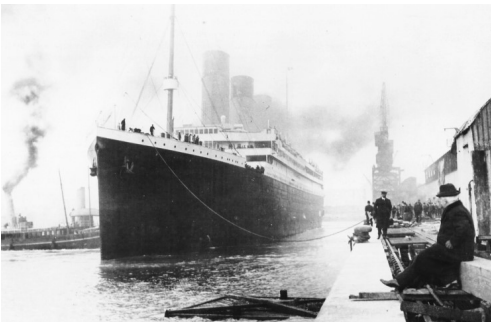


Titanic: A Modern Myth

By

Mari Garcia

On the 14th April 1912, at 11:40 pm, the then-largest and most luxurious ship the world had ever known struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sank. This year, 2012 the world has marked the hundred year anniversary of the world's worst maritime disaster. The story of the *Titanic* and its sinking has given rise to many myths and stories over time, fuelled by the shock and horror of the disaster which resulted in the loss of 1500 lives, nearly three quarters of the 2200 passengers and crew that sailed on her.



Since then, the *Titanic* has passed from the world of legend into myth, a post-modern myth for the new age of which she was such a potent symbol. But what do we make of the astrology of the disaster? The temptation with any such event, especially something as significant or momentous as this is to examine the chart of the moment of impact. Whilst this has its merits, the problem is that it does not tell the whole story. If we want to examine the whole story of the *Titanic*, its symbolism, significance and fate then we must go back to a chart that exemplifies a moment of 'birth' or initiation.

With something like this, what we are doing is looking at an event through a *retrospective* lens and we are applying the same astrological principles in a *retroactive* manner. That is, we will be judging something that has already happened and which had its beginnings sometime in the past. As a matter of fact, the basis of our judgement will be made using the traditional techniques as used in electional astrology. Originally known as *Katarchai* – from the Greek, meaning inceptions – electional astrology gives us an insight in to the quality of the moment. Usually employed to select an auspicious moment for an enterprise, we will be doing the reverse and judging a moment and its consequences.

Where did the wheels of fate start to turn for this ship? Some might suggest the start of construction, others may say the design but if we want to identify the moment in which the ship took its rightful place, then we must examine the chart of the beginning of the voyage, her maiden voyage when the *Titanic* set sail from the dock at Southampton bound for New York. The *Titanic* sailed at 12pm on the 10th April 1912¹ and the chart is set for Southampton, England. I have used Whole Signs in order to gain a clearer picture.

The Maiden Voyage

The first consideration is to look at the Ascendant and the chart has 8 degrees of Leo rising and the ruler of the Ascendant is the Sun in Aries, exalted, conjunct the MC in the 9th and also conjunct the North Node. At first glance, this describes a very auspicious and glorious moment with the exalted Sun high in the chart and conjuncting the MC. Exalted planets are considered to be in good condition and their expression suggests that there is the expectation of 'only the best will do'. This is reflected in the advertising that accompanied the *Titanic's* maiden voyage for she was billed as "the biggest, most beautiful ship the world had ever seen", "the largest moving object ever created by humans", "the Ship of Dreams", "the Queen of the Ocean", and above all, she was advertised as "unsinkable."² The square to Neptune heightens the sense of illusion and romance which accompanied the image.

¹ Time sourced from Encyclopaedia Titanica at http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/list_timeline.php [17/12/2012]

² History on the Net at <http://historyonthenet.com/Titanic/unsinkable.htm> [18/12/2012]

The Sun as ruler of the Ascendant is strengthened in Aries however the square from Neptune and its conjunction to the North Node implies that there are factors which are not obvious and which may

affect the seeming strength of the Sun. If we look to the dispositor of the Aries Sun, we find Mars in Cancer in Fall in the 12th house, underlining that there is something hidden that undermines the Sun. Hence, the voyage starts with much panoply and show as per the Leo Ascendant, and the ship was loaded with the best crockery, cutlery and napery and her features, from the fabled main staircase and elegant drawing rooms, gymnasium and artworks were hailed by all and sundry. The *Titanic* generated a lot of attention as her physical proportions and appointments were lauded and admired.

