



Saturn's Perihelion in 2003

The Year of the Scythe?

by Gary P. Caton

As the Saturn–Pluto opposition's recent dominance over the mundane scene fades, some astrologers have glanced ahead for insight into what might be the preeminent aspect for 2003. This is natural and good, but I am hesitant to *ever* simply reduce the planetary gestalt down to a two-factor combination of planet/sign or planet/planet. Too often I've seen the drastic effects this can have on people: They can become locked into a fatalistic outlook that is devoid of the inherent richness and diversity of being truly human. At the same time, I recognize the difficulty of integrating the awareness of too many factors and the even greater difficulty of communicating that awareness — which is frequently intuitive. The compromise that I have arrived at as a rule of thumb for my own astrology practice is to always consider at least a *three*-factor analysis. This raises the intrinsic complexity of interpretation to the next level, minimizing the most dangerous possibilities of a “cookbook” approach.

With this in mind, I began to consider why the most recent Saturn–Pluto configuration seemed to be so powerful and dominant, even when compared to other Saturn–Pluto events. My search for the third factor, beyond planet and aspect, led me to realize that both of these planets are relatively close to *perihelion* — the point in a planet's orbit where it is closest to the Sun.

Johannes Kepler first defined planetary orbits as *ellipses*, not circles. His first law of orbital motion states: “The orbit of each planet is an ellipse with the Sun at one of its foci.”¹ This means that each orbit will have a minimum distance from the Sun, or *perihelion*, and a maximum distance from the Sun, or *aphelion*. Pluto reached perihelion in 1989. This is a major long-term event, because Pluto's 248-year orbit is an extremely elongated ellipse, which actually brings Pluto inside Neptune's orbit for 20 years (1979–1999). This explains why the current Pluto-in-Virgo generation (born 1956–1972) experiences Pluto's square to natal Pluto before

the Uranus opposition of midlife: The planet's orbital speed increases with its proximity to its gravitational magnet, the Sun. Saturn's perihelion, of course, occurs every 29 years. My intuitive understanding of this phenomenon as an "event" leads me to treat it like a progression, making transits key to activating this energy.

Incorporating a "three-factor" analysis for 2003 proves very interesting. This year will see two notable planetary perihelia: Saturn will reach perihelion on July 26, at nearly 4° Cancer. Mars reaches perihelion on August 30, just past 6° Pisces and in trine to Saturn. For those who have been researching the 2003 planetary aspects, the third factor will be immediately clear: Uranus enters Pisces! Saturn reaches his opening trine with Uranus on June 24, at nearly 3° Cancer–Pisces. So, we have Mars at perihelion, conjunct Uranus, and both trine Saturn at perihelion. Call me politically incorrect, but I do not see these three malefics conjuring up the second coming of the "Summer of Love."

In fact, the last time that Mars and Saturn were in perihelion during the same year was in 1915 during World War I (when the Saturn–Pluto conjunction was sesquiquadrate Uranus). That year, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were massacred by the Turks, and the Germans first used poison gas as a weapon at the second Battle of Ypres. Currently, it certainly seems as though Saturn–Pluto has the world poised for history to repeat itself, with the war machines warmed up and at the ready. Although some astrologers may consider Saturn trine Mars–Uranus to be a beneficial, mitigating aspect, we must remember that the opening trine corresponds to Leo in the Natural Zodiac.² The Lion does not maintain his position as King of the Beasts by being peaceful.

The following is a brief outline of the Saturn perihelion years of this past century. Mars at *aphelion* seems to have a mitigating effect, bringing out Saturn's limiting principle rather than inflaming his tyrannical side, as when Mars is at perihelion. However, Saturn's themes of structure and perfection can still be seen. The genetic and nuclear issues are particularly disturbing when we factor in Uranus in Pisces in 2003.

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Saturn Perihelia in the 20th Century and Related Events

February 21, 1915 1° Cancer
(April 5, Mars perihelion at 4° Pisces)

- Armenian genocide (April): 600,000–1.5 million Armenians massacred by Turks.
- 2nd Battle of Ypres in World War I (April 22): Germans first use poison gas as weapon.
- Sinking of the *Lusitania* (May 7): British passenger liner sunk by German submarine; 1,195 killed.
- The one-millionth Ford automobile rolls off the assembly line (December 10).

