

BEYOND THE VEIL

THE MINOR PLANETS IN ASTROLOGY

by Eric Francis Coppolino

When Stephen Colbert took the podium at the White House Correspondents Association Dinner at 10:30 p.m. on April 29, 2006, nobody was expecting an ambush. At most, people familiar with Colbert, whose program on Comedy Central had begun just six months earlier, figured that a pretty good comedy routine was coming. Colbert is funny, but at that time most people had not figured out that he's also serious, which in part accounts for why he was invited to speak. His act involves playing the role of a bombastic, egotistical "conservative" commentator — a fact that apparently got past the censors.

What the audience witnessed was a searing takedown of both President George W. Bush and his administration and the press and then the hapless public, broadcast nationally on live television. It was more akin to a coup d'état than satire.

Addressing the press, he said: "Really, what incentive do these people [in the administration] have to answer your questions, after all? I mean, nothing satisfies you. Everybody asks for personnel changes. So, the White House has personnel changes. And then you write, 'Oh, they're just rearranging

the deck chairs on the *Titanic*.' First of all, that is a terrible metaphor. This administration is not sinking. This administration is soaring! If anything, they are rearranging the deck chairs on the *Hindenburg*."

From that moment on, any hope that Bush had of being taken seriously seemed to evaporate. As he listened to Colbert dismantle him, Bush looked like he wanted to crawl under the table, but one of his former aides said he had the expression that he was ready to blow a gasket.

At a recent astrology conference, I was in Richard Tarnas's "Astrology of the Comic Genius" intensive, where we watched the video of Colbert's presentation, studying his natal chart. I had just one thought: *Where*

was Mercury when Colbert made his speech? On the spot I looked up the data and cast the chart. (See **Chart 1**, page 24.)

I had to blink my eyes a few times because I could not believe what I was seeing. I double-checked my data. Mercury was partile conjunct Eris (♁) — Eris, the goddess we remember from Greek mythology only because she rolled the apple of discord into the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, leading to the beauty pageant of the goddesses. The apple was inscribed, "To the Fairest," and with everyone's full cooperation, its arrival incited a bonfire of the vanities that we still talk about today. This was a cleverly designed sneak attack, made of pure cunning. The implications were profound, among them the Trojan War.

Colbert's apple of discord, slyly rolled into a room full of the most prominent members of American society, was more of a peace protest, lambasting the president for his lies about weapons of mass destruction, his tax cuts for the rich, and his overall incompetence. It was a knockout punch, and Mercury was in prime form that night, conjunct a newly discovered, about-to-be-named body that hardly anyone had heard of yet. Adding a touch of elegance to the chart, the Mercury-



photo by David Shankbone

Steven Colbert

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Eris conjunction was square asteroid Pallas Athene in Capricorn, illustrating this direct challenge to the political establishment.

This event does not define Eris for us, but is what I would call a proving moment: a moment when a planet's themes emerge in a visceral way. *Proving* is a homeopathic term, meaning to test a remedy, demonstrating some of its effects. I think of a proving moment as (borrowing language from Geoffrey Cornelius) *a spontaneous eruption of symbolism*. The meaning of a new body does not end there — indeed, many times that's where it begins. Any minor planet, once discovered, enters a phase of what Erminie Lantero, referring to Chiron, described as “continuing discovery” (in her book, *The Continuing Discovery of Chiron*). Often the themes emerge when we're least expecting them to — or when we spot something in the world and cast a chart to see what's going on. Here, we had an Eris-like event of historic proportions in the year that Eris made her big splash, just four months after Colbert's infiltration of such an important event.

When deciphering minor planets, synchronicities (sometimes bold, other times subtle) count for a lot. If you want to understand what the minor planets are saying, the best thing you can do is to look and listen and collect information: Pay attention to which of them are prominent in the charts of salient world events, or which ones turn up in charts like the New Moon or Full Moon. Then, see what develops. Look for the minor planets' known themes moving through the news and the lives of your clients. Note the patterns. Listen for their hoofbeats in the street.

The Shape of Consciousness

When the age of planetary discovery began with the sighting of Uranus in 1781, we were not just on the brink of a radically changing solar system. We were on the edge of a world about to go through

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more upheaval, progress, and conflict than anyone (except maybe Nostradamus) could have predicted. The premise of astrology is that the shape of the solar system reflects both the state of the world and the shape of consciousness. With the discovery of Uranus, the time-honored container of Saturn had been breached, and the age of science and industry had begun.

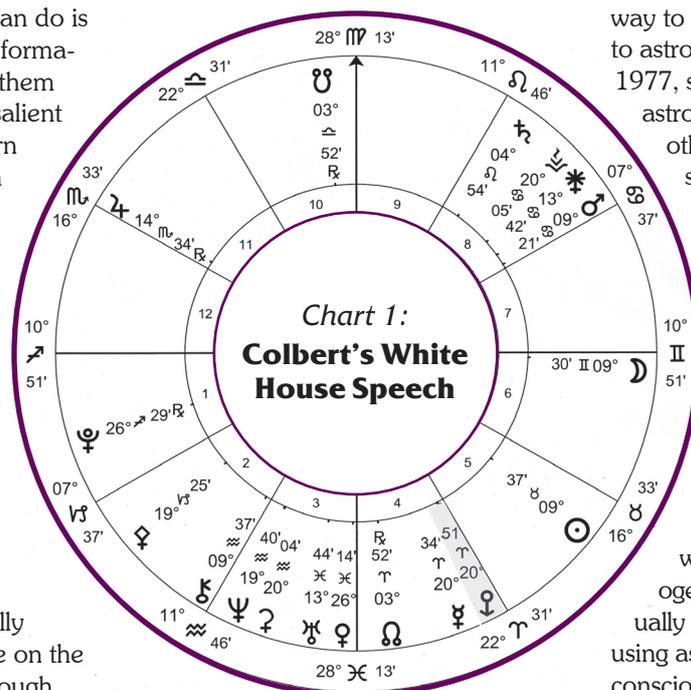
Interestingly, the second-ever planetary discovery, on January 1, 1801, was of a minor planet, though it was not called that: Ceres (first described as a comet, then a planet, then an “asteroid”) is now designated minor planet 1, written (1) Ceres. Four more asteroids were discovered between that time and the discovery of Neptune in 1846. (Astraea, the fifth asteroid, was discovered just one year before Neptune was, after a 38-year gap in discoveries.)

