

# *The Lunar Nodes - A New Reading of its Traditional Meaning*

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I have not seen astrologers giving enough importance to the Nodes in natal astrology, and even less when the matter is Profections or personal Revolutions. Vettius Valens, however, an author of the first century of our era, gave great importance to the malice of the Ascending Node, which is not in any way the view of most medieval authors.

He takes the matter so seriously that I by myself felt the necessity to do an in-depth study about the Nodes in order to have a personal idea about its real value.

The first part of Book V of the Anthology of Vettius Valens published by the Project Hindsight, translated from the Greek by Robert Schmidt, is based largely on the consequences of critical configurations of the Moon with the North Node, namely in conjunction, opposition and above all in a square configuration. That, coming from an astrologer with the experience of Vettius Valens and formulated with a real crystalline clarity of ideas, fact not common when we read his books, was something worthy of

note.

We must remember that authors under Arabic influence, especially all the Medieval astrology, had the tendency to qualify the North Node, or Head of the Dragon as positive, male, warm, beneficial, of the nature of Venus and Jupiter and the South Node, or Tail of the Dragon in contrast, as female, cold, evil and of the nature of Saturn and Mars.

That is the idea that prevailed in Medieval astrology, like we see from the readings of Al-Biruni, IX Century, Al-Qabisi (Alcabitius), X Century and Bonatti ,XIII Century, the last one giving to the Tail of the Dragon a place of exaltation, Sagittarius and another of detriment, Gemini, and to the Head of the Dragon a place of exaltation Gemini and a place of detriment, Sagittarius.

It should be noted that the authors of medieval times, did not appear to have a strong personal conviction on the use of Nodes, using, when they talk about them the expression " according to some" or " according to others", in a way that we feel that the delineation of Nodes matters seems to be somewhat nebulous and subject to doubts.

In William Lilly, a traditional author of the XVI century, so strictly speaking, a modern, we read in Book 1, pg. 83:

"The Tail of the Dragon is feminine by nature and completely opposite the head, since it is malefic when associated with good planets, and benign when in conjunction with evil planets. This is the constant opinion of all the ancients but in which it is based I don't know; I always thought the head of the Dragon equivalent to any of the fortunes, and when linked to bad planets decreases its evil meaning , when connected to the good increases the good promised by them: on the Tail of the Dragon, I always noticed in my practice that when it is linked to bad planets, their malice or malicious in that connection was doubled and tripled, or extremely increased, and so on and when it happens to be configured to any of the fortunes being them significators in the question, although the subject is reasonably promised by a main signifier it is not probably brought to perfection in any time "

Since much of Horary Astrology is based on Lilly's work, the study of the Nodes in a particular house is fairly valued in Questions but the same does not happen in Elective or Natal astrology.

## *Review on Ancient Authors' Statements*

**Vettius Valens**, as we said above, believed that the astrologer should not choose for an event chart a moment when the Moon was squaring the Nodes because whatever the kind of enent it will be doomed to failure.

He stated as well that the house where one of the Nodes fell in an annual Profecion or Solar Revolution, revealed a turbulent area of the year. If the Node should fall in the Ascendant it was a sign of a critical year.

Anyway, while you were talking about climacteric or critic years in Valens, we can deduce that he does not take the Nodes, and mainly the Ascendant Node, on good account.

The author comes to the point of saying that the planet that is conjunct to a Node, be it benefic or malefic, will only be able to perform its promises when it enters in "phase" what means when it exits from the rays of the influence of the Node.

**Claudius Ptolemy**, a First Century astrologer, in the Book 3 of his Tetrabiblos, Ed. Loeb says, in the page 327 that:

"Again, if the luminaries, together or in opposition, move toward the maleficent planets upon the angles, or if the maleficent planets move toward the luminaries, particularly when the moon is at the nodes or her bendings, or in the injurious signs such as Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Scorpio, or Capricorn, there come about deformations of the body such as Hunchback, crookedness, "etc.

So Ptolemy believed, as his contemporary Valens, that the Nodes can be harmful if the Moon is with them.

**Dorotheus of Sidon**, I, 12 (Pingree 171), contemporary of Ptolemy and Valens, says that the best condition is when the Moon is growing in light and goes toward the northern sky. We can't deduce that he considers the North Node positive, but that the growing in light and in direction of the North is beneficial.

From the X Century of our era, when the western astrology suffered the Arabic influence more directly, we have the testimony of Alcabitius and Al Biruni, as quoted above, and in the XII Century the important point of view of Ibn Ezra, and Bonatti.

**Ibn Ezra** in his Treatise on The Planetary Meaning In the Twelve Houses, extracted from Pietro of Abano, Venice, 1507, fols. 89, (quoted in the Italian web site Cielo e Terra) provides us with a very interesting description of the meanings of the Nodes in the houses

Here is a summary of what the author says:

First House

Caput Draconis: increase the dignity and strength, according to the conjunction with the planets.

Tail Draconis: loss, the worst threat, scarcity and reduction of all things.

Second House

Caput: increase the substance and many benefits.

Tail: poverty, loss, loss of confidence.

Third House

Caput: interpretation of dreams.

Tail: separation of siblings; incurable fights with them, danger to them.

Fourth House

Caput: progress in the situation if in sign of fire or air, however, evil if in signs of water and earth.

Tail: poverty, hatred, looking for things without value.

