

# Housework in Timbuktu

*(For Alison)*

My sister flies from Accra  
to Tamale, then takes the north  
road to Bolgatanga and further on  
to muslim Ouagadougou, where two  
young men on a mobilete attempt  
to snatch her handbag.

In Burkina, feet swollen with  
the heat she breaks her journey,  
buying new medicine, worrying about  
infection from mosquitos.

Two days later the rains fall  
on the francophone west and she  
decides to continue by train  
to Bopo and then on to Mopti,  
to catch a riverboat along the Niger.

All the way to Timbuktu.

On the outskirts of the town  
there's a painted sign and she has  
her picture taken.  
Standing at the lorry park next to  
the market, she starts to think of all  
the housework back in Stoke on Trent,

where her husband is turning over  
a new divorce.

She may wait for him to visit  
but he'll never get to Timbuktu.

SIMON FIELD