



HEALING WISE

Susun S. Weed



Ash Tree Publishing
Woodstock, New York

Wise Woman Tradition

The Wise Woman tradition is the oldest tradition of healing known on our planet, yet one that is rarely identified, rarely written or talked about. A woman-centered tradition of self love, respectful of the earth and all her creatures, the Wise Woman tradition tells us that compassion, simple ritual, and common herbs heal the whole person and maintain health/wholeness/holiness.

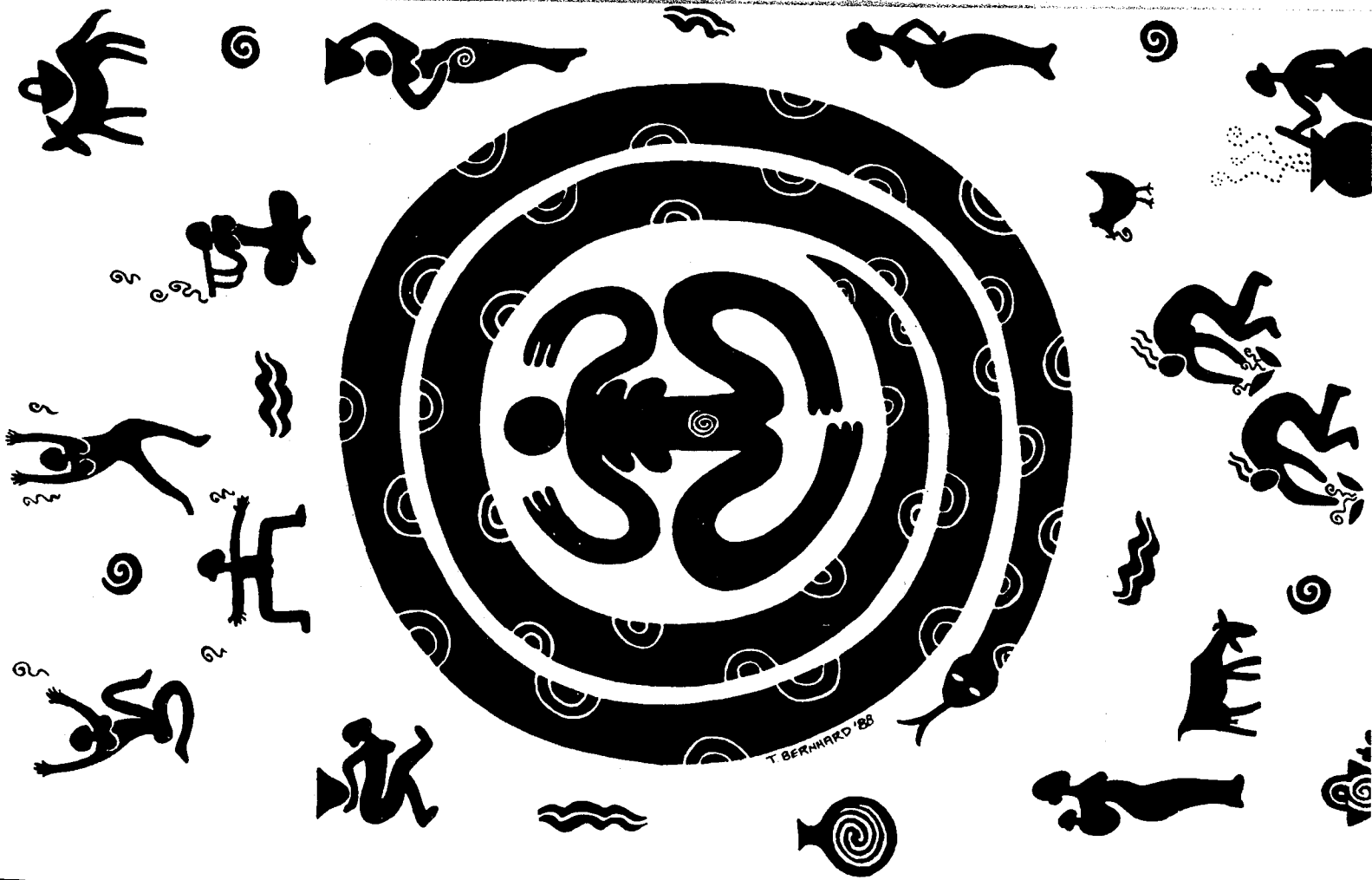
In the Wise Woman tradition good health is flexibility, openness to change, availability to transformation, and groundedness. The spiral is the symbol of the Wise Woman tradition.

The special powers and sensibilities of women (especially menstrual powers) are central to the Wise Woman tradition. Men in the Wise Woman tradition find the wise woman within themselves and become her.

In the Wise Woman tradition we nourish. We do not fix or cure or balance. We nourish health/wholeness/holiness in each individual, ever aware of each individual as holographically related to family/community/universe, in spiraling, ever-changing completeness. Problems become doorways of transformation.

Substance, thought, feeling, and spirit are inseparable in the Wise Woman tradition. Wholism, holographic imagery, and unified field physics are parts of the holy wisdom of the Wise Woman way: a choiceless "both/and" wisdom. Everyone wins. Each one is the best. In the spiralic and amazing Wise Woman tradition, our self-healing options are as diverse as the human imagination and as complex as the human psyche. The Wise Woman tradition has no rules, no texts, no rites; it is constantly changing, constantly being re-invented.

The wise woman and the Wise Woman tradition have been invisible for thousands of years of our recent past. Now the time has come for us to recognize this invisible thread woven into our lives, this common thread that runs from our earliest foremothers to us, this thread of love and nurturance which can lead us out of the maze of planetary destruction, war, and self-hatred.



The Wise Woman Tradition

Who Is This Crippled Old Black Woman?

