founding advisor to the literary magazine, *Rune*. He has published more than 100 poems and a number of short stories in local and national journals, magazines, and collections. Jay is also the author of *Irish Coffee* (Coal Hill Press) and *The Cinnamon of Desire* (Main Street Rag). He is presently working on a memoir. Jay considers his work Appalachian, accessible, the ongoing problem-solving of a turbulent life, and just what you might need.

Danielle Connors - *The Most Loyal Friend*

Danielle Connors is studying at Robert Morris University. She is a senior year English major with a history minor. She is a member of the English Honor Society Sigma Tau Delta and is an officer of the Italian club on campus. Danielle is currently interning with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. Danielle is also the managing editor of *Rune*.

Natalie D.C. - *Blink & Self Portrait*

Natalie D.C. is an 18-year-old artist and writer based in Pittsburgh, PA. Her writing grapples with her erratic mental health and conflicting half-Moroccan identity. She has been published in two consecutive issues of

the *Ralph Munn Creative Writing Anthology* and has received regional and national recognition by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. When she isn't busy working towards her BA in Public and Professional Writing, you can usually find her re-reading her favorite book over and over, watching K-dramas with her little sister or filling her walls with anything and everything that makes her smile.

Melina Dimatteo-Snyder - *Sunset in Mexico*

Over this past summer, Melina and her friends took a trip to Cancun, Mexico. She never saw more amazing views with her own eyes. Pictures don't do Cancun justice. The picture she submitted to *Rune* of the sunset was taken right outside her room. Melina would take another trip there in a heartbeat.

Amy Ganser - *Winged Voracity*

Amy spent the last part of 2019 and the first part of 2020 as a temporary administrative assistant in the School of Informatics, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Then in 2021, she was brought back to campus on a different temp assignment, performing the random student body covid testing through the Office of Student Life and has been at RMU since. Amy has always loved writing, but she has never done it professionally and only recently rediscovered her love of poetry. Two of her pieces have been featured on *Move Me Poetry's* publication on Medium. Sometimes she rhymes, sometimes she doesn't. Amy doesn't have a particular style; she really just writes what strikes her mood. She is excited for the opportunity to share with her colleagues and the students at RMU.

Donna Greco - *Black Things*

Donna Greco is a conservatory-trained pianist-teacher, having performed and taught in Pittsburgh, both in classical and jazz music, for over 40 years. She is also a professional astrologer, conducting readings, seminars, and public presentations. She attended Duquesne University for conservatory piano. She has a BA in English literature and creative writing from Westminster College. She teaches piano in her Squirrel Hill studio. Her poetry has appeared in *Voices from the Attic*.

Moriah N. Hampton - *Favorite Objects*

Moriah Hampton received her Ph.D. in Modernist Literature from SUNY-Buffalo. Her fiction, poetry, photography, and photopoetry have appeared in *Wordgathering*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Brief Wilderness*, *The Sonder Review*, and elsewhere. She currently teaches in the Writing and Critical Inquiry Program at SUNY-Albany.

Mackenzie Hill - *Let's Go, Fighting Vikings!*

Mackenzie Hill is a sophomore English Studies major at Robert Morris University. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta (International English Honors Society), Society of Collegiate Journalists, and *Rune*. One of Mackenzie's short stories was also selected to be performed at Robert Morris University's annual Creepy Conference in the fall of 2021.

Megan Johnson - *Love in the Hourglass*

Megan Johnson is a freelance graphic designer and photographer from Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Her artwork is primarily Photoshop composite/photomanipulation work. Her piece featured in *Rune* is of nature. Megan often leans towards darker, cinematic, and macabre themes.

Romella Kitchens - *Gone Fishing*

Ms. Kitchens has been published in numerous literary magazines and online, including *Chiron Review*, *Van Gogh's Ear*, *Heart*, *Revista Americana*, *The Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *City Paper Chapter & Verse* and *Coal Hill Review*, *Mainstreet Rag*, *Uppagus*, *Brevity* and many more. Her work has been archived at the University of Pittsburgh's Frick Fine Arts Gallery, and she has been anthologized in two Autumn House Press Editions.

