To Challenge, To Uphold, or Both: A Study of Gender and Sexuality Discourses in the Western Astrological Tradition.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments……pg.5.

Abstract……pg.6.

Introduction……pg.7.

Definitions…… pg.8.

Astrology…… pg.8.

Gender…… pg.9.

Sexuality…… pg.11.

Astrology and Gender and Sexuality…… pg.12.

Uphold …… pg.13.

Challenge …… pg.14.

Methodology…… pg.14.

Historical and Textual Review…… pg.15.

Survey and Interview…… pg.15.

Thesis Statement…… pg.16.

Part I…… pg.17.

Historical Review…… pg.17.

Ancient Foundations…… pg.17.

Hot/Cold, Wet/Dry, Day/Night…… pg.18.

Hellenistic Sexuality…… pg.21.

The Quality of Men and their Professions ……pg.22.

The Inner and Outer Horoscopes…… pg.23.

Individuation and the Alchemical Marriage…… pg.25.

The Gay Signature…… pg.27.

Astrology for Women……pg.28.

Naming New Planets…… pg.29.

Queering the Tradition…… pg.31.

Historical Considerations…… pg.32.

Uphold: Review…… pg.33.

Challenge: Review…… pg.36.

Uphold? Challenge? Both? ……pg.39.

Part II…… pg.39.

Survey/Interview Findings…… pg.39.

The Astrologers…… pg.40.

The Terms Used……pg. 42.

Clients…… pg.45.

Conclusion…… pg.46.

Bibliography…… pg.49.

Appendix A: Questionnaire…… pg.52.

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ABSTRACT: This paper is an attempt to understand the relationship between astrology and broader cultural gender and sexuality discourses. Employing a mixed methodological approach, this project enacts a review of relevant literature on astrology's historical engagement with gender and sexuality before discussing the findings of a survey and interview process where modern astrologers were asked to reflect on their own part to play in the discourse. Initially, two common arguments emerge when the astrological use and address of gendered and sexed terms are considered. One supposes that it is the nature of astrological texts to uphold socio-cultural norms about gender and sexuality, where the other posits astrology's capacity to challenge them. Upon review, it may become clear that the way that an astrological tradition seems to engage with gender and sexuality is highly related to the cultural views of the astrologers who practice within it. The results presented here suggest that 'astrology' does not have a consistent stance on gender and sexuality discourses. Instead, it may be more likely that astrologers use astrology to process their own cultural understandings of gender and sexuality, as evidenced by the various ways that those discourses implicate their work.

To Challenge, To Uphold, or Both: A Study of Gender and Sexuality Discourses in the Western Astrological Tradition.

By Dylan Coutts

Introduction

In the seventeenth century, English astrologer William Lilly (1602-1681) published a series of political pamphlets wherein he used astrological techniques to predict the outcomes of some events related to the English Civil War. At the time, following a series of laxities in censorship laws, astrology was becoming increasingly popular among the public on account of the sensational claims astrologers began to publish on politics and other social affairs.[1] Notably, concerning the political crisis, astrologers on both sides of the aisle, Lilly for the Independents, Captain George Wharton for the Royalists, for example, used astrology to advocate for the likelihood that their respective ideological positions were 'written in the stars.'[2]

What is interesting in this case is the idea that astrologers of variant—and quite critically, opposite—ends of the political divide were able to justify their causes within an astrological framework. Of course, not all forecasts drafted came to fruition—however, the fact that all manner of positions on a particular issue *could* be astrologically founded is essential to consider. This principle that astrologers have used astrological techniques to argue the validity of multiple opinions within the same social discourse is critical—and may have implications that extend beyond the political arena.

Specific to this conversation, it is relevant that astrologers have also used astrological techniques to comment both implicitly and explicitly on gender and sexuality. In an article aptly titled 'Gender,' notable astrologer Bernadette Brady noted the longstanding engagement between astrologers and their respective understandings of gender. Within, she outlined the historical use of gendered terms like masculine and feminine to describe the astrological planets and signs and some of the gendered social implications regarding the general practice of astrology through history. In conclusion, Brady noted that 'the work of deconstructing astrology to explore ways of [understanding] gender issues within the astrological system will continue as long as society

[1] Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology: The Medieval and Modern Worlds* (London: Continuum, 2009). pg. xi.

[2] Harry Rusche. 'Merlini Anglici: Astrology and Propaganda from 1644 to 1651.' *The English Historical Review*. 80.315. (1965). pg.322.

explores the consequences of gender issues for humanity.'[3] Accordingly, if we are to take Brady's assertion, the idea that astrologers critically engage with gender discourses in their astrological works holds weight. This general principle seems to apply equally to the astrological tradition's engagement with sexuality. Astrologer Peter Clamp in his *The Astrology of Homophobia* (2000), for example, posited that astrologers often import their cultural biases on sexual morality into their astrological practice, sometimes to what he called 'dangerous ends.'[4] Following this, this paper will consider the interrelation of astrology and gender and sexuality as it may follow that an examination of the intersections between them may provide critical insight into the nature of all three.

Definitions

Before venturing into critical engagement with astrology, gender, and sexuality, this paper will first need to clarify a few definitive concepts related to the relevant subjects. Therefore, in what follows, cursory definitions of astrology, gender, and sexuality will be presented in pursuit of clarity.

Astrology

In an article for *The Encyclopaedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, astrological historian Patrick Curry laid out a broad definition of astrology that accounts for the high degree of variability among traditions. He claimed that astrology is 'the practice of relating the heavenly bodies to lives and events on earth and the tradition that has thus been generated.'[5] In essence, Curry's definition implies that any process that finds meaning in celestial patterning can be considered astrological. In concurrence with Nicholas Campion's research, Curry's definition leaves room for the likelihood that throughout history, 'astrology' has been used variously to describe 'form of magic, a system of prediction, a model for psychological growth, a science, a spiritual tool, a religion and a system of divination.'[6] As other notable astrological historians like Campion have championed it, Curry's definition will suffice for this investigation.

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[3] Bernadette Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History: Interpreting the Stars from Ancient Mesopotamia to the Present*, ed. by William E. Burns (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2018), pp. 138

[4] Peter Clamp. 'The Astrology of Homophobia.' on *aplaceinspace.net.* (2000). [accessed 2 June 2021].

[5] Patrick Curry, 'Astrology' in *The Encyclopaedia of Historians and Historical Writing,* ed. by Kelly Boyd (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999). pg. 55.

[6] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. xi.

Additionally, owing to the evidence, it is relevant that astrology may be a culturally specific practice. Namely, it might be the case that the way a particular culture conceptualizes astrology's function can provide critical insight into that culture's values. For example, philologist Otto Neugebauer noted that tracking changes in the astrological tradition gives critical 'insight into the daily life, religion and superstition' of people who employed its techniques.[7] This premise that astrology contains critical information about the cultures that use it is echoed by numerous astrologers who have sought to understand astrology's elusive historical function. For example, Alexander Ruperti, one of Dane Rudhyar's students, wrote that '[t]here is not one Astrology with a capital A. In each epoch, the astrology of the time was a reflection of the kind of order each culture saw in celestial motions or the kind of relationship the culture formulated between heaven and earth.'[8] More recently, astrologer Alice Sparkly Kat posited that if astrology can 'be compared to other sociopolitical markings of identity,' then it 'must also be a political project bound to cultural meanings, formed by the interplay between political and historical context.'[9]

Ultimately, it is not within the scope of this paper to opine a concise definition of what astrology is. However, this idea that astrological concepts may reflect culturally founded positions on the topics they are used to discuss is critical.

Gender

Historically, there have been several diverse positions on the constitution and meaning of gender — again complicating the quest for concise understanding. However, of the numerous theories, three stand out as having relevance to this conversation:

(i) Biological Determinism posits that a person's sex (male/female) defines their gender expression (man/woman). According to biological theories, gender is necessarily linked to the body as it is determinable by physiological characteristics. For example, late-nineteenth-century sociologists Geddes and Thompson argued that a person's 'metabolic state could determine social, psychological, and behavioural traits.'[10] *The Stanford Encyclopedia* offers an elaboration, explaining how this argument becomes applied:

[7] Otto Neugebauer, 'The Study of Wretched Subjects', *Isis,* 42.2 (1951). pg. 111.
[8] Alexander Ruperti, 'Dane Rudhyar: Seed-Man for the New Era', *The Astrological Journa*l, 32.2 (1986)
[9] Alice Sparkly Kat. *Post Colonial Astrology* (Berkley: North Atlantic Books, 2021). pg.5.
[10] Mari Mikkola, "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2019), ed.

> ’Women supposedly conserve energy (being ‘anabolic’), and this makes them passive, conservative, sluggish, stable and uninterested in politics. Men expend their surplus energy (being ‘katabolic’), and this makes them eager, energetic, passionate, variable, and, thereby, interested in political and social matters.[11]

Ultimately, the biological determinist argument operates an essentialist position, assuming that gendered categories are by-products of a physical distinction between men and women.

(ii) Social Role Theory argues that gender is essentially related to the division of men and women based on social expectations. Alice Eagly explained the principle in an article for *The American Psychologist*, noting that as people within a society ‘observe members of a group occupying certain roles more often than members of other groups, the behaviours enacted within these roles influence the traits believed to be typical of the group.’[12] Accordingly, Eagly noted how in industrialized economies, women are more likely to be homemakers where men are often expected to assume positions that involve ‘physical strength, assertiveness, or leadership skills.’[13] Effectively, the repetitive pattern of men and women taking particular roles within a given society is the basis for social role theory’s distinction between men and women more broadly.

(iii) Social Constructionism argues that gender is a social construct. Sociologist Joseph Pleck, for example, explained the constructionist position arguing that gender is unrelated to biological factors and is instead produced by ‘concepts about femininity and masculinity that [a person adopts] from their culture.’[14] In this view, founded following the rise of feminist discourses on the subject, gender does not constitute two static and binary categories; instead, as sociologists Judith Gerson and Kathy Peiss have noted, it is ‘a set of socially constructed relationships produced and reproduced through people's actions.’[15] For others like Michael Kimmel, an essential feature of this argument is the idea that ‘gender is constructed from cultural and

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By Edward N. Zalta [accessed 20 June 2021]

[11] Mikkola, "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender." (2019).

[12] Alice Eagly. et al. ‘Gender Stereotypes Have Changed: A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis of U.S. Public Opinion Polls From 1946 to 2018’. *American Psychologist.* (American Psychological Association: 2019). pg.2.

[13] Alice Eagly and W. Wood ‘Social Role Theory of Sex Differences.’ in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies.* ed. N. Naples, R. C. Hoogland, M. Wickramasinghe, & W. C. A. Wong. (2016).

[14] Joseph Pleck, et al, ‘Problem behaviors and masculinity ideology in adolescent males’ in *Adolescent Problem Behaviors: Issues and Research*, ed. by R.D. Ketterlinus and M.E. Lamb (Psychology Press, 1994). pg.165.

[15] Judith Gerson and Kathy Peiss 'Boundaries, negotiation, consciousness: reconceptualising gender relations’ *Social Problems*, 32.4 (1985): pp. 317.

subjective meanings that constantly shift and vary, depending on the time and place.'[16] Significantly, in a constructivist view, gender cannot be determined by biology. Instead, gender is subjective, and understandings regarding its meaning and application are products of particular cultural viewpoints.

