

For the AA Journal: Snapshots column

Starting at Zero: Setting the Scene for Neptune in Pisces

It's been my experience that when an outer planet moves through the final few degrees of a sign, we let go of (or 'say goodbye' to) certain aspects, ideas and even iconic figures that have been at the very heart of that ingress. For example, the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Theresa occurred when Neptune was at 27° Capricorn in August–September 1997. Both passings impacted the world: some people were part of a wave of grief (Neptune) while others exhibited head-shaking incredulity (Neptune) at the extreme set of emotions their deaths provoked in others. At the time of their deaths, neither figure had been enjoying the Neptunian fog of blind admiration she once had, although both had embodied Neptune in many ways – the fairytale media princess reaching out in Angola and the nun devoted to ministering the poor and sick in India. (TR Uranus was conjunct Diana's Jupiter in Aquarius in much of 1997 and at the exact time of her death – with progressed Jupiter Rising through Paris. This fits in well with the symbolism of her work to publicise landmines, is mirrored in her need to 'blow the lid' on aspects of the Royal Family, and reflected in her sudden, violent death in a foreign country before she could do so.)

Some ten years on, I was intrigued to read about the deaths of two high profile 'queens' in August 2007, a time when Saturn was leaving the sign of Leo. New York high society socialite Brooke Astor died on the 13th (Saturn at 27° Leo) and Leona Helmsley, the imperious New York 'hotelier from hell', passed away exactly a week later (Saturn at 28° Leo). Both donated millions to their city: Astor was a noted philanthropist who said, 'Money is like manure; it should be spread around', while Helmsley, on the other hand, was branded the 'Queen of Mean' who apparently said, 'Only the little people pay taxes.'

Outer planets spend much time creeping towards the end of the sign, but in highlighting the key 'letting go' period before the ingress, I would consider the time a planet has remaining in the sign before the ingress, and if the planet has already traversed to the end of that sign. For example, Neptune had reached 29°57' in April 1997 and, at the time of Diana and Theresa's deaths that autumn, it was retrograde but only five months away from its first entry into Aquarius. In the example of the New York doyennes, Saturn moved into Virgo on 2 September 2007, just a few weeks after the deaths of Astor and Helmsley.

But what of the first degree of a sign? The recent entry of Neptune into Pisces has surprised and taught me how significant it is when it comes to deaths and endings, too. But whereas the final few degrees are the 'last stand' (the end of an era), endings occurring while the planet has *just entered the new sign* seem to be harbingers of events to come and signposts of the mood of the new transit. Deaths or events when outer planets are at 0° set the scene for the years ahead.

As Sue Tompkins pointed out in her profile of Derrick Bird (*The Astrological Journal*, Jan/Feb 2011), Bird's killing spree occurred just days after Uranus moved into Aries. It could be said that, on one level, Bird acted out our own collective frustration with the helplessness and apathy of Uranus's seven years in Pisces, and took a very obvious, very violent course of action to express himself (Uranus in

Aries). Certainly the messages of **Uranus in Aries** (e.g. civil unrest and fighting collectively for individual rights and freedom) are being felt and heard in the news: from the thuggery and civil disobedience in London, the sudden violence in Norway, revolution in Egypt and collected protests in Wall Street... to violence linked to youth (Aries), such as the shooting of three kindergarteners by a gun brought to school by a six year old, and the very publicized and shocking spectacles of two leaders killed by shots to the face or head: Osama Bin Laden and Muammar Gaddafi. Note the gung-ho and self-righteous/self-congratulatory Aries energy in the horoscope of Bin Laden's murder back in May 2011.

In April 2011, France became the first European country to ban the niqab and burqa with Neptune at 0° Pisces (suggesting an increasingly uneasy alliance between country and religion as Neptune travels through Pisces for the next fourteen years). But perhaps more apt was that this happened when Uranus (which represents freedom of speech as well as censorship and bans) was at 0° Aries (a sign that rules the face, and a sign concerned with *firsts*). On 1 May, China (infamous for its censorship of political ideology on the internet) outlawed smoking in public places (I've often seen transits or directions involving Mars/Aries and Uranus – *extinguishing the flame* – when people give up 'lighting up'), and on 1 July 2011, books by sci-fi writer and Scientology founder L Ron Hubbard were banned in Russia as 'extremist' (Uranus). Bans 'in the name of freedom' seem to be the order of Uranus in Aries!

