

# Beyond the Sun Signs

Anne Whitaker

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From time to time I am asked to give talks on astrology. The audience is usually an interesting mixture of the gullible, the open-minded, the sceptical and the dismissive. My opening gambit is to say that I wholeheartedly agree with those who feel that astrology as presented via magazines, newspapers, radio and TV is largely trivial entertainment without much substance. I then pause. There is a silence, and I can sense the question hovering in the air: 'Well — if that's the case, why is she here?'

## *Why Popular Astrology Lacks True Value*

The first problem a serious astrologer has to overcome is the widespread public perception that what they read in the papers is serious astrology. *It is not.* Popular astrology classifies humanity into twelve basic types: 'I am Leo, you are Aquarius, that person over there seems like a Gemini.' This typology is based on the position the sun is occupying in the heavens on the day of an individual's birth, and assumes that the sun's position shows in symbolic form the basic character of the

individual. To base an assessment of the texture and complexity of a human being's life on one single factor is plainly inadequate, and it is not at all surprising that many people refuse to accept that something so one-dimensional can offer anything meaningful in mapping out the intricacies of human personality.

## *Enter — and Exit — Macbeth*

Most readers will be familiar with Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, a complex exploration of the tragic consequences which follow the compulsive pursuit of power insufficiently held in check by moral scruples. Let us imagine a stage with Macbeth standing on it, spotlit, alone. He stands there and stands there — no-one comes to interact with him, no Lady Macbeth, no Banquo, no witches, no Duncan. Eventually Macbeth gets tired of waiting and leaves the stage. Nothing has happened. Macbeth is a key character in a complex play, the development of which is made possible by his interaction with the rest of the players. Macbeth is central: without him the play cannot exist, yet just as clearly the play cannot exist with him alone.

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Attempting to describe the action in the play of our life in terms of our sun sign alone is as shallow and ineffective as *Macbeth* with only one character. The sun sign may symbolise an important character on life's stage, but taken on its own it cannot convey the complex drama of an individual's personality and the life pattern which arises from it.

### *Focusing and Highlighting*

When a biologist wants to describe an organism, she cuts a thin section through a piece of plant or animal tissue. The section is laid out flat on a glass slide, and the biologist identifies a number of key features and stains them to highlight them. The prepared slide is placed under a microscope, and the biologist focuses the microscope to obtain a clear impression of the section.

What an astrologer does in attempting to build up a picture of you is a similar process. She cuts a section through space and time at one particular moment — that dictated by the date, the latitude and longitude of your place of birth, and the exact time of your birth. Taking this section involves making a series of mathematical calculations.

The next stage is to lay out the information regarding planetary positions and co-ordinates of that moment in time, flat on a birth chart form (see the illustration on the next page for an example). Different colours are used to highlight particular features, such as the different planets and axial points. Then the astrologer applies her skill, experience, and judgement to an analysis of this space/time section or birth chart.

Analysis takes hours in the early

stages of learning — with practice it gets less. From this analysis, done properly, it should be possible to build a core picture of you with your strengths and vulnerabilities, talents and blocks, hopes and fears.

### *The Complete Cast*

Returning to the analogy of the stage with the cast all interacting to produce an unfolding drama, we can now look at the completed birth chart and see the characters standing waiting for their cues as your life unfolds. There is the Sun, representing your core life force; the Moon, symbolising emotional and intuitive responses; Mercury relating to mind and communication, your intellectual life; Venus, indicating the urge towards harmony, towards relating, and your response to beauty. Mars symbolises your qualities of aggression and will to action; Jupiter, the urge to expand in vision and understanding; Saturn, the principle symbolising your relationship with structure and discipline, and your capacity to develop wisdom with time. Uranus symbolises your urge to be different from the herd, and speaks of the quality of your social idealism. Neptune symbolises your longing for perfection, for the Divine; and Pluto speaks of your connection with the dark and powerful forces in life which demand the death of old forms, so that regeneration and renewal can occur.

Thus the ten planets symbolise the core energies at work within the personality; the twelve signs, the clothes the planets 'wear' in meeting the world; the twelve houses, the spheres of life or the backdrops against which the action of the play takes place. In addition there is the

ascendant/descendant axis which shows how you meet the world in general, and 'significant others' in particular. The IC/MC axis shows where you are coming from at the very core, and the life direction towards which you strive.

The nodal axis shows talents already developed, and how you should push to develop new ones; the planetoid Chiron shows how and where you may be wounded in body or spirit, which can also

be the point where you can develop the wisdom to heal yourself and others. The birth chart also shows the aspects, or angular relationships, between the planets against the backdrop of the heavens. Each aspect shows a particular way in which two or more energies are linked. Aspect patterns show significant subplots which provide important counterpoints to the main themes in the drama of your life.

