

2020

rune

robert  
morris  
university  
literary  
magazine

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# RUNE

## **ABOUT**

The journal accepts poetry, artwork, photography, creative writing, including short fictions, 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.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Mary Ann Rafoth, Provost  
Jon Radermacher, Interim Dean  
School of Informatics, Humanities,  
and Social Sciences  
Heather Pinson, Head of the Department  
of English and Humanities

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Robert Morris University  
Literary Magazine

a collection of  
poetry & prose  
art & photography



**RUNE 2020**  
poetry & prose

# A GREAT ESCAPE

Daniel Bates

## A GREAT ESCAPE

I wonder, has anyone ever tried to  
escape to Alcatraz, an oasis of  
rock, concrete, bars, an island  
whispering of misfits, numbers, really,  
a creative mecca for castaway incredibles

dismissed by diversity, demographics,  
Democrats, and displaced by a millennial  
madness that blows in the wind like a swale of  
squawking starlings that create mindless  
clouds of synchronized insignificance?

I would swim against the current, fighting  
cargo ships, wind surfers and whales, toward its  
barren shores. I would tow behind me my life's  
work in a canvas sack and wave between strokes  
to the ferry gawkers and hipsters sailing past.

Or I would climb aboard a giant sea lion at  
Pier 39, cinch my saddle and bust this  
bronco across waves, naysayers and the occasional  
herring to this aquatic Eden of graffiti, rubble  
and tales of hard-knock solitude.

Then I would defend my island, The Rock, as any  
squatter would against droning park rangers, tourists and  
former convicts who claim they hung out with  
murderers and Al Capone and knew the  
prisoners who crawled out and swam away.

I would swim, alright, until everybody left me alone.  
But the water is too cold.

# ATTENTION LAST RITES

Jay Carson

## ATTENTION

...and that, ladies and gentlemen, is the reason  
that all European intellectuals ever since  
have been either existentialists or communists.  
I've been looking for the first part of that sentence  
ever since I woke up in that class.  
Everybody I knew in the class  
either cut or, like me, didn't pay attention.

It's happened more than once:  
.... is the most important writer of the century.  
.... is the only way we can save this economy  
or was it this planet?

I did finally read the first part of *The Sun Also Rises*  
enough (3) times to find out Jake Barnes had an  
accident in the war that made him impotent;  
he wasn't just being coy with Lady Brett.

I'd like to hear your thoughts on paying attention  
but I would probably miss the first half of them.  
So like Jesus said, save the something or other for last.

## LAST RITES

Death is so sacred I always assumed  
the dying wanted to be alone with it.  
No, they want our last company,  
even to talk:

In hospital, holding hands like the guilty  
lovers of life we are, Nancy and I  
recount how lucky we were to have each other.  
"I don't know whether to die," she says. I can  
only tell her what she'd always told me in difficult  
decisions: "You will."

We wrestle to sit, ease, her up in bed  
and she screams in pain, finally ending  
in a long frightening coughing spell.  
She asks if I am still teaching at the university we  
both retired from long ago.  
But Nancy stills knows a hack from a handsaw and  
points to a curious bag and tube at the end of her  
bed "Who let that sheep in?" she laughs. "I want  
to punch somebody," Nancy says, "but I don't  
know who."

We fight with the bed again,  
Sending it up and up toward the ceiling  
And I think with dying hope  
of the promise  
that God will always keep  
36 angels on earth.



# BEFORE WE FORGET

## Micah Thompson

### BEFORE WE FORGET

Before we forgot . . .  
music was more than sound;  
it was motion.  
Our small bodies,  
like oceans,  
swayed to the waves.

We were brave.  
We wore our insides,  
like jellyfish.  
Proudly displaying  
true colors;  
revealing our heart to others  
even if it stung.

Before we forgot . . .  
tears were our primary language  
'cause words  
could not match the anguish  
of our soul.

Outside opinions  
could not control  
our decisions.  
Criticism  
could not silence our convictions.

Whether rage or praise  
we engaged  
every fiber of our being  
to convey what we were feeling.

Our laughs were unabashed.  
Our shouts were unbound.  
We were loud.  
We were free.  
We were playful.

All was attainable.  
Nothing was out of reach.  
We knew no boundaries.

We were bound to eternity,  
in our minds,  
we'd venture to worlds  
now forgotten  
where boxes were rockets  
and blankets were caves,  
and bedrooms were topless  
as we flew into space.

Before we forgot . . .  
heaven was not just a place  
for good people.  
It was our home;  
where we'd belong  
if we could only remember,  
if we could only remember,  
love.

# BELA ON THE BUS

## Johnny Hartner

### BELA ON THE BUS

Somewhere's an accident.