September 8, 1944 3° Cancer
(May 31, Mars aphelion at 5° Virgo)

- D-Day, World War II (June 6): Allies invade Normandy.
- First computer (formally dedicated on August 14): Harvard scientists develop the Harvard Mark I, the first automatic, general-purpose digital computer.
- V-2 rocket (September): Germans develop and launch the first true missiles.
- Battle of the Bulge, WWII (December 1944 – January 1945): Last-ditch German blitzkrieg attempt.
- DNA isolated by Oswald Avery — published in *The Journal of Experimental Medicine* in 1944.

Both Mars's and Saturn's perihelia and their trine occur during the traditional time for conducting military campaigns.

January 8, 1974 2° Cancer
(July 5, Mars aphelion at 6° Virgo)

- Oil embargo ends (March 18): OPEC ends the oil embargo on the West.
- Nuclear India (May 18): India becomes the world's sixth nuclear power.
- Arms talks (June 27 – July 3): President Nixon and Premier Brezhnev meet in Moscow to discuss arms limitations.
- Turkish atrocities (July 20): Turks murder 5,000+ and rape 1,000+ civilians in Cyprus; some victims have never been found.
- Genetic engineering banned (July): The National Academy of Sciences calls for ban on some types of genetic engineering, after DNA cloning and recombinant DNA research show the possibility of interspecies viability — thus opening the door for biological (bacterial and viral) weapons.
- Nixon resigns (August 8): first U.S. president to resign from office.

Charting 2003: Cardinal Ingresses

Interestingly, the World Trade Center opened on April 4, 1973 — less than one year before Saturn's perihelion — and fell almost two years before the next perihelion. When viewed in this light, one wonders whether the Saturn–Pluto opposition was the first "trigger" for the current perihelion. No matter how precise an orb one wishes to ascribe, Saturn's perihelion will certainly color much of the year 2003. Both Mars's and Saturn's perihelia and their trine occur during the summer months — the traditional time for conducting military campaigns: Will the summer of 2003 be the "Summer of the Scythe"? The tools we can use to answer these questions are some of the oldest techniques available to astrologers. For questions of war, mundane astrologers turn to charts for Mars–Saturn conjunctions and/or Mars entering North declination.³ These charts are interpreted like return charts, and they rule affairs until the next conjunction/ingress. Since Mars will neither conjoin Saturn nor change to North declination in 2003, we can basically expect a continuation of the events of 2002: The "war on terror" will likely intensify as the current Mars–Saturn cycle unfolds.

So, how will this play out? The most elementary tool of the mundane astrologer is the chart for the Sun's ingress into

Saturn's Perihelion

cardinal signs.⁴ We are looking for summer events, so we will examine the solstice chart for Washington, D.C. on June 21, 2003 at 3:10:45 p.m. EDT (see **Chart 1** below). We can see that the Sun is conjunct Saturn and both square the Aries Moon. The ancients would say that Saturn is “afflicting both lights.” Further, the Mars-Uranus conjunction is squaring the lunar nodes. Is another terrorist attack in the making? Or, might the United States find itself engaged in an unpopular war? The presence of a “mystic rectangle” involving Mercury-Venus, Jupiter, Pluto, and Neptune might seem to bode well, except that the Jupiter-Neptune opposition squares the Sun/Moon midpoint. If the U.S. has an inflated (or even neurotic) sense of identity and invulnerability at this time, the absence of any grounding energy from the earth element will compound these tendencies, at least temporarily.

By studying lunar ingress charts,⁵ we can narrow down the timing and expectations a bit. We will examine the Moon's ingresses into Cancer, because we are looking for summer events in a Cancer nation (assuming that July 4 is the national

birthday). The Moon enters Cancer on June 28, 2003 at 11:52:53 p.m. EDT, in the middle of a five-planet stellium in the 4th house; the planets involved span only 14° (see **Chart 2** below). Saturn sits right between the Sun and Moon (again afflicting both lights), and all three trine the rising Mars-Uranus conjunction. Furthermore, Pluto sits smack on the Midheaven, forming a wedge (a trine-sextile pattern) with Jupiter-Neptune. Earth energy is still lacking, and there is a strong emphasis on the mutable and water signs.