Fifth House

Caput: many children and love between them.

Tail: loss of a benefit, emergence of an evil among the children, shortage of children, old clothing.

Sixth House

Caput: major illnesses, increase of slaves

Tail: disease, idleness of the servants, weak animals.

Seventh House

Caput: union, many carnal relations.

Tail: destruction of the union, fight, enemies.

Eighth House

Caput: force of life and decreased pain.

Tail: death, loss of inheritance.

Ninth House:

Caput: confidence, strength of religious faith, according to be beneficial or malevolent.

Tail: high strength and low fidelity.

Tenth House

Caput: something like a request to God. It also indicates the strength and elevation in a good profession.

Tail: the loss of control and danger in the journey.

Eleventh House:

Caput and tail has no meaning here.

Twelfth House

Caput: denotes the increase of evil and the good reduction.

Tail: on the contrary, increases the good and the evil decreases.

**Guido Bonatti** on page 987 of his "Book of Astronomy", translated by Benjamin Dykes, Chapter 105, Book 2, gives the meaning of the North Node in each house, often following Abu Mashar, and his description is quite similar to Ibn Ezra', which must also be inspired in the Persian master of the VI Century

## *Collecting and Observing Data*

I tried to do a thorough study of some consistent material, in order to search facts enough to validate the use and the meaning of the Nodes in the delineation of natal charts.

Initially I looked for a sample of 30 charts chosen from the database of the program Astrodatabank by random, but random samples are almost impossible to obtain, as everyone who works in the statistical field can testify.

In addition, the software does not enable the choice of the Nodes for statistical measurement.

Then I decided to use all the charts of a chosen group not so big and I filtered the data according to the criterion of mental illness and institutionalization, and as I expected, the database offered me only 32 charts with their correspondent biography. It was feasible to examine that number, one by one.

My study is based on that charts and on some others of my private consulting. I used all the data I had and outlined the issues that each biography pointed out.

I concluded that, except by two charts that I was able to understand perfectly independently of the Nodes, all the others showed that the Nodes in some sign, house and planetary connection where decisive to understand the biographical events, as I will explain in following paragraphs.

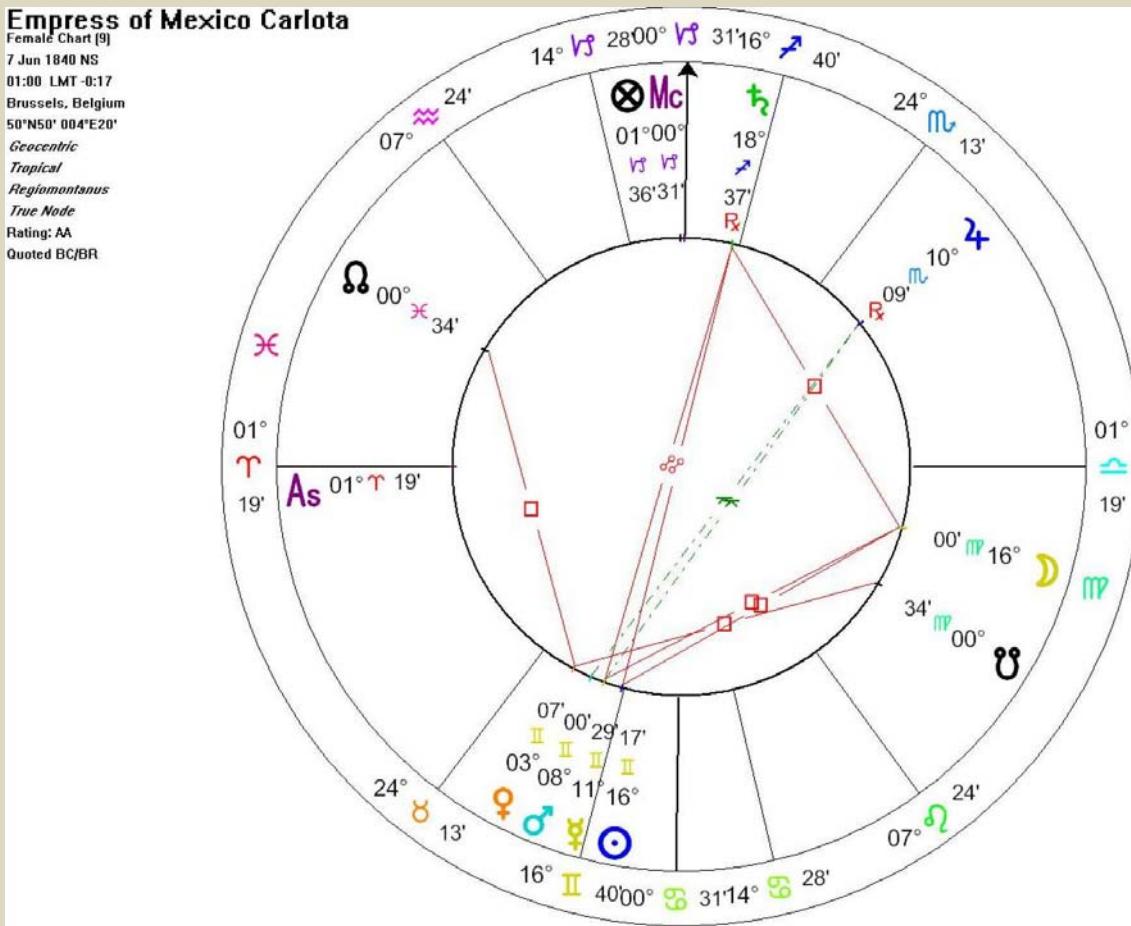
Of about 40 charts of people who have suffered from mental illnesses and was hospitalized I selected five for presentation here. The choice was completely by random.

