

# DISSERTATION PROPOSAL for WOMANIST/FEMANIST SPIRITUALITIES

*\*Editor's note: This dissertation proposal was submitted to Dr. Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum in May 2001 for the Womanist/Feminist Spiritualities: Theories & Methodologies Kalli described it as her attempt to delineate a framework for the past 25 years of scholarship and experience.*

Dear Lucia, Thank you so much for this opportunity! I realize that what I am attempting to encompass here is really my life work, and that only a portion of it will appear in my dissertation. Still, I think it's reasonable to use this assignment as an exercise to begin to organize the scope of my feminist astrological thoughts since I have deferred my enrollment into the program for financial reasons until September 2002, and since I have a full 10 years to finish. Rereading this, it still seems horribly confused, inchoate, jumbled, sloppy, crude. But at least I've made a start on delineating a framework for the past 25 years!

## HERSTAR FEMINIST ASTROLOGY: THE DIVINE MOTHERS AND THE COSMOLOGICAL SKY

### *Abstract*

Not available at the present time.

### *Table of contents*

#### **I. ASTROLOGIES AND RELIGION**

My first intention will be to educate the reader with respect to the global astrological traditions and the origins of religion:

a) Working definition of global astrologies b) Relationship between global astrologies and the history of planetary religions, especially shamanism.

#### **II. FEMINISM AND RELIGION**

Secondly, I will share my sense of the global feminist tradition, with special attention to the challenge to all "world" religions posed by the metaphysics of feminist spirituality.

a),The feminist tradition that materially supports female personal power b) The feminist tradition that materially supports entities conventionally perceived as "feminine" c) The metaphysics of feminist

spirituality, and its challenge to all "world" religions

### **III. ASTROLOGY AND THE FEMINIST TRADITION**

Thirdly, I will challenge the western cultural disjunction between astrology and feminist spirituality by suggesting that the Goddess period of our evolution as a species gave rise to astrological traditions in the first place:

a) The case for astrologies as the primordial cosmologies of Goddess b) Feminist analysis of the Eurocentric sky, including field research that resulted in the publication of 49 feminist astrological essays drawn from 10 countries (Herstar Invocation Action, 2 vols., 1998) c) Feminist analysis of the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese sky.

### **IV. HERSTAR TAKES BACK THE SKY**

Finally, I will begin to correct the distortions of patriarchal astrology by means of feminist shamanic research and storytelling:

a) Ecofeminist storytelling of stars, asterisms and constellations based on historical and biological research as well as shamanic practice

#### *Personal introduction*

As a highly privileged white teenager in the American 1970s, I heard feminists from many professions and cultures expose an immense and incontrovertible fact: there is a history of power imbalance between males and females. It felt as though an earthquake was destroying my whole landscape. No matter where I peeked in Western Civilization—and most other places as well—I was greeted with an astonishing profile of domination. Women were almost nowhere in written history. As far as economics goes, everything my mother did to raise six children wasn't defined as work. The religious root of Western civilization—monotheism—was almost entirely a metaphysical portrait of the Father and Son. Healthy psychology was defined as the pattern of male socialization. Medical research was almost entirely based on the male body. Legal codes skipped over violence against women and children, especially at home. American women didn't enjoy legal equality with men. The list of grievances seemed to be limitless.

Moreover, the scathing analysis of this tiny and unheralded group of feminists reframed human history, teaching that this male-female imbalance had given monstrous birth to even more massive grids of imbalance. Entities conventionally perceived to be feminine had been systematically dominated for centuries, especially by Western socioeconomic and religious

institutions. These "feminine" entities could be "effeminate" men, or entire races and cultures, or Earth itself.

This stupendous legacy of oppression—whether of females, Goddess, or entities perceived to be feminine in essence, such as Earth—came to be interpreted as the essential debility of Western civilization. The core assumptions of our culture were to be challenged. Courageous and brilliant feminist assertions shook the foundations of our personal identities, households, social institutions, and fields of knowledge. As the 1970's feminist earthquake rocked our cultural landscape, it was terribly disorienting and painful. On a deeper level, I knew this earthquake was one drummed up by a great and truthful intelligence, an intelligence at once individual and collective. This truthful mind would force us to evolve.

