

PUSSY

A RECLAMATION

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Lines from “I Hope to Be an Old Woman Who Dresses Very Inappropriately” by Gloria Steinem, from *Moving Beyond Words* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

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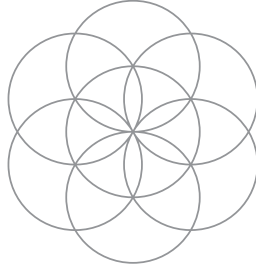
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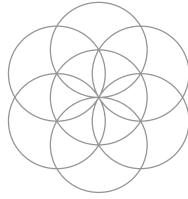
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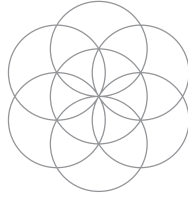


*I dedicate this book to the women
who will never hear of it, never even imagine
it; women who are currently living in the darkest
corners of the world (whether inner or outer), who
cannot even dream of having the luxury to investigate
the topics examined in the pages that follow.
Like the butterfly effect, may these women
somehow feel the impact of our love
and devotion to all things woman.
Even from afar, may our radiant
light ignite theirs.*



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FOREWORD

Talk about a tour de force! I am transfixed by the depth, humor, and game-changing wisdom in this book. And honored to be the wingwoman in helping it soar all over Planet Earth. I can feel the trajectory of Regena's whole life and her soul's journey singing through every page, with the power to uplift the planet and every creature on it.

Regena is one of the most profound and provocative thought leaders in the world today. It is my hope that this book will put her work in the hands of every woman in this world so that they, like me, can know the life-changing information and practices revealed here.

My own initiation into the magic and mystery of the School of Womanly Arts began as the mother of two graduates. I got to see my daughters come to life and upgrade their relationships with themselves, with their friends, and with men. I have also been a frequent teacher at the school. Early on, I was lecturing on some aspect of women's wisdom and how it came through the body. Having spent a little time in the audience participating in some of the exercises, I began to make the connection between the experience of pleasure and rapture and its impact on physical health. And so, during a lecture, I asked the students to please come to the microphone and tell me if they had experienced any improvements in their physical health since starting the program at the SWA. I was astounded when the line of women at the microphone went to the back of the room. And then even more astounded as

each woman related how her participation in the Womanly Arts had improved or healed everything from abnormal pap smears, infertility, and ovarian cysts to lung and breast cancer. It was then I knew that the deliberate pursuit of pleasure not only improved the quality of a woman's life—these things could also *save* her life.

There's plenty of science to support the pleasure/health connection. Part of the reason for this has to do with the production of massive amounts of a gas called nitric oxide, which is produced by the endothelial lining of the blood vessels during states of joy, pleasure, and ecstasy. And nitric oxide is the über-neurotransmitter that balances all the others—like dopamine, serotonin, and beta endorphin—the same neurotransmitters that so many women try to balance with psych meds like Prozac and Paxil, to name just two. I'm convinced that very few women would need these meds if they understood and applied the power of eros and pleasure in daily life.

Like a good mother, a good doctor, and a good scientist, I observed the life-giving power of pleasure in the lives of my daughters and other women. But then I realized that one doesn't reclaim the power of pussy with the intellect. This is a body trip. And as a woman, I too needed to dive into the SWA as a participant—not as some academic expert standing on the sidelines with a notebook in hand. And so—I dove in. I took the course. I became a full-fledged sister goddess. I learned how to brag, I learned how to praise other women. I learned the importance of having other sister goddesses in my life—women who no longer participated in the “mean girls” wounding so common in middle school, an artifact of Patriarchy from which the majority of adult women never recover unless they are open to being reeducated.

My daughters and I also worked through all kinds of mother-daughter chains of pain handed down from prior generations. They had to learn to see me as a sensual woman who desired a full, passionate life—not just a mother whose best years were behind her and whose future was limited to caring for grandchildren and other family members. I also sent scores of other women to the SWA, knowing that the key to women's health—and men's health

and planetary health, for that matter—lay in reconnecting with this power source within us.

