

KAREN RIGBY

Nightingale & Firebird

As if the song encoded in the wheel could railroad
to the garden, the mechanical grind transformed

the nightingale to music-box, the music to evergreen
vistas. The firebird was another story: inventory

of dust on the wings. Dried blood on the red-gold
coat. One thread about tin substitutes for splendor,

the other a ghost-image for your burdened heart.
Easy to confuse the black chinoiserie with feathers

torn from ashes, twin halves for a childhood fear:
you were never loved. You could surrender

to the hammer or the flame but no one would come.
That which they called *wonder* was only a greased key

in a courtesan's palm, and when the bird sang, no one
heard the sound a wing makes when the current breaks.