

A Tale of Two Doctors Part 2: Interview with Liz Greene

by Darrelyn Gunzburg

Liz Greene was Patrick Curry's first astrology teacher in the mid 1970s. Both of them gained their Ph.D.s early in their lives and, after making contact, veered off on different pathways. Now in 2004, their paths have crossed once more, only this time they are peers, co-teaching the Psychology module for the MA course at Bath Spa University College. What are their different styles of astrology, and how did they reach them? What is their philosophy regarding astrology? Where do they see astrology heading in the next decade?



*We complete this two-part interview with Dr. Liz Greene, one of the extraordinary names in the twentieth and this current century. Her early books, *Saturn* (1976), *Relating* (1978), and *The Astrology of Fate* (1984), almost single-handedly shaped modern psychological astrology and began a significant and substantial legacy of work which continues to explore the astrological perspectives of mythological and psychological states. I interviewed Liz at her home in Bath on June 29, 2004. Liz can be contacted at: www.astro.com.*

Darrelyn Gunzburg: Liz, looking backwards at your life, what initially steered you into the pathway that you've taken?

Liz Greene: I don't really know. Certainly, the impetus didn't come from my family, because they weren't involved in these sorts of areas, although both my parents were well read, and there were always a lot of books in the house. I think some of it came from needing to understand why I perceived things as I did. The library that my parents had was extremely valuable, because I stumbled onto Freud when I was twelve. I just pulled *The Interpretation of Dreams* off the shelf and read it and I can remember thinking, "I'm right! I'm not crazy after all." I am a vivid dreamer, and somehow I always knew dreams were important. The revelation of this unconscious side of people and their inability to see that their behaviour and their motives were actually affecting how they interacted, without their realising it, was something I seem to have always known but for which I couldn't really get a hearing. So, a lot of how I came upon this pathway was finding books that affirmed perceptions that I wasn't getting validated from school or from teachers or from my immediate environment. That drove me inside, and it drove me to look for understanding through what other people wrote, and that inevitably opened up the area of psychology and mystical and supernatural

phenomena, all of which fascinated me when I was quite young. I can't remember a time when it didn't, so this became an obvious way to go later.

I was fortunate in that my parents had books on mythology and fairy tales, and my mother used to read these to me when I was quite small. Whatever my parents might have done wrong, they gave me that great gift, for which I shall always be grateful. So, I already had a sense of "the story," and I used to write stories as far back as I can remember. But other than that, I think I just had a head full of "things" for which I had neither name nor language, and then it just became a question of finding languages that made sense of it all and would allow me to communicate. By the time I was eleven or twelve, I was convinced that people reincarnated. I was sure that there were such things as ghosts or resonances of some kind, and I always felt that there was another, hidden side of life that people weren't noticing. I painted – that was another outlet – and I found a lot of magic in nature; I still do. Writers and novelists have been working with this material for as long as people have been writing novels, so it isn't actually New Age at all. Shakespeare always fascinated me. I love plays, and Shakespeare is full of fate and the way that people conjure their fate. Greek tragedy always appealed to me. So, those ideas were available from places other than New Age sources. I got a lot of it from literature and from theatre.

DG: In terms of religion, in what kind of household were you raised?

LG: There was no heavy leaning on me to be religious in any orthodox sense. Both my parents believed in God; they had the ethical and moral framework, but without a strict doctrinal framework, so I was given a lot of freedom on that one.

My father was English. He was born in London, and he named me after the [current British] Queen, for my sins. *[laughs]* I was born in the United States and when I moved to England, I didn't have a British passport, but when I applied for one, I got one instantly. My mother's parents were from Vienna. Both my parents brought with them the values, images, cooking and languages from their own backgrounds. My grandparents spoke German, but I have a problem with the German language: I find it too harsh. However, I got my love of music from them – my love of Wagner and Strauss - so I grew up in a European culture. On one wall, of my parents' house, where my grandparents lived for a time, there was a picture of the Queen, and on another, there was a picture of the Emperor Franz-Josef, because my grandfather always felt that the worst thing that ever happened to Austria was that they got rid of the Hapsburgs. So, the energy in the house was not terribly American.

