



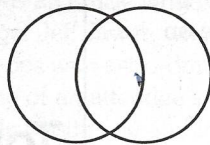
Uranus Chose Me

An Impersonally Personal Experience

It was the summer of 1991 at the annual Roots of Astrology week-long experiential conference in Vermont. As one of the many explorations of that year's theme, "The Four Elements: Personal and Planetary Alchemy," Wendy Ashley created a journey pattern on the ground in the shape of a *vesica piscis* to guide participants in a personal quest. A journey pattern (the labyrinth is one) is a sacred geometry design used as a format for a symbolic quest. The *vesica piscis* is formed by two circles, with a point on the circumference of each touching the center of the other. The overlapping space in the middle represents the sacred space of union — or, as we used it, the yoni of the Great Mother through which we all pass into birth. I'd like to share with you my experience of this journey through the Great Mother.

In Wendy's design, the planets, personified by costumed players, were stationed around the two circles and in the shared space. According to alchemical tradition, the soul's need is to develop the solar and lunar selves using the planets sympathetic to those two orbs. Jupiter and Saturn are found with the Moon on the left-hand path of the Moon. Venus and Mars join the Sun around the right-hand path of the Sun. Only then are the fully materialized King

by Kelley Hunter



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Participants at "Roots of Astrology" in 1991

(Sun) and Queen (Moon) able to unite. Their union is essential to the formation of the Philosopher's Stone, true wisdom.

Under a star-covered awning, the invisible outer planets — Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and Chiron, which are not part of alchemical tradition — occupied the transitional space where the circles overlap, representing the womb of the Great Mother and rebirth into higher consciousness. The outer planets are typically considered aspects of the collective unconscious, giving access to deeper states of self-awareness, more available after midlife. Around age 40, we experience Uranus opposing and Neptune squaring their natal positions and, for current generations, Pluto square Pluto as well. Wendy believes that men start their developmental sequence with the Sun, and women with the Moon, so in Jungian terms, the switchover at midlife might represent the integration of *anima* for men and *animus* for women, ending with Pluto, or death.

Chiron, orbiting between the visible and invisible planets, represents a transition between states of consciousness. In the journey pattern, the planets under the awning became a kind of consciousness-altering "rebirth" space. There were two Mercury figures, one at each end of the tunnel, to lead people into the circle and direct the flow of par-

ticipants around it. A pragmatic solution to traffic control, this Trickster planet deserved both direct and retrograde representation, we figured.

Into this astro-drama, participants were asked to bring a particular issue they were dealing with in their lives. Each person chose either the Sun or Moon path to begin, depending on whether they felt that they began their lives with more of a solar sense of self-awareness and personal autonomy, or with a lunar tone of family bonding and personal connections. As the participants encountered the planetary players, they were asked questions that supported and inspired a deeper understanding of the life issue under review. In a sense, this experiential design serves as an oracular device, like Tarot cards or the I Ching or an astrology chart. It becomes a kind of astro-drama, a dramatization of astrological archetypes.

The planets were assigned by picking names out of a hat. That way, the planets chose their own representatives — inevitably someone with that planet prominent by birth or transit. As it turned out this time, most of the planets we usually think of as female were to be played by men, and vice versa. The planetary cast was costumed and given appropriate key phrases with which to address the participants. As they warmed up to their roles, some planetary players moved well beyond those key phrases.

Uranus chose me. I had completed the Uranus opposition into midlife two years earlier, and was soon to begin its transit opposite my Moon. I have Uranus and the Moon ten degrees apart in Cancer, and though this orb is considered wide by some standards, believe me, these two are conjunct in my experience! In the costume bags, I found an extra-shiny bright blue tunic with big silver stars and a silver sequined belt. There was a multicolored metallic ribbon wig through which I poked sparklers. In a fit of divine inspiration, “Neptune” equipped me, electrical Uranus, with a heavy-duty appliance cord, like the kind that attaches to a washing machine or refrigerator. I forgot about a mask until I was in my planetary station,

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the first stop inside the outer planets’ tent. At my feet, a paper plate marked with the Uranus symbol identified me as Uranus. I grabbed it, poked eyeholes in it, and held it on my face with my teeth.

The Journey

It’s time. The planets are in their orbits. We are ready to go. We four players inside the transpersonal tent of the Great Mother cannot be seen, nor can we see what is going on outside in the “real” world. Wendy, as Mercurial psychopomp, sends people one by one into this “transpersonal” womb of the universe. Uranus is the first outer planet to be encountered. Each person gets zapped, turned around, plugged into higher regions, infused with electricity in various chakras. I can’t articulate well holding the paper plate “mask” in my teeth, so Uranus has a kind of slow, jazzy voice: “Are you ready for a change?”

