spring called Kanathos, just as the goddess Aphrodite returned to the sea at Paphos. They renewed their sense of virginity, which originally meant one-in-herself, independent, and self-directed. In our ritual the women form a circle, seated around a low table that has been transformed into a visual feast with flowers, candles, Goddess figurines, shells, and other favorite objects. We begin by invoking the presence of the four directions and passing a large shell containing smoldering sage sprigs for purification. We ask the blessing of the waters that love might flow, the blessing of fire that passion might burn, the blessing of the air to cleanse a new beginning, and the blessing of earth that the lovers might stay grounded and sure. We sing a chant of the Goddess’s names: *Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali, Inanna*. We invoke the spirit of Hera and Aphrodite. Each woman offers a blessing for the bride, the union, and her new state of being. We close our eyes as one of us leads us on an inner journey of transformation in which one’s old identity, as old clothes, is sloughed off on the bank of a stream one crosses to enter a bower of eros. Someone reads from the myth of Aphrodite about her return to Paphos for her sacred bath of renewal: “There She was attended by Her Graces: Flowering, Growth, Beauty, Joy, and Radiance. They crowned Her with myrtle and lay a path of rose petals at Her feet...”41 Then we crown the bride with laurels and lay a path of rose petals before her as, humming a chant, we lead her to the grotto, that is, the transformed bathroom, filled with a profusion of flowers, numerous candles, and fragrant incense. Her warm bath of water and scented oils is sprinkled with petals, and she is left alone to immerse as gently lilting music plays. When she rejoins us, the bride reclines and we encircle her, massaging oil into her warm, soft body while we turn turns reading favorite poems of eros softly near her ear, poems of opening one’s heart and mind and body to the beloved. Then we dress the bride in our gift, an extravagantly beautiful sleeping gown. With still more blessings and radiance, we break the circle. We eat voluptuous fruits and cake.

I was given that ritual before my remarriage. The following day, still enveloped with the glow of grace and transformation, I thought back to the bridal showers I had attended during my college years and just after: ladies in cheery frocks playing parlor games, partaking of tea and cake, chatting of just about anything on the eve of a marriage except the elemental bounteouness of the female, skimming on the surface of our lives.

*Recovering an Embodied Epistemology*

The contemporary renaissance of Goddess spirituality is not merely a protest demonstration against patriarchal hegemony in Western religion or even against the broader cultural negation of the female body. It is the practice of an embodied way of knowing and being in the world. We have immersed ourselves in the erotic realm of myth, symbol, poetry, song, dance, and ritual for more than fifteen years in order to *come to our senses*. Having been educated within the patriarchal framework of tightly bound “reason” and supposedly detached “objectivity,” we hungered to feed our capabilities of perceiving subtle, encompassing, scrumptious connectedness emanating from every direction of our being. We longed for authenticity, the truth of our being. Boxed in by cultural denial, we dissolved the boxes by forming a circle, an ever-widening circle of the empowering realization that being is being-in-relation, that we come to know the larger reality of humanity, Earthbody, and cosmos through the body, not by escaping the personal to an abstract system, and that apprehending our dynamic embeddedness in the unitive unfolding brings wisdom and grace to our subjectivity—including our conceptualizing and theorizing.

These metaphysical observations, considered so elementary in nonpatriarchal, nonmodern cultures, challenge the entire defense system that has been erected by patriarchal, disembodied epistemology, the seemingly inviolable split between the knowing subject and the passive object about which data is gathered. The
Western notion of “reason” placed gestalt sensibilities and feelings of interrelatedness beyond the pale of relevance. That orientation evolved not because of constitutional imperatives of the male, but because of the profound cultural shift away from a worldview in which males as well as females felt a secure sense of connectedness with the dynamics of the sacred Earthbody to a worldview in which males were set apart from the “dangers” of nature and the female and became focused on reactive autonomy, separateness, and control. Because of the perceived threat posed by emotion, desire, and sexuality to rational control, a fundamental opposition was established between eros and cognition and, hence, between women and rational thought. In the analyses of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Freud, for example, reason emerges under the authority and pressure of a patriarchal father. In Plato and Descartes, reason emerges only when nature, which was strongly associated with the female, is posited as oppositional with an “inevitable” moment of domination.

