

PRAISE FOR

# Wild Feminine

“Never before have I seen an author put into words concepts that encompass the deepest spiritual meaning and eternal symbolism of what it means to be a woman. Kent’s book is a must-read for any student or teacher of the mysteries of the female body and the energies that define us.”

—**Rosita Arvigo, DN**, traditional healer and founder of the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Massage, author of *Sastun*, *Spiritual Bathing*, and *Rainforest Remedies*

“By suggesting a return to the root, Tami Lynn Kent offers direction for a path largely forgotten. Within the pages of *Wild Feminine* lies great hope for women, natural birth, and all things precious to the female body.”

—**Ina May Gaskin**, midwife and author of *Spiritual Midwifery* and *Ina May’s Guide to Childbirth*

“As a former midwife and the current organizer of international conferences for women, I am thrilled to recommend this unique book by Tami Lynn Kent. There is not a woman in the world who would not benefit from reading it. Whether you are seeking healing from emotional or sexual wounding or you just want to learn how to more fully enjoy and inhabit the most feminine aspect of yourself, this book will be a friend for life.”

—**Elizabeth Lesser**, cofounder of Omega Institute, author of *The Seeker’s Guide* and *Broken Open*



Wild  
Feminine



# Wild Feminine

*Finding Power, Spirit & Joy  
in the Female Body*

Tami Lynn Kent

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*Dear Reader,*

*I invite you to journey deep into the heart of your female body, to your root place, and to the root of all womanhood. Discover this landscape of the wild feminine. Find the connection between creative energy flow and the core of your body to reclaim the radiance that is rightfully yours.*

*The stories in this book reflect my work with women to offer guidance and awareness for the potential within our pelvic bowl and our feminine energy. Each story is a composite created to honor the true essence of healing I've witnessed while also protecting the privacy of those women who have graced my work. You do not need a practitioner to make profound shifts in your body and life; it is my intention that this book, distilled from the collective wisdom of the female body, will assist you.*

*This book is not meant to take the place of medical advice or your own intuition.*

*May you and your body be blessed.*





*The Great Work that is beginning is the realization of the  
feminine as the bridge between God and humankind.*

—Marion Woodman  
*Bone: Dying into Life*

*The female body may represent one of feminism's least-touched  
frontiers, perhaps one of its final frontiers.*

—Caroline Knapp  
*Appetites: Why Women Want*



# Foreword



Life in the twenty-first century presents new and unprecedented challenges for women. Major social changes, including those won by feminism, have given modern women an entrée into public life that would have been unthinkable for our female precursors, remembering that American women only received the right to vote in 1920. This inclusion as card-carrying citizens in a masculine world, although a welcome and just development, has created specific issues that our foremothers, whose world was overwhelmingly feminine, did not have to face.

For example, how do we, working in an office, factory, or other institution, accommodate the changes in our bodies and minds that accompany our monthly cycles? How can we ensure that our

working conditions will not harm the babies we gestate? Is it possible to work apart from our infants and maintain our breastfeeding relationship? Do we continue paid employment while our children are young, and if so, how can we make the best provision for our children and their real needs for our loving care? How do we keep our public face as we make the transition through menopause, a passage that so often demands that we withdraw to complete our inner work?

These examples highlight the conflicts many women face as we balance our presence in the masculine world with our feminine needs and concerns. One response—perhaps the most rewarded in our culture—is to deny our female bodies: to adopt a pseudo-masculine approach that minimizes our bodies' innate feminine functions. Society sanctions this attitude and provides the means for menstrual concealment and suppression, birth interventions that override the body's natural process, separation of mothers and babies, formula feeding, and the treatment of menopause with hormonal substances, among others.

While each of these may be convenient at the time (and easier choices, culturally, than choosing menstrual retreat, natural birth, breastfeeding, mother-baby dependency, and unmedicated menopause), there is a downside. Each time we deny our female functions, each time we deviate from our bodies' natural path, we move farther away from our feminine roots. This can create distress within our bodies and can set the scene for further problems, physically and emotionally, for ourselves and our families.

For example, social pressures against breastfeeding (and other intimate forms of mother-baby contact) and the widespread promotion of nonhuman milk for human babies have resulted in a generation of mothers and babies who were denied the specific and evolutionary goodness of breastfeeding. Researchers are now linking our current epidemics of heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, breast cancer, and childhood diabetes with this mass deprivation

of feminine function. Similarly, recent research is highlighting that hormonal medications used to suppress menopause may increase the risks of breast cancer and heart disease: conditions that hormones were initially touted as preventing.

There is good news, however: no matter how strong the denial or how often we have turned away, our female bodies have not forgotten their functions. Our bodies are hardwired with this deep knowing and will call us back to reclaim the feminine for ourselves, in our own particular and specific way. And often it is our suffering in these especially female areas—menstruation, sexuality, abortion, miscarriage, birth, mothering, menopause, for example—that sets us on the path to healing our inner feminine.

