

“A Last Chance Power Drive”

An Archetypal Analysis of Bruce Springsteen’s Song Lyrics

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Focusing on the expression of the planetary archetypes in the creative work of a single artist, this article explores the searing intensity and transformative power of the archetypal Pluto, in aspect to Venus and Mars, as expressed in the song lyrics of Bruce Springsteen. In the first of a two-part analysis of Springsteen’s work, Le Grice argues here that it is possible to view Springsteen’s recording career as a romantic odyssey, a personal journey of creative transformation, in which the dominant forms of expression of this three-planet archetypal complex evolve over time.

In October 1975, an up-and-coming musician from New Jersey called Bruce Springsteen was suddenly thrust into the public eye when he was featured simultaneously on the covers of both *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines.¹ Springsteen was hailed as the future of Rock ‘n’ Roll as his critically acclaimed album, *Born to Run*, and his rousing live performances with the E-Street Band launched him on the path to stardom. Previously, he had been characterized as the “new Dylan,” and the style of his music had partly reflected this, but on *Born to Run* Springsteen forged his own signature style of titanic rock epics, almost operatic in their drama, length, and power.² In the years since then, Springsteen has become an iconic figure in American culture, establishing himself as one of the most insightful and authentic musical artists of our time. Often defying the expectations of music critics and fans alike, he has remained unswervingly true to his own creative direction album after album. In a constant stream of creative output, Springsteen’s music has done much to mythologize contemporary American life, articulating the yearnings and aspirations of millions caught up for better or worse by the promise of the American Dream.³ One of the defining voices of his generation, Springsteen speaks directly to the struggle many people face to find happiness and fulfillment in the modern world.

This paper, the first of a two-part exploration of Springsteen’s music, analyzes some of the major themes evident in Springsteen’s song lyrics by an interpretation of the archetypal significance of one of the major planetary configurations in his birth chart. In certain respects this interpretive method is an extension of Jungian depth psychological approaches to the

1. Parke Puterbaugh, “Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files* (London: Pan Books, 1998), xvi, xxviii.

2. Puterbaugh, “Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, xvii.

3. According to Puterbaugh, “Broadly stated, his [Springsteen’s] work can be seen as an ongoing commentary on the status of the American Dream as an attainable reality.” “Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, xiv.

analysis of artists’ personalities, lives, and work. Themes evident in a piece of art (whether painting, music, film, or literature), which might normally be related to Jungian archetypal images, psychodynamic factors, or biographical experiences from the artist’s life, are also connected, in archetypal astrology, to themes associated with the various sets of planetary alignments in the artist’s birth chart.

To give a little more background on this method for readers new to the field: It has been well established by astrological research that the planetary alignments at the moment of an individual’s birth are symbolically representative of the inherent qualities—or archetypal dynamics—of that moment in time. It has been established, furthermore, that the archetypal dynamics of the birth moment continue to define that individual’s personality and biographical experiences throughout the entire lifetime. And as in life, so in art, where themes associated with the archetypal patterns of an artist’s birth chart are often magnified and dramatized, writ large on the artistic canvas, finding particularly striking forms of expression. The same archetypal complexes shaping an artist’s own experiences, which are evident in the various conflicting impulses and motivations of character, provide the *prima materia*, as it were, of the artist’s work. Springsteen’s music is an excellent example of this, with the lyrical content and emotive power of his songs vividly conveying the specific combinations of the major archetypal themes of his birth chart.

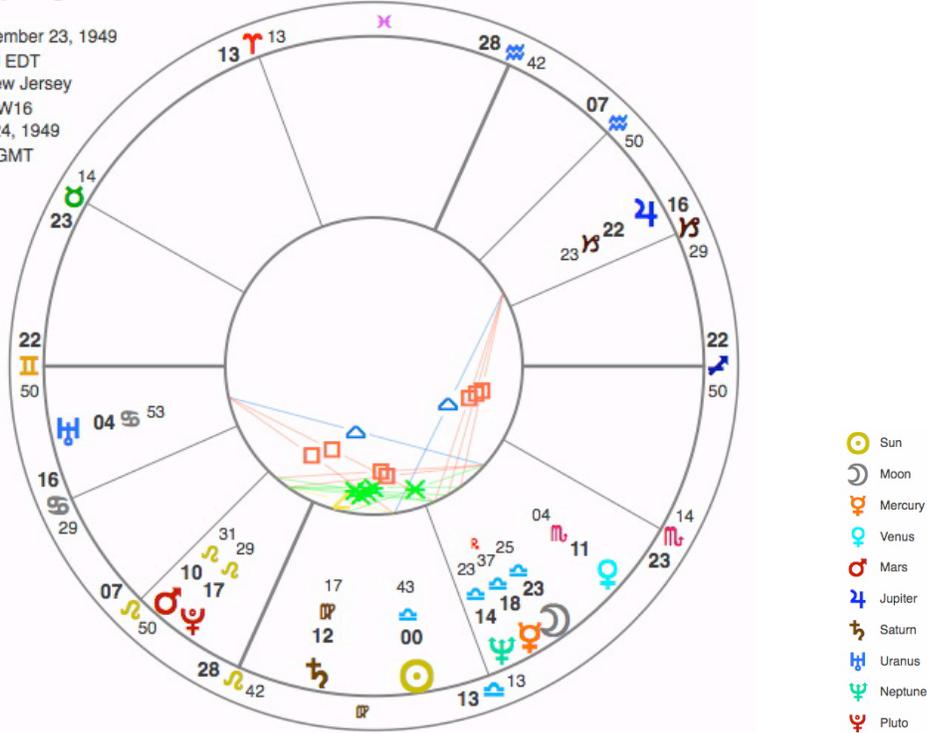
Overview

Springsteen was born on September 23, 1949, at 10:50 p.m. (EST) in Freehold, New Jersey.⁴ In his birth chart, Pluto (♇) is positioned at 17° 29’ Leo and forms two major dynamic or “hard” aspects to other planets—geometric alignments that indicate a potent, mutually stimulating, and sometimes challenging or antagonistic relationship between the archetypal principles associated with these planets. The first is a conjunction to Mars (♂), which is at 10° 31’ Leo, and the second, a square aspect to Venus (♀) at 11° 4’ Scorpio. In terms of degrees of exactitude, the closer square is actually between Venus and Mars, and while an analysis of this aspect alone would be very rewarding, it is my intention to focus predominantly on the themes associated with Pluto that color the expression of this three-planet archetypal complex. These dynamics and complexes are not unique to Springsteen, of course, and others with similar charts or sharing these same planetary alignments will give expression to these archetypal complexes in widely differing ways. Yet Springsteen speaks for many, and an archetypal analysis of his music will enable us to enter deeply into the particular configurations and complexes present in his chart in a way that can illuminate their significance for us all.

4. Springsteen’s birth data is from *Astro-Databank* (www.astro.com/astro-databank), source: Birth Certificate (Rodden Rating AA).

