

WHO KILLED BOY STAUNTON: AN ASTROLOGICAL WITNESS REPORTS

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In 1955, Dr. C. G. Jung published a monograph entitled *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, attempting to deal with some of the questions raised by the kind of phenomenon we customarily call coincidence. The term "synchronicity" itself means "meaningful coincidence." Among the data accumulated were hundreds of natal horoscopes of couples in which there was found a more-than-random correspondence between the positions of most partners' Sun, Moon, or Venus with that of their mates. The experiment did not attempt to establish that the planetary positions at birth were the "cause" of each couple's eventual union, but merely to demonstrate the interconnectedness that seems to exist between astral and terrestrial phenomena. The ancient Hermetic maxim, "As above, so below," represents the fundamental tradition of serious professional astrology, a tradition that is thousands of years old. The horoscope is a kind of blueprint of the potentials of the unfolding universe at any given moment. In natal astrology, the moment of birth is seen as the "expanding moment," coincidentally registering certain astral effects which have a symbolic value in describing the native's attitudes and development. Horary astrology is the study of specific questions — "Should I invest my savings in silver?" — and the focal point here is the exact moment that the question was asked. This is the expanding moment wherein the planetary positions give a favourable or unfavourable judgement, often with surprising detail.

As a member of the Jungian Analytical Psychology Society of Ontario, novelist Robertson Davies undoubtedly enjoys a certain familiarity with Jung's work on synchronicity. Certainly, "meaningful coincidence" plays a large role in the unfolding drama of his most recent trilogy: *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore*, and *World of Wonders*. Like the ripples flowing outward from a pebble tossed in a pond, the story expands naturally through time and space from the impact of Boy Staunton's snowball upon young Mrs. Dempster, the single most meaningful event in the lives of Davies' central characters: "My lifelong involvement with Mrs. Dempster began at 5:58 o'clock p.m. on the 27th of December, 1908, at which time I was ten years and seven months old."¹ Here we are given the exact moment at which Percy Boyd Staunton threw his fateful snowball containing the stone that links him with his own death nearly sixty years later. As such, it represents the seed moment of the story — the "birth," if you like, of *Fifth Business*.

A chart of the planetary positions at that moment can be erected quite simply once the exact location of Deptford has been established. (The exact latitude and longitude of the place in question are essential for accurate calculations.) I decided to use the location of Thamesville, Ontario, as a

¹Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), p. 9. All further references to the novel are to this edition.

substitute for the fictional Deptford. Thamesville was Davies' own birthplace and purportedly the model for "Deptford" which stands, quite pointedly, on the Thames River. It should be noted that on charts A and B which appear with this article the intersecting lines represent the angles that planets make with each other. Broken lines indicate malefic aspects (squares and oppositions), and solid lines indicate benefic aspects (sextiles and trines). Chart A was erected for the exact moment of the snowball incident and, although it is not an individual nativity, it can be seen as the birth of a situation.

Cancer rising on the cusp of the first house sets the tone for the whole chart. Cancer is the natural ruler of the fourth house (Home) and is the sign of the Mother, reflecting both Mary Dempster's condition and Dunstable Ramsay's neurosis. Symbolically, with Cancer rising the young man gets a job and takes on a family. He perceives a focus for his energies and assumes a measure of responsibility. The snowball incident is the beginning of Ramsay's focusing in on Mrs. Dempster, and later sees him assuming full responsibility for her care. With Cancer rising, Capricorn is descending in the west on the cusp of the seventh house. This is the house of "others" and how they enter our lives. Capricorn's appearance here shows a disciplined approach in dealing with others, and a definite order imposed on all interpersonal relationships. There is a need to create what Jung has called a persona, or several. The persona is the mask of convenient identity through which one faces other people. It serves to project a desirable impression upon others and to conceal the true nature of the Self. Again, Dunstan Ramsay, Boy Staunton, and Magnus Eisengrim all demonstrate this quality of character, masking their reservations about interacting with others behind a show of strength and discipline: the scholarly teacher, the aggressive businessman/politician, and the professional deceiver — the magician.

