

The King Is Dead

(But Before That He Was Really Sick)

***An Analysis of Elvis Presley's Natal Chart from a Medical Astrological
Perspective, using Western Astrological and Oriental Medical Symbolism***



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Elvis

Presley bestrode the world of popular music like the Colossus of Rhodes. An iconic photograph of him, shot for *Rolling Stone* magazine, captures the singer in a pose very similar to his towering bronze forebear, his legs astraddle, asserting his dominion over the lesser mortals below.

His meteoric rise to international superstardom in the realms of music and film, subsequent decline and descent from that lofty pinnacle, and all-too-premature death at the age of 42 have secured him a place in the pantheon of legendary, doomed, yet undying, entertainers.

Elvis' particular destiny was to reach the entire world and to be a trailblazer in an entirely new musical milieu, rock and roll, one which has since come to exercise a similar hegemonic grasp upon the popular imagination. An astrologer can easily discern those factors in Elvis' birth chart, which can be seen to have destined him for pre-eminence of a kind all-too-rarely bestowed upon the average person.

However, to a *medical* astrologer, it is apparent from an in-depth analysis of his natal chart that the same planetary and energetic configurations which catapulted him to the apex of fame also contributed to his ensuing descent into illness, and a death which could not be staved off by conventional medical means.

I became interested in Elvis from the standpoint of medical astrology after having read the section on the colon in Mary Roach's informative and entertaining book on the alimentary canal, *Gulp*¹. While regaling the reader with a wealth of information about the colon, some of which might make one squeamish, Ms. Roach drops the bombshell (at least for me) that Elvis suffered from a very rare affliction, toxic megacolon, or Hirschsprung's Disease, as well as a battery of other conditions.

I do not think that there is a person of a certain vintage in the civilized world who is not familiar with the reportedly ignominious circumstances which attended Elvis' death – discovered on the floor of his bathroom, a victim of an apparent overdose of drugs. His doctor, George Nichopolous, aka Dr. Nick, was subsequently charged with overprescribing prescription medications to the singer (among others). However, in *Gulp*, Dr. Nick (such was his sobriquet) relates an entirely different story to Mary Roach, describing an Elvis in the last stages of a chronic, and to the singer both embarrassing and debilitating, condition that may have been the single dominant contributory factor in his physical decline and subsequent mortality. Ms. Roach refers to this condition as Hirschsprung's Disease.

Elvis suffered from a very rare affliction, toxic megacolon, or Hirschsprung's Disease, as well as a battery of other conditions.

¹Roach, Mary, *Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, © 2013.

He took extraordinary measures to ensure that he would not again be subjected to such an embarrassment, and then dosed himself with laxatives on a regular basis so that he could eliminate on occasion.

What is Hirschsprung's Disease?

In researching the syndrome in various online sources, I found that Hirschsprung's disease (HD) is a disorder of the abdomen that occurs when part or all of the large intestine or antecedent parts of the gastrointestinal tract have no nerves and therefore cannot function. During normal fetal development, cells from the neural crest migrate into the large intestine (colon) to form the

networks of nerves called Auerbach's plexus and Meissner's plexus. In Hirschsprung's disease, the migration is not complete, and part of the colon lacks these nerve bodies that regulate its activity. Hirschsprung's disease is often called congenital aganglionic megacolon. The sufferer cannot eliminate in a normal fashion and experiences long periods of constipation that can only be alleviated with medication. However, because the colon is spastic, the individual occasionally loses control over the bowels and may experience involuntary discharges. According to Dr. Nick, Elvis once had an episode of this nature while performing on stage, and he was terrified lest he experience a repeat occurrence. He took extraordinary measures to ensure that he would not again be subjected to such an embarrassment, and then dosed himself with laxatives on a regular basis so that he could eliminate on occasion. In effect, at the time of his death, his colon was all but ossified, impacted with a thick layer of barium sulfate.

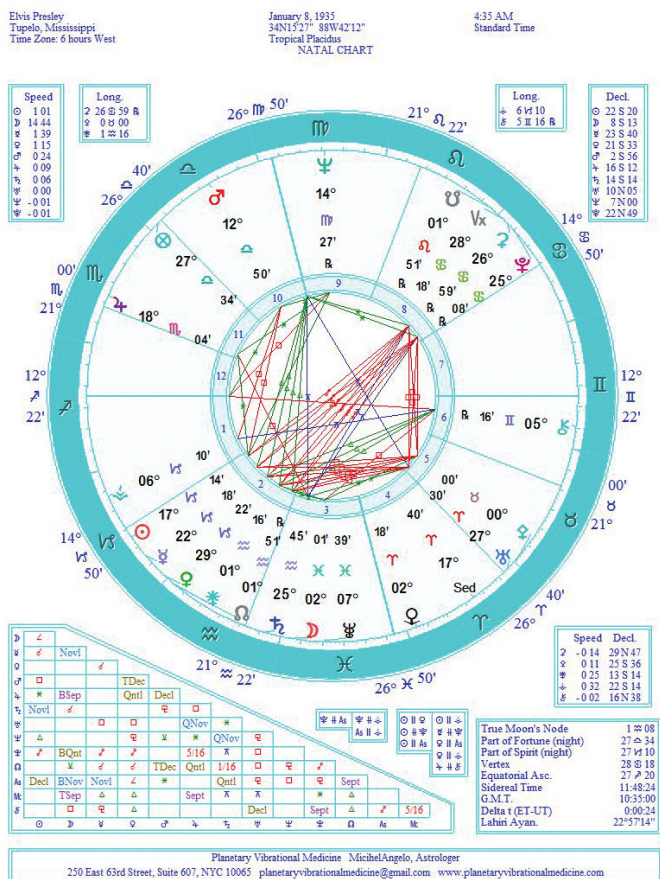
This revelation of Elvis' hidden frailty was profoundly intriguing, and I resolved to use him as a case study for a forthcoming class in applied medical astrology that I was teaching in New Mexico in August 2013. A cursory glance at his chart revealed some interestingly corroborative details that I felt would assist me in teaching my students about medical chart analysis. However, when the time came to actually present the chart to the group, my own intuitive skills and grasp of medical astrological symbolism helped me to uncover one layer after another of planetary chart configurations that were all too eloquent in their description of Elvis' myriad pathologies, not just the enlarged colon.

