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# EARTH VISION

**a travelogue of spiritual ecology**

**Josef Graf**

***EARTH VISION BOOKS***

**[www.evsite.net](http://www.evsite.net)**

Printed in Canada

T O R O N T O  
"the meeting place"

Only that day dawns to which we are awake.  
- H.D. Thoreau

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**Earth Vision, a travelogue of spiritual ecology**

text and photographs by Josef Graf

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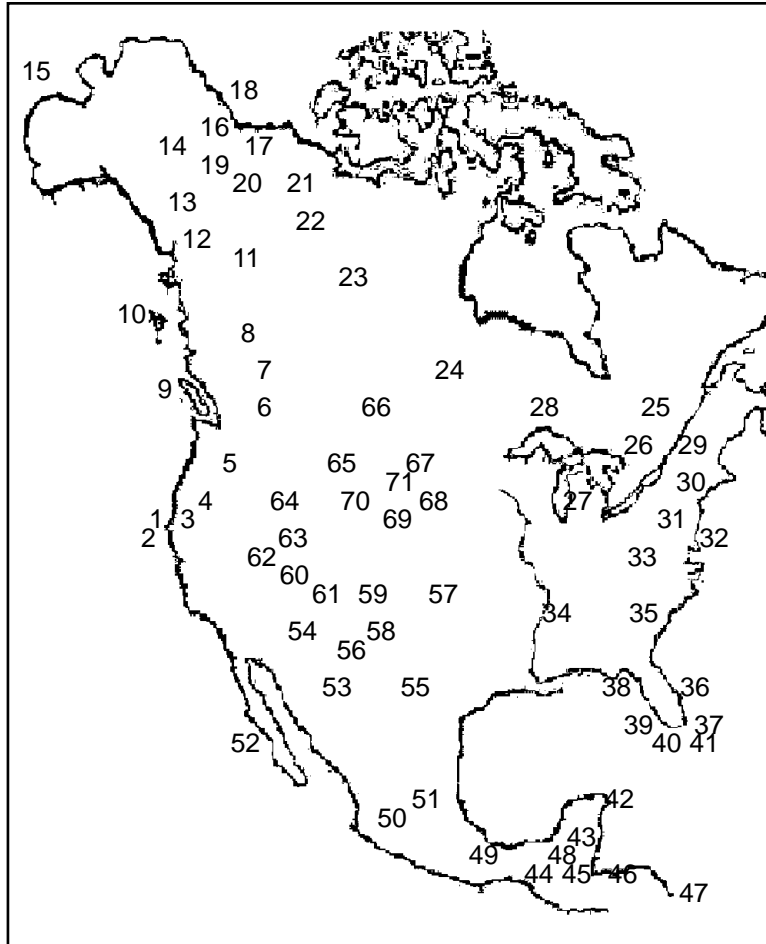
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*Who are you?* They called out, at the edge of the village.  
*I am one of you,* the poet called back.  
Though he was dressed like the wind, though he looked like  
a waterfall.  
- Mary Oliver

## Map of the Journey:

see Table of Contents for location titles



The third millennium everyman's journey through nature's counsel begins in the broad expanse of the Pacific Ocean, then circumnavigates North America before spiraling into the center, where it ends in a place undefined by physical location - in the heart of the continent.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Overture	
	Prelude	1
<b>1</b>	Pacifica	3
<b>2</b>	Whale	5
<b>3</b>	Redwood	7
<b>4</b>	Wren	9
<b>5</b>	Interspecies Communion	11
<b>6</b>	Rocky Mountains	13
<b>7</b>	Peak	15
<b>8</b>	Sky Master	17
<b>9</b>	Carmanah	19
<b>10</b>	North Pacific Coast	21
<b>11</b>	Moose	23
<b>12</b>	A Guardian	25
<b>13</b>	Wolf	27
<b>14</b>	Swan	29
<b>15</b>	Sea Lion	31
<b>16</b>	Caribou	33
<b>17</b>	Tundra	35
<b>18</b>	Arctic Ocean	37
<b>19</b>	Veils	39
<b>20</b>	Tundra Mountains	41
<b>21</b>	Musk Ox	43
<b>22</b>	Arctic	45
<b>23</b>	Raven	47
<b>24</b>	Sweep of Grace	49
<b>25</b>	Beaver	51
<b>26</b>	Eastern Forest River	53
<b>27</b>	Cardinal	55

<b>28</b>	A Great Lake	57	<b>58</b>	Mountain Forest	119
<b>29</b>	Deer	59	<b>59</b>	Sage Desert	121
<b>30</b>	Thunderstorm	61	<b>60</b>	Gaia	123
<b>31</b>	Treasury	63	<b>61</b>	A Grand Canyon	125
<b>32</b>	Atlantica	65	<b>62</b>	Dry Canyon	127
<b>33</b>	Dormancy	67	<b>63</b>	Birth Valley	129
<b>34</b>	Mississippi	69	<b>64</b>	Cougar	131
<b>35</b>	Cypress Swamp	71	<b>65</b>	Medicine Rocks	133
<b>36</b>	Upon a Golden Plain	73	<b>66</b>	Prairie	135
<b>37</b>	Everglades	77	<b>67</b>	Buffalo	137
<b>38</b>	Alligator	79	<b>68</b>	Great Plains	139
<b>39</b>	Mangrove	81	<b>69</b>	Nature's Prism	141
<b>40</b>	Coral Sea	83	<b>70</b>	At the Hub of the Continent	143
<b>41</b>	Caribbean Night	85	<b>71</b>	Epilogue	145
<b>42</b>	Yucatan	87		Coda	147
<b>43</b>	Ant	89			
<b>44</b>	La Selva	91			
<b>45</b>	La Selva, 2 (Jaguar)	93			
<b>46</b>	Mono	95			
<b>47</b>	Terra del Sol	97			
<b>48</b>	Rio del Sur, Rio del Sol	99			
<b>49</b>	Cascada	101			
<b>50</b>	Puebla	103			
<b>51</b>	Zapotec	105			
<b>52</b>	Baja	107			
<b>53</b>	Solace	109			
<b>54</b>	Palm Canyon	111			
<b>55</b>	Stars	113			
<b>56</b>	White Sand	115			
<b>57</b>	Grass Sea	117			

## Overture

There was a time when I thought of myself as a common denominator, a sort of third millennium everyman. But that was before life in a materialistic society obsessed with acquisition had lost its appeal, before the geese of my navigational bearing started altering their lines of migration, before the herds of vigilance abraded their antlers against the grain of modernity.

Seeking relief from an existential emptiness of midlife, now mounting to quiet desperation, I turn my back on mediocrity and the status quo, and travel west to where the land comes to an end and a great sea stretches out beyond comprehension.

For three days I camp there, where the sea of spirit communes with the ground of physicality, and open my soul to the interchange.

On the third evening, before turning in, my journal entry:  
*What lies beyond the veil, beyond what nature presents? When moved to a state of wonder by a striking vista with its light, color, and emotive quality, I know I am somehow encountering a part of myself. And, if nature serves as a catalyst for inner beings to express themselves, am I not compelled to go on a quest to encounter the full range of inhabitants across my interior continent?*

And in the moment of my epiphany I resolve to shine my heart's lamp upon a deep ecology, to explore how the soul choreographs itself within the theatre of nature.

That night, before sleep takes me, in this setting on the brink of an untamable vault, aware that I must now transcend common perception, I find myself turning away from the notion that the problem with my interface with nature is one of distance, of separation. Rather, the problem, it seems to me, revolves around a need to acknowledge a profound intimacy. Furthermore, this resonance with nature, I feel, might not only empower humanity to survive beyond the 21st century, but to flourish.

For the world is dark enough. And the question ever returns: how will we bring light into it?

## **Prelude: *Soundscape of Light***



In the night, as my dreaming weaves in sound and image, I discover a surge condensing from an etheric field. Grounded in spirit, flowing earthbound, it is a merging of redwood violin streams, wandering coyote piano keys, shimmering swan trumpeting, and myriad other voicings that converge to form a symphonic pool.

Within the pool, trout and salmon harmonies wheel in a broad eddy, interplaying a lucency that awakens an angel who dwells upon a ridge of joy. And the river of light-sound spills down through a forest of dancing nature spirits and out across a broad plateau, over which lofts the angel prisms with light and color.

Steadfast the radiance glides on until, by the rim of the plateau, whitewatering through a canyon of deepening hope, the stream of rarefied consciousness rounds a final bend, then tumbles as a waterfall, a heartsong that cascades down into the Void. . .

There is no sound now. No movement. Only silence and stillness. And a soft imperceptible glow.

The mystery has begun.

## 1 *Pacifica*



In the morning, standing before a great water cresting and foaming, I sense the rhythm of my own measureless sweep within, an oratory upon the sifting sands, so ominous I have difficulty comprehending it.

Then, assailed by an unconscious obsession, a rogue wave pulls me in, and in the backwash of my blustering, drenched, sputtering, astonished, I concede, I had it coming, falling complacent even while the insurrection of spirit railed against the tyranny of matter. And in the moment of my concession, I begin to sense a tidal pulse inviting me to enter this reservoir of unrestrainable fervor, where my heart at last can sigh in full measure.

While off its crests rise ghostly birds, and beneath its furrows sink scaled and fin-winged flocks into forested kelp below, the sea asks me to delve deeper, to sound beyond its veils of beauty and immensity. And by day's end, where churns the salt of time's wisdom within the curl of wave upon the beach of my reckoning, I feel the steady pound of breakers wearing away at the rugged shore of my conjecture.

And within that frothing mingle of salt and sand, I come to wonder where swims the monarch of the realm, that I may apprentice in the rise and fall of its tidal consecration.

## 2 *Whale*



Several days later, while sounding in the sea of soul, a mighty navigator senses me seeking to immerse in its water-wendingways, striving to fathom the passage of tidal sublimation.

Far within, the depth sustains communion with the surf of a higher plane. Silver the brine, gold the tea where spouts the whale's ivory sigh. Coursing. Sounding. Freedom is an aqua-dance, rhythmic like the sea.

By the purging force of salinity I lose my fear of diving, of submersion in the abyss. And along with this surrender, my whole wide watery-world is filled with a rhythm that lists and rolls in tireless undulation. Upon the surface, my cresting thoughts breach to the heights, and within the spaces between the slip and swell, filled with the pulse of the void, I feel myself turning back to penetrate the depths.

Here, in this amniotic sanctuary, I wonder, what manner of accord does the whale confer? What stalwart patience, what delight in this silken firmament? What songs and tales of wavedwellers? What conversation with the Deep?

In turn, I will strive to share with the whale my landward tidings, to convey coyote tales, to sing leafing tree songs, to intone the scaling of majestic summits. And especially will I seek to commune, on behalf of the whale, with its towering rooted cousin ashore.

### 3 *Redwood*



Turning inland, as I wander among the giants, inviting them to increasingly pervade my soul, the holy forest twilight becomes a bell of equipoise. And, perplexed by a redwood standing fast in silent power, I wonder, does the stately giant within need to voice its splendor, its timbered glory, its towering vitality, as though such power could reside in mere lumber of words?

Having forgotten who I am, I go wandering the land seeking myself! And yet, here, within this cathedral of calm and fortitude, I am inspired to tower above the path of my wandering, knowing that supremacy of patience reigns over all outcome. This rose-flame sentinel, earthen fiber dyed with hemaglobe of Gaia, smelting copper into a grand etheric infusion, grounding with a velocity so slow as to overcome all resistance - just who is this emperor rooted in the depth of Earth that continuously emanates the stabilizing force of its thunderously silent being?

