

Penny Thornton - The Science of Seers

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Whatever your conceptions and misconceptions of astrologers and astrology I am aware that I tread in the footsteps of Masters. Astrology has an extraordinarily long and colourful history. The study of the stars goes back almost as far as you care to remember. Certainly, we can presume that as soon as man could lift his head above the primordial swamps he must have wondered what those sparkly lights were in the sky at night. And since there was no television for his evening entertainment he began to see the shapes of animals in the patterns of stars. He would also have noted that these lights appeared to move and that if he waited long enough the same star would return to the same spot when, as before, the snow was falling, the plains were flooded or the trees full of blossom. And this happened again and again and again. Star-gazing was first and foremost a way of measuring time: when to plant, when to reap, when to cull the deer, when to expect the rains and the snows. But out of man's instinctual need to find something greater in the universe than himself, someone to blame when things went wrong and to praise when everything in the garden was wonderful, an explanation as to how all things came into being and functioned, great myths were created. The stars were gods and goddesses. They held sway over the affairs of men. And as time went by the star-gazers became more sophisticated, and the myths ever more complex. You only have to go to Egypt and visit the stunning temple of Dendera, built some 3000 years before Christ, to comprehend the mystical significance the constellations held for the Ancient Egyptians.

However, astrology as we know it today: the study of the planets in our solar system, their cycles and their influence, began in Babylon some four thousand years ago – around 2000 BC. The Babylonian sky-watchers were the first real astronomer/astrologers: they observed the stars and made precise calculations of the movements of the planets. And by the time Jesus Christ was born the science and art of astrology had developed to a high degree. Indeed the Magi were almost certainly astrologer/priests who did not suddenly see a star in the East and immediately mount camels in hot pursuit of it. Their calculations informed them of significant celestial phenomena and a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction in Pisces – for this must surely have been the Star of Bethlehem - would have been very significant indeed. With only their wooden measuring instruments to go by the Ancient Babylonian astronomers were oblivious to Uranus, Neptune and Pluto – it would take another two millennia to discover this trio - they believed Jupiter and Saturn to be the two outermost bodies in the solar system, consequently they attributed great power to these planets. And while these ancient star-gazers would have known that Jupiter and Saturn formed a conjunction every 20 years or so, what was so impressive about this one was that it was taking place in the mystical sign of Pisces - something that happened only every nine hundred and sixty years – and then not just once, but three times in the one year. Thus, this conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was no common or garden event but one they believed presaged the birth of a wondrous king, no less the birth of the Messiah. This conjunction, by the way, happened in 7BC. And we are probably looking at a date of September 12th for the birth of Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus was a Virgo.

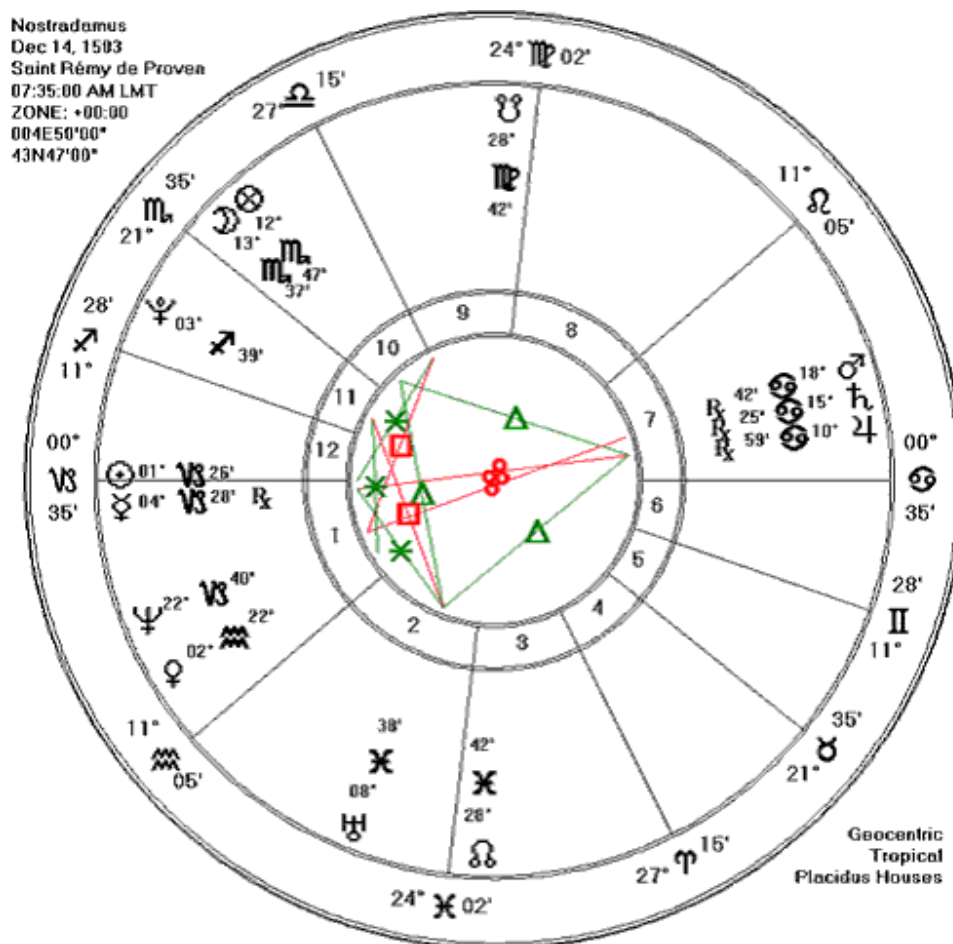
Now, it is not my intention to give you a history lesson tonight but I did want to put astrology into some kind of perspective. To many people astrology is the province of the irrational few but the astrology practised today by astrologers like myself comes out of a great and ancient tradition. And while the whole issue of how astrology works – how lumps of rock careering around a star, our sun, can possibly have any effect on who we are and what happens to us – is the subject of a whole other lecture I do want to make the point that until comparatively recently – and we're talking about the end of the Seventeenth Century – astrology and astronomy were but two branches on a single stem. And also, rather crucially, that the exponents of astrology right from the time of the Ancient Babylonians, through to the Age of Reason and including such hallowed names as Plato, Aristotle, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and Kepler, were revered by one and all – they were the great intellectuals of their day, grappling with the laws of the universe and at the same time exploring and defining man's place in the grand scheme of things.

And I'm looking forward to the day when astrology will once again be held in a high place.

For our talk tonight I want to focus on one of the most famous astrologers of all time, Michel de Nostradame. In the sixteenth Century it was fashionable to Latinize your name, which is why we know him as Nostradamus. Today, as in the sixteenth century, his book of prophecies, *The Centuries*, is a best seller. I'm going to discuss some of those prophecies shortly, especially those that have meaning for us now in light of the War on Terror, but first a bit of background on the seer himself.

