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## Survey at 70°N

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RACHEL MCCARTHY

## Survey at 70°N

We're here to rename the named -  
to pronounce the drowned coves  
and redraw the coast.

Yet what troubles me most  
are not the abandoned homes  
staggering toward the edge

or even the guillemots  
huddled on their thin ledge  
but the wind singing to itself;

sounding one low sweeping note  
as it tunnels clean through snowfall  
into the wild heart of the Arctic.

I know I'd be lost  
but it's all I can do  
not to follow.

\*

Late, in your hotel room  
we take turns nipping at a flask of Absolut  
and talk of tongues of ice  
renouncing themselves:

*Barents, Novaya Zemlya, Svalbard*  
I don't mention the wind  
despite the fact  
you're already drunk

and would be brave enough  
to kiss me properly, once.

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