Then, from high in the canopy, redwood wisdom conducts my gaze below, counsels if I would know majesty I must study its counterpoint. And there, down by the lacing weave of my rooting, something diminutive moves, something fleet and brightling, at the nether end of grandness.

## 4 *Wren*



Within the underfoot of the mind-forest, grace-of-wren lightens my thinking. Flitting from limb to levity, it lures me down the path of whimsy, to delight in a gentling way.

Tiny mouse eyes stare, laughing into mine, boldly greeting the giant of my wandering ego, as the inner wren becomes a rodent-brown nest-weaver in twigs of simple aspiration.

Forgive my overlooking, little emissary. Help me to separate the millet from the grist in my unending harvest of minutia, for I know that yours is a beak that can ravel the finest detail of an intricate tapestry.

When I descend to scarcity of inspiration, you remind me there is a time to spread my wing and a time to pull it shut and, with the power of the diminutive, to fold my ambition into the quiet underbrush of sentience. Though your eye is smaller than a mouse's, what regal perception resides within its tiny vortex, what hidden counsel within the minute under-story of my passage, and what solace within the inaudible drum of this wren-heart beating.

Fluttering through the microcosm of perception, this nimble avatar intones phrases that rise on a crescendo to a station of cheerful bearing.

## 5 *Interspecies Communion*



Treewords in the sap current of forest talk.  
Birdsong and wing phrases of avianspeak.  
Wolf-tongue eloquence.  
Floral linguistics.  
Rustling leaf poetry.  
Watery oratory of riverflow and oceanwash.

Wing and arm, hoof and hand, beak and lip. Inner hooves race across an astral plain, inner wings soar a celestial sky, inner fins glide in an etheric current.

Beyond the melody of the song sparrow, beyond the haunting call of the owl, beyond the plaintive song of the wolf, a parallel voice is conversing. Whether sitting on a morning limb, ranging a wild tract, coursing the ocean deep, or rooted in the pulse of earthheart, it is there, proclaiming.

And my soul sensing axis, a hub, a mirror of countless untamed agencies, becomes a butterfly telepath alighting upon a legion of wilding catalysts. And what is the essence of the device that nature so consummately applies, how the form of the being is not its identity, but only its creative disguise?

## 6 *Rocky Mountains*



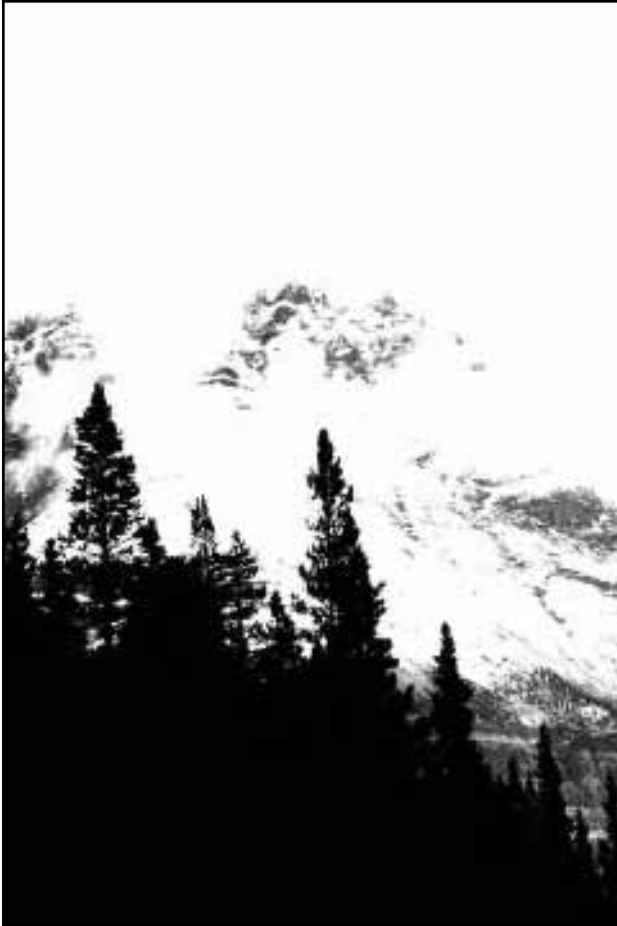
Northward traverse carries me, day by day, until I come upon a great walling. And there I find tremendous cohesion, pillars of granite strength supporting immense grandeur.

This is a place where a slate-gray heart in a silent cadence pumps quartz and gold filaments, where deep-anchored stoneroots drone a steady tone of unshakeable magnitude. Here, I discover that lofty attainment comes from remaining poised tenaciously between opposing forces.

Reaching starward, in the wheeling of the light, I experience a longing for ascension, at first into majesty, and then above that, to a pinnacle beyond even the great Shining. But much striving will be needed to transform looming obstacles into potent stepping-stones. While the summit beckons, until it is attained, work of earthly concern holds sway.

And now, as I transcend the treeline of my expectancy, the final stretch lies before me. Couched in upper reaches, long-endured weariness dissolves. At eagle altitude, where peak-light illumines insight, there is a piercing of the next dimension. Here, I will accept no less than what I came for. I will scale magnificence. I will rise to the heights of my greatest ideals, even unto a realm that attends the very seat of the sun.

## 7 *Peak*



Majesty is the summit of lost dreams. Above the compact-stone and graywalling, a celestial stair rises to where a glacial bell chimes so lofty as to be inaudible.

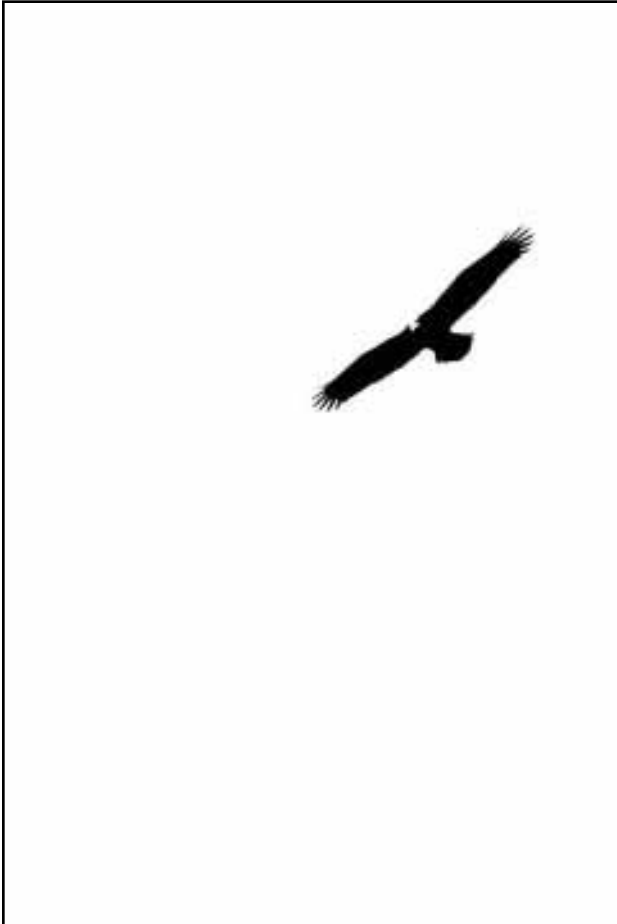
Upon this seat of inception, this locus of communion with Creation, can I ascend, I wonder, with mindfulness, retaining my grounding? What the peak says I can hear before it utters, what it shows me is vision that precedes perception, if I can scale my mountain path from the inside outward.

Because, in this domain that lies beyond anticipation, I meet the dwarfing of my identity - an exposing of the limitation of self-concept - I shrink from the heights, until meager sense of self can attain to a more profound conception.

I am on the apex when I feel I am summit. In this place, barely in the material realm, skyteeth cut into a higher plane. Because I must beware while ascending exalted spires the excarnating effect of precarious heights, I will study the eagle who, with iron talon, soars even-keel at cloudheight.

Peaklight illuminates me. Love avalanches down my elation. Majesty is the celebration of soulhood.

## 8 *Sky Master*



In the heights, wheeling over the terrain of my conjecture, I come to perceive that when I lock my storehouse, thieves surmise there are valuables within and scheme after them. That which is defended is attacked.

And when I stall the flight of my mind, despite intent to retain control, detaining wonder, I lose it. Sky cannot be circumscribed.

Further, when I fold the wing of my heart, confusion breeds. E-motion, energy-in-motion, languishes when confined. A frozen river yields no harvest.

Then, as I descend, striving to sustain a stance of openness, I prepare to meet whatever manner of threshold presents itself.

## 9 *Carmanah:*

*A community of Giant Sitka Spruce*



Three days within the grove confirm that it is imperative to safeguard the sanctuary of the soul, as well as the outer cathedral, because the strength of an unshakable core can overcome all the demise of the world.

Carmanah, I discover, compels me to be so attentive as to hear the scratch of a spruce needle upon the window of consciousness. Here is green from an angelic sea of moss waving, the drenching waters of a timeless clock, dripping long-resounding chimes of antiquity. These giants are deep wells turned inside out, founts of arboreal wisdom projecting to the sky of mind.

Because they are rooted in the heart of Earth, I can commune with her through the trees. I must be prepared to wait, however, if I would comprehend what she is saying. Her heart beats a hundred times slower than mine, and the furnace of her poetics forges hot, beyond temper of human imagination.

## 10 *North Pacific Coast*



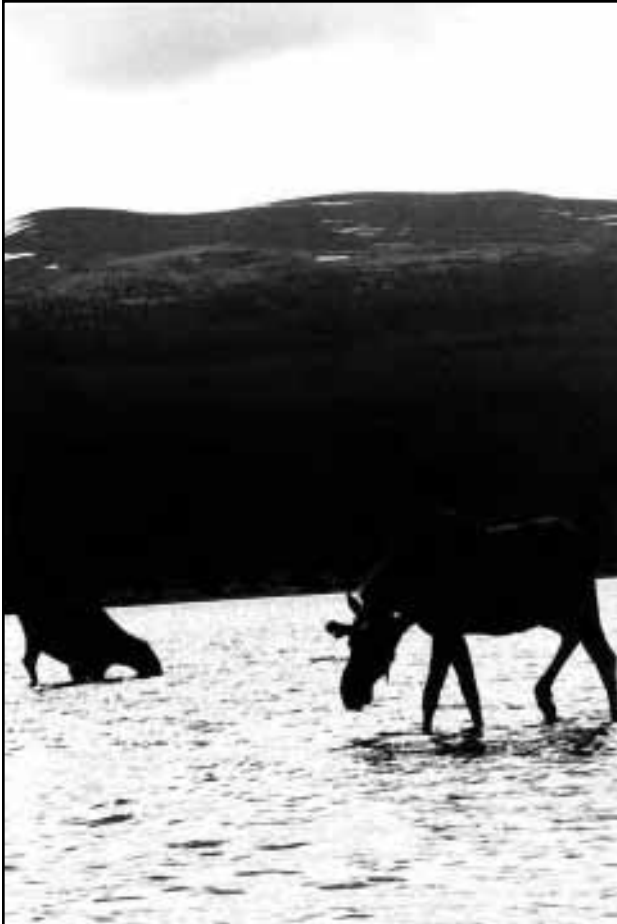
Cedar carves its image of vitality into our contours. Copper bronzes the hand of the initiate artist. Children of the fog, kindred spirits of mink and otter, inhabit the shores of our maternal sands, a beachhead seeded by paternal saltsea foaming.

I am in a place of seal-song wind and ascending strata of forest climbing into mystery, a stairway rising from the Pacific vault of sunset-simmered waters, a place where long-steeped teas of remoteness brew my seaside questing. Here, my lungs breathe a vapor of renewal, expelling anxiety and drawing in cedar wed with saltwind.