In retrospect, from my perspective, it was as if Elvis had been a hollow man, presenting, at least in his youth and early career, an archetypal veneer of unblemished masculine pulchritude and vitality, propelled by an unabashed sexual display of almost intoxicating appeal to his masses of fans. A book on physiognomy that I once read opines that Elvis possessed the classical profile of a Roman emperor. But, beneath the glittering persona and unalloyed perfection of his androgynous adolescent physique, there lurked a malevolent "undertow" of malaise which eventually dragged him down into the dark waters of oblivion.

Ladies and Gentleman, “the King,” Elvis Aaron Presley, born January 8, 1935:

In my classes in *Planetary Vibrational Medicine*, I endeavor to introduce the complex mechanisms of medical astrology to an audience usually comprising, to a large extent, healthcare practitioners who are somewhat familiar with acupuncture points and Oriental Medicine theory. There are a number of rudimentary points of contact between these two seemingly disparate worlds, Western astrological medicine and Oriental medicine, that I endeavor to highlight:

1. Five Element chart symbolism, disharmonies between 5 Element planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) and their potential manifestation of malaise;
2. Planetary strength and debility, i.e., essential dignity, particularly as it relates to the 5 Element planets;
3. 8 Extraordinary meridian involvement, as derived from my own 8 Extraordinary meridian model of the horoscope, and relevant issues;
4. Aspect patterns that specifically relate to health, in particular the T-square and quincunx, which can be easily discerned from simple examination of the chart dynamics;
5. Traditional astrological medical correspondences of the 5 Element planets as they relate to anatomy, physiology, maladaptation, disease, etc.



6. Medical correlations of the 12 houses of the horoscope, particularly the 6th and the 12th houses, the two most traditionally connected to illness;
7. Any planets situated on the 6th/12th house axis, for their relevance to the above;
8. Other chart patterns, like those midpoints which relate to health and propensity to illness, which can also be discerned visually;
9. Certain fixed stars which relate to illness, or that are of particularly malevolent influence;
10. Correlations of the outer planets (Uranus, Neptune, Pluto), particularly if they impact the 5 Element planets in the chart

It is beyond the purview of an article such as this to attempt to impart all the subtleties of chart interpretation, but we can, nevertheless, gain a certain insight by considering some of these factors.

Elvis'

Chart: Hirschsprung's Disease, asthma, glaucoma, fatty liver, high blood pressure, etc.

Notable Chart Features:

Venus (Metal element planet) at anaretic (weakened) degree, 29 Capricorn.

Jupiter in Scorpio; enlarged colon. It is in very poor cosmic state (peregrine).

Saturn quincunx Pluto; blockage in colon. A disharmonious aspect specifically related to health; Saturn often refers to blockages, hindrances. In Elvis' case, the autopsy revealed that his colon was virtually impassable, due to his continuous consumption of drugs designed to constipate him.

Sun square Mars; excessive bodily heat = high blood pressure. These are both fiery planets; in 5 Element symbolism, Mars relates to Fire, and the Sun is the fiery furnace at the heart of the solar system. The 90 degree, square, aspect is one that traditionally relates to health problems. The excess heat in the body which results from this disharmony can produce conditions of high blood pressure over time.

Jupiter on Sun/Neptune midpoint; toxicity of the Liver due to consumption of drugs and narcotic substances.

Mars/Neptune midpoint; point of toxicity, toxicity from drugs; quincunx Venus, conjunct MC; Neptune semi-sextile Mars (30 degree, disharmonious aspect, which relates to health).

Saturn/Neptune midpoint; cardinal point of disease = 5 Sagittarius opposite Chiron at 5 Gemini in the 6th house of health.

Moon in Pisces conjunct Fomalhaut at 3 Pisces (one of the Royal Stars of Persia, hence the nickname, "The King") drugs and drug addictions.

Pluto in Cancer, 8th house, sextile Algol, the most malevolent fixed star in the heavens; Venus trine Algol. Algol afflicts both signifiers of the Large Intestine.

Chiron in the 6th in Gemini; asthma, general ill health; square Moon, impacting general health (perhaps also indicative of his unhealthy obsession with his Mother).

²Despite the demotion of Pluto by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) to the status of a dwarf planet, now called somewhat into question by recent fly-bys of the New Horizons spacecraft, Western astrologers continue to regard it as a major player in natal chart dynamics, with a tremendous amount of archetypal and interpretive significance.

