

HELEN MOORE

The Future Gazes Back, Royal Academy, 2010

After Anthony Gormley's 'Amazonian Field', an installation comprising approx 24,000 figures

They creep through the Palladian
door-cases, nudging our giant feet.

I daren't bend and touch –
after all this *is* Art, and the attendant is watchful
as a dog in a manger –

but I guess dank clay,
that strange way a corpse feels;

and with their limbless forms, they look ready-
shrouded, as if buried upright in their thousands,
the mass production of a late Chinese Emperor –

yet these the funerary statues of our children's
children, if we don't mend our ways.

Their folksiness out of place perhaps
in the University's former Senate Room –
with its glazed lunettes, painted stucco and *putti*?

Hollow eyes eked out, as if poverty's playthings –
I'd like to pocket one, give her a good home;

but we can only avert our gaze,
degrees of complicity
needling our minds

as we stand against the edifice
that's made us who we are –

Bacon, Newton, Hume, Locke –
and stop mouthing gnostic apocalypse,
just change our ways.