

The Beauty and Nature Reader

Read through the quotes slowly. What stirs in you as you read? Journal your thoughts.

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

– Mary Oliver

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.” – Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

“We know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel His presence most when His works are on the grandest scale spread before us; and it is in the unclouded night-sky, where His worlds wheel their silent course, that we read clearest His infinitude, His omnipotence, His omnipresence.” – Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

“We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.” – Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.” – John Muir, *The Mountains of California*

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity.” – John Muir, *Our National Parks*

How I go to the woods

Ordinarily, I go to the woods alone, with not a single friend, for they are all smilers and talkers and therefore unsuitable.

I don't really want to be witnessed talking to the catbirds or hugging the old black oak tree. I have my way of praying, as you no doubt have yours.

Besides, when I am alone I can become invisible. I can sit on the top of a dune as motionless as an uprise of weeds, until the foxes run by unconcerned. I can hear the almost unhearable sound of the roses singing.

If you have ever gone to the woods with me, I must love you very much.

– Mary Oliver, *Swan: Poems and Prose Poems*

“I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.” –John Muir, *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*

“We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it.” – Wendell Berry, *The Long-Legged House*

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” – Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

“And if these mountains had eyes, they would wake to find two strangers in their fences, standing in admiration as a breathing red pours its tinge upon earth's shore. These mountains, which have seen untold sunrises, long to thunder praise but stand reverent, silent so that man's weak praise should be given God's attention.” – Donald Miller, *Through Painted Deserts: Light, God, and Beauty on the Open Road*

I Go Down To The Shore

I go down to the shore in the morning
and depending on the hour the waves
are rolling in or moving out,
and I say, oh, I am miserable,
what shall—
what should I do? And the sea says
in its lovely voice:
Excuse me, I have work to do.

– Mary Oliver, *A Thousand Mornings*

“The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature and God.” – Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

How to be a Poet (to remind myself)

Make a place to sit down.
Sit down. Be quiet.
You must depend upon
affection, reading, knowledge,
skill-more of each
than you have-inspiration

work, growing older, patience,
for patience joins time
to eternity...
Breathe with unconditional breath
the unconditioned air.
Shun electric wire.
Communicate slowly. Live
a three-dimensional life;
stay away from screens.
Stay away from anything
that obscures the place it is in.
There are no unsacred places;
there are only sacred places
and desecrated places.
Accept what comes from silence.
Make the best you can of it.
Of the little words that come
out of the silence, like prayers
prayed back to the one who prays,
make a poem that does not disturb
the silence from which it came.

– Wendell Berry, *Given*

“I didn't need to understand the hypostatic unity of the Trinity; I just needed to turn my life over to whoever came up with redwood trees.” – Anne Lamott, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*

“If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere.” – Vincent Van Gogh

“An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.” – Henry David Thoreau

“My profession is to always find God in nature.” – Henry David Thoreau

“I think it annoys God if you walk by the color purple in a field and don't notice.” – Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

“The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder.” – G.K. Chesterson

“Beauty especially occurs in the meeting of time with the timeless; the passing moment framed by what has happened and what is about to occur, the scattering of the first spring apple blossom, the turning, spiraling flight of a curled leaf in the falling light; the smoothing of white sun-filled sheets by careful hands setting them to air on a line, the broad expanse of cotton filled by the breeze only for a moment, the sheets sailing on into dryness, billowing toward a future that is always beckoning, always just beyond us. Beauty is the harvest of presence.”¹

“Talk about God cannot easily be separated from discussions of place. A desert-mountain environment (or any landscape, for that matter) plays a central role in constructing human subjectivity, including the way one envisions the holy. The place where we live tells us who we are – how we relate to other people, to the larger world around us, even to God. Meaningful participation in any environment requires our learning certain ‘gestures of approach’ or disciplines of interpretation that make entry possible. All these are matters essential to the analysis of any spirituality.”²

“My fear is that much of what we call “spirituality” today is overly sanitized and sterile, far removed from the anguish of pain, the anchoredness of place.”³

“The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw – and knew I saw – all things in God and God in all things.” – Mechtild of Magdeburg⁴

"Surely the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it!" When those words came out of Jacob's mouth, there was no temple in Jerusalem. Without one designated place to make their offerings, people were free to see the whole world as an altar. The divine could erupt anywhere, and when it did they marked the spot in any way they could, although there was no sense hanging around for long, since God stayed on the move. For years and years, the Divine Presence was content with a tent – a ‘tent of meeting’ the Bible calls it – which was not where God lived full-time but where God camped out with people who were also on the move. God met them outside the tent, too, but the tent was the face-to-face place, the place where the presence of God was so intense that Moses was the only person who could stand it. When

¹ David Whyte, *Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words*, (Langley, WA: Many Rivers Press, 2015,) 20.

² Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998,) 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴ Quoted from Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*, (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009,) 1.

Moses came out of the tent of meeting, his face was so bright that he wore a veil over it in order not to scare the children.”⁵

“Human beings may separate things into as many piles as we wish – separating spirit from flesh, sacred from secular, church from world. But we should not be surprised when God does not recognize the distinctions we make between the two. Earth is so thick with divine possibility that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere without cracking our shins on altars.”⁶

“And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God.” – Julian of Norwich⁷

“The artist Georgia O’Keeffe, who became famous for her sensuous paintings of flowers, explained her success by saying, ‘In a way, nobody sees a flower, really, it is so small, we haven’t time – and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.’ The practice of paying attention really does take time. Most of us move so quickly that our surroundings become no more than the blurred scenery we fly past on our way to somewhere else. We pay attention to the speedometer, the wristwatch, the cell phone, the list of things to do, all of which feed our illusion that life is manageable. Meanwhile, none of them meets the first criterion for reverence, which is to remind us that we are not gods. If anything, these devices sustain the illusion that we might yet be gods – if only we could find some way to do more faster. Reverence requires a certain pace. It requires a willingness to take detours, even side trips, which are not part of the original plan.”⁸

“What I seek most in going into wilderness is not exercise or escape, but a physical and spiritual depth of intimacy. I’m moved by nature’s power and beauty, but what sets me afire is the longing I sense there of everything else wanting to connect, the desire for an intimacy that is as alluring as it is frightening. I go to spend time alone with God ... in a robust and full-bodied way. The two of us marvel at fresh deer tracks in the mud and black clouds looming over the ridge.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Quoted from Ibid., 17.

⁸ Ibid., 24.

We revel in the wildness and grieve over what isn't wild enough. We argue over the bloody business of insects devouring each other. We fall in love all over again. We connect." ⁹

"When we are stunned to the place beyond words, we're finally starting to get somewhere," says Anne Lamott. ¹⁰

"People need wild places. Whether or not we think we do, we do. We need to be able to taste grace and know again that we desire it. We need to experience a landscape that is timeless, whose agenda moves at the pace of speciation and glaciers. To be surrounded by a singing, mating, howling commotion of other species, all of which love their lives as much as we do ours, and none of which could possibly care less about us in our place. It reminds us that our plans are small and somewhat absurd. It reminds us why, in those cases in which our plans might influence many future generations, we ought to choose carefully. Looking out on a clean plank of planet earth, we can get shaken right down to the bone by the bronze-eyed possibility of lives that are not our own." Barbara Kingsolver, *Small Wonder* ¹¹

"It's always farther than it looks. It's always taller than it looks. And it's always harder than it looks." ¹²

"Our beginning in the spiritual life, like our entry into wilderness, usually involves a passage through disenchantment. We can identify with the spiritual tourists who went into the desert of fourth-century Egypt, enamored by the reputation of the desert saints, seeking the romance of the monastic life. Invariably, their illusions of instant spirituality slammed up against the rock-hard practicality of the monks and the fierce indifference of the land." ¹³

"There is likewise an ancient Christian tradition that refers to nature as a second book of divine revelation. In a story told about the third-century monk St. Antony of the Desert, Antony is queried by a philosopher about how he can survive without books. Antony replies, 'My book, sir philosopher, is the nature of created things, and it is always at hand when I wish to read the words of God.' Mystics like Meister Eckhart and St. Francis have led us to discover that the deeper our awareness of God, the greater our perception of God in all of creation. Eckhart

⁹ Belden C. Lane, *Backpacking with the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015,) 10.

¹⁰ Quoted from *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ Quoted from *Ibid.*, 29.