But there's more. I also experienced Regena's uncanny ability to intuit a woman's desires long before she herself is aware of them. In other words, Regena is a woman whisperer. And she will wrestle a woman to the ground if need be to get her to give up her resistance to her own desires and her pleasure. I've never seen anything like it. It's the best show in town. She is such a fearless warrior standing for sisterhood and pleasure. I was not immune.

Because of my work at the School of Womanly Arts, my whole life changed. At Regena's suggestion, I took up tango. I was both delighted and terrified, especially when she asked me to perform tango as an entrance for The Men's Session of Mastery, in front of hundreds and hundreds of men and women. The very same delight and terror that you may have felt when you first saw this book on the shelf, or chose to pick it up in your hands. Regena had thrown down the gauntlet. Who was I to refuse the invitation? I danced not once, not twice, but three times. Each year taking it higher—and dancing better. Each year becoming more and more fearless in my willingness to sink into my body and into my pleasure. And each year attracting a more capable partner. Until finally I "landed it" when my tango teacher Paul agreed to go with me. And I trusted him completely. Just before we took the stage, Paul said, "I've got you." I melted into his arms and danced my heart out. And have been dancing regularly ever since. With every part of myself. Including my pussy.

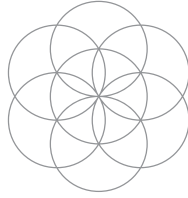
Regena's work has also deepened my own work. It was a critical part of inspiring my most recent *New York Times* bestseller, *Goddesses Never Age*.

Because, as Regena says, reclaiming pussy is not about having sex with a lot of people. Nor is it about sex at all. Though it can be. Reclaiming pussy is about reclaiming the erotic power that is your Source as a woman. It's about bringing heaven down to earth—in the most sacred part of your body and your life. I've often said that if you want to know where your true power lies, go to those places you've been taught to fear the most. Your orgasm, your period,

labor and birth, menopause—all processes that involve your pussy. This is where your real power lies. In the sacred temple of your pelvis. Right in front of the bone known as the sacrum—the holy bone. The place where the soul enters the body.

And so my charge to all of you—as a doctor who has spent a lifetime assisting women in healing their bodies—is that you have the courage to read *Pussy: A Reclamation*. But don't just read it. Let the truth of it sink into your body, right into your bone marrow. Let this book change your life in the way it has changed mine. Live the message. May you reclaim your radiance, wonder, and the life-giving power of pleasure and eros right in your own body. And thus remember who you really are. A goddess.

Christiane Northrup, M.D.
March 2016



INTRODUCTION

Pussy.

It's arguably the most powerful pejorative word in the English language. It is the ultimate salacious smack to a woman's dignity, used when the intention is to hurt, humiliate, and fracture her humanity. *Pussy* is the lowest of the lows for men as well; there is no quicker way to snip a man's balls than to call him one, no clearer way to warn him that his reputation is in dire straits.

No one calls me "pussy" when they want to communicate how radiant and beautiful I look on a certain day. They don't use the word to tell me how expertly and thoroughly I have managed to accomplish a Herculean task. And yet, *pussy* is all that and more.

I am a woman of words, a gift I got from my father. He could jot a short line on a page and express everything he longed to say but lacked the social skill to impart. I grew up with him reading the Bible aloud, every Friday night. I was raised to have great respect and reverence for the power of language; for the way a simple, well-placed word could launch a movement or a philosophy. The way a single word could change the course of history.

My favorite book ever was the dictionary I received in junior high school. A cherished pastime was searching out the etymology of my favorite words, each turn of the page unpacking worlds of history. My problem? In all the millions of words I found between the covers of that beloved book, I could not find one single word that described *me*. No word that indicated my huge capacity to feel, my elusive and ever-changing cyclical nature, my raw femaleness,

my delicacy, my shyness, my strength, my yearning to be seen and known and loved and gotten. No word. Not one.

