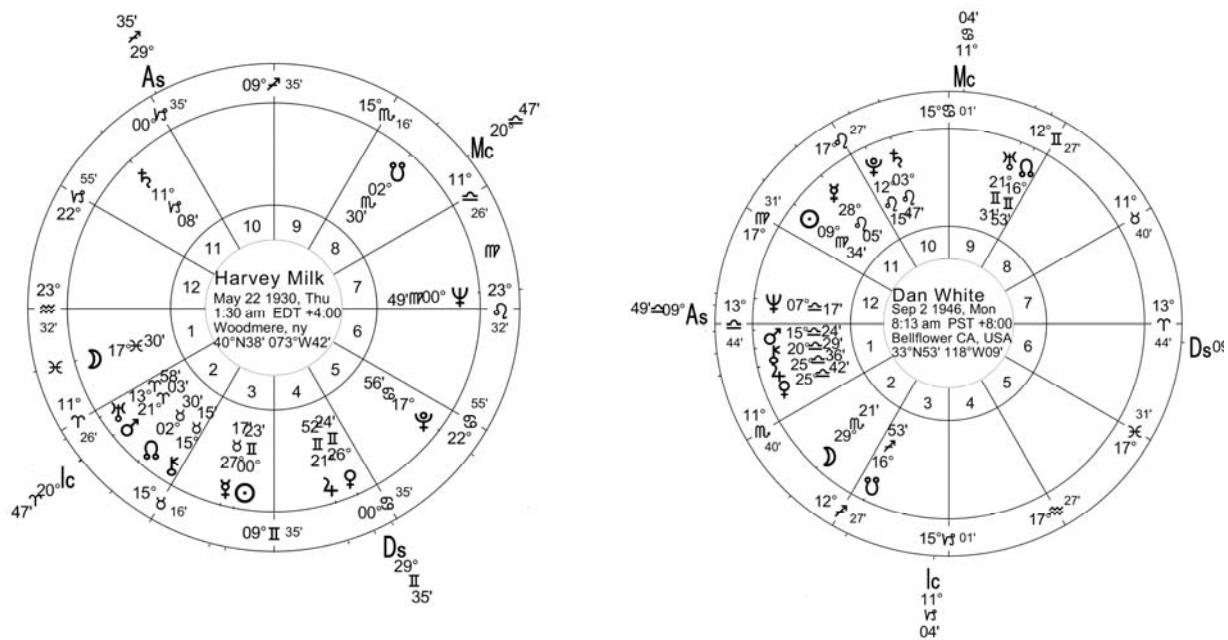


WINDS OF NEPTUNE, FIRES OF MARS

By Kenneth Irving

This brief excerpt from Chapter 5 of the forthcoming revised edition of *The Psychology of Astro*Carto*Graphy* (by the late Jim Lewis, along with Kenneth Irving) details briefly the second of two tragic incidents involving San Francisco that took place within a week in 1978, under a Mars-Neptune conjunction. The principals, Supervisor Harvey Milk, and his assassin, Dan White, each had a telling interplay between birth and locality Mars and Neptune. The two men's relocated angles for San Francisco are shown here outside their standard birth charts.



Not long before Dan White shot him down in cold blood, the openly gay San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk said of him to a colleague, “Dan White is a closet case . . . and he’s dangerous.” Prior to that, Milk had made a similar assessment of the People’s Temple, which had become a political force in the city over the last few years, calling it “weird and dangerous” and warning his own staffers and campaign workers to be on their guard and to be extra polite when dealing with Jim Jones’ group. Tragic events in Jonestown had proved him right on November 18th, but little did he know that on the morning of the 27th, just nine days later, he would also be proved right about Dan White, at least insofar as his being dangerous was concerned.

White, who had served on the Board of Supervisors with Milk, was known to his constituents and the press as a clean-cut all-American boy, a high-school sports star who had gone on to prove himself in military service as well as in the San Francisco fire and police departments. In 1977, he emerged from a Catholic blue-collar district in San Francisco to run as a “traditional values” candidate, saying in one piece of campaign literature, “I am not going to be forced out of San Francisco by splinter groups of radicals, social deviates, and incorrigibles.” White and Milk, the liberal, gay-activist politician, were natural political antagonists, and so they became when both were elected to the Board of Supervisors, their votes often falling on opposite sides of the political fence.