Six in the morning, it's still dark. On the 51 C bus  
we're stuck on the Smithfield bridge. In five minutes time  
the voice of Bela Lugosi from the back breaks out:

"Why is there so much traffic on the bridge?

Why aren't we moving?

Tell Mr. Bus Driver to take foot off brake, put on gas."

Like mad Renfield I want to join in the fun.

"Master! Master! Master! Please!"

I'm sure he's standing now, arms holding up the cape  
like bat wings. "Starting to panic back here. Almost daylight.  
Let's get off this fucker."

A frustrated passenger cries: "Oh, for God's sake, will someone  
open a window and let Dracula fly out?"

A drunk who resembles Balzac in front turns around  
for some existential identity check, italicizing every word  
with each time: "Do you know who you are?

Do you know who you are? Do you know who you are?

Do you know who you are? Do you know who you are?

Do you know who you are?"

"I know who I am," says the Howdy Doody

lookalike contest winner and points to

the polkadot handkerchief hiding his entire throat.

"I have gills and can stay under water  
for three days."

"It's not important who I am," says the white witch doctor  
and points to a string of skulls around his neck.

"What's important is my boys want to know why  
it's called 'devil's food cake'? Can Satan actually get dessert?"

Charlie Manson's brother says, "The Beatles'  
Magical Mystery Tour had nothing on this."

Karl Marx's cousin chimes in. "I'm almost waiting for  
Firesign Theatre to call out 'We're all bozos on this bus.'

You look familiar," he says to Lenin who stands and puts his arms  
in the air, a plea to heaven. "What is to be done?"

That's when Balzac answers, "We end up in  
I Know Who Yinz Are; I Seen What Yinz Done!"

# NECROMANCY 101

## Johnny Hartner

### NECROMANCY 101

Listed in a college catalogue is a noncredit course entitled "Communing with the dead." Who are the professors teaching this one, John Dee and Edward Kelly? They'd have to be raised from the medieval dead to teach us how to raise other dead folks.

Now, that is money well spent. How are the tests? I'm biting my nails worrying I might flunk my midterm if I can't reach my parents via Ouija board.

And would I really want to hear from them? They'll probably yell at me for some private thing of theirs I revealed to the world, bitch about me not cleaning my room, tell me to brush my teeth and have on clean underwear when I die.

Do we get an A if like Doctor Faustus we bring back Helen of Troy and sound like Richard Burton in that movie to buxom Liz Taylor: "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?"

Maybe for extra credit I could drag old Shakespeare back for a chit chat about Hamlet, or even Casper's cousins to find out what made him so want to be so friendly when all ghosts get more kicks from scaring us live folks into heart attacks to join themselves.

For the final exam, I'm sure most of the Underground Club will refuse to come back, moaning "Once on your side was enough." There should be an alternative course, Communicating to Live People because when you get right down to it, with people texting at one's own dinnertable in their cellphone coffins, it's hard enough to communicate vis-a-vis with the living let alone...

# THE BUTCHER SHOP

## Chris McClure

### THE BUTCHER SHOP

It was on the corner in a triangular building. I was probably about three when my father used to take me to the local butcher shop, holding my hand to help me up the curb before we entered the shop. The floor was covered with sawdust; I loved to make swirling, circular patterns in it with my right foot.

"Why does it have sawdust?" I asked. My father and the short, stout man behind the counter would look at each other and laugh, as if I had said something funny or clever. "It's to keep the floor clean," my father said. "But it makes it dirty," I said. They both laughed again. I wrinkled my nose; the place had an odd smell that I couldn't place but that made me uncomfortable in a way I didn't understand. Later, I learned it was the smell of dried blood and freshly slaughtered meat. Some long-buried instinct had made me react like an animal would to the smell of death.

The man behind the counter – I think my father called him Joe – was stocky with thinning dark hair. He wore a white apron stained with dark blood; I didn't like that. And why was a man wearing an apron, I wondered. My father said that was women's work.

My father would order lamb chops or steak which hadn't yet become too expensive for the average family. It was red and wet; I tried not to look, afraid I wouldn't want to eat it, knowing how it looked before it was cooked. But the glass cases were right in front of me and I couldn't help looking at the gray, ugly joints of liver pudding which were shaped like the pipes under the bathroom sink. Or the piles of red, mottled hot sausage. Or the liver, brown and wet. I hated the smell of it when my mother cooked it with bacon and onions and the way it looked curled up on my plate.

I liked those trips – Saturday mornings with my father. I had no idea I was seeing something that would soon become obsolete, undersold and depersonalized by Walmart and the Giant Eagle.

# TRUE LOVE- BAH, HUMBUG!

Chris McClure

## TRUE LOVE- BAH, HUMBUG!

True Love – Bah, Humbug!  
“They All lived happily ever after” – I’ll bet!  
Believe that, my friend, and you’re all wet.  
Statistics prove there are more women than men,  
How can there be someone for everyone then?