In electional astrology, especially in the Hellenistic tradition, the placement of the Moon indicates the beginning of the endeavour, and the placement of the lord of the Moon indicates the outcome. The Moon in

the chart is in Capricorn, in the sign of its detriment and in the cadent 6th, suggesting that the start of the endeavour has some serious problems. Looking at the dispositor of the Moon, we find Saturn in Taurus, accidentally dignified in the 10th however it is also in an applying sextile to Neptune, suggesting that flaws may influence the outcome of the event. Additionally, the Moon is also in the last degree of Capricorn, in the terms of Mars, which is in Cancer, in Fall in the 12th house. The Moon is also Void of Course, emphasising a difficult or inauspicious end to the voyage.

Selecting a house that reflects the matter under consideration, we go to the 9th as this is about a voyage and Aries is on the 9th and we find the exalted Sun, the North Node and the Mercury there underscoring the high profile of the voyage. The ruler of the 9th however, is again the Mars in Fall in Cancer in the 12th. Another testimony that what is being considered is headed for a 'fall' or may cause sorrow, difficulty or confinement.

If we wanted to add more specifics to the judgement of the voyage, we turn to Dorotheus of Sidon, who tells us in the *Carmen Astrologicum* to:

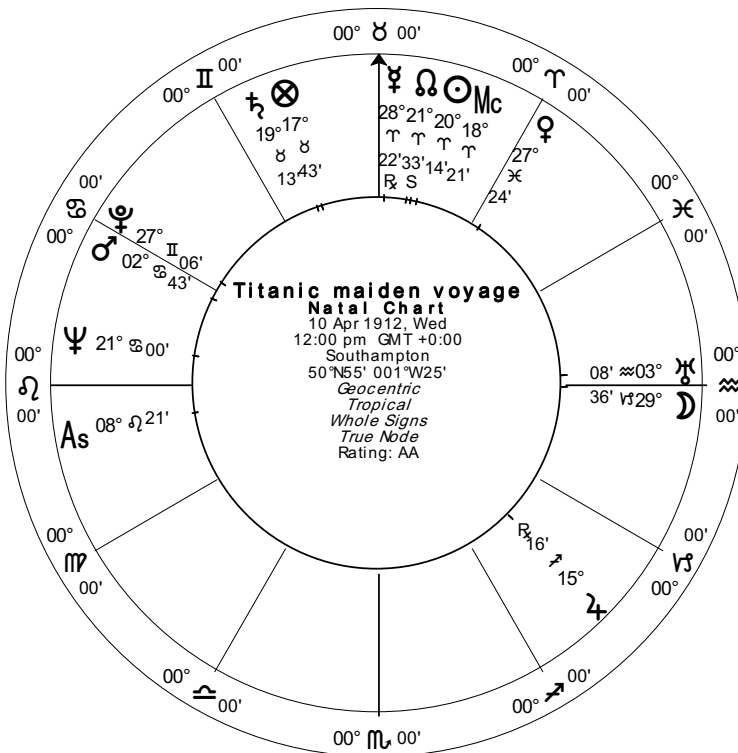
“... look for the traveler from the Ascendant, and [for] the land which he desires from the seventh, and for the action and for the necessity which he seeks in that journey from the house of government [the tenth], and for the outcome of that matter from the house of the fathers [the fourth].”³

The Passengers

Taking this one at a time, we look to the Ascendant for the traveller and here we see Leo and the ruler, the Sun exalted in Aries conjunct the MC aptly describing the majority of the passengers who considered themselves to be fortunate to be travelling in such a magnificent vessel. Passenger Margaret Devaney said, “I took passage on the Titanic for I thought it would be a safe steamship and I had heard it could not sink.” Another passenger, Thomson Beattie, wrote home “We are changing ships and coming home in a new unsinkable boat.”⁴

³ Dorotheus of Sidon *Carmen Astrologicum*. trans D Pinnigree. Ascella Publications, 1993. Book V, Chapter 21.

⁴ History on the Net <http://historyonthenet.com/Titanic/unsinkable.htm> [18/4/12]



The travellers on the *Titanic* were confident and proud to be on the vessel and her luxurious appointments also attracted some of the wealthiest people including the millionaires John Jacob Astor and Benjamin Guggenheim, aristocrat Sir Cosmo and Lady Duff Gordon, the latter a notable dress designer whose clientele included Isadora Duncan, Oscar Wilde and the British royal family. Also among the first class passengers was the ‘unsinkable’ Molly Brown whose husband had struck it rich mining for silver and Isador Straus, a partner in Macey's department store in New York. As a group they personified the wealth, power and pride of the passengers as reflected in the Leo Ascendant.