Fascinated by the feminist tradition, I explored the disciplines of feminist history and theology in college and graduate school. I earned a B.A. in History at U.C. Berkeley in 1981, specializing in ancient Mediterranean history and religion. My thesis focused on the astrological cosmology of ancient Egypt and the highly disruptive emergence of imperial monastic monotheism. Later, I earned an M.A. in Systematic Theology at the Graduate Theological Union in 1987 by specializing in the question of how feminist theory, in conjunction with a survey of the status of women worldwide, represents a challenge to all organized religions. My thesis, which included numerous icons depicting the life cycle of the Madonna, was a series of meditations focused on the question of what monotheism has made of human reproductive processes, as well as male and female metaphysical power. My doctoral program and dissertation will carry all of this work to a more advanced level of creativity.

Therefore, in 1995, when I made a life commitment to astrology, it was practically instinctive to approach this field in terms of my prior academic training. And it was obvious that the written astrologies of centralized, highly patriarchal cultures— especially those of Greece, Rome, Europe, and all territories colonized by Judaeo-Christian civilization –had been developed by men, for men, within male-dominated civilizations. Clearly, the western astrological tradition had been filtered through patriarchal values for thousands of years, even though the rise of feminism and female literacy since the 18th century had begun to alter the western reception of the cosmological sky.

Astrologies need have nothing to do with patriarchal consciousness. Astrologies concern our species and its relationship to the natural world. Astrologies record the ways in which our species has perceived the practical yet sophisticated laws of interactivity that obtain in Nature. The feminist blind spot within the western astrological tradition is an enormous visionary portal! As I began to share this perspective with my colleagues within the public discourse of the professional western

astrological community, I found that for the most part, the topic of feminism was a mysterious, volatile, emotional, unconscious, unknown quantity. With the notable exception of a small and brilliant chorus of feminist voices, it usually drew a blank or a defensive response. This intellectual climate reminded me of what it felt like in the 1970's to study classics, history and religion in a competitive university setting. Feminist theory was just getting its bearings. Professors had not yet been trained to spot and deconstruct the andocentric, patriarchal, monotheistic assumptions that stood as the first principles of virtually all academic disciplines. Sensing the future perhaps, they were uneasy about their ignorance. I also found this atmosphere at pontifical universities in Rome, although the kindly monks were blissfully content with pre-herstory. I also noticed that even though at least 80% of the astrologers in this country -and at least 80% of those who pay for readings—are females, the North American sector of the Western astrological community was entirely content as a democratic whole to assemble at sacred times as if it were a patriarchal den. This situation was epitomized in the male-centered distribution of ceremonial power and andocentric tenor of teachings at the North American celebrations of a sacred planetary alignment—the Jupiter-Uranus conjunction of 1997—as well as the absence of structures for feminist activism and awareness within our professional community at that time. Thus my commitment to feminist astrology—to HERSTAR—was born. My responsibilities as a feminist astrologer are to:

- mediate between my appreciation of both feminism and astrology;
- deepen my experience;
- offer my truth in free and personal terms;
- be an unconventional scientist;
- share whatever knowledge I have been given of the greatest natural laws and interconnections; and
- relinquish all fears of giving the wrong answer or earning disapproval.

As a feminist astrologer, I honor female energy as Source. I identify how perceptions of planets, signs, elements, houses, and fixed stars have been cast in terms of male experience in patriarchal social order. I allow the core astrological vocabulary to flow from my own meditations, pilgrimages and creative efforts, as well as from suppressed legacies in astrology, art and religion. In so doing, I continue to carve out the path of my lifelong commitment to the past, present and future of feminist theory, scholarship, and activism.

When I was in high school and college during the 1970's, the living forms of the patriarchal cultural landscape trembled while private, public, social, symbolic, secular and sacred icons toppled to the ground. The feminist tradition called us to make adjustments as a species, and to grow toward

different lights.

Feminist astrology shows how the reception and transmission of lights has changed. The lights of sky and their rapport with our planet now shine through a different prism.

I see the skyquake of feminist astrology—mirroring the earthquake of contemporary feminism—as an undulation of the jewelled belly of the sky. I intend that its beauty, radiating from the words and images of my dissertation, will disseminate yet another promising tool of feminist religious revolution.

