



LAND, WEATHER, SEASONS, INSECTS: AN ARCHETYPAL VIEW

THE DAIRY FARMER'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE
VOLUME IV

DENNIS L. MERRITT, PH.D.

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The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe Volume 4

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1: An Archetypal View of the Midwest Environments	1
Chapter 2: Seasons of the Soul	22
Chapter 3: Planet of the Insect	58
Notes	91
Appendix A: Sacred Landscape at Strawberry Island	98
Appendix B: Sacred Corn	101
Appendix C: Praying Mantis as a Spirit Animal	104
Appendix D: Pink Floyd and the Fly in Life's Ointment	106
References	108
Index	112

The four volumes of *The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe* offer a comprehensive presentation of Jungian ecopsychology. Volume 1, *Jung and Ecopsychology*, examines the evolution of the Western dysfunctional relationship with the environment, explores the theoretical framework and concepts of Jungian ecopsychology, and describes how it could be applied to psychotherapy, our educational system, and our relationship with indigenous peoples. Volume 2, *The Cry of Merlin: Jung, the Prototypical Ecopsychologist*, reveals how an individual's biography can be treated in an ecopsychological manner and articulates how Jung's life experiences make him the prototypical ecopsychologist. Volume 3, *Hermes, Ecopsychology, and Complexity Theory*, provides an archetypal, mythological and symbolic foundation for Jungian ecopsychology. Volume 4, *Land, Weather, Seasons, Insects: An Archetypal View* describes how a deep, soulful connection can be made with these elements through a Jungian ecopsychological approach. This involves the use of science, myths, symbols, dreams, Native American spirituality, imaginal psychology and the *I Ching*. Together, these volumes provide what I hope will be a useful handbook for psychologists and environmentalists seeking to imagine and enact a healthier relationship with their psyches and the world of which they are a part.

My thanks to Craig Werner for his comprehensive and sensitive editorial work, and to Tom Lane for his constructive comments.

*To Werner Loher and James Hillman, two real and imaginal mentors,
and to Gene Defoliart, a good old boy in a good way, from Arkansas.*

The environmental problem has religious as well as scientific dimensions...As scientists, many of us have had a profound experience of awe and reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred. At the same time, a much wider and deeper understanding of science and technology is needed. If we do not understand the problem it is unlikely we will be able to fix it. Thus there is a vital role for both science and religion.

—*Carl Sagan, 1992*

CHAPTER 1

An Archetypal View of the Midwest Environment

Everyone has to feel rooted, has to have a foundation for their life. The roots can be in family, friends, home or community. For many, deep roots extend into the land and the region they live in. Two important ecopsychological premises are that we are capable of far deeper connections to the land and those who feel connected to the land are naturally interested in protecting and preserving it. The Midwest is the area I feel rooted in. When I grew up on a small Wisconsin farm in the 1950's and 1960's there was an ecopsychological balance between the fecundity of the land—the archetype of the Great Mother in her nourishing form—and the archetype of the farmer in intimate relationship with her.

What is so compelling about a region considered by many to be flyover country? A numinous dream of a typical meadow in Wisconsin enticed me to look at the Midwest more closely, feel more deeply for its essence, and appreciate its many dimensions. I use a variety of approaches to bring to consciousness what is special about the Midwest environment, approaches that can be used anywhere to deepen a connection with the land and establish a sense of place. This is not insignificant in the mobile, rootless society that is America.

To sense the spirit of a place, I analyze an environment as if it were a dream. Like a dream, I consider every element in the environment for its potential depth and interior nature. I look for metaphors contained in the image, its “as if” dimension. What scientific facts will deepen an understanding and appreciation of the image? What are its symbolic dimensions? How does it appear in myths and stories? The result is that one can “see into” the environment and experience its essence. With this approach I will consider the Midwest's location, glacial history, topography, water systems, dominant plants and animals, and agriculture. Weather and seasons will be examined in the next chapter, “Seasons of the Soul.”

I. Location

The broadest and most general aspect of the Midwest is its location. Physically it is the center of America, its heartland. As in working with dreams, listen for overtones and undertones of words; sense the metaphors and the deeper psychological meanings. We're talking about America's Heartland, i.e., close to the heart, adored, a core feeling, including how the country feels about itself in its heart. The Midwest is in the center of the country, implying central, correct, basic and essential. Think of the opposites of words to get a better sense of their meaning. Opposite of central would be fringe, as in "fringe elements"; border, as in borderline sanity; far out, less important, less essential. We are in the middle of the land mass called North America, Turtle Island to many Native Americans; continental, massive, not easily moved, immovable, stable. By contrast, from the perspective of many Midwesterners, California is "the land of flakes and quakes."

