

The background of the cover is a photograph of a large, multi-story building with a prominent dome and large glass windows, set against a twilight sky. The building is illuminated from within, and the sky shows a gradient of blue and purple. A semi-transparent blue brushstroke is positioned behind the text "RMU LITERARY MAGAZINE".

RMU LITERARY MAGAZINE

# RUNE

APRIL 2021

Robert Morris University  
Rune 2021

## **ABOUT**

The journal accepts poetry, artwork, photography, creative writing, including short fiction, dramatic writing, and creative non-fiction. Rune accepts submissions from the Robert Morris University community as well as artists and writers from the surrounding Pittsburgh area and beyond.

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# RUNE

Robert Morris University  
Literary Magazine

a collection of  
poetry & prose  
art & photography

RUNE **2021**  
poetry & prose



# Breathe

By Wayne Amtiz

## Breathe

Where the wind stills  
Breathe

Where the skull borders two inward seas  
Breathe

Where the eyes open to the world  
Breathe

Where the lips part  
Breathe

Into the gums, into the teeth roots  
Breathe

Straddling the skull, straddling the ear  
Breathe

Without speaking, speaking her name  
Breathe

Without breath, without breathing  
Breathe

Into the bones where the fingers part  
Breathe

Into the toes where the toes part  
Breathe

Along the length of the arms into the shoulders  
Breathe

Along the length of the legs into the thighs  
Breathe

Vertebrae by vertebrae  
Breathe

Along the length of the spine  
Breathe

With Breath long past, with the body entire  
Breathe

With eyes open with closed eyes open  
Breathe

Breathe your heart out breathe your tears dry  
Breathe

As if nothing else matters  
Breathe

Deep in the marrow trawling the blood  
For one last breath

With the life that's yours  
With all that's past and for all that remains

For all that remain  
Breathe

For breath and breath only  
Breathe

# Mr/Nice

By Keyshawn Address

## Mr/Nice

I let my ambition blind my direction  
Tangle words  
Forming circles

They say  
"Sounds nice"  
And let me be

Speak false claim of progress  
"Sounds nice"  
They let me be

Rejoice in newfound hope for life  
"Sounds nice"  
They let me be

Shaking, I lay with tears down my face  
"Sounds nice"  
They let me be

I grip them by there throats and squeeze  
"Sounds nic..."  
They let me be

I feed them knowledge from the forbidden tree  
"Sounds nice"  
They let me

Behind closed doors they conceal hatred

I take action of my life  
"I think you need to reconsider"  
They refuse my peace.

# The Summit

By Keyshawn Andress

## The Summit

It was a hell of a trip wasn't it?  
I climbed the mountain  
Hurdled the fallen trees  
Escaped ferocious beasts  
Was struck down by God's misery  
To be saved by nature's grace  
I reached heights that men only dream of  
To look down and feel alone

Oh, how many sleepless nights?  
No bed  
No comfort  
Just hard ground  
It was consistent  
It was cold  
Unwelcoming

When we began the end was already in sight  
A voyage  
A journey  
We were all headed to the same place  
Where did we all go wrong?

Now I stand here  
Looking up at heaven's gates  
Do you see me?

So I let go

It was a hell of a trip wasn't it? To think I believed I could enter the garden without the trials of those who passed. Now look where I stand, a man with a hollow shell, an embodiment of the villains I feared as a child. How many years until you realize you fucked up? How many years? How many fucking years? I remember staring up and seeing the summit: it was so far; now look where I stand 13,000 ft above sea level. It was more than a trip: it was a journey, a voyage with no plan of return. The four of us wanted it more than we could breathe, we wanted to feel the power course through our veins. We wanted everything they told us we needed, so we took that step forward. Now look at us, or better yet look at me, a man of no substance. Every day was a trial of its own; the journey up the crooked path was unwelcoming. Every corner greeted with despair, then you wake up one day and you're all alone. To find that you're not just not around the company you desire. Those damn ravaged beasts. They watch you all day, stalking your every move, and you know the whole time. There's nothing you can do but wait and wait. Just stuck waiting in suspense until they decide it's time to strike, and there you stand, looking into the eyes of death, and in that moment there's no thinking, no help, nothing, it's just live or die, eat or be eaten. That's the moment you realize the real extent of your humanity. How barbaric we are and how easy it is to take a life. The only thing you feel in that moment is that pounding in your chest as your heart races. You never know how alive you are before you are about to die. Then it's over; there's no dramatic moment like in the movies when something dies. It's just silence, nothing but silence as blood leaks out and you look down to a lifeless body. You feel nothing; you just sit and watch until eventually you become numb. No longer feeling guilt or loss. Just numb. At first you're scared you lost your humanity. Then you come to realize there was no humanity, just a word we use to separate ourselves from those beasts. Yet, we are the most ferocious beast, aren't we? Viewing our species as superior, we think we play God in this world. To find we are everything but what we believe; resulting in the destruction of our own environment. Just animals who shit where they sleep and sleep where they shit. It's pathetic, our narcissistic behavior; only valuing our own, we forget we are part of the whole. So I decided to climb a mountain with no hope of returning. I wanted to become one with where I am from.

# (Crossing) COVID Lines

By Daniel Bates

## (Crossing) COVID Lines

I wear a hat these days, nothing  
Fancy, just to hide quarantined  
Hair, wavy and gray, curling out  
Like my shaggy junior-high  
Mop of the 1970s, with  
Coordinating leisure suits.

I didn't fit in then, and I feel  
No more fashionable today  
Sniffing silently behind surgical  
Mask and latex gloves, stoic as I  
Shop among zombies shuffling  
Straight ahead, six feet of

Separation, one-way arrows  
Screaming 'wrong way' again  
Defying well-trained aisle habits.  
I smile – or am I just wincing?  
Angry, even, behind a veil of  
Practiced blank stares following

Toilet paper hoarders, possibly  
Doomsday preppers filling  
Carts with Lysol wipes, eggs,  
Quarantine-ground chuck. And  
Soup. Always toilet paper and soup.  
And panty-liners and bread. Oh, and

Land-O-Lakes Cheese suddenly with  
No Native American on the logo –  
Political correctness in a pandemic.  
I'm glad Pop-Tarts aren't  
Prepper pastries. Or the mask  
Might have to come off with the

Distancing as I cross that  
Line in the aisle on my way to  
Another backed-up register.  
Call it a Covid rage, as I  
Breathe in my own exhale. Again.  
Believe me, it's real.

# A Thirst for Justice

By Joan E. Bauer

## A Thirst for Justice

*for Martin Gugino*

A warm June day in Buffalo.  
80 degrees. Mr. Gugino, age 75, takes off  
his helmet as he approaches the police  
at the George Floyd / Black Lives Matter protest  
in Niagara Square.

Maybe he wants them to have a clear view  
of his lined face, his white hair.

He's made some notes:  
*The cops should not have clubs  
and should not be in riot gear.  
The National Guard should arrest the police.*

Veteran activist, Catholic worker, pacifist.  
Four arrests over some years.  
U.S. Capitol, White House twice. No convictions.

Retired IT guy, bachelor, devoted son.  
He's a regular at 'Burning Books' Bookstore.  
His last name from 'cousin' in Southern Italian.

Tall & lanky. Taller than the police.  
Don't tell me they're afraid of him.

*He's a bit frail, friends say. He would never resist.*

He is dressed in blue: jeans, shirt, mask.  
Then shoved to the ground. Then bleeding from his ear.  
Then on the way to the hospital.

As Dorothy Day reminds us:

*We can only lay one brick at a time; we can only  
be responsible for one action in the present moment.*

# Wind

By Victoria Beuchat

## Wind

You played with my hair  
Twisting and turning it into innumerable tangles;  
As my hairbrush yanks your handiwork,  
I watch  
Caramel colored clusters  
Drifting, drifting,  
To the floor  
In the midafternoon glow.

You made the grasses dance  
And tickle my face  
As I laid within your grasp,  
Under the piercing hot sun  
Of a June afternoon.

And when I was shaking,  
My eyes squinting,  
My world spinning,  
It was you who saved me  
You whose very breath  
Encircled me,  
Enticed me,  
Filled me,  
And carried me away to  
Where I was sane,  
To where I felt your  
Cooling embrace  
Was meant for me alone.

