

*astrological-cultural-spiritual-political  
views & commentary...*

*Issue #82  
Nov 2005*

# THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & 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...

website ..... [www.billherbst.com](http://www.billherbst.com)  
email ..... [bill@billherbst.com](mailto:bill@billherbst.com)  
voicemail ..... 612.207.4486



Dear friends,

This month's newsletter takes a temporary leave from my ongoing series exploring our long-term past and future to focus on astrological events of more immediate and pressing concern. These events have been building, and they coalesce during November, December, and January, with further implications that extend well into the future. November's commentary discusses the nature and timing of these events, as well as their psychological and spiritual meanings. Next month's newsletter will focus on the political implications (which may gain momentum this month). Then, in January—barring any surprises—I plan to return to the

next chapter in the series about the linkage of the 1960s to the coming storm of 2012-15. In the meantime, we are imminently headed into interesting and provocative times.

## FIXED GRAND CROSSES

The heavens are moving in fascinating ways. To paraphrase Sherlock Holmes: "The game is afoot, Dr. Watson." Already we are well into the long Mars retrograde. November brings another of the Mercury retrogrades that bring us to a stop sign every four months. And coming right around the corner are not one, but two Fixed Grand Crosses that will pop bubbles of illusion, forcing at least a little more truth and honesty into the streams of fantasy through which we all swim.

None of these astrological developments is particularly unique or so rare as to merit a special press release. Their overlapping combination, however, is significant and quite powerful. The months we have just been through and especially the three months upcoming are very pressurized. If you haven't yet felt the sharp edge in the air and the uncomfortable sense of compression that accompanies it (either in your own life or in the lives of others with whom you interact), then you should get ready, because November, December, and January intensify those feelings, more so with each successive month.

Wanting to break out in some satisfying release—but not quite being able to—is a central quality of this time.

## MERCURY RETROGRADE

The third and last Mercury retrograde of 2005 began its setup or shadow phase on October 26th, followed by the actual retrograde phase on November 14th through December 4th. During that five weeks, Mercury's position in the zodiac will straddle late Scorpio to mid-Sagittarius and back.

The usual caveats apply: Slow down and expect delays. Drive carefully. Double-check communications to insure mutual agreement, but try not to be too disturbed when misunderstandings occur despite your best efforts to prevent them. If possible, avoid starting new projects. Work instead to finish up existing projects that became bogged down or were shelved for one reason or another. Tidy up your "inner house," either literally or spiritually.

Most of all, exhale frequently and be as patient as you can from now until the end of November.

## THE COMING GRAND CROSSES

In astrology, a grand cross is a configuration formed by four planets aligned into a pair of perpendicular axes. The resulting pattern involves six interconnected aspects: four squares and two oppositions. In a chart, the formation looks like a box—a 90° rectangle—with a cross or "X" through the middle.

The most common interplanetary grand crosses are formed when slow-moving outer planets are in square or opposition over some weeks or months, and then faster-moving inner bodies, such as the Sun or Moon, move into aspect to complete the configuration. When the Sun completes the Cross, its duration is roughly two weeks. When the Moon does this, the Grand Cross is extremely short-lived, lasting only about 24–30 hours.

Grand Crosses are energy generators. In metaphysical terms, they concentrate and amplify the existing force field of life-energy in a way that vibrates down to the densest levels of our reality. Grand Crosses (and their more common cousins, T-squares) come in three flavors: cardinal, fixed, and mutable. Cardinal Crosses are crisis-oriented, pushing activity and events to a head. Fixed Crosses focus our values and goals, challenging the relationship of ends to means. Mutable Crosses move the energy in random and unexpected directions, dispersing it like 52-card pickup.

Between November and January of 2005-06, we will experience a related pair of Fixed Grand Crosses. The first of these will be completed by the Sun, with relatively brief duration in early- to mid-November. The second Cross, a more rare type, will last much longer, from late November 2005 through mid-January, 2006, with a continuing rainbow of after-effects that stretch out all the way through 2006 and well into 2007.

