Harvest

ANNE PIERNON WIESE

Clasp of grief and chafe of grain—
we’re too far gone to get home again.

Wayne’s dream red combine shaves
the section, gulping silver cornstalks
in its path, green grain wagon heeling
as the tandem crest the swells, visible
then hidden in the bottoms. From I-90
or the air, you can’t gauge the heave
of this land—how after Becky’s pulled
pork buns and pickles on the tailgate
we can take a walk and lose ourselves.

Two men in the field, plus Leon and Nick
driving the trucks to the grain elevator
in Edgerton—a skeleton crew when you
think how it used to be: gangs of hired
hands from far and near bedding down
in barns and sheds, wolfing fruit pies
and iced buttermilk in the kitchens
of the farmhouses to which they traveled
many miles during harvest time.

Under this white ocean sky wands of sun
furled with mist curve down and sizzle out
against the churn of black chemical earth
and stalk waste. From the west, a God-like
helmet of steel mildew rain approaches.
Up in the combine’s climate-controlled cab
behind tinted glass, a pink skull gazes back.