Bruce Springsteen

Natal Chart
 Friday, September 23, 1949
 10:50:00 PM EDT
 Freehold, New Jersey
 40N16 / 74W16
 September 24, 1949
 2:50:00 AM GMT
 Koch



Bruce Springsteen's Birth Chart

The qualities associated with the planetary archetype Mars include physical energy, self-assertion, courage, aggression, decisiveness, initiative, ardor, and action. Its meaning encompasses a complex array of themes associated with the warrior archetype. Venus, in many respects the complementary opposite to Mars, is associated with love, liking, romance, sexual desiring, the pleasure-seeking principle, beauty, and the aesthetic sense. Pluto symbolizes the experience in human life of the instinctual force of nature, a power that effects its own evolutionary transformation through an encounter with human self-reflective consciousness. The nature of the archetypal Pluto is to empower, intensify, deepen, destroy, and transform. As we will see, the combination of these three archetypal principles are consistently evident throughout Springsteen’s recording career, finding expression in his lyrics and music in a number of ways that reflect the confluence of their respective qualities, drives, and themes.

My analysis of Springsteen’s work will consist of three closely related approaches: (1) an examination of the language and metaphor of his song lyrics, including the personifications of the Venus-Mars-Pluto archetypal complex in the names and descriptions of the characters; (2) an exploration of the actions of the characters, the feelings and motivations behind their actions, and the circumstances in which these actions take place; and (3) an overview of how the expression of the Pluto archetypal principle in Springsteen’s work changes through time. I will argue that it is possible to view Springsteen’s music as a kind of romantic odyssey, a personal journey of

creative transformation and individuation, driven and guided by the evolutionary dynamic associated with the Pluto archetype. An analysis of Springsteen’s career suggests, in fact, a clearly discernible developmental pattern associated with the changing experience of the Pluto archetype over time, which I will attempt to illuminate in this paper.

With this developmental context in mind, it is possible to group Springsteen’s albums into four relatively distinct phases. In the first phase, I would situate his first three albums released between 1973 and 1975: *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey*; *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E-Street Shuffle*; and *Born to Run*. Here the characters in Springsteen’s songs are empowered by the instinctual force associated with Pluto to strive for a happier, more romantic life (Venus) and, through courageous, decisive actions (Mars), to satiate their desire for an intense experience of romantic love (Venus-Pluto). As I see it, this is an early, mainly positive expression of the Plutonic drive supporting and empowering the desires of the youthful aspiring characters Springsteen portrays.⁵

During the second phase, the expression and release of the instinctual power associated with Pluto becomes increasingly thwarted by the demands and pressures of living in the world. The intensity of the yearning Springsteen expresses remains at fever pitch, but the powerful instinctual energy, finding no positive external outlet, turns inwards, fueling a long, painful transformation process. Springsteen now experiences this force predominantly as a negative power and his characters henceforth are railing against the imposed restrictions they encounter from society and authority, burning now as much with resentment as desire. Springsteen wrestles with this conflict for many years, but it finds its clearest expression in his work over four albums released between 1978 and 1984: *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *Nebraska*, *The River*, and *Born in the U.S.A.*

In the next phase of Springsteen’s work, he presents a more personal, more refined, and altered expression of the Plutonic energy, focused no longer just on the satiation of desire, but also on the struggle and complexity of intimate human relationships. There is also a shift during this period toward an increasing concern with social and political issues as if the archetypal energy that fuelled his early romantic heroism had begun to find alternative forms of expression relevant to the concerns of the wider world. This phase overlaps somewhat with the previous one, but is most apparent in *Tunnel of Love* (1987), up to and including *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* (1992).⁶

Finally, in the fourth phase of Springsteen’s work, the Plutonic instinctual-emotional fire that burned so intensely during his early albums has gone full circle, as it were, as Springsteen returns with a new wave of music that embraces both the positive and negative aspects of life.

5. Puterbaugh characterizes Springsteen’s first three releases as a trilogy of “celebratory” albums. See his “Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, xxiv. For a discussion of Springsteen’s relevance to the mythos of American life, see also Jim Cullen, *Born in the U.S.A.: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition* (London: Helter Skelter Publishing, 1998).

6. On *Tunnel of Love*, according to Puterbaugh, “Springsteen pulled back his musical focus into a more personal, smaller scale framework, honing on one-to-one relationships rather than the larger rites of community.” In addition, Puterbaugh notes, “his interviews from this period revealed an increasingly political bent.” See his “Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, xliii and xlvi.

What was once an exclusively personal claim to the instinctual power associated with Pluto has by this time become more universalized. The romantic desire for a particular individual, although still present, occurs in the context of a wider celebration of life in the midst of tragedy, a juxtaposition of light and dark, in a full embrace of life’s inherent polarities, although often with a significant reduction in the visceral emotional power and intensity of the songs. The overwhelming compulsion and extremity of feeling, which, as we will see, is so evident in his early albums, has at this late stage been transformed into a more conscious, socially aware mode of expression. I think this shift is most apparent on his recent albums including *The Rising* and *Magic*.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to focus in detail on all four phases of a career spanning more than thirty years, so I will concentrate here on the first two phases, covering Springsteen’s best known songs, and conclude with the transition to the third phase and the album *Tunnel of Love*.



The Wild, The Innocent, and The E-Street Shuffle *Album Cover*

Phase 1 (1973–1975)

Greetings From Asbury Park, New Jersey (1973); *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E-Street Shuffle* (1973); *Born to Run* (1975)

In their feel and tenor, Springsteen’s first two albums, both released in 1973, are in general a more representative expression of the lyrical wizardry of his natal Mercury-Neptune conjunction (a complex that I will explore in the next issue of *Archai*) than his Venus-Mars-Pluto archetypal complex.⁷ However, the figurative and descriptive content of the lyrics themselves unmistakably reveal the presence of the archetypal Pluto coloring the entire range of characteristics and impulses associated with Venus and Mars.

7. In Springsteen’s birth chart there is a conjunction of Mercury, the Moon, and Neptune in Libra, all square to Jupiter, a planetary combination that is particularly associated with the soulful yearning for a more ideal life, a theme present in many of his songs. This four-planet archetypal complex will be explored in the next issue of *Archai*.

