WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY: WOMEN AS CREATIVE NARRATORS IN THE DISCOURSE ON SPIRITUALITY

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

This research examines the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement. In the context of this research, spirituality narratives are defined as stories that provide histories, myths, and explanations of the role of humans in the cosmos.

Of special interest in this study are those narratives within the Women's Spirituality Movement that constitute what are termed "goddess spirituality" and the "new witchcraft" or "wicce." In the United States, these two spirituality narratives have become increasingly visible during the last three decades.

The goal of this inquiry is to enhance understanding of how people construct spirituality narratives (or any other system of meaning or knowledge). This process is demonstrated by focusing on the construction of narratives within the Women's Spirituality Movement. Utilizing the symbolic interactionist perspective, this goal is achieved by: (1) identifying and describing narrative variations within the Women's Spirituality Movement; (2) identifying and describing the principle spirituality narratives that provide the symbols and language used in the construction of women's spirituality narratives; (3) demonstrating how people construct meaning (both of self and of the world) through the manipulation of language; and (4) presenting a visual model that illustrates the sociocultural context within which all spirituality narratives are constructed.

Together, the spirituality narratives (both principle narratives and new constructions) and the sociocultural context produce a universe of discourse on spirituality. A universe of discourse consists of shared symbols and ideas that provide the framework for

ongoing interaction. This research uses written texts representative of goddess spirituality, the new witchcraft, and other related spirituality narratives to construct a model of a universe of discourse on spirituality.

Background of the Study

The Sociocultural Context: The Meaning of Secularization

Secularization is a major foundational concept in the sociology of religion. Despite continued confusion and controversy concerning the process and relevance of secularization, the concept maintains a central position in research attempting to understand the role of religion in a postmodern world. A definition of secularization suggested by Peter Berger in The Sacred Canopy is "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols" (Berger 107). Andrew Greeley, in a much simpler explanation of secularization, states secularization " . . . means essentially that religion is less important now than it was in the past" (Johnstone 272). Although some consider secularization no longer meaningful due to its ideologically-charged usage in past dialogues (Berger 106), others think the term must be retained " . . . if we hope to make sense of contemporary developments in religion . . ." (Johnstone 271). Still others believe there is an imperative to deconstruct and reconstruct the concept to assure more meaningful analyses of contemporary society. "In this regard, Shibley suggests a reconceptualization of secularization." He states that thinking in terms of either secular or sacred is no longer relevant. Rather, "paradoxically our world is both at the same time . . ." (Shibley qtd. in Chalfant 115). Similarly, Daniele Hervieu-Leger suggests that we must "radically redefine secularization . . . .. She offers as a reconstruction of the meaning of secularization: "the process whereby religion organizes itself to meet the challenges left by modernity . . ." (Swatos x).

In The Future of Religion Stark and Bainbridge posit yet another view of secularization. They state that the process of secularization should not be conceived of as a linear process or as being specific to the modern era. Rather, there exists a dialectical relationship between secularization and sacralization in all societies. They acknowledge the tendency toward secularization in modern and postmodern societies, but suggest that two other interrelated processes--revival and innovation--occur dialectically with secularization, as mystery and magic are replaced or removed from the world. Revival is the process by which sects reject traditional religious organizations to combat what is perceived as a "too-worldly" world. Innovation is the creation of new religions, or cults, primarily through the synthesis of two or more older belief systems or by importing religious traditions from other cultures. According to Stark and Bainbridge, the three processes combined--secularization, revival, and innovation--comprise the dynamic of ongoing religious change.

The need for studies that " . . . chart the main contours . . . " of new religious movements " . . . in relation to one another and in relation to the broader social and cultural changes . . ." (Beckford 1) is being expressed increasingly by sociologists of religion. In this study, I identify, describe, and analyze a number of important narratives on religion and spirituality that exist in the United States with the goal of addressing the larger sociocultural questions concerning the nature of secularization discussed above. Further, by focusing on the specific content within and the relationships among these spirituality narratives, I respond to five megatrends identified as crucial concerns in future research on religion in The Future of Sociology (Shupe and Hadden in Borgatta and Cook 131). The five megatrends are:

1. The challenge to secularization theory
2. The acceleration of religious conflict in the United States
3. The entrenchment of privatized religion

4. Retrenchment of many mainline denominations
5. New emerging forms of piety

These megatrends are related to the central questions in this study: What are the content and form of new narratives on spirituality? In what ways do these spirituality narratives oppose the traditionally dominant narrative on religion in the United States? What is the relationship between the construction of the new spirituality narratives and the ongoing construction of self? Do these narratives represent reactions against secularization, a continuation of secularization, or a new process requiring a reconstruction of secularization theory?

A Challenge to Secularization Theory: The Women's Spirituality Movement

One apparent challenge to the theory that the world--especially the Western world--is engaged in a linear "process of replacement of religious faith with faith in scientific principles" (Johnstone 273) is the Women's Spirituality Movement.

"The Feminist Movement represents the most broad-based critique of traditional social arrangements, from the interpersonal to the institutional, of any contemporary social movement" (Ferree and Hess xi). One aspect of the Feminist Movement which has been gaining momentum during the last thirty years is Women's Spirituality. Women's Spirituality, often referred to as the "Third Wave of Feminism" (Jordan 1991), in common with the broader Feminist Movement, consists of multiple and diverse strands. The connecting premise among the various strands is the belief that the Judeo-Christian tradition is a sexist religion " . . . with a male God and traditions of male leadership that legitimate the superiority of men in family and society" (Christ and Plaskow 1).

Johnstone in his discussion of "Women and Religion" (183-196) constructed a typology consisting of three categories of response by women to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The first he calls "tradition-affirming." This category includes two subcatego-

ries: (1) acceptance of the "subordinate female religious role," and (2) participation in the "specialized role . . . typified in the female monastic orders within Roman Catholicism." Johnstone's second category of response is "tradition-reforming." Again, he has identified two subcategories: (1) advocation of "open ordination" to the ministry for women, and (2) the "radical obedience" response formulated by Rosemary Radford Ruether which calls for major "reshaping" of the Christian Church while maintaining the historic message of the tradition. The third category of response constructed by Johnstone is the "revolutionary" response. Within this category he describes two subthemes: (1) the "religious exodus proposal" called for by Mary Daly in which she prescribes leaving the church of the fathers and building a new church that is centered in women's experiences, and (2) witchcraft, which posits the superiority of a female deity.

This study focuses on "revolutionary" responses that incorporate myths, images, and symbols of the goddess into their spirituality narratives. As with the larger Women's Spirituality Movement, there are several variations within the goddess spirituality narrative. Even the more specific goddess spirituality narrative, witchcraft, encompasses several traditions. Historically, both goddess narratives and witchcraft narratives have been subsumed under the concepts of cult or the esoteric and the occult.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Approaches to the Study of Other Spirituality Narratives

The Cult as a Religious Organizational Type

The religious phenomena, identified as other spirituality narratives in this research, have been understood traditionally as cults or as extensions and refinements of the Weberian-Troeltsch church-sect typology. The church-sect typology, introduced by Weber, is " . . . a way of identifying differences among religious groups" (Johnstone 72). The church-sect typology is conceptually a continuum of religious organizational types with the church and the sect types representing the polar ends of the continuum. Other variations of religious organization falling within the continuum include denominations and cults.

Two interpretations of the church-sect typology have been identified by Demerath and Hammond (qtd. in Johnstone 72-73). Each of these interpretations suggests a different focus for research. The first interpretation requires an emphasis on the "internal characteristics" of the various religious organizational types. The second interpretation, which is utilized in this study, focuses on the "external relationships" among the various religious types and the social context within which they exist.

"The classic definition of the church identified with Weber and refined by Troeltsch is that of a religious organization that is an institution of the society, supporting and supported by the other institutions" (Hargrove 119). According to Wallis' "Typology

of Ideological Collectives," the defining characteristics of the church are that it is "uniquely legitimate" and "respectable" (Hargrove 323). The religious organizational type, denomination, is the dominant religious form in America today. Denominations represent variations of one accepted religious tradition that exist in basic cooperation in and with society. Denominations, according to Wallis' typology, are "pluralistically legitimate" and "respectable" (Hargrove 323).

In contrast with the legitimate character of the church or denomination in society, sects and cults are religious organizational types that oppose the dominant religious traditions of society and are typically characterized as deviant. Various suggestions have been made for differentiating between the opposition offered by sects and cults. Wallis delineates between the two types in the same manner as he distinguishes between church and denomination. According to his typology, sects are "uniquely legitimate" and "deviant" while cults are "pluralistically legitimate" and "deviant" (Hargrove 323). Wallis, therefore, defines both sects and cults as deviant in terms of society's accepted religious forms but states the difference between the two types is determined by the claims made on their members. Whereas, " . . . sects must have some form of strict boundary maintenance," cults do not require that their members restrict " . . . their ideology or their membership to a single group" (Wallis qtd. in Hargrove 323).

Another suggestion for distinguishing between sects and cults is posited by Stark and Bainbridge in The Future of Religion. As discussed in the Introduction of this paper, Stark and Bainbridge define sects as religious groups that break off from traditional religious institutions in protest of the increasing secularization of those institutions and society. Cults do not break off from traditional religious institutions. Rather, they are formed independently by merging beliefs from various sources to create a "new" belief system.

Regardless of the conceptualization of sects and cults, these phenomena have been the focus of much sociological research on religion in the last three decades. Turner and Robbins point out that while the sociology of religion traditionally has been a "sociology of Christianity" (Turner 5), the discipline has recently shifted its attention in response to the proliferation of sects and cults that resulted from the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Robbins 150). The research on cults has taken two prominent paths: studies that focus on the continued refinement of the church-sect typology (Bird; Anthony; Wilber; Anderson; Wallis in Robbins 1992) and studies that describe the process of becoming a cult member (Lofland and Skonovd; Snow and Machalek; Long and Hadden; Barker; Greil and Rudy in Robbins 1992).

The Future of Religion by Stark and Bainbridge represents a study in which the researchers have attempted to define more clearly the variations of religious organizational types. They begin with the church-sect typology and proceed to an in-depth analysis of the nature of sects and cults. Their approach is grounded in exchange theory and, as such, has been criticized as too rational in its assumptions (Hargrove 44). In spite of claims of reductionism, however, they offer extensive empirical data--both contemporary and historical--on the variety and scope of sects and cults in America. Within the context of this study, the most important aspects of Stark and Bainbridge's work are the distinctions that they make between sects and cults and their discussion of different types of cults.

Stark and Bainbridge define all cults as ". . . novel, deviant faiths" (207); however, they explicate the concept of cult further by identifying "three degrees of organization (or lack of organization) . . ." among cults (Stark and Bainbridge 26). The cult type with the least amount of organization they call "audience cults" (Stark and Bainbridge 26). Participants in audience cults ". . . take part . . . [almost] . . . entirely through the mass media . . ." (Stark and Bainbridge 208). The extensive availability of

books (especially science fiction and fantasy), journals, newsletters, newspapers, and computer networks in a postmodern, high-technology culture allows members of audience cults to participate in a variety of cults simultaneously (Stark and Bainbridge 210). Audience cult members personify the metaphor "spiritual supermarket." The second organizational type of cult identified by Stark and Bainbridge is "client cult." Client cults most often take the form of a therapeutic relationship with a consultant/therapist and a consumer/client. Channelers, psychics, and palm readers represent contemporary services offered to client cult members. "Cult movements" are the third organizational type of cult discussed in The Future of Religion. Although cult movememts involve varying degrees of organization, Stark and Bainbridge state that "cult movements are full-fledged religious organizations . . . [in which] . . . dual membership . . . is out" and "attempts to cause social change . . . become central to the group agenda" (Stark and Bainbridge).

Whereas Stark and Bainbridge concentrate on differentiating among different types of cults, the Lofland-Stark process model focuses on the process of becoming a cult member. This "value-added" model . . . is identified by Robbins as one of the ". . . most influential sociological models of the conversion-committment process in religious movements . . ." (Robbins 79). The model, constructed from observations made in a study of the Sun Myung Moon cult, describes the process of conversion as movement through "seven sequential states . . . to full commitment" (Robbins 79). Robbins summarizes the process as follows:

> a person (1) experiences acute and persistent tensions, (2) within a religious problem-solving perspective, (3) which leads the individual to define himself as a religious seeker, (4) after which he encounters the movement at a crucial turning point in his life, (5) and forms an affective bond with one or more converts, (6) after which extra-cult attachments become attenuated, and (7) the convert is exposed to intensive interaction within the group (79-80).

Both types of inquiry--those that describe the conversion process and those that delineate between the various types of cults--provide insights useful to the study of other spirituality narratives; however, more relevant to this examination of goddess spirituality are studies of the esoteric and the occult.

The Esoteric and the Occult

The classic foundation for the study of the esoteric and the occult is Simmel's essay on secret societies. Central to Simmel's work is his recognition that secret societies are based upon the concept of exclusion. "The secret society sets itself as a special society in antithesis with the wider association included within the greater society. This antithesis, whatever its purpose, is at all events intended in the spirit of exclusion" (Simmel 87). A sociology of the esoteric and the occult, following Simmel's approach, would focus on systems of thought which are hidden or concealed except from an elite few and which are in opposition to the dominant systems of thought in society.

Margot Adler in Drawing Down the Moon states that there are two basic categories of "theories that attempt to explain the growth of new magical and religious groups": (1) theories that define these activities as expressions of "regression, escape, or retreat", and (2) theories that define alternative spiritual systems as "positive reactions to, or rebellion against, the limitations of modern technology, in which occult ideas are energizing and innovative" (355). The first type of theory is typified by psychological and political theories. Adler identifies as examples of this type of theory Christopher Lasch's work on the culture of narcissm and Marxist political theories. As examples of the second type of theory, Adler cites the works of Mircea Eliade, Edward Tiryakian, and Marcello Truzzi. Tiryakian and Truzzi are the most significant to this inquiry as they provided early statements on the sociology of the esoteric and the occult.

In "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," Tiryakian says that there are basic concepts that must be defined before a sociology of the esoteric can be developed. These concepts are: culture, exoteric culture, esoteric culture, and the occult. Subsuming the sociology of the esoteric under the sociology of culture, he begins by defining culture as "a collective paradigm which provides basic interpretations and justifications of ongoing social existence" (Tiryakian 268). Culture consists of "exoteric culture" which provides the meaning for "the everyday social world" (Tiryakian 264) and "esoteric culture" which provides a constant "subsystem" of society (Tiryakian 268). Esoteric culture is a "seat of inspiration" for new ideas and, therefore, acts as a catalyst for sociocultural change. Esoteric culture as defined by Tiryakian consists of "religiophilosophical belief systems which underlie occult practices" (Tiryakian 265-266). Occult practices in this context are "intentional . . . techniques . . . which draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature of the cosmos" and "which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results" (Tiryakian 265).

Tiryakian states that inherent in the study of esoteric culture is the acknowledgement of its secret character (Tiryakian 275). Marcello Truzzi in "Definition and Dimensions of the Occult: Towards a Sociological Perspective" responds to this assumption of a link between esoteric culture and secrecy stating that "historically, this has been a prominent characteristic, but in recent years, privacy hardly seems a defining characteristic of the occult" (Truzzi 251). This statement correlates with the earlier discussion of Stark and Bainbridge's concept of "audience cults." Members of audience cults participate primarily through books, journals, and texts of "forbidden knowledge." The "commodifying" of secret knowledge is a significant aspect of the contemporary construction of new spirituality narratives.

Truzzi approaches the sociology of the esoteric and the occult differently than Tiryakian. Whereas, Tiryakian focuses on the "external relationships" between exoteric

culture and esoteric culture, Truzzi attempts to describe the dimensions of occultism. He identifies as ". . . a common denominator of all activities labelled the occult . . ." a concern "with things anomalous to our generally accepted cultural storehouse of 'truths' . . ." (Truzzi 245). He discusses five dimensions of occultism. These dimensions are:

1. The substance of the occult belief
2. The source of the occult label
3. The authority of occult claims
4. The source of occult knowledge
5. The functions of occultism

Truzzi says that all occult beliefs are anomalous in that they maintain the "existence . . . of some thing or event which is somehow a deviation from the usual, credible order of things" (Truzzi 247). A crucial factor is the status of the person or persons presenting the anomaly. Therefore, theories which are outside the traditional stock of knowledge are more likely to be considered legitimate when offered by a physicist (such as Fritjof Capra) or a biologist (such as Rupert Sheldrake) than if suggested by an unqualified or non-credentialed individual. In fact, Truzzi says that "as one gains respectability," one tends to dissociate oneself from other occultists (Truzzi 248).

Truzzi's sources of authority for occult claims are based on Weber's authority types: traditional authority, charismatic authority, and rational-legal authority. For example, a channeler who is given instruction on channeling techniques by a more experienced channeler is responding to traditional authority; a group leader of an esoteric group who claims to have psychically obtained knowledge from superior beings represents an example of charismatic authority in the occult world; and a person practicing Silva

Mind Control techniques who has experienced "real," positive results is an example of rational-legal authority as manifested in occultism.

Truzzi also presents a continuum of "proofs" relevant to occult beliefs. One polar end is represented by "scientific proof;" the other is represented by "mystical belief." Gradations of proofs between the two ends include: "proto-scientific proofs" (i.e. parapsychology); "quasi-scientific proofs" (i.e. astrology); "pragmatic occultism" (i.e. magic); "shared mystical occultism" (i.e. Transcendental Meditation); and "private mystical occultism" (i.e. channelers) (Truzzi 249-251).

The importance of Truzzi's continuum for this study is his recognition that science and the occult do not represent two clearly-delineated types of knowledge--one valid and one invalid. Rather, they coexist in a dialectical relationship where facts and information are equated with one or the other depending upon variables such as who is making the knowledge claim. Also important to this research is Truzzi's statement that there is no one function of occultism: "Even one form of occultism usually includes a variety of need-fulfilling elements" which means "there are many levels of belief and participation which need to be mapped out" (Truzzi 252).

Both Tiryakian and Truzzi's works provide useful information for the current study. The model constructed to present the findings of this examination of women's spirituality narratives incorporates Tiryakian's recognition of an esoteric subsystem which acts as a catalyst for change. The model also reflects the fragility of boundaries between science and the occult and the complexity of esoteric subcultures discussed by Truzzi.

Criticisms of Traditional Approaches

Ethnocentrism of the Research

Claims of ethnocentrism in research on religion are the most common criticisms of traditional approaches to the study of alternative spirituality narratives. These

criticisms are part of more general accusations of bias in the social sciences based on gender, ethnicity, and the Judeo-Christian heritage dominant in the Western world. Some sociologists of religion recommend that selected concepts be "dropped" from the theoretical vocabulary due to problematic meanings. Additionally, many foundational concepts in the sociology of religion are being deconstructed and reconstructed with the goal of correcting these biases.

The term cult has been identified as a "pejorative label" reflecting prejudice not scholarship (Hargrove 155; Swatos xviii; Robbins 151; Melton qtd. in Roof 98). The term, grounded in the Weberian-Troeltsch church-sect typology, implies deviance regardless of the theoretical context. This negative connotation is especially problematic in countries such as the United States where there exists a long history of religious diversity. Melton states that the term cult has been used by some sociologists " . . . who were trying to place several difficult leftovers into their typology of religious groups (98). This ethnocentristic view creates obstacles to completing meaningful research on the nature of religious groups that are typically subsumed under the concepts of cult, the esoteric, or the occult. Two examples of ethnocentrism revolving around the concept of cult are the anti-cult bias and apologist stance frequently encountered in studies of non-conventional religions (Robbins 134).