This West Coast drenches away at vision, washing away the veils of misperception. Here, the hard edge of my longing is softened by finer consideration, re-aligned by spirit's moderating influence. In this wildland of bounty, I discover, solitude renders space for issues to spiral into their optimal outcome.

When I realize abundance is my nature I need no longer pursue it, salmon spawn at my feet, wood tumbles down by my hearth, purifying waters trickle into the vessel of my dreams.

## 11 *Moose*



Rattling sounds from the scraping of antler upon the willow of creativity conjure hidden forces from my wildsoul thicket. And there, by the edge of untamable terrain, as I gaze with unwavering discernment through the hooved one's eyes and back again into my own, there unfolds a conversation of the spirit.

Teach me, now, to stare down predators, and to circle downwind before bedding my dreams, that I may receive warning of intrusion upon my reverie. Teach me to step through quiet moss, in the greening of a resting-place, to browse beneath the surface of intuition, to feed upon your lakeweed resiliency. Show me how to relish the elemental power born of spruce tree windsong.

Soul-vision scans spirit contours. Between moose and man, finding no fear, we share stone steadiness, leglong resolve, and wolfchase stamina.

And as I gaze upon the endless browse of salycin, and enter within its maze of willow and alder, sketching in disarray the forks and seams of boreality, I sense a being nearby who guards the threshold between this world and the spirit world. One whose message, when condensed, speaks volumes.

## 12 *A Guardian*

The Universe is giving me the maximum amount of love I can receive, given the obstacles I have designed into my life.



## 13 *Wolf*



Within the recess of an earthen womb, pups of creative will are born, dancing young canids discerning, throughout a terrain arranged in aromatic complexity, the meaning of a thousand scents.

Unhindered for a time, I range where the list of my yearning leads, over the tundra of aspiration, through the forest of golden-eye instinct, knowing that each turn leads on to yet another part of my indefinable quest.

The persecution of shadowy and elusive wildness has compelled free-ranging spirit to withdraw. And wandering now over unbridled tracts, at home with charismatic volition, its power cannot be purchased with currency of the faint, but revels in the hunt, in the culling of impulsive behavior.

Under a robust sky infused with the sanctity of moonlight, the wolf is charged with the untenable mandate of countering the world's obsession with subduing the wild, the assail of those who, beneath the transcendancy of the stars, fall mundane.

Without wilderness, how can there be wolves? And without wolves, how wilderness? The wolf's song as it howls into the future conveys remembrance, and avows restoration, of its former range.

## 14 *Swan*



Quiet, modest, not with brass and clamor, but by power of the serene, inertia is overcome.

And while shafts of radiance ply the sky of mind, life becomes a bluelight prayer, a centering in the moment of time's gracious wings. Being in several places at once is second nature now, as a white feather drifting gently upon the heart opens a vortex, beaming love in all directions.

Now my busy and contriving body, finally taking upon itself to descend, whistling down upon courtly waters, softening into etheric gravity, trails a wake of composure where dreams of regal bearing glide through the night, incandescing the vessel of the soul's yearning.

And by night's end, as I find myself lofting through dawn's highest strata, marveling over the vista below, a startling trumpet peals through the chasm of perception, causing me to wonder how it is, though I've barely learned to tread the earth, I can now use wings of elegance to transcend that place once known as home.

## 15 *Sea Lion*



Descending from the blue vault into the briny cauldron, trading feather for fin, cherished now by the sea's boundless ferocity, at home even within the moil of a tempest, I release my fear of floundering in the elements of the world. Here, rendering to destiny its mandate, I learn to recognize when the inner current calls for resistance, and when it calls for surrender.

Let me be one with this extravagance of immersion. Just as the lion of whitecap has no concern for where its body ends and the ocean begins, but merges with it, so it is when I trust the tide of incarnation to enrich my sojourn.

Teach me, aquatic tiger, to engender faith in what the drift of life provides, so that, if it's something favorable, I will gain, and if it's something detrimental, I will evolve strength through struggle.

## 16 *Caribou*



Silhouetted against the sky of conjecture, antlers pierce the horizon. While lichens flourish in herbivore bloodstream, long-legged canter treads a moss carpet, forging psychic trails that weave over wild tracts.

Let my migrant urge deliver me to boundless sustenance, maintaining seasonal passage for as long as I range where spirit lists. Let my ambition graze upon a provision transparent, a banquet unassuming.

Now, as it draws closer, circling, perplexed by my presence, the herd wonders what I am about. Lichens bear vitality. The ptarmigan sings dawn poems and performs midday rites. The wolf teaches vigilance. The swan adds grace to slaking waters. And the snowy owl softens twilight, when sky sheds its veil-of-light to reveal night's boundless stars. But my role is hard to appraise.

And so, I too wonder, as I migrate across the tundra of my comprehension, herding my existential oblivion before me, how to authenticate the nature of my quest, for the caribou, and for myself.

## 17 *Tundra*



Trekking across the tundra, moss pupils dilate to receive me. My steps wake vision, open dream windows. I am in this moss sea, eternally and vulnerably. I am here, stepping with caribou, riding bareback on the howl of a white wolf.

Navigating here without a landmark, nothing by which to find bearing, at home in oblivion, I learn to venture freely in whatever direction draws me.

Within this icy garden, forces of preservation suspend the regimen of time. While above there soars a bright summery vastness, below there lies a mouse-size wilderness, a tiny forest of etheric energy persisting despite all odds, a congealed energy dreaming a long, deep winter.

Towering above the crouching plants, yet dwarfed in a boundless panorama, horizons of my goals widen. This land offers cleansing winds and hoof-pressed trails. While asleep upon its mossy bed, spirits of lichen and mossberry attend my dreaming. Arctic patience sighs over a routeless tract. Tundra creeks run shallow. Water trickles, water seeps. Thoughts trickle slowly, my heart seeps authenticity.

## 18 *Arctic Ocean*



Like the tundra, the ocean opens my every gateway, compelling self-bearing. And within the dazzling prism of its surf, wrapt in glacial rhythm, out where magnetic forces harbor the secret of the earth's rotation, I come upon the birthplace of an eerie lamp, a sundog coruscating upon the horizon of mystery.

Here, I am in an unpredictable world, a world of beings whose identities I am unsure of, half-creatures - caribou-seal, whale-wolf, beluga-swan. A white swan greets a white whale by a bank strewn with the driftwood of past endeavor. The beluga swims my goodwill, the swan flies my elegance. The fin of devotion and the wing of grace meet and commingle.

Here, eurythmic energy from the charged polar field is lofted southward, surging in waves that sweep a cryogen wash upon the shore of my artistic questing, while icebergs drift, congealing my creative impulse, but melting under the waxing sun of my originality.

Meanwhile, ashore, above the sighing tract, wheeling light converts enigma, and weightless wings unwrap the shrouding.

## 19 *Veils*



I can take masks off, I can put masks on. Either approach furthers self-exploration.

Peeling off successive layers brings me increasingly in touch with the real self.

Donning mask upon mask permits me to express the multitude of aspects of the real self.

## 20 *Tundra Mountains*



In arctic night, raven instinct sleeps and flies in dreambody with white owl. And by day, snowy owl, vanguard with silent firewings, sleeps and soars with black-feathered boldness over the moss-carpeted range.

While an ice-blue spell is cast across the tenor of my marvel, and a light sonata rains down from the sky in silken streams, vision gestates in crystal silence beneath the mossy walls of the heights.

Now, as the sun approaches the horizon, and a congealing mist carries polar imaginations inland from the frigid ocean, distilling them around the rugged contour of awakening insight, I find myself in a summit place even before scaling the mountains. This treeless land in my uncharted serenity is a terrain of impending discovery, an invitation to wander.

## 21 *Musk Ox*



In this hour in which my plodding assumes a pace of tenacity, the cloudless sky weds my assurance with a tundra of even tenor. I will keep to my hidden power, my steadfast reserve, let no abasement intrude on my center.

Wool of honor, kiviatic integrity, contending against permafrost, with wind as ally, and moonrise mentor, I grow accustomed to a nuance of invincibility. Grazing on a browse of constancy, all directions fortified by unwavering stance, every opening is shielded with shamanic intent.

Patient, consistent, I discover I don't need to act until it feels just right.

## 22 *Arctic*



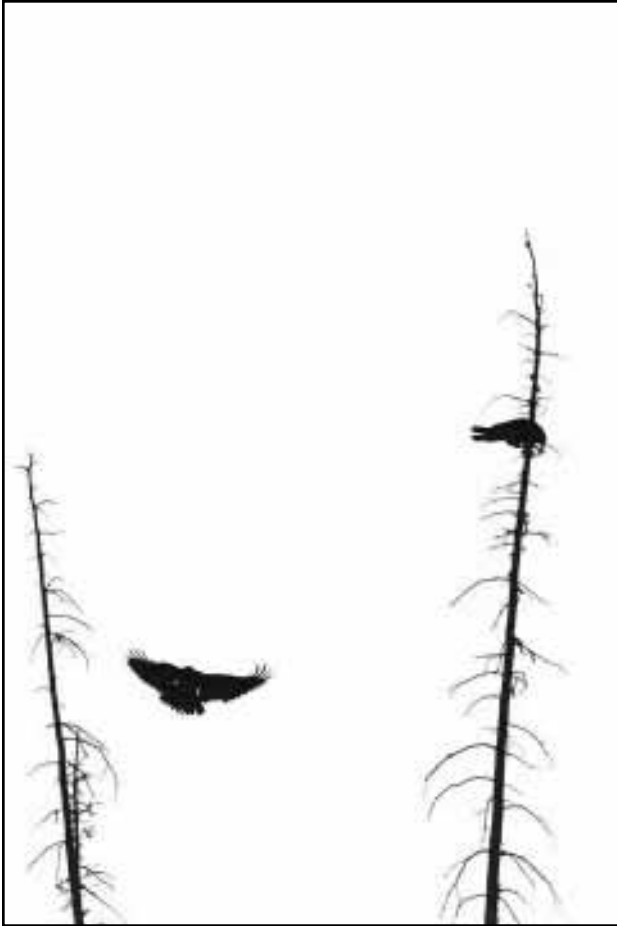
In this silksky setting shining upon a garden of northern owl spirits, the radiance beckons me to wander over the history of my imagination. Here, doors are so yawning as to render all movement and intention evident, all enigma revealed.

Now, as I take the last sunseting steps of a long day's journey, a sacrament of soul-sculpting awaits me. For I must choose between the great bear, whose primal assail is psychic annihilation to invite a new configuration, or the owl, a quiet shaman with a gentle but penetrating nature.

Then, weighing options upon a scale of moss and tussock, as though by way of amenity, with wings embering as a lamp preternatural, and with white feathers drifting down around me silent and ghostlike, the moonround face of the snowy owl regales me.

This land that weaves my rapture in dreamlit contours is a completely unfolded land. Where caricature has no mandate, simulation falls bankrupt. Here, I wander over my vulnerability. Here, where the oculist coats the backing of my iris with spirit, I escape no reflection.

## 23 *Raven*



Black-feathered instinct anticipates intention, as it scavenges excess, and awaits opportunity to rob unguarded eggs from the nest of complacency.

Teach me to glide and bank on indigo arm-sails, to work with strident force the under-current of my mind. Through audacity and wit, ingenuity overcomes toil. But I must clarify what I truly want, for, just as I scheme it, it will come to pass. Teach me, avian of Mercury, to build a nest of influence, to incubate existential potency for a meaning-starved world, to waken self-reliance, craftiness and daring in the winds of destiny.

And out of a moment of pause, as I move on, black feathers give over to silver shafts, to white of down, and the enigma of boreal serenity.

## 24 *Sweep of Grace*

When I offer and it is spurned, I still gain, because to give is to receive.