The symptoms are the same for both puppy love and true,  
And the starry-eyed bit fades after a year or two.  
What’s left is a habit that’s formed through the years;  
It’s practicality that keeps them together, my dears.

“I’ve grown accustomed to your face  
In this same, old familiar place.  
You wash the clothes; I’ll earn the pay,  
And we’ll stay together forever,” they say.

It’s a good idea, I must admit,  
But the idea of true love just doesn’t fit.  
You may say that I just don’t see –  
I’ll believe it, my friend, when it happens to me.

# FRENCH TOAST CASSEROLE

## Bruce Pemberton

### FRENCH TOAST CASSEROLE

Marcus Whitman, missionary and physician, dies in 1847 with his wife, Narcissa, during an Indian raid near Walla Walla. They deserved better, but the Cayuse thought differently, after a deadly outbreak of measles. None of it has any bearing on Whitman County's inability to publish a senior lunch menu, which it fails to do for reasons unknown.

What the hell's for lunch today? asks the new curmudgeon, flexing his recently acquired griping muscles. A month ago, there was a whispered controversy on that day's meat offering. Was it turkey loaf or pork roast? The assembled elderly line up on both sides of the issue. We could have just asked the cooks, but that seemed hurtful.

My ninety-year-old farmer friend, a life-long Idahoan, who's never vote for a Democrat, who farms the same land his homesteader grandparents did, shows up for lunch on rumors of mashed potatoes. The cooks change it at the last minute, and serve gravy over rice and discover it's not a popular decision. He almost grabs his cane and leaves. To distract him, I tell him about the stunning six-foot Coeur d'Alene Indian running for governor. She's a Democrat, he snaps, that's all I need to know! He doesn't touch the rice.

We're in the community center downtown and sit at large tables. Ours has retired farmers, and across the room, there's another for their wives, who whisper the latest in local people and issues. The cooks have their own and next to them, there's the coed table where all the cool kids, or former cool kids, or rather, the elderly cool kids sit. The last table's surrounded by walkers, and wheelchairs.

Sometimes, the county buses over a load of seniors from Pullman, wanting us to socialize, but we sit with our regular lunchmates and glare across the room at the uninvited strangers. Interaction is minimal.

Today, I show up early and ask, of course, what's for lunch. French toast casserole, the cooks tell me, and we have plenty. We'll make you a to-go plate! After the Pledge, a prayer, and sundry announcements, an elderly regular comes over and offers me her lunch, almost uneaten. I leave with two stuffed styrofoam trays, stopping at the grocery for genuine maple syrup and a stick of imported Irish butter, hoping it will help, but it doesn't. Hours later, for dinner, I try again to eat a plateful. Not surprisingly, neither of my dogs are interested, either, and maintain their distance.

# DAY OF PRAYER, JUNE 2004

Bruce Pemberton

## DAY OF PRAYER, JUNE 2004

One of my Iraqi soldiers, Salah, comes to me with a neck boil the size of a golf ball. He can't move his head left or right, and I've got to find him a medic before it abscesses into his brain.

It's Friday, the Muslim day of prayer, and everything's closed. The Iraqi medics in the Ministry of Health, who'd be candy strippers back home, are deep in prayer and can't be bothered. I try the medics in the North Carolina National Guard, who tell me he needs to see someone in the Iraqi Ministry of Health. I try to use my rank to get someone to see him, but a first sergeant comes out and orders me to leave and to take my Iraqi soldier with the unsightly swollen neck with me.

Finally, I find two bored Navy corpsmen who look at the boil with excitement and anticipation. They find Salah an interpreter, tell him what they're going to do, and they let me watch. It takes an hour, an autoclaved scalpel, a topical anesthetic, an antibiotic cocktail, and five stitches. They stuff his drained boil with gauze and tell me to bring him back the next day.

He's on 24-hour bedrest and I tell him that means no smoking, no drinking tea on the parade field with his buddies from Basrah, and that he must stay in his bunk in the barracks. He understands none of this, as all of our unit's interpreters have fled. He chatters away in Arabic about something I don't understand but finally, the last word he says, I know. It's shukran, which is, thank you. I put my hand over my heart, and tell him, afwan, which means you're welcome.



# WEAPON IN LIFE TO YOU

Hadeel Alameer

## WEAPON IN LIFE

Sometimes you wonder what to say,  
when you don't know what to say.  
Sometimes all you can see is darkness,  
and before you see the light, darkness comes back.  
Between darkness and light, you struggle to stay alive.  
Your life becomes a battle between fall and rise,  
And when you are staring over the edge of a cliff,  
a person appears and pulls your hands.  
Your heart had stopped, for seconds, for minutes.  
This person brings you back to life again,  
this person becomes your weapon.