Victoria Lee Erickson in Where Silence Speaks: Feminism, Social Theory, and Religion has provided a critical analysis of basic concepts in the sociology of religion. She focuses on Durkheim's sacred-profane dichotomy and Weber's religion-magic dichotomy. Carried out within a feminist framework, Erickson's aim is to deconstruct both dichotomies in order to show that they are "gender-biased concepts" (Erickson xiii).

The distinction between sacred and profane articulated by Durkheim provides one of the most basic theoretical assumptions in the sociology of religion. Durkheim identified this distinction as the most ". . . fundamental characteristic of all known

religious beliefs . . ." (Hargrove 33). He stated that this dualism is present in all societies as it represents ". . . two entirely different orders . . . that cannot be joined into a 'single universe of meaning' . . ." (Hargrove 33). This dichotomy separates mundane, everyday interactions from those phenomena and events which are approached with ". . . awe and reverence . . ." (Hargrove 33). This perspective has been criticized by several theorists. Many of these criticisms have been formulated by feminist theorists in the social sciences and in theology (Daly 1969, 1973; Ruether 1975; Spretnak 1982; Eisler 1987; Christ and Plaskow 1979; Starhawk 1979, 1982, 1988; Fiorenza 1989; Merchant 1980; Lerner 1986; Gray 1981; Griffin 1978; Schaef 1981). Erickson's work is representative of this trend. She asserts that Durkheim's dualism clearly divides the world into two, separate spheres: masculine-sacred and feminine-profane. Likewise, Erickson says "there are several layers of conflict that are implicitly and explicitly found in Weber's work" (80). She states that these conflicts, listed below, also separate the world into masculine-religion and feminine-magic spheres.

1. religion -- magic
2. masculine -- feminine
3. society -- community
4. elites -- masses

The sacred-profane and religion-magic dichotomies introduced by Durkheim and Weber are fundamental concepts in the sociology of religion. In fact, these dualisms have traditionally been the starting point for most sociological research on religion. As with the use of the concept of cult, the connotative meaning implied in research grounded in these dichotomies has increasingly been criticized as biased and in need of reconstruction.

The criticisms by feminist theorists in theology and the social sciences are especially pertinent to the examination of women's spirituality narratives. For example,

Starhawk, who is both a psychologist and a witch, provides criticisms of the social sciences from her position as a scholar and also is a major voice in the witchcraft narratives. This reflexivity, which is a crucial aspect of the narratives on women's spirituality, is encountered frequently in the analysis of other spirituality narratives.

Lack of Information

Directly related to problems with foundational concepts in the sociology of religion due to ethnocentristic research is the "general ignorance of: (1) the extent of religious diversity in the United States . . ., (2) the history of religion in America . . ., (3) the history and theologies of specific religious groups, and (4) the actual parameters of religious life in American society" (Shupe and Hadden qtd. in Borgatta and Cook 122). Attempts to correct this lack of information are the goals of such works as Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age by Catherine L. Albanese and Perspectives on the New Age edited by James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton. Melton believes that when a nonconventional religion (traditionally called a cult or a sect) is studied separately or as a deviation from the larger religious context, both "our understanding of it" and "our assessment of its impact as part of a larger integrated religious movement" are distorted (Melton qtd. in Roof 104). For example, by studying the history of nonconventional religions (or what I refer to as other spirituality narratives), the popular notion that cults are "new, innovative impulses" is frequently shown to be incorrect. Rather, they are often revealed as new versions of "long-standing families and traditions" (Melton qtd. in Roof 105).

Thus when both the pluralism of American spirituality narratives and the histories of those narratives are included in the analysis of American religion, a much different understanding of the universe of discourse on religion and spirituality emerges.

Current Approaches to the Study of New Religious Movements

Recognition that the sociology of religion must cease studying religious phenomena in isolation from other social forces in society is being increasingly articulated (Hargrove 19; Beckford x; Hannigan in Swatos 15; Robbins 61). One approach that avoids the ethnocentrism discussed above is the suggestion that new religious movements should be studied in conjunction with new social movements. As this approach includes the analysis of social actions and influences other than religious organizational types, it avoids the bias inherent in traditional typologies and concepts in the sociology of religion. The approach also provides a framework that allows historical studies of contemporary religious movements and social movements.

John A. Hannigan has developed an example of this approach which he calls "the paradigm of the new social movements" (Swatos 1). Hannigan says that the sociology of religion has historically developed theories explaining new religious movements grounded in either "crisis theories or modernization theories (or combinations of the two) . . ." (Swatos 2). One alternative approach, he suggests, is a synthesis of new social movement theory and new religious movement theory in order to ". . . document the religious or spiritual dimensions of new social movements" (Swatos 4). This approach provides a framework for analyzing the impact of new social movements such as deep ecology or ecofeminism on the discourse on religion and spirituality.

Similarly, in Cults, Converts, and Charisma: The Sociology of New Religious Movements, Robbins suggests that the traditional approach in the sociology of religion to focus on a ". . . linear secularization process" misses the ". . . constancy and continuity of movements of 'religious outsiders' throughout American history" ((61). He, like Hannigan, believes that new religious movements should be considered in combination with ". . . new social movements such as feminism and environmental and anti-nuclear

activism which overlap new religious movements in terms of both holistic symbolic properties and social bases" (Robbins 61).

The symbolic similarities and differences among contemporary alternative spirituality narratives maintain a central position in this study. Spirituality narratives, in the context of this research, include religious movements, social movements, organized religion, and any other source of statements concerning the ultimate meaning of humans in the cosmos. As this study is carried out within a sociology of knowledge framework, it responds to many of the criticisms and suggestions discussed above.

Significance of a Sociology of Knowledge Framework for this Research

The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the relationship between the existing patterns of meaning in culture and the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the individuals living within that culture. In fact, it has been said that "the sociology of knowledge ought to be called the sociology of meaning . . ." (Geertz 212). In agreement with this statement, this inquiry focuses on the ongoing construction of meaning--both the meaning of the individual and the meaning of the world in which the individual exists--through the manipulation of symbols.

Although religion historically has been the institution that legitimizes meaning (Berger 32; Eck and Jain 4), this research proceeds from the premise that in a post-modern world the legitimizing role of religion is no longer as clearly defined as in the past. By utilizing the broad concept of spirituality narratives as opposed to restricting the analysis to religious organizational types, new religious movements, or new social movements in isolation, this study recognizes that the discourse on religion and spirituality is not the domain of religion alone. Further in contrast to the traditional understanding of secularization, it is not only science that is sharing this power to legitimize

meaning. Rather, in contemporary America, both the narratives on spirituality and the legitimizing of those narratives are constructed in the context of many courses of social action and influence.

In A Future for Religion, Swatos states that secularization needs to be understood as "a paradigm shift of major proportion in ways of knowing how the world works, in which heretofore widely accepted epistemological assumptions are directly challenged . . . that is, secularization is primarily a concept for the sociology of knowledge, and only secondarily for the sociology of religion" (Swatos x). Combining this view with the recognition that there are many narrators in the discourse on spirituality suggests that an analysis of symbolic constructions--regardless of the source of those constructions-- would provide information exempt from the biases of studies grounded in the usual typologies and concepts of the sociology of religion. In agreement with these views, this study is conducted within a sociology of knowledge framework concentrating on symbolic constructions of spiritual meanings relevant to the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

Symbolic Interaction: The American Branch of the Sociology of Knowledge

This research is conducted within a sociology of knowledge framework. The sociology of knowledge approach is concerned with the ". . . relationship between the mind and the sociocultural environment" (Curtis and Petras 1). The sociology of knowledge is most often regarded as a product of French and German thought while the American tradition represented by the symbolic interactionists of the "Chicago School" has typically been ". . . considered . . . the antithesis of a sociology of knowledge approach" (Curtis and Petras 3). In this research, the theoretical orientation is the sociology of knowledge suggested in the works of George Herbert Mead.

Most sociology of knowledge theories build upon and modify the works of the French and German traditions. The foundational works of these traditions include the formulations of Marx, Scheler, Mannheim, and Durkheim. Theories grounded in these works, although presenting various insights important for the sociology of knowledge, fail to provide an "epistemological foundation" for the approach (Curtis and Petris 19). This failure results in a "one-sided determinism" that concentrates "on the role of the social order in determining the mental perspectives of individual members" (Curtis and

Petras 1). Only with American symbolic interaction is the social determinism, both explicit and implicit, begun in the German and French branches of the sociology of knowledge adequately resolved.

Symbolic interaction as conceptualized in ". . . Mead's theory of mind, self, and society is . . . one of the clearest statements on the interrelationship between the sociocultural environment and the mental life of the individual" (Curtis and Petras 19). In this study, the focus includes both elements of this dialectical relationship: the sociocultural content of the universe of discourse on spirituality and religion and the manipulation of symbols by individuals exemplified by the specific spirituality narratives.

Knowledge, Language, and Self

Central to Mead's social behaviorism is the recognition that language ". . . provides the mechanism for the emergence of mind and self . . ." (Mead xviii). Language, as a system of significant symbols, allows humans to interact by sharing symbolic meanings. Language, then, is the vehicle by which humans accumulate and construct knowledge--knowledge about their environment and knowledge about themselves.

Knowledge about the world and knowledge about self are dialectically interwoven. "The social definition of identity takes place as part of an overarching definition of reality" (Berger qtd. in Curtis and Petras 379). Thus, as the individual interacts with others, she acquires information about the world necessary for successful adaptation and she also learns to see herself as an object within that world.

An individual's ability to see herself as an object in the world is achieved through "role-taking" or seeing herself through the eyes of others. This ability, dependent upon the capacity for language, allows the individual to see herself as part of an increasingly complex whole. Initially she takes the role of "significant others" such as family members. As her interactions continue, however, she takes the role of an increasing number and

variety of others ("organized others") with the potential of taking the role of a coherent overarching "community of attitudes" or the "generalized other" (Mead 265).

Self and mind emerge from the proceses of using language and role-taking. The self is a process consisting of two phases: the "I" and the "me." The "I" phase of the self "is the response of the organism to the attitudes of . . . others; the "me" is the organized set of attitudes of others which one . . . assumes (Mead 175). The "I" phase is that part of self which allows for spontaneity, creativity, and freedom. The "I" is the phase of self that acts. The "me" phase of the self consists of the incorporated views of others. The "me" is the ". . . conventional, habitual . . ." part of self that provides structure (Mead 197). For some individuals, the "I" or ". . . the element of novelty is carried to the limit" while the "me" or the ". . . conventional form may be reduced to a minimum" (Mead 209). In other individuals, this relationship between the "I" and the "me" may be reversed. Therefore, Mead's conceptualization of self acknowledges both the unique and normative aspects of individual behavior. He also avoids a deterministic view of humans by recognizing that the relative values of the "I" and the "me" differ from individual to individual and from situation to situation. Thus, Mead views self as a dynamic process rather than a static entity. This dynamic self exists in a dialectical relationship with society. Just as the self emerges from interactions with others in society, so does the self change self and society through interactions with others.

Knowledge as Action

"Knowledge . . . is, according to pragmatist premises, always related to action" (Luscher 6). As a pragmatist, "Mead is said to have introduced action into knowledge" (Ferguson 36). In agreement with Mead's view, this study defines knowledge as ". . . the process of coordinating the shifting social perspectives that result from taking different roles" (Ferguson 36). In other worlds, this research asserts that knowledge is action.

According to Mead, as an individual takes the role of more and diverse others, ideally she will be able to recognize universal attitudes that represent a more abstract "generalized other." This process occurs continually as the connecting attitudes of different others are identified. However, in a postmodern world, the multiplicity and incongruency of both "organized others" and "generalized others" requires innovation in order to provide any sense of coherence. This coherence is constructed through the manipulation of language. Thus, through the use of significant symbols, two oppositional others can be merged into a new "generalized other" with a history and/or myth constructed to provide legitimation. The acts of synthesizing and constructing "generalized others" are two processes by which humans construct selves and their social world.

Knowledge as an Organic Whole

"A central theme of Mead's writing is that the world of knowledge is an organic whole, in which all parts affect each other to produce a dynamically fluctuating system" (Baldwin 37). In acknowledging this wholeness, Mead is not asserting that there is correspondence between the "real" world and knowledge about that world. Rather, he is once again illustrating the interactive nature of human constructions. Emergence or novelty is always a part of knowledge constructions (Mead in Baldwin 40). These novel constructions, however, are limited by the symbols available in the universe of discourse (Brissett and Edgley 34). Therefore, although new knowledge constructions or interpretations are constantly appearing, these interpretations will always contain some continuity in meaning. According to Mead, "the novel break reveals the continuity, while the continuity is the background for the novelty" (Mead qtd. in Baldwin 40). In this research, new constructions of spirituality narratives represent novel breaks, while the universe of discourse on spirituality, informed by the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, provides the continuity and background for those narratives.

Philosophical and Methodological Principles

This study is guided by the constuctivist or hermeneutical paradigm. Often referred to as naturalistic inquiry, this paradigm focuses on "symbolic communication and meaning" (Erlandson, et. al. 10). The philosophical foundations for this paradigm are found in the works of such philosophers as Richard Rorty, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Martin Heidegger, all representatives of what has been termed the "interpretative turn" in philosophy (Hiley, et. al. 87).

The hermeneutical paradigm is based on the recognition that the major activity of humans is interpretation. Further, the paradigm posits the assumption that social scientists engage in a "double hermeneutic" activity. The "double hermeneutic" assumption asserts that social scientists "do not just give interpretations, they are interpretations of interpretations" (Hiley, et. al. 7). In fact, Rorty, has described "inquiry as reweaving" (Hiley, et. al. 65).

More specifically, the hermeneutical paradigm is based on two premises. First is "hermeneutical universalism" or the assertion that interpretation is ubiquitous--carried out by all people at all times. Second is "hermeneutical contextualism" or "the claim that interpretation always takes place within some context or background" (Hiley, et. al. 8).

Methodologically, the "naturalistic investigation" approach of Herbert Blumer and the "grounded theory" approach of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss provide methods suitable for studies directed by the philosophical premises of the hermeneutical paradigm. These approaches require that ". . . data collection and data analysis go on in concurrent and integrated steps that build on one another . . . in hermeneutic-dialectic fashion" (Erlandson, et. al. xiv). Thus, the research process is neither deductive nor inductive. Rather, the process begins with empirical observations but continually moves between empirical observations and analysis as indicated by the data.

Because this inquiry describes and analyzes written texts, the methodological approach used is called a "grounded hermeneutical approach" (Crabtree and Miller 110). This approach was carried out by adapting Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory within a hermeneutic framework (Crabtree and Miller 110). The grounded hermeneutic approach as utilized in this study ". . . seeks to illuminate social, cultural, historical, . . . linguistic, and other background aspects that frame . . . human practices" (Crabtree and Miller 111). The human practices providing the data for the study are written texts dealing with spirituality. The hope is that the visual model presented will provide a new and useful understanding of the contemporary discourse on spirituality in the United States.

Methodological Techniques

Unstructured Observations and Conversations

The questions that led to this study were asked in response to observations and conversations occurring in four locations: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Stillwater, Oklahoma; Norman, Oklahoma; and Springfield, Missouri. These observations and interactions indicated that "something interesting was going on" in the discourse on spirituality and religion. Increasing numbers of people were wearing "esoteric" symbols representing various cultures and belief systems. Stores selling esoteric literature and artifacts were expanding both in size and in the volume and range of products available. Most important to this research, many women were talking about "the Goddess" and/or referring to themselves as "witches." In response to these observations and comments, several questions arose: Who is the Goddess? What does it mean to be a witch? Where are these people getting their information?

At the same time that these unstructured events were taking place, I read a novel written by Marion Zimmer Bradley titled The Mists of Avalon. The novel, which tells the story of the Arthurian Legend or the Matter of Britain, provides a version of the legend

centered in the experiences of the women of the story (i.e. Ingraine, Guineverre, Morganna le Fey) rather than the usual version that focuses on the experiences of the men in the legend (i.e. Arthur, Merlin, Lancelot). Bradley's creation is both rich and complex as it offers a coherent story that connects several strands of thought on spirituality and religion including the legend of Atlantis, belief in reincarnation, pagan and mystery religions, and Christianity. The central theme of Bradley's version of the Arthurian legend is the replacement of a spiritual tradition that honors the Goddess, women, and mystery in the world with a religion that honors a God, men, and control of the world.

Familiarity with this book provided an opening for entering into more in-depth interactions with people participating in the "Goddess phenomenon." In the course of conversation with people (predominantly women) who had read The Mists of Avalon, I was able to identify people (again, predominantly women) who were organizing a "Neo-Esoteric Spirituality" group. The preliminary exploration for the current study was carried out during participant-observation with this group.

Preliminary Exploration

All of the women participating in the Neo-Esoteric Spirituality group identified themselves as feminists and as being interested in the Goddess. Therefore, participant-observation in this group was planned as a method to learn about the Women's Spirituality Movement.

The demographic data obtained from participation in the Neo-Esoteric Spirituality group supported the demographics presented in other studies of similar activities (Johnstone 1988; Kelley 1990; Melton in Roof 1993; Simmons 1990; Ben-Yehuda 1988; Brown in Lewis and Melton 1992). The total number of participants was fourteen. Eleven of the fourteen participants were women, all were caucasian, and all were baby-

boomers (ages ranged from twenty-nine to thirty-eight). Additionally, all of the participants worked in some area of the "helping professions" (e.g. social work, counseling, emergency intervention) and eight of the fourteen were or had been involved in one of the twelve-step programs (e.g. AA, OA, etc.). This last finding agrees with Chalfant's findings concerning the high correlation between "twelve-step groups and religion" (115).

Because all of the women identified themselves as Goddess followers, it was anticipated that through participation in the group and interviews with individual members, understanding of goddess spirituality would be gained. However, this goal was not achieved. Rather, the content of the discussions and interviews revealed a confusing mixture of several systems of thought including Women's Spirituality, Theosophy, Neo-Jungian psychology (focusing on Goddess archetypes), and concern with ecology and the environment.

The creative manipulation and synthesis of these various systems of thought were the most important findings of this study. Most interesting was the women's identification of self with both goddess spirituality (a spiritual tradition which is based on holism and egalitarianism) and Theosophy (a philosophical tradition which is based on elitism and hierarchy). The ability of group members to combine these two systems of thought, which in their basic premises are in opposition with one another, guided the analysis to the written texts that provide the knowledge bases (language, images, myths, histories, and beliefs) for the various spirituality traditions.

The Sample

The sample for this study consisted of written texts. The texts chosen for the sample were determined by four methods. First, the initial texts were representative of writings on women's spirituality--especially narratives dealing with images and myths of the Goddess. Second, the texts were obtained from three esoteric bookstores: Starwind

in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; The Four Winds in Norman, Oklahoma; and The Renaissance in Springfield, Missouri. Therefore, the sample was influenced by the "perceived market" for esoteric literature as defined by the stores' buyers. Third, texts were chosen in response to conversations with people in the four cities mentioned above. Thus, the sample was chosen to represent "what people were reading" in those cities. Fourth, interactions and references among the texts were pursued. For example, if a writer of a goddess spirituality narrative (e.g. Charlene Spretnak) referred to or responded to a new science narrator (e.g. Fritjof Capra), the text referred to was included in the sample if possible. Problems arose with the sample when texts mentioned were "out of print" or unavailable in local libraries, but this occurrence was rare.

Sampling was defined as complete when the texts being "read" no longer suggested new categories of narratives related to women's spirituality. Additionally, after the categories of narratives were identified, texts were included in the sample with the purpose of further defining and understanding the variations within and among the categories. As with the principle categories, special attention was given to variations relevant to women's spirituality. Again, once the texts no longer added depth to the analysis, the sample was considered complete.

