

# 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.