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,

gridle 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.