First Impressions

The question I initially asked was, "Where might I locate a signature for an abnormally enlarged colon?" It revealed itself immediately as Jupiter at 18° 04' Scorpio, on the cusp of the 12th house, associated with hospitals and self-undoing, the second most important house of health in the horoscope. In a simple symbolic equation, Jupiter (expansion) contributes to the abnormal enlargement of the colon (anatomically associated with Scorpio; modern ruler: dwarf planet, Pluto²). Moreover, this Jupiter/Pluto signature is immediately replicated in a trine between Jupiter and Pluto retrograde at 25° 08' Cancer, in the 8th house. Even though this is a trine, a harmonious, 60° aspect relationship, I cannot help but regard this

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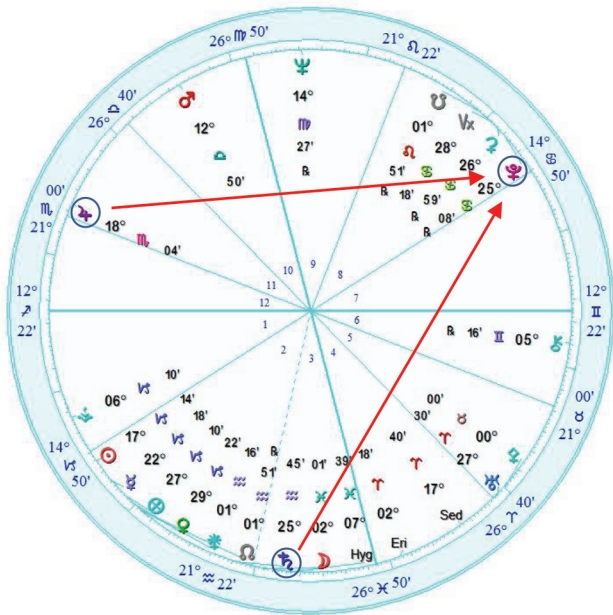


Figure 1: Jupiter in Scorpio = enlarged colon. This signature is duplicated by the wide Jupiter/Pluto trine indicated by the red arrow. Peregrine Jupiter, *almuten* of the ASC, also rules the 1st house of health.

As noted above, Pluto is also in a very tight and stressful 150 degree, quincunx, aspect with Saturn; blockage of the colon. As discussed in my last article, (OMJ, Wood 2012 issue) these aspects are particularly significant in matters of health.

structure and functioning of the body — “diffuse, surreptitious, perfidious and weakening,” according to Darling³ — also squares/afflicts the Ascendant.

5 Element Planetary Disharmonies

The signifier of the disease, Jupiter, is a 5 Element planet, according to the *Nei Jing*; and, given that it is in poor estate due to its placement in a sign which is not intrinsic to its nature, Scorpio, this would indicate to us potential issues with the Wood element. At a basic level of interpretation, it suggests that the Liver would not be particularly vital in its functioning, and that perhaps the native would have problems with general toxicity of the body, as a consequence. Couple this with Elvis’ addictive tendencies, also represented by Jupiter, which is prone to excess and does not readily tolerate limits to its desire for pleasure, and his poor and often excessive dietary habits, well documented in his public biography, and you have the potential for a liver which would be greatly overtaxed. In fact, another interpretation of my planetary shorthand occurs to me, which is that Jupiter in Scorpio = toxic liver. Yet another manifestation of Wood element imbalance is high blood pressure, which is something from which Elvis suffered later in life.

This implicit hypo-functioning of the Liver is reinforced, as we have previously noted, by the square of Jupiter to Saturn, at 25° 45’ of Aquarius. Saturn is, in the parlance of medical astrology, the Great

duplication of the energetic signature for his condition as suggestive. Retrograde Pluto’s presence in the 8th house of death is also eerily foreboding, although that death was comfortably remote in 1935.

In considering the manifold symbolism found in an astrological chart, the idea that a single feature could present itself as the crux of a given health problem may seem to be somewhat simplistic. However, I have found that energetic equations derived from such a “shorthand” of planetary correspondence often resonate through the entire map. Obviously, any conclusions regarding this chart factor are given greater import if they are echoed by other configurations, as we will see below.

It should be noted, as well, that this less than vital Jupiter in Scorpio is also the *almuten* of the Ascendant, the degree of the zodiac that was rising at the time of Elvis’ birth, which was 12° 22’ Sagittarius. The *almuten* is the planet Jupiter, which has the greatest strength at that point in the zodiac. This is because Jupiter is the traditional ruler of Sagittarius and, thus, in modern parlance, it is also the ruler of Elvis’ chart. So, as the planet that has dominion over the Ascendant, it casts an ominous shadow over the general health of the native. The Ascendant is the cusp, the boundary, of the 1st house, which traditionally correlates, in a medical sense, to health and vitality. Additionally, Neptune, which has a pernicious effect upon the

³Darling, Harry F., M. D. *Essentials of Medical Astrology*. American Federation of Astrologers, Tempe, AZ, 1981, p. 19.

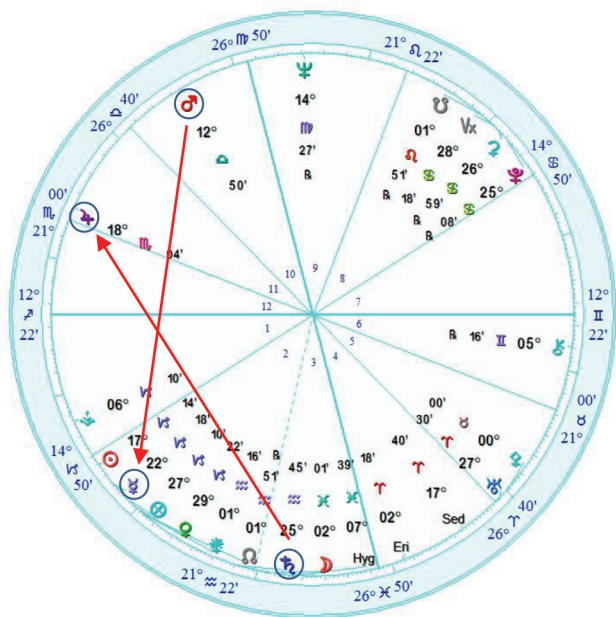


Figure 2: 5 Element planetary disharmonies involving the two Malefics. Mars (Fire) squares Mercury (Water); Fire insults Water. Saturn (Earth) squares Jupiter (Wood); Earth insults Wood.

