

Altjira and Chariklo

Weaving Gateways in Time and Space

David Leskowitz

When Australia became a Commonwealth on January 1, 1901, the Sun was at 9ʸ29 (0 am AEST). Beyond our collective sight, yet in alignment with the Sun that day, a distant minor planet lurked at 9ʸ03, although it was one hundred years before the Deep Ecliptic Survey discovered it out beyond Neptune on October 20, 2001. This minor planet, #148780, discovered at 23ʸ28, was named for the Aboriginal “deity” *Altjira*.¹ Thus, Australia was inaugurated on the day of an “Altjira cazimi,” when the Aboriginal TNO transited the heart of the Sun.

THE AUSTRALIAN ALTJIRA

The stars are said to be embers in the campfire of a sky-dwelling being named Altjira – at least according to German missionary Carl Strehlow writing in 1907. Altjira would make for a superb astrological deity if the early missionaries’ interpretations of Altjira as a god of *Dreamtime* could be trusted.

Since the IAU proposed that classical trans-Neptunian objects be “given mythological names associated with creation,”² TNOs have populated our cosmos with eclectic deities. Astronomers are not always students of myth; this job falls to us as astrologers. As we learn to apply our new pantheon of signifiers from deep space into our astrology, we need to tread carefully, as many TNOs named after creation deities may be unknown to the astrologer, who might not understand, nor be in relationship with them. Where does this leave us wide-eyed astrologers of the trans-Neptunian? We find ourselves in a similar place as the anthropologists seeking the meaning of these exotic symbols. As new planets are discovered at the frontiers of our sky, we can try

to avoid the mistakes of those who “discovered” new lands on earth.

The Indigenous people who have inhabited Australia for tens of thousands of years find their spirits in the earth; while those who arrived as colonists expected to find a sky god like their own. When Christian settlers of Central Australia went looking for creation stories of the indigenous Arrernte, they seem to have created them “in their own image”.³ These concocted stories were picked up by European scholars, and now, if you search the internet for astrological *Altjira*, you’d find “God of the Dreamtime” or “Emu-footed Sky Father”, a confusing pair of definitions. These English terms come from competing anthropological views more than one-hundred years old, each missing the mark. They made their way from Oxford’s Dictionary of Mythology to NASA’s tables of official lore, where they now serve to define TNO Altjira.

The Minor Planet Center followed Carl Strehlow’s lead, deeming Altjira a “central god of the Dreamtime who created the earth and then retired to the sky.” These phrases are replicated across the astrological internet, even if there is no such “central god” of a “Dreamtime” in the beliefs of the Arrernte people. The missionary’s own informant, an Arrernte man named Moses, wrote: “The preachers asked them who had created the earth. The old men said, “The earth has always existed.”⁴ So, there is no Creator God for the people who speak this word.

Theodor Strehlow, the missionary’s son, was fluent in the language of the Arrernte, and translated *Altjira* as “eternal, uncreated, springing out of itself.”⁵ He also corrected his father

on other phrases that found their way into contemporary definitions, such as one obscure word (“otiose”, meaning indolent) that described *Altjira*. He rejected his father’s depiction of such a sky being. More importantly, Altjira’s connection to an Emu-footed one was from a misconception of names for an eternal ancestor.

Two kinds of contrasting ancestral beings relate to this word, those who dwell in the sky and the totemic ancestors.⁶ *Altjira* describes ancestral totems of the maternal lineage as well as lines of energy running through the earth. Along with other variant spellings, *altjira* is part of many complex words that relate to totemic places, including *Alcherirama*, meaning to see a dream.

A more recent conclusion is that “altjira is an adverb”⁷ – distinct from our “dream” as either noun or verb. Musing on the more prominent usage of *altjira*, Stanner observed in 1954 that we “cannot ‘fix’ the *Dreaming* in temporal time: it was, and is, *everywhen*.”⁸ This works as an astrological definition for Altjira, and it’s even an adverb. Not exactly “timeless” but “all time, the fullness of time” – *everywhen*. Recent scholars have warned that the “Dreaming” may set the image of blurry Aboriginals against waking colonists,⁹



