

Isabel Balée

DILUVIUM // A BLUEJAY

sun-drenched

& swollen

mother

of golden

breath thinning

mother

bleeding

starvation

labored,

float away with me

in a seashell,

the sky entombed
in my chest ripped
sky ripped out
 of me
mother so cruelly
 ripped out
with a pair of pliers

 the back of my mouth
stuffed with gauze
 blood & saliva
courses my jowls

the stars blood thinning
 deep
keel me over
 & curdle me
 earth

is pulled out
from under my feet

I cannot fall without
an earth
to catch me

dying

annis pluribus

inhumed

inauditum

in my sternum

too private

my eyes

are cisterns

my mouth a brackish hole

thinning

flooded

lungs

where

a bird sat sadly;

where a bluejay

too private

for birds

my

calcified

blood

Mother O bluejay:

water rises

after the breach

growing in me

in tunnels of ribcage

& detritus
of gutted
cathedrals
where
a bird from the swamp
sat sadly on the roofs,

the dying I know
it is *water*
prevailing
cartilage

& high mountains
under whole heaven
covered,

anemic, aortic,

Mother High Water,
where is the light? in the hole
of my lung
where you planted a tree?
where a bird *from the swamp*
watched, sadly?
my roof mother
exhumed *watching*
dense moss
dying I know

I know it

It is an oak;

high water
convulses
to the feet
of the saints

steeped in
brackish

her body bleeds inward

into the city

without her

she moves in &
out of me

*the saints
could not protect*

my mother

submerged

can not protect

me

the empty
part of me
spreads to every organ
the empty gutted house
of me
cleans her mother's bedroom
of reading glasses tiny bowls
& tiny scrawlings

O light leave me
supine &
spill-over,
a long-necked bird
in lonely
weighted
sleep,

from the window

the buds
turn yellow & curl

before falling
from the tree
prematurely;

lay with me

in the water

let your lung overflow

the brackish

let your blood calcify

the oxbows

the egrets

est tot aquas

removed from living

memory

meadows

inundavisse

engulfed

like fish

overrun

in the hallway

they tell me

I will not

remember

but my mind

does not protect me

does not

protect

my *family*

anxious

about the new

neoplastic

skyline

at the end

of the hallway

clinical findings

devoted

to consultation

with family

representing

blood products &

a bluejay

perched

without your

swollen sunshine

is not

a bluejay,

a bluejay

perched

is a cistern

effusing

between me

& the living

undifferentiated

daughter at

bedside today

head on mother's

pleural effusion

born in reverse the daughter now

the mother lung

here is the water mommy

drink it through

the straw

whenever

you are ready

to go

let go

“i will be ok”

Notes on the poem:

Some lines adapted from Genesis 7:19

The following lines are influenced by historical research of Christian Rohr.

From his article *Writing a Catastrophe. Describing and Constructing Disaster Perception in Narrative*:

“The saints could not protect” is adapted from the passage, “at such a time, even the saints could not provide protection from the flooding, indeed they themselves were not spared,” (Rohr 98).

“Where a bird sat sadly / from the swamp” is adapted from a latin transcription of the great flood of Linz in 1501 (Rohr 91).

“annis pluribus inauditum est tot aquas inundavisse” is an account of destructive events from Humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini: “For many years no one heard of such a flood (annis pluribus inauditum est tot aquas inundavisse) like that which we ourselves watched rise in the new city quarter of Vienna. “ (Rohr 98).

Bibliography:

Rohr, Christian. “Writing a Catastrophe. Describing and Constructing Disaster Perception in Narrative Sources from the Late Middle Ages”. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 32.3 (121) (2007): 88–102.