
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 #108; February 2009

Dear friends,

This is the third and---for now---final installment in my series about the astrology behind (within? surrounding?) our new President, Barack Obama. This month's commentary focuses on key personal cycles moving through time in the current and coming chapter of Obama's life, during the next four years of his administration.

To download a copy of Barack Obama's natal chart and major transits, click on the link below. (If your email doesn't recognize hyperlinks, cut and paste the link into your browser's URL window and hit return.)

<http://www.billherbst.com/Obama.pdf>

--Bill Herbst

Commentary: **BARACK OBAMA 3: TRANSITS**

President Barack Obama has taken office during a major crisis, a turning point in history not just for America, but for the whole freaking world and everything in it that swims, crawls, or flies. Three years ago, we might have thought that bringing home the troops from Iraq to end that nasty and expensive occupation might have been high on the agenda of important first acts in this change of American political allegiance from Bush and the neocon War on Terror to a solid Democrat sweep of the executive and both legislative arms of Congress. But no, not even close. Iraq is now almost a political footnote, and President Obama intends to upscale the war in Afghanistan. (Ah, the more things change, the more they stay the same...)

The new overarching crisis, as everyone knows by now and any astrologer could have predicted years ago (I did), is *economic*. Our ongoing wars spark hardly any conversation at all among the populace now that our wallets are shrinking and our remaining jobs vanishing.

Presidents are expected to improve the economy by plunking their magic twangers or performing other occult, ritual acts that no one but a voodoo economist understands. So, let's take a look at the long-term transit patterns moving through Obama's chart over the next four years to see how he might approach this herculean task.

The point in writing about Obama's personal transits is not so much to reveal his private, inner experience, although some of that may emerge in the writing; rather, the purpose is to investigate how Obama's attitudes and behaviors as President are likely to affect *us* — the great, unwashed masses out here in Collective Land. As a result, a general analysis of Obama's moving cycles is less revealing for my purposes than a more filtered approach: we need to see which points in Obama's natal chart will be activated by the most significant planetary configurations coming together in the heavens, the alignments that set the archetypal tone for civilization during the years to come.

Two configurations are taking shape now. The lesser of the two ("lesser" because of its relative brevity) is a triple conjunction between Jupiter, Neptune, and Chiron. That occurs in the second half of the sign Aquarius, initially setting up in 2008 and coming to precise alignment in 2009. Obama's natal Uranus falls exactly opposite this triple conjunction near his horizon, the axis of the 1st and 7th houses.

The second of the two configurations is so important that it's been given its own name, the "Cardinal Climax." Another three-planet alignment, this one is a t-square (a right triangle) with Saturn opposite Uranus forming the base and Pluto in mutual square making the apex. The base formed in 2008 in the last third of the mutable axis Virgo-Pisces, and the t-square matures in the early degrees of cardinal signs, where its most powerful expression occurs in 2010-2011. The entire four years of the Cardinal Climax represent increasing crisis and collapse that function as prologue, set-up for the seven-pass Uranus-Pluto first-quarter square that defines the 2010s as a radical decade of profound and tumultuous change, marked by both catastrophe and brilliant innovation that will occur repeatedly as civilization breaks down and renews simultaneously. Conflict and creativity will intertwine as humanity grapples with the duality of its own nature. In Obama's natal chart, Mars in Virgo/7th is the first planet to be activated by the t-square. Venus in Cancer/5th is the second.

So, we have three planets in Obama's natal chart that form nine significant long-term transits. Many other transits (not to mention progressions and solar arcs) take shape and pass through between now and 2012, but these nine (one of which is already over) are critical. Dates were calculated using the standard 1° orb for personal transits:

Transiting Neptune oppose natal Uranus, Feb 2008 – Dec 2009
Transiting Chiron oppose natal Uranus, March 2009 – Feb 2010
Transiting Jupiter oppose natal Uranus, May 2009 – Dec 2009

Transiting Pluto square natal Mars, Dec 2003 – Nov 2004
Transiting Uranus oppose natal Mars, May 2008 – Jan 2010
Transiting Saturn conjunct natal Mars, Dec 2008 – Sep 2009

Transiting Pluto oppose natal Venus, Mar 2008 – Dec 2009
Transiting Saturn square natal Venus, Nov 2009 – Sep 2010
Transiting Uranus square natal Venus, Mar 2011 – Feb 2012

Charisma or the Cult of Personality?

