

*Editor's Note*

At some point in each of our lives, we need refuge: space that makes us feel safe, protected, and sheltered. Where do we find refuge? How do we find it? What forms does it take? Refuge may be a physical space, as small as a favorite room or as large as a new country, or it may be a mental space, a way that we find security within our own minds. Refuge may be found within people, from family to friends to people we connect with only through the internet. Whether it's something we've found, or something that we're still seeking, the idea of refuge carries power.

For our spring/summer 2024 issue, *Refuge*, we asked writers to consider the concept of refuge in both its literal and its metaphorical dimensions. Refuge takes many forms here, beginning with refuge found in place, such as the slow pace and peace of the Åland islands in Kelly Rowe's "Island Quietude," but also in the music and beat of a nighttime city club, as in Aaron Landsman's "Track 1 — *Détente, Turn of the Century Remix*." Mary Francesca Fontana describes the delicious freedom of wandering through a city not your own in her poem "Divorce." Seeking refuge from Chile's strict abortion laws, the narrator of Catalina Infante Beovic's "An Island" travels to Chiloé, a Chilean archipelago where the continent is said to end and break off into pieces. Nature is also a place of refuge, from Bex Hainsworth's "Shoreline Abecedarian" to Jane Dickerson's "Reverie at the Other Como" to Angela Kirby's "Woods."

We also share work that shows the cost of seeking refuge, as in Nancy Eimer's "Spring Moon Over a Valley," which shines the moon's light on the objects left behind by migrants during perilous journeys to reach places of safety. Lynn Shoemaker's "Idomeni" offers a look into the pain, loss—and still, grace—found in a refugee camp in Greece, and Jody Winer's "A Human Body" paints a physical picture of the way homelessness can mark a person.

Refuge is not just place, however; it is often people. Many of our writers turn to mothers as refuge, as in Tina Kelley's and H. G. Dierdoff's poems "Cleaning Out Mom's Storage Unit at Assisted Living" and "I Place My Mother in a Scripture." Relationships with friends and partners can also provide vital refuge in Jake Phillips's "Friend; or another morning after bingeing *Kids Baking Championship*" and Phillip Watt Brown's "In My Dream We Were in Eden."

These are just a few examples from an issue full of work that will comfort you, concern you, and make you think, and that we hope will provide its own small place of refuge.

In addition to work submitted for our theme and for our open submission period, our spring issue also contains the poems and stories honored in our 7th annual Francine Ringold Awards for New Writers. The Ringold Awards honor writers at the beginning of their careers, and so they are one of our favorite programs, highlighting our 67-year mission to discover, publish, and promote the work of new writers, and this year's winners are exceptional. Poetry winner Johanna Magin's liminal poems hide a raw and powerful punch within their delicately crafted lines, while fiction winner Zen Ren's "Content Violation" offers an adept examination of identity and what it means to be good, as it follows a young woman working as a social media content moderator. Identity plays a strong role in the fine work by our honorable mentions as well, and they, along with our winners, are writers to watch.

This has been a hard editor's note for me to write, because it is my last one. Though I had looked forward to serving as Editor-in-Chief for many more years, life is a story in progress, and sometimes the next chapter takes a turn you didn't expect.

My story with *Nimrod* started when I walked into our offices as a college freshman in the fall of 1999. Having grown up on Hollywood images of the publishing industry, I'd expected a shiny, sleek place and was a bit surprised by *Nimrod's* overstuffed, ramshackle rooms, but I quickly learned that, as with books, what mattered at *Nimrod* was what was inside and not how it looked on the outside. And what was inside *Nimrod* was a profound and lasting love of poems and stories. I have been proud to serve as a *Nimrod* intern, Associate Editor, Managing Editor, and Editor-in-Chief, because I believe that our mission is a vital one. One of the very best things about stories in all their forms is their ability to bring us new understanding of those who are different from ourselves. Being able to spend twenty-four years of my life sharing the work of writers from across the globe, from historically marginalized groups, and from first-time writers has been a privilege, and an endeavour that I am glad to have been part of. And so, until our paths meet again:

Write bravely. Be kind. Read well.