

# ***SPIRIT OF NATURE POEMS***

**A Collection of Poetry**

***by Courtenay Young***

## **THE STARS LOOK DOWN TONIGHT**

**The stars look down upon our hopes and fears  
For years, infinity's been traversed by their light  
How do they see us on this cloudless night?  
What messages have they to set us right?**

**How do we appear to them tonight?  
What actions do we take that send out Light?  
What fires burn in hearts that are so bright?  
That the message will be carried through the years?**

**Our children sleep away their innocence tonight.  
When they wake up and view our present work today,  
Will they smile and say; "Those people got it right.  
There is a world that's whole where we can play".**

**The moon looks down. She's silvery cold tonight.  
Her barren rocks and dust reflect the light.  
She sees us rich and warm and shining bright  
And hopes that we'll not be like her tomorrow night.**

**The sun comes up expectantly and warm.  
Crimson gold will touch each heart today with Light.  
If that's reflected in our hearts  
And in our actions well before this day is old,  
The stars, the moon and sun will see  
Our children and our future bright**

***LET THINGS SPEAK IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE***

**Can you not let things speak to you in their own language?**

**Can you not let the dolphin's friendliness touch your heart,  
Without putting him into a marina to do tricks?**

**Can you not let a dog wag her tail and chase a thrown stick,  
Without distorting her by selective inbreeding?**

**Can you not allow the wild geese to fly honking overhead,  
Without wanting to shoot them down for sport?**

**Can you not let water crash dramatically over the falls,  
Without piping it to drive electric turbines?**

**Can you not let the wild grasses wave in the wind,  
Without wanting to crop them into hay & silage?**

**Can you not let things speak to you in their own language?**

## **ERRAID IMPRESSIONS**

**Amber shavings drift over green grass  
Turquoise waves was rocks with silver  
White birds shrilly bisect the blue  
As a lark trills liquid yellow**

**Pink sun sets a glow behind the western isle  
Discreet orchids nestle wildly in the grass  
Sorrel spears reflect passing clouds of crimson  
And the sickle moon watches seals roll off rosy rocks**

**Below the white boat, pale lines gleam dimly through the green  
A hanging cloud of filament beneath bright orange floats  
Harsh ropes struggle with the sea's deep purple weight  
For a trap to catch a fleeting sight of twisting silver**

## **ERRAID SANCTUARY**

**We spent the night where gulls soar low  
O'er neat Victorian dwellings  
Walled, aligned and well designed  
For artisans on lonely barren shores  
Who kept the bright lights shining;  
Their waiting, weather-watching wives  
Spent lifetimes praying husbands safely home  
After the storm's dark night**

**Our prayers soar up this Sunday morning;  
We, who try to keep Light shining in our hearts.  
These pleas rise up to join with those across the strait  
Where, following the Druids, those ordained  
And drawn to keep Light shining through dark years,  
Passed their lives contained in prayer.**

**This inspiration through the ages  
Now becomes a meditation for the eyes.  
The holy isle gleams softly in the morning sun  
As we breathe deep and lightly tread this joyous isle.**

### **TO WHICH I WILL RETURN**

**The champagne light that brightly cleans this isle  
In conjunction with the waves of wind that keenly wash  
All mean and petty thoughts a hundred miles to lee  
Have caught my heart and now it's not so free  
To go and leave the friendly guardians of this isle  
Don't smile: for you, these weekly partings do not mean  
An ache that will not heal till I return**

### **HOLY ISLAND**

**The ground we put apart.  
The land we set aside.  
The hill and moor we fenced.  
We isolated that corner of the isle  
Which now grows different - holy.**

**Saplings spring joyous in the gullies  
Undergrowth runs riot across the moor  
Uncropped by omnivorous ewes  
Unsullied by their grey and woolly flocks  
The land regenerates itself.**

**The ubiquitous paths and trod turn back to grass.  
Few walk here now, save the curious and gentle feet of pilgrims.  
The bleating sheep get further left behind  
To be replaced by sight of seal & teal duck and other wild things  
As the grim, bare landscape flourishes anew  
And we find we profit very differently - our souls begin to grow.**

