

TO YOUTH

Robert Petty

Could I have loved you, simply, as a storm
Breaks, voiceless, into warmer light,
Forgetful of the terror and the night
And the strange sky where wings of passion swarm
So mindless there of one another—
I might have moved as naïve as the need,
Ripped the portal where young dreams are freed,
And healed it then with love as any other.

But I could not, and all is much the same,
Yet death is here, though with another name,
For with each loss, each love is more demanding,
Till in the end, it is not love at all. . . .

Nor will we guess, the leaves across our breast,
We were the world, though young, and in the Fall.

TO A FRIEND—DR. JOHN E. POTZGER

Robert Petty

When we first met, your eyes were very young
Though you were older, and hand in hand,
With eager steps, I followed you into a land
Of towering trees where old vines hung;
There for hours we talked beside a stream;
You told me of a field beyond the wood,
Pointed out a tree that I might climb
To see it, strange and new. It is a dream,
That as I started, wondering if I could,
The sun grew dark—Your father called you home.

WAR DEAD

Robert Petty

You were the dream beyond this bastard place,
Flesh grown softer than the mud of spring
Along these wounded hills where life is stunted;
Yours was the heart, sounding the grave I wanted;
Groping to suns no bullet could erase,
The hour I touched your lips—remembering,
Till I fell backward, far to the left of light,
Holding the warm, tired fingers of the night.