

Omens

The Romans believed in omens:
a cock crows at midnight,
an overcast day portends
disaster: comets, falling stars,
haruspices deciphered rebuses
in the entrails of turtle-doves
...augurs of evil outcomes.

The Greeks fed sacred grottos.
At Delphi, fetid volcanic fumes
foretold Atropos's trails
to Pythonesses possessed.

The Ancients knew
the terror of Erinnyes,
the meaning of divergence from the will
of gods or genii,
hubris,
the wrong turn at a crossroads,
crisis
...infants with sharp knives.

We moderns being wiser, scientific,
attend high councils, pretend
to understand tyrants, presidents,
command crusades, jihads,
plagues, while asking why
why

black tarred seagulls, dead whales
wash up upon our shores

from the ever-rising seas.