

black women of the slave tradition that were mentally and emotionally strong. These black women were also self-determined, sassy, lovers, and caregivers to the black community. But most of all they were survivors. The term feminist cannot do justice to the experience of these black women. Therefore, womanist thought is a critique of the racism of white women and white men and sexism of all men. Such a critique is performed from within a context of a black woman's experience of racism, sexism, and classism. Besides using the history of black women to reveal their long-silent voices, womanist thinkers are concerned with issues of power that not only involve relations between women and men, but they are also concerned with the dehumanizing results of issues like abuse, exploitation, and oppression for African-American women. Thus womanist thought tends to be prophetic, political, and survivalist.

### *Guideline Questions*

By inventing and using terms, what is Daly attempting to accomplish for feminism?

How do *eros*, empathy, and goddesses fit together for Christ, and how do they contribute to what she calls a "paradigm shift?"

How does empathy function in Gross's methodology and what advantages does her feminist approach to the study of religion offer in comparison to methods developed by men?

What does Williams discover about black women from slave narratives and how does her discovery shape her "womanist" perspective?

## *From Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*

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MARY DALY

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT THE JOURNEY of women becoming, that is, radical feminism. The voyage is described and roughly charted here. I say "roughly" by way of understatement and pun. We do not know exactly what is on the Other Side until we arrive there—and the journey is *rough*. The charting done here is based on some knowledge from the past, upon present experience, and upon hopes for the future. These three sources are inseparable, intertwined. Radical feminist consciousness spirals in all

directions, discovering the past, creating/disclosing the present/future.

The radical be-ing of women is very much an Otherworld Journey. It is both discovery and creation of a world other than patriarchy. Patriarchy appears to be "everywhere." Even outer space and the future have been colonized. As a rule, even the more imaginative science-fiction writers (allegedly the most foretelling futurists) cannot/will not create a space and time in which women get far beyond the role of

what is background  
foreground?

space stewardess. Nor does this colonization exist simply "outside" women's minds, securely fastened into institutions we can physically leave behind. Rather, it is also internalized, festering inside women's heads, even feminist heads.

The Journey, then, involves exorcism of the internalized Godfather in his various manifestations (his name is legion). It involves dangerous encounters with these demons. Within the Christian tradition, particularly in medieval times, evil spirits have sometimes been associated with the "Seven Deadly Sins," both as personifications and as causes.<sup>1</sup> A standard listing of the Sins is the following: pride, avarice, anger, lust, gluttony, envy, and sloth. The feminist voyage discloses that these have all been radically misnamed, that is, inadequately and perversely "understood." They are particularized expressions of the overall use of "evil" to victimize women. Our journey involves confrontations with the demonic manifestations of evil. . . .

The Background into which feminist journeying spins is the wild realm of Hags and Crones. It is Hag-ocracy. The demons who attempt to block the gateways to the deep spaces of this realm often take ghostly/ghastly forms, comparable to noxious gases not noticeable by ordinary sense perception.<sup>2</sup> Each time we move into deeper space, these numbing ghostly gases work to paralyze us, to trap us, so that we will be unable to move further. Each time we succeed in overcoming their numbing effect, more dormant senses come alive. Our inner eyes open, our inner ears become unblocked. We are strengthened to move through the next gateway and the next. This movement inward/outward is be-ing. It is spinning cosmic tapestries. It is spinning and whirling into the Background.

The spinning process requires seeking out the sources of the ghostly gases that have seeped into the deep chambers of our minds. . . . Thus, for example, the word *spinster* is commonly used as a deprecating term, but it can only function this way when apprehended exclusively on a superficial (foreground) level. Its deep meaning, which

has receded into the Background so far that we have to spin deeply in order to retrieve it, is clear and strong: "a woman whose occupation is to spin." There is no reason to limit the meaning of this rich and cosmic verb. A woman whose occupation is to spin participates in the whirling movement of creation. She who has chosen her Self, who defines her Self, by choice, neither in relation to children nor to men, who is Self-identified, is a Spinster, a whirling dervish, spinning in a new time/space. . . .