The patriarchal norms for reason and objectivity have been constructed as the (male) triumphant dismissal and containment of the (female) senses. The sense of sight, which allows measurement and instrumentation, has been the most highly valued mode of obtaining information since, as Plato noted, it is thought to be less entangled with the “prison house” of the body than are the other senses. Deconstructive postmodernism continues the patriarchal project of distrusting and devaluing the body by regarding it as a dumb receptacle of power-laden invasions, an unreliable and even treacherous collaborator. Within that framework of perception, any bodily sensation is suspect: It is most likely the result of devious invasions of culture and community. Hence, the body must be resisted in order to protect autonomy.

The advent of Cartesian rationalism, which has been called a “super-masculinization of rational thought,” initiated the development of modern philosophy. Susan Bordo has proposed that the “great Cartesian anxiety,” his epistemological insecurity that is resolved via rigorous processes of doubt, was actually a dimension of anxiety over separation from the organic female universe of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. She posits Cartesian objectivism as a defensive response to that separation anxiety, an aggressive intellectual flight from the feminine rather than simply the confident articulation of a positive new epistemological ideal. Descartes published his *Meditations on First Philosophy* in 1641, at the close of a century that had seen an extreme food crisis, wars, plague, and devastating poverty. It was also an era of intense gynophobia, which was expressed in the prevailing ideas on the need to bring the untamed natural power of female generativity under male control. The patriarchal hysteria that resulted in the witch burnings and related persecution was fueled by nightmare fantasies about female power. Kramer and Sprenger’s *Malleus Maleficarum*, the authoritative text widely used by the prosecutors, accuses witches of a plethora of natural and supernatural crimes involving sexuality, conception, and birth. Just as Bacon identified nature as needing forceful male control, so the gradual male takeover of birthing by obstetrics was said to resolve the “disorder” of birth.

The medieval sense of oneness, continuity, and organic justice was replaced by the sense of the universe as an indifferent home. Nature came to be perceived as an unruly and even malevolent virago. Instead of organic unity, one perceived only “I” and an unpredictable “she.” The passions behind the Cartesian revolution burned not merely to replace the enervated, legalistic system of scholasticism, but to tame the female universe. The practitioners of empirical science used metaphors that express heady delight in assaulting nature in order to reveal her “secrets,” while rationalism philosophically neutered her vitality. With the cosmos reduced to dead matter functioning as mechanically as a clockwork, the modern era grew confident of conquering nature through “objective” knowledge.

Modern faith in the patriarchal sense of reason and objectivity, based on detaching oneself from the treacherous emotions and relational thinking, has shaped the development of science, medicine, scientism in the social sciences, law, commerce, and government. The grand edifice of rationalism and objectivism stood, of
course, on the extremely subjective procedure of selecting certain bits of information from the gestalt field that encompasses every situation and then shining the light of “reason” on those “objectively” considered “facts,” which were “quite obviously” the only noteworthy aspects of the situation. People ignorant of, or resistant to, the cultural rules of what is and is not engaged within patriarchal rationalism might argue that much more of the gestalt awareness, including feelings, must be considered to attain even a rudimentary systematic knowledge, but, on the whole, citizens in modern Western societies have abided by the orthodox patriarchal cultural messages concerning the proper shaping of rational consideration.

Because distancing oneself from the relational gestalt assuages the culturally imposed existential fears of men under patriarchy, the restricted awareness required by patriarchal rationalism feels quite natural and generally becomes habitual with them. In a well-known set of experiments to determine whether there were differences correlating with gender in the way people perceive a figure embedded in a surrounding field, H. A. Witkin and his colleagues in 1962 designed a procedure whereby the subjects could either separate out the figure from the surrounding field or see the whole, that is, see the figure as part of the surrounding field, or the gestalt. In many of the experiments the researchers found women more likely to see the embedded figure and surrounding field as a whole, while men were more likely to separate out the figure from its context. Reflecting the values of patriarchal culture, Witkin labeled this phenomenon with a positive term for the detaching behavior of most of the men (“field independent”) and a pejorative term for the relational behavior of most of the women (“field dependent”).

Relational perception, so threatening to the patriarchal touchstones of autonomy, separateness, and control, is simply devalued as dependent and hence inferior.

The gender-based differences in patriarchal culture concerning relational cognition—either avoid it like the plague or embrace it—account for gender-based differences in the use of language. According to feminist linguistic studies, women tend to view conversation as the relational glue that holds everything together, while men tend to view it as yet another form of competing for control, protecting independence, or negotiating for status. Perhaps that explains linguists’ findings that, although women are societally perceived as nattering on endlessly, monitored mixed-sex conversations show that men, in fact, talk more, interrupt much more, and usually set the topic of discussion, often ignoring subjects raised by women.