The Destination

Dorotheus then tells us to look at the seventh to determine the nature of the destination. The seventh sign is Aquarius ruled by Saturn in Taurus in the 10th and one could say that the land to which they are journeying was the ‘New World’. Uranus in the 7th and conjunct the Descendant also adds to the statement suggesting that the destination is exciting, unpredictable and may be chaotic.

The Purpose of the Journey

To determine the purpose of the journey, Dorotheus tells us to look at the 10th sign to discover what is being sought on the journey. We find Taurus on the cusp of the 10th and its ruler Venus exalted in Pisces in the 8th suggesting that material stability, security and also pleasure were what passengers were seeking. From the historical data available, it seems that people went on the *Titanic* for three different reasons. One, many of the wealthy people travelled for fun or just wanted to go and relax on the most expensive and luxurious trip available. Two, those in second class came to see a different land or to get away from the place they were living in. Three, there were those who wanted to start a new life, better prospects and the security of employment and opportunity for advancement. Venus also squares Pluto adding to the wealth angle and it also trines Neptune adding an element of fantasy, romance, dreams and idealism.

The Outcome of the Voyage

The last consideration Dorotheus points us to is the 4th in order to determine the outcome of the voyage. Here we have Scorpio and its ruler Mars is in Cancer, in Fall in the 12th. This is not very good indicator of the outcome of a voyage. Indeed, Dorotheus may well have counselled against the journey given the sinister overtones of the lord of the 4th being in such poor condition by dignity and also being in the house of sorrow and confinement.

An added point is that Mars in this diurnal chart is the ‘out-of-sect’ malefic and its condition and placement suggest that it presages danger which is hidden as it is in the 12th house, is destructive and causes a ‘fall’ as it is in the sign of its Fall in Cancer and being out of sect, will cause danger through cutting or severing. The *Titanic* sunk as we know, because an iceberg, which was ‘unseen’ and ‘hidden’ by the heavy fog, literally sliced through the water-tight compartments of the hull.

Looking at the chart, we look to the Moon’s phase and we see that it is a waning Moon, again not conducive to a journey as there is a lessening of the light. The Moon’s next aspect after changing sign (the Moon is Void of Course) is the conjunction to Uranus highlighting once again the instability that is inherent in the voyage. More importantly, the Moon is in the 6th and as Dorotheus tells us:

*“If the Moon is in the sixth place or the 12th from the Ascendant, then it indicates that misfortune and pain and misery will happen... on this journey.”*⁵

Finally, in Chapter 25 of *Carmen Astrologicum*, Dorotheus tells us:

*“If the Moon is in Capricorn....it indicates that some fear....will reach the people of the ship.”*⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, Chapter 25.

In summary, the chart for the commencement of the voyage has shown the difficulties that underpinned what seemed, on the surface to be a good chart for a journey with its Leo Ascendant and its ruler in exaltation, conjunct the MC. It describes a voyage that on the surface exudes success and power but has a number of factors which destabilise and undermine it.

The Disaster

To look further at the story, we need to consider the chart of the actual moment of impact. The chart seen here is set for 14th April 1912, at 11:40 pm⁷ and the coordinates given are those which were broadcast in the *Titanic's* mayday signal.⁸

The importance of this chart is not so much a description of what happened but what it says about the disaster itself and why it has become so ingrained in the modern psyche. As I said before, the *Titanic* has now passed from legend to myth and has come to embody many things not least, the seeming failure of science to conquer the elements and humanity's frailty against rampant nature.

This is best summarised in a quote from an article written for the journal, *Engineering* in the issue of 19th April 1912:

*"The Titanic was the product of the fullest experience, alike in design and construction, of one of the premier ship-owning companies and one of the most scientific and practical shipbuilding organizations in the world. She embodied all that judgment and knowledge could devise to make her immune from all disaster. Yet on her first voyage Nature, whose sovereign power seemed, through her, to be challenged by man, has triumphed with a sudden, unexpected, and forceful stroke, which, by reason of its appalling magnitude, might be regarded as a demoniacal diversion for the humiliation of a Titan of man's creation."*⁹

The chart has Sagittarius rising and Jupiter is in Sagittarius, in rulership and retrograde in the 1st describing the 'titanic' proportions of the event. It has been described as the greatest peacetime maritime disaster by one source and another has equated the impact of the disaster with the 9/11 attack on the

