

WHY I DIDN'T VISIT THE CAMP

My son gave me
a salamander pin;
he wrote, Pappa, you
like the salamander
have been through fire.

Not I, but another.
Who said, how we burn,
burn, but why do we not
burn with thick smoke,
with a fatter flame?

Today, we monitor
mercury 'round
crematoria; there,
he smiled, we floated
the ashes in water
to separate the gold.

The memory is frozen
in pockmarked glaze,
viscous flow arrested
in dark drops, black
lined crackles. I do not
need to see the kiln
to know this pot
has been through fire.