

# **CALL FOR PAPERS**

## **For an international conference on**

### **Women and Spirituality**

**LERMA, Université d'Aix-Marseille,  
in collaboration with Queen Mary University, London,**

**to be held in Aix-en-Provence, France, 12-13 June 2009.**

This conference, focusing on the English-speaking world, will explore the complex relationships between women and spirituality. Culturally defined by their gender, women occupy an ambiguous place both at the centre and on the margins of the spiritual sphere. Such ambivalence is palpable in the Judeo-Christian heritage, where virginity and motherhood are valued respectively as badges of purity and fruitfulness, whilst the biological processes which underlie them are considered taboo or impure. Throughout history, women are in turn represented as inferior, defective creatures or as privileged 'empty vessels' in their relationship with the divine. This dual conception of the nature of woman has influenced the way in which religious institutions, learned writers, or indeed women themselves came to consider the female relationship with the divine.

We will explore spirituality as a broad concept, of which religions are a crucial, visible part but which can also take a variety of pagan or secular forms. Studies of various aspects of female mysticism, wisdom or contemplation will therefore be appreciated.

This multi-disciplinary conference welcomes papers belonging, amongst others, to the fields of history, literature and the history of arts. Studies offering a comparative analysis with France will be gladly considered, as will any papers exploring such themes as:

- The position of religious institutions and religious authorities towards women
  - Female spirituality and the construction of a religious orthodoxy
  - Accounts of female spirituality (autobiographies, diaries, hagiographies, eulogies ...)
  - Feminist perspectives, re-membering the history of women's spirituality
  - The historiography of female spirituality
  - Female bodies and female spiritualities
- Women and spirituality in fiction and the visual arts

Proposals (approx. 400 words) to be sent to Dr Laurence Lux-Sterritt ([laurence.sterritt@univ-provence.fr](mailto:laurence.sterritt@univ-provence.fr)) and Dr Claire Sorin ([clairesorin@hotmail.com](mailto:clairesorin@hotmail.com)) before 15 November 2008. Languages spoken at the conference will be English and French; papers will not exceed 25 minutes each.