

BARRY BUTSON

DAD DRIVES THE COUNTRY ROADS

Dad drives the country roads of Perth
in his old Fargo half-ton, slow
but still throwing up dust.

Cigarette in one hand, stiff wheel in the other,
he is more of a man than most,
killing himself out here for his family

or maybe just to get away from it
for a while (cold as we were to him)
and joke with a farmer or two

into whose lanes he will pull, risking
the Scylla of Shepherd and Charybdis
of chicken coop ammonia.

He'll cull a henhouse, pile his crates
of poor layers onto the Fargo
and head back to the roads,

township after township, day after day,
hands and wrists beak-scarred
and spur-blooded, the white of his cigarette

half-pink in his fingers, making about the same
as a poet for his efforts, yet blowing out gut
and clogging both lungs for tiny cheques from Swift's.

His thoughts on these travels have gone graveward,
but I'd guess they'd include politics and maybe
his sons and how they would never have to travel

these roads, no ... never would have the *chance*
to drive these roads in the post-War decades,
for he was last of his strange breed and knew it.

So just maybe he just laughed like hell
every single time he pulled a smoke from his lips
and flicked its ashes casually out the window.

Though I doubt it.