

HELEN MOORE

The Underneath Farmers

After Harry Edmund Martinson

“The cut worm forgives the plow” – William Blake

They especially like the rain –
it drums on clods and furrows
and draws them up like ruddy shoots
to roll and wallow in the damp.

When the tractor rumbles overhead
drizzling pellets in tick-tack formation,
it drives them up to dance for God,
to writhe in fields of paradise.

Instead the limpid pools sting and burn
and their skin is quickly turning fuchsia;
they have no hands to wave,
nor tongues to speak,
but their heads and tails are curling,
asking for mercy, begging us to stop.