I will strive to perceive the virtue beyond the guise of rejection, and move on to welcoming sanctuary. If one hinders access, there will arise two that open the gate.



## 25 *Beaver*



Within this aquatic sphere, in the quiet reserve of heartwood wilderness, a leather-tail keeling proceeds across the pond of contemplation.

Arresting the momentum of a stream, deepening current beyond languor, resourceful, diligent, I methodically engineer the pool of sentience. And with the sweep of inspiration meeting the dam of creative interweave, a nurturing environment spontaneously forms to harbor the lodge of my heart's purpose.

Ultimately, through foresight, communal sustenance is stockpiled, birch-tip sweetness and poplar asperity, to prepare for passage through austere conditions.

## 26 *Eastern Forest River*



Now, while my quest ventures through a forest dreaming of spring, the river, no longer numbed by clench of ice, purls its glass music, a passage consoling, releasing apprehension into its silver current.

And with the hour of dusk, while beech and maple eddy sweeten resolve, in this interval of light and dark twining a sacred braid, the raccoon descends from its oaken home to amble along the bank of provision, and deer slip gently down to quenching waters. Now the sojourner's stream of awareness reflects a primal energy yet to comprehend.

If I hold still through this passage of twilight, my perception may open to what lies behind the setting. I feel the interplay between river and forest, a confluence of water and root in which, if I listen quietly, I may hear whispered the secret of its agency.

Then, as the sky darkens, the silver deepens to a color that paints itself beyond perception, a chroma that gradually assumes the indigo of night.

## 27 *Cardinal*



As my longing for a companion in life awakens, an envoy flitting through the night of my solitude comes to perch by the window of my heart. There, in morning rays, the bird of romance sings its strain in resonance with my yearning, a counsel of Eros embering sweetly.

By mid-day, in the sun's full light, mounting the crown of a maple, the cardinal intones an aria that, descending in crimson hue to the ground level of my heart, bears hope in the face of disillusion. Adorned in ruby feathers, it nests in a place between waking and dreaming, hatching uncommon resolve and pervading my soulscape with an allure of rose-petal intrigue.

## 28 *A Great Lake*



While clairsentience rains down into this measureless entity, waves traverse from the horizon of intent across a liquid wilderness, the surf of their manes glinting in pulse with the depths, where the inclination of the soul champs and races. Time spent swimming with northern pike, or wading with a great blue heron, helps me discern that the only risk in confronting limitation is that I may be set free.

Sunlight glinting off the surface of comprehension. Sand damp between the toes of navigation. Following a blueprint, track of bird or deer, along a shifting shoreline. Gulls mewling over the compass of my searching, while the wash of wave clears my margin of intuition. Lost in grandeur overwhelming, nature portrays its boundless blue-water universe as an arena of Self-realization.

When I experience immensity with no horizon, I can let go my fear, for I am finally coming home. And I will not be obliterated, for, by retaining my center, I will find my compass through this vast and bearingless domain.

## 29 *Deer*



Whether by my doorstep or remote in forest, the deer always appears unexpectedly. Fleeting as a moonshadow, changing course on a whim, it shows me the secret of shifting intent lies in a subtle bearing, a stance of gentleness poised on the raw edge of risk.

As the eye is built by light, so the quiet pool of deer vision, fashioned by moonray, is reflective perception, a viewing to traverse the twilight, to render orientation through the thicket of shadow.

With the deer's adrenergic vigilance, I listen acutely, my ear attunes to hidden matters, the softest turn of wind in foliage, the quiet step of stalking paw. By its power I discern hidden movement within the voice of another, the subtle turn of intention, the muffled secret that fills the silence.

Teach me, then, deer within, to listen to the gentle cadence of my heart, that I may orient a most ultimate passage though this incarnational forest.

## 30 *Thunderstorm*



Sweeping across the horizon of interior sky, a storm advances to awaken long-slumbering ardor. In preparation, a vacuum develops, followed by an ominous build-up. While concentrating forces becloud and transfix, fervency in the stratosphere of the soul mounts, and thunderhead titans poise upon mountain shoulders, overshadowing, inflating expectancy.

Now, as the overcasting of spirit-sky compels me to focus my scattered intention, the storm fetters the wings of sanguinity, for it has come to lash against the stronghold of complacency. I must take heed! A cracking firecloud announces a conversion. It booms, it claps, it cannonades. Deluge is imminent, wash will come.

It is time to awaken, to join the potency of dragons dancing in the firmament, to gather in a rolling mass, and journey over Earth, blessing where I go.

And when it is over, all is renewed - spring sits on the limb, birth breathes in the grass, and light shines for the first time.

## 31 *Treasury*



I exercise my sensibility when I believe in nothing unless it's proven.

I exercise my sovereignty when I believe all is possible unless proven otherwise.

Surreal perception opens an unprecedented vista. I can continue to unfold my life in a contained manner. I may even succeed at harboring it within a theater of predictability. Or I can fly the eagle of imagination from its perch over the valley of intent to scout untried hinterland.

A creek made silty streams itself clear.

A scarred tree renders sap to dress its wound.

A bird with a wounded wing dissolves its pain in song.

Human, gifted with the limitless ascendancy of nature, I can only succeed, unless I choose to fail.

## 32 *Atlantica*



Translucent jellyfish milk the moon while a thousand incarnations of ghost crabs emerge to hunt along the tidal strand. Rolling rhythms and long-breathing tides impress an unremitting massage upon inmost turmoil while, between the bounds of sanguine calm and furious tempest, there ranges the unpredictable drama of the soul.

The vessel of spirit lists and rolls, and the lens of perception seeks a navigation. A plague of raging hurricanes shall pass, but not until the ending of this dark and wayward age. Broken hearts, strewn along the shoreline, will be healed. Toxic dumping will cease, and the net-casters will harvest with devotion, in a spirit of restoration. Poets of ecology will be reborn, the tide of their verse compelling a quickening.

Here stretches treasureland, dwindling when assailed, boundless when revered. Atlantica implores her coastline be restored as a confluence of wildland and hintersea. In days to come, these whitemaned wavehorses will break upon the seaboard of a renewing empire.

### 33 *Dormancy*



Ships are setting sail that may not return to the port of my heart within this incarnation. And much unfolds on a scale more encompassing than can be contained within the framework of the known universe.

Animals, as martyrs, struggle in a quiet dreamfire. Birds await mercy. Like tortured saints, they pray a thousand feathers. They petition our ascension. Trees, as artisans, hammer out chestnut words. Their poetics lead the soul through the night of its trembling. Stones are painted with questions. Sunrise is a dye that colors the heart's fabric with virtue.

I wrap the cloak of humanity tightly around my form, binding wings, dimming light, subduing the harmony of angels. With eyes closed there is only half a face to present. With will sleeping, only half of intent can stumble forth.

When the spirit knows, and acts accordingly, the mind does not always understand, but attempts to discover a line of reasoning. It seeks a satisfaction of logic to ease the crossing of wild-weather skies. The mind invariably attains sufficient understanding in hindsight. Meanwhile, spirit has moved on to its next bold venture.

## 34 *Mississippi*



Grandfather waterway, ribbon sea of tideless inner surging and a thousand raining inhalations, will we rise above our tirade of commerce to heed your cleansing mantra? Or will we flounder onward, even into the sunset of this wayward regime?

Though in your nativity you spring with slivers and beams of light unfurling, the shadow of contamination falls to requiem the closer you sweep to your delta. Yet, in your seabound resolve, you are ever an artery transfusing resplendence through the heart of the land.

Those who feel the confluence of your steadfast bearing and their own sterling manner know the hawk that soars above perceives your constancy, lavishly yielding, streaming unreserved. May all wildsoul beings driven away return: the deer, to sip your renewing current; the songbird, to intone lost charm; and the black bear, to rummage upon banks of ransomed grace.

## 35 Cypress Swamp



Within the still mirror of an evasive riddle resides a sleeping power, here, where the swirl of water, slow beyond perception, brews a steeping tea, a detritus to amber the glass of a seeker's vision.

Here, where the alligator models the power of intent, in this place where long passage of quiet assimilation proceeds between sudden events, I learn the value of forbearance. By contemplating the cypress talent of thriving in submersion, I discover fortitude in the face of saturation.

Cypress elders with mossy beards, bearing a thousand rings of time's design, give counsel even into their last days. Beings in the water listen, as do winged ones and four-foots, and even those two-foots seeking worthy mentorship. Owls that call to each other in broad daylight portend a council, upon ground of trembling earth, that will convene at sundown.

### 36 *Upon a Golden Plain*



I have ranged through numerous landscapes of my interiority. I have encountered mountains, canyons, power-animal houses, dreamscapes, primordial mists, and even sands of future time. Now I find myself in a two-dimensional setting where a broad ocean converges with an expanse of featureless terrain.

Given other circumstances, I would recognize that an act of grace has delivered me to this rarefied congruity, but now broad skeins of glooming clouds have gathered. A loved one, facing an unknown fate, falling into the cauldron of illness, is poised beneath the Sword of Damocles.

I fear I have come to a place where last steps are walked. Even while exploring all parameters, and straining to prepare for any prognosis, I know I cannot make provision. Birds of hope tangle their wings in a net whose mesh has neither cause nor end. A seacrow hammers a staccato lament from a stark silhouette, palms looming in monochrome black.

Last breaths haunt me, absurdity invades my rationality, acid of grief etches contours in my long-standing faith in the perfection of life's design. I would take on the suffering of the loved one, if I could only find a way. But there is no place of trade. All that prevails is the wide expanse of land and water, a place where diverse strivings converge, where concerted reckoning takes place.

And I turn my eyes from the setting sun, looking to the East, searching for solace, but the arc of my vision becomes a hundred and eighty witherings of the arbor of my heart. And with the inversion, passion blooms its last reckless flower before wilting into a weary despondency.

Now I lie dormant between the setting and the rising, until a deluge of night awakens me. It is rain, rain in great black and gray cascades, not of melting thaw, nor the mist that cools the heat of summer, but a middling fall, like a stoical downpour recalled from far-away-north of the remotest horizon of my memory.

And, as I arise and roam the gray-washed concrete of a city sprawled in the sea level of my mind, in search of greenery, in search of budding, the fragile fabric of my quest is rent upon the sharp corners of concrete-and-steel dwellings, houses of no-doors, and windowless huts.

I stumble in a stream of poetry, every few meters pausing to jot down the moment, to document my passage for those who might follow, but it is all flailing in a current that refuses to be navigated. There can be no accounting. The paper will not take a map, ink of mind runs dry when it strives to chart a contour, there can be no rendering. Feet walk themselves, eyes are already turned in limitless directions. The police of consciousness do not patrol this realm. Where there is no pattern, no law can be broken.

And it is at this point of ultimate dissipation, within a chamber filled with the agency of the Void, that I finally surrender. Releasing my hold on the map, aware of the cartographer's stammer, I rescind the doctrine of navigation.

Now, in this moment of stillness, of accepting my utter dependence on Spirit, an epiphany unfolds. I see before me horses penned, but sense their impending freedom. The watchdog of the corral has aged and grown mellow. I look again and see dolphins swimming in dark waters, feeding on stars reflected in the pool of my mind. And again I look and see waves rolling ashore, and feel every breaker as a sunrise surging upon the sands of renewal. The waves come in unending, each foaming wash, I sense, unfolding as a dawn that my loved one will witness.

The loved one's heart resides in my core. Because of this, I love by calming and clearing myself, I help by redeeming unvented darkness, by responding to the call to grieve each time it spirals around.

Because infirmity's cradle converts tragedy inexorably to Life, I see the loved one smiling now, enwrapped in wings of ascension, his own destined wholeness of soulstate, that most ultimate of healings.

