

Home Town

It's been fifty years. I approach from the north,
and the Bethel Church steeple still beckons.
Highway 75 remains a narrow two-lane
drawn between cornfields.

The roof of the old Broek barn sags now,
and shoulder-high weeds shelter its torso from the snow.
A cottonwood tree grows out of the silo
like a yellow mum in the vase in Mom's dining room.

My parents and grandparents lie here,
in the black cemetery dirt,
the same dirt in my veins and under my fingernails.

Grandma's house gone, the grain elevator For Sale,
Doc's Café closed, the high school's windows boarded up,
and I don't hear the whistle of the 5:30 train.

My first kiss in Town Park,
the day Billy got killed on the railroad tracks,
high school basketball games,
and the Saturday we stole the police car.

The sun sets fast tonight
and the shadows take their places in the dark.

By Arlin Buyert