Gradually, the two gas giants, Uranus and Neptune, were assimilated into astrology. The asteroids — most of them named after goddesses — fell by the wayside for a long time, though they finally started to get attention in the 1970s when ephemerides and computer programs became more commonly available and gender equality became a cultural theme.

One difference between the traditional and the modern planets is that you can see the traditional planets with the naked eye. I asked Rob Hand about this recently, and he said that the zodiac and the traditional planets “deal with normal consciousness. An invisible planet requires the expansion of consciousness in order to be seen. They cannot be seen by the normal senses, and that is very important.” As we discover and delineate these bodies, imagine that we are gradually expanding our awareness into the invisible, non-normal realms.

In a sense, we are going beyond the veil of the senses and the usual shape of consciousness. This lack of tangibility may, at least partly, account for why the minor planets tend to be so controversial. And given how many minor planets there are, we are getting the hint that there is a lot going on beyond the veil — a very busy universe beyond the limits of the normal senses.

Speaking of controversy, that's one way to describe Chiron's relationship to astrology. Chiron was discovered in 1977, sparking the imagination of some astrologers and the skepticism of others. Books came out in rapid succession, and a conscious effort was made by a small group of astrologers to research Chiron's meaning and integrate it into their work. Others felt that it was too small, too new, or too poorly defined to be meaningful. Gradually, it has come into more common use — in a sense, leading the astrological field from behind. By this I mean that, while Chiron itself was not accepted by many astrologers, the ideas about Chiron gradually infiltrated astrological thinking: using astrology as a healing art; holistic consciousness; and a spiritual purpose



All charts use Koch houses and the True Node.

to the work that many practitioners had missed along the way.

Chiron was designated (2060) Chiron, being the 2,060th object in the catalogue. At the time, all of these objects were asteroids, including those in the main belt between Mars and Jupiter and some called Trojans that orbit with Jupiter. Chiron was a salient discovery because it didn't fit any previously known category of asteroid (though, due to its elongated orbit, it was similar to (944) Hidalgo, discovered much closer to the Sun in 1920).

Chiron crossed the orbit of Saturn and went out nearly to Uranus. Its name, a tribute to the wise (and nearly forgotten) centaur of ancient Greek myth, corresponded to its hybrid quality: It seemed to be part-asteroid, part-planet, and part-comet. (It is now considered a very massive comet nucleus.) Its discoverer, Charles Kowal, gave Chiron its first keyword when he said of his discovery, "This thing is a maverick." (I have learned from this work with new discoveries that astronomers are often beautifully intuitive contributors to astrology.)

In a sense, with the minor planets, we are always in maverick territory. It's a bit of a wilderness, and to work with the minor planets it really helps if you enjoy, or at least acclimate yourself to, unfamiliar psychological and mythological material. (**Note:** You can look up the positions of all of the points referenced in this article — and sort them many different ways — on a free Web site written by my friend Tracy Delaney in Wales: www.serennu.com)

Enter QB1, the Kuiper Belt, and Pholus

Let's skip ahead a few years to the next two major discoveries, both of which happened in the watershed year of 1992. A distant point was discovered and given the provisional name 1992 QB1 and eventually, when its orbit was confirmed, catalogue number 15760. The number of known minor planets had increased nearly eightfold in just 15 years. The object 1992 QB1 was a significant discovery because it was the first planet found orbiting our Sun beyond Pluto. This in turn confirmed the existence of the Kuiper Belt, which up until that time was only speculative. Yet, this

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discovery — of both an object beyond Pluto and a new region of the solar system — went unnoticed by most astrologers. Rapid discovery of planets in the Kuiper Belt followed QB1, including a whole class whose name is a clever pun on QB1: the "cubewanos" (*Q-B-1-oh*).

There are two main populations in the Kuiper Belt: the cubewanos (or classical Kuiper Belt objects, with orbits of about 300 years) and the plutinos (with orbits of around 250 years, similar to that of Pluto). In the naming tradition of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), plutinos are given names of underworld deities, while cubewanos are usually named after deities associated with creation and resurrection.

Jane X. Luu, 1992 QB1's principal discoverer, has so far opted not to give it a mythologically based name. Yet, a whole class of minor planets is now named for QB1 (the cubewanos), and as a result, it seems likely that QB1 will always be called that.

The same year, a small, orbit-crossing object was discovered and eventually named Pholus, after another of the wise (rather than the violent) centaurs. Pholus cycles around the Sun in 92 years, extending past Pluto at the far end of its elongated orbit. This was the discovery that led to the designation of the Centaur class of minor planets, because now there were two of them.

Chiron had received a lot of attention from astrologers in the years following its discovery; however, Pholus went nearly unnoticed, as did the 1993 discovery of the third Centaur, Nessus (which circles the Sun in 122 years). This led the way to the discoveries of many more Centaurs: small, orbit-crossing bodies whose distances from the Sun are generally outside that of Jupiter.

Pholus got catalogue number 5145, and its discovery was followed by a sequence of rapid sightings of other minor planets (a property that aligns with its main energetic quality, which we'll come to in a moment).

