

thousand years ago, as the spearhead of *proto-science* at the time, and even though astrology was still taught as a university subject in the 18th century CE – already a few centuries ago astrology as a branch of systematic knowledge production detached itself, as a self-contained and self-referential system, entirely from the collective, critical and academically managed, disciplinary canons of the theory and method of science. In Barthes' characterisation of astrology today:

'Elle sert à exorciser le réel en le nommant. (...) L'astrologie est la littérature du monde petit-bourgeois.'³⁸⁹

Astrology thus could be (but is not...) a good example of what in Guattari's terminology would be called *detritorialisation* (perhaps to be translated as 'uprootedness?'): *a closed system that does not, or does no longer, produce knowledge for freedom.*

L. MODERN ASTROLOGY AS DETERRITORIALISED IN GUATTARI'S SENSE? In my book *Intercultural encounters* (van Binsbergen 2003: ch. 7), I cast doubt upon such an argument. I do this, not by attributing any direct veridicity to the proclaimedly professional procedures of modern astrology *per se*, but by describing how a professional astrologist in practice seems to arrive at his or her pronouncements. Under the appearance of astronomical, unequivocal exactitude, a plethora of astrological 'planets' including Sun, Moon, Earth, and merely mathematically defined points such as Lunar Nodes and Midheaven, activate a network of extremely complex and usually massively contradictory correspondences. This produces such a 'superabundance of understanding' (*cf.* Werbner 1973) that, in the absence of any consistent and unequivocal result, the astrologist, making creative use of the many degrees of freedom which the astrological system allows for (so much for *detritorialisation!*), actively designs a selective compromise of contradictions, in which that astrologer's own knowledge and intuition about the client and the latter's situation prevail in such a way that the final pronouncement strikes that client as revealing and relevant, positively inspiring further action. (This does sound as Guattari!) There also, on the basis of my practice of 25 years as an effective and successful African diviner, I have initiated an argument that in subsequent years has gradually taken more definite shape (*cf.* Chapter 14 of the present volume; and van Binsbergen, *Sangoma Science, in preparation*): a central implication of modern quantum mechanics is that there is an inextricable threesome consisting of (1) our measurement results, (2) ourselves as experimenters, and (3) the world, therefore our thought is actively and in the most literal sense *world-creating* – *the world (which is protean beyond human understanding anyway) may, to a considerable extent, turn to us the face that corresponds with the mindset in which we approach it*; if our mindset is that of nineteenth-century CE (*i.e.* Newtonian, pre-quantum and pre-relativity) natural science, astrology can only return results that appear to us illusory and meaningless, but if we approach the world with the mindset of astrologers of the Ancient Near East or the European Renaissance, the world may turn to us that particular face that is more or less in line with the assumptions of astrology. And, as I found in my own divinatory practice over the years, the same can be said of African geomantic divination, where much to my surprise and contrary to all my expectations as a highly trained social scientist and expert statistician, my divination usually turned out to be veridical.

In the course of the last three centuries, science and technology have totally transformed the world (especially North Atlantic society and its worldwide socio-

³⁸⁹ Barthes 1957: 168; *cf.* van Binsbergen 2003b: 244.