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Tattoo

Karen Subach

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Karen Subach

Tattoo

—for Primo Levi

There was just the hand, there was my arm.

There was just the small pin, there was my hand, there was my arm.

The pin's blue pinch. The dots processing in
Some with suitcases, some with shoes.

9 the monocle of the man who dragged the pin.

2 the profile of the monocled man who grinned and hooded
with pushing the ragged pin to

6 the broken eyeglass of my father, in a bloody blue.

Blue the root of this I chew again.

8 the pair of glasses I pushed through the wire for bread.

There was gunfire, and then none.

Zelda, Josef, Ewa, Isaak, dead, had dug and dug.
I had to look.

Space between slashed 7 and crooked 4
traces the head of a shovel.

Flesh layers, then. The soil.

Aqua brightest vein, my ink tastes of trains,
the tracks siphoned in and up, the back-to-back,

the 9, the 1.

O pulled-open, mouth-shouting, won't-close-O undone,
blighted part I hate most,

O for Oswiecim, 1943,

O bloating on my white raggy cold old forearm.

You serpent approaching to close on yourself.

You fruit, bitten.