## TO YOU

To you, who owns all my memories and secrets,  
and breaches all the barriers, and enters my heart,  
Listen to me before time goes fast.  
Listen before we lose it.  
Listen before I burn all the letters I wrote.  
I am still waiting on the roads,  
I am still the same companion,  
our memories still clear in my eyes.  
With our laughter,  
and our sorrow.  
Do you have any doubt that you are my world?  
believe it, you are still my world,  
you are the home I always want.  
Oh, My legendary heroine.  
Do you still have any doubt that the sun rises from your palms?  
I still need you,  
still yearn to be with you.



# I CAN'T KEEP NOTHING ON AROUND YOU

Kathryn Peterson

## I CAN'T KEEP NOTHING ON AROUD YOU

i can't keep nothing on around you.  
peeled that pretending right off my back.  
slipped the silence right over my head.  
all my doubts fall down to my ankles  
in a big ole pile that you throw  
across the room.  
i can't keep nothing on around you.  
fantasies of us forever unclasped  
right behind my chest.  
one. by. one.  
and the rest of my daydreams  
your drank up in between my thighs.  
i can't keep nothing on around you.  
i ain't wearing your words but  
i feel them.  
everytime you stroke my bare skin.  
it feels like me.

Untilted  
Judith Robinson



# A BEATITUDE WINDOWS

## Randy Minnich

### A BEATITUDE

High above the city, on a ledge,  
a Peregrine Falcon's nest.  
She sits on a prominence:  
yellow eyes, gray cloak  
she unfurls to sail and plunge,  
fists full of daggers,  
a razor for beak.  
When she shrieks  
street talk falters

In the gravel nest, three puffball chicks.  
She brings them birds her size.  
Bloody feathers flutter in the wind.  
When she stoops, the smaller cringe.  
The bigger wince.  
She is a dinosaur after all.

Sixty six million years ago  
the sky caught fire,  
rained molten rock,  
torched the forests, then  
turned black and cold.  
Left death and rot and windswept char.  
Her forebears were the ones that lived,  
somehow. The rest, the not as fit,  
left only images in stone.

So you might guess her ancestors  
were royalty, haughty presences,  
majestic on the eyrie,  
terror when they swooped  
screaming down the canyon.

But no. The proud died too.  
Just five species of birds survived:  
ancient ducks and chickens.

The meek once did inherit the earth.  
They didn't stay that way.

### WINDOWS

Mimi loves the window seat:  
lounging in the morning sunshine,  
whirl of chickadees. She flicks her tail  
and dreams her wicked dreams.

Today the foxhunt clip clops by:  
enormous creatures, proud and muscular,  
hounds baying 'round their feet,  
humans on their backs!

Her ears are locked,  
her nose is pasted to the pane.  
She turns to me, wide-eyed.  
I'd never seen a cat amazed.

The window calls her daily  
to watch the wonders passing by.  
Had her DNA been twisted differently  
she'd likely own a telescope  
and read a lot of books.

# GOOD GRIEF NATURE'S WARM EMBRACE

## Jonathan Potts

### GOOD GRIEF

Charlie Brown is probably divorced  
He comes home and strips off his shirt  
Gets drunk watching the evening news  
And "Big Bang Theory" reruns  
Sally won't him near her kids  
But Linus still stops by  
On his way home from the office  
Sometimes he brings a six pack  
(Though he knows he shouldn't)  
When Marcy left Franklin  
Peppermint Patty knew  
That she, too, was living a lie  
She left good 'ole Chuck  
Crying alone in the driveway  
As the taillights of her Subaru  
Grew dimmer, and dimmer, and dimmer

### NATURE'S WARM EMBRACE

Before the last leaf falls  
The trees appear to be aflame  
Whose branches now moan  
Beneath the weight of fallen snow.  
Even that is a mere disguise  
Of the warm air soon descending  
Like green clouds on the Western Front

Why should the rising tide  
Bring me to such grief?  
The water has always beckoned  
'Tis where my mother finds her rest  
When last I draw breath  
Perhaps I'll embrace her there again

But my reverie is snapped  
Like those frozen, creaking branches  
By a high-pitched voice  
And a small hand  
That seeks purchase  
In my own

# SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE PSYCHIC

## Joris Soeding

### SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE PSYCHIC

walking away from the shore  
Chicago Avenue after dusk  
then neon  
David stops, brings up a reading  
we step in for choices and a price

I decide on the palm reading for ten  
David wants one in another room, twenty  
she traces my hand  
I follow her finger  
our eyes meet on occasion  
serious in love—less than two years  
marriage in five—I will be ready then  
vows just once  
a strong positive sense  
creative—profession in nine months

thanks and I wait  
look at the room  
skyscrapers, concrete, then this  
velvet, beads, the other world  
we walk  
a breath before rushing air of the subway

# PARIS

## Jonah Hoy

### PARIS

Paris.