Ultimately, as is the case with our definition of astrology, it is not technically possible to neatly define 'gender'—understandings are notably not universally accepted.[17] However, in the modern-day, constructivist arguments seem dominant.[18] For instance, organizations like the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research have all adopted constructivist definitions of gender, suggesting the general acceptance of the theory.[19] Subsequently, this paper will follow suit - heretofore recognizing that gender and its related terms (ex: masculine/feminine, man/woman) amount to social constructions that are, again, subjective to the time and place that they are applied.

Sexuality

As this paper will also address some of the implications that astrological writings on gender have had on the astrological approach to delineating sexuality, it is essential too to seek clarity on this equally complex concept. Initially, sociologist William Little defined sexuality as 'a person's capacity for sexual feelings and their emotional and sexual attraction' to other people.[20] Accordingly, Little identified four categories of sexuality:

> 'Heterosexuality: the attraction to individuals of the opposite sex;
> Homosexuality: the attraction to individuals of one's own sex;
> Bisexuality: the attraction to individuals of either sex; and,
> Asexuality: no attraction to either sex.'[21]

Though not an exhaustive list of sexual categories, Little's definition clarifies that sexuality is essentially an attempt to classify different modes of sexual attraction. It is important to note here

[16] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, (New York: Free Press, 1995)
[17] Jack Drescher. 'Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality.' *Behavioral Sciences*. 5.4 (2015).
[18] Lori Rolleri, 'Understanding Gender and Gender Equality' on *actforyouth.net*. pg 2. [accessed on 10 June 2021]
[19] Rolleri, 'Understanding Gender and Gender Equality.' pg.3.
[20] William Little. *Introduction to Sociology*, 2nd edn. (BCCampus, 2016). ch.12.
[21] Little. *Introduction to Sociology*. ch.12.

that sociologists have argued that theories and subsequent classifications of sexuality, as with gender, seem to display a level of cultural specificity. In her *Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, for example, Nikki Sullivan argued that sexual categories for 'defining particular kinds of relationships and practices are culturally and historically specific and have not operated in all cultures at all times.'[22] Instead, she explained that sexuality is distinct from gender and is discursive; 'constructed, experienced, and understood in culturally and historically specific ways.'[23] Importantly here, despite the apparent distinction between gender and sexuality as discursive categories, others sociologists like Jack Drescher are careful to explain that it is 'rare' to happen upon a view of sexuality that 'does not draw upon gender beliefs that contain implicit cultural ideas about the "essential" qualities of men and women.'[24] This point is necessary for understanding here, as it may become relevant in this discussion that astrologers use their notions about gender to make statements about sexuality.

Astrology and Gender and Sexuality

In the preceding sections, we have laid out some of the relevant definitions for our investigation. Subsequently, the preliminary evidence suggests that astrology, gender, and sexuality are fluid theoretical concepts; their definitive terms seemingly transform as theorists apply them to different socio-cultural contexts. Accordingly, the lack of fixity within each presents a question about how and why astrologers seem to have relied on cultural understandings of gender and sexuality to concretize and codify astrological concepts.

To guide this discussion, Brady has isolated two general streams in the astrological conversation on gender in her article for *Astrology through History*. First, she commented on how astrologers have used gendered terms like masculine and feminine to classify astrological concepts like the significance of the planets and signs.[25] Second, she noted the critical shift that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century where astrology, once a 'male-dominated' study focused on political power and the material world, became a 'female-dominated' study pertaining to the 'inner, or spiritual world of the individual.'[26] In addition to Brady's suggestions, it may also be

[22] Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003). pg.1.
[23] Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory.* pg.1.
[24] Drescher. 'Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality.' (2015).
[25] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.
[26] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.

relevant that astrologers seem to tailor their astrological advice based on their presumptions about the gender of their readers. Researchers like Edson Tandoc, Patrick Ferrucci, and William Evans have documented this phenomenon in their respective studies on modern horoscope columns in women's magazines.[27][28] According to their findings, it might also be critical that the use of gendered principles to process astrological information may implicate how astrologers speak on sexuality.[29]

Subsequently, two common themes emerge when the astrological use and address of gendered and sexual terms are considered. One supposes that it is the nature of astrological texts to uphold socio-cultural norms about gender and sexuality; another posits astrology's capacity to challenge them.

Uphold

In their social study on the relevance of astrological horoscopes in women's magazines, Tandoc and Ferucci argued that astrology columns in modern magazines overwhelmingly reaffirm sociocultural narratives related to gender roles.[30] Following the methodological framework set by Theodor Adorno's *Stars Down to Earth*, Tandoc and Ferucci surveyed horoscope columns from Teen Vogue, Glamour, and Essence over a few months. Ultimately, they found that the columns sought to validate normal social perceptions of womanhood, claiming that 'stereotypes, more than the stars, seem to be deciding the fate of those who read and believe the horoscopes in these magazines.'[31] Though some might be quick to discount their study for focusing solely on 'horoscope columns,' it is relevant that some astrological historians, including Brady, have acknowledged that high theoretical and other practical forms of astrology have also potentially worked to sustain socio-cultural norms about gender.[32]

This position seems to find footing in definitions of astrology that acknowledge its capacity for reflecting the cultural values of the people who practice it. Namely, if astrology reflects cultural attitudes, and attitudes towards gender and sexuality are, in a constructivist sense, cultural

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[27] Edson Tandoc and Patrick Ferrucci, 'So says the stars: A textual analysis of Glamour, Essence and Teen Vogue horoscopes,' *Women's Studies International Forum*, 45 (2014). pg.39.
[28] William Evans. "Divining the Social Order: Class, Gender, and Magazine Astrology Columns." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73. 2. (1996). pg. 389.
[29] Tandoc and Ferrucci, 'So says the stars…' pg.41.
[30] Tandoc and Ferrucci, 'So says the stars…' pg.39.
[31] Tandoc and Ferrucci, 'So says the stars…' pg.39.
[32] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.

positions, then it should follow that astrological practitioners' use and address of gender and sexual norms should reflect dominant cultural positions on those issues.

Challenge

While this seems like a solid point in the analysis, it is also essential that many astrologers admittedly use astrology to challenge culturally dominant positions on gender and sexuality. For example, in the case of the modern 'Queer Astrology' movement, astrologers like Colin Bedell have extolled astrology's power to foster a sense of belonging in people who feel excluded by binary understandings of masculinity and femininity and other heteronormative standards.[33] Equally, several articles like Erika Smith's *How the Queer Astrology Movement Is Changing Gender Norms* and Heather Dockray's *Queer Astrology is Having a Moment. And it's a Big One*; have noted that there may be something particular about astrology's use in the modern-day that makes it particularly suited to challenge heteronormative understandings of gender and sexuality in society. [34][35] This idea that astrology can be seen variously as a framework for both upholding, and challenging culturally dominant positions on gender and sexuality, presents a critical question about the nature of astrology's engagement with related discourses.

Methodology

Following the cursory overview presented herein, the evidence suggests that astrology and cultural discourses on gender and sexuality are related. This paper will now attempt to define this relationship and consider some of its implications. The current complication, however, is determining an academic method that will afford a concise understanding of the matter at hand and render practical conclusions about the nature of the relationship in question. In this section, the paper's methodological approach is explained.

Historical and Textual Review

In league with astrological historians attempting to comment on some part of astrology's use through history, this paper will first present a historical review of relevant literature. Writing

[33] Colin Bedell, *Queer Cosmos* (Jersey City: Cleis Press, 2019). pg.xiv.
[34] Erika Smith, 'How the Queer Astrology Movement Is Changing Gender Norms' on *refinery29.com* [accessed May 4 2021].
[35] Heather Dockray, 'Queer Astrology is Having a Moment. And it's a Big One' on *mashable.com*. [accessed May 4 2021].

on the value of literature review in social studies, sociologist Norman Fairclough explained that 'texts are sensitive barometers of social processes, movement, and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change.'[36] Accordingly, a critical literary overview of the astrological relationship to gender and sexuality seems a relevant first point for consideration. However, complications undoubtedly arise if one only uses the textual tradition to make any definitive claim. Particular to astrology, Nicholas Campion has noted that while astrological texts demonstrate some astrological methods and theoretical concerns, they do not effectively indicate which of them astrologers necessarily used or how widely they were applied.[37]

Survey and Interview

Accordingly, the project will adopt a mixed-method predominantly relying on historical and literary review while also seeking the opinions of contemporary astrologers who may speak to the actual practice of astrology more effectively. So, following literary analysis, the project will discuss the findings of a questionnaire answered by 49 astrologers of variant age, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality to cast a balanced understanding of some critical concepts. The questionnaire broadly considers some current astrologers' general perceptions about sex and gender and how those perceptions affect their astrological practice. This approach follows Alan Bryman's suggestion that social surveys provide a comprehensive, if general, first impression that can lead to further analysis once a basic understanding of the data is constructed.[38] This project will also include relevant findings from an interview process, where ten astrologers were asked for comment on astrology's gender and sexuality complexes to gain further detail and grounded perspective. This paper's use of interviews follows Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey's suggestion that they be used to 'capture people's individual voices and stories.'[39] Additionally, Hennink et al. suggest that interviews allow an efficient model for researching sensitive topics, particularly those associated with gender and sexuality, as will be dealt with here.[40]

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[36] Norman Fairclough. 'Discourse and Text: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis.' *Discourse & Society*. 3.2. (1992). pg.211.
[37] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. xi.
[38] Alan Bryman. *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. (Taylor and Francis, (2016).
[39] Monique Hennink, et al. *Qualitative Research Methods*, 2nd edn. (London: SAGE Publications, 2020). ch.7.
[40] Hennink, *Qualitative Research Methods*. ch.7.

I have chosen this approach to follow the methodological pathway that both Bernadette Brady and Nicholas Campion have employed while attempting to gauge belief or gain a sense of particular thought ways within the astrological community.[41][42] Each of them has used surveys and interviews, among other qualitative methods, in their respective studies — both citing the critical value of hearing and attending to the particular perspectives within a studied community to glean significant and balanced conclusions. Owing to the relatively small sample size (49 survey respondents and ten interviews), this project cannot claim to provide a comprehensive overview. However, with what is hopefully a robust review of relevant literature, the survey/interview responses might help locate the study's findings and provide additional context for the arguments made herein.

Thesis Statement

Thus far, this paper has laid out some evidence for astrology's critical relation to gender and sexuality discourses. It seems clear in the preliminary evidence that astrology may have the capacity to uphold and effect normal understandings of gender and sexuality within a given socio-cultural milieu. Thus, this paper will venture to answer the following questions:

(i) Is the relationship between astrology and gender and sexuality discourses one that sustains cultural norms? Or;

(ii) Is astrology more effectively used to challenge them?

As mentioned, the first part of this paper will consider the literary record and review some of Western astrology's historical engagements with gender and sexuality. Accordingly, based on the available literature spanning from ancient Assyria to the contemporary West, this section will attempt to understand how and why astrologers have operated their social and cultural understandings of gender and sexuality in their respective astrological practices. Following literary review, this paper will address the findings of a questionnaire and interview process to locate the literary findings within the opinions of contemporary astrologers. Ultimately, it is expected that the paper should reveal that astrology's stance on gender and sexuality as it stands in the Western

[41] Bernadette Brady, *Theories of fate among present day astrologers*, PhD Thesis, Trinity Saint David University of Wales, (2012). pg.220.

