

Ken Meisel – Two Poems

Andrea Amati & the Creation of the Violin

Underneath the rose window of the Cathedral of Cremona
he is struck by the shape of the shin bone volute,

that small exotic sea shell found on the beaches of Japan,
which an artist has sketched for him because it resembles

the body of woman he knows, lying serene on a divan.
And this, because Amati has become enchanted

by the way the human voice is but the hark and hallelujah
back to Heaven in prayer. And this because Amati

is in love with a woman whose body mimics the structure
of a shin bone volute, which is a shell with wide hips

and a throat slender enough to hold a streak of song birds
inside it, who glide from flower to flower in prayer,

and who sing all the moments of rapture into the wind.
And this, because Amati has been called by God to make a violin.

God appears to Amati as a dead bird near the cathedral
whose broken body, lying there on the cobblestone street,

is stiff and browned by the day, and so the violin maker
is inspired to bring back to life the human longing for God

inside the breast plate of an instrument, which God tells Amati
will be the way we'll push holy praise and *vox humana*

through the arc and stretch of song, which will be the violin,
which is, itself, the body of man and woman here on earth,

with sloping shoulders and curved waist, and a hole in the gut
made deep with loneliness and the well spring of prayer.

And so he carves the wood into a musical instrument
and he strings a bow with the hair of a horse, which is the male

animal God placed in front of the chariots of fire
which carry all the souls backwards and forward to heaven.

This, Amati thinks, will be the lifted structure and voice
of the human heart singing a way back to heaven,

and so he carves it, shapes it into a body like ours,
gives it the name *violin*, which means make a path back to God.

One Angel, Listening to Mozart & Seeking Her Birth, Goes Free

The angels, gathered together under the green cypress trees
and listening to Mozart's Violin Concerto # 1 in B Flat,

were arguing amongst themselves on what color to be
as they took on human form. The one with the large flea eyes

had said, bluegum eucalyptus, whereas the other had argued
for the red of the western bleeding heart, and the other still

had held forth for the mottled flecks of white alder bark.
The skin of the human is *imperfect*, like the flecks of an alder

he'd said, whereas all the other colors are just encaustic wax
on the realms of glamour. This said, the angels became

irresolute and agitated as they watched the men streaking
in swarms below on the streets of Vienna at Christmas time,

and amongst them, all the ladies adorned in lights. The violins
of Mozart's Concerto, which God had told the angels

to listen to as the singular force of rapture that celebrates
how nothingness turns to new life on an umbilical string,

played on through the muted stillness of the cypress trees.
All this as God looked on from a swathe of operatic silence.

"Love is a *portent of emotional strength*," the one angel, stroking
himself like an entangled moon beam, said, and the other,

dressing himself up as a western pasqueflower, argued,
"beauty is based on frequency invariance, a continuity of form,"

whereas as giving over to one's death is like an adagio to God,
which is, he argued, "rapture, transcendence." The one girl

angel amongst them, herself a rubberlip sea perch, swept herself
aside like an incessant, restless mesmerism with bee wing fins,

and she fell upon a great rock in the middle of the glade and said,
"the soul coming into life on earth is a violin cutting itself a place

through beauty invariance and *all* the frequencies, which is *birth—*”
and, exhausted by the loss of air in lungs, yelled in gasps, “*I’m free.*”

Ken Meisel is a poet & psychotherapist from the Detroit area with publication credits that include *Spillway*, *Cream City Review*, *Concho River Review*, *Free Lunch*, *Sulphur River Literary Review*, *Rattle*, *River Oak Review*, *Byrant Literary Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Soundings East*, *The Chaffin Journal* and *Lake Effect*. He is the author of five poetry collections. They are *Beautiful Rust* [Bottom Dog Press, 2009], *Just Listening* [Pure Heart Press, 2007], *Before Exiting* [Pure Heart Press, 2006] and *Sometimes the Wind* [March Street Press, 2002]. The chapbook version of *Just Listening* won the 2006 Swan Duckling chapbook contest. *Rattle* magazine chose one of his poems for their ‘best of’ collection, published in 2006.