*Healing* literally means “to make whole,” and this wholeness is unique for each of us. Therefore, there is no fixed agenda, no stereotype of femininity except authenticity and joy, for our bodies are also the source of pleasure and fulfillment, whether through lovemaking, ecstatic birth, or the sensual pleasures of breastfeeding. Even menstruation can be immensely pleasurable, given time and space.

This is the truth so beautifully articulated in *Wild Feminine*: that our female bodies need us now more than ever, and that we too need the wisdom, the wildness, the passion, the joy, the vitality, and the authenticity that we can gain through this most intimate of reconciliations.

Tami Lynn Kent gives us more than a message: she also provides practical tools to reclaim our original female power and passion. This book contains an energetic map of the feminine landscape: that which is contained within our pelvic bowl. Through exploring and reconnecting with this terrain, a process that she calls Holistic Pelvic Care, Tami offers us a path back to the root of our femininity—a coming home to what is truly ours, as we rediscover our own feminine energy. This is mind-body medicine at its best and most sacred.

*Wild Feminine* also offers activities, reflections, and rituals that can help us understand and integrate our female experiences, and be compassionate with ourselves. Like a wise teacher or friend, this book encourages us to inhabit our wholeness, to find our direction, to release our restrictions, and to bring an ongoing awareness to our lives. Tami Lynn Kent weaves her feminine wisdom through the text so we emerge with more understanding of our inner feminine and our female cycles: our monthly ovulation-menstruation cycle and the larger cycle that moves from menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding back to menstruation.

Life in the twenty-first century may be challenging for women, but we are blessed with a growing collection of resources to guide us. *Wild Feminine* offers wisdom and guidance that has the potential to heal the feminine in each of us and in our culture.

—Sarah J. Buckley, MD

Sarah is a family physician, mother of four,  
and author of *Gentle Birth*, *Gentle Mothering*  
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## OPENING

# Reclaiming the Wild



I am drumming. Twenty women form a circle on the floor. They lie with heads together and legs extended, each pointing out from the center like a great star that pulsates with the beat of this drum. I ask the women to feel the drum's vibration in the root of their bodies. They follow the drumbeat to their wombs, where life itself begins.

Encircled by pelvic bones round and smooth, the root of the female body is like a bowl. Here, in her womb, a woman will find the energy she holds for herself and for mothering her creations. For centuries, women have been the bowl- and basket-makers, weaving containers that held food or water just as their bodies held the energy of the children and home. In urban settings and modern

times, female roles have been redefined. But a woman's body still holds or releases energy from her root place, just as it always has.

Women are the energy keepers, their bodies a record of past events. As a woman travels to the root of her body, to her pelvic bowl where she stores this accumulated energy, she discovers what she has been given—and makes her way forward from there.

The drumming stops. Rising from the floor, each woman rights herself to sitting. They look at one another, wearing the face of the wild. They have journeyed into the source of their womanhood. Remembering long-forgotten landscapes, women speak of ancestors, ancient songs, births, and spirits: the terrain of the wild feminine. A communal spring of distilled beauty, the wild feminine revives each one. Breath upon breath, they are calling her back, retracing her path in their roots, reclaiming the wild in themselves.

## INTRODUCTION

# Coming Home



I did not begin my work in women's health looking for the wild feminine; the wild feminine found me. I was unaware of her absence until I sat with woman after woman who was profoundly disconnected from the root of her body, this physical place which houses the pelvic organs and channels the creative flow.

With my mother's passion for dance imprinted in my cells, I have always seen the body as a vehicle for expression. I found my way to physical therapy through the joy I experience in walking, playing sports, doing yoga—simply moving my body. My active sons would be surprised, they have seen me so often in a slower, pregnant form or sitting to nurse a baby. But movement inspired my work with the body.

Though it was my dream to work in women's health, I considered attending medical school because I had never heard of women's health as its own field of physical medicine. A fascination with movement patterns and how they influence the body directed me to physical therapy, but I rediscovered women's health in the third year of my graduate program. A guest speaker came to share her practice of physical therapy specifically for women. As she spoke, I knew the combination of physical therapy and women's healthcare was my true calling.

When I established my practice as a women's health physical therapist, in the outpatient clinic of a large hospital, my clients were typically beyond menopause and experiencing severe pelvic symptoms. Women came by referral from a urologist, and my treatment techniques were often a last resort prior to pelvic surgery for bladder leakage or uterine prolapse (when the uterus falls toward the vaginal opening). Pelvic surgery is not inevitable but may become necessary after the long-term effects of pelvic imbalance. Pelvic imbalance can also cause women to suffer needlessly from back or pelvic pain, decreased libido, and diminished vitality. Living with prolonged pelvic imbalance, a woman further loses touch with her creative center. Working with my clients' bodies, I felt the great weight of their unspoken grief regarding this loss; but at the time, I did not recognize its source in the unaddressed imbalances in their core.