Neptune rising in Cancer on the ascendent brings a disruption, even chaos, in terms of the mother and the home. Boy Staunton's snowball does, indeed, bring disorder to both the Ramsay and the Dempster household at once. Boy himself experiences this disorder unconsciously, suppressing it until it re-emerges nearly six decades later to claim his life in the moment of recognition. Opposite Neptune, in the sixth house, we find the Sun, Mercury, and Uranus all in Capricorn. These planets in the house of health and personal service, together with Pluto in the twelfth (the house of confinements, hospitals, and asylums), show a lifelong concern with hospitals and institutions, although not necessarily involving the personal confinement of the native himself. This principle works through the conscientious Dunstan Ramsay, whose feeling of responsibility causes him to maintain Mrs. Dempster in a series of institutions at considerable expense to himself. At the top of the chart, close to the Midheaven, we find Saturn in Aries. Saturn can be an older man, consolidation, or it can indicate death, as we shall see later. Generally, though, Saturn is The Lesson Learned, and often learned the hard way. Since The Lesson Learned is what *Fifth Business* and the two subsequent novels are all about, it comes as no surprise to find Saturn literally above everything else in the chart and making no good aspects with any other planet. The only major aspects made by Saturn are negative "challenges" toward the Sun and Mercury — The Lesson Learned the hard way. Again, all three characters come to mind, but particularly Boy Staunton.

This brings us to another way of looking at the chart: trying to identify specific *people* who may appear in the chart. Not all planets can be taken as

indicators of particular persons, but the major ones here do seem to be embodied in the characters within the novels. Start with the Sun in the sixth house. The first thing the Sun's symbol (☉) brings to mind is the snowball and rock which have been thrown. At the time of this chart, the snowball is striking Mary Dempster, so we can see the Sun as Mrs. Dempster — the central luminary and source of the energy produced by the situation. This assumption is strengthened by the Sun's affiliation with Mercury and Uranus here. All three are in Capricorn, making them a kind of family. Mrs. Dempster, the Sun, is followed by the laboring infant Paul Dempster, only two degrees behind his mother and said to be "conjunct" with her, in the guise of Mercury. Mercury is the trickster, an appropriate indicator of the future magician, Magnus Eisengrim. Uranus can show an unusual or eccentric person, such as the religious zealot, Reverend Amasa Dempster. The Reverend's excitement over the prospective death of his wife is quelled somewhat by Dr. McCausland, indicated here by Mars in the fifth house (the house of children and childbirth). Mars, the traditional sphere of doctors and surgeons, makes a good aspect with Uranus and with Neptune, a situation thus lessening the tension between Reverend Dempster and the unexpected development. The lady represented by Venus in the company of the doctor as Mars can only be Mrs. Ramsay, Dunstable's mother, in the sign of Sagittarius. The strong negative aspect made by Venus (Mrs. Ramsay) with the Moon in Pisces in the ninth house suggests that the Moon may be her son, Dunstable. The sympathetic aspects made by the Moon with both Mrs. Dempster and her son underline this choice. The Moon in Pisces is concerned with the unconscious mind. In the ninth house of philosophy, religion, higher education, and long journeys, it points to Dunstan Ramsay as the guardian of the unconscious element of *Fifth Business*. The aspects show clearly the favourable relationship between Dunstan and both Mrs. Dempster and Paul, as well as the tension that exists with his own mother. Finally, we come back to Saturn, which I earlier associated with Boy Staunton. Just as Dunstan (Moon) makes good aspects with Paul and Mary Dempster, so Boy as Saturn makes bad aspects with both of them. The broken lines, indicating strong tension, chart the course of the snowball hurled by Boy, and note its negative effects on both Mrs. Dempster and her unborn child.

From this brief analysis of the astrological picture at the time of the snowball incident, we can see that certain correspondences do, in fact, exist between the interaction of the major characters of the novel and the interaction of the heavenly bodies at that same time. The question of whether these connections were the conscious work of novelist Davies, striving to weave still another intricacy into his fascinating web of words, may be troublesome to some people. I suggest that this question is really unimportant. The date cited in *Fifth Business* for the snowball incident was nearly five years before Davies himself was born, a fact which flatly eliminates any possibility of duplicating personal experience that was already found to have correspondence with astral influences.