### *Preliminary discussion of topic*

## **I. ASTROLOGIES AND RELIGION**

My first intention will be to educate the reader about global astrological traditions and the origins of religion.

a) Working definition of global astrologies

b) Relationship between global astrologies and the history of planetary religions, especially shamanism

I will initially "unpack" the following working definition: astrology is the supreme intelligence of codes for cosmic navigation and healing, codes based in the memory of natural laws and cycles of creation that have merged visible and invisible realms for our ancestors in practically all cultures, dating back at least as long as written records attest.

Next, I will explore the rapport between astrology and the history of religion. I will show that astrology is perhaps the most direct and unambiguous channel into the primordial shamanic strata of human religious and scientific understanding. I believe that original astrological knowledge is shamanically received and transmitted by those who consciously melt the boundaries between their bodies and the natural environment in order to achieve a precise, highly disciplined communion with nature. Shamans blur the boundaries between their bodies and the material world, allowing their beings to stream out and commune with raw, potent, living force fields of natural power whether force fields of greenery, or force fields of animals and birds, or of water and mud, or wind and fire, or the round of seasons, or lights in the Sky that seem to be fixed, or those that wander and wander. To my way of thinking, praying for an intimate rapport with all aspects of nature—specifically animals, plants, and minerals—had everything to do with the way that the treasures of cross-cultural astrologies developed in the first place. For astrology plots interrelationships between plants, minerals, animals, stars, planets, bodies, states of being, and these can clearly be seen to coordinate with one another in perfectly intimate, endlessly creative ways. However strange and elusive these meditations may seem today, I think they produced the primary tools with which

astrologers now decode maps of individual, situational and galactic identity. I further submit that such meditations—whether Taoist, Mayan, Egyptian, Greek, Hindu, African, Polynesian, Christian, feminist—allow our species to gradually identify precise, intimate interrelationships over time between natural forms of intelligence, and to create and recreate the foundations of navigation, science, medicine and religion.

## II. FEMINISM AND RELIGION

Secondly, I will share my sense of the global feminist tradition, with special attention to the challenge to all "world" religions posed by the metaphysics of feminist spirituality.

- a) The feminist tradition that materially supports female personal power
- b) The feminist tradition that materially supports entities conventionally perceived as "feminine"
- c) The metaphysics of feminist spirituality, and its challenge to all "world" religions

Sharing a sense of the enormous feminist political and spiritual tradition will be an intellectual challenge, to say the least! At this point, I plan to lovingly explore feminism in terms of three complementary grids of inquiry:

*a) Feminism is the tradition of theory, scholarship and activism that supports the increase of personal power on the part of all female human beings. Feminism includes any manifestations of economic, political, legal, medical, academic, cultural and ecclesiastical solidarity with women and girls.*

Woman-identified creators in innumerable fields of human activity—historians, theologians, poets, mothers, psychologists, linguists, archaeologists, artists, healers, sociologists, economists, environmentalists, novelists, scientists, musicians—have stubbornly focused on a deeply disturbing grid of inquiry by acknowledging the immense, incontrovertible and brutal history of male domination. They have also explored the ways in which this violence is inculcated within the female line, the way it circulates within the company of women and passes to children.

On one hand, feminists around the world have defended and protected the values and skills of all those who devote themselves to roles traditionally associated with mothers. On the other hand, they have also laid bare the brutal truth that in so far as sexual, reproductive, domestic, and emotional services have been *compulsory* obligations for females rather than options freely chosen, they have been nodes of slavery, despite political and religious idealizations to the contrary. Thanks to this pioneering work, droves of women began to leave the household in search of other creative worlds, defying the ancestral knots of socialization that encourage and reward female submission, those that insist upon heterosexual cohabitation, marriage and parenting.

Feminist astrology cannot politely ignore the anguished collective female struggle for liberty and justice. The feminist tradition has needed to champion females as emerging human beings, to insist that our welfare in physical and metaphysical terms is absolutely central to the enterprise of culture.

The courage and hard, dirty, unpopular work of global feminist activism continues to slowly, yet inexorably, liberate the female sector of the species from slavery in sexual, procreative, domestic, economic and emotional terms. Remarkable progress has been made, considering the conservative resistance generated by the cornerstone of all other liberation struggles: the traditional family unit. Gaining support from governments and organized religions has been a tale of uneven progress. At this point, the idea that women's rights are human rights remains controversial, but it has been provisionally accepted by various religious and political bodies around the world.