Only after birthing my first son and nursing my own vagina through postpartum healing did I find that I too was estranged from my root. Taking care of my pelvic bowl for the first time, I encountered a well of emotions regarding my long-forgotten feminine needs. To identify and then address these feminine needs—for living in a sustainable manner, giving form to my creative energy, and receiving daily nourishment—I traversed the far reaches of my feminine terrain. I learned to weave my own way of making a joyful life, giving birth to two more sons, tapping into a deeper source to nurture myself, my creative life, and my children.

### **Integrative Pelvic Care**

The experience of connecting with my own root led me to reinvent my practice of women's health. I left the hospital clinic and opened an office in a more intimate homelike setting and began to offer preventive and postpartum pelvic care. I also developed an integrative practice I call Holistic Pelvic Care™, which incorporates a range of healing practices to restore balance in a woman's pelvis. Even traditional Western medicine acknowledges the benefits of recognizing connections between mind, body, and spirit; yet women's pelvic health has not generally been associated with this holistic approach. Holistic Pelvic Care combines the physical medicine practices of vaginal massage and organ alignment techniques with visualization and body awareness exercises to restore physical balance and energetic flow in a woman's pelvic bowl.

Without integrative pelvic care, I realized, most women simply learn to live with the pelvic imbalances resulting from childbirth, accumulated stress, or other events. Even beyond treating chronic pelvic symptoms, pelvic care ought to be an essential component of women's health. Today's women have chronic core tension due to a lack of awareness of pelvic wellness, habits—like prolonged sitting—that maintain pelvic stagnation, and a general disconnect from the feminine. Women benefit from forming an internal knowledge of their own feminine range, and ultimately rebuilding the underlying patterns limiting their core vibrancy and self-expression. By caring for the root of the female body as part of basic healthcare, and with a holistic perspective, we can address and heal both obvious and subtle imbalances, reversing the predominant trend of disregard for women's pelvic needs.

As my practice has grown, women have come to my office to heal themselves from birthing or to simply reconnect with the root, and then they often tell their friends to come. Though my clients are now typically younger or holistically minded, and presumably part of a more progressive population, each woman discovers that she

has traveled a number of years without really knowing her root. I continue to witness a universal pelvic disconnect. Sometimes the detachment is physical: a woman has difficulty feeling her vaginal muscles. Other times it is emotional: a woman disassociates herself from her pelvic space as a way of coping with painful associations regarding femininity or her body. More subtly, this pelvic disconnect is energetic. Women experience diminished energy in the pelvic bowl because they do not regularly or consciously utilize their core creative capacity; they do not know how to cultivate feminine energy in their bodies.

Physical medicine is my art, and working in the root of the female body is like making sculpture; it requires the practitioner to attune to the deeper currents that give shape to a physical structure. Reading the physical patterns in the pelvis and restoring the vital energy flow are skills honed by respectfully listening to the body's wisdom. Skilled hands are a blessing because, for most women, the root has scarcely been approached with the reverence it deserves. My hands and my heart have sat with many women, and I have come to respect the creative capacity carried in the female body.

### **The Link between Physical and Energetic**

The physical process of realigning a woman's pelvic muscles eventually led me to a contemplation of how we as women embody our womanhood, an exploration of the ways the body records what it means to be female. Sitting at the root and listening to women's stories, I began to notice how root energy patterns were related to a woman's creative essence and how these patterns governed her usage of creative energy in everyday life. I took notes on these patterns, piecing them together to identify greater themes.

Energy is the fuel for our cells, giving life to our bodies and empowering our ability to create a robust and fulfilling existence. Energy flows in the body like river currents. The physical body interacts with the energy flow much like a riverbed channels and

responds to the flow of the water. By understanding the connection between the patterns in our physical bodies and the resulting direction of creative energy flow into various aspects of our lives, we can strengthen those patterns that are beneficial and change the patterns that limit our true potential.

In my work with women, I find that just as physical patterns in the body can be changed in beneficial ways, the energy patterns of the pelvic bowl can be identified and transformed so that a woman may consciously direct her creative abilities. With the creative seeds of the ovaries and the gestational ability of the womb, the female body contains unlimited creative potential (the energy potential remains even if the organs have been removed). When a woman knows how to access her root place, she finds the energy for building her creative dreams, nurturing her creations, and changing the core patterns that diminish her radiance. She explores the link between physical form and energy flow and communes in the realm of the wild feminine.

### **The Return of the Feminine**

What began as a notebook of case studies documenting the healing I witnessed in the female body eventually became *Wild Feminine*. This book is a guide for exploring the vibrant feminine ground which women may come to understand and reclaim. *Wild Feminine* gives voice to an emerging women's movement: women of all ages and backgrounds are returning to the female body, reclaiming the creative force that arises from our center, and discovering its potential in daily life. A woman's root is her best resource for creating and integrating an empowered expression of the feminine.

