

Sonnet V

By Robert Southey

Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword
Of Vengeance? drench'd he deep its thirsty blade
In the cold bosom of his tyrant lord?
Oh! who shall blame him? thro' the midnight shade
Still o'er his tortur'd memory rush'd the thought
Of every past delight; his native grove,
Friendship's best joys, and Liberty and Love,
All lost for ever! then Remembrance wrought
His soul to madness; round his restless bed
Freedom's pale spectre stalk'd, with a stern smile
Pointing the wounds of slavery, the while
She shook her chains and hung her sullen head:
No more on Heaven he calls with fruitless breath,
But sweetens with revenge, the draught of death.

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Worth

By Marilyn Nelson

Today in America people were bought and sold:
five hundred for a "likely Negro wench."
If someone at auction is worth her weight in gold,
how much would she be worth by pound? By ounce?
If I owned an unimaginable quantity of wealth,
could I buy an iota of myself?
How would I know which part belonged to me?
If I owned part, could I set my part free?
It must be worth something—maybe a lot—
that my great-grandfather, they say, killed a lion.
They say he was black, with muscles as hard as iron,
that he wore a necklace of the claws of the lion he'd fought.
How much do I hear, for his majesty in my blood?
I auction myself. And I make the highest bid.

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