

## Thoughts on the Peace Starwalk with Great Female Bear

*We cannot live in a world  
That is interpreted for us by others  
An interpreted world is not a home  
Part of the terror is to take back  
Our own listening  
To use our own voice  
To see our own light*

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Writer, composer religious reformer & visionary

Since we are not in the same physical space, we will not be able to close the circle together, declaring it open yet unbroken. So I will close the story about what I have recently learned from the seven stars of the Big Dipper:

This story allows me to respond to the question of how feminism makes a difference in my life as an astrologer. The privilege of responding to this question is one I have freely offered to as many people as possible. Now that everyone else's essay is finally in place, I extend the same privilege to myself. (This refers to Invocation One)

I intended to gently nestle quotes from all 50 Invocation authors within my own story. Such a gesture would have been a lovely way to show echo your own calls, and to bid your farewell. However, it was all I could do to finish my own essay! In the future, I'll make good the promise of this intention.

To begin, I will hark back to China, the oldest continuous human civilization with 5,000 years of written records. I will ask for guidance from Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens. She taught the Taoist art of treading the Dipper - walking from star to star – to the Yellow God in primordial times. I ask her to teach me as well. I too would walk the magic path of these seven stars.

Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens teaches me to invoke the star-spirits —many of them female—who reside in each of the Dipper stars. By teaching internal and external visualizations, chants, trance travels, prayers, and so forth, she induces the descent of these helpful star-spirits into my body. They are eager to assist in removing obstacles between my human self and my corresponding divine being.

*Oh Great Ones, help me to live in my dharma.*

The necklace of pearls: I start my story with a series of beautiful synchronicities. This rapidly-paced chain of events, as precise and elegant as a perfectly matched necklace of pearls, led to the adoption of the Dipper as the asterism on the Herstar Website home page. I report these synchronicities because as a feminist astrologer, I trust more than books and lectures, more than what I learn from giving readings. I follow many kinds of clues, such as dreams, encounters, impressions, coincidences, the ebb and flow of feelings.

I also report these events because they triggered such emotional resistance. Initially, I strongly resisted associating Herstar with the Dipper in any way. It seared grandiose in the extreme. I gave in eventually, but not without a struggle. In retrospect, it was as though I needed to learn that I cannot afford to live small, to think conservatively at this time. The experience tested me in many ways. How large am I willing to live? How much will I allow my mind to stretch? How afraid am I of having the wrong answer, of earning disapproval, of becoming more than I already am? How serious am I about showing up as a feminist thinker in my astrological work?

After five months of hesitation, I gave myself permission to venture a feminist interpretation of an asterism. I'm willing to see things anew, to allow them to fit together, interestingly. It is good to simply share my findings. Goddess awakens the Child within.

### **Experiential research findings:**

Fires of friendship and oracular toys: I originally suggested that designers Julia and Sharon create an illustration for the Herstar website based on a vision of Earth ecology, or perhaps a solar eclipse. Instead, they came up with a reclining female figure leaning on her right elbow with several stars sprinkled throughout her body. The Earth, with the United States facing the viewer, floated near her outstretched left arm. I was delighted with the idea of a constellation, liked the drawing very much, and merely suggested that the Earth be drawn so that the North Pole faced the viewer.

Several days later, I bought an assortment of small, brightly-colored, plastic horses with long, flowing hair for my niece's eighth birthday. I was completely taken with one bubblegum pink pony. It had a tiny, purple image of the dipper printed on its rump. I kept seeing Julia and Sharon's reclining female figure drawn on the hindquarters of this plastic toy, with the seven purple Dipper stars floating through her body. Embarrassed to be thinking so large, I dropped the idea like a hot potato.

The next day, the vision of the seven Dipper stars superimposed on the reclining figure floated into my mind once again. Glancing out the back door of my friend's apartment, I happened to see another plastic toy: an Earth. It seemed identical to the one in Julia and Sharon's drawing, right down to the coloring. The North Pole even faced me. I blurted out what was going on to my friend Anne. Nonplussed, she told me about the Taoist understanding of the asterism, handed me a book of astronomical charts, instructed me to photocopy the grid of the Dipper, and told me to go for it. I did the photocopying right away, but had my reservations. Julia and Sharon wouldn't like it if I had an idea at the last minute, and I couldn't afford to pay than anymore. But several days later, I asked if they would consider redrawing the reclining female figure so that her random sprinkling of stars could be replaced by these seven.

As I watched, they laid some tracing paper over my photocopy of the Dipper's astronomical grid. They penciled in the seven stars, then superimposed this tracing

paper full of Dipper stars on top of their illustration. Lo and behold, the seven stars fit perfectly onto the existing Herstar reclining figure. My photocopy had even been done at the precise degree of enlargement - perhaps 385% - necessary to match their drawing. This thrilling spontaneous combustion drew all three of us into a group hug!



Let me now summarize the experiential research findings that guided me to the Dipper:

1. My designers drew a constellational female figure to symbolize Herstar on a Web site home page. Although this was not a synchronicity per se, it was an amazing brainwave on their part, and one I never would have had the huevos to suggest. I consider it worthy of mention.
2. A small toy - the pink pony - gave me the idea of superimposing the Dipper on their drawing. After a few days of resistance, as the idea took hold again, another small toy the Earth –appeared in front of me. The toy's North Pole even faced me, fulfilling the one request I had made of Julia and Sharon. Even plastic toys can be portents, oracles, tokens of augury.
3. This happened while I was visiting my best friend, a Chinese scholar. She had tried to educate me long before about the Taoist dimensions of the Dipper, but I had never found time to read about it. She gave me the definitive text on the subject and a book of astronomical charts. Without her expertise, books, and calm attitude, I surely would have dropped the idea.
4. In spite of my own reservations about irritating Julia and Sharon or increasing my costs, the Dipper perfectly matched their drawing. Nothing had to be changed.
5. I randomly enlarged the astronomical chart while photocopying. The resulting star grid exactly matched a drawing that I had seen only briefly.
6. These events transpired rapidly, within about one week. So, even though I am not

I warn you that my journey thus far has been bumpy and unpredictable. I bounced through a terrestrial expanse of bears and feminism, descended to a grim underworld of the Madonna, and ascended to a celestial river swimming with star women and a variety of bearish beings.

However, my job is not to be consistent or predictable. My job is:

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

### **Grounding with Star Woman Megrez**

I have several weeks to close this circle. Let me begin by orienting myself with respect to Earth and Sky. As I work every day, I know that the Dipper also circles once a day. As Earth turns each day, from my view in the Northern Hemisphere the Dipper appears to rotate counterclockwise in a circle, pointing toward the North Star and its constellation, the Little Dipper. From what I've read, if I lived as far south as the Horn of Africa or New Zealand, I could still see the Dipper rotate, although it would swing much closer to the horizon.

All of these stars are above me right now, and really at all times, invisibly guiding me north. On this bright April afternoon, I wish I could see them circle. But as I make my

own circle, closing this circle, I cannot. Yet their invisible brightness inspires me, and invites my visualization.

So I will send out a little prayer to the Star Women who lives in the one we call Megrez, the fourth Dipper star. Her name is Most Exalted Seven Ardors. An Inner Consort, she wears a cloak of purple damask and a yellow flowered feather skirt. Her hair is arrayed in a chignon like a sprawling cloud. Oh great one, descend. Help me to form the embryo of my future divine and immortal body.

*She told me to talk about bears.*

Maybe this was a voice of intuition. But it sounded like a fleeting message from star woman Megrez. Well, I suppose I could make a few observations about Ursa Major, the Great Bear constellation.

