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Paul Stanhope

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*Three  
Geography Songs*

for

SATB choir

1994-97 / 2005

Sample Score Only

### *Three Geography Songs (1994-1997/2005)*

These three choral movements have been extracted from a larger cycle of five pieces originally known as *Geography Songs*. The texts set here are by the Australian poet Michael Dransfield, who died at the young age of 24 in the early 1970s, having produced a remarkable series of published works. The three poems I have set here—*Explorer's Journal*, *Geography III* and *Geography VI*—all deal with the rapturous beauty of the natural world. Dransfield, who was a heroin addict, sought the redemptive qualities in nature as a way to escape his “too literal company” and the “kerb and gutter citizens” of his inner-city digs in order to find the “jade shadow of a rainforest”.

The poet's imagery of his natural settings is vivid, and I have emphasised certain word-pictures, such as the ecstatic repetition of “stars” in *Explorer's Journal*, the equation of the forest as a sort of cathedral of nature in *Geography III*, the references to music also in this poem and finally and the dominating sense of skyline in the gentle *Geography VI*. These nature poems are among Dransfield's best work: he clearly felt enriched and in touch with the natural world, its beauty and its cycles of renewal and re-birth.

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#### Explorer's Journal (extract) Michael Dransfield

Escaping from too literal company,  
desirous of achieving weightlessness  
I fled the kerb-and-gutter citizens  
to wander through emerald  
valleys and the jade  
shadow of a rain forest six days long.  
Finding amid fern and vine  
austerities which made literature art, musick,  
seem inexpressibly strange.  
I followed native walkabouts:  
choosing to live their lives,  
taste the same diamond-bleak waters,  
study an elegance of stars  
mantling the hills. Sandstone weeks'  
unknowable visions, a calendar  
glittering with seasons of discovery.