And, yet, you leave with the same  
Swiftness in which you come.

And when you are gone  
I am  
Shocked by the  
Ringing in my ears,  
The emptiness in my lungs,  
The stark silence of life,  
That creates a mirage,  
Before my eyes.

I glance at the grass so still  
And tired

The sun beating down and I miss you,  
Your embrace,  
I call to you,

But you never come  
I am collapsing,  
My sea colored eyes burning,  
Please, come  
And save me

You who can make the grass dance,  
You who make the piercing heat of sun  
Feel much less suffocating,  
You who carries me forward and propels me  
Towards some point  
That I trust you know.

Yet you do not come  
Until coldness beats inside my veins  
And grasses no longer dance.  
Now the world is a dead arrangement  
Of lifeless branches  
That try to wave  
In their stiff way.

You bombard with a force that tips me over  
I cannot walk, cannot breathe without remembering  
You.

Cannot think, cannot smell,  
Cannot open my mouth to exhale without  
Thoughts of you, without your presence  
Blustering bluntly upon me.

I know there is no escaping you:  
For no mechanism, no  
Manmade device  
Restrains your force.

My ears are numb forms,  
My face and hands frozen, red,  
And I know it is you,  
In your mirth,

That makes me raw.

I try to hide  
Behind friends  
Whose crackle and light  
Is warmth itself.

Yet you slink into my mind  
Through cracks and windows  
And open doors

Tempting me, reminding me  
Of your power.

I crave you  
And your welcoming embrace,  
Your cool touch  
That saved me.

But your slightest graze now burns me  
With its intensity  
And I know

No matter where I go  
You will always find me  
Never the same,  
But with the same intensity;

The same force  
That trips me, blows me backwards,  
Yet, saves me from burning, melting,  
Collapsing, falling.

The same force that gently twirls my hair  
Will freeze me  
And make it so I cannot catch my breath,  
Cannot feel my very limbs.

Yet I never forget  
Your embrace in the sun  
That held me tight

Always I yearn for you,  
Live because of you,  
Even when you leave,  
Even when your coldness  
Shocks me.

Drifting in and out,  
To and fro,  
Unpredictable.  
Always a part of me. ‘



# Your Best Friend's Legacy

By Brian Carr

## Your Best Friend's Legacy

When your best friend dies you find water green and the grass blue. You want to walk, but you end up crawling. Every honorable person you see on television reminds you of him. Your most prized possession is a hat he gave you for your 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. It hangs high in your basement as a reminder of what used to be. You may say that the clothes of the dead have no future, but I say spend a day in my shoes and then we can talk.

Sometimes you feel your best friend in the silence: nothing moves, no hinges creak, no lights flicker. Just his silence. You were wrong, Stephen Spielberg; death has no special effects. There is no possession, just possessions. To take your mind off the silence you reach for what once was both of your favorite CDs. CDs in horizontal stacks; vertical rows of plastic jewel boxes, songs with melodies, lyrics, choruses, verses, movements. Songs you can't live without. Songs you'll never listen to again. Songs you know by heart. Songs you want to forget. Songs you can't forget. Songs for dinner, for reading, for playing sports. Songs to break the silence. Songs against eternal darkness. You search through all his hockey cards, throwing away the ones of the players he didn't like. Flyers' players cards. Capitals' players cards. Ovechkin cards.

They say everyone has a voice, but you hear silence whenever anyone else talks. But, one day (perhaps), you'll make a deal with the silence. You'll sit in his grandparents' chair and it will only be a chair. Or you could give it away. All of it. Everything. Everything except the pogs. He was forever (or so it seemed) gathering pogs and slammers. He'd return from the store with his coat pockets sagging, doing his best Santa Claus expression. Round pogs, disk-shaped pogs, pogs of all shapes and sizes and colors and textures. Pogs from England, Canada, Atlantic City, New Jersey, Ocean City, Maryland. Pogs and slammers stored in shoe boxes, in plastic bags, in bowls; clusters of pogs distributed around the house like incense to resemble how he was not even a teen when he was taken away from the world. He liked the look of them, the feel of them, rattling in his palm. You could get rid of it all, but not the pogs. You could walk on them, sleep on them, sit on them. Your house would be silent, filled with pogs. You would have solitude. You would not be alone. You would have pogs. Even if the water surrounding you was green and the grass beneath you was blue.

# Night in the Time of Plague

By Jay Carson

## Night in the Time of the Plague

My salty sweat stings like an astringent  
on finger-picked nail quick.  
My mind-hunt for foolish foods  
(the sex of the old) sings  
like an endless mosquito choir.  
Do I have enough meat? Tums?  
Apples? Will she love me at arm's length?

Hope: the last glass of honeyed vinegar  
I drank before bed, a month ago.

In the weak humidifier light,  
I try to meditate,  
on what? God's test?  
My last inhales?

*This breath, excellent breath*  
*This moment, the guru says,*  
*Excellent moment.*

# 3 Wishes

By Corinne Casey

## 3 Wishes

GENIE: Could be male/female. Early 30's. Grants up to 3 wishes. Background is unknown

ALLY: Young girl. Lost and looking for love.

Setting: A beach in San Diego

3 wishes that's all you get. You can't ask for any more.

GENIE

But Genie, my first two wishes were total wastes.

ALLY

This is your last one so you better make it count.

GENIE

ALLY

I have no idea what to do Genie. I want him to fall in love with me. But if I make that my wish how will I ever know if it's true love or if it's just a crazy love spell.

GENIE

Well my dear, that is up to you to decide. People always ask me to grant this wish. It's always ended in a happy ending.

ALLY

But is it real? How will I ever know if it's real?

GENIE

As far as I'm concerned there are two ways to look at this. 1. You either wait around wondering if he'll ever pursue you or 2. You make the wish and spend forever together.

ALLY

I know he's the love of my life but I'm not the love of his.

GENIE

How can you be so sure? You're so young my darling. Why you have your entire life ahead of you. What if you just haven't met your soulmate yet.

ALLY

Look Genie, I don't want anyone else. He's just caught up right now with someone new. He's distracted. But maybe with your guidance and my wish he'll come running back.

GENIE

I can't tell you what to wish for. I only make it happen. I can tell you that everyone has been

happy with their love wishes so far. But I have a strict return policy. No returns or exchanges on wishes whatsoever. The wish can never be undone.

ALLY

I'm ready.

GENIE

Go ahead....

ALLY

Genie, Genie, grant my wish make his love for me forever rich

\*\*\*GENIE SPINS AROUND AND AROUND BRINGING WISH TO LIFE\*\*\*

ALLY

Now what?

GENIE

Well now it's time for you to go find your guy! He'll be madly in love with you the second he lays eyes on you.

ALLY

Take it back! That's not real! I'm freaking out! Take it back!

GENIE

Sorry darling. My returns policy is rather strict.

ALLY

How do I reverse it? I knew I shouldn't have done this

\*\*\* ALLY FALLS TO THE GROUND AND PASSES OUT FOR A FEW SECONDS\*\*\*

GENIE

Ally! Are you okay?!? Wake up! Wake up! It's not that big of a deal. Shouldn't you be rejoicing right now.

\*\*\* ALLY FINALLY STANDS UP\*\*\*\*

ALLY

Genie, what if he never sees me, will he not be able to fall in love?

GENIE

He can fall in love with anyone, be in love with anyone but the moment he sees you it's game over.

ALLY

I regret my wish. I'll have to avoid him forever.

GENIE

I mean at this rate he's been avoiding you it shouldn't be that hard.

ALLY

GENIE!!!

GENIE

I hope that works out for you but I've got to move on to my next customers.

ALLY

You ruined my life and now you're going to walk away?

GENIE

I gave you 3 wishes, You could have really helped a lot of people but your first two were meaningless. You decided to make your last one count and now it's not good enough? Careful what you wish for. I know so many people who would be dying for 3 wishes right now. Goodbye.

\*\*\*GENIE BEGINS TO EXIT STAGE LEFT\*\*\*

ALLY

Genie, wait that's not what I meant!!! I'm sorry, you're right!

