

# Woman as Metaphor<sup>1</sup>

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*Women's activities and relations to men are persistent metaphors for man's projects. I query the prominence of these and the lack of equivalent metaphors where men are the metaphoric vehicle for women and women's activities. Women's role as metaphor results from her otherness and her relational and mediational importance in men's lives. Otherness, mediation, and relation characterize the role of metaphor in language and thought. This congruence between metaphor and women makes the metaphor of woman especially potent in man's conceptual economy.*

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Women's activities and women's relation to man persistently are used as metaphors for man's activities and projects. In these metaphors, man mediates his engagement with the world through a representation of it as Woman and metaphorically transposes his relation to Woman on to his relation to the world. Many of the metaphors are transcultural and transhistorical. Man speaks of conquering the mountain as he would woman, of raping the land, of his plow penetrating a female earth in order that he may sow his seed therein. He symbolically mimics a woman's birthgiving in initiation rites when man gives birth to man, concretizing metaphors into ritualistic enactments.<sup>2</sup> And he uses exclusively female activities as metaphors to help him structure his own relations to his exclusively male enterprises.

Plato uses the midwife and the female domain of procreation as metaphor for intellectual activity which, within the setting of fifth century Athens, is virtually an exclusively male domain.<sup>3</sup> Rilke speaks of "The thought of being creator, of procreating, of making," as "nothing without the thousandfold concordance of things and animals—and enjoyment of it so indescribably beautiful and rich only because it is full of inherited memories of the conceiving and the bearing of millions" (Rilke 1934). Nietzsche, situated—however problematically—in the male domain of philosophy, opens *Beyond Good and Evil* with the invitation to suppose that truth is woman. Conrariwise (or perhaps given Nietzsche's ironical stance, contrapuntally) the arts of deception are spoken of as Woman. Locke, eloquently deriding eloquence, writes "Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving wherein men find pleasure to be deceived." (Locke 1689).

Images of sexual conquest, particularly since the seventeenth century, are regularly used to describe the relation of the male scientist who investigates a

female Nature, Mother Nature, penetrating her, and forcing her to yield up her secrets Or man speaks gently of the earth as his mother and Nature as his nurse

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own,  
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
 And no unworthy aim,  
 The homely nurse doth all she can  
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
 Forget the glories he hath known,  
 And that imperial palace whence he came

Wordsworth (From "Ode, Intimations  
 of Immortality from Recollections  
 of Early Childhood ")

Man identifies that which he wants and desires, or has acquired or fears acquiring, as Woman The earth, the sea, the hurricane, Truth, Freedom, Liberty, Sexuality are all called Woman, as is Death itself These examples direct us to consider the importance of woman's metaphorization in the conceptual organization of man's experience

The use of the vehicle of Woman to form men's conceptualization of the world and their relation to it is pervasive and goes unquestioned because Woman, both as Other and as Mother, occupies a position in men's lives that both reflects the structure of metaphorical thought and mirrors the role of metaphor in language and thought To the extent that the structuring of our conceptualizations depends on the use of metaphor (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980 and Kittay 1987) to that extent we can expect that the articulation of men's experiences, in large measure, will be modeled on their relationship to women

Let me suggest how there is a congruence between man's relation to women and the structure of metaphorical language Simone de Beauvoir argues convincingly that woman is Other for man man regards himself as the norm against which woman is postulated as Other Alterity is itself a crucial requirement for metaphor A minimal, but essential requirement for metaphor is that its topic and its vehicle come from two distinct conceptual domains, that is, the vehicle must be Other with regard to the topic Consider, for example, the difficulty of using "knife" metaphorically for "fork" when both are used as they come from the one domain of eating utensils, or consider using "apple" for "pear" where both come from the domain of common fruit

Women and metaphors alike are at once mediational and relational As Other, woman serves to mediate between man and man, man and Nature, man and Spirit In metaphor the domain of the vehicle mediates between

that which is not well known, or that about which we want to learn more, and what is familiar or ready to hand. That is, metaphors mediate between an assimilated (or rather relatively assimilated) conceptual domain and a distinct and separate domain which needs to be newly assimilated or reconceptualized. My claim, then, is that as women are the Other, mediating for men between one stage of life and the next, between the familiar and the new, so Woman serves symbolically, through metaphor, to mediate man's conceptualizations between himself and those alterities he must encounter.

Woman has served not only as Other and as Mediator. Woman has been the fulcrum of relations, of those associations into which men enter—the life of a woman has traditionally been dominated by relations born to others. It is this role as the locus of human relations that makes possible woman's capacity as mediator. While women are the loci of sets of human relations, metaphors acquire meaning by exploiting semantic relations.

Metaphors accomplish their mediational cognitive function, the mediation between distinctive domains through a *transference of semantic relations* (Kittay & Lehrer 1981, Kittay 1987). Metaphors are best understood if we regard the metaphorical transfer of meaning to be a transfer of the relations of contrast and affinity which pertain to the vehicle term on to the domain of the topic. For example, if I say of a tennis player that she is "hot" this game, "hot" is the vehicle, and its semantic field is the field of temperature terms, the domain of the topic is athletics. "Hot" and "cold" are graded antonyms in the temperature field, when transferred to athletics, a "hot" player is one who plays well and scores while a "cold" player does not. The antonymy of the pair is preserved. Moreover, if a player scores only moderately well mid-game, we can say "she was luke-warm in the third quarter." Since "hot" and "cold" are not absolute but graded antonyms, we can capture all sorts of performances in between, and even on the outer extremes, e.g. "Her performance on the court today is sizzling." In this way metaphor can, through a relational transposition, structure an as yet unstructured conceptual domain, thereby altering, sometimes transiently, sometimes permanently, our ways of regarding our world.

To the extent that man uses Woman as metaphor he has a conceptual domain available that is already schematized by proximate and familiar relations that can be transferred to make intelligible more distant and obscure conceptual and experiential domains. Woman provides men with a set of richly articulated domains by which he can conceptualize even his earliest mediations between himself and his self, his fellows, and his world.

The congruence of the structural features of metaphor and the structural features of man's relations to woman makes the metaphorical use of Woman a central feature in man's conceptualization of his cosmos—so central, that were men's relations to women to change, men will need to abandon conceptualizations even of parts of their experience which appear to have little to do

with their relations with women. The study of the persistent use of woman's domain as the vehicle, where the domain of man is the topic, is then a philosophical investigation, spurred by feminist theorizing, into the nature and source of some of our most significant conceptions.

## I THE 'OTHER' AND GENDER THEORY

### WOMAN AS 'OTHER'

If the structure of metaphor is such that the vehicle and the topic must come from two distinct domains, then Simone de Beauvoir's understanding of woman's secondary status already provides motivation for the metaphoric use of woman. For Beauvoir contended that woman's inferior status was rooted in man's conception of woman as Other.<sup>4</sup> If woman is Other, then she is always available as the vehicle for the self-conception and activities of man, the subject, the topic.