Malefic; and, thus, other planets and chart factors that are negatively impacted by Saturn are generally weakened. Squares (90 degree angles) are traditionally signifiers of potential disease. There is also a disharmony between the Wood and Earth elements present in the chart. As noted above, Saturn is the most dignified planet in the chart, and thus much stronger than Jupiter. Moreover, while a malefic that is in good cosmic state may not necessarily have a malign influence, I cannot overlook its potential deleterious effect. I would still tend to view this square with Saturn as potentially challenging.

This could result in Earth having an adverse impact on Wood. The 5 Element pattern of Earth “insulting” Wood is characterized by the following potential symptoms, with an associated *Zang-fu* pattern of Liver Qi stagnation:

- ◆ Jaundice
- ◆ Hypochondriac Pain and Distention
- ◆ Stye

It is not difficult to extrapolate from these particular symptoms to the actual manifestation of a fatty liver, which was one of the myriad pathologies that afflicted Elvis, or, from the disharmony of the Wood, which opens to the eyes, to the glaucoma which attended him later in life.

Another potential 5 Element disharmony involves the square between Mars at 12° 50' Libra and Mercury at 22° 18' Capricorn; this is a Fire/Water disharmony. Of the two, Mars, as the Lesser Malefic, in its detriment in Libra, has the greater capacity to disrupt the functioning of Mercury's Water element. This would undoubtedly heat the body in a pathological fashion, causing it to be drier. This dehydrated condition would also hinder the functioning of the Large Intestine in its capacity of elimination. Overheating of the body is also indicated by Sun in Capricorn squaring Mars in Cancer, a hard aspect between two fiery planets.

As we have noted previously, Venus, the Metal element planet, at 29 Capricorn, is situated at an *anaretic* degree; 29 degrees of any sign is considered to be a poor placement for any planet, as the planet itself is between signs, literally “betwixt and between,” and does not quite know how to behave. The two Benefics, Venus and Jupiter, can produce effects that are anything but benign, if they are not dignified. Given that Venus is responsible for maintaining the homeostatic functioning of the body, the implications are fairly serious.

Additionally, according to various ancient methods of calculation, in particular that of Claudius Ptolemy, whose book *Tetrabiblos*⁴ was one of the few texts to survive from the ancient world, Venus is considered to be the *hyleg*, the “life-giver” of the horoscope; but, ironically, at the same time it is the *anareta*, the “killing planet.” Thus the internationally famous artist and singer (Venus) meets his ultimate

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⁴Ptolemy, Claudius. *Tetrabiblos*. Ashmand, J. M. (translator), Pacific Publishing Studio, US, © 2011.

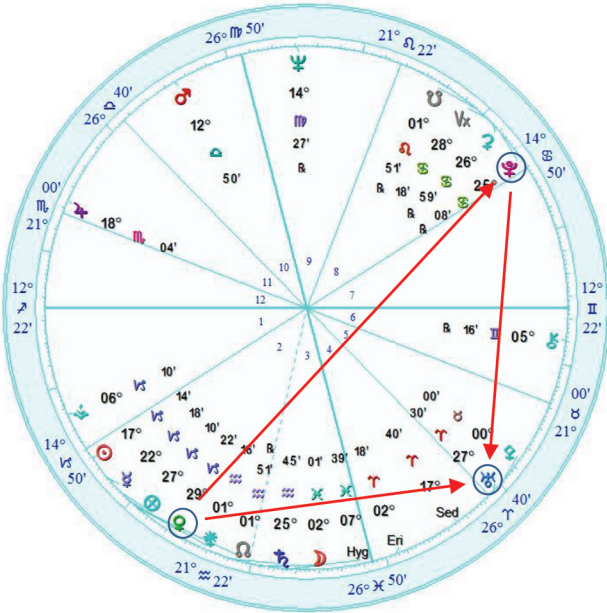


Figure 3: Venus (Metal) is peregrine (lacking real strength), and at an anaretic degree (29 Capricorn); opposes Pluto retrograde in Cancer (modern ruler of Scorpio). Both of these planets relate to the colon. Uranus in Aries is the focal point of a T-square involving Venus/Pluto, and is exactly at their midpoint; inhibition of colonic peristalsis, spastic colon. This T-square activates the “electrical” axis of the body, and probably indicates the karmic nature of the affliction.

end due to his inability to maintain appropriate constitutional balance (Venus as homeostasis) through the expulsion of toxins from the body, because of an inherited defect in his Large Intestine (also Venus as Metal element).

Other Factors:

- ◆ In 5 Element symbolism, Venus, as the planet associated with Metal, relates to the Large Intestine (colon); Pluto, through its modern rulership of Scorpio, can also be linked to the colon;
- ◆ Pluto is situated in the 8th house, which is also traditionally associated with Scorpio; Pluto is regarded by some medical astrologers as a “triple-strength” Mars⁵, hence its capacity for inflammation and distress is immense; its affliction of Venus via opposition is a severe impediment to the Large Intestine. Even though, technically, Hirschsprung’s Disease is not an inflammation of the large intestine, per se, the capacity of Pluto to destroy tissue must be noted, as well as the concomitant toxicity of the body;
- ◆ Venus is also semi-sextile Saturn, a 30 degree, stressful aspect which has relevance to health. This is another signature for hypo-functioning or blockage of the colon;
- ◆ Uranus, an outer planet, which has no particular 5 Element significance⁶, is believed to govern the rhythms of the body. As the focal point of a T-square with Venus/Pluto, it could give rise to a spastic colon, interruptions in peristalsis. These are symptoms associated with Hirschsprung’s disease;

- ◆ Uranus besieged, located between the two malefics, Mars and Saturn; glaucoma;
- ◆ Uranus almost exactly on Venus/Pluto midpoint (15 minutes of arc, less than a degree). This mirrors the configuration of the Venus/Pluto/Uranus T-square previously noted;
- ◆ Finally, the Venus/Pluto opposition is along the Vertex/Anti-vertex, the “electrical” axis of the body. This axis is believed to be as potent in considerations of health as the Ascendant/Descendant; as the Vertex itself relates to considerations of fate, I believe that this is another indicator of the lethal genetic abnormalities associated with this condition.

