#### THE PABLO NERUDA PRIZE FOR POETRY

#### **FINALIST**

#### Hannah Dow

## Realizations While Staying in Other People's Apartments

It is not difficult to imagine that we could live here, together, with the hanging plants, Swedish soaps, strong water pressure.

At this confession, you turn toward the wall's discerning arrangement of framed maps and suggest we try finding ourselves,

our histories. *There we are*, I point to a shade of blue that could be heaven—this, a betrayal no less mundane than any of my others.

What is heaven but another word for prison? The great gray mass of North America reminds me of places I think I will not travel—

those which recall everything I know and do not know about you, us. The only thing I want to know right now is

what use it will be, after I have died, to look back on the map of my life and see how many times I was near to you and did not know it,

all the ways we might have saved each other.

## My Mother Tries to Teach Me How to Pray

When I fold my hands together I do not think of my childhood bedtime ritual: doubling my small

body under yours to kneel where you were kneeling to ask the Lord that we might live another day. When

I fold my hands together I do not think of you, but of an almost-lover who folded sheets of paper into birds.

*Dear dove,* he'd say, kneeling beside me as I closed my eyes to stars and he bent me into the poems

he tucked inside his pocket. Unlike other mothers, you never asked me to close my eyes when I prayed.

Even then you must have known the fear I had—not of darkness, but of sudden light—the knowledge that

everything is made to disappear. When I kneel, I think of begging for my life. I have learned to call this *prayer*.

## Bildungsroman

Trumpets without tongues, we wove lilies into the baskets. When they asked us what we meant by these, we'd say "mary, mary" and be still. We lined the baskets on the sill...

-Eleanor Rand Wilner, "Without Regret"

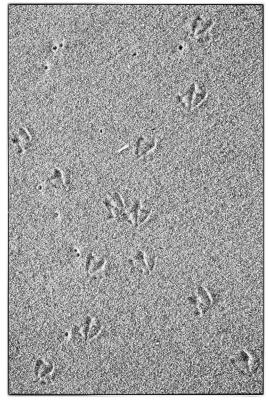
Trumpets without tongues, we wove lilies into the shoots of one another's hair. Light into dark into light, I'd never seen anything so splendid or straightforward. Your fingers moved with the unruly patience only a child can manage, and I remember how clean your palms were despite our digging, gathering. The way you folded stem over stem, green over green

into the baskets. When they asked us to come inside, we obeyed and left everything behind. And when they looked away, we danced in the kitchen to your father's smoking songs. You lifted my hands to your shoulders, the shallow slope of your neck. Each time I glanced at our reflection in the lofty windows, I knew we were each imagining the other into others, into saints—and if ever asked

what we meant by these, we'd say "mary, mary" but mean "man, man." (Or I did.)
When did I make myself the tragic one, find the perfect flower to take me far away from you, pass myself around and into the soft and unkind hands of numb and unkind men who never drew me into themselves the way you drew a field of lilies with a single embrace? You taught me, like a trumpet, to hum and then be still. We lined the baskets on the sill.

# The Seafloor of Your Heart Sings Against It

Something left you late this morning, so says the untwisting of small tracks. Now you field-note what you are learning: that whatever left you late this morning came to make a fossil of its warning. Yours is a loneliness that doubles back like the animal that left you late this morning & the twisting & untwisting of small tracks.



Steve Lautermilch, Palette (Gebo), photograph