I see the wise woman. She is old and black and walks with the aid of a beautifully carved stick. She's the ancient grandmother of us all and she represents health/wholeness/holiness in the Wise Woman tradition.

She's the one who brought me here. She brought me to the Wise Woman tradition, and she has guided me in the writing of this book. I have been following her traces for years, finding here and there a thread from her cloak.

I find many of her threads, vibrant threads, when I visit with and read about aboriginal women. The aboriginal woman, the original woman, the earth-based woman, the woman of earth colors, the woman of the mother cultures speaks to me. She speaks in a gesture, in a color, in a glance. She speaks in a smile, in a song, in a dance. She speaks to me of Wise Woman ways.

The crippled old black woman winks at me and spreads her arms.

"These are the ways of our ancient grandmothers, the ancient ones who still live. These wise women are one with all life as they tread the ever-changing spiral. Every pain, every plant, every stone, every feeling, every problem is cherished as teacher: not teacher who grades, but teacher who guides. Night is loved for darkness and the stars. Day is loved for light and the sun. Uniqueness is our treasure, not normalcy. Our universe includes all; it is 'both/and,' not 'either/or.' This is the Wise Woman way the world 'round."

"These are the ways of our ancient grandmothers, the ancient ones who still live. These wise women receive nourishment from and give nourishment to the great mother of all. They receive her abundance with compassion, knowing they themselves will be food for others. They know that dying is the portal to the existence of death as birth is the portal to the existence of life. They celebrate all comings and goings. This is the Wise Woman way the world 'round."

I see the wise woman.

She carries a blanket of compassion. She wears a robe of wisdom. Around her throat flutters a veil of shifting shapes. From her shoulders, a mantle of power flows. A story band encircles her forehead. She stitches a quilt; she spins fibers into yarn; she knits; she sews; she weaves. She ties the threads of our lives together. She forms a web of spiraling threads.

I see the wise woman. She is at her loom: a loom warped with days and nights. White threads, black threads receive her flying shuttle, a shuttle filled with threads of many colors. Threads the colors of the earth, the common ground; threads the colors of the people of the earth. Some threads short; some threads long; each thread different, each perfect. These threads are alive with sound and color. These threads are mutable; they change at a touch. These threads are crystal antennae; they respond at a thought.

And intertwined with each thread is a thread blood red: a thread of such sensitivity, it cannot be seen, yet a thread of such vitality, it can never be hidden. As our blood flows over and under the days and nights of our lives and binds each moment to the whole, so the red thread of the wise woman binds us in the tapestried, cosmic web.

I see the wise woman.

And she sees me.

"These are the ways of our ancient grandmothers, the ancient ones who still live. These wise women spin the invisible web which weaves us all together. They invite you to weave the threads of your own life back into the cloak of the ancient one, the holy blanket of the wise woman. They thank you for reweaving, wherever you can, the sacred threads of planetary, animal, plant, and personal kinship.

"These are the ways of our ancient grandmothers, the ancient ones who still live. The joy of life is the give-away. They give you a gift of a robe, a robe woven of unconditional self love: luminous, resonant, shimmering.

"Here, put it on. Ah! Do you feel it?"

"As you emerge through the neckhole you become the center of the universe. All revolves around you, the world's axis, life's matrix, the still point in the ever-moving. The designs of the universe itself radiate down your sleeves and bodice. It is an ancient design. Lift your arms. You are the tree of life, the goddess, unique and whole.

"And as you trace the invisible way of the Wise Woman, wearing your robe, know that the ancient ones offer you safe journey. They offer you safe journey and the possibility of finding yourself healthy/whole/holy. This is the Wise Woman way the world 'round."

The Wise Woman Tradition is Invisible

The Wise Woman tradition is the oldest tradition of healing known on our planet, yet one that is rarely identified, rarely written or talked about. It is an invisible tradition.

Flexible and common, claiming no healers, having no universities, no institutions, the Wise Woman tradition is hard to see. I feel it as an invisible thread humming with wholeness, ancient and vibrant, stitched through my life, stitched through the lives of all who went before and all who come after me. An invisible, tenacious thread.

The reasons for the invisibility of the Wise Woman tradition are manifold:

- Nourishing is an invisible process.

The Wise Woman tradition is based on nourishment, a basic process generally taken for granted, not considered worthy of much note. Nourishment through giving suck and gathering and preparing food is presented as background by anthropologists who are fascinated by the occasional dramatic hunt. Wise women nourish in invisible ways, helping others to empower themselves without saying, "Hey, look at me healing you. Look at me teaching you!"

- Mothers are invisible.

Virtually all health care given worldwide (99% say some experts) is provided by mothers who care for their families' health, and most of this is done in the Wise Woman tradition. But this is not measured nor paid for, and anyway, isn't that what mothers do?

- Women, especially women of color, are invisible to white men and white male society.

The Wise Woman tradition is a woman-centered tradition. For hundreds of years, the news of the world has been given to us by white men who hardly see women at all, let alone black women. And they do not see women as powerful even when they do perceive women's existence. Women healers, midwives, and herbalists are frequently written out of accounts, omitted when lists are recopied, or known only by a husband's name. And the lineage of the European Wise Woman tradition has gone up in flames so often that tracing that thread is difficult indeed.

- A woman making dinner is invisible.

To claim that she is engaged in healing her family and community and keeping her universe in balance is a lot to claim for dinner. This is the Wise Woman way.

- Spoken words are invisible.

The Wise Woman tradition is an oral tradition, and we have grown accustomed to believing things only if they are written down, in books, like this one. The Wise Woman tradition flows from experience rather than faith in books; from creativity rather than dogma; from many unique individuals creating new ways to heal/whole, creating new/old wise ways, rather than a monolithic tradition. It is nonrepeatable, non-replicable, ever changing.

- There's no visible structure in the Wise Woman tradition.