## 37 *Everglades*



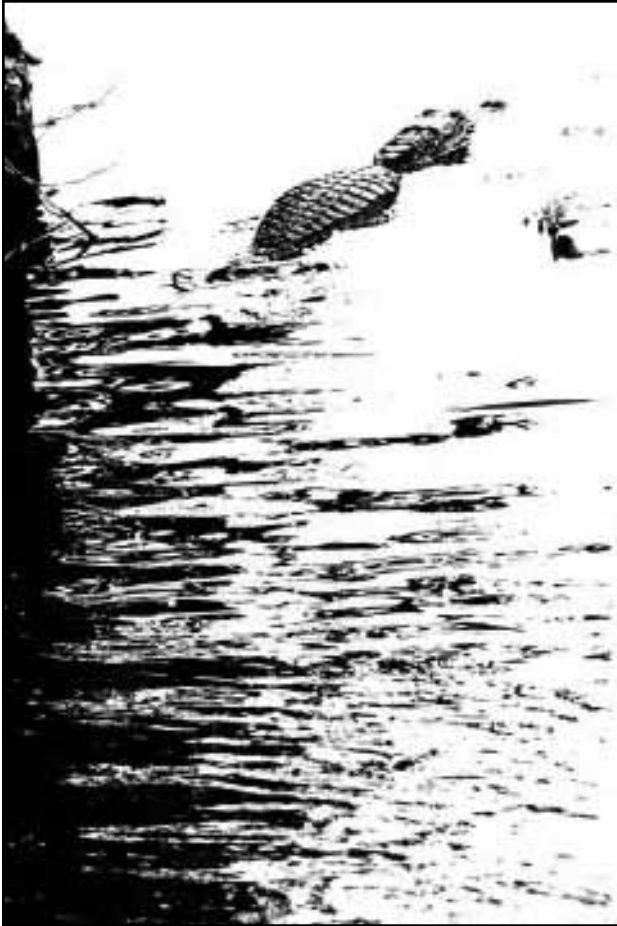
As cloud shadows roll over everglade expanse, bundling into island hammocks, razor-fine blades slice away at notions of progress, and a choleric sun, streaming into the pool of subconscious, raises the humidity of the soul.

Much is hidden, much is quietly revealed. Counsel enhances the community. Most listen attentively. The thin ears of grasses heed the guidance, the sharp psyche of the alligator adheres, the submerged mind of the turtle operates in accordance, the mangrove silently obeys, flocks of birds come and go in harmony with the intent of the Grand Weaver.

Human capacity to listen, however, falls short. How then, can I fathom the weaving of a single species, much less glimpse the overall intricacy of the community?

When the optimal route forward is unknown, the Everglades teach that, while all courses may appear of equal merit, there is a subtle current flowing with a clear directive. Spirit, precipitating out of the superconscious, seeps through the verdure of the soul, and issues out into the great gulf of unconsciousness. While it pervades the interior web, it can be drawn on and used to quench the thirst of myriad soul-beings.

## 38 *Alligator*



Vigilant is this guardian of the weedy murk, gliding armored beneath the mirror of vision, silently lurking, ready with sudden eruption to seize any careless venturing.

Patiently forebearing, with incisive power it cuts to the marrow, submarine vision pursuing fish of ineptitude and birds of caprice, devouring errant notions before returning to the deep, to a cavern of submerged instinct, a place where lurk dangers to be met with stoic valor.

Dozing in the sun, portals coming ajar, bearing secrets of primordia to those who can translate subversive language, it dreams to life the ancient time when reptiles ruled, it dreams the giant flying ones, it envisions immense eaters-of-palms and massive rangers of swamps, it dreams earthquaking footsteps and howling winds of newborn mountains.

And, as it awakens from its reverie, it finds itself immersed in a yet deeper dream, its incarnation now upon Earth.

### 39 *Mangrove*



Awaiting dawn in this seabrim setting, starshine gleaming softly upon my interior terrain, I learn to see with eyes that don't require light, to step an easy-breathing poetry, to listen to the lizards of dusk rustle memory's leavings, and to watch within the blackness of the understory as fireflies ignite in vivid pulses compact portents of the future.

Even while my premonition flickers on and off, mysterious rippling breaks the surface of my pondering, as fish of quiet message glide in with the inkblue voice of returning tidal stream. Twilit bird phrases echo, skimming even-keel over the wide saltwash. A few mosquitoes, tiny airborne spearpoints, insist I heed second-by-second passage. Offshore, lie shipwrecked designs of my life, along a self-pirated route where, in submerged places, sea-cliff caverns glow with a plunder of divination.

There, in the depths of the luminous caverns, treasures are held in abey, for the daring of heart, for seekers of lost vision. In these places guarded by sentinel mangroves of the salt sea, I am invited to retrieve what is mine, as I stand rooted in this briny web, with its burden of salinity and too-deep water, thriving despite encumbrance.

And across the vault? What unfolds asea, in the castling of its ossified gardens?

## 40 *Coral Sea*



I drink the sun, rendered cool in its rising, as it draws on the red and golden leaven of the Caribbean, kindling its flame of rapture in my core.

This coral sea seems a place I long ago daydreamed to verity. Here, the solitude is honeyed, the clarity imperceptible, the grandness unapproachable. The green of emerald pales in contrast to the place where I swim, while the steel gray of my longing disperses over the sea's horizon, transforming gradually into a silken haze of contentment.

And here, beneath the seamless azure, thrives a sanguine reef, a coral formation fabricated through layers of fervency by all resolve, all the striving that moats with turquoise peace the undersea castle of divinity.

How graceful now my life is becoming, with the sting of the wind abated, and the bite of cold warmed by surpassing beauty. In the strata beneath my feet shimmers memory's epiphany. What once roofed my consciousness has now become the foothold. My step is becoming a levitation.

In days to come, the ground will be rendered only as solid as the sounding sea, and the greatest prophecy will become that which perceives the import of every new moment.

## 41 *Caribbean Night*



My mind travels long and wide with beachbound waves across the sea of fulfillment before foaming upon the sands of reverie. And with moonrise, out across the inking waters, indigo and silver begin their dance, a lead and follow counterplay of shimmer and obscuration.

And while constellations glimmer in the field of my vision, my soul drifts far asea even before my earthly plans have embarked from shore. Another language seeps in, an eloquence of wave and wind, a language of nature's whispers. Although its tone has an ancient familiarity, the oratory lulls me to a sterling place of wonder, a place where moonlit sea weds with resolve and will not release its hold.

Stars penetrate my mind's firmament, a waving palm softens resistance, the Great Presence is all around, moving with a thunderous rhythm but sounding as silent as the sleeping sands. My eyes are windows to the sea. Coral of the soul thrives in the reef of a calming place. The sea salts itself, a spice for the preservation of dreams. Moon rains down and glitters back from galvanic pools.

And with dawn, seven snowing stars, the last to leave the waning night, hold the landscape entranced for a passage of heartbeats until, as the final embering star sighs and sinks into an opening sky, lesser light is overwhelmed by greater.

## 42 *Yucatan*

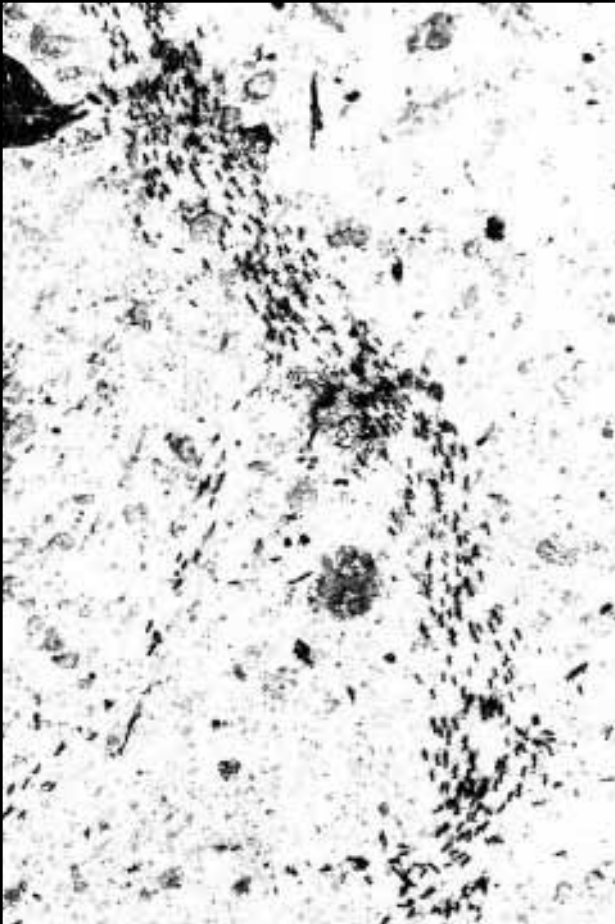


Stone ruins of a Mayan sojourn greet the glimmering sun, triggering remembrance of a distant past, another passage of the soul's eternal wandering. With ancient memories coasting westbound from Atlantica, upon the surf of a primeval insurgence, waves of recollection curl up against the fortress of my mind, calling for a new architecture of the soul.

Yucatan knows my sea of rapture, my expansive reservoir of calm. Yucatan, a deep dream, the return of romance, makes love to my center, to my faintest pulse.

Asea, the water contemplates to great depths, but speaks only in the sweep of waves upon my quivering edges. And here I mingle with the churned up sand and seaweed, an ocean broth in the shallow of a speaking place. And while the sailor embraces the wind, the swell, the breathing bound, and the diver penetrates the deep, it is the soul of passion, striving for lucidity, that fathoms all sounding beyond measure

### 43 *The Ant*



Industry creating vigor, the soul glazed dull by long leisure, restored through labor, steadfast service in communal enterprise, diligent teamwork inexorably mounting to a masterpiece of community, striving never wasted bearing rewards unexpected, facilitating a mission, clearing the path, delivering provision to the hub of intent in the nest of ideals, antenna of vigilance, reading the liquid air, anthill conveyance, grains one-by-one transported, sands sculpting an architecture of brotherhood, a multitude of formic knights scouting with irrepressible tenacity, demonstrating a network of communication and co-operative venture, finding restoration, flourishing on an impressive scale.

And the morning of a new empire is imminent.

## 44 *La Selva*

### The Lowland Jungle:



Abundance. Aromatic profusion. A humming flourish of life in a towering mass of twenty-one shades of green. Here, where summer, unchecked by wintry death, is instilled with eternal ardor, an ample etheric vessel teems with luxuriance. My thoughts abound, my heart overwells. How numerous are the pathways of growth, how copious the animal wealth, how resplendent and varied the biotic expression, the orchestration of floral gesture.

Above an ant roadway, engineered under a monkeytease canopy, the wild call of toucan celebrates exotica. The song of parrot is the birth of color. Color is an inhalant for angels. Here, a tumultuous sky of vegetation and humidity breathes me. Jungle is a thousand expressions, jungle is saturation, every small niche filled, multi-layered paths weaving, abounding with lifeforms.

What makes me feel wealthy? The deeper I penetrate the question, the more I realize the richest simply deny their poverty. Because there is an aspect of jungle that can only be known in a state of enchantment - but enchantment with wakefulness - sustained vigilance attunes to deepest jungle counsel.

With silence in Place, then, my inner door ajar, I will seek in this selvan excess a being fierce and supremely occult.

## 45 *La Selva, #2*

Spirit of the Jaguar:



Can I embrace this feral interweave of intensity and sinew? Here, if I say yes from the depth of heart, unprecedented power will coruscate across my canopy heights.

The shortest route is in the spring of the jaguar. Prior to the pounce, however, silent stealth commandeers. If I would assume the emerald-fire that burns in the eyes of this feline priest of night, I would then fall into the pool of my soul and be compelled to enter, unrestrained, into fearless cunning.

