

## **A CLEAN LIFE**

**by Bronwen Barber**

“Too clean for a buffer girl,”  
was what his family said about her.  
“She doesn’t swear, doesn’t sweat.”  
No silver spoon shone brighter.

They wed; soon there were five  
(and a lodger) in a Pitsmoor back-to-back.  
She kept it spotless, took extra turns  
to wash out the courtyard privy.

He caught the slum disease. However much  
she cleaned, she could not scrub away  
lesions on his lungs, fever, spots of blood.  
Afterwards, she took in laundry

to put food on the table. The house smarted  
with Vim and Domestos. Not a speck  
out of place. Dust-catching heirlooms  
and treasures disappeared. “Your poems?

Your school merit certificate? In the bin.  
We can do without clutter.  
Cleanliness is next to Godliness.”  
Her granddaughter lives an ungodly life.