Chariklo, the Centaur of Grace and Altjira, Everywhen
Wikimedia Commons

cautioning that “Aborigines are spoken of as if they dwell in the Dreamtime ... before Europeans came to interrupt their slumber.”¹⁰ Arrernte Elder Margaret Kemarre Turner tells us that *altjira* is “not a dream, like a fairytale dream, it’s a Traditional Story, and that is *in us*.”¹¹

As for those early anthropologists who gave us the “dreamtime” form of Altjira, Spencer and Gillen made audio recordings that preserve the earliest aural record of an Aboriginal language.¹² Australian anthropologist Jennifer Green tells us: “Spencer [and]...Gillen... between 15 March 1901 and 17 March 1902 they travelled together from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs.” And it was “several days out of Oodnadatta, [when] they made camp and set the device up” to record Aboriginal voices. With this information, our first resonance with the TNO *Altjira* is the first recording made by colonists of an Aboriginal person voicing this enigmatic word. On March 15, the start of their journey and days before making the recording, the Moon was in Capricorn, conjunct Jupiter (9°48’), applying partile conjunct Altjira (10°38’). And, as their journey unfolded, a Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Capricorn would occur. Somehow this undiscovered planet already carried its relevant meaning into events on the ground.

It is also fascinating to see the early ethnologists in light of TNO Altjira: Carl Strehlow was born on the cusp of Altjira’s ingress into Sagittarius, while the Horn Expedition (featuring Spencer et al) set off as Altjira entered Capricorn (May 1894). The first brought the ‘theological’ view of Altjira, and the second, the more serious ‘scientific’ approach, quite in line with its ingresses.

Intrigued by the published definitions, I introduced TNO Altjira into my astrological study of dreams. Whatever “dreamtime” might mean, the planet named for it proved to have resonance with the Centaurs, and so I kept Altjira on as an outpost to Pluto’s sphere. Beyond Neptune lies an enormous array of tiny planetoids – plutoids, Kuiper Belt Objects, Scattered Disk Objects, Cubewanos – Trans-Neptunian Objects, all.

THE ABORIGINAL TNO AND THE CENTAUR OF GRACE

Here we will explore how the most massive of the Centaurs, Chariklo, healer and wife of Chiron, interacts with TNO Altjira. Chariklo is the “Spinner of Grace” who provides a sacred space for healing. Chariklo’s grace is an antidote to the fate spun by Klotho, just as the eternal, Altjira is counterpoint to the temporal time of Kronos. When joined by Chariklo, Altjira acts as a gateway to the transcendent. Their astrological combination may bring a culminating vision or a sacred communion, as in some following examples. Let’s begin with when the planet of healing, Chiron, was discovered.

Chiron was the first minor planet to be discovered after Pluto, ushering in the age of Centaurs in 1977. Still unknown at the time of Chiron’s discovery, the planets that would be named for Chariklo (his wife) and Okyrhoe (their daughter) were conjunct Altjira. The fact that the first Centaur was discovered within the period when the planets to be named for his wife *and* daughter were paired with this TNO suggests its astrological value.

Chariklo’s orbit (61 years) and Altjira’s (296 years) conjoin only every 80-90 years. Prior to their appearance at Chiron’s discovery in Aries, their synod in Sagittarius (1889-90) accompanied the first campaign toward Federation in the Australian colonies. They had just reached partile conjunction (their second of a triple pass that year) when the “Father of Federation” Henry Parkes delivered his Tenterfield oration on October 24, 1889.¹³ The conjunction held through the next season when the colonial premiers organized a convention toward this national goal. Thus the Centaur of “holding space”¹⁴ in conjunction with the only planetoid named for an Australian archetype is clearly at work during the founding of the colonial nation.

We also find the hidden TNO at work on the continent halfway through a previous cycle with Chariklo, when Captain Cook first sighted Australia on April 19, 1770: Altjira (28♌14) joined the opposition between Saturn (26♏17) and Chariklo (26♏16). The TNO opposed the Centaur again when the “first responsible self-government of New South Wales formed” on 6/6/1856, with Altjira at 8♏19 opposite Chariklo at 10♏27 (near Pluto). Such definitive moments of colonization found at the hemicycle between these two minor planets speak to the rupturing of the “timeless” upon the space of land held for 2,000 generations by the Aboriginals and their ancestors.