¹² Quoted from *Ibid.*, 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

reminds us, 'Look deeply into things, and discover God there.' And Francis invites us to join him in regarding the sun, the moon, and all of creation as our brothers and sisters." ¹⁴

"Forming a sense of place is about learning to listen, to smell, to taste, to touch, and to see. It may be the wind in the poplars, it may be the footfalls of a child on the stairs, it may be the onset of a summer storm. The hidden God who is everywhere can only be discovered by such attentiveness. This book aims to help readers pay attention to the 'particular world,' to listen to and recognize the elements of that world so as to discern the presence of the divine in them." ¹⁵

"Sacred places are valued for their 'thinness.' In them, the divine becomes transparent." ¹⁶

"We often make the mistake of thinking that the aim of our personal spiritual practices is to produce an encounter with God. The purpose of prayer is not to produce experiences then and there, but to open us to the encounters that will occur when and where God chooses. A disciplined spiritual life heightens our awareness to the possibility of these revelations occurring in the midst of the ordinary, but it does not create them." ¹⁷

"Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, the most fundamental thing that can be said about the sacredness of a place is that it is the place where God is encountered. It is not the place itself that is holy, but the encounter with the Lord." ¹⁸

"To be a contemplative it is necessary to walk through nature softly, to be in tune with the rhythm of life, to learn from the cycles of time, to listen to the heartbeat of the universe, to love nature, to protect nature, and to discover in nature the presence and the power of God. To be a contemplative it is necessary to grow a plant, love an animal, walk in the rain, and profess our consciousness of God into a lifetime of pulsating seasons." ¹⁹

"...I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

¹⁴ Robert M. Hamma, *Landscapes of the Soul: A Spirituality of Place*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, Inc., 1999,) 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁹ Joan Chittister, *Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000,) 86.

which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?"

– Mary Oliver
From "The Summer Day"²⁰

Exploring Interior and Exterior Landscapes

"I used to believe that to write about landscape you needed to live somewhere surpassingly gorgeous, such as the Rocky Mountains or the Pacific Coast. Imagine my dismay a few years ago to find myself living in the Chicago suburbs, surrounded by shopping malls and interstates. However, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, I've found that what I'm looking for is in my own backyard, in a small pocket of the area where I live.

Encouragement came in the words from novelist and poet N. Scott Momaday:

Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk.

Rather than stay unhappy with what I didn't have, I decided to focus on learning the landscape at hand. I write these words to share what I'm learning about prayer, and the tallgrass prairie, and the connection of landscape to our souls. Whatever landscape you are in, whether you are more interested in prayer or in the prairie, I hope that through seeing the possibilities that lie within exterior and interior landscapes, you will discover a greater connection with the God who made them all. Unlocking the secrets of both interior and exterior landscapes is a lifelong venture, and I'm only starting down the path to understanding. There is much to see along the way."²¹

"After a taste of the divine, can you be content with the conventional?"²²

²⁰ Cindy Crosby, *By Willoway Brook: Exploring the Landscape of Prayer*, (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2003,) ii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xv-xvi.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

“The wildest, most dangerous trails are always the ones within.” – Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* ²³

“All praise be Yours, my God, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all the weather's moods,
By which You cherish all that You have made.
All praise be Yours, my God, through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious, and pure.
All praise be Yours, my God, through Brother Fire,
Through whom You brighten up the night.
How beautiful he is, how gay!
Full of power and strength.
All praise be Yours, my God, through Sister Earth, our mother,
Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
Various fruits and colored flowers and herbs.”

– St. Francis of Assisi ²⁴

“How necessary it is for monks to work in the fields, in the rain, in the sun, in the mud, in the clay, in the wind: these are our spiritual directors and our novice-masters. They form our contemplation. They instill us with virtue. They make us as stable as the land we live in.”
– Thomas Merton ²⁵

“All things with which we deal preach to us. What is a farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun – it is a sacred emblem from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter overtakes in the fields.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson ²⁶

“The beauty and grandeur of nature touches each one of us. From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine.” – Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops ²⁷

“Nature to a saint is sacramental. If we are children of God, we have a tremendous treasure in Nature. In every wind that blows, in every night and day of the year, in every sign of the sky, in

²³ Quoted from Ibid., 40.

²⁴ Quoted from Christine Valters Paintner, *Water, Wind, Earth & Fire: The Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements*, (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2010,) 1.

²⁵ Quoted from Ibid., 2.

²⁶ Quoted from Ibid.