As with all great figures of history the man must be separated from the myth. And there are many apocryphal stories about Nostradamus. What we do know about him was that he was born on the 14th December 1503. He was a Capricorn, with a moon in Scorpio and a powerful stellium in Cancer – Mars, Saturn and Jupiter. And by the way, as far as Renaissance man was concerned, Jupiter and Saturn were still the outermost planets in the solar system and therefore the relationship between them was just as paramount as it was in 7BC. To be born at the time of a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction virtually guaranteed fame or infamy and certainly a life lived in interesting times. And still today Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions are considered to be harbingers of major national and international developments - Anwar Sadat of Egypt was assassinated on a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction, Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan both suffered attempts on their lives under a conjunction of these two planets, Princess Diana and Prince Charles were married on a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction – in Libra incidentally, the sign of partnership - and a whole host of other important developments happened under the most recent conjunction in the year 2000 – not least the coming into power of President Assad of Syria. Of which we will hear more later.

Some biographers have maintained that Nostradamus came from the Jewish tribe of Issachar, a people who could ‘read the moon and the stars’ and interpret the heavens. Others report that he was the grandson of the famous physician and astrologer to the French Court, Jean de Remy. However, the reality is somewhat less illustrious. Michel was born into a family of Jewish grain dealers who converted to Christianity a couple of years before Nostradamus was born in order to evade being deported from France. (When the French throne reverted to Louis XII he decreed on September 26th 1501, that all Jews were to renounce their religion or leave Provence.)



Nostradamus Solar Chart, Dec 14th, 1503, Saint Rémy de Proven, 07:35AM LMT

Michel was an exceptionally clever little boy. He lived with and was educated by his paternal grandfather, Pierre, who was a much travelled man of great intellect. His maternal grandfather also taught him for a while. Thus, from an early age he was exposed to Hebrew, Latin, science, mathematics, philosophy and astronomy. By the time he entered university at Avignon his passion for the study of the stars had reached such a crescendo that he was nick-named Le petit astrologue. Nostradamus spent hour upon hour in the vast library at the university reading works on magic, alchemy and astrology. His love of such things did not go down well at home, however, and his parents fearing he would end his days prematurely on a woodpile courtesy of the Inquisition, insisted that he study medicine, which he did for some four years at the University of Montpellier.

As we astrologers know only too well, even when it appears we have taken a route entirely opposite to the one we believe to be our destiny it invariably turns out to be the right one. And so it was with Michel and medicine for he achieved his first measure of fame, not as an astronomer, nor as a prophet, but as a doctor. In the early fifteen-hundreds France, in keeping with much of Europe, suffered periodic bouts of the plague. Michel gained a reputation for treating and curing the plague, which he appears to have done with the aid of his own formulas – secret mixtures of herbs that he no doubt gleaned from his study of healing and magic in the library of Avignon University – and a precocious understanding of the importance of cleanliness, fresh air, running water, and a refusal to bleed patients, which was common practice in his day. Needless to say his success was not greeted with applause by other doctors, especially since he broke ranks by refusing to wear the requisite magic coat of seven colours donned by all Medieval doctors for protection.

Something else all astrologers understand – one’s knowledge does not protect one from the slings and arrows of fate, even if we could find a magic coat of seven colours. And tragically, despite curing hundreds of people he was unable to save his own family. His wife, son and daughter all died from the plague. But in keeping with his stalwart Capricorn spirit, he lived to fight another day, marrying for the second time at the age of forty-four and producing six more children, three daughters and three sons.

It wasn’t until 1550, at the age of forty-seven that Michel began in earnest to devote himself to the occult. In that year he launched into print with an almanac, which covered the weather, crops, animal husbandry and the odd supernatural occurrence. Not unlike the Old Moore’s Almanac that is still in print today, which by great coincidence was the first publication I ever wrote for – an essential rite of passage, perhaps. At the same time Michel was writing a serious tome, Le Traite des Fardemens. He had also embarked on what was to become his most famous work of all, his prophecies, otherwise known as The Centuries.

The Centuries was intended to be a book of one thousand prophecies spanning roughly one and a half millennia – from 1555, the year they were published, until 3775. These one thousand predictions were divided into ten groups, each comprising one hundred four-line stanzas. Hence the title, The Centuries. The entire one thousand did not emerge at once, either, they came out in clumps: the full text, entitled Les Propheties de M. M. Nostradamus, was published some thirteen years later in 1568. However, there are not one thousand predictions: for some inexplicable reason Centuries VII contains only forty-two. Then again, nothing Nostradamus ever did really added up...

Nostradamus is kind enough to tell us the methods by which he made his predictions in the first two quatrains of Centuries 1.

<i>Estant afsis de nuict secret efstude</i>	<i>sitting alone at night in secret study.</i>
<i>Seul repose sur la selle d’aerain</i>	<i>it rests solitary on the brass tripod.</i>
<i>Flambe exigue fortant de solitude</i>	<i>A slight flame comes out of the emptiness</i>
<i>Fait psperer q n’eft a croire vain</i>	<i>making successful that which would have been in vain.</i>

<i>La verge en main au milieu de BRANCHES</i>	<i>The wand in the hand is placed, in the middle of the tripod.</i>
<i>De l'onde il mouille & le limb & le pied:</i>	<i>He sprinkles with water both the hem of the garment and his foot</i>
<i>Vn peur & voix fremissent par les manches:</i>	<i>Fear, a voice runs trembling through the sleeves (of robe)</i>
<i>Splendeur divine. Le divin pres s'assied.</i>	<i>Divine splendour; the God sits nearby.</i>

Here we have a picture of Nostradamus seated alone at night with a candle and a tripod upon which a bowl of water is placed. Nostradamus, by gazing into the water until it became cloudy would then see visions of the future. The second quatrain tells us that he was clairaudient as well – fear, a voice runs trembling through the robe... Why trembling through the robe I'm not sure, unless it is to give the impression of a vibration. The mention of water to wash the feet is also an allusion to the common practice, still employed by modern-day mediums and healers, of using water to cleanse the extremities before opening up the psyche.

These two quatrains, like the remaining nine hundred and forty, are a mixture of French, Latin, doggerel, anagrams and acronyms. Take the word BRANCHES, which is written in capitals: this could represent the branches, or legs, of the tripod but it could also be an indirect reference to the prophetess at Branchus. Nostradamus was the king of the double entendre – he hid double and sometimes triple meanings everywhere in his text. But when Nostradamus uses capital letters he is showing us very definitely that this word needs to be examined closely to glean its meaning. Also the phrase, flambe exigue – a slight flame almost certainly has a double meaning, both the flame of the candle itself and the light of inspiration.