Spinsters can find our way back to reality by destroying the false perceptions of it inflicted upon us by the language and myths of Babel. We must learn to dis-spell the language of phallocracy, which keeps us under the spell of brokenness. This spell splits our perceptions of our Selves and of the cosmos, overtly and subliminally. Journeying into our Background will mean recognizing that both the "spirit" and the "matter" presented to us in the fathers' foreground are reifications, condensations. . . .

The Journey is itself participation in Paradise. This word, which is said to be from the Iranian *pairi* (meaning around) and *daēza* (meaning wall), is commonly used to conjure an image of a walled-in pleasure garden. Patriarchal Paradise, as projected in Western and Eastern religious mythology, is imaged as a place or a state in which the souls of the righteous after death enjoy eternal bliss, that is, heaven. Despite theological attempts to make this seem lively, the image is one of stagnation (in a stag-nation) as suggested in the expression, "the Afterlife." In contrast to this, the Paradise which is cosmic spinning is not containment within walls. Rather, it is movement that is not containable, weaving around and past walls, leaving them in the past. It moves into the Background which is the moving center of the Self, enabling the Self to act "out-wardly" in the cosmos as she comes alive. This metapatriarchal movement is not Afterlife, but Living now, discovering Life.

A primary definition of *paradise* is "pleasure park." The walls of the Patriarchal Pleasure Park represent the condition of being perpetually

parked, locked into the parking lot of the past. A basic meaning of *park* is a "game preserve." The fathers' foreground is precisely this: an arena where the wildness of nature and of women's Selves is domesticated, preserved. It is the place for the preservation of females who are the "fair game" of the fathers, that they may be served to these predatory Park Owners, and service them at their pleasure. Patriarchal Paradise is the arena of games, the place where the pleas of women are silenced, where the law is: Please the Patrons. Women who break through the imprisoning walls of the Playboys' Playground are entering the process which is our happening/happiness. This is Paradise beyond the boundaries of "paradise." Since our passage into this process requires making breaks in the walls, it means setting free the fair game, breaking the rules of the games, breaking the names of the games. Breaking through the foreground which is the Playboys' Playground means letting out the bunnies, the bitches, the beavers, the squirrels, the chicks, the pussycats, the cows, the nags, the foxy ladies, the old bats and biddies, so that they can at last begin naming themselves.

I have coined the term metapatriarchal to describe the journey, because the prefix *meta* has multiple meanings. It incorporates the idea of "postpatriarchal," for it means occurring later. It puts patriarchy in the past without denying that its walls/ruins and demons are still around. Since *meta* also means "situated behind," it suggests that the direction of the journey is into the Background. Another meaning of this prefix is "change in, transformation of." This, of course, suggests the transforming power of the journey. By this I do not mean that women's movement "reforms" patriarchy, but that it transforms our Selves. Since *meta* means "beyond, transcending," it contains a built-in corrective to reductive notions of mere reformism. . . .

The title of this book, *Gyn/Ecology*, says exactly what I mean it to say. "Ecology" is about the complex web of interrelationships between organisms and their environment. In her book, *Le Féminisme ou la mort*, Françoise

d'Eaubonne coins the expression "eco-feminisme."<sup>3</sup> She maintains that the fate of the human species and of the planet is at stake, and that no male-led "revolution" will counteract the horrors of overpopulation and destruction of natural resources. I share this basic premise, but my approach and emphasis are different. Although I am concerned with all forms of pollution in phallogotechnic society, this book is primarily concerned with the mind/spirit/body pollution inflicted through patriarchal myth and language on all levels. . . .

The title *Gyn/Ecology* is a way of wrenching back some wordpower. The fact that most gynecologists are males is in itself a colossal comment on "our" society. It is a symptom and example of male control over women and over language, and a clue to the extent of this control. . . .