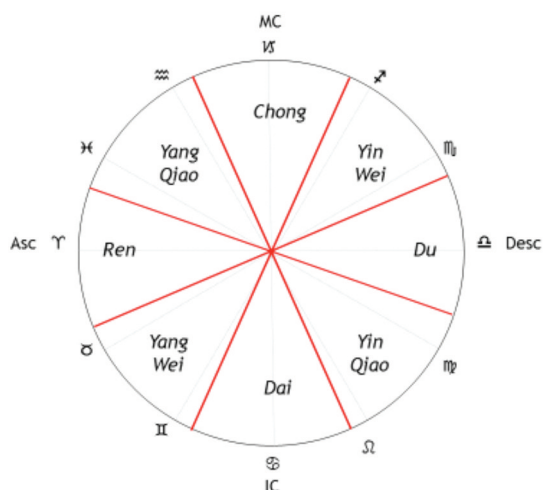
⁵According to William F. Davidson, see Darling, Harry F., M. D., op. cit., p. 18.

⁶Jonathan Clogstoun-Willmott, in *Western Astrology and Chinese Medicine* (Destiny Books, 1985), offers the theory that it may correspond to Liver Qi, pp. 139-140. This would perhaps indicate a further debility of the Liver, as expressed in Elvis’ chart.

Natal 8 Extraordinary Meridians Involvement

Elvis had a preponderance of planets (4 of 9) in the 2nd and 8th houses of his chart – Sun, Mercury, and Venus in the 2nd, and Pluto in the 8th. This axis, according to my 8 Extras model of the chart, shown on the next page, correlates with Yang and Yin Wei meridians.

The 5 Element planets associated with Yang Wei Mai are Mars (Fire) and Jupiter (Wood), TH 5 (*Wai guan*) and GB 41 (*foot Lin qi*) being the relevant treatment points. Those of Yin Wei Mai are Mercury (Water) and Venus (Metal), the master/couple points being KID 6 (*Zhao hai*) and LU 7 (*Lie que*), respectively.



Again, as with other symbolic considerations, an overemphasis on one or more of these meridians by planetary placement may indicate predisposition to “weakness.”

Interestingly enough, the 2nd and 8th houses of the chart correlate to Taurus and Scorpio, and the planetary associations of these signs are Venus and Pluto, respectively, both of which relate, as we have previously noted, to the Metal element, and the Large Intestine in particular. As we have noted previously, these two planets are in a disharmonious relationship, an opposition (180 degree angle). I cannot help but view the conflict between these two elemental signifiers as reflecting the deleterious genetic inheritance that gave rise to his condition of toxic megacolon. The Metal element is severely debilitated in this chart.

From a psychospiritual perspective, we could view this as a struggle between the outer directed activity of Yang Wei vs. the more meditative aspects of Yin Wei, bringing into high relief the contradiction between the tremendously Yang, extrovert, nature of being a rock and roll star, and the cultivation of an inner life. It is not generally well-known, but Elvis was very interested in metaphysical subjects⁷, and there are certainly various chart configurations which would support such a notion:

- ◆ Jupiter in Scorpio (deep probing into metaphysical studies, and religion, searching for profound spiritual truths);
- ◆ Jupiter at the midpoint of the Sun and Neptune; Neptune also relates to spiritual proclivities, and it is situated in Jupiter’s own 9th house. The Sun, as the carrier of the soul’s deeper yearnings, would strive after this spiritual understanding and quest for the eternal truths of the Universe, something beyond the narrow confines of the personality. Drug addiction, one expression of Neptune, which trines the Sun, presents a comfortable choice, one without severe challenges, and seeks to dissolve the boundaries between things, i.e., individual and transpersonal consciousness. It is at best a poor substitute for authentic spiritual experience, but nevertheless can be construed as his attempt to transcend his everyday existence;
- ◆ Jupiter is on the threshold of the 12th house, which is naturally associated with Pisces, and is the other sign which it traditionally rules. One might argue that, at the time of his birth, Elvis was not quite ready to embark upon the spiritual immersion inherent in such a placement, something that would have only become apparent to him in later life. With Jupiter in the 12th and Neptune in the 9th, there is a tremendous emphasis upon the spiritual life.

It should be apparent from the above discussion that, in this instance, we are not discussing Jupiter as the planet associated with Liver and the Wood element, but, rather, Jupiter’s traditional rulership over the 9th house of the chart, and the expansive qualities of the archetype as they relate to spiritual inquiry and metaphysical pursuits. This is in keeping with what Richard Tarnas⁸ describes as the multivalent nature of planetary archetypes. There is no inherent contradiction in exploring these different correspondences of Jupiter in Elvis’ chart.

⁷Elvis had but a single astrological consultation in his life, with the noted transpersonal astrologer, Dane Rudhyar, in which Rudhyar expressed his profound convictions about Elvis’ spiritual qualities. Found at: <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/astroarticles/secretelvis.shtml>

⁸Tarnas, Richard. *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New Worldview*. Viking Penguin, New York, NY, © 2006, p. 87.