*b) Feminism also supports the increase of power of all entities conventionally perceived to be feminine" in essence, be they children, "effeminate" males, elders, "Mother" Earth, "feminine" races and cultures, and so forth. Economic, political, legal, medical, academic, cultural and ecclesiastical solidarity along these lines are also conceived of as feminist phenomena.*

The feminist tradition does not restrict itself to the fate of females, since the feminist value base is attentive to structures of domination such as race, class, sexual orientation, age, disability, and so forth. Therefore, woman-identified creators have also explored the habitual way in which violence against women also afflicts beings and entities perceived to be female in essence. Entire races, cultures, Earth itself, have been regarded as essentially female objects. At best, they are romanticized. At worst, they are considered to be devoid of subjectivity and dignity, and hence scorned, colonized, plundered and destroyed. This hideous gridlock stretches back in time, saturating so many of the centralized cultures of which we have written evidence. Moreover, it operates with tremendous force today around the world.

Feminist activism has therefore been central to an enormous spectrum of progressive crusades during the past few centuries, from Susan B. Anthony leading the petition drive on behalf of the anti-slavery 13th amendment campaign, to Rachel Carson launching the ecology movement with *Silent Spring*, to the anti-nuclear women's camp of Greenham Common, to the role of lesbians organizing and caring for gays with AIDS. Examples along these lines are simply endless.

Power in female terms has gathered in relentless generational waves---despite storms of cultural resistance ever since the late 18th century. Its tremendous spiraling effects on our relationships, institutions, and fields of knowledge is, I believe, the most revolutionary historical development of the past five thousand years. To me, the stately rhythm of feminist manifestation is a song so vast in its implications that it is the greatest of sacred songs. Moreover, I review all evidence

of the feminist song as evidence of Female Energy as Source, or Goddess.

c) The metaphysics of feminist spirituality insists upon a shift of consciousness that calls for the embrace of Female Energy as Source, or the presence that many simply call the Goddess. Her legacy entails the release of dualistic philosophical grids and thus the acceptance of relative, fluid and indefinite maps of identity for all beings.

The metaphysics of feminist spirituality poses a magnificent challenge to all "world" religions. Clearly, the psychic coordinates of centralized cultures have clearly countenanced female slavery. Much of women's history around the world, at least in written records from the past five thousand years, portrays a housebound community of lifelong minors under male guardianship, economically and legally dependent. Naturally, the same psychic coordinates have spun themselves through our divine stories and symbols. For thousands of years, the purported divine will of a reigning male deity, or cluster of male deities has sacralized the dosed female encampment as a function of the inalienable order of natural law. Dualistic philosophies and fixed ethical maps of identity for males and females have rounded out the metaphysical circuit.

Sexual structures are distributions of life energy that correspond to patterns of species reproduction, but they also map the way our species mediates its role with Nature and the divine. Sexual imbalance is the core medium, the gut level, of planetary imbalance, and metaphysical systems that justify this imbalance are falling big time, given the momentum of feminist transformation and its demanding role as a catalyst of planetary evolution.

Since the material world and the myriad invisible worlds are mutually interpenetrating and co-evolutionary realities, feminist spirituality has a tremendous role to play in the female fight for freedom and justice. Currently, our religious revelations and shamanic points of reception are becoming woman-identified in a very big way. Feminist phenomena are galactic dances of purification, and the ritual hours are well underway.

Feminist fusion means that the elemental pain of a profoundly dualistic planet is resolving into a unitized, yet dyadic and ceaseless mutating multidimensionality. The exploding supernova of feminism, owing to the specificities of its physical, emotional, mental and spiritual fire, is the most comprehensive series of emanations pressing us toward the proper planetary fulfillment of the ethical imperatives of the Piscean age: loving empathy for, and symbiosis with, all living creatures and habitats.

### **III. ASTROLOGY AND THE FEMINIST TRADITION**

Thirdly; I will challenge the western cultural disjunction between astrology and feminist spirituality by suggesting that the Goddess period of our evolution as a species gave rise to astrological traditions

in the first place.

- a) The case for astrologies as the primordial cosmologies of Goddess
- b) Feminist analysis of the Eurocentric sky, including field research that resulted in the publication of 49 feminist astrological essays drawn from 10 countries (Herstar Invocation Action, 2 vols., 1998)
- c) Feminist analysis of the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese sky

### **1. *The case for astrologies as the primordial cosmologies of Goddess***

According to conventional thought, astrologies--whether Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Arabic, European, Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, Polynesian, Native American, Mayan—were developed by male priesthoods during the past 5,000 years of patriarchy. As a feminist astrologer, I interpret history differently.