The place I dream when my head hits the pillow and fall asleep.  
My feet reach across each stone that bump the soles of my shoes.  
My eyes closed with no sight but the wind reaches around me  
lifting me through the sky, soaring over the stars.

Paris.

Where the Arc sits, and the poets long  
the writers write, the lovers dream.  
Monet paints and the Eiffel stands  
a 1:30 am fantasy you wish you had.

Paris.

Where two people who are strangers, once lovers  
endeared by each other but now cant face to look at one another.  
A simple nod to the past each gives,  
that famous line, "We'll always have Paris"

Paris.

Movies and tv depict this Parsian world  
art, food, and wine have this edens snake, tempting allure.  
My notebook etched with glasses clinking  
at a table with a dreamt up woman whose name that isn't worth mentioning.

Paris.

A heated affair that fills your wanderlust mind  
hand on your face, eyes away, wasting precious class time.  
Someone taking you in your arms because you love a good cliché  
Kissing your neck, inching up and whispering "Je t'aime"

Paris.

Instead of drinking fine wine and flirting with french beauties  
you're stuck, surrounded by cheap beer and menaces to society.  
Instead of riding a ferry on the Seine  
you are burdened by the murky rivers that deteriorate a bridge's edge.

Paris.

Eyes shut, send yourself there  
no plane, no train, not even a car.  
Your feet stomp, you walk, and pray they don't ache  
but pray more that this dream is only a matter of time to wait.  
Paris.

# HAROLD AND KATE HOW TO TIDY THE ASTEROIDS

## Mary Soon Lee

### HAROLD AND KATE

She knows he's read Harry Potter,  
but that he's never watched the movies.

He knows she's watched every Jane Austen adaptation  
(and far too many Colin Firth movies).

She knows his favorite book  
is "Out Stealing Horses,"  
but can never remember its Norwegian author.

He knows her favorite book  
is "Pride and Prejudice,"  
but he doesn't think Darcy deserved Elizabeth.

She knows he hasn't missed  
a book club meeting in three years.

He knows that she goes back to Wisconsin  
for Thanksgiving, but not for Christmas.

She knows she would say yes  
if he ever asked her out.

He knows she's said yes  
to other men.

She knows he notices what she's wearing,  
but that Gary doesn't.

He knows it would finish him  
if she said no to him.

She knows he doesn't trust  
happy endings.

He knows she's never had one.

### HOW TO TIDY THE ASTEROIDS

First circularize their orbits.  
The belt is no place for eccentrics.

Next dust each one carefully,  
cleaning inside every crater.

Order them by size and disposition:  
carbonaceous, metallic, silicate.

Pull the littlest ones in close  
where Mars can check on them.

# TWO FEET AND AN UNSETTLED MIND THE TRUTH AND I

Sabine Cherenfant

## TWO FEET AND AN UNSETTLED MIND

Earth was its usual lively self,  
lost in the track of life,  
And you—  
with feet stalled on moving ground,  
and a dream already miles ahead—  
are at the end of your faith.  
Age lengthens as it tries to reach its end.  
The dust at your feet are fallen prayers.  
You never asked anyone to wait for you,  
but two feet and an unsettled mind  
won't make the journey to a coveted land.

## THE TRUTH AND I

The truth is nothing but  
history never written,  
the smoke propagating  
while the flame dies out.  
And so, I write to lament  
its absence.

# THE FIRST WOMAN I LOVED

## Todd Davis

### THE FIRST WOMAN I LOVED

three four maybe five years old I remember  
I remember watching her after her bath  
her pale white skin radiant pink from the heat  
she was wearing only a white bra and panties  
and a white silky slip that clung to her  
like light she sat humming to herself at her  
dressing table and brushed her wavy brown  
hair with long slow strokes smiling shyly to  
herself in the dressing mirror except for the  
occasional tangled hair that caused a  
momentary twinge of pain to flutter across her  
face like a skittering bird

then she turned and from her drawer  
extracted the exotic dangling garter belt  
its loose ends writhing like medusa's head  
she stood and pulled up her slip over her hips  
up to her breasts and holding the slip  
between her lips she stepped into the garter  
belt and pulled and tugged and shimmied it  
tightly over her thighs and into place then  
pushed it slightly up or down her bare feet  
making baby steps on the bare wood floor  
until she had it adjusted just so just right no  
more not too high nor low nor loose nor tight  
then she sat again and gathered up a silky  
stocking into a rumpled clump that would  
stretch and expand as she pulled it over her  
pointed toes and foot pulled it slowly up her  
calf with her hands her white leg disappearing  
into sheer shadow first one leg then the other  
then again she stood and clipped the thick  
dark stocking tops to the tiny snake mouths  
of the garter's undulation somehow I knew at  
that young age even as I do now her dressing  
was a celebration of the flesh

