

# Future History: No New Normal

## (ASTROLOGICAL NOTES FOR AN APOCALYPSE)

Andrea Javor aka Mystic Sandwich

### The End of a World

It's impossible to make sense of history when we're in the midst of it. For all our projecting, guessing, and divining, we don't know how these stories will end. We know the future will be different from the past, but how?

Our past is lurching; the structures that seemed solid now falter. Didn't so many of us wish for this: an end to the old order, the death machine called neoliberalism? (Not that we thought it would look quite like this, or that so many would be caught in the wreckage.)

*Apocalypse* seems more apt than *revolution*, given nature's role in this great turning. But all our theorizing, longing, and imagining of a better world are not for nothing. Apocalypse isn't the end of the world; it's the end of *a* world. And when one world falls, another will take its place.

Apocalypse means "uncovering" or "revealing," and it seems both that much is being revealed, and that much is yet to be revealed. Revelation is the mechanism of transformation: it is through confronting our darkest depths that we evolve.



## The Cosmic Context

For all the unknowns we've been asked to sit with, astrology offers not answers but symbolic context: a frame that holds this moment, the hint that perhaps there is meaning—even if we don't know quite what that is—to what we are living through.

Astrologically, 2020 is no ordinary year. Several significant long-term cycles end and begin this year, suggesting that 2020 is a turning point in the grand scheme of history and that the transformation we are undergoing concerns the entire trajectory of humanity.<sup>1</sup> While the skies are infinitely complex, at the heart of the current astrology is a rare triple alignment between Saturn, Jupiter, and Pluto, that is in effect for the whole year (with the Saturn-Pluto conjunction in effect from late 2018 until early 2021). Exploring these archetypes and how they interact allows us to glimpse the symbolic significance of this moment.

The significations of Saturn include limitation, structure, borders, conservatism, authority, isolation, solitude, discipline, mastery, time, maturity, mortality, responsibility. Jupiter indicates abundance, prosperity, gifts, optimism, magnitude, magnanimity, excess, worldview, belief, ideology, religion. Pluto symbolizes the unconscious and the hidden, and the means by which they are revealed. It signifies corruption, compulsion, obsession, the id, power, transformation, death; the renewal that comes only of the most intense confrontation with all that has been kept in the dark.



## Cronos and Zeus: The Seeds of Patriarchy

The astrological understanding of Saturn and Jupiter evolved from the myths of Cronos and Zeus. In these myths, time itself is imagined as the cycles of masculine rulership and lineage: through much violence, in the name of power, Cronos, god of time, usurps his father, Uranus, and is usurped in turn by his son, Zeus. These dramas intimate the patriarchal arc of history, the age-old battles for power among men.

Power is imagined as a fraught and ambiguous relation to fertility: Cronos doesn't just kill Uranus, he castrates him, cutting off his ability to proliferate his powers. While Cronos's fertility is signified primarily by his sickle—symbol of the harvest, and the weapon used to castrate Uranus; Zeus's fertility is symbolized by his many sexual exploits, as both seducer and rapist, and his uncountable offspring.

In the myths, women and children are violently objectified for their role in lineage. In the attempt to evade the fate bestowed on him through overthrowing his father—namely, being overthrown in turn, Cronos consumes his children (Zeus, of course, survives, to eventually fulfill that fate). And Zeus attempts to secure his rulership by eating one of his wives, Metis, who was prophesied to bear a child that would dethrone him. These myths allude to the irony that the quest for power over nature and plenitude leads to the denial and objectification of life.



## Hades: Transformation through Revelation

Hades, brother of Zeus, is the god of the underworld, called Pluto (meaning riches) by the Romans who were terrified of Hades's capacity to bring about suffering, but recognized that wealth lies in the depths—as ores buried beneath the Earth's surface or psychological riches in the depths of the psyche. The association of wealth with the underground also connotes the hiding of wealth, the greed and hoarding of riches, and the shadow side of prosperity and power.

Hades rapes Persephone and forces her down to the underworld, a symbol of the soul's terrifying confrontation with the violent and brutal aspects of humanity, so terrible we seek to confine them to the underground—the unconscious in our current imaginary. Pluto, as keeper of the underworld, may contain riches, but also hides our greed, compulsions, and will to power. When that which is buried in the Earth surfaces—when the repressed returns—it is often volcanic.

It's through a reckoning with the unconscious—both individual and collective—that we come to know ourselves more fully. It's an unfortunate feature of humanity that transformation quite often requires suffering; that birth and death are the ultimate transformations and are often painful, difficult, and sometimes traumatic.