Neptune, the next stop, has an extended communion with each person (at least, so it seems to Uranus/me), meditating with one, dreaming with another, swimming on the ground with the next, fostering images, fulfilling every fantasy — “initiations taking place in the mystic realms!” So, as the line slows, Uranus goes retrograde and gives visitors another zap or two. Participants come through this transitional zone world of the outer planets twice, once after completing each circle. The planetary players have another chance to trans-personalize them and, appropriately for the outer planets, get some sense of the personal processes being experienced during the journey, which are very deep for some people.

It is a timeless experience, with 30-plus people transiting the circle in about two hours. Then, those playing the planets take their own journeys in a necessarily altered sequence to accommodate each other. I am one of the last, along with my outer-planet cohorts. I start with the (then) upcoming Uranus–Neptune conjunction as I turn to encounter my next-door neighbor, Neptune. Yvan, as Neptune, is truly inspired, with mysterious, lacy veils over his face, sensitively tuning into each person. What he says to me I can’t quite remember, just as it’s hard to remember dreams, but it makes a deep impression. Neptune at the time is opposing the Moon in my chart, making it hard for me to remember much very clearly.

With a bit of trepidation, I move on to Pluto. I was then finishing the Pluto-square-Pluto transit as well, a once-in-a-lifetime challenge that confronts one with deep issues of power and powerlessness. I listen to the dark goddess, portrayed by Robin, who has little black serpents on each side of her mouth and whispers into my ear. Again, I can’t remember the message (I wasn’t through the square yet), but it strikes a deep chord in my personal process. Pluto is natal on my Ascendant. It makes sense to me now to step into the world beyond the womb of the tent through that Ascendant, which marks the birth moment, to be “born” again through a surge of Pluto’s transformational power. Before doing so, I encounter Chiron (Michael from Chicago), wearing a wide strip of leopard-skin cloth across his modern blue button-down shirt. I tell him of my intention to enter the outside world. He reminds me to bring my gifts and fulfill my quest.

I now venture out into the bright sunshine for the first time in hours, slightly dazzled and wondering which path to take first, the Sun or the Moon. There are walkers on both circles, so I have to pause. Just then, my teenage daughter comes running up to me, thinking I am finished with the event. “Mom, can you drive me to my friend’s house?” That makes it clear. Since I have a Cancer Moon, being a mother is a central role of my life. Perhaps the strongest personal bond is with my

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daughter, especially having been a single mother for several years. I start on the Moon path. (I promise to drive her later.)

I first encounter Dorothy as Jupiter, dressed in an elegant blue velvet tunic and crowned by an academic mortarboard and tassel. We have a good time jumping up and down and laughing at each other. She reports on several visitors that she, as Jupiter, profoundly questioned:

How far can you go? He replies, "Like the eagle flies."

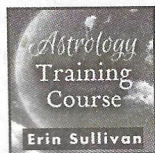
How far can you go? She raises her eyebrows, lifts a finger to her lips, and whispers, "Too far."

How far can you go? He murmurs, "All the way. Hmm. Sweet."

How far can you go? She looks away and smiles, "I don't know."

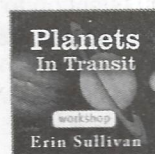
How far can you go? She laughs, "All the way!"

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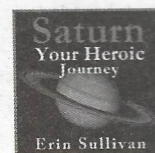
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With Jupiter's inspiration, I bounce along all the way to the Moon, conveniently forgetting that Neptune is opposing my Moon by transit.

But I do remember the Moon, played by Jacques from Quebec, who had come into the tent earlier on his own journey, trembling with anxiety about making a conjunction with Uranus. I had reassured him that it wasn't as bad as all that, reminding him that the Moon changes constantly anyway. Now it is Uranus's turn to conjoin the Moon. He dips his fingers in a bowl of water to anoint me. Peering at me through his shimmery silver crescent mask, he says to me quite gently, "You need to be neutered."

"What!" I exclaim in disbelief. He repeats the statement. Because he is from Montreal, his primary language is French, so I ask, "Are you sure you are translating right?"

"Yes," he affirms, a bit offended. "The Moon knows what is needed."

Slightly in shock, I move on to Saturn, a.k.a. Dale, serious and austere in a long black cloak, leaning on a tall walking stick. I ask him what the Moon could mean by such a bizarre statement. "I have my limits," he replies, shaking his head. We talk of other life lessons for a few moments, and I feel a little more grounded. I move quickly through the now-empty womb of the tent. All the outer planets have incarnated or zoned out into the farther reaches of the galaxy.

I come out into the sunshine again and turn onto the Sun path, hoping for resolution to this perplexing suggestion from the Moon. Certainly, it is mythically correct. Uranus was castrated by his son, Saturn, thereby effectively neu-

tered. The dripping foam from his severed testicles fell into the sea and gave birth to Venus/Aphrodite. But what could this mean to me?

