

Combine Harvesters, ars poetica

by Colleen Watson-Turner

Early September and harvest time; combines
lumber through the buttery fields reaping
bumper crops of red spring wheat and cat-whiskered
durum as high as my waist and I
am long-legged.

And as long swaths of golden stalks are felled
by spinning reel and scythe machinery,
the combine's threshing drum winnows away
the chaff and straw, filling the hopper up
with golden grain.

And then the grain is augered out and trucked
away to bins and elevators as farmers work
into the night, their combine's single headlamp
illuminating bright cones of standing wheat,
darkness all around them.

Inside the combine's cab, some dials and levers,
a steering wheel, a dimly lit dashboard
and you might wonder, where's the poem inside
a combine's machinery, it's metal logic?
But right now,

someone's hands are mixing flour and salt
with water--just enough to make a pliant dough
while someone else's hands are forming loaves,
patting tortillas, rolling out chapatti,
naan and pita for the oven,

griddle and pan—even a flattened piece
of battered tin will do if the fire's stoked
and the Case and Cockshutt combines rumble on
and if nothing, *nothing, runs like a Deere*
through the night. Come morning,

the crops are off, gathered up and in, the chaff
and straw returned to earth. Behind the combines,
miles of soil and crew-cut stubble wait for spring's
new seed. And here's the poem: On my table,
fresh bread. Please, sit down and eat.