

5.2. “For Adolf Eichmann” by Primo Levi (Translated by Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann)

Primo Levi, born in 1919, was an Italian Jew who was trained as a chemist prior to the war. Because of his expertise, he was put to work at Buna-Monowitz, the synthetic rubber factory mentioned in this segment of the series. After the war he continued to work as a chemist and author. Levi died in 1987.

*Source: Primo Levi, *Collected Poems*, trans Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann (Faber & Faber, 1988). Used with permission.*

The wind runs free across our plains,
 The live sea beats for ever at our beaches.
 Man makes earth fertile, earth gives him flowers and fruits.
 He lives in toil and joy; he hopes, fears, begets sweet offspring.

. . . And you have come, our precious enemy,
 Forsaken creature, man ringed by death.
 What can you say now, before our assembly?
 Will you swear by a god? What god?
 Will you leap happily into the grave?
 Or will you at the end, like the industrious man
 Whose life was too brief for his long art,
 Lament your sorry work unfinished,
 The thirteen million still alive?

Oh son of death, we do not wish you death.
 May you live longer than anyone ever lived.
 May you live sleepless five million nights,
 And may you be visited each night by the suffering of everyone who saw,
 Shutting behind him, the door that blocked the way back,
 Saw it grow dark around him, the air fill with death.

20 July 1960