At this point I have to advice that the biographies used in this article are Astrodatabank's copyright and should only be reproduced with their permission.



## *Example Charts*

- 1- The first example is the natal chart of Carlota, Empress of Mexico.



*Biography: Belgian royalty, daughter of King Leopold I. She married the Archduke Maximilian of Austria to 17 years. Ambitious and restless, she was pleased when her husband offered the throne in Mexico on 28/05/1864. As Empress of Mexico, worked with enthusiasm in Mexican affairs, despite various political and social obstacles. Returning to Europe to seek help, Carlotta suffered from mental breakdown and went crazy all around July 1866. Kept in isolation, she never knew MAXIMILLIAN was executed in 1868.*

*She died in 19/01/1927, at 7:00 pm. In the castle of Boechout in Neise, near Brussels.*

We have here an example of what is called a "phase" in Hellenistic Astrology: The Moon enters in "phase" and gives the maximum of its characteristics.

"Phase" means the time in which a planet is in the exact degree of escaping from the influential of the Sun, and at this moment the planet acts with big strength.

Valens believes that a planet on the Nodes is also subject to "phase", presumably when it arrives at the distance of 17 degrees before and after the Node. In this case

the Moon is almost in phase, as far as 16 degrees from the South Node.

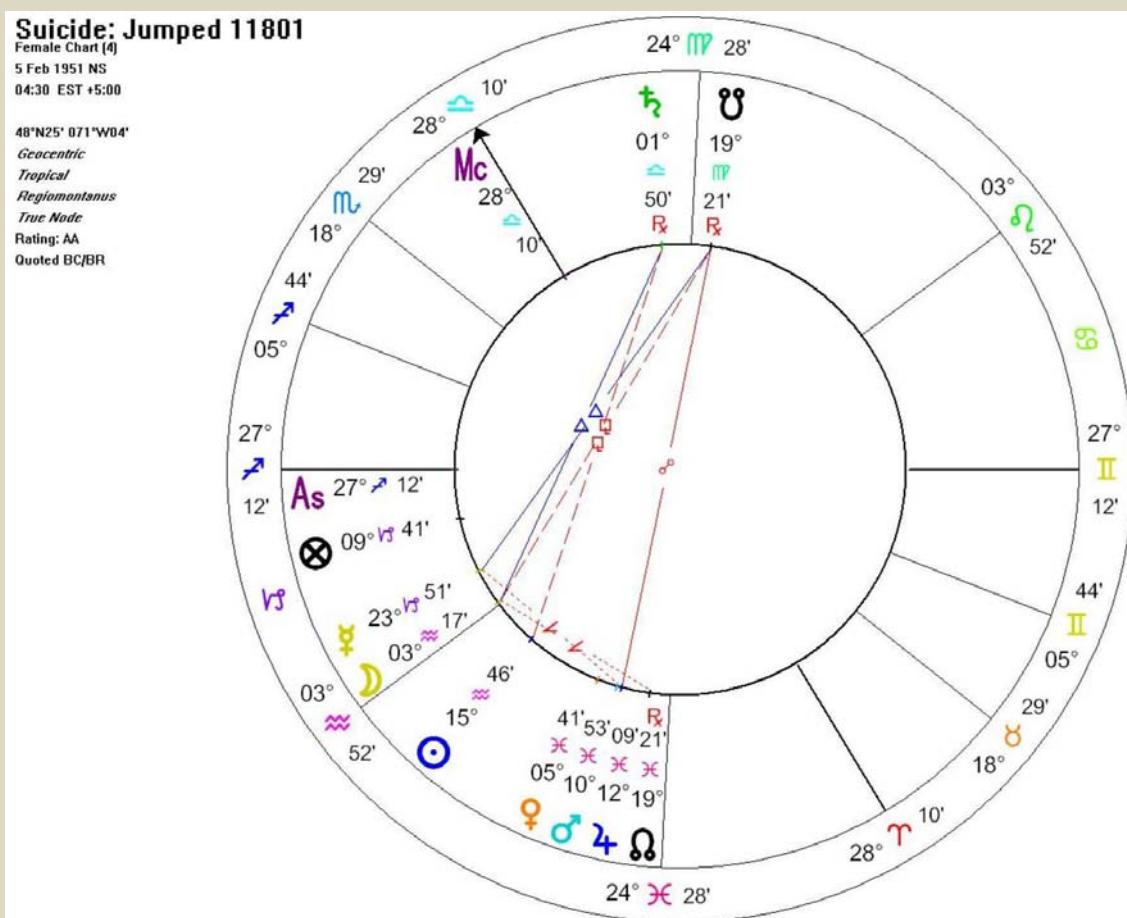
So it is strong in the way that it is exaggerating its meaning as the ruler of the end of the life.

However, the Moon is ruled by Mercury in the third house, in its domicile, but cadent. Mercury is the universal signifier of ideas and the Moon the universal signifier of emotions. The South Node is in the house of diseases and the North Node is in the 12<sup>th</sup> house, the house of the institutionalization.

