

I AM THE MOUNTAIN OF MANZANAR

Dust storms
Sweat days
Yellow people
Exiles

I am the mountain that kisses the sky
 in the dawning
I watched the day when these, your people, came
 into your heart

Tired
Bewildered
Embittered

I saw you accept them with compassion
 impassive but visible
Life of a thousand teemed within your bosom
A thousand that hated and feared you
Silently you received and bore them
 Daily you fed them from your breast
 Nightly you soothed them to forgetful slumber
Guardian and keeper of the unwanted

They say your people are wanton
 Saboteurs
 Haters of white men
 Spies

Yet I have seen them go forth to die
 For their only country
Help with the defense of their homeland
 America

I have seen them look with trusting eyes at nature
And know the pathos of their tearful laughter
Choked with enveloping mists of dust storms
Pant with the heat of sweat days, still laughing
Their only sin, their faces
Exiles

And I say to those who hate and those outside your bounds
Scoff if you must, but the dawn is approaching
When these, who have learned and suffered in silent courage
Better, wiser, for the unforgettable interlude of detention
Shall tread on free soil again
Side by side, peacefully with those who sneered at the
 Dust storms
 Sweat days
 Yellow people
 Exiles

Michiko Mizumoto, Manzanar High School, 1943