

ROAD

The road failed to provide
the least house, hamlet or farm
by long after desolate dark
so we ached in the car till dawn,
groaned and stamped awake,
meeting our bones and the ghost
of each breath in grey nowhere
on a strip of bitumen sheepish
by now with a woolly blur
and stretching its skinny arms
to horizons straining apart,
absolute as a local by-law
"Thou shalt go this way or that
(the mountains are only for show)".

But a road is a wall to a mole.
Have you ever held one in your hand?
This one was very small;
brown and sleek, he throbbed
like the pulse of the earth,
scrabbling frantic for ground.
Seconds after I set him down
he was gone in a shower of dirt,
his crumbling wake, an unearthly writing in sand.

Such a road could lead anywhere,
Sioux City, Nhill, or Dinas Mawddwy
where a small shop raised its blind
to the blue just-lifting mist.
Two women pocketing talk
strange as birds, with a look

that said sharply “not of our kind”,
sold us fruit cake black
as the soil. “*Diolch. Boreda.*”
I stood outside by the road
with dark food in each fist
and both feet in the land.

MARY DILWORTH

HIDING PLACE

It is raining. Beyond the barn
the farm gate, hinged open.
I find a shed: it has the smell
of the repository: the sheep dip,
old cans, and bits of string.
Ivy grows through the wall.

Someone peers across to me.
I pretend an interest in the sky.
He nods, accepting my shelter
from the weather.
And I turn away. I am a mole,
in a hole, wounded, but not dead yet.