Ex Machina

By Linda Gregerson

When love was a question, the message arrived
    in the beak of a wire and plaster bird. The coloratura
    was hardly to be believed. For flight,

it took three stagehands: two
    on the pulleys and one on the flute. And you
thought fancy rained like grace.

Our fog machine lost in the Parcel Post, we improvised
    with smoke. The heroine dies of tuberculosis after all.
Remorse and the raw night air: any plausible tenor

might cough. The passions, I take my clues
    from an obvious source, may be less like climatic events
    than we conventionalize, though I’ve heard

of tornadoes that break the second-best glassware
    and leave everything else untouched.
There’s a finer conviction than seamlessness

elicits: the Greeks knew a god
    by the clanking behind his descent.
The heart, poor pump, protests till you’d think

it’s rusted past redemption, but
    there’s tuning in these counterweights,
celebration’s assembled voice.


Source: Fire in the Conservatory (Dragon Gate, 1982)