### **Ursa Major- The Great Bear**

The seven stars of the Dipper are merely a part of Ursa Major, the Latin words for Great Bear. The third largest constellation, it extends over a huge portion of the Sky of the Northern Hemisphere. Its stars are circumpolar - above the horizon at all times - from latitudes north of 41 degrees. I live at 38 degrees north latitude, so the hundreds of visible stars and over four dozen galaxies of Ursa Major are, for the most part, a perpetual presence in my local Sky.

Many Ursa Major stars are part of an open star cluster. They appear to be scattered widely in the sky, but are actually clustered together. This star cluster, just 75 light years away from Earth, is the closest one to us. Perhaps this star cluster's proximity to Earth partly answers the question of why Ursa Major has spawned more names and stories – especially for the seven highly conspicuous stars of the Dipper –than any other constellation. Richard Allen tells us that this "*has always been the best known of the stellar groups, appearing in every extended reference to the heavens in the legends, parchments, tablets, and stones of remotest times.*"

Indeed this is hardly the occasion to survey the spectrum of names and myths for the Dipper, but I would like to offer one comment. It seems to me that our ancestors very often chose names and stories for the Dipper that corresponded to the basic tools or securely guiding lights of their daily labors.

For example, traders and travelers in many regions saw a wagon. Farmers saw a Plough, or a team of Oxen; Soldiers saw a Chariot. Knights probably saw the Round Table of King Arthur; Phoenician sailors saw Safety; Confucian officials saw an ideal Government; The southern French saw a Casserole; Hindus saw seven Sages or Poets; African-American slaves saw a Drinking Gourd or Dipper leading them north to freedom on the Underground Railway. In any case, the Dipper is beginning to relate to feminist astrology.

I have discovered glittering rays in the spectrum of meanings for the Dipper that suggest either precious tools grounding our labors, or cherished principles of secure guidance that orient us to life itself. I also find the flavor of death in many of these images, since soldiers, knights, sailors and escaping slaves led dangerous lives.

Our work is hard. We need support and guidance from other, larger quarters. The infinitely expansive, absolutely accessible Sky brings invisible and sacred forces into the immediate realms of our tools and aspirations. As human beings, we deeply need to feel that Earth is a mirror of Sky.

So, why is this constellation called the Great Bear? Why would we name these stars after bears? How did bears relate to the labors of my ancestors? How did they guide or orient my people to life and death?

Richard Allen immediately goes on to remark that the most common identity for these stars is the bear, and a female bear at that: "*Although the group has many titles and classical associations, it has almost everywhere been known as a Bear, usually in the*

*feminine...*" Chinese, Arab, Greek, European, and Native American cultures saw a female bear in these seven stars. We are touching into a code of great antiquity that spanned the entire northern half of our planet.

Our attention might be drawn to the work of ancestral hunters, understood as the men of pre-agricultural hunting and gathering societies. Presumably, while tracking and killing the precious meat, bone and skin of the female bear, hunters would focus for survival on her body. They would see her body, as a tool and zone of practical orientation, in these seven stars.

Surely there is some truth to this interpretation. Still, I abandon it because:

1. It ignores the fact that this asterism is understood as female. Surely hunters tracked male bears as well.
2. It assumes that the activities of adult males represent the human species. I would ask about females and children as well.
3. It focuses only on the material world. Yet human beings relate to invisible worlds, especially people who live intimately with nature. This approach to Ursa Major comes to a dead end. I wonder how to proceed.

To refocus, I remind myself that these stars spell a primary orientation to Sky. They visibly describe a circle in the North Polar region of the Sky, guiding us North, or in any direction we choose. All of these stars are above me now, and at all times, invisibly guiding me in any direction. Listening to spirits in the bones of things I think I will reach for guidance into my understanding of feminism.

For me, the feminist tradition almost invariably has to do with going beneath the surface of things. Like the Dipper stars, feminism rotates around the principle of releasing belief systems based in dualistic facades, whether these facades are physical or metaphysical. Feminism honors the archaic and perennial principle of listening to the spirits in the bones of things in order to get beyond appearances. How I can listen to the spirits in the bones of things right now, here in front of my steaming computer?

Perhaps I could call in the spirit of the female bear for guidance. Perhaps she could tell me how the bear family helped orient my family to labor, to life and to death. Perhaps the bear could help me draw upon aspects of nature stored somewhere deep in my cellular memories. Perhaps I could walk a few tiny steps into the numinous world of her live essence.

Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens vociferously agrees. She says that the perilous dance she taught in primordial times - treading the seven Dipper stars - is a bear dance. The dangerous dance of pacing the void, of visiting each star, is done a halting pace, a slow ambling gait. It is done in a sharan's shuZe, one thought to have originated in the shambling of the bear.

Mystic Woman now smiles gently about teaching me to shuZe like a bear to the stars. Let me call in the spirit of Great Female Bear. Suddenly, it is abundantly clear to me that I could not even hope to approach the Dipper stars without addressing Great Female Bear directly, regardless of how foolish I may be because in doing so. I'm amazed that I could even have considered writing this essay without asking for Her presence. It was supremely anthropocentric to think that I could approach the Great Female Bear asterism without requesting a rapport with Great Female Bear Herself.

Moreover, my willingness to make such an attempt strongly evokes the openness of the primordial astrologer. Surely, 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. Did these unspeakable treasures originate in books, lectures, or astrological readings? Of course not! They originated in life itself –and in the way we human beings allowed ourselves to receive and transmit life.

I feel that astrological treasures were originally received and transmitted by those who blurred the boundaries between their bodies and the material world, allowing their beings

to stream out and commune with raw, potent, living forcefields of natural power –whether forcefields of greenery, or forcefields 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.

For astrology plots interrelationships between plants, minerals, animals, stars, planets, bodies, states of being. All forms of intelligence, these can clearly be seen to coordinate with one another in perfectly intimate, endlessly creative ways. The incapacity of language to encompass such things is obvious to anyone who has felt such coordinations. Truly, it is far more satisfying to feel such things than to approach them with language, and anyone can feel such things for themselves, if they would only try...

At any rate, I think that the practice of blurring boundaries between human bodies and the material world, of streaming out and communing with raw, potent, living forcefields of natural power is the blood and guts of the history of astrology. However strange and elusive this practice may seem today, I think it produced the primary tools with which astrologers now decode maps of individual, situational and galactic identity.

As a student and teacher of astrology, I'm committed to fleshing this practice out and sharing what happens, regardless of how ridiculous I may appear. This would seem to require that I tune into my body so as to abandon it, and to hear messages coming up through my senses from aspects of nature. So far, mystic woman of the Nine Heavens and feminism have taught me that, as a feminist astrologer, I will need to study the biological history of all beings coded in the Sky. Moreover, I will need to do experiential research on the metaphysical identity of these creatures.

This work will honor the core feminist principle of releasing belief systems based in dualistic, stereotypical facades. It will involve tuning into my body that I might go beyond it, in order to hear messages coming in through my senses from aspects of nature. Humming this freaky music will be an experiment. I will summon it well-tuned, mentality.

It would need to be immovable, impassible, shot through with stamina, logical and blooming. I go forth from all determination, and abandon my will. I stand free to receive, and to receive slowly.

I realize that it has now been given to me to set a star course. This departure had to be earned. I am taking the first step of my bear walk out to the array of Dipper stars. I had no idea this would be such a slow dance. I'm charting a course for the alpha star of Ursa Major, Dubhe [Arabic: Bear]. It is near the right elbow of Julia and Sharon's Herstar female figure. It supports her. It is the arm she leans upon.

