

In Search of Manu ¹

"The earth we abuse and the living things we kill will, in the end, take their revenge, for in exploiting their presence we are diminishing our future." Marya Mannes, 1958

"The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth." Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish Indian Tribe, 1851.

i.
I fear for my cherished land,
With a sorrow in my heart,
As I witness our modernity
Tear the fragile earth apart.
I look above, the chromatic skies
Where hawks and eagles soar,
And tremble silent with my thoughts:
They'll be safe-harbors nevermore.
In pain I bare witness as
Emerald columns of evergreen,
Majestic redwood, oak, and elm,
Vanish from our forests' scene.
And of our noble canyons
Where the mighty rivers roar,
Weakened by the will of time,
They collapse upon their shores.
Yes, I fear for my cherished land,
With a sorrow in my heart,
As I witness our modernity
Tear the fragile earth apart.

ii.
I cry for my nation's living,
Nature's children who must endure
Imminent peril of extinction,
Man and beast, rich and poor.
Ancient species' sacred homes,
Vanquished by iron plow;
A necropolis of whooping cranes,
Condors, wolves, and spotted owls.
Habitats of graceful beauty,
Perfumed flowers, and plumage,
Fragmented, isolated, wasted
By our civilization's pillage.
Nor are spared the vibrant seas,
Where fish and whale and dolphin's swim;
Struggle to survive a refuge
Ravaged and polluted: humankind's destruction.
Yes, I cry for my nation's living,
Nature's children who must endure
The imminent peril of extinction,
Man and beast, rich and poor.

iii.
I'll be father to my land,
The earth is my estate.
I'll be teacher to its children.
So shall be my mandate:
I'll not hand industry license
To effuse waste in our precious waters,
Which destroy the ancient ecosystem:
Tantamount to mass slaughter.
Through treaty, vow, and summit,
My pledge to global neighbor:
Deter cataclysmic collapse;
So our survivors be our inheritors.
Through my sovereignty I will affirm
That mankind and earth are entwined.
Flora and fauna and each human being,
Cohabit one home; pray we thwart its decline.
Yes, I'll be father to my land,
The earth is my estate.
I'll be teacher to its children.
So shall be my mandate.

A poem to celebrate Earth Day, 2019

© Copyright 2019

Michael R. Berman, MD. All rights reserved

¹ The Manu Rain Forest in Eastern Peru which is still an intact biosphere and has the richest concentration of life on Earth.