Chart B at the end of this paper examines a second moment from the novel: "... at about four o'clock on the morning of Monday, November 4, 1968, his Cadillac convertible was recovered from the waters of Toronto harbour. ..." (p. 224). This is the moment of the discovery of Boy Staunton's body, the moment when his chariot of death is raised from the Toronto harbour, and an appropriate time to ask the horary question: "Who killed Boy Staunton?" Horary astrology, as mentioned earlier, is

concerned with the moment when the question was asked (horary=hour). There could be no better time to inquire about the nature of Boy's death than at the exact moment his body is found.

Saturn has completed two full orbits around the Sun (29 years each) since we last saw it in the guise of Boy Staunton back in 1908. Once again, it is in Aries. Boy himself has completed two professional orbits (businessman and politician), two matrimonial orbits (Leola and Denyse), and produced two children in that time. Saturn as the planet of Death on the cusp of the eighth house, the house of Death, certainly falls into the "meaningful coincidence" category, a situation leaving little room for misinterpretation here. If we wish to see who might be behind this death, we look straight across the chart (literally "behind" Saturn) to a suspicious-looking Mercury in the second house. Mercury, as we know, is the indicator of Magnus Eisengrim, the magician. Looking to the ascendent on the eastern horizon, we can expect our most immediate indicator on the situation. We find twenty-five degrees forty-seven minutes of Virgo rising. Virgo is ruled by Mercury — Magnus again — making him the "lord of the ascendent," or the physical ruler of the moment that is rising at that time. The exact nature of Magnus' involvement in Boy's death remains open to speculation, but factors definitely indicate that he has some sort of direct involvement in the circumstances of Boy's sudden death. Also interesting is the position of Mars, just rising to the ascendent, and to the physical horizon at that time (first house). Mars is associated with all forms of machinery — a sunken car, for instance — and we see it rising now, symbolically breaking the surface into consciousness, just as its earthbound counterpart (Boy's Cadillac) is breaking through the surface of Toronto harbour on the end of a steel winch.

But who killed Boy Staunton?

"He was killed by the usual cabal: by himself, first of all; by the woman he knew; by the woman he did not know; by the man who granted his inmost wish; and by the inevitable fifth, who was the keeper of his conscience and keeper of the stone." (p. 237)

Does the solution posited by the Brazen Head of Friar Bacon have any correspondence with the indicators of this chart? In Chart B, Neptune in the third makes an almost-exact sextile aspect with Pluto in the twelfth. The sextile is an aspect of flow, of co-operative effort, joining Neptune (Intuition, Illusion, Decay) and Pluto (Transformation, Regeneration, and the Group as a source of Power) and containing all the elements of what the Brazen Head called "the usual cabal." Mercury's position, exactly between these two planets, and its opposition to Saturn (the actual death) lend support to the construction of a triangle which contains all the cabalistic elements and which "points" to the planet of Death on the cusp of the house of Death. This triangle, with Neptune sextile Pluto as its base and Saturn as its apex, resembles the rare and significant aspect known as the Finger of Fate, or Finger of God. It "points the way" to the violent death of the native (Saturn in Aries in the eighth) and contains within its base all the elements which have combined to produce that death. The five planets contained within this arc of the base are Mars, Jupiter and Uranus in the first house, and Mercury and the Sun in the second.

"... by himself, first of all..."

Boy Staunton's strong personal drive, his aggressive character, and his preoccupation with sexual prowess mark him as a very highly-developed Martian type. His previous association with Saturn in Aries coincides with this indication, since Mars rules Aries, and we have already established the relationship between Mars and Boy's car, in which his body has just been found.

"... by the woman he knew..."

I do not feel that Uranus, unlike Mars, represents a particular person, any more than "the woman he knew" represents a specific person. Uranus is the source of originality and inspiration, the creative aspect of what Jung has called the anima archetype. The anima is the source of a man's expectations of women which he hangs on every woman he meets, hoping to find someone who can wear them comfortably, or, at the very least, quietly. The woman he knew — the only woman Boy ever really knew — was the woman within himself which he projected onto others. Unfortunately, he never realized that her nature was symbolic and not grounded in the actuality of either Leola or Denyse, or, for that matter, in any of the others.

"... by the woman he did not know..."