*Hagiography* is a term employed by Christians, and is defined as "the biography of saints; saints' lives; biography of an idealizing or idolizing character." Hagiology has a similar meaning; it is "a description of sacred writings or sacred persons." Both of these terms are from the Greek *hagios*, meaning holy. Surviving, moving women can hardly look to the masochistic martyrs of sadospiritual religion as models. Since most patriarchal writing that purports to deal with women is pornography or hagiography (which amount to the same thing), women in a world from which woman-identified writing has been eliminated are trying to break away from these moldy "models," both of writing and of living. Our foresisters were the Great Hags whom the institutionally powerful but privately impotent patriarchs found too threatening for coexistence, and whom historians erase. *Hag* is from an Old English word meaning harpy, witch. Webster's gives as the first and "archaic" meaning of *hag*: "a female demon: FURY, HARPY." It also formerly meant: "an evil or frightening spirit." . . . A third archaic definition of *hag* is "nightmare." . . . *Hag* is also defined as "an ugly or evil-looking old woman." But this, considering the source, may be considered a compliment. For

the beauty of strong, creative women is "ugly" by misogynistic standards of "beauty." The look of female-identified women is "evil" to those who fear us. As for "old," ageism is a feature of phallic society. For women who have transvaluated this, a Crone is one who should be an example of strength, courage and wisdom.

For women who are on the journey of radical be-ing, the lives of the witches, of the Great Hags of our hidden history are deeply intertwined with our own process. As we write/live our own story, we are uncovering their history, creating Hagography and Hag-ology. Unlike the "saints" of Christianity, who must, by definition, be dead, Hags live. Women traveling into feminist time/space are creating Hagocracy, the place we govern. To govern is to steer, to pilot. We are learning individually and together to pilot the time/spaceships of our voyage. The vehicles of our voyage may be any creative enterprises that further women's process. The point is that they should be governed by the Witch within—the *Hag* within. . . .

Haggard writing is by and for haggard women, those who are intractable, willful, wanton, unchaste, and, especially, those who are reluctant to yield to wooing. It belongs to the tradition of those who refuse to assume the woes of wooed women, who cast off these woes as unworthy of Hags, of Harpies. Haggard women are not man-wooded. As Furies, women in the tradition of the Great Hags reject the curse of compromise.

The Great Hags of history, when their lives have not been prematurely terminated, have lived to be Cronos. Cronos are the long-lasting ones. They are the Survivors of the perpetual witchcraze of patriarchy, the Survivors of The Burning Times. In living/writing, feminists are recording and creating the history of Cronos. Women who can identify with the Great Cronos may wish to call our writing of women's history Croneography.

It is also appropriate to think of our writing in this tradition as Crone-ology. *Chronology*, generally speaking, means an arrangement (as of

data, events) in order of time of occurrence or appearance. In a specific sense, however, it refers to "the classification of archeological sites or prehistoric periods of culture." Since the history of Hags and Cronos is truly Prehistoric in relation to patriarchal history—being prior both in time and in importance—haggard women should consider that our Crone-ology is indeed our chronology. In writing/recording/creating Crone-ography and in studying our own Prehistoric chronology, we are unmasking deceptive patriarchal history, rendering it obsolete. Women who refuse to be wooed by patriarchal scholarship can conjure the chronicles of the Great Cronos, foresters of our present and future Selves. . . . As unwooed women unearth more of our tradition, we can begin to hear and understand.

Hag-ographers perceive the hilarious hypocrisy of "his" history. At first this may be difficult, for when the whole is hypocrisy, the parts may not initially appear untrue. To put it another way, when everything is bizarre, nothing seems bizarre. Hags are women who struggle to see connections. Hags risk a great deal—if necessary, everything—knowing that there is only Nothing to lose. Hags may rage and roar, but they do not titter. . . .

There is nothing like the sound of women really laughing. The roaring laughter of women is like the roaring of the eternal sea. Hags can cackle and roar at themselves, but more and more, one hears them roaring at the reversal that is patriarchy, that monstrous jock's joke, the Male Mothers Club that gives birth only to putrefaction and deception. One can hear pain and perhaps cynicism in the laughter of Hags who witness the spectacle of Male Mothers (Murderers) dismembering a planet they have already condemned to death. But this laughter is the one true hope, for as long as it is audible there is evidence that someone is seeing through the Dirty Joke. It is in this hope that this Hag-ography is written. . . .