The North Node is ruled by Jupiter which is in the house of Mars in the eighth sign: death. Mars is in conjunction with Mercury.

The two appear together as disporitors of the Nodes. There is not, as we can see, a positive or a negative Node, since both speak the same language according to their rulers and the Moon: death occurring during institutionalization, ideas and emotions mixed together.<sup>i</sup>

2 Our next case will show a new perspective to look at the Nodes.



*Biography: American women who committed suicide jumping from a bridge after leaving the psychiatric support in the hospital where she gets institutionalized.*

*Last seen at 12/06/1987 at 15:30.*

*Some days later, her car and purse were found, and footprints in the snow, leading to a small bridge over the river.*

*Her body hasn't been found by the time the biography was written.*

I think this chart would be better understood using the "whole signs" system of houses. Thus, we see the Head of Dragon in the fourth sign, the end of life, in sign of water, and in the water the body disappeared "forever." The Node is conjunct Jupiter, in its domicile, and Jupiter rules the Ascendant.

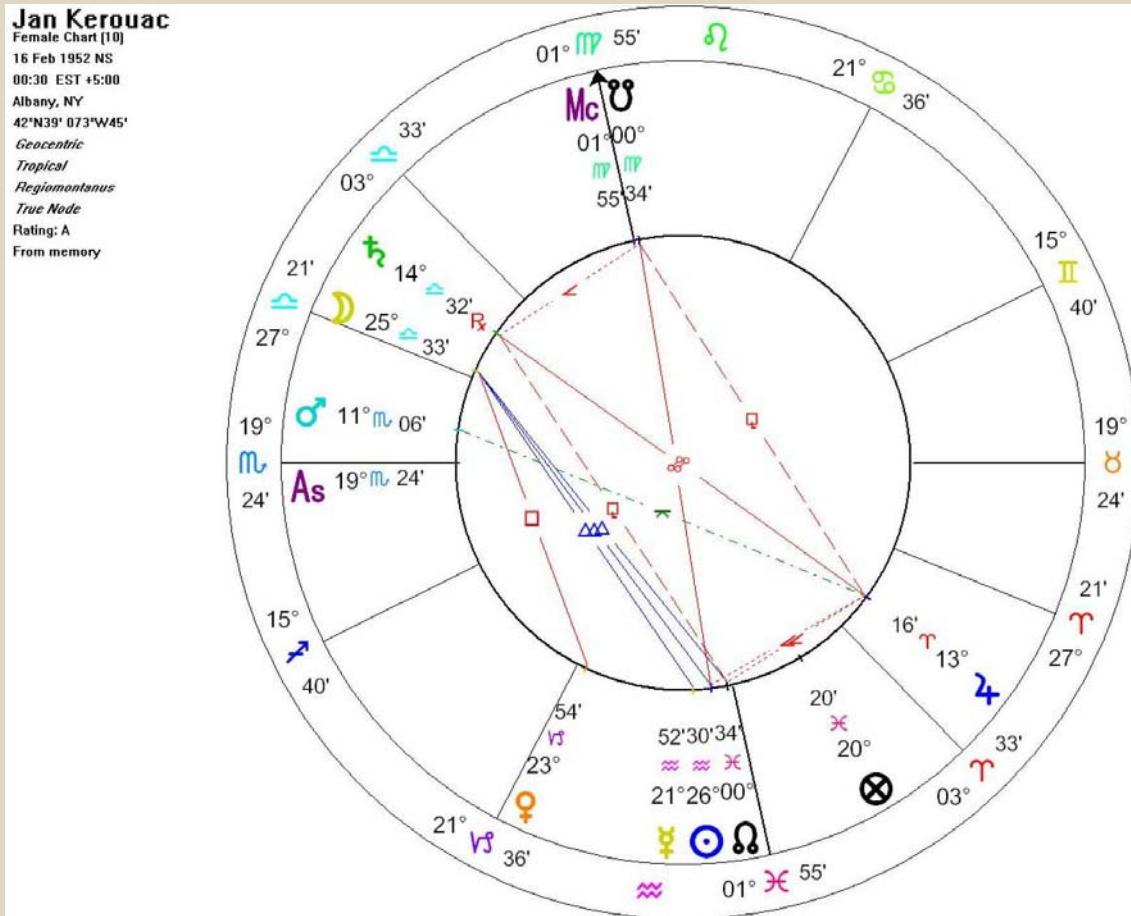
Ibn Ezra says that the North Node in the Fourth House is good if in sign of fire or air, and negative if in sign of earth and water, as is it is the case here.

Jupiter in turn is in conjunction with Mars that by "whole signs" rules the 12th house, the hospitalization.

The case also lends itself to an analysis using dynamic houses. The North Node in the Third House has to do, according to Ibn Ezra and Bonatti, with dreams interpretation, having a characteristic linked to fantasy, which matches with a sign of water. She left in a car, which is a matter of the Third House, and she went towards the bridge, another matter of the Third House (in the **Theme Mundi**, the third house is a bridge between-worlds) and jumped in the water!

It should also be noted that Mars is in conjunction with Jupiter, the ruler of the 4th house.

