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)