In the course of The Second Passage, Crone-ographers who have survived discovering the

various manifestations of Goddess-murder on this patriarchal planet have become aware of the deep and universal intent to destroy the divine spark in women. We have seen that the perpetrators of this planetary atrocity are acting out the deadly myths of patriarchy and that this ritual enactment of the sado-myths has become more refined with the "progress of civilization." This refinement includes an escalation of violence and visibility and at the same time a decrease of visibility to those mesmerized by the Processions of fathers, sons, and holy ghosts. . . .

Since we have come through the somber Passage of recognizing the alien/alienating environment in which woman-hating rituals vary from suttee to gynecological iatrogenesis, we can begin to tread/thread our way in new time/space. This knowing/acting/Self-centering Process is itself the creating of a new, woman-identified environment. It is the becoming of Gyn/Ecology. This involves the dis-spelling of the mind/spirit/body pollution that is produced out of man-made myths, language, ritual atrocities, and meta-rituals such as "scholarship," which erase our Selves. It also involves discovering the sources of the Self's original movement, hearing the moving of this movement. It involves speaking forth the New Words which correspond to this deep listening, speaking the words of our lives.

Breaking out of the patriarchal processions into our own Gyn/Ecological process is the specific theme of this, The Third Passage. In a general sense, our movement through the preceding Passages has all been and is Gyn/Ecological Journeying. Moreover, since our movement is not linear but rather resembles spiraling, we continue to re-member/re-call/reclaim the knowledge gained in the preceding Passages, assuming this into our present/future. Hence, there is no authentic way in which the preceding Passages can be dissociated from the Third. Thus, Gyn/Ecology is not the climax or linear end point in time of the Journey, but rather it is a defining theme/thread in our Labyrinthine Journey of the inner ear, in the

course of which we constantly hear deeper and deeper reverberations from all of the Passages and learn to be attuned to echoes, subtleties, and distinctions not attended to before. Yet, Gyn/Ecology is the proper name for The Third Passage, for it names the patterns/designs of the moving Female-identified environment which can only be heard/seen after the Journeyer has been initiated through The First and The Second Passages.

As the Spinster spins into and through this Passage she is encouraged by her strengthened powers of hearing and seeing. By now she has begun to develop a kind of multidimensional/multiform power of sensing/understanding her environment. This is a Self-identified *synaesthesia*: it is woman-identified *gynaesthesia*. It is a complex way of perceiving the interrelatedness of seemingly disparate phenomena. It is also a pattern-detecting power which may be named positive paranoia. Far from being a debilitating "mental disease," this is strengthening and realistic dis-ease in a polluted and destructive environment. Derived from the Greek terms *para*, meaning beyond, outside of, and *nous*, meaning mind, the term *paranoia* is appropriate to describe movement beyond, outside of, the patriarchal mind-set. It is the State of Positively Revolting Hags.

Moving through all three Passages is moving from the state of anesthesia to empowering gynaesthesia, as dormant senses become awake and alive. Since, in The Second Passage, the Voyager became more aware not only of the blatancy and interconnectedness of phallocratic evil, but also of its reality, she is enabled to detect and name its implicit presence and therefore to overcome roadblocks in her discovery of be-ing. Empowered with positive paranoia she can move with increasing confidence.

We have seen that this is the age of holy ghosts, with particular reference to gynecology. It is an age of manipulation through/by invisible and *almost* insensible presences. Some of these might be called physical, such as radiation and "white noise." Others more properly may be said

to belong to the realm of the spirit, of "ghost." We are dealing here with the realm of implicit or subliminal manipulation, of quiet, almost indiscernible, intent on the part of the manipulators and quiet, unacknowledged acceptance of their ghostly presences and messages by their victims. Hence, the first chapter of this Passage will be concerned with Spooking. The Haggard Journeyer will not be astonished to find that Spooking is multileveled. Women are spooked by patriarchal males in a variety of ways; for example, through implicit messages of their institutions, through body language, through the silences and deceptive devices of their media, their grammar, their education, their professions, their technology, their oppressive and confusing fashions, customs, etiquette, "humor," through their subliminal advertising and their "sublime" music (such as Christmas carols piped into supermarkets that seduce the listener into identifying with the tamed Goddess who abjectly adores her son).

