**The Fire Responds to Questioning**

Lisken Van Pelt Dus

Yes, I was there.

No, I did not call for help.

I don’t know how I started.

What I remember is warming into being,

first my extremities, fingers of light

flickering, then only a gust of wind

and suddenly I was everywhere,

burning with hunger.

Linen drapes flared yellow

and glowed behind me.

Books smoked. A woolen armchair

sputtered orange while a pair of cranes

on a Chinese silk screen shrank from me,

smelling like charred meat.

The books blackened.

No, I didn’t content myself with the library.

I spread out, made myself at home,

tried each bed, filled each dresser.

Understand, I hardly had time to think.

Someone dreamed me into life

and all I knew was doubling,

every thirty seconds doubling.

Tell me: what do you know

of how you began?

What did you burn as you grew?