Following a Hegelian metaphysics, Beauvoir claimed that "Other" was a basic category of human thought. As the subject sets itself up as the essential one, it does so in opposition to an other. "The subject can be posed, only in being opposed" (Beauvoir 1952, xvii). But if otherness is a fundamental category of human thought, necessary to the very formation of self-consciousness, women too should set themselves up as the essential Subject in opposition to another self which they posit as Other. Women's positing men as Other would then generate metaphors in which men were the vehicles for the self-conceptions and activities of women. Indeed, within the Hegelian dialectic the claim of the other consciousness cannot long be ignored, and one must acknowledge the reciprocal claim on the part of the other. When that consciousness which has been posed as Other sets itself up as the One, it then poses the first consciousness as the Other.<sup>5</sup> And yet man's relation to woman differs from his relations to the other self-conscious beings, i.e. men, in that this otherness is not reciprocal. Women have not similarly asserted their own essentiality and posited the otherness of man. And the dearth of metaphors where men serves as the vehicle for the topic, woman, attests to this lack of reciprocity.

Beauvoir was herself unable to explain the lack of reciprocity. As she noted, other groups, notably minorities or colonized peoples, have lacked the full reciprocity of Otherness for extended periods, but have in time asserted their subjectivity and posited their oppressors as other. Only in the case of women has the lack of reciprocity seemed so natural and so inexorable. Neither the apparent lack of historical contingency in the case of the Otherness of women, nor the apparent "primordial Mitem" of the sexes explains this lack of reciprocity. "In truth," she writes, "the nature of things is no more immutably given, once for all, than historical reality. If woman seems to be

the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change" (Beauvoir 1952, xviii) This suggests that in the end we are forced to attribute woman's continued otherness to her own complicity with her oppressors. It is a complicity, which Beauvoir analyzes as arising from woman's exclusion from production and her historic enslavement to reproduction—a condition over which she has had little control—as well as men's resistance to her assumption of the status of subject.<sup>6</sup> But it is also a complicity that comes from a "temptation to forego liberty and become a thing," a temptation which coexists in the person along with the "ethical urge" toward transcendence.

But if this is so, how did women come to assume the position of dependency, of otherness in the first place? Why should women have permitted themselves to be excluded from production? And why should women's role in reproduction have doomed her to otherness and subordination rather than ascendancy and power? Why, in the final analysis, should women and not men have yielded to "the temptation to forego liberty?" Without retreating to that essentialism, be it biological or metaphysical, that Beauvoir so significantly repudiated when she declared that woman was not born but made, we are left without a fully satisfactory answer to the question Beauvoir poses. Why is otherness not reciprocally posited by woman?

I suggest that with the arrival of current gender theory we have an explanation that can help resolve our perplexity. Gender theory has provided a justification for claiming that the category of Otherness is not as essential to the self of a woman as it is for a man. Once we understand the source of the asymmetry of otherness, we will also understand why woman serves as metaphor for men, and why man does not perform a similar service for women. Furthermore, this justification explains why woman, in particular, has functioned as a mediation and predicts the sort of relations we can expect when we examine metaphors in which woman is the vehicle. We shall see exactly how Nancy Chodorow's (1978) psychological tale of the formation of the self illuminates Beauvoir's question and consequently frames the investigation of *Woman as Metaphor*.

#### CHODOROW AND GENDER THEORY

Perhaps we first need to consider whether an empirically based study such as Chodorow's can have a bearing on the philosophical concept of the Other. I adopt the position that the most metaphysical concepts, apparent spinings of ethereal webs *ex nihilo*, are, if *only* through metaphoric transpositions, grounded in experiential reality. Such experience in turn presents itself, in its particularity, through the articulation of concepts. In fact, the very thrust of this paper is to show, more or less specifically, how an entire series of such conceptualizations are grounded in men's experience of women as nurturers,

an experience which itself reflects culturally defined conditions shaping the lives of both men and women

Primary among the important psychological consequences of asymmetrical gender-differentiated relations between mother and child, consequences which result from the production of gender, is the fact that men establish their identity, their sense of self, in opposition to the mother, while daughters establish their sense of self through a continuing identity with the mother. If this thesis is correct, it explains why otherness is essential to the self-formation of men but not of women. For men the category of Other is crucial because men establish their relation both to themselves and to their world through an *opposition* to one whose otherness is marked not only by the limits of one's skin, but by the saliency of sexual and gender differences. Woman, in contradiction, does not establish herself in *opposition* to one who is so fundamentally differentiated from herself.<sup>7</sup>

Chodorow argues that the young boy must repress his primary identification with his mother in order to develop his proper sexual identity, that is, more precisely, his gender. Foremost among the salient sexual differences which the young boy comes to perceive are the procreative ones. Therefore the boy comes to understand that *because* he is *male*, and his mother is *female*, he cannot reproduce in his experience the birthgiving which brought him into existence and which justifies the remarkable power that the mother holds over him (Kittay 1983).

Certainly, the young girl learns, as does the young boy, to distinguish herself from her mother, that the limits of her skin are not coincident with that of the woman who cares for her and has power over her. But as Chodorow's use of "object-relations" psychoanalytic theory allows her to demonstrate, the differentiation, the separation is never complete in the girl. And to Chodorow's analysis we can add that the young girl can maintain the identification in the knowledge that she can one day bear the same relationship to her children that the mother bears to her: her dependency on her mother and the power she thus grants her mother is the very power that she can look forward to having when she herself becomes a mother. For women the category of Otherness never has the fundamental status and pervasive character it has for men because women's own understanding of themselves and their affiliations is mediated through one who, insofar as she has a same gender identity, is not fundamentally Other.

In recasting Chodorow's object-relations psychoanalytic theory into the philosophical concept of alterity, we can say that for the boy and girl alike, the mother, as the first important Other, serves as the first mediation between the child and the child's sense of who s/he is—one's consciousness of oneself as a separate conscious being in a world with other separate conscious beings. She is simultaneously the mediator between the child and the child's needs, desires, etc. and between the child and the world. But for the boy, his

relations to himself, his relations to other persons and his relations to the world about him are all first mediated by the Mother, as *fundamentally* and *absolutely* Other, in her sexual (and perhaps particularly procreative) differentiation from the boy. The significance of the biological sexual difference attains its particular saliency by virtue of the cultural significance of gender (itself a cultural, not a biological concept) to identity itself. In order to establish his appropriate gender identity, he must establish himself both as separate and as distinct from her.