Mary Soon Lee - *Ming Dynasty Cats*

Mary Soon Lee was born and raised in London, but has lived in Pittsburgh for over twenty years. Her latest books are from opposite ends of the poetry spectrum: "Elemental Haiku," containing haiku for the periodic table, and "The Sign of the Dragon," an epic fantasy with Chinese elements, winner of the 2021 Elgin Award. She hides her online presence with a cryptically named website (marysoonlee.com) and an equally cryptic Twitter account (@MarySoonLee).

Scott McDanel - *Grey Matter Gladiator*

Scott McDanel is a producer, director, screenwriter, and poet from Pittsburgh, PA who tells stories no one thinks to tell. He will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts from Robert Morris University in 2022. His work encompasses a colorful buffet of creative formats including, but not limited to, the Arts and Entertainment talk show *Dark Side News*, the radio show that explores a world of music unknown in *Scote's Mixtape Madness*, and the dark fantasy short story "Kingslayer." You can find him on Twitter @McDanelWriting.

Randy Minnich - *Nightfall*

Randy Minnich is a retired chemistry professor and researcher. He's now reading, writing, and looking forward to hiking in the woods and traveling to see grandchildren again. He has written and published a number of poems and two books, one about cats and the other about sitting quietly in Pittsburgh's North Park woods.

Rianna Morris - *"Castle"*

Rianna Morris is from State College, PA. She is a freshman marketing major with a minor in psychology. She enjoys photography, going on adventures with friends, and spending time with her family.

Dora Odarenko - *Poltava, Ukraine, 1919*

Dora Odarenko, a teacher and pastor, now lives in Pittsburgh. She holds degrees from Barnard, Columbia, and Yale and her teaching has ranged from Harlem, NY, to Sarah Lawrence. She considers her poems on-going conversations with her memories, the natural world, and with those striving for earth preservation and justice.

Sharvani Padisala - *Indian Classical Dancer*

Sharvani Padisala is a transfer student from CCAC. She is currently completing a Bachelors in Cyber Security. She is a 21-year-old student with numerous talents and lots of stress in her life. She feels like it's not an easy task to introduce herself, but she will try to be short and sweet. She is the youngest child in her family. She has an elder brother who is super talented

and handsome and importantly an outgoing nerd. She knows that the words outgoing and nerd are complete opposites, but he truly is one. On to herself, she never got a chance to learn sketching professionally. She learned how to sketch from her brother who learned it from their mother. Sharvani's mother was born talented in all creative stuff. Sharvani's teacher was her brother. She used to copy all his sketches by sitting beside him. After he left for his higher studies, she had to do everything by herself. She learned the different styles and techniques and tried putting them on a blank sheet no matter what it was.

Alana Palmer - *Aware*

Alana Palmer is a student-athlete and artist on the track team. She is majoring in graphic design and minoring in photography. In her free time, she does freelance art and writes poetry. She is currently working on publishing her first poetry book.

Rachel Rauschenberger - *Battlefields*

Rachel Rauschenberger is a senior Accounting major at RMU. She has loved writing since she was a child and especially adored fiction since the third grade. She writes fanfictions and original works on *Archive of Our Own* often and has made many author friends through that. For this story, she wanted to play around with imagery since it's one of her favorite things to write.

John Repp - *They Could Have Had Something*

John Repp is a poet, fiction writer, essayist and poet living in Erie, Pennsylvania. His most recent book is *The Soul of Rock & Roll: Poems Acoustic, Electric & Remixed, 1980-2020*, published by Broadstone Books.

Judith Robinson - *the pure sky world to come*

Judith R. Robinson is an editor, teacher, fiction writer, poet and visual artist. A 1980 summa cum laude graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, she is listed in the Directory of American Poets and Writers. She has published 100+ poems, five poetry collections, one fiction collection, one novel, and edited or co-edited eleven poetry collections. Judith teaches at Osher at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh. Judith's

newest poetry collection is “Buy A Ticket,” WordTech Editions, 2022. Judith’s newest edited collection is “Speak, Speak,” poetry of Gene Hirsch, Cyberwit.com 2020. Judith’s latest gallery exhibit was “The Numbers Keep Changing,” at The Pittsburgh Holocaust Center, April–June, 2019.