There is no hierarchy in the Wise Woman tradition: no difference between above and below, no order of authority, no sense of "man" as better than all other forms of life. There's no president, no guru, no chairman of the board. There are no rules to follow. You can't get a degree or certificate in the Wise Woman tradition. You can't be tested on it, because there are no right and wrong answers.

- Uniqueness is invisible.

Each healing/wholing ritual encounter in the Wise Woman tradition is unique. Repetition is neither sought nor valued. In the Scientific world view, a single instance of anything is virtually invisible. The more repeatable something is, the more visible it is.

The Wise Woman Tradition is a Spiral



The symbol of the Wise Woman tradition is a spiral. A spiral is a cycle as it moves through time. A spiral is movement around and beyond a circle, always returning to itself, but never at exactly the same place. Spirals never repeat themselves. Spirals remind us that life is movement, that each moment is unique, and that form is the essence of transformation.

The symbol of the Wise Woman tradition is the spiral. The spiral is the bubbling cauldron, the curl of the wave, the lift of the wind, the whirlpool of water, the umbilical cord, the great serpent, the path of the earth, the twist of the helix, the spin of our galaxy. The spiral is the soft guts. The spiral is the labyrinth. The spiral is the womb-moon-tide möbius pull. The spiral is your individual life. The spiral is the passage between worlds: birth passing into death, death passing into birth. The path of enlightenment is the spiral dance of bliss.

The symbol of the Wise Woman tradition is a spiral. Spirals never repeat. Walk a circle and you can stay in balance, know the cycles, trust your every step. Walk a spiral, you will inevitably come to the unique next step, the unknown, the thirteenth step, the opportunity for change, the window of transformation.

The thirteenth step creates the spiral. Twelve is the number of established order. Twelve is easily divided and ordered into halves and quarters and thirds, easily categorized and labeled and defined. One step beyond the mutable twelve is thirteen, the wild card, the unique number, the indivisible prime. Thirteen, the number of change.

- Commonness is invisible.

It's just too familiar. When the European came upon native cultures he could not see that there were medicine women, because all women were medicine women. The few medicine men (often dressed up as women) were visible to him. And so European cultural biases perpetuated the myth of the medicine man, and the medicine woman remained invisible.

- Prevention is invisible.

If I drink nettle infusion while pregnant and don't hemorrhage, I haven't done anything visible or noticeable. We have become so used to invasive preventive medicine (as with mammograms) that nourishing as prevention is invisible to us. With Wise Woman ways we resonate in health/wholeness/holiness throughout our lives, so there are fewer emergencies and fewer heroic measures needed.

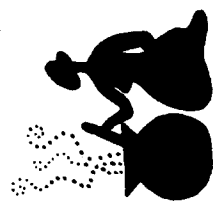
- One of the powers of the wise woman is invisibility.

A Wise Woman tradition midwife tells me that when she is profusely thanked (right at the birth), she reconsiders what she did, looking for ways to be more invisible.

"I'm there to help her remember *her* power, not to display mine. I'm there to support *her* to deliver the baby; I don't deliver. I'm only there if I'm needed. The more invisible I am, the more I can really help."

Because it's invisible, the Wise Woman tradition is difficult to discover and easy to ignore. At the same time, because the Wise Woman tradition is the oldest tradition of health care among humans, its ways are deeply embedded in our collective consciousness, in our morphogenetic fields, in our ancient brain parts. We can try to ignore the Wise Woman tradition, but it won't leave us alone.

The wisdom of the Wise Woman ~~way~~ exists within each of us; it exists within you and it can come to life through you. The Wise Woman tradition lives in the woman self memory of each person. How do I know? The most frequent comment (and my favorite compliment) after a talk on the Wise Woman tradition: "I already knew everything you had to say, I just needed you to remind me."



The Wise Woman Tradition is Woman-Centered

The Wise Woman tradition is a woman-centered tradition. Everything is perceived as manifesting from the female center: life, nourishment, song, story, shelter, love, beauty, sacredness, healing, wholeness.

Earth is mother is woman is wholeness is health. So, whether they are men or women, all self-healing helpers in the Wise Woman tradition are perceived as women. (In some cultures, the men act this out by wearing female clothing, or by cutting themselves, so that they bleed like women [see **Blood Mysteries**].)

In the Wise Woman tradition, health/wholeness/holiness comes through nourishment, and nourishment comes through the mother; nourishment comes from woman. So healing occurs in the ground of woman power, in the ground of heart-centered compassion.

What is this woman power? This power of nourishment? This power of creation and destruction? What is this female energy? It certainly is not the opposite of what we think of as male energy. It is not "the passive" or even "the receptive." It is the void.

Female energy is the void of all being: the all-consuming void, the all-birthing void.

The Power of the Void

In the Wise Woman tradition, all health, all coming to wholeness, begins with a return to the void. To heal, to become whole, we turn again around the spiral of our life. We turn again around the spiral and enter the void, the great unknown, knowing only that our form is reformed, that our form is transformed, that rebirth inevitably follows death.

When we resist our death, our return to the void, we call it "our problem."

The problem is I am in pain. The problem is I am out of control. The problem is I am falling, without chance of stopping, falling into the void of all beginnings, into the void of all ends.

The Wise Woman tradition asks us to let go and fall. Fall into the void. Fall into the open arms of the mother. Add on to yourself by letting go of everything. Become whole and healthy by turning on the spiral, by returning to the void.

Where does the spiral end? Where begin? In the void. Place of female power. Place we are taught to avoid. Nothing. Chaos. The spiral

emerges from and ends in invisibility, the great nothing dark womb of the goddess, endlessly empty, endlessly full, doorway of life, window of transformation, entry to death.

Death is part of successful healing in the Wise Woman tradition. Death the invisible, unique void. The void is woman power: simultaneously dynamic and relaxed; empty yet completely full; satiated yet always consuming; creative, abundant, insatiable, unfillable, unquenchable, wild, having nothing to receive, knowing everything is already present, completely calm.