Before moving on, then, to apply these feminist analyses to metaphor, we see how Chodorow, in effect, explains why women have never reciprocally constituted men as Other. For women, Otherness need not have the oppositional and absolute character it has for men. For better and for worse, the self that women develop may well be more accommodating to otherness. If gender theory is correct, then the key to women's liberation may not lie in the reciprocity of Otherness. Instead women will be liberated by creating new social conditions that will forge alternatives to men's current conception of the relation between self and other. It may now be the historical moment for philosophers to rewrite Hegel's master-slave dialectic from the standpoint of the maternal consciousness, the consciousness which has been formed to accommodate the otherness of the child and which in turn develops that same accommodating otherness in the female child. This is a dialectic in which the self and other are such that the self comprehends itself not through an opposition, but through a connectedness, an empathetic bond with an other. This still to be developed dialectic, together with other feminist efforts, may throw light both on the familiar limitation of women's dependency and lack of autonomy that emerge from the relative lack of separation and differentiation from the mother, but it will also illuminate the excessive valuation of autonomy and the undervaluation of mutuality which feminists have begun to identify.

These remarks are meant as a contribution to the efforts of feminists to see how far gender theory can take us in understanding the gender-based nature of our theoretical constructs. The utilization of this perspective to the question of Woman as metaphor is part of the exploration of the new terrain opened up by examining the consequences of woman's mothering.<sup>8</sup>

## II MOTHER/OTHER—WOMAN/METAPHOR

It is the initial positing of Mother as Other which makes woman a particularly suitable vehicle to mediate later (re)definitions of oneself and one's connections to the world. Because man's first and most significant attempt to define himself and to establish his relationships arises out of his experience with a woman, women serve metaphorically to represent those activities and domains in which man will redefine himself and establish new associations in a

world which expands for him as he matures and gains knowledge. This conceptual move is facilitated by the structure of metaphor itself. Because it is in the very structure of metaphor to exploit such relationships, woman's situation as Other is solidified through the metaphorization of these early experiences and their metaphorical transposition on to man's later life. Woman performing her role as Mother/Mediator is propitiously situated in man's life to become *the* metaphor which mediates between assimilated and as yet unassimilated experience in later life.

Furthermore the very relations the Woman as Mother bears to her young son obtains the potential—through their saliency in the boy's mental representations of himself and his position in the world—to serve as the model for the various possible relations he will later need to establish between himself and his world. On many accounts of metaphor, models are elaborated and extended metaphors which have the possibility of greater conceptual stability than most metaphors. As such, the models of the relations of the man to his early mother figure become the source of many possible metaphors in which those relations are transferred to the domains occupied by man and his various projects. They will be relations which reflect the metaphoric transpositions of the ways in which the child views his relation to his mother given the gender differential, combined, we must add, with devaluation of the female gender.

They will be relations which reverse the power the mother has over the child, yielding metaphors of conquest and forced submission. Others will reflect the fact of man having been born of woman. These are the metaphors of man giving birth to himself, to his products, to other men (in initiation rites). They are metaphors of man giving life (Pygmalion), saving life, or, though a metaphoric reversal of death for life where woman is death or the victim to receive death, taking life. Still others will reflect man's dependency, with all the ambivalence such dependency evokes. These give us the ambivalence of metaphors of the good and nurturing Mother Earth and the "Earth Mother [who] engulfs the bones of her children" (Beauvoir 1952, 166), the glorification of woman's sensual body and the devaluation of the bodily (Flesh as Woman), the life-giving yet fearsome powers of a female Sea, the welcoming or enveloping or suffocating and confining arms of the city as Woman.

And they will reflect the mediation of the mother with the greater and more powerful forces of the Father (the Virgin Mary), the female incarnation of Justice, Liberty, Truth, Death, her mediation between the young boy and his future self, the female Muses which mediate between the poet and his art (men's brainchildren, born of the male creator mating with the female Muse), and her mediation with the social world, woman as keeper of the hearth, the feminine as the compassionate, empathetic, moralizing element, and woman herself as a metaphoric transaction binding together groups of



men in the rites of marriage (See Levi-Strauss 1949) These latter mediations also have a negative side, as when the woman is thought to bridge man not with the higher, but with the lower powers, aligning man with the forces of Evil the witch copulating with the Devil is the symbolic incarnation of this metaphoric mediation Images of woman "on top," of woman taking over have metaphorically represented anarchy, the overturning of properly constituted power, as in Bruegel's painting of Mad Megg<sup>9</sup>

The metaphorical image of woman has been used to represent man's emotional and irrational elements, his (sic) "darker side" Here woman mediates negatively between man and himself so that he can displace unto woman those components of his nature with which he wants to disassociate himself — just as he utilized the psychological mechanism of "splitting" his mother into a 'good mother' and a 'bad mother' (see Klein 1957), so he splits himself into a good self and an evil self and uses the "bad mother" as the one unto whom he can project his evil self, producing the metaphor of Woman as Evil, Irrational, Witch

The dark side of woman as mediator between man and other men, between man and his social world has its representation in metaphors of Woman as Artifice, Woman as Deception, and its mythic representation of Helen, whose "mediation" between men was that of war and destruction, although ambivalent figure that she is, she was also the source of unity among Greeks woman as she who binds men together is the positive mediation while woman as she who causes discord among men is its negative side The metaphoric use of women who belong to social groups thought to be Other is pertinent here The Other Other has perhaps a unique role in mediating between men and women of his own social group—especially in the context of sexual relations The iconography of the black female servant in paintings with strong erotic content, e.g. Manet's *Olympia* or Daniel Rossetti's painting *The Beloved*, can be analyzed as an intensification of the erotic—itself paradigmatically Other—achieved by the sexualization of the woman who is doubly other<sup>10</sup>

In regard to both its relational and mediational aspects, metaphor is the instrument, *par excellence*, for such relational transfers across distinct domains, where the metaphor mediates between such distinct domains Man's metaphorization of his relations to women is thereby used to order man's subsequent relations to others and that which is Other

The work of Evelyn Fox Keller (1984), Sandra Harding (1986), Carolyn Merchant (1980) and others strongly suggests that scientific developments are associated in some systematic way (the directionality of a causal link, if any, remains unclear) with the changing metaphors regarding "gender politics," and the many forms and shifts in this politics of gender Harding (1986, 115), speaking of the Renaissance and Elizabethan periods, writes

Thinkers of the period consistently perceived unruly, wild nature as rising up against man's attempts to control his fate

Machiavelli appealed to sexual metaphors in his proposition that the potential violence of fate could be mastered "Fortune is a woman and it is necessary if you wish to master her to conquer her by force, and it can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by the bold rather than by those who proceed coldly, and therefore like a woman, she is always a friend to the young because they are less cautious, fierce and master her with greater audacity "

The violent images recur in Bacon ([1623] 1870, 296)

You have but to follow and as it were hound nature in her wanderings, and you will be able, when you like, to lead and drive her afterward to the same place again Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into those holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object