We can learn just as much about a culture from what it's missing as from what it embraces.

One of the greatest pieces of unconscious conditioning we have in our Western culture is that we do not teach our children the name of the source of our feminine power. Ask my students at the School of Womanly Arts what they were taught to call their genitals as a child, and you'll get a parade of colloquialisms: Wickie, Cuckoo, Privates, Down There, Pooter, Pee Wee, the Fine China, Name and Address, Venus, Noonie, Miss Kitty, Purse . . . the list goes on. Those who were taught a more direct word were often taught to call it "vagina," a clinical term that is also physiologically incorrect.

But what's worse, the majority of women were taught to call it nothing at all.

When we have no common language to describe that which is most essentially feminine about us, we have no way to locate and own our power as women. As my dad used to read to us on Friday nights, "In the beginning was the Word." When there is no word, there is no beginning. How would you talk about an interconnected global computer network providing information and communication facilities via standard technological protocols if you did not have the word *internet*? Yet our culture gives us no way to talk about the place where our power—and, in fact, all of life—comes from.

It's this very feminine power that is missing from all the success stories we hear. It's what leaves Sheryl Sandberg, one of the most productive women in America, revealing in a *New Yorker* profile that she's felt like a fraud all of her life. It's what has fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg admit on *CBS This Morning* that she wakes up every day feeling like a loser. It's what has Gayle King, who was interviewing von Furstenberg, reply that *she* wakes up every morning feeling fat.

It's what has Shonda Rhimes observe in her book, *Year of Yes*, that she and every other woman she knows push away compliments and are unable to receive appreciation and approval.

It's what has so many female grad students settling for assistant teaching, while their male counterparts head their own classrooms. (According to Linda Babcock, a professor of economics at Carnegie Mellon University and the co-author of *Women Don't Ask*, her very own dean explained the differential: "More men ask. The women just don't ask.") It's what has men initiate salary negotiations four times more often than women do. It's why when women *do* negotiate, they ask for 30 percent less than men.

I have been preoccupied with the question of why women have this limited ability to access their power and voice that nothing they do seems to ameliorate or resolve. As I look around the world of women, it seems as if our lights are off. *We* are turned off, like a light switch. The bulb is in there, but it sure isn't lit up. And it is no wonder. We have all been taught to turn off, to turn away.

Turn away from the homeless person begging for change. Turn away from the impact of climate change that we each deepen with our daily actions and inactions. Turn off from our own emotions.

No one had to teach us to turn off. Our culture models it with actions so much louder than words. So many of us were taught to back away from our strong emotions—to find them embarrassing, ridiculous even. So many of us were taught to keep a lid on anything and everything outrageous. To just turn it off. We turn off our life force, turn off our feelings, turn off our sensuality, and as a consequence, we turn off our power.

When we live in a world that cannot even comprehend its own inherent bigotry against women—and thus cannot step forward to honor or support the women and girls who have been devastated by it—what is the recourse? How do we stand up to an invisible assault that does not want to be made visible? How does

a woman weather—let alone triumph over—such a global denial of her experience?

How does she locate a pathway to mend, strengthen, and remake herself in a world that does not recognize she is broken?

How does she turn on when she has been systematically denied, passed over, and subjugated?

Where is the opportunity in this story line for the victim to become the heroine?

How do we, as women, reconsecrate our holiness after we have been defiled, turned off and ignored all our lives?

The solution for the epidemic of powerlessness among women, which neither great success nor higher education is able to solve, is simple: reconnecting a woman to her pussy. Just as pussy is the source of all human life, pussy is the source of each woman's connection to her own life force, her voice, and her sense of internal power. When a woman turns on her pussy, she is actually turning on her life force and connecting to her divinity.

My life's work has been about creating this very pathway for women: the missing pathway out of victimhood and into our own inherent radiance. A pathway that does not depend on anything or anyone, but rather places the power firmly in a woman's own hands. When she designs, and then lives, her own destiny, a woman naturally sets right everything wrong in our world. But the first step is the most crucial—she has to get right with her own pussy. More than right. She has to *turn on* the most disparaged, maligned, and unknown part of herself.