It is not surprising that men often experience more difficulty than women in breaking the grip of patriarchal conceptualization when they try to shift to a worldview of holism and interrelatedness. I have heard a cognitive biologist explain that cognition, and life itself, far from being a rigid matter of stimulus-and-automatic-response, is actually a mutual, creative interaction between organism and environment—from which he concludes that the organism is “autonomous”! Would not “creative interaction” be a more accurate term for the process than “autonomy”? I have heard a cultural historian extol the new perceptions of our interconnected universe and the dynamic play of unimaginable multiplicity only to conclude that “opposites are basic and opposition essential.” Surely the holistic discoveries in many areas of science recently, like the insights of the wisdom traditions, indicate that the cherished patriarchal notion of dialectic struggle as the universal norm for creativity and survival must yield to awareness of far more complex “multilectic” interactions.

I have heard various male lecturers tout interactive, contextual epistemology—extrapolated from constructivist philosophy and general systems theory—and arrive, not at a sense of the extended self and a network of interactive bonding and caring, but at the comfortably patriarchal conclusion that since no one any longer can claim to perceive or know anything as objective reality, they have no grounds to impose their perceptions, judgments, and values on others: everyone will be free of everybody else!

The first time women hear—from members of the sex having an excess of privilege and power in our society—that “new
thinking” declaration of independence, many of us experience a bodily reaction, a tightening in the solar plexus and the groin, a tension throughout the body. What becomes of ethics and morals? That rape or battering is a violent assault might be the perception of the victim but not the attacker. That a rape took place at all might be regarded as the “cognitive construction” of the victim and even a witness, but that would be merely their respective idiosyncratic interaction with other organisms and phenomena.

I once watched a seminar of graduate students listen to a lecturer who first discussed the interactive nature of being and then drew relativist, pro-autonomy conclusions. Expressions of concern were manifested on most of the women’s faces, and some began to question the speaker; the men saw no problem with the presentation until the discussion, and then most of them agreed that the women had raised sound concerns. When asked how a community with such a worldview could even pass laws against assault and other crime, the lecturer responded that such laws could be enforced, but they would no longer be associated with “right” or “wrong,” merely the preferences of that particular community. Since we now know that all human behavior is part of a larger dynamic, he explained, “wrongdoing” or “evil” or “culpability” can no longer be located in any one being or group. Our being is interactive, but everyone creatively constructs his own reality, so our behavior is essentially autonomous, he asserted. If ever there were a case of a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, such patriarchal conclusions drawn from systemic analysis must surely qualify. If one cultivates a depth practice in a spiritual tradition, one experiences not only the epistemological phenomenon of interactive subjectivity but also deep empathy and constitutional connectedness with all being. The patriarchal obsession with ultimate freedom from everyone else then seems a comical notion. Hearing someone’s joy or pain, one cares, one’s whole-body sensitivity receives it, rather than shrugging it off as just another perceptual construction, holding relationship at arm’s length once again.

Nurturing an empathetic and affectionate “feeling for the organism,” the geneticist and Nobel Laureate Barbara McClintock spent decades insistently cutting through the patriarchal dualisms of either rationality or emotional warmth, either objectivity or bonding, either truth or involvement, either science or love. She discovered genetic transposition, the ability of “regulator” and “operator” genes to change positions on a chromosome, by cultivating pure mindstates of absorption with openness to “hearing” what the cells of corn plants had to tell her, “letting” it come to her. She observed the markings and patterns of coloration on the leaves and kernels, as well as the configurations of the chromosomes as they appeared under a microscope. She became aware that each plant was unique and yet was in relationship with her and with the larger reality. Long ignored and ridiculed by her scientific colleagues, she proudly calls herself a mystic. She performs ritual arts of the Earthbody through a microscope.

A feeling of empathetic connection with a corn plant, a member of an endangered species, a homeless person, or a family member is not an attractive option to men whose psyche is shaped by patriarchal fears that any emotional “entanglement” can render one vulnerable. One cannot experience embodied ways of knowing in a universe of dynamic intersubjectivity and unitive being if one is locked in a lifelong psychic struggle with the body—one’s own physicality, one’s mother’s womb-body, all womb-bodies, the Earthbody, the generative cosmos. The ritual arts of Goddess spirituality have attracted men as well as women because they are healing and radically reconstructive. They evoke possibilities for realizing one’s uniquely felt relationship with divine creativity and ultimate mystery in the universe.