In 2000, Varuna was discovered orbiting in the Kuiper Belt; this was considered such a significant event that the new body was given a special place in the minor planet catalogue — number 20,000. Varuna is similar to 1992 QB1, being located beyond Pluto, with an orbit of 281 years (it is classified as a cubewano). By 2002, Quaoar was discovered, also in the Kuiper Belt (with a 285-year orbit), and it was considered such a significant discovery that it was also given an honorary minor planet number — 50,000. It, too, is a cubewano. Note that the discovery rate had by this time reached an exponential pace, doubling every few years.

Just a year later, in 2003, the same team that had found Quaoar discovered Sedna. This was one of the strangest objects ever identified, having an orbital period of about 11,400 years. It was given minor planet number 90,377 and was named for an Inuit goddess living deep beneath the Arctic Ocean — calling attention to the melting ice caps. Sedna moves so slowly that, in just two orbits around the Sun, we experience nearly a full precession of the equinoxes.

Let's consider the tally up to this point. In the 25 years between the discovery of Chiron and the discovery of Sedna, 88,317 objects orbiting our Sun were added to the minor planet catalogue — an increase of nearly 43-fold. As of this writing, there are more than 310,000 objects with precisely confirmed orbits around the Sun (and thus with catalogue numbers, making them eligible for naming) *and* as many discovered objects with orbits awaiting confirmation. Not long ago, there were nine "planets." Today, there are nearly three-quarters of a million objects known to be buzzing around our Sun. Is anybody telling schoolchildren about this? And more germane to our topic, is anyone telling astrologers?

Considering Rob Hand's comment about how the invisible planets require an expansion of consciousness, we are

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getting a clear message from the cosmos about the imminent necessity of doing just that. The thing is, most of these points are not written about in books and are only rarely mentioned in articles, so we have to expand our consciousness on our own, with an actual stretch. There are so many of these bodies that a listing of meanings by sign, house, and aspect would fill a library — though it's not even possible to sum them up that way. Astrologers who use these planets have to develop new methods of research, delineation, and approaches to organize putting them to work in a meaningful way.

The Discovery of Eris

Eris, discovered in 2005 and named in 2006, was the public relations watershed for the minor planets. The goddess of chaos and discord seemed to be commenting on the state of planetary anarchy in the years that preceded her discovery.

Numerous objects in the Kuiper Belt had already been discovered; however, since Eris was originally believed to be larger than Pluto, it precipitated a number of dramatic events. It suddenly called attention to the existence of the minor planets in a way that finally reached the public. Most notably, the class “dwarf planet” was created, its first three members being Ceres, Pluto, and Eris. For the first time, astronomers had defined what a planet is. By their nascent definition, approved late in the IAU conference in Prague in August 2006, there would be just eight planets (the nine, minus Pluto). Everything else orbiting our Sun would be some form of minor planet (unless, presumably, something bigger than Mercury was discovered).

Pluto was reclassified as (134340) Pluto and took its place in the minor planet catalogue. (For a while, astronomers at the Minor Planet Center had been reserving number 10,000 for Pluto; however, after a heated debate, that distinction went to a main belt asteroid called Myriostos, meaning “ten-thousandth.”)

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There's no argument that Pluto is a minor planet in the astronomical sense of the word, though Eris discoverer Mike Brown has described Pluto as a “cultural planet” — something regarded (and loved) as a planet by society, despite what it may be, astronomically. Now it has a minor planet number just like Pallas, Juno, or Chiron. Yet, no astrologer has any less reverence for Pluto as a result. Which leads to a question: What about all the other planets in Pluto's class? It would seem that we've all been tricked by a cosmic joke into taking seriously a minor planet, not knowing what it was, even if we didn't believe in all that “driveway gravel” anyway.

We are in a remarkable age of planetary discovery, comparable to nothing that has come before. It's at once alluring and daunting to have this many planets to work with. Unlike previous generations of astrologers (and some contemporary ones) who might have tossed aside asteroids just because they're asteroids, we now have many planets available to work with in the class of Pluto and Chiron, both of which have been demonstrated to be significant influences in astrology.

When pressed to explain why they don't use the minor planets, most astrologers have admitted to me that their reluctance stems from there being too many to figure out a way into the matrix. How do you make sense of them all? Where do you begin? There are so many! How do you memorize their meanings? Once you've accepted that your natal chart is not going to be the same thing you studied as a teenager or young adult, and that your concept of yourself will change as a result, then comes the adventure.

Remember, you didn't learn all the traditional planets at once. You learned

them from a combination of study and experience. You will learn the minor planets the same way, one at a time or in small groups. Once you tune into one of these points, based on affinity or because it has shown up a few times in your chart, you can watch its process develop before your eyes. As I suggested earlier, there are what I call “proving moments” — in the homeopathic sense of the word “proving,” where the theme and purpose of a remedy are demonstrated through direct experience. This is not a scientific process but rather one of careful observation, mixed with theorizing and some creative imagination.

In applying the minor planets to any situation, there are generally two ways to go: One is to select points that follow a particular theme and work from there. The other way is to sort the planets onto a 90-degree dial and look for which of them are making aspects to sensitive points in a chart you're working with.

In terms of delineation, formal study of the planet and its mythology is helpful. Yet, each minor planet I work with seems to have its moments of spontaneous eruption of symbolism, wherein the nature of the archetype manifests. The thing to remember about archetypes is that they are complex and multifaceted. Though the small planets are often viewed in a reductionist way (we are told that they grant specificity to readings, allegedly having narrow meanings), they can have presentations as complex as any of the major planets. Any one proving moment can affirm past theories or offer something new, though it's important to work in the spirit of continuing discovery and to keep an open mind going into the future.

