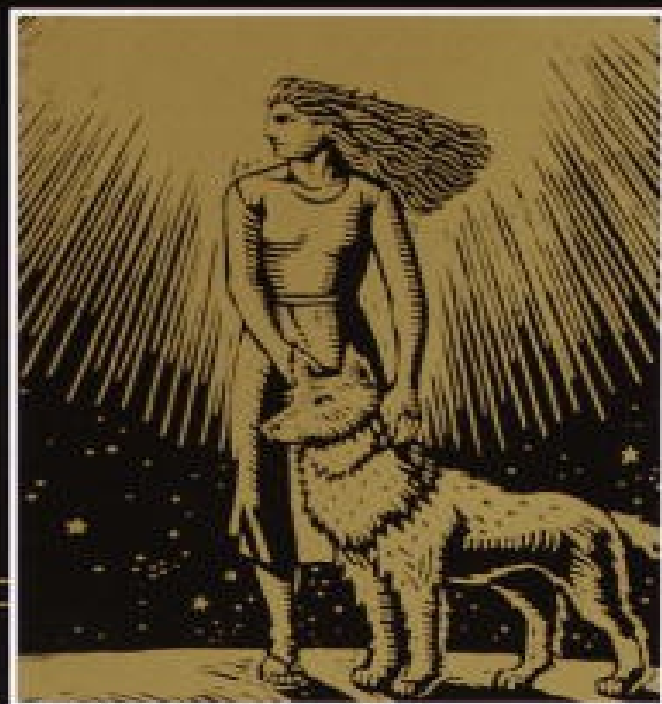


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Women Who Run With the Wolves

Myths and
Stories of the
Wild Woman
Archetype



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INTRODUCTION

Singing over the Bones

Wildlife and the Wild Woman are both endangered species.

Over time, we have seen the feminine instinctive nature looted, driven back, and overbuilt. For long periods it has been mismanaged like the wildlife and the wildlands. For several thousand years, as soon and as often as we turn our backs, it is relegated to the poorest land in the psyche. The spiritual lands of Wild Woman have, throughout history, been plundered or burnt, dens bulldozed, and natural cycles forced into unnatural rhythms to please others.

It's not by accident that the pristine wilderness of our planet disappears as the understanding of our own inner wild natures fades. It is not so difficult to comprehend why old forests and old women are viewed as not very important resources. It is not such a mystery. It is not so coincidental that wolves and coyotes, bears and wildish women have similar reputations. They all share related instinctual archetypes, and as such, both are erroneously reputed to be ingracious, wholly and innately dangerous, and ravenous.

My life and work as a Jungian psychoanalyst, poet, and *cantadora*, keeper of the old stories, have taught me that women's flagging vitality can be restored by extensive "psychic-archeological" digs into the ruins of the female underworld. By these methods we are able to recover the ways of the natural instinctive psyche, and through its personification in the Wild Woman archetype we are able to discern the ways and means of woman's deepest nature.

The modern woman is a blur of activity. She is pressured to be all things to all people. The old knowing is long overdue.

The title of this book, *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, came from my study of wildlife biology, wolves in particular. The studies of the wolves *Canis lupus* and *Canis rufus* are like the history of women, regarding both their spiritedness and their travails.

Healthy wolves and healthy women share certain psychic characteristics: keen sensing, playful spirit, and a heightened capacity for devotion. Wolves and women are relational by nature, inquiring, possessed of great endurance and strength. They are deeply intuitive, intensely concerned with their young, their mates, and their pack. They are experienced in adapting to constantly changing circumstances; they are fiercely stalwart and very brave.

Yet both have been hounded, harassed, and falsely imputed to be devouring and devious, overly aggressive, of less value than those who are their detractors. They have been the targets of those who would clean up the wilds as well as the wildish environs of the psyche, extinguishing the instinctual, and leaving no trace of it behind. The predation of wolves and women by those who misunderstand them is strikingly similar.

So that is where the concept of the Wild Woman archetype first crystallized for me, in the study of wolves. I've studied other creatures as well, such as bear, elephant, and the soul-birds—butterflies. The characteristics of each species give abundant metaphoric hints into what is knowable about the feminine instinctual psyche.

The wild nature passed through my spirit twice, once by my birth to a passionate Mexican-Spanish bloodline, and later, through adoption by a family of fiery Hungarians. I was raised up near the Michigan state line, surrounded by woodlands, orchards, and farmland and near the Great Lakes. There, thunder and lightning were my main nutrition. Cornfields creaked and spoke aloud at night. Far up in the north, wolves came to the clearings in moonlight, prancing and praying. We could all drink from the same streams without fear.

Although I did not call her by that name then, my love for Wild Woman began when I was a little child. I was an aesthete rather than an athlete, and my only wish was to be an ecstatic wanderer.

Rather than chairs and tables, I preferred the ground, trees, and caves, for in those places I felt I could lean against the cheek of God.

The river *always* called to be visited after dark, the fields *needed* to be walked in so they could make their rustle-talk. Fires *needed* to be built in the

forest at night, and stories *needed* to be told outside the hearing of grown-ups.