Other planetary activity

Before considering Neptune's brief entry into Pisces last spring–summer, I think it is important not to forget that during this time:

Pluto was in Capricorn square Uranus in Aries

Saturn was in Libra

Jupiter was moving through the latter half of Aries and reached the end of the first decan of Taurus

Saturn in Libra appears to be reflected in the equal rights of legalizing civil partnerships/gay marriage in some American states, as well as the announcement (26 April) that the first Gay Pride rally in Moscow would take place. During this Saturn trip through Libra, the Presbyterian Church have approved people in same sex relationships to be ordained, and the Church of Scotland announced on 23 May 2011 that it will allow gays to become ministers. The lesson of Saturn in Libra must surely be to learn diplomacy, negotiation and compromise – and this seems to be reflected in the number of coalitions set up around the time of its entry in late 2009 and once again in mid-2010. It's arrival (and station) at 29° Libra (late January to early March 2012) will be the true test of such coalitions.

Neptune in Pisces

Neptune in Pisces will not only bring Piscean themes to the fore (from issues of religious devotion and gurus... to 'telepathic' forms of everyday communication... to changes in drug laws and an array of new addictions), it will also have a direct link to Virgo areas of life (from the disappearance of a retirement age... to diseases, viruses, plagues... to the scandal/uncertainty/evaporation of charities, pensions and health care provisions).

First off, here's some data from Neil F. Michelsen and Rique Pottenger's *American Ephemeris for the 21st Century* (ACS Publications, 2010):

4 April 2011, 13:52 GMT	Neptune enters Pisces
3 June 2011, 07:29 GMT	Neptune goes retrograde at 0°55' Pisces
5 August 2011, 02:55 GMT	Neptune retrogrades back into Aquarius
3 February 2012, 19:04 GMT	Neptune enters Pisces
30 March 2025, 12:01 GMT	Neptune enters Aries
22 October 2025, 09:49 GMT	Neptune retrogrades back into Pisces
26 January 2026, 17:38 GMT	Neptune enters Aries

So, what happened in the four months (4 April to 5 August 2011) that Neptune travelled through Pisces last year? And how does this act as a omen for the years to come, starting February 2012?

I went online and looked up the news on *Wikipedia* for each one of those days, and here are some of the highlights, particularly those at the very start of the ingress. Bearing in mind that the other outer planets will 'create' their own 'headlines' in the news, I have attempted to stay with those that have a strong Neptunian feel. (Interestingly during this four month period, Neptune completed its first full barycentric orbit since its discovery – a cycle different from the exact discovery degree.)

The promises of politicians

4 April Neptunean US President (of Hope) Barack Obama announces he will fight another Election just hours after the ingress.

4 April Controversial former musician, Michel 'Sweet Micky' Martelly, wins the Haitian Presidential Election; he is known for his use of profanity and homophobic slurs on stage.

4 April As part of the British government's package of welfare reforms, the 1.5 million claiming incapacity benefit (Neptune) will now be required to attend work capability assessments (Virgo–Pisces polarity).

4 April A boat carrying asylum seekers and migrants (Neptune) from Libya to Italy sets off today. Two days later it capsizes and more than two hundred people drown. *During Neptune in Pisces, will we see more migrations of 'nomadic' communities without a fixed abode?*

4 August The UK Government launches a new e-petition website to encourage the public to prompt Parliamentary debate (Uranus in Aries, too).

Hacking, invasions and injunctions, oh my!

I used to wonder whether the age of Neptune in Pisces would bring greater awareness of psychic phenomena and planet-visiting aliens, but it appears that we are experiencing invasions and abductions of a very different kind – most notably, the invasion of privacy. (Viruses – computer and otherwise – also fall under this umbrella.) Cyberwarfare – politically motivated hacking, espionage and sabotage – is the new global world war of the 21st Century.

Is nothing sacred? Invasions of privacy and privacy laws appear to be key issues with Neptune in Pisces. With *Twitter* postings, computer hackings and the super-injunctions scandal, we are becoming aware that no one can stop leaks or get away with cover-ups for long. There's an obsession with exposing high-ranking subterfuge

(Uranus in Aries square Pluto in Capricorn) and the emergence of Julian Assange's *WikiLeaks* online (Neptune) has guaranteed an instant, global awareness of the mere whiff of scandal (Neptune). The Law appears to be powerless in stopping such infiltrations and leaks – and consensus suggests this is a 'good thing' with large corporations and public figures (News International, philandering footballers) but a 'bad thing' on a personal level (Milly Dowler and other victims of crime). Some of the biggest battles of Neptune in Pisces will involve the processing of information (mutable), and we are already aware that major power lies in the collection, sale and distribution of personal data (the Mercury-ruled sign Virgo).