My father always regretted leaving England. He came from a large family, and they were extremely poor. His older brother went off to fight in the First World War and got killed. My father wanted to be an architect; he managed to get a scholarship to London University, but his parents said, no, we need you to work, and they wouldn't let him

go. He was enraged, so he just packed his bags and emigrated and never saw them again. The climate after the War was pretty horrible. There were no jobs. My father was exceedingly bitter because his favourite brother had been killed, and I think the whole thing just poisoned him. He wanted a new life and felt he couldn't get it by staying in London because the family were in London. I think he had the idea that somehow a great new life would be waiting for him in America, but it didn't work out that way. But by that time, he'd married my mother, so there he remained. He met my mother in America. They were both involved in political circles. They were both highly passionate Democrats and great admirers of [Franklin D.] Roosevelt, and I think they met at some kind of political gathering. But my father never became Americanized. He had his kippers in the morning and his Guinness in the evening. He was a deeply introverted and inarticulate man, but we understood each other. We weren't close in the conventional sense, but on another level I think we were extremely close.

My mother was frightened of the metaphysical arena. She didn't ever stop me from reading books about it, but she was a highly extroverted person, and the inner world scared her, so she just didn't want to talk about it. My father never said anything about metaphysical matters and I only found out much, *much* later, before he died, that he had been fascinated by those things all his life. So, possibly I got something from him by osmosis, because he certainly never spoke about it. There wasn't any resistance from my parents, but there certainly was from my schooling. I have only one sibling, Richard Leigh, a writer, who is also involved in the metaphysical realm. We were both "cuckoo's eggs," as Bernadette [Brady] puts it. Both Rich and I were given a really hard time at school. I don't know what American schooling is like now, so I can only comment on what it was like then. The school administration was quite obsessed with the idea of "normality," and that meant extroversion: You go out and join the team, and you play hockey and football. He and I both went right off the graph with our IQ scores. We were both introverted and rather strange, and as I preferred to read books or paint paintings or grow plants rather than play hockey (this was seen as "antisocial"), we got labelled as "TMA" – not *The Mountain Astrologer*, but Too Many Aptitudes. We were deemed "dangerous" because we had too many talents in too many areas. So, there were a lot of attempts to "fix" us so we would be normal, happy, American children. Fortunately, it was pre-Ritalin days, or no doubt we would have been medicated. Both of us were tough enough to tell the school psychologists and guidance counsellors where to get off, so we stubbornly remained what we were. This was McCarthy's America we were growing up in as children. Not a nice climate.

DG: Not nice at all. Can you see anything positive that came from it, apart from the toughness and the strength to say *no*?

LG: The one thing that I feel I got from growing up in America, which I wouldn't have got had I grown up in England, was the absence of a class system. I'm extremely grateful for not having been burdened psychologically with the enormously powerful

British social hierarchy, because I've seen it scar people here so badly. All that's happened in recent times is that the class system has inverted itself, so that the new upper class are the working class with a regional accent, and the new lower class are the well-spoken Oxford English. The hierarchy is deeply rooted here. Growing up in America you don't get that; you grow up believing that whatever you can make of yourself is what you're going to become, and for that I'm especially grateful.

I also got a good education. I started off with English Literature as my major, but that was under duress - it was my parents' choice. My choice would have been to go to art school. I had a mediocre talent as a painter, but a mediocre talent looks like a big talent in a small town. *[laughs]* Anyway, I thought I wanted to be an artist, and I probably would have done well in a branch of design of some kind, but that was not permitted. Also, I had won scholarships which were awarded on the basis of my choosing English Literature as a major. After a month I couldn't stand it, so I moved over to the Theatre Arts department, and my new major was Scenic and Costume Design, with a minor in Psychology. *That* I loved! Then, after a while, the psychology became more interesting, so I flipped it around. But initially, my aspirations were in the visual arts.

