Stubbing Wharf (without the “e”)  
Jemma L. King

The hunt was for Ted’s  
“gummy dark bar”,  
his street “sweating black”  
with future forking choices,  
an angry, pregnant wife.

I’ll admit to expecting 1959.

I saw Plath swaddled  
in new synthetics, choking  
the corner in a swelling sulk, tightly  
framing her rum with  
homesick paws.  
Ted, the wounded dog, pouting  
at her lack of love  
for sooty, poetic edges, looking  
for the answers  
in that Guinness of his.

I employed the extras of  
pipe smoking old man  
and dog.  
Fireside and damp  
fluey carpet,  
threadbare, overpatterned,  
dulled on the heel  
of tarred pit boots.

Instead of the frothy  
static of this scene,

a sun bleached pub garden  
crashed in on me.  
A shining sign  
“The Stubbing Wharf” (minus the “e”)  
staring benign  
at a packed yard of  
activity lunches, humming  
with the ghosting presence  
of flying texts and e-mails,  
children bouncing missiles  
diffusing at will, mums  
scrolling downloadable menus.

“The Stubbing Wharf is a beautiful traditional family friendly pub  
Situated on the A646 just to the west of Hebden Bridge”
the website says,

“Always the warmest welcome”.

What it doesn’t say is that the particles have been rooted out, blasted with the thunder-roll of decades collapsing into new fads, colours.

As I sat, shoulder to shoulder with strangers, strong armed and pinioned by the lock of wooden benches,

I knew then,

that they were no more here, than in my own front room, or head.

Their minutes bracketed off and cordoned in print.