Fall 1998

The Formerly Loved

Nance Van Winckel
THE FORMERLY LOVED

From a small prop plane  
hedove into the smoke.  
He had a shovel. Green boots.  
Went down. The white sail  
of him. Toward what?  
Who could know, who  
could see? He said the river  
was a sound beyond the trees.

I was a woman on the road  
by a water truck. Watching him  
step from the smoke. Dragging  
the shovel. A tree crashed  
across the river. Halfway up  
Halfmoon Ridge, the smoke of him  
turned to me. I loved even  
the green of those boots.

How to unmake a fire before  
it unmakes a mountain.  
How to unblacken the grasses  
after his burn. Trenches of detour.  
Wild-eyed, the moose comes tearing  
out. Confusing the river sounds  
with the crackling trees. Who  
can see? From the road, more

smoke over the moose face.  
I watch for a green. A man’s kiss  
in a freefall. The char on my lips.  
An unmade time around  
the space. A country in flames.  
And then its smolder. A wind of him  
blowing. Sounds. He said sounds  
were rivers in the trees.