This is just speculation, of course, but it may be no coincidence that only a few years prior to the appearance of the first set of Centuries, a reprint of a book of prophecy by the fourth century Platonist, Iamblichus, was published, which detailed just such methods of divination. Then there are some other wilder theories about where he developed his predictive skills. And I cannot resist mentioning this.

Some of you may remember the furore caused by the book, Holy Blood, Holy Grail, that was published in the mid-nineteen-eighties. This book hypothesized that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross at all but was secretly brought to the South of France by Mary Magdalene, his wife. Furthermore, he fathered a dynasty. The book claims that this is the great secret held by the mysterious Priory of Sion – that even today this dynasty is alive and well and living in France, waiting for the appropriate moment to assume power – a moment when the world is in a near-state of collapse. Which probably makes it any day now. This secret society, whose origins appear to date back to the time of the Knights Templars has had as its Grand Masters such esteemed figures as Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Issac Newton, Victor Hugo and Claude Debussy. So it is not quite so easy to dismiss the theory or the organization as a prawn short of a sea food salad!

Holy Blood, Holy Grail makes a claim that Nostradamus's great grand-father, Jean Remy, who lived close to the organization's headquarters in the South of France, was not just astrologer to Rene of Anjou, the King of France, but also a member of the Priory of Sion, of which the King was the then Grand Master. The theory goes that Michel was given the secrets of this organization by his grandfather, which included the prophecies for the future of mankind, and invited to commit them to posterity by means of a book. Thus, this is the principle reason why the prophecies are so abstruse and are not placed in chronological order. One does not give away the secrets of a secret society.

Whatever the case, considering the Inquisition, it was certainly safer, to make these predictions as fluid and open to interpretation as possible and in keeping with almost all prophecies, and as Nostradamus himself maintained,

they were to be understood after the event, rather than before it!

Certainly, there is a strongly Biblical theme running through Nostradamus's quatrains, whether this was the result of his Jewish ancestry or because of the secret teachings kept by the Priory that had been handed down from the time of David.

Let me give you an example.

<i>L'antichrist trois bien toft annichilez</i>	<i>The third Antichrist soon annihilates everything</i>
<i>Vingt & Sept ans sang durera sa guerre</i>	<i>twenty-seven years of blood his war will last</i>
<i>Les heretiques mortz, captifs, Exilez,</i>	<i>The unbelievers dead, captives exiled,</i>
<i>Sang, corps humain, eau rogie</i>	<i>Bloody human bodies, red water</i>
<i>gresler terre</i>	<i>covering the earth.</i>

Centuries VIII, q; 77

St. John's Revelations make mention of the Antichrist – remember he of the number 666. In this terrifying vision of the future, St John predicts plagues, blood, famine, war, climactic changes, upheaval, strange signs in the heavens, earthquakes – you name it it's in there – and Nostradamus's quatrains feature the same cast of characters. The unnerving factor is that many of the criteria for the End Times, are already happening. We are indeed seeing an increase in earthquake activity, we have wars and rumours of wars – take the current situation with America's sabre rattling over Iraq – we have climactic changes, false religions, and what is AIDS if not a terrible plague?

In 1555 these predictions had an unnerving effect on the general public too and Nostradamus's conveniently sized books – initially published a few hundred Centuries at a time – fitted easily into the pockets of the ruling classes. They in turn found their way by word of mouth into the lower class's consciousness as well. But what turned Nostradamus into a super star was his prediction about the King, Henri II.

<i>Le lyon ieune le vieux surmontera</i>	<i>The young lion will overcome the old</i>
<i>En champ bellique par singulier</i>	<i>in a field of combat in a single fight.</i>
<i>Dans caige d'or les yeux luy creuera</i>	<i>He will pierce his eyes in a golden cage,</i>
<i>Deux claffes une, puis mourir, mort Cruelle</i>	<i>two wounds in one, then dies a cruel death.</i>

Centuries 1, q: 35

Three years after this quatrain was published it came horribly true.

Catherine de Medici, the wife of Henri II, had been troubled by this prediction, especially since the Italian astrologer, Luc Gauric, had already warned the King that both the beginning of his reign and the end would be marked by duels. Shortly after his accession, Henri had fought a duel – rather a risky venture for a monarch, but then Henri was an Aries - and Catherine clearly wanted to know whether the next would indeed kill him. Henry,

of course, had a blind disregard for the warnings of astrologers and on the occasion of his daughter, Elizabeth's marriage to King Philip of Spain, decided to celebrate the event with a tournament. Henri was victorious during the first two days' jousting matches but on the third the lance of his opponent, the Captain of the Scottish Guard, Montgomery, pierced Henri's helmet, splintered in two, entering his brain just above the eye and lodging in his throat. Henri died in agony ten days later. To add to the accuracy of this prophecy, both Montgomery and the King featured a lion on their coat of arms.

The fulfilment of this quatrain brought Nostradamus international fame. However, he had his critics too, including doctors, philosophers, even other astrologers. Now, that couldn't be the green-eyed monster, could it? No, of course not... His detractors even made up a neat little tongue twister about him in Latin:

*Nostra damus cum falsa damus nam fallere nostrum est;
Et cum falsa damus, nil nisi nostra damus.*

Roughly translated this means: When we give our own we give false things. And when we give false things we give but our own. Basically it's just a play on the words *notre* and *damus*. I guess it loses a lot in the translation.

Catherine de Medici summoned Nostradamus to Court in the summer of 1556, no doubt shortly after she had read the quatrain above. To be correct it was the King who issued the summons, presumably because he believed he was humouring his wife. While further explanation of the quatrain was surely part of that first consultation, Catherine also asked Nostradamus to read the horoscopes of all her children. Then, as now, this presented a daunting task for an astrologer. And why? Well, all seven of Catherine's children were to lead tragic lives. Her eldest son, Francois, would die in his teens leaving his child bride, Mary, Queen of Scots, to her unfortunate destiny. Elisabeth, her eldest daughter, would be married to old Philip of Spain and die in childbirth. Another son would become the notorious Charles IX – somewhat unsure of his sexuality and something of a clone of Roman Emperor, Caligula – la belle Marguerite married the Huguenot King of Navarre who exiled her to a convent for her infidelity then proceeded to take over France as King Henry IV. And so it goes...

Quite how Nostradamus got around explaining to Catherine that her thirteen-year-old son, Francois, had but four more years to live is a matter for our imagination but, as it turned out, he had already prophesied the event:

<i>Premier fils vefue malheureux marriage</i>	<i>The first son, a widow an unfortunate marriage</i>
<i>Sans nuls enfans deux isles en discord,</i>	<i>without children. Two islands thrown into discord.</i>
<i>Auant dixhuict incompetant</i>	<i>Before eighteen years of age, a minor.</i>
<i>De l'autre pres plus bas fera l'accord.</i>	<i>Of the other even younger will be at one (married).</i>

Centuries 10 Q: 39

This quatrain is spot on. Catherine's first son, Francois, married Mary, Queen of Scots and died from a chill at the tender age of seventeen, leaving Mary a widow. Their brief marriage was childless and in the wake of Francois' death England and France were at loggerheads. The rather abstruse last stanza can be understood as Francois' brother, Charles, becoming engaged at the even younger age of eleven.

