

The Transportation of Hens

by Bill Yarrow

ten at a time we carried them
by their legs
to cages on the truck
where they grew silent
in the darkness
of an early market

sixteen hundred hens
suffocated
during the collection
as we reached for them
they trampled each other to death
I was one of the collectors

in the morning, their deaths
were discovered
and we were called upon
to load them
first in nylon sacks
and then onto a tractor cart

we drove them to a trench
not far from the main road
the transportation of hens,
we were told, was a normal
part of our work
setting fire to the bags was not

