

*Editor's Note*

It seems impossible to me, but I recently realized that this fall marks the twentieth anniversary of my association with *Nimrod*. The journal, of course, predates my involvement by over forty years, and the *Nimrod* Literary Awards—the Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction and the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry—by just over twenty. Still, that means I've been here one-third of the life of the journal and almost exactly half of the life of the Literary Awards. I hardly have the longest association with *Nimrod*—that honor goes to Senior Advisory Editor and former Editor-in-Chief Fran Ringold, and several of our current Editorial Board members—but it's a substantial one nonetheless. And what thrills me as I think back on the last twenty years is how rich they have been, how full of remarkable writing from remarkable writers.

Fall means the publication of our annual Awards issue, and the works published in conjunction with the Literary Awards are among my favorite markers of the richness that has struck me for so many years. This year, we honor Matt W. Miller, John Tait, Robert Thomas, and Jonathan Wei as our winners. Our final judges for 2019 were poet Kim Addonizio and fiction writer Margot Livesey, and I would like to let you read what they had to say about their winning selections.

Of Pablo Neruda First Prize-winner Robert Thomas's "Negligee and Hatchet: A Sonnet Crown," Addonizio says, "Here's a formally constrained poem that brilliantly manages to sound anything but. A paean to longing, to the mysteries of love and time and distance, 'Negligee and Hatchet,' as its title suggests, is full of contraries and surprises—swamp pop and Mick Jagger, grotto and tomb, Aphrodite and caramel corn. Just as 'the sea turns/in its bed transposing ordinary/wind into dragons' ('Sonnet with Ark and Tug'), the poet's language turns and dazzles with every line." About Second Prize-winner Matt W. Miller's work, she muses, "We are measured, this poet says movingly, 'against our most impossible ghosts.' These elegiac poems are concerned with boyhood and manhood, family, memory, and loss. Gritty and lyrical, their specificity makes the reader intimate with people and places even as the speaker mourns them and recognizes the insufficiency of

words and memories to keep things whole. I was so impressed by the range of this writer's storytelling gifts."

Livesey was equally impressed by the work of our fiction winners. "Capybara," she says of First Prize-winner Jonathan Wei's story, "begins in the ordinary, a woman waiting for her son in front of the capybara enclosure at the zoo, and arcs into the extraordinary in an utterly persuasive fashion. I admire the attention to detail of all kinds—the capybaras, the lions, the other people at the zoo—and the many surprises, small and large, of this beautiful, heartbreaking story." Speaking about John Tait's Second Prize-winning "This Might Hurt Some," she says, the story "boldly covers more than a decade in the lives of Paul, Alice, and Alice's family. Paul's point of view as an outsider, and a non-Korean, is handled with a lovely, sure wit. As the narrative leaps forward, the story within the story is gradually revealed in a way that only deepens the unexpected complexity and guilt."

It's not only the winners we honor in this issue, but also the honorable mentions, finalists, and many semi-finalists, as well as work submitted generally throughout the year. Here you'll find a diverse selection of work that delights us with its originality and depth, and we are pleased to share that delight with you in this issue, *Awards 41*.