**Fallow ground - Hallowed ground  
With respect we recreate the sacred.**

## **SHY ANGEL**

**She drifted south towards an isle,  
ringed by silver strands and beaches  
of pure white sand, set in restless seas.**

**It was a gentle call that came to her,  
unlike the fierce necessity to mate  
and raise another brood of chicks.**

**Also unlike the call to fly true flight  
that uses tricks of framing sky and sea  
and cliff and shore, to quarter air in majesty.**

**An alien call from one of Them who hunt and shoot  
and kill and take her eggs, yet also  
watch and guard and sometimes rehabilitate.**

**She rested, slightly restless, on a rock  
below the cliffs of Dun I's mound,  
more or less awaiting fate or sight of destiny.**

**Then came the sudden shock expected, as with gasp of breath  
and stumbling feet, two folk came round the fell;  
she slipped away in sudden fright.**

**She could now tell that one of Them was he who called,  
not called her to her death or test of fate,  
but simply to his awe and just for her to be admired.**

**She used the folds of land and weaving bands of air  
to slip away and shyly soar on silent wings across the sea,  
back to her island sanctuary, glowing in the evening light.**

**She left behind a pilgrim, reverential in his prayer,  
who'd journeyed to the holy isle to glimpse a sight  
of purpose in his life and be inspired.**

**What better messenger ! Winged, majestic, rarely seen.  
A feathered angel, powerful in flight but shy.  
Two souls that touched and had been touched,  
though neither quite knew why.**

## ***IONA GONE AWAY***

**We left sad stones that sheltered sisters  
And scraps of glory reproduced as tourist treats.  
The Abbey's restored shell is empty still of light  
Whilst on the grass outside white doves contest  
The crows for crumbs from plastic bags  
Till all take flight from plimsoled pilgrimed feet  
And sparrows reign supreme.**

## ***BREATHE DEEPLY***

**Breathe deeply and never forget  
To gasp that acrid city air  
To clasp the lead-painted child's toy tight  
To spray the ozone-killing can all over your hair  
Or to chew those chemicals down well into your gut  
Then to suck in the sulphurous fog from the near-by factory  
Or to piss into our sewered streams  
And to make the night brilliantly wanton  
With atomically powered radiation  
And to fill those plastic bins with processed shite  
And to read about our trivial poisoned lives  
On reams of pulped-down forest trees  
And then to waste earth's final oil reserves  
By driving around in ever-decreasing circles.**

**Oh, yes! Don't forget, my dears  
To slaughter the cows that waste the corn  
And dress their hides to make your fashionable bags  
To fill with paper wealth, in order to buy rare furs  
And whale-oil cream and drugs and booze or fancy things  
To kill the pain of breathing deeply**

## **"BEWARE THE RICH BEARING GIFTS"**

**Growth is the real enemy. Development's a crime. For we destroy far more than ever we create, for sure, when we export our vague and good ideas to places inappropriate. There is a shadow face to economic growth. It is in fact a plague - and we must realise this in time.**

**It seems material deprivation is actually increased by foreign aid - less water, fertile soil grows less, less wealth, more people starving, cultural health in part betrayed by missionaried dreams of raising all to packaged goals of money and success.**

**Their failure was ensured from start. The well-intentioned lies that spewed out really hid another form of slavery which grew so quick and so insidiously they stole away the age-old rights of self-respect and self-sufficiency.**

**Let's take the lid off. Question the taboo. Expose the dirt of interlocking parasites that feed off people who're already maimed by poverty, disease and crime, and war and deserts growing unrestrained. We must attack the paradigms where whole societies fall prey to market forces uncontained that every year hold greater sway.**

**We do not "need" our brethren to follow the same road as us unless we have to sell them goods they do not really want or must provide us with their loads of mono-cultural crops to feed our ever-climbing opulence and never-ceasing greed.**

**Development, it seems, is always popular, even when and where it hurts, and even to those it harms.**

**So whilst they starve and pay back loans that multiply each year and sell their land to ease these debts or fight with arms and weapons brought from us and paid for with their shirts, and tears, and whilst ever-growing fear, instead of happiness, infects their children's eyes, they dull the belly's ache and feed instead their dreams of alien goals through unreal televisioned images that gently steal away their souls.**