\*\*\*GENIE LOOKS BACK AT ALLY\*\*\*

GENIE

Until next time kiddo

\*\*\*GENIE WANDERS OFF UNTIL WE CAN'T SEE HER ANYMORE\*\*\*

END SCENE

# A Friendship

By Sabine Cherenfant

## A Friendship

It starts small:  
A seed planted.  
A candle lit.

A warmth in your heart—  
But still,  
Be on guard.

Hold its hands.  
Walk with it  
Until it finds  
Its own balance.

Moments turn into weeks,  
Months, and even years.  
Then, one day,  
You see the big picture.

Your humanity,  
Bare and simple.

Your dreams worth dreaming.

And the simple words you've said,  
Collected like seashells.

Life tilts sideways.  
Your shield slips into the abyss,  
And still, all they see is you.

# An Unfitting End

By Danielle Connors

## An Unfitting End

I'll tell you a story;  
One with a beginning,  
And a premature end.

He was raging wild.  
I'd like to imagine  
It happened battling pirates,  
Trekking through the desert –  
Even those nights out till 7 AM.

You'd think it was his wild  
That did him in.  
But there were also those moments –  
Those quiet in-betweens.  
"I want to help people," he said.  
"You did," I wish I'd said.

Out of all his adventures  
Crashing on friends' couches,  
Dancing on that stage,  
Out at a club,  
Or travelling to a faraway country.  
I would have preferred any one  
Over the way it was.

So show me a fitting end.  
Because spoiler alert:  
He dies – Minus the adventure.  
And it was nothing more than a loose tire.

\

# He Meant

By Danielle Connors

## He Meant

When he told me I read too much, he meant “I don’t want you to miss the world around you.”

When he yelled at me for swimming in the deep end, he meant “What if you can’t swim and I’m not here to help you.”

When he chastised me for going outside without a coat on, he meant “You could get sick from the cold.”

When I got my driver’s license, and he was quiet, he meant “You won’t need me to pick you up from school anymore.”

When he asked me not to go out by myself, he meant “There are people out there who could hurt you.”

When he told me I should stay home, he meant “The roads are slick. It’s safer if you wait till tomorrow.”

When he said that I didn’t practice the piano enough, he meant “I want you to succeed at everything you try.”

When he told me he wouldn’t always be there to watch out for me, he meant “I love you. What would I do if anything happened to you?”

The worry and the warnings – I know what they meant now.



# Questions

By Monique Davis

## Questions

### QUESTIONS

Can I take you on a journey? Will you be mad if you end up where you started? Progress is beautiful, but not everyone is so lucky to concern themselves with it. Some hold the burden of concerning themselves with survival. Reflect on your situation. Are you concerned with survival or progression? If your answer is progression, be humble.

### QUESTIONS

Can we secretly conform to society for a minute? Can I appreciate your experience and mine? Will I still be the same human being that my consciousness tells me I am? What if I acknowledge the popular sentimentality? Should I make my normality secret? Is it too cliché if I try to reinvent philosophical grandeur? What if I ask for your help but then I deny your help? How dare you. How dare me.

### QUESTIONS

The audacity...How can I enjoy existing when so many people's existence is bleak. Existence makes no sense. I feel too much, and it hurts. I feel too little, and I cringe at my empathetic deficit. Destiny has written itself, and it says that we will exist as a futile subsistence.

# The First Snowfall

By Shaheen Dil

## The First Snowfall

The dogs are wild with joy,  
they make dog-angels on the white lawn,  
drag branches heavy with wet fall to the ground.

My boots are too short for these drifts.  
I throw two red balls to the happy pups,  
but this Holiday postcard is not for me.

Dress me in summer, and a hard breeze,  
heat crackling through shimmering muslin,  
glistening under a torpid sun.

Give me a monsoon rain,  
artillery pounding drops,  
water hanging like sheets, persistent.

Take me to a winter wind, dusty and dry,  
a Harmattan blowing  
these silver drifts to smithereens.

# Orpheus, You Impatient Bastard

By Jonah Hoy

## Orpheus, You Impatient Bastard

Orpheus, you beautiful and bountiful oaf  
your talent and skills are unmatched.  
Yet, you chase this girl's lost soul?

Hades the king of Hell grants you a one time chance  
to take your love and walk away.  
You did what most only try and fail, time and time again.  
You cheated death,  
and won.

It had three of a kind and you laid down a full house,  
paradise was fingertips away.  
Then you just had to fuck everything up, didn't you?

You turned your head,  
you turned your fucking head  
and like clockwork,  
at the snap of a finger,

the drop of a hat,  
Without hesitation,

Poof.

Just like that,  
it's all over.  
You had death right by the balls  
quivering with fear  
nothing but seconds to spare.

It's over?

Everyone blames Orpheus for fucking up.

Moral of the story?  
Orpheus ruined it, didn't he?

No.

Hades knew right from the start.  
No matter how much he begged,  
no matter how loud he cried,

and how sweet the sound,  
his fate was sealed.

Orpheus's only crime was being an impatient dipshit  
for not facing the facts.  
Being too stubborn,  
too young  
and too narrow minded.

Whether you believe in an afterlife or not  
what's dead is dead.  
Take it from the pretty boy flute player,

Cry,  
Suck it up  
And get over it.

Or It'll make it that much harder to move on, trust me.

# Boy With a Ball

By Carolyn J. Fairweather Hughes

## Boy With a Ball

The little boy with a ball stood  
on the very edge of his driveway  
and watched four other little boys playing  
with their father across the street.  
He did not call to them  
or cross the street.  
He did not bounce the ball  
the way small boys  
with a ball in their hands do.  
He just watched and watched and watched.  
They did not look at him or call  
him to come over.  
They just played and played and played  
together with their dad.  
After a long time, the boy with  
the ball quietly turned  
and walked back up the driveway  
to his house.

# Monsters

By Peyton Jackson

## Monsters

When I was young,  
I believed in monsters.  
They hid in my closet  
And under my bed.  
But when I met you,  
I realized monsters  
Aren't fiction at all  
And they don't even bother to hide.

# Natural

By Kiley King

## Natural

Is in my mind not  
A scenery of nature  
Expressed in haiku?

Do we not explain  
The shifts and changes of mood  
With natural states?

As my sadness grows,  
Cold, pelting rain on the mind.  
Oh, my weeping tears

And I could have rage  
My inferno a rival  
Of the burning sun

Now think of hunger  
It is also a fire  
A slow growing pain

The guilt of my heart  
Runs like a babbling brook  
And it knows no end

Jealousy and greed  
Are they not unyielding vines?  
A loveless bondage?

But see, I do think  
The most beautiful of moods  
Is the ripe fruit joy

A bite through her skin  
My vivid ego; full bloom  
Bright, mischievous

Wind blowing through leaves  
My cherry blossom laughter  
I see and breathe joy

Pattering rain drops  
Match the drum of my heart beat  
And I am at peace

A soft glowing flame  
Atop an Earth-birtherd wax stick  
It, too, is my joy

Within my nature  
My mother's nature and  
Our Mother Nature

There seems to exist  
Moods in a capacity  
To speak through haikus

# How to Weigh Yourself

By Mary Soon Lee

## How to Weigh Yourself

Not on the bathroom scales,  
not in ounces nor in grams.

Consider your protons,  
so small yet positive.

Consider how you outweigh  
each constituent proton

by more than ten thousand  
trillion trillion times.

Consider how the Milky Way  
in his turn outweighs you

by more than ten thousand  
trillion trillion trillion times.

Between those two extremes,  
consider yourself, your works.

Consider the breadth of time:  
billions of years elapsed,

billions left before the Sun  
burns out. All things end.

Yet every act, every decision  
inscribed immutably in spacetime.

No kindness too small to mark.  
Reach out to those nearby.

# Love and Fear

By Grace McClain

## Love and Fear

What I love about night is that there are not a lot of cars.

What I fear about cars is they can hit me.

What I love about me is that I am motivated like a lion after prey.

What I fear about a lion is that it can break into my house.

What I love about a house is that I have a safe place to sleep.

What I fear about sleep is what I might dream.

What I love about dream is I can go hiking on a cool autumn day.

What I fear about the day is the unexpected.



# The Invisibility of the Damned Thing

By Randy Minnich

## The Invisibility of the Damned Thing

If it were only blue, or even  
beige, something we could see  
without a microscope. A sign  
that screams *Achtung!* The germ!