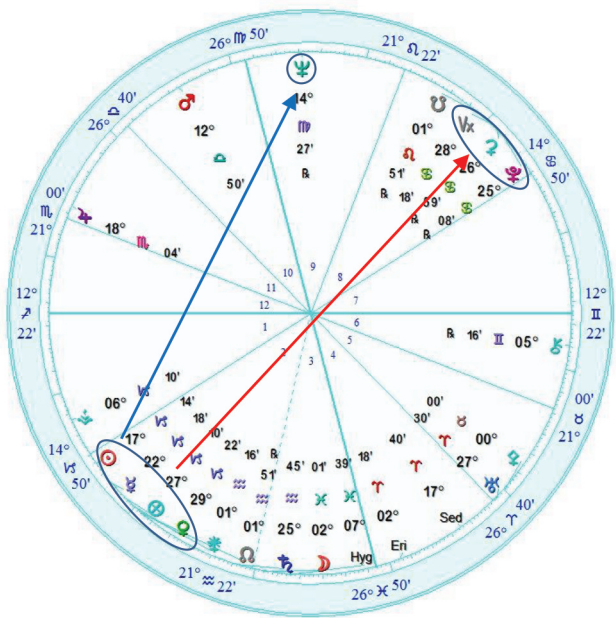


Figure 4: Yang Wei planets (Sun, Mercury, Venus in Capricorn) oppose Yin Wei planets (dwarf planets Pluto and Ceres); disharmony between the inner and outer life, the sensual (2nd house; Taurus) and the transcendent (8th house; Scorpio). Tension is resolved through escapism and the use of drugs (Neptune in Virgo, 9th house, trines the Sun). As a harmonious aspect, the trine to Neptune does not require a tremendous effort of energy or commitment, the “slippery slope” of drug addiction is a substitute for the rigors of authentic spiritual experience.

There are three planets (Sun, Mercury, and Venus) in the 2nd house of Elvis’ chart. Of all the 12 houses, the second has the most to do with the throat chakra. The two communicative planets, Venus and Mercury, in close proximity (conjunction) to each other here, are strongly indicative of the power of Elvis’ throat chakra. However, we might also argue that the 2nd house’s association with Taurus would mean, on some level, that his expression of those energies would remain somewhat earthbound.

Rock and roll, whatever its merits as entertainment and an outlet of emotional expression, is not, in general, a vehicle for spiritual transcendence; it is, by and large, lower chakra music, bound up in teenage angst and a quasi-prurient sexuality. Pluto in the 8th would have, on some level, required that he transcend that aspect of himself as part of his personal development, which was, arguably, arrested by his untimely demise.

Planetary Midpoints:

Midpoint is a generic term referring to the location between points on the ecliptic; this is not a new concept, and midpoints probably were in active use prior to the 16th century. A midpoint is a special case of planetary picture, a concept that was introduced by the Uranian school of astrology in the early 20th century.

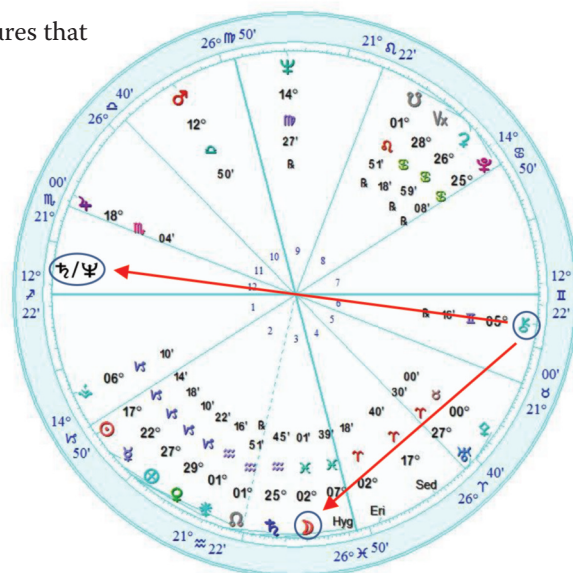
Midpoints are locations along the 360 degrees of the zodiacal wheel represented by the birth chart where planetary energies are combined.

There are two significant planetary midpoint pictures that are relevant to health issues in Elvis’ chart:

- ◆ Saturn/Neptune: cardinal axis of disease
- ◆ Mars/Neptune: point of toxicity, toxicity from drugs

Figure 5: Chiron in Gemini (general ill health, asthma) opposes the Saturn/Neptune midpoint (cardinal axis of disease); it also squares the Moon, another indicator of poor health.

The Moon is conjunct the fixed star Fomalhaut, a sign of great good fortune, but which also indicates problems with drugs and drug addiction.



The Saturn/Neptune midpoint is of crucial consideration in bringing to light certain hidden frailties within an individual's chart. We can think of the blending of the two planets in the following way: Saturn (structure) is undermined by Neptune (dissolution), giving rise to any number of pathologies, including organ failure and collapse.

The Saturn/Neptune midpoint in Elvis' chart is situated in the 12th house, at 5 Sagittarius, directly opposite the planetoid Chiron at 5 Gemini in the 6th house. Without going into detail, Chiron, an object discovered in 1975 by astronomer Charles Kowal, is generally conceded by astrologers to relate to wounding and healing. From a medical perspective, I believe that it can function as a particularly powerful malefic, and that planets/houses impacted by it are severely debilitated.

Therefore, to have Chiron in Gemini placed in one's house of health/sickness, the 6th, is probably indicative of general malaise, and it is arguable that this would be a signature for the asthma that plagued Elvis in later life, coupled with the debility of Venus, as Metal element planet. Chiron opposes the Saturn/Neptune midpoint and further exacerbates the potential for life-threatening illness; the Saturn/Neptune midpoint is in the 12th house, which relates to hospitals, confinements, and his considerable capacity for self-destructive behavior.

