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## THE HERBST NEWSLETTER

astrological-cultural-spiritual-political views & opinions

--- Thoughts, dates, and reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness ---

Issue #105; December 2008

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Dear friends,

This is my first newsletter in almost a year. By now, many of you know what happened to me. Some of you may not know. In November, 2007, I suffered a severe hemorrhagic stroke, meaning that a blood vessel ruptured in my brain. That life-threatening health breakdown plunged me into a series of crises that shaped the past year and continues to this day. Needless to say, it's a long story, which I've shared in installments on the home page of my web site: <http://www.billherbst.com/>.

The bad news is that the stroke left me crippled. I'm in constant, chronic pain (of a type called Central Pain Syndrome that is unresponsive to drugs), and I'm unable to walk easily or very far. The good news is that my consciousness and speech were unaffected by the stroke. I'm still able to live independently and take care of myself.

And so, while my health will no doubt continue to be vulnerable, it's time for me to get back to work doing what I'm passionate about: astrological readings with private clients and public writing about these amazing times in which we live. That great and difficult collective adventure has finally begun.

--Bill Herbst

## Commentary: **THE FIRST DOMINO TO FALL**

Numerous readers of past newsletters have emailed me these past months to ask how it felt to have predicted the current financial collapse. My response is that I'm not really concerned with making predictions *per se*; I merely report what I understand from the astrology I study. The discipline is to be an accurate reporter, even when the events I describe haven't yet occurred.

Times of radical change do not emerge out of nothing. They have precedents, precursors, or foreshadowing in real events and movements that question, confront, or destabilize the status quo, often many years before critical mass is reached. The radical period we think of as the 1960s did not erupt fully until the middle of that decade, but the way was paved by the Beats of the late 1950s, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Cuban Missile Crisis of the early 1960s. As important as those were, however, they didn't by themselves achieve critical mass. The sense of irrevocable change with no possibility of going back took hold of the collective only with John Kennedy's assassination in 1963. From that point on, the die was cast.

40 years later, we are headed into another amazing, turbulent decade. And like the 1960s, the radical 2010s have their precursors as well. In the initial years of the 21st century, four events served as foreshadowing: the attacks of 9/11 in 2001, two subsequent invasions in Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2003) that bogged down into painfully extended wars with no clear outcomes even today, and the drowning of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. All these served as warm-ups for what was to come.

The critical mass point-of-no-return arrived in March, 2008, when Bear Stearns--- a venerable, blue chip investment bank---suddenly went belly up. Other financial services giants would follow as the credit system seized up and shut down. Reasons initially cited for the lockup of credit and cascading defaults were the sub-prime mortgage crisis and later the more general breakdown of a byzantine set of highly-leveraged debt instrument packages called derivatives, but the roots of the current crisis go back further and run much deeper. [I'll have much more to say about that in future newsletters.]

Whatever the causes, the past eight months have brought a sudden and unexpected collapse of the entire banking system in a stunning crisis, the likes of which are unprecedented in American history. Trillions of dollars of dubious "value" have vanished into thin air, without even a puff of smoke to mark their departure.

Having begun at the very top of the financial food chain, in the boardrooms and cubicles of Wall Street firms, the ripple effect of that collapse is now working its way down to reverberate at the base, where the rest of us live and toil. The hubris of Wall Street will wreak terrible havoc on Main Street. The foreclosure crisis is not over by a long shot: Millions of Americans "own" homes where the market value is significantly less than their mortgages, and no one seems to know who the final mortgage holders are. No bottom is yet visible in the housing market. As the credit system failed, the equity markets tanked. 401Ks and retirement IRAs are down 30%, 50%, even 70%. Foreign markets are even more devastated as the black hole of deflation takes bite after voracious bite. The interconnectedness of a global economy carries consequences; this is already a global meltdown.

[While composing this commentary, I noticed the proliferation of "de-" words: *deleveraging, decoupling, deflation, default, devalue, departure, devastation, debacle, destruction* and---last but hardly least---*debt*. The prefix "de" means removal, reduction, reversal, separation, or negation. The word *debt* comes down to us from *dé-habére*: "to have not." Interesting, eh? Another of those times when words ooze meaning.]

Meanwhile, Paulson, Bernanke, and the Federal Reserve central bank run the printing presses around the clock, cranking out billions (trillions?) of fiat dollars to bail out Wall Street's con artists. When the deflationary phase of losses finally unwinds, the economy will be whipsawed into stagflation---a combination of stagnant economics plus fiscal hyperinflation, which will take down the dollar as sure as shootin'. When that happens, prepare for oil, gas, and food to shoot up in price to unimagined levels. People will die---no one you know, perhaps, but real human beings nonetheless. They'll die of starvation, lack of medical care, and sometimes from despair. What's happening is not merely tragic; it's criminal.