[42] Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012). pg.8.

tradition is highly particular to the locality and social position of the astrologer practicing. Namely, based on the evidence at hand, it seems that astrological uses and addresses of gender and sexuality can be used equally to progressive or conservative sociocultural ends, as astrology may be theoretically flexible enough to account for any opinion under its auspices.

Part 1

Historical Review

Ancient Foundations

Assyrian priests operating in the seventh century BCE were the first to use gendered language in an astrological context when they used their contemporary understandings of masculinity and femininity to classify the seven traditional planets.[43] To understand how and why gendered language was used to communicate astrological meaning in this way, it must be clear that members of the Assyrian religio-political sphere sought to use astrology to interpret the divine will of the gods.[44] In that context, the planets were each symbolically related to one of the Assyrian deities and subsequently seen to embody the gender of the god or goddess that they were related to. The assignations were as follows:

Moon | Sin (m) | God of Fertility & Cattle
Sun | Shamash (m) | God of Justice and Truth
Mercury | Nabu (m) | God of Wisdom and Writing
Venus | Ishtar (f) | Goddess of Sexuality and Warfare
Mars | Nergal (m) | God of Death, Underworld, Plague
Jupiter | Marduk (m) | Patron of City of Babylon
Saturn | Ninurta (m) | God of Healing and Agriculture [45]

Notably, of the seven traditional planets, the Assyrians had associated all but Venus with masculine deities. Noting the imbalance, historian Jeffrey Cooley explained the likelihood that Venus was made feminine in Assyrian astrology because of its attachment to the horizon and its

[43] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.
[44] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. xiv.
[45] Emma Wilson, 'Omens in the Stars: A Brief History of Babylonian Astrology' on *keplercollege.org.* [accessed 10 May 2021]

subsequent inability to 'culminate' and 'sit on the throne of heaven.'[46] Mercury was also considered an inferior planet, as it too was tied to the horizon. However, the Assyrian system maintained that Mercury could operate both as masculine and feminine depending on other factors of its appearance, particular to the time that an astrologer was interpreting its influence.[47]

In her investigation, Brady speculated that the probable cause underlying the imbalance in the Assyrian perception of planetary gender had to do with contemporary understandings of astrology's principal function.[48] She noted that within the context of an astrological tradition that sought to predict planetary influences on political and other state affairs, the assignation of only one feminine planet (Venus) reflected the centrality of masculine gods and male leaders within that religiopolitical environment.[49] Thus, for Brady, the isolation of only one feminine planet in astrology spoke to the Assyrian perception that there was only one acceptable role for women in state affairs: supporting or blessing the proprietors of political power (read: men).[50]

Hot/Cold, Wet/Dry, Day/Night

The next significant development in the use of gendered language in astrology occurred following the Hellenistic appropriation and subsequent revision of Assyrian astrological concepts.[51] Under the Hellenistic purview, the standard system for ascribing gender to the planets remained similar to its Assyrian predecessor, though with editions.

Like the earlier tradition, a planet's gender might be gleaned from the gendered nature of the Olympian god (or goddess) it was named after (for example, Venus was linked to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty).[52] However, as Nicholas Campion has noted, the importation of Aristotelian philosophical concepts into astrology created a different level of interpretation that astrologers used to comprehend its gendered concepts.[53]

Specifically, the Aristotelian natural philosophy that many Hellenistic astrologers adopted dictated that phenomena in the natural world were understandable in terms of their elemental

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[46] Jeffrey Cooley, *Poetic Astronomy in the Ancient Near East.* (Eisenbrauns, 2013). pg.195-196.
[47] Morris Jastrow. 'The Sign and Name for Planet in Babylonian.' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 47.189. (1908). pg.153.
[48] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.
[49] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.
[50] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.
[51] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 136.
[52] Christopher Brennan, *Hellenistic Astrology: The Study of Fate and Fortune*, (Denver: Amor Fati Publications, 2017). pg.236.
[53] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. xvi.

qualities. In this view, qualities like hot/cold, wet/dry, and day/night compounded to create a nuanced understanding of how things were related.[54] Subsequently, these theoretical binaries natural philosophers started to employ became central to Hellenistic understandings of maleness and femaleness that astrologers subsequently applied in astrological contexts.

For clarity, in an article titled 'Engendering Perception,' philologist Constance Classen explained the Hellenistic perspective that 'male' and 'female' reproductive organs were essentially the same, though inverted.[55] She clarified that, for Hellenistic natural philosophers, the 'inversion' was produced by the 'innate heat of men', which caused an outward expression of the reproductive organ, where insufficient heat 'obliged women's organs of generation to remain within the body.'[56]

This theoretical approach — that resembles a biological determinist view of gender — was nevertheless applied to astrological concepts; clear in infamous astrologer Claudius Ptolemy's (100-170CE) assertion that 'the moist is especially feminine — for as a general thing this element is present to a greater degree in all females, and the others rather in males.[57]

Following this, most Hellenistic models posit that the 'moist' planets (the Moon and Venus) were feminine, and the 'dry' (the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) were masculine. Mercury, notably, could be either-or.[58]

Hellenistic astrologers also revised their use of the gender binary to account for the perceived masculinity and femininity of the twelve, then new, signs of the zodiac. First, each of the signs was relegated to one of the four elements (Fire, Earth, Air, and Water) that were decided following the various combinations of hot/cold and wet/dry (Fire was hot and dry, Earth was cold and dry, Air was hot and wet, and Water was cold and wet). The signs were then divided into six masculine and six feminine, and put in alternating order, starting with Aries, a masculine fire sign. Ptolemy justified the decision to place a masculine sign first in the order in his *Tetrabiblos*, noting that 'the male likewise rules and holds first place since also the active is always superior to the passive in power.'[59]

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[54] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. xv.
[55] Constance Classen, 'Engendering Perception: Gender Ideologies and Sensory Hierarchies in Western History,' *Body & Society*, 3.2 (1997). pg.4.
[56] Classen, 'Engendering Perception.' pg.4.
[57] Claudius Ptolemy. *Tetrabiblos*. trans. by F. E. Robbins. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940.). 1.6.
[58] Brennan, *Hellenistic Astrology…* pg.197.
[59] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. 1.12.

Additionally, insofar as they embodied masculinity or femininity, the planets could be seen to express their influence through the gendered connotations of the sign and place they occupied when they were being considered. For example, in the *Tetrabiblos*' chapter on the ability to predict the 'sex' of an individual's potential children astrologically, Ptolemy wrote that the interpreter:

> 'must distinguish the male and the female planets […] from the nature of the signs in which they are, and from the nature of the planets themselves, […] since they become masculine when they are in the east and feminine in the west.[60]

Seemingly, in the Hellenistic system, notions of a planet's gender were fluid and changeable depending on other factors present within an astrological chart. Moreover, the apparent fluidity is understandable when the dominant intentions for using astrology in the Hellenistic era are considered. Namely, where Assyrian astrologers had used astrology to refer to various state affairs, Hellenistic astrology sought to speak to an individual's ability to engage with, control, or use their political power within the broader context of that state.[61] Subsequently, astrological methods needed to apply more broadly than before; needing to account for all manner of individuals, not just the king.

The Hellenistic intentions for astrology are evident in Ptolemy's writing on the 'Fortune of Dignity', where he used the position and expression of the Sun and the Moon (the luminaries) to judge whether an individual was likely to achieve success. In it he wrote that if 'the luminaries are in masculine signs and either both of them or even one of the two […] is also attended by the five planets […}, the children will be kings.[62] Conversely, he explained that 'they are entirely humble and miserable in their fortunes when neither of the luminaries is angular, or in a masculine sign, or attended by the beneficent planets.'[63] According to Brady, prognostications like these are perhaps most effectively understood in context with the Hellenistic perception that 'the role of astrology was to measure the individual against the standards of success or failure defined by the masculine world.'[64]

Hellenistic Sexuality

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[60] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. 3.6.
[61] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.
[62] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. 4.3.
[63] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. 4.3.
[64] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.

The reformed use of astrology also had significant implications on how Hellenistic astrologers viewed sexuality. According to Chris Brennan, traditional Greco-Roman social norms held that it was best for men to be masculine and women, feminine.[65] In a sexual context, this amounted to the expectation that men should take the 'active' for 'penetrative' role in sexual intercourse, where women were expected to take the 'passive' or 'receptive' position.[66]

However, within Hellenistic astrology, there was an implicit acknowledgement that individuals might transgress the standard in a way that could be reflected in the 'gendered nature' of the planets' placement in the astrological chart.[67] For example, Ptolemy noted that men who had both luminaries and either Mars or Venus unattended in masculine signs were inclined to an excessive form of masculinity that entailed addiction 'to natural sexual intercourse,' that ultimately made them 'adulterous, insatiate, and ready on every occasion for base and lawless acts of sexual passion.'[68] Conversely, women with the same placements were want to be 'lustful for unnatural congresses, […] and are what we call tribades; for they deal with females and perform the functions of males.'[69] Within both of these examples, Ptolemy uses the gendered expression of the luminaries to account for a person's sexual interest—assuming that two masculine luminaries would make an individual of either sex too masculine in their sexual expression. It is critical to note here that a planet's 'gender' was relevant only after the astrologer contextualized the gendered planetary conditions within an individual's astrological chart. Further than that, and particularly relevant to Hellenistic perceptions of sexuality, the gendered influences present within an astrological chart were only made into prognoses once they were weighed against the social expectations of the individual based on their gender.

Ultimately, the goal of Hellenistic astrology was to help an individual perceive how natural (read: astrological) influences might indicate how successful they might be at attaining power, success, and acclaim. However, if the attainment of success in a Hellenistic context can be understood to mean 'suit their social role,' then it seems likely that astrologers used astrological techniques to predict an individual's ability to suit socially-expected modes of being—especially as they related to gender and sexual expression. Since, in the Hellenistic era, acting in ways that

[65] Brennan, *Hellenistic Astrology*. pg.172.
[66] Brennan, *Hellenistic Astrology*. pg.172.
[67] Brennan, *Hellenistic Astrology*. pg.173.
[68] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. 3.14.
[69] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*. 3.14.

were ‘gender appropriate’ was a hallmark of a successful individual, it seems inescapable that astrologers in this era upheld social standards by using astrology to help individuals chart pathways for fitting into them.

The Quality of Men and their Professions

Following Hellenistic developments, the standard model of planetary gender remained relatively stagnant through the development of the astrological tradition in Europe.[70] For instance, Johannes Schöner (1477-1547), a German polymath, maintained the Ptolemaic gender distinctions and their accompanying delineations, as Ptolemy had described them in the *Tetrabiblos*.[71] For example, in his *Opusculum Astrologicum*, Schöner noted that if the masculine Sun was ‘descending in its circle, in a cadent house,’ or ‘in a feminine sign,’ its expression was debilitated.[72] Brady noted the importance of this distinction as femininity in this context was considered a depleting influence on the sun as it impeded its ability to ‘perform in the material world’ potentially upholding contemporary social perceptions relating to masculine dominance, and feminine inferiority.[73]

Writing much later in the seventeenth century CE, William Lilly also relied heavily on the works of Ptolemy in the construction of the first English astrological manual, *Christian Astrology*. Throughout the text, Lilly maintained the Hellenistic gender assignations of the planets; the Sun was ‘naturally hot, dry […] masculine, and diurnal’, and the Moon was a ‘feminine, nocturnal planet, cold, moist and phlegmatic.’[74] Significantly, Lilly’s writing seems to confirm the apparent link between his cause for gendering the planets and the ones laid out by earlier Hellenistic authors when he used the traditional gender assignations to comment on what social roles were more or less acceptable for men and women, respectively.