ASTRONOMICAL LINKS

Altjira is even more trans-Neptunian than Pluto, the first TNO. Its North Node is close to the Aries Point of the tropical zodiac, meaning that its orbit crosses the ecliptic at nearly the same place where Earth’s celestial equator does. Its heliocentric nodes overlap with Chariklo’s perihelion and aphelion. Likewise, when Altjira travels closest to the Sun, it reaches early Aquarius (5°52’) – near the North Node of Chariklo. For a Centaur or TNO the aphelion can be seen as an outpost from which the sentinel planet receives its band of distant echoes. Then at perihelion the message is delivered to the inner rungs of the Solar system.

Among the thousands of minor planets, there may be many pairs like Altjira and Chariklo that enact legs of a Galactic relay race. Regardless, these two



Image:
Spencer and Gillen leaving Oodnadatta, 1901
(SpencerandGillen.net)

planets' coordinates along the zodiac align in three dimensions to form a spatial bridge for information to flow from cosmos (the trans-Plutonian) through Altjira, to intra-Uranian centaur Chariklo, toward our local Solar system.

Their discoveries show kinship, too: Chariklo was discovered transiting Altjira's *aphelion*. At her discovery on February 15, 1997, she was opposite Uranus and Jupiter in Aquarius; the same degree reached by Neptune at Altjira's discovery (October 20, 2001), also Altjira's *perihelion*.

Orbital harmony like the 5:2 ratio between Jupiter and Saturn continues through the Centaur and TNO realm: the 60ish year span of Chariklo's orbit fits nearly five times within one 296-year Altjira-year. These little bodies beyond the familiar continue the cosmic melody in strange new tones. Altjira (296 years) travels nearly twice the orbit of Neptune (165), 5 times Chariklo's (61 years), and 12 times Okyrhoe's (24.5).

THE GATEWAYS OF TIME

LSD: Altjira to Chariklo

The birth of LSD was an accident, one which took years to notice. The Swiss chemist, Dr. Albert Hofmann, who synthesized what he would later call his "problem child" was born with TNO Altjira conjunct his Sun. Noting such birth conjunctions (usually in closer orbs) is one way for us to discern what new planets mean. I happened to draw on this example for its transits, and only later noticed this natal signature in LSD's creator.

At the lab birth¹⁵ of LSD, Altjira exactly conjoined the chemist's Saturn. Four years later, when he unknowingly brought the liquid hallucinogen in contact with his skin, thereby experiencing the world's first 'acid trip,' Altjira (9♄09) directly transited his Chariklo (8♄49). Moon also joined Chariklo in the sky. Altjira's transit to his Chariklo opened his awareness to an experience of wonder. The unintentional psychedelic explorer reported: "At home I lay down and sank into an intoxicated-like condition, characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination. In a dreamlike state... I perceived an uninterrupted stream of fantastic pictures... with intense, kaleidoscopic play of colors." A gateway into the timeless was opened in our time.

Jane Roberts and "Seth": Chariklo to Altjira

Jane Roberts became the channel of a spiritual entity named "Seth." Together they were pivotal in the New Age movement, even coining the phrase "You create your own reality." Jane was born with Saturn-Pholus opposite Chariklo (1♄34), aligning with her Ascendant-Descendant axis. Thus the sensitizing psychic factor of Chariklo loomed large in her horoscope – 7th House Cancer seems to give an especially mediumistic talent. She was born on a Taurus Solar Eclipse at the North Node, conjunct Jupiter (21♃55) and close to Altjira's eventual discovery degree of 23♄28.

Her first encounter with this entity occurred on September 9, 1963, when she picked up a pen to try her hand at automatic writing. Jane felt the call as Chariklo graced her natal Altjira in Aquarius. The centaur of grace transited within minutes of arc to natal Altjira. A powerful natal promise unveiled as a trance-channel found her vocation.

Chariklo remained within a single degree throughout the four-month period of her first meetings with Seth: the next encounter on December 9, 1963, by means of a Ouija board which helped spell out his name; and the third time when she found she could speak his words out loud: January 2, 1964. The transit was then exact: Chariklo to natal Altjira. She reported that channeling felt like "an accelerated state characterized by a feeling of inexhaustible energy, emotional wholeness, and subjective freedom".¹⁶ She was able to embody Chariklo as she held space for this profound energy, tuning her natal Altjira to open a connection with a formless entity who had books worth of esoteric knowledge to impart through her.

