

Burning Off

Fog settles at this bend
till even the fast rising river is forgotten.
The wind blows, and for a moment,
something living lifts,
real as branch, bark.
The sycamores stand,
wild and white with loss.

Then the fog comes down again
and all is wrapped into itself.
Only the sky tints, changing colour.
Refinery fires take on the flush
of night-bombings wars and wars away.
In this confusion of twilight,
lacking a river edge, fog holds
all that was ever imagined.

The high gulls almost manage it,
fading in and out
as if time were simple.
The possible, the impossible;
nothing can be saved.
Even this passover of birds
will be undone by the air
like all of January's leafless trees.

— *Katherine Soniat*