Harding (1986) maintains that the canons of science retain the *structure*, if not the content, of the metaphors because the contentful metaphors have proven so fruitful in empirical research <sup>11</sup>

#### MEDIATIONS/METAPHORS

A child emerging into personhood engages in many mediations which utilize Mother/Other These become the source of future metaphoric mediations Such a flow of mediation/metaphor has at least three distinctive tributaries And in looking at the vast assortment of metaphors it may be helpful to have a typology to guide us

The developing child must mediate between its present self and its evolving self, between itself and its world (as object), and between itself and other subjects (its social world) In a world where the subject is thought of as male, these three mediations are reflected in three metaphor-types (male)self/(male)self, (male)self/object world, (male)self/(male) social world The typology provides, at once, three ways in which women or women's activities are used to form metaphorical identifications based on women's role in a man's early life and which are the sources of potent metaphorical conceptualizations

(MALE)SELF/(MALE)SELF We have said that the mother first mediates between the young child and his sense of self Attaining that sense of self comes through an increase in his activities and his growth According to early child theorists, the child's early attainment of his sense of self proceeds through activities in which he identifies with his mother In the self/self metaphors, we have man's later replication of precisely this relationship to his mother—again he mediates between a current self and a developing self by

identifying with the active woman and through a mimetic relation, an imitation not of the actual activity but of the structure of that activity, man incorporates these activities into a newly articulated self-definition

Here Woman is vehicle in the sense that some exclusive male activity is modeled on her activities, as in, for example, the midwife metaphor<sup>12</sup> In this type of metaphor, man vis-à-vis his domain locates himself in a position homologous to that of the woman vis-à-vis her domain<sup>13</sup> This results in a metaphoric *identification* of the man with a woman Socrates in the domain of philosophy is a midwife Notice that in the *Theatetus* metaphor, Socrates points to one disanalogy which he takes to be critical, namely, that his job as a philosopher-teacher is far more important than the midwife's since he, unlike the midwife, must be able to discern true from false births

Where man metaphorically identifies himself with woman, we can almost always find an accompanying statement in which the man, at once, dissociates himself from the devaluation of the literal female activity by supervaluating his metaphorically identified male activity When men of New Guinea structure their male initiation rites on the model of women's birthing, they make clear to all that their birthing is far superior to the birthing of women And Rilke (1903) writes in the "Book of Hours"

Bestow on us man's real motherhood (not of the kind of woman's labor), install the he-man in his right as he who giveth birth, birth to Death—Messiah fulfill his longings, for they are greater than the dream of the virgin giving birth to God<sup>14</sup>

It is woman's agency within her own domain that is modeled by man when he seeks a representation for his own activity But man's metaphoric identification with woman is combined with a supervaluation of man's activities and a metaphoric *appropriation* of the relevant relations which pertain in the female domain via a transposition of these relations on to an exclusively male domain

(MALE)SELF/OBJECT WORLD This metaphor-type does not require the topic of the metaphor to be a domain of man's activities *per se* It only requires the topic to be a domain which is Other for man Here the relation of man to some alterity is mediated through a chosen relation (or set of relations) to Woman not man but the alterity (which is the topic) is metaphorically identified with woman, and it is man who is the utterer of the metaphor The alterity is just that otherness which man wants in some way to engage Or else, it is the alterity he wants to mediate between himself as utterer and a force greater than himself When an alterity is metaphorically identified as woman, and man relates to it as he would to a woman, the ensuing relation is generally modelled on the mother guiding her child in the child's interactions with the external world The confidence, security, anger, and fear

— all the ambivalences evoked by the move away from the dependency on the mother—is reflected in the metaphors in which another alterity is metaphorically named Woman. His attitudes and behavior toward the Other mimic his relations (or rather some chosen subset of possible relations) to women. In a telling passage from the *Prelude*, Wordsworth, deriding “that false secondary power/ By which we multiply distinctions,” praises that association of the babe to its mother which instills in us a yearning to regain the wholeness of Being, the unity of ourselves and the world of Nature. The effort to reestablish unity is the creative urge of the poet. The babe, in his experience of oneness with his mother is “the first/ Poetic spirit of our human life” (*Prelude*, bk 2, lines 216-17, 260-61).

The ambivalence of the closeness and dependency that the young child experiences in regard to its mother becomes reflected in the contrary and contradictory nature of the images of those alterities identified as woman. Biblical images of the cities of Jerusalem and Babylon, for instance, exemplify both sides of the ambivalence. St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians speaks of that “Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children,” and of that “Jerusalem which is above which is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal. 4:25). The city of Babylon is simply “the great whore.”

(MALE)SELF/(MALE) SOCIAL WORLD. In this metaphor-type, the woman herself, not a mere representation, linguistic or otherwise, becomes the metaphoric vehicle. The metaphoric identification is between woman and that value which *woman signifies* but which *man possesses*. Possession of such value places him in an interactive relation with other men. This metaphor is based on the mediative role of the mother to the child as she integrates the child into the social order, which under patriarchy is the world of the Father. To a large extent, the value the mother takes on is both value that the child attaches to her and that which other, grown men (the father) attach to her. It is the shift in her value from protector, nurturer, omnipotent figure to her value as erotic object.

Once she loses her omnipotence (becomes viewed as a castrate in Freudian idiom) and is seen to be valued by others for her erotic qualities, she can be exchanged for another erotic object. It is an exchange which binds men together. The Oedipal complex can itself be viewed as such a metaphoric exchange. The boy gives up the Mother as a love object—gives her over to the Father—in exchange for the father’s social identity in and through the super-ego. This is also how to understand Levi-Strauss’ explanation of the primordial and universal character of the incest taboo: that “in human society a man must obtain a woman from another man who gives him a daughter or a sister” (Levi-Strauss 1967, 44). Through the exchange of women, men establish circles of social interaction with men not from the same maternal line. In this exchange, actual women function as *signifiers* whose value comes from their mediating role in the interaction between men.

Within social structures where kinship plays a less critical role in establishing social relations, woman is still the metaphoric vehicle for the value controlled by a man, value through which he establishes his position in the social order. Thus the "possession" of a Beautiful Woman takes on the metaphoric role of signifying the greater virility (or money or power) of the man "possessing" her. Similar signification is given to a woman's clothing, jewels, leisure, or today, perhaps, to her professional achievement. We have already cited the destructive (although ambivalent) character of such mediation in the figure of Helen. To this we need to add the rape of women in wartime, which is as much a symbolic act as an actual assault. Woman as the metaphor, the mediation between one social group of men and another, is precisely the vehicle for expression of the domination of one group over the other. If the sexual exchange of women marks the bond between men, the victor's sexual "expropriation" solidifies a conquest.<sup>15</sup>

Within patriarchy, those men who possess value do not signify value. Men who do not possess value but are productive, e.g. slaves and laborers, do signify value, however, the signification is literal, not metaphorical. In social and economic orders where women are actively engaged in "productive" labor, they too signify literal rather than symbolic or metaphoric value—that is, they exemplify the value they produce for others. But it is that which neither possess value of itself, nor is engaged in "productive" labor (labor productive of value), which is best suited as the metaphorical vehicle for value. It is reasonable to conjecture that the less she is engaged in utility and needed productive labor, the more geared to leisure and luxury, the more she is capable of being metaphorically identified with the value which belongs to man.