to the closet she repaired and knocking about she  
found there the high heeled shoes she intended to  
wear and sitting again she slipped them on her feet

and turned her knees to the side and glanced to see  
that all was right from toe to underpants then turning  
to her mirror she rambled through her jewelry box  
flashes of silver and gold like tiny fish in the sun swam  
through her long thin fingers until her eye caught the  
specific one and holding it up to her ear she clipped  
it on then the other and quizzically she stared past the  
surface glare deep into the mirror's third dimension and  
seemed to ponder the melancholy she felt there  
at that point she saw me watching with  
adoration and wonder  
and called me to her to hug and kiss  
my hair and asked me if I wanted to watch  
mommy paint her nails  
and I nodded yes as she dabbed and stroked  
holding her pink tongue between white teeth  
as she worked  
until her fingers looked as if they beautifully bled  
so dark and bright was the red she chose  
then bending with a smile to me she said  
let mommy paint yours too again I nodded yes  
my tiny nails echoing her red red red  
then rouge and powder to her innocent wicked face  
and these I shared as well and sat upon her knee  
the slippery coolness of her slip moving beneath me  
and listened to her laugh to see me made up so  
her darling little boy in pancake drag  
and finally lipstick to match the nails  
and her teaching me to pucker and purse  
and blot the tissue with the sanguinity of my lips  
and then a kiss upon my cheek she made  
the temporary red shape of her mouth on my face  
what will wash away will wash away  
but that kiss is indelibly forever



# THE FIRST WOMAN I LOVED

Todd Davis

## THE FIRST WOMAN I LOVED

looking in the mirror we both  
sat transfixed transformed  
laughing together at our new selves  
laughing at the reflection of what we had become  
laughing at the love that held us  
bound unbound bewitched and tabooed  
sacred transcendent temporal and tattooed  
the first woman I loved unrequited forevermore  
no blind Oedipus upon this shore  
the temporary cosmetics of a long-lost  
moment in time applied  
as the seed was planted from mother to child  
so the man would eventually grow  
feeding from the body of the boy that died

and so today the love of woman cherish  
and this man having been once shown  
by the first woman I loved  
what it is to be human  
what it is to be loved  
what it is to be grown

Peony- After the Rain  
Renee Augustine



# LIKE LEVANA, JEWESS OF CORDOBA

## Judith Robinson

### LIKE LEVANA, JEWESS OF CORDOBA

Soul, abide  
with me.  
Move lightly  
in the easy way  
of children.

The earth  
is home for now.  
Let me sway to the rhythm  
of festival harps.

I polish my skin  
with precious oils,  
adorn my neck  
with colored stones,  
rubies I love, the greenest emeralds;  
press my lips to pages  
of sacred text.

Tonight I lap up the world like wine,  
and do not foresee an empty glass.

The Perfect Reflection  
Nicole Brautigam



# WHITE CHRISTMAS MORNING

Bruce Pemberton

## WHITE CHRISTMAS MORNING

Christmas, 2018

It snows overnight, and I'm dog walking  
at dawn in ice cleats, down the slippery  
sidewalk hill then east on the forest trail,  
over the footbridge, then the length  
of Main, beneath the city park's noisy  
Great Horned owls, past the grain elevators,  
and then home the back way, across rail-  
road tracks, a snow field, and all of it in  
the profound silence of Christmas morning.  
Walking up our driveway, my dogs flush out  
a loud congress of quail...no, wait, my birder  
friends would never forgive me. It's a covey,  
over twenty, all fat with the cheap seed  
I buy. Deer will come tonight for corn, and  
racoons for cat food. Meanwhile, a large  
feral tom attempts to rip the wings off my  
favorite flicker, who somehow escapes.  
Scuffed up and trailing feathers, he resumes  
drilling on a stovepipe to the annoyance  
of the neighborhood, glancing down at his  
assailant and tilting his head the way they do.  
He eludes a predator who does nothing all day  
but hunt, kill, and catnap, and he lives to talk  
about it. He continues his Christmas assault  
on corrugated metal.

# DARK ENERGY

Todd Davis

## DARK ENERGY

The sleeping universe stretches and thins.  
The night sky weeps, empty of light.  
Stars bereave the loss of starry friends.  
Vanishing galaxies redefine night.  
The insidious black sea of nothing splashes  
and sloshes all worlds farther apart,  
while gravity, disheveled, stumbles and crashes,  
drunk on entropy, and slurring Descartes.  
And when it seems dilution can't get worse,  
I seek some solace from Shelley's mortal lines:  
I am the eye with which the universe  
Beholds itself, and knows it is divine.  
My fingers gently touch your lovely back  
as you rise from our bed and vanish into black.