Not this horror movie garrote gas  
that seeps unseen between us:  
a smiling face might morph to skull,  
the friendly handshake not let go,  
grip ever tighter, drag me gasping down.

It has me gloved and masked, skulking  
down the produce aisle. Peering  
nervously around the corners. Grim  
and anxious with the checkout girl.  
Obsessive with the Handi-Wipes.

It separates. It isolates. The body counts  
creep closer. Yesterday  
five thousand. Today it's ten, yet  
nothing to be seen but sunshine  
in the park and children laughing.

# Portrait of You

By Antoine Mosley

## Portrait of You

They're images of you still in my head  
But with it, are all the things that I said  
And although, there's no apologies for the things that I did  
I'd like to think, this is more than "it is what it is"  
All the places you'll go and the people you'll meet  
I hope not a single one, reminds you of me  
I know you'll feel shackled and can never be free  
But there are pieces around you, that'll create a beautiful peace  
I know you hate these images, all things that I drew  
But this final image, shall be a portrait of you  
May it remind you of sunshine and better days  
Fields full of lilies enlightened by the sun's rays  
The dreams you told me about, the things that you love  
All that you wanted, but could never be us  
Maybe I should give an explanation, at least something to hold  
Sometimes my words do lie, but my heart is of gold  
I told you some things, and all of them you believed  
But my greatest image, was that of deceit  
You hated my images, for they took me from you  
Gone and broke with nothing to lose  
Yes, there was an obsession, the thing I regret  
But now I'll lose my greatest, the one I thought best  
I hope you'll move on, and find someone better than me  
Because my love for you, my most sacred theme

# The Absence of Color

By Sydney Nelson

## The Absence of Color

She wears a long white dress, hand-stitched with white lace flowers. Her brown hair, streaked with gold and woven with white roses curls elegantly and cascades like a waterfall down her back. A veil covers her face. White heels tap softly down the wood floor of the aisle and echo through the otherwise space as she walks down the center of the old church. Oak pews sit empty. The woman reaches the man who stands alone at the altar. He reaches for the veil and raises it slowly, smiling, eyes brimming with happy tears poised to spill down his cheeks. When he lifts the sheer curtain of white fabric from her face, there is no smile, there are no tears. There is nothing but inky black emptiness, and the man jolts awake to a room as dark as the void under the veil. There was no one there, and there is no one here. And there is nothing at all, not here, not there, nothing at all anymore because the woman is asleep, enclosed in sturdy oak walls, six feet under a slab of carved white granite.

# Parenting

By John Parks

A mother and father standing side by side  
The mother is loud and affectionate while the father hides  
The mother is looking out for your heart  
While your father your head  
Being hard does not mean they don't love you  
So quit thinking that laying in bed  
Though their actions are very different  
They are striving for the same goal  
Nobody said these acts were magnificent  
They just want to help you take control

# The Burning Yearn

By Judith R. Robinson

## The Burning Yearn

to be the singular self  
not another identical  
clam shell or duck that walks, talks,  
and is a duck, no hardworking worker ant,  
sly city mouse, or other pretty face;  
not cow in a herd nor drop in an ocean trough:  
Bonnie Lynn,  
holy, whole, single, separate,  
gazing at the blooming moon  
with unpuzzled eyes,  
guarding memories  
of other summer moons,  
a thrilling bike race won,  
fireflies and a porch swing,  
brother Dan and cousin Ann,  
Teddy next door yet so far away,  
Uncle Al, in from Buffalo,  
his big bald sweating head,  
his happiness cooling off  
in the family's plastic pool,  
those many summers ago.

# Insurrection

By Mike Schneider

## Insurrection

I feel an insurrection coming on.  
Wait. Maybe it's indigestion. I feel  
a storming & takeover of the system,  
a bad smell, a swarm of something  
coming up. Maybe it's a passing  
problem — like a kidney stone,  
a messing with my constitution,  
a gastrointestinal parade of red hats  
& billowing flags, as if 76 trombones  
cut loose & bellow from deep down  
darkness. It feels shamanic, but maybe  
it's just a big nothing, *un gros rien*,  
as my friend likes to say — a mighty  
wind, divine afflatus, as Whitman put it,  
when he found words for his gassy  
insurrection. Pardon me, he'd say  
& go on. Plenty of that goes around,  
not divine, but afflatus? — definitely.  
You have to take it seriously, a warning  
sign for affliction. Maybe it's time  
for a colonoscopy. You might find  
a boink in the apparatus, a hairball  
in the drain pipe of the body politic,  
a nightmare groan of insurrection.

# The Children Remind Us

By Micah Josiah Thompson

## The Children Remind Us

The children remind us  
that life is a gift  
to unwrap at dawn;  
ripping up the covers  
we lie beneath.

We wake to sleep;  
they wake to rise —  
as the true suns  
and dawns  
they are.

In our haze,  
we struggle to see  
the approaching light;  
the shadows before us  
disguise the day.

But the children remind us  
that time gives  
like the present;  
and the day lends  
more than enough,  
if we let it.

# Uncorked

By Natalie Thompson

## Uncorked

Just you and me  
In quarantine  
Pandemic pals  
On evening prowls

Swipe left, swipe right  
Another meaningless plight  
Dating is dead  
Like victims of the virus

Never mind  
You look desirous  
Smooth on my lips  
Warm on my tongue

Can I give you  
Just one kiss?

I wrap my hands  
Around your neck  
And pour until  
There's nothing left

My Pinot Noir, my Chardonnay  
My Sauvignon Blanc, and Cabernet  
I love you all  
Just the same  
For keeping my sober  
Thoughts at bay

My confidant  
My friend, my boo  
I owe this pleasure  
All to you



# Last Supper

By Girard Tournesol

## Last Supper

We prepped for the end breaking  
bread at a café where street lamps  
bowed to the moon Spoke softly of  
the plague like pockets full of posies  
Went home to nude linens swaying  
like limbs in the wind Loved one another  
until we lived again in the dawn chorus  
scents of musk and aromatic coffee  
dripping the end all over again

# The Mystical Theater

By Brenna Wandel

## The Mystical Theater

"Something I can help you find, dear?"

A short, plump woman ambled to the front of the circulation desk. Her gray curls were pinned back on the right side with a turquoise-lined gemstone clip, and she wore a coral stone on her pointer finger. These were the only pops of color to her otherwise all-black attire.

"Not unless you keep novels here," I mumbled, "but it's a University library, so I'm guessing you don't."

She tilted her head to the side as she eyed me curiously. "Well which novel are you looking for?"

I was starting to feel silly being here, but then I thought back to the dream I had last night of my dad silently setting a book down before walking away. This was the third night in a row that he showed up in my dreams, and I was getting frustrated that he wouldn't say anything to me.

I shook my head. *Why in the world would I think a book in a dream had anything to do with a message my dad was trying to send me from beyond the grave?*

"Dear?" The woman's eyes were still on me.

"It's... I don't even think it's a real book. I'm gonna go, but thank you." I turned to leave but then thought *why not just ask? Daddy always taught me to ask questions, to investigate. That's one thing I do remember about him.*

"Well actually..." I began as she started to make her way back behind the desk. "I'm wondering if you've ever heard of a book called *M is for Mystical*. I know it sounds like one of those Sue Grafton novels, but I couldn't find anything about it online."

The woman hesitated before slowly turning to face me. There it was again: the head tilt, the curious look on her face. This time, though, her eyes sparkled.

"In fact, my dear, I have."

I could feel my expression change from one of indifference to one of utter astonishment. "You have?"

"Mhmm" she responded, slowly nodding her head. She still eyed me in a way that made me feel like a spectacle.

"What's your name, dear?"

"Maddie. Maddie Zurago."

Her eyebrows raised slightly at my response. She nodded her head slowly. "Okay Maddie Zurago, follow me."

While her movement was slow, she now walked with purpose. She led me around the stacks, through two separate hallways, and down a set of steep concrete steps to what felt like the library dungeon. She stopped at the bottom of the stairs and pointed to a darkened hall. "Go that way. Once you get to the maroon door, knock twice, and then say the name of the book you're looking for."

She trudged back up the stairs and disappeared.