From February 2008 through February 2010, Uranus is wildly accentuated in Obama's chart, first by opposition to Neptune, then by oppositions to Chiron and Jupiter as well. The expansive nature of Neptune oppose Uranus, more than any other astrological factor, may account for the amazing cult of personality that has arisen toward the new President, as if he were the next Savior. He seems at the outset of his administration to embody some of the best aspects of the Uranian archetype: brilliance, humanitarian sensibility, high social- and self-awareness. So far, none of Uranus' less attractive qualities are in evidence: instability, debilitating stress, eccentricity, or willful stubbornness. Time will tell about those.

While Uranus can indicate revolutionary or radical cultural and political views, its only major aspect in Obama's chart is a tight inconjunct to Saturn in Capricorn/12th. As a result, this particular conflict in Obama's essential character reflects the archetypal tenor of the 2010s, where traditional, status quo approaches are polarized to more radical and revolutionary alternatives.

A President on Fire

While a candidate for the U.S. Senate, in July 2004 Obama gave the keynote speech ("The Audacity of Hope") at the Democratic National Convention. Previously unknown in national politics, that speech catapulted Obama to instant celebrity and, in a very real sense, set the stage for his run to the Presidency. That speech occurred during transiting Pluto's transformational square to

Obama's natal Mars. His passion hit a nerve in the collective unconscious, which in turn enlarged the scope of his own desires. Obama knocked the speech out of the park and never looked back. The Senate seat he won was merely a platform for enlarged ambitions.

In May 2008, the second transit kicked in, Uranus opposite Mars, which remains effective through January, 2010. During the last months of the campaign, Obama was a man on fire. Starting last December, however, transiting Saturn conjoined his natal Mars for nine months, which has the effect of cooling one's ardor by putting up stop signs and road blocks. In some ways, however, Saturn-Mars is even more powerful than Uranus-Mars, since the former has a gritty determination to persevere by moving forward in the face of obstacles, while the latter has a shoot-from-the-hip, hit-or-miss quality. Without question, Obama is energized in his desire to DO everything he can to turn around the ship of America. Both current transits to Mars imply that he will work tirelessly despite setbacks.

I've received a number of emails asking me (as an astrologer) if I think Obama might be assassinated in office, since the hateful strains of racism and xenophobia still run deep in the American psyche. Looking over the charts of those public figures on the receiving end of American political assassinations, a predictable symbolic signature does emerge — some combination of Mars, Pluto, Scorpio, and the 8th house is common. (I haven't seen charts for any of the assassins, so I don't know if that signature cuts both ways.) Here's a short list of some of those killed, with relevant Martian positions in their natal charts:

Abraham Lincoln: Mars in the 8th
James Garfield: Mars ruled the 8th
William McKinley: Mars in the 2nd (opposite 8th)
John Kennedy: Mars in the 8th
Martin Luther King: Mars co-ruled 8th (with Pluto)
Robert Kennedy: Mars in Scorpio
Malcolm X: Mars conjunct Pluto

Obama's natal chart does indeed contain one textbook indicator of possible violent death (Mars in the 8th house, like Lincoln and JFK). While that may give us pause, it's not sufficient justification for making an inflammatory and dire prediction, since many other alternate scenarios fulfill the symbolism equally well: death from accident, heart attack, hemorrhage, death in a hospital (Jupiter and Saturn in Obama's 12th) during or after surgery. Obama's chart even allows for his possible death in bed while asleep. I admit, however, that nothing surprises me anymore, especially violence.

A Change in Values

The third series of major transits occurs as transiting Pluto, Saturn, and Uranus successively challenge President Obama's natal Venus. The death of Obama's beloved grandmother two days before the election was symbolically linked to Pluto's opposition to Venus, effective throughout 2008 and 2009. All three transits to Venus unfold over four years and, taken together as a group, signal a change of orientation in Obama's values, particularly with regard to personal love, affection, and his sense of family (Venus in Cancer).