I was lucky to be brought up in Nature. There, lightning strikes taught me about sudden death and the evanescence of life. Mice litters showed that death was softened by new life. When I unearthed "Indian beads" fossils from the loam, I understood that humans have been here a long, long time. I learned about the sacred art of self-decoration with monarch butterflies perched atop my head, lightning bugs as my night jewelry, and emerald-green frogs as bracelets.

A wolf mother killed one of her mortally injured pups; this taught a hard compassion and the necessity of allowing death to come to the dying. The fuzzy caterpillars which fell from their branches and crawled back up again taught single-mindedness. Their tickle-walking on my arm taught how skin can come alive. Climbing to the tops of trees taught what sex would someday feel like.

My own post-World War II generation grew up in a time when women were infantilized and treated as property. They were kept as fallow gardens ... but thankfully there was always wild seed which arrived on the wind. Though what they wrote was unauthorized, women blazed away anyway. Though what they painted went unrecognized, it fed the soul anyway. Women had to beg for the instruments and the spaces needed for their arts, and if none were forthcoming, they made space in trees, caves, woods, and closets.

Dancing was barely tolerated, if at all, so they danced in the forest where no one could see them, or in the basement, or on the way out to empty the trash. Self-decoration caused suspicion. Joyful body or dress increased the danger of being harmed or sexually assaulted. The very clothes on one's shoulders could not be called one's own.

It was a time when parents who abused their children were

simply called "strict," when the spiritual lacerations of profoundly exploited women were referred to as "nervous breakdowns," when girls and women who were tightly girdled, tightly reined, and tightly muzzled were called "nice," and those other females who managed to slip the collar for a moment *OR* two of life were branded "bad."

So like many women before and after me, I lived my life as a disguised *criatura*, creature. Like my kith and kin before me, I swagger-staggered in high heels, and I wore a dress and hat to church. But my fabulous tail often fell below my hemline, and my ears twitched until my hat pitched, at the very least, down over both my eyes, and sometimes clear across the room.

I've not forgotten the song of those dark years, *hambre del alma*, the song of the starved soul. But neither have I forgotten the joyous *canto hondo*, the deep song, the words of which come back to us when we do the work of soulful reclamation.

Like a trail through a forest which becomes more and more faint and finally seems to diminish to a nothing, traditional psychological theory too soon runs out for the creative, the gifted, the deep woman. Traditional psychology is often spare or entirely silent about deeper issues important to women: the archetypal, the intuitive, the sexual and cyclical, the ages of women, a woman's way, a woman's knowing, her creative fire. This is what has driven my work on the Wild Woman archetype for over two decades.

A woman's issues of soul cannot be treated by carving her into a more acceptable form as defined by an unconscious culture, nor can she be bent into a more intellectually acceptable shape by those who claim to be the sole bearers of consciousness. No, that is what has already caused millions of women who began as strong and natural powers to become outsiders in their own cultures. Instead, the goal must be the retrieval and succor of women's beautiful and natural psychic forms.

Fairy tales, myths, and stories provide understandings which sharpen our sight so that we can pick out and pick up the path left by the wildish nature. The instruction found in story reassures us that the path has not run out, but still leads women deeper, and more deeply still, into their own knowing. The tracks we all are following are those of the wild and innate instinctual Self.

I call her Wild Woman, for those very words, *wild* and *woman*, create *llamar o tocar a la puerta*, the fairy-tale knock at the door of the deep female psyche. *Llamar o tocar a la puerta* means literally to play upon the instrument of the name in order to open a door. It means using words that summon up the opening of a passageway. No matter by which culture a woman is influenced, she understands the words *wild* and *woman*, intuitively.

When women hear those words, an old, old memory is stirred and brought back to life. The memory is of our absolute, undeniable, and irrevocable kinship with the wild feminine, a relationship which may have become ghostly from neglect, buried by over-domestication, outlawed by the surrounding culture, or no longer understood anymore. We may have forgotten her names, we may not answer when she calls ours, but in our bones we know her, we yearn toward her; we know she belongs to us and we to her.

It is into this fundamental, elemental, and essential relationship that we were born and that in our essence we are also derived from. The Wild Woman archetype sheaths the alpha matrilineal being. There are times when we experience her, even if only fleetingly, and it makes us mad with wanting to continue. For some women, this vitalizing “taste of the wild” comes during pregnancy, during nursing their young, during the miracle of change in oneself as one raises a child, during attending to a love relationship as one would attend to a beloved garden.

A sense of her also comes through the vision; through sights of great beauty. I have felt her when I see what we call in the woodlands a Jesus-God sunset. I have felt her move in me from seeing the fishermen come up from the lake at dusk with lanterns lit, and also from seeing my newborn baby’s toes all lined up like a row of sweet corn. We see her where we see her, which is everywhere.

She comes to us through sound as well; through music which vibrates the sternum, excites the heart; it comes through file drum, the whistle, the call, and the cry. It comes through the written and the spoken word; sometimes a word, a sentence or a poem or a story, is so resonant, so right, it causes us to remember, at least for an instant, what substance we are really made from, and where is our true home.

These transient “tastes of the wild” come during the mystique of inspiration—ah, there it is; oh, now it has gone. The longing for her comes when one happens across someone who has secured this wildish relationship. The longing comes when one realizes one has given scant time to the mystic cookfire or to the dream-time, too little time to one’s own creative life, one’s life work, or one’s true loves.

Yet it is these fleeting tastes which come both through beauty as well as loss, that cause us to become so bereft, so agitated, so longing that we eventually must pursue the wildish nature. Then we leap into the forest or into the desert or into the snow and run hard, our eyes scanning the ground, our hearing sharply tuned, searching under, searching over, searching for a clue, a remnant, a sign that she still lives, that we have not lost our chance. And when we pick up her trail, it is typical of women to ride hard to catch up, to clear off the desk, clear off the relationship, clear out one’s mind, turn to a new page, insist on a break, break the rules, stop the world, for we are not going on without her any longer.

Once women have lost her and then found her again, they will contend to keep her for good. Once they have regained her, they will fight and fight hard to keep her, for with her their creative lives blossom; their relationships gain meaning and depth and health; their cycles of sexuality, creativity, work, and play are reestablished; they are no longer marks for the predations of others; they are entitled equally under the laws of nature to grow and to thrive. Now their end-of-the-day fatigue comes from satisfying work and endeavors, not from being shut up in too small a mindset, job, or relationship. They know instinctively when things must die and when things must live; they know how to walk away, they know how to stay.

When women reassert their relationship with the wildish nature, they are gifted with a permanent and internal watcher, a knower, a visionary, an oracle, an inspiratrice, an intuitive, a maker, a creator, an inventor, and a listener who guide, suggest, and urge vibrant life in the inner and outer worlds. When women are close to this nature, the fact of that relationship glows through

them. This wild teacher, wild mother, wild mentor supports their inner and outer lives, no matter what.

So, the word *wild* here is not used in its modern pejorative sense, meaning out of control, but in its original sense, which means to live a natural life, one in which the *criatura*, creature, has innate integrity and healthy boundaries. These words, *wild* and *woman*, cause women to remember who they are and what they are about. They create a metaphor to describe the force which funds all females. They personify a force that women cannot live without.

The Wild Woman archetype can be expressed in other terms which are equally apt. You can call this powerful psychological nature the instinctive nature, but Wild Woman is the fence which lies behind that. You can call it the natural psyche, but the archetype of the Wild Woman stands behind that as well. You can call it the innate, the basic nature of women. You can call it the indigenous, the intrinsic nature of women. In poetry it might be called the “Other,” or the “seven oceans of the universe,” or “the far woods,” or “The Friend.”¹ In various psychologies and from various perspectives it would perhaps be called the id, the Self, the medial nature. In biology it would be called the typical or fundamental nature.

But because it is tacit, prescient, and visceral, among *cantadoras* it is called the wise or knowing nature. It is sometimes called the “woman who lives at the end of time,” or the “woman who lives at the edge of the world.” And this *criatura* is always a creator-hag, or a death Goddess, or a maiden in descent, or any number of other personifications. She is both friend and mother to all those who have lost their way, all those who need a learning, all those who have a riddle to solve, all those out in the forest or the desert wandering and searching.

In actuality, in the psychoid unconscious—an ineffable layer of psyche from which this phenomenon emanates—Wild Woman has no name, for she is so vast. But, since this force engenders every important facet of womanliness, here on earth she is named many names, not only in order to peer into the myriad aspects of her nature but also to hold on to her. Because in the beginning of retrieving our relationship with her she can turn to smoke in an

instant, by naming her we create for her a territory of thought and feeling within us. Then she will come, and if valued, she will stay.

So, in Spanish I call her *Rio Abajo Rio*, the river beneath the river, *La Mujer Grande*, the Great Woman; *Luz del abtismo*, the light from the abyss; *La Loba*, the wolf woman; or *La Huesera*, the bone woman.

She is called in Hungarian, *0, Erddbén*, She of the Woods, and *Rozsomdk*, The Wolverine. In Navajo, she is *Na'ashje'ii Asdzaa*, The Spider Woman, who weaves the fate of humans and animals and plants and rocks. In Guatemala, among many other names, she is *Humana del Niebla*, The Mist Being, the woman who has lived forever. In Japanese, she is *Amaterasu Omikami*, The Numina, who brings all light, all consciousness. In Tibet she is called *Dakini*, the dancing force which produces clear-seeing within women. And it goes on. She goes on.

The comprehension of this Wild Woman nature is not a religion but a practice. It is a psychology in its truest sense: *psukhi/psych*, soul; *ology* or *logos*, a knowing of the soul. Without her, women are without ears to hear her soultalk or to register the chiming of their own inner rhythms. Without her, women's inner eyes are closed by some shadowy hand, and large parts of their days are spent in a semi-paralyzing ennui or else wishful thinking. Without her, women lose the sureness of their soulfooting. Without her, they forget why they're here, they hold on when they would best hold out. Without her they take too much or too little or nothing at all. Without her they are silent when they are in fact on fire. She is their regulator, she is their soulful heart, the same as the human heart that regulates the physical body.

When we lose touch with the instinctive psyche, we live in a semi-destroyed state and images and powers that are natural to the feminine are not allowed full development. When a woman is cut away from her basic source, she is sanitized, and her instincts and natural life cycles are lost, subsumed by the culture, or by the intellect or the ego—one's own or those belonging to others.

Wild Woman is the health of all women. Without her, women's psychology makes no sense. This wilderwoman is the prototypical woman... no matter what culture, no matter what era, no matter what politic, she does not change. Her cycles change, her symbolic representations change, but in essence, *she* does not change. She is what she is and she is whole.

She canalizes through women. If they are suppressed, she struggles upward. If women are free, she is free. Fortunately, no matter how many times she is pushed down, she bounds up again. No matter how many times she is forbidden, quelled, cut back, diluted, tortured, touted as unsafe, dangerous, mad, and other derogations, she emanates upward in women, so that even the most quiet, even the most restrained woman keeps a secret place for her. Even the most repressed woman has a secret life, with secret thoughts and secret feelings which are lush and wild, that is, natural. Even the most captured woman guards the place of the wildish self, for she knows intuitively that someday there will be a loophole, an aperture, a chance, and she will hightail it to escape.

I believe that all women and men are born gifted. However, and truly, there has been little to describe the psychological lives and ways of gifted women, talented women, creative women. There is, on the other hand, much writ about the weakness and foibles of humans in general and women in particular. But in the case of the Wild Woman archetype, in order to fathom her, apprehend her, utilize her offerings, we must be more interested in the thoughts, feelings, and endeavors which strengthen women, and adequately count the interior **and** cultural factors which weaken women.

In general, when we understand the wildish nature as a being in its own right, one which animates and informs a woman's deepest life, then we can begin to develop in ways never thought possible. A psychology which fails to address this innate spiritual being at the center of feminine psychology fails women, and fails their daughters and their daughters' daughters far into all future matrilineal lines.

So, in order to apply a good medicine to the hurt parts of the wildish psyche, in order to aright relationship to the archetype of the Wiki Woman, one has to name the disarrays of the psyche accurately. While in my clinical profession we do have a good diagnostic statistical manual and a goodly amount of differential diagnoses, as well as psychoanalytic parameters which define psychopathy through the organization (or lack of it) in the objective psyche and the ego-Self axis,² there are yet other

defining behaviors and feelings which, from a woman's frame of reference, powerfully describe what is the matter.

What are some of the feeling-toned symptoms of a disrupted relationship with the wildish force in the psyche? To chronically feel, think, or act in any of the following ways is to have partially severed or lost entirely the relationship with the deep instinctual psyche. Using women's language exclusively, these are: feeling extraordinarily dry, fatigued, frail, depressed, confused, gagged, muzzled, unaroused. Feeling frightened, halt or weak, without inspiration, without animation, without soulfulness, without meaning, shame-bearing, chronically fuming, volatile, stuck, uncreaiive, compressed, crazed.

Feeling powerless, chronically doubtful, shaky, blocked, unable to follow through, giving one's creative life over to others, life-sapping choices in mates, work, or friendships, suffering to live outside one's own cycles, overprotective of self, inert, uncertain, faltering, inability to pace oneself OR set limits.

Not insistent on one's own tempo, to be self-conscious, to be away from one's God or Gods, to be separated from one's revivification, drawn far into domesticity, intellectualism, work, or inertia because that is the safest place for one who has lost her instincts.

To fear to venture by oneself or to reveal oneself, fear to seek mentor, mother, father, fear to set out one's imperfect work before it is an opus, fear to set out on a journey, fear of caring for another or others, fear one will run on, run out, run down, cringing before authority, loss of energy before creative projects, wincing, humiliation, angst, numbness, anxiety.

Afraid to bite back when there is nothing else left to do, afraid to try the new, fear to stand up to, afraid to speak up, speak against, sick stomach, butterflies, sour stomach, cut in the middle, strangled, becoming conciliatory or nice too easily, revenge.

Afraid to stop, afraid to act, repeatedly counting to three and not beginning, superiority complex, ambivalence, and yet otherwise fully capable, fully functioning. These severances are a disease not of an era or a century, but become an epidemic anywhere and anytime women are captured, anytime the wildish nature has become entrapped.

A healthy woman is much like a wolf: robust, chock-full, strong life force, life-giving, territorially aware, inventive, loyal, roving. Yet, separation from the wildish nature causes a woman's personality to become meager, thin, ghostly, spectral. We are not meant to be puny with frail hair and inability to leap up, inability to chase, to birth, to create a life. When women's lives are in stasis, or filled with ennui, it is always time for the wildish woman to emerge; it is time for the creating function of the psyche to flood the delta.

How does Wild Woman affect women? With her as ally, as leader, model, teacher, we see, not through two eyes, but through the eyes of intuition which is many-eyed. When we assert intuition, we are therefore like the starry night: we gaze at the world through a thousand eyes.

The wild nature carries the bundles for healing; she carries everything a woman needs to be and know. She carries the medicine for all things. She carries stories and dreams and words and songs and signs and symbols. She is both vehicle and destination.

To adjoin the instinctual nature does not mean to come undone, change everything from left to right, from black to white, to move the east to west, to act crazy or out of control. It does not mean to lose one's primary socializations, or to become less human. It means quite the opposite. The wild nature has a vast integrity to it

It means to establish territory, to find one's pack, to be in one's body with certainty and pride regardless of the body's gifts and limitations, to speak and act in one's behalf, to be aware, alert, to draw on the innate feminine powers of intuition and sensing, to come into one's cycles, to find what one belongs to, to rise with dignity, to retain as much consciousness as possible.

The archetype of the Wild Woman and all that stands behind her is patroness to all painters, writers, sculptors, dancers, thinkers, prayermakers, seekers, finders—for they are all busy with the work of invention, and that is the instinctive nature's main occupation. As in all art, she resides in the guts, not in the head. She can track and run and summon and repel. She can sense, camouflage, and love deeply. She is intuitive, typical, and normative. She is utterly essential to women's mental and soul health.

So what compromises the Wild Woman? From the viewpoint of archetypal psychology as well as in ancient traditions, she is the female soul. Yet she is more; she is the source of the feminine. She is all that is of instinct, of the worlds both seen and hidden—she is the basis. We each receive from her a glowing cell which contains all the instincts and knowings needed for our lives.

“She is the Life/Death/Life force, she is the incubator. She is intuition, she is far-seer, she is deep listener, she is loyal heart. She encourages humans to remain multi-lingual; fluent in the languages of dreams, passion, and poetry. She whispers from night dreams, she leaves behind on the terrain of a woman's soul a coarse hair and muddy footprints. These fill women with longing to find her, free her, and love her.

“She is ideas, feelings, urges, and memory. She has been lost and half forgotten for a long, long time. She is the source, the light, the night, the dark, and daybreak. She is the smell of good mud and the back leg of the fox. The birds which tell us secrets belong to her. She is the voice that says, ‘This way, this way.’

“She is the one who thunders after injustice. She is the one who turns like a great wheel. She is the maker of cycles. She is the one we leave home to look for. She is the one we come home to. She is the mucky root of all women. She is the things that keep us going when we think we're done for. She is the incubator of raw little ideas and deals. She is the mind which thinks us, we are the thoughts that she thinks.

“Where is she present? Where can you feel her, where can you find her? She walks the deserts, woods, oceans, cities, in the barrios, and in castles. She lives among queens, among *campesinas*, in the boardroom, in the factory, in the prison, in the mountain of solitude. She lives in the ghetto, at the university, and in the streets. She leaves footprints for us to try for size. She leaves footprints wherever there is one woman who is fertile soil.

“Where does she live? At the bottom of the well, in the headwaters, in the ether before time. She lives in the tear and in the ocean. She lives in the cambia of trees, which pings as it grows. She is from the future and from the beginning of time. She lives in the past and is summoned by us. She is in the present

and keeps a chair at our table, stands behind us in line, and drives ahead of us

on the road. She is in the future and walks backward in time to find us now.

“She lives in the green poking through snow, she lives in the rustling stalks of dying autumn corn, she lives where the dead come to be kissed and the living send their prayers. She lives in the place where language is made. She lives on poetry and percussion and singing. She lives on quarter notes and grace notes, and in a cantata, in a sestina, and in the blues. She is the moment just before inspiration bursts upon us. She lives in a faraway place that breaks through to our world.

“People may ask for evidence, for proof of her existence. They are essentially asking for proof of the psyche. Since we are the psyche, we are also the evidence. Each and every one of us is the evidence of not only Wild Woman’s existence, but of her condition in the collective. We are the proof of this ineffable female numen. Our existence parallels hers.

“Our experiences of her within and without are the proofs. Our thousands and millions of encounters with her intra-psychically through our night dreams and our day thoughts, through our yearnings and inspirations, these are the verifications. The fact that we are bereft in her absence, that we long and yearn when we are separated from her, these are the manifestations that she has passed this way..”³

My doctorate is in ethno-clinical psychology, which is the study of both clinical psychology and ethnology, the latter emphasizing the study of the psychology of groups, and tribes in particular. My post-doctoral diploma is in analytical psychology, which is what certifies me as a Jungian psychoanalyst. My life experience as *cantadora/mesemondo*, poet, and artist informs my work with analysts equally.

Sometimes I am asked to tell what I do in my consulting room to help women return to their wildish natures. I place substantial emphasis on clinical and developmental psychology, and I use the simplest and most accessible ingredient for healing—stories. We follow the patient’s dream material, which contains many plots and stories. The analyst’s physical sensations and body memories are also stones which can be read and rendered into consciousness.

Additionally, I teach a form of powerful interactive trance that is proximate to Jung’s active imagination—and this also produces stones which further elucidate the client’s psychic journey. We elicit the wildish Self through specific questions, and through examining tales, legends, and myths. Most times

we are able, over time, to find the guiding myth or fairy tale that contains all the instruction a woman needs for her current psychic development. These stories comprise a woman’s soul drama. It is like a play with stage instructions, characterization, and props.

The “craft of making” is an important part of the work I do. I seek to empower my clients by teaching them the age-old crafts of the hands ... among them the symbolic arts of talisman making, *las ofrendas* and *retablos*—these being anything from simple ribbon sticks to elaborate sculpture. Art is important for it commemorates the seasons of the soul, or a special or tragic event in the soul’s journey. Art is not just for oneself, not just a marker of one’s own understanding. It is also a map for those who follow after us.

As you might imagine, work with each person is customized in the extreme, for it is true that people are made one to a kind. But these factors remain constant in my work with people, and these are the fundamental for all humans’ work before them today, my own work as well as yours. The craft of questions, the craft of stories, the craft of the hands—all these are the making of something, and that something is soul. Anytime we feed soul, it guarantees increase.

I hope you will see that these are tangible ways to soften old scar tissue, balm old wounds, and envision anew, thereby restoring the old skills that make the soul visible in down-to-earth ways.

The tales I bring here to elucidate the instinctual nature of women are in some cases, original stories, and in other cases, are distinct literary renderings that I have written based on those peculiar ones given into my keeping by my *tias y tios*, *abuelitas y abuelos*, *omahs and opahs*, the old ones of my families—those whose oral traditions have been unbroken for as far back as we can

remember. A few are written documents of my own firsthand encounters, some from long time passing, and all from the heart. They are presented in all faithful detail and archetypal integrity. It is with the permission and blessing of three living generations of familial healer-tellers who understand the subtleties and requirements of story as healing phenomena that I carry these forward.⁴

Additionally, here are some of the questions I pose to my analysts and others to whom I offer counsel in order for them to remember themselves. I also detail for you some of the craft—the experiential and artful play that assists women in retaining the numen of their work in conscious memory. All these help to bring about convergence with the precious wildish Self.

Stories are medicine. I have been taken with stories since I heard my first. They have such power, they do not require that we do, be, act anything—we need only listen. The remedies for repair or reclamation of any lost psychic drive are contained in stories. Stories engender the excitement, sadness, questions, longings, and understandings that spontaneously bring the archetype, in this case Wild Woman, back to the surface.

Stories are embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexities of life. Stories enable us *to* understand the need for and the ways to raise a submerged archetype. The stories on the following pages are the ones, out of hundreds that I've worked with and pored over for decades, and that I believe most clearly express the bounty of the Wild Woman archetype.

Sometimes various cultural overlays disarray the bones of stories. For instance, in the case of the brothers Grimm (among other fairy-tale collectors of the past few centuries), there is strong suspicion that the informants (storytellers) of that time sometimes “purified” their stories for the religious brothers' sakes. Over the course of time, old pagan symbols were overlaid with Christian ones, so that an old healer in a tale became an evil witch, a spirit became an angel, an initiation veil or caul became a handkerchief, or a child named Beautiful (the customary name for a child born during Solstice festival) was renamed *Schmerzenreich*, Sorrowful. Sexual elements were omitted. Helping creatures and animals were often changed into demons and boogeyms.

This is how many women's teaching tales about sex, love, money, marriage, birthing, death, and transformation were lost. It is how fairy tales and myths that explicate ancient women's mysteries have been covered over too. Most old collections of fairy tales and mythos existent today have been scoured clean of the scatological, the sexual, the perverse (as in warnings against), the pre-Christian, the feminine, the Goddesses, the initiatory, the medicines for various psychological malaises, and the directions for spiritual raptures.

But they are not lost forever. I was given as a child many of what I know to be unvarnished and uncorrupted themes of the stories of old, many of which I bring to this work. But even story fragments, as they exist today, can foreshadow the shape of the entire story. I've poked about in what I playfully call fairy-tale forensics and paleomythology, even though, as its heart, reconstruction is a long, intricate, and contemplative endeavor. When such would be effective, I use various forms of exegesis, comparing leitmotifs, taking anthropological and historical inferences into account, and forms both new and old. This method, in part, reconstructs from ancient archetypal patterning learned through my years of training in analytical and archetypal psychology, which preserve and study all the motifs and plots in fairy tales, legends, and mythos in order to apprehend the instinctual lives of humans. I gain an assist from templates that lie in the imaginal worlds, the collective images of the unconscious, and those drawn up through dreams and non-ordinary states of consciousness. A final polish might be gained by comparing the story matrices with archeological evidence from the ancient cultures themselves, such as ritual pottery, masks, and figurines. Simply put, in fairy-tale locution, I spend much time raking the ashes with my nose.

I have been studying archetypal patterns for some twenty-five years, and myths, fairy tales, and folklore from my familial cultures for twice as long. I have learnt a vast body of knowledge about the bones of stories, and know when and where the bones are missing in a story. Through the centuries, various conquests of nations by other nations, and both peaceful and forced religious conversions, have covered over or altered the original core of the old stories.

