

Astrological textbooks delineate the movement of the progressed Moon through the horoscope and throughout the life cycle. This article commemorates her three phases and muses on their meaning.

CYCLES OF THE PROGRESSED MOON

Juliet:

*O, swear not by the Moon, th' inconstant Moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.*

William Shakespeare
Romeo and Juliet, II. 1. 151-3.

Like Juliet, timekeepers could not depend upon the lunar cycle to accurately predict the regularity of the seasons. The ancients found that marking time by the moon's cycle meant time drifted, and over generations discrepancies in the calendar were occurring. By the 4th century BCE, the Egyptians had mastered the art of using three calendars. Unwilling to relinquish their mensal calendar that marked religious festivals, the Egyptians learned to juggle both civic and religious calendars.ⁱ

Astrologers are also used to mastering the art of working with a variety of calendars. Each astrological cycle is unique in the way that it measures out a different period of time, symbolises a particular set of themes and events, and constructs and re-constructs the personal narrative. Marking time by the Moon still offers an invaluable astrological calendar. While the Moon proved to be inaccurate at recording the civil year, its ability to reflect the religious festivals shone. Astrologically this is still a viable premise for the progressed moon: inaccurate at defining and mapping the civic (the conscious, solar) landmarks of our life, but a perfect tool for recording the religious (the feeling tone) festivals of our life cycle. The progressed Moon's movement through a personal horoscope evokes the aspects of our life narrative that

are pre-literate, sensual and unconscious; it is the continuing memorial to the feeling life. As it cycles through the horoscope, fragmented aspects of the self are evoked, remembered, and re-collected.

Swearing by the Progressed Moon

The moon's changing rhythm religiously records, reflects and reveals every heartbeat, each breath, and all nuances of primitive life. Dancing through a cycle of phases, she emerges from the dark, grows full, wanes, and then disappears once again. From new to full to dark again, she waxes and wanes, changing shape with each phase. Through these passages the moon reflects and records a labyrinth of impressions, feelings and senses. She is the protector of the menagerie of wild feelings, the guardian of treasured memoirs, the wise blood of the internal mentor. She has entranced and engaged us since conception. Astrologically we record this time with the progressed Moon as she circumvents the horoscope.

The secondary progressed Moon is the most appropriate astrological calendar for recording the emotional maturation and evolution of an individual. The progressed Moon's movement registers the full spectrum of emotional reactions and subtle feeling responses. She records the impact and experience of the feeling life of the family and the climatic changes that occur in the familial atmosphere. It is the record of the maturing, flowering and harvesting of our emotional life, our personal and experiential archives. The progressed moon symbolises our continuous search to belong, to remember, to renew. It is also the continuous cycle of the loss and recovery of emotional attachments. As a cycle it measures the phases of family life

from the birth of a siblingⁱⁱ through adolescence, leaving home and throughout the adult and old age phases until death. The progressed moon operates systemically responding and revealing phases in the family system as well as changes in the members in the family system who we are emotionally bonded or attached to.

As an astrological symbol, the cycle of the progressed moon is immensely important in defining initiatory stages in the life cycle. These critical points in the progressed lunar cycle occur most dramatically at the times surrounding the return, opposition and squares to its natal place. Due to the threefold nature of the moon I have noted the significance of the trines as well, which occur on the *average* of nine years after and before the return. In the personal horoscope the moon is important in its progression through the houses and in its aspects to the other planets as it rhythmically progresses through the chart.ⁱⁱⁱ For me, the key to understanding the progressed Moon is in unravelling the ancient images and traditions that honoured her, and becoming familiar with the goddesses who personified her attributes. One of Luna's spheres is 'feeling memory'. Mnemosyne was the mother of the muses and the personification of memory: 'lunar memory'. Through the progressed moon's movement we encounter her weaving the threads of our personal myth.

“Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind.”^{iv}

The progressed moon flows through the horoscope carrying the feeling memory of the life experience.

Honouring the Threefold Nature of the Moon

Matrilineal tradition separates the lunar cycle into three phases popularly symbolised by the maiden, the mother and the crone. Hera is one of many examples of the phases of the goddess. She is associated with three phases of life, reflected by her epithets *Pais*, the maiden; *Teleia*, the fulfilled; *Chera*, the solitary. Lunar goddesses were threefold in nature: her first phase was the youthful and unattached maiden represented by the emerging crescent of the moon, appearing out of the dark after the New Moon. At the full Moon she shines as the woman of power, as mother and equal, in all her brilliance as the benefactor of life. The final phase of the moon is personified as the crone, wise woman, elder. These goddesses were the guardians of the passage to the other world and contained the mysteries of the Dark Moon. The alchemy of these three distinct phases of life helps distill the life experiences: the white goddess presides over the youthful phase, while the red goddess enlivens the adult. In the last phase the black goddess contains the wisdom of the cycle. The secondary progressed moon symbolises these three stages of the life cycle.