DG: On one level, it's almost like the blocking of your father's desire to do architecture expressed itself after all - consciously or unconsciously - through you studying Scenic and Costume Design.

LG: Everybody's got talents of some kind. The sad thing is that many people just never find them. They don't know where to look, or they're not given the encouragement. If you receive encouragement from your parents, then you will find your talents and pursue them. But I think talents are hereditary. I think an ability for design or gardening or cooking or relating or painting or music can be seen in birth charts as signatures coming down through families: All the women in the family have Moon-Uranus, or all the men in the family have Mars trine Neptune, or whatever. Those are talents. They're the signature of an aptitude or an ability which, if it's developed, could be made into something.

DG: Have you seen that reflected in your father's chart and in yours?

LG: Up to a point, yes. I'm sure I did get an ability for drawing or design from him, so I can't lay claim to it as "mine." We get these things as free gifts. If you can develop them, that's wonderful. If you can't, even if it's very mediocre talent, at least you can enjoy it as a hobby. I'm sure that I got some of my interest in visual design from him.

DG: I remember you saying to me, years ago, that you got your Ph.D. so you could say some of the things you wanted to say without being questioned.

LG: Well, by that time I'd already got into astrology, and taking a doctorate was a highly calculated, deliberate, cynical choice: "I'm fed up with people treating me like a lunatic. If I have these letters after my name, they'll think twice." Of course, I had to muzzle myself and produce work in a language that was acceptable to the university. The difference now is that you can do an MA or a doctorate at Bath Spa and study what you love, and admit that you love it. But in those days, you couldn't do that. So, it was a calculated choice.

DG: Are you saying you didn't enjoy it?

LG: I hated it. I would love to do another Ph.D. now, and I probably will. I'd love to do it at Bath Spa, because I think it would be so much fun. But getting my doctorate back then was unpleasant. The subject did interest me. My thesis was on "Hysteria, Self-Hypnosis, and Religious Miracle Cures," and that still interests me — how people go through extraordinary healing experiences from diseases that were questionable to start with and attribute the cure to a particular religion or prayer or saint's relic. Yet, healing of this kind seems to occur in every religion, so it obviously can't be one particular religion's name for God. So, what's the dynamic? That was what I was trying to explore in my thesis, but I couldn't do it in a way that really moved into the imaginal realm. I had to be rigorously clinical with it, which was irritating.

DG: Just going back a step, how did you get more involved with astrology, since I assume at that time there were no formal courses or teaching?

LG: Well, there were courses in England - the Faculty of Astrological Studies was already up and running at that time. There were astrologers teaching in the States, but they were isolated individuals; there were no real astrology schools. Books were available by Dane Rudhyar and Marc Edmund Jones, as well as British astrologers like Alan Leo, Charles Carter, and Margaret Hone. But the places you could go to learn astrology were more like initiation schools than the astrology schools we have now. There was something very secret and clannish and doctrinal about them, and they always came with a religious package. You had to be a Rosicrucian or a Theosophist. I was in Boston at the time, and someone took me to see Isabel Hickey, who was running a small class there. Isabel was a foaming-at-the-mouth Theosophist, deeply steeped in Theosophical teaching, so her astrology came with that package. She demanded that her students take up those beliefs, which may be one of the reasons I didn't last very long. We did not hit it off, and in the end, I didn't wind up learning any astrology from her. Instead, she made me so angry that I went and bought every book I could find and taught myself. She was a great spur for me. Anger is often an extremely good way to get moving. A lot of people passed through Isabel's doors. Howard Sasportas went to her classes, and so did Darby Costello. We never met each other there, because we attended at different times. But we all passed through Isabel Hickey's portals.