Yet women who are productive will still take on a metaphoric import, but it is not the positive value accorded to the woman of leisure, it is rather negative value accorded to the Witch, the Whore, the Temptress. It is not only productive women that acquire a negative valence, but, especially in hierarchical and racist societies, those women who are the Other Other. The Other Other is a woman who, like the mother, is female, but, unlike the mother, comes from some group already marked by salient differences—differences conceptualized as threatening or desirable, as imbuing its bearers with power or rendering them vulnerable prey. Sexual transgressions along the lines of class and race invite danger, excitement, even disaster, but also allow men who are regarded as Other to deny their alterity (e.g. the sailor in *Swept Away* (see n. 15), also see Cleaver 1967), and allow men who are the One to affirm their mastery or assert the sexuality—especially where upper class males are conceptualized as effete or as lacking a robust sexuality (e.g. the Cary Grant figure in *I'm No Angel* (see n. 16)). The Other Other, the dark woman, the Jewess, the working class woman is sexualized—she is conceptualized as unusually voluptuous or yielding, or as perversely or exaggeratedly sexual.

The Other Other may be regarded as mediating between man and other men of his own class and race, but also between himself and his sexual relations with women of his own group or between himself and his ambivalence toward his own sexuality. The ambivalence toward sexuality in Western cultures is mirrored in the contradictory images of the diseased or perverse or bestial sexuality of the Negress, the Hottentot, the Jewess, or the prostitute and the sexually stimulating, the desirable, the irresistible Negress, Jewess, prostitute, or the sexually accommodating, pliant, self-effacing Asian woman. (See Gilman 1985) <sup>16</sup>

Gilman (1985, 122-3) writes, "All the world is the womb, according to Lawrence, Miller and Durrell, but the black womb is quite different" and cites a remarkable passage from Durrell in *The Black Book* (1973, 123), which features a black English student, Miss Smith:

The creeds and mores of a continent, clothed in an iridescent tunic of oil. I turn always to those rivers running between the black thighs for ever and for ever. A cathartic Zambesi which never freezes over, fighting its way through, but flowing as chastely as if it were clothed in an iridescent tunic of oil. I turn always to those exquisite horrors, the mutilations and deformations, which cobble the history of the dark continent in little ulcers of madness. Strange streaks here and there you will find hair trigger insanities barely showing, like flaws in ice, but running in a steady, heavy river, the endless tributary of sex. All this lives in the wool of Miss Smith, plainly visible, but dying.

As a mediator between a man and his own social class, the Other Other is generally destructive of the social order. In the same novel, Durrell speaks of the black woman: "The strange stream of sex which beats in the heavy arteries, faster and faster, until the world is shaken to pieces about one's ears, and you are left with an indeterminate vision of the warm African fissure, opened to swallow all the white races and their enervate creeds, their arks, their olive branches."

The witch, generally a peasant woman, is thought to derive her powers by her intercourse with the Devil. In this she mediates between men and the Devil—the figure who would destroy the order amongst men given by God, the Father. The Whore, the working class woman who sells herself rather than her labor, is the communal repository of men's lust, that is of those men who can pay for her. Within the hypocritical morality of those societies which support prostitution while condemning it, the Whore is at once destructive of the social order of marriage and supportive of an order in which the upper class women, desexualized, are kept "pure" of all utility, including the rendering of sexual services. <sup>17</sup>

The Temptress, again generally a woman of the "lower classes" (the Siren, the Golddigger, the Actress), both distracts men from obligations within the social order and tempts them to take a woman from outside his appropriate class. Given the view that marriage is a social and economic bond between men who exchange their daughters and sisters, if the temptress succeeds in marrying the man and thus displacing a woman from the appropriate group, she disrupts the prevailing exchange of value amongst men and diverts wealth away from the class of men with whom "her catch" has a bond, and amongst whose heirs the wealth is supposed to be distributed. In the film *I'm No Angel*, Mae West, the irresistible seductive showgirl, triumphs over the blue-blooded family of heir, Cary Grant, who inadvertently has fallen under her spell. As she winningly counters their assaults on her chastity and morality, love and Mae West win the day, thus playing out the scenario in accordance with Hollywood's version of romance, virtue and democratic opportunity.

In a counterpart to this Hollywood fantasy, the negative value of the Temptress is converted to positive currency when the man of wealth turns the temptress into his mistress (or turns a former prostitute into a kept woman, e.g. *Camille*). In supporting her in addition to his legitimate wife, he obtains still another sign of his worth.

#### OTHERNESS FOR THE WOMAN AS SUBJECT

The category of Otherness is not without significance for woman as well. She too must establish her sense of separateness from her mother and from the world in which she exists. But, women do not posit men as Other in establishing their own sense of identity. For women, the first Other is not a sexual opposite in a world where, as we have said, sexual difference is fundamental to identity. Of the three kinds of metaphor, we see that the self/self metaphor has some limited applicability to the female subject. She *can* posit the mother's domain of activity for activities which are literally non-motherly. After all, she too develops a sense of self in relation, if not in fundamental opposition to the mother. She can speak of "giving birth to herself," for example. But what we do not seem to find is a similar genre of metaphors in which domains of exclusively male activities are utilized as vehicles for exclusively female activities.

Women can also posit some alterity as Woman (the self/object world metaphor)—the Earth is Mother to women as much as it is to men. However, the opposition, the alterity is not so fundamental. It involves at once an identification between the speaker and the metaphoric vehicle, resulting in a metaphor with a very different configuration than the same metaphor uttered by man. For again, in the case of the young girl, as in the case of the young boy, it is the mother who mediates between the girl and the world she encounters. The father, to some small extent, may play a mediating role in relation to the

exterior world in such a way that his relation can be metaphorically exploited. We have the use of the male vehicle of the Shepherd as Protector, the Spiritual Guide, etc. for men and women alike.<sup>18</sup> But such male vehicles for activities and alterities which women engage in (usually along with, rather than instead of, men) do not predominate.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which women use actual women (the self/social world metaphor) to mediate metaphorically between themselves and their social sphere. If Chodorow and object theorists are correct, women never fully renounce the mother as a love object. Instead, the father is simply added as another love object. In their erotic attachments to men, there is often an affective relation to another woman. Does this "other woman" perform a metaphoric function comparable to the metaphoric function women perform for men? Or does the man have a metaphoric value in the association of the two women? However we describe the psychological reality, there appear to be few resonances, comparable to the mediation women provide for men in either actual or symbolic social structures. An anthropologist, for example, would be hard pressed to reinterpret incest taboos and kinship structures so that marriages could be viewed as an exchange among women of men. In our own culture, it is the father who gives the bride away, not the mother who gives away the groom.

