

## **The Apartment Fire**

The sidewalk under the scaffolding  
By the burned apartment building  
Is still messy with debris.  
Above, the jungle gym of pipes and planks  
Climbs to the third floor.

One day I found myself channeled  
Through the walkway alongside the demolition.  
This close, the smell still hovering  
Is the same as our campfire last summer:  
Mountain pine and, somehow, mesquite.  
I'm taken to the tent, the clear night,  
The roasting marshmallows, the one that fell in.  
But that's the smell of a memory --  
The dry sting of smoke tells the story here.  
I can't help the quickest glance inside  
The black shell. A dark mound of char --  
once wood, then fire, then loss.  
Think of the way a dog tracks time  
Through his quivering nostrils:  
All that's passed through this place  
Remains, only invisible  
Just a faint stain in the air.

The apartment building, slow to be dismembered  
Waits in its shrouds of scaffold through  
The holidays, dark against strings of lights  
That decorate the avenue. Tonight, again, that smell,  
As we bend to clean from the fireplace  
The ash of a year's occasions.