

## TIME

Robert Petty

You—fleeting as the breath which calls you time,  
 Yet endless as the wonderings, the fears  
 Which span our little catacomb of years;  
 We, with wasted days our greatest crime,  
 Awed, would frame your hauntings in a rhyme;  
 Trace from old stained casements your fleet form:  
 In blighted orchards, watching aphids swarm,  
 We count the seasons and we call you time.  
 The rising tide, its fall, each shadow cast,  
 Receding sand of dawns that come too soon,  
 Vague, scattered clouds of pain which hid the moon—  
 To each, some starlit token that you've passed.

Till one day, to us—withered in our loss,  
 You'll come as rain that washed an ancient cross.

## I SEEK A PETAL SOFTER THAN

John R. Foutty

I seek a petal softer than her hand,  
 And darker than the power of her eyes.  
 Myself, I opened to a sun that no  
 Unfolding flower has known. A blossom wilts  
 In time; my sun has passed the equinox  
 And lost its light. Spring comes,  
 they say,  
 each year.

Sadly she has stretched out the black branch  
 To me before a bud was green upon  
 Its cold surface. Her eyes, beneath all shade,  
 Were softer, crueler than the level gaze  
 A hunter draws upon exhausted prey.  
 I live; the hunter gives, with mercy, death.

Again Spring comes, but mocks my hope  
 With superficial warmth. My heat is left  
 Where wild winds stirred a silent shroud of snow  
 To whip the frozen fragments at my face;  
 Where snowmen clasped their white, ice-hearted mates  
 While lean albino leopards curled asleep.

The leopards shriek and leap from hidden caves  
 Into the light. Raking the earth, their claws  
 Bring out the anxious green; their muddy paws  
 Blur crystal pools where lonely statues stood.  
 Gold touches the new leaf and glistens on  
 The rhododendron's mouth,

but I,  
 am cold.