Astrology didn't provide many of those details. The archetype field indicated only that large and powerful social institutions in business and government were headed for breakdown and collapse through accumulated executive mismanagement resulting in sudden and compounding losses of economic viability and/or fiscal integrity. An ironic caveat was implied---"The bigger they are, the harder they'll fall." In addition, astrology told us when to expect that unraveling process to begin in earnest: 2008, the first year of critical mass. That's what the symbols indicated, and that's what I reported in newsletters.

## Three Saturn Cycles

Thus far in the 21st century, Saturn has past through oppositions to two of the three outer planets, meaning that its cycles with each of those two bodies

reached the halfway point. This implies full manifestation in harvest---literally, reaping what we had sowed earlier, during the beginning phases of the cycles.

From August 2000 through May 2003 (using 10° orbs), Saturn was opposite Pluto on the Gemini-Sagittarius axis. The Saturn-Pluto cycle, from 31-38 years long, brings a harsh ruthlessness in confrontation through the blunt use of raw power. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon occurred then, as well as the U.S. retaliatory invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, all of which had their roots in the early days of the cycle during the 1980s, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and the U.S. supported the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Saddam Hussein.

From August 2005 through June 2008, Saturn moved opposite Neptune on the Leo-Aquarius axis. The 36-year Saturn-Neptune cycle spawns collective dreams, visions, and fantasies. Some of these cross-fertilize with reality to change life (and us) for the better; others eventually prove to be toxic and destructive to reality, in which case we eventually have to pay the piper for our folly. New Orleans was drowned by Hurricane Katrina during this period, and the E-Z credit subprime mortgage crisis of massive defaults and bankruptcies geared up as the housing bubble was punctured. The economic and financial good times begun during the cycle's early days in the 1990s turned out to be the unsustainable product of toxic fantasies. Little did we realize in 2007 just how venomous they had become.

Now, Saturn is completing the third leg of this cosmic triffecta by opposing Uranus on the Virgo-Pisces axis as Pluto moves into Capricorn. The Saturn-Uranus cycle, 44 years on average, juxtaposes the traditional versus the revolutionary, the conservative versus the progressive, and old versus young. The cycle is not raw, blunt, and violent like Saturn-Pluto, not dreamy, idealistic, or anesthetized like Saturn-Neptune, but instead sudden, unexpected, and often unpredictable in its manifestations, provoking changes in our shared perceptions about what constitutes legitimate authority and reasonable servitude. This is when the public is roused from its slumbering passivity into active civil disobedience. Over the next three years, more and more people will notice that certain laws seem bankrupt of authority. Sometimes they'll formally challenge such questionable rules; other times, they'll simply stop obeying what they see as bogus.

Both previous transits were three-pass events, meaning that Saturn was exactly opposite Pluto and Neptune three times each (moving forward, then apparently moving backward in retrograde motion, and finally moving forward again). Three passes are standard fare for multi-pass astrological events. The Saturn-Uranus opposition, however, is a five-pass transit, adding significantly to its symbolic portent as well as lengthening its duration, from October 2007 through August

2011. All this presages the phenomenally rare seven-passes of Uranus at first-quarter square to Pluto, the first of which is already within wide orb and will reach its partile 90° angle in June 2012.

## The Devolution of Reverse Order

In the symbolic hierarchy of astrology, we proceed from the inner planets, which were known throughout antiquity, to the more-recently-discovered outer planets. Uranus was discovered in the late-18th century, Neptune in the mid-19th, and Pluto in the early-20th century, so their symbolism is naturally progressive: As planets beyond the limits of reality-significator Saturn, Uranus provides the jolt of revolutionary challenge to the status quo, Neptune takes that challenge a step further with the envisioning of a transcendent oneness that re-integrates the status quo, and Pluto completes the transfiguration by destroying the hollow shell of the old and now thoroughly used-up status quo, plowing it under, as it were, into compost to fertilize new seeds of life.

The "natural" evolutionary sequence is to awaken and challenge, then to transcend and merge, and finally to destroy and rebirth.

The Cosmos explores every possibility, however, often leaving no stone unturned in the alchemical application of creativity to universal process. So, in our recent and ongoing sequence of Saturn cycles relative to the outer planets, the heavens have moved in **reverse order**: first, the destructiveness of the Saturn-Pluto cycle, next, the dream-like quality of Saturn-Neptune, and only last, the confrontations with status quo authority of Saturn-Uranus.

