

**Girls Poem: 14-18 years included**

**“Sanctuary”, by Judith Wright**

The road beneath the giant original trees  
sweeps on and cannot wait. Varnished by dew,  
its darkness mimics and is bright  
behind the panic eyes the driver sees  
caught in headlights. Behind his wheels the night  
takes over: only the road ahead is true.  
It knows where it is going: we go too.

Sanctuary, the sign said. Sanctuary –  
trees, not houses; flat skins pinned to the road  
of possum and native cat; and here the old tree stood  
for how many thousand years? That old gnome-tree  
some axe-new boy cut down. Sanctuary, it said:  
but only the road has meaning here. It leads  
into the world's cities like a long fuse laid.

Fuse, nerve, strand of a net, tense  
bearer of messages, snap-tight violin-string,  
dangerous knife-edge laid across the dark,  
what has that sign to do with you? The immense  
tower of antique forest and cliff, the rock  
where years accumulate like leaves, the tree  
where transient bird and insect sing

The road knows that notice-boards make sense  
but has no time to pray. Only, up there,  
morning sets doves upon the power-line.  
Swung on that fatal voltage like a sign  
and meaning love, perhaps they are a prayer.