For example, Lilly offered a subsection entitled ‘The Quality of Men and their Professions’ in each of *Christian Astrology*'s chapters on the planets. In these sections, Lilly listed professional and social categories that the planet in question was related to. The Sun, for example, signified

[70] Brady, ‘Gender’ in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.
[71] Brady, ‘Gender’ in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.
[72] Johannes Schöner, Opusculum Astrologicum, trans. by Robert Hand (Berkely Springs: Golden Hind Press, 1994). pg.28.
[73] Brady, ‘Gender’ in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.
[74] William Lilly, *Christian Astrology: Books 1 & 2.* ed. By David Roell (Astrology Classics, 2005). pg.69.

‘Kings, Princes, Emperors [and] Dukes,’ among other notably all ‘masculine’ professions.[75] Only in his chapters on the Moon and Venus did Lilly modify this section’s subtitle to ‘Qualities of Men and Women.’ Thus, for Lilly, as for the tradition that preceded him, the Moon represented ‘Queens, Countesses, Ladies, and all manner of women: as also the common people,’ where Venus represented ‘Embroiderers, women-tailors, wives, mothers, and virgins.’[76]

It is significant to note here that women, at least as far as it can be assumed by Lilly's inability to see them reflected under any planet besides the Moon and Venus, were not afforded the same degree of social flexibility that men were. In Lilly’s conception, men could be Kings, Dukes, Poets, Drunkards, Clerks, Surgeons, and Scholars. Women, on the other hand, could only be Queens, Wives, Mothers, and Virgins. Critically, it is suspect here as to whether Lilly’s astrological statements on the appropriate roles for men and women are necessary astrological dogma, or if they are particular to his own cultural understandings. The latter seems likely, as Lilly’s engagement with gender and its implications on his astrology’s address of men and women reflects Raewyn Connel’s perception that historically, men were afforded many acceptable occupations and outlets for their masculinity.[77] Ultimately it seems likely that it is astrologers and their relevant social understandings, not the planets, who relegate women’s work to the Lunar, and Venusian spheres.

The Inner and Outer Horoscopes

Following the end of the seventeenth century, astrology went underground across Europe following condemnation by the political, academic, and religious elite.[78] As a result, there were not many notable theoretical developments made in the use or address of gender in the tradition. However, in the nineteenth century, astrologers began to reconceptualise astrology’s primary function in a way that reengaged its historical use of gendered language. Notably, where astrologers had used astrology to navigate politics and power, the theosophical and New Age appropriation of Eastern cosmological concepts into the Western tradition reimagined astrology as a tool for cultivating spiritual enlightenment.[79]

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[75] William Lilly, *Christian Astrology.* pg.69.
[76] William Lilly, *Christian Astrology.* Pg.74.
[77] Raewyn Connell. *Masculinities.* (Routledge, 2005). Ch.1.
[78] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 162.
[79] Brady, ‘Gender’ in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 138.

For clarity, the theosophists were a group of artists, philosophers, and socialites, among others, who were taken by the idea that a spiritual 'new age' was impending and that people could prepare for it 'by seeking personal spiritual enlightenment.'[80] In his *History of Western Astrology*, Campion wrote that, in essence, the theosophists believed that the universe was spiritual and that 'the material world was essentially an illusion concealing spiritual reality.'[81] Thus, according to Campion, the theosophist solution to the material/spiritual dichotomy was 'to leave the material world behind and enter the realm of spirit.'[82]

One of the foremost English astrologers of the late eighteenth century, Alan Leo (1860-1917), is likely responsible for placing the theosophical worldview onto astrological concepts. Inspired by the cosmic vision espoused by Helena Blavatsky and her followers, Leo believed that the signs and planets (and their arrangement in an astrological chart) created a sort of map that could direct an individual to spiritual wholeness.[83]

Particular to this study, it is essential that Leo used the Ptolemaic model for ascribing gender to the planets. However, and of equal importance, Leo's approach extended the astrological meanings of 'masculine' and 'feminine,' using them to address the theosophical dichotomy between 'spirit' and 'matter.' Specifically, for Leo, as for Lilly, the Sun represented the 'King, Emperor, president or chieftain…' in what he called the 'outer horoscope.'[84] However, in the inner consciousness, the Sun, as a masculine body, signified 'power, the sense of dignity, authority, grandeur, and pride.'[85] The Moon, following this pattern outwardly represented 'mothers and women, generally female occupations, and those who follow them such as maidservants, nurses [and] midwives,' where the inner moon, signified 'sensation, instincts, impulses [and] feelings belonging to the home and domestic life.'[86] Within this, Leo very clearly held to the tradition of conceptualizing planetary gender within the realm of the sociocultural expectations put on men and women. However, he broadened the scope of the conversation about 'masculinity' and femininity' in astrology by opening the possibility that the gendered terms could apply to traits that could ultimately be relevant to any individual, regardless of their gender. For Leo, masculine

[80] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 229.
[81] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 231.
[82] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 231.
[83] Alan Leo. *The Art of Synthesis.* 4th edn. (Modern Astrology, 1926). ch.1.
[84] Leo. *The Art of Synthesis*. pg.41.
[85] Leo. *The Art of Synthesis*. pg.41.
[86] Leo. *The Art of Synthesis*. pg..48.

placements in a natal chart spoke to intellectuality and spirit, where feminine ones indicated emotional and corporeal matters, in line with the theosophist spirit/matter dichotomy.

However, near the end of the text, Leo did note that specific planetary placements in the astrological chart could be more or less beneficial to an individual based on their gender. Perhaps unsurprising given that he was writing within a cultural milieu that recognized the importance of the masculine/feminine binary—and its implications on what could be seen as socially acceptable for men and women as distinct categories.[87] However, the underlying philosophy that saw the meanings of masculinity and femininity expand beyond traditional understandings related to biology and social role marked a shift in the astrological use and address of gender and sexuality.

Individuation and the Alchemical Marriage

Later in the twentieth century, Humanistic astrologers like Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985) followed the theosophical developments in astrology, arguing for a theoretical approach to astrological interpretation that prioritized the 'individuality and potentiality of growth of the person whose chart was being studied.'[88] Thus, in Rudhyar's astrology, the astrological chart could be read not as a tool for navigating social categories and producing material wealth but as a framework for accessing modes of transformation that might help an individual stand 'erect and open at the centre of the universe around him.'[89]

Again, this shift in theoretical focus had implications on how gendered terms would be used in astrology, particularly following the induction of modern psychological principles into the astrological system. Following Sigmund Freud's theories on consciousness, Carl Jung (1875-1961) thought the goal of the psychological process was to marry a person's conscious biases with their unconscious ones via an integrative process he called individuation. Following this, Jung developed his theory on the Anima and Animus, the idea that each person's psyche contained both a male and a female part.[90] For clarity, Jung claimed that the male part of a female's psyche was her Animus, where the female part of a male's psyche was his Anima. For greater insight into the astrological adaptation of this principle, Liz Greene (1946-) explained that a woman who 'is able,

[87] Leo. *The Art of Synthesis*. pg.148.
[88] Dane Rudhyar, Quoted in James Lewis, *The Astrology Book: The Encyclopedia of Heavenly Influences.* (Canton: Visible Ink Press, 2003). pg 342.
[89] Lewis, *The Astrology Book*. pg.343.
[90] Liz Greene, *Relating: An Astrological Guide to Living With Others on a Small Planet,* 2nd edn. (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, Inc, 1978). pg.74.

[..] to recognize the attributes of the animus and to distinguish her feminine ego-consciousness from him, can begin to work cooperatively with the unconscious transsexual side of her own nature.'[91] The goal in applying Anima and Animus in this way was to demonstrate how a woman could integrate feminine principles (that were consciously available to her based on her 'feminine psychology') and masculine ones (that rested in her unconscious Animus) to 'gain an increased awareness not only of her own womanhood but of the creative potential of her mind and spirit as well.'[92] The opposite was true in the case of a man, where integration of the subconscious anima could lead to a heightened 'sense of his feelings and his capacity for love while opening new possibilities for the expression of creative imagination and sensitivity.'[93] Effectively, Greene, among other psychological astrologers argued that the arrangement of the planets within an astrological chart could provide critical insight into how an individual might recognize the path to Anima/Animus balance.

According to Brady, within psychological astrology, individuals were not meant to understand the prominence of masculine planets in their charts as indicators of material success or kingly status as they might have done in preceding traditions.[94] Instead, the more modern astrological aim was to use gendered concepts to understand the balance (or imbalance) between the masculine and feminine archetypes (read: planets) that were thought to be present in an individual's psyche and legible in their astrological placements. For authors like Greene, recognizing the masculine/feminine balance/imbalance through an astrological lens clarified how a person might unify their conscious perception of their social role, with the unconscious reality that masculine and feminine principles are inherent in every person.[95] Perhaps inarguably, astrological attempts to view gendered principles this way are necessarily linked to the interests of modern depth psychology — implying the relevance of cultural or theoretical biases in the development of astrological perspectives.

The Gay Signature

[91] Greene, *Relating*. pg.74.
[92] Greene, *Relating*. pg.75.
[93] Greene, *Relating*. pg.76.
[94] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.
[95] Greene, *Relating*. pg.76.

The psychological approach to using gendered principles in astrology also had some real implications on how astrologers working within that framework handled sexuality. For example, following the psychological tendency to treat non-heteronormative sexualities (read: homosexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, among others) pathologically, some psychological astrologers believed that 'sexual deviance' as they described it, could be read in an astrological chart.[96]

The first explicit astrological study on homosexuality was Karl Gunther Heimsoth's *Homosexuality in the Horoscope* (1928). Within, Heimsoth used the natal charts of 30 people whom he (often incorrectly) assumed to be 'homosexuals' to claim that there were particular astrological placements that an astrologer could use to infer sexual orientation.[97] Though often operating under different pretences, various other writers in the psychological tradition made similar claims that astrology, if used diagnostically, could help identify and correct imbalances that lead to non-heteronormative sexual behaviour. In Charles E. O. Carter's, *Encyclopedia of Psychological Astrology* (1954), for example, under the subheading 'Immorality (Sexual),' the author noted that 'homosexuality is almost always relevant to Uranus' and its 'hard aspects' with Venus and Mars.[98] Another notable psychological astrologer Stephen Arroyo (1946-) used 'hard aspects between Venus and Pluto as an indicator of 'homosexual or bisexual inclinations,' explaining that the planetary combination suggested 'intense emotional resentment towards either the person's own sex or towards those of the opposite sex.'[99] Liz Greene also participated in this discourse, as she operated under the early psychological perception that homosexuality 'is often the result of a complete repression of unconscious figures which […] will become antagonistic and overwhelm consciousness if they are treated with arrogance or contempt by the ego.'[100] In Greene's case, she was careful to note that 'the planets do not make us anything; they are symbols of particular patterns of psychic energy,' clarifying that planetary conjunctions could not <u>*cause*</u> any sexual orientation.[101] However, as Greene explained, the planetary archetypes, as they reflected a person's psychical relationship to masculine and feminine principles, could indicate

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[96] Stephen Arroyo, *Astrology, Karma and Transformation*. (Reno: CRCS Publications, 1978).
[97] Karl Guenter Heimsoth, *Homosexuality in the Horoscope*, 2nd edn., trans. by Richard Baldwin (Tempe: American Federation of Astrologers, Inc. 2015).
[98] C.E.O. Carter, *An Encyclopaedia of Psychological Astrology*, 4th edn. (Bel Air: Astrology Classics, 2003). pg.101.
[99] Arroyo, *Astrology, Karma and Transformation*. (1978).
[100] Greene, *Relating*. pg.75.
[101] Greene, *Relating*. pg.120.

psychological imbalances that might eventually amount to homosexual behaviour.[102] 'The woman whose birth chart shows a Venus-Saturn square may feel deeply inadequate and uncertain of herself as a woman,' she wrote. 'Her capacity to relate — especially as the loving companion represented by the planet's archetypal, mythological namesake — has got caught by the shadow.'[103]

Following this, it must be clear that it was the early psychological position that homosexuality, based on its inclusion in the first three editions of the American Psychological Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM), was a result of some psychological imbalance in a person's psyche. Subsequently, it seems as though the astrological methods astrologers used to delineate sexuality reflect the early psychological impulse to perceive non-heterosexuality pathologically. The decision on the part of psychological astrologers to treat sexuality this way was likely related to their desire to align their astrological vision to other standard debates on the subject—thus affirming what had been seen as the consensus on the nature of sexuality.

