

# AMAZONIA

by

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The United Nations declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity.  
It is a celebration of life on earth and of the value of the Biosphere for our lives.

## Headwaters / Glaciers / The World Web

[Gaia]

My centre is everywhere  
Everything – huge and hung together

Reality. We sense it in us  
as a single course – each of us the head  
of our one river. But a river  
sources all water.

*We saw her. Walking  
barefoot on the brink. Green leaves  
for plumage, her wombs of water. Those  
many legs. So close, we glimpsed the webs  
between her woody fingers. Higher –  
till our boots rang on ice. Close  
enough to smell her. Each aroma:  
loam and root. And that stink  
enticing – of glacier  
meeting fire.*

[Gaia]

beneath fragmentation  
– the whole the centre  
everywhere from pole

to pole my molecular  
hard-won everything :  
huge and held and

hung together

## Cloudforest

Tug at any one thing.  
The rest will move.

[Gaia]

*It all happens here –  
between cloud and air  
between water and vapour  
between a plant and its root  
between sunbeam and green  
Here – between my forest  
and the steam it makes  
of rain the world  
is that web strung  
Between*

They trust to the wind. These mild  
men of vapour. Women of the future.  
Each raindrop a child of dust.

[Gaia]

*There is a world in trees  
furled within the rings  
There lives the dearest freshness  
deep down things*

Tug  
at any one thing  
in nature and the rest  
will move

## Waterstreams

[Gaia] I will show you fear in a handful of dust

Fish. A living force for water. Chief source of nourishment for billions. Estuary, reef, open sea. River, stream and lake. Approximately 3000 species of fish teem in the Amazon Basin – five times the number in the entirety of Europe.

[Gaia] I will show you fear in a handful of dust  
Tug at any ocean any nation The merest touch

# Rainforest

[Gaia] My centre everywhere

*Homo sapiens.* A single species, sitting squarely on the benefits of Biodiversity. The short-sighted: hungry for energy, hungry for trees. By 2100, the Amazon could shrink to one-third its original size. A key portion of the planet's powerhouse – burning. *Sapiens sapiens.* That green lens of forest, shrunk and failing.

*Gaia – meet Modern Culture. This climber  
sawing to the trunk the high branch  
on which it sits.*

*And Metropolis. The tourist who  
sets fire to the Mona Lisa  
to fry a few chips.*

The world may carry between 10 and 30 million species. Plants, animals, bacteria. So far, a mere 1.5 to 2 million have been named and recorded. The Amazon alone may be shared by 4 to 5 million kinds of organism. In Manú, you can find 200 varieties of tree in a single hectare.

\*

Globally, something like a dozen hectares of forest are lost every minute – over six million annually. Twice the size of Belgium. Each year, between 18 and 50 thousand species may sink into history. Each hour, approximately four extinctions – between 100 and 1000 times the natural rate. The fate of as many as a million species may hinge on habitat loss and climate change.

[Gaia] Humanity Hatched from its pond one minute before dark Flying into deep history – the history of rocks the history that runs with roots Mayfly dancing in the dusk of a May Day

The forest is a green canary. The Amazon: a canary in our coal mine. Or is that the problem: seeing the entire world as mine? What about: trees – the green-moneyed banks of the young? Doesn't that tie up mahogany and pine with money? Try: each forest is a lung. Lungs on the inside. Lungs on the outside. Why not be honest? Forest is forest.

[Gaia] Tug at any one moment any human And the rest will move

# Insects

[Gaia]

## Power

*that lever  
that fat wedge  
dislodging earth*

*but insects  
are glue – those  
dodging molecules*

*that bind  
my bulk against  
friction burning failure*

*in valley  
& pasture  
the new unit*

*the fresh currency  
on view isn't  
nouveaux*

*riches sat  
in kindly niches  
[tin rubber glass]*

*but my swaying  
dance in twin  
antennae –*

*those true partners  
unswayed by  
science*

*picking up  
your stoked-up  
order your crackly*

*blackly-rhythmed smoke*

Beetles. Here, thousands can come off one tree. Easily, between one moon and the next – a bushel of beetles.