## **Bears**

The first true bear lived 20 million years ago. One bear species from 2.5 million years ago evolved into all the bears we know today, whether black, brown or polar. There are currently four species of black bears. Actually, they boast coats of many colors. Black bears were well-established 1.5 million years ago. They differentiated over time into a single species of brown bear, which Americans call the grizzly. Finally, during the ice ages around 100,000 years ago, polar bears split off from the brown bears.

So, Great Female Bear has been around for a very long time. I now commune with all female bears who walk today, and with those who have lain down in the past. I'm still sitting in front of my computer, but at this point, I'm drifting somewhere spacious as well.

## **Great Female Bear**

Let me focus on Her body. She is black, gray, blue-gray, brown, blue, cinnamon, reddish-yellow, yellow, cream, white. As polar bear, She is technically transparent. Polar bear hairs are transparent, hollow, fiber-optic devices that transmit solar radiation straight down to Her black skin. Transparent hairs keep Her warm while hunting seals on the ice, while sailing underwater on interminable swims.

Oh Great Queen, I feel Your sheer physical power. I perceive a tremendous intelligence, one not so inferior to my own in terms of observation, reasoning and

memory. I observe an endless curiosity in the way Your dexterous claws explore, prod, poke, test, turn and tear. She's 300 feet away and sees me clearly. She smelled me long ago: Her sense of smell is 100 times better than mine. Her hearing is ultrasonic.

I invoke Your senses as I work to close this circle, and in so doing, I invoke my own Wild and Shaggy side. I ask Her to teach me about Ursa Major, and especially about the Dipper, because I've been led by spontaneous combustions to believe that these seven stars are related to feminist astrology, whatever that may be. First approach of Great Female Bear I get a double message. On one hand, She seems disgruntled or, more accurately, totally pissed off.

It seems that the Ursa Major business is enormous, and that we have neither time nor space to do it justice here. However, she also seems mollified for some reason. I reply that we need only scratch the surface of the story, like a claw deftly stroking the water of a woodland stream. But underneath I am quaking, for the raw strength of Her jaws is wrapped around my throat.

These are the jaws of a creature who refuses to knuckle under domination. Great Female Bear is indomitable. If I provoke Her, if I try to take the upper paw, so to speak, I'll be dealing with a short and ferocious temper. There is nothing "nice" about Great Female Bear. She is completely female. Yet she has nothing to do with the feminine or femininity, at least as I've always seen them defined.

Slowly, I realize that I'm not in pain. Her jaws are holding my throat firmly, rather than chomping down upon my flesh and bones. She has no intention of killing me. She simply wants to hold on to me. She does not want to let me go. She wants me to tell a little of Her story, and She wants others to tell it as well.

Her jaws clamped my throat decisively for hours. Eventually, She melted away.

## **Beginning to track Great Female Bear**

In her absence, I decided to track the Great Female Bear. I hunted to understand Her. Out of respect, I read a book about bears. Reading helped me to become better acquainted with Her. It also helped me unravel the abiding mystery of why my family named the Dipper stars after the bear family, and after female bears in particular. Finally, it helped me to identify bear teachings as primary tools and guiding orientations to life and death, and thus, to associate bear teachings with the Dipper.

## **How our families probably met**

I learned that Her family has only lived in the Northern Hemisphere. As beings of the North, bears neither originated nor evolved south of the Equator. Gravitating to the woodlands, bears have ambled over every square inch of the Northern Hemisphere at one time or another. They originated in what is now Europe, and spread out to Asia, the Arctic, and the Americas from there.

So, Her family lives only in the North. Meanwhile, mine took root in Africa. When we moved north out of what is now Africa maybe 100,000 years ago, we first encountered bears in the mountains of what is now the Middle East. Scientists conclude that as we traveled north from our African continent of origin and met the bears, we began to associate the group of stars under discussion with these creatures. This association was carried around the world toward present-day Europe, and also toward Asia and the Americas.

So, I now have an idea as to when and where human beings began to identify these stars as bear stars. But I do not know why. I do not know how bears - especially female bears - helped orient my people to labor, life and death.

## **How did our families get along?**

I envision the close relationship between our two families - one that endured for tens of thousands of years - as terrifying and deathly. Yet, I also see it as instructive and

inspiring, especially for humans. I am unable to shake a sense of antagonism between our two families. Obviously, humans who hunted the bear could be badly wounded or killed. However, I think the war went deeper. I suspect that we came into conflict over food supplies, depending on atmospheric conditions.

Our two families were both highly opportunistic omnivores. We would eat pretty much anything, as long as it didn't poison us. Our families liked the same foods in the same proportions –around 80 %vegetables, and 20 % meat. We also sought our food in the same locations, passing through the same kinds of travel corridors, lingering in the same food sites. Now, bears eat astonishing amounts of food in order to survive, owing to a very fast digestive system. It is not unusual for a bear to consume 10 % of its body weight in a single day. Such gluttony is legendary, but it merely appears to be gluttony. Bears really have no choice.

So, we looked for the same kinds of food in the same places, but pound for pound, bears needed far more than we did. Large and highly intelligent creatures, we observed, reasoned and remembered in similar ways. But the bear family's ability to smell, hear and see outstripped our own. Does this set the scene for a competitive and deathly relationship? Depending on the food supply of a given year, I think it definitely could. Perhaps such deep memories linger in the way that financiers today regard bear markets as deathly ones. The bear stars themselves have long been associated with death: the slow and mournful march of mourners, the bier, the coffin.

Yet competitive relationships can also be most instructive. Since bears needed so much food, and since their senses were vastly superior to our own, surely we watched them gather and utilize food and copied their moves in order to survive ourselves. I see humans learning to gather from watching bears forage expertly for foods and medicines in plant forms, and possibly for fish. Also - if bear proximity was in fact the most dangerous threat to our survival in times of scarcity - I see humans learning to hunt in order to deal with the threat posed by bears.

If these two visions are correct, it would mean that bears taught humans a lot more than humans taught bears. It would mean that bears oriented my ancestors with respect to the primary tools and labors of pre-agricultural gathering and hunting societies. It would then be clear to me why my family began to identify Ursa Major stars as bear stars, and why this identification spread wherever bears were found in the **Northern Hemisphere.**

It would be as clear as the small crystal polar bear on top of my desk, and as clear as the pure crystal ball and marian star of the sea next to the bear. It would be as clear as the crystal obelisk nearby. I now turn this obelisk over in my hand, playing with its internal waterfalls, birds and dolphins, letting each one catch the light. By naming the Dipper stars as bear stars, we immortalized the centrality of bear teachings. Bears taught us much of what we needed to learn in order to survive during the hunting and gathering stage of our evolution as a species.

Could there possibly be any truth to this? You know, I've only read one book on bears this week. I'm not an expert on ecology, or ethnology, or anthropology. I might be making a complete fool of myself. What if I am wrong? Do I have to publish this?

Wait.

- I asked Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens to teach me to bear dance out to the Dipper;
- I asked the friendly star spirits to help me live in my dharma;
- I prayed to the Star Woman Megrez, asking her to help me form the embryo of my future immortal and divine body;
- I called in the spirit of Great Female Bear; I invoked Her sight, smell, and hearing;
- I invoked my Wild and Shaggy side, whatever that is;
- Her jaws were firmly around my throat;
- I promised to go forth from all determination, to abandon my will, to stand free to receive, and to receive slowly;
- I meant it.

## **Closing the Circle**

Let me get back to my job. I must close this circle to open it up. I settle down calmly by remembering that as a human being, I deeply need to feel that Earth is a mirror of Sky, and that the bear stars guide me North, or in any direction.