Astrology for Women

This paper has perhaps already spoken on some theoretical and practical engagements with gendered and sexed discourses. However, when considering gender in astrology, the impact of popular newspaper and magazine horoscope columns is critical. The importance of the horoscopes owes to the reality that, following their invention by R.H. Naylor for the *Sunday Express* in 1903, newspapers and magazines became the primary disseminators of astrology in the West.[104]

In the context of magazine horoscopes, the use of technical and gendered astrological terms is limited as they needed to be theoretically accessible to a population that was largely unlearned in astrology. However, the writings in these horoscope columns, and their popularity in magazines written for women specifically, imply that the astrology within them is in some way wrapped up in the broader astrological discussion on gender. Particularly if D.T. Prusank's claim that magazines are sites 'for the struggle over defining women and their role' is valid.[105]

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[102] Greene, *Relating*. pg.120.
[103] Greene, *Relating*. pg.120.
[104] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 213.
[105] D. T. Prusank. 'Masculinities in teen magazines: The good, the bad, and the ugly.' *The Journal of Men's Studies*. 15.2. (2007). pg. 167..

Commentators have argued over the underlying cause for the popularisation of astrology in women's media to various ends. For example, some social commentators, like Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), believed that the repetition of astrological claims in mass media contexts promoted social conformity and created an 'ideology for dependence, as an attempt to strengthen and somehow justify painful conditions that seem to be more tolerable if an affirmative attitude is taken towards them.'[106] On the other hand, as Campion has noted, some argue that the rise of astrology written specifically for women could be seen as a liberating force, as it may have offered women a voice that had been denied them by mainstream patriarchal culture.[107]

Either way, it is critical that women became the overwhelming majority in terms of interest and adherence to astrology in the early nineteenth century.[108] Whether shift was caused by astrology's increasingly inward and spiritual focus, as Brady has noted or the large-scale popularity of astrology columns in new media targeting women audiences, as others like Campion have, the change in direction is crucial for astrology's engagement with the cultural discourse on gender and sexuality moving forward.

Naming New Planets

As evident in the discussion thus far, the traditional model for assigning gender to the planets had remained stagnant throughout most of the astrological tradition as it existed in Europe and the West. However, following the rise of feminist astrology, the imbalance between two feminine planets, the Moon and Venus, and seven masculine ones (traditionally: the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and newly: Uranus (1781), Neptune (1846), and Pluto (1938)) had become suspect.

According to astrological historian William Burns, the mission of the feminist astrology that emerged in the mid to late-twentieth century was to 'deconstruct [the] binary, and […] to broaden the astrological possibilities of the feminine.'[109] One of the ways astrologers attempted to do this was to incorporate four newly discovered asteroids into the astrological mainstream: Ceres (1801), Pallas Athene (1802), Juno (1804), and Vesta (1807). Notably, all of them were named for goddesses as opposed to gods and as a result some astrologers saw their discovery as an

[106] Theodor Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth.* 2nd edn. (Routledge, 2001). pg.115.
[107] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 280.
[108] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. 280.
[109] William Burns, 'Feminist Astrology' in *Astrology Through History: Interpreting the Stars from Ancient Mesopotamia to the Present*, ed. by William E. Burns (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2018). pg.117.

opportunity to redress the historical gender imbalance in the traditional planetary order. In *Asteroid Goddesses* (1986), the seminal text on the asteroids' function in astrology, Demetra George argued that the discovery and subsequent emergence of the asteroids was linked to the first and second waves of feminism, respectively. She claimed: 'Ceres, Pallas Athene, Juno, and Vesta represent new voices of the dominant feminine, recently activated and now demanding power, recognition, justice, and equality in our society.'[110] Accordingly, astrologers drew the astrological meanings of the asteroids from the archetypal symbolism latent in those Goddess's mythologies. For example, mythological Ceres (Demeter in Greek) was the mother of Persephone, who was stolen from Ceres/Demeter and brought to the underworld. Thus, astrological Ceres was to reflect the feminine principle of unconditional love and loss.[111]

While the asteroids were fundamentally feminine in their expression, the way that authors like George wrote about them enforced that everyone, regardless of their gender, was meant to glean personal insight from their placement in a given astrological chart. For example, in her chapter on Ceres, under the subtitle 'Especially for Men to Activate and Utilise their Centres/Powers,' the asteroid of unconditional love and acceptance supported men's 'increased participation in childbirth, developing attitudes of compassion/acceptance/empathy, and single father issues and responsibilities.'[112] The presence of these four new asteroids, if it is taken that they are equal in stature to the traditional planets, evened out the balance between astrology's masculine and feminine planets and even challenged the perceptions relating to gendered social roles, perhaps reflecting the parity that feminists sought to manifest in all areas of human and social life.

Although the astrological use of the asteroids was not universally accepted, other feminist approaches to astrology emerged in the mid to late twentieth century that sought similar ends. Geraldine Hatch Hanon, for example, wrote *Sacred Space: A Feminist Vision of Astrology* to highlight the 'inherent connection' between the menstrual and lunar cycles to affirm astrology's relevance to women.[113] Others in the feminist tradition sought to see the planets as androgynous figures, forgoing gendered language altogether in their vision of an astrology that was equally

[110] Demetra George, and Douglas Bloch, *Asteroid Goddesses*, 3rd edn. (Lake Worth: Ibis Press, 2003). pg.2.
[111] George, *Asteroid Goddesses*. pg.59.
[112] George, *Asteroid Goddesses*. pg.38.
[113] Burns, 'Feminist Astrology' in *Astrology Through History*. pg.118.

empowering for women as it had been for men.[114] Ultimately, as prior readings of astrology's engagement with gender may reflect the dominant social values of its astrologers, it seems pertinent that the feminist desire to see strong feminine principles reflected in astrology was likely related to the rising cultural discourse that sought to reorder traditional gender paradigms more broadly.

Queering the Tradition

Continuing in the feminist tradition of reevaluating astrology's gendered principles, Queer Astrology emerged in the early-twenty-first century, expanding the bounds of astrology's gender/sexuality discourse. For clarity, social theorist Michael Warner explained that Queer theory is a theoretical framework that pushes back on the perception that heterosexuality and binary understandings of gender are 'normal.'[115] Effectively, Queer Astrology is the application of that framework to the astrological tradition.[116]

Importantly, in the same way, that astrology had been deemed a 'woman's interest' throughout most of the twentieth century, theorists like Alexa Winstanley-Smith have suggested that in the twenty-first century, it is 'queer people' who hold the balance of interest in terms of astrology.[117] In the numerous studies and opinion pieces on why astrology has availed itself to queer people, authors seem to agree that astrology can provide alternative modes of self-understanding that bypass the limitations of heteronormative ones.[118] In an article called 'Why do Queers Love Astrology,' for example, Chani Nicholas writes: 'astrology is a tool of reflection that doesn't judge the many aspects of self but only reveals them.'[119] This general principle that astrologers might use astrology to foster a sense of identity outside the bounds of socio-cultural strictures seems to guide the queer astrology movement. In a forward to the *Queer Astrology Anthology*, Ian Waisler seemed to affirm this, claiming that Queer Astrology 'interrogates all the

[114] Rhea Wolf, 'Myths of Gender, Gender in Myth.' In in *Queer Astrology Anthology*, ed. by Ian Waisler and Rhea Wolf (San Fransisco: Queer Astrology, 2014). pg.65.
[115] Michael Warner, *Fear of a queer planet: queer politics and social theory*. (Minneaapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013)
[116] Ian Waisler, 'Why a Queer Astrology?' in *Queer Astrology Anthology*, ed. by Ian Waisler and Rhea Wolf (San Fransisco: Queer Astrology, 2014). pg.5.
[117] Alexa Winstanely-Smith. 'Queer Political Astrology: Problems and Potentials.' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 27.1. (2021)
[118] Smith, 'How the Queer Astrology Movement Is Changing Gender Norms' (2021).
[119] Chani Nicholas, 'Why Do Queers Love Astrology' on *chaninicholas.com* [accessed: 3 June 2021].

assumptions in our symbols' with the ultimate goal of alleviating astrological concepts from the heteronormative and binary gender standards that they have historically been associated with.[120]

Despite the popularity of Queer Astrology in the modern-day, there is no one obvious approach to 'queering' astrology. This principle sees reflection in Nikki Sullivan's work when she suggested that 'the queering of popular culture has taken multifarious forms,' and 'has focused on different issues, and has drawn on a range of theoretical positions.'[121] However, Colin Bedell, in his *Queer Cosmos* (2019), likely accounted for the bulk of what Queer astrologers do by leaving their writings 'carefully devoid of gendered constructions and heteronormative assumptions.'[122] Other queer astrology texts like Jessica Lanyadoo's *Astrology for Real Relationships* (2020) seem to follow suit — writing about astrology without mentioning gendered terms and written to speak to all readers in the same way, regardless of their situation.[123]

As Erika Smith found in her study, other queer astrologers have sought to use different polarities like yin/yang, day/night, active/passive to stand in for masculine/feminine. [124] The essential idea within this is that polarity is necessary within the astrological system — though it ultimately does not matter which polarity is used to relate the concept. It is, instead, up to the astrologer to determine which words can be used to speak on the concept, allowing a new generation of astrologers to alleviate their astrological techniques from traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity that have pervaded the astrological tradition. As Sullivan claimed, there is surely disagreement among Queer astrologers about how astrology's gendered history is to be operated on. However it should be clear that where once the gender binary was essential to categorize astrological phenomena, recently there have been notable voices within the astrological tradition who intend to challenge—or queer—astrology's historical relationship to gender and sexuality discourses.

