

## WORD PROTECTORATES

*yoga for a time of bio-crisis*

### *Avant Totemism*

Take a protector stance for an animal or plant that indicates health in a particular ecosystem. The species should be native, and recognized as key to your region. Avant Totemism brings eco-activists and artists into one council.

Totem comes from Ojibwa *nindoodem*, my ancestor, founder of my clan. The artist goes *avant*, out front, to protect water source, food chain, habitat, & shelter for the totem. This may require tedious meetings with the local Board of Adjustors.

Note: Avant Totemism is the opposite of *Mascot-ism*, fantasy use of animal as identity for sports, military, men's clubs, or commerce groups, without reference to the lifeways or well being of the species. Provençal *mascoto*: charm, fetish, empty specter.

### *Gnostellation*

Knowledge of the night sky. A star chart or star-wheel are helpful for constellation viewing. Field glasses too. Gnosis: learn night-sky traditions from several cultures by heart; pass the stories on to children. Urban lights, Starnet, intrusive military flights, and space station trash currently interfere with star lore wisdom. The Dark Sky Initiative, adopted by certain neighborhoods, hip park rangers, and some counties, is one step in reclaiming the sky commons.

### *Lokapāla*

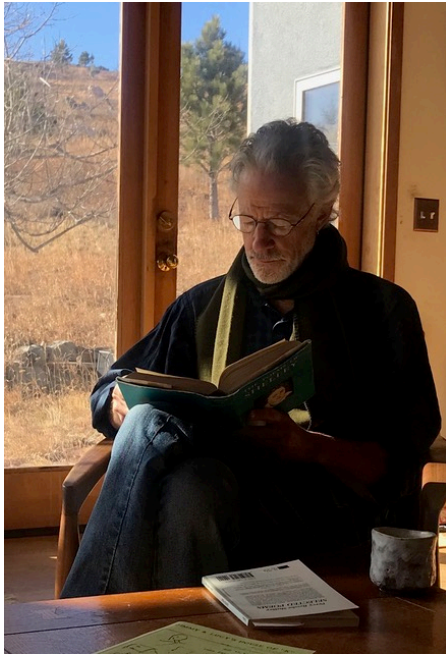
Sanskrit, protector of place. Sometimes a spirit, sometimes a bio-being that dwells in a distinct eco-zone. It embodies the genius of the place. Most are found where notable geo-formations, water source, or medicinal plants and minerals occur. Pinnacle, hoodoo, spire, chasm, grotto, spring, rock outcropping, moss & orchid cliff, native grass meadow, old growth tree—can be home of a *lokapāla*. Do not regard it as benign or malignant. The *lokapāla* guards the bio-spirit integrity of a place. It takes the personality of rock, tree, or weather; it might emit a fragrance of local herbs. It might be a venomous insect.

### *Upaithric*

Coined from old books—the Greeks—by Percy Bysshe Shelley, “under the open sky.” Praise to old-time open-air temples! Most of history people told stories, sang, made poems, and made love with sky as their roof. Free from walls, away from ceiling, computer, or thermostat, body wakens to wind, sun, animals, plants, soil, starlight. Think how poets hearkened to the Aeolian harp—found in China, Greece, India, Ethiopia, Indonesia. Tibetan prayer flags use the same winds as the harp, dispersing unheard sounds & good luck to creatures. I swear Thoreau used the term, but cannot figure out where.

### *Vespitation*

How breathing changes when the sky darkens. Catch sight of Venus (Hesperus) over the Western horizon at vespers (dusk). A long inhalation, then breath settles into gentle register. The North American vesper sparrow starts its melody. Nighthawk softly booms. The human lullaby takes tender notes, and outdoors the “moonshiners” watch their jugs, hidden beneath the juniper, starting to fill.



**Andrew Schelling**, born 14 January 1953 at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, Washington D.C. The 1970s and ‘80s he spent in Northern California: studied ecology of mind with Gregory Bateson & poetry with Norman O. Brown. Took up Sanskrit language, translation, and developed wilderness skills in Sierra Nevada and Coast Range mountains. In 1990 moved to Colorado to teach poetry and Sanskrit at The Naropa Institute (now University). Among twenty-odd titles are poetry, *From the Arapaho Songbook* and *The Facts at Dog Tank Spring*, as well as eight books of translation from India’s old lyrics. Another book, *Tracks Along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture*, is an ideogram of linguistics, folklore, old time stories, poets, and cattle rustling in California. This book has become something of an underground classic, used by readers as a history & handbook of bioregional thought. Schelling lives in the “middle mountains,” between the high plains and Colorado’s Indian Peaks Wilderness.