

'The Wreaths of Time'

A song cycle of American poetry for string quartet and voice

Concord Hymn

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

Misgivings

Herman Melville

When ocean-clouds over inland hills
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,
And horror the sodden valley fills,
And the spire falls crashing in the town,
I muse upon my country's ills—
The tempest bursting from the waste of Time
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's foulest crime.

Nature's dark side is heeded now—
A child may read the moody brow
Of yon black mountain lone.
With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,
And storms are formed behind the storm we feel:
The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the driving keel.

To Inez Milholland
Edna St Vincent Millay

Upon this marble bust that is not I
Lay the round, formal wreath that is not fame;
But in the forum of my silenced cry
Root ye the living tree whose sap is flame.

I, that was proud and valiant, am no more; —
Save as a wind that rattles the stout door,
Troubling the ashes in the sheltered grate.
The stone will perish; I shall be twice dust.
Only my standard on a taken hill
Can cheat the mildew and the red-brown rust
And make immortal my adventurous will.

Even now the silk is tugging at the staff:
Take up the song; forget the epitaph.

Old Black Men
Georgina Douglas Johnson

They have dreamed as young men dream
Of glory, love and power;
They have hoped as youth will hope
Of life's sun-minted hour.

They have seen as other saw
Their bubbles burst in air,
And they have learned to live it down
As though they did not care

No Doctor's Today, Thank You
Ogden Nash

This is my euphorian day,
I will ring welkins
and before anybody answers I will run away.
I will tame me a caribou
And bedeck it with marabou.
I will pen me my memoirs.

In Memoriam

(For George Moscone and Harvey Milk)
Todd S.J Lawson

Concrete faces in Solemn procession,
Fused to drum sounds and flickering lights,
Mixed with baleful footsteps, flags unwaving.

From Castro down Market, the footsteps
More sure, the intense crowd swollen.

*As if drums were begging to be muffled
As if tears were asking to be heard.*

Protracted, forlorned movements to Civic Center,
A young man wept, and old woman comforted him,
Then, his candle proudly relighted.

Past the statue of Lincoln, now bowed,
The quiet assembly watched a child
Place a lighted candle on the steps.

The drums had stopped, tears could not.

Dreams

Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