Some feminists have called this embodied and deeply connected way of knowing “lateral transcendence” or “dynamic objectivity.” In Goddess spirituality we call it a blessing, an aura of grace. When we part we say, “Blessed be.”


56. The anthropologist and naturalist Loren Eiseley felt that we humans have violated our nature by our exploitive response to the universe. He pointed out that we are ontologically linked with all of nature because of the evolutionary stages we have shared. See The Immense Journey (New York: Vintage Books, 1957) and The Invisible Pyramid (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

57. All-species parades are community celebrations of the animal citizens in the bioregion. Generally they feature children in costumes of local animals. Further information is available from the All-Species Project, 804 Apodaca Hill, Santa Fe, NM 87501.

58. For example, a tree-planting ceremony at home or on public land needing more vegetation could be part of rites of baptism, First Communion, marriage, and funerals. The liturgical language used in all of those ceremonies could be enriched by including awareness and appreciation of the creation.

An example of moving in the other direction, that is, bringing rituals of blessing and thanksgiving to events of the natural world, is offered by Gertrude Mueller Nelson in “Blessing for First Fruits and Herbs” using Psalm 65 and derived from “the old ones found in the Roman Ritual” in her inspiring book To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 211.

59. People who observe all eight of the old “Earth holy days” usually consider themselves part of the neo-Pagan movement. “Pagan” means “country person.”

60. The spring garland for the Earth in that ritual was the idea of the late Leslie Mahler, a creative and inspiring ritualist whose presence is deeply missed. Some of the other elements, including the songs, traveled from other ritual groups. A cassette tape of several widely used Earth-r ritual songs, Reclaiming Chants, is available from the Reclaiming Collective, P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.


Chapter 4 • Embracing the Body


4. Sanday, Female Power and Male Dominance, 35.

5. “The Shocking Rape Facts,” San Francisco Chronicle, 14 May 1990; citations, using FBI figures, from Karen Johnson and Tom Ferguson, Trusting Ourselves, the Sourcebook on Psychology for Women (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990). The number of reported rapes, that is, the FBI figures, is thought to be much smaller than the number of actual rapes.

Also see Diana E. H. Russell, Sexual Exploitation (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984). According to Russell’s probability sample survey of 930 women in San Francisco, 44 percent had been victims of rape or attempted rape at least once in their lifetime. Of those who had been raped, 50 percent had been raped more than once.

A survey of 1,292 women, conducted by Glamour magazine in 1989, found that only 4 percent of those women who had been sexually abused before age eighteen had been abused by a stranger. For 28 percent the abuser was their father; for 31 percent it was another blood relative; for 23 percent it was an unrelated man they knew; and for 13 percent it was a stepfather or boyfriend of their mother.


9. See Kathleen Hirsch, Songs from the Alley (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1989).


Also see Jane Caputi and Diana E. H. Russell, “Femicide: Speaking the Unspeaking,” Ms., vol. 1, no. 2 (Sept./Oct. 1990): 34-37. The authors suggest femicide to name the category of murders of women by men who were motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women. “Murder is simply the most extreme form of sexist terrorism... Femicide includes mutilation murder, rape murder, battery that escalates into murder; historical immolation of witches in Europe; historical and contemporary immolation of brides and widows in India; and ‘honor crimes’ in some Latin and Middle Eastern countries, where women believed to have lost their virginity sometimes are killed by male relatives.”


According to the findings presented at the 34th session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, which ended in March 1990, there
has been no tangible progress in achieving real equality for women throughout the world. (See "No Real Progress in Achieving Women's Equality," Fellowship, Fellowship of Reconciliation, June 1990, 25.)


14. See Bettina Birch, Radical by Design (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), a biography of the British fashion designer Elizabeth Hawes. Birch describes an evening in 1938 when Hawes's husband, the film director Joseph Losey, invited Hemingway over to dinner. When Hemingway arrived and saw Hawes's protruding abdomen, he asked Losey if they really had to dine with her at the table because he could not stand the sight of pregnant women.


Also see Arianna Stassinopoulos Huffington, Picasso: Creator and Destroyer (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

Steven Connor concludes in Postmodernist Culture (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 110, that the postmodern literary critic Ihab Hassan asserts "the heroic maleness of modernist/postmodernist denial against the disgusting 'female' acquiescence of matter, of the world, history, tradition."