Women who mother mediate literally for infant male and females alike. But while women become metaphoric mediators for adult men, men rarely play this metaphoric role for women. Instead, for the adult woman, her place in the world, even her identity is *literally* mediated by her relationship to a man. Women will speak metaphorically of their "battle scars" using the male domain of war for the actual scars left from childbirth or the psychological (and metaphorical) scars left by life's hardships. When puerperal fever took the lives of so many women, one might have said that the lying-in chambers of the hospital were women's "gory battlefields." But while we speak of men giving birth to new ideas, to works of art, etc., childrearing is not spoken of as "inseminating" the child with the values of society. Metaphors in which woman's activities are the topic and men's activities, the vehicle, or in which man is the Other, or in which actual men metaphorically are identified with the power or value which inheres in the woman and through which woman relates to the social world of women are all less frequent and less likely—and certainly constitute an insignificant number of the standard metaphors within our language.

The metaphor of Woman is, nonetheless, both accessible and understandable to women—and yet problematic. For in order to comprehend the metaphor a woman must see herself at once as the Other—in the vehicle—and as the One, occupying man's position in the topic of the metaphor. Woman, in so far as she shares man's relation to the Mother/Other, is capable of comprehending the metaphor from the position of the topic (man's world), but in so



far as she identifies with Mother/Woman she finds herself as the Other and the vehicle rather than the subject who can utter the metaphor

In so far as metaphor, on my account, requires that the domain represented by the vehicle be distinct from the one represented by the topic, the use of Woman as Metaphor for the activities which are generally regarded as limited to man solidifies as well as reflects the alterity of woman. And the shifts in relations man establishes to various alterities echo back to those he experienced with women. This leads to the following hypothesis: where woman and her domains are employed as a metaphor for some other human enterprise, the latter is viewed as belonging exclusively to man. Where she is thought to be an equal citizen in the latter domain, she would cease to serve as a metaphor.<sup>19</sup>

To pursue this admittedly speculative line, consider the Socratic midwife metaphor once more. The metaphor plays on the relation between creation and procreation and the field to which these notions belong. The conceptual fields generated result in the identification of female creation as corporal and male creation as mental or spiritual—an identification which makes of woman the vehicle for intellectual creativity, and at once excludes her as *participant* of that cerebral creativity. The transference in this metaphor is one from the field of the physical, palpable reality of corporeal birth—as accomplished by women—to the field of mental activity, and by a simultaneous transference of the antonymous relation of male and female to the *male sphere* of intellectual activity. Since one thing is always a metaphor for something other than itself, a woman's pro-creativity would only be a metaphor for a man's creativity. Unfortunately, woman has served, in our intellectual *history*, as a symbol of or as a metaphor for, but not as an actor in the life of the mental and spiritual. Once she becomes a full participant, will she still serve as a metaphor?

As woman becomes a participant, and if the progress toward that end proceeds without significant regressions, she will slowly cease to serve as metaphor. Though once her entire participation is secure, the metaphor of woman's procreativity for intellectual creativity may reenter the language, but with a different resonance. For woman's intellectual creativity, which she would now share with men, would be recognized as distinct from her unique role in birthgiving. When these two capacities are no longer in danger of being conflated and her role as the creator of ideas, poems, paintings, etc., is not in danger of being abrogated, then the one function can again be metaphor for the other.

This speculation is based on the observation that in a period of transition, when old roles and assumptions are questioned and new ones are still unformulated, but in which the direction of the new order is set forth, metaphor is often too threatening to the establishment of the new order. Either it incorporates regressive assumptions (as in the case of woman as metaphor *only*) or

because it is too radical in already using assumptions of the new order as a basis for building new incongruities. Metaphors, curiously, while crucially important conceptual tools for bringing about conceptual change, need a stable order for their meaningful formation as metaphor.

A final observation with regard to the birth metaphor. As women are more fully engaged in intellectual life, while still fulfilling their procreative function, we may find more metaphors in which former exclusively male activities are the vehicles for childbirth. A woman who is a musician may speak of the "symphonic climax of the head emerging," or the female philosopher may ponder the metaphysical perplexities of embodying two separate beings while having only a single consciousness, employing figures from philosophy to help her illumine the situation of pregnancy.

### CONCLUSION

If the claims put forward here are valid and the speculative hypotheses prove true, there would be profound consequences for man's conceptual organization were women to cease functioning as man's "double and mediator" (Beauvoir 1952, 687). This condition, if the claims of gender theorists are correct, will come about only if women no longer serve as the sole nurturers of young children. Add to this the claims of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and others that our conceptual system is substantially metaphoric, structuring (and being structured by) our language, our experience, and our actions. Then we see how an investigation of Woman as metaphor and its dependence on the early mother-child relation (in which the mother is Other for the boy) will reveal that much of the conceptual and experiential organization of men's lives depends on retaining the Otherness of Woman—the her potential as Metaphor.

Little has been done to analyze how a general image such as Woman contributes to and operates in the conceptualizations articulated by a culture.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, generally metaphor is far too context-bound to yield interesting results on such a scale. Lakoff and Johnson deal broadly with a number of metaphors which they take to be key metaphors within the conceptual system of contemporary Western man, e.g. "time is money," "up is good," etc. but they do not consider the metaphors utilizing woman such as "nature (or earth or body or the irrational) is a woman," intellectual creativity (or artistic activity) is giving birth," "becoming a man (or gaining knowledge—coming into the light) is emerging from the womb (or being born anew)," etc. Certainly literary studies and some anthropological work have dealt more specifically with the use of woman as some particular vehicle in particular metaphors. We need more general studies of the underlying metaphors employing woman as vehicle. And we need studies directed at cultural differences in the symbolic use of Woman, as well as differences in the metaphors generated by

the use of women from various social classes or racial groups. Here I have been less concerned with the specific content of the metaphors of Woman than in claiming that the structure of metaphor and the structure of relations between men and Mother/Woman as Other contribute to the conceptual importance of the metaphorization of Woman.

## NOTES

\* This paper was read at the City University of New York Women in Philosophy Colloquium at the Graduate School of the City of New York and at the World Congress of Philosophy, Montreal, August, 1983. I want to thank the members of both audiences for their useful comments. I also want to thank the graduate students of Society for Women in Philosophy, Stony Brook, State University of New York, especially Janice McLane, for their remarks and suggestions. The paper has further profited from the comments of Diana Meyers, Edward Casey, Elfie Raymond, Margaret Simons, and the two anonymous reviewers for this journal.