\*

One tree. A hulking ship with its crew of ants. An ark for the earnest ant. Underneath: that ghost-ship of root. Sixty ant species, setting sail. A slew of green sails, heading west. The rain, champagne on its hull. A single tree launching through forest as many ant species as in the entire British Isles.

[Gaia]

*Last night worm and ant  
disappeared Trees stiffened  
Soils perspired Grain by grain  
who would aerate and turn?  
From root to rain canopy  
to shoot the unhuman  
mourned  
Last night humanity  
died Tree and Soil  
sighed Moved  
on*

## Canopies / Flight

*We are walking  
Carbon The human the gibbon  
Carbon The oxeye and termite  
Carbon Each bird and butterfly  
Carbon in flight*

[Gaia]

*There is a kind of cuckoo  
in my nest A species  
of dust that flies  
blind Intent  
on true west  
it flaps towards  
night – magnificent  
absurd Dust in flight  
from itself: Icarus Bird*

The Manú Biosphere Reserve may carry as many avian species as the whole of North America. Tropical forests: seven per cent of the land surface serving an immense biological variety. Worldwide, roughly two-thirds of Biodiversity – crammed into that equatorial band.

[Gaia] I am one vast bird in flight around the sun You are ticks in my plumage – you are flight feathers Indigenous races embrace me with emotion and experience You are high and strict on science But I am not bent on reward or punishment There are only consequences If you pluck all my feathers we cannot fly together

# Boats

[Gaia]

*You come to me with questions  
Your pupils dilate with questions  
Amber eyes swarm my nights Eyes  
of alligator blink my water Blue eyes  
over-warm with sun Look deep –  
see the bank of my almighty  
river Wait by my many  
-eyed water How it  
winks there is  
an answer*

[Gaia] Each of you a paper boat upon my water Some carry candles – some not You cast words in hope but I am water I am indifferent – I nurture I buoy you – I drown View yourself with the selfsame curiosity a writer brings to words or a child to a tree Bring me that openness a tree has to water or water to a tree You are clown and sailor on gentlest river on most difficult seas

## A Future?

[Gaia] I will show you the future in handfuls of dust

Industrial Society. Scientific Ingenuity. Better Management. Greater Efficiency.

Save the Whale. Pray to God. The hand of Luck.

Research specific strands of Being Stuck. Be faithful to one Assumption –  
Progress means mounting ever-mounting Production.

\*

This century – a moment In a moment  
the forests half gone

2050 will need not one  
but three planets to feed our consumption

[Gaia]

*Quick quick – quick-quick quick  
Your tango comes to an end  
Slow slow – slow-slow slow  
Grow supple elastic  
Bend*

We boom what is wrong  
but are seized by our systems  
Stumped in our forests of systems

Environment: the meta-organism –  
not a robotic system So long  
as forest is removed for

Economics Ecology  
slumps Humanity must become  
Ecology Or be shrunk with the system

[Gaia]

*And one man made a speech About the slaughtering of green  
And while he was speaking a woman dug a pit in me placed within it  
a green branch Laid it gently as though it were her daughter  
And gave it water*

Each human Limited in space in time So we see ourselves And so we make our prison  
Each with ambitions desires Affection for just a few persons a particular car Those prison  
bars What if our edges could dissolve? Each of us infinite Endless

[Gaia]

Your future is jungled  
with choice The nature of that  
jungle is up to you Failing to choose  
can bungle futures too And the future looks  
back Humanity has always looked over  
its shoulder Slacker or boss – each  
has everything

to lose  
You can toss your grand  
children to chance or  
my blossoming  
Choose

Nation to nation human to Human dust  
to Dust What are we trying to prove?

Touch the nation any Human Tug  
At any moment Our future will move