

*Editors' Note*

*A guest arrives with ten blessings, eats one, and leaves nine.*

— Iranian Proverb

As a literary journal with an international focus, *Nimrod* often finds itself in a unique position to invite and publish work by writers who are underrepresented in the United States. With our special thematic issues dedicated to different groups of writers, either from marginalized groups or from various regions of the world, our vision for the journal is to continue to grow and remain relevant while being especially far-reaching.

Thus, for our Spring/Summer 2019 issue, *Voices of the Middle East and North Africa*, we are proud to present poetry and fiction by nearly 50 writers from the Middle East and North Africa or with heritage from those regions. In these pages, we seek to celebrate the diverse cultures and people of the Middle East and North Africa, to enrich and add complexity to the representation and understanding of the region, especially in the United States, and to create an inclusive environment for MENA writers to share their stories. We understand that writers from such underrepresented groups may not always feel welcome in the Western publishing world. Limited often by politics, at times by language, or by both, the Middle Eastern or North African writer may experience difficulty finding a home in the Western market. Indeed, much of today's modern MENA literature remains quite unknown to Western readers, and, unfortunately, the work that makes it through the barriers is often seen, with or without reason, to align with a certain Western narrative. At *Nimrod*, we believe it is our duty — and pleasure — to reach out to those writers whose voices are not being heard in our literary circles — and to give them space to be themselves in our pages.

When composing our call for submissions, we asked writers to send in material on whatever subjects they wished. We hoped to include work by writers from as many of the groups within the Middle East and North Africa as possible: work in translation from the area's numerous languages; work from writers of the many faiths practiced in the region, as well as those who follow no

particular religion. We wanted to read them all—we wanted to present a medley of their works. We wanted voices that are both different from and similar to ours, craft techniques new or traditional. We wanted our writers to feel invited into the conversation. Most importantly, we wanted to open doors and leave them open to writers of this region, our guests of this issue, so they would feel welcome to share poems and stories with a new readership who may be unfamiliar with their work or find such work not easily available. After all, as Khalil Gibran wrote in *Sand and Foam*, “If it were not for your guests all houses would be graves.”

With that in mind, we hope we have successfully opened the doors to our house. Here you will find work by a diverse group of authors on a range of subjects. In these pages, our writers explore alienation due to nationality; the loss and finding of home; war and oppression in many forms; but also queerness and belonging; growing up and growing older; relationships between parents, children, siblings, friends, and lovers; and much, much more. Emerging writers share space beside established voices, and both the fiction and the poetry demonstrate a span of forms and styles. There is joy alongside heartbreak here, the unique and the universal, and we hope that you enjoy it all.

In addition to the thematic writing, we also include work received throughout the year. *Nimrod* accepts general submissions almost all year, and we are always astounded by the variety and quality of material we receive; the work in this issue ranges in subject from the naturalist John Wolley’s studies of the great auk to the “parent generation” dancing, groovily, to the oldies. We also share with you, with great excitement, the winners and finalists of our second annual Francine Ringold Awards for New Writers. The Ringold Awards honor emerging writers in fiction and poetry with no more than two previous publications in their genre, but whose distinct voices and engaging ideas ensure that we’ll be reading more from them in the future.

We loved reading, selecting, and editing all of the work in this remarkable issue, and we’re thrilled to share it with you now.