

Editor's Note

WITH THIS ISSUE, *NEW ENGLAND REVIEW* WELCOMES OUR NEW poetry editor, Rick Barot. While Rick is known out in the world for his accomplishments as a poet, essayist, and teacher, I've more recently learned that he also spends time assembling minimalist washi tape collages and has read, among many other things, all five volumes of *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, more than once over. In the course of selecting poems for this issue, I've also discovered that he has a penchant for asking the hard questions, the big questions: What is *NER* for? What is our role in current events and conversations? What makes a piece of writing last beyond its immediate publication date? Must it, will it, should it? Why is so much of what we select so dark? When it comes to the poems individually he's just as inquisitive and presses just as hard. He examines what may have been intended versus what has been said, what one person might hear and another will not. And once he asks his questions, he actually listens to the response, turns responses into conversations, and conversations into the articulation of a vision for what literature and literary magazines can do.

What we're going for, then, he said is "rigor *and* amplitude." In other words, *NER* is a place for what's new and what's urgent, but it's also a place where longevity matters. While we can never be sure if a particular piece of writing will live beyond its immediate context, we can look at it from various angles, at different times of day, put it through various tests. Even then sometimes you just can't explain what makes it work and why you're certain that it does. We'll make mistakes, of course, but I know that, like his predecessor—and like our hard-working associate editors in prose—Rick brings exactitude *and* joy to the conversation; interrogation *and* an appreciation for the risk writers take each time they create something new.

Rick is no stranger to this magazine; he's just pulled his chair closer to the table. He first came to *NER* as a poet, appearing as far back as 1998 (19.3). Just before we enlisted him as poetry editor in 2014, we published his essay "The Image Factory" (34.3-4). In between he served for several years as a submissions reader, where he evaluated thousands of poems for possible publication in our pages.

In his first issue as poetry editor, Rick set out to present a selection of poets who'd never published in *NER* before. He contacted some of his poetry "heroes," some people who, as he said, seem like they should have been in *NER* but just hadn't been caught in the net, and others who just had not yet found a place here. In keeping with that intention, all the poets in this issue appear in *NER* for the first time, so at the same time as we welcome Rick to his new role, we also welcome these twelve poets to our pages.

The National Endowment for the Arts has granted *NER* \$10,000 again in 2015 to publish and promote the magazine and its website. We used much of our 2014 grant from the NEA to pay writers, raising our honorarium for the first time in twenty years. Because of this new grant we'll be able to continue paying at a higher rate through the next volume. But this year we're going to do even better: beginning in 2015 we will pay contributors to *NER* Digital, our feature of original writing for the web. Up until now writers have been gracious enough to allow their work to be published online for the gift of a subscription to *NER*, but now we'll be able to offer them an honorarium as well.

As we enter this new phase for *NER* Digital, we'd like to tip our hats to associate editor J. M. Tyree for his dedication to the project—for masterminding the idea and raising it up through its first few years. While he has recently shifted his editorial focus over to the journal's nonfiction, *NER* Digital continues to grow under the direction of managing editor Marcy Parlow, who brings new energy and attention to this lively corner of our website. Our current series—"Confluences"—has so far featured imaginative responses to photographs, films, paintings, and poems, with short personal essays on Ingmar Bergman, Vivian Maier, Dostoevsky, Kara Walker, Hal Hartley, Gaudi, Tammy Wynette, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Anselm Kiefer, and more.

NEA support for *NER* in 2015 equals more support for literature and its makers. Thank you, National Endowment for the Arts, and thank you for reading. Now turn the page.

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