The terms *divine*, *sacred*, and *spirit* will be used throughout this book. I am not writing from a religious point of view, although a woman may connect with the spiritual feminine realm in the practice of her own religion. Rather, I am addressing the individual experience of living each day with spirit. Living in relationship to

spirit is a uniquely personal journey. It means awakening to the sacredness in every moment and all forms of life.

Wherever there is an absence of power, spirit, or joy in a woman's life, she has lost touch with her wild self. Each feminine loss is registered in the root of the female body, and to the body a woman must return in order to retrieve the full expression of her own wild feminine.

Though I do explore the energy of both the masculine and the feminine, the content of this book focuses on the feminine because it is imperative that women especially begin to recognize and reclaim the feminine in themselves. As the energy keepers and the ones who gestate life for our communities, we must learn how to restore the feminine energy flow in our bodies. When the feminine returns to the female body, the masculine is naturally inspired to reinvent the outer structures (roles, relations, work, home) in a more sustainable and life-giving manner. Natural systems are self-regulating once the core balance is restored.

Additionally, our creative lives are in the process of transformation. In the past fifty years, with the advent of birth control and professional career options, women are having fewer or no children. In just two or three generations, women have gone from having an average of six or eight children to just one or two. As a result, women have many more menstrual cycles during their fertile years and, with the widespread use of menstrual products, have increasingly been able to move at a continuously fast pace, with less regard for their bodily cycles. Often because of delayed childbearing choices, women are having difficulty conceiving or sustaining full-term pregnancies. Though our fertility cycles have evolved over thousands of years, the recent changes in our bodily experience of fertility have far outpaced evolution. The rhythms of our bodies are still linked to our women ancestors whose creative potential was typically expressed through carrying, birthing, and mothering children.



As a women's health physical therapist who spends many hours working on the pelvic bowl, I recognize that the very advantages of creative freedom, such as an abundance of professional opportunities and birth control options for women, have also taken us outside of our creative centers. Witnessing women reconnect with their bodies, I have seen that the body often reflects a more maternal, home- or earth-based essence. Yet, even as we transform our lives as women, the pelvic bowl has resources to assist us. To return to our bodies, we do not need to take a step backward but rather simply apply the creative energy we already carry to our present situation.

Because the creative flow in our bodies has evolved over time through pregnancy and birthing, it is helpful to reflect on these physical processes (as well as to examine ovulation, menstruation, miscarriage, and menopause) to learn about our creative energy. My hope is that whether or not you have had children, and regardless of whether you are still menstruating, you will read each story within *Wild Feminine* for the deeper patterns and clues that may reveal how to engage with your own creative essence. These physical processes provide insight for the creative cycles that run throughout our lives; it is worth returning to our origins in order to comprehend the essential feminine resources in the root.

### **A Vast Potential Within**

Your creative essence is a powerful current that flows through you. Rather than shaping or defining your creative energy by external factors (careers, partners, children, past experiences, and so on), you can work with the creative flow directly in your center. Focusing on this, you recognize the vast potential within—a whole range of energy resources and guidance from the wisdom of the body and the inner connection to spirit—and that we typically only access a small part of this landscape. Rather than realizing the full capacity of our creative core, we accept the limitations (ways of holding

ourselves back or shutting down our creative energy) that we have inherited or formed in reaction to wounds or certain roles, and as a result, we diminish our natural abilities to receive true healing, new resources, vital energy, or unclaimed ground.

*Wild Feminine* will teach you how to work with the physical structure of your root and tap into the concentrated organ energies to change your relationship with the energy you draw from the environment and the greater spiritual realm. Through stories and guided exercises, you will find the energetic and physical connections to a whole creative range in the root of your body. These connections will allow you first to examine what is there and then to begin to trust and use the potential of your root in daily life.

In the first chapter, I introduce the language I developed to describe my observations from working with clients and also cultivating my own wild femininity. Chapter 2 teaches how to read the physical patterns of your pelvic bowl, how to do vaginal massage, and how your body patterns influence your creative flow. Chapter 3 describes how to dismantle restrictive feminine identities and renew your feminine spirit. The emotional energies of shame, sadness, grief, fear, rage, and joy are addressed in subsequent chapters. These emotions are often encountered when tapping into the energy of the pelvic bowl. Rather than stored or held, emotional energy is meant to move and activate your awareness; each emotion has a distinct purpose in restoring your feminine range.

Read about ovarian and uterine energies in chapters 4 and 5 to learn about the energetic capacity of your female body and how to clarify the energy in your bowl. Chapter 6 reveals how your feminine range expands when the energy of your lineage wounds, and other defining lines, are transformed. Chapter 7 shares the joy of making and applying your own root medicine in daily life, and each chapter contains exercises to take care of your root and cultivate the relationship between the physical and energetic to give intentional form to your creative expression.