Continuing on my journey, I come upon a lovely conjunction of Venus and Mars, as those players have their turn on the journey. Mars, played by Nicole, dashingly attired all in red with bright red feathers poking out from her mask, has been stationed at the end of the Sun path. Now she is having her encounter with Venus, played by Stefan, gorgeous in his purple drapes and peacock feathers. All week we had been under a Mars-Venus conjunction in Virgo. Here it is in person.

As I move toward them, I suddenly think that perhaps Uranus had to be neutered, de-sexed, made androgynous in order to experience the masculine and feminine emotional energies from a fresh perspective. Natally, I have Venus in Aquarius, Uranus's sign, with rather unconventional, freedom-loving emotional preferences. We often bring old patterns into our romantic relationships, inhibiting an open emotional encounter. Perhaps the message for Uranus is about needing to separate (Uranus) from old emotional patterns (Moon) for fuller self-expression and greater happiness.

Excited, as Uranus can be, I join the two planets on the path. Venus provocatively asks if this is what I really want. Mars urges me to go for it, to act on my desire. We all hug. I feel the energy. I start to move on and look back to see that Pluto is coming up to the Venus-Mars conjunction. Not to be missed! I retrograde and join their stellium for a deepened and empowered reunion. All four of us embrace. It is profound. Can you imagine what it would be like to have a Venus-Mars-Uranus-Pluto stellium in a natal chart? Some people born in the mid 1960s have just such a configuration.

Now it is time to join the Sun. I hardly recall what She looks like, standing at Her nuclear cauldron of fire. She looks into my eyes, "Are you ready to be your Self?" Yes, now I am ready. I exit the circle and go to take my costume off (and drive my daughter to her friend's house).

At dinner the next evening, I was recounting my experience to Jacques, formerly the Moon, and telling him about the profound revelation I got from his message.

"I did not say 'neutered,'" he exclaimed. "I said you need to be nurtured."

Of course! What else would the Moon say? But I heard it through the filter of Uranus. The impersonal energy I had been playing all afternoon had given me a uniquely personal experience of my own Moon-Uranus conjunction. Wendy Ashley offered further comments drawn from alchemical tradition: "The union of the solar and lunar processes resulted in the creation of 'electrum,' so named because when it was rubbed with a cloth, it created static electricity. From a Jungian point of view, your wisdom was acquired through an inner union of the two sexes' natures together."

What a midlife revelation! I had to wonder: What was going to happen when Uranus came fully into opposition to my natal Moon the following year? Wendy gave me the blue and silver-starred costume to help me find out.

Postscript

And what did happen when Uranus opposed my Moon? Uranus transiting through Capricorn in my 5th house opposed my Cancer Moon in the 11th house for the whole of 1992, exact in March, May, and September. We held another Roots of Astrology conference that summer — the last one, as it turned out. Unusually, there were four times as many women participants as men, so

The improvisational experience of playing Uranus in such a co-creative process spilled over into the risks I was willing to take in redesigning my life.

many faces and facets of the goddess were honored.

That fall, my daughter spent a semester at an international high school in India, a major growth experience and our longest separation to date. I went to visit for parents' week that September and unexpectedly extended my stay to visit an ashram.

Last but not least, there were several administrative changes at the college I was working for. Our harmonious working team was reconfigured in a new building, and three bosses were replaced. It was not a positive development for me, signaling the beginning of the end, accelerated by a bout of migraine headaches. I left that job, my last full-time position, the next year (1993) and became a self-employed astrologer — a risky move that required unsettling lifestyle alterations. I rented out my house and began visiting the Virgin Islands, where I have been living since 1996.

The experience of the Great Mother remained with me during the Uranus-Moon opposition, reverberating in ways

I can see more clearly when I look back. The improvisational experience of playing Uranus in such a co-creative process spilled over into the risks I was willing to take in redesigning my life. Now I have the waning Uranus square in progress: Uranus in Aries square my Uranus in Cancer, soon to close in on the Moon. How appropriate to be revisiting this experience again!

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Kelley Hunter, Ph.D., C.A.P., has explored the language of the stars and mythology for over four decades, enriched with perspectives from depth psychology, cosmology, and consciousness studies. Author of *Living Lilith: Four Dimensions of the Cosmic Feminine and Black Moon Lilith*, Kelley also contributed to the anthology, *Goddesses in World Culture*. She enjoys the creative process in drama and visual arts, as well as experiential astrology. Kelley lives in St. John, Virgin Islands, leading star-gazing nights between travels, teaching, and consultation work. Her *Cosmic News* appears each month on her Web site (www.heliastar.com) and Facebook (Kelley Hunter, AstroMythology); e-mail: kellhunter@earthlink.net

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