In keeping with the theme of drugs and drug addiction, the Mars/Neptune midpoint is conjunct the Midheaven (MC) of Elvis' chart. The MC is the point of the natal map where we make the most significant contact with the wider world; in this instance, I believe that the planetary blending could also refer to the unfortunate facts of Elvis' drug addiction becoming common currency.

This is reinforced by the Moon's opposition to Neptune. In mundane astrology, i.e., that of the world, the Moon refers to the general populace. It is probably at least worth mentioning, as well, that this Mars/Neptune does more than hint at Elvis' decidedly androgyne sexual charisma (Mars in Libra is not terribly macho), which became known to the world through his films (Neptune).

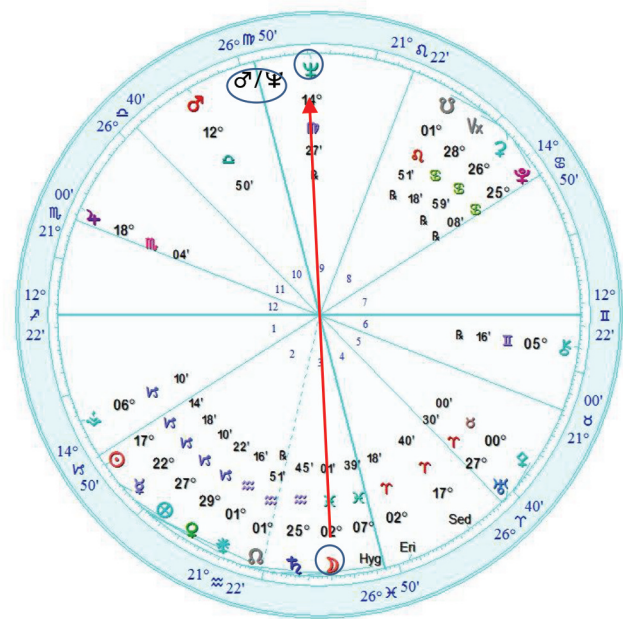


Figure 6: MC = Mars/Neptune; drugs and drug addiction. Moon opposite Neptune: this information becomes common knowledge.

⁹I have personal experience of this in connection with a study I made of my astro-twin, an Italian operatic tenor who has had a very significant international career. The only substantive difference between our charts (about 16 hours apart) is the angularity of certain planets, and, in the latter's case, very significant contacts with powerful fixed stars.

Fixed Stars:

The contact of certain crucial chart features, i.e., personal planets, angles, etc., to fixed stars is very much a part of astrological tradition, although most modern astrologers pay little attention to the latter. In my experience, this connection is a very potent one, but the terrible irony is that, as much as these stars grant the native significant blessings in a given life⁹, they have the equal capacity to undermine, even destroy, those upon whom they bestow their benison; and those individuals who rise to pinnacles of glory often, like many shooting stars, plunge terrifyingly to Earth and vanish into obscurity. Elvis' career was decidedly in eclipse prior to his less than picture-perfect death, and it is only posthumously that he has regained his luster.

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We have previously noted the contact of Elvis' Moon to Fomalhaut (Pisces 3), one of the four Royal Stars of ancient Persia. While it is Regulus, *Cor Leonis*, the "heart" of the Lion (29 Leo) that is the "King" star, contact with the other three (Antares and Aldebaran being the other two), is also highly significant. In this light, if you will, I do not think that it is coincidental that Elvis' title should have been the "King." However, the toils of drug addiction that are the *bete noire* of Fomalhaut were very much a part of Elvis' pathology. Actually, as I now consider the chart afresh, I notice that Elvis' Venus, at 29 Capricorn, makes a quincunx to Regulus, providing additional support for his "kingliness." Moreover, his Ascendant, at 12 Sagittarius, is conjunct Antares at 9 Sagittarius; according to Robson, Antares, if it is rising, promises "riches and honor, violence, and sickness; the benefits seldom last."¹⁰

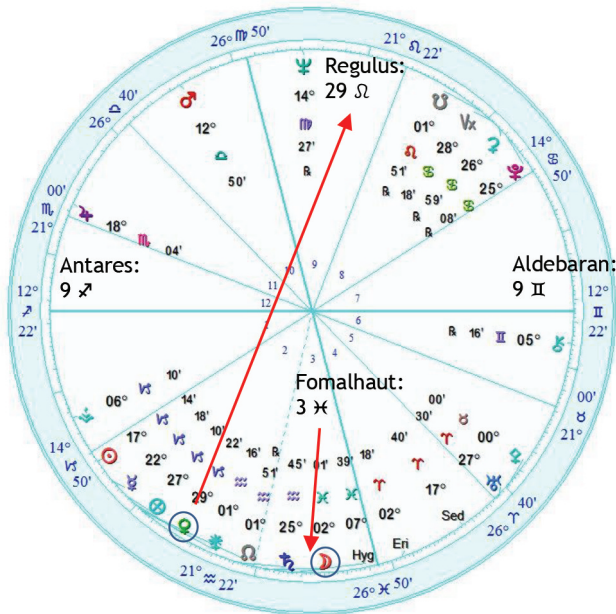


Figure 7: Royal stars: as previously noted, the Moon is conjunct the fixed star Fomalhaut (3 Pisces); Venus is in conjunct Regulus at 29 Leo. Elvis' ASC/DSC axis makes reasonably close contact to the other two Royal stars, Aldebaran and Antares.

Each of these stars affords the native great distinction, but these considerable blessings are not always of lasting duration.