## **BLUE WHALE**

**Blue Whale**

**Trolling through the deep blue sea  
So serene and slow and seemingly so free  
That rolling waves or storms do not disturb  
Your massive equanimity**

**Blue Whale**

**What hidden message or essential quality  
Have you got in store for me? What can speak?  
Can your slow-motion movements filled with grace  
Tell of Divine Magnificence maybe?**

**Blue Whale**

**Does your cousin's haunting eerie song speak to my poetry?  
Does your size diminish my delusions of grandeur?  
Does your calmness contrast my ferocity?  
Do we need to heed your extreme rarity?**

**Blue Whale**

**I doubt I'll ever see you now; see your massive tail  
Drive you so majestically through the arctic seas  
Your smooth rolling back contrasting the jagged ice  
Let this be the beginning of my lament. I cry**

**Blue Whale!**

**I see your breath rising like a cloudy tree into the air;  
Icy bergs break and crack sharply. You sound softly.  
A gasp, a sigh, a prayer; a rolling wave in the sucking sea  
That tells you were once there. I make a plea.**

**Blue Whale**

**Stay. Stay with me. Stay as you are. Don't go. The seas  
Will be too empty if you do. There are some of us who care.  
We'll change; we'll have to change. If *you* go, so will we.  
Extinction doesn't work exclusively.**

**Blue Whale**

## ***SALMON RUN***

**The wind strokes  
Purple water  
Flecked with white  
Exciting the heavy salmon  
On it's homeward run  
Until it leaps in ecstasy  
Of death  
To clasp  
The diving osprey's  
Steely claws  
That grasp  
Its final throws  
And so  
It is born aloft  
By labouring wings  
In champagne sunlight  
Drowning in the sparking air**

**The flurry of its final leap  
Was quickly lost  
In wind-born spray**

## ***BLACKHILLS***

**The wind ripples the surface of the water  
And scatters the mayflies briefly  
Whilst the electric-blue dragon fly  
Seems almost out of place  
Amongst the soft and gentle greens  
Of weed, of rushes and grassy banks  
Beset with yew and willows too  
Behind and around, the wooded slopes  
Display a hundred shades of early summer green  
And the occasional copper beech  
Shows a deep and purpley shadow**

**Beyond, the brilliant blooms of rhododendron  
Sound a symphony of colour  
Purples, whites, pinks and crimson  
Caught and sounded back  
By the still waters of the lake  
And staccato interjections of  
Bright Japanese orange  
Intersperse the melody  
That plays against the background hum  
Of the warm murmuring placid water meadow**

## **WAIF**

**Bird's nest, now resting  
On the forest floor  
In fluffy shards;  
Tattered fledgling  
Battered by the fall  
Cheeping among the dripping leaves  
No real hope of life at all  
Too young to fly  
So - passing by  
I picked you up  
And took you home  
You'd nowhere else to go  
Now bird, bright-eyed  
And feathers sleek and preened  
Greeting me with cocked head  
Whistle, trill and cheep  
You seemed happy here - but I don't know  
Throughout those winter months you stayed  
Not wishing to fly away  
And by and by, you won my heart  
I learnt to whistle to your tunes  
Your liquid music dribbled through  
My early-morning sleep  
I woke to your endearing croons  
And the touch of your beak  
And the sleek rustle of your plumage  
Until spring came  
By then you had my all  
Everything except your freedom flight  
And you might have taken that too  
As the trees turned green  
But I gently broke apart  
And wept to see you torn between  
Free flight and me  
I took the blame and the responsibility  
And left to make it easier for you  
And now I see you free  
Winging through the trees  
With a new mate  
My life has changed now too  
What ever might have been  
Is long gone now.  
We have our different fates  
But sometimes still I dream -  
Will you return once more some day  
to perch upon my window sill ?  
One dawn will I awake again  
to hear you singing from the tree out on the lawn ?  
Those days of winter closeness now are truly gone  
But I would thrill again  
My heart would fill again to hear your trilling song.**

## **REDWOODS**

**Misty green  
Rain-bearing clouds  
Drift past your shoulders  
Massive fingers  
Point ragged at the sky  
You stand and watch  
Millennia pass by  
Red bark crumbles softly  
    Will we feel their passing glory?  
Trees grow slowly  
    Wiser as they grow older  
Or just more inspiring?**