1. There is an ambiguity in the title due to a feature of metaphor first brought to light by I. A. Richards (1936). There are metaphors in which women are metaphorically described and there are metaphors in which women are used to metaphorically describe something else. Richards introduced the view that the meaning of metaphor emerges from an interaction of the *subject*, or *topic* of the metaphor, that which is represented by the metaphor, and the *vehicle*, the representation used to speak of the subject. When a woman's beauty is represented as a flower, fruit, or some other delight of Nature, then, we say Woman is the *topic* and Nature the metaphor's *vehicle*. While the vehicle offers a perspective through which we view and understand the topic, the choice of the vehicle can itself reveal much about the way in which the topic is conceived. Simone de Beauvoir's superb chapters from *The Second Sex*, "Dreams, Fears, and Idols" and "Myth and Reality," display the numerous and contrary vehicles that metaphorically speak of woman. Beauvoir concludes that woman is a cipher, an Other unto which man can project all his "dreams, fears, and idols." Woman is thus metaphorically represented by whatever alterity man seeks to engage, and so becomes myth rather than subject. On the other side of the ambiguity we find that she can also be used to represent the alterity. Beauvoir's focus is on metaphoric and mythic representations of women, although she also points to many examples where woman serves as a metaphor for some other alterity. It is in this latter sense that I want to look at woman as metaphor.

2. See Mead (1949), Bettelheim (1954), Kittay (1983).

3. Plato, at the same time, was among the few men within philosophy to challenge that exclusivity, though interestingly enough, not in the same dialogues in which he utilizes the vehicle of woman. In these dialogues, especially in the *Theatetus* and the *Symposium*, the presumption is that the intellectual and creative sphere are the province of males—and thus despite the fact that the wisdom concerning love is learned from a woman, Diotima. The ascent to the absolute form of Beauty is described for men only.

4. My reading of Beauvoir does not depend on an understanding of woman's Otherness as being the primary, that is primordial source, of woman's oppression. Otherness is fundamentally a representational, not a causal notion and can well co-exist with a more materially grounded notion of the ultimate sources of women's oppression. Nonetheless the representation of a class or caste as Other serves to encapsulate for the oppressed, and in turn justify for the oppressor, the behaviors that constitute the oppression. As such the concept has not only representational, but also causal force.

5. Ironically, within the Hegelian dialectic, self-consciousness is ultimately the achievement of the slave, one made possible by the slave's relation to his labor.

6. I thank Margaret Simons for reminding me of this aspect of Beauvoir's analysis.

7. Some feminists, e.g. Young (1984) challenge the universality of Chodorow's thesis, suggesting that because it relies on an analysis of gender formation within the nuclear family, the thesis cannot be generalized to situations where familial structures are different. And some feminists resist all attempts to fashion universalistic theories about women.

I hold on to the view that the varieties of women's situation, of her oppressions, and her symbolization are not disjoint but can be encompassed in a theory that has within it the possibility of accounting for differences, a theory that sees, for example, different forms of oppression as transformations of one another that take their specific form in virtue of constraining and shaping conditions unique to each culture, race and class. I take the theory that Chodorow gives us, especially when we consider the *Reproduction of Mothering* together with Chodorow's articles, e.g. "Mothering, Male Dominance and Capitalism" (1979) to be such a theory.

The universality of Chodorow's thesis lies not in its specific account of gender formation in the nuclear family, but in two theses: the universality of women's nurturance of very young children and the universality of women's subordination to men. Only if one seriously questions these must one question the possibility of an appropriate variation of a Chodorow-like account to accommodate differences in family structure.

While few have contested the universality of women's mothering, some have posed serious challenges to the thesis of universal male domination, e.g. Allen (1986). It is still not clear how we should receive accounts of genuine gynocentric societies. On the one hand, they evince data, apparently ignored by male, white anthropologists, of institutions granting women considerable power, even an egalitarian status. On the other hand, the claim is made that these egalitarian features were destroyed in large measure by colonialism and imperialism. The societies studied by anthropologists, significantly adulterated and infected with the patriarchy of the colonial powers, lack the strong and alive egalitarianism of former times. Those who speak of their native cultures as thus contaminated by white man's patriarchy, speak of the power of the native women still present in an attenuated form. But harkening back to a time and place when women were powerful in an unattenuated form, to a genuinely sexually egalitarian society, when the existence of such structures are based on artifacts, myths, folktales and various oral traditions is not nearly as satisfactory as the direct evidence of an healthy, vigorous, and extant sexually egalitarian society. For instance, in reading an account such as that of Paula Gunn Allen, one is genuinely impressed by her evidence and arguments that the women of the Laguna Pueblo exercised considerable power. But given that matters of war and peace and the external affairs of the society were in the hands of men, one wants to ask if the external and internal affairs were equally valued, or did the men hand over the internal affairs to women so that they would be left free to occupy themselves with what they may have taken as the more important external affairs? That is to say, before concluding that this was genuinely an egalitarian society, one wants to know much more.

Evidence may be mounting for a reversal of the thesis of universal male domination. To the extent that there is evidence for genuine, though historical instances of gynocentric societies, to that extent feminist theorists will have to reconsider theories based on universal male domination and will have reason to glean visions of what a gynocentric society of the future might look like and what the preconditions for patriarchy are. Perhaps for now, both the thesis of universal male domination and its negation are conjectures, still, we have surer reasons for adopting the thesis. At the very least, we can say that the thesis, if not universal, is a true generalization. And a theory such as Chodorow's is generalizable to the extent that the generalization is true.

8 As Carol Gilligan's provocative book, *In a Different Voice* (1981) suggests, a self which regards itself as a self-in-relation rather than as autonomous, develops distinctive ways of dealing with moral problems. According to Freud, boys' oedipal complex is resolved by the castration complex, which is, in turn, completed by incorporating the father's authoritative morality into their own self. As this feat is not possible for women—their castration complex precedes their oedipal stage—Freud claimed that women are incapable of forming a fully authoritative superego. With Chodorow and Gilligan, Freud's claim is turned on its head. We have here not a failing of women, but an excess on the part of men to compensate themselves for the repression of a former identification with their mothers. These views, though new and in need of further research and argument, are, for many, tantalizing and intuitively convincing. (See Kittay and Meyers 1987). If this line of research is as productive as it now seems, we will have at hand a set of tools by which to begin a profound reexamination of our representation and study of human nature and enterprises.