**RUNE 2020**  
art & photography



# AMSTERDAM TULIPS

## Mei-Ling Blackstone



# RAINBOW MOUNTAIN

## Mei-Ling Blackstone





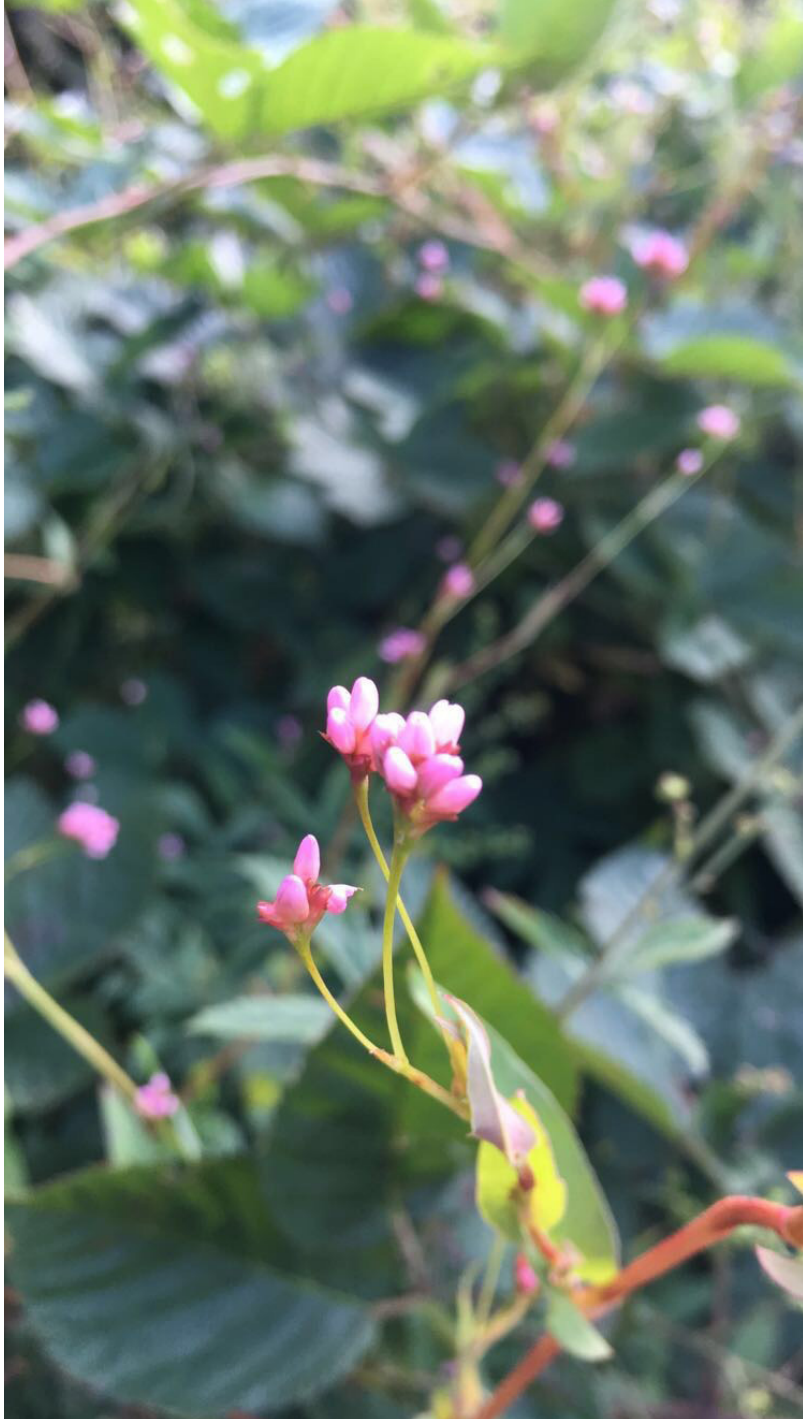
# LE LEVER DU SOLEIL SUR LA CÔTE

Nicole Brautigam





**PRETTY IN PINK**  
Nicole Brautigam



**UNTILTED**  
Judith Robinson



# LADY BUG

Renee Augustine





**RUNE 2020**  
biographies



# RUNE 2020

## Biographies

### **Hadeel Alameer**

Hadeel Alameer is a senior English major. She has 3 boys – one was born in Saudi Arabia, and two were born in the U.S.

### **Renee Augustine**

No Bio

### **Daniel Bates**

Daniel Bates is a writer, poet and artist who works for Robert Morris University's Academic Media Center as a student media advisor for RMU Sentry Media.