## THE TECHNICAL ASTROLOGY

Formation of both Grand Crosses is gradual, and that process is already underway. The various component elements are "assembled" piece by piece, as each interplanetary relationship moves into place in the heavens. I don't know if this qualifies as "intelligent design," but it is compelling to watch, whether or not Dorothy and Toto discover a little man pulling levers behind the curtain.

The configuration began to form in mid-September. By late October, three of four corners were in place. On **November 1st**, the Sun completed the first of the two Grand Crosses. That initial Cross will be relatively short (as are all Sun-completed Crosses), ending on **November 11th**.

Even before the first Cross dissipates, however, a powerful relief pitcher warms up in the bullpen. On November 9th, Jupiter in early Scorpio moves into the configuration, preparing to take over the Sun's starting role.

On **November 28th**, Jupiter completes the second and much longer Fixed Grand Cross. Using wide orbs of 8°, that second Cross will remain in place and effective for **52 days**, until the square between Saturn and Mars breaks finally on **January 18th**.

Over the year and a half that follows, various components of the configuration remain in effect, fade out, then return again. All told, the symbolic implications extend from September, 2005, through August, 2007. That's two full years.

So, although the two sequential Grand Crosses dominate the heavens for the next three months, this is not just a three-month event.

### **SYMBOLIC MEANINGS**

At the core of both Grand Crosses is the Saturn-Neptune opposition from Leo to Aquarius that extends from beginning to end of the two years.

Saturn represents real life—hard, cold reality—while Neptune symbolizes the other-worldliness of images, ideals, fantasies, and illusions. Saturn is caution and sobriety versus Neptune's infatuation and inebriation. Saturn is the pragmatic truth; Neptune is infinite possibilities. Saturn is firm boundaries that separate one thing from another, while Neptune is the dissolving of boundaries into unlimited oneness. Saturn is our karmic position on the wheel of Sangsara, while Neptune is the window into Samadhi.

Saturn can manifest as the fulfilled achievement of a lifetime's effort toward maturity. It can also be frustrating denial or abject, humiliating failure. Neptune can manifest as a transcendent experience of perfect faith and universal love. It can also be a con game of seduction and betrayal or the profound disappointment of unrequited romance.

Human beings seem to be hard-wired to put up grudgingly with Saturn while longing fervently for Neptune. We live in worlds that contain both reality and illusion, hard pragmatism and dewy-eyed fantasy. Toughness and tenderness are part of our natures, as are tough-minded judgment and compassionate forgiveness.

In 1989, Saturn conjoined Neptune in Capricorn. Reality and illusion were cross-fertilized in a particular fashion. Now, 16 years later, that cycle has reached the halfway point, the harvest of what was planted. Reality is now polarized to illusions and images, and the results are up for judgment.

We are experiencing in actual manifestation now and for the next 18 months which of the many different reality-fantasy seeds planted in the early 1990s proved fertile and bore good fruit, versus others that proved toxic and resulted only in cynicism or falsehoods. Examples of fertile fusions include ideals that have been fully implemented in reality and images that hold up to the acid-test of truth. Examples of toxic fusions include beliefs that no matter how widely accepted are no longer supported by reality or lies and deceptions that claim to be one thing, but are in fact merely the cover for something quite different. For instance, the collective faith (Neptune) of Americans in the ability of government to protect them from disaster (Saturn) recently took a huge hit during Hurricane Katrina.

Mars and Jupiter are spearheading these revelations in the second and longer Grand Cross. Mars in Taurus says, "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it's a DUCK! Let's eat it." Jupiter in Scorpio says, "Nah, let's go beyond that. Let's take a biopsy and analyze it, and let's see what its babies look like before we eat it. We have to know what we're dealing with here by digging down to the INNER TRUTH."