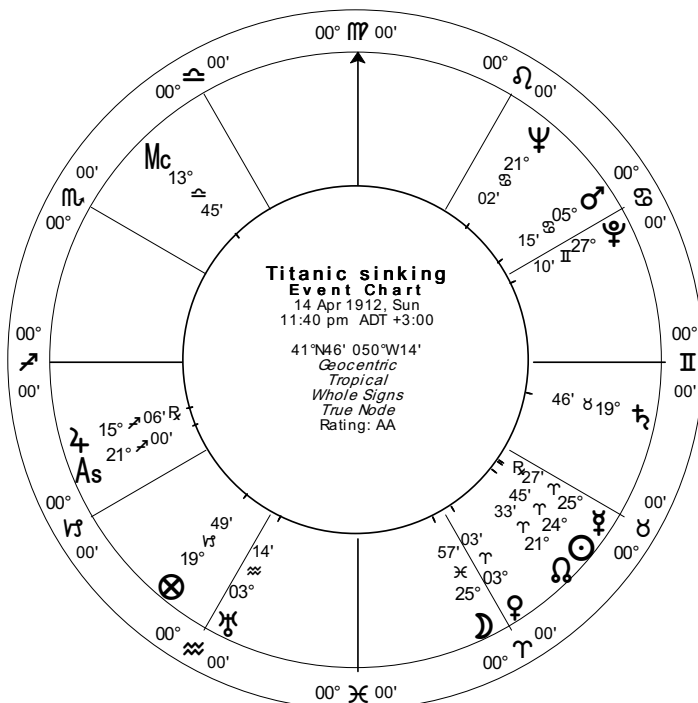
World Trade Centre. There was horror and disbelief at the enormity of the disaster and shock at the loss of life on such a grand scale.

This is also supported by the Moon, which represents public opinion in a mundane chart. The Moon is in Pisces in a square to Pluto, adding intense emotion and a sense of crises. Additionally, the Moon also squares the Ascendant and receives a trine from Neptune, reinforcing the impact of the event on the collective. Again, if we consider that the Moon describes the beginning of the action and its dispositor the outcome, the square to Pluto and trine to Neptune can be said to describe the volatility and crisis as well as what some survivors described as a surreal experience.

Lawrence Beesley, a survivor in one of the lifeboats described what he and others heard from those in the water:

"every possible emotion of human fear, despair, agony, fierce resentment and blind anger mingled – I am certain of those – with

*notes of infinite surprise, as though each one were saying, 'How is it possible that this awful thing is happening to me? That I should be caught in this death trap?'"*¹⁰



⁷ At the time of the collision, *Titanic's* clocks were set to 2 hours 2 minutes ahead of Eastern Time Zone (UTC-05:00) and 2 hours 58 minutes behind Greenwich Mean Time. In other words, her time was close to UTC-3 (only 2 minutes ahead).

⁸ Titanic-titanic http://www.titanic-titanic.com/titanic_wreck_location.shtml [18/4/12]

⁹ ENGINEERING, Friday, April 19, 1912, p. 531 sourced at Titanic times <http://www.copperas.com/titanic/index.html> [18/4/12]

¹⁰ Barratt, Nick (2010). *Lost Voices From the Titanic: The Definitive Oral History*. London: Random House. Pp 199-200

Another interesting point, is that the Aries Sun, ruler of the Ascendant in the Maiden Voyage chart is now conjunct the IC, buried in the chart and perhaps describing how the *Titanic* is remembered in most pictorial depictions as sinking into the deep. The *Titanic* wreck lies 12,000 feet (3,700 m) below the surface, and it was not until 1985, with the assistance of sophisticated equipment, that the wreck was even found.



Jupiter is also the Moon's dispositor in this chart and it is in rulership and retrograde conjunct the Ascendant, again emphasising the magnitude of the outcome of the event. Also, the Moon rules the 8th, the house of death where we find the Mars in Cancer in Fall and the Neptune. The number of the dead was not only enormous but it took a long time to verify who had survived and who had perished as there were a number of crew and passengers who, for a number of reasons, failed to embark at Southampton, Cherbourg or Queenstown, the three ports she called into before setting sail across the Atlantic.

