

Timer

By Tony Harrison

Gold survives the fire that's hot enough
to make you ashes in a standard urn.
An envelope of course official buff
contains your wedding ring that wouldn't burn.

Dad told me I'd to tell them at St. James's
the ring should go in the incinerator.
That "eternity" inscribed with both their names is
his surety that they'd be together, "later".

I signed for the parcelled clothing as the son,
the cardy, apron, pants, bra, dress-

The clerk phoned down, 6- 8- 8- 3- 1?
Has she still her ring on? (Slight pause) Yes!

It's on my warm palm now, your burnished ring!

I feel your ashes, head, arms, breasts, womb, legs,
sift through its circle slowly, like that thing
you used to let me watch to time the eggs.