Just as Uranus represents the unconscious function of the anima, so also Jupiter represents social and intellectual expansion, through women in Virgo, the sign of the ideal woman. Although generally masculine in nature, Jupiter in Virgo is feminized and earthy, symbolizing perhaps the great body of women with which Boy Staunton has made contact during his lifetime, each one of them being a separate incarnation of "the woman he did not know." He could never really "know" any woman with whom he has made contact, because he never learned to see past what he wanted each one to be (anima) to what each one actually was. In this way, all women were unknowable to the great swordsman, Boy Staunton.

"... by the man who granted his inmost wish..."

We have arrived back at Mercury in the second house, the familiar trademark of Magnus Eisengrim, illusionist extraordinaire. We can only guess at the conversation that must have transpired between Magnus and Boy Staunton on the night of their meeting, but we can easily see something else that did pass between them that night:

I lifted the casket that contained Mary Dempster's ashes. "Do you want to take this with you, Paul?"

"No thanks, Ramsay. I have everything I need."

It seemed an odd remark, but in the emotional stress of the situation I paid no heed to it. Indeed, it was not until after the news of Boy's death reached me next morning that I noticed my paperweight was gone. (p. 236)

The archetypal nature of the stone, symbol of the complete unchanging Self, was the fateful message that passed between the two men. Magnus truly grants Boy's inmost wish — a wish he had suppressed for years — the wish to see the true nature of his Self. But when the master of the veils finally

draws back that last veil and allows Boy Staunton to see into the black chasm of himself, he sees a fathomless pit which the stone could not bridge. Faced suddenly with the irrefutable knowledge of his own guilt, there is nothing to do but to wipe out the terrifying vision completely through the symbolic transformation of death.

“... and by the inevitable fifth, who was keeper of his conscience and keeper of the stone.”

The Sun in the second house represents the stone itself and its keeper, Dunstan Ramsay. In the previous chart, the Sun symbolized the snowball containing the stone, and now it appears uncovered in the sign of Scorpio — the sign of transformation, death and regeneration, material becoming energy, and magic. There can be little doubt that Ramsay was, in actual fact, keeper of Boy Staunton's conscience and keeper of the stone, the only one of the central trinity of *Fifth Business* who consciously tried to understand what had happened as a result of his ducking away from Boy's snowball all those years before.

Since synchronicity is concerned with the interconnectedness of outer and inner phenomena, the symbol of the stone (the philosopher's stone) is appropriate to any discussion of synchronistic nature. The stone — cold unliving matter — has long been recognized as a symbol for the very essence of life, a relationship that is very similar in kind to the symbolic interplay between the celestial spheres and human behaviour. The only important aspect made with the Sun (the stone) in the chart of Boy Staunton's death is its opposition to the Moon in Taurus in the eighth house. Here we find the influence of Liesl, not having a direct bearing on the death situation but standing by and issuing the challenge of the stone. It is Liesl who finally throws Ramsay's paperweight into some bottomless Swiss gorge, destroying the object that has borne the symbolic power so that the power itself may be set free (an eighth house function). Representing the Lunar unconscious, she appears here as the Moon in Taurus — sign of the hermaphrodite, ruler of inner resources, and source of the answers to every important question.

It is significant to note, also, that both the day of the snowball incident and the day of the reunion between Magnus and Boy Staunton fall upon Sunday. Activity, of course, runs right through into the following morning (Monday), culminating, in the first case, with the birth of Paul Dempster/Magnus Eisengrim and, in the second, with the death of Boy Staunton, both at approximately the same hour. This symbolic shift from solar consciousness (Sun-day) to Lunar unconsciousness (Moon-day) is the primary focus of all of Robertson Davies' recent work.

Although this outline of the astrological data related to Davies' latest trilogy is crude and compact in nature, it is hoped that it will give some indication of the kinds of "meaningful coincidences" which can make themselves known to the discriminating reader. Taking the time to stop and check nearly always uncovers the fine gossamer web of the synchronistic field leading one straight into the heart of the Expanding Moment.

Fredericton, N.B.