9 I owe this observation to Linda Nochlin in a personal communication.

10 I recommend the discussion in Gilman (1985), especially part I, in which he not only draws our attention to the sexual iconography of the black female servant in European painting,

but discusses the sexualization of women who belong to non-white, non-Christian, or lower socio-economic groups

11 See Harding (1986), especially chapters 5 and 9 for a fuller discussion

12 It is interesting to note that Socrates' mother was herself a midwife

13 Today not only it is the case that the profession of philosopher is occasionally occupied by women, but the role of midwife has been largely usurped by male physicians. When we understand the metaphor, we bracket those contemporary facts which we know to be at odds with the sexual differentiation of the two domains presupposed by the metaphor. Our comprehension is facilitated by the scarcity of women philosophers and the embedded feminine word in "midwife."

14 Note that one cannot understand "man" in the generic sense, since it becomes the anaphoric referent of "he-man."

15 I use the term "expropriation" rather than "theft" because wartime rape, rather than rape which occurs under the normalized circumstances of peace, often has an almost semi-official status. Men are rarely brought to trial for wartime rape, much less actually convicted and punished for such activities. It is often assumed to be the normal booty one is entitled to as victor.

But as the sailor in Lina Wertmüller's movie *Swept Away* discovers to his dismay, the rape and conquest of a woman of the social class that constitute his oppressors does not in and of itself a revolution make. When the sailor and the wife of his employer are swept off to a desert island, he lords over her as she had once lorded over him—and goes far beyond that in his sexual mastery of the woman who becomes his willing sexual slave. For the sailor the possession of his master's wife signifies that he is at least as much of a man, if not more, than his former employer and all the men of his ilk—men of the upper bourgeoisie. But this signification gets lost as soon as the couple leave their island and return to their former surrounding. The husband reclaims his wife, she her privileged existence as an upper bourgeois woman, and the sailor is again just another hired hand.

16 This sexualizing of the Other Other, has a corollary in the sexualized and feminized images of the black man and the Jew in racist and anti-Semitic societies. The African man, pictured with a pendulous abdomen, was likened to the pregnant European woman. As such, his physiology was believed to be of a lower order than that of the European man. The Jewish male was characterized as having effeminate features and as possessing feminine personality traits and, once again, placed lower on the scale of human development than the European male (Gilman, 1985). One can understand the feminization of the male other as yet another use of woman (here the feminized traits) as an effort of the males belonging to the dominant groups to mediate their own relation to men who are distinctly Other. By imbuing them with feminine traits and identifying them with a feminized Other, the privileged men legitimize excluding other men from sexual access to women from the dominant social group.

17 We see here again how the Other Other mediates not only between a man and other men, but also between a man and the women of his class. This is perhaps paradigmatic of the way in which working class women and women of color and, in the context of anti-Semitism, Jewish women have been used by the men of the dominant group to exclude the women of their own class from productive labor, from sexual fulfillment, and from forming genuine connections to all women. And it is also paradigmatic of the way in which women of the dominant class have been pitted against other women—so the former see the latter as more sexually available, desirable, useful and so forth, while the latter see themselves as excluded from a womanhood exemplified by the former. The woman who is the Other Other bears the social cost that makes possible the rarified femininity of women of the upper classes. The metaphorization of the Other Other is one more obstacle to an inclusive feminist movement.

18 Rosemund Rosenberg called these to my attention.

19 This hypothesis is formulated for societies that are patriarchies and may be moving toward a more sexually egalitarian society. If there are, or have been genuine gynocentric societies that have never moved through an androcentric period, this hypothesis would not necessarily hold. For in a truly gynocentric society the relation to the mother, for both male and female must be importantly different, since the mother would not be a devalued Other. Patriarchies depend on the expropriation of the power of women—of her sexual and procreative powers (see Kittay 1983), a condition which, by definition, would not hold for a gynocracy. Gender identity formation for both men and women takes place in the context of this expropriation and concomitant

devaluation of women. The discussion which follows and which has predominated in this paper presumes, with Chodorow, that gender identity formation and women's subordination are intimately entwined, and that woman's mothering is the linchpin in the complex.

As Iris Young (1983) has pointed out, it is perfectly possible that gender identity formation is not necessarily tied to woman's subordination and that a society in which mothering is the work of women can also be a society in which women are not subordinated. Allen (1986) who argues that the Laguna Pueblos have, or rather have had such a gynocracy (see n. 7), claims that American Indian culture generally is gynocentric. It is therefore worth examining the images of American Indian cultures and seeing whether we find the same metaphoric use of woman. A detailed study is beyond the confines of this paper. But two points are noteworthy.

First, the image of woman and Mother seems to be an especially salient one even in such a presumably egalitarian society. Allen writes:

There is a spirit that pervades, that is capable of powerful song and radiant movement, and that moves in and out of the mind. Old Spider Woman is one name for this quintessential spirit, and Serpent Woman is another, Corn Woman is one aspect of her, and Earth Woman is another, what they together have made is called Creation, Earth, creatures, plants, and light.

She cites a portion of the Thought Woman story:

In the beginning Tse che nako, Thought Woman finished everything, thought, and the names of all things. She finished everything, thoughts, and the names of all things. She finished also all the languages. And then our mothers, Uretsete and Naotsete said they would make names and they would make thoughts. Thus they said. Thus they did.

Furthermore, the Mother/Woman image is importantly mediational. For example, in speaking of the Corn Mother, Allen says that without her presence, "no ceremony can produce the power it is designed to create or release. The story of Abanaki, the First Woman, is even more clearly mediational. During a great famine she has her husband kill her so that her corpse should be transformed into a fertile field which would provide food for her children and their descendants (Allen 1986, 13, 13, 17, 23).

But the second point to note is that nature of the symbolism in the context of Native American culture is importantly different from Western societies. Allen emphasizes that the symbols are statements of a perceived reality, not metaphors which stand for something else. Therefore it is not that the Earth, for example, is metaphorically conceptualized as woman, but it is a woman, from a certain point of view, just as Allen says "The color red, as used by the Lakota, doesn't stand for sacred or earth but it is the quality of being, the color of it, when perceived 'in a sacred manner' or from the point of view of the earth itself" (1986). If this is how we are to understand the images of Woman in Native American cultures, then, perhaps Woman is neither Other, nor metaphor, in spite of her evident importance in the symbolic fabric of Native American life. In that case, the thesis of this paper—that it is by virtue of her Otherness that woman is a central metaphor in our conceptualization—is not challenged by the role of Woman in the symbolic structure of gynocentric societies. And the importance of woman's mediational role, which I have claimed derives from her position as mother, is evident in both modes of symbolization.

20 There is of course the notable exception of Beauvoir's two chapters cited above from *The Second Sex*. Also see Griffin (1978), Merchant (1980), Harding (1987), and Keller (1984) for useful analyses of scientific metaphors, and Gilman's (1985) analysis of the images of women from groups thought to be Other.

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