A Council House in Heaven

As my mother chewed on cloves
and pressed a hot water bottle to her face
while feeding nappies through the wringer
plans to tear down her home and place
the schoolmaster, his wife and seven
kids in grey concrete boxes went ahead.
A woman in twinset and pearls showed
her an article that read God was good and said
there's a council house for everyone in heaven.

Mum said she'd rather go to hell; instead
we emigrated; her tooth's clawed roots
defied the dentist - from purple bruises
flowering down jaw and breast
she reckoned the surgeon stood on her chest
and had a clear memory of him shimmering
in the ether holding up a bloody trophy
saying these aren't human
they belong on a horse.

While Dad packed his books into kitbags
she doped herself with codeine
the lime trees on the Green were rimed
from root to twig and so was the line
of nappies in the school house garden
left for the thaw or bulldozers
Mum's frozen flags of surrender -
dry those if you can you bastards
it won't be heaven where I'm going
but hell or Australia the sun might shine.