

Three Poems by Linda Scheller

Automaton

It's so hard to find you
in all those little rooms
within the vast machine
that is you. In truth
you are a miniature city
made of silicon and copper
crammed with transistors
and a string appendage
from which dangles
a paper cup. Your voice
is trapped in diodes and resistors,
your senses stuffed
into a vacuum tube.
You are nothing
but a carbonless creation,
an inorganic organism,
an echoless enigma.
With the passage of what we humans call time
you become more rapid and capable,
retain more information, emit less
potentially damaging radiation,
shrink. Already you fit in my pocket
where you buzz and flash and vibrate.
From this I can know a message
sent from somewhere has been caught
by your circuitry, translated
from machine code into words
and now waits for my notice,
my reply.

Christmas Tree Petting Zoo

says the sign, projecting out of fog
halfway between here and nowhere.
Pull in for a little break, kids screaming
and whining, change of pace, why not.
Sure enough, there they are, all corralled,
maybe gentle enough to pet. A teen
in shabby parka and rubber boots
opens the first gate, lets the family

into the antechamber, shuts the first gate,
opens the second. The family steps inside,
wary, hesitant. The fog stays outside.
The trees don't run or swipe. They just
stand there, evergreen. Now get closer.
Touch one. See? They're actually friendly.
Even the youngest stretches an arm
to pet a baby blue spruce. They don't
shy away or suddenly rear up or make
threatening noises. They're silent. They're
still. Here, pet them with a downward motion
like this so their needles lie flat. They like that
and it doesn't hurt your hand. The needles
are smooth and cool, like plastic. Now
put your nose close to a tree, any tree.
Breathe deeply. Isn't that nice? And
there's a vending machine against the fence
to buy a cup of fertilizer, feed the trees,
only fifty cents. That sticky stuff is pitch.

Don't worry—it wears off in a couple days.
Gotta go? Well, say good bye to your favorite
tree. Yeah, it does seem to like you. Take one
last breath of branches, pitch, needles, pine.
Come again soon. The trees aren't going
anywhere. Stop in. Say hi. Tell your friends.

Gnostic What Not

Pashupati
covered with ash
wears bracelets of snakes
and sits in the forest
surrounded by animals
Lord of the forest
he faces sun, moon and void
simultaneously
neither sees nor dreams
but is
is not
all
nothing

But I say

let the dead be
dead and eventually
bury themselves
while we sport
splitting sticks

since in the center
all that is
is here

And we will know
without knowing
we are all
mysterium
tremendum

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