The appendix contains information for starting a *Wild Feminine* Book Club. This section provides suggestions for using the material in this book to explore the wild feminine with a group of women. In the company of others or on your own, you will find many ways to celebrate your feminine radiance. Whatever your history with your body, you can begin now to discover the powerful resources within.

By putting *Wild Feminine* to practice, we learn how to bring strength and vitality to the core. We recognize that skilled bodywork will often resolve many of the physical imbalances in the pelvic bowl, providing relief from prolapse, pelvic pain, postpartum muscle imbalances, incontinence, diminished libido, or even just a generalized disconnect, and instead enhance the well-being of our sensual and sexual core and ability to receive pleasure. We can heal psychically from past sexual or pelvic traumas by reclaiming our rightful range. We clear blocks from our core energetic flow and witness a resurgence in our creative capacities. We can revive our feminine and masculine energies to reinvent our jobs, relationships, roles, and other structures that define us in order to be fully expressive and deeply nurtured.

But even more important, we as women can recognize the potential of the pelvic bowl that taps directly into the universal energies, from which all of life is made. By exploring this place where the universal energy meets the female body, we come home to the mystery within us and engage with that mystery to give life to the body, and body to the life.

### **My Spirit Daughter**

Things always happen to me in the fall. The timing of my miscarriage was no different. The leaves had just a tinge of red when I began to bleed. There were signs of an approaching change, my body's preparation to meet what was coming. Though I had known the same rhythm for many years, I was still unprepared for this event.

Miscarriage is not, as I had always imagined, like an unexpected menstrual period. On the day of my miscarriage, I awoke from a dream that I was bleeding, but my sense of dread did not dissipate upon awakening. The red of my blood confirmed what my body already knew; miscarriage is birth and death simultaneously. Miscarriage is ecstatic connection and unquenchable loss. The uterus dilates and contracts, as in the process of birth. In its wake follows an ancient grief, the grief of grandmothers and women who have lived before, pouring forth from the uterus.

At one point, in the height of uterine contractions, I became drowsy. Surrendering to the path of this unborn soul, I lay down upon the floor. Lying in my place of meditation, near the window framing a large cedar tree, I closed my eyes. Looking back now, I recognize the place of stillness that marks the moment just before a baby emerges from the womb. Breath is suspended and there is infinite quiet, standing at this edge, where once again everything is understood.

Time passed, but I was unaware of its passage until my uterus shuddered. Suddenly, the spirit of my daughter filled the room. I felt her tiny body leave mine, and I reached down to discover her placenta's perfect fit in the palm of my hand.

I wrapped her hint of a body in cloth, not knowing what else to do. With no obvious path set before me, I wandered through the day with her small bundle in my pocket. At sunset, I stood with my son and husband in our backyard. I hesitated, kneeling down at the side of a shallow grave. I did not want to let her go. My hands lifted her out of my pocket and placed her gently against the soft, dark earth. I heard the voice of my son and remembered where I was. My grief rose until the air around me was spinning.

In the days that followed, I embraced the grief in my uterus even though it was easier to ignore it. Working with the female body has shown me that unacknowledged grief never goes away; it simply becomes buried. If a woman denies and buries her bodily

grief, she may never walk that region of herself again. Over time she loses access to her own feminine range, sometimes wandering outside of her vital self altogether.

By allowing the grief of my female body to take whatever shape it might, I discovered other forgotten ground. I felt how detached my own uterus had been. I knew myself as a strong woman. Still, I was a stranger in this core place. In the expression of grief and other feelings about losing a baby, I also found grief for not being celebrated as a girl or a woman.

I journeyed into my grief and came upon my first sense of peace. It was peace I had been searching for, and ultimately found, deep within my feminine self. By giving expression to the buried grief of my womanhood, I was exploring the hidden contours of my female body. I was coming home.

Grieving from my womb, I traveled down through layers of stored emotions that had inadvertently blocked access to my root. As I recognized each bit of sadness or loss held in my core, I also realized the heft of the burdens I had been carrying as a woman. In the desire to grieve for the soul of my child, I stepped beyond the boundary of what I had previously allowed myself to feel. Touching the weight of each loss shifted the energy in my core. I was no longer afraid of what I might find. I lifted each stone in my body until I felt the sensation of bare dirt. For the first time I saw a vast inner landscape: the open expanse of my own creative range.

From this root place of connection, I saw my body as an ally. Had I miscarried three years earlier, while pregnant with my first child, I would have tightened every muscle in my pelvis, using my will to silence my womb. Now I was following the lead of my root, trusting the response of my wild feminine.