Surely, at the very least, Great Female Bear taught me to find food and medicine, helping me to survive. But this still doesn't tell me why Ursa Major is a female bear, since all bears foraged expertly for food. What did Great Bear do as a female to orient my ancestors to labor, life and death? Let me sniff around and prod. Let me come upon another finding, and turn it over with my paws. What else do bears and humans have in common? Well, we both have long lifespans and breed very slowly, aggressively caring for our young: Bears live a long time –30 to 40 years, even in the wild - because short lives would waste all that learning and the gene pool cannot avoid the loss. And they reproduce extremely slowly because each generation must be taught as much as possible of what the previous generations have figured out, and that requires a lot more one-on-one, mother-and-child interaction than would ever be possible if the mother had to constantly be dealing with a brood the size of a rabbit's. Bears are not born knowing how to be bears. Each cub has to learn the art for itself. The omen of the mother and child.

I interrupt this exploration to rear back and stand up on my hind legs. I have a surprise announcement. As I typed the aforementioned quote, a poster that had been securely taped to the wall above my bed for nearly 18 months tumbled down. A large glow-in-the-dark stellar map of the Northern Hemisphere, it fell to the floor, one corner after the next. As it tumbled down, I was typing the words mother-and-child interaction in the middle of the preceding quote. This omen directs me to follow the path of the mother-and-child interaction. Such a route will be of assistance as I explore my vastly circling themes: the Dipper stars, Ursa Major, Great Female Bear, the blood and guts of astrological history, the identity of feminist astrology. A most auspicious omen has clued me into a fully female Sky, and I give great thanks for its timely intervention.

Now, as I continue to step out toward Dubhe the Bear star, I set a course for the female and maternal core of Ursa Major. However, I do so cautiously. This is a dangerous dance, and one done many times before. The writers of our oldest continuous records judged this constellation as the greatest of all sources of celestial power.

Entire teachings in the Taoist canon were dedicated to methods of comprehending the esoteric meaning of the Dipper and its components, of learning to project one's secret self into it, of realizing it within one's innermost anatomical chambers, of conjuring it to inspire, to protect, to outlaw, to perform miracles. As I settle into the topic of the mother-and-child interaction in the Sky and on Earth with respect to the seven Dipper stars and feminist astrology, a bewilderingly wide range of parallel courses swings into view, all exciting portals of inquiry. I now understand why the Northern Hemisphere fell off my wall. This is enormous.

I will begin by making a few observations about the mother-and-child interaction of the two Bears in the Sky. Great Female Bear in the Sky and the Child in the North Star Ursa Major, the Great Female Bear in the Sky, is constantly in close relationship with her offspring. She is always tracking her child. Ursa Major as Mother is perpetually connected to someone else, perpetually in relationship. She points at all times toward Ursa Minor, the Little Bear, the Child.

Her celestial link to her Child is what has guided us north for so long. For when we trace a line through Her first and second stars and follow this line out through the wild rivers of space, we are directed to the constellation Ursa Minor - the Little Bear, the Child - and its North Star. The North Star nestles in the Little Bear. An immutable center of sorts, it is the only star that does not appear to move as the Earth turns each day. Its place in the Sky does not depend on the time of day or day of year.

If Earth's polar axis were extended infinitely into space today, the line would come very close to this star. In 2102 C.E., such a line would aim straight for the North Star.

The polar axis does shift, but this star has long led us reliably, and will do so for some time to come.

To get our bearings, to be guided North or any direction, we have traveled from Great Female Bear to Little Bear, in other words, from Mother to Child. The sacred Child and the North Star, I am now led to focus on the North Star. I wonder if ancient Greeks viewed the North Star and its constellation as a Sacred Child. Certainly at their Brauron sanctuary, the Child was central. Here, girls known as the shebears in saffron-colored robes made serious, five-year commitments to serve Bear Goddess Artemis in a sacred capacity.

The Brauron sanctuary was dedicated to Ursa Major as the constellation of Artemis. Since Bear Goddess Artemis was Ursa Major, it stands to reason that the young shebears serving Artemis were living examples of Ursa Minor, the Little Bear. However, culturally speaking, I do not even need to go so far afield to find the portrait of a supremely powerful guiding star linked with a sacred Child. Such a vision brought Her to me on every winter solstice of my late 20th century Western childhood.

I have long felt that this Christian festival teaches that the birth of every Child is to be our North Star. Our responsibility to the creative Child within every one of us, and our responsibility to future generations, is what can be relied upon to lead our labors in the right direction. The child, defined as broadly as possible, securely guides us into a healthy future. All of these stars are above me right now, and really at all times, invisibly guiding me North. As a human being, I deeply need to feel that Earth is a mirror of Sky.

Given that Great Female Bear as Mother in the Sky is perpetually connected to Little Bear as Child in the Sky, how may I understand these constellations more deeply? Let me descend to Earth, and investigate the mother-and-child interaction within the bear family.

## **Great Female Bear as Teacher**

Great Female Bear trains her progeny assiduously for two to three years. During this period, She has little time for much of anything else. For the kind of knowledge that we omnivores require is not passed through instinct. It must be painstakingly taught, generation after generation. Great Female Bear - as well as human child care providers - carry the unsparing burden of this work.

We opportunistic omnivores must learn to have flexible dispositions, because we never know what will feed us next. To find foods as circumstances change, and to evaluate various foods, avoiding poisons, we must learn easily. We must experiment and continually adapt to new conditions. Cubs learn these patterns from their interactions with Great Female Bear as Mother. Humans learn then from child care providers, female and male.

From a species point of view, this basic training is, quite frankly, a kind of boot camp. There is nothing warm and fuzzy about the curriculum. A serious enterprise, it establishes a neurological grid for the way that we will gather, process and integrate information throughout our lives. In a word, it generates the high intelligence we need to survive. From an evolutionary perspective, teaching children well is a matter of life and death. This fundamental training is the precious tool that grounds all the rest of our labors, and a securely guiding principle of our survival. Since I have identified precisely these concerns as those our ancestors memorialized in the Dipper, I now add Great Female Bear as Teacher to my own reception of this seven-starred asterism.

Of course, I cannot tell ....whether my ancestors thought the way I do. It hardly matters, however. I am an ancestor of the future, and someone who names the Sky according to her own lights. As I name the Sky, I honor the feminist tradition. This allegiance is precisely what enables me to mediate between feminism and astrology, and indeed, to work as a feminist astrologer. So, I will briefly touch into a few reflections on feminism and the mother-and-child interaction.

## **Feminism, mothers and children**

Feminism protects and defends people - male or female - who devote themselves to roles traditionally associated with mothers. Anyone who labors on behalf, of families within the household proper, cherishing the life force, constructs the very core of civilization. Feminists have pointed out the extent to which anti-feminist societies idealize such labor. These societies greedily welcome new births, since up-and-coming laborers, consumers and soldiers are highly valued. So, the structural functionality of the maternal dynamic is glorified. These systems are happy to utilize people as mothers and caretakers.

Yet the people who live their lives as mothers or caretakers are held down and exploited in many ways. Unempowered, they tend to be the most vulnerable citizens. Their cultural contribution is strangely devalued, disrespected, even despised. They are even enslaved by lack of access to basic reproductive freedom. Feminism around the world has long taken up arms against this contradiction of warm propaganda and cold oppression. Let me give you just two examples.

On one hand, for the past century or so, feminists of both sexes have led a pitched battle for sexual and reproductive freedom. Female ability to control our own sexual and reproductive life has often been something that governments and religions have seen fit to withhold. It's unbelievable, but legions of feminists have focused their entire working lives on this single issue. They have been murdered, thrown into exile, fired, ostracized, scapegoated and so forth and so on. Moreover, this exhausting struggle is far from over.

