

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.