A model was constructed for the presentation of the findings of this study with the intention of providing a visualization of the complex relationships among alternative spirituality narratives. These relationships include symbolic similarities, symbolic differences, and new constructions emerging from the synthesis of two or more principle narratives. The model also provides a framework which aids in differentiating among various meanings of terms such as Goddess and witch. Thus, the model offers a portrayal of the complex process of coordinating various systems of meaning.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A Model for Discourse Analysis

Purpose of the Model

The model presented in this study is intended as a ". . . snapshot in time of a set of emergent ideas" (Lincoln and Guba 9). The model is not intended as a depiction of "what is." As Martin E. Marty said of Catherine Albanese's book, Nature Religion in America, "other scholars would do it differently, would cover other subjects, and discover other meanings" (qtd. in Albanese xiii). The hope is that in constructing this visual model, a tool is made available that can provide structure to the study of a complex process--the process of constructing meaning through interaction.

Construction and Presentation of the Model

As discussed earlier, this model was constructed using a grounded hermeneutical approach. The four principle spirituality narratives (Women's Spirituality, Earth-Based/Nature, Esoteric/Occult, and New Science) were not constructed a priori for the purpose of fitting texts into the model. Rather, as texts were examined, similarities and differences in the symbolic messages were coded. From these codings, the four principle spirituality narratives were identified. After these narratives were identified, texts representing each principle spirituality narrative were "read" in order to distinguish between variations within and syntheses among the narratives related to women's

spirituality. Ongoing analysis occurred thoughout this process.

Conversely to the actual research process, the model and its theoretical bases are explained before the contents of the various spirituality narratives are described. This reversed order is intended to provide a coherent presentation.

Theoretical Bases of the Model

As stated in Chapter III, the theoretical orientation of this study is found in the works of George Herbert Mead. Mead's original formulations are expanded here and modified by incorporating insights from the feminist sociology of knowledge perspective (Hekman 1986, 1990; Smith 1987, 1991; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1988; Ferguson 1980; Nielsen 1990; Nelson 1990; Harding 1983, 1986, 1991; Code 1991; Bernard 1981; Chafetz 1988; Gergen 1988; Glennon 1979; Mills 1979; Stanley 1990; Abbott and Wallace 1990).

A frequent criticism of Mead's theory is that it ignores issues of inequality or differences in the ability to define the situation (Ferguson 1980; Smith 1987, 1991; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1988). Implied in Mead's theory of mind, self, and society is the assumption that the development of self occurs through role-taking among equals. The conclusion from this assumption is that, due to the capacity for language, and thereby, rational thought, people have the ability to identify and construct different "communities of attitudes" of ever-increasing levels of abstraction. The problem with this theory, as detailed by feminist theorists is that, in fact, there are many generalized others, some of which have more power and legitimacy. Thus, for people role-taking from the perspective of a subordinate position there is incongruency between the generalized other of the subordinate group (e.g. women or non-Christians) and the generalized other of the dominant group (e.g. men or Christians). This incongruency results in problems with the

development of self-image and the ability to create coherence out of opposing viewpoints.

The model presented in this paper reflects this inequality in the ability to define the situation by incorporating Hegel's master-slave dialectic (Mills 1979) into the stucture. Thus, the model portrays the dialectic between the dominant narrative on religion and spirituality and other spirituality narratives as one in which the meaning of each is dependent upon the existence of the other while the dominant narrative has a position of superiority. Together, the dominant narrative and the other spirituality narratives form a "whole" or a universe of discourse on spirituality in which neither the dominant narrative nor the other narratives can be fully understood without reference to the other.

Within the feminist sociology of knowledge there are at least two distinct theoretical interpretations of Hegel's dialectic. The first interpretation, which emerges from the theories of Marx and the Frankfurt School, is standpoint theory (Garry and Pearsall 1989; Smith 1987, 1991; Code 1991; Harding 1991). The second interpretation utilizes Hans-George Gadamer's concept of "fusion of horizons" (Nielsen 28).

According to standpoint theory, all people experience their world from various vantage points (e.g. sex, religion). These vantage points result in differing worldviews or definitions of the situation. Further, these vantage points reflect various dominant-subordinate relations (e.g. male-female, Christian-non-Christian). Individuals situated in subordinate positions have greater and more accurate awareness or knowledge about the world. This knowledge is achieved due to necessity–the necessity to understand both the standpoint of those in the dominant group and the standpoint of the subordinate group of which they are a part in order to survive. People situated in dominant groups have neither the necessity nor the ability to attain this level of awareness.

Several feminist theorists have identified problems with standpoint theory (Nielsen 1990; Westkott in Nielsen 1990; Hekman 1990, 1986; Ferguson 1980). These theorists have relied heavily on Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" to resolve those problems.

Gadamer agrees that everyone experiences the world from varying situations. He names these positions "prejudices" or prejudgments. However, he defines these prejudices not as problematic, as do theorists in the standpoint theory tradition, but as ". . . essential building blocks . . . for acquiring new knowledge." By going back and forth "between the old and new . . . worldviews . . .," new syntheses are made possible (Gadamer qtd. in Nielsen 28). Therefore, everyone exists within a "horizon" which includes ". . . historical time, place, [and] culture, . . ." (Nielsen 29); however, by actively relating to other horizons, a ". . . broadening, or enrichment of one's own horizon . . ." can be achieved (Nielsen 29). Gadamer's view coincides with Mead's conceptalization of acquiring knowledge by coordinating the various perspectives with which one role takes. Thus, standpoint theory is important in correcting Mead's oversight concerning inequalities of power to define the situation while in response Gadamer and Mead's theories correct the absolutism of standpoint theory.

Another modification of Hegel's original dialectic reflected in the model is the concept of a multiple dialectic rather than a two-part dialectic. While there does exist a central dialectic relationship between the dominant narrative on spirituality and other spirituality narratives, there also exist dialectic relationships between various other spirituality narratives. This multiple dialectic is represented in Figure 1. "A Model for Discourse Analysis" on the next page. The multiplicity of tensions, contradictions, oppositions, and similarities that exist among the other spirituality narratives reveals a process of narrative construction that is complex and unpredictable. This process includes both "symbolic fusion" which are the new narratives constructed by merging two or more previously existing narratives and "symbolic links" or shared words and symbols that do not necessarily have the same meaning in the various narratives. This visualization of the universe of discourse on spirituality provides a very different image of

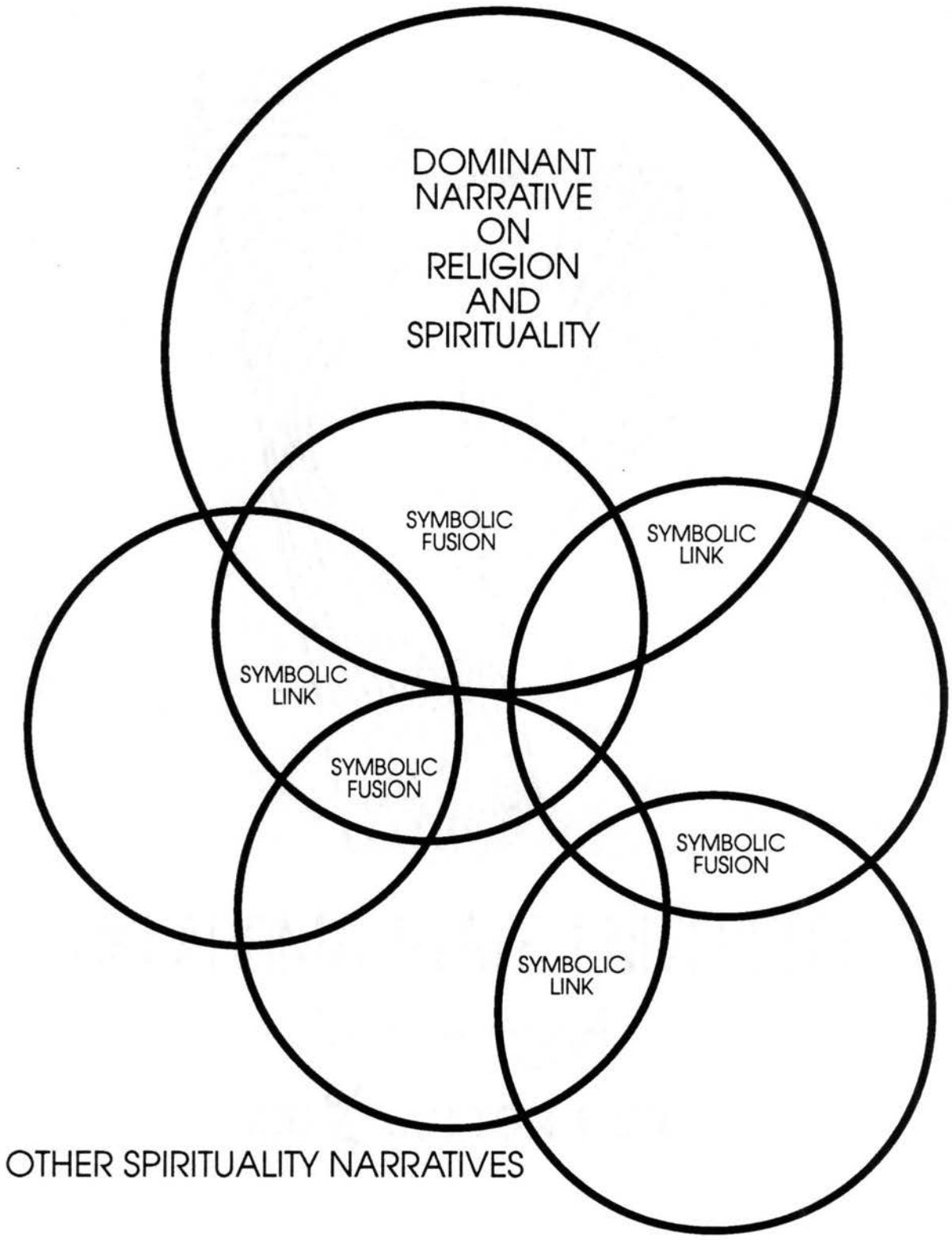

Figure I. A Model of Discourse Analysis

narrative construction than the usual linear process evolving out of a two-part dialectic relationship.

The central dialectic relationship examined in this study is the relationship between the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement and the dominant narrative on religion and spirituality--the Judeo-Christian tradition. This relationship is shown in Figure 2. "The Central Dialectic: Women's Spirituality and the Dominant Narrative on Religion and Spirituality" on the following page.

Narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement

The Women's Spirituality Movement has become a principle narrative in the discourse on spirituality and religion in the United States. The roots of Women's Spirituality are found in the writings of nineteenth century cultural feminists Matilda Gage (Woman, Church and State, 1893) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (The Woman's Bible, 1895, 1898). Both women asserted that religion, in particular Christianity, is patriarchal and sexist in its ". . . symbolism, ideology, structure, and ministry . . ." (Spretnak 1982:xi). Locating the ultimate source of women's inferior status in the "creeds, codes, [and] scriptures . . ." of the Bible that define women as "made after man, of man, and for man, an inferior being, subject to man" (Stanton qtd. in Donovan 37), both offered sustained criticisms of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Convinced that women's subordinate status in society is an extension of the image of women presented in the ". . . biblical view of creation and redemption . . ." (Christ and Plaskow 19), Gage and Stanton called for changes in the stories, images, and language of Christianity. Stanton went so far as to introduce The Woman's Bible at the 1896 convention of the National-American Women Suffrage Association. "It faded into oblivion, but was rediscovered by feminist scholars of religion" in the 1960s (Christ and Plaskow 19).

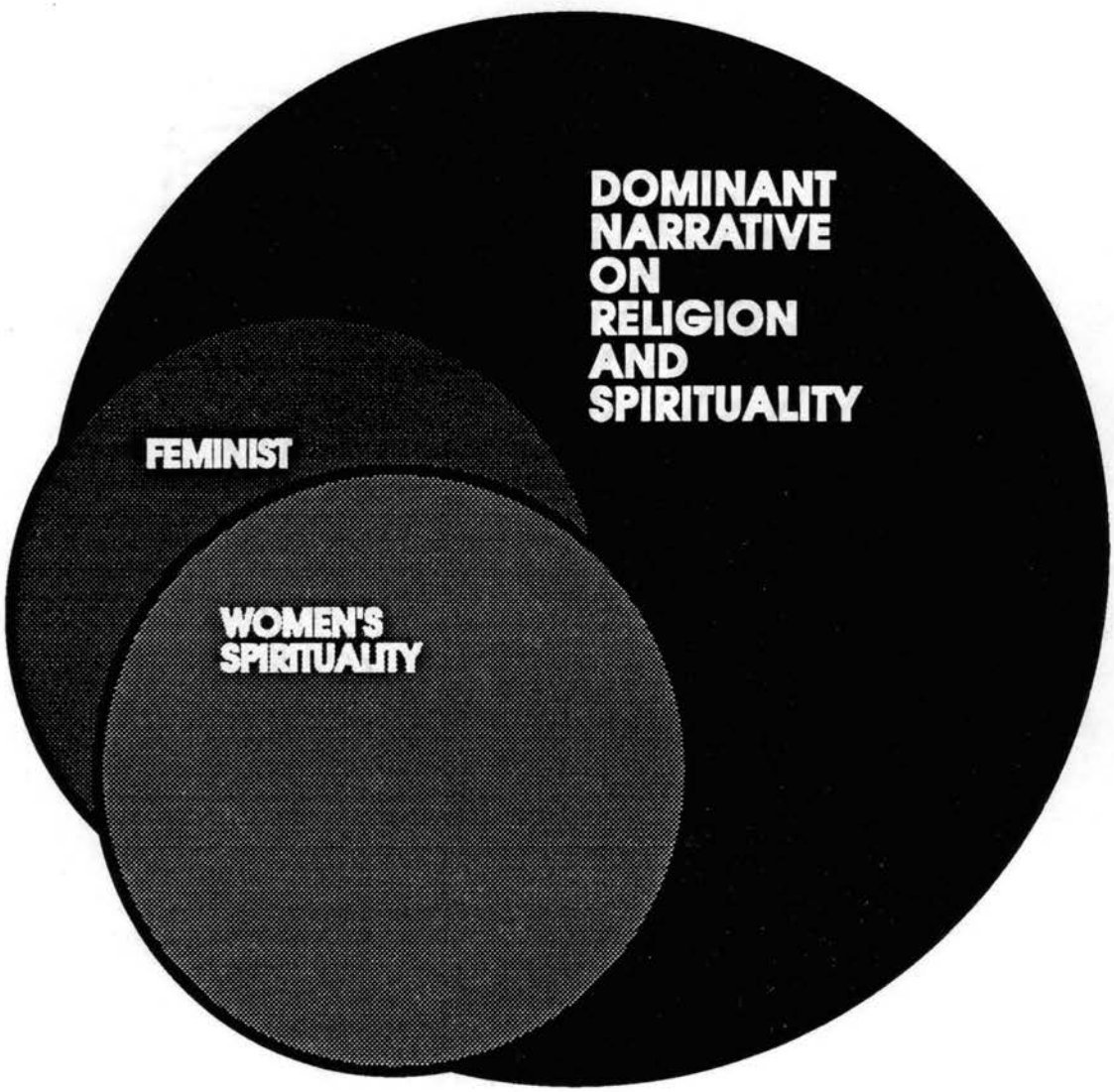

Figure II. The Central Dialect: Women's Spirituality and the Dominant Narrative on Religion and Spirituality

A second attempt to locate the source of women's inequality in religious myths and symbols was made by Valerie Saiving in 1960 ("The Human Situation: A Feminine View"). Again, as with Gage and Stanton, Saiving's criticisms of religion were not widely accepted and ". . . her article, . . . like The Woman's Bible, was forgotten" (Christ and Plaskow 21).

Despite the slow start, following Saiving's article, new works appeared in the late 1960s which continued the critical analysis of the Judeo-Christian tradition begun by the early cultural feminists. Building upon the earlier writings, Women's Spirituality narratives now speak on various social issues including: women and religion; the status of women throughout the world; political developments; and global events. The Movement has been called ". . . one of the most significant and hopeful political developments . . ." of our time (Bandarage 81).

Christ and Plaskow have identified two distinct attitudes within the Women's Spirituality Movement (9-11). The first attitude they call "reconstructionist" or "reformist." This attitude is similar to Johnstone's "tradition-reforming" response discussed in the Introduction to this paper. The reformists' goal is to reconstruct the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition so as to change the images and language that serve to negate women's participation in that tradition. For these Christian feminists, ". . . more women in the pulpit is no longer the prime goal . . . . their aim is a thorough and comprehensive transformation . . . of the Christian faith" (Abramson, et. al. 80). They do not claim earlier traditions or create new traditions. Rather they hope to reconstruct the history of Christianity in such a way as to both retain the central message and bring about a more egalitarian view of men and women within that message. The second attitude identified by Christ and Plaskow they term "revolutionary." This attitude is the equivalent of Johnstone's "revolutionary" response. Within this group are those who name themselves "goddess worshippers" or "witches." The goal of revolutionaries is to create (or recreate)

traditions which honor a female deity. Unlike the reconstructionists' perspective, the Judeo-Christian tradition is viewed as anti-woman in its central message and therefore not redeemable.

Reconstructionist or Reformist Narratives

Two writers in the reconstructionist tradition who made early statements in the Women's Spirituality Movement are Rosemary Radford Ruether (New Woman, New Earth, 1975; Sexism and God-Talk, 1983; Gaia and God, 1992) and Mary Daly (The Church and the Second Sex, 1969; Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation, 1973; Gyn-Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, 1978). Of the two, Ruether has had the most widespread influence due to the depth and clarity of her writings.

Throughout all of her books, Ruether carries on an in-depth examination of the cultures that shaped the Christian tradition–Sumerian, Babylonian, Hebrew, and Greek–to identify the myths and symbols that provide the foundation for women's subordinate status in religion and society. An important aspect of her examination is the analysis of the central messages contained in the creation stories of these pre-Christian cultures (Ruether 1992: 15-26). According to Ruether, creation stories "... are blueprints for society. They reflect the assumptions about how the divine and the mortal, the mental and the physical, humans and other humans, male and female, humans, plants, animals, land, water and stars are related to each other" (Ruether 1992: 15). The following is a brief discussion of Ruether's analysis of how these creation stories have influenced Christianity and Western thought.

Both the Sumerian and the Babylonian creation stories (which provide the foundation for the Herbrew version) posit a primal Mother Goddess, Tiamat. It is from Tiamat that the cosmos and other deities emerge. In the Babylonian story, Tiamat

(symbolizing chaos) is conquered and killed by a young, male, urban deity--Marduk. Thus, Babylonia moves from an early matriarchal worldview to a male-dominant world-view. This shift in religious symbolism coincides with Babylonia's ascendency to the status of a leading city and is an early example of placing the value of progress above the value of reproduction. This subjugation of the Goddess Mother and reproduction is continued, although in somewhat different forms, in the Hebrew and Greek creation stories.

In the Hebrew creation story, the Creator of the cosmos is no longer the Mother Goddess. She has been eliminated from the story. Although there are two different versions of creation contained in Genesis, the fundamental message identified by feminist theologians as damaging to women's status is that "the husband is the primal and collective person . . . [while] . . . the woman is derivative, made to serve him" (Ruether 1992:21). Additionally, the "dominion" granted to Adam "over the rest of creation" is identified as providing the justification for the contemporary exploitation, destruction, and misuse of both animals and the rest of the earth (Ruether 1992:21). Thus, the Hebrew creation story furthers the separation of female/reproduction-male/production begun in the Babylonian story by dividing male and female, humans and animals, and humans and earth. Further, God as male is defined as the "creator" of life as opposed to Goddess as female as "giver" of life. These dualisms are supported in the Greek creation story.

