**“Her”** by Michelle V. Foley March 2019

Rivers fill her fingertips

Trees sway under her breath

She’s a home to homes, love, and life,

And once it’s over, death.

Birds beat their wings, her heart, against her fragile ribs, a cage

They glide through her valleys, her mountains, her plains,

For honeysuckle’s nectar and lavender and sage.

Her spirit rests in every lake,

Her soul in every hill,

Her heart beats steady in the ocean’s depths,

But she’s not good enough, still.

Is she not good enough for men?

When the sun and moon and stars whirl round her,

A race taking turns, taking pains, craning necks

For just a glimpse of her lovely face?

Is she not good enough for men?

When around her hips, her wrists, her back, buzz butterflies and fleas

And in between and intermingled, live herds of deer and antelope and elk and honeybees?

That’s not enough when the world of men is made of steel and grease and brawn.

They drill into the earth … her flesh

Turn pasture into lawn, turn elephants to ivory, make paradise a pawn.

They care nothing for the creatures that have made her skin a home.

They’re in hot pursuit of the oil pumping through her veins, the iron in her bones, the diamonds In her brain, and her burning eyes of coal.

When she warns us with droughts, famines of hope and water,

Don’t think that plastic and pollution won’t hurt your sons and daughters.

Don’t think that not thinking, that brinking it all at the back of your mind, at the edge of your mind

That if you don’t remind yourself of it all, it’s not happening … because it is happening.

Be warned, mankind, that her soul swirls with hurricanes, brings famines, heats, a want of rain,

We put her joints in constant strain, feign regret, exploit for gain,

Plunge needles through her oily veins,

I’m sorry for all this refrain but it’s insane how we crave everything but her.

So be warned, mankind, that she’s fragile like the morning dew clinging to her skin,

Like a newborn or a bird’s nest, or the eggs cradled within.

She’s gentle like the breeze, like a young bird’s broken wing, like a summer cloud, a fairy house,

A tulip’s bud in spring.

She’s beautiful, she’s weak, eggshell under bird’s beak.

And in twenty years, when the oceans reek of gluttony and guilt,

When rhino bones are dust, when river sand is silt, when forests lay barren, victims to wilt,

She’ll wish that we’d seen that she wasn’t quite built for something like us.