Since our cycles are moving in reverse order, one might detect a certain "backwardness" in our process of reconfiguring civilization. That may be so. And indeed, the "cart before the horse" reverse order is helpful in explaining certain seeming anomalies, such as why the American military invaded Iraq in 2003. Our government skipped all but the crudest pretenses of thoughtful debate, diplomacy, and any other options in the headlong rush to war. The Bush administration was committed from the beginning to overthrowing Saddam Hussein *by force*. War was not the "last resort;" it was, in fact, the preferred means.

Even though millions of us shook our heads sadly, resolute in our certainty that the invasion of Iraq would trap America in a bloody, useless quagmire (like a previous wrong-headed war in the 1960s), our protests amounted to little more than pissing in the wind. At that point, the archetype field was dominated by Saturn-Pluto. Power and raw violence were the vibrational orders of the day, and

our glorious leaders were all too happy to pull the trigger. You know, shoot first and ask questions, well, *never*.

Those of us who lobbied against invading Iraq were right, of course. The war was illegal, immoral, and just plain stupid. Our shock-and-awe fireworks did morph into the long quagmire of a bloody insurgency, but only after Saturn had moved on from Pluto and settled in opposite Neptune, where formerly military targets morphed into the ghostly chimera of guerilla attacks.

Will we ever leave Iraq? I don't know, but the Saturn-Uranus opposition may have something to say about that.

## Saturn-Uranus in Politics: "Throw the Bums Out!"

National elections for President were held in America during active Saturn-Uranus quarterly transitions in 1908, 1920, 1932, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, and 2000. In **SIX** of those eight elections, the party that had held the White House previously was voted out:

- *1908 (1st Q) – conservative business candidate William Taft defeated Democrat William Jennings Bryan to replace progressive reformer and incumbent Theodore Roosevelt*
- *1920 (Full) – after the culmination of World War I and the global influenza pandemic, Republican Warren Harding thrashed Democrat James Cox, replacing disabled incumbent Democrat Woodrow Wilson*
- *1932 (Last Q) – in the depths of the Great Depression, Democrat Franklin Roosevelt routed incumbent Republican Herbert Hoover*
- *1952 (1st Q) – during the setbacks of the Korean War, Republican Dwight Eisenhower defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson to replace incumbent Democrat Harry Truman*
- *1976 (Last Q) – in the aftermath of Watergate, the first gas crisis, and the pardon of Richard Nixon, Democrat Jimmy Carter narrowly defeated incumbent Republican Gerald Ford*
- *2000 (1st Q) – With the help of a partisan Supreme Court, Republican George W. Bush was "elected" over Democrat Al Gore (who won the popular vote) to replace incumbent Democrat Bill Clinton*

In only two Saturn-Uranus elections---1964 and 1988---was the incumbent party victorious. In both cases, the opposition party chose an ineffectual candidate

who was successfully demonized by the incumbent's campaign as too far from mainstream views (Goldwater in 1964 and Dukakis in 1988).

The next election that will occur during a Saturn-Uranus period is the one we're about to decide. On November 4th, 2008---the exact day of this week's national election---Saturn will form the first of its five oppositions to Uranus from 2008-2010.

Given the history of Saturn-Uranus elections over the past century, odds are 3 to 1 that the Democrats will reclaim the Presidency from the Republicans. The fact that Saturn and Uranus will be **precisely** opposite on the **exact** day of the election is certainly provocative, but I'm not sure that makes it deserving of extra weight, and, if so, how much. Suffice it to say that both Obama and McCain are running on platforms of change. Neither candidate wants to be associated with the status quo, since the public's mood toward George W. Bush is surly ("Throw the bums out!").

Anyone with half a brain knows that the country is in serious trouble. Both major-party candidates are predictably loyal and dutiful servants of the American Empire, but that Empire is in free-fall breakdown, suffering already from military exhaustion, political corruption, and institutional malfeasance. Add to that list the distinct possibility of long-term financial ruin and a full-scale global economic depression, and the next president faces an uphill struggle with very few friends and little, if any, help.

We won't know for another six to seven years if modern Americans as a people possess sufficient strength of character to weather the storms that are coming. We don't know how we will react to hardship and suffering. We can't know yet if we will successfully call upon our intelligence, our creativity, and the better angels of our nature to rebuild our society and culture anew.

At this point, the only thing we know for sure is the first domino to fall.

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