If we then look at the sign on the 4th to determine the outcome of this disaster, we see Pisces on the 4th and we are back to Jupiter, retrograde in Sagittarius on the Ascendant. The sinking of the *Titanic* resulted in an inquiry whose recommendations included major changes in maritime regulations. The new regulations outlined new safety measures, such as ensuring that more lifeboats were provided, that lifeboat drills were properly carried out and that wireless equipment on passenger ships were staffed around the clock. An International Ice Patrol was set up to monitor the presence of icebergs in the North Atlantic, and maritime safety regulations were harmonised internationally through the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea; both measures are still in force today.¹¹

The *Titanic* Story and the Collective

Over time the story of the *Titanic* has assumed legendary proportions with a number of films made purporting to tell the 'real' story. The earliest of these appeared in 1912, the same year of the disaster and of course, the most recent is the film of the same name which was released in 1996 and recently re-released in high definition, to commemorate the centenary. It is interesting to note that this film, produced by James Cameron, was released on the Uranus return of the disaster, falling within three degrees of the Sinking chart.

I have taken some liberties and made some assumptions about the chart for the film's premiere release in 1997. By moving the time to 7:49 pm or thereabouts we have a repetition of the Ascendant of the Maiden Voyage chart, at 8 Leo as well as replicating the placement of Uranus on the Descendant. My reasoning was that this sort of synchronicity is exactly what happens when an event or person gets caught up in the collective experience. The signatures carry through as the story becomes part of the collective memory and as such is retold in the collective culture. The chart for the film's official premiere then 'echoes' the chart of the *Titanic* Sinking as well as the Maiden Voyage. The most salient features of their synastry are:

- Sun of the Film Chart conjunct the Ascendant of the Sinking Chart – the film is the lens through which we see the disaster.
- Pluto of the Sinking Chart opposing the Sun of the Film Chart – the horror and devastation inflicted is immortalised in the film.
- Saturn and MC of the Film Chart conjunct the IC of the Sinking Chart – the film brings to light what has been buried. If we recall, the opening scenes of the film is actual footage of the wreck of the *Titanic* lying on the ocean floor.
- Ascendant of the Film Chart conjunct the Neptune of the Sinking Chart – the illusion and dreams as well as the confusion and uncertainty of the disaster are captured by the film.

¹¹ Eaton, John P.; Haas, Charles A. (1994). *Titanic: Triumph and Tragedy*. Wellingborough, UK: Patrick Stephens. P 310

- Repetition of the Uranus on the Descendant for the Maiden Voyage and Film chart – the film captures the voyage and the people replicating the mores and mannerisms of the time. One could say that the film has become a time capsule of the Edwardian era.
- Uranus return and Neptune opposition – both these cycles of the Maiden Voyage and Sinking Chart simply strengthen the notion of recurrence and repetition of a story and a memory.

What then does all this tell us? Firstly, events have echoes through time and the greater the impact of the event the 'louder' its echo so it should not surprise any astrologer that the three charts echo each other over a hundred year period.

Secondly, judging an event in a retrospective way is about telling the story rather than simply pointing out certain features. Also, by looking at an event as an unfolding story, we can let the astrology describe the nature of the event and its impact on the collective.

Thirdly, the unfolding of planetary cycles continue the re-telling of the story in the collective through the agencies of individuals who themselves are connected to the event. This third point is one that is of particular interest. Out of curiosity, I ran the charts of Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, the stars of the film to see what sort of synastry there might be between the actors and the story of the event they were re-enacting.

Leonardo DiCaprio's¹² Moon at 15 Libra is conjunct the IC of the Maiden Voyage Chart and the MC Sinking Chart respectively and opposes the Saturn of the Film's Chart. Although already established as an actor, his role in the film

catapulted him to international acclaim and transformed DiCaprio into a commercial movie superstar. It is said that he was reluctant to take on the role but it was only at the insistence of James Cameron that he agreed.

Kate Winslet's¹³ Sun and Moon are at 11 and 13 Libra also conjunct the IC of the Maiden Voyage Chart and the MC of the Sinking Chart respectively and like DiCaprio, opposes the Saturn of the Film's Chart. Winslet campaigned heavily for the role, sending Cameron messages and emails which resulted in an invitation to screen test for the part. Cameron was still reluctant and Winslet continued her lobbying, sending Cameron a single rose with a card signed "From Your Rose" and lobbied him by phone. "You don't understand!" she pleaded one day when she reached him by mobile phone, "I am Rose! I don't know why you're even seeing anyone else!" Her persistence, as well as her talent, eventually convinced him to cast her in the role.¹⁴

