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Father in Neutral

He starts up his Plymouth K-car,
a used model, hueless from the sun.
Lights his pipe, cranks down the jaundiced window
and waves, priestly, dispersing cherried smoke.
He blows a kiss, then shifts the gear bar
so quickly he remains—a moment—in neutral.

He backs from my motel space
without a glance in the rearview mirror.
He needs these farewells to pass fast.
What follows after melding with Gulf Boulevard traffic
—taped taillight still signaling his last turn—
eases with each intersection, for he approaches
again the destination of routine
he knows before my arrival and my departure.