Midwest conjures up a psychological locale between the established, the city, the older and stogy East, and the wild, uncultivated, younger, brash, more irresponsible West. (Shortridge 1989, p. 8) The Midwest is associated primarily with a massive agricultural base that is cultivated, prosperous and stable. It is part of the myth of the developmental stages of the life of a country—youth, middle age and old age going from West to Midwest to East.

II. Midwest Topography

We'll start on the environment of the Midwest by going from the ground up, working on the premise that every landscape has a soul. The most general fact about the Midwest's physical environment is its basic topography. It is like a gigantic shallow trough slanting to the middle and south (except along its northeastern fringe) stretching from the ancient Appalachians in the east to the newer Rocky Mountains in the west. (1) This is the twelve state area going south from North Dakota to Kansas and east to Ohio. Much of the Midwest had been part of an ancient inland sea located on the equator half a billion years ago. Infinite numbers of tiny creatures laid down a limestone bedrock. The northernmost Midwest is part of the Canadian Shield, a bedrock of ancient hard rocks like granite and covered with shallow soils in

northern Minnesota, northern Wisconsin and the western portion of Michigan's upper peninsula.

The sharpest metaphoric contrast to the level, almost flat topography of the Midwest is mountains. The basic landscape of the Midwest is not one of highs, peak experiences, elevations and depressions, or ruggedness. Compared to the insular, inclosing effect of mountain valleys, the flatter landscape is something more open, expansive and unprotected. Mountains and mountaintops are generally associated with spirit. It helps in developing metaphors to "try" on several images of the same theme. Imagining the type of person living in the mountains leads one to think of a rugged, adventuresome individual, taking more risks by driving mountain roads and mountain climbing. We might see him or her as a survivor of harsh, challenging environments; a rough-and-ready person, a Marlboro Man, probably riding a horse or driving a beat-up 4-wheel-drive vehicle.

Contrast this with someone living on a rather flat landscape. We might imagine someone more down to earth, earthy, not extreme in highs and lows; someone with flatter affect, not radical or extremist, but moderate, middle of the road, maybe bland, maybe someone more materialistic. Each soul will feel more at home and develop in a particular landscape that suits it, needing occasional visits to contrasting environments to add other dimensions.

III. Glacial History

One cannot appreciate the Midwest without understanding its glacial history. Every Midwestern state has been profoundly affected by the ice giants that rolled through here in recurrent waves eons ago. An analyst friend dreamt she should live where the glacier had been. To sense the depth of this dream we must re-imagine glacier country. We ask along with her, "What is the soul of glacier country? How does a glacial landscape impact the psyche?"

Learning about glaciers and recognizing the evidence of their past helps one resonate with the soul of glacier country. The signs are everywhere if one has the eye to see. Gravel pits, those convenient entrances into the underworld, reveal a thick layer of soil called glacial till created by that giant land scraper, the glacier. The soil is a mixture of material the glaciers scoured off the landscape in their marches down from Canada. Scattered throughout glacial till are rocks rounded by

tumbling in the bowels of the ice-giants. Most are scarred by straight lines scratched across them by other rocks. Their mineral content and composition belie an ancestry different from the bedrock layer of limestone indigenous to the landscape's foundation. These unpretentious gravel pits reveal a history of vast changes from long ago.

But not that long ago. It has been only 11,000 years since the last glacier melted and ran off the upper Midwest landscape. The landforms glaciers created serve as reminders of the end of the age of mastodon hunters and the beginning of agriculture and civilization. Geologists tell us there have been several glacial periods within the current Ice Age, the Quaternary, that began about 2-1/2 million years ago. The southern-most advance of the glacial mass in the respective periods reached Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois and Wisconsin. The last glacial period, the Wisconsin, ended about 11,000 years ago, having begun 110,000 years ago. Wisconsin has risen 160 feet since getting all that ice off its back and is still rising 1/2 inch a year: it was that depressed by the glacier.

The soul of the Midwest is in many ways indebted to the past lives of glaciers that have come and gone over millions of years for reasons unknown. Much of the Midwest had been part of a vast inland sea hundreds of millions of years ago. The relatively flat sea bottom left behind from the drainage of the ancient ocean was further leveled by the onslaughts of water in solid moving form. But it is not fair to say that glaciers only flatten a topography; they do provide some relief. Moraines are hills constructed from debris scoured off the land and dumped at the glacier's melting end point or the squeeze line between the lobes of a glacier. These hill formations have an irregular surface and are imaginatively arranged: a jazz landscape. You know when you're in moraine country when you start seeing a lot of gravel pits—open pit mining of glacial debris. Moraines often contain interesting features such as kettles: big, round pits formed when huge chunks of debris-buried ice took a thousand years to melt, creating a glacial sinkhole. (Fig. 1)

Erratics are huge rocks carried great distances, sometimes hundreds of miles in or on the glacier. They get deposited on the land in an erratic pattern when the glacier melts, left sitting there atop the soil. These lost souls fascinate the psyche, many of the larger ones being sacred to the Native Americans in this region.