Lunar goddesses embraced the full round of life. The moon became the symbol of the menstrual phases of a woman's life, which embraced maidenhood, before she bled, as well as her menopause, after she finished bleeding. Lunar blood is the mystery of the life force, which creates and restores, but also takes back life. For both genders the symbol of the menstrual cycle can be applicable in segregating the three phases of the life cycle.

The triform nature of the lunar cycle amplifies the experience of the progressed Moon. The progressed Moon throughout the life cycle has three separate, yet interwoven, phases. Circumventing the horoscope three times in an average life span^v, the progressed moon defines three distinct developmental stages: youth, adult and elder. Each cycle of the progressed moon lasts approximately 27.3 years charting important developments in the individual and family life cycle. During its first revolution (from 0 - 27.3 years old), the Moon is absorbing, recording, gathering experiences, sensing, and participating in the feeling life of the tribe. This is the Maiden phase when the goddess Artemis reigns over this primal, wild, untamed and un-tethered time. She was the Mistress of Animals, serving as the symbol for the protection of primitive instincts. We could imagine this as the pre-blood time when life is wild, undirected and virginal. This is the first round of the progressed moon through the horoscope.

The Moon has no personal container in the early years. Since the ego is unformed, the Moon is contained by Mother and the family, and therefore participates freely in their feeling life. Lunar boundaries are fluid. Through the *participation mystique* the child absorbs, senses and records the moods and feelings of the members within the family system. Aspects to the natal moon are a helpful indication of what impact the familial atmosphere had on the child. When the Moon is aspected by the outer planets, the child's feeling experience may have been overwhelmed by powerful feelings lurking below the conscious horizon of the familial atmosphere. Lunar aspects also help to identify the child's attachment style, their experience of loss and grief and their ability to manage these feelings. The Moon registers and remembers the feelings in the family atmosphere as well as the emotional reaction to them.

These remembrances become the record of the individual's feeling life, symbolised by the progressed Moon. The progressed Moon recollects and reawakens these earlier feelings and impressions. During the first cycle through the horoscope, the progressed moon experiences and shapes the feeling terrain of the individual.

Emotional maturity is marked by the completion of its first revolution at age 27. By then, we have recorded every emotional experience available to us. Its second journey through the horoscope (from 27.3 - 54.6 years old) is the phase of adult life, when new emotional and personal attachments are formed. Life force is directed and creative. Giving birth literally, or to the creative self, initiates us into the adult cycle when the feeling life of child and adult co-exist. The child is internalised and the tentative mothering of the self commences. Remembering and reliving our earlier emotional experiences in an adult context begins. A greater choice about our emotional responses and an ability to differentiate our feelings from those of others is part of this maturation. Selene was worshipped as the goddess of the full Moon who drove her chariot, drawn by white cows with crescent-shaped horns, across the night sky. This second phase of life also evokes the goddess Mnemosyne, mother to the nine Muses.^{vi} She is the personification of memory, which is loosened during this time. Memory now is 'not just of the past, a taped recording; it is constructive, evocative, poignant, and the beginning of musing'.^{vii} Mnemosyne guides the progressed Moon's movement in this second phase recollecting (re-collecting) the emotional experiences and memories of the first phase.

The progressed Moon represents the archives of all that we have tasted, touched, wanted, smelt and felt. Lunar memoirs are stored in psyche as images, symbols,

feelings, impressions and instincts or imprinted upon the body. Lunar memory is not lineal, memorising dates and statistics, but revealed through dreams and senses. Mnemosyne's finds her voice in poetry; her memoirs are stored in the fragments of a song, a story or fairy tale. She 'uses the structures of narrative, epic, song or myth to preserve remembrances'^{viii}. The progressed moon is rhythmic and reflective. As the moon progresses through the horoscope she evokes dreams, images, songs which give continuity to our life's narrative. Memory and imagination are woven together through Luna's progression.

