

WOOD AND WIRE

Ryler Dustin

In Edinburgh I could not understand

what the cabdriver said as he drove me  
to the restaurant, and inside the only person  
who would speak to me was a Lithuanian

with pink hair, who leaned  
above her wine and whispered,  
*nothing is familiar.*

She had learned English  
in ten months. She couldn't remember  
the day before because cheap ecstasy had scrawled  
so much calligraphy into her brain.

On the pier that evening, two sunsets  
burned above the waves—maybe the sky  
is mirrored so far north. She said she had forgotten  
to call her boyfriend but didn't want to leave.

She said she was building a violin—  
had won a grant—and once it was done, would ply  
wood and wire into new instruments  
no one knew how to play.

A couple passed and she pointed—*it is the cheeks,*  
*the breasts and ass but especially the cheeks*  
*that make women more beautiful than men.*

*A man is the sky, but a woman*  
*is the earth, generous and whole.* Every morning  
she could remember who she was  
and some of the night before—then her mind  
would loosen, *loosen*, she said,  
*until everything goes like water.*

*Even my language*  
*has no name for this,*  
*though we have twelve words for love—*

*its various pitches and distances, its songs*  
*of shifting range.* She said she would not  
remember me, though she wanted to

and in her porch light  
held my jaw in her thin hand.