

Linda Scheller

Colloquium of Fossils

Eternity crawls between storms.
While I wait, a panoply of fossils
speak. Ammonites and trilobites,
calcified legions, mineralized denizens
of inland seas remind me
of our human folly. In their era,
their forms suggest, they swam
and danced underwater, diving
where we now drive our cars
exhausting the ghosts of their kin,
unleashing new patterns of air,
more heat, and new extinctions.
Outdoors above the parking lot
clouds move east, carrying the rain
we lack to those who drown,
cursing their surfeit.

Here, the orchards command us
Pray for Rain, as if our supplications
might nullify an era of deforestation,
burning, digging and building.
Our gods are the puppets of those
whose whims and aggressions
divide us, lie and obfuscate.
Plants wither and rivers disappear
not because some tyrant in the sky
withholds the rain to punish us
for acting like the animals we are
but rather, because our species
proliferates without restraint.
Individuated creatures of nerves,
sense organs, and flesh
become peripheral devices
linked to a central processing unit
and we become automatons
of circuitry, tied to our wires
and bits and lighting, all powered
by underground lakes
of fossil fuel. The overlords

contend for its possession,
invoking the gods
in their call for war.
The overlords command us
Pray for Rain and stare
at your screen and cheer,
keep cheering, for frack's sake.

As we metalize ourselves,
the overlords disseminate propaganda,
spinning jingoism and advertising
discontent, garnering compliance
through mindless entertainment,
fear, and petty emulation.
The ammonites and trilobites tell me
use your body while you can.
Don't say we didn't warn you.

With a purse full of ammonites,
I drive home and sit on the concrete.
As I breathe, the oceans rise.
Within my children's children's time
this valley will become an inland sea.
Where owls now call and oak trees grow
new species of crustaceans will mate,
new organisms swim. New sediments
will settle and cover our civilization.
New fossils will form and remain
to speak of our era, new sandstone
impressions of highways and offices,
factories and malls, new pictures
in stone showing our conquest,
rape and murder of Earth.
New oil will pool where the remnants
of our bodies melt, collect and vaporize
as we become the fossil fuel
the puppet gods told us to love.

Mating Season

The birds ride bare branches
feeling spring, mixing it up.
God's chosen choose each other
they sing, clacking their beaks,
bristling.

Monterey

Dolphins, the captain said,
straight ahead
but all I saw were specks
on the colorless horizon.
No, there
called someone,
pointing to the right.
Tapering gray
they came at us
right angled to the boat
drawing closer, leaping clear
and arcing down, maybe seven
hurtling toward the stern.
They have to stop,
they'll hit the boat
I thought as they shot toward us
skipping on the surface.

They dove beneath the boat
then rose alongside, skimming
through waves, up for air
and straight for speed
racing us, darting under the boat
and up again, leaping in tandem
and flying in the rolling swells.

Water and air,
silver sky, silver skin
they swam with us
to greet scores of teaming
streamlined kin, flashing
fins and dipping flukes

and when we left the swirling pod
two stayed awhile beside the boat
swimming astern
as if the world were new again
and childhood friends
might kindly go with us
a little of the way home.

Linda Scheller is a writer and teacher who came to California's Central Valley from upstate New York. Her poetry and plays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies including Notre Dame Review, Plays, Hawaii Pacific Review, Poetry East, and More Than Soil, More Than Sky. She is a founding board member of the Modesto Stanislaus Poetry Center.