

## Inspecting the Fields

Shoulders round as he crouches  
in loam to squint down a row,

temples fanned with years of dirt  
and seeds and constant scrub of wind.

Low morning sun lances through pines  
edging the field, stretching long the shadow

of his John Deere, tires big enough  
to swallow a man. From a back pocket,

fingers of sweat-hardened gloves  
bobble like a family of nesting chicks

eager for whatever their mother  
has to offer. Pinching a tiny shoot,

the farmer worries its green skin  
between calloused forefinger and thumb,

touch as gentle as velvet  
of a mole's neck. Holding a fistful of soil

to his nose, he inhales the scent, tongue  
of earth blooming inside his head.

With sun climbing onto his shoulders,  
he rises and wipes brown streaks

into the stone-washed denim  
of his jeans, knees popping

like a gunshot of crows escaping  
a field that a fox just entered.