Plato's Timaeus provides the Greek version of the creation story. This story, "more abstract and philosophical", divides reality "into two realms: the invisible, eternal realm of thought and the visible realm of corporeality" (Ruether 1992:22). Of these two realms, the realm of thought is defined as superior and is equated with males, while the body and physical realm are termed inferior and equated with females.

One last important "separation" which occurs in the transition from Tiamat, the Sumerian and Babylonian Mother Goddess to Yahweh, the Hebrew Father God is the removal of the Creator from His creation. This change from an immanent deity to a transcendent one also moves men further into the superior realm of spirit while leaving women tied to the inferior earth.

Works such as Ruether's which trace the religious myths and symbols that were merged into Christianity (Davis 1971; Stone 1976; Baring and Cashford 1991; Gadon 1989; Frymer-Kensky 1992), have provided the foundation for the fundamental criticisms of the Women's Spirituality Movement. These criticisms focus on the dualistic thinking that lies at the core of the Western mind. These dualisms have been outlined as follows (Spretnak 1982; Gray 1979):

female--male

body--spirit

irrationality--rationality

immanent--transcendent

reproduction--production

Frequently, the Enlightenment is considered the point at which dualistic thinking became central to Western culture; however, Ruether and others (Tarnas 1991; Schneidau 1976; Berger 1969; Berman 1984; Frymer-Kensky 1992) have suggested that the dualisms and paradoxes of the contemporary West originated in Christianity's synthesis of Greek philosophy and science and Hebrew religion.

For the reformists within the Women's Spirituality Movement, it is this dualistic worldview passed down from the Greeks and Hebrews to the Christians which must be changed if equality is to be achieved. They believe this transformation of worldview can be achieved by changing the images and language within Christianity.

The "women-church movement is a Christian feminist movement of self-identified women and women-identified men whose common goal is to reinterpret the Gospel from the perspective of women's liberation" (Fiorenza qtd. in Abramson, et. al. 80). Leaders in this movement include Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza (In Memory of Her 1989), both important "voices" in the reformist tradition of the Women's Spirituality Movement. The purpose of women-church is to respond to the exclusion of women from full participation in the church that results from the dichotomies in Western culture by changing the symbols of the church. For example "for 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit', some feminists substitute 'Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter' and avoid masculine nomenclature" (Abramson 80). Through such changes, women-church hopes to ". . . bring about genuinely inclusive communities of women and men in the 'ecclesia' of Jesus Christ" (Winter 258).

Due to its commitment to the Christian Church, women-church does not include ". . . women who practice witchcraft and celebrate goddess rites . . ." (Winter 259). These women form a separate tradition within the Women's Spirituality Movement called "goddess spirituality."

Revolutionary or Goddess Spirituality Narratives

Goddess spirituality narratives, like the reconstructionist narratives, rely heavily on works which reexamine the history of the religious myths and symbols of the West. Unlike the reconstructionist narratives, which are aimed at redefining the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order to transform the Jewish and Christian faiths, revolutionaries hope to reintroduce the Goddess as a principle divine image. This reintroduction of the Goddess into the world has been defined as the "reinfusion of the sacred into the universe" (Bednarowski qtd. in Melton 169). (See Figure 3. "Goddess Spirituality Narratives" on the next page.)

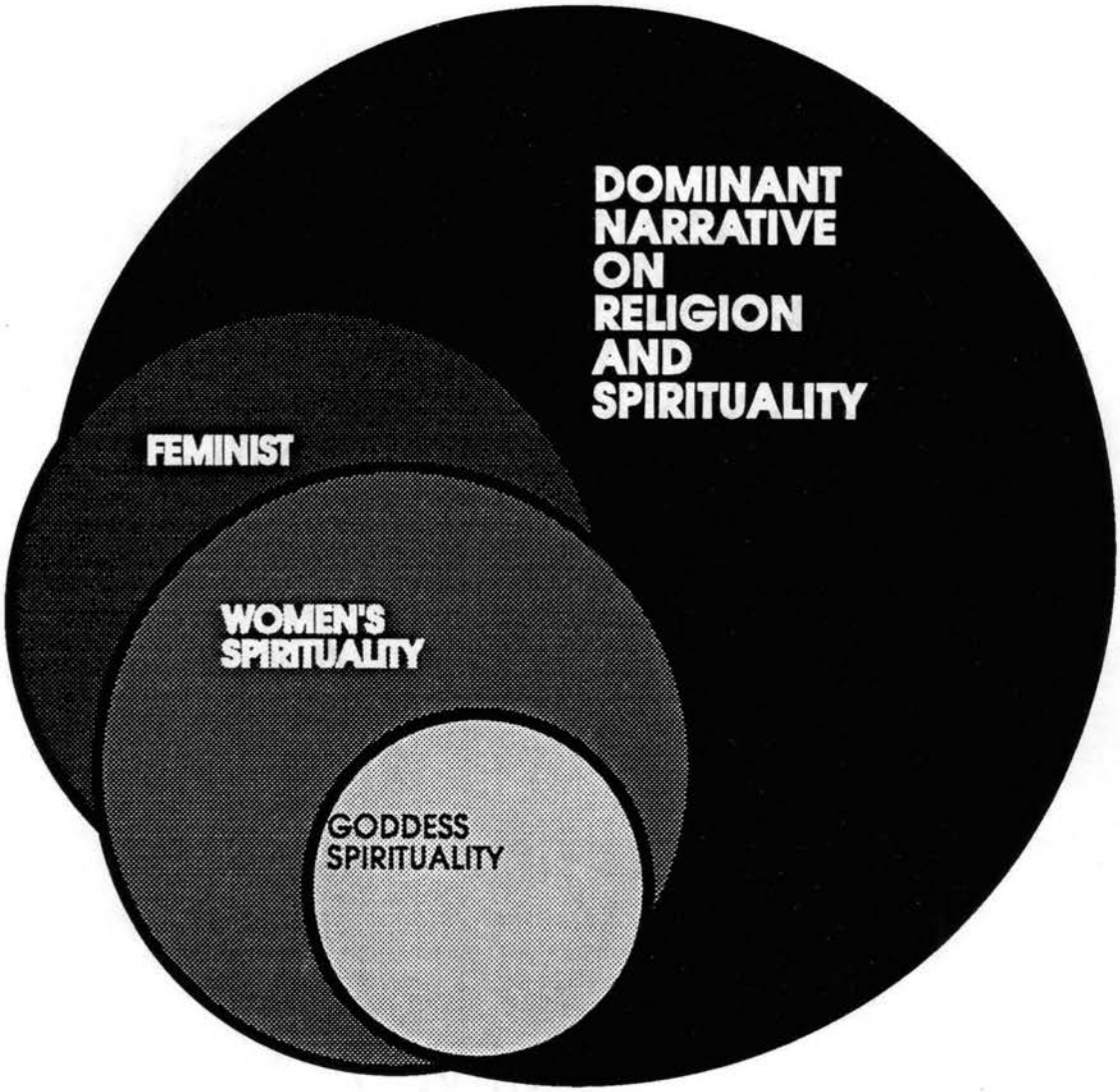

Figure III. Goddess Spirituality Narratives

In the mid-Seventies, following the lead of the early reconstructions of Christian ity's cultural heritage, revolutionary writings emerged which outlined the "myriad incidents of societal shift from Goddess to God, from matrifocal to patriarchal culture" (Spretnak 1991: 130). From these writings, a shared understanding of this shift was constructed which provides an important foundation for Goddess Spirituality narratives (When God was a Woman 1976; The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: Myths and Cult Images 1974; The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future 1987; The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovery of the Religion of the Earth 1987; The Once and Future Goddess: A Symbol for our Time 1989; The Language of the Goddess, 1989; The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image, 1991; The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine 1981; The Creation of Patriarchy 1986; In the Wake of the Goddess 1992). The basic events bringing about this shift, as described by writers of Goddess Spirituality narratives, are outlined below.

Throughout the Paleolithic Era (35,000 BC to 10,000 BC) and the Neolithic-Chalcolithic Era (10,000 BC to 2500 BC), "the cultures of Old Europe [southeastern Europe] were matrifocal, sedentary, peaceful, earth- and sea-oriented .... They revered the Goddess" (Spretnak 1991: 131). Then between 4400 BC and 2800 BC, three waves of invasion by Indo-European warriors (Aryans) occurred. These invaders, also called Kurgans, brought with them a very different worldview than that of Old Europe. It is believed that they ". . . brought with them the concepts of light as good and dark as evil . . . and of a supreme male deity" (Stone 66). Eisler points out (as do Baring and Cashford 156), that "there were other warlike invaders as well. The most famous . . . the Hebrews" (44). The significance of these invasions is that this "clash of cultures" resulted in the replacement of the "symbols of cosmogony, generation, birth, [and] regeneration . . ." (Spretnak 1991: 131) with symbols of conflict, dominance, and war.

Baring and Cashford summarize this cultural shift stating that "in the fourth millennium BC, nature was still experienced as numinous . . . as an overwhelming mystery that is both sacred and alive" (149). During these invasions, the separation of humans from nature begins. It is at this point that the Sumerian creation story discussed earlier becomes "the first record of the myth of separation between Earth and Heaven . . ." (Baring and Cashford 152); a separation which is still present in the dominant narrative on spirituality in the West. Concurrently "the Goddess became almost exclusively associated with 'Nature' as the chaotic force to be mastered, and the God took the role of conquering or ordering nature from his counterpole of 'Spirit'" (Baring and Cashford xii).

Charlene Spretnak in States of Grace, describes how excited and empowered she felt the first time she read of prepatriarchal cultures which honored the Goddess. She discusses how this image of a Goddess-centered and yet "gender-egalitarian society" (130) captured the attention of "women who had been raised in patriarchal religion" (129) "that . . . [told them that they had] . . . the wrong body to share sameness with the Divine" (Spretnak 1991: 130).

Following these reexaminations of Paleolithic and Neolithic matrifocal cultures, a great number of studies were carried out with the goal of learning more about the individual manifestations or "aspects" of the Goddess. The elation that women experience when exposed to this information Spretnak describes as "grasping heritage and presence in terms of the cosmological self . . . that participates in the larger reality" (1991: 137).

Thus, in Mead's terms, the Divine is the ultimate "generalized other" with whom an individual role-takes. The issues of self-image and coherence of meaning in the world are directly tied to the image (gender) of the Divine. In discovering a female deity as the

ultimate "generalized other", many women experience a new feeling of belonging in the cosmos.

It is important to recognize that "contemporary expressions of Goddess spirituality . . . are not simply attempts to replicate [an] extremely ancient religion . . . [rather] . . . contemporary practice . . . includes creative participation in myth, symbol, and ritual" (Spretnak 1991:134). In addition to providing a female, divine "generalized other," there are two other aspects of Goddess spirituality that have been identified as "empowering" for women: (1) the lack of prescriptions and proscriptions in the Goddess tradition, and (2) the opportunity to learn about and express cultural or ethnic identity.

In Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess, Carol Christ states that "Goddess traditions are not normative . . . [for her] . . . in the way that Scripture and tradition have been . . ." (xi). She, like many others (Christ and Plaskow 1979; Spretnak 1982), revel in the absence of rules and guidelines concerning the "appropriate" way to worship. In Goddess Spirituality narratives, women talk of creating their own altars at home, gathering in the dark with their sisters to worship the Goddess, or speak of the new-found pride in and comfort with their bodies. Spretnak says that in "poring over the hundreds of photographs of Goddess figurines, bas-reliefs, and frescoes, one could not fail to grasp the centrality of the elemental power of the female body" (1991:13). In a culture that defines women's bodies as "inferior" and the functions that women's bodies perform as "unclean," Goddess Spirituality offers an alternative image that results in a new sense of freedom for many women.

Many of the more recent narratives in Goddess Spirituality provide in-depth examinations of cultural manifestations of the Goddess. Books such as The Book of the Goddess: Past and Present and Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood, rather than focusing on the historical dynamics of "cultural transformation" (Eisler 1987), provide "Goddess lore" collected from a wide range of cultural backgrounds including: Mexican, Scandinavian,

Algonquin, Japanese, and African. Appendix A provides a partial list of "Goddess Aspects" presented in Goddess Spirituality writings.

Utilizing these histories and Goddess lore writings, narrators in the Women's Spirituality Movement have constructed a powerful critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Western culture for which it laid the foundation. They

> attribute various kinds of cultural malaise--desacralization, ecological and nuclear disaster, class, race, and gender warfare--to the same cause: the dualisms between spirit and matter, male and female, science and religion, thinking and feeling, that they see as having been fostered by the . . . established religions (Bednarowski qtd. in Lewis and Melton 177).

As a major part of this critique, writers in the Women's Spirituality Movement have outlined what they consider the fundamental characteristics of the "patriarchal imagination" (McKee in Nicholson 250-257) facilitated by the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The Dominant Narrative on Religion and Spirituality

Char McKee, in The Goddess Re-Awakening states that

> the central belief at the core of the patriarchal imagination is that all members of creation exist separately from each other as autonomous creatures apart from nature and their environment, seeking gratification for drives of power, sex, and survival, in competition with all others. From this core belief, The Great Illusion of Separateness, has come the perspective that all else except separate ego is "the other"--other races and nations, other forms of life and the earth, even our own "other" inner selves, are all strangers to be feared (251).

McKee goes on to outline the components of the "patriarchal imagination" (McKee in Nicholson 251-257):

1. The central theme of Creation is separateness
2. The only valid way of knowing reality is with logical mind
3. Reality is mechanistic
4. Reality is hiearchical and polarized
5. The rest of Nature was made for our species to dominate
6. World problems can be solved through science and technology
7. Violence is an acceptable solution for conflict

Likewise, Starhawk, a leading voice in the Women's Spirituality Movement, focuses on the separation that has evolved from the dualisms inherited from classical Greece and the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Hebrews (Starhawk in Spretnak 1982: 174):

> Estrangement is the culmination of long, historical process. Its roots lie in the Bronze Age shift from matrifocal, Earth-centered cultures whose religions centered around the Goddess and the gods embodied in nature, to patriarchal, urban cultures of conquest, whose gods inspired and supported war.

Starhawk also identifies Christianity as furthering the image of women as inferior and unclean (Starhawk in Spretnak 174):

> Christianity deepened the split, establishing a duality between spirit and matter that identified flesh with nature and both with women/sexuality, and all three with the Devil as forces of evil. God was envisioned as male--uncontaminated by the processes of birth, nurturing, growth, menstruation, and the decay of the flesh--removed from this world to a transcendent realm of spirit somewhere else.

Baring and Cashord, authors of The Evolution of an Image, similarly state that for them

> it came . . . as a surprise to discover the to extent which our Judaeo-Christian religion or mythology (depending on the point of view) had inherited the paradigm images of Babylonian mythology, particularly the opposition between the Creative Spirit and Chaotic Nature, and also the habit of thinking in oppositions generally. We find this, for instance, in the common assumption that the spiritual and the physical worlds are different in kind, an assumption, that unreflectively held, separates mind from matter, soul from body, thinking from feeling, and reason from instinct. When, in addition, the "spiritual" pole of these dualisms is valued as "higher" than the "physical" pole, then the two terms fall into an opposition that is almost impossible to reunite without dissolving both of the terms (xii).

Thus, the dominant narrative on spirituality and the resulting worldview is characterized by separateness and alienation, both of which have their roots in the dualisms first appearing when Marduk killed Tiamat in the Babylonian creation story. Spretnak (1982) states that

> when this dualistic pattern of thinking is combined with a symbolic tradition in which God is addressed and conceptualized in predominantly male language and imagery, the sexism of religions thinkers appears logical and consistent.

The narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement offer alternative visions to the dualistic and patriarchal views of the dominant narrative on spirituality: holism and interconnectedness in place of separateness; an image of the Divine as immanent not

transcendent; and a world in which mystery and reverence replace violence and domina tion. The two alternative views are best described by Riane Eisler in The Chalice and the Blade in her presentation of a theory of societal evolution (xvii):

> This theory, which I have called cultural transformation theory, proposes that underlying the great surface diversity of human culture are two basic models of society.
>
> The first, which I call the *dominator* model, is what is popularly termed either patriarchy or matriarchy--the *ranking* of one half of humanity over the other. The second, in which social relations are primarily based on the principle of *linking* rather than ranking, may best be described as the *partnership* model.

Although the overarching language of the Women's Spirituality Movement offers this image--a change from a patriarchal, dualistic, and hiearchical worldview to an egalitarian, holistic, and interrelated worldview--a close examination of the specific narratives within the Movement show some inconsistencies. These inconsistencies become visible when the more intriguing of the Women's Spirituality narratives--Ecofeminism, Feminist Wicce, and what I call Feminist Gnosticism--are inspected critically. These narratives, constructed by "fusing" the message of Goddess spirituality with other principle spirituality narratives (New Science, Earth-Based/Nature, and Esoteric/Occult) have been crucial to the creation of a "critical mass" capable of having a major impact on the discourse on spirituality. Before these Goddess Spirituality narratives can be described, the other principle spirituality narratives need to be introduced.

Other Principle Spirituality Narratives

New Science Spirituality Narratives

New Science spirituality narratives are theories constructed within the "hard" sciences that interact with the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement to change the Western worldview. These theories according to Truzzi's "dimensions of occultism" (248) are anomalous to the traditional scientific wisdom of the last four hundred years. The importance of these narratives lies in both the interpretation and the language of the theories. Their potential influence on the discourse on spirituality can be recognized simply by examining the titles of some of the new science "best sellers": God's Laughter: Man and His Cosmos 1992; The Mind of God 1992; God and the New Physics 1983; The Dancing Wu Li Masters 1979; The Tao of Physics 1976; The Self-Aware Universe 1993; The Ages of Gaia 1988; Chaos: Making a New Science 1987; Mysticism and the New Physics 1992; Quantum Healing 1989; The Holographic Universe 1991; The Matter Myth 1992; Beyond the Quantum 1986; Belonging to the Universe 1991).

Despite the religious and spiritual tone of the titles, these books were written by qualified individuals within the scientific community. Therefore, although some of the interpretations in these works are questioned by more mainstream scientists (Bohm in Griffin 59, 64; Thompson 99), the qualifications of the writers are a deciding factor in the role they play in the discourse. Again, this exemplifies Truzzi's "dimensions of occultism" --specifically "the source of the occult label" (Truzzi 248). Figure 4. "New Science Spirituality Narratives" reflects the relationship among the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement, the Dominant Narrative on Religion and Spirituality, and the New Science narratives on spirituality.

Two New Science narratives which were frequently encountered in this study are: David Bohm's theory of "the implicate order" and James Lovelock's "Gaia hypothesis."