This ongoing conflict is hugely instructive with respect to the bottom line of women's history. It throws into sharp relief the ugly and unsentimental extent to which our sexuality, reproductive role and marital status have not been under our own discretion and control. Much of Western women's history, at least in written records from the past few thousand years, reflects a community of lifelong minors under male guardianship, economically and legally dependent. Moreover, the closed female encampment has

been routinely portrayed and justified as the inalienable order of natural law and the will of whichever male divinity reigns in a given culture.

Feminism also opposes the idealization of so-called feminine values, skills and virtues. These are modes of being that females have simply been constrained to develop almost exclusively to make ourselves valuable within a context of sexual, reproductive and domestic captivity. Rather than idealizing these things as feminine, feminism insists that they are so essential to life and survival that they are to be respected and developed as human.

To repeat, lest my point be misunderstood: Feminism recognizes that daily devotion within the household, and especially with children and elders, is the compassionate magic of birth, growth and death in real terms, in real time. Yet there is nothing particularly feminine about these forms of consecration. They are to be received as patterns of human devotion.

As Theodore Rozsak said so memorably 30 years ago:

*“Saving the compassionate virtues is not the peculiar duty of women. On the contrary, the sooner we have done with the treacherous nonsense of believing that the human personality must be forced into masculine and feminine molds, the better”.*

No matter how lyrically intoned, the notion that women are innately "feminine" and therefore uniquely responsible for the fate of the softer human virtues is a lethal deception. To think this way is to play dumb to the fact that throughout civilized history men have unloaded the nurturing talents on women for base purposes of manipulation and exploitation. Worst of all it is to continue giving the men of the world a solid-gold rationale for repressing those talents in themselves and for thus stripping power of its humanitarian discipline.

Feminism asks us all, regardless of our relationships or household arrangements, to

summon what might be called the values, skills and virtues of the household. We are to embody these principles in our daily lives, no matter who we are or where we are placed. In so far as we all work “on behalf of emerging human beings,” Earth becomes a sacred place. Sexual and reproductive dignity and the humanity of household care now glitter for me in these stars. They are above me now and always, invisibly guiding me North.

A shocking blow with no warning from Mystic Woman. How odd! Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens abruptly regales me with a tale about the greatest classical swords of her culture. Her tone is urgent. Evidently these treasure swords were engraved with the stellar image of the Dipper. These seven-star wonder weapons supposedly have something to do with feminist astrology.

This is confusing. I am going to put Mystic Woman off for the time being. Instead, let me reach more deeply into the female and maternal dimensions of Ursa Major with a sparkling array of Wendy Ashley's profound observations. Ursa Major as Earth, uterus, breasts, milk, winter birth cave, nursery, nurturance, home, burial place. In a striking interpretation, Wendy Ashley has written that the Big Dipper asterism is precisely the uterine or belly of the vast Great Female Bear constellation.

In her article, *Mama Bear*, Wendy also makes the point that the Dipper is the bowl for Earth Mother's milk, whether Rhea, Hera or Gaia, and that this milk was understood as the source of the Milky Way: The Big Dipper is the uterus of the bear as primeval Great (Earth/Sky) M0ther, the sky/earth cave/uterus out of which all are born, as well as a ladle holding her milk, the stuff of which all is made. Milk is the only food of all infantile mammalian life. The earth is the uterus out of which we are all born. The earth is the breast at which all plant life is nourished. So the Big Dipper as uterine stars of the Great Bear, is an image of the source of all life. Mentioning that we once lived and buried our dead in caves, Wendy describes how the bowl of the Dipper is also "*the winter cave in which she will bear her cubs. The cave is also the uterus of the Earth as symbolic gestation place of all of us, of all of life.*" She also says that this stellar bowl conjures up

the safety and protection of our nurseries and homes, and our human need for nurturing.

In retrospect, it is fascinating to recall that my own journey toward the Dipper was catalyzed as I searched for a nurturing toy for my niece. I spied seven stars spread over the uterine zone of a small plastic pony's haunches, and could not dispel the image from my mind. With this fond memory, I close the multidimensional portals of inquiry opened by the mother-and-child interaction and Ursa Major. Although I have barely peeked into these portals, I must range onward. I now understand why Great Female Bear was irritated by the idea of exploring Ursa Major when She made her first approach. The topic is unmanageably large, especially since I'm starting from scratch.

### **Second approach of Great Female Bear**

Here She comes again. It's good to see Great Female Bear, but I wonder if I am going to feel those jaws around my throat. Well, this doesn't seem to be happening. As I lope along on my long, strong legs, She simply travels in the same direction. There is a scientific basis for our close identification. She eats, breeds, teaches and learns like me, but that's not the whole story. Ecologically speaking, She and I are indistinguishable. We occupy the same niche in nature.

Most ecologists believe that bears never lived in what is now Africa because when bears arrived in that area, we humans were already there. We were broadcasting our bearlike, omnivorous patterns into the environment. We therefore filled the ecological niche that would otherwise have been available to bears. This means that we humans are the bears of Africa.

And so, as She and I roam along through unbounded terrain, I slide comfortably into the wild and shaggy skin of an African bear. I feel how the loss of the woodlands destroys bear habitat, as does pollution of streams and oceans. In so far as ecocide threatens Her life, it endangers my own. If we cannot preserve bears, we cannot

preserve ourselves. A prayer for Her is a prayer for me.

### **Great Female Bear as Sister**

I give great thanks for the work I have done to adopt a more relative, fluid and definite map of species identity. In order to approach Her, I did my best to dissolve the boundaries between us. I now feel that She is in some sense my sister. I am so nourished by the spirit in Her bones, for She is indomitable. An uncompromising drive for freedom pours out of Her being. Her stars did shine over the freedom trail of African-American slaves, people well-acquainted with the horrors of entrapment under the thumb of merciless domination. Slaves were allowed to drink from dippers rather than proper cups or glasses. They made the dipper a symbol of oppression -into a symbol of freedom. As they escaped from their owners, traveling north on the Underground Railroad, they followed the "Big Dipper" or "drinking gourd."

As I close this circle, I invoke Your free-loving spirit, and my own indomitability. I now see Great Female Bear ambling along as I wend my way toward Her star. She wanders over to a stash of archetypal femininity tucked away in the brambles. She pokes and prods the tidy little package, slices its ribbon with her claw, and sniffs the contents. Discerning that it is crap masquerading as soul food, She cuts a huge fart of disappointment and lumbers off in disgust. Great Female Bear eats pretty much anything in sight, but She knows how to avoid things that will poison Her. We both convulse in uproarious gales of bearish belly laughter over the artificiality of this package, the one designed from "nature," the one just for Her and me. This bear dance to the limits of light is a perilous dance done to a beat that thrills me, pointing me on a dangerous path of destruction and creation. And it is slow. So slow. I now realize that Great Female Bear is an emanation that feeds the feminist spirit within me.

All of Her stars are above at all times, invisibly guiding me North. On this cloudy May day, I wish I could see them circle, but as I close this circle, I cannot. Yet their invisible brightness invites my visualization. I now see Her field of radiating stars as celestial

support for the feminist global female fire. As a feminist, I deeply need to feel that Earth is a mirror of Sky. Our work is hard. We need support and guidance from other, larger quarters. Sexual dominance and submission wounds everyone's identity, distorts the picture of human responsibility, and creates a world where the free and independent activity of half of humanity is repressed, and where those conventionally perceived to be female are inferiorized, such as "effeminate" males, races, cultures, Earth itself.