²⁷ Quoted from Ibid., 9.

every blossoming and in every withering of the earth, there is a real coming of God to us if we will simply use our starved imagination to realize it. ” – Oswald Chambers ²⁸

“All my life has been a relearning to pray – a letting go of incantational magic, petition, and the vain repetition ‘Me Lord, me,’ instead watching attentively for the light that burns at the center of every star, every cell, every living creature, even human heart.” – Chet Raymo ²⁹

“Let me seek, then, the gift of silence, and poverty, and solitude, where everything I touch is turned into a prayer: where the sky is my prayer, the birds are my prayer, the wind in the trees is my prayer, for God is in all. ” – Thomas Merton ³⁰

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,
the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,
while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

– Genesis 1:1-2

²⁸ Quoted from Ibid., 10.

²⁹ Quoted from Ibid., 11.

³⁰ Quoted from Ibid., 16.

“Be still deadening North wind;
South wind come, you that waken love,
Breathe through my garden,
Let its fragrance flow,
And the beloved will feed among the flowers.”

– St. John of the Cross ³¹

“The secret life of Me breathes in the wind
And holds all things together soulfully.”

– Hildegard of Bingen ³²

You ride on the wings of the wind,
You make the winds your messengers.

– Psalm 104:3-4

“When a bird remains long on the ground it thereby weakens its wings and its feathers grow heavy. Then it rises, flaps its wings and swings itself up till it takes to the air and glides into flight. The longer it flies the more blissfully it soars, refreshing itself, hardly alighting on the earth to rest. So it is with the soul: We must prepare ourselves in the same way if we wish to come to God. We must rise on wings of longing up to him.” – Mechtild of Magdeburg ³³

“It is necessary for me to see the first point of light which begins to be dawn. It is necessary to be present alone at the resurrection of Day, in the solemn silence at which the sun appears.” – Thomas Merton ³⁴

“The earth we are riding keeps trying to tell us something with its continuous scripture of leaves.” – William Stafford ³⁵

“Love all God’s creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. When you are left alone, pray. Love to throw yourself on the earth and kiss it. Kiss the earth and love it with an unceasing, consuming love.” – Fyodor Dostoevsky ³⁶

³¹ Quoted from Ibid.

³² Quoted from Ibid.

³³ Quoted from Ibid., 25.

³⁴ Quoted from Ibid., 52.

³⁵ Quoted from Ibid., 104.

³⁶ Quoted from Ibid., 105.

“If we think of ourselves as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, we see that we are the earth; we are the consciousness of the earth. These are the eyes of the earth. And this is the voice of the earth.” – Joseph Campbell ³⁷

I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. – Psalm 52:8

“Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.” – Genesis 2:9 ³⁸

I am the Vine and you are the branches. – John 15:5

“After I'd received the body of Christ, I saw that my soul was like a tree fastening its roots in the wound at the right side of Jesus. Then in some new and wonderful way I felt a marvelous sap – the goodness of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ – transfusing itself through this wound, as through a root, penetrating into all my branches and fruit and leaves. Surging through my soul, then, the goodness of Christ's whole life shone more brightly, like gold shining through crystal.” – St. Gertrude the Great ³⁹

“I came here to study hard things – rock mountain and salt sea – and to temper my spirit on their edges. ‘Teach me thy ways, O Lord’ is, like all prayers, a rash one, and one I cannot but recommend. These mountains – Mount Baker and the Sisters and Shuksan, the Canadian Coastal Range and the Olympics on the peninsula – are surely the edge of the known and comprehended world.... That they bear their own unimaginable masses and weathers aloft, holding them up in the sky for anyone to see plain, makes them, as Chesterton said of the Eucharist, only the more mysterious by their very visibility and absence of secrecy.” – Annie Dillard ⁴⁰

“The pale flowers of the dogwood outside this window are saints. The little yellow flowers that nobody notices on the edge of that road are saints looking up into the face of God. This leaf has its own texture and its own pattern of veins and its own holy shape, and the bass and trout hiding in the deep pools of the river are canonized by their beauty and their strength. The lakes hidden among the hills are saints, and the sea too is a saint who praises God without

³⁷ Quoted from Ibid.

³⁸ Quoted from Ibid.

³⁹ Quoted from Ibid., 109.