Ice a mile or more thick spread out over half a continent has interesting things happening within it. The hidden activities of glaciers are

revealed upon melting, like remembering a dream after we wake from slumber. Rivers form inside a glacier whose riverbeds gradually fill with debris. When the glacier melts, these riverbeds of debris are dumped on the land, creating snake-like hills called eskers crawling across the landscape. Cone-shaped hills called kames form when debris carried by meltwater washes through holes in the ice and settles into an ice cavern below. It forms an inverted V, like sand settling on the bottom of an hourglass, which gets dropped on the landscape when the glacier disappears.

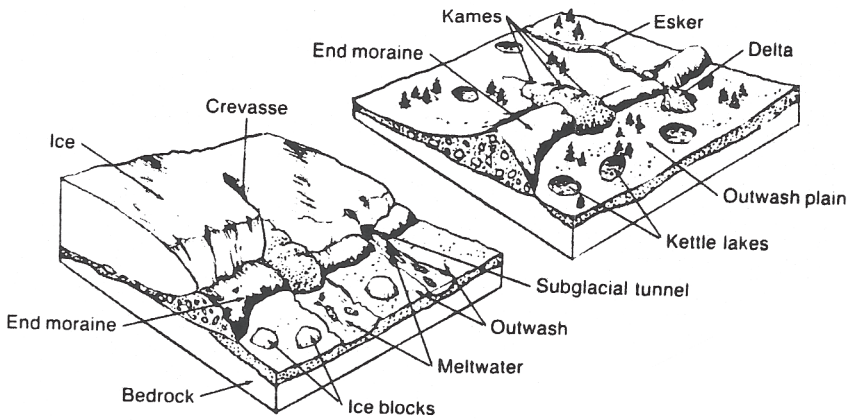


Figure 1. Glacial and post-glacial landscapes. (Sullivan 1984, p. 253)

My favorite glacial landscape is in drumlin country. Scientific imaginations still haven't figured out how some of the hills were formed. It's believed they were built up in layers beneath the moving glaciers. They occur in groups, sometimes in the hundreds, behind the terminal moraine. From above they look like long, narrow, semi-flattened teardrops best imagined as an entire fleet of gigantic battleships lined up in the same direction. The tapered end of the teardrop points to the direction the ice was moving, like the V of water that forms behind an exposed rock in a river. You don't have to get too high in an airplane to see geological history being pointed out by clusters of these massive markers. The I-94 freeway between Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin should be named "the drumlin special"—it cuts straight through some of the finest drumlin scenery in the world.

When I look out over a drumlin countryside I see a vast sea of gigantic land waves frozen in earth time. These paradoxical waves formed under water in its solid form. I get an almost mythical sense that a giant hand played in a sandbox we now call Wisconsin to create these formations.

I am aware of immense cycles of time in drumlin country. These hills are a reminder that in this place, just over 11,000 years ago, was a pile of ice several thousands of feet thick. It is also a reminder that we don't know the mysteries of earth's warming and cooling spells that extend over eons of time. Every spring when I see the glacial hills greening, I'm thankful for the gift of warmth returning life to glacier country. Does climate change sound the death knell for glaciers?

The varying glacial topographies generate subtle but significant effects on the earth-sky relationship. Glacial hills, often decorated by their crowns of trees, are just high enough to intrude into the sky horizon. The sky becomes a backdrop leaving the earth to have the prominent effect on the psyche. It doesn't take much to lose the sky as the dominant element. The contrast is seen in the flatter Illinois prairie country which presents a Big Sky effect on a state-wide basis.

The low elevations of the hills in the Midwest give the land a very human dimension. Contrast this with the Rockies, where one is overwhelmed by their awesome size and grandeur. Glacial hills gently surround and comfort the psyche. The rather flat or gently hilly topography allows it to sustain non-permanent vegetative cover. This means the landform is suitable for farming because erosion can be limited, the consequence being that cultivated plant life is introduced to the psyche.

