

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD

in memory of Primo Levi

Shall this heap of gold teeth
pulled root and all by kapos
speak for them? They once bit
a sugar cube for every cup of tea
with raspberries. They remember
too many Sabbath sweets.

If not this, shall the unmuted
witness of man's base twist speak
of Mengeles and Ivans, freezing
experiments, the butt of a gun?
In the same camp a man
gave me two crusts of bread,
and some rare earth metal chips
sold well as flints.

Who shall speak for the dead?
I, said the dazzling southern day.
I waft you the smell of a favela.
I bring you news from a doctor.
And I, said my night. I give you
eels of comparison
with those who didn't come back.
I speak for the dead
when I take away your breath
when I wake you every day at 5
the time you woke in the camp.