3- Let's see now the case of Jan Kerouac



*Biography: American writer and noted family, the only daughter of Jack Kerouac, famed Beat generation author. She is probably best known for her first novel, "Baby Driver: A Novel About Myself," 1981, which documents her last visit with her father.*

*Jan's mother was Joan Haverty, Jack Kerouac's second wife. Her parents were estranged at the time of her birth, and her father denied paternity. Her childhood, in the lower east side of Manhattan, was a difficult one, and she and her mother lived in poverty for the most part. When Jan was about nine years old, her mother instituted legal proceedings to force her father to provide child support; blood tests were positive, and Kerouac finally acknowledged her as his daughter.*

*As a teenager, she got heavily involved in the drug scene, and her mother eventually committed her to the state mental institution. After her release, she got into further trouble, and at age 15-16, Jan and her boyfriend took off for Mexico, stopping on the way for a brief visit with her father; it was to be their second and final meeting. Her father died while she was still a teenager. Eventually returning to the United States, she worked various odd jobs, for a time as a prostitute. Like her father, Jan loved being on the road, and her travels in Mexico were the subject of her second novel, "Trainsong," 1988.*

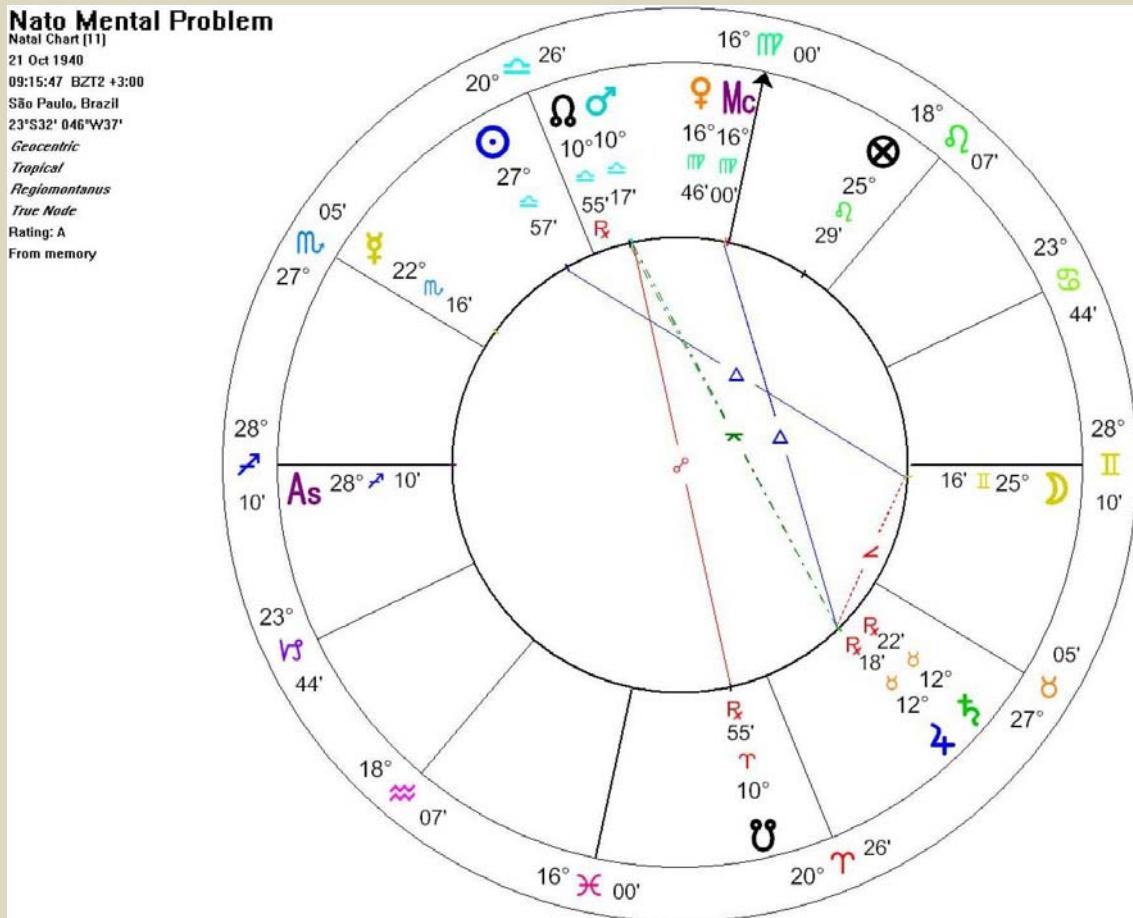
*The last few years of her life were focused on her struggle to have her father's body moved to a family plot, as well as to have his archives placed in a museum or library, thus preserving them forever. A friend commented, "Jan loved her father very much and was haunted by not having him and wanting to get to know him, trying to follow in his footsteps." She was working on her third novel, "Parrot Fever," at the time of her death.*

*Married and divorced twice, her first husband was John Lash. In 1968, she gave birth to a stillborn baby; her only child.*

*Her life was a troubled one, marked with periods of self-destructive behavior, and her promising literary career was cut short by the onset of kidney disease. She underwent dialysis for the five years preceding her death. On 6/04/1996, she had her spleen removed, and she died the following day, 6/05/1996, Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

We see clearly that the Nodes in the Fourth and the Tenth House relate to the father, one of the central themes of the Nativity, which is also the case of our last study. In that case the North Node is also in Pisces, sign of water, which Ibn Ezra considers negative.

4- Now we will see the case of my private consulting, with the same position of the Nodes.