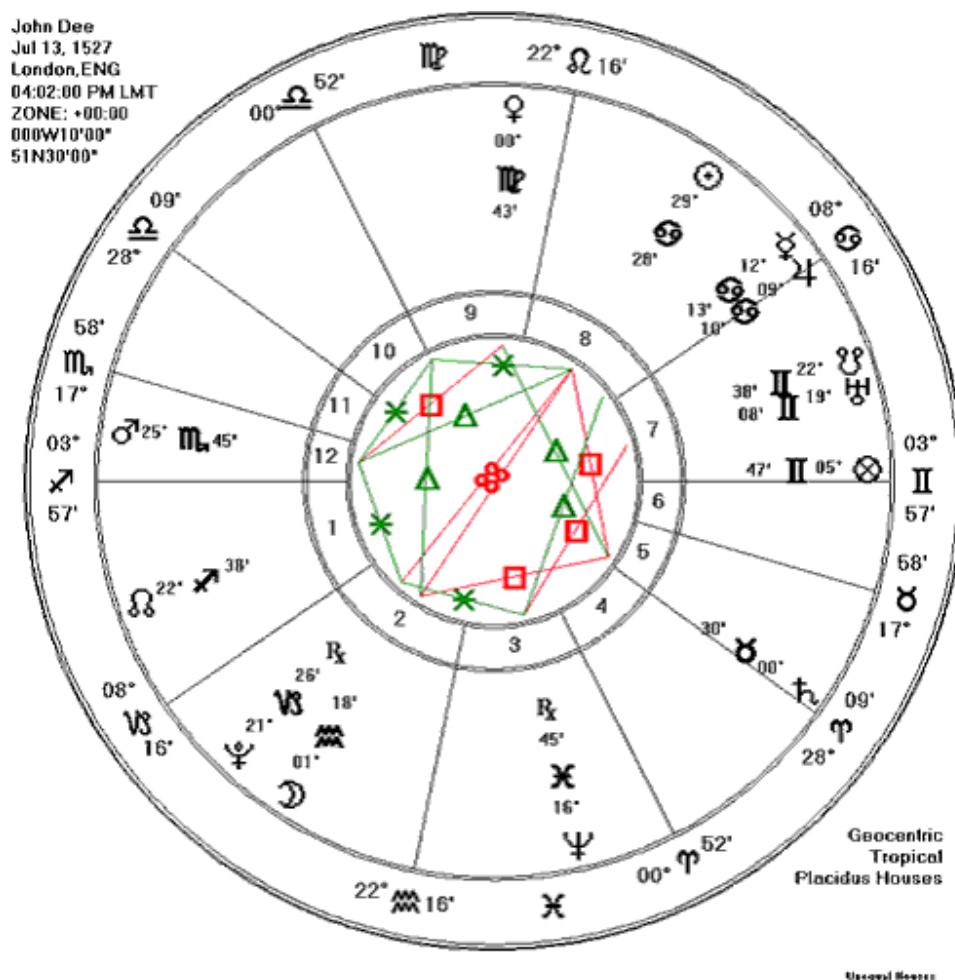
A few weeks prior to Francois' death Nostradamus made an even stronger prediction, clearly in one of his almanacs. This we understand from a letter written on 3rd December 1560 by the Tuscan Ambassador, Niccolo Tornabuoni, to Duke Cosimos of Florence:

“The health of the king is very unsure and Nostradamus in his predictions for this month says that the royal house will lose two young members from unexpected illness.”

On 5th December Francois died from a chill and before the end of the month his young cousin, the son of the Duc de Roche-sur-Yon, also died from an infection.

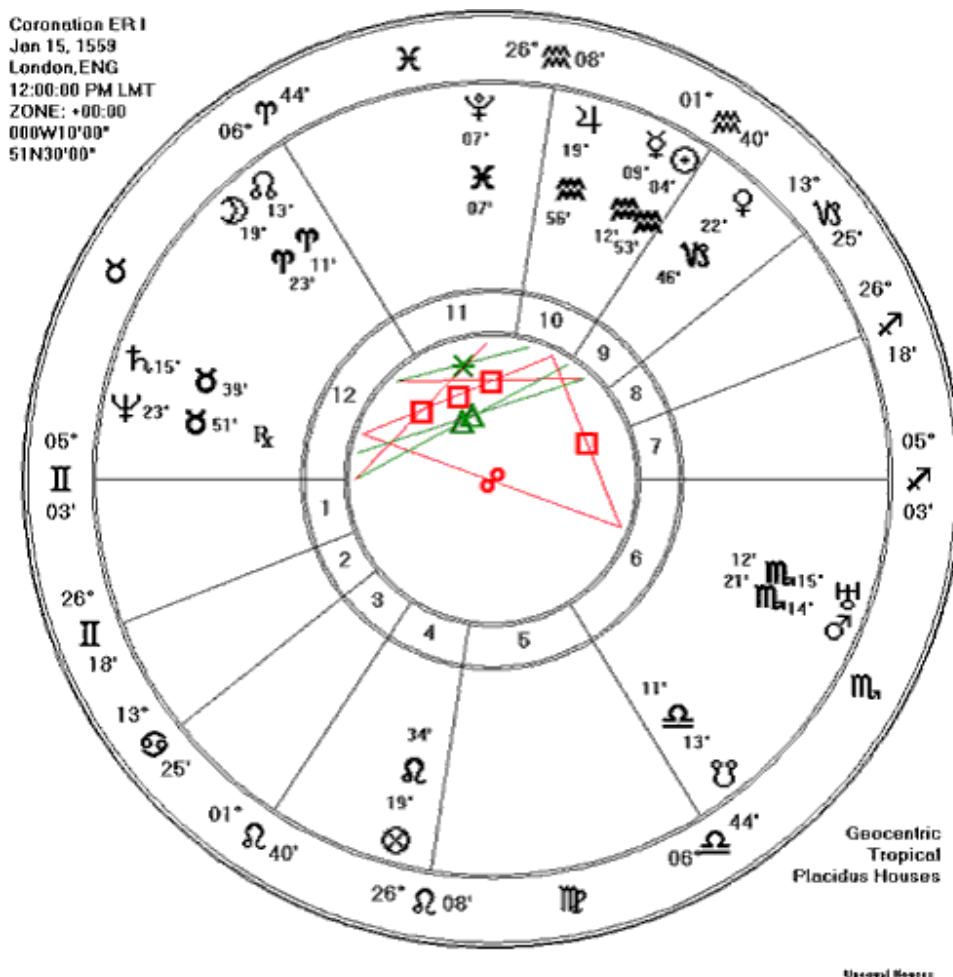
But fame is a capricious thing. And while there is no doubt that Nostradamus continued to be held in high esteem by Catherine de Medici and countless others he was loathed by many. Indeed, by 1564 effigies of him were being burned in Paris and fearing a real roasting by the Inquisition he retired to his home in the South of France.

