

Gordon Scapens

COUNTING NIGHTMARES

He sends men off to war
where he would not go,
marching towards horizons
they cannot see,

and they have no songs,
words dying like flowers,
buried behind the face
of an unknown clock.

There is no time to waste
only time to lose,
and man-made trouble
stares in all our faces,

writing the small print
at the bottom of plans
for forceful policies
perpetrated as peace missions.

This is an uneasy world.
Living is watching peace
walking off the page
and being unable to follow.

War is never over,
man has its measure.

They count soldiers going out,
count nightmares coming back.

This war slays little dragons
while the big one waits.

WORDS NEVER SAID

Nobody's girlfriend,
everyone's lover,
she was a red carpet
to a night that taught
the art of being the lead
in your own life.

Always available, inflating
hellos with hinted excitement
and goodbyes with promises,
her warmth made the difference
between hope and fulfilment,
performed miracles of boys to men.

She never awarded criticism,
never praised actions,
any secrets were hers to keep.

But nobody ever knew
the effort for her smiles,
ever knew the speech
in the silence she saved,
ever undertook the step
of knowing who she was really was.

They understand now.
She left a note.

FADING AWAY

The attitude towards her
is like she's an inmate
but she feels separate
and belongs somewhere else,
but not sure where.

There are daily happenings
without her choosing,
and strangers visit,
talk like they know her.

Time interrupts silence
for group mealtimes,
group activities, group bedtimes.
She is always included
but wonders why she's here,
why the past is a story
all about someone else.

She knows she's individual
but remains silent
in the step she's taken
in her life that wasn't there,
knows she's not a number
but does have a name.

If only she could recall it.

EXPLAINING PROGRESS

This isn't a supermarket
but a cathedral of stored blessings
awarded to those carrying
the appropriate purse.

This isn't money you spend
it's oil for the cogs of commerce,
something to ease contentment
to faceless companies.

This isn't a queue to exit
only a ritual conga dance
to the tune called
'the insolence of wealth'.

This isn't a till receipt
just a page from a bible
saying something is hidden
that needs to be told.

This spreading of such places
doesn't mean they breed
it's just money is a religion
in certain quarters.

And the corner shop
being boarded up
is just learning
to live in the dark.

Life disguises itself,
tells the biggest lies.