With hindsight I'm incredibly grateful for how things turned out. If I had had the sort of nature that was looking for a guru, I would have become a Theosophical astrologer and a clone of Isabel, and I would never have developed my own observations and experimentation in the way I did. I didn't know of any other teachers, so I started exploring on my own and went on like that until it was far too late to find a teacher. I started teaching astrology when I was 19 years old. I'd never thought of doing such a thing. I'd only been studying for a couple of years when a class appeared whose teacher had vanished over the horizon. They had somehow heard that I was an astrologer but I didn't see myself as "an astrologer." I was stumbling along, trying to make sense of the astrology I was learning and along came these students, about a dozen of them. They said, "We heard you were a teacher. Could you come and teach us?" Jupiter was transiting right on my Sun-Midheaven, and I remember thinking at the time, "Don't be an idiot. You don't know anything." I also have a deep ambivalence about getting up in front of a group. It always paralyzes me with terror. But something else inside said, "Just shut up and do it," so I shut up and did it. I found that it was great fun, because I discovered what I knew from the questions people asked me. A lot of astrology students are always waiting for the day when they're going to be ready to do charts or when they feel they know enough to teach. There is no such day. I think we always know a great deal more than we realise, and it takes somebody else asking, "What does this mean?" Then you have to dig inside, and suddenly you draw on things that you've noticed but haven't put together before. The mechanism of learning is often stimulated by someone else thinking you have something to teach them.

DG: So, when did you decide to leave the States?

LG: I always wanted to leave. When I was a child, I knew I wanted to leave. I grew up in a European household, and I was not happy in the culture of the world outside. I felt I would fit better in Europe, where introverts are not deemed to be socially maladjusted and intellectuals are not deemed to be dangerous. As far back as I can remember, I knew America wasn't my place. What I'm seeing in America now is a rising up of what I met in the '50s. It's Joe McCarthy all over again, but with different scapegoats. This current Administration is simply turning the clock back.

Sometimes, I feel there are two Americas. There's the Puritan America which is always lurking underneath, waiting for its chance, and there's the liberal, tolerant, open-minded, intelligent America which tends to be located in sophisticated cities — with a vast country in between. This second America sometimes manages to get a foothold, which it did in the early '60s under Kennedy. I think it's a pity that Bill Clinton was so vilified, because he was actually a good president. It's not of interest to me where a politician puts his genital equipment; it doesn't have anything to do with how well he does his job. But the U.S. was founded by Puritans, and there's something in the collective psyche which keeps reverting back to those values. Even if they temporarily

go into eclipse, they're always waiting for their chance, and they went for Clinton. You have to fight all the time to break free of it.

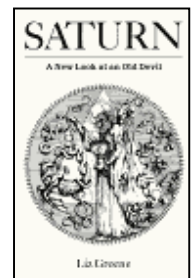
DG: Are you able to suggest a solution, astrological or otherwise?

LG: I don't know what could help now, except to get George Bush out. But he is an elected President. Of course there's an argument that he *isn't* but more or less half the country voted for him. It's not as though he was a dictator who took over against everyone's wishes. People elect their leaders. Everyone here whinges about Tony Blair. Well, we elected him, for heaven's sake. Some of us knew better, but most didn't. He won by a landslide. I moved to Switzerland just before the general election, partly because I knew what was coming. Everyone believed Blair was the new Messiah, who could walk on water. I thought, "Give them half a Neptune transit in Aquarius, and they'll work it out." Blair was the Great Hope — everyone was convinced they were going to have a wonderful, equal society. Well, it isn't equal now any more than it was when he was elected, and in fact it's become a great deal worse. No matter how well-meaning people are, it takes a most unusual and extraordinary individual not to be corrupted by power, and Tony Blair is not particularly extraordinary.

I don't have any solutions for these kinds of problems. Perhaps, if a bit more alertness, consciousness, and individual responsibility were demonstrated at the next U.S. and British elections, then some of the damage might be undone. I don't know whether the available candidates have the capacity to undo the damage. Really fine leaders don't come along every generation. And predicting election results is not my area of astrology, anyway.

