



Neptune, Mars, Venus and the Flagging Relationship, or a bit of reassurance when a man isn't playing away but has gone off his game.

Step one is don't panic. Men who have lost their desire for sex are far more numerous than folklore suggests. Unless I have a freakish tendency to attract confessions from every hurt, frightened, confused, angry and frustrated woman in the country the problem is not only fairly common but on the increase. If you are another such woman, or if you are the man, relax, you can be sure there plenty of other people out there secretly worried that if their relationship is not actually dead a surgeon may be required to revive it. A number are also lying awake at night trying to figure out which one of them is actually abnormal. Both of these groups are likely to be composed principally of the ladies. The men may be hiding in the shed or out with the guys to evade the woman scorned. When they are at home they are usually in front of some form of screen. In any case they are often doing the nearest thing possible to sleeping round the clock without getting caught.

A man playing away needs to do all those things required by the other woman. If you are suspicious ask yourself how much chance there is he will get to the gym? If the answer is hysterical laughing (and he is not well off by local standards), there is a reduced likelihood he is exhausted from, or saving himself for, a supermodel. Unless he has a copy of Double Agents for Dummies in the loo cistern, an expanding gut, ratty sweatpants and estrangement from the barber, combined with a tendency to drink more and do less than normal implies that he assumes his woman will tolerate very low standards, which means she is you. Fear not, you get to keep Mr Sweatpants.

So what *is* wrong with him? Part of the answer may be a combination of real-life difficulties coinciding with an active Neptune. Few astrologers would argue with the suggestion that a percentage of people having a Neptune, Venus or Neptune, Mars transit might have an affair. Most would probably expect those natives' natal charts to show a predisposition to philandering, which includes combinations of Mars, Neptune or Venus, Neptune. However when a number of natal charts of both men and women who did have an affair were examined it was found that they were more likely to contain Sun, Neptune aspects than Neptune with Venus or Mars.¹ These results shifted my understanding about why affairs happen and I am less inclined now to assume they occur more often during Venus, Neptune or Mars, Neptune transits. Unfortunately few people offer up the actual dates and times of clandestine weekends for analysis. Some alternative evidence is provided by a small number of charts I have belonging to men who simply lost interest in sex. Taken together with the aforementioned test, the implications are that Neptune, Mars combinations may be more likely to result in a lack of

drive than an illicit fling. Case histories reveal the disinterest appears to be part of a collection of symptoms in a man who feels paralysed by the unknown and impotent to change his future. Several additional stories, where there was no access to the chart, have offered support for the idea that a man who goes cold is often in fear for his job or has some other serious problem at work, he feels stuck, directionless, discouraged, depressed, helpless, hopeless or simply bone tired from the effort to survive. Sleeping and drinking more are also Neptunian but unless severe these things will be less significant to most woman than a man with a regular headache.

Society tells us that men are in a constant state of adolescent heat, anything else is just not manly. All women know every other women wraps up in three layers of ancient, grey, grandma cardigans as a hint that an early night means she could do with some actual sleep. And also that it does not work. Within two or three years of cohabitation most couples develop their personal version of the code to deal with the usual inequity of desire for sex. "Put my nighty down when you are finished". "Just borrow my body." "I promise I won't be long". A woman who has gone several months without needing the code starts to wonder why she is no longer interesting. Eventually she can become deeply insulted or deeply insecure.

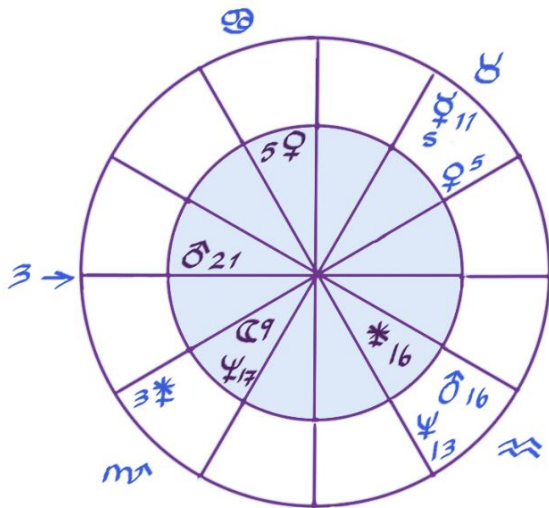
When a couple have bound their lives together their transits cross into each other's experiences, hearts and minds. They can do no other. She may have her own parallel Neptune action, whether it is his or hers she may misunderstand the cause of his change and become confused about what she has done differently. His Neptune, Mars lack of libido may become her hidden anger, seeping out in odd places as she snipes at him for something unrelated.