Does all this heavy angularity (Mars-Uranus and Pluto) represent some kind of attack? I feel certain that it does. The question is whether the U.S. is giving or receiving the blow. The Ascendant is often said to be the personality projected into the world, so I am inclined to see this chart as indicating that the U.S. delivers a massive strike — probably from an aircraft carrier (mutable water) between June 28 and July 6 (the Moon's ingress into Libra). Nevertheless, it is impossible to rule out the stellium in the 4th house as representing Americans once again huddled together after a terrorist attack that occurs close to the national holiday.

The next period to watch will be around August 28, 2003 when Mercury, Mars, and all three outer planets are retrograde (although Pluto stations direct on August 29). The Moon's ingress into Cancer (on August 22, 2003 at 3:44:50 p.m. EDT) again finds some heavy hitters lining up for the period of August 22–29 (see **Chart 3** opposite). Pluto is ascending in this chart. The Sun, Jupiter, and Venus conjoin to oppose Mars-Uranus, which forms a grand cross with the lunar nodes. This looks more like a major standoff among nuclear powers (Pluto) than a single attack/retaliation. However, some sensible earth element arrives (Mercury and Venus in Virgo) to perhaps mitigate conditions. The loose orbs for the grand cross do not suggest World War III; however, any incidents earlier in the summer would certainly have aroused some strong opposition.

To summarize, if I were a court astrologer advising my king, I would have to warn him against any strong-arm tactics or preemptive strikes; this strategy would likely backfire or at least require intense diplomatic repairs. Even if the U.S. “gets away with” an unpopular military action, the country may regret this under Pluto in Capricorn. (When Pluto is in late Capricorn in 2022, the U.S. will have a “Pluto return” to its natal position in 1776.) I would

Chart 1:
2003 Cancer Ingress
(Solstice)

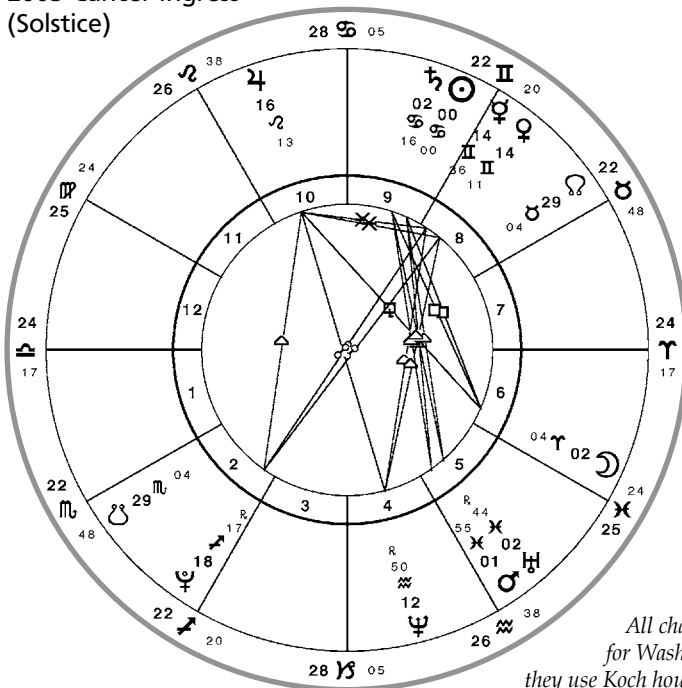
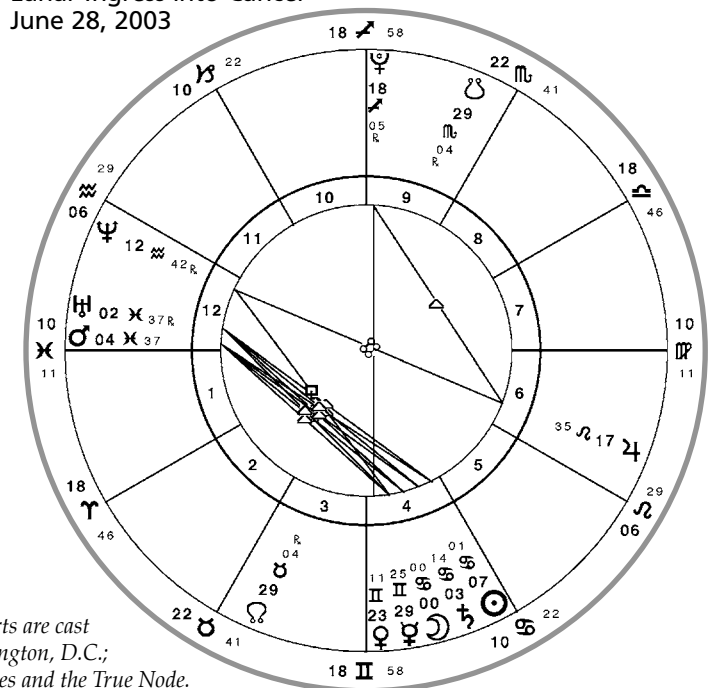


