BEFORE WE KNEW OUR LOSS
SHARON LAX

THE PORTENT OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

so much upon the red
the wheel and barrow.

an uncertain temperature
the means to an end
but I’ve forgotten
the road.

needs some paint, some grease
slackened body
no summer reprieve
bring some wood fire’s dyin’.

slash along the side
bitter feud

so much
upon
a wheel
barrow.
proper bend
the handle and mud
the rust like blood.

but the rain came down
nothing new reflected
‘though moon is to steel as whisky to ice.

the tawny indecision
of the dirt-encrusted left front wheel
and already too much said.

so little
on when we’ll see
the light of day
or hold our children close again

nothing on return
or when
taking tool to tin
a wry trust in deceitful things.

THE RUINS

In place of fields

Grasses
high as thighs
corralled
by pines, birches, oak
colonies of sugar maples.

Once a farmhouse claimed this skeleton.

Now dying summer
has laid down her throttled planks.

Farming tools
bones from a lost era
post guard at the crossing.
Palaeozoic monuments
necks bent under weight of sky.

Limbs rusted

Waiting for the driver
to come
and relieve them of their station.