DG: Did you write *Saturn* at your Saturn return?

LG: No, it got published at my Saturn return, right on the button, but I started writing it 18 months earlier. Everything I write is much more rewarding if I'm struggling with it or not knowledgeable enough about it. Then, if I teach or write about that subject, it forces me to do research and learn, and there's more energy and satisfaction in that than writing about something I already know a lot about. I wrote *Saturn* in an effort to try to understand the planet better.



I've never in my life done a goals-by-objective effort, except for my doctorate. Writing *Saturn* was more like, "I think I'll try this, it looks interesting." And then there was a book. I thought, "Well, what do you do with a book? I know: I'll go to my library, and I'll look at all the astrology books I really like and see who's published them. The chances are that somebody who's published the kind of astrology books I've enjoyed reading might be interested in this one." The publisher turned out to be Samuel Weiser Inc, so I sent them the



manuscript with a letter that said, "Would you be interested in this?" I was a bit like the Fool at the beginning of the Tarot cycle, blithely ready to walk over the edge of the cliff. Then, I thought, "I'll do a cover for them." So I did a pen-and-ink drawing and sent that off, and lo and behold, they put it on the cover. I was extremely fortunate to have met Donald and Betty Weiser. The next book I sent to them was *Relating*, and since then Weiser have published virtually all my books, except the volumes published by the CPA Press [Centre for Psychological Astrology] seminar volumes – although now they're called Red Wheel/Weiser and are under different management.

DG: It fascinated me when you told me that you had worked in the music industry for Shelter Records, organizing the European tour for Freddie King, the blues singer and guitarist. Where did that fit in?

LG: Nothing fits in! *[smiles]* In the early '70s, I was working as a professional astrologer and also practicing psychotherapy. One of my astrological clients was an English record producer called Denny Cordell, who had produced Procul Harum and Joe Cocker and had just finished the infamous "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" tour. Denny had met a singer called Leon Russell and wanted to know about the viability of the two of them setting up a record label in California. I did their synastry and



Denny Cordell Lavarack (1943 – 1995)

encouraged them to go ahead, and then I heard nothing from them for a couple of years. During that time, I was not happy working as a psychotherapist – I was too young and I felt trapped by the work - and I



couldn't really make a living as an astrologer. I am completely unsuited to doing "proper" nine-to-five office work, so I was in a quandary. I wanted to work as an astrologer, but I needed something to supplement my income. But it had to be something that wouldn't kill my soul. One day, I turned the radio on and out blasted "Roll Away the Stone," which was Leon Russell's first big hit. This was followed by some patter about Shelter Records and Denny Cordell. My ears pricked up, and I thought: "Hello, they went and did it, just as I suggested. I'll ring Denny Cordell and ask him to give me a job." And that's what I did. It was the start of a wonderful two years of rock 'n' roll, which I needed to get out of my system. My love of the theatre was, I suppose, the same thing that got me into the record industry. It was a magic world at that time - artists were expected to have talent and were not created by a publicity machine. I used to do

the charts for prospective artists that Denny was thinking of signing on the label. I also did charts for the staff, when problems arose between them.

DG: What an insightful man!

LG: Oh, Denny was marvellous, quite an extraordinary man. It was through him that I got to Europe for the first time. I came to London on a company business trip and thought, "I've come home." Then, I began working out a way of getting over here permanently. I tried to convince Denny to open a London office, but he wasn't prepared to do it at that point, so in the end I just emigrated. I continued to see Denny every couple of years, on and off, until he died.

All these different things – studying set and costume design at university and working for summer stock theatres, doing the academic bit, doing the record business bit – I'm so glad that I tried all these things, because they've been such wonderful experiences from which I've learned so much. They're different dimensions of life which I think are extraordinarily enriching. In no way have I ever regretted following that extremely circuitous path, without any clear idea of where I was going at all except to do the next thing that seemed interesting. The connecting thread has always been my love of astrology, but otherwise there is no order or logic in it.