Let me be wary of dangers lurking in darkness, in the fitful swamp of unconsciousness, in the stagnation of habit. Let me beware the hidden crevasse of neglect. The shadow's dimmest recess warrants a rigorous daily regimen. Teach me jaguar, how, if I would steal through the arcana of my sentience, I will stand in peril - unless I can develop alert presence and impeccable integrity.

How far into the foliage of my destiny can I prowl? How deep can I penetrate with undeflected intent into the fervor of the soul's profusion?

## 46 *Mono:*

Spirit of the Spider Monkey:



While there is, at times, a stoicism I have come to accept as normal, a part of me knows it to be a form of self-denial, a compulsion to confine my craftiness in a zoo of solemnity.

At first, feeling bogged down by ground level aspiration, dragging a tail of dejection, seeking release from subjugation, I am unaware of cavorting on high. Then, above the tangle of understory, with scope of vision crowning, long-limbed dexterity and canopy-high rollicking mockingly assail my solemnity.

Mischievous pranks flaunt and mimic, and the cauldron of improvisation entices me. Swinging on sanguine limb, bouncing from caprice to whimsy, fear of heights is overcome. Constraint is undermined by a poise of anarchy.

Oppression, auspicious portent, reading a hairy palm, presage to assure and placate, all fall flat under the sway of a bold hominid spontaneity.

## 47 *Terra del Sol*



Southbound I drift, to where the radiance of the sun renders the earth less and less tangible, to where white birds wade in light pools, seeking sustenance from the nightwind's sowing, and searing cloudscapes cushion a delicate field of enchantment.

Yet farther south, deeper than the well of desire I go, farther than my most vivid feeling of wonder, to a place where the gold wings of a dreambird ply consecrated air. Pushing ever toward the heart of a lone star, yet never reaching its destination, the condor will never cease its striving. It flies an eternity, an ascension melody, an unending aviation into a frontier of obliviation.

And so far sunward I soar, that the frost of despondency cannot singe my envoy feathers. But what South is this that draws the great flocks of avatars? What sanctuary renews their celestial mission before sending them back to the land of spring, to their vigil in the north? What force operates down here in this eternal radiance, where the coldest night merely induces the bloom of the amarilla tree?

And beyond the birthplace of Mother Corn, the sunbeam of the gods, farther south than earth can be tread, I encounter, at last, a domain where thinking dims to a sentient dream, and feeling embers warmly, kindled by the golden deities harbored within the soul, and within the bullion glow of the land.

## 48 *Rio del Sur, Rio del Sol*



Across the river of contemplation soar the rising raptors of a renaissance. And as I cross over to the bank of transcendence, I discover that the flowers are the same in their loveliness, the trees as lush a green, the sun as blessedly warming. All seems equal, but I sense somehow there is a difference.

Great-winged sentinels alight overhead. A hole has been dug in search of treasure, the air is thick with herbal aroma. As I pause in a vine-clad grove, images of past lives gently well. And then a voice from a great beak calls me back to the river.

The river is my element of subsistence, my daily nourishment derives from its gilding, I bathe and dream in its whirlpools, I quench my thirst to create here, in this watershed where the physical plane is rendered more etheric.

And, merging with the river, as my quest becomes suspended between the bank of materiality and the bank of spirit, even while I sense my home is close at hand, the issue of shelter is transcended. For I am in a setting where tenancy is held in abeyance.

In time, as I find my passage of exile acceptable, I will learn to dwell on either side of the river. And my familiarity with the nature of the terrain will lead me to discover how my mind has created this valley.

## 49 *Cascada*



Purest energy streaming through ordered stages recreates itself. Bubbling percussion and lilting trickle compose a glittering sonata, leaping ripple by ripple, uplifting the spirit through constancy of refreshment.

There is beauty in flow unhampered, yet elegance and resolve are conspired in the soul that rises to overcome obstruction.

While a streaming cadence trundles down spirit's stairway, the creative play of its descent anoints a gesture of momentum that gives itself over to be taken up, in renewed form, by the vessel of the will.

Flow never ceases, wash knows no impurity.

## 50 *Puebla*



From treetop perch, a nightbird surveys the jittery maneuvers of a bat whose radar is at work in the fabric of intuition. And in the soft breeze of early evening, with expectancy simmering into a pool of interspecies communion, I can sense the echo of an owl's flight overhead, within the ink of night that weds with the depth of my pupils.

Because I am a member of the human community, am I not kin to a thousand gods and goddesses? Looking within, gazing upon the smoking mirror, I can observe the movements of my nagual. This, my animal counterpart, leaves footprints in the sands of my instinct. Quail listen closely, they are my ears, the hair of my head is cactus rooting, my feet, sacred hooves of the blue deer.

Arrows of contemplation unseal an energy portal on the desert floor, from which shine multi-colored rays. I will go into the desert and listen, to the cacti, to the deer, to the land. I will listen as if I know nothing and have come in quest of instruction.

## 51 *Zapotec*



A stairway of obsidian ascends to where the eyelashes of the moon ray down. Color and light from the heart of sky seed wonder. Hummingbird feathers are steeped in nectar of constancy.

Once, I lived in a land of abundance, before the interior conquest. Now, as I fathom the coherence between separation and unity with All, it becomes evident that when the eye is no longer focused on acquisition, it is free to discern the gold streaming in upon the wheel of the sun's extravagance.

Wild burro listens, through the doorway of the sky, to songs that pass through Time's house.

Coyote waits at the gateway of twilight, a lantern of amber in each eye, as she readies her tricks for the night's raiding.

El lobo prepares for no one, but lives to fulfill the creative destruction of the status quo. The wolf stands in silent forgiveness of humanity's carnage, and waits, housed in patience, while its lost holiness tumbles through time and space until its inexorable return upon the light-steeped heights, to the same tract of cosmologic order that it fell from.

## 52 *Baja*



Crow chases hawk in low-flown pursuit, black wings beating rust wings in feathered circles, circling feathers reeling around quartz, quartz storing sunrays, sunrays imprisoned in crystal ambiance.

Here, where sea and desert converge, where salt and sun bleach the passage of the soul, radiance mounts to an apex. Here, in this luminous place of unending summer reverie, my baser cravings dry up like last year's creosote seeds.

But in the wasteland of my heart there lurks a sinister envoy that relies on guilt to gild its talons, on doubt to barb its beak. And, though one wing is feathered with regret from the past, and the other with worry of the future, the relentless predation can be eluded, I discover, astride a winged power, the pegasus of creativity.

Crow pursues hawk over cacti. Hawk pursues the horizon of aspiration. The sun grows thin yellow roots in the bluesoil of sky. Stone swallows heat. Crow chases hawk. Black wings become rust wings. Black beak sharpens. Those who conquer become the nature of what they conquer. The conqueror is subdued by the conquest.

## 53 *Solace*



The mountains will sing, they will sing again. The feet of the innocent will be clothed in soft fiber of gold. The veils of the animals will be shed. The door of self-abasement will be sealed. Broken-dream hearts will be mended. Wanderlust of the soul will be satisfied. The hundred will become the thousand. The turning of the Earth upon her axis will become a stairway to heaven. Long-evaporated waters of spirit will rain down, inner deserts will flourish.

Compelled to break the chains of self-confinement, I ask for will, for clarity, for inspiration. And then, poised by the greatest of seas, I look out upon the beauty of prayers washing upon the shore of solace, prayers answered by the kindling of starlight in dreams, by the coyote bearing grief to the rainclouds, by the birds of dawn entering my vision, by the river of purity flowing down through my seven inner cities, by desert light bleaching all intention.

For those who weave the cloth of Life for their brothers and sisters and grow weary, Spirit will console, spirit will do the weaving, spirit will supply bright dyes.

In the light of morning there will be no fatigue.

## 54 *Palm Canyon*



Born in heaven on a sunny day when an angel's song became its seed, on its seven millionth birthday the palm was taken aside and transplanted, in early Earthen lands. And time passed, until the palm reigned supreme on the ground of Gaia. But that was long ago.

Again, eons passed, until a day came when I heard news of a canyon where the last remaining wild palms have taken a stand. And there, poised upon a mountain turret, intoning a hidden chorus, where wells a fount of verdant fronds, I discover a cathedral oasis, a retreat within a castle of nature's walls, a place to make offering, to acknowledge the primeval.

Deep comfort visits those who linger in this ambience where remnant warders, rustling in the breeze of primordia, recall a time when pure pools lapped shores upon which giants roamed, and where even now can be sensed the warmth of their exhalations.

And by day's end, with the retreat of the sun, my attention is directed to where pure light descends from on high.

## 55 *Stars*

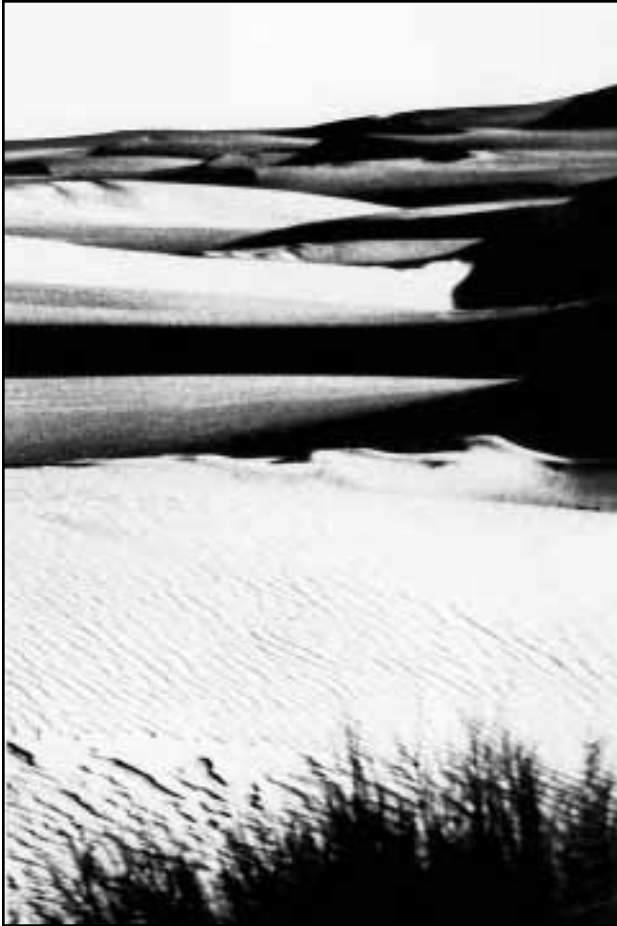


Seeking revelation in this indigo night, some of my hope gleams as a soft, warm red, and some as a searing blue-white. And while starlight shepherds me to wholeness, the constellating of my dreams blueprints an overlay upon my astral vision.

What forces conduct the wheeling of this diamond countenance? If stars are ceiling to the mind, what can be the limit to consciousness? Within the celebration of cosmic order, myriad aspirations of the soul abound, warming the dark, lighting the abyss, refining base matter upon cold planets, raising all to the grace of etheric form.

The Mind of Heaven ponders universal thoughts, untaintable radiances that enflame the soul. Starlight, infinite, everlasting in quality, if not by time's passage, draws my heart to attune across a field of constellation. And gazing up through the night of perception, attending to the grand and silent opera of the gods, I come to wonder how, if each star mirrors an ideal of the soulscape, what surpassing beauty becomes an Earthly sojourn.

