THE ASTROLOGY OF DEPRESSION
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What insights can the natal chart lend to a psychiatric diagnosis of “Chronic Depression?”

Popularly known in American street lingo as “the blues”, Chronic Depression, or “dysthymia”, is characterized by protracted sadness and fatigue. Sufferers can’t change their mood at will and may spend years immersed in ongoing sorrow, despondency, guilt, regret, and suicidal ideologies. Sufferers experience profound apathy and feel life as devoid of pleasure. There may be changes of appetite, or weight. Excess sleeping is typical, or alternatively, insomnia. Episodes may last from weeks to years, and are recurrent. This condition is not prompted by grief, drugs or situational stress.

Many chronic depressives experience temporary episodes of a more severe nature known as ‘Major Depression’. This conflation is known as “double depression”. For our purposes here, the entire spectrum of Chronic and Major Depression will be referred to as Chronic Depression.

As astrologers, we might assume that yes, the birth chart would display the excesses of astrological energies causative to depression. This article and my three case studies examine the planetary and elemental ‘signatures’ typical of Chronic Depression.

Let’s ask a second, more pertinent question: 

*Can psychiatry benefit from understanding the astrological energetics expressing themselves as chronic depression?*

After all, the astrological understanding of the planetary and elemental energetics of mental illness predates psychiatry by centuries!
Types of Depression Currently Defined

Clinical Psychology currently defines nine types of depression: Chronic Depression; Major Depression; Postpartum Depression; Seasonal Affective Disorder; Atypical Depression; Psychotic Depression; Bipolar Disorder; Situational and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder. We only have space to discuss Chronic Depression, our exclusive focus of this study.

Traditional Views of Depression

Renaissance physician-astrologers recognized and documented planetary, sign, element and ‘humor’ (bodily fluid) energetics thought causative of depression, or “melancholia”. We have space for a brief survey of these ideas. It is essential to note that astrological origin was accepted as but one of many possible causes, whereas astrological charts were studied to determine all possible alternate sources for health complaints. Planetary causation was completely accepted by Medieval and Renaissance physicians as a primary etiology underlying physical and mental illness of all kinds.

Traditionally, all illness was thought to be precipitated by imbalances of four qualities: heat, cold, dry and moist. A wide variety of reasons (including constipation) were offered to explain how humoral imbalances occur, including planetary beams! Yes, planets could make you sick.

Ancient physicians were primarily concerned with the flow and balance of temperature and moisture. Depression was recognized as energetically cold/dry or alternatively, cold/moist. The astrological causes of depression were generally attributed to several sources, primary being the cold influence of Saturn acting alone or through his signs Capricorn and Aquarius. Dr. H.L. Cornell’s Encyclopedia of Medical Astrology lists “melancholy”, and “morbid states of mind and body” under Saturn. This opinion was widely held in antiquity.

Equally blamed was an excess of the cold, dry “melancholic humor” the bodily fluid black bile; and sometimes an overabundance of the cold, wet “phlegmatic humor” or phlegm (explained more thoroughly below).

Planetary energies, in addition to several other known causes might imbalance the four bodily fluids or “humors”, precipitating depression. This could occur at birth (natally), or by transit.
Melancholy Folly: Why the Four Elements and Four ‘Humors’ Shouldn’t Be Conflated

This small section offers a useful detour off the main theme of this article. Readers who have no interest in the medical confusions wrought from conflating the astrological elements with classical humors can skip down to the following section entitled “Water Signs and Chronic Depression.” If you are a Medical Astrologer, this section is essential reading.

‘Phlegmatic’ types of depression were thought typical to water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces). However, the earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn) became strongly associated with depression despite their practical traits not well matching symptoms typical of Chronic Depression. How did this conundrum occur?

The word “melancholy”, an alternate word for depression, literally means “black bile” from the Greek melas, “black” + khole, “bile”. This bodily humor was believed responsible for depression, i.e. “melancholia” when in excess. (Centuries later, black bile was discovered to be either non existent or referring to a brownish-grey sediment sometimes found in the blood rather than true bile.)

Hippocrates (460-370BC) fathered this four-humor theory of health. There were now four astrological elements and four bodily humors! Furthermore, the four humors in excess, expressed themselves as four human physical-psychological “temperaments”: Choleric, Melancholic, Sanguine and Phlegmatic. (These temperaments are not identical to their predecessors, the four ‘elements’.)

Humors and their designed temperaments were assigned both heat and moisture levels in this manner: yellow bile-choleric: hot/dry; black bile-melancholy: cold/dry; bloodsanguine: hot/moist; and phlegm-phlegmatic: cold/moist.

It must have seemed elegantly symmetrical to match up the four humors and their four temperaments with the original four elements, without allowing that perhaps these groups are not identical. The four temperaments were assigned to the traditional four elements in the following manner: Choleric-Fire; Melancholic-Earth; Sanguine-Air; Phlegmatic-Water. This system falls apart when examining signs individually.