DG: And after that?

LG: I'd been reading Jung all the way through my education, although I couldn't bring him into my university work – he was not deemed "scientific" enough. When I moved to England, the first thing I did was to train at the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology with Ian Gordon Brown and Barbara Somers. This was excellent, but in the end I felt that I was not getting enough emphasis on the clinical side of psychotherapeutic work. Both sides of the psychological spectrum have always seemed to me to have half the truth. Transpersonal psychology and good old nitty-gritty childhood dustbin stuff are both part of us, and I was missing the clinical side. My university education was minimal in terms of psychotherapeutic training. So, I decided to do a Jungian training. I felt that this would properly qualify me, and I would get a good basis for depth psychotherapeutic work. I finished my analytic training in 1983, and then for many years I practiced as an analyst as well as working as an astrologer.

I got my Diploma from the Faculty of Astrological Studies before I wrote *Saturn*. I did that as soon as I came to England. I'm very assiduous about getting bits of paper, because they're so very handy. Also, I wanted to fill in the gaps in my knowledge. I had to do a lot of refurbishing and relearning before I took the Faculty exam.

DG: So, there really is value in doing exams, because you realise what you don't know and you can then fill in the gaps.

LG: I do feel that it's a mistake not to subject oneself to testing of some kind. Even though I said I hated doing the Ph.D., I don't regret having done it, apart from the value of the bit of paper. It forced me to think in ways that were unfamiliar and uncomfortable, which is not a bad thing. This is why I think the course at Bath Spa is so valuable. Astrologers are usually extremely intuitive. They have a feeling for symbols - that's why they go into astrology, that's why they love it, that's why they're good at it. But it's easy to be sloppy in your thinking and make a lot of assumptions. We don't ask enough questions of ourselves: "How did I come to this conclusion? What's the philosophy I'm bringing to it?" We know so little about our own art. A lot of astrologers say that exams can't test whether you're a good astrologer. Perhaps not. But they can test whether you know that you're a good astrologer, and they can test areas where you actually have to use your brain. Intuition alone is not enough. The Faculty course is a superb course and I think their Diploma is of real value. It's worth making the effort to get it, if for no other reason than that it makes you aware of what you don't know. It forces you to think. Best of all, it forces you to frame what you think you know in a language that someone else can understand.

DG: What drew you to Bath Spa after living in Switzerland for so long? I mean, I know you were thinking of moving back to England anyway.

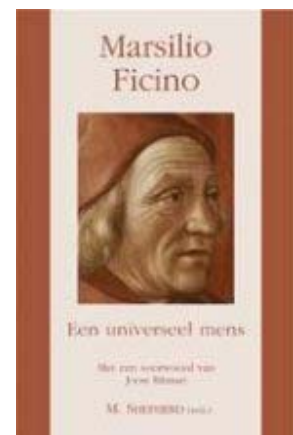
LG: It was ... I wanted to say "chance," but we both know there's no such thing as chance. But it looked like chance. I wanted to come back to England, and then it was a question of where. I had been living in London for many years, and then I moved to a village outside Oxford, which was a ghastly mistake - partly because of the village but also because Oxford is a difficult place. It's a beautiful city, but its life is divided. There's the university, and there are the car factories - and little in between. They call the division "town and gown." The academic mentality at Oxford is extremely narrow and closed. They can't cope with a psychoanalyst, never mind an astrologer, and I experienced incredible rudeness from Oxford dons - really gross rudeness, in terms of their reactions to anything other than their own little world. On the other side of Oxford it was, "Let's go home and have a couple of pints of lager and watch *East Enders* [a TV soap about the everyday lives of predominantly working-class, often interrelated, families living in a fictitious borough of London's East End]." Oxford was clearly the wrong place for me. I already had a pied-à-terre in London, but I didn't want to live there again, because it's so choked up. I need to look out the window and see something beautiful. I can't look out the window and see the brick wall of somebody else's block of flats. In the end, it had to be somewhere outside London, somewhere beautiful but where I could get on a train and come into London fairly easily. The obvious choice was Bath, made all the more attractive because I love Roman archaeology and Roman history. If the Romans were here, it must be okay. So, I decided on Bath before the university course had even begun.

