Ode to Digging Potatoes

Go play in the dirt, she said,
and tonight, though I call it
harvesting potatoes,
what I'm really doing
is "playing in the dirt,"
the quickest way I know
to recalibrate the soul.
The potatoes are a bonus, really,
though I say they are why I am here.
Each firm, red-skinned round
I pull from the earth is a small proof
of how things can grow in the dark—
the way a woman, too,
can grow in conditions
when she forgets for a time
there is light.
I sift the cool soil through my fingers
as I pull my hands through the bed,
and I fall in love with this substance
made richer by what is dead,
this basis of all that lives,
this home for the kind of treasure
I honor now more than ever,
the kind that needs darkness and time.

—Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer