
Journeys Through a
Different Lens

Medicine Walk

by Pam Hale Trachta

I exited the retreat center north of Boulder into the sunlight, armed with instructions to go for a walk alone and to listen to the wisdom of an object or image that would present itself to me. I was to travel in whatever direction drew me, to allow intuition to lead me to my symbol, and to listen to my quiet and objective inner voice.

I used to play this same spiritual game with myself and my photography students years ago, asking them to look for subjects they could use as *projections* of their own wisdom. I had forgotten the exercise, perhaps because it doesn't fit into my current lifestyle, which is heavily dependent on my Dayrunner. But now I had no excuses; the leader of the retreat had directed me to *re-member* how seeing a simple object differently can change us inside.

Since the group had been practicing listening to our inner voices to make the simplest of choices, it didn't seem too crazy that I *heard* an instruction to turn right when I got to the road. (Butterflies must have this form of listening down pat and take it seriously, too. Why else would they know where to migrate or have the gumption to keep on going, when they might only live long enough to pass the route on to their offspring?)

My migration directions sent me to the edge of a field of grain, where I was to sit down among the grasses on the damp, muddy earth. Glancing around to make sure no one was laughing, I waded my way into the tall, thick grasses. I felt giddy following the illogical, invisible

map, and could only hope this would be the treasure hunt I was counting on.

At least I was hidden by the time I sat down, though I wasn't thrilled with the prospect of getting my pants muddy and having to rejoin the group with a dark and dirty rear. Finally my chatty mind ran out of "yes, buts" and I began to take in the grassy world waving around me.

The field was undulating like the sea, the grasses obeying the wind and bending in unison, each rooted in her place. "Am I supposed to see that I am like one of these grasses?" I mused to myself, "In that case, I'm simple, ordinary. Is their life, mindless, boring, each doing just what the other does? What about my longing to be special?"

There was no argument or *answer* forthcoming, but the silence implied to me that maybe I needed to reconsider the meaning of special." As I noticed the pearly light playing off the tops of the stalks, I saw the power and beauty they had together. I saw that the field was a different entity than any one plant or than the largest bouquet I could gather. Being present in the middle of the whole field was, especially considering my moist rear end, a humbling thing.

When I changed my focus to the grasses immediately surrounding me, I saw that they were wheat.

With my interior macro lens, I examined the intricate structure of each stalk. How, I mused, does the memory in a seed instruct it to construct these patterns, this kind of housing for the nourishment growing inside it? Ancient wheat has played a more significant role

in the world than most individuals. And, it's probably more beautiful to boot, if you like blonde, graceful elegance.

Being an old fan of fashion magazines, I found myself seeking out the most beautiful stalks to take with me to photograph. But when I caught myself selecting the youngest ones, the ones unmarked by time, I remembered why I no longer buy Vogue. To be true to myself, at fifty-six, I had better honor the pieces with scars on them, with the kind of beauty that comes from complex history. I have no choice. Some of the old wheat ladies around me didn't either. I chose them.

When I tried *picking* them, I had trouble. The strength of each stalk made them almost impossible to break. Their roots were hardy and persistent, so I felt guilty when I pulled one up and got a whole muddy colony along with it.

Out here in this field the "death" I had just caused by my harvest seemed acceptable, as natural as the invisible birth of new seeds that was going on all around me. Scarring and loss are just part of the deal, my wheat sisters seemed to say.

I liked the nodules that joined the sections of their stalks, like the end of one life chapter and the bud of the next. Some sections remembered hard seasons, and others were positively virginal.

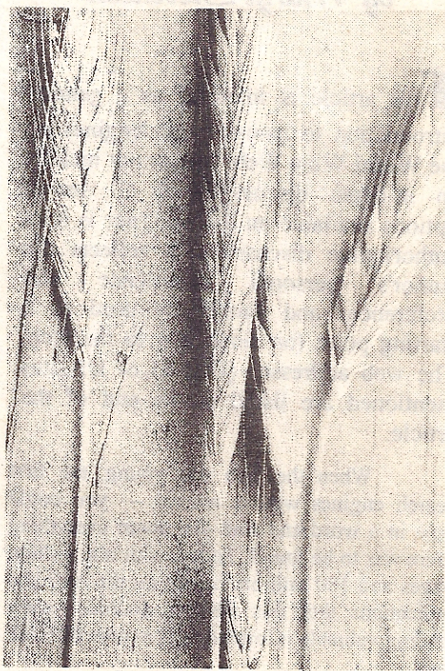
As hoisted my awkward, whale-like human body up out of the Wheat Sea, trying not to trample any more than I had already destroyed, the field looked like it was flowering to me. Each wheat top was reaching out, upbraiding at its height, offering its nourishment.

Birds and weeds and other plants blended with the field. I was the foreigner, a colonizer. As I parted the seas once again and exited on to the paved road, I saw a cloud passing that looked sweet and sad.

Somehow as I left the sunlight for the electric light of the room where we would process our experience, I felt nourished, as if I had processed my wheat and made a fresh loaf of warm bread.

My inner voice didn't sound quite so out of place as it had earlier and my mind didn't even try making it a suspect. I thanked that intuition, my old friend that I embrace so lovingly one minute, suspect the next, and occasionally forsake absolutely, like a lover who has turned on me.

In small groups we reminded each other and ourselves that our deep intuitive selves would have never let us down. We made new vows to be faithful to it, to keep taking good medicine. Mine



will always include wheat, even if it means wearing a muddy rear end.

Pam Hale Trachta is an artist, photographer, writer, workshop designer and facilitator, and consultant to individuals and organizations. Owner of Through a Different Lens Pam uses photography as a vehicle and metaphor to stimulate creativity, vision and the ability to see ourselves, our challenges and our potential through a different lens. (520) 577-6385.

Healthy
Lifestyles