

The Cats of Claudel

Should I not have cried about the flood?
The mud sluiced back the statuettes
that I made, one shelf, two...
The others were not catastrophic,
and among the figures, the faces,
balanced my cats, their whiskers,
silver water, their meows, my pulse...
Where are they now, now after
the plaster's been salvaged,
and the kiln-set clay, and the marble,
not mammoth, but long as my vision
which once sought such light—

Sculpting from that
was a whirling dervish in wreckage,
and I should have laughed
about the backed up Seine, should
have done as my cats did:
found a spot, curled for sun,
the milk of it, the ivory...

Still, of all that, I made a show,
my triumph, the *Salon*,
though nobody believed,
nobody paid, except strays
with a fondness for felines,
their genius of just being—

The Seine might take care of *this* too,
and *these*... the depths... a whoosh...
and then crash...white chunks entering
indigo...

To de-sculpt is a pick ax at my blood,
not liquid silk, not satiation, but
breaking and dust——
I suppose that's when the cats left,
yet here, in these prisons, a roving
eye, a scraggily head reminds me
of their company, and the silence,
the music, in stone
I created.

<https://stephenmead.bandcamp.com/track/the-cats-of-claudel>