Working with proving moments is just one of the techniques used to decipher newly discovered planets. Many other methods are used, including studying the orbital plot, reading the discovery chart (in effect, the natal chart of the new body), studying the mythology, and observing the placement of the planet in people who have accomplished unusual things. Events in the era of the discovery are also significant. For example, Chiron arrived in the mid 1970s, during a time when the Human

Potential Movement was going strong; this included therapy methods, the rising popularity of holistic centers like the Esalen Institute, courses such as EST, and many other consciousness-raising projects. In practice, Chiron seems to be a patron saint of this kind of personal growth work, whether as part of an organized program or not.

It's also interesting that Chiron's first pre-discovery photo was taken in 1895, the year that D. D. Palmer discovered (or rediscovered) the medical art of chiropractic — named for Chiron — which is often associated with the gift of hands-on healing.

The Cry of the Poor

One proving moment for the Centaur planet Hylonome emerged during the funeral of Yasser Arafat. I had just arrived in Paris in the autumn of 2004, and soon after, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was brought in to have French doctors treat a disease that his Palestinian doctors did not understand. In Europe, this turn of events was considered monumental, and BBC World Service was on the story around the clock.

On November 11, Arafat died, and the French held a solemn funeral service at a military airport, with rites appropriate for a head of state. This alone was astounding — to have seen Arafat's position go from Arab terrorist to world leader.

The next day, his body was flown from Paris, first to Cairo for full military honors and then taken by military transport helicopter to the Palestinian Territory. BBC World was covering the events live, and in the darkening afternoon of Thursday, November 12, the Egyptian helicopters arrived in Ramallah, where tens of thousands of men filled a massive plaza, many of them firing their weapons into the air, awaiting their leader's homecoming. Gradually, the crowds parted as the helicopters touched the ground. It was a biblical scene, playing out before the eyes of the world.

As I watched this on TV, I was watching a real-time chart animation go by in Io Sprite (this program is open on



my desktop at all times). The drama was unfolding at the moment of the Scorpio New Moon, just as the Sun and Moon formed a conjunction in the sign most often associated with death and evolutionary transitions. (See **Chart 2**, below.) When live coverage of Arafat's arrival began, the New Moon was in the 8th house, and as the Moon and Sun touched the horizon, their conjunction was exact. Anyone with a vague sense of symbolism could feel the momentousness of this. It was one of those astonishing moments of astrology.

As if this were not enough, Mars had just arrived in Scorpio and was about to touch the South Node, a fitting image of a fallen warrior, with the eerie reminder (coming from the South Node) that it was time to let go of some of the violence that had surrounded Arafat's life. Yet, the Sun and Moon were conjunct a Centaur planet: Hylonome (♄♃), named for a female centaur who impaled herself on the same spear that killed her husband. Discovered in 1995 (with an

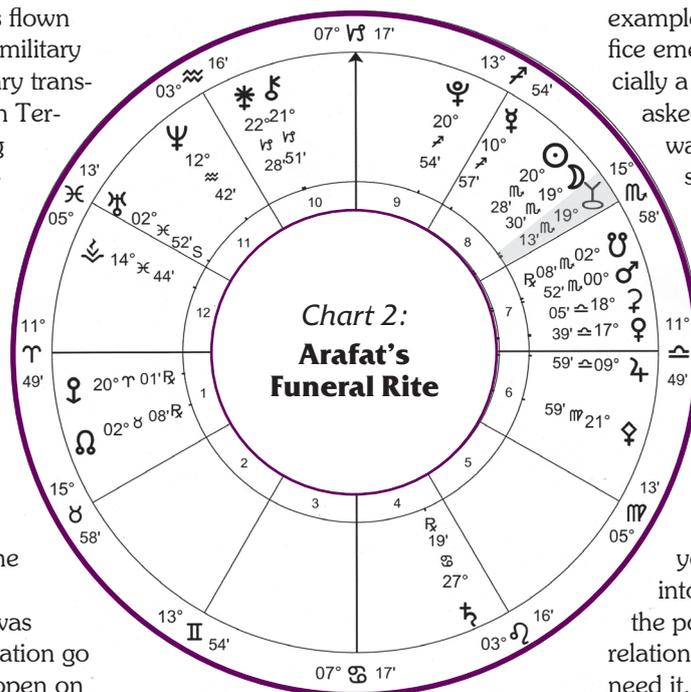
orbital period of 126 years), Hylonome has been connected by Centaur specialists to themes of grief and the process of working through grief. This is a theme endemic in the Centaurs, but especially pronounced with Hylonome. As the New Moon took shape conjunct Hylonome in Scorpio, we were witnessing one of the most vibrant public outpourings of grief since the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, almost a decade earlier.

Juan Revilla, a research astrologer in Costa Rica, is known to nearly anyone who studies the Centaurs seriously. Revilla's delineation for Hylonome goes beyond the "processing grief" group of ideas and includes the phrase, "the cry of the poor." This was being boldly demonstrated in Arafat's spontaneous funeral rite (more like the roar of the poor, plus the sound of celebratory gunfire). Posted to his Web site long before this event, Revilla's other key phrases for Hylonome include *death song, war song, heroism, sacrifice, eternal youth, longing for Paradise, the sacrificial victim, tragic beauty, redemption, and political and religious messianism* — all terms that aptly describe Arafat.

(**Note:** Revilla uses primarily the orbital elements to delineate a new discovery, and he avoids mythological references.)

An astrologer is not likely to see all of the delineations above in the life of any one client, though Hylonome also has subtler, personal manifestations. For example, if the theme of needless sacrifice emerges in the life of a client, especially a situation where they are being asked to sacrifice their life in some way, check the natal position, transits, and synastry of Hylonome for more information. Investigate when someone has been widowed; look for it in murder-suicide situations or in any situation that feels like Sati, the Indian ritual where the wife or wives die on the funeral pyre of their husband.