By the time I actually moved, the Sophia Project was fully up and running. But I didn't really know much about it at first. Then Nick [Campion] and Patrick [Curry] asked if I would like to give a class, as a kind of trial run. I like the format within which I'm working now at Bath Spa. I'm a part-time lecturer, so I don't have to deal with any administration. I'm not a good administrator. When it comes to running the CPA, Juliet [Sharman-Burke] does all the administrative work, bless her – if it wasn't for her, the CPA wouldn't exist. But I have the pleasure of being able to teach.



DG: What do you feel you are gaining from being at Bath Spa?

LG: I have to learn new things and stretch my brain. Instead of “how to” astrology (“Today we’re going to do a seminar on Jupiter. Jupiter in the first house means ...”), I have to learn about what Marsilio Ficino thought about Jupiter and why, or how the Greco-Roman astrologers understood the difference between soul and body, or why Thrasyllus, the Roman astrologer who edited Plato’s works, doctored the dialogues and rearranged them as he did. I have to explore the history of the ideas behind the astrology which we work with now. I find this incredibly exciting. It gives me an excuse to go back and be a student again. I have to do a lot of work to prepare for these classes. I can’t waffle, because the students are sharp and challenge me, so it’s making me develop my thinking. Doing charts and teaching astrology involves learning, too, but in a different way. The Bath Spa course gets me into learning about things that I wouldn’t otherwise be able to justify spending time learning about. It’s so much fun. It also appeals to my sense of mischief. Here we are in the middle of a university, and look at what we’re doing! I find it a hoot, because the astrological community has always had a chip on its collective shoulder about academics. Most astrologers are on the run from academia. These are the great gods of the establishment, and we’re either defensive and reject them entirely or we’re pleading, “Please take me seriously, I’m really not crazy,” and subjecting ourselves to a lot of abuse. That’s one of the reasons I got my bits of paper. If an academic says, “What a load of rubbish!” I can reply, “Well, actually, if I want the opinion of an academically trained mind which can assess this material objectively, I’ll ask myself.” And now, thanks to the Sophia Project, we can all do that. The course is healing a lot of the feelings of inferiority in the astrological community.



The course is also training us to communicate in a language that other academics understand. The academic world is not merely a monolith of intolerance. There are some extremely interesting and intelligent people who would like to know more, but

because we can't articulate astrology in language other than our own jargon, they don't grasp what we're on about. Yet, if ideas from the astrological world can be communicated in a language academics can understand, they're extremely interested. This has been our failing, not theirs. This is why the Methodology Module is so valuable at Bath Spa. Even though everyone hates it and jumps up and down kicking and screaming, we're learning how to communicate with people who are coming from a different mind-set and discovering how to meet them halfway. That is immensely valuable.

DG: There is a bit of a divide in the astrological community about university courses in astrology, isn't there?