Available evidence suggests that the women themselves may be experiencing Neptune, Venus rather than Neptune, Mars. From her perspective her entire relationship is threatened because she is not woman enough. Society has instructed her that her survival depends above all else upon being attractive to and keeping a man, *at the same time as it has taught her that most men will jump anything*. Both things together cannot logically be true but they have taken root. The result in the lonely woman may be fear or rage singly, together or alternately. Neptune will mix the two and add bewilderment. Her confidence fails, imagination takes over, he is having an affair or he will soon leave her anyway, she is fat and unloved and unlike all other women. It should not be happening and it is impossible to tell anyone. It is too degrading.

If she is tough enough, old enough or knows him well enough and tries to talk to him sensibly his own Neptune transit makes it very much harder than normal to articulate his difficulty. Whether that means his sexual chill or his fears and sense of rejection or injustice at work. If his feelings about the concrete are impossible to grasp any then attendant issues about where Life and the Universe are all going and Why are so disorientating they can induce serious fear in him. Yet in the middle of a good Neptune it can become impossible even to label fear by its name. Patience is required, this is not about men being unable or unwilling to talk, this is a time when stuff will not go into words. Occasionally the use of symbolic images can help to build a bridge of understanding between two lost people but it may be made of smoke and built on quicksand.

Sometimes life is less dramatic. One man with Neptune squaring his natal Mars became uncharacteristically listless. His woman understood the cause and was glad of the sleep.

Case 1 Inner wheel natal, outer transits



Another woman complained of constant tiredness and no sex life because her partner was getting up at 4.30 a.m. to get to work. She was missing the fun but knew it was not an indication of anything deep and scary between them. Her transits the day I was informed are interesting. In defence of privacy only a partial chart is included. On the day in question Mars had just separated from Neptune, the two had been within orb for several days. Since abnormal effort is now required from anyone with ambitions to buy a bag of lentils, the conjunction is likely to have manifested in similar levels of exhaustion in more than this particular household. That something in the air is poised is shown by

Mercury at station, (in her 8th, opposite her natal Moon – as she decided to confide in a woman about her sex life) and the fact that Neptune was also at its stationary minute and would turn retrograde during the day. Note that transiting Neptune is in the house that was traditionally linked with sex before the moderns moved it to the 8th. It has been my observation that in general the 5th tends to relate to sex for child bearing and fun, while the 8th tends to sing when there is some difficulty. Both are involved here, there is difficulty because the fun has gone.

What helps indicate this woman's reaction is transiting Mars close conjunct natal Juno in the 5th. Juno is a woman cheated, most typically within or by her relationship. She is smarting because she wants the sex and is currently being denied something that is generally expected in a relationship. Natal Juno in Aquarius is ruled by Saturn, in the 6th. His job is the problem. Saturn in turn is ruled by the Piscean version of Jupiter, which may be a general tendency to excess work because of an inability to form clear boundaries. The chart is hers but it has manifested through her partner. Neptune, Mars here simply means she and her man are tired.

Her irritation is increased by a double whammy, transiting Juno applies to her natal Moon in the 2nd. (Juno and Venus are also opposed in the heavens, which makes relationship issues something of a general trend). Note that she is experiencing Neptune square Neptune. (Amongst other possibilities in her life) It may be time to face the wider issue of a work, life balance. Transiting Venus, in her 8th, sextiles natal Venus, in the 10th. Sex / shared money and career are paired again. The transit is soft, Venus is not threatened by Neptune (or anything else problematic) at this point. She is unhappy but does not blame her partner, feel her relationship is undermined or feel personally threatened as a woman.

