



Cate Lycurgus

Given Names

Who could cling to the myth of accretion when arrived, like we have, at this precipice? Where cypress once flanked makeshift steps now tumbled

unto sea, we have to keep back to see the system break, wild spray kick up & anoint the rock as it takes Purísima with. Sandstone sanded down

to sand, only half what it was—the remainder shoring roots that will also go—: where what it is is its undoing. We understood, with time; not only

would the outcrop cleave, sea pink drop off the shoulder, verge un-shore itself from street; but that we would lose all standing. All that remains of ours,

& the stint when it seemed dominion & redoubt could coexist, has retreated—: quarter mile back, the Bliss Point lighthouse blinks, pointless,

into the blinding day. As though its pulse might lure ships in, hold strong surf at bay. Below, riprap does its best—hauled & heaped against the face—

but steady friction reshapes. At the edge of the world, we sang in the round with gulls & killdeer, an airbus coursing overhead—combusting last millennia's

fens—none overlapping our cries. For belonging. Longing. To sustain what we couldn't save, our throats graveled, choked, so we gulped from green

longnecks tossed to shatter; that shards would one day return to us, softened, somehow mattered. How many filled a jar was anyone's guess; each hunk

confirmed how oceans can take up what's treacherous, render it smooth; yet one was never enough—we needed proof after proof. That this was not

remarkable: to be wrecked beyond use, past all recognition & still worth scooping up. We who were A Part of All We Had Touched. We who were Apart From Nothing.

Cate Lycurgus's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Best American Poetry, American Poetry Review, Ploughshares, Kenyon Review, and elsewhere. Cate lives and teaches in San Jose, California.