

THE NIMROD LITERARY AWARDS
The Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry



SECOND PRIZE
MARY MOORE

Chimera

I took the skin of my twin for a jacket. . . .

— Alison D. Moncrief Bromage,
from “Prologue.” *Daughter, Daedalus*

1

We floated in the bloodlight,
the salt and soothe
of amnios, curled
like shrimp:

two buoyed
in the egg-bellied mother,
yolked twins,

we somersaulted,
bobbed and rocked
when the world walked,

pink seahorses,
eaters and swimmers,
footless dancers,
buds for limbs.

2

Died the Tuesday
mother never knew you

drowned in the sea
of mother may I be.

Devolved
into fluids,
cells, helices,
you eeled
your way into me,
under eye bud, in
heart's left chamber,

I your shroud, lilac-
and iris-veined
arterial blue.

3

You might have pitched
a mean curveball,
long-legged runner,
sprinting the grade-school bases,
sliding home
on the "Hail Mary" drive,

or lain face-up beside me
on the summer lawn,
found the starry diagrams
of myths, imagining our own:
the spinner, the two sisters,
the lady whose indigo silks
rustle in the poplar.

Would you have played piano
as I key the Mac,
our secret language a libretto?
Musical as Italian, all the words
would end in *ab* or *ob*,
the unworded
sounds of pleasure,
agreement and loss.

Or we might have been
antonyms' dissonance, who knows?

4

They tell me you'd
have been winged
or hooved, finned, two-
hearted, one-eyed:
a moon-calf, a chimera.

I'm a zoo of two anyway.

My first lost half, you
haunt me like Plato's dream
of the first humans,
spherical like pearls
or the moon:

halved by the envious
gods, they yearn still toward
each other across
the abyss of difference.

5

You lived only in
the womb-dream
a wisp a fiction
before you slipped
under my skin
alien
yet familiar
an incarnation I
also am

like the inside-in
myth of the soul,
sister, demon, twin.

Antherea Polyphemus,

named for Homer's cyclops, giant silk
moth, bears eye-shaped spots on its beige
wings, oh mild-mannered mimic,
its only defense a lie.
Threatened, it flashes eyed
wings, as if looks could kill.
Think basilisks, peacocks, Medusa.
Though dyeable, its silk doesn't sell,
and the spun brown cocoon mimes its own
dry-river-loam look. Mouthless,
it mates and dies in a week, poor monstrous
brevity. Luckily it runs on auto, unconscious
we hope, its living death brought us
by the pheromone, Eros.



Christopher Woods, *The Moth that Spent the Night*,
photograph

Speaking the Beast

The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct
and a projection . . . the monstrum is etymologically
'that which reveals,' 'that which warns. . . .'

—Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory*

His man's head baring a shark's
three rows of teeth, showing his carnivore
creds, he yawns. The manticore
suits its lion's body; but what god arks
this nightmare with the real lions,
the egrets, housecats, and butterflies?
Of course it's just imagined,
a manifestation angst devises,
like the Greek mythmakers
with their Oedipal take
on taboo. Maybe the manticore's
story is all teeth. Either way,
the hero, who wreathes
himself in a necklace of toothy ivory
once he's killed it, is nervy
for days, neck tingling with the jaws' force
on the spear's shaft, but he's heeded
whenever he speaks the beast or boasts
of not being bested or ghosted.
I bet he's someone's private nightmare,
made manifest to show and warn:
The manticore's man-born.
Or for the reductionists,
say he's a fantasist's
doodle on a manuscript's
foot, though an apt
caricature of the abbot in a snit:
after he inks it, the monk is rapt
with the splendor and horror
of what can be
thought.

Embroidering

She faces the blank sky of New Jersey,
white and gray. She cannot find a mood,
a key for being Amanda
when the seeing is so dank,
so settles in a pool of lamplight
to do some crewel, so bored
is she, so uncool; draws
in dresser's chalk
a pool of ruffles, a skirt,
and fits it out with a girl,
pony-tailed, pigeon-toed,
half animal, half girl:
Amanda lacks the gene
for nicey-nice

but works her stitches like a pro:
French knots dot the eyes;
herringbone feathers
the tail; rows of chain batten down
the satin-stitch ruffles.

Amanda likes the one-sided girl,
the tail grown sideways
from her head, a chimera of sorts,
like a horse with arms.

But on the verso, a chaos
of stitches, knots, zigzags,
turns and reversals,
a synapse map.
She flutters her hindmost
wings and sighs:
Amanda embroiders Amanda.