“It’s Hard to Be a Saint in the City,” the last track of *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey*, perfectly encapsulates the feeling of the Venus-Mars-Pluto archetypal combination. With a tough, urban tone of voice, the song’s protagonist proclaims:

I had skin like leather and the diamond-hard look of a cobra
 I was born blue and weathered and I burst just like a supernova
 I could walk like Brando right into the sun
 And dance just like a Casanova

With my blackjack and jacket and hair slicked sweet
 Silver star studs on my duds like a Harley in heat
 When I strut down the street I could hear its heartbeat ⁸

This passage is quintessential Venus-Mars-Pluto, combining the motifs of the battered, tough male character with a weapon (Mars), of dancing and the lover (both Venus), and the instinctual power of nature, the sensation of bursting, and the snake (all Pluto). Like a “Casanova,” Springsteen’s character has a romantic prowess and a predatory feel, almost swaggering, strutting down the street at night. The mood is hot, atmospheric, pulsating. This is the pervasive emotional tone of Venus-Mars-Pluto, one that seems to be especially characteristic of early adulthood when the drives associated with Pluto typically find more extraverted and perhaps unconscious forms of expression, impelling one to exert power and influence out in the world. The location of the song’s unfolding drama is the urban “jungleland,” which is to be the setting for many of his songs during the first phase of his recording career. This “jungleland,” which Springsteen actually uses as the title for the last track on *Born to Run*, well represents Pluto’s association with the realm of the underworld, which is in turn symbolically associated with the instinctual dynamism of the human psyche, the source of the primal, chthonic power of life, as in Freud’s formulation of the id. The wild jungle landscape symbolizes the uncivilized, untamed, “wild” aspect of human nature—themes all associated with Pluto. In Hellenistic mythology, Pluto (the Greek Hades) is the ruler of the underworld, the subterranean realm of darkness hidden from the light of the sun and, accordingly, in its archetypal meaning Pluto is associated with the dark depths of the psyche where the conscious ego fears to go. It relates to the instinctual ground of life and to that

8. Marlon Brando also had Mars and Pluto in dynamic aspect—an opposition.

which the light of consciousness excludes and therefore casts into shadow. As Jung has shown, the shadow archetype is the compensatory counterpart to the differentiated conscious ego.⁹

Springsteen’s characters originate from and thrive in this underworld environment where the mythic Pluto rules. In the opening line of “Incident on 57th Street,” for example, we learn that “Spanish Johnny drove in from the Underworld last night”; and in “It’s Hard to Be a Saint in the City,” the last track on *Greetings*, the main character positively flourishes in the urban jungeland:

I was the king of the alley, mama, I could talk some trash,
I was the prince of the paupers crowned downtown at the beggars’ bash
I was the pimp’s main prophet I kept everything cool
Just a backstreet gambler with the luck to lose

Springsteen populates his songs with personifications of urban underworld creatures such as the “Cat from the Bronx,” the “Magic Rat,” and the “Mad Dog.” These are accompanied by street gangs and “sages from the subway” who “sit just like the living dead.”¹⁰

In Christian myth, many of the qualities of the shadow archetype and many of the characteristics of the astrological Pluto are attributed to the Devil who appears in Springsteen’s songs as a dark power of the urban underworld. In “It’s Hard to Be a Saint in the City,” for instance, the Devil (Pluto) colludes with and corrupts the male character (Mars):

The devil appeared like Jesus through the steam in the street
Showin’ me a hand I knew even the cops couldn’t beat.
I felt his hot breath on my neck as I dove into the heat.
It’s so hard to be a saint when you’re just a boy out on the street

Again and again in Springsteen’s songs the urban “jungeland” associated with Pluto is the scene of romantic adventures that arise from the interaction of the archetypes associated with Mars and Venus, of “masculine” and “feminine” energy, particularly as expressed in love relationships. However, the presence of Pluto in the Venus-Mars natal aspect gives to this complex a distinctive dark, underworld inflection. This is apparent in the overtly sexual or seedy characters Springsteen uses in his songs. The cast list includes pimps, prostitutes,

9. The planetary archetype Saturn is also related to the Jungian shadow archetype in its association with inferiority, weakness, fear, shame, and guilt. The Saturn principle is associated with repression and moral judgment; it is the principle that denies, blocks, judges, and contains. In its negating quality, Saturn is the archetypal principle that creates the shadow by denying certain elements of one’s character that are incompatible with the moral qualities, values, and persona with which one is identified. Since Pluto represents the biological instincts (the id, to use Freud’s term), which are often socially taboo, the Saturn principle creates the shadow by repressing the Plutonic instincts into the underworld of the psyche. See C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. A. Jaffe, trans. Richard and Clara Wilson (London: Flamingo, 1983), 417–418.

10. Quoted lyrics from “Jungeland” on *Born to Run* (New York: Columbia Records, 1975) and “It’s Hard to Be a Saint in the City” on *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey* (New York: Columbia Records, 1973).

“interstellar mongrel nymphs,” “silicone sisters,” fallen nuns, “hard girls over on Easy Street,” “tainted women in Vistavision” who “perform for out-of-state kids at the late show,” “teenage tramps in skintight pants,” and “hunk metal whores.”¹¹

The pimp is a classic Venus-Mars-Pluto figure, as it is typically a man (Mars) who is involved in the control and sexual exploitation (Pluto) of women (Venus). Prostitutes, nymphs, and “tainted women” all express the Venus-Pluto archetypal combination. The pure romantic expression associated with Venus is tainted by the uncivilized instinctual mire of the Plutonic underworld.

Repeatedly in Springsteen’s lyrics, he is able to bring together in a variety of ways distinctive themes associated with the combination of the Venus, Mars, and Pluto archetypes. In “Incident on 57th Street,” for example, a female character remarks, “those romantic young boys, all they ever want to do is fight.” The boys are both romantic (Venus) and they fight (Mars). Romance is energized by Mars and fighting is romanticized by Venus. Activities associated with Venus, such as romantic love, dancing, and making music, go hand in hand with activities associated with Mars, such as fighting and competing. Springsteen’s characters are “switchblade lovers” who “take a stab at romance.”¹² Violence is sometimes described by Springsteen as a thing of beauty (“Hey man, did you see that? His body hit the street with such a beautiful thud”)¹³; or it is related to forms of artistic expression, including poetry, opera, ballet, and dance; or it occurs in connection with making love, amusement arcades, fairgrounds, flowers, and kisses—all associated with Venus. In “Jungleland,” we hear, for example, that “there’s an opera out on the Turnpike, there’s a ballet being fought out in the alley” and that “kids flash guitars just like switch-blades, hustling for that record machine”—where the fighting, the switch blades, and the hustle are related to Mars, and the music and guitars are related primarily to Venus.

When combined with Plutonic intensity and explosive power,

The hungry and the hunted explode into rock ‘n’ roll bands

They face off against each other out on the street down in Jungleland

The “hungry and the hunted” could have come straight out of the Darwinian world of “nature red in tooth and claw” with the characteristic “kill or be killed” mentality that is particularly associated with the Mars-Pluto combination. Fueled by this energy, the song’s characters “explode” (Pluto) in rock music battles, competing with each other (Mars) through their music (Venus).

11. Quoted lyrics from “Blinded by the Light” and “The Angel” on the album *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey*; and “Incident on 57th Street,” “Does this Bus Stop at 82nd Street?,” and “The E-Street Shuffle” on the albums *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E-Street Shuffle* (New York: Columbia Records, 1973).

12. Quoted lyrics from “Sandy (4th of July Asbury Park, New Jersey)” on *Wild* and “Jungleland” on *Born to Run*.

13. “Lost in the Flood” on *Greetings*.