Such a way of life is obviously dead on many levels. The Great Female Bears of the feminist global fire lift this corpse - Earth's essential debility - onto the pyre. Feminist fields of starry radiation turn away and destroy historic ignorance that severely limits human intelligence and evolutionary potential. Mystic Woman stubbornly reappears with her treasure swords. As though I had never cut her off, Mystic Woman now bellows her tale about the Chinese treasure swords engraved with the stellar image of the Dipper. She commands me to immediately visualize these words as the next step of my training in how the Dipper stars relate to feminist astrology.

I am not fond of weapons, but I obey. Wearing by long hours in my electronic capsule, by gravity, by the bouncing, by the jagged exhaust of my space trip toward the alpha star of the Dipper, I now concentrate on these weapons. The greatest classical swords of Mystic Woman's culture are typically made of steel. Their incredible power is often concealed beneath iron oxide rust stains. Although apparently forged by people, these seven-star swords are comprised of transformed celestial essences, or even of dragons.

They are like stars, these wonder weapons of immense spiritual authority. Actually, they are stars. They gleam brightly with purple light, yield purple pneuma, and radiate blinding beams. Like stars, they bring coldness, winter and death to mind. Their power brings victory or defeat to rulers. These swords fly. Feminism as a double-edged sword

Thanks to Mystic Woman, I suddenly see the celestial freedom of feminism as a double-edged sword forged roughly 200 years ago. The seven-star wonder weapon of feminism has championed females as emerging human beings, insisting that our welfare

in physical and metaphysical terms is central to the enterprise of culture.

The first steel edge of this sword has defended and protected the values and skills of all those who devote themselves to roles traditionally associated with mothers. The second edge - a blade far more threatening to the status quo - laid bare the brutal truth that in so far as sexual, reproductive and domestic 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.

Speckled with rust stains, borne aloft by the breath of dragons, this second edge flew. Braving violent cultural opposition, it cut through the weighty antique padlock on the front door of the household. Women began to leave home in search of other worlds. Flying relentlessly, it sliced through the ancestral knots of socialization that encouraged and rewarded submissiveness in women. Flying mercifully, it carved out non-monastic alternatives to heterosexual cohabitation, marriage and parenting.

I interpret this foray into weaponry as a difficult lesson from Mystic Woman. She shrieked about Dipper stars engraved on the finest Chinese weapons because feminist astrology cannot politely ignore the anguished struggle for freedom in the history of women. The most radical thing is a long memory. The treasure sword flies into my hands as the seven-star sword sailed with its purple light, purple pneuma and blinding beams, it flew into my hands today. Its celestial essence then transformed itself into a Cretan labrys. Holding this sharp ritual tool for the first time, I grasped the sober implications of my commitment to think as a feminist within the context of late 20th-century Western astrology.

Western astrology has been a sacred inscription of male-identified priesthoods for thousands of years. I cannot assure that these priesthoods held the interests of women and girls at heart. Quite the contrary, our astrological priesthoods - Greek, Jewish, Arabic, Medieval and Renaissance Christian, 20<sup>th</sup> 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. 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. The trend continues to this day. The historical record plainly shows that classical Mediterranean philosophy and 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.

I spy these fundamentalist philosophical and religious assumptions threading their way silently and relentlessly through our core astrological vocabulary as it is taught today.

One example is how the adjectives masculine and feminine are ubiquitous in Western astrology. Elements, zodiacal signs, planets, asteroids, pretty much everything seem to be coded as masculine or feminine. Astrologers intone that the masculine and feminine have nothing to do with males and females, that we all have masculine and feminine principles inside of us, and that the more we integrate these principles, the better of we will be. This is obviously deeply meaningful for many people. Sometimes these terms are defined, but usually, no definitions are offered.

I have never wanted to hurt anyone's feelings, so I remained silent and wrote notes like this me to myself: I respect dualistic belief systems such as masculine Sun and feminine Moon in so far as they reflect our human past, but am willing to release them on behalf of our future. Now, thanks to the example of Great Female Bear, I see all such diplomacy as pure cowardice. Rather than protect other people's feelings, I now care about protecting myself from being trapped and dominated by ubiquitous, indistinct, highly suggestive astrological thought forms that relate to masculine and feminine.

Linguistically, the words masculine and feminine have everything to do with males and females. By using them over and over and over, I assert that everything that exists can be corralled into one category or the other, and that one category is more appropriate for one kind of body. Since astrology involves all of nature, I would reinforce these stereotypes on a preposterous scale. I really can't imagine an astrological habit that could run more at odds with my value base as a feminist than this one.

In terms of personal experience, the idea that masculine and feminine principles live inside me has not been a reliable guide to my unfolding. When instructed to integrate them, I visualize a genetic technique that would splice artificial noetic molecules together and produce a boring alien culture on the cellular level. I've ignored the whole program. But as an astrologer, these sticky little boxes of Ptolemaic ticky-tacky are always underfoot. They cannot be ignored.

They say this is Jungian, and therefore profound. Jung was able to respond to the surge of feminism - then called "the woman question" - in a way that was prophetic for his time. But if Jung were alive today, do you think he would be selling the dualized belief system of masculine-feminine?

This astrological dualistic belief system is the most gargantuan fossil of sexual stereotyping that survives in Western culture today. Like fossil fuel, everybody uses it. 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 Great Female Bear of the feminist global fire, I will do my part to lift this corpse - a manifestation of Earth's essential debility - onto the pyre. 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.

As I now visualize the invisible Ursa Major stars, I commune with all Great Bears of the feminist global fire who walk today, and all those who have lain down in the past. With the immense spiritual authority of Chinese treasure swords, they fought to convince the human family that sex need not impede anyone from loving and laboring according to individual nature and potential. They also argued that philosophical and religious assumptions as to essential sexual difference, inferiority and superiority, and subordination and domination, are neither natural nor divine. I pledge to continue this important work in my own way.

The final, floating, gentle blow of the feminist double - edged sword, the crowning touch of this treasure labrys is compassionate. For the loving, labyrinthine shift of consciousness toward relative, fluid and indefinite maps of identity - whether in terms of gender identity, sexual identity, racial identity, cultural identity, even species identity - greatly nourishes the rising power of females, of Goddess, and of entities conventionally perceived to be feminine in essence, such as Earth. As dualisms are released, as boundaries are blurred, Earth spirals into a more radiant condition and becomes more of a biological star.

All of a sudden, everything I've written looks goofy. I'm supposed to be talking about Western astrology: planets and elements, and signs, and houses, and techniques...This is astrology..... you are doing astrology. Who does this voice belong to? It doesn't sound like Mystic Woman at all, and Great Female Bear has never spoken to me. Your western astrology is a shadow of its former self. Maybe it is Great Female Bear. Maybe She just decided to talk to me for a change. This certainly seems to be an authoritative, bearish, female Presence. I wonder what will happen if I ask some direct questions.

Great Female Bear, did You do anything else to orient my ancestors, to teach than about labor, life and death?

*...we are born to die...I taught you not to worry.*

It's working! I guess I was insecure back there, and She's conversing to spur me on.

It seems that the life cycle of Great Female Bear made a great impression on our ancestors in the Northern Hemisphere. Wendy Ashley judges that our legacies about parthenogenesis and virgin birth developed from observing Her life cycle. Since human paternity does not seem to have been acknowledged in hunting and gathering societies, women were probably seen as parthenogenetic beings as well. It does make sense that we would have seen Great Female Bear as a miraculous parthenoenetic being, the sole creatress of Her children. She entered her hibernation cave in early winter not looking the least bit pregnant, and all by Herself. Just a few months later, She emerged triumphant with her cubs.