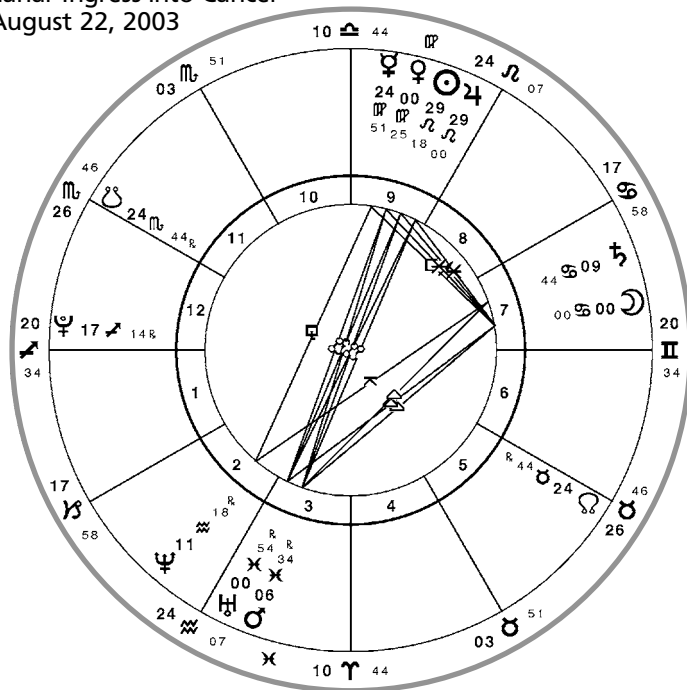
Chart 2:
Lunar Ingress into Cancer
June 28, 2003



All charts are cast for Washington, D.C.; they use Koch houses and the True Node.

also recommend heightened security in early July and late August 2003, being particularly alert for possible attacks from the water and "asymmetric warfare" (Mars-Uranus) — similar to the October 12, 2000 suicide attack on the U.S.S. Cole.

Chart 3:
Lunar Ingress into Cancer
August 22, 2003



References and Notes

1. Neil Michelsen, *Tables of Planetary Phenomena*, 2nd edition, San Diego, CA: ACS Publications, 1990, pp. 42–45.
2. Glenn Perry, *An Introduction to AstroΔPsychology*, San Rafael, CA: The Association for AstroΔPsychology, 1998, pp. 33–35, 143–155. In this book, Glenn Perry introduces the idea of the zodiac as a developmental cycle. He states that an aspect derives its meaning from the corresponding sign in the natural zodiac. This means that the opening trine is like the sign that is four signs from Aries: Leo. It is interesting that Perry correlates this to the *adolescent* developmental phase in humans — much less evolved than Sagittarius: the sign associated with the closing trine.
3. Maritha Pottenger and Zipporah Dobyns, "Ingresses," in Michelsen, *Tables of Planetary Phenomena*, p. 62.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*

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Gary P. Caton received a bachelor's degree in Counseling (*summa cum laude*) from Old Dominion University in Virginia and is currently pursuing a master's in Education. Gary has studied spirituality and metaphysics for 15 years. His life was changed in 1992 by a dream in which he was shown the planetary alignments; he subsequently became an astrologer. Gary teaches astrology by starting where the ancients did — with the underlying natural cycles that form the zodiac itself, to discover its inherent mechanics. He also consults, lectures, and edits the Tidewater NCGR newsletter. Gary currently resides in Norfolk, Virginia with his wife Caroline, two dogs (Abuttah and Griswald), and two cats (Chiron and Cali). He can be reached at (757) 944-4450 or via e-mail: garyandcaroline@msn.com