In the peace of my body, I called to my spirit daughter. Asking how I might remember her, I heard this reply: *Teach women to know the beauty of their bodies and to celebrate the feminine in themselves.*



## ONE

# Beginning Your Journey

*The female body is a sacred space for meeting with spirit. Women are the weavers of our universe: through their bodies they take in pure creative essence and then actively create a dynamic form. Modern women can access this capacity with intention only when they know how to work with the underlying patterns that shape their creative range. This chapter examines what is inherently a mystical creative process within a framework that can be interacted with and cultivated in daily life, restoring an intimate relationship to the sacred within.*

**T**he wild feminine is an elusive creature. Like most wild things, she appears when least expected: arising from deep stillness, frequently taking flight just as our awareness responds to her presence. She appears in my work with women the way the wind stirs and blows through an open window. Something clear and deep is restored when women reconnect to this wild place in themselves. In writing this book, my challenge was to define exactly what took place during this process of reconnection, so that women could find their own way there.

At first I did not recognize the wild feminine; my only understanding of the feminine was as a gender construct. But observing her return in the energy and expressions of the women in my midst,

I saw the true feminine nature. When a woman found the wild feminine in her core, she was radiant and wise in her own unique way. All previous notions of what I had called feminine changed, and I was inspired by each encounter with this authentic feminine.

My desire to understand this mysterious feminine essence prompted me to leave my young sons in the care of their father and fly from one coast to another for a women's conference in New York City. Like a biologist in pursuit of a rare animal, I would seek the wild feminine in the places she was likely to appear.

While tending to my children and home in the weeks before I left, I savored the romantic notion of a trip to New York. I would stay with my best girlfriend; in the past five years, she had never seen me without my children. I could satisfy my need for adventure through a solo excursion to the big city.

My New York venture was deliciously appealing from the comfort of my living room, less so in the gritty reality of travel. It was late at night by the time I arrived at my girlfriend's apartment, and my breasts were bulging with milk meant for my youngest son. I retrieved a handheld breast pump from my luggage and attempted to relieve the building pressure. To my dismay, there was no suction in the pump. I then discovered the purpose of a tiny piece of latex left at home. No, that contact lens-sized disk was not just a filter for the milk. It provided suction. Without it, a breast pump just blows air back and forth. I looked in the mirror. At the sight of the harsh light on my milk-laden breasts and my hands pushing and pulling my inept pump in a futile effort to extract a bit of milk, I started to laugh; I even snorted a few times at the absurdity of my situation.

My girlfriend seemed tired. She went to bed, and I was left alone with my engorged melons. "Okay, ladies," I said, hoping that talking to my breasts might encourage their assistance. "I realize you're a little upset. I promise to return you to your baby shortly. Until then, we must make do." I leaned over the sink and began to squeeze. (I would repeat this every four hours in various bathroom



stalls at the conference, and then later at the airport, until finally reunited with my breastfeeding son two days later. I hoped my breasts would forgive me.)

Leaving my children and home had made me feel raw, yet my senses also seemed attuned for discovery. The next day I felt alert and prepared for a greater understanding. I left my girlfriend's house early, while New York was still bathed in the gold of morning light. As I found my seat at the conference, the laughter and voices of women were all around me. I was ready to receive the information I was seeking when Marion Woodman began to speak.

Marion, a leading feminine spiritualist and Jungian analyst, has spent a lifetime studying the feminine. If anyone could illuminate the feminine nature, it was she. In general culture, references to women often reflect stereotyped versions of femininity with the term *feminine*. I wondered how Marion would define something or someone as feminine.

Almost as if reading my thoughts, Marion stepped up to the podium, commenting on the beautiful feminine banners, which hung as a backdrop to the stage. After musing about color and texture and their relation to the feminine, Marion looked right at the audience. She said it was difficult to know the true feminine, because *very few people have experienced it*.

These were the words I had traveled across the country to hear. In my own office, one-on-one with women, I was witnessing the return of something I had hardly met before. Marion Woodman confirmed what I'd suspected: notions of femininity surround us, but what we typically define as feminine is not its true form. The actual experience of the feminine is rare, even in the midst of a conference of hundreds of women exploring their femininity. As women, we possess the feminine in our elemental nature. Why then is its presence so elusive?

The truth is that the feminine has never left us—women, and men, have abandoned it. We have forgotten what it means to live

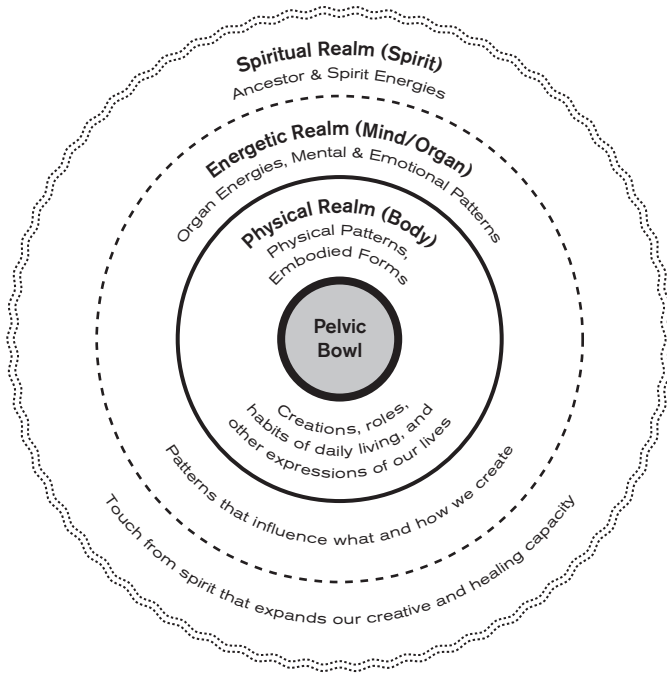
by our feminine principles. Living in profound disconnect from the earth, in the frantic pace of life unmoved by our more natural inner rhythms that alternate between expansive creation and restorative retreat, we have precious little time or space to invite the appearance of the feminine. In fact, we will not encounter the feminine until we return to the place we first met her: the female body.