The humor ‘black bile’, i.e. melancholy, was designated as the metabolic agent of its historic predecessor, the earth element. The logic now followed that because black bile “caused” depression, and belonged to the earth
element, then earth signs must be depressive by nature (even if many of the more notorious traits subscribed to water signs fit the symptoms of Chronic Depression best!)

Unfortunately the incorrect conflation of these four assumed bodily fluids, or ‘humors’ with “their” four astrological elements became so standard in early writings as to typically occlude all mention of the elements themselves!

This causes a lot of diagnostic confusion because the two are not identical. E.g. Aquarius, a mid-Winter, Saturn-ruled sign is correctly listed as “cold” in some older texts. Aquarius as a sign type makes a good candidate for being the coldest of signs. Mid-winter is typically the coldest time of year!

However, once the four humor theory appeared, then all three air signs, including Aquarius were assigned the “sanguine” humor and thus listed as “hot and moist”, and cheerful too, in alternate texts! Hot attributions make no sense for Aquarius because this sign’s medical and temperamental traits are all lean cold, not hot! (Aquarius types are famous for freezing feet, insufficient circulation, depression, anemia, low blood pressure and varicose veins.)

Another argument against conflating the four bodily humors with four elements is that of the “missing” temperatures “warm and cool”. In the humor theory, signs of shared element are lumped together under “their” assigned humor, and therefore must be either “hot” or “cold”. Unfortunately, life does not work this way! And neither do the signs.

The signs are too variable to be lumped together by element under extremes of temperature. For instance, air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) are all supposed to be “hot”, just because “their” assigned bodily humor, (blood) is classified as such. On physical and psychological examination, neither Gemini or Aquarius are hot, but we might easily conceive of temperate Libra as “warm”. Classic Libra types are just exactly that, neither hot nor cold, but warm. Libra is after all, the sign of balance!

The same conundrum holds for the other half of humoral division: that of temperature: moist/dry. For example, the earth element is classified as “dry” because its assigned humor, “back bile” was believed to be dry. Therefore, all three earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn) must now follow along and be “dry” too! But, are they?

Its easy to debate that Taurus, one of our most fertile and magnetic signs is hardly “dry”. Neither do Taurus natives suffer from the same level of “dry” ailments as do their fellow earth signs Virgo and Capricorn. In fact, Taurus folks are famous for their lustrous hair, luscious lips and sexy ways. And, why would the most fertile time of year be energetically “dry”? Its just not a fit!
Signs are a hybrid of elemental, planetary, modal and seasonal energies. Understanding this makes it easy to see that although a sign is assigned its elemental group, it’s not the element itself. Conversely, and element is not a sign! And neither are the elements identical to four bodily humors (my main point!)

The best advice to confused astrologers is to use the classical four elements (fire, earth, air, water) and not conflate them with the later four classical humors and four temperaments until you are well aware of the profound differences. One can diagnose elemental imbalances directly from the birth chart, sans physical examination. However, humor imbalances must be established from physical observation, as was their intended medical use.

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**WATER SIGNS AND CHRONIC DEPRESSION**

In regards to depression, the classical character of water signs in excess precisely fits the symptoms of chronic depression, i.e. ‘melancholia’ far better then do the practical, hardy, and realistic earth signs. (Personally, I’ve not observed many earth sign natives presenting the “sleepy” symptoms of this ailment.)

However, Pisces, Cancer and Scorpio in affliction are indeed famous for presenting (when negative) all the clinical symptoms of chronic depression: fatigue, introversion, grief, sorrow, apathy, no pleasure in life, aversion to exercise, fear, hopelessness, self loathing and suicidal ideologies, plus a profound love of sleep. Water signs also comprise the three “mute” signs of tradition, and are naturally associated with the 8th house of death and the 12th house of sorrows. Weeping is a watery activity!

C.E.O. Carter’s, discussion of ‘Melancholy’ in his Encyclopedia of Psychological Astrology writes⁶ “the water signs all tend to moodiness”. Any random perusal through sign descriptions of Pisces penned by historic authors lends keywords (when negative) as “sensitive”, “repining”, “self abnegating”, “lazy”, “resigned”, etc. This reputation is firm.

Although some Pisces types are cheerful, if you want to learn to recognize the depressed water sign type, observe the general affect and vocal tones of six famed Piscians: Johnny Cash, Ralph Nadir, George Harrison, James Taylor, Brian Jones and Kurt Cobain. Perhaps we should include Billie Holiday and Marilyn Monroe, whose languid affects mirrored their Pisces Moons! Get the picture? (Pisces, Cancer and Scorpio readers please note that being born in water signs does not guarantee depression and that all signs have their unique mental afflictions! Indeed, your inherent sensitivity has in fact produced many of the world’s great geniuses.)
Joseph Blagrave’s 1658 description of depression (below) is perhaps the most behaviorally descriptive extant in early writings. He gives symptoms:

“And such who are by nature Melancholy, and Mad, usually are given to sadness, sighing and a much silence, seldom pleased. And those who by are by nature Phlegmatic Mad, are usually sluggish, and idle, not caring to do anything, except forced thereto, and much given to sleep, will lie in bed two or three days together if not disturbed.”