Once you work with a new point enough times, if you're listening, it will begin to speak to you. Though you may not cast it into every chart, or indeed may use the point only rarely, you can form a relationship that will be there when you need it.



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Borasisi: The Power of Lies

On March 4, 2011, there was a New Moon in Pisces conjunct a Kuiper Belt object called Borasisi (a cubewano). This point was sighted in 1999 by three veteran discoverers, including Jane X. Luu, who found 1992 QB1 and is also credited with proving the existence of the Kuiper Belt itself. The discoverers gave their new planet an unusual name, taken not from mythology but rather from the novel, *Cat's Cradle*, by Kurt Vonnegut. Borasisi is the name of the Sun in the novel's religion, called Bokononism.

I had not worked with Borasisi carefully until that time, and I thought that, with a New Moon conjunct this point, I would explore some of the themes I had seen coalescing around Borasisi over the years. To do this, I revisited *Cat's Cradle*, a story that Vonnegut conceived when he was working in public relations at General Electric. In the novel, Vonnegut contrasts the lies of religion (you will go to heaven when you die) with the lies of science (toxic chemicals are safe), proposing that the lies of science are much more devastating.

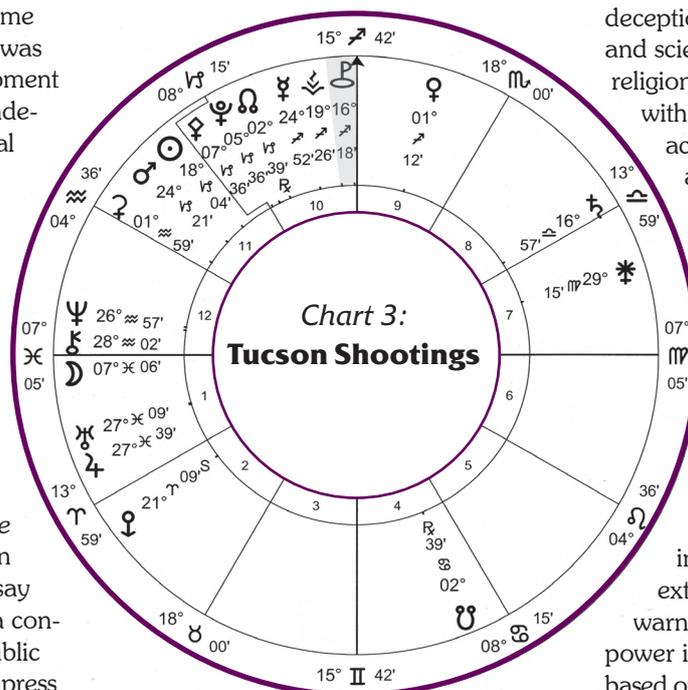
He knew this as a GE spokesman whose job was to lie to the public about the dangers of GE's products, something that GE does copiously. At the time (in the 1950s), for example, GE was aware of the dangers of its equipment containing highly toxic, nearly indestructible PCB fluid — a chemical that disrupts hormones, induces cancer, and causes countless other harmful effects. Vonnegut said in an interview that, when writing *Cat's Cradle*, he was also concerned about nuclear weapons and atomic power, both of which GE was involved with as an industry leader.

Vonnegut borrowed the concept of "Ice 9" in *Cat's Cradle* as a metaphor for things that can completely destroy the world. I say "borrowed" because Ice 9 was a concept invented by another GE public relations man years earlier to impress

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science fiction author H. G. Wells when he came to visit GE's labs in Schenectady, New York (Wells never used the idea). Ice 9 is a (fictional) form of water that is solid and stable at room temperature. Ice 9 crystals will impart their pattern to any water, so that a grain of the stuff dropped in a bathtub will turn the whole thing to a block of Ice 9. This will also work in the ocean; if any of the stuff gets in the ocean, the entire planet would freeze.

The lies of science, as described in *Cat's Cradle*, would have you believe that Ice 9 is perfectly safe and that nothing can go wrong — just like the PR surrounding PCBs or nuclear power plants. But then, there is the human factor: hubris, the inability to handle power, coupled with self-deception. In our personal lives, I relate Borasisi to the lies that we believe even when we know better, including the biggest ones coming out of industry and government.



Though our lives may be much smaller than the nuclear crisis, we have our role in that we can choose whether to accept what is said to us. No matter what we may have believed, we ultimately bear the brunt of the problem when things go wrong.

One week to the day after the Borasisi New Moon in Pisces, there was an earthquake and tsunami near Fukushima, Japan. This event overwhelmed a number of nuclear power plants, cutting them off from the power grid and thus from the energy necessary to keep their reactors cool. The world watched in horror as reactors at the facility exploded, one after the other. Everyone knew that tens of thousands of tons of spent fuel were on site and that engineers were having trouble keeping this cool as well. No matter how "safe" nuclear power was presumed to be, the world had been pushed over the brink of nuclear disaster — and the nuclear equipment involved had been manufactured by none other than GE.

Nobody who studies astrology missed the fact that this happened on the day that Uranus, the namesake of the uranium that is used in nuclear power plants, changed signs from Pisces to Aries. Yet, few people were aware that there had been a lunation with a theme so specific to the event just one week before.