## 56 *White Sand*



As the sands of time's passage pile into crystal drifts, rhythmic patterns reflect an artistry of internal weathering. Divine light blazing through the dunes of cognition penetrates obscurity, sweeping shadows into black eddies, carving a fresh configuration of what is ivory and ebony, light and dim, radiance and mystery. Every new tempest sculpts a renaissance, with quartz alluvia folding into heaps, pronounced in contour. And within the sculpture, beauty of the soul proceeds by delving as far into the light and as fearlessly into the dark as possible.

With sun descending to horizon, intensifying contrast, I feel moved to evolve a vision that honors the wholeness created by the interplay of light and dark, a vision, taking hurdle and detour in stride, to support my sojourn through the sunset of this age.

And with close of day, I carry my quest to where the sand gives out, and the grasses root, out beyond the shore of the vast greening.

## 57 *Grass Sea*



I don't know who I am, and I don't know who they are. They are me by extension, and I am them. They-me being I-they.

The tree grows me.

Plants green me.

Clouds rain me.

I pass through capillaries of grass at the same time that I whistle through reeds, and shine on water droplets of an interior immensity. Photons extract me from a leafy throne, then deposit me in the account of an earthen bank.

I, like an island tree in the midst of a grass sea, branch up from the green. Roots respire, swimming an earthpool nutrition. Branching, branching, all limbs expand in unison, a harmony of expression. Sunfall rains down, filling the botanic sea, and circumspection churns the emerald brine until chlorophyll waves wash ashore by the roots of the island tree. Branching, the tree draws solar forces up from the verdancy, an etheric tide rising skyward, drawing sunfall back to home.

I cycle.

They cycle me.

I cohere.

Love breathes through all.

## 58 *Mountain Forest*



Within the community of forest islands overlying this desert austerity there resides a regency of solace, a consoling undertone that graces my sojourn through the forest of its incarnation.

While listening to the hushed narrative of an ancient parable, in this place where mountain wind merges with a sedation of etheric streaming, my anxiety is purged and my wandering grounded. Here, the seed-cone of patience splays open, revealing a resolute genesis and the heartwood of vulnerability is ambered by a fragrant resin.

When pining for communion with forests and mountains, I am longing for accord between inner and outer nature. Where stone gives way to root, needle drinks cloud, and sun beds down in leaf, there is distilled, out of the streaming light of this arid garden, a renaissance of my aspiration.

## 59 *Sage Desert*

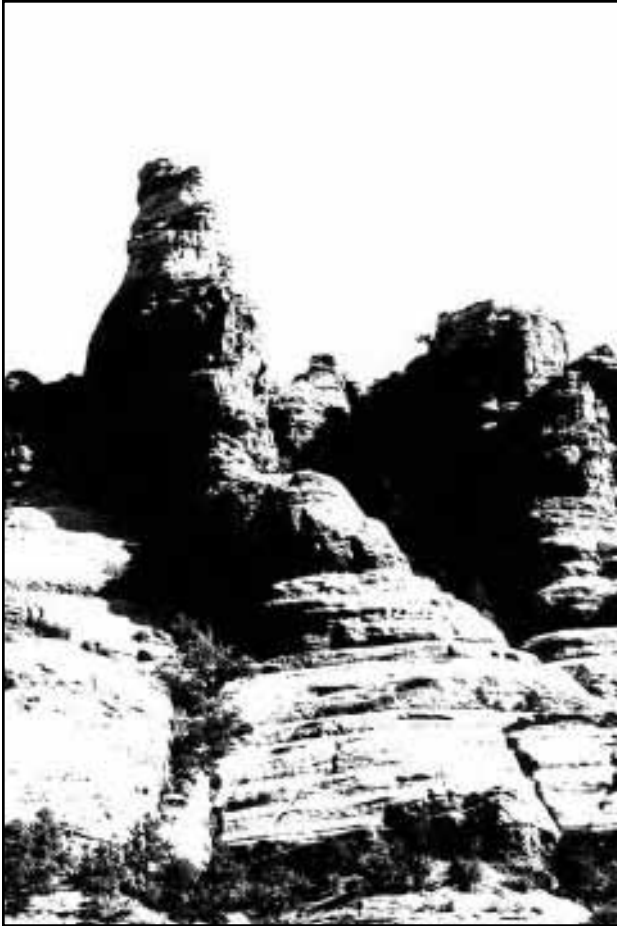


Time spent in this seamless azure and ivory sand, with its purifying blend of sage and heat, counteracts my obsession with the trivial. Here, it becomes clear that when life is made to conform to a contrived pattern, my will becomes parched, weakened by its own aridity. To delve into what underlies such self-restriction, I explore what it is about patternless spontaneity and emptiness that I find so disconcerting.

Sagebrush tenacity and yucca evolution sustain an etheric constitution of austerity that holds the killing desert at bay. Plants of forbearance inexorably find succor despite minimal sustenance. Though etherically sparse, they harbor enduring resilience. Here, I learn to wait in silence, to hold a question out in the bleaching light, with nothing but prolonged emptiness for response.

This land of candor and minimalism tests limits, plumbs the boundaries of the need for provision. It is a place to let the superfluous fall aside, to cultivate autonomy by living with bare essentials. A place where less becomes more.

## 60 *Gaia*

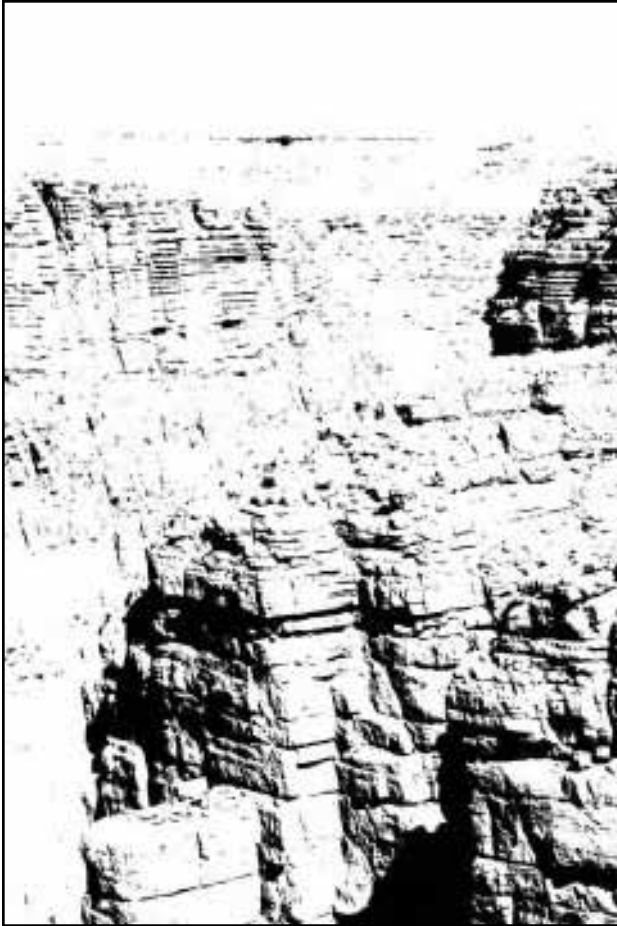


That spirit may experience the resistance that abides with incarnation, this grand turquoise pearl sustains an ingenious orchestration of balance and an exuberant etheric forum that generates the diversity of life forms to mirror the soul's countenance.

Spring is the beginning of the sleeping stage of the Earth's day. Slumbering through summer, flourish of plant life becomes a vehicle of earthen dreams soaring artfully to the regency of the sun. While summer induces reverie, winter is not only the soul's most wakeful season, but also the very daylight of Gaia.

It takes the Earth a year to circumnavigate the sun, to complete her day of cosmic proportion. When I feel a need for change in my life, it often occurs to me that the progress I seek can take a day, or so. However the circumstance may be such that the day needs to be a day in a global time frame, not mine.

## 61 *A Grand Canyon*



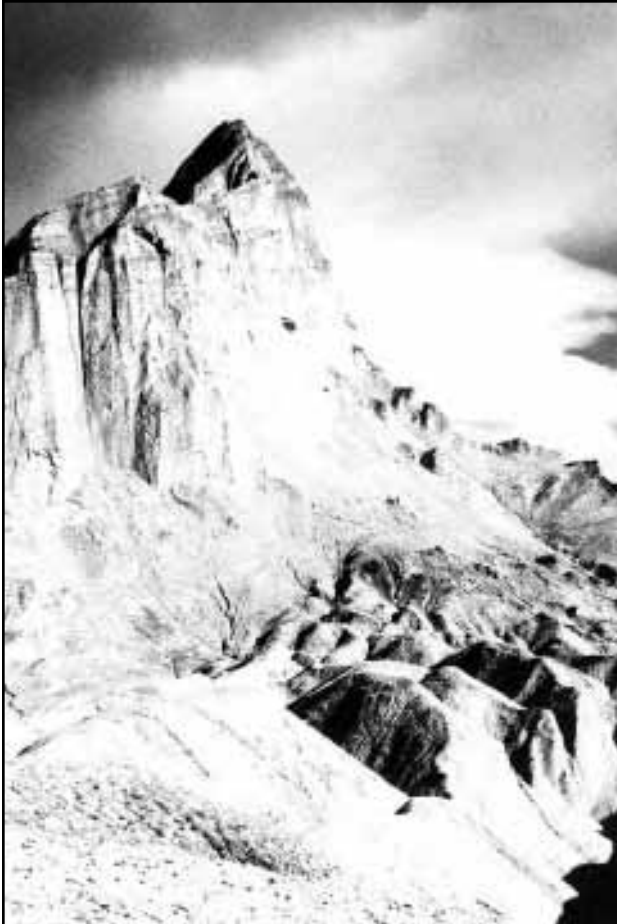
Faced with this earth-palace fashioned from a blueprint ancient, multi-faceted, unchartable, I find myself gazing also upon an interior coliseum. And as the fever of epiphany begins to unfold the first geologic petals, overwhelmed by inspiration, ideals of my youth combine with the vista of mid-life to generate a visionary extravaganza. And then the rest of the rose blooms.

The water of time engraves design into the substrate, birthing subtleties, enhancing character, amending flaws, gradually conveying the soul toward a coronation. Poised at the brink of sacrament, this river-sculpted masterpiece of a thousand laminas of geologic time becomes a monument to spirit's authenticity.

When the door of time is unsealed with the cipher of patience, hidden potential becomes accessible, revealed in magnificent relief, folds and counter-folds, a myriad of contours, gestures, and colors. And a spirit-river running through countless layers of incarnation etches its latest impression as it surges through the core of the grand array.

Now, as the canyon affirms that I am even older, even more dimensional than it, I find my heart steeped in that utmost of aspirations, the Queendom of the Soul.

## 62 *Dry Canyon*



Purifying, warming, parching, unremitting sunwash saturates the land. But with no vessel to contain the light, it radiates away, leaving an empty tract. The Sculptor has deserted the land, but the imprint of the artist remains.

This is a vale of birthing goals, a place to review sojourns. Eons pass. The soul journeys on. The sun of angelic guidance passes over the land, its fervor penetrating the soil of genesis, its orbit guided by creative aspiration.

Breathing here, I discover, is inhaling the agency of a wild horse, and exhaling the narrative of a recurring dream. Mystery songs roll out of coyote throats. A great time approaches. There is a shifting in the depths, in the bones of the mountains. There is a slide of dry pebbles against the treasure-hold of memory. The land is deserted by water, the etheric life-blood of Earth. Dry spells bake the soulscape for a duration so great as to lose meaning in measurement.

Transformation is imminent, illumination impending, as I am drawn further and further into the light-steeped, fire-wrought, water-smoothed canyon of my destination.

## 63 *Birth Valley*



Here I find an earth-cellar depth, subsea but dry, salt-bleached and yawning before an ample sky, a place where the mountains are crumbling into a higher plane, a place where those who come alone and avoid distraction confront long-standing blocks.