There is perhaps no better image of the coming together of the energies represented by a planetary aspect between Mars and Venus than the kiss. The kiss is an expression of love (Venus) but it is also an action (Mars). It combines both active desire (Mars) and receptive desire (Venus). However, for Springsteen, since Pluto is also involved in dynamic aspects with both these planets, the kiss is imbued with an extreme intensity and passionate heat. He describes this vividly in “Fire” on *Bruce Springsteen & the E-Street Band Live/1975–1985* (“‘cause when we kiss, Fire”) and in “Candy’s Room” on *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (“We kiss, my heart rushes to my brain, the blood rushes in my veins fire rushes towards the sky”). In “Born to Run,” Springsteen declares, “I wanna die with you Wendy on the streets tonight in an everlasting kiss,” and in “Prove It All Night,” on *Darkness*, the song’s romantic hero demands “a kiss to seal our fate tonight.” Here the Mars-Venus image of the kiss is combined with the Plutonic idea of fate, a fated love, a love that cannot be resisted, in which the kiss represents an acceptance of this fate.

It is fitting that right at the start of his recording career Springsteen should draw analogy with the snake or serpent, a classic theriomorphic symbol of Pluto (“I had skin like leather and the diamond-hard look of a cobra”).¹⁴ Associated with the primitive instincts rooted in our inherited biology and animal ancestry, the serpent’s wealth of symbolic meaning encompasses the entire range of the expression of the planetary archetype. It suggests danger, evil, the threat of violent retaliation, and the power to inflict death. Most significant, the serpent symbolizes the instinctual power of nature that, at first unconsciously, drives Springsteen’s characters relentlessly forward in life, empowering them with an all-consuming urge to find a way to express and satiate the torrent of emotional energy associated with the archetypal Pluto. For Springsteen, this Plutonic energy is the creative daemon that is both the fuel and the consuming fire of the passion in his music.

Initially, Springsteen’s characters appear blissfully unaware of where this power might lead them. Yet the way of desire, for one and all, will in time become the way of inner transformation. For as a symbol of Pluto, the snake also represents the principle of death-rebirth, with the shedding of the old skin and re-emergence into a new life. In Hindu Yoga the snake represents the kundalini force, the coiled power residing in the root chakra. It is also the cunning manipulator of Eden, the power that leads human beings to the Fall through the knowledge of good and evil. And in another form, it is the enigmatic symbol of the *uroboros* (the alchemical symbol of the self-devouring serpent), which points to the mystery of human self-reflective consciousness inextricably bound up in a relentless cycle of life blindly consuming itself.

Springsteen identifies himself not only with the snake, but also with the tremendous, explosive power of nature. The feeling of “bursting just like a supernova,” as many with a strong natal Pluto would testify, is typical of the phenomenology of this archetype. Another metaphor often associated with Pluto is that of a volcano erupting, but both images point to the same core experience: the accumulation of such a tremendous instinctual-emotional-energetic power in the body that one feels like one will indeed physically explode. For

14. “It’s Hard to Be a Saint in the City” on *Greetings*.

Springsteen, this experience usually occurs in connection with romantic love (Venus), desire (both Venus and Mars), and the urge to act on these feelings (Mars).¹⁵

Particularly in Springsteen’s early work (1973–1975), this sense of explosion is a positive experience. The male character is so charged with energy, with a burning desire for life, with a desperate longing for the pleasure-pain of romantic love, and with the need to experience everything with an unbridled passionate intensity, that bursting seems a very real possibility. In “Night” on *Born to Run* (1975), Springsteen conveys a clear sense of this burning intensity. Driving cars and chasing girls provides for Springsteen’s character a cathartic release after a day’s work:

And she’s so pretty that you’re lost in the stars
As you jockey your way through cars . . .
And you’re in love with all the wonder it brings
And every muscle in your body sings as the highway ignites
You work nine to five somehow to survive to the night

All three archetypal principles associated with Venus, Mars, and Pluto are evident here, with the physical, muscular (Mars) sensation of searing energy and Dionysian ecstatic pleasure (Venus-Pluto), stimulated by the intoxicating cocktail of driving a fast car (Mars), and romance and beauty (Venus). Springsteen also combines specific words often associated with these three archetypes to convey this feeling, so we find muscles (Mars) that sing (Venus), and the highway that ignites (Pluto). This style of juxtaposing the archetypal language and metaphor is, as we have already seen, a constant feature of Springsteen’s song writing.

The conjunction of Mars and Pluto brings together the instinctual motivation to survive and exert power in the urban “jungleland” (Pluto) and the impulse to fight, struggle, to go after what one wants (Mars). It is not surprising, then, that one of Springsteen’s favorite images is that of the gun and the act of shooting. In “Spirit in the Night” on *Wild*, two of the characters are named “Little Gun” and “Little Dynamite,” and there are numerous references to shooting. Indeed, it is easy to lose count of the total number of references not only to guns or shooting, but also to other weapons (such as knives or axes) and explosions (dynamite, fireworks, canons, bombs) that occur in Springsteen’s first three albums. Weapons are associated with Mars, the planetary archetype of the god of war, and explosive weapons in particular encapsulate the combined meaning of Mars and Pluto.

The first clear example of this veritable armory of references to weapons comes in “Lost in the Flood” on *Greetings* in which the song’s central character is appropriately referred to, interchangeably, as “Gunner,” “Ragamuffin’ Gunner,” and “Gunner Man.” Here Springsteen uses a verbose overload of images that are archetypally appropriate to the Mars-Pluto complex

15. Mars is related to desire as ardor, striving, the energetic pursuit of something. Venus is also related to desire, but as loving or liking. Pluto is connected with desire too, in its association with the id, with the repressed unconscious, with instinctual-emotional energy, and with libido.

in lines such as, “Well the blaze and noise boy, he’s gunnin’ that bitch loaded to blastin’ point.” Later, as the song draws to its climax, Springsteen provides further examples:

And now the whiz-bang gang from uptown, they’re shootin’ up the street.
And that cat from the Bronx starts letting loose but he gets blown right off his feet
And some kid comes blastin’ round the corner but a cop puts him right away

As a symbol of the Mars-Pluto conjunction the gun is especially apt. In Freudian terms, of course, the gun is a phallic symbol of masculine potency, and there is certainly a suggestion of this connotation in Springsteen’s lyrics. However, there are clear associations too with the work of Stanislav Grof on the archetypal dynamics of the birth process. Pluto is the planetary archetype most closely associated with the death-rebirth process, particularly with what Grof has called the third perinatal matrix, relating to that stage of birth in which the fetus struggles through the birth canal.¹⁶ This phase of birth seems to symbolically replicate what occurs during the firing of a gun. Just as the Plutonic pressure forces the baby along its passage through the birth canal, out of an enclosed dark passage into the light of day, so pulling the trigger creates an increasing volcanic pressure that propels the bullet down the barrel, resulting in a forceful, single-pointed release of the bullet out into the world. Both events are also associated with destruction: according to Grof, the baby experiences the passage through the birth canal as a life and death struggle, marked by the stark encounter with powerful destructive forces; and the act of shooting is obviously also associated with destruction and sometimes death. In all these ways, the two events are symbolically resonant.