I theorize that astrological codes were first perceived and constructed prior to the consolidation of patriarchy—

say, at least beginning as early as 100,000 thousand years ago—and were gradually woven together within an oral tradition by females during the long Goddess phase of our evolution as a species.

I hypothesize that over tens of thousands of years, the ancestral mothers gradually created astrologies as a corollary to, and primary function of, their biological and cultural leadership in matters of sexuality, birth, and growth. Energies and consequences of birth take up lots of room. Birth is spacious, it radiates into the world at large, it is fruitful, it multiplies endlessly in fractal-like recursions and mutations. Intimate, daily familiarity with the grounds and consequences of human reproductive process—sexuality, menstruation, gestation, labor, biological growth, complex socialization, and death—gave females the unique ability to perceive the connections between our bodies and the movements of nature over time. To me, astrological traditions are, originally and essentially, the religions of birth, and therefore the elaborate yet "missing" cosmologies of Goddess.

Moreover, other traditional female labors –gathering plants, nurturing crops, tending animals, healing with herbs, cooking –amplified the astrological wisdom of the ancestral mothers. This makes absolute sense to me, since astrologies are precisely the intricate theoretical networks that map interrelationships between plants, animals, minerals, humans, and celestial bodies over time.

I think that over millennia, and within the household matrix of incarnational process, the web of clan mother discussions stretched between cultures and formed the massive oral foundation of our planetary astrological traditions. The ancestral mothers knew well that the way we incarnate, grow and die is galactic in identity and scope! I think that this oral tradition –one central to the

development of science, especially medicine, astronomy, and mathematics –needs to be understood as the foundation for our religious understanding as a species.

Unconsciously, perhaps westerners still recognize that astrologies are traditions of the ancestral mothers. Why do *you* suppose that Nancy Reagan took the "blame" for her husband's consistent and determined use of astrology throughout his entire political career? Perhaps on a Eurocentric cellular level, we are also remembering the witch burnings, for the *Malleus Maleficarum* –the Christian manual used for hundreds of years to exterminate the wise mothers of Europe – enunciated that if a woman observed anything in the sky, she was fit to be burned.

***2. Feminist analysis of the Eurocentric sky, including field research that resulted in the publication of 49 feminist astrological essays drawn from 10 countries (Herstar Invocation Action, 2 vols., 1998)***

Next, I will present the Eurocentric sky. Our astrological priesthoods –Greek, Jewish, Arabic, medieval and renaissance Christian, 20th-century psychological-have largely attuned themselves to the bedrock assumptions of recent western and near eastern civilization, as expressed in classical Mediterranean philosophy and the monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Unfortunately, these philosophical and religious traditions have rationalized and justified male domination, and they seem to have done so more successfully than anything else we have on record. Feminism has sincerely shaken these fields up, particularly during the past few decades, but the fact remains that for thousands of years, these systems were proud to define females as essentially different from males and as inferior to males in physical and metaphysical terms, and to proclaim our subordination at every measurable level as the necessary foundation of an orderly society. These vicious principles posed as immutable laws of nature and as the divine will of an omnipotent, omniscient male supreme being.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, darn near every move made on behalf of women and girls was routinely opposed by the philosophical and theological arguments advanced by fundamentalist thinkers from these systems, and the trend continues to this day. The historical record plainly shows that classical Mediterranean philosophy and orthodox imperial Judaism, Christianity and Islam –at least in their pre-feminist incarnations –have without question been some of the worst adversaries that women and girls have ever had.

My position on western astrology is that the Eurocentric cosmological sky is basically a vision that reflects orthodox/imperial monotheistic religion, and that this monotheistic astrological vision has been politically promoted for centuries as a celestial inscription of patriarchal social order. Therefore, in this dissertation I will need to provide working definitions of both patriarchy and monotheism. ,

a. Patriarchy. Patriarchy is an adaptation to the sexually differentiated process of human reproduction in which the female as biological mother is constrained to the immediate grounds and consequences of her part in reproduction, that is, to sexual, domestic, procreative, caretaking, emotional, and subsistence-economy services. She is basically confined in these unpaid or indirectly paid labors to the household. The male head of household, if he is even around, enjoys a completely different status. The male reproductive partner under patriarchy is never exploited for sexual and reproductive services, in spite of variations according to historical period, territory, class, education, religion, income, and race. Marriage contracts do not render him vulnerable with respect to the culture at large. He is responsible only in a peripheral sense to the household, and may default on his responsibility to maintain his group at subsistence levels without appreciable civil or religious penalties. He may physically and sexually abuse his dependents, obstruct or deny their access to material resources, and marshal the forces of law and religion against them. All in all, he gains a proprietary right to children produced and nurtured by female labor, a right expressed in name, law, and property relations. At best, he may assist responsibly and personally minimize the overwhelming forces that separate him from *his* people.

Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have shown how our patriarchal orientation has accompanied the systematic oppression of females, "effeminate" males, gays and lesbians, entire races and cultures, even Earth itself. Patriarchy has also contributed mightily to the degeneration of our planetary pool of astrological wisdom. I firmly believe that during the past five thousand years, the consent that humans have given to patriarchy -as well as the coercion that holds patriarchy in place—have had absolutely disastrous consequences for our planetary astrological resource base. Obviously, patriarchal empires exploit and destroy the indigenous cultures in which astrologies thrive. But on an even deeper level, the fundamental, if unwritten, law of patriarchy is this: let us mount a standing war against the utterly miraculous female role in human reproduction. Since I hold that the female role in human reproduction, so long under attack, is precisely the root and essence of astrological reception and transmission, I strictly associate the consolidation of patriarchy with the corruption and decline of astrological wisdom.

b. Monotheism. Responsible scholars like Elaine Pagels speak accurately about the balance of the monotheistic tradition. As she explains, the trinity of monotheisms have been historically grounded in principle on the triumph of a male God: "Unlike many deities of the ancient Near East, the God of Israel shared his power with no female divinity nor was he the divine husband or lover of any. He can scarcely be characterized in any but masculine epithets: king, lord, master, judge and father. Indeed, the absence of feminine symbolism for God marks Judaism, Christianity and Islam in striking contrast to the world's other religious traditions, whether in Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome, or

in Africa, India and North America, which abound in feminine symbolism." Monotheism -defined as the triumph of a male God, at once single, supreme and remote -came into being with the eclipse of Goddess. "Eclipse" is probably a euphemism. Given the brutal discharge of imperial warfare that has achieved this triumph in various locations for the past 4,000 years, it is more honest to say that monotheism was born from the murder of Goddess. This may raise some eyebrows. I concede that due to feminist cultural influence the monotheistic God has recently become female as well as male. "God as Female" surfaces unmistakably and passionately in late 20th-century western monotheistic religious scholarship, art and liturgy. Yet "God as Female" has only been seriously inscribed by monotheistic feminist scholars during the past few decades. This mutation does not fairly represent the history of monotheism in any way. "God as Female" is an original departure that may be spawning an entirely new—and still inchoate—religious sensibility.

As a feminist astrologer, I isolate and emphasize the extent to which orthodox monotheism naturally lends itself to the abuses of empire, whether Jewish, Christian, or Islamic. I think that more than any other cultural factor on the record, orthodox/imperial monotheism, whether Jewish, Christian, or Islamic, sets the cosmological stage for a staggering phase of female slavery. I think that orthodox/imperial monotheism justified, and continues to justify, the systematic exploitation and destruction of entities perceived to be female in essence: males who do not conform to approved notions of masculinity, entire races and cultures, Earth itself.

Patriarchy has created and maintained the sacred inscription of monotheism. Western astrology today is largely a monotheistic vision. As human beings living within patriarchal social order, we have needed to feel that Earth is a mirror of Sky, and we have told our stories accordingly.

In response to all of these conditions, I organized The HERSTAR Invocation Action in 1997. My goal was to initiate a systematic feminist critique of received western astrological theory and practice, and more importantly, to track the ways in which feminist transformers of culture are currently recasting and regenerating the tradition. I asked male and female astrologers for whom the feminist tradition had been a creative force to write essays on how feminism had made a difference in their lives as astrologers. Forty-nine astrologers from 10 countries responded, and I self-published the results in two volumes. I will incorporate this work in this dissertation by quoting each one of the 49 authors.

My commitment to think as a feminist within the context of late 20th-century western astrology is sobering. Western astrology has been a sacred inscription of male-identified priesthoods for thousands of years. I cannot assume that these priesthoods held the interests of women and girls at heart.