But there is good news. For all the structural tumble-down in existing versions of tales, there is a strong pattern that still shines forth. From the form and shape of the pieces and parts, it can be determined with good accuracy what has been lost from the story and those missing pieces can be redrawn accurately—often revealing amazing understructures which begin to heal women's sadness that so much of the old mysteries has been destroyed. It is not quite so. They have not been destroyed. All one might need, all that we might ever need, is still whispering from the bones of story.

Collecting the essence of stories is a constant paleontologic endeavor. The more story bones, the more likely the integral structure can be found. The more whole the stories, the more subtle twists and turns of the psyche are presented to us and the better opportunity we have to apprehend and evoke our soulwork. When we work the soul, she, the Wild Woman, creates more of herself.

As a child, I was lucky to be surrounded by people from many of the old European countries and Mexico. Many members of my family, my neighbors, and friends had recently arrived from Hungary, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Serbo-Croatia, Russia, Lithuania, and Bohemia as well as Jalisco, Michoacán, Juárez, and many of the *aldeas fronterizas* villages at the Mexico/Texas/Arizona borders. They, and many others—Native Americans, people from Appalachia, Asian immigrants, and many African-American families from the South—came to farm, to pick, to work in the ash pits and steel mills, the breweries, and in domestic jobs. Most were not educated in the academic sense, yet they were intensely wise. They were the bearers of a valuable and almost pure oral tradition.

Many of my family and neighboring people who surrounded me had survived forced labor camps, displaced person camps, deportation camps, and concentration camps where the storytellers among them had lived a nightmare version of Scheherazade. Many had had their family lands taken, had lived in immigration jails, had been repatriated against their wills. From these rustic storytellers I first learned the tales people tell when life may turn to death and death may turn to life at any moment. Because their transmissions to me were so filled with suffering

and with hope, when I later grew old enough to read fairy stories printed in books, the latter seemed curiously starched and ironed flat in comparison.

As a young adult I migrated west toward the Continental Divide. I lived amidst loving Jewish, Irish, Greek, Italian, Afro-American, and Alsatian strangers

who became kindred spirits and friends. I've been blessed to know some of the rare and old Latino communities from the southwestern U.S.A., such as Trampas, and Truchas, New Mexico. I was fortunate to spend time with Native American friends and relatives, from the Inuit in the North, through the Pueblo and Plains peoples in the West, to the Nahuas, Lacandonas, Tehuanas, Huicholes, Sens, Maya-Quiches, Maya-Caqchiqueles, Mesquitos, Cunas, Nasca/Quechuas, and Jivaros in Central and South America.

I've traded stories with sister and brother healers at kitchen tables and under grape arbors, in henhouses and dairy barns, and while patting tortillas, tracking wildlife, and sewing the millionth cross-stitch. I've been lucky to share the last bowl of chili, to sing with gospel women so as to raise the dead, and to sleep under stars in houses without roofs. I've sat down to the fire or dinner, or both, in Little Italy, Polish Town, the Hill Country, Los Barrios, and other ethnic communities throughout the urban Midwest and Far West, and most recently traded stories about *sparats*, bad ghosts, with man-*griot* friends in the Bahamas.

I have been double-lucky that wherever I've gone the children, the matrons, the men in their prime, and the old coots and crones—the soul-artists—have crept out of the woods, jungles, meadows, and sandhills to regale me with caws and kavel. And I too, to them.

There are many ways to approach stories. The professional folklorist, the Jungian, Freudian, or other sort of analyst, the ethnologist, anthropologist, theologian, archeologist, each has a different method, both in collecting tales and the use to which they are put. Intellectually the way I developed my work with stories was through my training in analytical and archetypal psychology. For more than half a decade during my psychoanalytic education I studied amplification of leitmotifs, archetypal symbology, world mythology, ancient and popular iconology, ethnology, world religions, and interpretation.

Viscerally, however, I come to stories as a *cantadora*, keeper of the old stories. I come from a long line of tellers: *mesemondok*, old Hungarian women who might as easily tell while sitting on wooden chairs with their plastic pocketbooks on their laps, their knees apart, their skirts touching the ground, or while wringing the neck of a chicken... and *cucntistas*, old Latina women who stand, robust of breast, hips wide, and cry out the story *ranchera* style. Both clans storytell in the plain voice of women who have lived blood and babies, bread and bones. For us, story is a medicine which strengthens and arights the individual and the community.

Those who have taken on the responsibilities of this craft, and are committed to the numen behind the craft, are direct descendants of an immense and ancient community of holy people, troubadours, bards, griots, cantadoras, cantors, traveling poets, bums, hags, and crazy people.

I once dreamt I was telling stories and felt someone patting my foot in encouragement. I looked down and saw that I was standing on the shoulders of an old woman who was steadying my ankles and smiling up at me.

I said to her, "No, no, come stand on *my* shoulders for you are old and I am young."

"No, no," she insisted, "this is the way it is supposed to be."

I saw that she stood on the shoulders of a woman far older than she, who stood on the shoulders of a woman even older, who stood on the shoulders of a woman in robes, who stood on the shoulders of another soul, who stood on the shoulders...