Another favorite metaphor for Springsteen, and the one for which he is best known, is the car. This conveys the essence both of Mars (of going somewhere quickly in a direct line and of moving out into the world to do something) and also of Pluto, since the movement is the result of the internal combustion of the engine, of a controlled explosion. The Pluto archetype is related to the polar extremes of absolute control and total abandonment; it is associated both with explosive force and controlled power. And Mars-Pluto is the archetypal signature of the thrust. Invariably, as suggested by the aspect of Venus to Mars and Pluto, the action is either in the company of a girl, or in pursuit of one. The archetypal energy associated with Pluto gives to the act of driving a dangerous edge and an intensity that comes from the total commitment to life even in the face of death. Springsteen’s characters drive “suicide machines sprung from cages” to escape the “death trap” of conventional life.¹⁷ They travel along “Thunder Road,” go “Racing in the Streets,” and drive “head first into a hurricane.”¹⁸ They compete (Mars) to win the love of a girl (Venus) like the hero of “Racing in the Street” on *Greetings* who recalls how he “blew that Camaro off my back, and drove that little girl

16. See Stanislav Grof, *Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 45–51.

17. “Born to Run” on *Born to Run*.

18. “Thunder Road” on *Born to Run*; “Racing in the Streets” on *Darkness*; and “Lost in the Flood” on *Greetings*.

away.” They are on a “last chance power drive,” to quote a famous line in “Born to Run,” which has a double meaning, for the power drive relates not only to driving cars, which is Springsteen’s intended reference, but also to the Nietzschean concept of the “will to power” and Alfred Adler’s psychology of the power drive—the philosophy and psychology of Pluto.¹⁹

Running, an athletic activity expressive of the Mars archetype, is another variation on this theme.²⁰ But again, reflecting the presence of Pluto in the archetypal complex and its characteristic association with instinctually empowered compulsion and extremity of expression, Springsteen’s characters are not just running, they are running until exhaustion; it is desperate running, with no turning back, until the heart pounds out of the chest. They are running “‘cos there’s no place left to hide.”²¹ And of course Springsteen’s signature song is “Born to Run,” a title in which Pluto’s association with birth (and the cycle of birth-sex-death) and Mars’s association with running are brought together.²²

In “Born to Run,” touching on many of the above themes, Springsteen invites his beloved to

Just wrap your legs ‘round these velvet rims
and strap your hands across my engines
Together we could break this trap
We’ll run till we drop, baby we’ll never go back.

Here, in addition to the overtly erotic implication of the metaphor (which reflects the combination of all three archetypal principles), Springsteen brings together the themes of immense combustive power and that of running to the point of exhaustion associated with Mars-Pluto, combining these with Venusian elements of beauty, romance, and the touch of velvet luxury—all within the context of his inexhaustible romanticism.

19. In addition, Springsteen’s description of the power drive as a “last chance” suggests the quality of fateful, death-risking action, a life-or-death outcome, an all or nothing gamble with no safety net or insurance policy, that is so characteristic of Pluto.

20. It is perhaps significant that the Mars-Pluto conjunction falls in the third house of Springsteen’s birth chart, which is traditionally associated with short journeys and the immediate environment. This might explain, from an astrological perspective, why Springsteen’s characters typically express the Mars-Pluto energy driving and running around their local environments.

21. “Born to Run” on *Born to Run*.

22. “Born to Run” also suggests the idea that the characters are somehow fated to run. Pluto is often experienced as the power of fate and Mars is associated with running. For more on Pluto’s association with fate, see Liz Greene, *The Astrology of Fate* (London: Thorsons, 1997).



Born to Run Album Cover

Born to Run is Springsteen’s third album and on it he conveys the archetypal quality of Pluto less through the verbose descriptive language and character personifications, and more through the feeling-tone of the song. The emotional fervor and power of the music viscerally conveys the experience of a positive, empowering expression of the archetypal Pluto in relation to romantic love, beauty, and pleasure (Venus) and to actions, will, desire, struggle, and daring (Mars). His music burns with a passionate intensity rarely matched by his peers.

As one might expect, the burning desire Springsteen conveys through his music is often described using the imagery of fire and heat. As we have seen, desire generally falls within the archetypal domains of both Venus and Mars, and these two archetypal principles together are especially associated with romantic or pleasure-seeking desire. Pluto, in distinction, is related to the experience of all-consuming elemental desire from the depths of nature. The Plutonic element is that of an empowering intensity and an overwhelming compulsion. Without this, the Venus-Mars aspect might still manifest as a pleasure-seeking urge, a strongly romantic inclination, a sociable and flirtatious manner, but it would lack the life-or-death intensity that usually accompanies Pluto aspects. The Pluto principle represents deep, underlying, and often unconscious motivations; it relates to that drive and urge which has us in its grip. For Springsteen, this is evidently the experience of love, the hope of finding it, the promise of escaping to a better life with the one he loves, the chance of making right the wrongs in life in one transformative moment of romantic heroism and daring.

The album *Born to Run* marks the high point of the first phase of Springsteen’s career, which is primarily concerned with a largely affirmative and extraverted expression of instinctual power. Especially in his titanic romantic epics such as “Thunder Road” and “Born to Run,” his characters are seeking to satisfy their Dionysian longings out in the world, with a certain girl, in a certain town, at the right moment. They struggle and risk everything to gratify their desires and to break free into a new fulfilling life.²³

23. Much of Springsteen’s music also reflects a square alignment in his natal chart between the Sun and Uranus, which is associated with themes such as liberating heroism, identification with the role of outsider, the impulse to break free, new beginnings, and awakening to a bright new reality. I will discuss this complex in the second part of this paper to be published in the next issue of *Archai*.

This theme is perhaps most apparent on the song “Born to Run” itself:

Will you walk with me out on the wire,
 ‘Cause baby I’m just a scared and lonely rider
 But I gotta find out how it feels
 I want to know if love is wild
 Girl I want to know if love is real.

A powerful craving for an especially deep or wild experience of romantic love is typical of the Venus-Pluto complex. The intensity of this feeling of love is such that it is able to bear all things, for it is a love supported by the limitless power of nature (relating to Pluto), a power that obviously exceeds the personal capacity of any one individual. This desire is often directed towards one particular person, *the* one true love, a theme explored by Springsteen in many of his songs throughout his career, such as “Rosalita” on *Wild*, “She’s the One” on *Born to Run*, and later in “Candy’s Room” and “Prove It All Night” on *Darkness*. Paradoxically, however, this complex is often profoundly impersonal, as if the particular person that is the object of one’s affections doesn’t really matter. What counts is that one’s deepest desires are stirred, that the experience of love is passionate, intense, transformative.

As we know from depth psychology, during the early adult years, prior to the differentiation of the rational ego from the drives of the instinctual unconscious during the course of individuation, people often unwittingly identify with the flow of desires and power drives surging through them, and they attempt to live out and satisfy these urges in the world. Without the critical discernment essential for dealing with the unconscious, one is likely to claim as one’s own the emotional power, instinctual charge, and titanic energy associated with the archetypal Pluto. At this stage of psychological development, there is a sincere belief that the power and intensity of one’s feelings will be sufficient in themselves to carry one away from the mundane reality of the everyday world, and Springsteen vividly conveys this throughout the album *Born to Run*.