Women are also spooked by other women who act as instrumental agents for patriarchal males, concurring, with varying degrees of conscious complicity, in all of the above tactics. To the extent that any woman acts—or nonacts when action is required—in such complicity, she functions as a double agent of spooking, for politically she *is and is not* functioning as a woman. Since Hags/Witches have expectations of her—righteous expectations which are almost impossible to discard without falling into total cynicism and despair—she spooks us doubly, particularly by her absences/silences/nonsupport. Finally, Spinsters are spooked by the alien presences that have been inspired (breathed into) our own spirits/minds. These involve fragments of the false self which are still acting/nonacting in complicity with the Possessors. They also take the shape of nameless fears, unbearable implanted guilt feelings for affirming our own being, fear of our newly discovered powers and of successful use of them, fear of dis-covering/releasing our own deep wells of anger, particularly fear of our anger against

other women and against ourselves for failing our Selves. Spinsters are spooked by fear of the Ultimate Irony, which would be to become a martyr/scapegoat for feminism, whose purpose is to release women from the role of martyr and scapegoat.

Faced with being spooked, Spinsters are learning to Spook/Speak back. This Spinster-Spooking is also re-calling/re-membering/re-claiming our Witches' power to cast spells, to charm, to overcome prestige with prestidigitation, to cast glammers, to employ occult grammar, to enthrall, to bewitch. Spinster-Spooking is both cognitive and tactical. Cognitively, it means pattern-detecting. It means understanding the time-warps through which women are divided from each other—since each woman comes to consciousness through the unique events of her own history. It means also seeing the problems caused through space-warps—since Hags and potential Hags are divided from each other in separate institutional settings, disabled from sharing survival tactics in our condition of common isolation, spooked by our apparent aloneness. Tactically, Spooking means learning to refuse the seductive summons by the Passive Voices that call us into the State of Animated Death. It means learning to hear and respond to the call of the wild, learning ways of encouraging and en-spiriting the Self and other Spinsters, learning con-questing, learning methods of dispossession, specifically of dispossessing the Self of possession by the past and possession by the future. It means a-mazing the modern witchcraze, developing skills for unpainting the Painted Birds possessed through the device of tokenism, exposing the Thoroughly Therapeutic Society.

Since Spooking cannot always be done alone, and since it is a primary but not complete expression of Gyn/Ecology, the second chapter of this Passage is concerned with Sparking. In order to move on the con-questing Voyage, Spinsters need fire. It is significant that witches and widows were burned alive, consumed by fire. For fire is source and symbol of energy, of

← space warps — separate institutional  
& things (patriarchal marriage)

gynergy. It is because women are known to be energy sources that patriarchal males seek to possess and consume us. This is done less dramatically in day-by-day draining of energy, in the slow and steady extinguishing of women's fire. Sparking is necessary to re-claim our fire. Sparking, like Spooking, is a form of Gyn/Ecology. Sparking is Speaking with tongues of fire. Sparking is igniting the divine Spark in women. Light and warmth, which are necessary for creating and moving, are results of Sparking. Sparking is creating a room of one's own, a moving time/space of one's own, in which the Self can expand, in which the Self can join with other Self-centering Selves.

Sparking is making possible Female Friendship, which is totally Other from male comradeship. Hence, the Spinster will examine male comradeship/fraternity, in order to avoid the trap of confusing sisterhood with brotherhood, of thinking (even in some small dusty corner of the mind) of sisterhood as if it were simply a gender-correlative of brotherhood. She will come to see that the term *bonding*, as it applies to Hags/Harpies/Furies/Crones is as thoroughly Other from "male bonding" as Hags are the Other in relation to patriarchy. Male comradeship/bonding depends upon energy drained from women (its secret glue), since women are generators of energy. The bonding of Hags in friendship for women is not draining but rather energizing/gynergizing. It is the opposite of brotherhood, not essentially because Self-centering women oppose and fight patriarchy in a reactive way, but because we are/act for our Selves.

Sparking means building the fires of gynergetic communication and confidence. As a result, each Sparking Hag not only begins to live in a lighted and warm room of her own; she prepares a place for a loom of her own. In this space she can begin to weave the tapestries of her own creation. With her increasing fire and force, she can begin to Spin. As she and her sisters Spin together, we create The Network of our time/space.