Nostradamus was living and working at the same time as another famous astrologer, Dr John Dee. Dee, born in 1527, was some twenty-four years younger than Nostradamus and he would have been twenty-eight when the Centuries was first published. Dee, like Nostradamus, experienced seasons of fame and success interlaced with periods of infamy and vilification.



During the Sixteenth Century no self-respecting monarch or ruler would have been without an astrologer but however sought after such a position might be it carried certain dangers. Dee, revered as an astronomer, navigator and man of letters was forever dodging bullets at the courts of Mary Tudor and her successor, Elizabeth I. These courts, like any royal court, were infested by spies and constantly a-buzz with plots. And Dee, like any courtier, had to be careful with whom he hobnobbed - allegiances changed all the time. He narrowly escaped incarceration in the Tower of London, not because of a failed or an accurate prediction, but because he was thought to be plotting against Mary. Also, it seems that regardless of the amount of trust and belief placed in

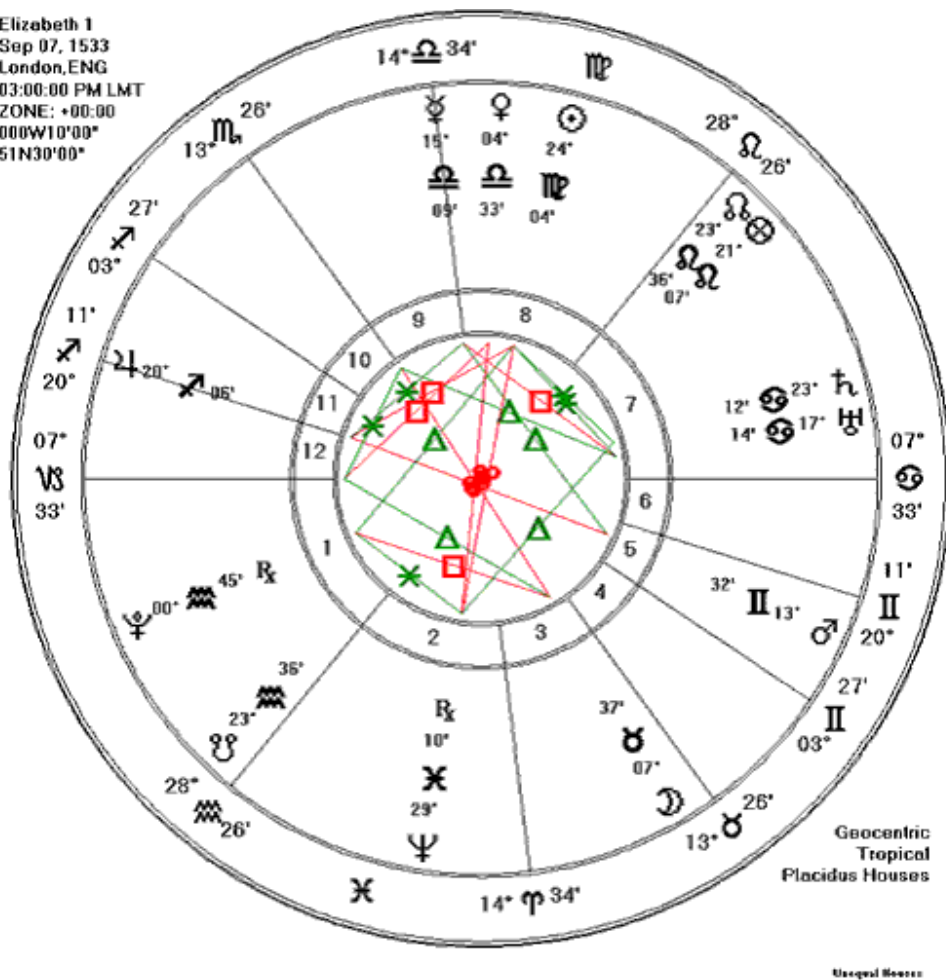
astrology a huge amount of hostility and fear was levelled at its practitioners. And while Dee was clearly a man admired for his intellectual accomplishments there was extreme concern over his dabbings in alchemy. Nevertheless Elizabeth I took him under her wing: she asked him to choose the date and time for her coronation, which he did. Crowned on the morning of January 15 1559, with Jupiter in Aquarius and Mars in Scorpio the reign of Elizabeth was indeed long, innovative and glorious. Of the many predictions he made for Elizabeth his advice on the advisability of marrying the Duke of Anjou is probably the most remembered: “Bio-than-atos!” he is said to have replied, which is the Greek for a violent death – the Duke died of typhoid a year later.



To give you some idea of Dee’s place in the scientific and philosophical scheme of things in many of his works his theories anticipated those that would change the shape of science a century later. He was convinced that the universe worked according to mathematical laws and although his idea that every entity in the universe emitted rays that influenced other objects was not exactly on the mark it was on the way to Newton’s theory of gravity. And while in Dee’s day observing celestial phenomena was done with the aid of wooden cross-staffs and rulers he was convinced that perspective-lenses – telescopes by another name – were the way forward. Telescopes were rare and expensive items in the sixteenth Century and used principally for navigation. He was indeed a man light years ahead of his time.

By the way Dee’s preoccupation with ‘rays’ extended to the notion that the rays from the planets and celestial bodies could pierce the soul. He also opined that since light could be manipulated with the use of lenses and mirrors, celestial rays could also be deflected. In this way you could ameliorate the planets in your horoscope. Have a difficult Saturn? No problem, just adjust this mirror!

Elizabeth I
 Sep 07, 1533
 London, ENG
 03:00:00 PM LMT
 ZONE: +00:00
 000W10°00'
 51N30°00'



Dee was fortunate to be living in a momentous era. When he was forty-five years old a brilliant new star appeared. And, unlike the ‘star’ of Bethlehem this really was a new star. It was Cassiopeia. And while this discovery shook the foundations of science – how could a star suddenly appear, then disappear, which it did roughly a year later – it certainly fuelled the belief that the heavens were in a state of turmoil, which would inevitably wreak havoc on the lives of men and nations. To John Dee the appearance of Cassiopeia was another sign of even greater things to come. In 1583 Jupiter and Saturn were to again conjoin in the sign of Pisces, which meant another nine hundred and sixty-year cycle was coming to an end. There were fears of the end of the world and at the very least the end of the Catholic Church. Certainly, it seemed many of Nostradamus’s predictions were set for an unprecedented period of fulfilment. And in retrospect those fears and expectations were justified: Europe was on the threshold of the Thirty-Years War, one of the most bloody and terrible conflicts to grip the continent.