There is one other fixed star that I wish to mention in connection with Elvis' affliction of toxic megacolon, the one with the most fearsome reputation – Algol, *Ras al Ghul*, the "Piled-up Corpses,"¹¹ at 26 Taurus. Algol, which is situated in the constellation Perseus, may be regarded as the "eye" of Medusa, whose severed head was emblazoned on Perseus' shield as his aegis, following her slaying by that young solar hero.

Algol is sextile Pluto in Cancer, and also trine to Venus in Capricorn; while these are not hard aspects, I cannot overlook the fact that this fearsome astral "basilisk" is involved with both signifiers of the fatally compromised Large Intestine.

It is not unreasonable, in this context, to recall that Medusa's gaze had the capacity to petrify her victims, literally turning them to stone;

that is exactly what transpired, over many years, with Elvis' colon, before its strangulated functioning ultimately stopped his heart.

Conclusion:

In re-assessing this singular case study after a period of two years, I am struck anew at the overwhelming wealth of testimony to be discerned in Elvis Presley's astrological chart concerning his vulnerability to illness. The interpretive *poly-valency* of planetary and zodiacal symbolism reveals a remarkable capacity to describe the gamut of experiences of a given individual. We have gained insight into the two-edged nature of planetary and astral configurations; the gods are ever capricious, granting their favors only conditionally, and they have equal capacity to foster or to annihilate us, their fragile creations.

Those among us who rise to the dizzying heights of international fame and celebrity invariably, in my estimation, manifest birth charts replete with evidence of their potential pre-eminence. The planets align themselves in a potent circuitry. Obstacles that would, and do, stop the majority of people dead in their tracks are merely minor inconveniences or present slight detours *en route* to the lodestar of their ambitions; destiny calls, and these individuals answer that vocation with a resounding "yes."

¹⁰Robson, Vivian. *The Fixed Stars and Constellations in Astrology. Astrology Classics*, Abingdon, MD, 2005, p. 108ff.

¹¹*Ras al Ghul*, the "Blinking Demon," is the Arabic name for this star; the ancient Chinese associated Algol, *Tseih She*, with the latter attribute.

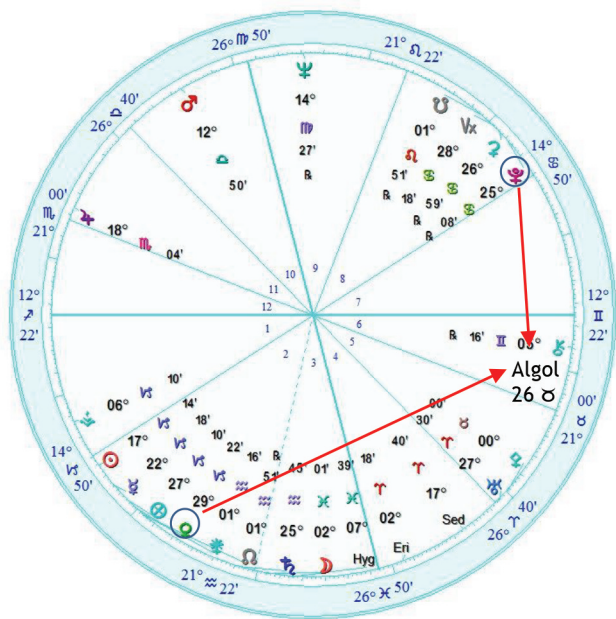


Figure 8: Algol, the “Blinking Demon”, the most malevolent star in the heavens, in the 6th house of health, is directly involved with the two signifiers of the Large Intestine, Venus and Pluto, and impacts the “electrical” axis of the chart; Medusa’s baleful gaze petrifies, and the non-viability of the organ eventually suffocates the heart.

However, hidden in plain sight, in these “star” maps, are signposts that can point, just as resolutely, to the catastrophic, and often spectacularly meteoric, descent of these scintillating subjects from their previous location in the hallowed firmament of human culture and adulation. Elvis’ chart, in my opinion, presents an outstanding example of this; the story of it is a cautionary tale about suffering and excess. Could he have avoided the ignominious end somewhat preordained for him by this singular interweaving of astral energies? Perhaps, had he foresworn his earlier ascent to the empyrean realms of rock star glory. However, I believe that, ultimately, his lack of consciousness would not have permitted it, in this particular incarnation.

Finally, I’d like to convey my interpretation of one last astonishing scintilla of astral serendipity. Venus, the *hyleg* of Elvis’ chart, as we have seen, life-giver and destroyer, the sigil of everything that made him who he was – singer, artist, actor, paragon of male pulchritude – lies in close proximity to the fixed star, Albireo.

Albireo is in the head of the constellation Cygnus, the Swan; some commentators say it specifically relates to the beak of the swan. Albireo is, apparently, a stunning example of a double star, and presents a magnificent aspect in the night sky. According to astrological tradition, it is believed to bestow upon the individual “a handsome appearance, and a lovable nature,”¹² two attributes which Elvis indubitably possessed in abundance. However, it has one other arresting connotation in this context; Albireo is a signifier for the call of the dying swan, the “swan song” as it is commonly known:

According to legend, swans are mute until the hour of their mortality, and in their death throes they give voice to the most beautiful of utterances. While it is indisputable that Elvis sang with memorable tones in the heyday of his extraordinary career, it is the tragedy of his spectacular progress and precipitate decline, and the *stilling* of his unique voice in the unbroken silence of the grave, that ensures that his song will be “sung” for generations, if not centuries, to come.

“O silver-throated Swan

Struck, struck! A golden dart

Clean through thy breast has gone

Home to thy heart.

Thrill, thrill, O silver throat! ...”¹³ ♦

¹²Robson, Vivian, op.cit., p. 114 & 118.

¹³Excerpt from “The Dying Swan,” poem by English poet, Thomas Sturge Moore (1870-1944), found at <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-dying-swan/>.