Springsteen ends “Jungleland,” and with it *Born to Run*, with a prophetic indication of where his creative process is heading, suggested by the fate of the central character: “In the tunnels up town, the Rat’s own dream guns him down as shots echo down them hallways in the night.” Here again Springsteen expresses the combination of the archetypal meaning of Pluto and Mars. Tunnels are a subterranean place of darkness where the underground character “the Rat” (all relating to Pluto) is “gunned down” (Mars). The Plutonic force of nature, in other words, is driving Springsteen towards a confrontation with his inner darkness and a psychological death.

Phase 2 (1978–1984)

Darkness on the Edge of Town (1978); *Nebraska* (1980); *The River* (1982); *Born in the U.S.A* (1984); *Tunnel of Love* (1987)

The release of his fourth album, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, in 1978, marks the beginning of a second phase in Springsteen’s recording career in which he addresses the individual’s experience of the prolonged frustration of the impulses, drives, and instincts associated with Pluto. *Darkness* is an album of defiance in the face of adversity, and resilience in the face of a bleak, stark reality that just does not respond to the power of feeling Springsteen’s characters experience. Instead, they have to face up to the dawning realization that, as for everyone naively driven by Plutonic power, strength of will and intensity of desire are in themselves not enough to make good the “Badlands” (to use a Springsteen song title) in which his characters live.



Springsteen circa 1978 on the album cover of Darkness on the Edge of Town

More than any of his other albums, *Darkness* explores the confrontation between individual will, courage, strength, and toughness (associated with Mars), and the overwhelming power of repressed libido (the titanic force associated with Pluto). It is the experience of romantic love (Venus) that is, once again, the primary carrier of this conflict.

In “Badlands,” the opening track of *Darkness*, Springsteen expresses the intensity of his desire in a world in which he is not able to find satisfaction and fulfillment of his deepest urges. He leaves us in no doubt as to how he feels:

But there’s one thing I know for sure girl
 I don’t give a damn for the same old played out scenes
 I don’t give a damn for just the in between
 Honey, I want the heart, I want the soul
 I want control right now

The repeated use of “I,” “I want,” and “me” make it clear who is the intended beneficiary of the Plutonic power, reflecting the insistent demands of an ego that tries to appropriate this power for its own personal ends. At the same time, the Mars energy gives a feeling of urgency to the Plutonic impulse to radically change and to take decisive control of one’s life.

Once again reflecting the compulsion associated with Pluto, Springsteen’s characters are obsessively driven by a hungry, insatiable desirousness that they are powerless to resist. As Springsteen puts it in “Prove It All Night:”

Everybody’s got a hunger, a hunger they can’t resist
There’s so much that you want, you deserve much more than this

Pluto is like a bottomless pit in that it represents an inexhaustible source of life power—the energy of nature—as experienced through our own desires and drives. We can in fact never satiate or fully consume this energy, although it can easily consume us. This is Pluto as the *uroboros*; it is nature perpetually and blindly devouring itself.

Springsteen continues the same theme throughout the entire album. As he approaches his Saturn return in 1978, although he still believes in “The Promised Land” (representing the fulfillment of desire), the irreconcilable conflict between desire and hard reality causes the frustration and damming up of libido, building a formidable reservoir of energy that accumulates in the unconscious.²⁴ Inevitably this is the cause of much anger and resentment. Springsteen protests:

I’ve done my best to live the right way
I get up every morning and go to work each day
But your eyes go blind and your blood runs cold
Sometimes I feel so weak I just want to explode
Explode and tear this whole town apart
Take a knife and cut this pain from my heart²⁵

On the album *Darkness*, the serpent power of Pluto now reappears “on a rattlesnake speedway in the Utah desert,”²⁶ but here its presence symbolizes not worldly potency, as it once did, but the transformative potential of repressed desire, of an internalized serpent power that, like the creature itself, makes “your blood run cold.”²⁷ Furthermore, the weapon (Mars), formerly empowered by the instincts (Pluto) and directed out into the world, is here turned back on

24. Writing about the album *The River*, Puterbaugh observes that Springsteen “delves into the emotional currents that run beneath the surface, summoning forth an emotional flood of thwarted dreams and busted desires.” (“Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, xxxiii). This description could also be applied to some of Springsteen’s other albums, especially *Darkness on the Edge of Town*.

25. “The Promised Land” on *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (New York: Columbia Records, 1978).

26. “The Promised Land” on *Darkness*.

27. “The Promised Land” on *Darkness*.

the character himself to “cut the pain” from his “heart.” The explosion of instinctual power is no longer joyful and ecstatic, but is an explosion of outright rage—a theme often in evidence with the Mars-Pluto complex.

Towards the end of the album in “Factory” and “Streets of Fire,” Springsteen’s characters are beyond the point of caring with “death in their eyes.”²⁸ The harsh reality of life and the limitations of material existence frustrate the life urges associated with Pluto, and, as Springsteen observes, this “eat[s] at your insides.”²⁹ The life dynamic, starved of outer expression, turns inward and becomes a destructive, venomous force. The following passage from “Streets of Fire” suggests that Springsteen’s character is now encountering the purgatorial fires of transformation:³⁰

When the night’s quiet and you don’t care anymore
And your eyes are tired and there’s someone at your door
And you realize you wanna let go
And the weak lies and the cold walls you embrace
Eat at your insides and leave you face to face with
Streets of fire

In *Darkness*, Springsteen’s characters, having settled into the conventional patterns of everyday working life, discover it is not enough to simply “live the right way.”³¹ Hard work, strength of will, and good intention are insufficient to deal with the life challenges and deep transformative processes associated with the Pluto archetype. Pluto represents an impersonal force that is impervious to conventional standards of human morality and personal sensitivity.³² It symbolizes both a subhuman and a transpersonal power that seeks conscious assimilation and its own transformation in the light of human self-reflective consciousness.

The “streets of fire” are leading Springsteen towards a descent into hell, where the fire of his own repressed desire nature will be the agent of his own transformation and purification. However, Springsteen remains faithful to the Mars-Pluto archetypal complex by ending the album on a note of defiance, even within the “Darkness on the Edge of Town.” Having lost his money and his wife, the song’s beleaguered hero declares,

Them things don’t seem to matter much to me now
Tonight, I’ll be on that hill ‘cause I can’t stop
I’ll be on that hill with everything I got

28. “Factory” on *Darkness*.

29. “Streets of Fire” on *Darkness*.

30. This is an example of what Stanislav Grof has called *pyrocatharsis*, a kind of purgatorial cleansing and refinement of one’s character. Grof defines pyrocatharsis as “purgatorial fire.” See *Psychology of the Future*, 48.

31. “The Promised Land” on *Darkness*.

32. See, for example, Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality* (Santa Fe, NM: Aurora Press, 1936), 237.

Lives on the line where dreams are found and lost
 I'll be there on time and I'll pay the cost
 For wanting things that can only be found
 In the darkness on the edge of town

It is the demonic force associated with Pluto, empowering the Mars qualities of will, might, and courage, that gives a superhuman strength in the face of overwhelming, insurmountable adversity. Defiance is a compulsion that can't be resisted.