As the woman behind the School of Womanly Arts, a multimillion-dollar women's educational institution based in New York City, I have made it my mission and my purpose to reclaim our power—to reclaim *pussy*, starting with the very word. I do it through the courses I teach, where I usher hundreds of women through personal growth and transformation. I take women on a journey that includes historic reckoning, sensual awakening, psychological reconfiguration, and spiritual and physical reconnection. I immerse my students in the Womanly Tools and Arts, invite them into a sustainable community of thousands of sisters

they can learn from and depend on, and extend their growth and transformation throughout the rest of their lives. The School of Womanly Arts (which I'll refer to throughout this book as the SWA) is created of women, by women, and for women. Its not-so-secret purpose is to initiate each student into full possession of her inalienable, indefatigable, and indestructible feminine spirit in the face of life's eternal, ongoing challenges. A woman who graduates from our programs takes with her a sense of connection to her irrevocable power, a depth of confidence previously unimaginable, and a righteous understanding of her value during this time and place on earth.

Picture this: a room filled with the crackling connected pulsing energy of hundreds of women, standing together in sisterhood, some for the first time, some as core community members for years, all instantly bonded. Every key of a woman's emotional, physical, and spiritual keyboard is invited to play. We rage madly together, weep to our ancient bones together, and raise the roof dancing in rapturous celebration of the privilege of life itself, together. Each woman feeling more *herself* because of the presence of the others.

And that is precisely what is going to happen for you in reading this book. You are going to connect more powerfully than you could have ever imagined to your deepest intuition, your sacred feminine power, and your voice that needs to be heard. I am going to give you some of the exercises that I use in the SWA's Mastery program, so you won't just read about what's possible, you will actually experience incredible changes inside yourself as you practice along with me.



A DISCLAIMER

In this book, I am going to use the distinctions *man* and *woman* as a structure for talking about the masculine and feminine forces in the world.

I know and love all my readers—gay, straight, bi, transgender, and otherwise—and this book is for women of all orientations. Masculine and feminine energies are at work in all individuals, in all relationships, and in the world in general. The majority of us have been taught so much about our masculine energies, and very, very little about the feminine, resulting in a challenging imbalance both individually and collectively. This book will rebalance your inner scales.

Regardless of sexual preference or gender identity, we all have masculine and feminine within us. The feminine force is primarily responsible for desire. The masculine force is primarily responsible for the production of that desire. The masculine is the rock; the feminine is the wave crashing against that rock. In same-sex relationships, these roles are often swapped back and forth, but they are often swapped in hetero relationships as well. Sometimes a hetero woman will enjoy slipping into her masculine, and a hetero man will enjoy inhabiting his feminine.

I will do my best to pay tribute to all the different constructs as I write. And, for clarity, I will use *men* and *women* as reference points. My goal is to allow you to really crystallize the differences between masculine and feminine energies, regardless of which bodies they're showing up in. That way, all of us can begin to truly enjoy the polarity between—and the union of—these two forces in our world.



This book is my offering. It contains everything I have learned, everything I have longed to share with a wider audience than could possibly fit into the enormous ballrooms and theaters where

I meet my students each year. It will walk you through the journey that each woman takes in the Mastery program, which mirrors the journey that each woman takes in her life.

The centerpiece of this protocol? You guessed it: a reclamation of the very source of her feminine power.

We begin with a reconciliation that is tragic in its very necessity. I reacquaint each student with that part of herself that is the key to everything she has ever been looking for but has been pushed into shadow, into shame. A part that has, for all intents and purposes, gone underground. Unnameable, undiscussable. Left to fend for itself or worse, to wither and die. And how else would I begin this reconciliation but in the way our very world began—with a word?

In the beginning was the Word.

The word, my darlings, is *pussy*.

And with this book, I intend to return that word to its rightful place—as the highest of all possible compliments, as a sacred living prayer.