Her egg, fertilized in early summer, grows quickly into a very small sphere and then enters a free-floating state of suspended animation for fully five months. In late October, the egg implants and begins to grow again just as She dens. She is therefore able to naturally tune the size of Her litter, which can range from one to five cubs, to the nutritional conditions of a given year. From June to October, the fruitful months of the Northern Hemisphere, She eats almost constantly if possible. Depending upon Her fat reserves in October, the appropriate number of cubs will come to term. In a bad year,

the egg may not develop at all.

I wonder if during our formative years as a species, Great Female Bear was an avatar of resurrection, understood loosely as the continuity of life after death. After crawling alone into a hole in the earth and slipping into a deathlike state of illumination for months, She miraculously burst forth in the spring with her Children, living icons of birth and rebirth. Great Female Bear, appearing to die in hibernation, become the doorway into life for Children Who, like Her, would eventually die for real.

### **Great Female Bear and the Madonna**

It occurs to me that Great Female Bear, on Earth and in Sky, is a kind of ancestress of the Christian Madonna. So many parallels suggest themselves:

- 1 Bear cubs are born in winter birth caves. Our ancestors once lived much the same way, and we still set a teddy bear in every crib if we can. Likewise, the humble birth of Mary's sacral Child occurs in a primitive animal shelter, a birth cave, in the dead of winter.
- 2 Bear cubs are born to apparently parthenogenetic mothers. Well, Mary conceived by the word of God, at least according to theology. Her asexual conception has always seemed to me to be a motif of parthenogenesis, albeit a forced one. Mary as Mother of God - one of her central dimensions in Greek and Russian Orthodox Christianity - is clearly a parthenogenetic identity.
- 3 We track down the bear cub in the Sky - the little Bear constellation - thanks to its guiding star, the North Star. The humble birth of Mary's sacral Child occurs at the winter solstice, when solar force appears to drift back toward the North. Also, astrologers tracked the sacred Child by following a guiding star.
- 4 The bears in the Sky guide us in any direction we choose, teaching us times and seasons, giving us our bearings. The sacred Child gave many their bearings as well.
- 5 Great Female Bear emerges from the deathlike sleep of hibernation and the cold, dark winter with her cubs. Mary's sacred Child emerged from death and was resurrected in the spring. Each triumphs over death.

6 Ursa Major and Minor are arguably the most conspicuous, reliable and useful fires in the night Sky. In the pre-Reformation, catholic, Greek and Russian Orthodox orchestrations of Christianity, the Madonna has long been the most conspicuous and reliable hearth for popular devotion, expressed in hymns, artistic works and pilgrimages.

7 The Madonna even "hibernates" like Great Female Bear. Mary falls asleep, or hibernates, before being assumed into heaven. She never dies. This occurs in mid-August every year, when solar presence gets as close as it can to the uterine Dipper stars of Ursa Major. Several weeks later in September, when the solar presence has passed the uterine stars, the Madonna is Goddess reborn.

The Madonna is not goddess. Good heavens, who is this? It certainly isn't Great Female Bear. Farewell, Great Female Bear. Thanks for everything. The Madonna is not goddess

I have no idea who this is, but I'll have to deal with this question later. It seems that I have other business to attend to, and it will not be pleasant. For as this message repeated immense waves of sadness and gloom bespoke untold suffering on the part of women and girls. I must speak to this sadness and gloom.

I must tend to these tears. I must dig my way into an underworld. I didn't want to go, but I must, the underworld of the Madonna in the realm of monotheism. No, the Madonna is not Goddess. Her story may echo that of Great Female Bear on Earth and in Sky. She may live in Heaven with Jesus. But she takes up theological residence exclusively in the house of monotheism. I see her languishing silently in this monotheistic realm as though it were an underworld, and as though she knows that the story we know of her life is a lie. I do not know enough about Mary to see her as Goddess in the Dipper stars. Let us descend into her underworld.

## **Monotheism**

Responsible scholars like Elaine Pagels speak accurately about the balance of the

monotheistic tradition. As she explains, the trinity of monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam 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. Despite my affinity for the teachings of prophets like Jesus, I am not a big fan of imperial monotheism, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic. I think that more than any other cultural factor on the record, it set the cosmological stage for a staggering phase of female slavery. I think it justified 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. Let us look at the sacrifice of Great Female and Mother within monotheism.

### **Mary's Sacrifice**

The Madonna arose on the ashes of Goddess, so Mary is Great Female and Mother, but only as she was permitted to survive within monotheism. Compromises were made, and in many respects, Mary became a man-made creature. Mary's female and maternal body was sacrificed. As an artificial theological being, Mary suffered bizarre physiological fates beneath her gilded robes. Her synthetic fertility and maternity - an ascetic skeleton pieced together in orthodox Mariology –forbade any cosmological solidarity with the sexual and procreative lives of girls and women:

- 1 Mary never had sex;
- 2 She gave birth effortlessly and painlessly;
- 3 She remained a virgin after giving birth; and
- 4 She never gave birth to a daughter.

Whether this story had anything to do with her life is beside the point. I here draw attention to Mary as she is theologically presented, and to the cultural impact of such teachings on women and girls. Orthodox Mariology specifies the inalienable disparities between Mary and real women and girls. Human daughters cannot aspire to live like Mary. Instead, we are daughters of Eve, and we share her punishments. It is right that we suffer as mothers and are dominated by partners:

*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. [Genesis 3:16, King James Version]*

Eve's punishments reveal the oceanic sadness of female and maternal history in patriarchy. Patriarchy is the social structure on Earth that corresponds to the Sky of monotheism. I descend yet another step into this awful underworld by offering a brief definition of patriarchal social order.

## **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 proprietorial 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.

Patriarchy creates and maintains the celestial inscription of monotheism. As human beings, we deeply need to feel that Earth is a mirror of Sky. The terms of Mary's survival: her sacred marriage. Of course, Great Female and Mother never dies, even within such a debased household system. She will always survive. The people, in their infinite wisdom, will never let Her go. In fact, orthodox treatises about Mary - the decrees of councils and popes - usually do no more than confer official status upon the joys of the village people.

The egalitarian urge of the Marian village tradition unofficially celebrates a sacred marriage between Mary and Jesus, the couple incarnate of the non-protestant Christian drama. Of course, this devotional rather than formal marriage, but it still unmistakably

echoes pre-monotheistic sacred marriage traditions. Still, due to its overwhelming monotheistic context, the sacred marriage of Mary and Jesus remains a patriarchal marriage, at least for now.

As these two are theologically presented, Jesus lived logically, poetically, and politically in his messages and works on Earth. But Mary lived only emotionally and physically in her virginal and maternal body in response to the existence of her male child. Her maternity is the only avenue of her participation in the central mystery of the redemption, and the only basis of her intercessory powers. They took her mind away.

It's easy to confuse the Madonna with Goddess. She is the most powerful sacred female or feminine essence that has been allowed to ascend in monotheistic ranks. I simply suspect that her true story has yet to be told. I do not know enough to name her as Goddess in the Dipper stars.

### **Leaving the Underworld**

I'm getting free from the underworld. I'm now moving somewhere else, slowly. I am still taking the first step of my bear walk but to the array of Dipper stars. I had no idea this would be such a stumbling pace, such a jagged dance.

I can't believe I had to go to that dreadful place. It was as though I had to exorcise monotheism and patriarchy in order to proceed anywhere as a feminist astrologer. Actually, this makes perfect sense. Studying Ursa Major and calling in Great Female Bear taught me that astrology evolved ages before the relatively recent births of monotheism and patriarchy. As a feminist astrologer bound for Dubhe the Bear, the alpha star of Ursa Major, I have been taught to disabuse myself of monotheistic and patriarchal reflexes, be they conscious or unconscious.

