

Roland Kuhlmeier

Ex Cathedra

Condemned Building

A building or a boat to be scrapped.
No shed, no inflatable dinghy;
Rather a lifetime's careful craft.
The keystone corbelled to the regular atria
Of my heart, scaffold of my bloodflow.
Fearfully made, intimate corners, vaulting arches,
Once shared, sacred and safe spaces.
Defiled.
So carelessly destroyed.

The building has lost its integrity
(Oh, what a falling off was there)
Rotting slowly with each damp shadow
Behind the pulling of a curtain
Each obfuscation of light
Each clenching of my vision.
And now I don't know where to start
To end, to destroy my life's work.

Eviction Order

I know, I *Know*, it must come down.
But if I am to stay standing?
How does one destroy a sacred building?

First I must leave the cathedral
Then I must look deeply, painfully into
Those fear-laden buttresses
Those bulwarks of craven commitment
That love of gentle sandstone
Passing over the crumbling mortar
The shot and punctured plaster
Sprinkled lasciviously across the floor.
Did I know, did I foresee?
No, but I felt masonry shifting,
An inward collapsing of equilibrium.

So, I wait and watch the slow sagging
And bowing of supporting walls
And the slipping of tiles.
I watch myself watch.

Demolition Job

Dynamite is not the answer.
An unholy blast and obliteration.
Annihilation and my atria crumbles too
And there is the corollary in my soul
A poisonous vacuum.

But neither do I dismantle brick by brick
By brick...a constellation of stones,
And the slow monotonous, melancholy
Of cold hammer on cold chisel.
I cannot savour destruction.

So I leave the building
And wait until the buttresses
No longer fly
Until my heart's easy rhythm is restored
And there is only rubble to step over.

The marches of the night are long
The swell, the salt smell
Water slides beneath the keel
Winds flap and clap the sail.
Starless, the clouds roll over me.
There are no landmarks
Beyond prow and stern and compass,
Shearwaters call, slice across the waters
Motion sensed, I try to feel a horizon.

A storm comes through
Rising wind, driving rain
The hull tossed like flotsam.

And if on my way
There was a light, a safe harbour,
It is no wonder that in the lee
Of great cliffs, a soft beach,
The scent of grass, I anchored,
Went below and dreamed
In gentle undulations
Sweet water, fresh pasture.

Waking to banshees in the rigging
The gale has chased me down
And the anchor is snagged
Drawing blood from my hands.
I cut the chain
And sail into pitch.

Cleanliness

When the motive reclines lethargic
And the meaning has a bleary head
Billboards will inhabit my eyes
Slogans will jostle in my throat
Then the dreambeats will lose their thud
Fleeing, forlorn in tinkling spirals
Reverberating into the foam of sounds
To hapless extinction.

But when the motive reclines lethargic
There is the guilt athletic
With javelins.
The guilt gymnastic
Clambering into my repose
With deft convulsions
Stretch-straining my posture
Pulse-thundering on my dreambeats.

So with this stain of spirit
And this brisk inadequacy
Losing my coordination
Finding my wholeness spastic
And limping apologetic
I stumble after the footfall thuds
Stepping barely audible
Into the explosions down the valley.