A secondary yet important agricultural effect created by the glacier is not noticeable unless studied scientifically. Glaciers tilled the soils, generating a good physical mix of particle sizes and minerals. The result is an adequate physical base for topsoil development and plant growth. One realizes the significance of this glacial mixing when considering the problems for plants trying to grow on sandy soils, or the wastelands created after some rain forests are cut and the clay hardens into a form forever useless for farming.

Understanding how the features in glacial landscapes were created, the vast time frames involved, the information buried beneath our feet; this is knowledge generated by science. This is science with soul, infor-

mation that connects us to things and adds an awesome dimension to the lives of those who know, who see.

IV. The Water Environment

There is an important interactive effect of glaciers to consider in the Midwest—they gather water. Glaciers ruined the arboreal (tree-like) drainage system of little streams leading to larger streams feeding increasingly larger rivers. Glaciers cut across these watery limbs, forcing the water to congregate into myriads of lakes, ponds, potholes, kettles and marshes. The Great Lakes lie in giant beds carved out by the glaciers.

The particular size and shape of the watery container have specific effects on the psyche. Lakes in contrast to oceans are bounded waters, containers of human-dimensional sizes. The human mind can envelop a lake, can wrap itself around it. Oceans are immense, impersonal; they generate feelings of cosmic forces, of extraterrestrial influences from the moon and archetypal ebbs and flows. Their salty water is not “fresh” and does not nourish human life.

Water is the second vital element in the Midwest. It’s an important resource here. Californians had to build a 400-mile aqueduct to carry water from northern to southern California. Midwest water is from rain, not from irrigation or pumps except on the western fringe. We get adequate rainfall that can support abundant plant life, about 30 inches a year well distributed. The Midwest has the necessary water of life—fresh, drinkable water.

Midwesterners need help to appreciate hot, muggy summer days. They have to recognize that such weather is the invisible pipeline to a prime water source—the Gulf of Mexico. We have the occasional drought in Wisconsin. One gorgeous summer day follows another with moderate temperatures, sunshine and low humidity—and plant life suffers. Much of our water of life is rung out of muggy summer days by thunderstorms. One is more appreciative of muggy days following a terrible drought.

Our abundance of rainfall fills up the innumerable variety and shapes of water beds created by the glaciers, including that massive gathering of waters called the Great Lakes. Here we have the water of life on a grand scale, containing almost one-fifth of the planet’s fresh water. The

Great Lakes States have a different type of continental environment, with moderated weather within miles of the lakes. A Windy City is created by the cooler lake air deflecting transient air masses around the southern tip of Lake Michigan. It is a maritime psyche of mammoth lake storms—some of the worst in the world— huge fish, ocean-going ships, and port cities with all that such cities imply.

We have to bring to bear all our senses to imagine water in the Midwest. Consider being in a boat on a hot day or swimming—fluidity, dissolving, splashiness, playfulness, invigorating coolness. We are buoyed up, supported. Midwest waters contain an abundance of plant and algal life, they're teeming with life; not like crystal-clear mountain lakes, but murky and rich with organic watery smells.

Some of the bogs, potholes and ponds are actually kettles—those glacial sinkholes formed when huge chunks of buried ice finally melted. These waterholes and marshlands are rampant with life and are important for birds and purifying water. They ooze rich, mucky smells from ages of decaying vegetation. Smells are hard to describe. The sense of smell is direct, strong, immediate, particular, and can reach us from unseen sources. It is a primal, animal sense often feared by over-spiritual types, especially the lusty smells of sexual and earthy activity. The dead in Hades orient by smell and so do salmon in finding their river homes after ocean or Great Lakes journeys.

There are a wealth of rivers here despite the effects of the glaciers. A woman friend who lives by the Mississippi River loves sitting next to the river—it has a wonderful effect on her psyche. Where does this effect come from? The movement of water is a prime metaphor about life for the Taoists and a river is an ideal metaphor for the flow of life. Rivers present the paradox of being in place yet ever moving, an analogy of the psyche being in our physical body but ever changing.

V. Forests and Farms

Elemental forces and forms have combined in the right proportions in the Midwest to help create its most distinctive feature—agriculture, a cultivated landscape. Glacial land is symbiotically joined with abundant rainfall and the heat from our local star that produces warm summers and a long, frost-free growing season. Severe winters rid the realm of many insect pests. American scientists, farmers and agribusiness working with the natural blessings that are the Midwest have produced a

The pig as an emblem of ignorance or unconsciousness appears at the center of the Tibetan World Wheel with two buddies—the cock as the sign of concupiscence and the snake as a symbol of hatred or envy. The wonders of scientific measures of animal IQ's tell us that pigs are actually smarter than cats or dogs. They're really quite clean animals (so I've been told) and only wallow in mud because it's cool, not because it's cool to be uncouth.

