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Poetry and Nature

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Poetry reaches in and touches the felt sense of awe, of grief, of sacred space; it is the crucible within which loss sparks renewal and trauma transforms into initiation. The author offers two poems with narrative context to illustrate its role in her personal experience.

Keywords: *nature poetry, environmental awareness, immediacy, wilderness*

Poetry and Nature

I have been writing for some time now about the intersection where our deep grief of destruction and loss meets our overwhelming love of earth in all its fecundity. My sorrow for the losses we are witnessing is tempered by the immense and unflagging beauty all around me. In my poems I share that felt sense and invite others to find their pathway as aware, awake humans on this small blue planet of ours.

In the following poems, my personal relationship with the wild nature of Earth and other-than-human beings honors, through poetic language, a way to touch ancient memories and meanings within us. Wherever we can re-learn or remember our natural reverence for all life, we can re-imagine a world of health and wholeness for all the yet-to-be-born.

Vernal Dream is an expression of this persistence in nature, even in the face of our cultural trance and amnesia of modernism. The cosmos continues. It provides pervasive mysteries of symbolism, like the western trillium—an ancient rhizome that holds the flower's life force below ground until the snow melts (Brayshaw, 2007). The trillium's three petals, leaves, and color-changes retell the old story of the power of each age of life and life's renewal, as symbolized worldwide in the Triple Goddess iconography: maiden, mother, crone (e.g., Campbell, 1991; Gimbutas, 2001). I find that sitting with small things in nature, like flowers and stones, and relating to them as sacred gifts, one could say as muses, allows my mind to quiet and my perception to alter from three dimensions to a multi-sensory and multi-dimensional experience. Suddenly connections become apparent that were previously unseen by me.

VERNAL DREAM

And yet, while we slumber,
dreaming of shaking our rude fists
at the rain,
beauty in scent, color and texture
will creep
into our world and our garden
and even our waiting arms.
And, if in our deep sleep,
we forget to awaken,
to thank the trees and praise the earth
and regard the heavenly clouds
with loving eyes—
even if we forget all that—
still the stars burn in the
galaxy, the wind pushes against the
skirts of old women, skin
meets skin in a dance of duplication
and still all things turn and change
and die. And renew.
And whether we awaken or no,
we were once
among the breathing, hopeful
ones. And then, trillium-like, gone.

The immediacy of an intentionally remembered experience, even one lived long ago, has the power to transform ones' understanding of the development of ones' character over a lifetime. *That Morning* tells the story of how a singular stunning incident could be the soul's deepest initiation in an initiation-bereft society. That moment may well lead one through life inside a

particular color. That color, or pattern of consciousness, until witnessed with something like love, or ceremony, can leave one in a black and white world of experience. I seek out memories of places, events, and people, for the life-long development they sharpen in my life today.

THAT MORNING

That morning
I sat upon a stone, alone
beneath the rimrock high above,
waiting.
That morning
with cold hands and icy fingers
I held a small rifle in my
arms.
That morning
a young buck rising from his hiding,
his resting place, began his way
down.
He did not see me, did not smell me.
I did not see him, did not hear him.
Only the Gods watched: I stood to stretch,
he stepped out from behind a rock,
our eyes met in terror.
That morning at sixteen
I came of age and was broken
by the ways of my world.
An explosion shattered all the soft sounds
of morning. A heart shot through—his by
my metal bullet,
mine by his death wound.
I did not know then how to make a prayer.
I did not know the wound would bleed until at last
I gave his antlers back to that place fifty years hence.
It's never too late to pray.

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Gimbutas, M. A. (2001). *The language of the goddess: Unearthing the hidden symbols of Western civilization*. London, UK: Thames & Hudson.

About the Author

Judy L. Todd links her deep connection to nature to her childhood by the Siltcoos River, on Oregon's central coast, where she was "wilded" in the woods and along the waters. What she got there taught and shaped her development. As an older adult now, she has spent the last fifteen years teaching inherent naturalist skills to others while also exploring, hiking, observing, and connecting with nature. This experiential work outdoors re-activated her love of wildness and taught her to stop, listen, and look. Judy is now at work on the issues confronting our world through climate change, globalization and the industrialization of nature. Her work encourages self-actualization, raises evolutionary consciousness and expresses deep ecological truths. Her poetry mirror-book *Elegy for Nature & Canticle to Nature* is her most recent work. Judy lives near grandchildren in Portland, Oregon. You may contact her at judy@yournatureconnect.com

About the Journal

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