

ANN SCOWCROFT

Sewing

Like some exquisite animal from Chinese fairy tale
silky black enamel and stainless steel polished silver
and silver the threading arm
dropping down arching up to the spool a goose
unfurling its neck again again
the hum when your foot
in its small sequined slipper
commanded the treadle
the needle dipping down tasting the warp
the weave again again

My own thick fingers are dumb to this work
are thick and knuckled
can't guide the slippery fabric
can't hold the tension steady
these are languages encoded in a wrist my fingers
will never bend enough to reach, no—
these dull blunt fingers caught to ropey hands
cannot reach you either
on the hard cushion of your sewing bench
they cannot touch the amber beads the thin neck
the earthen shirt the softening face

Still
they nearly
reach the smell of your perfume
your kindness
the way your comb felt in my hands
when last I smoothed your hair