The total impression of pigs would be incomplete without commenting on their smells. There is nothing worse than the smell of a pig farm. When driving through Iowa on the Interstate, you can tell when you're within a mile of such an establishment. I'll take the smell of cow manure any day.

A tour through the Midwest will balance the psyche between the world of animals and the world of plants. The plant environment is dominated by corn, wheat, alfalfa and soybeans. To imagine what it's like to be a plant, you must cultivate a vegetative imagination. We're talking about being rooted, grounded, firmly anchored in the earth, otherwise you're washed out, washed up, blown away. Only as a rooted plant can you have that intimate connection to the earth that provides life with its prime mineral supply. Yours is a life of rootedness and absorption—absorbing minerals and water through the roots and CO₂, life's waste gas, through your leaves. The greatest miracle of all, and upon which *all* life depends, is absorbing sunlight. Only you can capture the emanations from the sun and use that energy to drive a chain of chemical reactions that combine water and CO₂ to create sugar—the molecular foodstuff and energy source of life. Plants also manufacture most of the amino acids needed by all other living organisms to build the enzymes and other proteins that make each body unique.

So when you pass that corn field, wheat field, soybean or alfalfa patch, don't think "motionless" and simply "existing." Think "absorption"—absorption of dense mineral matter and water from a cool, moist earth; absorption of air and sunlight through delicate leafy appendages. Think manufacturing of life's building blocks and energy sources. Think oxygen, plant's by-product gas of life, all produced by staying rooted in one place and absorbing the environment.

Contrast vast acreages of corn, wheat or soybean monocultures with alfalfa, which implies a dairy farm and therefore a variety of crops to feed the discriminating cow palate. Think drilled and lined up in rows versus a solid field of alfalfa as thick ground cover. Grant Hill's paint-

ing, "Stone City Iowa," epitomizes the buttoned down, grid-over-the-land feeling one gets from row crops on a landscape. Also think wind pollinated (wheat and corn) versus bee pollinated (colorful flowers and the beautiful fragrance of alfalfa). Cornfields have their own distinct smell, and driving past cornfields on warm summer nights will yield a windshield full of smashed moths whose larvae love corn as much as pigs do. Think of being lost or disappearing into tall corn plants versus being in a waving mass of sweet-smelling, thigh-high alfalfa plants.

Corn deserves special attention because it rightfully has been called the quintessential American crop. It originated in the Americas, Mexico by best estimates. Within twenty years after Columbus "discovered" America, the Spanish and Portuguese sailors had spread it to Africa, the Middle East and shortly after to China. (Fussell 1992, p. 18) It quickly adapted to the varied environments of its newfound homes and transformed barren lands into fruitful cornfields. It accounted for a population explosion in China that began in the seventeenth century. (p. 163) This "hopeless monster" as geneticists call it is endowed with a wildly variable gene pool that allows it to adapt, through natural and artificial selection, to a wider range of growing conditions, environments and industrial purposes than any other grain. It is unsurpassed in energy conversion, yield, speed of growth, and edibility of most of the plant. (p. 20)

This strange plant is totally dependent on humans for its reproduction: the husk wraps the seeds too tightly to disperse; if a shucked ear is buried, the young shoots die of overcrowding. (Fussell 1992, p. 20) The tremendous increase in corn yields (from 25 bushels per acre in the 1920's to 125 bushels today) comes from cross-pollinating (by hand!) various strains of corn to produce hybrids. (n 2) Farmers can't plant their harvested corn seeds, making them dependent on seed producing companies to start each hybrid generation from scratch.

Corn is one of the "big three" grasses that were domesticated into grains between 9000 to 5000 BCE, with corn originating in the Americas, rice in Asia and wheat in Mesopotamia. This changed the previous two-million-year course of humanoid, then human hunter-gatherer societies into cultivators of crops. Agriculture allowed humans to settle down, multiply, and gather into population centers which permitted the rise of complex cultures, the arts and civilizations. (Fussell 1992, p. 39, 40)

The famous pre-Columbian American civilizations—the Aztecs, Incas and Mayans—were built around corn. Corn became the central object of religious worship and integral to their language and calendar systems. (see Appendix B: Sacred Corn) The Anasazi of the American Southwest and their Pueblo descendents were the northern cultural derivatives of old Mexican corn cultures. The Hopi, of Anasazi descent, influenced the Navaho, one of whom described the sacred relationship with corn like this:

When a man goes into a cornfield he feels he is in a holy place, that he is walking among Holy People, White Corn Boy, Yellow Corn Girl, Pollen Boy, Corn Bug Girl, Blue Corn Boy, and Variegated Corn Girl...If your fields are in good shape you feel that the Holy People are with you, and you feel buoyed up in spirit when you get back home. (Fussell 1992, p. 95)