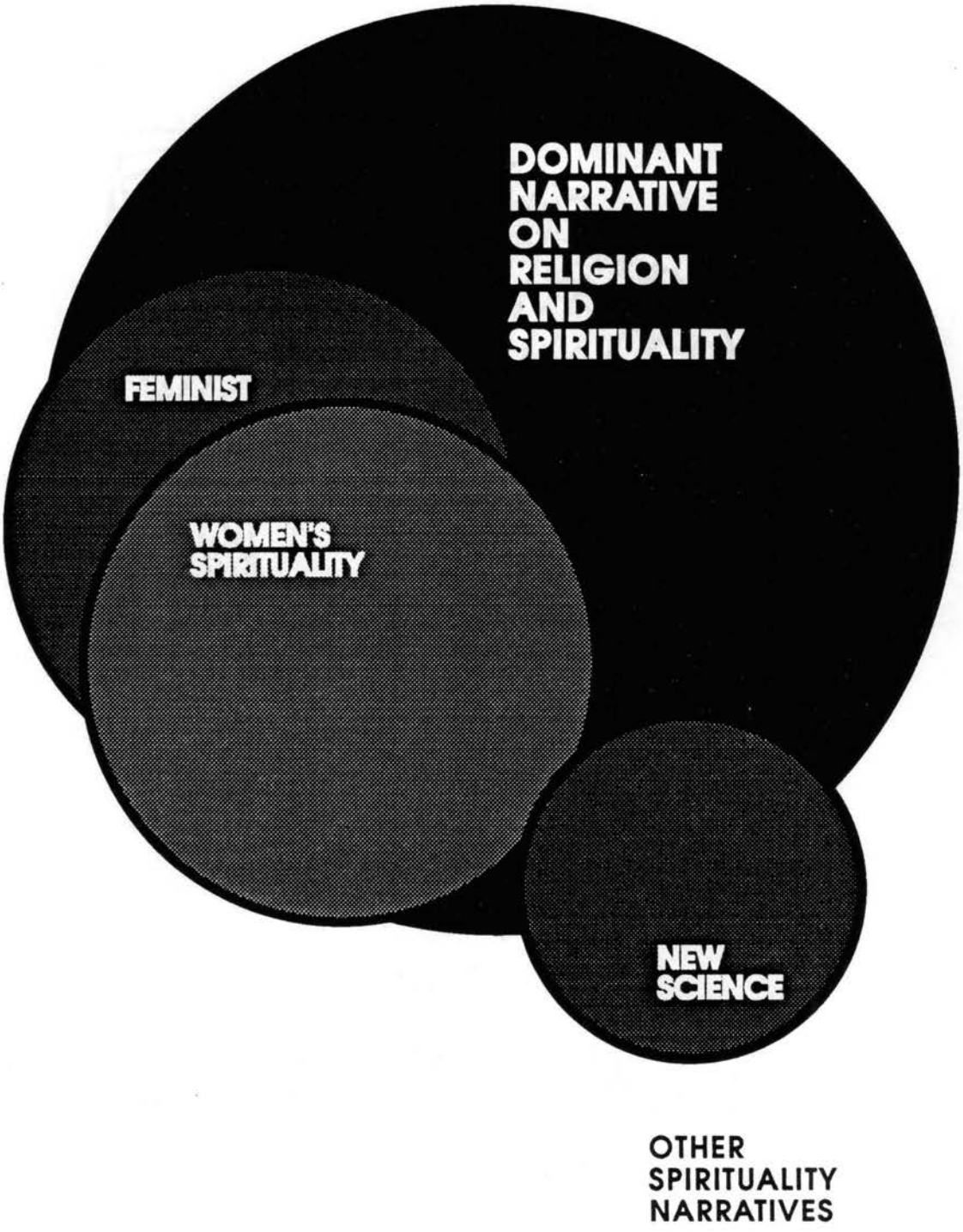

Figure IV. New Science Spirituality Narratives

These theories are briefly introduced in the following paragraphs. The emphasis in this discussion is on the interpretations and words in these narratives which have been used by feminists to legitimize the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement.

David Bohm's Theory of the Implicate Order. In Taking the Quantum Leap: The New Physics for Non-Scientists, Fred Alan Wolfe states that "the new physics [quantum mechanics] uncovered a bizarre and magical underworld" (1). One of the many scientists who study this underworld is David Bohm.

Quantum mechanics, the study of subatomic particles, has shown that

> atomic objects do not have properties that are intrinsic to themselves and independent of their environment.
>
> [Quantum physics] also helped to introduce a new physical reality that is described as organic, holistic, ecological, systematic, and indivisible, replacing an older, more mechanistic worldview that underlies the assumptions of both Newtonian physics and traditional scientific methods (Nielsen 14-15).

In The Reenchantment of Science, Bohm discusses the importance of quantum mechanics to our worldview. He shares his concern about "the loss of meaning" in the world (58) and his belief that "we must have something really new and creative" (59) that can put meaning back into our lives. Bohm believes that this can be achieved (partly) through the vision of quantum mechanics.

Bohm begins his discussion of the implicate order with a comparison of the old physics to the new physics as represented by quantum mechanics. The following is Bohm's list of the basic principles of the dominant scientific view--mechanistic physics (60-61):

1. The world is reduced as far as possible to a set of basic elements
2. These elements are basically external to each other
3. The forces of interaction do not affect their inner nature

Bohm then outlines the basic characteristics of quantum mechanics in his theory of the implicate order. Words used by Bohm which have been instrumental in legitimizing the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement are italicized.

> The universe is one seamless, *unbroken whole*, and all the forms we see in it are abstracted by our way of looking and thinking . . ..
>
> . . . according to quantum physics, . . . an internal *relationship between the parts and the whole, among the various parts*, and a context-dependence, which is very much the same thing, all do exist (64).
>
> The order physics [mechanistic physics] has been using the order of *separation* (65).
>
> In my proposal of *unbroken wholeness*, I turn the mechanistic picture upside down. . . . An essential part of this proposal is that the *whole universe is actively enfolded to some degree in each of the parts*. . . . external relatedness is a secondary, derivative truth . . . which I call the explicate order or unfolded order . . . . The more fundamental truth is the truth of internal relatedness . . . which I call the implicate order . . . (66).

The similarities in the language of the Women's Spirituality narratives and Bohm's "implicate order" are clear (e.g. whole, unbroken, interrelated). There also exists a connection between Bohm's "implicate order" and Esoteric/Occult narratives. In The Seeker's Handbook: The Complete Guide to Spiritual Pathfinding, John Lash states that Bohm's "implicate order" is the "exact equivalent to the WORD in ancient cosmological teachings" (405). He further states that the WORD is "the single most important

principle in ancient wisdom and metaphysics, presently being reinvented in such concepts as implicate order, hologrammic theory, and morphogenetic fields" (Lash 405). Therefore, in examining just one New Science spirituality narrative, a symbolic thread connecting Goddess spirituality narratives, New Science narratives, and Esoteric/Occult narratives is identified. Symbolic links such as this were discovered often throughout this study.

James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis. Similar to Bohm's theory of implicate order in physics, Lovelock's Gaia theory in ecology states "that organic life on Earth actually monitors and controls the processes of the atmosphere" (Lash 276). Therefore, the "Gaia hypothesis" posits a holistic life-force which encompasses and defines the individual forms contained within. Although, the Gaia hypothesis is not as widely accepted as Bohm's theory (Lash 276), it is used to legitimize Women's Spirituality narratives. Reference to the fact that Lovelock named his theory after the "Greek mother-goddess-earth" is made often in Goddess Spirituality narratives. The connection between Goddess-centered mythology and the contemporary theory in ecology is utilized to verify the wisdom of early matrifocal cultures in Goddess narratives. An example is Janet and Stewart Farrar's reference to the Gaia Hypothesis in The Witches' Goddess:

> The concept of the Earth Mother as the body-plus-soul of the fertile planet beneath our feet is of course common to many religions and to occult thinking, but a few years ago it received unexpected support from the carefully worked-out theory of two distinguished British scientists.
>
> In the "New Scientist" of 6 February 1975, Dr. James Lovelock FRS and Dr. Sidney Epton published the outlines of their Gaia Hypothesis, and in 1979 Lovelock gave a fuller account of it in his book Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth. They based the Gaia Hypothesis on two propositions: (1) life exists only because material conditions on Earth happen to be just right for its existence, and

(2) life defines the material conditions needed for its survival and makes sure that they stay there. . .

Lovelock and Epton's conclusion from this staggering array of scientific improbabilities (which were nevertheless scientifically demonstrable facts) was that the whole system--the Earth and its biosphere--"seemed to exhibit the behavior of a single organism, even a living creature."

They called this creature Gaia, "the name given by the ancient Greeks to their Earth goddess."

The whole theory deserves careful study by every witch, pagan, or occultist--preferably from Lovelock's easily available book, for it typifies a steadily growing development: the discovery, by the frontiersmen of science, of the coherence of that multi-level reality which occultism has always recognized.

(The Gaia Hypothesis, incidentally, cannot be dismissed as wishful thinking or selective argument by inadequate scientists. "Fellow of the Royal Society" is one of the few honours which can genuinely be said to be granted only to first-class minds. If the pagan movement had an Honours List, it should give Lovelock a knighthood at least.)

The Earth, then, by human experience, occult theory, and scientific fact, is a living entity (15-16).

The above examples show that the New Science spirituality narratives serve to legitimize the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement. The other two principle spirituality narratives--Earth-Based/Nature and Esoteric/Occult--are more directly utilized in the formulation of new constructions of Goddess Spirituality narratives.

Earth-Based/Nature Spirituality Narratives

Earth-Based/Nature spirituality narratives are narratives in which the central message is the need for and the wisdom of "an intimate relationship with nature" (Spretnak 1991:79). The variations within this principle narrative are represented by such diverse subnarratives as deep ecology, Native American spirituality, and traditional witchcraft. In the following paragraphs, Native American spirituality narratives are examined. As with the analysis of New Science narratives, the emphasis is placed on the words and phrases that link Earth-Based/Nature narratives with other spirituality narratives--especially Goddess narratives. Deep ecology and traditional witchcraft will be discussed with Ecofeminism and Feminist Wicce in the section on other women's spirituality narratives as they are directly related to the construction of those Goddess Spirituality narratives. Figure 5. "Earth-Based/Nature Spirituality Narratives" reflects the increasing complexity of the universe of discourse on spirituality.

Native American Spirituality Narratives. "The cosmic union of humans and the rest of the Earth community, including the stars and moon, is central to the Native American worldview" (Spretnak 1991: 90). This cosmic union is best described in the words of Ed McGaa, author of Mother Earth Spirituality:

> If there were no rocks, my body would have no minerals and I would die. If there were no water, my cells would dry up and I would die. If there were no Great Spirit moving in all aspects of the vast creation, I would not have been awakened with a consciousness of this cosmic dance of life (xvi).

This reverence for all aspects of creation is voiced throughout Native American writings (Allen 1986, 1991; McGaa 1990, 1992; Noble 1991; Versluis 1989, 1992; Churchill; Neihardt 1961; Wind 1989; Medicine Eagle 1991; Summer-Rain 1985, 1987, 1988,

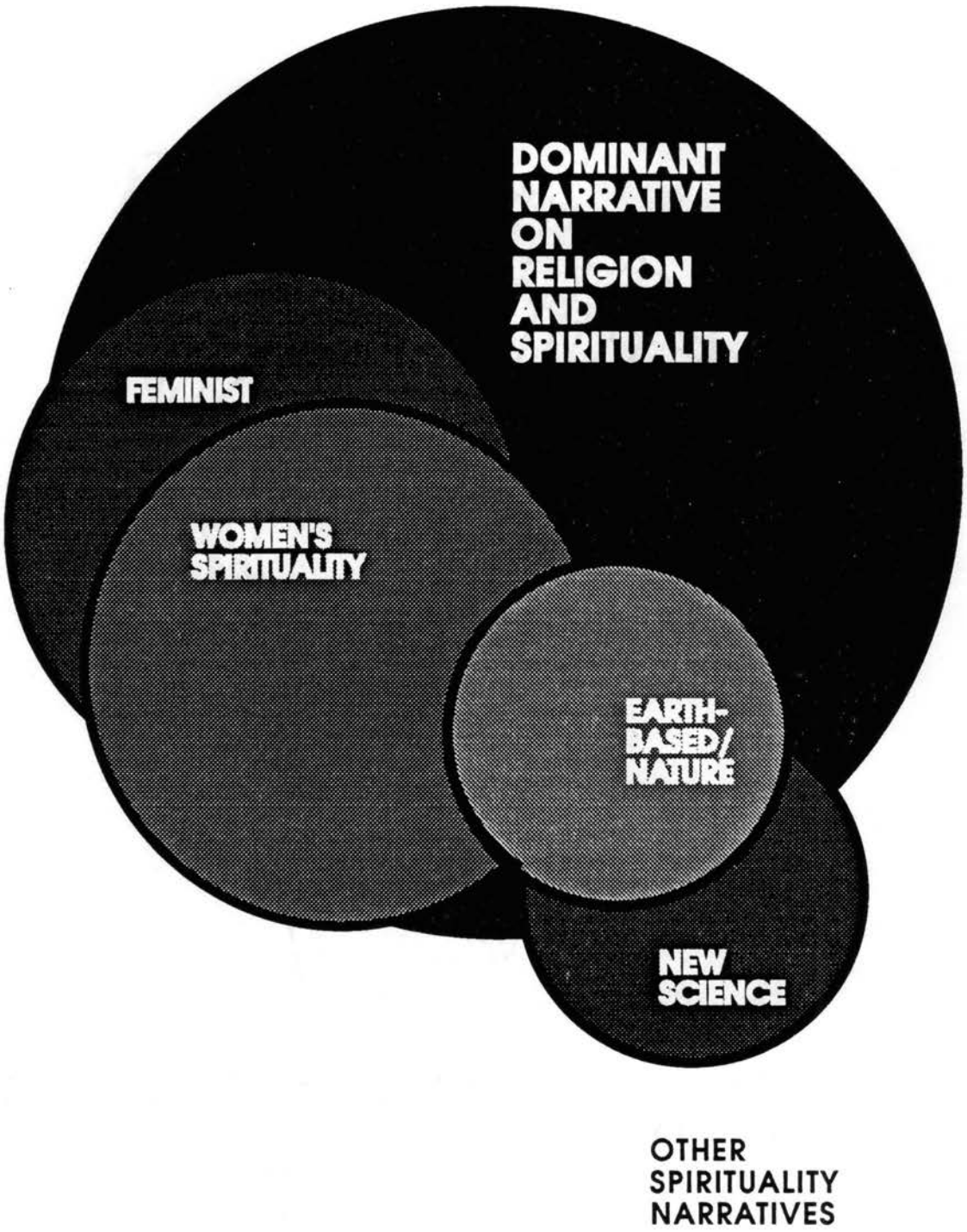

Figure V. Earth-Based/Nature Spirituality Narratives

1989; Mander 1991). Native Americans, ". . . in general, perceive 'the environment' as a sensate, conscious entity suffused with spiritual power" (Spretnak 1991: 90). This vision of the earth as a living being is similar to, and yet different from, Lovelock's view of Gaia:

> In no way do I see Gaia as a sentient being, a surrogate God. To me Gaia is alive and part of the ineffable Universe and I am a part of her (1988: 218).

The connotative meaning of "the earth is alive" is quite different from the perspective of the ecologist. The importance for the discourse on spirituality is the similarity in words and phrases which, as with Bohm's "implicate order" and the WORD, creates a symbolic link that contributes to the "critical mass" of the Women's Spirituality Movement.

Another symbolic link exists between the freedom from prescriptions and proscriptions previously discussed in the Goddess Spirituality narratives and the absence of the need for man-made structures for worship in the Native American narratives:

> Our church had no man-made articles. It had no statues--we needed no reminders of where we were or Who resided there. Our church had no expensive stained glass windows--we had stars. Our church had no manufactured music--we had the symphony of the spheres. Our church had no Sunday-dressed people--we had all God's creatures to worship with. Our church had no collection basket--we gave ourselves totally over to the will of God. Our church had no sermon--we listened to the Spirit breathe. Our church had no representative priest, minister, or rabbi--we opened our spirit's door and let the glorious Spirit of God step quietly in (Summer-Rain 1985:140).

One other symbolic link between Native American spirituality narratives and the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement, frequently discussed in both, is the

emphasis on the benefits of matrifocal societies. In the following words of Paula Gunn Allen, the symbolic links are evident between the Goddess narratives presented earlier and the evaluations of early tribal structure made in Native American narratives:

> Many of the tribes of the western hemisphere were organized along gynocratic lines prior to contact with European patriarchies in the fifteenth century. In gynocratic tribal systems, egalitarianism, personal autonomy, and communal harmony were highly valued, rendering the good of the individual and the good of the society mutually reinforcing rather than divisive.
>
> Gynocentric communities tend to value peace, tolerance, sharing, relationship, balance, harmony, and just distribution of goods (1991:xiv).

There is also a symbolic link between Nature-Based/Earth narratives (as repre sented by Native American writings) and New Science narratives. In Mother Earth Spirituality, Jan Hartke states that Native Americans (specifically "mystic warriors") "would understand what Einstein meant when he said:

> The more knowledge we acquire, the more mystery we find .... A human being is part of the whole, called by us the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest--a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a founda tion for inner security (Einstein qtd. in McGaa xiii-xiv).

A last symbolic link to be discussed exists between Native American spirituality narratives and the narratives of the Esoteric and the Occult. According to Versluis:

> . . . it is important . . . to recognize that the cosmology of the original peoples [Native Americans] corresponds fundamentally to the Platonic and Neoplatonic understandings of the cosmos, and in many ways also to the esoteric understandings of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (1991:70).

Similarly, Dion Fortune, recognized by occultists as one of the greatest teachers in the Western Mystery Tradition, " . . . opined that the American Indian held the key to the mysteries of the world" (Knight 192).

It is to Esoteric/Occult spirituality narratives, the last category of principle spirituality narratives identified in this study, that we now turn. Figure 6. "Esoteric/Occult Spirituality Narratives" portrays the relationships among the four principle spirituality narratives: Women's Spirituality; New Science; Earth-Based/Nature; and Esoteric/Occult.

Esoteric/Occult Spirituality Narratives

Esoteric/Occult spirituality narratives present information defined as ". . . the hid things of Being. . ." (Purucker 119); ". . . mystical and sacred teachings reserved for students of high and worthy character" (Purucker 45). Subnarratives of the Esoteric/Occult category encountered often during this inquiry include: Theosophy; the Western Mystery Tradition; and Judaic-Christian Gnosticism (Guiley 1991; Lash 1990; Fortune 1934, 1938/1989, 1987; Bailey 1922/1977; Knight 1978; Blavatsky 1889/1972; Webb 1974; Seligman 1948/1975; Hartley 1968/1986; Nasr 1989). Theosophy and the Western Mystery Tradition are outlined briefly in the following paragraphs. Gnosticism,

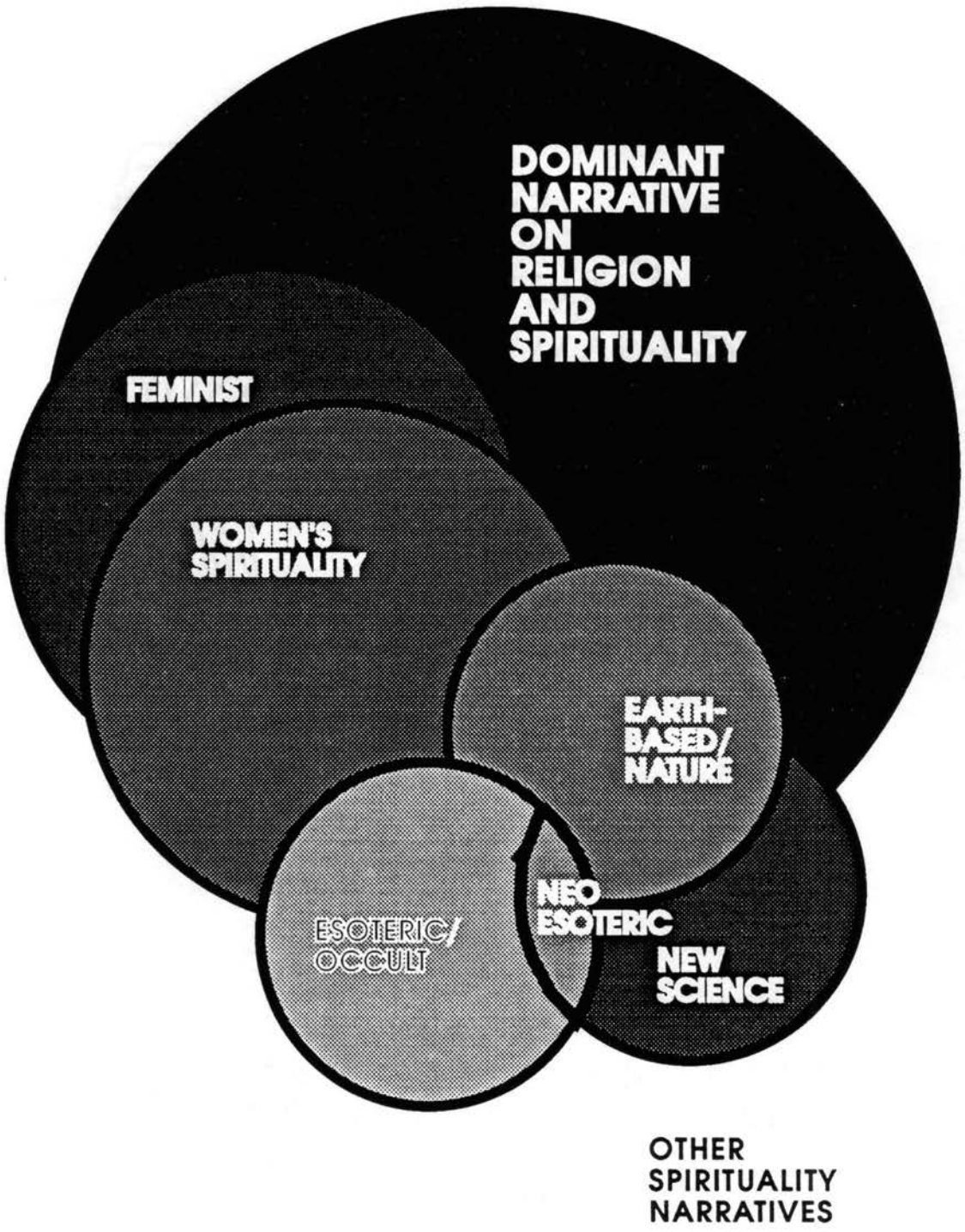

Figure VI. Esoteric/Occult Spirituality Narratives

a major component of Feminist Gnosticism, will be discussed in the section titled, "Other Women's Spirituality Narratives."