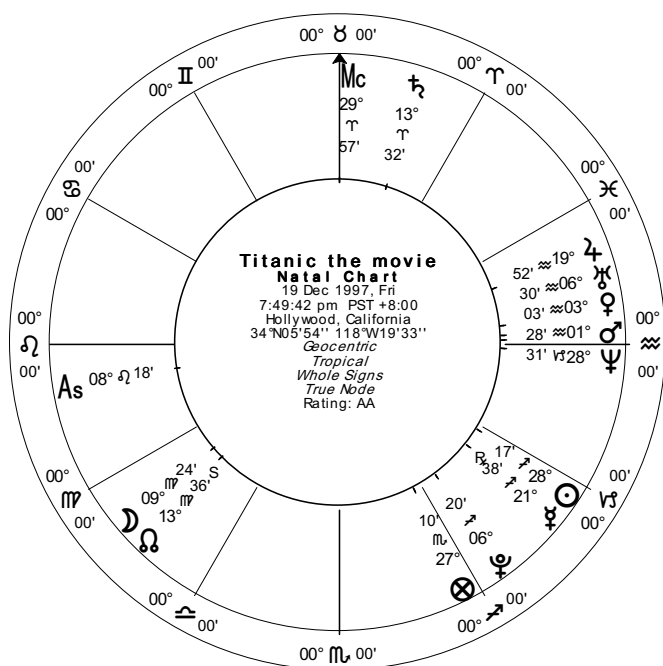
James Cameron¹⁵, the director and producer of the *Titanic* film has his Mars at 27 Sagittarius which conjuncts the Ascendant of the Sinking Chart, opposes the Pluto of the maiden Voyage Chart and conjuncts the Sun of the Film Chart. It was his drive and energy that brought the story to life. Although there is no published birth time for Cameron, his Sun-Pluto conjunction at 23-24 Leo trines the Sun-Node of the Maiden Voyage and Sinking Charts and sits in the first of the Film Chart. Not surprising as he researched and wrote the script, produced, directed and edited the film. The arduous journey of *Titanic* began in the late 1980's when, after seeing Robert Ballard's 1987 *National*

¹² Leonardo DiCaprio, 2:47am, 11th November 1974, Los Angeles, CA, USA

¹³ Kate Winslet, 7:15am, 5th Oct 1975, Reading, UK.

¹⁴ As reported in 'Titanic' Man overboard! After a production as lavish and pricey as the doomed ship itself, James Cameron finally unveils his epic film — but will it be unsinkable? *Entertainment Weekly* 7th November 1997. <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,290182,00.html> [18/4/2012]

¹⁵ James Cameron, 16th August 1954, Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada, no birth time.



Geographic documentary about the discovery of the wreck, Cameron jotted down these ideas: “Do story with bookends of present-day [wreckage] scene ... intercut with memory of a survivor ... needs a mystery or driving plot element.”¹⁶ The rest, as they say, is history.

What this article has set out to demonstrate is that events in the world have a way of imprinting themselves on collective memory and some events capture the collective imagination, going from historical to legendary to mythical. The story of *Titanic* is one of those that has become as large, if not larger than the subject of the story. It has been used time and again as an allegory of hubris – the notion that the gods strike down those who set themselves as ‘godlike’. The story has also been used as a marker in history, with some commentators suggesting that the disaster presaged the carnage of World War I while others describe it as the beginning of the end of an era -- the Edwardian era and the certainties of class and privilege.

On a more pragmatic level, the disaster led to the realisation that there was an international responsibility for maritime safety which led to an overhaul of regulations and the setting of international standards.

In whatever way we wish to look at it, the magnitude of the *Titanic*’s fate and its results continue to be part of the collective memory. Much like the impact the ship made on her voyage and in her destruction, what we have seen is that the story continues to unfold and take with it ordinary mortals to mythical heights of immortality.

Mari Garcia

19th April 2012

Copyright Mari Garcia 2012. *Mari Garcia is a consulting astrologer who has been involved with astrology since 1990. She has lectured widely both in Australia and the USA and has published articles in Australia and overseas and writes for several local and national publications. She runs a consulting practice in Adelaide and is co-principal of **ASTRO MUNDI**, which offers a four year course in astrology, a Traditional Astrology course as well as special interest workshops and Master Classes. Mari can be contacted on 08 8563 9182 or check out the website at **www.astromundi.com**. Keep abreast of developments at Astro Mundi on Facebook.*

¹⁶ Ibid.