

*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.