Case 2. The first real cheque I had for a reading was from a woman in the middle of this breed of crisis. I mention it because I know the date. It is unlikely ever to be possible to pinpoint the beginning of a prolonged sexual cool down but since we are looking at Neptune that is to be expected and does not matter, Neptune takes his time and does not leave milestones. By the reading I already knew that there had been unquantifiable but growing problems for nearly two years. In this case the woman was the one with the strong Neptune transit. Both of the pair had transiting Saturn very strong, his experience seems primarily to be one of overwork and insecurity because his business partner had left suddenly. So the underlying cause of the cool off in him seems to be very similar to many of the men with the Neptune, Mars transits. Saturn always demands extra work, Neptune, Mars can make whatever is the existing load seem

overwhelming, which does not mean the load is always an illusion. Where Saturn is involved in the mix it is not.

In addition, in this particular case, the relationship may have been less ideal than it had appeared at the wedding. She has natal Venus exalted in Pisces in a very close, applying trine to Neptune. They married when Neptune had moved from her MC and was within 2° of an applying conjunction with the Ascendant, it was therefore also applying to sextile Venus. Both the natal and transiting positions suggest the possibility of romantic idealism in general or at least illusions about the partner that may not last. Perhaps more ominously, based on the birth time given, which ought to be reasonably accurate, transiting Neptune was trine her Part of Marriage, two arc minutes from exact. Even allowing for a few minutes of inaccuracy in the birth time this gives another transit close enough to compound the Neptune, Venus symbolism!

The major Neptune issue in him was not planetary but was significant, Neptune was within 5° of squaring his Ascendant, Descendant at the ceremony. For him the marriage would always be tied to the point where his foundations began to shift. Few people understand this kind of thing on a rational level. There is only a shadowy awareness that the world is not secure and something quite urgent but unknowable needs doing. Compounding the difficulty is that for this man it seemed to begin when he got married. The transit would close in over the first few years, undermining his perception of himself and his wife. It would probably befuddle and eventually change his view of relationships in general. At least some misunderstanding, especially between a new couple, was just about guaranteed along the way.

Things began to change almost immediately, he did not completely freeze up but became less keen, less often and she experienced him as increasingly emotionally detached and reluctant to engage with her with true warmth and intimacy. Unfortunately at the same time she lost a close family member and medication made her gain weight. She attributed his lack of interest to the difficulty of living with both her severe grief and giant bum. The astrology gave her a different view, she was reassured to know neither he nor their relationship was that shallow and that it would have happened anyway. Further, that it might be possible to clarify at least the problems associated with Saturn and try and address them together.

Case 3 involved a woman whose natal chart had several strong similarities to Case 2 above. Unfortunately I cannot publish either or give many life details of Case 3. Annoying as that is I mention this case because, given all the available information, I think that these two women are not especially inclined to attract men who seem to go off them but that their make-up inclined them to MIND very much when it happened. Eventually they minded enough to tell somebody, other types do not. Cases 2 and 3 occurred twenty years apart, in women of different ages and nationalities. The two have the same Ascendant and Moon sign. Neptune is at the MC in both. Venus is exalted in one, in rulership and active in the other, Neptune aspects Venus in both. Venus aspects the Ascendant, Descendant in both, she is a strong component of their personality and self-image. These are major aspects with, in most cases, an orb of much less than 5°. Juno is archetypal in both, which usually means a woman who is prepared or required either to give a lot to, or lose a lot for, their mate. Therefore when things go wrong they are apt to feel it keenly.