## Mythic Proportions

If Saturn and Jupiter together symbolise the battle of the Titans, then with Pluto involved, the battle becomes apocalyptic. For, if a pandemic weren't significant enough, let's not forget, always looming in the background, the ecological crisis threatening not just lives, but life. Pluto confronts us with our mortality, not just as individuals, but as a species.

As we contend with the pandemic, and various forms of quarantine and distancing, we confront the very Saturnian themes of mortality, limits, solitude, rules, authority, surveillance. But while on the face of it we are navigating a pandemic, and a pandemic is no insignificant thing, the astrology (particularly the overlapping ending of multiple long-term cycles) suggests that the pandemic is a trigger for something deeper, bigger, more significant. The astrology suggests that the entire arc of human history is coming to a head; that stories born thousands of years ago are culminating now; that this is a momentous, historic turning point of mythic proportions.

The ecological crisis is a logical outcome of the Cronos and Zeus stories playing out over millennia and impacting much of the Earth. If rulership is imagined as a form of fertility that requires the control and management of life, but which leads to infertility when it outruns its course, then free market economics demanding perpetual growth (perpetual power, perpetual "fertility" through production) is the ultimate form of life-denying productivity that has culminated in the threat of mass extinction (the ultimate infertility) and impending climate collapse.

Paradoxically (as archetypes tend to be), just as the purportedly unstoppable machines of production and consumption have maintained the Plutocracy, so it's taken something Plutonic—beyond human control—to throw a wrench into those otherwise relentless machinations.



## The Transformative Potential

Tragically, the pandemic is revealing the vulnerabilities, the cracks, the injustices in our systems. Illness is not equally distributed; nor is recovery. We've seen that people of colour, people who work underpaid service jobs, people who are homeless, or incarcerated, or sick, or elderly, or in so many other ways underprivileged, are most likely to be infected, and most likely to die. And when so many professionals are paid to stay safe at home, while so many others must risk their lives to tend to them, the already existing class structures are brought into stark relief. Many of us may have already been aware of these injustices, but the potential is that as Pluto reveals what has been hidden, such injustices will be acknowledged more broadly in society.

The same logic applies to the nefarious workings of those in power. Just as the Plutonic, especially with Jupiter, can signify the consolidation of power and wealth, and with Saturn, the reification of systems of control, so the Plutonic upwelling of truth into consciousness can spur transformation and renewal. It's precisely because these difficult themes are centred and visible right now that we have the opportunity to change course.

Think of the quiet and profound change that may result from millions of people across the Earth slowing down. Think of millions of people reflecting, contemplating, planting seeds, baking bread. Think of millions of people realizing that it's possible to do less, buy less, consume less. Think of millions of people coming to the embodied understanding that we are all interconnected in visceral and practical ways. Think of the care, the solidarity, the creativity. How could such a phenomenon not have a profound and lasting impact on the course of human history and the Earth itself?



## The Reactive Potential

We also see a reaction to the forces that would bring light to the shadows: the doubling down of those in power, the fascist and totalitarian impulses, the subterfuge of those billionaires hailed as philanthropists, the disaster capitalism, the control of women's bodies, the rise in racialized and gendered violence, the surveillance, the power grabs. Just as Pluto brings to the surface the depraved workings of power (Pluto acting on Saturn), those whose power is threatened by such revelations will inevitably react by fortification and amplification of their control, repressing and suppressing with doubled guile (Saturn acting on Pluto).

Saturn, in its less evolved manifestations, is likely to project the revealed id onto others—to point the finger, to aim the missiles, to strengthen the walls. A more evolved Saturnian response is to take responsibility for one's own role in the melodrama, whether that's complicity, greed, or desire for power and control. It takes immense courage to compassionately contend with one's own id, one's own Plutonic depths. That is the kind of heroism we could use right now. Saturn, at its best, holds the promise of moral integrity and personal responsibility.



## Unknowing is the Doorway

In the name of transformation, Pluto seeks to destroy our systems (Saturn), but also our ideology, our worldview, our beliefs (Jupiter). The narratives and who controls them is a central theme here. But so is the erasure of what we thought we knew. We don't know what our futures hold. But that not knowing is necessary for initiation: there would be no transformation without it. Knowing restricts us to a few worn roads that look a lot like the past, whereas not knowing contains infinite potential. To sit with the uncertainty, the chaos, the big blank where our futures once were — that is our work.

