

## BIRKENAU

The ash fields were calling me.  
Their voices came to me from afar,  
and, responding, something inside myself  
said that in me spoke all of them.

I was one of them, in those wagons  
crammed with poor foul-smelling creatures.  
I was with them, in the long queues  
consumed within the incinerating chambers.  
I stared at the constant plumes of black smoke  
disappearing into an indifferent Heaven.  
I saw their gaunt faces; wide eyed,  
expectant behind the wire fences.  
I think, horrified, of the children torn  
from their mothers and tossed into the flames;  
of their quivering faces, the smoke,  
the silence, and the piled-up bodies.  
The gas-chambers, the gold teeth,  
Christ bleeding from his open side.  
Where was His Church in the face of the slaughter  
and extermination of so many human beings?  
How can anti-Semitism possibly exist  
in a world which believes itself civilised?

The desecrated graves are calling me...  
Now I walk through the streets of Prague,  
through its synagogues, museums of the robbed.  
Which part of my heart died with all those deaths?

Prague, October 2010