6 April Silvio Berlusconi, beleaguered and scandal-soaked Prime Minister of Italy, stands trial (yet again). This time, the charge is for having sex with an underage prostitute. *This period appears pivotal for Berlusconi and it 'feels' like the bitter end of a sleaze-ridden premiership.*

8 April News International announces it will admit liability in some of the breach of privacy cases being brought in relation to phone hacking by *The News of The World*.

Employees of the tabloid had been accused of engaging in police bribery and hacking into the phones of celebrities, politicians and royalty. But discoveries were made in April proving that the phones of murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, relatives of deceased soldiers, and victims of the 7/7 London bombings were also hacked. Ironically on 7 July itself – following a public outcry, various resignations and concern over publisher Rupert Murdoch's stranglehold over the media in the UK – *The News of the World* was closed (the final edition is printed on 10 July, ending 168 years of publication). Murdoch has a very fishy chart, with Sun–Mercury in Pisces and Neptune elevated on the MC – he is *everywhere* and has infiltrated most areas of media. Neptune's move into Pisces appears to have signalled a change in his fortunes – for the time being. (In spring 2011, by Solar Arc, Mercury had just squared his Neptune and, if his birth time is accurate, TR Neptune was squaring Solar Arc MC at 0° Sagittarius.)

21 April US Congressman Ed Markey sends Steve Jobs a letter asking him to explain the purpose of a file embedded on iPhones and iPads that keeps a detailed log of the device's location. Some governments announce intentions to investigate any violation of privacy laws.

25 April *WikiLeaks* (founded on 4 October 2006 with Jupiter in Scorpio square Neptune in Aquarius) releases classified cables detailing the interrogations and victimization of the elderly and mentally ill (Neptune) carried out by the US in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. The people were later released without charge.

26 April Sony's PlayStation Network remains offline after a worldwide security breach obtains 77 million of users' personal information, making this the largest breach of personal information in history. (On 3 August, McAfee uncovers one of the largest series of cyber attacks against the IOC, the United Nations, the Indian government and major businesses.)

9 May Super-injunctions are big news due to anonymous writers on *Twitter* deciding to 'name and shame' a list of celebrities who had issued gagging orders (most, in fact, were not 'super-injunctions'). 'Super-injunctions' ensure that facts/allegations not allowed by law to be reported – and the injunction itself is said not to legally exist (Neptune).

- 9 May American billionaire Louis Bacon wins a judgment in the UK against *Wikipedia*, *The Denver Post* and *WordPress*, allowing him to obtain information on the identities of those who have allegedly defamed him.
- 29 April Prince William and Catherine Middleton marry, starting perhaps another fairytale worthy of Neptune (certainly a stellium in Aries, including Jupiter, suggests the start of a new generation of British royals).
- 10 May Max Mosley loses his European Court of Human Rights bid to force newspapers to warn people before exposing aspects of their private lives.
- 4 July Hackers break into Fox News' *Twitter* account on Independence Day to post a story that Obama has been killed.

Deaths of Neptunian Figures

When deaths occur at the beginning of a planet's sojourn through a sign, what is this telling us? Consider the deaths of three significant Neptune people while Neptune was at 0° Pisces – Osama Bin Laden, Amy Winehouse and Sai Baba. Bin Laden's death could signal the start of a search for another guru or saviour for those who believe in his cause (Neptune/Pisces). And while martyred Amy Winehouse – the first music industry victim of the Neptune in Pisces era – may have joined the 'Club of 27', her passing may be the first of a new wave of drug-related deaths in the years to come. Or her predictable but pointless passing could actually signal a change in perception (or in the Law) of drugs and act as a wake-up call to the current Neptune in Capricorn generation intent on having it all (Capricorn) but throwing it away (Neptune).

Sai Baba

In an article in *The Daily Telegraph* (5 August 2011), the subheading ran: 'The death of an Indian guru who built up a worldwide following of up to 50 million people has triggered an unholy scramble for control of his £5.5 billion empire. This, of course, begs the question: how does a man of God in poverty-stricken India accumulate that sort of fortune? And, in the age of Neptune in Pisces, who will India seek out now their beloved guru has left the earthly plane some years earlier than he predicted?'