⁴⁰ Quoted from Ibid., 112.

interruption in her majestic dance. The great, gashed, half-naked mountain is another of God's saints. There is no other like him. He is alone in his own character; nothing else in the world ever did or ever will imitate God in quite the same way. That is his sanctity.” – Thomas Merton⁴¹

“O tall mountains
of confidence in God,
you never surrender when the Lord tests you!
Although you stand far away from me
as if in exile, all alone,
you remind me that
no armed power is strong enough to best you.
Your trust in God is wonderful!”

– Hildegard of Bingen ⁴²

“One climbs a mountain drawn instinctively by the magnetism of the highest point, as to a summit of personal awareness, awareness of oneself as a point in relation to as much of space as can be grasped within maximal horizon. Thus a mountain top is one of the most sensitive spots on earth.” – Tim Robinson ⁴³

Taste and see that the Lord is good. – Psalm 34:8

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it were you taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return. – Genesis 3:19

“We come from the earth and return to it, and so we live in agriculture as we live in flesh. While we live our bodies are moving particles of the earth, joined inextricably both to the soil and to the bodies of other living creatures.” – Wendell Berry ⁴⁴

⁴¹ Quoted from Ibid., 113.

⁴² Quoted from Ibid.

⁴³ Quoted from Ibid.

⁴⁴ Quoted from Ibid.

“But now ask the beasts to teach you, and the birds of the air to tell you;
Or the reptiles on earth to instruct you, and the fish of the sea to inform you.
Which of all these does not know that the hand of God has done this? – Job 12:7-9

“Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature, even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature.” – Meister Eckhart ⁴⁵

"I live in the woods out of necessity, I get out of bed in the middle of the night because it is imperative that I hear the silence of the night, alone, and, with my face on the floor, say psalms alone, in the silence of the night . . . the silence of the forest is my bride and the sweet dark warmth of the whole world is my love and out of the heart of that dark warmth comes the secret that is only heard in silence, but it is the root of all the secrets whispered by all the lovers in their beds all over the world." – Thomas Merton ⁴⁶

“Wilderness. A place apart. A cathedral where the sky sweeps down to meet the earth, where rivers born of frozen lakes start their journeys to the sea, where centuries or seconds pass the same in the slow, uncaring cycles that govern nature. Wilderness. A refuge for plants and animals where life can flourish undisturbed by man and his developments. A ‘savage’ land beyond the civilizing influences of humanity. Wilderness. A place that existed long before us and will exist long after. A place that has no use for us, but which we need for many reasons. The place from which we came. Wilderness. A haven of solitude and peace, an antidote for the stresses of 20th-century life. A place where the only wars are fought between the elements, where the only schedules are the ones we impose upon ourselves, and the only clocks are the sun and the seasons. Wilderness. A place of breathtaking beauty – enough to feed the soul for a lifetime, to inspire poets and painters, hunters and hikers, to reward earthly man and woman with a glimpse of heaven. Wilderness. A territory of the heart.” ⁴⁷

Pilgrims

“To this wilderness of lichened slopes
windswept bristlecone and purple aconite
we come as visitors,
our heads checked at the box below

⁴⁵ Quoted from *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁶ Quoted from *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴⁷ Mary Jean Porter, *Sangre de Cristo Wilderness: A Territory of the Heart*, (Westcliffe, CO: Music Mountain Press, 1997,) 15.

where we signed our names,
our hearts in our hands
on our sleeves
in the pockets of the flannel shirts we wear.
These hearts are our guides.
They will teach us what books cannot
about this windy peak
this sky that streaks above us
this field of alpine strawberries
with fruit like tiny rubies.
Our hearts will teach us
what more knowledgeable men and women cannot
about this special place.
They are all we need to appreciate this wilderness.
They are the wild parts of us –
the perfect match for this wild place.”⁴⁸

“I think people want to realize – at a level deeper than the intellectual – that a spring-fed lake high in the mountains is where their water actually comes from; that berries, rosehips, acorns, grass seeds, fish and ‘wild animals’ provide food more basic than a supermarket; that, as human beings, a wild place truly is their birthplace even though they were born in hospitals and their ancestors might have lived in cities.”⁴⁹

“This wilderness dream helps define who I am. I might participate in and have the trappings of modern, middle-class life, but part of me is ‘checked out.’ I feel different – I am different – because I have been to the wild. I have seen its great beauty, heard its silence, felt its solitude, magic and mystery, and I cherish them. Long ago, the natural world branded my heart and claimed my allegiance.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 20.