

THE SERVER ROOM

a poem

Conor O'Callaghan



Smithereens Press

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smithereens.press@gmail.com



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Late evening – a relatively complex
complex of plate glass, workstations idle
but for process in situ, mail arriving –
oversees elements of good practice.
One has no charge to answer. The report said.

Even now there are floors where a blue skies
thinktank is thanking its lucky stars,
calendarising all foreseeable windows,
disassembling beneath into Easter's
veritable orangery of hols.

An auction site that shall remain nameless
-ly logged into pops one final alert.
Its watchlist's portable Olivetti
(vintage, aquamarine, some signs of use)
is ticking down in red, has been outbid.

There they blow, on the sandstone esplanade,
the gods, the designated parking bays,
barn conversions in the Peaks, wishing well,
whose minuted peaches soon as tabled
spray through local cable in bullet form.

Let the auction fallow. Folly it was,
a romance of keys that goosepimple pages,
of carriages returning with a chink
of light relief and with no memory
to speak of. Leave it grey out. Click Refresh.

Loaves and fishes in the beverage dock
surplus to the shindig for a dray horse
drifting out to grass; swipe-card/lanyard lost;
Morris dancers monthly in the atrium
embedding a culture of celebration

and ripe in bold like fruit unpicked in briar
a sent-from-BlackBerry 'wish you were there'
where *there's* a chichi Hoxton tapas dive
or that low-tide sandbar from Whitstable
through the Channel they euphemize 'The Street'...

of natural wastage, adapting to scale;
drop-in sessions at the multi-faith centre;
calls for papers 'Theorizing Normalcy
& the Mundane'; donations to a present
tense defecting for the private sector,

Such gorgeous nubless hubris! Source of which,
a door unmarked this side of History,
becomes a bonnet bee, a bugaboo
at hours like these with all one's colleagues split
and thirsts for loveknots slaked and spirits drab,

and below in sun the tram to Halfway
through the current plan, the ring road
chockablock with external stakeholders,
dominant drivers, opinion formers,
appropriate partners and other 'friends'.

Refresh. And lo! it lands, good news, on cue:
the gospel according to the apostles
of policy, their interim review
via ribbons of white Vatican smoke
or bargeloads towed on virtual canal,

words like the shadows of dirigibles
inching over the closest horizon,
lambs' wolves, bright wolds and dales of old flannel
refurbished for uncertain ages,
great folds of hosannas, angelic notes

provision for 'real life' experience,
husbandry in selected areas,
arias of a solitary central host
delivered to us from *in excelsis*,
a class of listserv lesser doxology,

all sung suds and bubbles as in some
luxury shower foam infomercial
their mission and vision of pastoral,
maintenance/enhancement of the estate,
emergent patterns, developing fields,

our offer's lingua franca reaped and baled
in the graces, airs, of summer's grammar,
green shoots, brand evolution, new markets,
the ale froth of quality, management,
such sumptuous fluff, acres of the stuff,

heavenly bouffant meringues of language,
focus and progression, hope's woolly vowels
working closely with the opalescence
of systems, the knowledge economy,
its argot's luminous opacity

like upholstered immaculate plumage
blooming off brewed hops out towards Burbage,
the remote mother-of-pearl cumulus
of such institutional verbiage
one still finds something oddly moving in.

Refresh. There's nothing left to send/receive.
The cooler is swamped by a ring of empties,
the gridlock seconded to a stream in spate.
The time is now, its last abiding brief
to click upon the happening night without.

Be sure to check there's no one else around.
Then make that door unmarked an echo chamber
to drown the churning of a copy job
resumed from lord knows when, a tripping bus,
the draught's conditional honour of bliss

Refresh. Now's as pure as any chance
to retrace contraflow the current ocean-bound.
Ascend in clear segments of fluorescence,
past clusters of furniture for chilled confabs,
partitioned space's bureaucratic murk.

and listen hard. This interior's hiss
of dehumidifiers, fans and ohms
coursing through each missive's chosen font,
of tangled vines of ampersands, of fronds
of ethernet mycelium/ports,

it rises at that murmurous force ahead,
the rumour blessed precious few have heard
and fewer glimpsed, a falls at altitude
that pilgrims – handfuls, barefoot, far between,
in search of altered states – give credence to.

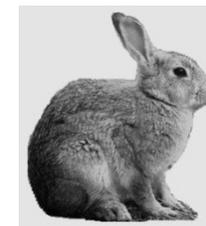
Behold the server and the server's place
of worship's working templates. Praise the here
where mountains float above a pea-soup mist
and all that blue skies thinking has been saved.
Pray to the deities of eternal code. Refresh.

Up here on the lam, the limb of oneself,
form a cup of digits/palms and wait
for data like rain meltwater cold
to pool to brimming point, to cascade down.
Drink. Be whole again beyond communication.



Conor O'Callaghan is an Irish poet based in the UK. To date, he has published three collections of poems with Gallery Press and one book of prose non-fiction with Bloomsbury. This extraordinary

new poem, re-imagining the server room of an office building as a remote site of pilgrimage, incorporates several external texts: the 'Refreshed Corporate Plan' of Sheffield Hallam University, 'Directive' by Robert Frost and the minor or lesser doxology of the Latin mass. 'The Server Room' first appeared in *The Edinburgh Review* (136, Winter 2012) and will be collected in *The Sun King* (Gallery Press, 2013).



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