

The Razing

After all this time, it shouldn't have been a surprise;
it was, after all, unlivable.

Parts of the roof had given up any pretense
of shelter, and the world before the house
was beginning to show through. Still,
I could not have imagined that thirty years
of life would endure so poorly, that ghosts
would already stare from empty window sockets,
and every wall breathe with every wind
like some discarded Kenmore box, both ends broken through.

And now it was coming down.

When I'd heard, I expected the gothic, towering crane,
that it would take some apocalyptic wrecking ball
to make such an end, this vivisection and monocide.
Reality made do with one yellow bulldozer—
looking especially bright now that morning was here
and it could in earnest begin the few swipes
from front lawn to back, dismembering perennials
lying in riotous beds beneath each southern window—
and a rust-pocked truck to haul it off.

Before noon, the other men unpacked sandwiches by the truck
and stomped the dust from their boots; good enough men,
they spoke in quiet monotone—seeing me
picking amongst the limp strands of re-bar, mock oak
panelling, porcelain shards—of the Dodgers, perhaps, or women
they had known, the sleeker condos that would start here,
then snake along the wood's edge as far as the river.

The elms seemed larger now with no house for comparison;
what sun came through played tricks with these open rooms,
where shadows danced like half-remembered dreams.

Near the old fireplace site, the glint of glass
was only a piece of photograph frame that cut my hand
neatly across the palm. It would bleed till I sucked it clean.

—C. Wade Bentley