I believed the old dream-woman about the way it was supposed to be. The nurture for telling stories comes from the might and endowments of my people who have gone before me. In my experience, the telling moment of the story draws its power from a towering column of humanity joined one to the other across time and space, elaborately dressed in the rags and robes or nakedness of their time, and filled to the bursting with life still being lived. If there is a single source of story and the numen of story, this long chain of humans is it.

Story is far older than the art and science of psychology, and will always be the elder in the equation no matter how much time passes. One of the oldest ways of telling, which intrigues me greatly, is the passionate trance state, wherein the teller "senses" the audience—be it an audience of one or of many—and then enters a state in the "world between worlds," where a story is "attracted" to the trance-teller and told through her.

The trance-teller calls on *El duende*,⁵ the wind that blows soul into the faces of listeners. A trance-teller learns to be psychically double-jointed through the meditative practice of story, that is, training oneself to undo certain psychic gates and ego apertures in order to let the voice speak, the voice that is older than the stones. When this is done, the story may take any trail, be turned upside down, be filled with porridge and dumped out for a poor person's feast, be filled with gold for the taking, or chase the listener into the next world. The teller never knows how it will all come out, and that is at least half of the moist magic of story.

This is a hook of tellings about the ways of the Wild Woman archetype. To try to diagram her, to draw boxes around her psychic life, would be contrary to her spirit. To know her is an ongoing process, a lifelong process, and that is why this work is an ongoing work, a lifelong work.

So here are some stories to apply to yourself as soul vitamins, some observations, some map fragments, some little pieces of pine pitch for fastening feathers

to trees to show the way, and some flattened underbrush to guide the way back to *el mundo sub-terraneo*, the underground world, our psychic home.

Stories set the inner life into motion, and this is particularly important where the inner life is frightened, wedged, or cornered. Story greases the hoists and pulleys, it causes adrenaline to surge, shows us the way out, down, or up, and for our trouble, cuts for us fine wide doors in previously blank walls, openings that lead to the dreamland, that lead to love and learning, that lead us back to our own real lives as knowing wildish women.

Stories like “Bluebeard” bring us news of just what to do about the women’s wound that will not cease its bleeding. Stories like “Skeleton Woman” demonstrate the mystical power of relationship and how deadened feeling can return to life and deep loving once again. The gifts of Old Mother Death are to be found in the character of Baba Yaga, the old Wild Hag. The little doll who shows the way when all seems lost raises one of the lost womanly and instinctual arts to the surface again in “Vasalisa the Wise.”⁶ Stories like “La *Loba*,” a bone woman in the desert, teach about the transformative function of the psyche. “The Handless Maiden” recovers the lost stages of the old initiation rites from ancient times, and as such offers a timeless and lifelong guidance for all the years of a woman’s life.

It is our brush with the wild nature that drives us not to limit our conversations to humans, not to limit our most splendid movements to dance floors, nor our ears only to music made by human-made instruments, nor our eyes to “taught” beauty, nor our bodies to approved sensations, nor our minds to those things we all agree upon already. All these stories present the knife of insight, the flame of the passionate life, the breath to speak what one knows, the courage to stand what one sees without looking away, the fragrance of the wild soul.

This is a book of women’s stories, held out as markers along the path. They are for you to read and contemplate in order to assist you toward your own natural-won freedom, your caring for self, animals, earth, children, sisters, lovers, and men. I’ll tell you right now, the doors to the world of the wild Self are few but precious. If you have a deep scar, that is a door, if you have an old, old story, that is a door. If you love the sky and the water so much you almost cannot bear it, that is a door. If you yearn for a deeper life, a full life, a sane life, that is a door.

The material in this book was chosen to embolden you. The work is offered as a fortification for those on their way, including those who toil in difficult inner landscapes, as well as those who toil in and for the world. We must strive to allow our souls to grow in their natural ways and to their natural depths. The wildish nature does not require a woman to be a certain color, a certain education, a certain lifestyle or economic class ... in fact, it cannot thrive in an atmosphere of enforced political correctness, or by being bent into old burnt-out paradigms. It thrives on fresh sight and self-integrity. It thrives on its own nature.

So, whether you are an introvert or extrovert, a woman-loving woman, a man-loving woman, or a God-loving woman, or all of

the above: Whether you are possessed of a simple heart or the ambitions of an Amazon, whether you are trying to make it to the top or just make it through tomorrow, whether you be spicy or somber, regal or roughshod—the Wild Woman belongs to you. She belongs to all women.

To find her, it is necessary for women to return to their instinctive lives, their deepest knowing.⁷ So, let us push on now, and remember ourselves back to the wild soul. Let us sing her flesh back onto our bones. Shed any false coats we have been given. Don the true coat of powerful instinct and knowing. Infiltrate the psychic lands that once belonged to us. Unfurl the bandages, ready the medicine. Let us return now, wild women howling, laughing, singing up The One who loves us so.

For us the issue is simple. Without us, Wild Woman dies. Without Wild Woman, we die. *Para Vida*, for true life, both must live.

CHAPTER I

The Howl: Resurrection of the Wild Woman

La Loba, The Wolf Woman