*Biography:* The native had a difficult childhood. His father left the mother when he was born. His aunt and uncle received his mother and the baby in their home and the native grew up seeing he was treated with much less consideration than his cousin. He used to eat after the family, wear the cousin's old clothes, played with broken toys, etc. That kind of thing generated many frustrations and anger. He held many grudges towards the mother for her behaving like a maid in the house and because he felt she never stood by him. Such feelings turned into aggressive behavior and when he was 14 he had the first aggressive crises, when he got himself a gun and went to the father's house threatening to shoot him. After this episode he was hospitalized. His mental illness and the frequent institutionalizations damaged his career and marriage. However he remained married since the moment when this article is being written, and he had two daughters, one of them diagnosed as schizophrenic.

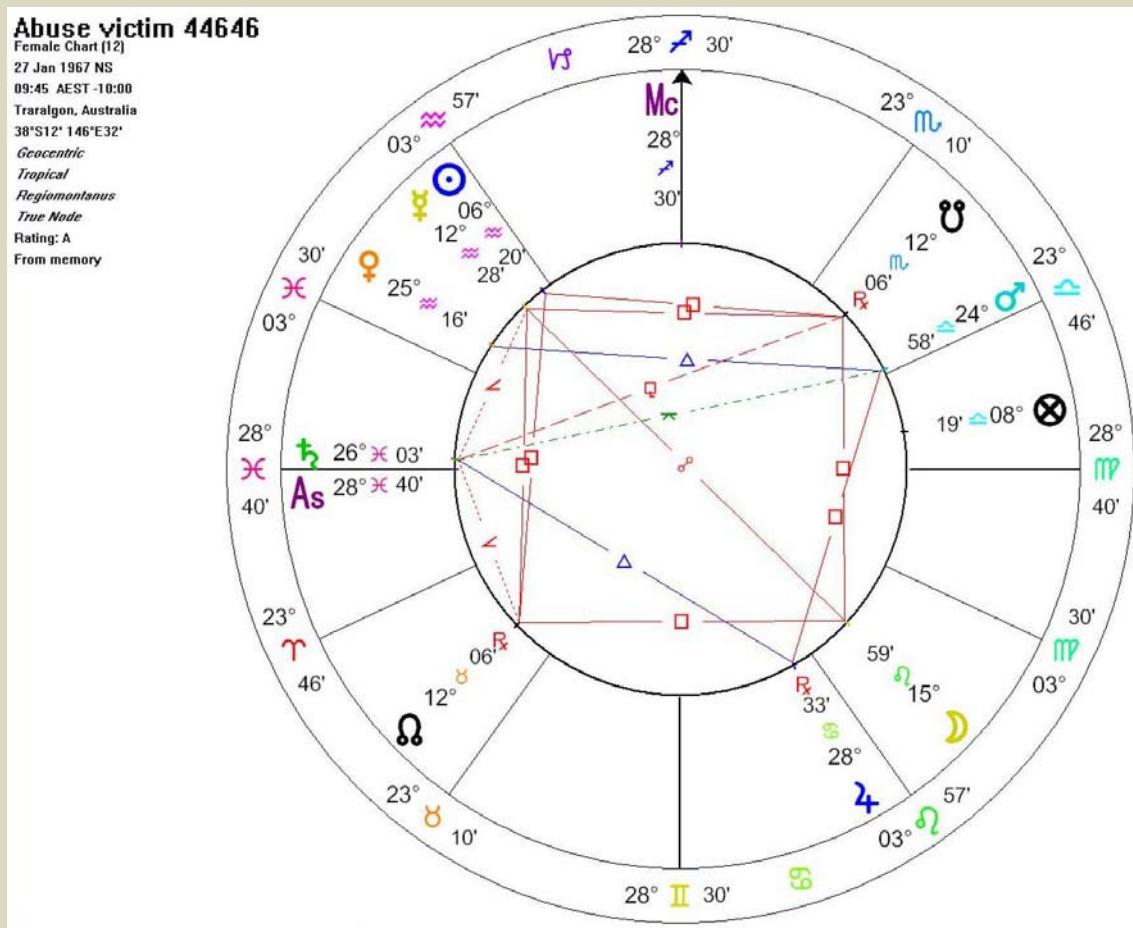
Here we see the North Node in the 10<sup>th</sup> house and the South Node in 4<sup>th</sup> house, two critical places in the native life. That describes the ups and downs in his career, damaged by the disease, since the North Node is in conjunction with Mars, the ruler of the 12<sup>th</sup> house, and the family was his basic problem. The South Node is ruled by Mars,

which partially explains the origin of the psychotic episodes taking an aggressive form. The two houses containing the Nodes are important and interconnected. The native considered his life haunted by his father and mother (Fourth and Tenth house).

5- I'll show below the figure of a native that has an impressive history of abuse. I used the chart to demonstrate clearly that the Moon squaring the Nodes, i.e. in its "bendings", may be the greatest calamity that a person can face. I found, in addition to this chart, more two examples of the same dramatic configuration, but I considered this dramatic story as enough to explain the relationship between the Moon squaring the Nodes: it is a real eloquent example to illustrate the situation.

As a proof I found another chart, almost identical, but where the Nodes are not squaring the Moon, and I'll bring the Biography and the chart in order to demonstrate my theory and to allow the reader to make a judgment by himself about the importance of the Nodes.