*publication info & credits, art exhibitions, awards, including Pushcart nominations, on request or at: www.judithrrobinson.com (website) or alongtheserivers@gmail.com

Nick Romeo - *On the Radar*

Nick Romeo is a multidisciplinary artist, musician, and writer. Nick lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with his wife and now two cats named Megatron and Tempest Time.

Nico Scalise - *Cherry*

Nico Scalise is currently a senior graphic design major. He creates and enjoys lots of different art forms from design, illustration, to animation. He is always excited to try something new and unique and will often jump in the deep end of what an art medium can do.

Delainy Seech - *Ode to What Was*

Delainy is currently attending college at CCAC. Once she gets her general education credits there, she plans to transfer and major in English.

Hossam Al Sidran - *My Perpetrator*

Hossam Al Sidran is a junior mechanical engineering student at RMU. He was born and raised in Saudi Arabia.

Michael Simms - *Two Thefts*

Michael Simms is an accomplished poet, writer, editor, publisher, and teacher. Three full-length collections of his poetry, four novels, and two widely adopted poetry textbooks have been published or are under contract with publishers. He has also been the lead editor of over 100 published books, including the bestselling *Autumn House Anthology of Poetry*, now in its third edition. Simms has taught at a number of universities, including Chatham University’s MFA program from 2005-2013.

Ian Singendonk - “Red”

Ian Singendonk is an exchange student from Germany currently attending RMU for this spring semester. His majors are Social Studies and English. He picked up photography as a hobby some time ago and tries to take his camera everywhere to capture his time abroad. Ian’s photography includes photos from his hometown, Dortmund, and impressions from his time in the US.

Joseph Szalinski - *Why We Need the Humanities*

Joe Szalinski is a writer/performer from Pittsburgh, PA. In addition to writing, he also acts, makes music, and performs spoken-word and comedy. His work has appeared in various lit mags and anthologies. In Summer 2021, Joe published his debut poetry chapbook, *Nondescript Other Such*. He regularly posts cartoons and videos to his Instagram page @poetry_hugger.

Natalie Thompson - *Twenty-Nine*

Natalie Thompson will be graduating this spring from RMU’s MBA program. She resides in Indiana, PA with her fiancé and their Australian shepherd.

Girard Tournesol - *When Atheists Pray*

Girard’s work has appeared in past issues of *Rune* and, and he has been widely published nationally and internationally. Most recently his poem “As I Turned I Woke” written in the 2015 aftermath of a citizen murdered by a policeman in Baltimore was the feature poem for *Poets Against Racism-USA*. His work has appeared in *Adelaide Literary Magazine* of New York and Lisbon and both *North/South Appalachia* and *Dark Horse Appalachia*. His nature poetry has been featured in *Tiny Seed*. Closer to home, Girard has been published by Clarion University’s *Tobeco*, Philip Terman’s *Bridge Literary Arts Journal*, *The Indiana Gazette*, and *The Watershed Journal*. For fun, Girard has appeared as a street poet for charity and has been a judge for Poetry Out Loud the last 5 years.

Christine Aikens Wolfe - *Generations* (after Jong Wong's *Tenants*)

Christine Aikens Wolfe published *Garlanding Green* (Dos Madres Press, 2018). Her poems appear in *Gargoyle*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Sonnetto Poesia*, *Rune* and more. Anthologized in *Phoenix Rising from Ashes*, *Fission of Form*, and *Love & Ensuing Madness* (on-line). Her story “Owl & Stag,” published in *The Wild Hunt* (Air & Nothingness Press, 2021). {Christine is a member of the Madwomen in the Attic poetry workshops at Carlow University and is President of Pittsburgh Poetry Society.}

Caitlyn Wood - *Pittsburgh*

Caitlyn is a sophomore psychology major and the VP of Academic Excellence for Sigma Kappa.

*"The artist vocation is to send light
into the human heart" - George Sand*