Throughout *Darkness* Springsteen's characters make it clear that they are willing to do whatever it takes (to “pay the price”) to bring about the life they so desperately want.³³ This desperation, which is inherent in the experience of the Pluto archetype, can lead people under this influence to sacrifice their personal integrity by pursuing morally questionable means of achieving their desired ends. The ferocity and all-consuming nature of the experiences associated with Pluto can corrupt, such that this principle often functions as an autonomous complex that unconsciously dominates the conscious ego, usurping one's rational judgment and overpowering one's normal, more civilized human feelings. This is clearly evident in “Meeting Across the River” on *Born to Run* in which the central character does a last-chance gangster-like “hit” to earn money for his beloved. Some years later, under the increasing pressure of the prolonged frustration of the drive for pleasure and happiness, some of Springsteen's characters in both *Darkness* and *Nebraska* are irresistibly drawn to the sinister path, to the darker side of human nature. They are seduced by the energy present in their own darkness and consequently suffer a loss of their innocence. In “Prove It All Night” on *Darkness*, Springsteen presents what seems to be a variation of the myth of Persephone in which the young innocent girl (Venus) is captured by the powers of darkness and taken to the underworld (Pluto).

Baby, tie your hair back in a long white bow
 Meet me in the fields out behind the dynamo,
 You hear their voices telling you not to go,
 They made their choices and they'll never know
 What it means to steal, to cheat, to lie,
 What it's like to live and die

The “long white bow” suggests innocence and Springsteen's beckoning plea is like the Devil or Hades whispering a seductive call to submit to the darkness. Psychologically it is the call of our own repressed life energy, associated with Pluto, here represented by the dynamo. For Springsteen, to follow this call is to experience a fullness of being and life intensity (associated with Pluto) that is lacking in the structured routines and prohibitive moral order of everyday life in modern society. In this song, to bring into play the repressed dynamism associated with

33. “Darkness on the Edge of Town,” on *Darkness*.

Pluto requires a moral transgression to a life of lying, stealing, and cheating. The archetypal Pluto can compel a person to use any means necessary to give expression to this energy, and this is perhaps especially true for those with challenging Mars-Pluto natal aspects when the instinctual power of Pluto is closely tied to action and the impulse to go after what one wants.

By “Atlantic City” on the album *Nebraska* (1981), the central character, with “debts that no honest man can pay,” does succumb to the darkness and turns to underhanded means in one last desperate gamble to escape to a more fulfilling life. “Well I’m tired of comin’ out on the losin’ end,” he explains, “so honey last night I met this guy and I’m gonna do a little favor for him.” Although this character’s “luck may have died” and “love may be cold,” his unwavering devotion, a quality often found with Venus-Pluto aspects, will not let him give up on his relationship.

A dynamic natal aspect between Venus and Pluto often suggests that it is the experience of romantic love and close personal relationships that will lead the individual down into their depths, to confront the darker side of the psyche. This can obviously put an immense strain on relationships. As Liz Greene has pointed out, Venus-Pluto aspects often indicate that individuals must forsake their cherished romantic ideals and face their own shadow side through relationship.³⁴ Springsteen conveys this loss of romantic idealism in “Stolen Car,” a song that first appears on *The River* and was later re-released in a different version on *Tracks*. He laments,

I found me a little girl and I settled down
 In a pretty little house and a pretty little town
 We got married and promised never to part
 Then little by little we drifted from each other’s hearts

The impersonal power of Pluto is at odds with the “pretty” and “little” concerns of personal human lives and it is a great challenge for the individual with a major Venus-Pluto aspect to find a way to integrate the two. Often with Venus-Pluto complexes, one’s desire for happiness is inextricably entwined with a fateful calling or vocation, with a tumultuous power struggle, or, as we have seen, with an encounter with the dark side of the psyche.

In “Stolen Car,” the decay of his marriage takes the character into the darkness of despair:

I’m driving a stolen car through a pitch black night
 And I keep telling myself everything’s gonna be alright

34. Greene explains: “With Venus-Pluto you are simply not allowed to live with others in a superficial way. You can meet someone when you’re quite young . . . and you both fall in love and want to get married and settle down. Then you buy a nice house in a nice suburb and have 2.3 children and two cars and theoretically you should both live happily ever after.” However, she continues, “those things will be shattered at some point so that you can get a glimpse of the enormously complex inner world that underlies all that nice collectively acceptable domesticity.” See *The Outer Planets and their Cycles: The Astrology of the Collective* (Sebastopol, CA: CRCS, 1983), 37.

But I ride by night and I travel in fear that no matter what I do or where I ride
Nobody ever sees me when I drive by

And, at a later point in the song, he expresses the fear that, “in this darkness I might just disappear.”

Sometimes a Venus-Pluto aspect manifests as a possessive or a symbiotic form of relationship of such intensity it consumes both individuals. Springsteen recognizes this in “Loose Ends,” also on *Tracks*:

We met out on open streets when we had no place to go.
I remember how my heart beat when you said I love you so
Then little by little we choked out all the life that our love could hold
Oh no . . .
It’s like we held a noose and baby without check
We pulled until it grew tighter around our necks

Again, there is something in the nature of the Pluto archetype that is obsessive, devouring, all-consuming, such that it can possess, totally dominate, and even destroy one’s life. With Venus-Pluto hard aspects one can often observe this pattern in romantic relationships, until such a time as the deeper roots of the Pluto power-complex can be brought to conscious awareness and worked through.

In “Streets of Fire,” the main character, with a sense of resignation, comes to the realization that “I’m dying, but girl I can’t go back,” recognizing that a death experience is inevitable and irreversible. A psychological death is required because a life without a connection to the instinctual power of the unconscious ground (Pluto) becomes shallow, empty, and desolate. Springsteen captures the sense of this:

I live now, only with strangers
I talk to only strangers
I walk with angels that have no place
Streets of fire

By *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984), Springsteen’s characters are hypnotically drawn to the past, looking back to happier times when they were more in touch with the instinctual basis of life. In “Glory Days,” “No Surrender,” “Bobby Jean,” and “I’m Goin’ Down,” Springsteen conveys this romantic longing for the past, which seems preferable to facing the purgatorial fires of transformation. In “Downbound Train,” the main character, desperate to reverse the seemingly unstoppable descent he is faced with, is haunted by the memory of what he once had and of the night his “girl” left him. In one last attempt to reclaim the love he has now lost he reports, “I ran through the wood . . . I ran till I thought my chest would explode.” Driven by this desperate compulsion, he continues,

I rushed through the yard, I burst through the front door
 My head pounding hard, up the stairs I climbed
 The room was dark, our bed was empty . . .
 And I dropped to my knees, hung my head and cried

