

VOICED
by Grace Copeland

Here we are

at the torn-off edge of old England
where vowels awake in the shafts
of miners' grey mouths, pitmatic
caught in their teeth like pith
to pick out with a fingernail on the way home,
singing *ne mair to yor dorty old heap will aa come*

Where mams gather winds for their *shhhhhh*
for the tide song will soothe the bubbling bairns,
wrinkled shipwrights chase after shantyman dreams
rolling their Rs up the banks of the Wear,
tripping and twirling them reet rund
the rubble of them owld days.

Hooded Ts duck behind headstones
in Mere Knolls. They shy inland,
voiceless as the buried,
gulp down kisses
like dry pills.

Ws are reserved for the lips of Parklane smokers
whistling singed woes into the wind
they have asked her a hundred times
for direction, only for her to whisper back
It is too cold to linger anywhere loveless

Here we are, snagging on our own corners
Swallowing debris, waiting
on a word to start again and
all the while unsung, bereft of crescendo.

Here, where the deck cranes
come now to die

here, at the wild grey shores of language
cut off by god walking past –

the ends of our words
welding sparks blown on the wind.

And yet here we are
in this ghost town republic of sound

sung for, singing still,
for music can't be mispronounced –

Hear that?

Here we are.

Here we are.