*Knock twice and say the name of the book? What is this, a secret society for Sue Grafton sympathizers?*

I shook my head at the woman's directions. *Well I'm here now, so I might as well knock.*

I walked down the long hallway and found the maroon door. I knocked twice.

A young brunette who was sitting a few yards away glanced up from her book with feigned interest. "You know they make stud finders, right? And anyway, we're not allowed to nail anything to walls on campus."

Clearly my puzzled expression and furrowed eyebrows were not enough to encourage further explanation as she dropped her head back down and continued reading. *I'm knocking on a door, not a wall.*

I looked again at the door and then back down to the brunette without saying anything.

"Go ahead," I heard a muffled voice call from behind the door.

"*M is for Mystical*," I responded, my attention again drawn to the maroon paint.

The girl looked up at me again, this time making it clear that I was bothering her. She rolled her eyes, and then proceeded to read the text in her lap.

The maroon door cracked open an inch, and a set of eyes surveyed me. The door then widened just enough for me to squeeze through. Once on the other side, my surroundings took me by surprise.

"Right this way," said a portly man in a red and yellow usher uniform. He gestured with his left hand.

I looked at him amusedly as I glanced around what appeared to be a vintage movie theater.

"There's a theater in the basement of the University library?" I asked him.

"Mmmm," he breathed noncommittally, his eyes looking straight ahead.

"I'm here for a book. *M is for Mystical*? Have you heard of it?"

He smiled at me and gestured towards Theater 3. "You'll find everything you're looking for if you head in there, miss."

The theater was empty, and the screen was dark. As I made my way to a middle seat about ten rows back, the lights dimmed, and the screen began to flicker. The gray and black countdown started from five as the circle around each number faded in a clockwise rotation.

"Go ahead, Sweetie. Go grab *Sorry!* and set it up. We'll play in a few minutes."

An odd sensation came over me. My throat tightened and my arms felt tingly. A tear threatened to spring as my face became increasingly warm. *That voice.*

"Okay, Daddy!" a seven- year-old me exclaimed before thundering up the stairs to the game closet. I was dressed in my favorite yellow striped shirt and a pair of blue jean overalls.

By the time I watched myself run back down the stairs, game in hand, I could hear that same recognizable voice speaking in a hushed tone.

"I know you didn't want me to pick up another shift this weekend, honey, but it's overtime. I'll be getting paid really well to be there, and soon enough, we'll have the house paid off."

"But Randy, you work three to eleven nearly every weekday evening. Maddie hardly gets to see you as it is, and now on one of the *two* days she *can* spend time with you this weekend, you won't be home," Mom pleaded.

"I'll make it up to her. I'll take her on a daddy-daughter date later this month," he promised.

Mom sighed. "I appreciate you working so hard to provide for us, but sometimes I worry that Maddie will feel gyped. You were home a lot more when the other girls were younger. I just don't want her to feel like she's not important to you. Not to mention that I miss seeing you, too."

"She'll get it one day. She'll understand that I'm putting in these long days so that you can stay home with her. So that you can help her with homework and drive her to and from basketball practice every night and so we can buy her new school clothes and anything else she needs. When I'm home, we spend time together. We have our game days. I know she looks forward to those," he assured Mom.

Little me continued setting up the game as they talked, oblivious of their conversation.

"I know. You're right, she does love playing games with you. I just don't want her to look back one day and feel like you weren't ever around."

Tears threatened to spill as I looked around the theater confusedly. *Where did this film come from? Who's playing this? How did anyone know that I was going to be here?* My attention was redirected when I heard his voice again.

"Alright Sweetie, you ready? I'm guessing that you'll be yellow again? I'm gonna be green," Dad sang as he plopped down on the couch across from me.

Long-forgotten memories played out before my eyes. I relived days filled with games, daddy-daughter dates, birthday parties, basketball games, and normal, run-of-the-mill things, and they all made me miss my dad even more. Seeing his face, though, and hearing his voice soothed some of the pain and grief I had been feeling.

*But what is he trying to tell me?*

As grateful as I was for these memories, my mind couldn't help but turn this question over and over. And with it, I began to wonder what exactly this theater was and how it worked.

*Is this even real?* I pinched myself and immediately felt like the disbelieving, skeptical girl in every movie and television show I've seen. A brief stab of pain shot through my arm as I watched a tiny section of my skin turn red.

Looking around the theater, I tried to pick out anything that looked out of place or impractical. I wanted to point to something and say, "Aha! Well *that* couldn't possibly be real," but nothing caught my attention.

I stood to leave, and my foot tripped over something I hadn't noticed before. I picked up the forest green leatherbound book titled *M is for Mystical* and noticed a slip of paper sticking out from the top. My eyes widened.

No way I thought as I slowly opened the book.

# Shade of Blue

By Rachel Ward

## Shade of Blue

I thought I'd feel blue,  
 After you.  
 The sad part is,  
 In the back of my brain I always knew there would be an end,  
 To the security of having someone to go home from the bar with,  
 To the comfort of falling asleep to your soft snores and waking up to my drool dried on your chest,  
 And luxury of having someone to share my deepest darkest thoughts with  
 That is if you were listening.  
 I always hoped there'd be an end,  
 To the petty arguments  
 stemming from the insecurities that distorted your view.  
 In between passion and pleasure there was a hidden pain  
 A hurt that you projected onto me.  
 You dug daggers deep within my soul that left scars that will never heal.  
 I thought I'd feel blue,  
 After you  
 But I feel free.  
 Free from the hold you had on me  
 Free from the anxiety you added to my existing daily dose  
 I feel thankful more than ever  
 That I had the strength to break away from the control of a man who hurt me more than he helped me.  
 I thought I'd feel blue,  
 After you  
 But I feel angry with myself for staying as long as I did  
 I was blinded by what presented as mystery and turned out to be misery.  
 I took comfort in the protection your broad figure and strong build provided,  
 I admired the quiet confidence you radiated, as you roped me in and brainwashed me to believe  
 that you had my best interest at heart,  
 When were always your number one priority.  
 I thought I'd be blue,  
 After you  
 But I found myself on my knees, praying for your heart to be healed and for the distance between  
 us to be kept  
 Because I spent the last three years catering to a person who dimmed down my personality and  
 disregarded my dreams  
 It took me awhile,  
 but I finally mustered up enough self respect to prioritize my wants and needs  
 I thought I'd be blue,  
 After you  
 But if found a profound sense of purpose in your absence.

# Masks

By John Werthman

## Masks

My name is COVID, and I am unstoppable. Compare me to the CSX #8888 runaway train, also known as the Crazy Eights. It was an incident that inspired an action thriller movie in 2010. Two tanker cars in that train were filled with thousands of gallons of Phenol, a chemical compound that can bring on severe respiratory distress when inhaled. That story ended on a positive note. A railroad crew caught the runaway and coupled to the rear, stopping the train.

This story is more than equal to that incident and may not have a happy ending. My virus is like Phenol, and it can infiltrate the lungs and potentially kill. There is no heroic train engineer nor track switches to throw that would alter my course. I have nurtured the 2020 Corona Virus to the best of my meager ability and utilized the animal kingdom again to come up with the best formula.

Man has sought ingenious methods to counter my attack. His approach has included herd immunity, rapid testing, and social distancing. He has employed the medical field to pursue a vaccine, but the topic bantered about the most has been the use of masks. I love it. The more the issue is discussed and argued, the fewer people want to wear them. I couldn't ask for a better diversion.

People resist and say they should have the freedom to choose whether or not to wear a mask. They have rights guaranteed by their constitution. I welcome that strategy. The longer I stay around, people will grow weary, and mask use will diminish.

Masks are not new. Man has used them for thousands of years during ceremonies, and he has unearthed archaeological evidence at burial sites and found murals depicting them. Wearers of these shrouds have always thought the device would ward off evil spirits.

I'm no evil spirit. I'm real. My virus today has brought on a new legion of mask wearers. I am confident people never envisioned that anyone could walk into a bank today wearing a mask, but that is the path mandated. I love to see that the worldwide medical field advice has been stretched like a rubber band before breaking.

Humans do not like to be told what they can or cannot do. I guess it's not in their genetic make-up. Are they doubting science and becoming submissive to me.? Keep debating, people. The talk is cheap. Their actions or inaction speak louder than words.