**BIRTH CHART** EQUAL HOUSE SYSTEM

**PROGRESSED DATA**

\_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ Prog  
 Noon positions on \_\_\_\_\_  
 Correspond to \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_ Noon Date

P1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 P: \_\_\_\_\_  
 P: \_\_\_\_\_  
 P: \_\_\_\_\_  
 P: \_\_\_\_\_

Ruling Planet: ♃ Ruler's House: 6th ASC  
 Ruling Planet: ♃ Ruler's House: MC 4th  
 Ruling Planet: ♃ Ruler's House: ASC 1st 6th SC

Temples: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fire: 2(1) Own sign: ♂♂  
 Earth: 4(3) Exalted: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Air: ♂♂ ♂♂ Dominant: ♂  
 Water: ♂♂ Fall: \_\_\_\_\_

Overlapping: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cardinal: ♂♂ Angular: ♂♂, ♀♂, ♀♂  
 Fixed: ♂♂ Succedent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mutable: ♂♂ Cadent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mutual Reception: \_\_\_\_\_

PLANET	DEC.	ASPECTS												NOTES	BY DIRECT METHOD			
		☉	☽	♃	♄	♅	♆	♁	♂	♆	♁	♂	♆		Birth date	Birth place	Latitude	Longitude
Sun	♋ 10° 00'														Lower Earth Station	UK	51° 57' 00"	0° 00' 00"
Moon	♋ 10° 00'														Earth time of given	23° 20' 00"		
Mercury	♋ 10° 00'														Time standard			
Venus	♋ 10° 00'														Summer for double time			
Mars	♋ 10° 00'														G.M.T.			
Jupiter	♋ 10° 00'														G.M.T. date			
Saturn	♋ 10° 00'														Use time zone G.M.T.			
Uranus	♋ 10° 00'														Interval TO FROM noon 0 m.			
Neptune	♋ 10° 00'														Event			
Pluto	♋ 10° 00'														Consideration on interval 0 m.			
ASC ASCENDANT	♋ 10° 00'														Local time of Cross-over at birth			
MC MIDHEAVEN	♑ 10° 00'														Longitude equivalent "E" - W.			

NAME MARY SHELLEY No. 1992 SOURCE: FATHER PRESENT AT BIRTH  
 (AUTHOR OF 'FRANKENSTEIN')  
 Designed by M.E. HONE.

## *The Complexity of Real Life*

The art and science of astrology would be worth little if it reduced the complexities of life to simplistic statements. What it does is mirror back those very complexities in symbolic form. Astrology can reveal not only the inner motivating drives, many of which may be unconscious or unclear, but also the people and life experiences which the person is predisposed to attract because of his or her nature.

Carl Jung observed that individuals' lives are characteristic of who they are. Astrology shows this to be the case, and understanding the connection between who you are and what you attract is the first powerful step towards growth and change. This is a unique gift which a sensitive and experienced astrologer can offer in the course of a birth chart reading.

### *Fate or Free Will?*

Astrology cannot predict a fixed and fated character or destiny through the reading of a birth chart. In my opinion it is crippling to a person's ability to lead their life creatively to read their chart in this way. Perspective can be gained by contemplating the clear parallels which exist between the modern physicist's view of probability, and that presented by astrological symbolism.

The physicist observes the shifting dance of waves and particles and is only able to posit future outcomes in terms of statistical probability. The astrologer can observe and describe core energies, in their symbolic form, at work within the person's basic character and with reference to their past, present and future, but can only speculate regarding the wide

spectrum of possibilities which flow from each core pattern.

Modern physics has also demonstrated how the presence of the observer influences, however subtly, the outcome of the experiment. By giving definite predictions in an astrology reading, it is likely that the astrologer's intervention in some hidden but powerful way predisposes the client's life in the direction of the reader's suggestion, thereby closing down options instead of opening them up! Astrology is a powerful art, and its practice carries with it the need to be as honest, self-aware and responsible as possible.

### *What Astrology can Offer*

Like any other body of knowledge, astrology can be misused, misrepresented, turned into a straightjacket of dogma — spiritual, political, or social — from which unbelievers are excluded. As with feminism, socialism, Christianity, green politics, Buddhism or any other ism, the quality of illumination which can be derived from astrological knowledge is entirely dependent on the degree of integrity and self-honesty with which it is approached, interpreted and applied.

Astrology has most to offer when it is seen as an intelligent and creative way of asking questions about what our connections are with the web of life at an individual, social and spiritual level. It does not provide the ultimate answer to our existence, and when we begin to think it does, we fall into yet another ideological trap which, like all the others, stifles the growth of long-term creative approaches to the challenge of how best we can live together on the third stone from the sun.