Historical Considerations

Following review, Alexander Ruperti's claim that astrology cannot be codified under one set of definitive terms seems relevant. From the evidence presented, the idea that various kinds of

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[120] Waisler, 'Why a Queer Astrology?' in *Queer Astrology Anthology*. pg.5.
[121]Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. pg.189.
[122] Bedell, *Queer Cosmos*. pg.xvi.
[123] Jessica Lanyadoo and T. Greenaway. *Astrology for Real Relationships.* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2020)
[124] Smith, 'How the Queer Astrology Movement Is Changing Gender Norms.' (2021).

astrologies emerge in response to different socio-cultural contexts would explain the multiple ways that astrologers have sought to align their astrological discourse on gender and sexuality with relevant cultural ones. To this point, historian Ann Geneva has noted that any definitive claim about the nature of astrology needs to locate the tradition in question in its historical context.[125] For Geneva, as perhaps Ruperti, astrology, and its terms are not understandable when separated from the socio-cultural landscapes they were developed in. Rather, the study of astrological terms and how astrologers use them must be predicated on an understanding of the conditions that brought about the need for their use in the first place. Applying this notion to different astrological positions on the use and address of gender presents the likelihood that astrology might not have one 'stance' on gender and sexuality. Instead, it might be more appropriate to say that astrologers have used astrology to respond to their own cultural notions about gender and sexuality. Thus, following Ruperti's verbiage, there is not one astrological position on gender and sexuality, but many.

The way astrologers have deployed astrological perspectives on gender and sexuality also implies that astrology can both uphold and challenge normal cultural understandings. Following the evidence, the distinction depends on the intentions behind the astrological tradition in question or those of the astrologer practicing. Subsequently, the ways astrological writings on gender and sexuality either uphold or challenge their contemporary social perceptions should be reviewed.

Uphold: Review

In the Assyrian astrological tradition, astrologers used masculine and feminine to describe the planets. Following review, the evidence suggests their reason for doing so was related to their unique perception of astrology's function—where the planets were symbolic of a gendered set of gods.[126] Subsequently, as astrologers believed the planets reflected the gender of the god or goddess it was related to, the astrological position on the masculinity or femininity of the planets was dependent on the astrologers' religious belief system. Following this, Brady has explained that the imbalance between men and women gods (read: planets) in the Assyrian canon is relevant insofar as it accounted for the importance of men within the Assyrian political system.[127]

[125] Ann Geneva, Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind: William Lilly and the Language of the Stars (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. xiv.
[126] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.
[127] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 135.

Ultimately then, it seems that Assyrian priests based their approach to gendering the planets on their beliefs about the gender of their gods and the applicability of astrology to state affairs. The astrological techniques seem to have responded to the Assyrian will to commune with their gendered gods about the fortune of the king and his empire—an intention that might only be relevant in an Assyrian sociocultural context.

This process of contextualization is illuminating when considered against any of the astrological traditions discussed. Hellenistic astrologers like Ptolemy, for example, reformed the astrological use of masculine and feminine following his contemporary will to import natural philosophy into the system and broaden the scope of what astrologers could use astrology for. That is to say that in the Hellenistic era, astrologers expanded the astrological definitions of masculine and feminine to account for new contemporary aims:

(i) to align with developments made in natural philosophy and,

(ii) to use astrology to speak to an individual's ability to suit society's gendered expectations of them.

For clarity here, Constance Classen has noted that the Greeks gendered the universe in relation to their social perceptions as a method of squaring what was known about the human body within the scope of what had been the social consensus on the nature and function of gender.[128] She explained that 'according to the astrological lore which provided modern thought, gender, and sensory categories were not simply social constructions, but were set in the stars, part of the immutable order of the universe.'[129] According to Classen, Aristotelian gender concepts became naturalized when put into an astrological context. Thus astrology, in the Hellenistic era, bolstered the validity of natural philosophy by placing its precepts onto the stars. However, it also apparently reinforced the value of social expectations, particularly those related to gender and sexuality.

In these cases, the evidence suggests that there is no inherent gender or sexual bias that is consistent throughout the Western astrological tradition. However, the gendered perceptions in historical texts likely represent the culturally specific motivations and perspectives of the astrologers who wrote them. This is evident in the ways astrologers processed terms like masculine

[128] Classen, 'Engendering Perception' in *Body & Society*. pg.7.
[129] Classen, 'Engendering Perception' in *Body & Society*. pg.7.

and feminine Renaissance and Reconstruction era astrologies (like Schöner's and Lilly's) that developed alongside the still relevance of masculine dominance in politics and society.[130]

Notably, men and masculinity's preeminence in astrology began to shift when astrologers started to engage with modern psychology and its strictures. Brady explained that psychological astrologers still employed the masculine and feminine binary; however, their representation in that system does not necessarily 'prefer' masculinity as prior models do.[131] Instead, psychological perceptions of masculinity and femininity within astrology reflect the general aspiration of gender harmony and equality within an individual psyche, as reflected in the astrological significance of Jung's Anima and Animus theories. Notably, where past iterations of astrological masculinity and femininity seemed to restate the pros of masculinity against the ills of femininity particular to social roles and political achievement - psychological astrology recognized neutrality between the masculine and feminine and prioritized the revelation and subsequent integration of both principles within everyone. The nature of the shift in the astrological approach to using and addressing gender points to the compelling influence that dominant cultural ideas may have on astrologers. Again, this is clear in how psychological astrologers employ psychological understandings of masculine and feminine (read: Anima and Animus) almost without question following their development.

Cultural opinions about sexuality were also preserved in psychological astrology. As mentioned, Uranus and 'hard aspects' between it and various other planets in a natal chart were reframed so that psychological astrologers could use astrological techniques to refer to sexuality as the broader psychological community understood it. According to Jack Drescher, in the early twentieth century, psychological perspectives like Sandor Rado's claimed that neither innate bisexuality nor normal homosexuality existed and that 'heterosexuality was the only biological norm' were dominant.[132] Accordingly, theories like Rado's influenced the American Psychological Association's 1952 decision to include 'homosexuality' in the *DSM* as a 'sociopathic personality disturbance.'[133] Because it was the psychological aim to 'cure' homosexuality, psychological astrologers followed suit, attempting to prove how astrology could help approach pathology. Accordingly, the intervention of contemporary psychological viewpoints

[130] Connell. *Masculinities.* ch.1.
[131] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.
[132] Drescher. 'Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality.' (2015).
[133] Drescher. 'Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality.' (2015).

on the nature of sexuality is likely the cause for astrological authors like Liz Greene to have made statements like this:

> 'the shadow can be realized only through a relation to a partner; and anima and animus only through a relation to a partner of the opposite sex, because only in such a relationship do their projections become operative.'[134]

Following this, psychological astrologers seem to have intended to legitimize psychological precepts about sexuality by advocating their use in astrology — even despite any standard of validity.

Notably, homosexuality was removed from the *DSM* in 1973, as psychologists began to challenge the idea that it was an illness.[135] The ensuing resistance to treat homosexuality pathologically in psychology translated into a movement criticising what some psychological astrologers had written about it. Astrologer J. Lee Lehman, for example, ran a study to determine the validity of an astrological signature for homosexuality. Notably, she found that none of the established methods could effectively 'predict sexuality.'[136] She argued that the likely reason for this was the false pretence that these theories were based on – that homosexuality was abnormal.[137]

Further to this point, in the *Astrology of Homophobia*, Peter Clamp claimed that the application of Jungian psychology to non-heterosexual sexualities was problematic because Jung was 'a heterosexual man whose model of the human psyche is understandably heterosexually based and biased.'[138] Flowing from this, Clamp seems to have acknowledged that personal bias also played a critical role in developing psychological astrology's theories about sexuality. Ultimately, Clamp argued that astrologers' social and personal biases determine dominant astrological theories on sexuality: 'the astrological chart does not discriminate,' he wrote, 'only astrologers do.'[139]

Challenge: Review

Up to this point, this paper has considered how astrological texts from Assyria to the present day tend to reflect culturally relevant positions on gender and sexuality. However, in

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[134] Greene, *Relating*. pg.118.
[135] Drescher. 'Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality.' (2015).
[136] J. Lee. Lehman 'Delineating Sexuality' in *Sexuality in the Horoscope.* ed. By Noel Tyl. (St Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1994). pg. 223.
[137] Lehman, 'Delineating Sexuality,' pg.223
[138] Clamp. 'The Astrology of Homophobia.' (2000).
[139] Clamp. 'The Astrology of Homophobia.' (2000).

seeming contradiction, some astrologers throughout history have positioned their astrological work to challenge socio-cultural norms, not reflect them.

Feminist astrology, if we are to take William Burn's definition, was explicitly devised to challenge the late twentieth-century cultural narrative that assumed male dominance.[140] Following the rise of the Second Wave in the mid-twentieth century, astrologers began realizing the values of feminism within astrological understandings of gender and sexuality. These intentions are clear when Eleanor Bach, for example, in the introduction to the *First Asteroid Ephemeris*, explained that 'women are saying today, we are not just vehicles of pleasure (Venus) or emotional weathervanes, utterly dominated by our menstrual cycles (Moon). What about our resourcefulness, our productivity, our ingenuity….'[141] Accordingly, it was the feminist position, at least as George related it in her *Asteroid Goddesses*, to develop astrological methods that accounted for 'the widespread entrance of women into the fields of politics, arts [and] other professional careers,' and the 'revival of the Goddess in women's spirituality.'[142] Thus, the asteroids, conveniently discovered upon the rise of feminism's first wave, and integrated perhaps uncannily around its second, were brought into the system to challenge patriarchal dominance as implied in astrology by the imbalance between masculine and feminine planets. However, it should not go without note that while feminist astrology certainly can be considered as a reaction against normative and patriarchal understandings of gender, it can also be read in the effect that it had to normalize and sustain feminist perspectives.

This is where it becomes relevant that around the same time, more and more women (and perhaps, feminists) began to occupy authoritative positions in the western astrological tradition.[143] The fact that an increasing number of women had been authoring astrological perspectives seems to clarify why feminist and other non-patriarchal gender perspectives became dominant in more modern forms of astrology. Specifically, the types of astrology that are intent to dismantle normative positions on gender and sexuality were not likely to reflect society's 'dominant culture values' at large. Instead, the feminist reformation of gendered astrological principles more

[140] Burns, 'Feminist Astrology' in *Astrology Through History*. pg.118.
[141] Eleanor Bach, 'Preface,' in *The Asteroid Ephemeris*. by Zippoah Dobyns (Los Angeles: TIA Publications, 1977), pg.3.
[142] George, *Asteroid Goddesses*. pg.3.
[143] Brady, 'Gender' in *Astrology Through History*. pg. 137.

appropriately indicates that the astrologers who were prolific on gender and sexuality in that era were likely feminists.

