

*Editor's Note: Mirrors & Prisms: Writers of  
Marginalized Orientations & Gender Identities*

Welcome to *Nimrod International Journal's* Spring/Summer 2016 issue, *Mirrors & Prisms: Writers of Marginalized Orientations & Gender Identities*. Throughout our history, *Nimrod's* primary goal has been the discovery and promotion of writers whose work has not been available to mainstream American reading audiences or who have not yet received the attention that they deserve. In 1973 we shared the work of writers such as Linda Pastan and Olga Broumas in our *Women in the Arts* issue, and in 1977 we shone a spotlight on the voices of African and African-American writers in our *New Black Writing* issue. In 1981 we published *Arabic Literature: Then and Now*, highlighting work from traditional and modern writers from across the Arabic world, and we did the same for writers from India a few years later in *India: A Wealth of Diversity*. It is when we share the stories and poems of writers with diverse experiences and unique viewpoints—writers whose voices have not been heard as loudly as they should be—that we are truly fulfilling our mission. So it is with great joy and excitement that we present *Mirrors & Prisms: Writers of Marginalized Orientations & Gender Identities*.

*Mirrors & Prisms* features the work of writers who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual, or anywhere under the umbrella term MOGAI (marginalized orientations, gender identities, and intersex). While *Nimrod* has always published the work of such authors (and indeed James Land Jones, *Nimrod's* founder, was himself gay and fought for gay rights in Georgia in the 1970s as a professor of literature), we have never before devoted an entire issue to LGBTQIA writers. To do so now, we believe, is not only to continue *Nimrod's* tradition of bringing less-heard writers to the literary forefront, but to make clear what *Nimrod* has always known: that LGBTQIA writers have stories that can make a difference to all readers, of all sexualities and gender identities.

As with our recent issue *Lasting Matters*, which featured only writers age 57 and over, we decided to focus this issue solely on LGBTQIA writers. While we firmly believe that straight allies are vital, we wanted to give our writers a space entirely of their

own, a space to tell their own stories. Additionally, focusing on only LGBTQIA writers allowed us to accept poems, stories, and creative nonfiction without regard for subject matter. In this issue, you'll find work on all subjects, rather than only stories of coming out, sexuality, and identity. To keep the issue open in this way was very important to us, as we wanted to honor the breadth and depth of writing by our contributors, rather than limit their writing to a single aspect of their lives.

Thus, we present an issue filled to the brim, one overflowing with prose and poems that reflect an exciting range of topics by writers from all walks of life and publishing histories, with our contributors ranging from those well known in the LGBTQIA community to high school students making their publication debuts. The *Voyager* spacecrafts take on an extraordinary new life in Jessica Rae Bergamino's poems of life, death, relationships, and space. Old stories of all kinds get a new spin as myth and math meet in Allen Salerno's "Orpheus Considers a Geometric Proof," a twisted modern fairy tale takes hold in Kelly Magee's "Nobody Understands You Like You," and Baba Yaga roams New York City in Charlie Bondhus's "Baba Yaga and the Book." The physicality of our lives stands front and center in Caroline M. Mar's poem "Body," while Eleanor Lerman takes us on a journey in the opposite direction in her story "The Life of the Mind." Love appears in all its forms, from that of brothers and sisters in Lucien Darjeun Meadows's "Following I-64 West" to the love of partners in Ellen Bass's "Kissing After Illness" to the lost love of youth in Shelley Ettinger's "Ginny Calabrese." Here too you will find tales of coming out, sexuality, marriage, and politics. Laura Jok explores the changing friendship of two teenage girls on the cusp of adulthood in "The Love of God"; Matthew Hittinger confronts what the DOMA ruling did and did not confer in his two poems; and Bonnie J. Morris describes her own experiences documenting the LGBT movement in "Writing in Women's Bars." And all this is just a sampling of the fascinating, assured, and compelling work within these pages.

I'll close by sharing a last thought. When we announced this issue, we hoped the response would be positive, but we had not anticipated the level of enthusiasm from writers across the country and around the world. And not only did we receive notes

of general enthusiasm; rather, one of the comments that we saw over and over again was a thankfulness that *Nimrod* would decide to honor the work of LGBTQIA authors. The fact that so many authors expressed this same sentiment is, in our opinion, proof that issues like this have value, even as great strides are being made for LGBTQIA rights, and that the field of literature in general still has a long way to go to achieving full parity for LGBTQIA writers.

And now, I hope that you will sit back and enjoy the fine writing before you, in the way that it both mirrors the experiences of writers and readers around the world and displays a prismatic rainbow of new and brilliant voices.



Ashley Inguanta, photograph