Let's see the first chart:



*Biography: Australian victim of child abuse. She was age two when her brother was born and for the next three years she lived in the kitchen cupboard whenever her mom wanted a break, which soon became most of the day. She remained there when her mom went shopping or visiting friends. The cupboard could not be opened from the inside. Occasionally, her brother shared the space but that was rare; it was a lonely, cold, dark place.*

*Amy's parents continually ran her down, abusing her emotionally and physically. Neighbors were aware that she was being abused but did not "interfere." She lived an existence of destitution, alienation and isolation. Her younger brother became a tormentor as they grew up. He beat her, sexually molested her and tortured her. On one occasion he tied her hands behind her back and threw the rope over a top bar, pulling her up and dropping her down until she passed out. Her dad arrived and swore at the kids as they rushed her to the hospital. She had facial scars and a dislocated shoulder.*

*As her brother reached puberty, his sexual assaults became more frequent and violent; he "owned" her, and her sense of self-worth was endlessly battered. She had so little self esteem that she could not run away.*

*Amy eventually escaped with a "nice" man, who seemed to care for her. His girlfriend soon moved in with them and when Amy had a baby, they threw her out and kept the child. When she fought to keep her daughter, her brother joined in the fray, grabbing her by the hair, and they took her screaming to the local psychiatric hospital. She was by then completely irrational, psychotic and destitute, an empty shell.*

*During treatment, further horrors were revealed. She was sexually assaulted by other patients and staff at the hospital. While still living at home, she had been prostituted by her brother for his friends. Amy was afraid of the dark, of going outside, of enclosed places, of being stared at, being seen by the television; the damage to her psyche was inestimable.*

*She met a man, a Vietnam vet who was as psychically wounded as she, consumed by the pain of experience and existence. They moved in together; though they hardly spoke, they turned to each other in mute anguish. Amy screamed and cried every day. She began therapy in a psychiatric hospital, though her brother created obstacles to her continued treatment. At the time of the article, she is getting intermittent treatment for her psychosis.*

It is true that the native has Saturn in the Ascendant, which is a difficult position. Also, by "whole signs," Mercury is in 12<sup>th</sup> house and ruling the family house, the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Furthermore, using the same method of houses division, the North Node falls in the third sign, which refers to the brother. This node is governed by Venus, which is in Aquarius the 12th sign, and the dispositor of the whole tragedy is in the Ascendant, Saturn.

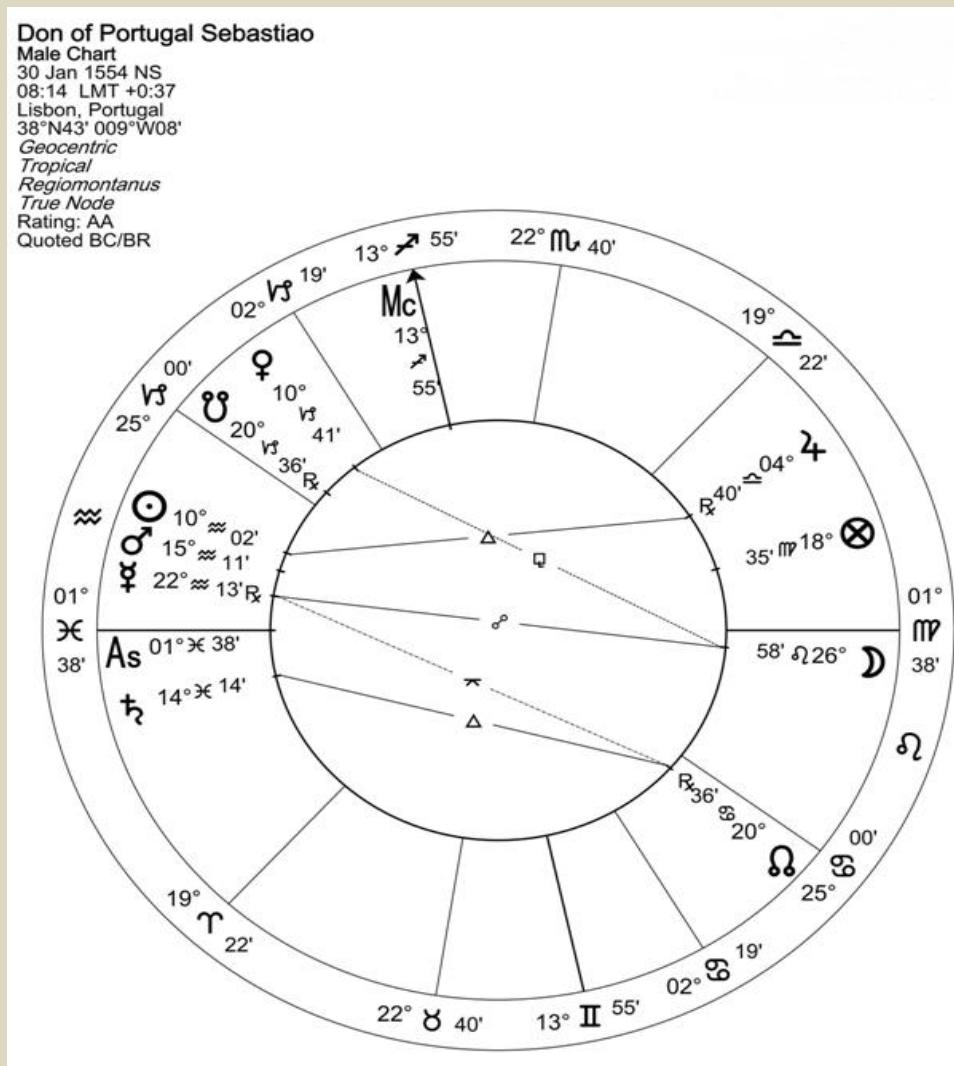
The Nodes are in the Second and in the Eighth House, death, ruled by Venus and Mars, respectively.