A reluctance or inability to let go of the sense of control and a vain, desperate struggle to hang on to life pleasures, romantic relationships, and personal power is often a prominent theme in the lives of individuals with major Venus-Mars-Pluto aspects. In “Downbound Train,” the desperate clinging to the past results in total exhaustion and defeat. The impersonal nature of the Pluto principle is such that to accommodate ourselves to it we have give up our rigid hold on our personal worlds and open ourselves to the greater power of life, a power ordinarily concealed from conscious awareness. Under the archetypal influence of Pluto, it is often the case that one must undergo a “descent into the underworld” to reconnect with lost energy and buried potentials, and, through this encounter, experience transformation and rebirth into a deeper mode of existence.³⁵

To resist or deny the descent by looking back to an earlier stage of life, when the instinctual energies associated with Pluto were more vital and unimpeded, has dangerous, life-inhibiting consequences for the continuing development of the personality. Springsteen’s characters find themselves at a life juncture when they must decide whether they will stagnate and “just sit around talking about the old times,” nostalgically longing for past “glory days,” or whether they will become “rider[s] on a downbound train” and courageously assent to the transformative journey into the Plutonic realm of the underworld.³⁶

Periodically, the fire of old desire resurfaces into consciousness, but this is now simultaneously the torturing fire of transformation. In “I’m on Fire,” Springsteen draws upon the theme of knives and stabbing, associated with Mars-Pluto, to convey his own passion and suffering:

Sometimes it’s like someone took a knife baby edgy and dull
 and cut a six-inch valley through the middle of my soul
 At night I wake up with the sheets soaking wet
 and a freight train running through the middle of my head

35. According to Stephen Arroyo, the essential meaning of Venus-Pluto alignments is “to transform one’s entire approach to love and relationship” as the “understanding of what constitutes ‘pleasure’ and ‘happiness’ becomes refined . . . through the fires of emotional torment.” *Astrology, Karma, and Transformation: The Inner Dimensions of the Birth Chart* (Sebastopol, CA: CRCS, 1978), 139.

36. Quoted lyrics from “Glory Days” and “Downbound Train” on *Born in the USA* (New York: Columbia Records, 1984). Overall, as Parke Puterbaugh has noted, on *Born in the USA* Springsteen’s characters “exuded a winning, grin-and-bear-it kind of flavor.” The album, he continues, “celebrated the indomitable American spirit of perseverance and rolling with the punches.” See Puterbaugh, “Introduction” to *Bruce Springsteen: The Rolling Stone Files*, xl). Although these qualities reflect several of the other planetary configurations in Springsteen’s chart, they also convey something of the Mars-Pluto complex in its association with a relentlessly driven quality and the immense reserves of energy and courage required to persist with one’s life direction whatever blows of fate might come one’s way.

Only you can cool my desire
I'm on fire

The second phase of Springsteen's recording career, as I see it, culminates in this descent into the fire. By the release of *Tunnel of Love* in 1987, Springsteen's main character in the title track has traveled “down into the tunnel of love.”³⁷ He has made the Plutonic descent through the Venusian experience of romantic love to face his shadow darkness. In this “tunnel of love,” he encounters “a room of shadows that gets so dark” and he is forced to confront “all that stuff we're so scared of.”

In “Two Faces,” on *Tunnel of Love*, Springsteen recognizes his psychological division and bemoans the power of the “other man” (the shadow) within him to affect and possibly destroy his relationship. He notes that his “other face” does “things I don't understand, makes me feel like half a man.” Again, reflecting the dynamic aspect between Venus and Pluto in Springsteen's natal chart, it is his love relationship that is most threatened by the shadow, as in the final verse of the song:

Last night as I kissed you 'neath the willow tree
He swore he'd take your love away from me
He said our life was just a lie

Eventually, though, the process reaches a decisive turning point, which comes on “Valentine's Day,” the last track on the album:

They say if you die in your dreams you really die in your bed
But honey last night I dreamed my eyes rolled straight back into my head
and God's light came shinin' on through
I woke up in the darkness scared and breathin' and born anew

This death-rebirth experience makes possible a new beginning; it marks the start of the ascent back from the Plutonic underworld, as Springsteen embarks on a third distinguishable phase of his career, which is where we must leave our commentary.

Summary—An Evolutionary Trajectory

As I have attempted to show in this paper, an analysis of the changing content of Springsteen's music in terms of the psychodynamics of the archetypal Pluto can enable us to better understand the evolutionary significance of this archetype in human experience. Through the stories told in Springsteen's songs, through his characters' dreams and struggles

37. Again, the tunnel relates to Pluto and love to Venus.

at different points in time, one can, I believe, discern an underlying developmental trajectory often apparent in the lives of people who deeply engage the dimension of experience associated with Pluto. This trajectory, in summary, seems to be defined by several stages: (1) an unconscious instinctual empowerment of the ego, when the drives associated with Pluto compel the emerging individual ego to assert itself in the world, to conquer and plunder, and to exert its power and try to satisfy its instinctually driven cravings; (2) a frustration of instinct by the Saturnian context of human life (the pressures of material existence, the “hard facts” of one’s reality, the inherent limitations of life, the slow pace of change, responsibilities and duties to others, and so forth) with a simultaneous intensification of the unfulfilled drives and desires associated with Pluto; (3) an increasing schism between the ego, attuned to an outer objective reality, and the instincts, hell bent on gratification—a schism that, if too extreme, can lead to the experience of alienation or estrangement from the instinctual basis of life and with it a loss of vitality, zest, and life power; (4) a “descent into the underworld” in order for the ego to recover lost power and potentials; (5) an ensuing death-rebirth struggle through which the ego and the instincts are both transformed; (6) and finally an “ascent,” resurrection, and a commitment to the process of working towards a new, more conscious, less compulsive mode of expression of the Pluto archetype.³⁸ One can undoubtedly see something of this process expressed in Springsteen’s creative journey, tacitly shaping the content of his song lyrics from album to album.³⁹

38. In Freudian psychology, this situation is depicted as the conflict between the ego, superego, and id. While the ceaseless conflict between instinctual frustration and instinctual gratification often continues unabated throughout the lifespan, for certain people, however, for reasons not well understood (but probably relating to the extremity of the struggle between the ego and the instincts, and to the individual’s “level of consciousness”), the conflict works towards some form of resolution through deep psychological transformation. As Jung has described, a transformation of both the ego and the instincts is intrinsic to the individuation process. This proceeds via a dialectical process between the ego and the unconscious and a circumambulation around a transitional center that Jung calls the Self. The dialectic, according to Jungian theorist Edward Edinger, moves between states of alienation (when the ego pole is dominant) and inflation or possession (when the unconscious is dominant). See Edward Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 1992) and C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 2nd ed., 1966, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1990).

39. The relationship of archetypal astrology to the evolution of culture and consciousness will be addressed more explicitly in future issues of *Archai*.

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Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey (1973)—**Greetings**

The Wild, The Innocent, & The E-Street Shuffle (1973)—**Wild**

Born to Run (1975)

Darkness on the Edge of Town (1978)—**Darkness**

The River (1980)

Nebraska (1982)

Born in the U.S.A. (1984)

Bruce Springsteen & the E-Street Band Live/1975–1985 (1986)

Tracks (1998)

Bruce Springsteen, Columbia Records

Tunnel of Love (1987)

The Ghost of Tom Joad (1995)