Here in the void lives the Crone. Here we encounter the Crone in her power: Hecate chants words of power at the crossing. Kali, bedecked with musical, runic skulls, dances on the corpses. Cerridwen, the sacred sow, cosmic pig, feeds eternally. Hel, full of passion, guards the sacred fire. The unknowable goddess flutters her veil. The void contains all and consumes all.

From the void comes the Virgin who gives birth: Mary sits spinning the red thread of life. Persephone weaves the tapestry of the universe. Ishtar performs the sacred belly dance for her sisters. All life arises from the creative void.

Where is the void? Is it heaven? Is it hell? Up the mountain in my town, at the Tibetan monastery, the day begins with an invocation to the goddess Tara, life giver. An invocation to Mahakala (Kali), the goddess of death, closes each day. All things begin from woman. All things return to woman. In sickness, in death, we are the food, the nourishment of the void, the great goddess. Now I eat you. In life, in birth, she gives to us, nourishes us abundantly, cares for us compassionately. Now you eat me.

The Wise Woman Tradition Heals with Nourishment

In the Wise Woman tradition, health/wholeness/holiness comes through adding on to, that is, through nourishment. Problems, pains, diseases, and illnesses are not fixed, or cured, or even brought into balance, in the Wise Woman tradition, but honored, supported, respected for their truth, nourished, and added on to the truth of the whole being. Nourishment helps us incorporate ("to intimately blend, to make into a body") all of our experiences. Each problem is acknowledged as a potential thirteenth step to transformation and growth.

Nourishment encourages expansion and growth. Nourishment includes. Nourishment supports each being as unique, holy, individual. Nourishing our problems encourages love for all parts of ourselves.

Blood Mysteries

In the beginning, according to the Wise Woman tradition, everything began, as everything does, at birth. The Great Mother of All gave birth and the earth appeared out of the void. Then the Great Mother of All gave birth again, and again, and again, and people, and animals, and plants appeared on the earth. They were all very hungry. "What shall we eat?" they asked the Great Mother. "Now you eat me," she said, smiling. Soon there were a very great many lives, but the Great Mother of All was enjoying creating and giving birth so much that she didn't want to stop. "Ah," she said smiling, "now I eat you." And so she still does.

We all come from the same mother. She is the wise woman. We all return to her embrace, her bloody-rich womb place, when we die. Every woman is a whole/holy form of her, able to be whole/holy mother of all life, able to be whole/holy destroyer of life. Her power is her blood that flows and flows, her blood which is life and gives life. Every woman's menstrual blood and birth-time blood is a holy mystery.

What are the blood mysteries? Why are they central to the understanding of the Wise Woman tradition?

Blood mysteries teach that menstrual blood and birthing blood are holy blood, power blood, healing blood. The blood mysteries teach us to remember that life and healing come from and return to woman, to the wise woman, to the woman who bleeds and bleeds. And does not die.

Blood mysteries reveal that menstrual (moontime) blood and birth blood are so holy, so full of potential, so full of the void, that they are to be used only to heal, to heal by nourishing. Holy woman-blood is nourishing blood, blood of love, blood of abundance, blood that heals the earth.

Blood mysteries recall the immense power of the bleeding woman. Power enough to share in great nourishing give-aways. Give-away from woman womb to earth womb, give-away from mother to matrix, give-away of nourisher to nourisher. When we bleed into the ground (in reality or in fantasy) our power regrounds as our blood flows through the personal root chakra and into the earth.

Bleeding into the ground, bleeding freely, we know ourselves as women, as nourishers of life, as givers of nourishment to the plants, givers of holy nourishment: our moontime blood.

I am woman giving away nourishment to ensure this planet's life. With my moontime power, my blood, with my birthing power, my

We become whole, and genuinely who we are, rather than the fixed, cured, balanced person we suppose we are supposed to be.

The Wise Woman tradition sees everything as nourishment. Nourishment insures life. Nourishment is the great grounding root and green leaf of the Wise Woman tradition. All health occurs through nourishment. (The immune system nourishes itself on viruses.) All is nourishment. Now you eat me. Now I eat you.

Cell by cell, you replace yourself. Thought by thought, you create yourself. Dream by dream, you envision the universe. You create a million new cells every second: impressionable, vulnerable cells. From what do you create them? With what do you imprint them?

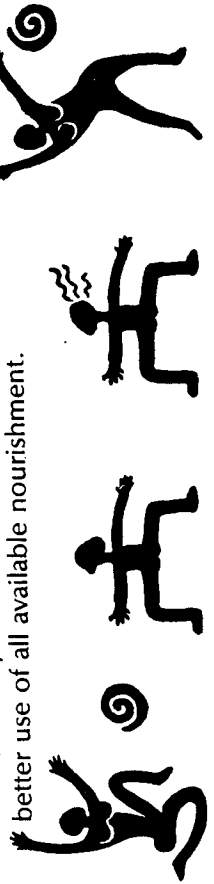
Nourish yourself optimally, with health/wholeness/holiness, to create healthy/whole/holy cells. Imprint them with vibrations of wholeness, resonate holographically, and you create health and flexibility in the Wise Woman way. Not "good health" as in the absence of pain and problems. Not immunity to all germs, viruses, hoaxes, disappointments, heartbreaks, setbacks, and sheer galactic perversity, but the stamina and grace to find the thirteenth step of every problem, to find pain's gift.

With optimum nourishment, says the Wise Woman tradition, we find ourselves walking an ever-increasing spiral of health/wholeness/holiness.

What of cleaning? What of toxins? How can you be healthy, holy, and happy if you're full of crap? Don't you have to clean the liver? Don't you have to clean the blood?