Theosophy. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Madame Helene P. Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Olcott. Theosophy is defined as "a philosophical system that teaches that one can gain knowledge of a transcendent reality through revelation . . . or practice of the occult . . ." (Guiley 611). Blavatsky asserted

> . . . that the divine spark in man being one and identical in its essence with the Universal Spirit, our "spirit self" is practically omniscient, but that it cannot manifest its knowledge owing to the impediments of matter (29).

According to the Theosophical system of thought, early civilizations had greater knowledge of the esoteric teachings or ancient wisdom than contemporary societies. Select individuals from those early civilizations became Masters who continue to "live on in various incarnations, guarding the knowledge and teaching it to worthy students" (Guiley 612). Theosophy attempts to bring together the teachings of all religions--Eastern and Western–asserting that they represent individual expressions of the "roots of ancient wisdom" (Guiley 612).

Theosophy is a complex belief system involving theories of a "cosmic evolutionary plan in which divine potential" unfolds (Guiley 612). This evolution occurs through the progression of "root races" or "racial strains going back to Atlantis, from which all current peoples of the earth have originated" (Lash 360).

Although the original Theosophical Society faltered with the death of Blavatsky, several other esoteric traditions were created by society members, which has led to widespread, if often unrecognized, influence on other Western knowledge traditions. The links found in tracing the relationships among the Theosophical Society and other Western knowledge traditions are fascinating and convoluted. Currently, there is a very

active branch of the Theosophical Society in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma which meets every Monday. Appendix B provides a schedule of events for 1993.

As previously mentioned, the Neo-Esoteric Spirituality Group in which I participated was a mixture of several spirituality narratives. Theosophy was a major aspect of the teachings in the group. Figure 6. on page 60 reflects the symbolic fusions involved in the Neo-Esoteric Spirituality Group.

The Western Mystery Tradition.

Whereas Theosophy attempts to merge Eastern and Western thought (e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism, Neo-Platonism, and Christianity), the Western Mystery Tradition does not. Dion Fortune, the ". . . great teacher and priestess of the Western Mysteries . . ." admonishes:

> Do not let it be forgotten that there is a native Mystery Tradition of the race which has its mature aspect in the sun-worship of the Celts, its philosophical aspect in the traditions of alchemy, and its spiritual aspect in the Hidden Church of the Holy Grail, the Church behind the church, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (Hartley 19).

The Western Mystery Tradition is composed of several aspects. The aspect encountered most often in this study was the "legend of the Grail." This is the central tradition presented in the novel, The Mists of Avalon, discussed in Chapter II.

In The Western Mystern Tradition: The Esoteric Heritage of the West, Christine Hartley (a student of Dion Fortune), identifies the origin of the "Grail legend" as "inherited from Great Atlantis" (24). The following is a brief summary of these origins as outlined by Dion Fortune in Esoteric Orders and Their Work: The Training and Work of

the Initiate. These origins are also incorporated into Theosophy's narrative as mentioned previously.

Human beings, as we are today, are the fifth in a series of evolutionary species. Throughout this human evolutionary process, what was once a group-soul or group-consciousness gradually became many separate divine sparks or individual souls. The "Great Ones" or those who had obtained "cosmic adulthood" in an earlier evolutionary step ". . . appeared upon the earth during the middle of the Atlantean Period" (Fortune 1987:21). These "Great Ones" are "the Divine Founders of racial cultures to which all primitive traditions look back" (Fortune 1987:21). The Divine Founders selected the most promising of the race to which they were connected and instructed them in the Great Mysteries. These students then trained others and so on. In later generations, from the "Great Ones" came what are called the Three Great Traditions. Although there are many different schools of esotericism, all are descendents of the teachings of the "Great Ones."

Each of the Three Great Traditions are directly related to one of the emigrations from Atlantis at the time of the seismic disasters. The First Emigration resulted in the First Great Tradition which

> when uninfluenced by the later, more evolved traditions, is a rule-of-thumb affair, and much adulterated by pure superstition, which is as alien to true occult science as it is to natural science. In this tradition . . . is found much knowledge of physical magic (Fortune 1987:26).

The Second Emigration was the precursor of the Second Great Tradition of the Wisdom Religions of the East. This Tradition contains ". . . some of the profoundest knowledge in the world" (Fortune 1987:25).

"The Third Emigration came out from the doomed continent immediately before the final cataclysm sank it forever below the waves" (Fortune 1987:25). The Western Tradition evolved from this last emigration. The Western Tradition has three aspects of which one is the "Devotional and Spiritual Aspect, whose Master of Masters is Jesus of Nazareth" (Fortune 1987: 27). This is the major tradition in the Western world; however, many combinations exist today.

Survivors of this Third Emigration or

> final great eruption . . . scrambled ashore on . . . the southwest of Ireland, on the lost land of Lyonese, on the indentured bays of Wales.
>
> And among those who came to rest were two--a priest and a priestess--one of whom was called Merlin and the other Morgan, known later as le Fey. Now, Merlin means simply the man from the sea and Morgan, equally simply, means the woman from the sea (Hartley 25).

According to Western esotericism, with the first Merlin and Morgan begins the older Arthurian cycles which have been repeated many times. The older Arthurian tale, through time, has been ". . . interwoven with Christian aspects" (Hartley 25). But, " . . .it is in the older Arthurian cycles and in the legends of the Grail . . . [that] . . . we have the Mystery Traditions of our race" (Hartley 26).

Symbolic Links Among the Principle Spirituality Narratives

Symbolic links are words or images shared by two or more principle spirituality narratives. The links do not necessarily--in fact, usually do not--carry the exact same meaning within the categorical narratives. Additionally, subtle differences in meaning exist among subnarratives (i.e. meanings differ among various Goddess narratives). Despite the difficulties involved in determining shades of meaning, there are basic

differences that can be identified. As mentioned earlier, these symbolic links, regardless of interpretation differences, are crucial to the creation of (or impression of) a "critical mass" worthy of notice in the discourse on spirituality.

Both Goddess Spirituality narratives and Earth-Based/Nature narratives typically contain images of the Earth Goddess or Earth Mother. Goddess narratives, however, use these Goddess images as empowering symbols for women; while Earth-Based narratives utilize the images to encourage a closer relationship with and support for the earth. Also, many subnarratives within Earth-Based/Nature spirituality narratives (e.g. Native American, traditional witchcraft) include both the Goddess and the God in their narratives while many Goddess narratives emphasize only the Goddess.

Goddess Spirituality narratives and Esoteric/Occult narratives also have symbolic links. For example, some "... contemporary Theosophical literature ... [refers to] ... 'the veiled mother of the world'" (McLaughlin qtd. in Bednarowski in Lewis and Melton 176). References to "the mother" also provide symbolic links between Esoteric/Occult spirituality narratives and Earth-Based/Nature writings. As with the links between Goddess writings and Esoteric/Occult narratives, Earth-Based narratives define "the mother" in terms of the earth, while the Esoteric/Occult conceptualization of "the mother" usually emphasizes the Divine as knowledge.

The symbolic links between New Science narratives and the other principle spirituality narratives are crucial because sharing images and symbols with these narratives provide legitimation. References to New Science writings occur frequently in the writings of Earth-Based/Nature and Women's Spirituality narratives. In return, these symbolic links have opened up a broader "market" for what historically have been scientific writings aimed at a very small audience. Today, words like "quantum" and "chaos" are part of everyday vocabularies. This can be attributed to a great extent to wider spread interest in the other principle spirituality narratives.

In addition to the symbolic links that connect the principle narratives, there exist what I call symbolic fusions. Symbolic fusions are "new" narratives which have been constructed by combining selected aspects of two or more existing principle narratives or subnarratives. Although similar to Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" (Nielsen 1990; Hekman 1986, 1990; Hiley 1991) and Mead's coordination of perspectives (Luscher 1990; Ferguson 1980) in that symbolic fusions enhance an individual's ability to "steer through" a very complex world, symbolic fusions, like symbolic links, greatly increase the "critical mass" of voices raised in opposition to the dominant narrative on spirituality and religion. So much so, that in fact, the overriding effect of symbolic fusion is greater than the sum of its parts. That is, once symbolic fusion occurs, the resultant influence on the perception of knowledge crosses everincreasing numbers of narrative boundaries. This effect, being multidimensional, cannot be adequately demonstrated on the two-dimensional figure (Figure 7.) that follows. Ecofeminist spirituality is a prime example of symbolic fusion whose impact on the dominant tradition far outweighs the individual effects of its multiple foundations.

Other Women's Spirituality Narratives

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a new social movement (Horrigan 7) that joins ". . . feminist visions and ecological politics . . ." (Plant xi). This narrative is constucted by combining the concerns of the narratives of Women's Spirituality and Earth-Based/Nature narratives. Figure 7. "Ecofeminism" on the following page reflects this fusion. The term ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by Francoise d'Eaubonne ". . . to bring attention to women's potential for bringing about an ecological revolution. . ." (Warren 125-126). Concurrently, the ecofeminist social movement ". . . emerged, in part, from a

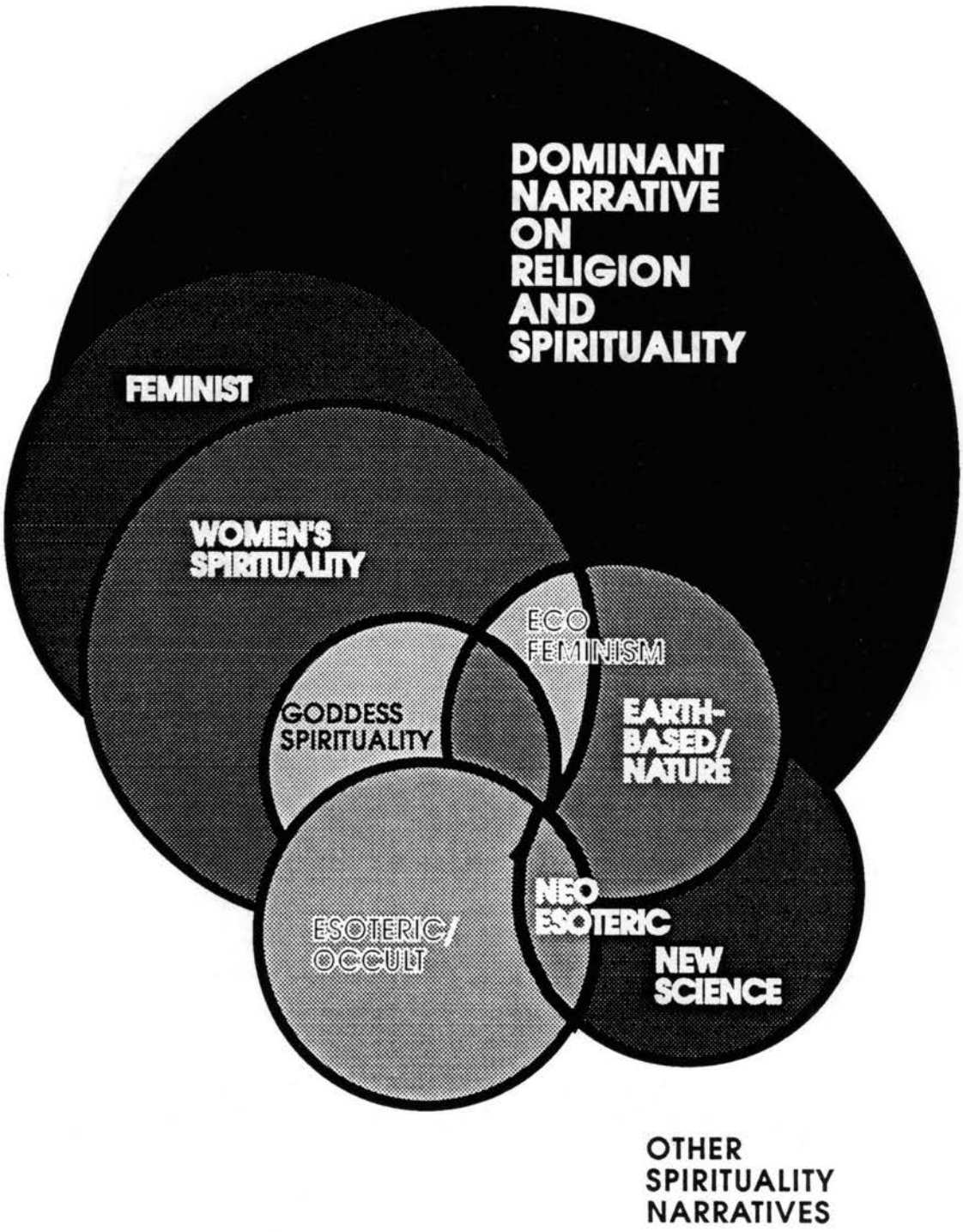

Figure VII. Ecofeminism

1974 conference organized by Sandra Marburg and Lisa Watson at the University of California, Berkeley, entitled "Women and the Environment" (Horrigan 7).

Since the early 1970s, ecofeminism has become an important voice in both the feminist movement and the ecology movement (Hypatia: A Special Issue on Ecological Feminism 1991; Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism 1989; Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her 1978; Green Paradise Lost 1979; Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap 1982; The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution 1980; "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" 1990; "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels" 1989; "It's Not Nice to Mess with Mother Nature: An Introduction to Ecofeminism 101" 1989; "As Class Meets Ecofeminism" 1989). Although, as with the other spirituality narratives discussed in this paper, there are variations within Ecofeminism, they all subscribe to certain basic principles. Ynestra King outlined these principles in "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology" (in Plant 19-20):

> 1. The building of Western industrial civilization in opposition to nature interacts dialectically with and reinforces the subjugation of women, because women are believed to be closer to nature. Therefore, ecofeminists take on the life-struggles of all of nature as our own.
>
> 2. Life on earth is an interconnected web, not a hiearchy. There is no natural hiearchy; human hiearchy is projected onto nature and then used to justify social domination. Therefore, ecofeminist theory seeks to show the connections between all forms of domination, including the domination of nonhuman nature, and ecofeminist practice is necessarily antihiearchical.

> 3. A healthy, balanced ecosystem, including human and nonhuman inhabitants, must maintain diversity. . . .
>
> 4. The survival of the species necessitates a renewed understanding of our relationship to nature, of our own bodily nature, and of nonhuman nature around us; it necessitates a challenging of the nature-culture dualism and a corresponding radical restructuring of human society according to feminist and ecological principles.

As can be seen in the above principles, an Ecofeminist criticism centers on the dualisms which exist in Western thought. Ecofeminists rely heavily on Women's Spirituality writings such as Rosemary Radford Ruether's New Woman, New Earth as they believe that the history and basis for the dualistic thinking of the West must be addressed if the dualisms are to be eradicated. This focus on the dualisms is held in common with the broader Women's Spirituality Movement--both reconstructionists and revolutionaries --but the "slant" is different for Ecofeminists. Reconstructionists criticize the dualisms with the goal of transforming the Judeo-Christian tradition so that women may be granted equal participation in the church. Revolutionaries fault the dualisms for women's inequality, but rather than trying to transform the church, they hope to reinstate a female deity. Ecofeminists perceive the Western dualism in its most primal form, as that of dominator/dominated. Of special concern to Ecofeminists is the corresponding hierarchy as expressed in Figure 8. on the following page (Gray 1979:4).

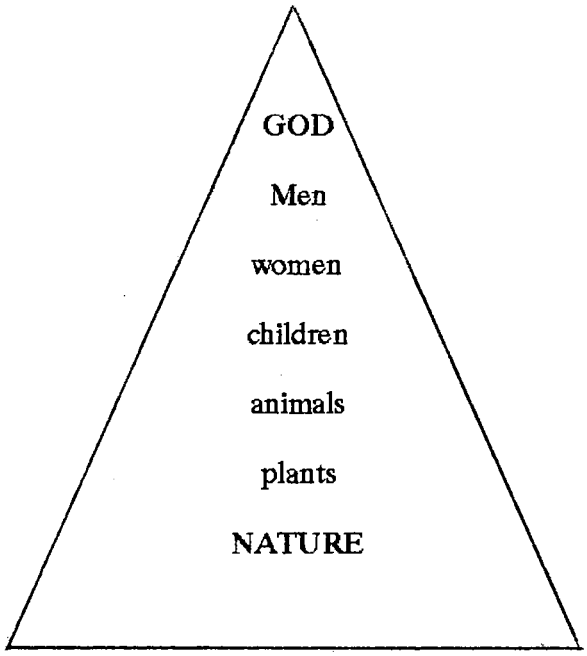

Figure 8. The Hiearchy of the Western World

Thus, Ecofeminism is

> a philosophy that takes on not just the domination of the earth by pollution, but domination itself, in all its forms--whites over people of color, men over women, adults over children, rich nations over the Third World, humans over animals and nature. Ecofeminists want an entirely new ethic (Van Gelder 60-61).

The crucial issue for Ecofeminists, however, is what they term "... the prototype of other forms of domination: that of man over woman" (King in Plant 19). It is this focus which creates tensions between Ecofeminists and the most closely related Earth-Based/Nature narrative, deep ecology.

Deep ecology, like Ecofeminism, is a new social movement (Horrigan 8). In "Deep Ecology versus Ecofeminism: Healthy Differences or Incompatible Philosophies?", Robert Sessions identifies four basic characteristics of deep ecology:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human Life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.

2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.