I was introduced to Seth by my father, who used this in his exploration of channeling in a work on transpersonal psychology. He notes, "Seth ... described himself as 'an energy personality essence no longer focused in physical reality.'"¹⁷ In contrast to the hyper-localized (in the sense of totemic space) yet time-spanning *altjira*, Seth was a non-local guide manifesting in time. Yet an Aboriginal mythos seems to have inspired him, as "dream time"

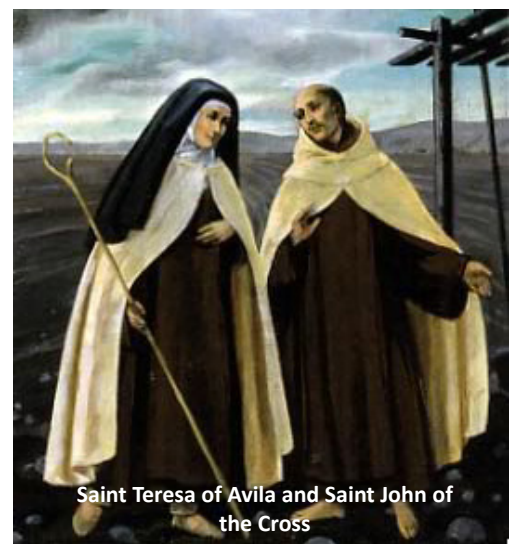
is used in the creation story Seth tells. Was Seth channeling Altjira? More likely the channeler had read about it herself. Regardless, Jane Roberts channeled Seth while her natal Altjira was visited by Chariklo.

Saint Teresa: The Conjunction as Transit

We can observe the influence of the conjunction of Altjira and Chariklo in the "spiritual marriage" of a Catholic nun with Jesus Christ. This synod in Scorpio brought together two well-known mystics, each of whom would be elevated to sainthood by the Church: Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross.

As Prioress of the reformed Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation, she had requested this well-respected priest be sent there as confessor. Although he honored her mystical path, he felt that as a Mother Superior famed for her rapturous visions of angels, she "should work on self-mortification."¹⁸ Six months into John's term as confessor, at one communion in November 1572 she heard the voice of Jesus pledge to her that she would be "my bride from this day forth."

In this pivotal moment in the spiritual life of Saint Teresa, a rare transiting stellium of Mercury-Altjira-Saturn-Chariklo (at 19-21°) set off her fixed sign synastry with Saint John. The Scorpio stellium squared John's Chiron in Taurus, while Teresa experienced them square to her lunar Nodes, drawing her path to a point of crisis. More precisely, Altjira squared her Neptune, as Chariklo squared her Nodes. Planets of grace stimulated Teresa's natal South Node-Neptune in Aquarius 12H, fulfilling her



Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross

potential as a mystical monastic. Under these aspects, she reported that “for the rest of the day she felt blissfully disoriented by this transaction.” How evocative of the whole planetary complex!

This “spiritual marriage, the permanent union of her soul with God” was even “recognized by the church.”¹⁹ In her spiritual memoir *The Interior Castle*, she describes this final stage of divine grace as one “where the soul always remains in its center with its God.” This divine marriage of a mortal woman to a transcendent God is an *Altjiran* tale in which the timeless took root in a devoted soul.

WEAVING TIME WHOLE

What does it mean for us to take an Aboriginal ‘idea’ and place it on a star that only ‘we’ can see through advanced telescopes? Do the ancestral spirits interface with the planetoid? Do we honor the Indigenous through such an appellation? Does TNO Altjira function as a signifier of what spans all time, or for our ability to project ideas onto the unknown? Maybe both. The cases here suggest that its meaning is already at work in our cycles of time.

These examples have revealed some significance through the symbolism of one Centaur and TNO alone. The full astrological chart would tell its story at various levels, traditional and otherwise. The relationship of these recently discovered objects to a certain kind of phenomena (both of the mundane and spiritual spheres) is suggestive to astrologers. It also provides a glimpse of

the possibility for modern astrology to “weave time whole” with the inclusion of many more planetary objects than we may think “necessary”.

TNO Altjira was named for a word that “naturally suffers badly in translation” (to quote Stanner, who gave us ‘everywhen’ for Altjira). And so it did in its earliest usage by Europeans, and by the modern sky watchers who followed. Altjira presides over a realm of minor planets waiting to be known.