# When Did the Adventure Begin?

By Christine Aikens Wolfe

## When Did the Adventure Begin?

Perhaps at the lake, the shining lake  
whose granite underbelly reflects brightness  
and dazzle to the surface.  
We take hands, step into the light

or the day we slip out of bed early  
in our Nova Scotia Bnb  
walk in predawn darkness  
(as our host told us)

to a knoll some 1000 feet down the road.  
We face east  
    red/pink      the sun leaps  
like a single eye  
over the horizon.

Lately, when I lie moody & morose  
no travel plans in any remote future

you slide to my side  
your hot belly  
against my cool back

you reach your arm around  
to enclose –

# Rings

## By Luke Yost

### Rings

The armies are quiet,  
 Too nervous to talk.  
 One foot on the field of battle,  
 Then the other.  
 Adrenaline shoots through the veins.  
 It's go time.

Cool and calm on the outside,  
 A line of poker faces,  
 Deadpan.  
 But it's just a mask.  
 Because Deep down they are wound tight,  
 So tight that if they were touched,  
 They'd snap.

The drums start thumping,  
 In rhythm with the heart.  
 The armies face each other.  
 Most are still wearing their masks.  
 Some now have half confident smiles.

Both sides know the rules of engagement.  
 There will be no killing,  
 No prisoners of war.  
 But there will be violence,  
 Strategy and maybe blood.

The only certainty is that there will be pain.  
 Pain for both the victors, but even more for the losers.  
 For they carry the pain of being not good enough

Cynics just looking in will always question the reasoning  
 Call it childish  
 And will never support.

Maybe they have a point.  
 Because at the end of the day,  
 These are just men playing for rings.

# Desiderium

By John Zedolik

## Desiderium

Wouldn't the white  
of winter's fresh-fallen  
snow be the preferred coat

if we could remain in its  
innocence, immaculate grasp,  
untouched by the responsibility

to get and do instead  
of stay and watch the cover  
of imagined clean cotton

erase the sins and scars  
of memory and earth as it falls  
and sits heavily like a new age

of ablution and pristine chance  
—that we must strip as soon  
as we are able with our scoops

and mechanized scythes—for we  
may only dream upon these clouds  
for an idyll under measured time

by a clock desired to be ignored,  
muffled beneath our sugared minds  
but ticking, carving true cuts, nevertheless