Nourish the new cells, optimally, says the Wise Woman tradition, and the old cells and other waste will be cleared away easily. The liver is replaced, every cell of it, in six weeks. Nourish each new liver cell optimally, and the liver will clean the blood. The kidneys are replaced, every cell, in a month. Nourish each new cell optimally, let the kidneys clean the blood. The blood volume itself is replaced, every cell, in three weeks. What cleaner blood than new and optimally nourished cells?

Partake of optimum nourishment, as understood by wise women through the ages, and soon every cell of your body is healthy/whole/holy: the nervous system functions more smoothly, the hormonal system fluctuates more evenly, the liver and kidneys are more effective, the immune system is better organized, and the digestive system makes better use of all available nourishment.

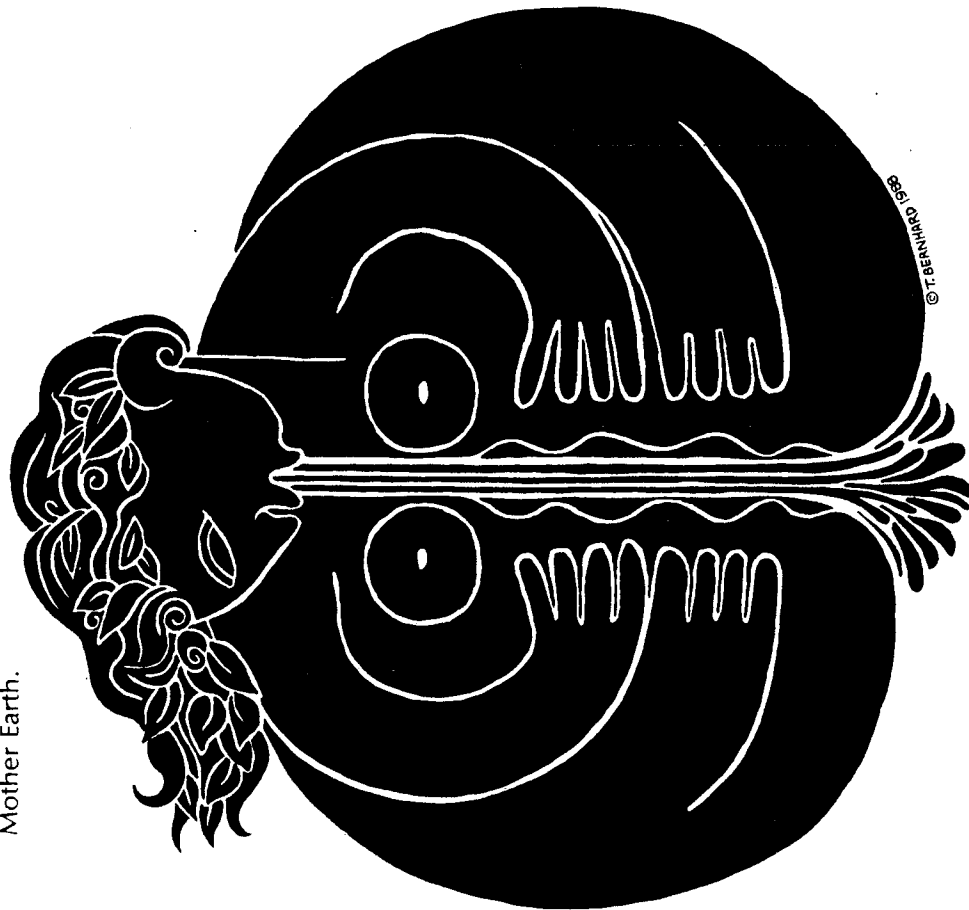


blood, I feed the earth who feeds us all. Every month I remember: I am woman. I am earth. I am life. I am nourishment. I am change.

I am woman, blatantly and repeatedly confronted with my changes: hormonal harmonics stirring moon time visions, ovulatory oracles, pre-menstrual crazies, orgasmic knowings, birth ecstasies, breast-feeding bliss, menopausal moods.

I am wholeness. I am woman of wisdom. I know life, death, pain, and health in my marrow, in my womb. I know the bloody places: the narrow bloody space between life and death, the bloody place of birth, the bloody mess of nourishing life, the bloody flow of letting life go. I am woman. My blood is power. Peaceful power. Peaceful blood.

My blood is holy nourishment. My blood nourishes the growing fetus. My blood becomes milk to nourish the young child. My blood flows into the ground as holy nourishment for the Great Mother, Gaia, Mother Earth.



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Gaia, whose ways are bloody. Woman, whose ways are bloody. Blood of nourishment. But bloody. Bloody menstrual blood, bloody birth blood. Blood of peace, nourishing blood. Blood of health/wholeness/holiness, not of sacrifice. The Wise Woman tradition is a bloody-handed woman, a bloody-thighed woman, a woman who gives birth, a woman who sees to the other side of things.

Health/wholeness/holiness is always changing. Life is mysterious, moving in spirals of change. Spirals moving to, through, from the void. Change making the hole so we can see the holy healthy gift of our wholeness.

"Sit, sister, here on the soft green moss, and give your sacred moon blood to the earth, back again to the spiral of life. Let flow your womb's blood red to the green and brown of earth. Sit here. Relax and close your eyes and let the visions come. Rest now and give your moon blood to nourish the mother who nourishes us. Relax and let the visions come."

The time of menstrual bleeding, according to the Wise Woman tradition, is a time of visions. Any woman who pays attention to these visions will find the powers of shamans, witch doctors, medicine wo/men.

"Add a bit of red leaf to your herbal mixtures, any red leaf except poison ivy. That will make the medicine strong," says a friend, apprentice to a Native American shaman. And the wise woman inside me whispers: "They do this to evoke the power of menstrual blood."