Gyn/Ecological Spinning is essential for entry into our Otherworld. The Voyager who does not Spin is in mortal danger. She may become trapped in one of the blind alleys of the maze which has been uncovered in The Second Passage. That is, she may become fixated upon the atrocities of androcracy, "spinning her wheels" instead of spinning on her heel and facing in Other directions. Or the nonspinner may make the fatal mistake of trying to jump over the atrocities into pseudoecstasy. As a result of this escapism, this blind "leap of faith," she can only fall into a tailspin. . . .

We have seen that the Female Self is The Enemy targeted by the State of War. This Self becomes ultimately threatening when she bonds in networks with other Self-accepting Female Selves. Since we have been conditioned to think quantitatively, feminists often begin the Journey with the misconception that we require large numbers in order to have a realistic hope of victory. This mistake is rooted in a serious underestimation of the force/fire of female bonding. It occurs when Amazons fall into the trap of imagining that sisterhood is like male comradeship. Because of the inherent weakness of its cogs, the male machine does require large numbers of self-sacrificing comrades. Because of the inherent strength of a woman who is Friend to her Self, the force of female bonding does not require multitudes. . . .

Sisterhood has nothing to do with breaking down "the walls of self," but with burning/melting/vaporizing the constricting walls imposed upon the Self. Moreover, female friendship is not concerned with "expanding walls and keeping them intact," but with expanding energy, power, vision, psychic and physical space. Sisterhood and female friendship burn down the walls of male-defined categories and definitions. However, hagocratic separatism/separation is not essentially about walls at all. Rather, it is expanding room of our own, moving outside the realm of the War State, War Stare. . . .

It is Crone-logical to conclude that internal separation or separatism, that is, paring away,

- day by day draining of energy - in worries about clothes/makeup/body  
a strong / fitness, etc. . . .

burning away the false selves encasing the Self, is the core of all authentic separations and thus is normative for all personal/political decisions about acts/forms of separatism. It is axiomatic for Amazons that all external/internalized influences, such as myths, names, ideologies, social structures, which cut off the flow of the Self's original movement should be pared away.

Since each Self is unique, since each woman has her own history, and since there are deep differences in temperament and abilities, Hags should acknowledge this variety in all discussions of separatism. While it is true that all women have had many similar experiences under patriarchy, it is also true that there have been wide variations on the theme of possession and in struggles for dispossession. To simplify differences would be to settle for a less than Dreadful judgment of the multiple horrors of gynocide. It would also impoverish our imaginations, limiting our vision of the Otherworld Journey's dimensions. Finally, minimizing the variety in Amazon Journeymen's experiences, temperaments, and talents would blind us to the necessity for separating at times even from sisters, in order to allow our Selves the freedom and space for our own unique discoveries. Acknowledging the deep differences among friends/sisters is one of the most difficult stages of the Journey and it is essential for those who are Sparking in free and independent friendship rather than merely melting into mass mergers. Recognizing the chasms of differences among sister Voyagers is coming to understand the terrifying terrain through which we must travel together and apart. At the same time, the spaces between us are encouraging signs of our immeasurable unique potentialities, which need free room of their own to grow in, to Spark in, to Blaze in. The greatness of our differences signals the immensity/intensity of the Fire that will flame from our combined creative Fury.

Whereas discussions of relations between men and women eulogize the so-called complementarity of opposites, an Amazonian analysis

of female friendship/love discovers the fact that the basis of woman-identified relationships is neither biological differences nor socially constructed opposite roles. . . . Rather than relying upon stereotypic role relationships, Amazon friends/lovers/sisters cast our Selves into a creative variety of developing relationships with each other. Since there are no models, no roles, no institutionalized relationships to fall back upon, we move together and apart in ever-varying patterns of relating. As each friend moves more deeply into her own Background she becomes both her earlier and her present Self. At times this re-membered integrity makes her appear Strange to her friends, and since the latter are also remembering, the encounters of these older/younger Selves can be multiply Strange. This Dreadful Strangeness is part of the terrain of the Otherworld Journey. It is essential to the Amazon adventure.