# RUNE 2021

art & photography

## “PUFFIN BIRD”

Jordan Conner



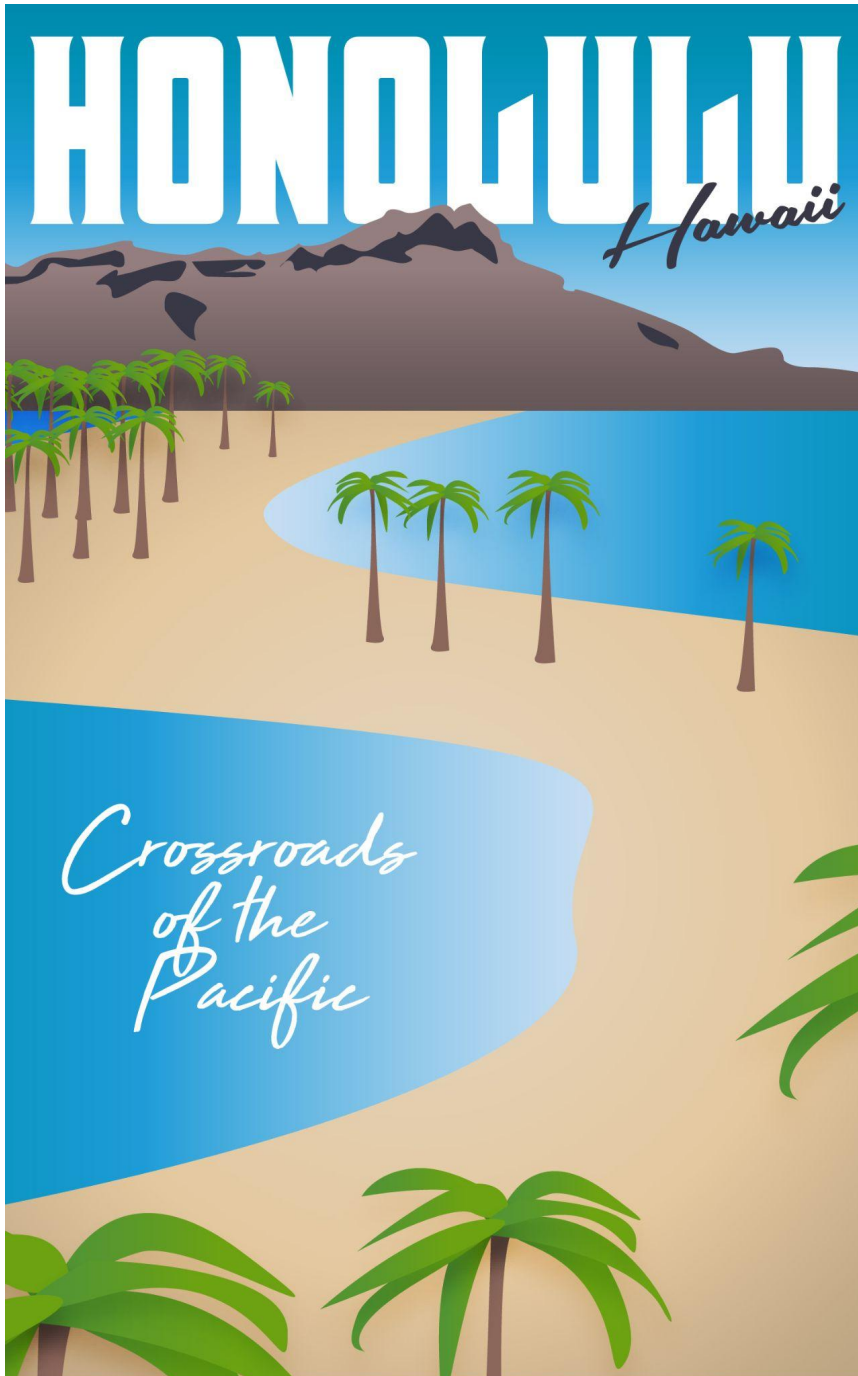
# THE BLANKET

Nick Romeo



# “HONOLULU HAWAII POSTER”

Ryan Hickey





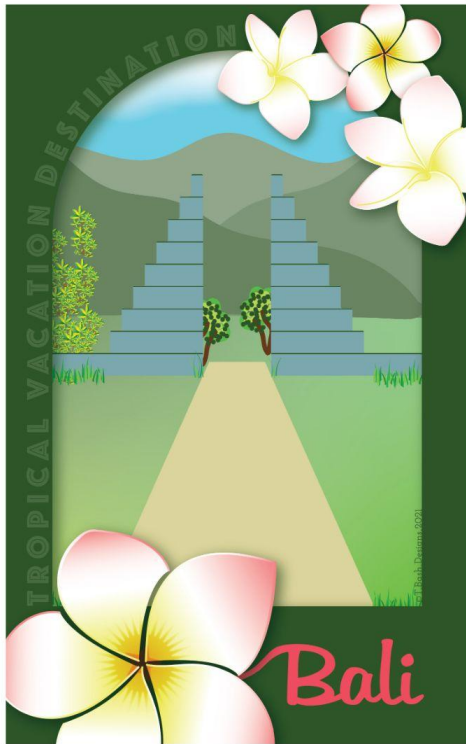
# **“SICILY POSTER”**

Nico Scalise



# “BALI, HAWAII, & CANCUN POSTER”

Patricia Bash



# “ARIZONA POSTER”

Hannah Kerber



# “NEON PITT POSTER”

Harrison Klehm

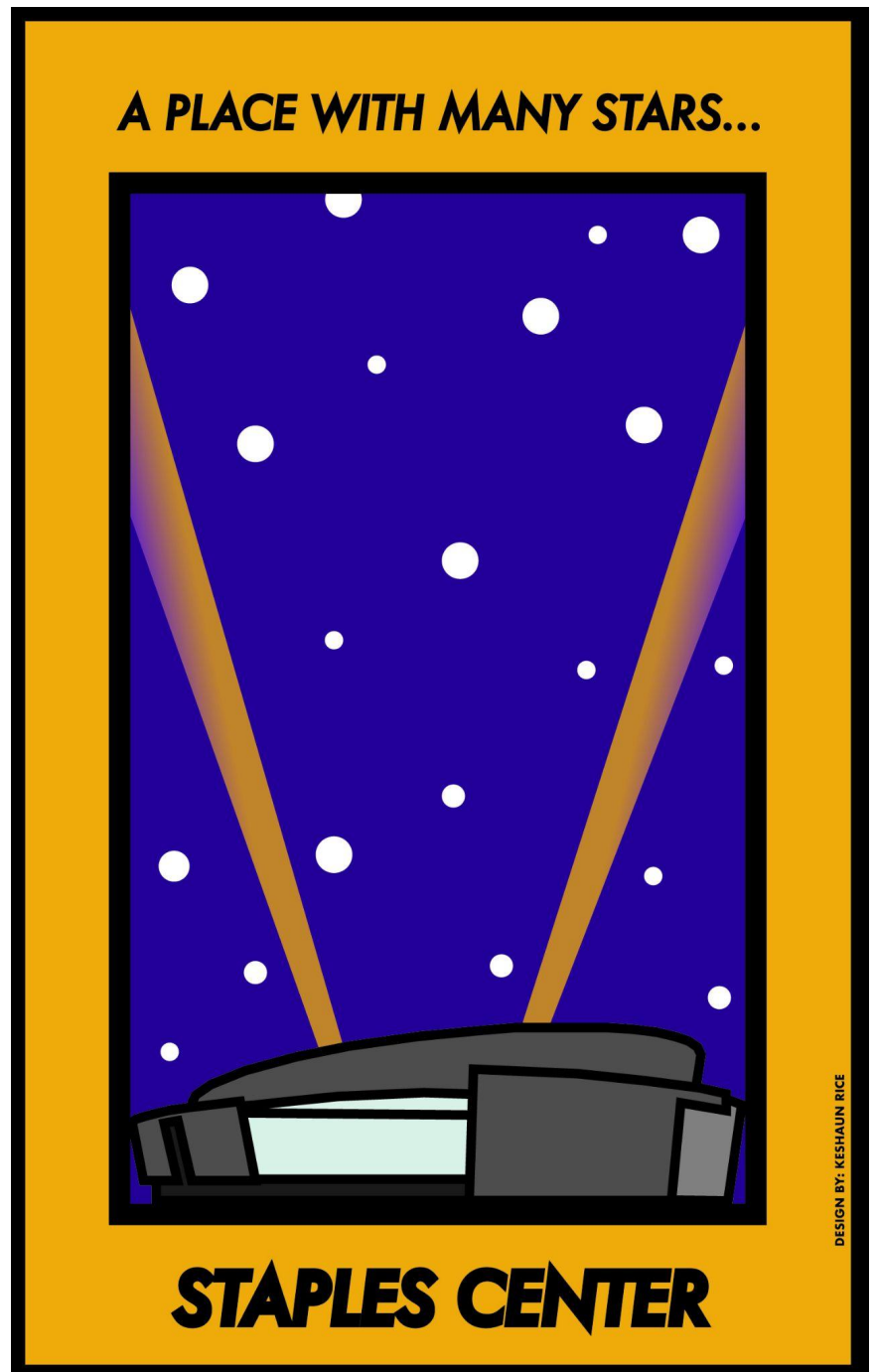


Harrison Klehm



# **“STAPLES CENTER POSTER”**

Keshaun Rice



# 3 CONNECTING STARS

Emma Crites



# “LITTLETON NEW HAMPSHIRE POSTER”

T.J. Vercek





# DON'T BE SO ANXIOUS

Antoine Mosley





# **“TREE”**

Renee Augustine



RUNE  
**2021**  
biographies

rune 2021

**RUNE 2021**

# Biographies

## Wayne Amtzis

Though Wayne Amtzis lived most of my adult life in the Himalayas, since his 70th year he's lived in Pittsburgh. His work includes: *City on his back: poems and photos from the streets of Kathmandu*, *Sandcastle City/Quicksand Nation*, and four works of translation from Nepali and Nepal Bhasa.

## Keyshawn Andress

Keyshawn Andress is from West Mifflin, Pennsylvania and is currently an integrated masters student at Robert Morris University studying accounting and taxation. Post-graduation he plans on pursuing a PhD within the field of business.

## Renee Augustine

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.

## Patricia Bash

Trish is a senior who is planning to graduate at the end of the Fall 2021 semester. She is a wife, mother, full-time graphic designer, and part-time student.

## Daniel Bates

Daniel Bates is a Pittsburgh-based poet, writer, and artist who attempts to provoke as he imagines and captures life's layered underside as art...and often from his Harley.

## Joan E. Bauer

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). Her poems have been published widely and three have

been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. For some years, she worked as a teacher and counselor and now lives mostly in Pittsburgh, PA where she co-hosts and curates the Hemingway's Summer Poetry Series with Kristofer Collins. She can be found on Twitter @Joan\_E\_Bauer.

## **Victoria Beuchat**

Victoria Beuchat is a sophomore Business Management student, and she enjoys reading in her free time.

## **Nicole Brautigam**

Nicole Brautigam is currently a junior at RMU and is majoring in Early Childhood and Special Education. Nicole always had a love for being outside, taking pictures, reading, writing, drawing, and painting! As a future teacher, Nicole is always finding more ways to be creative!

## **Brian Carr**

Brian Carr is a senior English major at Robert Morris University. Brian is originally from Imperial, Pennsylvania, but now resides in Moon Township. Brian is a transfer student from Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) and intends to have an internship set up in the next few months so he can get started with his future career.

## **Jay Carson**

Jay Carson holds a doctorate in rhetoric from Carnegie-Mellon University. He 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 in local and national journals, magazines, and collections. He is also the author of *Irish Coffee* (Coal Hill Press) and *The Cinnamon of Desire* (Main Street Rag). Jay considers his poetry Appalachian, accessible, the ongoing problem-solving of a turbulent youth, and just what you might need.

## **Corinne Casey**

Corinne is a Communication student at Robert Morris University. She graduated in December of 2020 and is looking forward to using the writing techniques she's learned at Robert Morris University in her career.

## **Sabine Cherenfant**

Sabine Cherenfant is a Robert Morris University Alumna. Sabine currently works as a compiling editor for Greenhaven Publishing. Sabine's work has previously appeared in *Rune*, *The Collegiate Scholar*, *Thoughts on Journalism*, and *Quartz*.



## Jordan Conner

Jordan Conner was born and raised in The South Hills of Pittsburgh. Jordan discovered a passion for photography at a young age and has continued to work on their craft. Jordan looks forward to graduating this year with a degree in Business Administration.

## Danielle Connors

Danielle Connors is studying at Robert Morris University. She is a junior year English major with a history minor. She is president of the English Honor Society Sigma Tau Delta and is an officer of the Italian club on campus. Danielle is also an editor of *Rune*.

## Emma Crites

Emma Crites is an Interaction Design major, and plans on graduating in 2023. After college she plans on working for Disney, Blizzard Entertainment, or Respawn Games. Emma's favorite hobbies include streaming and watching movies and tv shows. If you want to see more of her work you can follow her Instagram @ta.today.

## Monique Davis

Monique Davis is a mid-career professional working in the behavioral health/criminal justice field. She is the clinical supervisor of a drug and alcohol outpatient clinic and is enrolled in RMU's PhD Instructional management and Leadership program. She utilizes poetry as a mean of exploration and expression.

## Shaheen Dil

Shaheen Dil was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh and has led a peripatetic life. She has spent time in many parts of the United States and traveled throughout the world. Shaheen has worked in both Academia and Business, but poetry has always been her avocation. She currently resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Manhattan, New York. She is a member of the Pittsburgh Poetry Exchange Workshop. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals, including, among others, *The Critical Quarterly*, *Four Quarters*, *The Journal of South Asian Literature*, *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*, and *Golden Streetcar*. Her work has appeared in two anthologies: *Poetry Chain: An Anthology of New Verse* and *Waiting for you to Speak*. Shaheen's first book of Poetry, *Acts of Deference*, was published recently by Fakel Publishing House in Sofia, Bulgaria.

