

## **Automata Factory**

*Poetry by Elizabeth Aoki*

1.

The only way you can get sick here  
is if you bring it with you, messy fluids smeared  
in fingerprints against the white diamond glass.  
Breathe hoarse steam against vibrating steel grates.  
Cough your flu unheard against the engines of the night.  
The workers wear white masks and helmets  
exoskeletons carve their sinews  
into windup toys with silver capillaries.  
Voices flit from radio to radio, barking orders  
less human-looking than their handiwork.

2.

It walks like a duck.  
Quacks like a duck.  
But as a trickle of oil leaks from its beak  
and behind, well --  
we know it is not a duck.

3.

This is the assembly line where they press down faces  
for market; they start out cerise, taupe, green  
and end up bronze, ebony, ivory, pink.  
The faces they give you repel disease,  
attract wealth, give off pheromones  
that will linger in hallways. But you  
will only speak the language of faces  
once you put them on. The ears  
are part of the deal and only buzz  
in a certain range. The poor are gone  
and you cannot smell them.  
Only a humming like a refrigerator  
constant and in the background  
might make its way to your jaw.  
Sometimes this face  
will clench and grind  
your prosthetic teeth in the night.  
You won't know it

except in your bones.  
No one would know anything  
to look at you.