These are the natural powers of menstruating, menopausal, and post-menopausal women:

- Oneness with the earth as a responsive nurturing presence
- Communication with plants, animals, rocks
- Weather making
- Shape shifting
- Invisibility
- Communication with fairies, devas, elves, dragons, unicorns
- Foreknowledge
- Acutely sensitive senses of smell, taste, hearing, sight, touch
- Healing

The Wise Woman tradition understands healing/wholing as blood mysteries. The blood of birth and death, and the blood of nourishment, these are the natural knowledge of women, these are the things that make us wise.

Holographic Understanding is a Wise Woman Way

The whole is more than the sum of its parts in the Wise Woman tradition. And every part is seen as the whole in the Wise Woman tradition. The part is as whole as the whole is. These are holographic understandings. They follow the way of the hologram.

Hologram is derived from the Greek words *holo*, meaning *whole*, and *gram*, meaning *to write*. Thus the hologram writes the whole. A hologram is formed by splitting a laser beam into two parts: one travels directly to a photographic plate, one is bounced off an object and onto the plate. The resulting interference pattern at the intersection of the beams, which is recorded on the photographic plate, is not only extremely complex, but usually invisible to the unaided eye. When the photographic plate is illuminated with laser light, the original object is seen three-dimensionally, with luminous depth and great detail, from many viewpoints. If only a small part of the plate is illuminated, the entire object is still visible, though somewhat less sharply, with less definition and detail, and from fewer viewpoints.

The individual cell in the body is one small, whole picture of the entire being. The person is composed of millions of cells, millions of pictures, collected together and becoming more than the sum of the parts. In this collection of cells the luminous depth of life stirs and we see great detail, great adventures.

Nourish each cell as unique, nourish it optimally, says the Wise Woman tradition, and the person will thrive, heal, and become whole as an inherent part of being alive.

With holographic understanding, the Wise Woman way treats each being as a complete and perfect wholeness. With holographic understanding, the Wise Woman way knows that everything we think and do affects the whole: our whole/holy selves, our families, our communities, the earth as a whole, and even the vast universe.

With holographic understanding, the Wise Woman tradition sees each illness as an expression of the ever-changing truth of the full being, and the healing/wholing of the illness to be the wholing of the entire being, family, community, planet, universe.

With holographic understanding, in the Wise Woman way, we nourish and add to each being. Nourishing, we add to wholeness, rather than eliminating "the problem." Adding to, we increase the clarity of the hologram. So each personal problem is seen as an opportunity to strengthen family. Each problem is understood as an opportunity to create community. Each problem is valued as an opportunity to heal the earth. Each problem is respected as an opportunity to nourish the universe.

If we do not nourish the universe and heal the earth and create community and strengthen the family when we cure the pain or the problem, then, to the Wise Woman way of thinking, we have not healed anything at all, even if the patient is well. If we heal the person but disrupt the family, the community, or the earth, then wholeness is not increased, nourishment is not in action, health does not occur, and holiness is forgotten.

In the holographic understanding of the Wise Woman way, you and I are each, no matter how different, a whole picture of the entire universe. Physicists and mystics say this in different ways. We can read the entire universe in each other, though the finer details aren't clear. Our health, our pain mirror and illuminate part of the joy and sadness of the universe. The more of us that think and act in certain ways, the clearer that expression is in the universe.

Each cell is a living entity with feeling and spirit, not just physical substance. Full integration of all parts with all parts is part of the holographic understanding of the Wise Woman tradition.

The Wise Woman tradition knows that individuals aren't just a body, a mind, and a spirit, and even if they were, wouldn't separate the parts.

When we're doing emotional work, we understand that therapy has its emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects. When we are responding to our soul's longings, we are full of feeling, and need to create a physical expression of our heart's desire. When we are engaged in intense physical effort, such as lovemaking, the emotions are more accessible, the spirit closer at hand. All aspects of our being are integrated, inseparable, in the Wise Woman way.

Integration obviates hierarchies. The Wise Woman tradition does not believe that the soul is higher than the body, but that it is in a mutual relationship with the body. All parts of the body (and any part of the body) reflect, holographically, the soul, the spirit.

Optimum nutrition depends on the availability of whole, integrated food and energy sources. Holographically, their wholeness activates the wholeness of each of your cells.

Wild plants are whole, integrated food and energy sources. Wild plants carry spiritual power, emotional power, physical power, and other, invisible, unnameable powers as well. Eat a wild plant, and you're eating wholeness. Wild plants are readily available resonators of health/wholeness/holiness, optimum nourishers to all parts of your being. This is one of the reasons that the Wise Woman tradition herbalist prefers to use wild plants.

In the Wise Woman tradition the body is more than a physical

object. Emotional bodies, energetic bodies, dream bodies, soul aspects, and subtle bodies, to name but a few, are just as integral to the hologram as the physical body.

The Wise Woman tradition understands that healing/wholing transformation in the body creates change in the entire being.

With Wise Woman holographic understanding, we learn to see the interconnections and weavings of all ways of being. We learn to perceive and strengthen the weave of ourselves and our lives by walking the way of the flowing spiral and looking for the pattern of the hologram. We begin to see the once-invisible threads of nourishment that weave us in the web of our grandmothers. We begin to notice the story cloak of the ancient ones.



The Wise Woman Tradition Says Health/Wholeness/Holiness is Ever-Changing

In the Wise Woman tradition, health is flexibility: loose muscles, quick mind, unlimited curiosity. Wholeness is inclusive, pliable, expanding to accommodate. Holiness sees the holiness, wholeness, health, and nourishment in all beings.

So health, from the Wise Woman perspective, includes a lot of people who are considered sick by other traditions. Confinement to a wheelchair, blindness, extreme age, terminal illness, mental retardation, and other disabilities do not disqualify any being from health/wholeness/holiness in the Wise Woman tradition.

Resistance clenches the muscles, causes pain. Resistance prejudices the thought, causes isolation. Resistance says holy must be exactly like this or it doesn't count, and the glory fades from the world.

