

GEORGE HORSMAN FROM HOOLE, CHESTER - FINALIST

Evacuee

As you unreel the road up Wensleydale
and the scrub West Riding burns out black behind you
the way turning into a sidestreet mutes the traffic,
the car shrinks to a Toytown matchbox
scaled down with the dry-stone ribbons on the hills
and it's there that you glimpse a rail track deep in grasses
and remember: this is my country. This is where
that nineteen-forties driver lifted me into his engine
and stoked the coal and puffed up the line
to the Halfway Houses where he stopped
and handed me down to Mother. It's the dale
I belonged to then which still possesses me now.
It's the frisson of blood that salt wind brings to a sea-dog.
It's the land where driver and Mother are still alive
always and everywhere, enfolding the child in these hills.