

At the Apocalypse Party of the Rich

At the apocalypse party of the rich
all will be said and done.
The lords of the computing clouds
will walk like gods
through the nightmare gardens
of their savage fantasies,
through the enchanted forests
of their deepest desires.

From their floating city-states
they will dally with cinematic sunsets
delight in purling streams of duplicated waterfalls,
loungue in the shimmering shade of CGI palm trees,
private bison herds browsing the lawn's breeze.

From their heavenly dwellings of carbon and glass
they will revel in the recreational decadence of free enterprise,
in the metamorphic splendor of manipulated landscapes,
in the depthless aestheticism of design.

From the awful opulence of their lushly-rendered enclaves
they will parade and annihilate ecological life
in the same seamless moment,
transforming the wild into a designer oasis,
a theme-park arcadia.

*

At the apocalypse party of the rich
the altarpiece will be a
slab-like member,
a polystyrene bulge,
luxuriating on the mantle
as a wizened driftwood
or hanging, nubile and milky,
in snowy vacuum-sealed skin;
taut and dripping
in luminous plastic.
As they draw near,
each immortalist will whisper:

*Dear synthetic wonder,
dear alien divine,
tell me of how you achieved
eternal flesh.
Speak to me of your polymer body,
your everlasting repose,
your abiding bones.
Share with me the visions
of your viscous resin,
so that I, too, might live forever.*

*

At the apocalypse party of the rich
the lords of the computing clouds
will praise the economic imaginary
which blessed their furtive ambitions,

will raise a toast
to the economic model
wherein human collectivity
is figured as game theory:

*productive bodies
programmed by their own genes
to be rational and calculating
guarded and competitive*

*isolated chunks of mortal capital
contextless / transferable
disposable / replaceable
winners and losers
swirling, swirling
in the nebulous arms of finance*

so that the fabricated scarcity,
which would ready us to fight,
prepare us to exploit,
could be forgiven
as the trivial functions of a game;

so that radical indifference
could be called a necessity,
and hostile self-interest

a posture of victory.

*

At the apocalypse party of the rich
the lords of the computing clouds
(invisible seers of a secret system)
will celebrate freedom

the freedom through which
they wound their networked threads
of black cables and light diodes
(the hair of some sleek medusa),
wound their inorganic circuitry
into surveillance:

a glowing world of metrics
which claimed
private human experience
as raw material for sales;

digital inputs
(clicking, tracking)
that became prediction products
to trade in human futures.

Quietly, quietly
the lords of the computing clouds
(entrepreneurs of the intangible)
made hidden bargains
with the agency of the virtual,

trafficking ghostly collections of data,
shaping our behaviour
toward desired ends,
haunting our sense of will.

*

As for us,
these defeatist fears
are a troublesome tapestry:

alternately alarming and distant;
intimate and odious;

an objectionable plot—
yet inseparable
from how we live
and what is real

as we go about our play,
gazing into the one-way
mirror of the digital:

wanderers
foraging in a data flow
of photo-realist particles,
grazing an array
of orphan images and stray text,
twisting and teasing
the fabrics of digital selfhood,
materializing memory into code.

Translucent, template-people
creating citations of ourselves
in tiny tile mosaic
of pixel perception;
prosthetic creatures
making pacts
with mechanic companions.

*Moving landscapes
seen from a car window
flowers growing on a wall
a forest, a backpack, orchids
and someone inside a room,
coughing, clicking.*