

Feminist/ Spin-ster/ Amazon: Mary Daly

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Feminist/ Spin-ster/ Amazon: Mary Daly

Mary, Mary always contrary, your labrys-wielding book, *Gyn/Ecology* rocked my world. Many years ago, as a becoming-academic, your puns, capitalizations, neologisms and broken/up words provoked laughter, outrage, incredulity and recognition. Your wor(l)dings spoke to my brain-heart-body of new modes of Be-ing and whispered a wanderlust to my feet to go find a sisterhood of self-identified powerful women who spin their own future from the joys of their creative imaginings. Your radical feminist analysis of patriarchal practices – footbinding, suttee, female genital mutilation, witchburning, and psychiatry – named and narrated global injustices against the bodies and minds of women. You called your critique of patriarchy, misogyny and sexism a work of ‘exorcism’ which un/covered the many ways that the Male Maze of Patriarchy freezes women’s passions, subdues their energies, and mutilates their minds.

And so, you urged women to become Spin-sters – that is, un/surprisingly, women who spin. Spinning, you said, was a rich and cosmic verb, a partaking of/in the whirling movement of creation, a mode of Journeying into/through/beyond the implanted pseudodichotomies of self/other, self/world, thought/action. Spinning is thought-action which integrates bodyminds. Don’t be a Daddy’s Girl, you said, meaning Athena born from the head of Zeus, who did the patriarchs’ dirty work for them by pinning Medusa’s head on her shield. Be an Amazon, you said, be an A-mazing Amazon, reclaim words, weave worlds, spin texts. Re/member that *texere* is the Latin of both textile and text, so go spin the threads of connectedness, weave a cosmic tapestry. Use your Voyaging Energy, you said, to be a Harpy, a Fury, to write a Crone-ology, a Hag-iography, of and for women who rage and roar against patriarchal culture.

You are mostly forgotten now. A white, second wave, radical, separatist, Lesbian, feminist who divided the world into women and men – women *versus* men – and passed over the white, academic privilege that sustained you. You spoke of ‘us’ and ‘we’, asserted ‘woman’ as universal essence, and thought you could speak ‘for’ all women. The argument with Audre Lorde proved you couldn’t and shouldn’t try to.

Despite what I now know about the limitations of your work, I am still fond of your way with words, your rampaging intellectualism and, most of all, your ‘up yours’ to all and every manifestation of patriarchy. Back then, *Gyn/Ecology* rocked my world, showing how being feminist-doing feminism is about moving beyond the dull, dead and boring methodolatory of patriarchy, and into a space-time in which knotting is magic and spinning is celebration of Life. Mary Daly (1928 – 2010) RIP. *Rage in Potentia*.

Daly, M. (1978) *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethcis of Radical Feminism*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press.