When we restore the internal pelvic landscape—the capacity within our female bodies that supports the presence of the feminine—we witness a return of the feminine to our lives. When we recognize her essence in the root of our bodies, the feminine will no longer be invisible and endangered. Rather than a gender construct that narrows our range of expression, the feminine becomes a living manifestation of our wild selves. Recovering her full range in our feminine core, we receive sustenance from the wild feminine at last.

## The Wild Feminine Landscape

In my work I use words and phrases like *root*, *feminine terrain*, and *wild feminine ground* or *landscape* to evoke the resonance between the female body and the earth. Words that compare our bodies to the land, where we sow our chosen seeds and learn to grow what will feed us, reveal our truest form as women.

I call the inner range of the female body the wild feminine landscape: a place where we can interact with the energetic and physical patterns that record our relationship to the feminine and define our inherent creative potential. These patterns in the root of our bodies form a filter through which we perceive our creative lives, shaping our experience of womanhood but also giving us the ground to discover our abundance. Presently, our root patterns typically reflect cultural or familial limitations, rather than our authentic nature, and often restrict our creative range. In learning to read the physical and energetic patterns of the pelvic bowl, we can challenge these restrictions and reacquaint ourselves with our full feminine landscape.



Physical tension and energetic blocks in the pelvic bowl limit core vitality and energy flow. Conversely, physical alignment and balanced energy patterns create robust health and the potential for greater flow and energy resources into our bodies and lives.

We live in our bodies. We have thoughts and identities, relationship patterns and emotional patterns. We tend to think of the patterns in our bodies and the patterns of our lives as permanent forms, but each—from our deepest cells to the vastness of our creative capacity—is a dynamic expression that can evolve and change, and respond to the environment that surrounds it. By exploring the body, mind, and spirit aspects of our female forms, we encounter both the possible limitations that may restrict our femininity as well as the source for our inspired expression. Rather than a solid structure, we discover the vibrant nature that exists in and around us.

## Changing Form

The key to changing the form that shapes your inner landscape is to examine the internal patterns that organize your relationship with the outer world:

1. Proprioceptive maps (based on perception of space and position arising from sense stimuli within the body) are patterns formed from the internal sense of body awareness.
2. Kinesthetic maps record information for movement patterns.
3. Layers of tension or softness within the body often give meaning to sensory information or emotional information.
4. Mental constructs give form to what is expected or possible.
5. Inner pathways channel energy flow in the body.

Together, these patterns interact to inform your daily movements, habits, ways of being, and potential for engaging with each experience. Working with and realigning these patterns for body awareness, movement, tension, mental habits, and energy flow can change how you embody—or literally inhabit your body—and utilize your creative energy. Though we have these patterns and layers throughout the body, we will focus on the pelvic bowl and the root patterns that define creative flow.

To reconnect with the root of your body and begin the process of working with your own form, you must first encounter the energy of long-held, often unconscious, emotions and mental attitudes (patterns) preventing you from cherishing your womanhood and accessing your core radiance. As you meditate on your pelvic bowl and identify the history held in your core, you will learn what feminine aspects you have come to value or disregard for your-

self. You will begin to recognize how patterns you carry can diminish your own abundance or cause you to live outside of your center. You may not know the stories of your ancestors, nor how those stories have formed the range of your feminine self, but you can look to the energy in your pelvic bowl and discover the gifts and challenges of your heritage and how they affect your energy flow. By clearing energetic obstacles from your core or studying your root energy patterns, you can reshape inherited patterns associated with feminine roles or the use of your creative energies, and experience delightful new ways of physically, energetically, and spiritually embodying your feminine form.

### **Feminine and Masculine Energy**

Most of the information in this book relates to the feminine. Of course, every person has both feminine and masculine energy, designed to complement one another. The feminine is the in-breath, the internal tide of intuition and inspiration that shapes and influences the out-breath, or masculine form. When balanced, the feminine and masculine result in creative abundance, and the forms that arise from this balance are both productive and sustainable.