## **REDWOODS TOO**

**The big trees are dying  
Naked spears protrude  
    Above the forest  
Their tops denuded by acid rain  
Death works it's way down  
    Painfully slowly  
If this were not enough  
The bare-topped hills  
    Are stripped in swathes miles wide  
By red-necked greed  
And an inundation of fast-growing foreign firs  
    Cater to a nation's paper needs**

## **REDWOODS GOING**

**Endless serene and stately columns  
    Once made a temple a thousand miles long.  
They once succumbed to storm and fire alone;  
    For little disturbed the aeons of tranquillity  
They now contend with carelessness  
    And drought and litter louts  
Their only worship - droves of camper vans.  
Their spirit's gone and highways weave  
    Between the isolated groves  
The big trees are dying - almost gone**

**ODE TO A TREE IN A WINTER LONDON CHURCHYARD**

Frozen, motionless you stand,  
A white network of delicate tracings -  
    so still;  
All around is white, quiet, dead;  
Away, behind those dark forbidding faces  
    with their pale outlines & highlights,  
    softening and enhancing their murky walls,  
There's a murmur; never ceasing, never changing,  
The murmur of constant traffic - red, black, green, white -  
All white coated, all frosted - melting, getting greyer  
But all is white and quiet here in this backwater,  
This mere side street which leads - somewhere? Nowhere.

Nowhere someone breathes, and your snow-soft covering billows,  
    puffs - a white cloud, it whirls,  
Shrieks, blizzards, freezes and then drifts gently down  
    with its brothers to the shrouded stones,  
    each with its own obliterated epitaph.  
A posy lies pink against the sheeted slab,  
    Rest In Peace - the world rests, and you gaunt tree  
Do you rest, in peace, in a Persil paradise  
    where all is crisp and quiet ?

A line of footsteps - crisp-crunch leads to a wreath'd shrine;  
Two knees imprint the snow in silent prayer  
    which rises with the frosty breath of the devout.  
Above there soars a gull, a lonely snowflake  
    crisp and grey against the overcast and cloudy sky  
    it swoops, rises, alights and fluffs itself,  
And then, as if by Midas touch, is frozen  
    Cheeky sparrows dart and chink,  
    twittering meaninglessly at your guest,  
Jumping from twig to twig in sharp bursts of whirring wings.  
    Your twigs sway and shiver with their crystal icicles  
To an unheard melody.

A clock beats out the metronome from its gold-backed face,  
Your orphans shrill its piping harmonies and swoop to its quavers  
Windows are its cymbals, doors its drums, the clink o' change  
    in the pockets of passers-by are its castanets  
And you, its silent dancer - dancing in the breeze  
    that flurries down between the buildings tall  
Dancing, always dancing, going nowhere at all.

## **MOTHER'S ANGER**

Tread softly as you walk upon my gentle earth.  
I am sleeping still and do not wish to wake.  
You, my children, to whom I've given birth,  
Please listen now for all our sakes.

At first your play was loving, soft;  
My hills and valleys rang with mirth,  
So that I did allow, but -  
Your games are irritations now.

All is not well, it seems.  
You have grown unkind and begin to trouble my dreams.  
Your roads begin to bind me; cities press their weight.  
(Tracks and towns I tolerate)  
You furrow my skin, spend my riches in your haste,  
And turn my trees to waste.  
You spread your poisons wide and dig for fuel deep,  
Yet still I sleep - but my dreams for you grow troubled.

Fear lest I wake:  
Lest fire spews and mountains quake:  
Lest seas rise up or ice-age shuts the door on your short lives:  
Or lest I change my track around the sun  
There's little fun in being fried.  
Your weather's presently quite mild and shacks and surface scrapes contrive.  
All that of course would change and you've nowhere else to hide.  
The mother sometimes turns against the child.

You cut my hair and break my very bones - for toys!  
You plunder secret treasures, kill the seas. Treat me with some respect, please!  
My sanctuaries reverberate with noise. Why all this strife?  
Sacred hoards, not necessarily laid down for you, are scattered wide.  
You hew down stately trees - for paper, boards.  
I'd planned for you a very different dream, a glorious fate. You could not wait.