### **Mei-Ling Blackstone**

Mei-Ling Blackstone is currently studying abroad in Strasbourg, France as a business major. Her love for photography has grown with her passion for traveling since she was a kid. She loves the outdoors and experiencing the world in person.

### **Nicole Brautigam**

Nicole Brautigam is currently a sophomore here at RMU and is majoring in Early Childhood and Special Education. She has always had a love for taking pictures, drawing, and painting.

### **Jay Carson**

Jay Carson holds a Doctor of Arts from Carnegie-Mellon University. A seventh generation Pittsburgher, he taught creative writing, literature, and rhetoric at Robert Morris University where Jay was a faculty advisor to the student literary journal, Rune. He has published more than 100 poems in national literary and professional journals, magazines, and anthologies. Jay published a chapbook, Irish Coffee, with Coal Hill Review and a longer book of his poems, The Cinnamon of Desire, with Main Street Rag. He considers work Appalachian, Irish, accessible, the problem-solving spiritual survival of a raging youth - and just what you might need.

### **Sabine Cherenfant**

Sabine Cherenfant is a Robert Morris University Alumna. She currently works as a compiling editor for Greenhaven Publishing and as an assistant manager at Nordstrom. Her work has previously appeared in The Collegiate Scholar, Thoughts on Journalism, and Quartz's medium channel, The Office.

### **Todd Davis**

T. S. Davis is the author of Sun + Moon Rendezvous, a book of poems, and the former producer of the Seattle Poetry Slam. He's published poems, essays, and nonfiction in a variety of magazines including Rattle, The Lyric, Bellingham Review, 14 X 14, Blue Collar Review, Amethyst Review, Henhouse, and Your Genealogy Today, among others. Mr. Davis is a retired Registered Nurse who lives in rural Arizona and writes creative nonfiction and Shakespearian sonnets.

# RUNE 2020

## Biographies

### **Johnny Hartner**

Johnny Hartner is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and Duquesne University and is a Professor of English at the Community College. He's had publications in Brentwood Anthology, Illya's Honey, Krax and Gargoyle.

### **Jonah Hoy**

Jonah Hoy is a junior history major at RMU and is also the managing editor of Rune.

### **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 Advisor and is earning his MBA with a certificate in Business Analytics. He writes to transform lives and change narratives. His writings are mostly inspired by nature, conversations, and Scripture. Read more of his poetry at [micahjosiahthompson.wordpress.com](http://micahjosiahthompson.wordpress.com)

### **Chris McClure**

Christine McClure graduated with a B.A. in Journalism and Communications from Point Park University. She worked in the advertising and marketing field for a number of years, proofreading, editing and handling print production. She also taught creative writing and English grammar at the former Duff's Business Institute.

Christine is now semi-retired, but still proofreads and edits for a local technical magazine and for advertising and marketing projects. She also takes noncredit classes at the University of Pittsburgh in a variety of subjects, including writing and history. She is an avid reader of murder mysteries and has traveled all over the world. Some of her favorite trips were an African safari, Costa Rica and Egypt.

### **Randy Minnich**

Randy Minnich is a retired chemistry professor and researcher. He's now reading, writing, and day-dreaming 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.

### **Bruce Pemberton**

No bio

### **Kathryn Peterson**

Kathryn Peterson is a yoga teacher who specializes in sex energy. Her work on intimacy has been featured by the Sex Expo, Bwom, PlayboyTV, and the Intimology Institute. She holds BA and MA degrees from New York University.

# RUNE 2020

## Biographies

### **Jonathan Potts**

Jonathan Potts is the vice president of public relations and marketing at Robert Morris University, where he has worked since 2007. He started his career as a journalist and freelance writer, and previously worked at Carnegie Mellon University and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Westminster College and a master's degree in organizational leadership from RMU.

### **Judith 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 75+ 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 collection, "Carousel," was published in January, 2017, Lummo Press.

Her newest gallery exhibit "The Numbers Keep Changing," is on display at The Pittsburgh Holocaust Center, April through June, 2019.

### **Joris Soeding**

Joris Soeding's most recent collections of poetry are Forty (Rinky Dink Press, 2019) and Home in Nine Moons (Clare Songbirds Publishing House, 2018). Soeding's writing has appeared in publications such as Another Chicago Magazine, Columbia Poetry Review, Concho River Review, and Red River Review. He is a 7th/8th grade Social Studies teacher in Chicago, where he resides with his wife, son, and daughter.

### **Mary Soon Lee**

Mary Soon Lee was born and raised in London, but has lived in Pittsburgh for over twenty years. Her latest book is Elemental Haiku, containing 119 haiku for the elements of the periodic table, published by Ten Speed Press. She's hoping that her antiquated website will be updated any day now (<http://www.marysoonlee.com>).