The fact that Mars is in trine with Venus and receives it by rulership explains the reason why this person was alive until at least her middle years of age.

The tragedy of her life is explained specially by the square of the Moon to the Nodes, in perfect agreement with Valen's theory.

6- I intend to prove now, through the chart of Don Sebastian of Portugal, that the only explanation of the different destinies of Dom Sebastian and Amy is only explainable by the different position of the nodes.

Both of them have Saturn in Pisces in the Ascendant, Mercury in Aquarius in the 12<sup>th</sup> house in opposition to the Moon in Leo, an identical configuration that ended up with different results.



**Biography:** Portuguese royalty, the only son of Prince John and his cousin, the Spanish Princess Joan of Austria, daughter of Charles V. When his mother left for Spain a few months after his birth, Sebastian was left in the care of his grandfather, King John III. He was educated by priests who ingrained deep bigotry and Puritanism and by the old military standards of fanatic chivalry. Historians wrote that he was precocious, strongly built and excelled in hunting and the art of war.

*From the age of 11, he was given a regime of purging and was suspected of having diabetes. Sebastian came to the throne at 14. Something of a recluse, he became a self-centered despot. The anti-luxury laws that he issued were obeyed by few of the nobility, who preferred their lifestyle of ostentation hedonism. Sebastian was a misogynist who refused all the brides who were offered to him, but instead, obsessed with a mad idea of military glory in North Africa, he led his army and many of the Portuguese nobility in battles of conquest. On 8/04/1578 (August 14 NS), he led his troops in the battle of Alcacer Kibir, Morocco where he, age 24, and his army were defeated and killed. This precipitated the downfall of Portugal when two years later, Felipe II of Spain seized the throne.*

Amy's story is infinitely more painful than that of Don Sebastian. Don Sebastian's chart had the Nodes in the 6<sup>th</sup> and in the 12<sup>th</sup> house. And we know, in fact, that he was a reclusive person, a 12<sup>th</sup> house signal.

We can observe that the role of a node as positive or negative is irrelevant and the present one is a good example of that. The North Node is in 6<sup>th</sup> house, which presumably would bring bigger diseases and the South Node is in the 12<sup>th</sup> house, the decrease of bad things, according to ancient theories. Rather, that kind of thing does not occur. Don Sebastian was much more a reclusive person instead of a sick man.

## Conclusion:

In this article, based on detailed studies of more or less 40 charts( thirty of them given by the Astrodatabank software and 10 coming from my private practice)of persons with mental problems and a history of institutionalization, I tried to prove the importance of the Nodes in astrological delineation.

The traditional astrologer must use them as much as he uses the planets themselves, thing that the Jyotish astrology has always done.

Not taking the Nodes into account is the same as discarding valuable information for the understanding of the Nativity.

We have to notice that often there is no difference between the South and the North Node in their benefic or malefic meaning, but regarding the proportions and provided that it is not in conjunction with a planet, maybe the North Node tends to be slightly better than the South Node.

However, to decide ultimately this question is necessary, as in any delineation, to observe in which house the node is in, the celestial and terrestrial position of its dispositor and the presence or absence of planets in conjunction with them.

Furthermore, as we read in the IV book of the Anthology of Valens, each house get influenced by the opposite one.

In this case the question about the South Node being evil becomes dispensable, since its malice will be reflected in the opposite house turning critical both of them.

I noticed that the Nodes act as a warning sign for a house: Depending on the configuration and delineation of the chart, even the presence of the Head of the Dragon, if conjunct with a good planet in its own domicile, can work in a bad way, as we can see in the case of the native that jumped from the bridge to death.

I'm sure Valens was correct and that the Moon in square to the Nodes points out to big damages and it's dangerous also the connection of the Moon by conjunction or diameter to a Node.

The Moon in the bendings is a configuration that should be avoided at any cost, especially in Electional astrology.

I have no answer about whether we should take into account aspects of the planets to the Nodes, but I noticed that when the Nodes are in conjunction with planets they behave in a negative way.

I would also add that the Nodes are not a random configuration.

They have a deep meaning in a nativity and appear in the same house for generations.

I didn't find in the present sample any prove showing that the North Node exalts in Sagittarius and the South Node in Gemini, as states Bonatti.

I do have a prove in my personal case and in my daughter's case ( both " common persons") that exaltation and debility has nothing to do with the Nodes as said Bonatti.

We both, mother and daughter, have a nodal configuration of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> houses. We both have serious problems with siblings, even my South Node being in the 3<sup>rd</sup> house in its so called "exaltation", Sagittarius, and she having hers in the so called "weakness", Gemini ( also in the 3<sup>rd</sup> house).

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<sup>1</sup> Camille Claudel and Vincent Van Gogh, both psicotics with institutionalization history had the Nodes North in the 12th and South in the 6th.