This general argument applies equally to the still burgeoning Queer Astrology movement. Specifically, as more Queer astrologers began applying their personal experiences and queer theoretical approaches to the astrological use and address of gendered principles, the more the astrological perspectives reflected queer and non-heteronormative values. Considering the relevance of Queer Astrology, astrologer Erin Sullivan explained that the need to 'queer' astrology came 'out of the social need for the individual person to make a strong statement for equality and acceptance.'[144] For Sullivan, Queer Astrology exists because the astrologers who practice it are inclined to use astrology to assure 'that the gay or LGBTQ individual actually exists [and has] a real and valid status.'[145]

It seems likely from the evidence that the cultural perceptions of those who hold authoritative positions in the astrological literary tradition become the astrological discourse on gender and sexuality as it exists in the historical record. This is clarified even when considering astrological discourses specifically intended to uphold cultural standards, as discussed. For example, in Assyria, in the Hellenistic world, and through to arguably the seventeenth century CE, astrology was practiced by a highly educated and perhaps privileged elite (read: men) often employed by people who occupied high social standing.[146] At some points, the astrologers' clientele were even those responsible for defining and applying what would become dominant social positions (Kings, Priests, Professors, and Nobles, to name a few). Undoubtedly, frameworks for understanding gender in those astrological traditions reflect dominant cultural positions because astrologers were engaged in the processes and with the people who held the sociopolitical capital to determine them. However, in historical examples where astrology has availed itself to astrologers who do not hold that capital (in this example, women and queer people), the literary tradition reflects the popular intentions among astrologers' to use astrology to reimagine social standards and create discourses that account for their particular issues. Following this, it is perhaps not that the prevalence of feminist and queer astrological discourses in the modern day indicates anything necessarily about society's collective understanding of gender or sexuality. Instead, the

[144] Sullivan, 'Is Astrology Gender Biased?' (2017).
[145] Erin Sullivan, 'Is Astrology Gender Biased?' on *astro.com*. (2017). [accessed 3 June 2021].
[146] Erin Sullivan, 'Is Astrology Gender Biased? (2017)

dominance of feminist and queer voices in astrology's recent gender discourse more directly speaks to the large number of astrologers who have used astrology to imagine a world where their experiences of gender and sexuality are more accurately reflected and perhaps normalized.

Challenge? Uphold? Both?

Ultimately, following this discussion, the study's initial question: 'does astrology challenge or uphold common perspectives on gender and sexuality?' might be improved if reframed to account for the likely reality that 'astrology' does not challenge or uphold anything in and of itself. The way astrologers have used and addressed gender and sexuality throughout astrological history has often shifted to account for the varying social situations that astrologers have used astrology to respond to. Subsequently, the better question is: 'do astrologers use astrology to challenge or uphold common perspectives on gender and sexuality based on their engagement with those discourses on a broader scale?' From the evidence provided, it seems that the likely answer to this question is: yes.

Part 2

<u>Survey/Interview Findings</u>

Perhaps the major conclusion to be drawn thus far is that astrologers can use astrology variously to uphold and challenge social conceptions about gender and sexuality depending on the intentions of the astrologer in question. Specifically, it seems clear after historical overview that astrologers adapt the function and form of astrology to suit their own contemporary needs. However, owing back to Campion's suggestion that the textual tradition is relevant but not comprehensive, the results of a survey and interview process will be considered to address how astrological perspectives on gender may be highly particular to the astrologer practicing.

First, however, in *Qualitative Research Methods*, Monique Hennink emphasized the value of subjectivity and researcher reflexivity while interpreting qualitative data.[147] As a matter of personal reflexivity, I should clarify that I identify as a Queer astrologer. Accordingly, I come into this study as an insider to the general conversation (as an astrologer), with my own perspectives

[147] Hennink, *Qualitative Research Methods*. ch.2.

on the use of gendered concepts in astrology (as a queer person). Hennink also identifies the value of purposive sampling, the idea that a study's subjects can be intentionally determined based on the study's needs.[148] Accordingly, survey and interview respondents were sourced through postings and direct messages on Facebook and Twitter. The posts specified that the survey intended to gain contemporary perspectives on how gender and sexuality may affect astrological practice. In the likelihood that cultural concepts about gender and sexuality implicate all manner of astrologers, the posts stipulated that any person who considered themself an astrologer - regardless of their gender or sexual identity - was welcome to respond. To garner a wide range of opinions, the survey did not attempt to define what an astrologer was too specifically, allowing the respondents to decide whether they suited the distinction.

The Astrologers

To perceive the astrologers' positionality concerning gender and sexuality discourses, participants were asked to disclose their gender and sexuality. In each case, the survey left a write-in option so that participants could use their own terms to describe their experience. Notably, participants identified their gender variously. Terms used included non-binary (40%), man (21%), woman (19%), trans (7%) and non-conforming (2%). Other participants noted that they did not 'define' their gender (7%), while others stated they were questioning (2%). Within this, several participants (26%) identified their gender using a combination of terms. Examples include participants who used 'non-binary' and 'woman' or 'femme' (19%) and 'non-binary' and 'trans' (9%). Of the participants, there were 25 different terms and combinations used to describe gender identity. In terms of sexuality, there was a similar degree of variance. Of the participants, there were 15 different terms used including, Queer (30%), Gay (21%), and Bisexual (21%), among others. As with gender, many of the respondents used a combination of terms, suggesting that the bulk of the astrologers surveyed saw their gender and sexual identities in terms that surpassed standard dichotomous distinctions. Importantly here, owing to the high number of astrologers who identified themselves outside heteronormative or binary gender and sexual categories, it was expected that the results would reflect Queer approaches to understanding gender and sexuality in astrology in greater proportion.

[148] Hennink, *Qualitative Research Methods*. ch.6.

The survey also asked respondents to identify the 'type' of astrology they practiced to understand how the astrologers perceived their engagement with its techniques. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there were 20 different terms used, including 'Traditional,' 'Modern,' 'Evolutionary,' 'Queer,' 'Psychological,' and 'Hellenistic.' Notably, 72% of the astrologers used a combination of terms (like Queer/Traditional, Queer/Feminist/Psychological, and Hellenistic/Modern)— suggesting that the astrologers surveyed primarily operate within more than one astrological tradition simultaneously. The point here seems to align with existing research suggesting that astrologers do not perceive or use astrology monolithically.[149] Instead, the methods they use and the traditions they draw from vary and are particular to the intentions of the astrologer practicing. This became even clearer in this study when astrologers defined the 'function' of astrology under at least seven different categories: Language (31%), Psychological tool (17%), Divinatory practice (17%), Art (4%), Religion (4%), Self-reflection (8%), All of the above (11%). This again concurs with prior studies, suggesting that even in one contemporary period, there is no real sense of consensus on one valid 'type' or 'function' of astrology. The reality that astrologers seem to draw their perspectives from several distinct traditions points to the value of personal subjectivity in developing and using astrological terms.

To get a better sense of how the astrologers perceived astrology's engagement with gender sex discourses, the survey asked whether they thought astrological perceptions of gender changed over time. Most of the astrologers (87%) noted that they thought they did. In an interview, one astrologer explained that the astrological gender discourse followed broader sociocultural ones noting that 'perceptions of gender inherently live within the individual, as influenced by their own personal and sociocultural context, exposures, and experiences.' Following this, the evidence suggests that the surveyed group understands that astrological positions may be particular to social context. Astrology's social dependency was validated further in the study when 77% of the astrologers affirmed that dominant social perceptions of gender likely influence the practice of astrology. The results here seem to confirm the idea that astrologers practice astrology in a way that is subjective to their personal experience with dominant socio-cultural narratives.

As the astrologers seem to broadly agree that the cultural space they inhabit affects their astrological vision, the survey sought clarity by asking the astrologers if their individual experience of gender had any effect on their practice. In response, 74% of them admitted that their gender

[149] Campion, *A History of Western Astrology*. pg. xi.

does influence their astrological positions. For clarification, one of the surveyed astrologers noted that she thought her 'womanhood and lesbianism impact everything about how [she moves] through the world' — including her astrological practice. Another explained that 'as a queer and genderqueer astrologer, [they] always aim to offer a counter-narrative to the tired, hetero-patriarchal classical canon of astrological thought.' Notably, not all the surveyed astrologers (23%) agreed that their gender influenced their practice. However, at least in the case of one of the astrologers, their 'views on the irrelevance of gender' guided their decision not to let it affect their practice. In this astrologer's case, the initial statement that their gender does not affect how they practiced astrology seems complicated by their admission that their stance on the irrelevance of gender more broadly does. In their case, it appears that even though this astrologer did not say that their gender played a part in their understanding of astrology, their astrological practice was nevertheless informed by their perspective.

The Terms Used

Flowing from this, the survey asked the astrologers to identify which planets were masculine and feminine to understand how the astrologers related to the tradition of gendering planets. Per the traditional astrological schema in the Ptolemaic model, the masculine planets Mars (58%), the Sun (51%) were identified as masculine by more than half of the participants. Equally, the Moon (62%) and the Venus (60%) were consistently feminine. However, in apparent distinction from traditional models (and in relation with some Feminist and Queer perceptions), 12% of the participants noted that all the planets could be identified as masculine, and 35% stated that none of them could be viewed that way. This was consistent in the case of the feminine planets. As above, 12% of the participants noted that all the planets could be feminine, while 35% stated that none of the planets were feminine.

Interestingly, despite some adherence to traditional modelling, there is a high degree of variability in how the astrologers applied gender to the planets, indicating that the way astrologers use gender in astrology is flexible. This point also refers to the notion that only a percentage of the astrologers (26%) identified their broader astrological practice as 'traditional'; however, not all of the 'traditional astrologers' maintained the traditional scheme. Notably, all the planets were identified as masculine and feminine, respectively, by at least some of the survey group. Thus, whether an astrologer uses traditional perceptions of planetary gender is relevant to their

perception of the planets and how gender is to be used in the system. Specifically, even in the case of the planets, the ‘astrological position’ on the use of gender seems, at least in this study, to lack consensus.

For further clarity on the application of gendered terms in astrology, the astrologers were asked what the words 'masculine' and 'feminine' mean in an astrological context. Notably, 87% of them understood that the masculine/feminine binary is used to allude to the concept of polarity. One astrologer noted that ‘it relates to dichotomies of doing and receiving; nocturnal and diurnal; assertive and passive.’ Other astrologers used examples like ‘yin and yang,’ and ‘extroverted and introverted,’ ultimately expressing the idea that masculine and feminine reflected a polarity. Notably, despite recognizing what the terms meant, at least five astrologers specified that they thought their use in astrology was reductive and reflected a system that validated heteronormative understandings of what the words could mean. Accordingly, these astrologers sought to use other terms, like the ones mentioned above, to reflect their non-binary experiences of gender in their practice. This seems to concur with Erika Smith’s findings that it is common among queer astrologers to prefer other binaries in their explications of astrological polarity as the use of masculine and feminine hold cultural significance that some astrologers here intend to avoid.[150] In seeming concurrence with this idea, the remainder of the astrologers (12%) noted that the meanings of the two words were too variable throughout the tradition to opine a definition. One indicated that masculine and feminine are outdated and ‘limit our understanding of complex human experiences.’ Another explained that ‘they represent a culturally agreed-upon set of values or traits and can change over time or across geography.’

The variance in the understanding of astrology’s traditionally gendered principles sheds further light on how the astrological relationship to gender is subjective. Notably, there was not one standard position on the gender of the planets and despite relative agreement on the technical meanings of masculinity and femininity, a number of the astrologers disavowed their use in astrology. The relevance of the variability was bolstered when the astrologers were asked whether they used gendered concepts (like the masculinity or femininity of the planets) in their astrological practice at all. In response, more than half of the respondents (52%) indicated that they do not. Providing clarity on their answers, the bulk of the astrologers who do not work with gendered concepts noted that the implicit imposition of ‘outdated social constructs’ onto astrological

[150] Smith, ‘How the Queer Astrology Movement Is Changing Gender Norms.’ (2021).

concepts through binary understandings of gender was ineffective for them. One astrologer wrote that ’it is dated to use gendered language in astrology, and using it reinforces that these foundational archetypes of male/female or cis-heteronormativity are valid.’ The responses here seem to indicate that contemporary astrologers are at least alive to the fact that the terms they use in an astrological context can reinforce social standards. Therefore, the decision not to use gendered language in an astrological way seems to stem from a personal decision not to use astrology to propagate or validate heteronormative understandings of gender.

