

Significant poets



6 Significant poets

Dragonbirth

*In the midnight mists
of long ago
On a far-off mountainside
there stood
a wild oak wood...*

In the wild, wet wood
there grew an oak;
beneath the oak
there slept a cave
and in that cave
the mosses crept.
Beneath the moss
there lay a stone,
beneath the stone
there lay an egg,
and in that egg
there was a crack.
From that crack
there breathed a flame;
from that flame
there burst a fire,
and from that fire
dragon came.

Judith Nicholls



Dragon Night

A dragon creeps
into my head
and wanders,
stealthy as a moon,
when day is left behind.
At dead of night,
as light as air,
as dark as lead
she sneaks,
in silence;
creeps into my head,
into my mind.

A dragon prowls
into my mind
and presses,
silent as a star,
into my dreams.
When day is left behind,
on padded feet
she treads through darkness,

pressing, pressing,
silently she presses
through the forests
of my mind.

A dragon roars
into the night,
hurls flames,
as fiery as a sun,
before my eyes, behind;
scours shadows into life
and thunders, panting
fire that sets alight
the forests of my dreams.
The dragon roars
into my night,
into my mind.

Judith Nicholls



8 Significant poets

Green Man, Blue Man

As I was walking through Guildhall Square
I smiled to see a green man there,
But when I saw him coming near
My heart was filled with nameless fear.

As I was walking through Madford Lane
A blue man stood there in the rain.
I asked him in my front-door,
For I'd seen a blue man before.

As I was walking through Landlake Wood
A grey man in the forest stood,
But when he turned and said, "Good day"
I shook my head and ran away.

As I was walking by Church Stile
A purple man spoke there a while.
I spoke to him because, you see,
A purple man once lived by me.

But when the night falls dark and fell
How, O how, am I to tell,
Grey man, green man, purple, blue,
Which is which is which of you?

Charles Causley



10 Significant poets

My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear

My mother saw a dancing bear
By the schoolyard, a day in June.
The keeper stood with chain and bar
And whistle-pipe, and played a tune.



And bruin lifted up its head
And lifted up its dusty feet,
And all the children laughed to see
It caper in the summer heat.

They watched as for the Queen it died.
They watched it march. They watched it halt.
They heard the keeper as he cried,
“Now, roly-poly!” “Somersault!”

And then, my mother said, there came
The keeper with a begging-cup,
The bear with burning coat of fur,
Shaming the laughter to a stop.

They paid a penny for the dance,
But what they saw was not the show;
Only, in bruin’s aching eyes,
Far-distant forests, and the snow.

Charles Causley

12 Significant poets

Pheasant

pheasant strutting
 like a lord
 in green-sheen balaclava,
 trying to attract a mate
 so he can be a father,
 flicks his tick of
 yellow eye,
 hides pride behind a mask, displays his vicar's collar in this mixed-up-
 matching task. He preens red pencilled feathers, shakes shavings from his
 back and points a scaly leg as though he's ready to attack the dull brown
 bird he's spotted but greets her with a cry that's like a throttled
 engine that's threatening to die.
 She turns
 away, this dull
 brown bird, plays
 hard-to-get which
 brings a ruffle to
 his plumage, a
 clockwork whir of
 wings, a launching
 of his body, a
 tearing of his
 mind – divided as
 his airborne tail
 as he leaves her
 behind.



Gina Douthwaite



Island Dinosaur

I see
 an island in
 the sea. It's like
 a dinosaur. Its
 sleepy eye
 of sun awakes as I
 watch from the shore. Its rocky back is
 rough and black upon its bed of waves. It
 yawns a hungry warning to the fishes in its
 caves, then lumbers up on lumpy legs –
 its frilly socks start slipping round its ankles
 as it wades, stumbling and tripping, from the sea
 bed where
 it's slept a
 million years
 or more. And
 only I have
 seen it
 wake – my
 island dino-
 saur.

Gina Douthwaite