In other words, Mars in Taurus aggressively assesses the pragmatic results of our fusions of reality and fantasy, while Jupiter in Scorpio puts them under the microscope of analysis and probes deeply under their surfaces to discover what they truly are.

This process of revealing the truth, of separating fertile fusions of reality and illusion from toxic ones, is hardly black-and-white. Saturn and Neptune together are very tricky. They morph and change and morph again when challenged. Even the sharp scalpels of a Taurean Mars and the deep probes of a Scorpionic Jupiter reveal a million shades of gray.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL MEANINGS**

We live here on the earth in these animal bodies, and the world is filled with both dangers and strangers. Some of the dangers are obvious, some are invisible. Some of the strangers are people we don't know, while some can be those closest to us. Deciphering all that accurately is a bit much. We're often uncertain about how others will react or respond to us. Will we be accepted? Will we be rejected? In addition, we sometimes cannot be certain even about ourselves. We're often unsure of who we are, because many different selves coexist inside each of us, changing from moment to moment, which can prove very confusing.

So, we wear masks. Some of our masks are intentional, some are compulsive, and some are altogether unconscious. We create certain masks as persona to express ideals that we find powerful or ennobling. We create certain masks to hide from others, perhaps to feel safe until trust is established or even to gain advantage in interaction.

Masks can be opaque or transparent. Sometimes we assume that people can see through our masks to our truer inner selves when they cannot. Other times we assume that people cannot see through our masks when they can. Knowing who sees what gets very complicated.

After awhile, our masks become habitual. We may not know or remember that we are wearing masks at all and mistake them for our deeper selves. Over time, we may actually become our masks, as if the roles we portray gradually sank in and transformed our essence. That could change us for better or worse, depending on the nature of the mask, why we adopted it, and how we used it.

Sometimes we reach a point where we no longer need a certain mask, so we remove it, changing our persona. In that event, we may emerge as one of our truer inner selves, or we might simply adopt another updated mask. Other times, we reach that same point of not needing a given mask, but we discover that we can't get it off. It's stuck, glued on, as it were. Some people are imprisoned within a false persona, never free to come out, always being someone they're not.

These next three months, from November through January, are a time to check our masks. Do we need them? Can we remove them at will? Are they stuck? Can we emerge and offer ourselves to the world more spontaneously, more authentically? Where are we hiding, and do we need to continue to hide? To what do we aspire, and have we become our aspiration? Where are we lying—to others and to ourselves—and do we need to continue those deceptions? How many of our inner selves are classified as state secrets, and can we invoke the freedom of information act in our own lives? Are we brave enough to let out who we truly are?

Whose creatures are we? To whom or what do we owe allegiance, and at what price to our soul? Exactly who owns us? Who do we obey? And, more importantly, who do we dare to disobey? Is our disobedience carefully hidden in the shadows or openly defiant?

During this fall and winter, people who strive to cultivate images of themselves carefully-crafted for public consumption—especially those who polish that image to an artificial sheen that hides their less attractive qualities and smarmier hidden behaviors—may find their halos increasingly tarnished. Masks of all types will be removed—some ripped off by others, some consciously discarded by ourselves, and some collapsing of their own dead weight.

This is not easy. What we're talking about here is disciplined spiritual work on ourselves. Standing up for who we are and what we truly believe takes courage. Insisting on one form of freedom may require the sacrifice of another kind of freedom. The risk is that we may lose money, status, security, perhaps even the approbation, friendship, or love of others who matter to us.

Is it worth the risk? I would answer by posing another question: What is it worth to get out of prison?

We don't have to do any of this, of course. We can hunker down, go to ground deep into our bunkers, and stay just as we were. For those of us who choose the path of emergence, however, or for those of us who are chosen—Get Ready.

In the immortal words of one of Bette Davis' more notable screen characters: "Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy ride."



**Bill Herbst** resides in Olympia, Washington. To learn about his telephone sessions with clients, go to his web site at [www.billherbst.com](http://www.billherbst.com), and click on the link in the upper right corner for **Sessions FAQ**.

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