Now, if all this makes John Dee seem like a paragon of intellectual respectability, read on. Dr Dee was fascinated by the occult, the mysterious and the divine. To this end he spent much of his time trying to fathom the secrets of life and the universe. In his quest for truth and enlightenment he was aided by a very strange, mercurial individual called, Edward Kelly. Reading all the documentary evidence of the life and times of John Dee it seems he fell completely under the spell of this near-lunatic skryer, Edward Kelly. While Dee, consulted planetary Ephemerides, observed the heavens and cast his horoscopes Kelly peered into a crystal ball and summoned various angels and spirits. This motley crew caused more trouble for the two of them than all the political spin-doctors at court put together and much of the information supplied by the Archangels Michael and Uriel and the spirit, Madimi, seems to owe more to the rambling mind of Edward Kelly than anything remotely sent from heaven.

Dee and his aide-de-camp, Kelly, spent four long, arduous years putting together an angelic language and cosmology supplied by their visiting angels. Sadly, little of this remains because Dee was ordered by another spirit to burn all twenty-eight volumes, which he duly did.

In many ways, Dee was a more eccentric and controversial figure than Nostradamus. Yet the legacy he left us in terms of his mystical journey and pioneering scientific theories was huge. By the Nineteenth Century he was considered the English Nostradamus, the founder of The Rosicrucian movement and the inspiration for The Golden Dawn. However, he died a broken man, long forgotten by Court and his reputation in shreds. Nostradamus, on the other hand died, his renown intact, mourned by the many and leaving an extensive fortune.

Of all the many interesting features of the life and work of these two contemporary astrologers, how they made their predictions has to be near the top of the list. It is clear that neither of them relied upon astrology alone: they depended upon psychic agents, in Dee's case, crystals and the skryer, Kelly, and in Nostradamus's case, clairvoyance and clair-audience inspired by peering into a vessel of water. And I would say that the same is true today. You need more than an ephemeris and an astrological cook book to make a prediction.

When Nostradamus committed his prophecies to print he made it clear that they covered the span of many centuries – right up until 3797 to be precise – yet only a handful of quatrains deliver a clear date and, as mentioned earlier, the predictions were not assembled in chronological or thematic order. Thus, he made it deliberately difficult for interpreters to fathom his visions. The dates he does give and the astrological markers he provides – for astrological configurations are a clear way of establishing specific periods of time – confuse rather than clarify:

<i>L'an mil neuf cens nonante neuf sept mois</i>	<i>The year 1999 Seven month</i>
<i>Du ciel veiendra un Grand Roy Deffrayeur</i>	<i>From the sky will come a great King of Terror,</i>
<i>Resusciter le grand Roy D'Angle-Mois,</i>	<i>(who) will resurrect the great King of the Mongols,</i>
<i>Auant apres Mars regner par Bonheur</i>	<i>Before and after War reigns happily.</i>

Centuries 10 Q: 72

Now, this is quite specific: July, 1999. However, by the end of July 1999, no great sign had been seen in the sky and no great king or leader had been brought back to the land of the living.

Likewise, “ Saturn and Mars in Leo, Spain occupied... (Centuries 5: Q 14) Spain can only be said to have been occupied once since Nostradamus wrote his Centuries and that was during the Penninsular War of 1807/8. However, Saturn was in Scorpio then so this remains a quatrain to be fulfilled in the future. Mars has an eighteen-month cycle, while Saturn has a twenty-eight-year cycle so technically these two planets will come together in Leo every twenty-seven to thirty years. The next time they are set to conjoin in Leo is in 2006, although at this point in time it does seem unlikely that sunny Spain will be occupied by anyone other than its own people and its usually welcome visitors.

However, here is another quatrain that remains unfulfilled:

<i>De la felice Arabe contrade</i>	<i>From the rich Arab region</i>
<i>Naistra puissant de loy mahom- Etique</i>	<i>will be born one powerful in the laws of Mohammed</i>

Vexer l'Espagne, conquerer Granada ***it/he will vex Spain and take over Granada***

Et plus de mer a la gent Lygustique ***And more, by sea, the Ligurian people and the Adriatic.***

Centuries 5 Q: 55

This adds some fuel to the fire of speculation that Spain could be occupied, not necessarily by an Arab leader but by the 'law' of Mohammed. Liguria, by the way, means Italy – the Ligurians came from the area around Genoa. And it's not completely out of the question that given enough time Islam, as a religion – and, of course it is a law too – could spread across southern Europe via Spain and Italy.

L'Oriental sortira de son siege, ***The Man from the East will leave his base,***

Passer les monts, Appenis voir La Gaul ***He will pass the Appenine Mountains to see France***

Transpercera ciel, les eaux & Neige ***will cross the sky, the waters and the snow,***

Et chascun frappera de sa gaule ***And strike everyone with his rod.***

Centuries 2 Q: 29

Here we almost certainly have the same powerful Arab leader referred to in the previous quatrain leaving his home-land, his base, and coming into Europe. And since Nostradamus uses the phrase crosses the skies indicating flight, which, of course, was not possible in those days it is clearly a quatrain that refers to the Twentieth Century and beyond.. Striking everyone with his rod could imply that this powerful leader is bent on killing everyone with some kind of nuclear device but there is another interpretation - that he could communicate with everyone over the air-waves, thereby spreading his message far and wide.

Certainly, from the vast amount of references to the East in the quatrains, Nostradamus is in no doubt that Christendom (the West) will be threatened, if not beaten into submission, by an individual from the Arab world and by Islam.

Not only does he give us many quatrains about the rise and rise of Muslim power but there are countless predictions about the collapse of the Catholic Church. Some of the many quatrains about the fall of the Holy See could be seen as the triumph of Protestantism over Catholicism in England – which happened a matter of years after his death when Elizabeth I succeeded Mary, but some of the predictions about the end of the Papacy have simply not yet been fulfilled.