Borasisi deals with themes of deception coming from both religion and science — or, you might say, the religion of science. Those familiar with the nuclear power industry are accustomed to its cult-like quality and its casual, habitual use of deception as a means of convincing the public that it is safe. Obviously, this is based on belief rather than fact. The world had already watched in horror in 1986 as the Chernobyl reactor exploded and spewed radiation around the globe. Prior accidents at the Fermi nuclear plant in Detroit (1966) and at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania (1979), two extremely close calls, had served as warnings. The belief that nuclear power is safe is merely that: a belief, based on deception and disinformation —

precisely what Vonnegut was getting at in *Cat's Cradle*, and a theme that manifested in a rather stark historic way in the world shortly after a lunation involving this point.

Borasisi is a small planet with a big message, particularly in our world that is in many ways run by the public relations industry. You might put this planet to work any time you're studying a person or a situation where deceiving the public, and moreover the moral questions associated with that deception, are themes. Check Borasisi any time belief seems to trump the known facts or where self-delusion is an issue, whether the larger topic is religion, politics, corporate deception, or something novel that you've never thought of.

Eris and the Centaurs: The Tucson Shootings

When a major world event happens, I cast the chart and look for which minor planets are prominent. I use the basic tests for prominence — for example, if the point is angular or if it's making a conjunction, square, or opposition to

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the Sun, Moon, or a planet that thematically factors into the situation. When the Tucson shootings happened in early 2011, the exact time of the incident was released by authorities, and I cast the chart. (See **Chart 3**, facing page.)

At the moment of the shootings (which happened rapidly), Pholus (♄) was conjunct the Midheaven within less than one degree. Pholus, the second-discovered Centaur, has among its themes the runaway reaction or the uncontrolled release of energy. It is a powerful precipitator. Where Pholus is involved, things proceed rapidly — unlike with his cousin Chiron. German

minor planet specialist Robert von Heeren described Pholus as the “small cause with the big effect.” Pholus is currently a long-term visitor to Sagittarius, a fiery, reactive sign.

Jared Lee Loughner's walking up to a crowd of peaceful people and opening fire with a semi-automatic handgun had the mark of Pholus in the worst sense of the concept. The crowd included a prominent congresswoman, U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords, with whom he was obsessed; one theme of Pholus is how we deal with famous people when we encounter them personally. Pholus was on the cusp of the 10th, a house associated with government and authority.

I then checked the personal astrology of those involved. The natal charts for Giffords and Loughner (both set for noon) in many ways seem to be the same chart. The first thing I noticed is that both have the Sun conjunct Nessus (♁), the third Centaur, discovered in 1993. Nessus is about cyclical events; it can represent boomerang-like cycles that come back around to their point of



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Hosted by Eric Francis

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origin, sometimes after a long sequence of developments. It has that karmic feeling of something coming home to roost or coming to a halt (summarized by Melanie Reinhart as “the buck stops here”).

Loughner has the Sun conjunct Nessus within one degree in Virgo (see **Chart 4**, below). Giffords has the Sun conjunct Nessus within 1.5 degrees in Gemini (**Chart 5**, below). Both conjunctions are in Mercury-ruled signs, and both are tightly square one another. Loughner has the Moon and the South Node close to Sun–Nessus: He was born within hours of a solar eclipse conjunct Nessus.

It’s events like this that give Nessus a bad reputation. Aside from indicating a similarity between Giffords and Loughner — that their lives involve playing out a similar pattern — Nessus is an excellent diagnostic tool in many other kinds of cases, particularly those involving sexual infidelity or sexually transmitted diseases, or where there is a revenge plot. Negative, violent, and inappropriate sexual fixations are included under the subject area covered by Nessus, which we see demonstrated in Loughner’s documented long-term obsession with Giffords.



Gabrielle Giffords

Yet, there is a more striking similarity between the two charts: Both have a nearly identical pattern in which Mars, Chiron, and Eris appear in the cardinal signs, superimposed on one another. All three of these bodies are involved with warfare. Mars, of course, is the god of war. He represents energy, desire, passion, and aggression. It is not surprising to see Mars prominent in charts associated with a shooting and mass murder. Mars energy will have to be released or expressed one way or another, usually by direct aggression. (Eris, the sister of Mars, was more the type to operate through subterfuge.)