17. Structuralism is a mode of analysis based on the central tenet that all societies and cultures possess a common and invariant structure. Based on the anthropological writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss, structuralists perceive "deep" structures composed of interacting, complementary "opposites," such as man and woman, in all cultural expressions.


19. It is apparent to those who will admit that personal desires have some influence on "pure scholarship" that Foucault, as a homosexual in a society that oppresses homosexuals because such behavior is taken to be "obviously" depraved, had something of a personal stake in proving that a society's responses to sexual acts are entirely culturally constructed. If the act of sodomy were to be decriminalized and neutralized, the same would have to be done with rape, as specifically sexual assault.


22. The following are examples of works that explore themes of cultural feminism. Chrysalis magazine, published in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was a forum of cultural feminism. Among the articles it published were "The Freudian Cover-Up: The Sexual Abuse of Children" by Florence Rush, "Psychoanalysis, Patriarchy, and Power" by Jean Baker Miller, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, and Gynephobia" by Adrienne Rich, "The Erotic as Power" by Audre Lorde, and "Nuclear Madness: An Interview with Helen Caldicott." Woman and Nature by Susan Griffin (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), plus scores of books on the history and relevance of Goddess spirituality (see "Related Reading" at the end of this book) explore cultural history from a feminist perspective. Two other expressions of cultural feminism are my "Naming the Cultural Forces that Push Us toward War" in Exposing Nuclear Fallacies, ed. Diana E. H. Russell (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989) and my introduction to The Politics of Women's Spirituality (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), which proposes, among other things, that cultural power hoarded by males is a compensatory response to a fearful perception of the elemental power of the female, and that Jungian notions of the "eternal feminine" and the passive receptivity it entails are cultural constructions of patriarchy rather than universal truths about females.

23. See Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Revising Committee, The Woman's Bible (1885), republished as The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible (New York: Arno Press, 1974). Also available by then was Mary Daly's Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), which she refers to in the introduction as a sequel to The Church and the Second Sex and which advocated women's charting a postpatriarchal path.

It is important to note that Canaan was one of the last, not first, areas in the eastern Mediterranean region and southeastern Europe to "go patriarchal." The Yahwehists who migrated into Canaan definitely were not the sole cause of the destruction of all Goddess religion.


27. Marija Gimbutas's pioneering archaeological work concerning Old Europe falls into two areas: (1) the nature of society in Old Europe and the transformation caused by the Indo-European migrations, and (2) archaeo-mythology, a field she invented in order to consider the religious significance of excavated artifacts. The nature of the Old European substratum and
the social shift she has documented with regard to the first area of research is widely accepted by archaeologists internationally; some of her interpretive work associated with the second area is controversial among certain archaeologists.


For a thoughtful exploration of this experience, see Adrienne Rich, “Pre-patriarchal Female/Goddess Images,” in The Politics of Women’s Spirituality (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), excerpted from her Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976).

See Gimbutas, Language of the Goddess.

Skeptic sometimes accuse feminist cultural historians of “prettifying” the pre-Indo-European goddesses by ignoring the bloodthirsty, devouring ones, which they are certain must have existed. Actually, those forms seem to arise with the advent of patriarchal culture. The pre-patriarchal goddesses represented the entire cycle of being—birth, maturation, death, regeneration—but apparently not as demonic forces. Even Kali, the devouring Hindu goddess, is believed by many scholars to be a revised version of an indigenous Earth goddess who long predated the Aryan invasion; see the discussion by David R. Kinsley in chapter three of The Sword and the Flute: Kali and Krsna (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975).


Also see Mary Beth Edelson, Seven Cycles: Public Rituals; Seven Sites: Painting on Walls; and Shape Shifters: Seven Mediums (all available from the artist: 110 Mercer St., New York, NY 10012).


Surely penis envy is not the universal response that Freud assumed it to be. The feminist author Elizabeth Dodson Gray relates a young mother’s account of the aftermath of a visit in which her pre-school-age daughter took a bath with a boy of the same age. After the boy and his mother had left, the girl said to her mother with earnest compassion, “Isn’t it a blessing it didn’t grow on his face?”


Also see the special issue of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1981, vol. 7, no. 1, on French feminism, focusing on the works of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Christine Fauré.