With his trademark saffron robes and afro hair, Sathya Sai Baba (who died on 24 April 2011) stood at 5ft 2" but was truly a towering, influential Neptunian guru to millions of followers (and critics, too). Like most Neptunian figures there are numerous believers and detractors. Sai Baba's devotees hold on to his wise teachings (which on the whole can't be faulted), his education centres, philanthropic work and ability to work miracles (creating objects out of thin air) as proof of his benevolent sincerity and divinity. His critics cite the persistent allegations of sexual abuse with boys, the role he may have played in the murder of four followers, and the 'trickery' in manifesting holy ash and trinkets of a clever magician who held his gullible followers and Indian's elite in his hands. (When seeing these manifestations on film, the sleight of hand trickery of a magician appears to be at work, but with Neptune, one never knows...)

There is also the accumulation of Neptunian 'facts' about his birth. Firstly, there are contradictions surrounding his true age. There is a belief that he was the reincarnation of an earlier saint of the same name (Sai Baba of Shirdi) and that he was born 23 November 1926 in Puttaparthi, around the time of the original Baba's prediction of his reincarnation. Yet some cite a later birth date (4 October 1929). The arguments and responses can be found at:

<http://saibabaexposed.blogspot.com/2006/10/sai-babas-school-records-new-light.html>
<http://www.saisathyasai.com/baba/Ex-Baba.com/ssb-school.html>

Here's part of Sai Baba's entry on *Wikipedia*:

Almost everything known about Sathya Sai Baba's early life stems from the hagiography that grew around him, the presentation of narratives that hold special meaning to his devotees and are considered by them evidence of his divine nature. According to his followers, then, Sathyanarayana Raju was born to Easwaramma and Peddavenkama Raju Ratnakaram in the village of Puttaparthi, in what was the Madras Presidency of British India. His birth, which his mother Eswaramma asserted was by miraculous conception, was also said to be heralded by miracles.

On 8 March 1940, while living with his elder brother Seshama Raju in Uravakonda, a small town near Puttaparthi, Sathya was apparently stung by a scorpion. He lost consciousness for several hours. Within the next few days there was a noticeable change in Sathya's behaviour. There were 'symptoms of laughing and weeping, eloquence and silence.' 'He began to sing Sanskrit verses, a language of which he had no prior knowledge.' Doctors believed his behavior to be hysteria. His parents brought Sathya back home to Puttaparthi. Concerned, they took him to many priests, 'doctors' and exorcists.

On 23 May 1940, Sathya called household members and reportedly materialised prasad and flowers for his family members. His father became furious at seeing this, thinking his son was bewitched. He took a stick and threatened to beat him if Sathya did not reveal who he really was. To this Sathya announced calmly and firmly 'I am Sai Baba', a reference to Sai Baba of Shirdi. He proclaimed himself to be a reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi – a saint who became famous in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Maharashtra and had died eight years before Sathya was born.

Does Sai Baba's death, when Neptune was at 0° Pisces, leave the door open for new spiritual philosophers (or opportunists) to rush forward and assume the position he has left vacant? Or will a country polluted by corruption and, to some extent, spiritually bankrupt be lost without a guru to guide them?

A few additional thoughts

We can expect breakthroughs in Neptune-related illnesses such as myalgic encephalomyelitis (M.E.) and viruses, and health issues such as euthanasia. On 15 May 2011, the people of Zurich voted to reject a ban on assisted suicide in Switzerland, and also rejected the restricting of assisted suicide to Zurich residents only. On 31 May, the World Health Organization classified cell phone radiation as a 'carcinogenic hazard' and a 'possible carcinogenic to humans' (i.e. linked to causing cancer). On 7 July, Jerusalem scientists identified the molecular basis for the breakage of DNA (which results in the development of Cancer). On 1 July, the Danish drug company Lundbeck restricted use of its Nembutal drug to stop it being used in lethal injections in some US states. And on 29 July, Johnson & Johnson announced that it would lower the maximum daily dosage of its Extra Strength Tylenol to reduce the risk of liver damage.

Films released during this time include Neptune-tinged stories such as *Insidious* (a movie about a boy who enters a comatose state and becomes a vessel for ghosts in the astral dimension) and *Source Code* (a tale in which a time-loop program allows a man, whose brain is being kept alive, to return to the past in someone else's body and re-enact the last part of the life to alter future events). As always, film will lead the way and give us a glimpse of Neptune's return to its own sign.

Data and Sources

Bin Laden Murdered: 2 May 2011, 00:40 (-5), Abbottabad, Pakistan (34n09, 73e13). Source: FCC quotes newspapers on date. *Wikipedia* has 'after 1am'.

Rupert Murdoch: 11 March 1931, 23:59 AEST, Melbourne, Australia (37s49, 144e58). Source: Gwen Stoney quotes a newspaper announcement given in *A Paper Prince* for 'midnight ending the day'.

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