JUDGE RAE ARMANTROUT Chooses ROBERT WOOD LYNN as 2021 YALE YOUNGER POETS WINNER FOR MOTHMAN APOLOGIA

New Haven—Yale University Press is pleased to announce a winner in the 2021 Yale Series of Younger Poets competition. The judge, prize-winning and critically acclaimed poet Rae Armantrout, has chosen Robert Wood Lynn’s manuscript, *Mothman Apologia*. This is Armantrout’s first selection since being named judge of America’s longest-running poetry prize, succeeding Carl Phillips.

Armantrout says: “The Mothman was an apparition seen by several people in the skies of rural West Virginia in the mid 1960s. When a bridge collapsed, he was construed as a harbinger of disaster. There have been so many disasters since then, appearing at an ever-increasing rate. Where is the harbinger? In the long poem *Mothman Apologia*, the Mothman reappears as a kid growing up in Appalachia, where he is a helpless witness to devastation both personal and public, from strip-mined landscapes and towns awash in Oxycontin to the loss of a lover. Robert Wood Lynn has written about tragedy without either grand-standing or giving in to self-pity. The Mothman has always been an equivocal messenger. Here he begins to doubt his own existence as soon as he scans the internet (much as anyone deep in a ‘flyover’ state might do). It’s possible to compare this work with John Berryman’s *Dream Songs* or with documentary poetry like *Salient* by Elizabeth T. Gray. As a reader, I was often surprised, even engrossed, and never once bored! How often can you say that?”
Of his recent win, Robert Wood Lynn says: “I am so grateful for this honor and to be included in this esteemed series. My manuscript, *Mothman Apologia*, explores the complications of being young in a rural area, an experience that resists the pastoral and the provincial. I want to reach people with that. I am so thankful for Rae Armantrout and Yale University Press for believing in this book. For believing in the Mothman, if just while reading it.”

Yale University Press will publish Lynn’s book in April 2022. The manuscript is the 116th volume in the series. Its last volume, Desiree C. Bailey’s *What Noise Against the Cane*, will be published by Yale University Press on April 13, 2021.

A native of Virginia, writer Robert Wood Lynn is a graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law and an MFA candidate in poetry at New York University, where he teaches creative writing in the undergraduate writing program and serves as Art Editor for *Washington Square Review*. His writing has been featured in such outlets as *American Literary Review*, *Blackbird*, *New Ohio Review*, and *Michigan Quarterly Review*, among others.

Awarded since 1919 by Yale University Press, the Yale Series of Younger Poets celebrates the most prominent new American poets by bringing the work of these artists to the attention of the larger public. Earlier winners of the prize include such giants as Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery, and Robert Hass. It is the longest-running poetry prize in the United States.

Yale University Press will also continue its partnership with The James Merrill House. Winners of the Series will receive one of the five writing fellowships offered at The James Merrill House in Stonington, CT. The fellowship provides a furnished living space and daily access to James Merrill’s apartment for a writer in search of a quiet setting to complete a project of literary or academic merit.

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