



After '70

Some thirty years since Sparrow-
Cove she appeared where she
began on Great Western docking

old Bristol hollowed and halved
by the Falkland tide, and the time
it took to remember her

she was the first of herself, a stunning
leap into spiting the sea, all
iron blossom and bellowing

he can see the lifetimes she has
ferried from below the waterline,
where she fights the city air

where she is half desert half
glory, where she sits
avoiding the rust

the people have not forgotten
the bones buried in the
books that built Bristol.

the stench of sea and copper
still carry the weight, of a
blooded Bermuda

no matter which way you sailed
history is a mudded ledger
filled with many names and

the differences blurred under
murmuring inquisition once Colston
was called to the docket

it took a century to redefine these
waterways and build a dialogue
beyond the cotton fields

our communal emblem
sits where she began
and beckons the city

to sit in a chattering room
to redefine the voyage from
everywhere to home

long after the cove and the scuttling
she still whispers a waterlogged
shanty about freedom

there is plenty of story to whittle from
her wood I wish I could have heard
her singing back into harbour.

Saili Katebe