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## Miasma

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SAM SAX

## *Miasma*

of course when the plague came  
those who could  
left the city

the wealthy  
burdened their horses  
with precious stones  
& dead flowers.  
—left their houses  
bolted & prayed for

while gone  
they burdened their children  
with stories of a homeland  
before it'd fallen  
into the teeth of rats

with the doctors gone  
anyone who wanted  
could treat the sick  
how they wanted

wear a bird mask  
dark cloak & a cane  
to prod the abrasions  
deviling across  
the sufferings' backs

it's an old story, one world  
ends & a man gets rich  
selling the copper wire  
in the walls

another flips a quarter  
& buys the flooded  
neighborhood

another patents a medicine  
old as the earth

it was once believed illness  
was a punishment  
from god

now we have machines  
that show the small crow-  
shaped tumors growing  
in my grandmother's brain

now my uncle can have  
an eradiated vein planted  
just above his heart

a doctor pads his white  
coat with bones until it flares  
into wings

when the children  
returned to their city

they found their houses  
filled with birds, birds,  
birds