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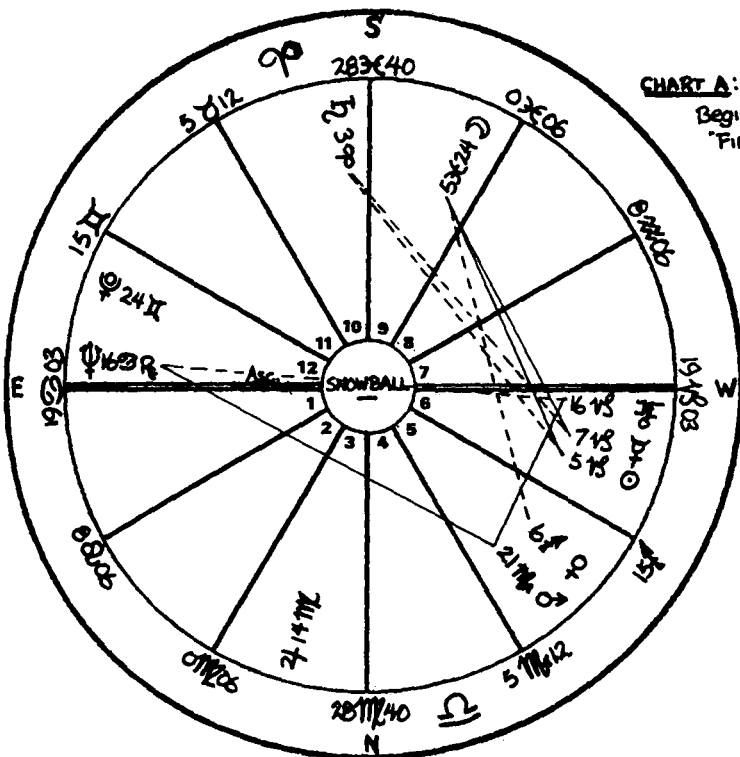
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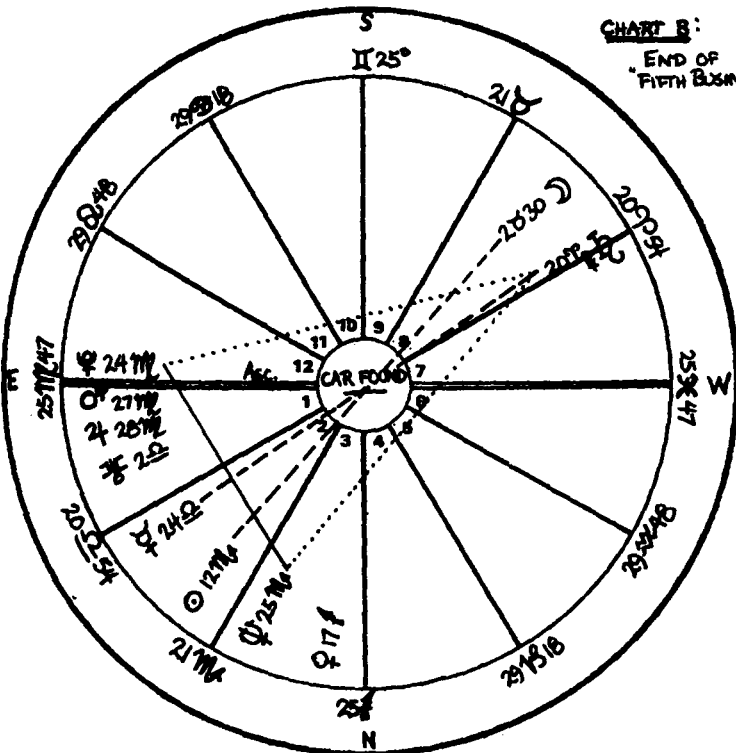
N. E.

CHART A:
Beginning of
"FIFTH BUSINESS"



- ☉ SUN
- ☾ MOON
- ☿ MERCURY
- ♀ VENUS
- ♂ MARS
- ♃ JUPITER
- ♄ SATURN
- ♅ URANUS
- ♆ NEPTUNE
- ♇ PLUTO

CHART B:
"END OF
"FIFTH BUSINESS"



- ♈ ARIES
- ♉ TAURUS
- ♊ GEMINI
- ♋ CANCER
- ♌ LEO
- ♍ VIRGO
- ♎ LIBRA
- ♏ SCORPIO
- ♐ SAGITTARIUS
- ♑ CAPRICORN
- ♒ AQUARIUS
- ♓ PISCES