

THE NIMROD LITERARY AWARDS  
*The Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry*



FINALIST  
JACKIE CRAVEN

*Old Woman with Goose, 30 x 24, Oil*

When I was nothing but a swirling minnow,  
my mother filled this canvas with loam and olives —  
layer after layer of brown aromas —

She must've felt queasy perched on her artist stool,  
swooping her brush and palette knife side to side  
while I swam back and forth inside her.

Much later, after I learned to walk on land, I saw  
how she glazed buff over blue, dusk over amber —  
colors stroked on, colors scraped away

as though she couldn't make the paint behave.  
I think my mother wanted a Rubens scene  
like the one that inspired Yeats —

beating wings, loosening thighs, a shudder  
in the loins. But there was the tossing  
truth of me — always moving, always growing —

and the seasickness, and the smell of pee  
and turpentine, and the strange heart beating  
beneath her ribs. Instead of Leda with a swan,

she painted an angry crone, knurled fingers  
grasping a blur of white feathers. I believe  
she'd like to wring the bird's neck. Even now,

those fierce eyes follow me across the room.