

David Pollard



Risk of Skin



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*For Simon Jenner - sine qua non*

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I

# Scroll of Darkness

Read it

- read it for me -  
each letter razed already  
into my heartsbones,  
sinews,  
    always  
part of the turning angles of its evil beauty,  
stark with the flesh of angels  
and the dead dark that hovers  
in creation;

    there below the waiting headland  
where the tide of war's infection  
and the horsemen's tryst  
whose sharp scythes fleck the  
small small parcel of our lives;  
who flee them as they thrill  
their concert for our journey  
that the day usurps,  
as the scroll rolls  
its lumined letters virid with turquoise ink above the snow

- word tombs black on the  
    melting glaciers of its momentary meaning -  
and on and on,  
the glancing letters of illumination  
craning into the darkness.

Time's creatures read and die  
along the rolling sea of this  
inevitable freedom in the curse of being

- seas of the spirit -  
ours,  
    mine.

    each and every  
sinew and heartsbone  
    knows how the gods will judge,  
inter pontem et fontem,  
    and yet the sudden waters rolling still  
    determined as the rising tide  
    upon the drowning beach  
acts on the blood,  
the veins and arteries -  
    prinking the evening clouds  
    as the moon rises

full upon the waters,  
spilling its rich banana dripping gold  
into the sudden  
almost expected tropics of the night.

Gone.

The scroll has reaped its harvest  
among the shivering pines  
were calling  
hillside and hovel  
into the tents of our lost being and language  
just before the dark has fallen  
and loss before loss  
grants us its dead.

# L'Homme Machine

They say

we are that time arched

over some rhythmic

motion of the limbs

for what is the heart, but a spring;  
and the nerves, but so many strings;  
and the joints, but so many wheels,

clockwise that

they say

is

proof of this intelligent creation.

Yet as

uniquely mortal

souls inspired of that,

if only

the love of good and evil

giving motion to the whole

practice angelic.

arch-angelic

grace.

# The Cleric

The voice of the dark is forbearing to speak . It unearths the sands of the book of Silence. [Edmund JabŽs]  
{style=poem} ~~~~~ The cleric hazards scripture darkly, and tracing it below a squall, dying into the cobalt grey and rain, there on the other side of black infernal styx, returns from where he learned his trade and opens up his pages onto its late, its always too late season.

This is the distillation of an absence that shirks, that irks itself back into and here below the page, each page which rants itself to silence flint in sand holding back all the waters on its white and lonely beaches.

Hear it pulsing, pulsing,

and only in that sound can each collapse into the failure of a name - my name spoken - his name -

for I was taught to kill  
the graven image  
in the dark,  
to use no other

and, in this huge failure of the fall, to let the hardened palate halt it into fact.

And, at the end, when this my only task is done and I am called to judgement,  
I will hold up that page of my novitiate and cry it mercy. ~~~~~

# Late Autumn Ghosts

How dark, o Lord, are thy decrees.

The morning air still mists the glass  
of memory towards another night

- still passing -  
weighed with the witchcraft of its wits.

We feel it  
at our dark fingertips,  
its gifts  
- again and turn again ☭

as it congeals

- before the stitching of its spine  
will break into the scattering of  
other leaves -

as we cry out for that incongruous  
letter that will stain the snow blood black  
with words that are

- last -  
and written  
onto the page  
we scratch with each his rite

see ☭ the wind is in the white reeds still ☭  
and the white moon in its old shadow liesÉ

into the pendant necklace of the void  
and place with care our one black mark into eternity -

remember me.

# The Site of Love

Call it.  
Call it now  
    to your chameleon  
    sight and voice  
    of love  
that lie  
here on a bed of visionary worlds  
    and trace your mark,  
    enter on the instant  
    my ready broken skin  
    of many colours.

But when my touch is most and nearest,  
when generation loses generations,  
    as much as I  
    does she,  
and find my damaged self,  
    a self for others  
    when it is most . . .  
    and almost . . .

Then is it he can throw  
    the gravity of light  
across our limbs,  
    across the prism of the wind  
for where else may it go,  
    weighed down  
    with such light white and shadows  
    and in such company.

# Unsnagged

In the morning of flesh, death joins the death of the world.

Desire is early winter now  
- beloved -  
pecking dry leaves  
from my still open hands  
with sudden delicatesse  
while all the time  
the falling moon bleeds  
bites from a sour mind,  
jugular as memory  
and does its perfect damage  
with little resurrections  
snagged from something huge.

Summer was great with prayer;  
caught us  
safe under the high sun  
and the high air of our roots,  
gave us back our birthmarks  
like the wide span of flight over a land  
- unlevelled -  
until brushed swarthy past  
and vanished in the evening,  
the tide of an avowal  
drawn back into itself.

Allow me some more days of rain  
and our good westerly  
while the sky rustles its teeth sharp over the sundials  
and the cut crops of colder thoughts  
fray me into the wrong dreams,  
leaving room for the sleep and secrets  
of another Sunday.

# Risk of Skin

Beyond the risk of skin;  
the delicate tracery of sins and veins,  
a finger stigmatising doubts  
draws forth the promised blood,  
granting the wound its peril to be saved.

Wound round with nerves  
and figments,  
ghostly,  
and skeletal,  
as is the whole mankind -  
that you shall come to this  
- diurnal course -  
the sudden certainty of generation  
clothed with breath,  
signed between the peril and survival  
as is creation always,  
as are the stones and trees  
- as are these bones -  
here in the valley of decision -  
and begin again to  
somehow gain  
handhold, foothold.

As the bird heaves its wings  
into a sense of its propitious time  
and lifts its burning eyes  
from its own ashes -

of course,  
even if they,  
too many didn't.