Flexible, pliable, and ever-changing: that, says the Wise Woman tradition, is health.

Every problem, each pain, disability, disease, is understood, in the Wise Woman way, as a hole for the entry of wholeness, a portal for the arrival of an ally. An ally who opens doorways of transformation. An ally who can protect you. An ally who brings you gifts. An ally who returns your missing pieces. An ally who guides you toward integration, through disintegration. An ally of wholeness, who accepts all of you. An ally who reminds you of your mortality and your immortality.

Healing is not *done* in the Wise Woman tradition. Health is allowed. Wholeness is nourished. Holiness is acknowledged. The wise woman smiles.



The Scientific tradition seeks an objective, impersonal, physiochemical solution to disease. The Heroic tradition seeks to cure by suggesting that you create everything, are responsible for everything, and you can make it all better if you follow the rules from now on. The Wise Woman tradition seeks to understand the personal, social hologram of the disease and to nourish wholeness.

In the Wise Woman tradition, wholeness nourishes wholeness. Fractured or isolated substances, such as drugs or vitamin supplements, create fractured and isolated people, not healthy/whole/holy people. The Wise Woman herbalist pays attention to preserving the integrity, the wholeness, of the plants she uses, rather than to preserving the active constituent or any other single aspect.

Healing/health in the Wise Woman tradition is concerned more with creating meaning than with creating a particular outcome. Healing/health is not dependent on curing, or removing the problem, but on making the problem meaningful, specifically, by finding the gift and the nourishment that the problem brings.

Healing/health, the Wise Woman way, is concerned with the story: the person's story, the family's tale, the community's fable, the planet's myth. When the Wise Woman knows the story (or even a part of the story, in holographic knowing), she can read the story line. She can retell the story, expose deeper roots of the tale, reveal new meanings in the fable, and create anew the myths.

Every personal story has a meaning both special to the one and true for all. By retelling the story, the wise woman weaves wholeness. By exposing the deeper roots of the tale, the wise woman grounds health. By revealing what has been hidden, the wise woman tears holes for holiness. By creating anew the myth, the wise woman offers optimum nourishment.

This is different from finding the lesson or the teaching of a disease or problem. "Learning your lesson" is a thought pattern from the Heroic tradition. Learning the lesson implies that you will never do the same thing again. ("Never doing it again" leads to loss of spontaneity.) Once you learn your lesson, you get well, you are cured. (If you are still sick, you haven't yet learned your lesson.)

The wise woman is impeccably clear of guilt and self-blame (without feeling guilty when she's *not* clear of guilt and blame), while acknowledging herself as creator of her universe.

Receiving the nourishment of the problem, allying yourself with your pain, and loving yourself implies that you are free to continue to have the problem, consensually, as a matter of intent. You can choose to die.

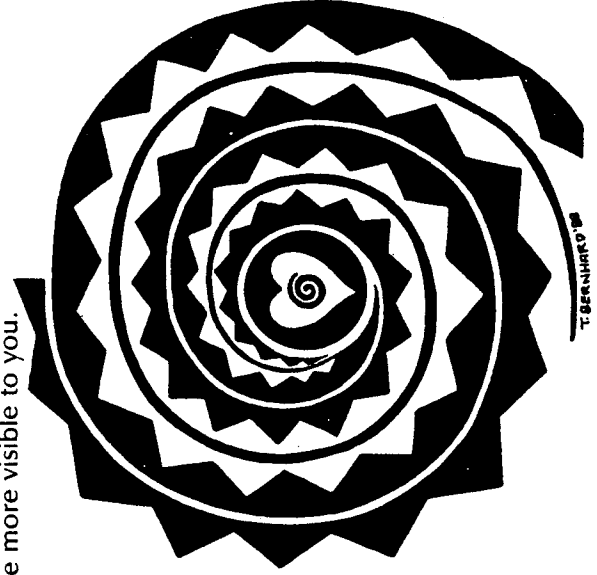
We are both sick and well at the same time, in the Wise Woman tradition. From one viewpoint, we know that different parts of us are healthy and sick. From another viewpoint, we understand that sickness builds health. An immune system unused is an immune system fallen into disuse. People who suddenly die from cancer and heart attacks are often people who were "never sick a day in their lives."

Understanding the gifts of health/wholeness/holiness in every illness, we follow the Wise Woman way and try to nourish ourselves in sickness as in health. How difficult it can be. How little we feel we deserve, how little we love ourselves when we are not well, not able. Even if we are only partially unable, even if we know we will recover shortly, we don't love ourselves as whole, we don't open our hearts to our own holiness.

In the Wise Woman tradition, we are alive and dead at the same time. Each second a million new cells in each of us stir to life. Each second a million more cells expire, die. Breathing in we inspire and live. Breathing out we expire and die. Our death gives life to others. The death of others (plants, animals) gives life to us. Now I eat you. Now you eat me.

Chaos, permeability, and nonsense are honored in the Wise Woman tradition, not instead of, but in addition to honoring order, boundaries, and logic. Life and death co-exist; there is no pitched battle; there are no enemies in the Wise Woman tradition.

The next time you have to make a choice *between*, try this: change the "or" to "and" and look at your decision from a place of inclusion. Let new vistas appear. Let the spiraling path of the Wise Woman tradition become more visible to you.



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Death is not failure in the Wise Woman tradition. Death may be chosen as a gift of integration and wholeness to self, a gift of optimum nourishment and health to the family and larger community. Disintegration of family and self-respect (and the lost opportunity to strengthen community ties by care-tending the dying at home) is natural when a family member is kept alive in an institution until the family's resources of money, time, and good cheer are exhausted—as is generally the case today in industrialized nations, with Scientific tradition approaches to health.

