

Wreaths or Coronets, Which?

By T. D. Agcaoili

I

We shall not say so many words
We shall just sit quietly in the dark
touching lips to lips
fingertips to fingertips.

No moments to waste: Flowers bloom in the air
the field guns rumble then disappear:
death's undeniable call. wreaths or coronets, which?

For the moment we sit quietly
in the night silent and trembling
like the stars.
The dawn shall come unbidden
and we shall say, Goodbye
Goodbye.

II

This is the Unknown Soldier:
Joe's limbs, Marcos' toes,
Carlos' arm, Ben's slim fingers;
Mike's head, the brains spilled
and unretrieved in the foxhole where he fell;
Steve's guts,
Mary's biggest loss;

Fidel's torso; lonely and proud.
and this wet heap, It still wanders the hills
which is Antero's innards But His heart, His heart?

III

We who went marching rapid fires of decay.
held to the skies threw before us
bright banners of courage We who went fighting

Where we stood death also stood.
Above us eagles screamed.
Beneath us the earth shook.
Inside us life knew that death
was whispering close by.
We who went fighting
were loverless
except for death
and her quick embraces.

IV

The smell of death is laurel leaf:
decayed.
The smell of death is million roses;
decayed.
We who were brave
surrendered
to our beds of laurel leaf

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Prisoners*

MANOLO ELIZALDE
PEDRO E. TEODORO
FLORO POLICARPIO

Wreaths or Coronets, Which?

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V

We flew to the sun,
bright red in the dawnlight.
We dropped blossoms
of roses, violets and marigold
and black flowers beneath us.

We flew to the sun
spilling the fresh roses of our blood
upon the fields of cloud.
We crashed into the sun,
the winds howling through
the battered fuselage of our bodies.

VI

This is the dream's ending:
wreaths, not coronets,
laid on the newly turned
scorched earth.

(We who went marching
stayed up in the night,
too tired to sleep,
too tired to sleep.)