Par la puissance des trois Roys temporelz ***By the power of the three temporal Kings***

En autre lieu sera mis le saint Seige ***The Holy See will be placed elsewhere:***

Ou la substance de l'esprit corporel ***where the substance of the material spirit,***

Sera remys et receu pour vray siege ***will be replaced and received as the true see.***

Centuries 8 Q: 99

<i>Le Prince Arabe, Mars, Sol, Venus, Lyon</i>	<i>The Arab prince, Mars, sun, Venus, Leo</i>
<i>Regne d'Eglise par mer succombera:</i>	<i>The reign of the Church will end by sea</i>
<i>Deurs la Perse bien pres d'un million,</i>	<i>Toward Persia very close to a million</i>
<i>Bisance, Egypte, ver. Serp inuadera</i>	<i>will invade Turkey and Egypt ,the true serpent</i>

Centuries 5 Q: 25

Both these quatrains suggest that the Holy See will either be removed or eradicated by forces from the East. This may not be immediately apparent in the first quatrain. However, that phrase “Roys temporelz” begs closer examination. We know Nostradamus delighted in anagrams and we have an interesting one here – switched around these letters create Roys en petroils – kings of petrol ergo oil kings. Thus, taking these two quatrains together Nostradamus could be suggesting that the rulers of the various oil states in the Middle East unite – and since he mentions three, we may be talking about Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran - and with their combined military power take over the near East and Europe. Clearly, once Islam is established in Italy, there can be no place for the Pope as well!

Once again we have an astrological reference to work with – the sun, Mars and Venus in Leo. The most recent period that these three were all to be found together in Leo was in July and August 1987, some three years before the start of the Gulf War and they will be together again in July/August 2006 and August 2015. A rather more interesting interpretation of this astrological mix is made by the Italian translator, Luciano Sampietro. He has a bee in his bonnet about the identity of the third Antichrist and his primary candidate is the Syrian President, Bashar Al Assad. Sampietro discovered that the word assad means lion, therefore he translates this quatrain in this way: “The Arab leader bearing the name, Lion, when Mars, the sun and Venus are all in the same sign (2006) will destroy the kingdom of the Church from sea: in the meantime, from the Iranian front with almost one million men he will invade Turkey and Egypt in the name of the serpent.” Of course, these astrological pointers could be informing us of the Arab Prince himself, a man with the sun, Venus and Mars in Leo...

Sampietro makes a stronger case for Syria’s president playing an Anti-Christian role in one of the quatrains that I mentioned earlier – that very clearly dated prediction about the King of the Mongols being brought back to life. Sampietro suggests that we do not translate the first line as in the year 1999, the seventh month but in the year 1999 and seven months. In other words, July 2000. A great King of Terror then carries a double meaning, not only the Anti-Christ himself but a sign in the sky, a total eclipse, no less. Sampietro takes as his guide here a statement by Nostradamus in a letter to King Henry II that preceded the last volume of the Centuries. In this letter Nostradamus states that before the Antichrist comes to power there will “precede a solar eclipse, the darkest and most tenebrous that has ever been since the creation of the world up to the death and the passion of Jesus Christ.” The last total eclipse of the last millennia took place on August 11th 1999 and it was indeed a daunting experience. A whole swathe of the globe was plunged into eerie and unnatural darkness as the moon passed in front of the sun. And as all good astrologers know an eclipse is active way before its moment of exactitude and some time after. On 17 July 2000, within hours of a total lunar eclipse and close on the heels of a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction, Bashir Al Assid was inaugurated as Syria’s president and given seven-year mandate at the highest level of power.

Nostradamus uses many names for the Antichrist – Aenobarbe, Mabus, Sabim, La Perse and Alus among them. And while other interpreters have endeavoured to make Saddam Hussein and Bin Laden out of these names, I do not think they can be said to have been successful. Sampietro, throws in Bush for good measure – an interpretation of Mabus (BUSH the AMERICAN) and Sabim – but much as this may delight the Democrats it

doesn't come anywhere near as close as some of the other anagrams Nostradamus has used, like Napoleon, Roi and Hitler.

Sampietro claims to have decoded Nostradamus and worked out the secret behind the dates mentioned in the quatrains. I'd say the jury was still out here, especially as some of his time-lines have already been proved wrong. However, Sampietro was stunningly right about one quatrain and Nostradamus astonishingly correct:

<i>Ennosigee feu du centra de terre</i>	<i>Sea of fire at the World Centre,</i>
<i>Fera trembler au tour de cite neuve:</i>	<i>will make tremble the tower of the new city:</i>
<i>Deux grands rochiers long temps feront la guerre</i>	<i>Two great rocks will be at war for a long time,</i>
<i>Then Arethuse rougira nouveau Fleuve</i>	<i>Then Arethusa will redden a new river.</i>

Centuries 1 Q: 87

In Nostradamus-speak the new city is universally held to be New York and this quatrain is quite graphic in its depiction of the Towers of the World Trade Centre being shaken and, of course, this event marked the beginning of what has become known as the War on Terror, although as far as Nostradamus is concerned this event precipitates the Third World War. Arethusa, by the way, was a nymph who while diving in the waters of a river was attacked by an evil entity living there. She appealed to Diana, who transformed her into a pure spring. It may be that Nostradamus is adding some imagery here to denote that this act of terror will precipitate more blood.

To my mind the following quatrain is a companion to the previous quatrain.

<i>Jardin du monde au pres de cite neuve</i>	<i>The Garden of the world close to the new city</i>
<i>Dans le chemin des montaignes cauees</i>	<i>On the path between the mountains.</i>
<i>Sera saisi & plonge dans lala cuue,</i>	<i>will be taken and thrown down into the tank</i>
<i>Beuuant par force eaux soulfre eneuenees</i>	<i>forced to drink sulphurous poisoned water</i>

Centuries 10 Q: 49

This is another fairly graphic description of water being poisoned but Nostradamus is not clear about what exactly is taken and thrown into the tank – which may be a word to describe a reservoir. New Jersey in America's North East is known as the Garden State and, of course, it is just across the Hudson from New York City. The roads between mountains could refer to the streets of Jersey City or Manhattan, which are lined by sky-scrapers. Not insignificantly New Jersey is also called the Corridor State, since it is the route through which people can get in and out of the Island of Manhattan.

There are literally hundreds of quatrains we could examine tonight – I have just given you a sample of a few that I believe illustrate Nostradamus' gift for divining the future and the importance such predictions hold for us.

However, I want to conclude by bringing astrology, astrologers and prophecy into the present day.

A little earlier I made the point that astrology is not enough on its own to divine the future. To illustrate my point I want to go back to September 11th, 2001. Surely an event of such magnitude should have been spotted by astrologers. Well, it was and it wasn't. And I'm going to have to get personal here. During the early months of 2001 I was writing a weekly article on current events and astrology for my website. In April, just prior to Saturn's entry into Gemini, I discussed the prospects this presented for the globe. Here is some of what I said:

I have just a hunch that during Saturn's transit of airy Gemini, the air itself will be the bringer of problems and lessons. (Saturn, of course, being the Great Teacher of the planets.) Perhaps we shall have a more than usual amount of air-borne viruses to cope with; maybe lung-related diseases will be on the increase. Perhaps too, some kind of chemical disaster will cause untold problems for a large mass of people. And, if I were a president or a prime-minister I would want to be very sure that chemical weapons were in safe hands.