Corn played an important role in many North American Indian tribes. The Pawnee, for example, associated corn with the Evening Star, “the mother of all things, who gave corn to the people from her garden in the sky.” (Fussell 1992, p. 16)

One reason corn is quintessentially American is because indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere originated and developed the largest number of strains. Of the roughly 280 races of corn, 210 are unique to South America, mostly to Peru, and 30 to Mexico. (Fussell 1992, p. 87) But it is the Americans who are noted for the tremendous development in agricultural practices and the scientific and technological manipulations of corn’s genetics and raw materials. The quaint Mitchell Corn Palace in South Dakota is the emblem of a tradition that trumpeted the union of science, commerce, agriculture and art that made corn “the ground of the entire industrial empire that sprang from the prairies and plains.” (p. 313) (n 4) Americans directly eat only about 1% of the corn grown here (n 3), preferring to use about 85% to fatten cows, hogs and poultry because its powers of conversion of food to meat is double that of wheat. (p. 7) We enjoy drinking the distinctly American oak barrel-aged corn liquors known as Jack Daniels Whiskey and Old Crow Bourbon, and the not so famous un-aged corn liquors of moonshine fame.

We Westerners have used our scientific and industrial ingenuity not to make recipes for eating corn but to develop a staggering array of products from corn kernels. Following the motto of the corn synthesiz-

INDEX

A

Aesclepius 64
 alchemy 102
 alfalfa 10, 12, 16, 17, 20
 All Saints Day 39
 America's Heartland 2
 Anasazi 18
 animal eye 61, 66, 67, 68
 animal soul 60
 ant 61, 74, 80, 97
 anthill 82, 84
 Aphrodite 11, 14, 22, 23, 26, 56, 61
 April Fool's Day 52
 archetypal feminine 14, 33, 93
 arthropods 68
 Ash Wednesday 51
 atmospheric electricity 93
 Aztecs 18

B

Babylonians 43
 baseball 56
 bear 8, 33, 47, 79, 97
 bee 17, 74, 78, 79, 80, 87
 Beelzebub 81
Be'gotcidi 77
 Beltane 54
 Bender, Herman 98
 Berry, Patricia 95
 Big Dreams 61, 62
 biometerology 24
 Black Goddess 93, 95, 111
 Brave Buffalo 59, 60, 61
 buffalo 34
 bug bite 86

C

California 2, 7, 20, 25, 27, 29, 63
 Campbell, Joseph 29, 81
 Canadian Shield 2, 9
 Candlemas 47, 48, 49
 cannibalism 102
 Carboniferous period 68
 Carnival 51
 Celtic 37, 38, 39, 47, 50, 54, 55, 56
 Celts 37, 38, 40, 44
 Ceres 40
 chaos 47, 48, 85
 Cheng, Francois 29, 108
 China 17, 19, 24
 Chippewa 98, 99, 108
 Christ 35, 37, 39, 42, 43, 45, 46,
 51, 53, 56, 78, 101, 103
 Christmas 36, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46,
 48, 51, 55, 88
 cicada 74, 89
 Cinderella 30
 cocoons 78
 Coleridge 24, 93, 94
 Columbus 17
 Corbin, Henri 26
 corn 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20,
 40, 41, 80, 91, 92, 101, 102,
 103
 Corn Belt 9
 Corn Maiden 40
 Corn Mother 40
 Corn Palace 18, 91
 cosmos 64, 78, 90, 97, 109
 cow 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 92
 coyote 32
 cross-pollinating 17
 Czech 49

D

dairying 9, 92
 Dairy State 12
 Dalai Lama 84
 Day of Atonement 56
 Demeter 14, 21, 35, 78, 95, 108
 Devil 39, 50, 80, 85, 86, 96
 diseases 24, 75, 87
 Druid 39
 drumlin 5, 6

E

eagle 30, 89
 Earth Mother 11, 27, 28, 35
 East 2, 17, 30, 42, 93
 Easter 36, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53
 Ecclesiastes 29
 effigy (image) mounds 88, 89
 eggs 50, 53, 72, 73, 89
 Eleusis 14
 Eliot, T. S. 82
 English Harvest Home 40
 Epiphany 43, 51
 equinox(es) 36, 37, 88
 Eros 48
 eskers 5
 Europa 11
 Evening Star 18
 exoskeleton 68, 72, 89
 extermination 58, 97, 106

