

# Auschwitz

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• *Deborah Schnitzer* •

Everyone knows where the railroad goes  
Has seen the black-boxed temple of doom  
The arch that slices the sky open as  
Way for some flesh

Fires burning  
Draw nearer

There is only the one-way street  
For this temple has only its single mind and  
Humped sound gravelled  
By the hoarse voices  
Boxed near the grate.

There is only the flesh-fed fire  
Gas is busy elsewhere  
Playing pipes in the showers  
Drowning sharp angles of the unwashed  
Screamed and staked together

There is only one collection plate  
And the take is awesome  
bones ash hair teeth gold fillings precious stones  
An offering endlessly recycled  
lamp shades key chains wigs safety deposit boxes

Fires burning  
Draw nearer

It is always raining in the temple of doom  
So that the fire burns eternal  
The text seems to write itself

Rituals chisel wrists  
Order the progress  
On the bodies-soon-to-be-burnt

Fires burning  
Draw nearer

Often this flesh comes with black boxes of its own  
Phylactery wound into the body singing the vein  
Melted voices turning the spit  
Smell of excrement crating the air  
And the Crematorium exults  
Its serpentine notation rising  
Settling an old score

Against the Jew

Fires burning  
Draw nearer

Music to the ears  
That run the lines into the  
Black-boxed temple of doom

Vigil without Aeneid  
She wears the lice-infested stripes  
as prayer shawl and  
when the starvation knocks  
her teeth out  
She only gives up whistling

She runs on empty  
fuelling others as the selection race begins  
her heart lifts the names of those who fall  
She tattoos them into the back of her head

When She lives  
Emerging as a talking stick in striped pyjamas  
Exhumed from the thick Nazi nap  
She harbours the names  
Walking stick ark of the covenant  
Scraping the railway lines

Coming towards me

Seeing me

She has written so many names into the back of her head  
She lists to one side and then to the other, moving forward in broken rhythm  
Feet webbed by the lines She has memorized  
She is every face She has seen disappear  
She is the cradle for their civilization

thin reed  
in this go-down water  
She carries