CARRIE GREEN
Black-Capped Chickadee (PLATE LXVI)

Virginia eases the stump open along the seam,
    afraid the decaying wood
might collapse upon its secret. Inside,
    even the heartwood crumbles.

She sketches jagged, illegible rings,
    the half moon where the birds first tunneled,
edges sharp as a bite. Her lines cramp
    near the tree’s disintegrating core.

Against the wood’s striations,
    the nest appears in relief:

    a cloud of moss and down
        that holds its shape when released
from the cavity’s embrace. A tree’s heart
    hardens and dies a little each day.

How lucky, then, to have the dust replaced
    with bits of moss and fur, to begin
again with freckle-spattered eggs.