

Martin Robertson

Two Poems in Memory of Anne Frank

I Orders

“Soldiers, advance against the enemy.
Shoot when you see the white of a man’s eye.
If more of you can kill your man than die,
ours is the victory.”

We have our orders, and our keep and pay.
A man must live. A soldier must obey.

“Bombers, proceed to London, to Berlin.
Sentries, patrol with dog and tommy-gun
where crave in their cat’s-cradle of barbed wire
these prisoners of war.”

We have our orders, and our keep and pay.
A man must live. A soldier must obey.

“You to gas-chamber duty at Auschwitz. You
to herd the beasts in Belsen. Stamp out the Jew,
man, woman, child. (The dying can be made
to stack and burn the dead.)”

We have our orders, and our keep and pay.
A man must live. A soldier must obey.

“That not the present only (child, woman, man,
womb-child) but all the chain of life within
the egg, the sperm, be hideously undone,
take these bombs to Japan.”

We have our orders, and our keep and pay.
A man must live. A soldier must obey.

—

Strontium 90 we need perhaps, to clear
the stench of Belsen from the atmosphere.
The diapason closing full in man
breaks down in discord. God must start again.

II *Röslein auf der Heiden*

Larch, gorse, rough grass,
heather, bracken, moss,
wild rose on the heath
—bare from bony feet,
fouled, burned—recreate
beauty, breed out of death,
carpet again the heath
where once, between rose
and larch, Hell was.

Life is sweet,
as you did not forget
living, never let
fear or horror deny it;
so now, dead, can teach
our doubt and shame—sweet
day and night,
cloud and sun, stars,
wind on the heath.