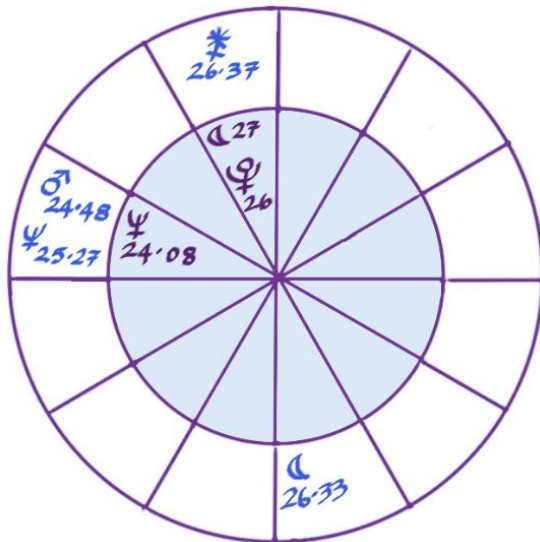
Both these women had a prior relationship with the kind of man the average person would not normally meet. Both men moved in fairly rarefied circles because of different jobs in the same industry, which can be linked with Venus, Neptune. In each case he arrived on their doorstep like a gift from the gods. Nature and experience led these woman to expect partnership to be a bit special. At the same time both needed a sense of security from them in order to be able to go out and do the rest of life. There are women of a cooler and more practical nature who can survive a long time if the bills are paid and the rubbish taken out. Some know when it is

probably a passing phase, some are delighted not to need tactics to avoid amorous advances at midnight. I do not say that either group is right or wrong, merely that I am getting strong hints that there are far more exhausted and depressed men out there than there are women complaining loudly.

Case 4 May be another woman who minded a lot but for different reasons. She did not have Neptune linked to either Venus or Mars natively or by transit when her partner went cool. My judgement, based on her natal chart, life history and the not insignificant fact that transiting Pluto was applying to a conjunction with her Ascendant, Venus, Mars at the time, was that she had unconsciously learnt that being female and attractive was armour against a violent father. He beat her brothers but not her. When her partner did not want her she was threatened at a core level. If she was unfeminine she was in deep trouble.

Her partner was someone else suffering through his Neptune square Neptune transit. Neptune was also due to trine his Mars but the exact aspect was about 20 months away, so I checked the progressions. The date used is a snapshot within a difficult timeframe.

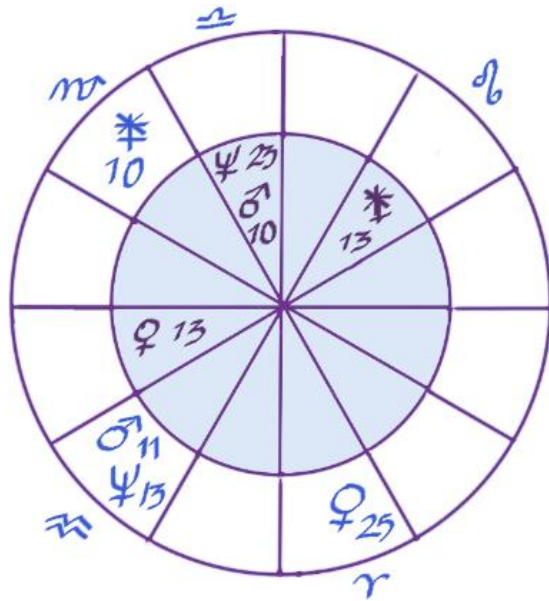
Case 4 Him. Inner natal, outer progressed



It can be seen that progressed Mars made its exact conjunction with natal Neptune approximately one year before the reading, while progressed Mars would hit progressed Neptune about a year ahead. I am not convinced it is possible to separate the difference between progressions to natal planets and progressions to progressions in real life, however Mars sandwiched one minute off the exact midpoint between natal Neptune and progressed Neptune feels like the issue is certainly not over yet. (The addition of the progressed Moon and Juno relative to each other and also to his natal Moon, Pluto conjunction gives some idea of the depth of feelings invoked and unleashed in this

man's woman). It is possible to wait Neptune transits out but, given the progressions, some very fundamental practical or philosophic change may be needed to ease the load on a person, so that they go forward with enough will and energy for a sex life or any other life.

