

THE NIMROD LITERARY AWARDS
The Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry

FIRST PRIZE
MARY-ALICE DANIEL

Disease Map

It's about my aunt getting tuberculosis.
The outbreak in her village is *devilry* after 1 death, *risk* at 10.

You can reduce anything to a set of numbers and elevate
any number to a name: *pandemic* at 100, when the WHO trucks roll in.

Sentinels for infectious diseases are usually chickens, birds, or horses.
In this case, it's tiny birds, learning to sing

the same way children talk—a slow process of trying
and flailing and a fucked-up, un-birdlike song.

Otherwise, not much warning, except a general wrongness.
Hunger and nausea coupled. On the disease map, the wash of pink

covering Borno state is impolite; it alludes too obviously
to their swollen gums.

I believe there are lifetime statistics that should be kept on everyone.
How many times a disease has saved your life:

My grandfather was captured as a slave
and released.

A coastline is an immeasurable thing.
Depending on how close you zoom in to how much detail,

the twists and turns can make any boundary infinite.
But he walked that coast, on lepered legs, so tired

his soul was just dragging his body along on its shoulders,
back to the ancestry of his infection.