Although, there are obviously close ties between deep ecology and ecofeminism as Earth-Based/Nature narratives, the two narratives have been engaged in ongoing debate and controversy for nearly a decade (Sessions in Hypatia 91; Fox 1989). The differences revolve around the central message of each. For deep ecology, the criticism ". . . is aimed at anthropocentric domination of nature" (Sessions in Hypatia 92).

> At the core of deep ecology is the call for a new (or a return to an old) sensibility. Modern humans have lost touch with nature and thus with their own natures--we no longer feel the rhythms of nature within ourselves, we have split ourselves from the world (dualism), and we live at a distance (alienation) from what is natural, leaving us fearful (insecure) and able to deal with the world only on our own terms (control).

At the core of Ecofeminism, however, is a criticism aimed at the ". . . connections between the dual domination of women and nature . . ." (Warren 125). Their response to

deep ecology's focus on "anthropocentrism (i.e. human-centeredness) rather than androcentism (i.e. man-centeredness)" (Fox 5) is expressed by Val Plumwood (in Plant 3):

> Deep ecology has failed to provide an adequate historical perspective or an adequate challenge to human/nature dualism.

Warwick Fox responds to this criticism saying that

> for deep ecologists, it is simplistic on both empirical and logical grounds to think that one particular perspective on human society identifies the real root of ecological destruction (15).

While these debates between deep ecology and Ecofeminism continue, the impact of their alliance has magnified the effects of the other narratives opposing the dominant narrative on spirituality and religion. This impact is enhanced by another closely related "new" construction in Women's Spirituality narratives, Feminist Wicce. Where Ecofeminism emerges from the union of the narratives of the broader Women's Spirituality Movement and the social ecology subnarrative within the Earth-Based/Nature narrative, Feminist Wicce is created from the fusion of Goddess Spirituality narratives and the Earth-Based/Nature narratives of traditional witchcraft.

Feminist Wicce

One of the more intriguing of the "new" narratives in the Women's Spirituality Movement is Feminist Wicce. (Wicce indicates female practitioners; wicca indicates male practitioners). Feminist Wicce combines aspects of traditional witchcraft (an Earth-Based/Nature Narrative) with Goddess Spirituality. Figure 9. on the next page reflects this symbolic fusion. Goddess spirituality has already been discussed. The following provides an overview of traditional witchcraft (Leek 1971; Cabot 1989; Valiente 1973;

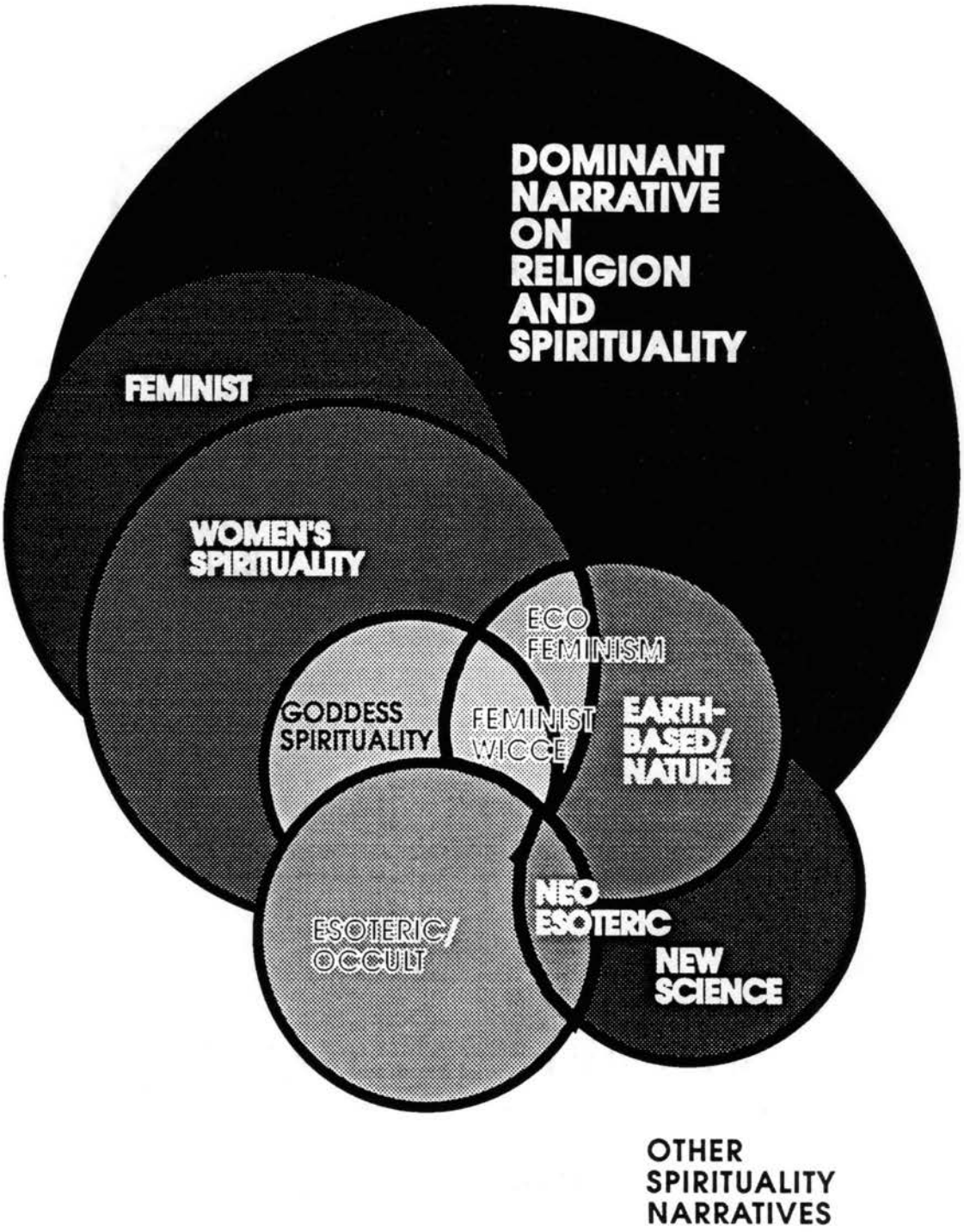

Figure VIII. Feminist Wicce

Wilson 1981; Russell 1980; Cunningham 1988; Farrar 1987; Jade 1991). In this study, traditional witchcraft is used to identify witchcraft which honors both the Goddess and the God. "Wicca is a contemporary religion. Its practitioners revere the Goddess and the God, as creators of the universe, as tangible, conscious beings" (Cunningham 4).

> The Goddess [Lady of the Moon, Earth Mother, Sister of Power] is the female force, that portion of the ultimate energy source which created the universe. She is all-woman, all-fertility, all love.
>
> In Wicca, She is perhaps most closely associated with the Moon. . .
>
> She is also associated with the Earth (71-72).
>
> The God [The Horned One, The Harvest King] is the male force, the other half of the primal divine energy acknowledged by Wiccans. He is all-man, all-fertility, all-love.
>
> Wiccans see the God represented by the Sun . . .
>
> Many Wiccans identify food [harvest] with the God (74-75).

In The Truth About Witchcraft Today, Scott Cunningham says that there are "at least five major ways in which Wicca differs from other religions" (62). The differences are:

1. Worship of the Goddess and God
2. Reverence for the Earth
3. Acceptance of magic
4. Acceptance of reincarnation
5. Lack of proselytizing activities

In her discussion of Wicca, Jade says

> The traditional groups include many different branches of what is

> considered "traditional British Wicca" . . . traditional Wicca is most often considered to be a religion as opposed to a philosophy by its practitioners. In keeping with this distinction, being a part of a traditional coven requires a strong commitment. One does not casually drop in to a traditional group. One becomes a formal member of the group and is, virtually always, initiated into the coven (62).

Jade also says that for women

> . . . interested in participating in traditional craft [wicca], there may be several barriers. Primary among them is that traditional . . . [wiccans] . . . are far more likely to be traditional in other beliefs also. This includes acceptance of mainstream cultural attitudes about the "place" of women. Although a priestess is technically the "head" of each coven and, in fact, most ocvens trace their passing on of knowledge and power through a matriarchal lineage, some groups still remain male identified (63).

This attitude and the fact that traditional witch covens typically involve a hiearchy consisting of three degrees are what Feminist Witches seek to correct with the creation of Feminist Wicce (Starhawk, 1982, 1979, 1987; Jade, 1991; Guiley, 1989; Williams, 1978; Amber, 9992; Young, 1989; Holub, 1990). The beginning of Feminist Wicce is usually identified with the publication in 1976 of Z Budapests book, The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows (now titled The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries (Jade 12).

Feminist Witches reject the idea of a hiearchy within the coven. Responding to the criticism that Feminist Wicce covens sometimes do involve a ". . . distinction . . . between 'seeker' and 'high priestess', Z Budapest answers that

> High Priestess means Female Elder. It is an honor that can be earned by starting a group and serving them. One aspect of conducting rituals is knowing how emotion and drama can be effectively combined to facilitate each woman's discovery of the Goddess within herself . . .
>
> The notion of High Priestesses being higher beings and not seekers as well is utter nonsense. People may respect or even feel a sense of awe for a High Priestess in much the same way they do a good teacher. We are so indoctrinated with the patriarchal way of seeing everyone as either one-up or one-down that sometimes a healthy respect for elders is misinterpreted as a bad thing. How are women going to learn from our mothers and crones if we don't honor and respect each other? (qtd. in Spretnak 1982: 539)

Feminist Wicce represents a specific Goddess Spirituality Narrative. Not all Goddess worshippers are witches. One distinguishing characteristic of witches is the use of magic. Starhawk (a student of Z Budapest and the most widely-known witch in the United States) explains that

> Magic is a word that can be defined in many ways. A saying attributed to Dion Fortune [introduced in Esoteric/Occult Narratives] is: "Magic is the act of changing consciousness at will." I sometimes call it the art of evoking power from within. Today, I will name it this: the art of liberation, the art that releases the mysteries, that ruptures the fabric of our beliefs, and lets us look into the heart of deep space where dwell the immeasurable, life generating powers (1987:6).

Starhawk further explains the use of magic in wicce:

> Witchcraft is not a religion of masses--of any sort. Its structure is cellular, based on covens, small groups of up to thirteen members that allow for both

communal sharing and individual independence. "Solitaires," witches who prefer to worship alone, are the exception. Covens are autonomous, free to use whatever rituals, chants, and invocations they prefer. There is not a set prayer book or liturgy.

Elements may change, but Craft rituals inevitably follow the same underlyng patterns. The techniques of magic . . . are used to create states of ecstasy, of union with the divine. They may also be used to achieve material results, such as healing, since in the Craft there is no split between spirit and matter (1979:13-14).

Amber similarly differentiates between two types of magic:

True magick is a blending of psychic, emotional, and physical energies in order to transform something--usually oneself. It has been defined as "the art of changing consciusness at will" and "the control of the secret forces of nature."

It can be used for very practical, down-to-Earth purposes: travelling safely, healing a sore throat, bringing prosperity. This is called "thaumaturgy." But it can also be used to cleanse the spirit, deepen insight and achieve Goddess-consciousness. Magick for spiritual growth is called "theurgy" (Amber 39).

As with most of the other spirituality narratives examined in this study, a large part of Feminist Wicce writings present a shared history. Feminist Witches locate their historical foundations in the previously discussed writings in the Women's Spirituality Movement (e.g. Ruether). For Feminist Witches, the emphasis is on the shared history often referred to as the "burning times." The "burning times" occurred from 1300 to 1700 (Starhawk, 1982; Amber, 9992; Young, 1989; Holub, 1990), but its effects on the followers of Wicce are prevalent today.

During the Middle Ages, "the Catholic Church believed itself to be the guardian of religious truth and as such under a divine obligation to destroy contrary religious beliefs" (Young 39). This belief led to the persecution of Christian heretics (including witches), Jews, and Muslims. Included in these persecutions of witches were large numbers of women (it has been estimated that eighty-five percent of those killed were women), many of whom were healers and midwives. It was believed that these "witches" performed a variety of odious tasks including the sacrifice of infants to the Devil.

> Most of the women accused of witchcraft were social outcasts, beyond the immediate control of men: they were spinsters and widows. The patriarchal society of Europe and Britain were openly hostile to such women. The hostility was only exacerbated by old age, poverty, handicaps, and ugliness (Guiley 374).

With the publication of Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of the Witches), written by two Dominican inquisitors, James Sprenger and Heinreich Kramer, the persecution of witches increased. (Appendix C contains an excerpt of the Malleus Maleficarum). This handbook, which outlines ". . . the activities of witches and how to convict them . . ." (Young 42), was to bring about the deaths of thousands (according to some, millions) of people--mostly women. From this period until the 1940s, witches were equated with Satanism, forcing witchcraft "underground" (Amber 19). A great deal of effort is expended by contemporary witches in attempts to explain that, in fact, the "old religion" (i.e. pre-Christian, paganism) does not involve belief in Satan--"Satan was an invention of the Inquisition" (Amber 18).

This history of the "burning times" is shared by both traditional and Feminist Witches. But it is especially important to Feminist Wicce because of the sociopolitical aspects inherited from the Feminist Movement. The recognition of the mass brutality toward women is a major component of Feminist Wicce narratives.

"Many women witches who come from a feminist background define themselves as Dianics" (Jade 68). The Dianic tradition is claimed by both traditional and Feminist Witches, but because these covens are strongly matriarchal and ". . .the Goddess is worshipped virtually exclusively" (Guiley 377), Dianic covens are usually feminist.

> The Dianic tradition sets itself somewhat apart from the mainstream Craft. It espouses a feminist spirituality and sisterhood that must struggle against an oppressive, patriarchal society, in an effort to bring about positive social and political changes for all . . ." (Guiley 378).

One Dianic Coven, The Re-Formed Congregation of the Goddess, has outlined the philosophy or thealogy (feminist theology) of Feminist Wicce (Jade 17-19; Amber 14). As a part of their thealogy, members sign an ". . . Affirmation as a statement of faith (not a test of faith) and also state that they consider themselves on a positive path of spiritual growth" (Jade 17). Appendix C contains the "Affirmation of Women's Spirituality" developed by Jade (17-19).

Within the Dianic tradition, there also exists a lesbian Dianic branch. According to Jade, "lesbian Dianics are the most active and visible of all those who call themselves Dianics" (69). Further, she believes that "the Dianics, grown out of the feminist movement, be they lesbians, lesbian separatists, or otherwise, constitute one of the most dynamic . . . traditions today" (Jade 70).

There is, however, another "new" narrative within Goddess Spirituality that is quite innovative. This narrative I call Feminist Gnosticism.

Feminist Gnosticism

Feminist Gnosticism is a Goddess Spirituality narrative constructed by combining the Esoteric/Occult narrative, Gnosticism, with Goddess narratives. With the addition of

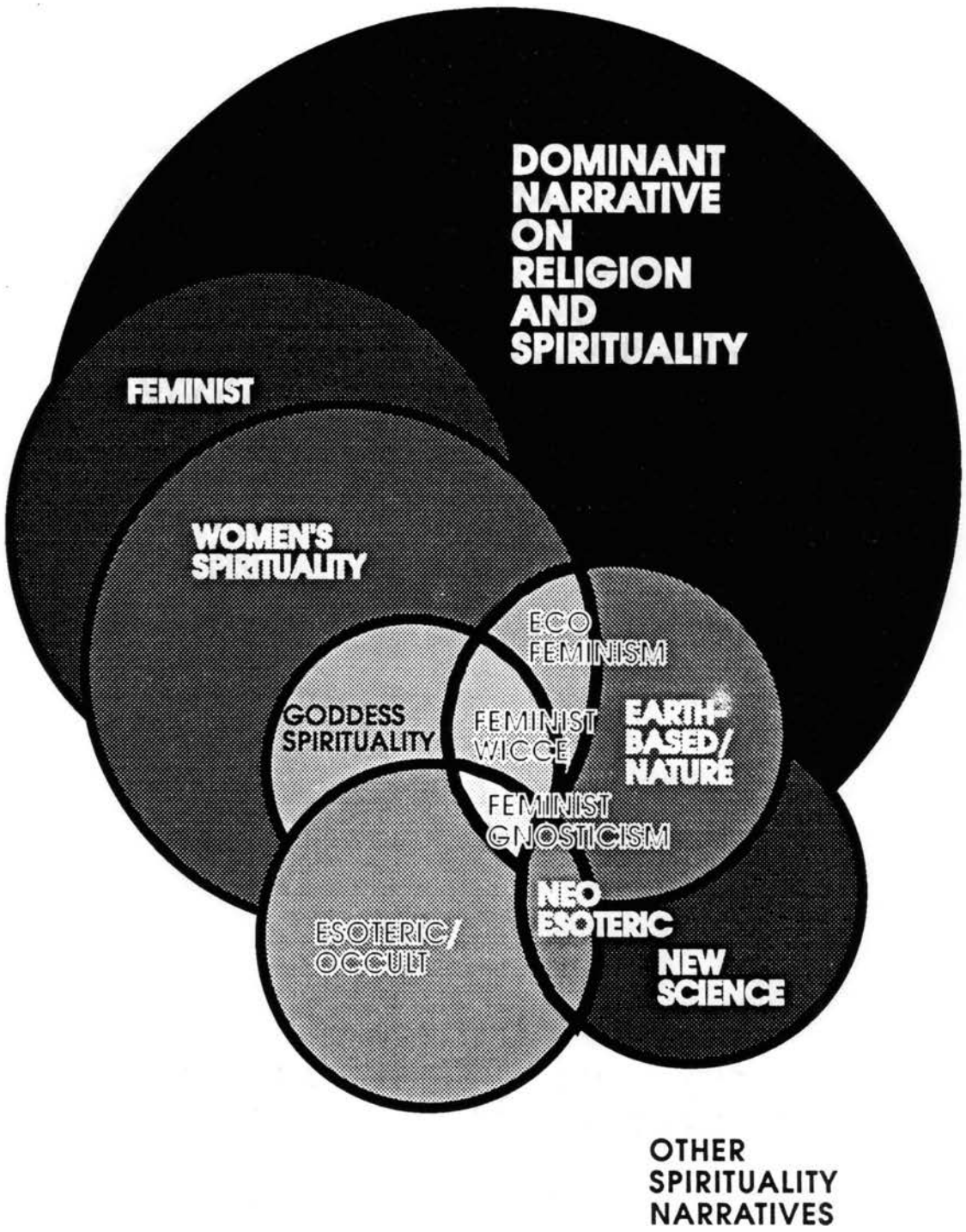

Figure X. A Universe of Discourse on Spirituality

this symbolic fusion, the model, Figure 10., on the preceding page, now reflects the entire Universe of Discourse examined in this study.

The term Gnostic comes from the Greek word, gnosis, which means knowledge. "The Gnostics, or 'knowers', were active from about the second century A.D." (Matthews 150). Gnosticism is a system of thought that combines many spiritual traditions including: Christianity, mystical Judaism, and Classical mystery religions. Utilizing all of these traditions plus others, the Gnostics offered a ". . . parallel version of Christianity" (Matthews 150). Dualistic and mystical, Gnosticism ". . . maintains . . . that God is to be found exclusively within the human self. It sets knowledge over against belief. . ." (Lash 135). The Gnostic writings (collected under the title "Nag Hammadi Texts") were discovered in 1945 in Egypt (The Nag Hammadi Library 1978; The Gnostic Gospels 1979; The Gnostic Religion 1958; A History of Gnosticism 1990).