A while ago, I woke with hate and changed my face.  
My children then, dinosaurs long-lived but slow, are old stones now.  
It was their turn to go. They were so very dull!  
When next I wake, I won't discriminate  
Between those of you with grace and those who wreck a dream made long ago.  
One cannot check a total cull of those who desecrate.

So tread softly as you walk upon my gentle earth.  
Your childish mirth may change to dread  
When I give birth to children more considerate.

## **TIDES**

There are tides in the affairs of men that move me slow and deep  
For some of those who have been shackled all their lives  
Have risen recently against the slow draining ebb of freedom  
And the remorselessly heavy exposure to the stinking mud of tyranny.

So if the tide can turn for them and flow back over the barren marshes  
That are home only to a few wild free creatures  
And also to some like the isolated clumps of mussels  
Who cling tenaciously to their little patch  
Their tenderness well hidden in tightly closed shells

If these tides can turn and bring back the salty tang of life  
With its chaotic ripples that will eventually cover all this wild marsh  
With a shimmering mirror lit by a lambent moon  
And bracketed by the flight of winter geese and creaking wings  
Maybe I can come back again with hope renewed  
Washed clean of the disturbed sediment of my turmoils.

Can I manage to leave behind all the excavations in the sticky mud  
Where I searched for my identity and some elusive meaning to it all  
That seemed to slip deftly away whenever I got near.  
If these tides can really turn, can I even regain a sense of peace  
And can the morass of my life be covered by these restoring waters  
Full and rich with teeming fish on which I can then drift  
Under red sails with the strake of my boat  
Sending ever-widening ripples to the wavering reeds.  
This is the life of which I dream when all my ghosts are laid  
Like sea-wracked wrecks in which otters now play  
And a lone porpoise sports exquisitely amongst the incoming bass  
Trolling the channel under the hungry stars

For I am often caught in the mesh of the cities' stink, drowned in the noise of cars,  
Struggling desperately & wondering if I will ever find my way back out  
To where there is a wide horizon, rolling sands and a salty tang in the air  
And the bittern's booming cry floats out over the low-lying lands  
And the marsh harrier hangs in the sky over the ebbing waters  
A simple dream though richly despised by the nets of intricate analysis  
That politicians and professionals make to harvest the unthinking schools  
First by feeding them with dead poets or grammatical rules like offal  
Till they are full grown & economically ready for harvesting  
Then by driving them steadily into the shallows to slaughter them  
In successive shoals with vivid descriptions of the wild & predatorial sharks  
That lurk out there on the horizon for their lies are as foggy and deceptive  
As the sea mists that roll in confounding the senses and distorting the landscape

So it often seems that I'm the only voice, the rare eye of a fisherman  
That can see the rapine capture and harsh exploitation of our liberties  
And whilst I am longing for a return to simple times, alone with the wild marsh  
It seems I must sometimes wade out into the deep swell and booming surf  
And risk being swept away by shock & undertow to try to save something  
Worthwhile from the wreckage in an attempt to stem these tides of other men  
Before they damage even more of this my sacred sanctuary  
- the fragile beauty of the marsh and undulating shore.

**WHO AM I ?**

**I am the light at the end of every dream  
I am the fire at the heart of every opal  
I am the sunrise at each winter solstice**

**I am the pride that carries the red deer's antlers across the glen  
I am the joy that lifts the dolphin in an arch above the sea  
I am the true flight of the sea eagle that divides the very air**

**I am the silver branch of the apple tree that bears the crystal fruit  
I am the golden bough of mistletoe that carries the mystery  
I am the crimson rowan berries that are food for faery folk**

**I am he who walks on the edge of land with water lapping at his feet  
I am he who stands at the gateway - guardian of the memories  
I am he who bridges the light & the dark showing the way across**

**I am the wild fruit that brings rare dreams  
I am the briar that pricks the unconscious finger  
I am the flower that carries the hope of love**

**I am the wise woman who can see into people's hearts  
& know their hidden fears and desires**

**I am also the bard whose songs put back heart into men  
& can bring tears to their eyes as well**

**I am nothing but a foolish scribbler whose wild ramblings  
sometimes carry a morsel of truth hidden deep in their veins**

**Who am I ?**

Courtenay Young  
Findhorn 1992