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## Byway

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*Robert J. De Smith* — September 2019

It is everything:  
The woman rigged out  
To hang steel girders  
Onto a red skeleton in a farm yard,  
She stepping from her pickup  
In flannels and a harness;  
The shivering shoulders  
Of the Loess Hills,  
Oxbows long cut off,  
A derelict faded yellow  
Excavator beside a ditch,  
A hawk gaining altitude with labor,  
The road at times matching  
The river bends, then rising  
Over successive hills,  
Then arrow-straight beside rusted rails.  
A magnificent tall hip-roofed barn  
Replete with a cupula,  
Now weather grey and stark.  
A boy, in a cerulean hoodie,  
Beside the road, right door open  
Of a ridiculously large truck,  
A dualie,  
Looking furtively over his shoulder  
As he relieves himself in the ditch;  
A glazed block double grain bin,  
Shelterbelts of trees,  
Shorn of their farm places;  
Sand and gravel,  
Extracted from pits,  
In its various hues of brown;  
And the river itself, winking through trees;  
The blue-green and brighter green  
Of field on field of soy and corn,  
Rising on contours.  
Decrepit machinery, parked in neat rows  
The last time they were of use;  
Towns, spired and roofed, almost a relief,  
But so is the next bend,  
Bridges and gravel turnouts  
And must be a dozen turkeys,  
Two grown, the rest small replicas,  
Crossing the road and disappearing  
Into the tall grass and  
Black-eyed Susans.