## Ryan Hickey

Ryan Hickey is a 19-year-old sophomore at Robert Morris University studying Media Arts with a concentration in Graphic Design.

## Jonah Hoy

Jonah Hoy is the managing editor of *Rune* and is a senior history major who is also head editor of RMU Sentry Media's A/E department.

## Carolyn J. Fairweather Hughes

Carolyn J. Fairweather Hughes has appeared in the anthologies: *For She is the Tree of Life, Pittsburgh and Tri-State Area Poets*, *Pennsylvania Seasons*, and *When I Am an Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple*. Her chapbook *Enough*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2019. She resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with her husband Richard.

## Peyton Jackson

Peyton Jackson is a sophomore at Robert Morris University studying English. She enjoys reading literature of all sorts in her free time and hopes to be a book publisher in the future.

## Hannah Kerber

Hannah Kerber (class of 2021) is a Graphic Design student who loves traveling, writing, and being outside in nature.

## Kiley King

Kiley King is a Statistics and Data Science major at RMU with a minor in Data Analytics and Mathematics. Though her passion resides in numbers, she loves to sit down and write in her free time as a way to decompress.

## Harrison Klehm

Harrison Klehm (Class of 2022) is a Graphic Design student who loves to illustrate fantasy settings and creatures, delving into the world of illustrated storytelling.

## Mary Soon Lee

Mary Soon Lee was born and raised in London, but has lived in Pittsburgh for over twenty years. Her two latest books are from opposite ends of the poetry spectrum: *Elemental Haiku*, containing haiku for each element of the periodic table (Ten Speed Press, 2019) and *The Sign of the Dragon*, an epic fantasy with Chinese elements (JABberwocky Literary Agency, 2020). After twenty-five years, her website has finally been updated: [marysoonlee.com](http://marysoonlee.com).

## **Grace McClain**

Grace McClain is a sophomore at Robert Morris University majoring in English Secondary Education. She is a member of Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education.

## **Randy Minnich**

Randy Minnich is a retired chemistry professor and researcher. He's now reading, writing, and daydreaming of the defeat of the virus so he can be more active and see the grandchildren. 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.

## **Antoine Mosley**

Antoine Mosley is an accounting major at Robert Morris University and has always liked to write on the side.

## **Sydney Nelson**

Sydney Nelson is a senior psychology major at Robert Morris University. Though most of her work consists of writing academic papers, she enjoys the creative outlet of writing fiction. She also loves making music and spending time with her dog, Tank.

## **John Parks**

John Parks is a son, brother, and boyfriend. His first passion was ice hockey as he participated in an above average level. His mind is always going 100 miles an hour just thinking of new, creative ideas. His favorite pieces of writing are fictional scenarios with an unpredictable end. His original college was the University of Akron where his life was a mess and he was doing the wrong things and hanging out with the wrong crowd. He transferred to Robert Morris University to try to fix his situation. It has been a battle to correct the wrongs he put on himself. He fought back in 2020, and even though it was a bad year for most, it was the first time John didn't feel anxiety ridden since 2017.

## **Keshaun Rice**

Keshaun Rice (Class of 2024) is a Graphic Design major at Robert Morris University. He highly enjoys writing and playing video games. He would love to go further as a graphic designer and also have his own show one day.

## Judith R. Robinson

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 85+ poems, five poetry collections, one fiction collection; one novel; edited or co-edited eleven poetry collections. Teacher: Osher at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh. Her newest edited collection is "Speak, Speak," poetry of Gene Hirsch, Cyberwit.com 2020. Her latest gallery exhibit was "The Numbers Keep Changing," at The Pittsburgh Holocaust Center, April-June, 2019. Her publication info & credits, art exhibitions, awards, including Pushcart nomination, on request or at: [www.judithrobinson.com](http://www.judithrobinson.com) website [alongtherivers@gmail.com](mailto:alongtherivers@gmail.com)

## Nick Romeo

Nick Romeo is a multidisciplinary artist, musician and writer. Nick lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with his wife and his cat named Megatron.

## Nico Scalise

Nico Scalise is a graphic design major in his junior year. Nico helps out at Colonial Catholic Ministry and also does graphic design work for the student run organization Sentry Media. Overall, Nico loves all types of creative work and is always excited to try a new idea or medium!

## Mike Schneider

Mike Schneider has published poems in many literary journals, including *Hunger Mountain*, *New Ohio Review*, *Notre Dame Review* and *Poetry*. Three times nominated for the Pushcart Prize, he received the 2012 Editors Award in Poetry from *The Florida Review*, and won the 2016 Robert Phillips Prize (selected by Richard Foerster) from Texas Review Press, which in 2017 published his second chapbook, *How Many Faces Do You Have?*

## Micah Thompson

Micah Josiah Thompson is a committed father and husband; a poet and novice quant. He has a background in business management, teaching, and advising. Currently, he works at Robert Morris University as the Engaged Learning & Community Involvement Advisor where he earned his MBA and certificate in Business Analytics. He writes to transform lives and change narratives. His writings are mostly inspired by nature, conversations, and interactions with the people around him. Read more of his poems, stories and essays at [micahjosiah.medium.com](http://micahjosiah.medium.com)

## Natalie Thompson

Natalie graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Pittsburgh in 2015. She's currently a graduate student enrolled in Robert Morris University's Master of Business Administration program. She works full-time at

Duncan Financial Group in their insurance division. Natalie resides in Indiana, PA with her boyfriend and her Australian Shepherd.

## **Girard Tournesol**

Girard Tournesol appears as a regular contributor in regional literary magazines, *The Watershed Journal*, *Tobeco*, *Bridges*, *The Pennsylvania Poet's Society* and online at *Dark Horse Appalachia*, *The Indiana Gazette* and *North/South Appalachia*. Girard lives in The Pennsylvania Wilds region of Northern Appalachia.

## **Anthony Vercek**

T.J. Vercek is a senior Media Arts major with a concentration in Interaction Design and a minor in Political Science. Anthony's submission is a travel poster depicting a place Anthony visited via a road trip in his 1981 Pontiac Bonneville Safari, a great example of the land yachts past generations used in voyages across the country. On one adventure, Anthony drove over 4,000 miles in 6 days across 10 states and Canada. Anthony is a great believer in the mystique of the classic American Road Trip and encourages everyone to, every once in a while, skip the flight and simply drive to your destination.

## **Brenna Wandel**

Brenna Wandel is a 2013 graduate of Robert Morris University who now has the daunting, albeit mostly entertaining, task of molding the minds of middle school English students. While an avid reader, she has only recently delved into the world of creative writing.

## **Rachel Ward**

Rachel Ward is a senior communication major at Robert Morris University. She has a focus in advertising as well as a certificate of sales. Rachel is a member of Hope Happens Here, Ad Club, as well as being a player assistant for the women's lacrosse team.

## **John Werthman**

John Werthman is a 74-year-old retiree. Writing is a new passion. John has attended a few writing classes at CCAC that fueled his interest in the written word.

## **Christine Aikens Wolfe**

Christine Aikens Wolfe mainly studies her craft with the Madwomen at Carlow, but is also a fellow of the Western PA Writing Project, so Christine has been privileged to work with Pitt faculty like Nick Coles, Tony Petrosky, Toi Derricotte and more.

## Luke Yost

Luke Yost is a senior sport communication major. He discovered a love of writing while working with RMU Sentry Media. He plans to continue to write after graduation.

## John Zedolik

For the past five years, John has been an adjunct English instructor at a number of universities in and around Pittsburgh. John has published poems in such journals as *Aries*, *The Bangalore Review* (IND), *Commonweal*, *FreeXpresSion* (AUS), *Orbis* (UK), *Paperplates* (CAN), *Poem*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* (AUT), *Third Wednesday*, *Transom*, and in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. In 2019, John published a full-length collection, entitled *Salient Points and Sharp Angles* (CW Books), which is available through Amazon. John's iPhone continues to be his primary poetry notebook, and John hopes that his use of technology to craft this ancient art remains fruitful.

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***RMU: BIG  
ENOUGH TO  
MATTER,  
SMALL  
ENOUGH TO  
CARE***

“

- PRESIDENT CHRIS HOWARD