F

farmer 1, 12, 19, 20, 92, 93
 Fastnacht 51
 Father's Day 53
 Father Sky 28, 98
 Father Time 45
 Feast of Fools 52
 Feast of the Boy Bishop 52
 Feast of the Tabernacle 40
 Floralia festival 54
 fly 37, 80, 81, 82, 106, 107
 Fox, Ralph Red 60

Freud 23, 65, 82
 Fussell, Betty 17, 18, 19, 80, 91, 92,
 101, 102, 103, 109

G

Gandhi 11
 Germans 44, 52
 God 39, 41, 53, 56, 67, 78, 81, 83,
 84, 85, 86, 96, 104
 Goethe 24, 63, 64, 80, 109
 Goleman, Richard 80, 109
 "Grantchester Meadows" 106
 Great Goddess 40
 Great Lakes 7, 8, 91
 Great Mother 1, 13, 14, 20, 21, 32,
 110
 Greeks 11, 40
 Gregorian calendar 47, 50
 Groundhog Day 47
 Growth 30, 32, 33, 34, 48

H

Hades 8, 35, 48, 86, 95
 Halloween 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 48,
 52, 62
 Hanukkah 43
 Harvest 30, 33, 40
 Hermes 26, 34, 35, 48, 54, 58, 75,
 82, 87, 95
 hero 22
 Herod 47
 hierophany 99, 100
 Hill, Christopher 96
 Hill, Grant 16
 Hillman, James 22, 23, 26, 59, 61,
 65, 66, 67, 68, 76, 77, 81, 82,
 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 97, 109
 Hoard, W. D. 92
 holly 42, 43, 45
 honey 79
 Hopi 18, 82
 horse 3, 44, 64

I

Ice Age 4
I Ching 13, 15, 24, 27, 29, 30, 33,
 48, 92, 95, 111
 Illinois 4, 6, 9, 26, 91, 111
 Imbolc 47
 Incas 18
 Independence Day 36, 53, 55
 India 11, 19, 78
 Insecta 68
 insect carried diseases 75
 insect dreams 82
 Ireland 47
 Irish 37, 39, 40, 50
 Isis 11, 14
 I-Thou 22, 23

J

Jack O' Lantern 39
 Janus 46, 56, 92
 Janus, Edward 92
 Jefferson, Thomas 19
 Julian calendar 37, 43
 Julius Caesar 37, 57
 July 4th 55, 56
 Juno 57

K

Kafka 82
 kames 5
 kettles 4, 7, 8
 Kitchi-Manitou 98
 Klipple, Sandy 64
 Kokapelli 82

L

Labor Day 36, 53, 54, 56
 Lac du Flambeau 98, 99, 100
 Lady of Bees 78
 Lake Mendota 88, 89
 Lakota 28, 62, 78, 90, 109
 Last Supper 53

Lauck, Joanne Elizabeth 60, 63, 78,
 81, 82, 84, 85, 86
 Lent 51
 leprechauns 50
 Lewis, Sinclair 20
 Lincoln 41, 47
 Lopez-Pedraza, Raphael 95, 96
 Lord of the Flies 81
 Lughnasa 55, 56
 Lupercalia 48, 49, 50, 51

M

Madison 5, 26, 88
 Maia 54, 57
 Mardi Gras 51
 Mars 56
 Martin, Herb 63
 Martin Luther King Day 47
 Mayans 18, 101, 102
 May Day 54
 mayfly 89
 May pole 54
 medicine wheel 30, 31, 32, 33, 34
 Memorial Day 53, 55
 Mephistopheles 80, 81
 metamorphosis 72, 78
 Midsummer Day 55, 56
 milk 10, 11, 12, 20, 50
 Milky Way 90, 99, 100
 Minnesota 3, 9, 20, 93, 111
 Mississippi River 8, 91
 mistletoe 43, 44
 Mitchell Corn Palace 18, 91
 Mithra 42, 43
 moraines 9
 mouse 61, 67
 music 27, 54, 62, 106, 107

N

Native Americans 2, 4, 27, 34, 64,
 107
 Naunet 11
 Navaho 18, 77, 101, 111
 Neumann, Erich 11, 13, 14, 110

New Orleans 51
 New Year 37, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 52,
 56
 New Year's Eve 46, 52
 Niagara Escarpment 91
 nightmare 63, 96
 Nordic 38
 North 2, 18, 30, 34, 44, 91
 Nun 11
 Nut 11, 14