33. Although the focus of this chapter is the renewal of Goddess spirituality by women who left institutional patriarchal religion, I do not mean to imply that only those women who left were feminist. A strong feminist movement exists today within both Judaism and Christianity (see “Related Reading” for chapter 5). An example is the response issued in 1990 by Rosemary Radford Ruether and several Catholic women’s organizations to the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter on women. Here is an excerpt from their open letter, which was published in Christianity and Crisis, vol. 50, no. 8 (28 May 1990):

In the new draft of the pastoral letter on women which your office has recently released you call on the world to repent of sexism and to give to women that full equality of personhood which is their God-given nature. Yet your pastoral reaffirms every aspect of the patriarchal system which is the basis of sexism. Dear Bishops, you embarrass us. You insult our intelligence.

What you want, Dear Bishops, is to seduce us into helping to rescue your patriarchal ecclesial system, while conceding nothing that is essential to that system itself.

Let me say clearly to you, Dear Bishops, we will not raise one cent for your patriarchal church. We will not lift one finger to rescue your patriarchal system. We will not bend one knee to worship the patriarchal idol that you blasphemously insist on calling “God.” We are not fooled.

We have heard the gospel of the authentic Jesus, the Christ: good news to the poor, release to the captives, the setting at liberty of those who are oppressed. We are raising money to promote the ministries of that authentic gospel.

But not one cent, not one finger lifted, not one knee bent for the church of patriarchy: the arrogant, blind, hypocritical, unrepentant Church of patriarchy.

34. The internationally known postmodern semiotist Umberto Eco has noted, perhaps inadvertently, that this traditional motivation for men raised under
patriarchy indeed helped shape his life. At twenty-two he decided that intimacy itself held far less appeal than the desire to project his name (or “sign”) beyond the death of the body via writing a book and making a son. For this budding semioticist, the abstract “sign” of his own being (his name) seemed to be the primary focus in life. (See Marshall Blonsky, "A Literary High-Wire Act," *New York Times Magazine*, 10 Dec. 1989, 79.)


36. A spiral dance, developed by Starhawk and the Reclaiming Collective, has become a popular closing ceremony at conferences. During the course of the spiraling, one sees the face (and body) of each participant pass before him or her twice. For directions and a diagram, see Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 246–47.

37. Apparently the label “mytho-poetic” was attached to the “earthy masculinity” branch of the men's movement by Shepherd Bliss in the mid-1980s. Robert Bly is probably the best-known practitioner. For a feminist response to Bly's analyses about men's liberation that is both appreciative and critical, see Terry Allen Kupers, "Feminist Men," *Tikkun: a Bimonthly Jewish Critique of Politics, Culture, and Society*, July/Aug. 1990, 33–38.

38. A professor of religious studies told me of attending a conference on ecology and religion and hearing a male speaker insist that we must stop “the rape of Mother Earth” and stop “ripping into Her placenta.” He repeated the latter phrase frequently, always with a passionate tone that sounded increasingly sadistic. Is that a common, if unspoken, response in patriarchal culture? I do not claim to know.

39. This objection was first raised, to my knowledge, by Elizabeth Dodson Gray.

40. Not all women's ritual groups, of course, locate themselves within the Goddess tradition. For an account of Christian-based rituals conducted with her women's group and with her family, see Gertrude Mueller Nelson's lovely *To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986).


44. Flax, "Political Philosophy."


49. Also see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).


52. See Linda Holley, "Thinking with the Weight of the Earth: Feminist Contributions to an Epistemology of Concreteness," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 1–23. Holley's concept of "lateral transcendence" describes the act of knowing as "a mode of transcendence based on being-inrelation-to, which, by rendering the knower incarnate, lessens the temptation to abstract 'things' from concrete space and time." She explains that this concept builds on Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "lateral universal."

I find her article altogether admirable, with the exception of a problem with terminology: she uses the unqualified term "postmodern" mostly to draw from postmodern physics so assumes the acceptance of the concept of a whole, a cosmos, as in ecological postmodernism. However, deconstructive postmodernists rooting their thinking in the works of Foucault, Derrida, and others dismiss such an assertion as merely "the narrative of holism," yet another cultural invention of scientists. They certainly would not call holism "postmodern."

52. Evelyn Fox Keller, “Dynamic Objectivity: Love, Power, and Knowledge,” chapter six, in *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985). "Dynamic objectivity" is the pursuit of a form of knowledge that grants to the world around us independent integrity but does so in a way that remains cognizant of, indeed relies on, our connectivity with that world” (117).

Chapter 5 • Who Is the Other?