

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
 business 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.