Now, face-to-face with my challenge, anxiety mounts and I am tempted to run, to find a way, any means, to stop what is happening. But I will not submit to retreat. I will bask in the bleaching rays until they create a shadowless cast. Bask, while the desert floor weeps up its saline purge.

Accustomed to focusing on the dense end of form's continuum, how will I sense the finer - the etheric vigor of a plant, the echo of a shooting star, the wings of a canyon fairy? How will I venture beyond the mundane, unless I abandon the map?

"Death Valley" is not a suitable name for this terrain, unless dying is perceived as the wayfarer's gateway to oasis. Through persistent assail of elements - pulse of heat, glare of light, and sweep of wind - I come to concede that my destiny is greater than I can imagine.

## 64 *Cougar*



The midnight stalker resides over fortress cliffs, upon a ledge poised on the brink of ingenuity. An elusive shade in the night of mind, the spirit of the cougar haunts a claystone range, ensconced in shadow, blending into the very rock of conviction, the glare of its vision piercing all intent.

While daylight is muted by worldly pursuit, evening's lengthening shadow pours its feline powers into the soul, awakening my astral lion. Questing upon a redrock shelf, leaping through summit consciousness, pouncing on caprice, precision claws and quicksilver reflexes are three steps ahead of my pondering deer ambivalence.

The lair of the inner cougar is found in stone sanctuary where wild angels loft, a place of striving for the highest seats, the most unreachable ledges of the inner continent - a domain that can only be attained through a bounding leap of zeal.

## 65 *Medicine Rocks*



The buffalo has fed the worst hunger of my exodus, and rain has held itself in abeyance during my passage across the prairie of metamorphosis. The swan has lined my dream-pillow. Songs of small birds have refined the most subtle strata of my sentience. The light of a tide-rending moon has rescued my wayward step through numerous bouts of darkness.

And now, poised upon a tract of the Great Plains, I find myself in the midst of bedrock creations sculpted by a fire-hand artist, a gallery humming in silent conversation with the stars, each stony syllable lasting a millennium, voicing an extravagance of tenure, patient beyond compass. Power held in focus mounts, adamant yet unexerted, while character builds an inlay of granite resolve.

Life will only abrade aspects of the sojourner that destiny would dissolve. Every bush burns when from the horizon the sun pours out its golden eloquence. An ant is an emperor in the face of sheer precipice. Every rock is sacred, it harbors the code humanity inexorably strives after. The silence of the Earth turning is an undertone of the Creator's grand toning.

## 66 *Prairie*



Before me stretches a sea of unbroken verdancy where an unremarkable traverse can transpire, a wandering between events, upon a journey of no landmark, only the skymark of the sun as it wends its way across its azure tundra.

Here, my inner hawk adds vertical rise to an otherwise level expanse, sailing over a sea of solar wave and chlorophyll surf. Broadening skies incite movement unrestrained, while the even contour of the land compels self-containment. Here, I become a hub at the center of a wheel with an endless rim. My existence is rendered to an uncluttered simplicity, a place where, stretched out toward an unattainable horizon, there lies a gestation of unassuming consequence, a tumult of still verdancy, a place to rescind the tyranny of impression and the demand of profile. Here, the land opens the vista of my biography and leads my mind to wander over prospects that might be engendered.

Sweetgrass blondes itself in the dusking sun. Its smoke is a golding of the heart, repelling all wraiths of avarice. Sage prays itself. Red willow bark curls up a line of smoke that unites sky and root, wing and paw. The thundering power of a great hooved one rolls across the ample range of my interior prairie.

## 67 *Buffalo*



The buffalo calls me to take a stand, to grow steadfast, to let my prairie-root grounding decipher the nature of all that encroaches upon the bounds of my herd vigilance. Here, a new moon assurance rises over coarse-hide resilience, cultivating inward fortification.

Holding ground, sustaining a field of expectancy, my ungulate vision broadens until I can ascertain how affluence comes to those generous of heart. And though stone-hoof resolve scouts the morning star for the epiphanic one who dwells within, the power of the Buffalo Maiden can only be accessed by waiting respectfully and cultivating purity of intent.

Steeped in verdancy, my soul sustains a counter-weave across the Great Plains, even as the spirit of the buffalo returns in unprecedented strength upon my inner prairie, bearing a steadfast center, prosperity, and the wildflower freedom of ranging over an uncontained expanse.

## 68 *Great Plains*



While roaming free over this grass sea attended by vigil of hawk and stealth of owl, cresting waves surge into emerald currents. Here, horses race wildmane heats and antelope graze on profusion, warming their bellies with jade solarity.

I recall now the resplendence across the Great Plains of long past, when wolf-shepherds guarded buffalo legions, and the land was arrayed in opulence. Reverse the fencing of the vastness! Empower a new savanna! Let the buffalo return, and sleek gray paws come home again.

Then, the moon sailing across the dark vast will have its luster enriched by the eloquence of wolf-howl. Then, the human niche can evolve in harmony with the full measure of Plains personas.

And now the regimen of science falls numb. For evolution will not follow a contrived solution, but seeks a vehicle through the very aspiration of the land. For, here rises no urge to strive either up or down. Just a land laid out plainly, with little call to modify or supplant - a place where what will be, will be.

## 69 *Nature's Prism*



How is it that despite, like nature, being comprised of a wealth of wonders, I stunt myself by meager self-conception?

Within dwells the fervor of mountain lion, the serenity of swan, tumultuous waves sweeping ashore, a healing breeze through pine bough. One moment, the rarefied power of a star, the next, a gentle servant, an unassuming songbird that intones by the sills of wakers lost in astral fog.

Sooner, or later, those whose dream-feathers lie detached in a heap, like the stuff in their pillows, will seek a way to waken. And in that moment, the stainless dove of the heart will loft through all terrain of Earth and Spirit and, upon sun-warmed sands where body and spirit convene, an eloquence of timeless unity shall prevail.

My soul, an immensely-faceted prism - and all are as I am, each a face of the Creator - amounts to so dimensional a bearing that full awareness of it would be confounding.

## 70 *At the Hub of the Continent:*



From tundra to jungle, from cavern to pinnacle, incentive has risen to honor and embrace the landscapes and the vast tableau of beings who inhabit the soul.

And now, in the very heart of the continent, feeling the measure of my sojourn coming to fullness, I open my journal and enter:

In the process of evolution, will not political boundaries as we know them dissolve? Instead of nations and states, are not eco-regions - such as the Great Lakes, the Prairies, and the Boreal Forest - the true provinces of the land?

To assert the sovereignty of these territories and to free nature's spirit, to empower rivers, lakes, woods, swamps and wildlife, eco-warriors will need to cultivate all non-violent strategy imaginable. To assail the status quo, we will need the element of surprise, as the coyote does in her night raiding. The time is upon us to become the crow that startles intruders with its clamor, to toss a monkey's wrench into machinery that degrades. To preserve the mountains and return the prairies, we will need the cunning of fox, the stealth of cougar, the speed of falcon, and the expedience and community of ant.

We will need our entire inner array to succeed.

## *Epilogue*



The rise of sun touches the flight of feather in the depth of sky. The give of earth answers the bite of root. Parched plants pray unceasingly for the song of water. Birdfeet track a sandmap. Birdears are wary of stalking paws. Fragmenting colors shower out of a spent rainbow, as a transformative angel patiently labors by the bank of a shimmering pool.

By day, I confront the impossible. I love to hammer away at the veneer of this world, splintering fibers asunder. During the night, my reverie of all-is-possible filters through the cracks. And by morning, sounds of wingbeats echo across the dream chasm, gradually melting into the brazen fabric of daylight.

I find myself in a crowd of hopeful seekers, listening to a cloaked speaker who seems strangely familiar. The orator turns and the mask of rhetoric dissolves to reveal the Self. He talks a fresh spring. He speaks sunrays. His mind is wind across a distant planet, his tongue, the flame of a cool, unrelenting comforter.

Joined to infinite spirit, and an umbilica to mother grace, we are hatched out of a lightning egg, as shining conveyors of untaintable wisdom.

For the soul has met the sunrise, and the mind has braced the sky, and our wings have been adorned by all manner of feather from the house of nature.

## Coda



A month after my sojourn, while contemplating the interior continent, I experience a vision that compels me to quest increasingly beyond the dysfunction that impairs the empire of nature, beyond the agency of conservation, beyond sustainability issues, beyond even the perspective of pure preservation. As a result of circumnavigating the continent, I now perceive nature as a treasure hold, despite its apparent dimming.

In my vision I encounter an oratory of water. Gradually, the stream becomes a river banked by lush flora, and the valley evolves until the river splits into two channels that cascade into a great salt sea. And the salt of sea becomes the salt of tears, and the source of the river is the heart. One eye releases a tear of grief over the demise of the land. The other sheds a tear of joy, a jewel in response to the magnificence of the Earth's latent evolution.

Then, staring into a teardrop gem, I waken to a heart-song. In front of me stands a tree and from behind the trunk shine luminous rays. And the light gleams, whispering the language of Nature:

*Your wealth amasses. Everywhere you go, you gain understanding: from the trees, you encounter stability and deep-rooted wisdom; from the birds, messages of the heart; from four-foots, qualities of your astral-soul character; and landscape angels reflect to you immutable facets of the many-layered Self.*

*The storehouse of your understanding grows affluent. But you will need to invest this wealth. What use is the gold of understanding without the instrument of Vision?*

*You can ask for insight, but it will not avail you until you transcend the barriers you have fashioned. You block your vision when you fill your life with so much diversion that there is room for little else. You block your vision when you empower self-doubt.*

*Don't stop short of who you really are. Don't accept any view that confines the grand nature of the soul. No matter how wide-ranging and boundless the world of nature is, even more so is the soul. When you come, eventually, to orchestrate the whole interior ensemble, the result will have a supreme, mysterious quality that will resound with a symphonic depth.*

*Study yourself at length in response to this question: What are you afraid would happen if you were to embrace your grandness?*

*From out of the dark night the Spirit of nature hears the cry of the soul. Illusions dissolve, resistance passes. Your Self is here as destined. The spirit of the Earth empowers you to apply Vision.*

*Now begins the moment of sight.*

***Postscript:***

"Life is a bridge - build no house upon it."

- A Zen saying

## The Author



Where thinking falls to the dimness of a dream, and imagination and feeling rise to a throne of sentience, earth-vision is born.

Within the biography of Josef Graf can be found a Waldorf teacher, wilderness traveller, watercolorist, swing dancer, and anthroposophical researcher.

With over twenty years of experience in the field of spiritual ecology, his primary approach to writing is to open himself to nature until it can speak through him.

His works can be accessed through [www.evsite.net](http://www.evsite.net)

## Books by Josef Graf

- *bringing the spirit of wilderness to the urban dweller*

*EARTH VISION, a travelogue of spiritual ecology*, is a portrait of the human-nature relationship through 70 sites across North America.

*A Calendar of Nature and Soul* continues to follow the trail of a third millennium everyman, now shifting from a geographic focus to a passage through the seasons. 52 chapters coincide with the weeks of the year, in which natural and biographic events interweave with Rudolf Steiner's *Calendar of the Soul*.

*GAIA SOJOURN, Spiritual Ecology Across a Series of Incarnations*, takes a global perspective through mythic, historic, and future time forums, using reincarnation as its principle device (an artistic blend of biography and fiction).

*The Earth Vision Gallery*, a thematic exhibit of photographs and watercolors contained within the covers of a book, carries the viewer through a holistic experience of nature, color theory, and self-discovery.

*Hebert Returns to America* is a gallery of humor with its artwork hung off the wall. The reader is invited to test drive Hebert's haywire passage through a diverse array of wild lands, social, cultural, and natural.

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