Despite this, there were times at the beginning when they seemed able to get along, with White toning down his conservative rhetoric and Milk opining from time to time that White was “educable.” Milk himself was in many ways like White, at least superficially. He, too, was a high-school (and college) athlete, a college graduate, and a navy veteran (not dishonorably discharged, as he would later tell political gatherings, but rather just another swabbie who did his three-year stint and got out a month early for

good behavior). His politics in the early years were quite conservative, and he was an avid enough supporter of right-wing Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964 to get up early in the mornings with a friend to ride the subways in New York and hand out campaign literature before work. As an occupation, Milk settled on the business world, working as a researcher for a prestigious Wall Street firm for many years. A good friend from those days felt that he was just biding time and that as well as he did his job he just didn't want to fit in.

One reason for this perhaps is that from high school on, straight-arrow, "man's man" Harvey Milk was living the kind of off-hours secret life gay men had to lead in the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, by the early 1960s he had established a middle-class existence that would have been the envy of most Americans, with a steady, high-paying job, a nice place to live, and a happy domestic life. The only difference, of course, was that his domestic companion was a nice-looking young man, something which few of his colleagues at work or in other areas of his social life knew about.

In the restless 1960s, Milk himself became restless about the same old surroundings, first transferring in his job to Dallas, Texas, where he was not at all happy, and then to San Francisco. Here, as one friend put it, he "fit in too well," and soon Mr. Wall Street's hair was sprouting a little too long, he was openly dissatisfied with the treatment of gays by the police, and was talking about running for mayor. Finally, after making a few waves in the press by burning his Bank Americard at an anti-war rally one lunch hour, Milk was given an ultimatum to cut his hair or be fired. He exited from the middle-class life with hair intact, fired for the first time in his life as he was nearing forty.

Within a few years, Harvey Milk was running a little camera shop on Castro Street and right in the thick of local politics. His penchant for fighting City Hall on behalf of both himself and others soon earned him the nickname "The Mayor of Castro Street," and he made his first run for the Board of Supervisors in 1973. Among other things he learned from losing was that if supervisors had been elected by district rather than city-wide, he would have won, so he duly supported a change to election by districts that passed before the next election, 1977, in which he was elected to office, along with Dan White. White may himself have benefited from Milk's efforts in changing the election process.

Over the next year, although Milk and White would occasionally find common ground, more often than not they were on the opposite sides of issues. White in fact at times seemed to be skirting the edge of political decorum in his statements about San Francisco's gay citizens. The main feature of his brief stint as a supervisor, however, was that Dan White did not like to lose; and lose he did on an important issue which had been part of his campaign—with Harvey Milk casting the deciding vote against him, after having first said he would vote with him. The issue itself was whether or not to use an abandoned convent in White's district for a psychiatric treatment center. The more Milk learned about it, the more he was for it, and after the vote, any cordiality between him and White seemed to be gone. Unhappy over his political failures and his inability to make a living between the small Supervisor's salary and an outside food service business, White suddenly resigned. But it did not take long for organizations with political and economic interests who had been depending on his vote to urge him back into the fray. Mayor Moscone refused to reappoint him, but in a conversation with the editor of a local gay paper in late November White telegraphed his intention to come out on top in a way, said the editor, that "...sent chills down my spine."

On the morning of November 27, 1978, White, fueled by days of frustration and a sleepless night in which he had stoked himself with sugared soft drinks and cupcakes, methodically selected ten cartridges for his .38 police special (five had hollow points, which cause massive destruction, especially at close range), loaded five of them, strapped on his gun and then rode down to City Hall to confront both Mayor George Moscone and Milk. After sneaking through a window to avoid the security checks at the door, White went upstairs and wrangled a quick appointment with the mayor. Though several people in the vicinity heard the shots, no one paid much attention as White hurried out, already having pocketed four spent cartridges and one live shell, and reloaded his gun with the five hollow points. Almost casually, he asked Milk to leave his own office and go to White's old office for a private conversation. There he murdered Harvey Milk by firing five shots into him. The last shots for both Moscone and Milk were execution style to the head, causing instant death.

There is an interesting contrast between the lives of Harvey Milk and Dan White that has a definite geographical feature to it, one which plays around a Mars-Neptune theme. For many years, as he stayed around his place of birth on the east coast, Harvey Milk lived a relatively normal middle-class life, despite the part of it that was secret to all but a few. Moreover, the life he led was not necessarily just for camouflage, as for a long while he really seemed to like its stability as much as anything else. Even politically in those years, he might have been closer, and sincerely so, to the Dan White of San Francisco days than to Supervisor Harvey Milk. The times, however, began to change him, and after his move to San

Francisco, he “came out” in more ways than one, tapping into a potential he had only been dimly aware of before. His rise in politics was the result of a genuine talent that certainly would have carried him to higher office had he lived.