Lessons are learned the hard way with Saturn and in light of what happened with the tech stocks last year investors will be far more circumspect in their financial dealings. And while putting your money into government bonds might be the safest thing of all in this climate, a Saturn-Pluto opposition could augur a world shortage in oil so maybe the one commodity to go up in this time of decline is indeed oil.

But Saturn's entry into Gemini almost paled into significance compared to the opposition it was heading towards with Pluto – August 5th 2001, to be exact. It had not escaped me that this difficult opposition was to fall precisely on the US chart's Ascendant/Descendant axis. Writing on July 16th I suggested:

... Pluto's transformational influence is aimed at America's persona. In other words, America is currently reinventing itself, experiencing the death of the old and the birth of a new. Part of this process is taking place through the new administration of George W. Bush ... Saturn's conjunction to the descendant (the cusp of the seventh house of partners and open enemies) suggests that it is other nations and other leaders who are proving and will continue to prove to be America's biggest challenge. America's partners will at the very least become critical of US policies and actions and at worst there could be hostilities where once there was unity. As for America's enemies, these leaders, nations and groups will come out against America in full force now. And if ever there was an astrological setting for war, it is this one.

Indeed, go back to the beginning of any major war and you'll find Saturn-Pluto in a difficult angle to each other.

However, I was not expecting to see any big global development in late July and early August. My eyes were set on the period between August 26th and September 7th, for this was when the Saturn-Pluto opposition would be brought to life by the faster moving planets. I prepared the ground in my weekly column on 9th September and looking back on the week, I was able to cite the humungous tumble of the stock markets as a response to this dark and difficult aspect. Indeed, so concerned was I about this period of September that I had asked my husband to put off his flight to England on the 4th and come at the earliest on the 11th. So, he duly booked his flight to London for the morning of September 11: it was American Airlines flight 142, leaving Kennedy Airport in New York at 8.30 am.

My margin of safety was not quite wide enough. We all know the dreadful events that unfolded at 9 45 am on that beautiful blue September morning. My husband was one of the lucky ones, his plane never took off and the only suffering he experienced was spending the next five days marooned on Long Island.

While 9-11 could be said to be an event that I had prepared for but not predicted the death of the Princess of Wales was an event that I had predicted but was not prepared for.

At the time of Diana's death she and I had not been in contact for five years, yet I was aware that during 1997 her chart was in trouble. Now, I do not intend to delve into the astrological why's and wherefore's here: suffice to say a surfeit of eclipses and contacts to an already violent theme in her chart set off all my alarm bells. The

periods of 1997 that I was most concerned about were February and late August/early September. I mentioned in an article earlier in the year that I feared she would come under attack, meaning intense criticism in the media rather more than anything else. However, on 31st August as I winged my way across the Atlantic back to the UK I was totally unaware that in Paris events were unfolding that made a night-mare come true.

I have mentioned once or twice during the course of this talk that astrology alone is not enough to make life-sized predictions: at the very least you need a robust sixth sense but at best you need some pukka psychic ability. Mine happens to be dreaming. And, the more I look at the Nostradamus quatrains with their anagrams, acronyms, bizarre images and apparent non sequiters the more convinced I am that dreaming comes close to the visions he saw in his bowl of water. And while Nostradamus was a product of the practices of his time, drawing pentagrams on the floor, mouthing incantations and opening himself up to visions of God, I am a child of my time, opening up my psyche to archetypal symbols and the language of the unconscious. The images Nostradamus glimpsed were fleeting and sometimes incomprehensible to him. He heard voices that told him of things he could not understand. Yet he wrote down all that he saw and heard and left events to unfold in the fullness of time. Likewise, when I dutifully record my dreams, with their paradoxical images, voice-overs, famous figures, friends and family - my-Alice-through-the-looking-glass kind of world – I may not be able to unravel their meaning at the time but often they are eerily correct about future events.

I cannot claim to have had dreams of the Twin Towers collapsing but I certainly dreamed of Diana's death. And some seven years before-hand.

In the summer and autumn of 1989, I had what Jung might have termed two "big dreams". In the first, I was in the front row of an audience watching a play. The curtain went up and on the stage, sitting at a large desk, was her majesty, the Queen. She was delivering a sombre speech, but no matter how hard I tried I could not hear what she was saying. I knew only that it concerned the future of the monarchy. My eyes were then drawn to Charles and Diana who were just behind her. They were posing for photographs and they were seated – Charles behind Diana – on a child's rocking horse. Diana was laughing and Charles was urging her to be more responsible and to look serious for the cameras. There was a flash and a large explosion. All that was left on the stage was an empty car seat on a raised dais.

In the second dream, which I will recount in the present tense since that is how I recorded it in my diary. I am sitting in a sand dune having a pic-nic. Diana comes towards me, dressed in white with a black cloak around her. She sits down beside me. I feel awkward and unprepared for her sudden and unannounced arrival. She is telling me about someone called Peter who has been fired because of her. Apparently he is going to France and will be undergoing plastic surgery to conceal his identity. She goes on to talk to me about William, and while she does this, she holds up a large figure three. She then begins to cry, and I comfort her, urging her not to give up on the marriage. She recovers her composure and I take up the topic of Peter, referring to him as a past relationship "it's not over: it's very much on." she says.

The scene changes to my then home. Diana comes into the sitting room with a large gift-wrapped present, which she hands to me. When I open it, I find a strange looking object about three feet in size – the only thing this object vaguely resembles is the ornate hand of a large clock. I am embarrassed at the enormity of the gift and refuse it saying that prince Charles might be cross if she gave it away. I escort her out to her car, and when I return, William is seated in the same chair. He is much older and sporting a beard. He says to me, "They don't tell me everything, you know. For a few minutes we lost complete radio contact with them..." As he was saying this to me, I saw an event from an aerial point of view. Two police motor cycles and a white car streaming ahead leaving a black car on its own. Two vans approach from either side and prevent the black car from moving forwards. The dream ends in chaos and I hear my own voice saying: "Isn't anyone going to do anything..."
Extract from WITH LOVE FROM DIANA (Simon and Schuster, 1995)

I sent these dreams to Diana, believing them to have some bearing on her future and the future of the monarchy. She told me that when she read them they struck a deep chord within her. But did they change anything? As Diana left the Ritz Hotel on that fateful night with her Muslim lover, as the black Mercedes sped madly through

the Paris streets, pursued by motor-bikes, did she suddenly remember this dream? And if she did, what could she have done to change events? How far back would she have had to go to stop the chain of events that led to her being in Paris on that night? How was I able to see these events so far ahead in time? Where does the information come from? Is history already written? If space curves, do we just keep going round until we meet up with ourselves again? Are we doomed to go round on the wheel of life for eternity?

These are weighty questions indeed and we would need at least another ten hours to do them justice. I do have some thoughts, by the way, I am not just 'copping out' but they will be a subject for another night, another chapter.