

# Three Poems

Su-Yee Lin

## FIRE&GOLD

I am a child when I see the fire and smoke burning the reams of gold.  
My mother's hands above and my own feeding the flames  
sheet after sheet.

With my father charring thin white and crunchy orange green as trees the sweet  
salty of carcinogens.  
The taste of fire in my throat and the heat that makes air  
shimmer. The way my father's arm tenses and everything  
flies.

Older, light in my fist flaming out toward fingertips, love that quickly  
dies to ashes.  
Later: the spark of yellow falling through air and into deep water.

And at the funeral a bonfire of houses and furniture these precious things we  
cannot die without.  
Shut the oven and light the match;  
our grandchildren will send smoke signals as currency the way we used to do.

## IF/THEN

Then the way the strokes run  
west to east, north to south  
follow the river down  
and out and into.

You said the way  
clouds look to birds  
heaven above  
and heaven below  
and people in between.

I said the way  
that counting works  
how a is one  
and one is not only one  
but two becomes one.

You said the way  
rain slants down  
a straight line for cloud  
a house of weather capped by sky.

I never said I could understand  
more than the words  
although  
if  
besides  
not only  
but also  
the differences between you and I.

## MILKY WAY

A man points to the Milky Way, says "My mother was born // up there." A cleft  
in the sky where his finger // points, a dark  
star-less // anomaly. "Over there, my // father," says a woman to // a space  
between the North // star and another // lesser // star. To the  
dark // spaces in the Big Dipper, in Orion // and his belt,  
    "My sister"  
"My cousin"      "My grandchild"  
    "My uncle." // Soon  
the sky is filled // with people so // heavy // with light and darkness, we //  
can't even tell // which dark spaces are  
unoccupied. A shooting // star falls and // someone // says,  
    "Me."  
We turn to the speaker but she's // already // gone.