Masculine energy, when balanced by the feminine, is robust and playful, able to create with beauty and pleasure in its formations. However, we are presently experiencing a profound division between masculine and feminine that is evident in our bodies and lives. The absence of the feminine and the domination of a distorted masculine is both destructive and unsustainable, manifesting many structures that are harmful to the earth and our very existence. As we restore our connection to the feminine, we will witness the rise of a vibrant masculine. (I explore the masculine and feminine divide, as well as the potential for healing, in chapter 4.)

Working with the root of our bodies, we can realign and redefine these physical and energetic patterns that otherwise restrict the energy flow in our bodies and lives. Clearing stagnant energy and

emotional burdens from the pelvic bowl, we have more creative energy to use as we desire. Changing our core patterns, we clarify the filter through which we experience our womanhood and transform the way that we receive energy or give life to our creations.

In the womb, our bodies take shape: spirit first becomes body. If we understand this potential in the root, of bringing spirit into form, we recognize the energy of the spiritual realm as essential for infusing our lives with joy and building our creative dreams. We perceive life as greater than the situations we encounter and allow the energy of spirit to flow through the core of our beings, bringing vitality and inspiration to each moment. Our embodied forms, whether as physical bodies, creative designs, partnerships, or the structures we build within our lives, become alive, responsive, radiant—in other words, wild—an outer expression of our full and finest creative selves.

### *Women's Stories: Realizing the Feminine for Herself*

Jill was referred to me by a friend who had experienced the profound impact of reconnecting with her pelvic space, so Jill wanted to discover what blocked her own pelvic connection. In learning about her pelvic imbalances, Jill noticed her tendency to distance herself from anything that she thought of as feminine.

She found it difficult to bring awareness to her pelvic space. She was hardly present in this part of her body. Jill noted that in her family, the men were respected and the women were overlooked, and she felt she had rejected her femininity in response to the limitations she associated with being female. As a young girl, she had identified herself as a tomboy. Later, when she began to menstruate, she felt embarrassed and ashamed by this monthly reminder of her femininity. Rather than welcoming the arrival of her womanhood, Jill rejected her period as a sign of weakness.

Rejecting her femininity ultimately limited Jill's own expression of the feminine. Avoiding feminine associations prevented her from accessing the creativity, vitality, and passion that comes from a strong feminine connection.

Jill and I began our work together by discussing the wisdom of her womb cycles. Alternately holding or releasing the menstrual lining, the uterus provides direction for a woman, signaling when to move boldly into the world or, alternately, when to rest. The idea of synchronizing her outer movements with the natural rhythms of her body inspired her, encouraging her to shed her previous sense of shame.

As we worked with her body, Jill found it difficult to maintain mental focus on her vagina. This disconnection expressed itself physically as well: she was aware of sensation in some areas of her vaginal muscles, yet in others, she felt numb. I encouraged her to breathe and take notice of each region in her pelvic bowl. As I pressed my finger along each point of her internal pelvic rim, Jill could feel the bowl formed by the bones of her pelvis. Repeatedly directing her awareness back to her root body sensations, Jill also noticed an immense sadness inside herself.

By simply observing her sadness, and breathing toward her pelvic space, Jill found that her feelings had a wave-like quality. A wave of sadness would rise, increase in intensity, then soften and eventually dissipate. In the place where she felt the sadness, Jill became aware of a basic, almost primal need for touch and connection. She was surprised by the force and clarity of the desires arising from her feminine core. In the root of her body, Jill found a fierce determination.

Discovering an unwavering strength in her female body challenged Jill's notion of femininity as weak. Paying attention to her root on a daily basis, Jill began to consciously reevaluate her perceptions of the feminine. Each time she

brought awareness to her pelvic bowl, she encountered the same sense of clarity and direction. Over time, Jill reframed her own femininity; rather than perceiving it as a weakness, she began to relate and respond to her feminine nature, reawakening to this resource within her female body.

Jill changed her relationship with her body, and she observed a profound change in the quality of her sexual intimacy. Prior to our work, Jill typically felt distant from her partner after having sex. Unsatisfied by their lovemaking, she tried meeting her needs by talking about her frustrations. But her partner felt criticized and Jill felt unheard, leaving the situation continually unresolved.

As Jill became attuned to her root, she became more aware of her body during lovemaking. She was aware of a wider range of sensations and emotions, making the overall experience of sex more physical and spontaneous. By focusing on her pelvic bowl, Jill was more aroused by her partner's masculine presence. Her partner responded with his body to the deeper connection she had with her own body, and they were both more nourished by their sexual exchange.

Whether following the guidance from her pelvic bowl or discovering a relationship with the feminine in her core, Jill had found a multitude of different ways to receive and then create with her own feminine energy.

## Ecology of Woman

Ecology refers to the series of interrelated relationships made between a specific organism and its outer world. As an undergraduate, I studied ecology and was fascinated by the interplay of relationships within each environment. Every living thing has an ecology, or various ways of communicating and connecting with its surroundings. Women too have their own ecology: the rhythms