Susheila Khera

Needing Water

Along the creek
heavy morning mist of late summer
rises and mixes with smoke
from six million acres of burning forest.

The sun glows
like an orange full moon
reflects red off metal surfaces
leaks in through the living room window—
pools like liquid amber on the coffee table.

A wavery line of cranes
navigates south through the yellow air
looking for a place to land.

Small roadside ponds
are drying up
their dark surface
coated with a film of ash.
The ducks sit grounded.
The creek has stopped moving.

Smoke gobbles up the evening mist
and beads as dew on aspen leaves.
7 p.m., 82°F
much too hot
for the middle of August in Alaska,
and no rain anywhere.