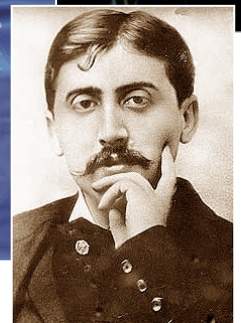
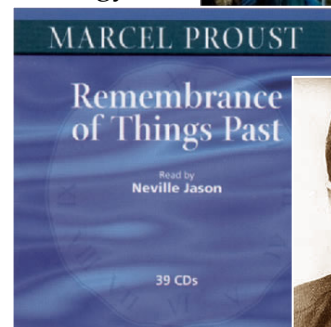
LG: There is. Many astrologers can't see the point and resent all this sudden emphasis on academic work. They say, "It doesn't make you a good astrologer." There is some truth in that. Being "a good astrologer," whatever that means, requires many skills, many of which cannot be taught in a university. But there is sometimes a kind of laziness in our thinking and in our ability to articulate what we know in ordinary English. We don't know enough about the history of our subject or the different philosophies that have helped to shape it. We don't understand, from an objective perspective, the particular philosophy that any individual astrologer espouses, and we don't know enough about allied areas like the arts and literature. There's a kind of fundamentalism in many astrologers: "Keep astrology pure, we don't need to know anything else." But we can't separate astrology from anything else. It's a universal language, and therefore it deals in universals. How are you going to translate the language if your perceptions are so narrow that they're locked in a little box? You can have an intuition or a feeling about a planetary placement, but how are you going to explain this to the client if you can't even put sentences together properly? I am totally in favour of rigorous mental training. I think we need it, as a community. It has something to do with being able to observe your own thinking processes – and understanding and formulating how you came to that conclusion. There's so much that we need to know, and we never stop learning. But we also have to know *how* to learn. We have to use our minds in a certain way in order to learn. It's an active process, not passive, and not enough astrologers make the effort to do that.

Astrology is such a beautiful language, but it's easy to get lazy with it, both in thinking and in communicating. You get around a bunch of astrologers, and someone says, "How are you today?" and someone else replies: "Oh, Saturn's on my Moon." We all think we know what that means, but each person might mean something quite different by it. Psychologists get lazy with their jargon, too. They lose the ability to communicate to a person who's not versed in that jargon. Also, I really can't bear the massacre of the English language. Language is a remarkable thing, and to be able to use language well is a wonderful gift. It's like anything else: The more you respect it, the more you can create with it. When I look at the truly awful grammar and spelling and

impoverishment of vocabulary amongst many astrologers, it saddens me. It's almost as though the language is being lost. It's true that the media are dumbing us down, and astrology is in danger of being dumbed down as well. Our concentration spans are getting smaller and smaller. We want "sound bites" instead of extended discussion and debate. We will read a novel if it's 92 pages, but not if it's 600.

DG: Unless it's J. K. Rowling.

LG: [nods] Unless it's J. K. Rowling or *The Lord of the Rings* - and even *The Lord of the Rings* is proving too difficult for some. But how many astrologers will read Proust or Mann? Okay, maybe these particular authors are not everybody's cup of tea, but we sadly neglect the wealth of literature we have available to enhance our understanding of human nature. I sometimes read the feedback that comes to the Astrodienst Web site guestbook, and the spelling is often atrocious. Some astrologers can't even spell Jupiter. They don't even write coherent sentences. They write something that looks like a text message. This really upsets me. Our level of literacy needs to be high. Otherwise, we cannot understand, let alone communicate, the wealth of riches in our symbology. Bath Spa is a place where people have to sit down and write proper papers about astrology, with sentences and full stops and commas in the right places, and correct footnotes, and sources properly credited and listed, and things like *ibid* and *op. cit.* You might well ask, "What good does it do an astrologer to know what *op. cit.* means?" It doesn't do any good, on the literal level. But, like learning Latin, it exercises the muscles between your ears.



DG: So, Liz, how do you see astrology being shaped by this academic training and expressing itself over the next decade?

LG: In a few years' time, the way people express astrology is going to be quite different. It's already mobilizing the British astrological community in extremely positive ways. In this country, the nasty backbiting and professional envy that have riddled the astrology schools here – and in every other country – are beginning to be put aside in favour of a larger goal. We have realized that we are actually a community, and the development of our understanding and communication skills as astrologers is more important than our petty infighting. Something quite remarkable is starting to happen: We are creating unity whilst still respecting diversity. That alone is worth its weight in gold.

DG: Liz, thank you so much for making the time available for this interview. We wish you all the best for a successful, enjoyable, and fruitful time at Bath Spa, whichever way you shape it – or it shapes you.

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For details of the Master's Degree in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University College, go to www.bathspa.ac.uk/sophia/ or e-mail the administrator, Alice Ekrek:

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