The Wise Woman tradition can allow death because the Wise Woman tradition is grounded in change. The only thing certain is change. Remember the void? The spiral of life and death is ever-changing and unique, flowing through all possibilities. This is the wisdom of the Wise Woman way.

Do not try to outwit and avoid pain and problems. They can be your means to greater wholeness, to more vital health, to a soaring spirit. They are part of your unique gifts. Fixity is worse than death, counsels the Wise Woman way. Keep on stepping around the spiral. What comes next?

The Wise Woman Tradition is a Both/And Universe

The both/and universe embraces all possibilities. The both/and universe is inclusive. The both/and universe accepts every part of us. There is difference, there is distinction, but not opposition. In the both/and universe, opposites are not compromised and evened out, but united as powerful allies, each with individual uniqueness.

The Wise Woman tradition asks us to nourish all parts of ourselves, and to see our problems as allies, bringing gifts. Sometimes those gifts are the "bad" parts of ourselves. We worry that if we nourish our "bad" parts (bad child, bad parent, bad person, bad lover, bad friend) we'll lose our good parts. We are used to an either/or universe, where one is either bad or good, sick or well, dead or alive.

In the Wise Woman tradition, we are both good and bad simultaneously. We find missing parts of ourselves when we ask to see the gifts, disguised as problems, that our allies bring.

We may discover the bad child, who is an important part of the real child. Following the Wise Woman way, we nourish the bad child. We nourish by listening to this child's needs and answering them. We nourish by allowing, providing, time for communication. And we find ourselves more whole, more holy, more real, more joyous, more alive as a result, not bad (as we feared).

The Wise Woman Tradition is Heart-Centered

In the either/or universe, we know where we stand and how to keep in balance. We strive to keep away badness, sickness, death and we struggle to hold onto goodness, health, life. Holding back the awful things with one hand, we cling to what good we have with the other. It seems such a secure balance. Such a familiar universe.

Where is the balance if we let go of resistance to illness, to death? If we acknowledge our own inability to live up to the standards of thoughts and behavior we set for the perfect person? If life and death co-exist in us, will we choose life? If health and sickness are inevitable turns on the spiral, is exercise and attention to nutrition a waste of time? How is chaos honored without losing all order?

The Wise Woman tradition balances all possibilities in the heart's center, the heart's truth. Balances by simply allowing the heart's truth, the heart's center. There are no right answers in the Wise Woman tradition. The right answer is "I don't know." The right answer is, "I'll have to wait and see." The right answer is silence, wherein the heart's truth rings and health/wholeness/holiness occurs.

The heart's truth is compassion, forgiveness, unconditional self-love. The heart's truth is the both/and universe. In the Wise Woman tradition the focus is on opening the heart, not toward others, but toward self.

Self-love, self-forgiveness, and deep compassion for one's own humanness, nourish the heart and give balance amidst the windings of the Wise Woman spiral. Nourish the individual heart, says the Wise Woman tradition, until the nourishment and love flow out. There is abundant nourishment for every heart when we learn to receive it.

Unconditional love is not for giving, but for taking, claims the Wise Woman tradition. The Wise Woman tradition demands that we learn to receive the abundance of the universe. Learn to receive the blessings of our mother. Learn to receive the ever-changing, ever-different flow of life and death, wellness and sickness, good and bad, with respect and joy.

Learn to accept unconditional love from yourself, says the Wise Woman way. Learn to forgive yourself completely. Even to forgive yourself for causing others to hurt you. Learn to have compassion for your own suffering.

Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.

Learn to distinguish, with Wise Woman vision, both/and unconditional love from the sort of unconditional love that's an undercover bargain: *"I'll love you unconditionally: you can do anything and I'll forgive you; I'll always be available to you; and if I fail, you can punish*

me. In return, you must love me unconditionally: no matter how I behave to you, you must always excuse me, and you must be immediately available to me; if you fail, I can punish you."

You need love to exist, to survive. In the Wise Woman tradition, love is a crucial aspect of optimum nutrition. Forgive yourself, better yet, enjoy yourself for your attempts to get love. Understand that your fights with your beloveds feel like life-and-death struggles because they are, for certain parts of yourself.

Our attempts to give love unconditionally are usually sophisticated stratagems for extracting love from the universe or another person.

The inner well of need for love and nurturance seems like a bottomless pit when we first gaze down it alone, with no one else to blame for the echoing hollowness. With each act of lovingkindness for ourselves, it fills. Slowly the bottom becomes at least visible. Others don't seem to be sources of pain so often. They, all of them, seem more and more like oneself.

As we love ourselves, and nourish all aspects of ourselves, a rare compassion is nourished, a tender compassion for everyone and everything. We are filled with compassion. We forgive ourselves deeply. And we realize that everyone who ever wronged us was a healer, a teacher, a lover of ours. The heart bursts with compassion. The floodgates of love spill over.

Once we have filled ourselves with unconditional love, once we agree to love and nurture all aspects of ourselves, we emit the energy of unconditional love. We don't do anything particular, yet the beings around us feel this love. Just by being, we resonate love and health/wholeness/holiness.

Some are attracted, some repelled by this vibration of truth, beauty, and love. There is no attachment in us to winning this one or that one, healing this one with love, being adored by that one. No attachment to getting you to accept my love so that I can expect love from you. Right now I love myself, and the universe loves me, and I am in the midst of all this love. If you reject my love, I remember. I remember with compassion the love I rejected before. I remember how vulnerable, how lonely I felt. I love myself as one who has rejected love, and so my love includes you in your rejection of love.

The welling heartsprings themselves are nourished at their sources when we love ourselves unconditionally. This constant inner flow of unconditional love and compassion *for self* creates an axis in the chaos of ongoing life and unwinding death. An axis, a string, a resonant fiber, vibrating wholeness, humming a love song, sounds within you. It flows out from you and touches, sounds in everything.