Women who have the courage to travel can see the absence of standardized roles as an asset, for such roles inhibit our struggle for truthfulness and fidelity. Heterosexual society does not reward Lesbians for friendship and fidelity to each other. Therefore, the way is clear for honest Amazon bonding. Since we know that our friendships will not in the final analysis yield social approval, we are free to seek Self-approval. We are free to follow our passion for Self-centering. As de Beauvoir correctly points out, men and women are always playing a part before one another. In contrast to this, Lesbians need not pretend. As she observes: "They [these liaisons] are not sanctioned by an institution or by the mores, nor are they regulated by conventions; hence they are marked by especial sincerity."<sup>4</sup>

Such sincerity involves risks. Since woman-identified relationships are unrestrained by mystification over biological and role-defined differences, there is often great intensity and turbulence in being together. It has been observed that sisterhood involves stages when one seems to be stepping off a cliff, and that, mysteriously, the ground rises under the



Journeyer's feet. That ground is the Self's own confrontation with her reality, her truth—a confrontation made possible and unavoidable by her unprotected situation. Having defied the patriarchal protection racket, she finds her Dreadless Self. . . .

Spanning requires spinning, in many senses of this term. Understood in a cosmic sense it describes the whirling movement of creation. According to Merriam-Webster, *spin* is connected in its origin to the Latin term *sponte*, meaning "of one's free will, voluntarily." Thus Spinning implies spontaneous movement, the free creativity that springs from integrity of being. The first definition given in Merriam-Webster for the verb to *spin* is "to draw and twist thread: make yarn or thread from fiber." This immediately calls to mind the image of "spinning a yarn"—a creative enterprise of mind and imagination. Spin also means "to form a thread, web, or cocoon by extruding a viscous rapidly hardening fluid used of a spider or silkworm." Gyn/Ecological creativity is spinning in this sense, too—dis-covering the lost thread of connectedness within the cosmos, repairing this web as we create.

*Spin* means "to revolve or whirl rapidly: GYRATE, ROTATE." This comes even closer to naming Gyn/Ecological creating. Spinsters whirl and twirl the threads of life on the axis of our own be-ing. This be-ing is itself the spindle, the thread, the whirl. Spinning be-ing moves in many directions, with force and speed.

*Spin* means "to turn quickly on one's heel: face about in place." Women spinning counter-clockwise counter the "wisdom" of Father Time with his time-killing time-clocks. Women whirling in be-ing shift the center of gravity. As vortices of thinking, imaging, feeling, we spin around, "face about in place." As the Masters' March of Time continues its monodirectional goose-stepping into oblivion, Spinsters are learning to re-direct energy. Turning quickly on

our heels, facing many other directions, we spin away from the death march. As whirling dervishes we move backward, sideward, forward, upward, downward, outward, inward—transforming our time/space. . . .

*Spin* also means "to last out, extend." This names the tactic of biding one's time, that patient alertness which appears to be stillness but which comes from an inner movement that is so fast it is imperceptible to those who see only the "outsides" and cannot perceive inner reality. This enduring, easily mistaken by males for passivity, is an active power of secretly watching, planning, testing tactics for springing free. It is the inner whirl, gathering momentum to jet forth threads of gynergetic communication. . . .

Self-Centering Spinsters whirl around the axis of our own be-ing, and as we do so, matter/spirit becomes more subtle/supple. Adding that *vortex* also means "something resembling such rapid rotary motion," the same dictionary illustrates this definition with a sentence about looking forward to a time "when human beings shall have sloughed off the body and become vortices of thought." Spinsters need not "look forward" to sloughing off the body in order to become vortices. The whirling dance of be-ing is thinking/creating/transcending earlier movements of both mind and body.

#### NOTES

1. See Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (Michigan State University Press, 1967), especially pp. 7–27.
2. See Mary Daly, "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Spring 1975), pp. 20–40.
3. Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la mort* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1974), pp. 213–52.
4. Marie Bonaparte, *Female Sexuality* (New York: International Universities Press, 1953), p. 204.

making connections (seeing connections - put gender in headlines)  
 perceiving the interrelatedness of seemingly disparate phenomena - male gynecologists (male doctors/male religion)