Amazingly, a huge wind just came along and ported me into another dimension.

I am stepping into a billowing frame of reference at this point. It is absolutely full of the beating of wings. I never want to leave. I am Artemis, the spirit in my bones is Artemis.

Artemis am I.

Here is the authoritative, bearish female Presence who taught me the metaphysical teachings of Great Female Bear before I entered the underworld!

### **Great Female Bear as Artemis**

Tra la, this is going to be fun. It's my reward for going to the underworld.

Let me introduce you to Her. Well, as far as I can tell, Artemis does not lend Herself to adjectival descriptions any better than Great Female Bear did. Well, let's see. If the adjective feminine were defined very spaciouly as: the attributes, skills, appearances, virtues or values pertaining to any female being, whether physical or metaphysical, under any and all circumstances of life and death, and at any and all times ... then such an adjective might apply to Artemis. I'm not sure, but it might.

However, our definition of feminine tends to be far more limited, circumscribed, domesticated. There is a powerful sense of subordination to something that controls, wins, rules, something more authoritative or forceful. But Artemis speaks strongly for a point in our past when what we now call feminine did not exist, or was not distinguished from what we now call masculine.

I will quickly list the rest of my impressions in waves:

*The First Wave:* Artemis came from Great Female Bear. It seems that the name my ancestors gave to the spirit in the bones of Great Female Bear was Artemis. I learn the error of my ways. Imprisoned in the schoolhouse of my own mind, I have usually approached Goddess as Artemis in terms of inanimate things created in the past: books, statues, archaeological sites, and so forth. While better than nothing, my avenues of understanding relied upon lifeless objects, except for one occasion when I walked a bit in the forests near Sparta. Evidently, that was as close as I ever came to Her. I am to directly seek Goddess as Artemis in Great Female Bear, in forests and running waters.

*The Second Wave:* What's in a name? Since Lady Diana's death in 1997, we have often heard about the deity who bore her name: Diana, the Roman Artemis. Let's peer into this name. The first syllable of the name Artemis - which also appears in the word arctic is traced to Arth, from the Greek *arktos* meaning bear or north. (By the way, Arth also means bear in the celtic languages, a felicitous sign of the cultural unity of the Northern Hemisphere.)

The second syllable comes from the Greek themis. This syllable is Goddess as Themis. Interestingly enough, it relates closely to the Sanskrit dharma. Jane Harrison notes that Themis came next in lineage after Gaia, and shared Gaia's character. This obviously roots Themis very, very deeply in Earth. Harrison also says Themis is the "*very spirit of the tribe or polis,*" "*basis of kingship and democracy, and social imperative ... the collective conscience that constitutes religion.*"

Jean Richer characterizes Artemis as an ancient polar goddess and immutable center. He says She is the law of the pole, the cosmos, death. The guardian of cosmic order, She rules the circle, destiny, Ursa. Major and the whole movement of the Sky.

Therefore, when I say the word Artemis, I am addressing Someone like this: Female bear - north - pole - Earth - center - celestial - divine - ancient - immutable law - cosmic order - death - circle - destiny - movement of the whole Sky – Ursa Major tribe and city spirit - social imperative - collective conscience - basis of religion, democracy and right rule.

It sure beats calling Artemis mistress of the animals, huntress, or Goddess of the Moon. And it sure tells us more about Lady Diana.

*The Third Wave:* Artemis is all of the animals. It seems that Artanis is all of the animals, and all of their habitats and powers. The extent of Her domain boggles my

imagination, considering what happened when I briefly tracked the bear family. I am to seek Artemis in the powers and habitats of all living things that are bound to die, and to live again.

*The Fourth Wave:* Birth truth: the cold, clear domain of Great Female Bear as Artemis is an apparently cruel place. It is benign, yet terrifying; deathly, yet in a principled fashion. The undertone of savagery thrills and nourishes me because of its truthfulness. I now can feel why Artemis attends birth. Undeterred by my discomfort, She cuts straight to Her truth. You may be given a strong child. Your lives may both be taken in labor. Regardless, Artemis is born of the power, and gives birth to power.

Like Great Female Bear, Artemis is a gate into life for those who must die, and a gate into apparent death for those who will live again.

*The Fifth Wave:* Elementals: I breathe freely, feel unbound and at home. Actually, there is nowhere else to go. The domain of Artemis begins at the gigantic iron crystal at the center of Earth and extends through the celestial sphere. Here, fire could be a female radiation of all stars. Air could be a female reflective course of all being. Water could be a female swim through every dimension of consciousness. Earth could be a female who makes it all perceptible.

This light entertainment confirms my impression that the "sexing of the elements" of western astrology – fire and air as masculine, water and earth as feminine – simply rationalizes and perpetuates a state of sexual power relations that have obtained in Western civilization since the freakish births of monotheism and patriarchy.

I'm now leaping to the insight that this frightening voyage toward the star Dubhe that has allowed me to commune with a bit of Great Female Bear as Artemis is physically attuning me, ever so slightly, to a framework for astrological energy that predates the age of Aries [roughly 2,000 BC]. A massive wakeup call, it smashes much of what

passes for Western astrology today.

This bear dance to the limits of light is a perilous dance done to a beat: that thrills me, putting me on a dangerous path of life and death and life. And it is slow. So slow. I like how it feels to be rooted in Sky. I like how it feels to live in a time before the air and fire of Sky became a male province, before independent females were massively defeated, forced into marriages with invading shock troops, and reduced to slavery.

Moreover, from my fresh perspective in Sky, I see that elements have nothing to do with male and female, with masculine and feminine. Elements are totally, unimaginably beyond us. This is why they are elements. In fact, projecting characteristics we have agreed to ascribe to human sexual biology upon elements in nature now seems to me to be fanatically anthropocentric.

*The Sixth Wave*: Atmosphere: everything blends. It's harder to talk about. The limits of language have never been more evident. All forms of life are potentially invested with the divine, all manifestations of the life impulse are by definition sacred. A line of life energy simply connects discrete beings: no more, no less. Here, there is an intimate connection between the body and the cosmos, between humans, plants, animals, between all things which express life forces. The fact that live objects seek beautifully, indiscriminately, to unify with, absorb and reflect one another, to live together, to live in relationship to one another, is completely accepted. Yes, there is unimaginable, arresting beauty.

Here, the way that matter reproduces itself in nature is still considered sacred. The earthly, thus divine body belongs in a divinely procreative, thus productive universe. Since the way life reproduces on Earth is considered sacred, there is little motivation to split masculine from feminine.

*The Seventh Wave*: Uprisings of unbounded, undivined subjectivity displacing ancient totalizing systems of consciousness comprised of field over field of sexual and generic

opposition. Reversing, displacing, intervening in all codes of sexual and genderic asymmetry. Indeed for my circle is open.

**Time's up.**

I thought I could trip the light fantastic, yet I bearly staggered toward one star.

We are the sons and daughters ancestral and intergalactic

We begin at the gigantic iron crystal at the center of Earth

We extend through the celestial sphere the deep space that has no circumference

We must now be heard

We hold balanced knowledge inside of us

Join me as I release any life memory of agreements made to be less than powerful

Join me as I release any life memory of being punished for my power

For the secrets of astrological nature

are simply our secrets

spoken aloud

and we must now be loud

and run naked

with our truth

Thank you for sharing my milky voyage across the wild rivers of Sky.

The circle is open!

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