Dan White, on the other hand, seemed to be one of those people who reach their pinnacle of success in high school, and for whom life after graduation becomes a floundering for a way back to the glory days. White did well in the military, did well as a fireman, and did well as a policeman, yet in what should have been a natural role as a blue-collar populist expressing the frustration of stolid, conservative home-and-family types over the political and social turn their city was taking, White failed miserably. It was not simply that he could not make ends meet on a supervisor’s salary, but that he seemed to feel powerless before the opposition he faced. After all, Harvey Milk probably lost more political battles than White by far, yet he would often turn a loss today into tomorrow’s victory by keeping his shoulder to the wheel and his eye on the prize.

Why the difference? At his place of birth, Harvey Milk had Neptune setting almost exactly, while in San Francisco the planet closest to an angle was Mars (Venus and Jupiter are near angles as well). On the other hand, Dan White had Mars closer to an angle at his birth place, while Neptune was closer in San Francisco. Depending on the orb allowed, some would say that White had a conjunction of the two planets, though in any case both were certainly bound together by their placement near the same angle. While the difference between birth place and locality is not as stark as in Milk’s case, it is there.

One difference that is stark, and which relates directly to the question of whether either might have had a problem in expressing Mars, is that while for Milk that planet is in Aries, its own sign, with a hard-edged square to Pluto (and to Saturn as well, if one allows wide orbs), White’s Mars is in fact debilitated in the opposite Venus-ruled sign of Libra and flanked (if not closely aspected) by benefics Venus and Jupiter on the one side and fuzzy Neptune on the other. Thus, even though White’s Mars is strong in being close to an angle, it is not in a particularly Martian environment, while Milk’s back-channel Mars, so to speak, is much more healthy in a Martian sense.

Whether Milk was right or wrong about his “closet case” diagnosis of White in regard to sexual orientation, he may have been correct in sensing that White was someone whose Martian-sounding background came in part from overcompensation for some kind of inadequacy, for the feeling that somehow he did not measure up as a man unless he could perform brave deeds, handle a weapon and so on. Mars as a horoscopic factor alone indicates the need or ability to perform actions in a directed way, and to match one’s performance against others. Neptune, on the other hand, is anything but directed or competitive, but by itself indicates a kind of “go along to get along” mentality that can be charming on the one hand, or frustrating (and frustrated) on the other. The heavily Neptunian individual is forever getting lost in the details of everyday life and while perhaps observant or even visionary in matters that don’t concern him personally, he may be quite lacking in insight where his own place in the grand scheme of things is concerned. Looking at Milk in New York and White in San Francisco, one might say that a key term for Neptune could be “the invisible man.”

In that light, consider Harvey Milk’s first forty years, spent for the most part where Neptune was strong. Even though good at his job, since he was quite insightful where financial and economic matters were concerned, Milk was never exactly a team player and always, according to the observation of a good friend who was aware of his sexual orientation, seemed to be somewhere else, even if it was not exactly clear where that was. During this time, even though Milk played out his relatively strong Mars in certain areas of life, such as athletics, it never became integrated into his passionate (even pushy) interest in politics—until he hit San Francisco, where his gayness and his political feelings were shaped in the forge of Mars. Thus began the resolution of his own Martian dilemma, which for anyone is the problem of giving drive and direction to one’s life based on one’s own essential strength.

While Milk was in San Francisco, at last listening closely to his own inner drummer, Dan White had his ear to the ground, listening to everyone else’s rhythms, and many of his personal choices were most likely dictated by a need to do the right thing in the eyes of others.

On the day of the murders in San Francisco, as for the Jonestown massacre a little over a week earlier, Mars and Neptune were conjoined in Sagittarius, emphasizing patterns suggested in the charts of Jim Jones and Dan White. Other than the fact that a strong transiting or progressed aspect between two planets tends to resonate with and activate the same kind of aspect in a natal chart, the conjunction occurred within a degree or two of a conjunction to Dan White’s South Node, and square to the natal Moon of Harvey Milk and to the progressed Midheaven of George Moscone’s chart.

No planet, even those usually classified as malefic, is wholly negative in its action, but when light and

heat are turned up too high and too quickly on a shadowed planet hiding in the cool recesses of our minds, whether that comes from transits, progressions, or geographical emphasis, or all three, the results can be devastating. More than 900 lost souls at Jonestown in November 1978 attest to that fact, as do three more consumed in the Martian flames fanned by the winds of Neptune nine days later in San Francisco. ☿

***The Psychology of Astro*Carto*Graphy** will be re-issued Fall 2010. For more information on the book and its authors, Jim Lewis and Kenneth Irving, go to www.planetlines.com and www.wordsandthings.com .*