

## How to Win an Argument

Until it was too dark to see it,  
Bird Rock battled the ocean, bending  
under each breaker like a lifesaver braving  
deeper water, the muscular booms of  
water sallying through a breach of rock, depth  
charges spattering its back with spray.  
And long after, the sooty oyster catchers  
with their cherry lipstick beaks, stumbling and  
hopping above the wave as if they'd forgotten  
they could fly, finding their roost in dry stone,  
Bird Rock fights on. The sea is always a mouth  
and the night is always an ear. Everyone  
knows this, who knows anything. Even when  
the sky and sea are like two pressed palms  
squeezing the plumline of the horizon flat  
and the ocean liners and yachts are strung  
on that line like a count of beads, even then  
Bird Rock fights and the sea shoves back.  
Neither gives an inch, neither blinking at all.  
If they knew how to stop, they've forgotten.  
The cautious crabs clinging to the sides of the  
rock through gnashing water and obstinate stone,  
do not know the answer, they keep to their hollows  
like chastised servants. No one has the answer.  
The beach is a blessing and the wind is a curse,  
everyone knows that, who knows about beaches,  
and when the wind scoops ice-cream foam out  
of the placid sea, a comb-over of highlights and

heaving, Bird Rock holds against it, knuckles white,  
face into the worst of it, its back to the headlands.  
They could be a couple, like that Air BNB roulette that  
dropped those tourists on us for a two-AM screech  
in our neighbour's house for two week's running.  
She took him through the script line by line each night  
until morning, he was obstinate and surly as the rough  
quartz and iron of Bird Rock. She was as wild as the  
greenest waves, the seaweed and the pipis in her hair.  
We thought that they would love and fight forever.  
And so too Bird Rock, and so the black ocean  
batter each other, and there's no better reason given.  
The night is a question and the day is an answer.  
Everyone knows that, who knows about darkness.  
In the morning, you'll find the island still fighting  
and stubborn, the water streaming from its seaweed  
fingers. You should not need to ask who will  
win: for the night is an ear, but the sea is a mouth.