

Foreword

Back in the early 1980s, it was Gail Straub's empowerment work that gave me the courage, and the inner tools, to start Women to Women, a women's medical center run by women, which was revolutionary at that time. This work became the basis for my first book, *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*. Since then Gail's global activism, along with her deep spiritual inquiry, have helped thousands of others around the globe find wholeness and inspiration.

Now Gail has written her fiercely honest and personal memoir *Returning to My Mother's House: Taking Back the Wisdom of the Feminine*. As I read her book I felt like I was drinking sweet cool water after being thirsty for a long time. I drank it up, every page. There is a piece of our collective woman's story that Gail describes that I've never read anywhere else. She provided me with a piece of information that has made a tremendous difference with my own daughters. It's this: Daughters often unconsciously take on the "unlived" lives of their mothers. And this "unlived" life becomes a powerful motivating force throughout our lives. Gail helped me bring this to

consciousness, thus freeing my daughters and breaking a long lineage of unconscious pain!

Gail's book describes the imprint of the feminine we each receive from our mothers; the gradual loss of both our mother's innate wisdom as well as our own; Gail's own journey that literally took her around world to find and take back her wisdom; and, finally, the commitment she ultimately made to pass on her wisdom and protect the lineage of the sacred feminine for others. Gail's story speaks to my entire generation of baby-boom women, and the way that we collectively lost our connection with the wisdom of the feminine and, often, with our own mothers. Most important, this story is about how we are finding this connection once again. Though this memoir is intensely personal, the story is universal. It's every woman's story of betraying the wisdom of our feminine and our profound longing to find it again. Because Gail's journey so clearly demonstrates that when one woman takes back her innate wisdom she does this for all the women who came before her and all the women who will come after her, all of us can find great hope for the restoration of the feminine—the source of all healing.

I am intimately familiar with the courage required to take back our female wisdom. It took me eight years to write my book *Mother-Daughter Wisdom*, a book that I really wanted to call *Mothers and Daughters: The Bond That Wounds, the Bond That Heals*. During that time, I nearly went blind in my left (feminine) eye because my process forced me to look at things I hadn't been ready to see until midlife. In order to write a book that was truly useful to women, I needed to come to grips with my own mother. Until we understand both sides of the mother-daughter bond, we can't truly reclaim our deepest feminine wisdom and power. And both Gail and I agree that this reclaiming is imperative not just for the empowerment of our daughters and grand-daughters, but also for our world.

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There isn't a woman alive who won't be able to relate to this lyrical, poignant, and beautifully written story. Like Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*, Gail's story will help women gain insight and wisdom that will not only help heal their relationships with their mothers, but could, quite frankly, help save their lives! Bless you, Gail, for doing work that heals all of us.

—Christiane Northrup, M.D.
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