As an astrological factor, Chiron is about raising awareness, the healing

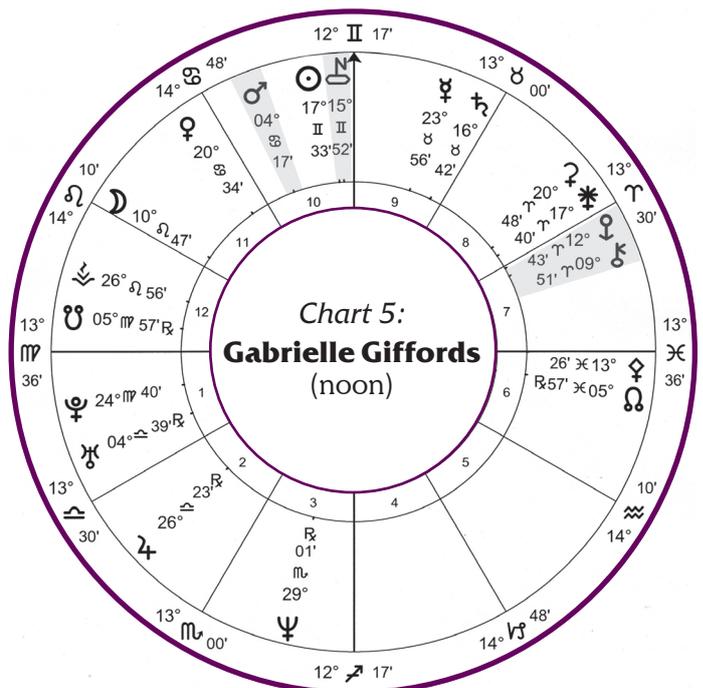
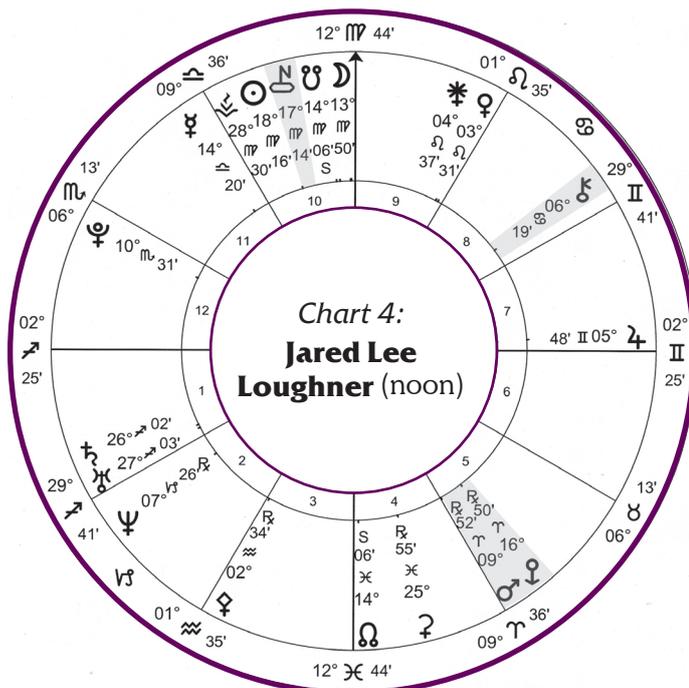
journey, injury that focuses healing and growth, “shamanic” wounding, warrior-like qualities (spiritual or otherwise), and mentorship. Chiron typically has a crisis around its placement, which either will be associated with gathering strength and power when it’s processed consciously, or will create a spiraling-down effect, a descent into futility when it is ignored.

Dale O’Brien takes this interpretation of Chiron to a deeper level, explaining that, in a situation like this, Chiron points to a holistic level of reality. He wrote to me in a recent e-mail:

Astrological Chiron corresponds to the remarkable multifaceted mythic centaur Chiron’s story, which in turn corresponds to indigenous stories of shamanism. In a shamanic perception of the world, everyone and everything is interrelated. For instance, when violence befalls a member of the community, that person is not seen as victim, but rather as playing a role for all in the community. The perpetrator of the violence, similarly, was seen as a troubled soul, acting out something disturbing members of the community.

In other words, Chiron’s presence describes this as a collective event, rather than an individual one.

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Eris (which almost everyone alive has in Aries) speaks to what I call the postmodern identity crisis. Eris vividly describes the alienation that many people feel, as well as the idea that we are searching for who we are, often to the point of a serious struggle and often in ways that push people to extremes. This can be inflamed by self-destructive actions designed to provoke chaos in the environment; an initiated inner chaos that can spread to the environment; a disowned feminine side in men that can lead to resentment in women; and an alienated feminine side in women that can become extremely toxic. When Eris was named in 2006, she upset the known order of the solar system, unseated Pluto as a planet, and helped to create the castaway class of “dwarf planets.”

In the charts of both Loughner and Giffords, these three points (Mars, Chiron, and Eris) are in a similar aspect, superimposed over one another with remarkable precision in the signs Aries and Cancer.

In Loughner’s natal chart, Mars is conjunct Eris in Aries. This is demonstrated by the chaos associated with his criminal acts of violence. In Aries, this is angry and aggressive and reveals how he struggles to focus his masculine energy, a crisis he projects onto women. Mars in Aries can lack confidence and could make up for it by doing macho things to help create the aura or sensation of masculinity. His Mars is retrograde, which tends to generate pent-up energy and inflame the insecurity associated with any tense Mars placement.

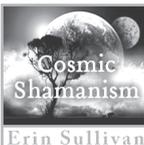
Loughner’s Mars and Eris are square Chiron in Cancer. Chiron in Cancer can represent a sense of injury around the mother, one’s feminine side, and this may, if not addressed, extend to all women. The square aspect between Mars and Chiron often manifests as an energy blockage — unless someone works to consciously integrate the square, in which case it will become a building block of integrity. This is a setup prone to outbursts of aggression.

In Giffords’ chart, we find Mars in Cancer conjunct Loughner’s Chiron (within two degrees). Her Mars provokes one of his most vulnerable points: his injured feminine side. Giffords also has her Chiron in Aries tightly conjunct retrograde Mars in Loughner’s chart, exact within a few arc minutes. Her Chiron is in a direct relationship to another one of Loughner’s most sensitive points. Said simply, they both have a Mars–Chiron square, directly aligned, though with the signs reversed.

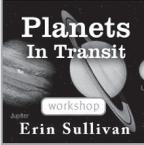
In Loughner’s chart Mars is conjunct Eris, and in Giffords’ chart Chiron is conjunct Eris. These aspect configurations match up like a map aligns with a satellite photo of the same territory. This tells us a few things, one of which is that these two people have an energetic connection. They also reflect one another in certain distinct ways, though they are working through the material differently. One thing they have in common is that Giffords, though a Democrat, has been a supporter of gun rights, and Loughner took advantage of those rights.

ERIN SULLIVAN

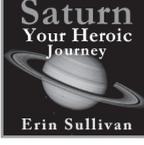
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Cycles of Health – continued from page 22

black bile, and phlegm — and that these were linked with the four temperaments: sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic, respectively, which in turn correspond to the four elements: air, fire, earth, and water.

2. Richard Mead, “A Treatise Concerning the Influence of the Sun and the Moon upon Human Bodies, and the Diseases Thereby Produced,” in *The Medical Works of Richard Mead* (Edinburgh, 1775), pp. 133–137. As can be seen from the chart, the New Moon actually occurred earlier than 9:00 a.m.