O

Odin 44, 57
 Ojibwa 99, 100

P

Pan 39, 48, 49, 95, 96
 parasites 86
 Passover 53
 "path of the dead" 98, 99
 Pawnee 18
 Persephone 14, 35, 48, 95, 103, 108
 pigs 12, 13, 15, 16, 17
 Pilgrims 41
 Pink Floyd 27, 97, 106, 107
Platoon 79
 Pluto 35
 polytheism 85, 87
 Pomona 40
 Pope Gregory XIII 37
 Portman, Adolph 75
 praying mantis 76, 87
 Pregnant Goddess 13
 President's Day 47
 psyche 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15,
 16, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28,
 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 38, 58, 59,
 62, 66, 67, 75, 78, 79, 84, 85,
 95, 96, 104, 106

Q

Queen of the Underworld 35
 Quetzalcoatl 80

R

rebirth 35, 42, 43, 45, 46, 48, 49,
 53, 81, 98, 102
 Redgrove, Peter 23, 24, 93, 94, 95,
 111
 Reformation 45
 rice 17
 ritual 36, 38, 46, 49, 95
 Rolling Stones 80, 107
 Roman 37, 40, 42, 44, 45, 46, 48,
 49, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57
 Romantic 24, 94
 Rome 42, 43, 49
 Romulus and Remus 49
 Rosh Hashanah 56
 Running Wolf 63, 110

S

Saint Bridget's Day 47
 Saint Lucy's Day 43
 Saint Patrick 48, 50
 Samhain 37, 38, 39, 40
 Santa Claus 44
 Santino, Jack 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41,
 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49,
 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57,
 95, 111
 Saturnalia 42, 43, 44, 45, 46
 Schwartz, Richard 85, 99, 111
 shamanism 24, 60, 63
 social insects 74
 soils 2, 6, 9
 Solstice 36, 43
 Soul of the World 22, 26, 109
 South 18, 30, 32, 51, 62, 89, 91
 soybeans 12, 16, 20
 spider 82
 spirit animal 60, 62, 63, 64, 76, 104
 Spring 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 48, 52,
 55, 108, 109, 110
 Strawberries 98
 Strawberry Island 98, 99, 100, 108
 Sukkoth 40, 56

Sundance 89, 90
 Super Bowl 46, 47
 symbols 13, 35, 50, 53, 65, 82

T

Thanksgiving 41, 42, 46, 56
 theriomorphic 67
 Thor 57
 Thunder-beings 27, 28
 thunderstorms 7, 27, 93
 Tibetan World Wheel 16
 Tiger Swallowtail 90
 tornado 28
 "tree-of-life" 44
 Trial 30, 34
 trickster 39
 Twelfth Night 43, 51

U

Ulee's Gold 79
Ummaguma 27
 Underworld 35, 102
 University of Wisconsin 92

V

Valentine 48, 50
 Valentine's Day 48
 van der Post, Laurens 104
 vegetative nervous system 65, 82, 87
 Vietnam 107
 Vishnu 78
 vision quests 60

W

Wakinyan 78
 Washington, George 41
 weather sensitive 23, 93
 West 2, 28, 30, 33, 75, 78, 111
 wheat 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 40, 92
 Wheat Belt 9
 Wilhelm, Richard 13, 15, 27, 30, 92, 111

Windy City 8
 witchcraft 39
 wolves 49, 63
 Wotan 44, 57
 wounded finger 87, 88
 Wright, Frank Lloyd 65

Y

yang 28, 32, 34, 45, 47, 48
 yin 28, 32, 34, 45
 Yom Kippur 56
 Yule log 43

Z

Zeus 11, 87

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I had several Big Dreams in my last year of training at the Jung Institute in Zurich, including a single image dream of a typical Wisconsin pasture or meadow scene. This was the most beautiful landscape I have ever seen because it shown with an inner light, what Jung called a numinous or sacred dream. Since returning to Wisconsin I have let the mystery and power of that dream inspire me to learn and experience as much as possible about the land and the seasons of the upper Midwest, a process of turning a landscape into a soulscape.

The means of doing this are presented in *Land, Weather, Seasons, Insects: An Archetypal View*, volume IV of *The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the*

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—Dennis L. Merritt

Front Cover: A Monarch butterfly on *Buddleia* in Olbrich Gardens, Madison, Wisconsin. This “King of the Butterflies” is probably the best known of the North American butterflies and is the chosen image for the Entomological Society of America. The caterpillar feeds on the lowly milkweed, genus *Asclepias*, named after the Greek god of healing. The plant and the insect are toxic to most organisms. The insect is known for its uniquely long and complicated migrations. Photo by Chuck Heikkinen.

Back cover: McCormick tractor in a shed snowed in by a blizzard in December, 1968, on the home farm of the author in Kewaunee Co., Wisconsin. Photo by Dennis Merritt.

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