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Out of Summer I, oil on canvas, 168 x 117cm., 2001, by Julia Ball.
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Roads and Weather

short sequences
life by fire
living by fire only

stone never
gives in
to fire warmth a few feet
        around
   me around

cold walls
cold glass
family at home
reading beside coal  past
trying
to keep our
distances equal

damp black coal shone
smoked thickly

bringing in snow
walking –
breathing coal – thru
winter villages
Bowburn, Langley

miners’ relics

wood falls free trees
dying tangling
  in living
branches fall
ready
  count yourself lucky
I save the piece of coal
that falls through
the grate-hole
rich black jewel
burning eyes staring
beside
fire

wind changing smoke
choking waiting

wood screeching too wet
bleeding yew
loudly

sweet wood burns out blood
in the grate
Wednesday 16 January to Thursday 17 January 1991

finally

and fire lights

and sheep dog

  barks

cars almost audible

finally

  we cross
kindling smells like chocolate
drying quickly stacked
neatly
to spark
    any kind of tree
blazes when
war kindles out of
    kin and kin
who is not of my kind
who is not kind
only smaller sticks of wood
for kindling sap
drying
out
I blend hawthorn
with fircone

yew with
elder

oak
and alder
changes light
today flames
white in dusty sunflake
flecks plant dying silver

casting shadows
light dust against
white

cracks in wood
slowly warming
for next winter
I went alone
into
wood

no one
saw me

carried it back
and burnt it

lying to sleep

fire fell into
its own
hollow
down
to grey

coal tastes
like comfort
on finger
pulling
down
called to account
a talent (a sheep, a goat?)
long enough you’ve had

sitting
counting cones burn
on the cold floor