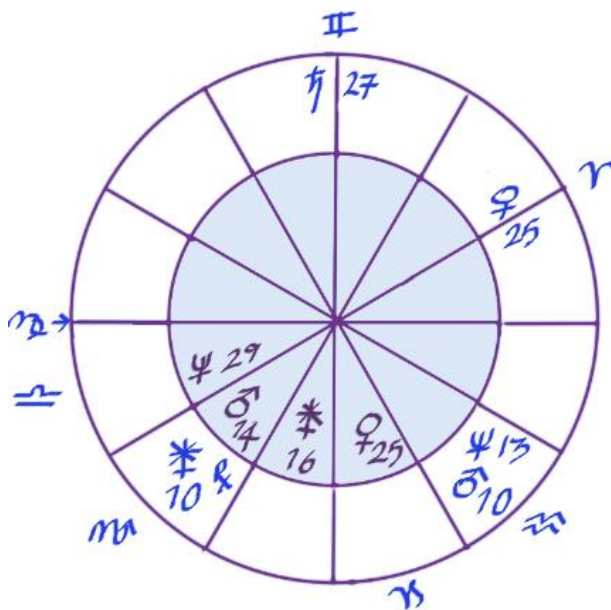
Case 5 was more quickly resolved, a very welcome bit of magic was effected by the following Saturday night. This one arrived a few days before Case 1, as certain proof other households had noticed the Mars, Neptune conjunction in Aquarius. The date is reconstructed from diary entries, it could be a day out. Nevertheless the famine had been ongoing, the chart is evidence that we have arrived close to some crisis point in the plot. The Neptune, Mars conjunction is less than two days from exact. They trine natal Mars of the complainant, the universal lassitude has exacerbated what was already a personal issue, since Neptune had quenched Mars for this woman some time ago. In her case there is now a brief window of more Mars than Neptune. More significantly the conjunction opposes her natal Juno. This woman was not merely irritated to be missing out as was Case 1, she was angry and insulted. Juno "cheated" by her man will rage like no other.



Case 5 Her. Inner natal, outer transits

Venus in both Case 1 and Case 5 is in Aries but in Case 1 Juno squares natal Juno in Aquarius (work put into the partnership) while Venus forms a close sextile with natal Venus, in Gemini, this is a period of basic relationship harmony for a woman who tends not boil easily. (Mars in Virgo, Juno in Aquarius, Venus in Taurus with other natal factors). In contrast, in Case 5, transiting Mars / Neptune oppose Juno, (in Leo), stir up natal Mars (in detriment in Libra) by trine. At the same time Venus (in detriment) is travelling through a sign squared to her own and Juno is running at her scorching best in Scorpio. A Venus, Venus square

by transit, compared with the sextile in case 1, adds a little more to the current struggle and the natal Juno in Leo means anger is invoked by damaged pride.



Case 5 Him. Inner natal, outer transits

The picture for the man in question was equally telling! The prevailing Neptune, Mars conjunction occurred in his fifth house, as well as it applied to square his Mars. Yes he had been less than stimulating company for some time. Just in case he had missed the point, life conspired to make transiting Juno square transiting Mars, which meant Juno was separating retrograde from a conjunction with his natal Mars. He had been subjected to considerable earache because of his languor, although things had gone a little quieter of late. His woman was probably brooding and would be back. His chart shows a very

strong work ethic and a belief that a husband must provide, which tends to overpower everything else. On the day I became involved his chart showed transiting Saturn sat a few seconds from his MC, which put it trine his Neptune for added pressure.

All this woman needed was reassurance that these things were far more common than people think and that it was far more likely to be due to his difficulty at work than any other cause. Followed by the suggestion that a woman looking for love will do better if she does not start a row at bedtime. She relaxed, she realised that his work situation was very heavy and she gave him space. Three days (and four days) later she was an extremely happy woman. The impression given was that something a bit special had occurred (twice), which might well be described as the best that a Mars, Neptune conjunction can offer.

A man with Mars, Neptune has often decided he has lost or is about to lose some kind of fight. He feels worn down and probably inadequate, he is afraid or depressed. He is simply not likely to be up to a woman who tackles him full on with more Mars, whether that means “pressure” for sex or anger at its absence. He has been taught Real Men always make the sexual overtures, taking the initiative can be another form of emasculation at this point. This is a time when even Mr Butch might respond better to something softer and more romantic. If that sounds ridiculous a good long rest and some reassurance that his woman is there for him and still loves him, despite his current trouble or his own perceived weakness might be called for. When Mars is in short supply it is as well to save it up and use it very judiciously.

¹ See; My article *Neptune in the Charts of Cheats*.