

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.