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Amanda Dunn

When the sky and the Lake are all streaked in grey
The cold autumn wind carries the spray
Out on the Lake slowly making her way
An elegant ship churns through the waves.

I must stop and watch, and pull off to the side
What is her name, and her cargo inside?
The new self-unloader hasn’t hampered her glide
Gently curved hull, steaming slowly with pride.

Has she come from Duluth, so far to the north
On her way to Ohio, with a hold filled with ore?
The swell of the Lake rocks her to and fro
Slowly she passes, and emotion springs forth.

The lighthouse she passes, no longer a home
For years it’s stood fast, enduring the foam
No more does its light guide the lakers ashore
Radar and satellites now handle this chore.

The Hullets are gone, the tracks are now trails
Great steam locomotives now boxes of nails
The furnaces and mills, once who fed millions
Moved overseas, making their owners billions.

Grandpa put pistons in blocks, two at a time
For thirty-four years, on an assembly line
My father, however, his luck did not hold
After but thirty they showed him the door.

It’s getting dark now, and she turns on her lights
The boat, like Ohio, goes on through the night
All around the Lakes now, darkness descends
But when night begins, we know it must end.

I sit watching the boat, feeling sadness and pride
Her bow and stern cabins twinkling with lights
Like that ship, perhaps, the Midwest can endure
But in what direction will she and I go?

She is fifty years old, I wish her fifty more
I get back in my truck and close the door
Perhaps, one day, I’ll see her again
Here’s hoping the sun will shine on us then.