For example, the severity of female sexual, reproductive and domestic slavery is perfectly

coded within our inherited western astrological legacy that binds only lunar and venusian planetary agency to females. In terms of 20th-century psychological jargon, these two bodies become "archetypally feminine." This state of affairs is justified by the will of the reigning male greco-roman divinities, portrayed as the inalienable order of natural law, and finally, projected onto the sky as though this limited reception was intrinsic to nature itself.

In a word, the dualistic philosophical and religious assumptions of monotheism thread their way silently and relentlessly through our core astrological vocabulary as it is taught today. The astrological dualized belief system is the most gargantuan fossil of sexual stereotyping that survives in western culture today! Like fossil fuel, everybody uses it, but still, it stinks. Dredging up and making fire out of the ancient bowels of our planet is unhealthy. Likewise, it's unhealthy to receive the star at the center of our solar system as an epiphenomenon of the penis!

Like a fossil fuel, the western astrological masculine-feminine dualized belief system pollutes my appreciation of nature. A dead relic, it has rationalized and legitimized the power relations of a savagely patriarchal era, making Earth safe for male supremacy. As a western feminist astrologer, I will ask how my tradition has received and inscribed the rhythms of nature so as to cosmically justify male domination on Earth, and I will ask for guidance to evolve alternatives. I will do my part to lift the corpse of western astrology -a manifestation of Earth's essential debility -onto the pyre.

### ***3. Feminist analysis of the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese sky***

Next, I will make the observation that as far as I can tell, Goddess is hugely alive today in the religious traditions that have carefully preserved an ancient yet vibrant astrological culture. Generally speaking, the more intimate a given culture is with the notion of female energy as divine source, the more appreciative it is of astrology. Humans seem to be best equipped to understand and harmonize with astrological laws of interactivity when we collectively recognize Female Energy as Source, or—to paraphrase Merlin Stone – when God is a woman. I will ask just what the apparent familiarity between astrology and the female potency of Goddess might signify given that astrologies are precisely the cosmologies of birth.

I will briefly compare and contrast, from a feminist perspective, the contemporary astrology of Europe with that of India, Tibet, and China. I will present my view that near eastern and Eurocentric monotheism -- a relatively late cultural development considering the great antiquity of astrologies -- is the sacred inscription that our species evolved to legitimize the consolidation of patriarchy, and that monotheism acted so as to constrict a far more abundant astrological cosmology that stemmed from Africa and that survives today primarily in Asia.

For example, prior to the consolidation of patriarchy, each night a male moon made love to, and reposed within, a different female asterism. Each of these 27 stellar zones was perceived to be

an emanation of Goddess, so the zodiac was mapped on a female body. This vision of the sky survives in India to the present day. With the consolidation of patriarchy, God became male, and each of the 12 stellar zones where the male Sun moved each month was mapped on a male body. Most feminists within western cultures today have only been taught this version of the sky.

**IV. HERSTAR TAKES BACK THE SKY** Finally, I will begin to correct the distortions of patriarchal astrology by means of feminist shamanic research and storytelling.

a) Ecofeminist storytelling of stars, asterisms and constellations based on historical and biological research as well as shamanic practice.

One needs to exorcise monotheism and patriarchy in order to proceed since astrology evolved ages before the relatively recent births of monotheism and patriarchy. As a feminist astrologer, I have been taught to disabuse myself of monotheistic and patriarchal reflexes, be they conscious or unconscious.

Only on this basis can I present ecofeminist astrological stories, based on organic methodological findings drawn from my own ancestral (Nordic) shamanic practice. As a feminist astrologer, I identify with the ancestral mothers, and write in terms of the contours of my own life and imagination. Like the female shamans of old, I blur the boundary between my body and the material world, allowing my being to stream out and commune with raw, potent, living force fields of Nature. I tune into my body so as to abandon it, and to hear messages coming in through my senses.

In so doing, I honor the feminist tradition, which almost invariably has to do with going beneath the surface of things, with releasing belief systems based in dualistic facades. Feminism honors the archaic and perennial principle of listening to the spirits in the bones of things in order to get beyond appearances. I call in the spirits of the animals for guidance, for they can help me draw upon aspects of nature stored somewhere deep in my cellular memories that I might walk a few tiny steps into the numinous world of their live essence.

© Kalli Rose Halvorson 2001