

Rain of Statues

By Sarah Lindsay

From the Mithridatic Wars, first century BC

Our general was elsewhere, but we drowned.
While he rested, he shipped us home
with the bulk of his spoils
that had weighed his army down.
The thrashing storm
that caught us cracked the hulls
and made us offerings to the sea floor —
a rain of statues, gold, and men.

Released from service,
done with war,
the crash and hiss muted,
we fell through streams of creatures
whose lives were their purpose.
We settled with treasure looted
from temples of rubble Athenian Greece;
among us, bronze and marble gods and goddesses
moored without grace,
dodged by incurious fish.
Their power was never meant to buoy us —
our pleasures were incidental gifts —
but, shaken by their radiance in our dust,
we had given them our voices.

Their faces, wings, and limbs
lie here with our sanded bones
and motionless devices.
Little crabs attempt to don rings
set with agate and amethyst,
and many an octopus,
seeking an hour of rest,
finds shelter in our brain-cases.
So we are still of use.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Source: *Poetry* (April 2014)



Sarah Lindsay's fourth book is *Debt to the Bone-Eating Snotflower* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013). She has received the 2012 Carolyn Kizer Prize, a Lannan Literary Fellowship, and a Pushcart Prize.

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