3. James Paterson, *Edinburgh’s True Almanack or A New Prognostication* (Edinburgh, 1687).

4. I’m interested in doing more research on this, so if you are affected by either the New or Full Moon, or when it is in any particular sign, please do e-mail me.

5. A decumbiture chart is one which is cast for the exact moment that a person is so ill that they have to take to their bed. A full description of decumbiture charts can be found in my book, *A Handbook of Medical Astrology*, 2nd edition, CrabApple Press, 2006, pp. 151–177.

6. Indicative days, in increments of 22.5 degrees, can be used if the illness is very acute.

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Jane Ridder-Patrick earned her Ph.D. in History from the University of Edinburgh researching “Astrology in Early Modern Scotland ca. 1560–1726.” She is principal of the Scottish School of Astrology and is trained in pharmacy, naturopathy, herbal medicine, and Rogerian and Transpersonal psychotherapies. Among her publications are *A Handbook of Medical Astrology* and the 12-volume *Zodiac Code series*. You can contact Jane via e-mail at astrology@janeridderpatrick.com, or through her Web site: www.janeridderpatrick.com

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Commenting on the similarities between the charts of murder victims and those who commit the crime, Rob Hand explained in a recent conversation: “They both have violence present in their chart. One’s a victim and one’s a perpetrator. One acts out and the other gets the projection. They are not identical but they have that similar pattern. If you wish to use the word karmic, it’s a karmic pattern. The only thing I object to is when people use this to blame the victim.”

Were we analyzing these charts using only traditional planets, we would be looking at a Mars square Mars by synastry. When we notice shared influences such as Chiron or Eris, there is something in that pattern deeper than violence; we begin to see the causes and effects of violence. When Loughner shot Giffords and others that day, we as a national community experienced a crisis about what to do with alienated individual anger. Stressful aspects involving Mars and Chiron (especially Chiron in Aries) indicate this kind of challenge, exacerbated when alienated Eris is involved.

I interpret these charts as speaking to the issue of violence between the genders — that is, this incident was an eruption of gender rage, something much larger than the individual rage that would be indicated by Mars alone. I also relate the pattern to the sense of injury that men and women feel from one another, as a cultural phenomenon as well as a personal one. Slow-moving Chiron and Eris can manifest personally, but as we know from other outer planets, they will often describe a greater context. In this case, it looks like a cultural injury involving male rage at the power of women, sexual injury, and projection, which these charts soberly remind us that we need to address.

A Visit from Chiron

I would like to end with a non-astrological manifestation of one of the recent discoveries, which reveals another way that an archetype might express itself in consciousness.

Early in my career, I was working with a client on her Chiron return, an event that happens for the first time around age 50–51. She had no prior

In the charts of both Loughner and Giffords, Mars, Chiron, and Eris are in a similar aspect, superimposed over one another in the signs Aries and Cancer.

knowledge of Chiron. Our session focused on the rite of passage associated with this transit. We had just spent the better part of the evening discussing the effects of Chiron in her life, tracking her development through various passages that culminated with the Chiron return she was now experiencing.

At the end of the session, I handed my client a copy of the book, *Chiron and the Healing Journey*, by Melanie Reinhart. Holding the book in her hands and looking at the cover, she suddenly began to cry. I sat with her and waited until she settled herself, and then asked her what was up. She told me this story.

A few years earlier, she had been called to Manhattan to tend to the last days’ care of a dying friend. Late one night, she heard a horse galloping in the streets of the city. It seemed unusual for a horse to be moving so quickly along the streets — and so audibly that she could hear it inside a brownstone — but she didn’t think much of it at the time, preoccupied as she was by the circumstances of her friend’s illness.

The next night, she heard the hoofbeats of the same horse, only this time it was moving more slowly, at a trot.

On the third night, from where she was in the kitchen, she heard the horse slow to a stop very close to the apartment. She walked out to the main room and experienced a vision of what she described as a 40-foot-tall centaur — a creature that is half-human, half-horse — standing before her. The human part of the figure was bald and without clothing, and joined at the waist to the horse’s body. She had no idea what she was looking at. While the creature did not seem malicious, she was struck by what she described as its awe-

some power, and was quite shaken at the sight of the huge, unworldly being standing in front of her. Her friend died that night.

She said the illustration on the cover of Melanie’s book was unmistakably of this creature: Chiron. This completed something for her: She discovered the identity of the creature who had manifested while her friend was dying. For me, a different circle was complete: the knowledge that Chiron, and perhaps any planetary archetype, is alive and aware and can manifest in bold ways, whether there’s an astrological basis for it or not.

Chart Data and Sources

(in order of appearance)

Colbert’s White House Speech, April 29, 2006; 10:30 p.m. EDT; Washington, D.C., USA (38°N54’, 77°W02’); news broadcast.

Arafat’s Funeral Rite, November 12, 2004; 2:44:43 p.m. EET; Ramallah, West Bank, Palestine (32°N04’, 34°E46’); news broadcast, with simultaneous computer-generated chart.

Tucson Shootings, January 8, 2011; 10:10 a.m. MST; Tucson, AZ, USA (32°N13’, 110°W56’); news conference given by the county sheriff, who stated the exact time to reporters.

Jared Lee Loughner, September 10, 1988; time unknown (noon used); relocated to Tucson, as no birthplace is available; various Internet sources.

Gabrielle Giffords, June 8, 1970; time unknown (noon used); Tucson, AZ, USA; various Internet sources.

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Eric Francis Coppolino is the founder and editor of PlanetWaves.net, a subscription-based weekly astrology magazine (and free daily Web site), and the host of PlanetWaves.fm. He has been working with the minor planets since beginning his astrological career in 1994. You can reach him directly at info@planetwaves.net