

## Motherland

Speaking the mother tongue we share,  
The women standing on the station platform  
Wait with the dogs they have taken on holiday  
Now that the children all are grown.  
Tightening leashes, they palm the 10p  
For the doggie to get on the train  
That carries them home to tea. The woman  
Waiting for me has distant kin's expectant  
Eyes, ready to welcome, ready to forgive  
The lateness of the arriving train,  
Like the mothers that we both have been  
To unpredictably late daughters and sons.  
Alighting, I am driven past the Cathedral's  
Eroded stone, stone women with eroded faces  
Waiting in niches to join the glorious  
Train of Mary mothering at the eternal  
Throne. The car is warm, the tone  
Now unforgiving. "Mum. Before you see her,  
You should know what I haven't written:  
How carping. How inconsiderate.  
Unmotherly she's become. Wants me  
To give up my teaching and take her  
Into our home. I won't. It's fine  
For outsiders to look on and say  
'She's old. Be kind. You'll be the same.'"  
And so we will. The hand that turns  
The wheel driving through motherland bears  
The sign of old age's leaden veins,  
The motherlode of terrors that we mine.

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