

CHRIS MANSELL

ON THE LAND

while some farmers on the land can tighten
there's no option in the city
but to accept accepted it is accepted
in the industry heavy undercapitalisation the normal
the accepted cant forecast politician playing with fire
interest to working cut throats accepted
the difference
the airport and a few years' concern
and then accepted
influence taking its toll and it's not just a massive
58 million dollars 37 million dollars 3.5 billion dollars
ensuring stability in the marketplace
takeovers becoming more frequent the style
the accepted style
you would be surprised at the holding companies
their results and presumably there are local companies
remaining ineffectual the accepted result is not likely
to be good news
for farmers it never is
accepted service and parts
and an accepted disadvantage of thin cheque books
for consumers for the price of luxurious commodities
one point of view accepted is that the worst isn't here
yet and it could be another two or three years
the phone rings
and I do not say the end
I am not the accepted treasurer

BETH SPENCER

DANCE, WITH RED WOOL

There's a rhythm here that I can't get.
Can't get it now and couldn't then.

The poem fidgets like an old crone,
like a five year old

with a fist of red wool
and a pair of old needles,

feet hooked around a chair
next the wood stove,

a duet: a cat presses its nose
against the pane, wants to come in but can't.

My sister laughs,
invincible in her seven year old wisdom.

She pirouettes, a famous-ballerina.
My mother large and warm at the stove

is blurred and the curves of her dress
roll down like paddocks of lucerne.

The needles claw and drag, twigs on a wet branch.
My hands are sore. Peck-peck. Like the magpie that swooped

and pecked my head. (*Tap-tap, the typewriter keys*)
but the sound I want is the clackety-clack

of my mother and aunt as they watch tv,
a soft-shoe dance on a polished floor.

Outside now, the sound
of a tractor, worlds away, heading home.

Inside, the room turns in a bubble house of salt,
flakes of snow spill from the shelves.

I have been reading and writing and spelling
for a year now, but I can't knit.

(*Can't-knit-Can't : this is the rhythm*)
Steam in my mother's hair like grief. She sighs,

cocks her head, stirs a pot, shifts the baby on her hip.
The radio plays an old song, she weaves gently.

Turning now to look over her shoulder
the rhythm of many things in her eyes

in her feet an old soft-shuffle:
pick and unpick, weave it strong as old string.

I've a small grubby heart in my hand,
a fist-full of words,

needles that scrape like sour twigs.

MARGARET DIESENDORF

SAINT GEORGE ON FOOT

(ICON. NOVGOROD SCHOOL. 14TH CENTURY)

Having shown him as he speared the dragon,
on his fiery mare, proud, heroic,
the artist fell into a reflective mood:
it occurred to him that even heroes
had to come down to earth once
deeds were done and the waves of
public acclaim withdrawn from the shores
of fame.

He'd show Saint George on foot.
It made him smile as he dipped the brush
in the ochre paint.

What he
was about to show: this man facing
a truth of life, namely that the
speared dragon was likely to rise
again without or — within.
Was not the long, pink cloak assuming
the dragon's shape as it billowed
from his neck?