Notes:-

For a continued discussion on the anthropological history of Altjira please see <https://centaurs.space/blog/>

Ephemeris

Find the position of Altjira by using its minor planet number (148780) at www.true-node.com/eph1 or Astro.com’s Extended Chart Selection

Birth Data

St Teresa (ADB) 28 March 1515 (Jul) 5 AM, Avila Spain

St John of the Cross 24 June 1542 (Jul) (Time not needed for this citation)

Albert Hofmann 11 Jan 1906 3 PM Basel, Switzerland (A, ADB)

Jane Roberts 8 May 1929, 23:27 Albany NY (A, ADB)

Carl Strehlow 23 December, 1871 (only reference is to Altjira degree)

End Notes

¹ The asteroid Ceres was discovered exactly 100 years earlier than Confederation (1 January 1801) also at the 24th degree of Taurus!

² Naming of astronomical objects. <http://iau.org/public/themes/naming>

³ Samuel Gill, *Storytracking: Texts, Stories, & Histories in Central Australia*. Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1998. p.17.

Gill, p. 92

⁴ Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers*, Cambridge University Press: 1993, p. 21

⁵ Gill, p. 166.

⁶ David Moore, “Altjira, Dream and God.” Chapter 5 in Cox, James L. and Possamai, Adam. *Religion and Non-religion Among Australian Aboriginal Peoples*. Routledge: London, 2016.

⁷ WEH Stanner, “The Dreaming”, in Lessa WA and Vogt E (eds.), *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, Harper and Row, New York, 1972, pp. 269-272.

⁸ Wolfe: “Can the Subaltern Dream,” in Humphreys, *Cultures of Scholarship*, 1997

⁹ John Morton (2000:758) quoted in Moore

¹⁰ M.K. Turner, *Iwenye Tyerrtye – What it Means to Be an Aboriginal Person*, Jukurrpa Press, Alice Springs: 2010, p. 47

¹¹ Jennifer Green, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (2012) 23, 158–178; *The Altyerre Story—‘Suffering Badly by Translation’* p. 160

¹³ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/about/Pages/1890-to-1900-Towards-Federation.aspx>, <https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/parkes-delivers-tenterfield-oratorion>

¹⁴ see Melanie Reinhart on Chariklo in *Sideways From Saturn*, 2023, forthcoming

¹⁵ Lab synthesis November 16, 1938, Switzerland; first dose by accident when resynthesized on April 16, 1943.

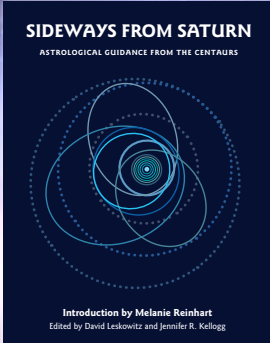
¹⁶ Jane Roberts, 1979, p. 160, quoted in P. Cunningham, *The Problem of Seth’s Origin: A Case Study of the Trance-Possession Mediumship of Jane Roberts*, Rivier College https://www2.rivier.edu/faculty/pcunningham/Research/Problem_of_Seths-Origin.pdf

¹⁷ Eric Leskowitz, “Channeling and Hypnosis,” *Transpersonal Hypnosis*, MA: CRC, 2000, p.168.

¹⁸ Cathleen Medwick, *Teresa of Avila, The Progress of a Soul*, Doubleday, NY: 1999, p.169.


¹⁹ Medwick, p. 169.

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David Leskowitz, (BA, Religion, Vassar College) works at the convergence of astrology, healing, and astral magic, in a collaboration with the Centaurs that has developed since Chiron transited his Pisces Ascendant twelve years ago. He has lectured for college and professional audiences, and leads monthly Centaur Attunement circles (www.centaurs.space) with Dr. Jenny Kellogg. He is co-editor of *Sideways From Saturn*, a forthcoming Centaur Astrology book featuring Melanie Reinhart and others! Visit <http://praepe.press> to learn more.

Image at top:

Rosie Tasman Napurrurla, Warlpiri 2002, Ngurlu Jukurrpa (“Grass Seed; Bush Grain Dreaming”), line etching on Hahnemuhle paper. Warnayaka Art Centre, Lajamanu, and Aboriginal Art Prints Network, Sydney