The most difficult period may be during Saturn's first-quarter square to Venus, from November 2009 through August 2010. Obama could suffer a personal setback or tragedy then. Just as likely, though, is some collective crisis on his watch. A natural disaster or the outbreak of war are unpleasant to consider, but they qualify as possibilities. Or 2010 might be when President Obama has to face the fact that his policy efforts to stem the financial meltdown are not working, as the country sinks deeper into depression and the repercussions engulf the global economy.

If a turning point is to occur in the radicalization of President Obama, it may come with the last of the nine transits — Uranus square Venus, from March 2011 through February 2012. At that point, the country should finally be approaching readiness to consider different solutions for what ails us through galvanic changes at the grass-roots level of the population.

Basically, Obama's first term is unlikely to be stellar. He's taken office during a time when it's too late for reform and too soon for innovation. Change from the top down is about restoring the status quo. And yet business-as-usual is already a dead duck, now entering the second year of a five-year collapse that will be monumental.

For all his talk of change and the best of intentions, Obama is a creature of the Empire (no one who is not could be elected President at this point). He has no viable choice other than to proceed with loyalty to the power elites and other owners of the country. So, for example, he will mandate rebuilding the automobile highway system rather than the restoring and improving the railroads and waterways, since mass transit garners little public support and is too radical a choice to be considered yet. And sadly, his economic stimulus package is another layer of massive indebtedness piled atop an existing mountain of debt. Not surprisingly, his appointments as primary economic advisers — Timothy Geitner, Laurence Summers, and Diana Farrell — are the same people who got us into this financial mess in the first place.

Economic recovery is NOT around the corner. What is 2-3 years away is the acknowledgement that all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again. In other words, we can look forward to a delayed and painfully slow-dawning realization among the powers-that-be that re-establishment of the status quo is impossible. The old economics simply won't work ever again. At that point, probably in 2012, we will enter the truly revolutionary phase of this transformative decade, where new ideas are welcomed and new structures actually considered. Simultaneously, the cascading collapses will have reached their apex. From 2012 on, we are likely to begin working forward creatively. Until then, however, we're just pissing away good money after bad.

Grass-roots movements from the bottom up are critical to give top-down change any chance of success. The public doesn't come alive until 2012 and beyond, after the Cardinal Climax has ended, and after Uranus exactly squares Pluto for the first of seven passes. Only from that point on will the nation as a whole population be sufficiently galvanized to consider, search out, and work locally to create the kind of revolutionary and sweeping changes in culture and civilization that just might pull our collective butts out of the fire.

Until then, we're just watching Rome burn. Some, like Obama, are hooking huge hoses to fire plugs in the hope of saving buildings from completely burning down, others are manning bucket brigades, but most — the vast majority — are just wondering about those flames in the distance, or watching with shock and awe, looking for an escape route out of the city, or a safe place to ride out the firestorm. Right now, we should be rescuing innocent people from the flames, not trying to figure out how to save monuments to centralized authority (banks). Rebuilding comes even later, after the fire has done its grisly work of razing the city to the ground. Then we build again, new and hopefully different from before.

If Barack Obama is destined to play an active and historic role in the turnaround of civilization — if he is to become the hero so many hope for — it will come in his second term, not his first.

Next month: The Automobile

This newsletter is free. No subscription fee is charged.
Donations are accepted with my gratitude, but making a donation is entirely voluntary, not mandatory.

If you'd like to make a donation, the quickest way is via PayPal. You can send money from a checking account, credit card, or debit card. To make a PayPal donation, click on this link:
<http://tinyurl.com/2n7h3x>

If you wish to send a check by mail, here is my mailing address:
822 1st Street, Florence, OR 97439-9346.

My heartfelt thanks to the many subscribers who have donated. Your support is very much appreciated.

To unsubscribe from the newsletter, simply respond to this email and type the word "unsubscribe" in the header.

My web site -- <http://www.billherbst.com> -- has information about my professional work with clients---fees, scheduling, content, etc.

Please read "Sessions Intro" and "Sessions FAQ." The links are in the upper right corner of my home page.

[© 2009, by Bill Herbst, all rights reserved. Permission is granted by the author to forward this email, but only in its entirety, without additions or deletions of text.]