Lunar memory is also stored in the body, in the adrenal or olfactory glands, the tension in the muscles, allergies and illnesses. No wonder the progressed moon often synchronizes with health issues. The body also remembers. Primal lunar responses may find their way into consciousness through particular eating habits, changeable moods, anxiety, obsessions and rituals, or excessive fluids which misshape the body. The progressed Moon's movement during this stage evokes psyche's bodily souvenirs. Emotional patterns repeated throughout our adult relationships that are evoked by the progressed moon may have their origins in early feeling responses. The Moon is habitual and through her steady progression of the horoscope we become conscious of the feeling life that underlies our emotional responses.

During this second phase of the progressed Moon through the horoscope, the same astrological territory is traversed as during the first phase. No longer virginal, the progressed Moon remembers the images and impressions of the last phase. The progressed Moon during this phase acts as a loosening agent, allowing buried complexes, taboo feelings, repressed memories to breathe again; to find some place in

the sunlight reflected by the full moon. The astrological cycle provides a tool to connect passages of time together. Links can be made back to times in the previous cycle which allows space for the process of reflection and musing.

The third circuit of the progressed Moon (from 54.6 - 82 years old) initiates us into the elder phase of life, the wise woman, grandmother, tribal elder and crone, when emotional experiences are more anchored and directed, less reactive and instinctive. Our emotional attitudes are more integrated and understood adding a sense of well being to the whole community. The mysteries of the darkening moon are internalised. This is the menopausal phase when the wise blood is internalised and the introjected life force becomes wisdom. For women the experience of menopause is a bodily symbol of this process of interiorization. Hecate Triformis is evoked during this life stage. As the triple goddess she embraces the spheres of heaven (Selene), earth (Artemis) and underworld (Persephone). All three phases are in her. She stands at the triple crossroads of life. The Roman epithet for her was Trivia (*tri-via*, the three roads) and at this junction all three cycles merge into one. Both mother and child are internalised and the cycle of mentoring commences. In this final phase Demeter is the custodian of the sacred mysteries of life, death and rebirth while her daughter reigns in the underworld.

During the mid-fifties the second progressed Moon return occurs nearly a year before the fourth Nodal return and stands at the midpoint of the Chiron return and the second Saturn return.^{ix} So often it marks a turning point, an emptying, and a renewal. Quite often clients present at this time sensing a major transition.

Margaret's first appointment was within the month of her progressed Moon return, four months before her 55th birthday. Margaret's eleventh house Scorpio Moon exactly squares Pluto in the eighth house and is quincunx Uranus in the fifth. Since the initiatory symbol of the return was so prominent, I asked her what she remembered at age 27, a full cycle ago. "That's when it began," she said. "When what began?" I asked.

At 27 Margaret was pregnant. Her husband ignored her, disliking her body and its new shape. He wanted her to remain youthful, an attendant to his boyish needs and a handmaiden to his burgeoning career. She fulfilled the required role and became enormously successful at her profession of the attending wife (Neptune/Sun conjunct in Libra at the MC) with the help of anti-depressants (Pluto/8 squaring Moon/Scorpio). Now nearly 55 the changing shape of her body was re-collecting the feelings of abandonment, rejection and shame that had plagued her throughout this last cycle. But Margaret felt she now had a stronger voice than she had at 27. A new wisdom had emerged and she began the journey of disentangling herself from these distorted images of herself. Margaret began gathering together some of the dismembered parts of her self throughout this re-remembering phase. The progressed moon is often an initiatory symbol that reflects a new phase of life, which Margaret was ready to embrace.

These three phases also correspond with the contemporary family life cycle of child, parent and grand parent, which the ancients saw as the maiden or child, the mother or bride, and the crone or widow. The three generations of the family are continually part of the progressed lunar cycle therefore the movement of the progressed Moon can

also describe atmospheric changes in the family (either the family of origin or the family of choice or both), and specifically mother and children. Systemically the progressed Moon often symbolises the emotional atmosphere around the child or the mother. For instance when Margaret was dealing with entering this new phase of life, her son and her mother were also involved in intensely emotional periods of their lives.

The Circle Game

*'We're captive on the carousel of time
We can't return we can only look behind
From where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game'*

-Joni Mitchell, *The Circle Game*

These three rounds of the progressed moon are represented in our personal horoscope by the Moon's movement through the houses and aspects to other planets.