As with other spirituality narratives discussed in this paper, a major component of Gnostic writings is the presentation of creation myths. There are several Gnostic versions. Of importance to Feminist Gnostics is the fact that "the Sophia myth appears in many contexts" (Olson 98). Sophia is the "Gnostic archetype of feminine Soul-Wisdom" (Hoeller qtd. in Nicholson 40). She is ". . . the daughter of the most high gods, who falls into the abyss and is redeemed by her own increasing self-knowledgment and self-unfoldment" (Hoeller qtd. in Nicholson 41). Matthews has identified "Sophia's task as an interim or bridging Goddess . . . [linking] . . . the ancient Goddesses through shared symbolisms . . . to the Goddesses of Europe" (320).

The following is a brief overview of the Gnostic creation myth as presented in the writings of Valentinus (Sophia: Goddess of Wisdom 1992; The Goddess Re-Awakening 1983; The Book of the Goddess: Past and Present 1987; The Evolution of an Image 1991; The Past and Future Goddess 1989; Sophia: The Future of Feminist Spirituality 1986).

> The first Beings were the Deep and his consort Silence. As primal mother and father they were existent within Intellect, . . . Truth, . . . Logos, and . . . Life. Within the pleroma dwelt . . . aeons.
>
> Sophia, the last of the aeons, wished to know her origin and plunged into the abyss of Aeon, where she critically unbalanced the pleroma and was brought up short by . . . Boundary. She was restored to her original place but the unbalance of her fall had created a formless entity. This caused intense anguish to the other aeons who caused Christos to come into being in order to deal with this entity. . . When Sophia realized her innate ignorance . . . she was subject to grief, bewilderment, fear and shock. These emotions became objectified and took on personas outside the pleroma. They are the ancestors of the material world, whose qualities formed the four elements while . . . [Sophia] . . . herself produced Soul.
>
> Out of the Soul, [Sophia] produced her son, the demiurge. . .
>
> The Demiurge attempted to create a reflection of the pleromic region, but it was a mere parody . . . The Demiurge's creation was finite and would cause him great distress. He was unable to breathe . . . soul . . . into the material bodies which he had made and it was . . . [Sophia] who did this secretly. She desired that all created beings should find their way back to the pleroma. When every single created being was returned to the source, the demiurge would cease to exist (Matthews 153-156).

New Feminist Gnostics have coopted the Goddess aspect, Sophia, because she is viewed as

> crucial figure in the reaffirmation of both deistic metaphor and women's spirituality . . .

Sophia seems the perfect solution for women who are sympathetic to the Divine Feminine, yet who wish to remain within Christianity and Judaism without compromising their beliefs (Matthews 330).

Two new gnostic groups which have as their central deity, Sophia, are "The Holy Order of Wisdom" and the "Ecclesia Gnostica Mysteriorum:"

> The Holy Order of Wisdom . . . is dedicated to communicating the idea and spirit of Sophia . . . The following poem expresses the vocational call which The Holy Order of Wisdom issues to all members:
>
> O Gnostic,
> O Knower
> of the unity of Love and Wisdom,
> the androgyny of Heaven and Earth,
> and of Nature and Spirit.
>
> O Knower
> of The Great Goddess,
> The Great Mother,
> who calls herself
> Sophia.
> Holy is her name,
> Sophia,
> co-creator of all things,
> earthly and divine.
>
> Divine Love
> lives with Eternal Wisdom,
> together as one,
> as a child in its mother's womb.
>
> Sophia
> gathers all of her children.
>
> O Gnostic,
> to you she calls,
> to fulfill the prophecy,
> to manifest the vision
> of Peace on Earth (qtd. in Matthews 337).

In spite of the interest in the Sophia aspect of the Goddess in Women's Spirituality, there are several problems identified with the use of the Gnostic myths to eradicate

sexual inequality. These criticisms come predominantly from reconstructionists within the Women's Spirituality Movement such as Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. According to Fiorenza, a critical analysis of the Gnostic Sophia myths shows that ". . . Sophia has never been an autonomous Goddess-figure but has always been dependent upon God for her existence . . ." (Matthews 331).

Further, some feminist theologians challenge that "Gnostic dualism shares in the patriarchal paradigm of Western culture. It makes the first principle male and defines femaleness relative to maleness" (Matthews 331). For example, the story of Sophia's fall and the resultant creation of the Demiurge is reminiscent of Eve's fall and the expulsion from Eden. Thus, Caitlin Matthews believes that

> the use of female characters in Gnostic parables is at once alluring and repugnant. The presence of central female personages has frequently been praised as a liberal feature of Gnosticism, proving that women were accorded an equal role in Gnostic ministry and worship. But the more we read of the first-hand textual evidence, the more we realize that the Gnostics upheld the conventional contemporary attitude to women: that women were hysterical, uncontrolled creatures, given to passions and subject to licentious behavior (Matthews 163).

Thus, as do Feminist Witches and Ecofeminists, Feminist Gnostics coordinate opposing "generalized others" by fusing together those features of the Gnostic writings that reinforce a positive image of femaleness and enhance the definition of women, while ignoring or reinterpreting those that support the view of women as inferior.

Historically, Goddess narratives have been excluded from the discourse on religion and spirituality. These innovative symbolic fusions (Ecofeminism, Feminist Wicce, and Feminist Gnosticism), combined with the symbolic links previously discussed,

result in a "critical mass" that gives women the power to take part in the construction of a universe of discourse on spirituality. Michel Foucault defined discourse as, not only a system of signifiers, but also as a system of constraints--exclusions and boundaries as to what can be said and what cannot be said (Collins 246). Through the creation of symbolic links and symbolic fusions, the narrators of the Women's Spirituality Movement have "gained the authority to speak."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

A Universe of Discourse on Spirituality

This research had two goals: (1) to demonstrate how people construct meaning through the manipulation of images and language, and (2) to answer questions concerning the meaning of secularization. In the context of this study, these goals were achieved by identifying a universe of discourse on spirituality defined by the Women's Spirituality Movement.

In the previous chapter, the content and form of what I call other spirituality narratives and their relationships to each other and to the dominant narrative on religion were described and presented in a visual model. Further, the construction of self as woman was shown to be directly related to the construction of Women's Spirituality narratives. It was demonstrated that through the creation of symbolic links and symbolic fusions, women narrators have formed a "critical mass" that has the power to participate in a discourse that historically has been "closed" to them. Concurrently, many of these narratives, by placing at their center a female deity (representing the ultimate "generalized other"), have empowered women and enhanced their self-image.

The central dialectic of the discourse examined in this study exists between the Women's Spirituality Movement and the Judeo-Christian tradition. Some people have defined the entire discourse as one that revolves around the feminine-masculine dualism. For example, in 1975, Fritjof Capra said that:

> . . . we are witnessing . . . the beginning of a tremendous evolutionary movement . . . . The rising concern with ecology, the strong interest in mysticism, the growing feminist awareness, and the rediscovery of holistic approaches to health and healing are all manifestations of the same evolutionary trend . . . they all counteract the overemphasis of rational, masculine attitudes . . . (1975: 8).

The process suggested in this statement is one that reflects the Hegelian dialectic --masculine/rational versus feminine/irrational--from which a new synthesis will emerge in linear fashion. As discussed in Chapter IV, this is not an accurate conceptualization of the dynamics involved in the discourse on spirituality. The discourse consists, not of a two-part dialectic, but of many oppositions and similarities which together produce what I call an unpredictable, multiple dialectic. A similar view is discussed in Post-modernization: Change in Advanced Society. In Postmodernization, this process is termed "the dialectics of postmodernization" (220). The dialectic is grounded in the "dialectic of enlightenment" developed by Adorno and Horkheimer (1979). It is the "formal characteristics . . . [more] than [the] . . . overall diagnosis" from their work which is utilized to develop a postmodern theory of change:

> The advantage of Adorno and Horkheimer's position is that it allows something of an each-way bet: single dynamic principles need not unfold in a steady, incremental way producing, incremental and predictable effects. They may speed up, slow down, switch fields of operation in ways which produce a bewildering array of contradictory effects (225).

The "dialectics of postmodernization" as outlined by Crook, Pakulski, and Waters in Postmodernization emerges from "the basic figure . . . provided by the model of a 'dialectic of differentiation'" (224-228):

differentiation ---- hyperdifferentiation --- dedifferentiation

The "dialectic of differentiation" is grounded in Max Weber's writings on the value-spheres of life (Crook et. al. 225). Weber distinguished "between several spheres of life--the most important being the political, economic, religious, and intellectual spheres" (Schroeder 10). He believed that the spheres of life would become increasingly divorced from one another with the intellectual (or scientific) sphere becoming the dominant one. He also predicted that as ". . . differentiation intensifies, it sets to work within the value-spheres as well as between them" (Schroeder 225).

The findings of this study demonstrate the "dialectic of differentiation." The principle narratives (Women's Spirituality, Earth-Based/Nature, Esoteric/Occult, and New Science) represent the differentiation associated with the modern era or Weber's distinctions between the spheres of life. Hyperdifferentiation is reflected in the development of the subnarratives within the principle narratives (e.g. the reconstructionist and revolutionary narratives within the Women's Spirituality Movement) and the variations formulated within the subnarratives (e.g. Feminist Wicce and Feminist Gnosticism within the revolutionary or Goddess Spirituality narratives). As this hyperdifferentiation continues, eventually, the potential for dialogue becomes as great between principle narratives as within principle narratives. Thus, the creation of symbolic links and symbolic fusions result in dedifferentiation.

In the model presented in this paper and in the "dialectics of postmodernization" introduced in Postmodernization, "the consistent principle . . . is simply that things are not always what they seem, that processes whose effects we have come to regard as predictable and unidirectional may have a twist in the tail" (228). A critical analysis of the central messages of the narratives and the symbolic continuity and symbolic discontinuity among the narratives demonstrates the unpredictability that has been identified as characteristic of the postmodern era. Here, the postmodern era is defined as one in

which there exist many narratives. Awareness of these diverse "generalized others" is common today as a result of the "emergence of what Bourdieu calls 'new cultural intermediaries,' who rapidly circulate information between formerly sealed-off areas of culture" (Featherstone 206). The access and commodification of information which formerly belonged to an elite group (i.e. scientists, occultists) have provided the opportunity for individuals to expand their knowledge base while, at the same time, requiring that people be more innovative in order to create coherence in their world. This coherence is constructed and maintained as individuals coordinate the various perspectives with which they role-take. It is the process of coordinating or fusing different and opposing perspectives that, in this study, produces the charisma and power of the narratives.

An examination of the language of the narratives in this study indicates that there is a "blurring" of the distinctions between the religious and intellectual (or scientific) spheres. Much of the power and charisma of the narratives of the Women's Spirituality Movement is produced by narrators who make references to New Science narratives that confirm their messages (e.g. Bohm's "implicate order" and Lovelock's "Gaia hypothesis"). This symbolic link with New Science narratives plus the introduction of a female deity create a "magical" message. At the same time, the charisma and power of the New Science writings can be attributed, to a great extent, to the narrators' use of sacred language.

The charisma created by "blurring" the distinctions between the religious and intellectual spheres represents an example of "elective affinity." Elective affinity was the term used by Weber to indicate his recognition that "all belief systems or world-views must, in some way, accommodate the needs of the groups that adopt them" (Schroeder 20). The need voiced by each of the spirituality narratives examined in this study is the need to "put the world back together." Repeatedly, in each of the principle narratives and subnarratives, the world is described as broken. All of the narratives, in their central

messages, speak of "wholeness" and the need to "put back together" some specific aspect of the Western world-view. For example, the Earth-Based/Nature narratives address the need to repair the relationship between humans and the earth. Likewise, the Esoteric/Occult narratives focus on the need to reconnect humans and the Divine. The New Science narratives, with their use of sacred language, are creating a connection that bridges the central "break" of the modern era--the break between science and religion.

The analysis of the content in and the relationships among the spirituality narratives examined in this study provides insights helpful in answering questions concerning the meaning of secularization in the postmodern era. The symbolic links, the symbolic fusions, and the dedifferentiation occurring in this discourse on spirituality support Shibley's statement that to think in terms of either secular or sacred is no longer relevant. Rather, "paradoxically our world is both at the same time . . . (Shibley qtd. in Chalfant 115).

Implications of the Research

This research supports Baldwin's statement that "the potential for the further development and elaboration of Mead's form of pragmatic social science is enormous" (157). In George Herbert Mead: A Unifying Theory for Sociology, Baldwin asserts that Mead's theory has the potential to bring together several schools of thought (5). This inquiry confirms Baldwin's assertion by utilizing Mead's theoretical framework to construct a visual model that facilitates an analysis capable of interpreting social actions in terms of symbolic interaction, conflict theory, and social change.

This study also demonstrates the relevance of Mead's theory for the analysis of textual discourse. Recognition of the importance of written texts to the ". . . ways in which we think about ourselves and one another and our society . . ." (Smith 1987:17) is a central theme of this research. Further, acknowledgment that written texts represent

crucial "modes of action" (Smith 1987:17) by which individuals learn, maintain, and change social identities and social realities is a major premise of this study. This attentiveness to texts as important "symbolic productions" (Featherstone 1991: 9-12) is shared with the sociology of postmodernism and the feminist sociology of knowledge.

Within the conceptual framework developed by Mead, written texts represent "organized others" and "generalized others" with which individuals role-take and interact. Texts also serve as mediums through which individuals carry on dialogues. In an era characterized by increased production of symbolic goods, written texts become courses of social action requiring analysis. George Herbert Mead's "unifying theory" (Baldwin 1986) provides a theoretical framework appropriate for this analysis.

Limitations of the Research

While the model presented in this study has the potential for usage in other analyses, substantively the findings of this research are limited. The sample represents texts "read" in only three cities. This limitation necessitates the use of caution in making statements concerning texts read in other areas of the country.

Additionally, because the study is defined by Women's Spirituality narratives that present myths, images, and symbols of the goddess, it leaves out other narratives which are important to the universe of discourse on religion and spirituality (e.g. spirituality narratives traditionally called sects). Further, as the goal of this inquiry was to demonstrate "how" written texts are used to construct meaning, variations within subnarratives and new constructions (e.g. variations within Feminist Gnosticism) are not described. Despite these limitations, however, it is hoped that the model presented provides a framework which facilitates discourse analysis from a sociological perspective.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

A PARTIAL LIST OF

GODDESS ASPECTS

Asase Yaa -- Ashanti
Asherah -- Canaanite
Athena -- Greek
Awehai --Iroquois
Bast -- Egyptian
Baubo -- Greek
Brigid -- Celtic
Cerridwen -- Celtic
Changing Woman -- Navajo
Demeter -- Greek
Diana -- Roman
Epona -- Celtic
Freya -- Norse
Gaia -- Greek
Habondia -- Celtic
Hecate -- Greek
Inanna -- Sumerian
Iris -- Greek
Isis -- Egyptian
The Morrigan -- Celtic
Nammu -- Sumerian
Nsomeka -- Bantu
Pasowee -- Kiowa
Rhiannon -- Celtic
Selu -- Cherokee
Spider Woman -- Pueblo
Tiamat -- Babylonian
Yolkai Estsan -- Navajo

APPENDIX B

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA

OKLAHOMA CITY BRANCH

SELECTED SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

APPENDIX B

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA

OKLAHOMA CITY BRANCH

SELECTED SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

New Pathways in Science: The Universal Organism with Rupert Sheldrake and
The Holographic Brain with Karl Pribram

The Monad and the Ego

Working with the Unconscious: Working with Creative Imagery with Shakti Gawain and
On Dreams and Dreaming with Patricia Garfield

Universal Brotherhood

Living Philosophically: Spirituality and the Intellect with Jacob Needleman and
The Primordial Tradition with Huston Smith

Power of Thought

The Roots of Consciousness: Understanding Mythology with Joseph Campbell and
Psychology of Religious Experience with Huston Smith

Perspectives on Healing: Psychic and Spiritual Healing with Stanley Krippner and
Communication as Healing with Patricia Sun

The Question of Evil

Personal and Social Change: Brain, Mind, and Society with Marilyn Ferguson and
Transforming Human Nature with George Leonard

The Rise and Fall of Civilization

The Ancient Wisdom in the Modern World

APPENDIX C

EXCERPTS FROM

THE MALLEUS MALEFICARUM

APPENDIX C

EXCERPTS FROM

THE MALLEUS MALEFICARUM

Witchcraft is high treason against God's Majesty. And so [witches] are to be put to the torture in order to make them confess. Any person, whatever his rank or position, upon such an accusation may be put to the torture, and he who is found guilty, even if he confesses his crime, let him be racked, let him suffer all other tortures prescribed by law in order that he may be punished in proportion to his offenses . . . .

Now the wickedness of women is spoken of in Ecclesiasticus xxv: There is no head above the head of the serpent: and there is no wrath above the wrath of a woman. I had rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than to keep house with a wicked woman. And among much which in that place precedes and follows about a wicked woman, he concludes: All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman . . . .

What else is a woman but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic danger, painted with fair colours! . . . When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil . . . .

Wherefore in many vituperations that we read against women, the word woman is used to mean the lust of the flesh. As it is said: I have found a woman more bitter than death, and a good woman subject to carnal lust . . . .

Others again have propounded other reasons why there are more superstitious women found than men. And the first is, that they are more credulous; and since the chief aim of the devil is to corrupt faith, therefore he rather attacks them . . . .

The second reason is, that women are naturally more impressionable, and more ready to receive the influence of a disembodied spirit; and that when they use this quality well they are very good, but when they use it ill they are very evil.

The third reason is that they have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from their fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know; and, since they are weak, they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves by witchcraft . . . .

All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman. And to this may be added that, as they are very impressionable, they act accordingly . . . .

For as regards intellect, or the understanding of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature from men . . . . Women are intellectually like children. . . .

But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives . . . . When a woman weeps, she labors to deceive a man . . . .

And indeed, just as through the first defect in their intelligence they are more prone to abjure the faith; so through their second defect of inordinate affections and passions they search for, brood over, and inflict various vengeances, either by witchcraft, or by some other means. Wherefore, it is no wonder that so great a number of witches exist in their sex.

. . . . . .

To conclude: All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable . . . . Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils. More such reasons could be brought forward, but to the understanding it is sufficiently clear that it is no matter for wonder that there are more woman than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft . . . . And blessed be the Highest Who has so far preserved the male sex from so great a crime; for since He was willing to be born and to suffer for us, therefore He has g ranted to men this privilege (qtd. in Holub 58-59).

APPENDIX D

AFFIRMATION OF WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

APPENDIX D

AFFIRMATION OF WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

There is one circle of women's energy, and I, _____, am a part of this energy and it is mine to direct. I wish to direct this energy . . .

To Know:

- that I can create my own reality and that sending out a positive expectation will bring a positive result;
- that the energy which I send out returns to me;
- that there are an infinite number of possibilities for my life;
- that every situation is an opportunity to practice and develop my craft;
- that my instincts and intuition can be used to guide me
- that my only power is in the present;
- that the Goddess or life force energy is within me.

To Will:

- that I shall try never to my energy unwisely or to limit the free will of another
- that I shall grow in wisdom, strength, knowledge, and understanding;
- that I shall, as much as I am aware, act in honesty to myself and to others;
- that I shall never use my energy for what I know to be evil, aggressive or manipulative, and shall only use my energy for what I know to be positive ends;
- that I shall grow to understand the cyclic, life affirming rhythms of the earth, and will always act with love toward her and all her plants and creatures;
- that I shall transform all negative in my environment.

To Dare:

- to be myself;
- to take responsibility for myself and my actions and know that consciously or unconsciously, I have drawn situations to me;
- to be strong and independent even in the midst of struggle;
- to accept and understand those whose ethnic or racial background, social or economic class, appearance, or sexual preference are different from my own;
- to stand firm and committed to women and my spiritual beliefs even in times of isolation, pain, desperation or negativity.

And to understand when to speak and when to keep silence.

So Mote it be (qtd. in Jade 18-19).

2

VITA

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