While the decision not to use gendered language in astrology was most prevalent, several respondents (23%) do use them. It is interesting to note that for most of these astrologers, their decision to use gendered language did not imply that their perspectives were adherent to dominant sociocultural perceptions. In an interview, one of the astrologers explained that they ‘often work with people who are seeking permission to express an energy that is culturally atypical for their gender.’ The astrologer continued to note that they use the gender binary as it exists in the astrological tradition to help ‘people bend their conception and expectation of gender expression to understand where they embody a blend of both/all and experience a more rounded fullness of self.’ Here, where other astrologers sought to dismantle heteronormative stances on gender by abandoning gendered language in their practice, this astrologer sought to use astrology’s gendered framework as it exists to facilitate an open conversation to help their clients move past those same heteronormative understandings. In another case, one of the surveyed astrologers noted that ‘my choosing not to engage with [astrology’s] gendered aspects would not change the fact that gender is coursing through the system.’ For this astrologer, naming the gendered aspects in astrology was a critical part of their ability to acknowledge that astrology ‘is a human-made system [that is] historically situated.’ Seemingly, in these astrologers' cases, recognizing how astrological concepts often present binary understandings of gender is a critical part of using astrology to challenge those understandings. It is interesting here how the two different approaches to using gendered terms in astrology lead ultimately to the same end. The astrologers in the survey use and omit gendered language in their practice, most seeming to intend to use astrology to challenge normative assumptions. Depending on the astrologer in question, either the practical use or disuse of gendered language can effectively challenge social standards. The approach ultimately depends on the particular astrologer’s position on how astrology is most effectively used.

Clients

As stated in the overview, it may be relevant that astrologers seem to tailor their astrological approach based on the presumed gender of their target audience. Subsequently, the survey asked whether the astrologers consciously accounted for their client's gender when interpreting their natal charts. In response, 43% of the respondents said they did not, whereas 34% of the astrologers indicated that they did. Of the astrologers who do not take their client's gender into account, the majority of them explained that the reasoning behind their decision was related to their perception that gender was not necessarily relevant to their astrological practice in any way. One of the interviewed astrologers suggested that 'there are far more intricate and interesting ways to address someone's identity through astrology,' doubling down on the perception that gender could, and perhaps should, be left out of astrology altogether.

On the other hand, astrologers who admitted to considering their clients' gender seemed to argue that understanding a person's relationship to their gender is a critical part of understanding that person altogether. Speaking clearly on this, one of the interviewed astrologers explained that 'socialization is a big part of who [a person is], and astrology cannot be read in a vacuum. A birth chart cannot entirely be divorced from the environment that it lives it.' That 'astrology cannot be read in a vacuum' is an apparent reference to the common understanding that astrology is perhaps inseparable from social context. This astrologer's decision not to forego considering a person's gender in their interpretation of their natal chart speaks to the likely reality that astrology is often used to assess personal engagement with broader social factors, in line with the tradition of Hellenistic astrologers who explicitly used astrology to help people navigate their social situations. Other astrologers who consider a client's gender suggested that they did so to foster a level of understanding between them and their clients based on shared experiences. One of the interviewed astrologers explained that 'most of [their] clients are women or non-binary and we share that identity, so that is sort of baked into the reading.' That astrologers can use astrology to relate shared experiences of gender speaks to some of the stated goals of Queer astrology, which seeks to foster community and mutual understanding through an astrological framework. For this, and at least five other astrologers who were surveyed, recognition of shared gender experiences is an essential part of how astrology can be used to help adherents see themselves fully recognized in the stars. The remaining astrologers in the survey (19%) explained that they only took their clients' gender into account if they specifically wanted it to be addressed. The tendency of astrologers to tailor

astrological interpretations to the particular needs of their clients suggests that gendered considerations may not be a necessary part of astrology. For these astrologers, astrology *can* be used to discuss gender, though significantly, it does not have to be. According to this study, the decision to relate gender through an astrological framework is ultimately optional and the way it is done is dependent on the astrologer and the client in question.

The idea that the astrological methods used in interpretation are subject to the client's needs in question carries over into these astrologers' handling of sexuality in an astrological reading. In response to a question about how sexuality should be addressed in an astrological context, most of the survey's respondents indicated that they only discussed sexuality at the express wishes of their clients. One astrologer explained that when clients wish to discuss sexuality, they are careful to clarify that astrology can offer insight into 'their sexual behaviour, but not their sexual identity or orientation since that cannot be seen in a chart.' Again, the tendency to tailor astrological conversations about sexuality (and perhaps gender) to the client's needs highlights the likelihood that there is no one standard or codified way that astrology can be used to address these issues. In a final estimation, it seems that it is up to astrologers and their clients to determine how the relationship between astrology, gender, and sexuality is to be functionally operated, seemingly on all accounts.

Conclusion

Following all that has been said, the apparent conclusion is perhaps a reaffirmation of what astrologers have already noted about the relationship between astrology and culture. In past examples, it seems all of Brady, Campion, Curry, Greene, Ruperti, and Sparkly Kat have hit upon something critical in their respective suggestions that astrology and its techniques are adaptable and predicated on historical and cultural context. Namely, there does not seem to be a consistent rule that defines how astrology can be used that applies in every case, as it has been and continues to be defined differently by nearly every astrologer and astrological tradition that attempts to define it, even among the participants in this study.

Subsequently, what seems most evident following our investigation is that astrology and its accompanying techniques are used in a way that is particular to the cultural context they are used to respond to. Further than that, it seems likely that this applies to individual contexts as well, especially following the research here that suggests that astrological techniques are inconsistent

among astrologers even in one contemporary period. What has also become clear is that astrological positions on gender and sexuality shift dramatically throughout the tradition. The evidence presented suggests that this is because gender and sexuality are discursive, and theories regarding their foundation and application are, like astrology, inconsistent and subjective to their contemporary contexts. Effectively, then, the study concludes that astrological positions on gender and sexuality are more appropriately, individual astrologers' positions, and are beholden to cultural and personal biases.

Furthermore, in the case of the historical record, where it seems that astrology can be viewed in terms of having either the power to uphold, or to challenge, sociocultural perceptions about gender and sexuality, it is essential to remember the positionality of the astrologers who seem to have control over the narrative. For example, one of the interviewees, who uses astrology as though it is a language, mentioned that, like English, there is a conservative use but also there are progressive uses of it too.' Accordingly, whether an astrologer uses astrology to uphold or challenge sociocultural notions about gender and sexuality speaks more to their values than it does to a necessary reality about the function of astrology and its relationship to broader cultural discourses on gender and sexuality.

In conclusion, there is an article by Liz Greene whose title speaks to the ultimate point here. It is called *Astrologers' Agendas: How We View Life is How We Read Charts*. Within, Greene explained just how critical personal and cultural biases are in an astrologer's application of astrological techniques. She writes that the way astrologers wield astrology is

> 'a reflection of the inherent temperament of the individual – [their] hopes, aspirations, personal histories, conflicts, fears, talents, and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious – and a reflection of the attitudes and perceptions that each of [them] brings to the story of [their] individual lives.'[151]

She concludes, as perhaps this study does that the astrological tradition is ultimately beholden to the opinions of the astrologers who write it. Moreover, as notions about gender and sexuality are a part of the cultural landscape that astrologers participate in, it should hold that astrological engagement with them can only be devised in the terms available to or popular among

[151] Liz Greene, 'Astrologers' Agendas: How We View Life is How We Read Charts' on *astro.com* (2008). [accessed 7 June 2021]

the astrologers in any given period. Thus, to rephrase Peter Clamp's suggestion, astrology likely does not hold a stance on gender and sexuality—astrologers, however, do.

Word Count: 15708

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Hello. My name is Dylan Coutts. I'm a queer astrologer currently pursuing my MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. This survey is a critical part of my dissertation on the intersections of gender, sexuality and astrology. The aim of my research is to develop an understanding of how and why astrological concepts become gendered and/or sexed - with particular attention to contemporary perceptions of gender and sexuality within historical astrological discourses. Anyone who considers themself an astrologer is welcome and encouraged to respond to this survey—regardless of gender identity or sexuality. Your responses to this questionnaire will help me get a better sense of how modern astrologers interact with issues of gender and sexuality in their work.

Please be advised that you may withdraw from the research at any time during the process and/or request that your results not be used in the final report. All questions herein are completely optional - you do not have to answer any question you don't want to. Within the study, all of your information will be referenced anonymously - none of your personal or identifying information will be published. Additionally, all information received will be kept in strict confidence.

Please feel free to reach out to me @ dylangeorgecoutts@gmail.com with any comments or concerns that may arise. I am also looking to conduct longer form interviews as part of the research - if this is of interest to you please reach out to me at that same address.

Thank you again!

How do you define your gender?
How do you define your sexuality?
How do you define your ethnicity?

How do you define the 'type' of astrology that you practice? (ex: traditional, psychological, queer, etc.)

Which describes the function of astrology best?

a. Language
b. Divinatory Practice
c. Psychological Tool
d. Science
e. Art
f. Religion
g. Other.

How did you learn about astrology?

To what degree does astrology reflect cultural values?
(on a scale of one to five)

Do you rely on gendered concepts in your astrological practice? (ex: the masculinity or femininity of the signs and planets)

a. Yes
b. No
c. Other

Why, or why not?

Can astrology be practiced without gendered concepts?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Other

Do astrological perceptions of gender change over time?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Other

What do the words 'masculine' and 'feminine' mean in an astrological context?

Which astrological planet(s) are masculine? (select all that apply)

a. Sun
b. Moon
c. Mercury
d. Venus
e. Mars
f. Jupiter
g. Saturn
h. Uranus
i. Neptune
j. Pluto
k. All
l. None
m. Other

Which astrological planet(s) are feminine? (select all that apply)

a. Sun
b. Moon
c. Mercury
d. Venus
e. Mars
f. Jupiter
g. Saturn
h. Uranus
i. Neptune
j. Pluto
k. All
l. None
m. Other

Why are more planets associated with masculinity than femininity in the traditional model of planetary gender?
(where the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are Masculine, and the Moon and Venus are Feminine)

True or False: It is important to redress the gender imbalance in the traditional model of planetary gender.

a. True
b. False

Is astrology influenced by dominant sociocultural theories on gender?
(on a scale of one to five)

Does a client's gender affect the way you interpret their natal chart?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Other

If so, how? / If not, why?

Does the way you experience gender influence your astrological practice?

If so, how? / If not, why?

What sources did you consult to learn about gender in an astrological context?

True or False: Sexuality can be read/predicted in a natal chart?

a. True
b. False

How often do you reference/discuss sexuality in your practice?
(on a scale of one to five)

How do you approach sexuality in your astrological practice?

Does a client's sexuality affect the way you interpret their natal chart?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Other