The second cycle of the Moon through the horoscope religiously repeats the first round. Lunar progressions, after the completion of the first round at 27.3, recollect primitive or ancient feelings unearthed from the first cycle. In *The Sibling Constellation* I cite an example. When Carl Jung's sister was born his progressed Moon was squaring Mars, which could symbolise competitive feelings, rivalry or the impression of an intruder. (Interestingly Freud had the same progression of the Moon square Mars when his next sibling was born). Exactly 27.3 years later, when the progressed Moon was in the same position, Jung wrote Freud calling him a 'dangerous rival' referring to their mutual interest in the psychology of religion.^x At

the precise point during the second cycle the overwhelming feelings of sibling rivalry and competition were again stirred and made conscious through their projection. Mnemosyne weaves the Martian themes of rivalry once again into the story of Jung's life, offering reflection and the space for musing. The artistry of gathering together our life story is the opus of the progressed moon. However the task is difficult, as lunar memory is not externalized, literalized or concretized. Working with the progressed moon engages acute listening skills and the uncertainty of psyche's images.

Imagery imbedded in the houses of the horoscope is both complex and rich. As the Moon begins the second round of the horoscope the terrain is somewhat familiar. As the Moon progresses through a house it recalls the past associated with earlier experiences in that area of our life. She acts as an agent to loosen hardened complexes often revealing the richness of the authentic self, buried under the rubble. As students we learn the potential meaning of the progressed Moon's passage through each house of our horoscope. However with each round we link back to the primal, wild and virginal aspects of our self and are offered an opportunity to gather the dismembered aspects strewn over the landscape (as symbolised by the house). Mnemosyne aids the remembering through images, dreams and feelings, which helps gather the narrative of our life together.

When the progressed Moon enters a new house of the horoscope it evokes the complexes and issues within its jurisdiction, generally symbolised by the planets in that house. During his consultation John said he was feeling extremely anxious, but was not aware of any reasons why he would feel this way. He was 32 when he came

for the consultation and the progressed Moon had just crossed the IC, a powerful personal point in any horoscope. Pluto and Uranus were in the 4th house opposing Saturn and Chiron in the 10th. During the consultation I asked what happened when he was 5, a lunar cycle ago when the progressed moon would have first traversed this territory. His face whitened, then he said, “my mother died”. We explored her death, his loss, his grief; but John’s rational side could not connect his present day anxiety to the loss that he experienced when he was a young boy. My experience of psyche’s timing is that it is quite impeccable. I trust in it fully, so I continued listening. I asked about his relationship, work, and family. Two significant events had recently occurred. A female colleague had just left the workplace after a close association of five years and his dog he had loved for five years had been struck by a car and had to be put down. Psyche had supplied two images of a five-year relationship. “Is it possible” I said “that the confluence of your colleague’s departure and your dog’s death remind you of your five year old”. He began to sob and it felt to me that the dam, which held the waters from the stream of forgetting, had opened. John had experienced both streams of the progressed Moon: *Lethe*, the waters of forgetting, mostly associated with the first and final stages of the progressed Moon and *Mnemosyne*, the waters of remembering, which rise with the second round of the progressed Moon.

A few weeks later John sent me a lovely card to thank me for the session. In it he said he had dreamt of his mother and that he felt he knew her. He said he especially remembered the smell of her perfume. I imagined him sitting on the throne of Mnemosyne, the seat of memory, and gathering some of the fragments interred in his fourth house; fragments of himself, which helped him, feel more whole. The

progressed Moon helps gather together the dismembered aspects of the self to help create wholeness as it cycles our horoscope.

Example 1: 2 October, 1943 11:43 am Melbourne, Australia
Progressed to 16 June 1998

Example 2: 6 January, 1966 4:09 pm Perth, Australia
Progressed to 2 February 1998

ⁱ Entering the new millennium the interest in the history of time keeping and calendars has been apparent.

ⁱⁱ In *The Sibling Constellation* (Penguin Arkana, London: 1999) there are examples of the progressed Moon synchronizing with the birth of a sibling as well as other nodal points in the family life cycle.

ⁱⁱⁱ The progressed Moon's movement is between 12 – 15 degrees a year.

^{iv} Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Granada Publishing, London: 1977). 49.

^v Recent statistics have suggested that the average life span for a woman in Australia is 82, which is synchronous to the return of the third progressed moon.

^{vi} Nine is a lunar number, 1/3 of the lunar cycle. The lunar cycle can be broken down into three cycles of nine years each, which also create nine sub cycles in the three cycles of the progressed moon.

^{vii} Ginette Paris. *Pagan Grace* (Spring, Woodstock, CT: 1995). 121.

^{viii} *Ibid.* 121.

^{ix} The times between the Progressed Moon return and the Saturn returns are generally potent reorientation phases in an individual's life.

^x Brian Clark, *The Sibling Constellation*. 75. Throughout the book there are similar examples of the synchronicity of the progressed Moon.