Blagrave had no knowledge of our recently categorized nine varieties of depression, and his comments are based on the old Greek energetic paradigm, no longer in vogue. We must remember that when he speaks of those “whose nature is Melancholy” he is discussing the prominence of a bodily fluid, and not earth signs, per se. However, once earth signs were assigned to this humor, the two (the earth element and the melancholy humor) became interchangeable. The same occurred when the ‘Phlegmatic humor’, or lymph became interchangeably linked to the obviously moist water signs. (The humor choler, or yellow bile, was given the fire element, and the humor sanguine, blood, was allotted to air.)

Personally, I’ve found that water signs (particularly Cancer and Pisces) are dominant in presenting symptoms of Chronic Depression, in addition to the signs of Saturn: Capricorn and Aquarius. Water sign Scorpio appears to be more conducive to bouts of the more extreme Major Depression.

The symptoms of Chronic Depression fit descriptions of water signs in excess better than traits expected for abundant earth signs (i.e. practical, responsible, steady, unflappable, hard working, tough). There are exceptions for all rules, but it’s obvious that Chronic Depression resembles traits known for an excess of water signs combined with Saturnian signs and the specific planetary signatures outlined below.

**Tallying Elements: A Word of Warning**

There are various systems afoot for tallying the elements within a chart for the purpose of establishing elemental dominance or deficiency. However, without a proper knowledge of planetary-sign co-mixture, it is all too easy to go astray!

E.g. should a chart display but one planet in water, and that planet is Saturn, we now have “frozen” water. This condition hardly helps a chart with deficient water signs. Saturn suppress fire, and this too must be noted when Saturn is the only planet found in fire signs. Saturn, being earthy, strengthens the earth element and provides a nice steadying force in air signs, while slowing it down.
Mars’ qualities must also be understood before assuming this hot planet strengthens the elemental energy of its natal position. Mars irritates air and boils water!

One must also know how to assign weight, or importance to a planet being tallied by element. Outer planets shared by generations should not always assume the same weight as personal planets, and one must use common sense before adding scores of asteroids to your count! Obviously the two “lights” Sun and Moon should receive more points.

**Sparse Research**

Early astrological research in the mental health field is sparse at best, and ancient or Renaissance writers limit their commentary to single cases, discussion of humors, complex lists of signatures sans examples, or parrot previous texts. Few ancient or Renaissance multiple case studies with documented symptoms and chart samples of Chronic Depression were conducted as far as I know (or any other mental illness). The work of Renaissance physician Joseph Blagrave offers some brief documentation of case symptoms.

**Lost Causes of Depression and Other Mental Illness (Etiologies)**

Clinical diagnosis could benefit from reconsideration of depression etiologies lost in the modern West’s wholesale adoption of a bio-chemical model of medicine. Renaissance physicians considered a far wider array of causes for depression then we do today including: constipation, shock, grief, bewitchment, fairy problems spirit interference, imbalance of the four humors, astrological elements and/or planetary rays. If included, several formerly recognized types of depression would join today’s clinical “nine causes”, including depression by astrological origin!

If one accepts reincarnation as valid, (as do most Hindu astrologers) then unresolved past life memories are a plausible source for unexplained malaise, constituting a tenth category of depression: the “past life hangover”! Modern astrologers are free to consider these currently unfashionable etiologies. For instance, one friend shared that he discovered at age sixty that his life long suicidal ideology was caused by the spiritual presence of a boyhood friend whom had killed himself. Once he dismissed the spirit, the problem abated. Nonsense?

Astrology holds that certain planetary patterns cause depression in ways we do not fully comprehend. The adherent of reincarnation theory sees how well the natal pattern reflects antecedent causes from past lives. From this point of view, many of us enter life
burdened with sorrow, guilt, specific fears, anger or regret.

Psychologists certainly do inquire into our early childhood influences that might precipitate depression, but rarely include causes further back in the DNA chain, and may reject past life memory as invalid.

Ancestral family trauma, also largely ignored, can also be seen in the birth chart! Is this family trauma somehow imprinted in the DNA of depression victims? All these possibilities are worthy of our consideration. However, the sad fact remains that today’s psychiatrists use a far narrower and less inclusive palette for determining the causes of Chronic Depression then did their predecessors!

Modern psychology documents newly discovered depression etiologies such as ‘Seasonal Affective Disorder’, so obvious in “light deficient” charts (see signature #3 below).

The wondrous astrological chart is able to see into all these possibilities, and was once used to do so!

**ASTROLOGICAL SIGNATURES OF CHRONIC DEPRESSION: PRELUDE**

**MULTIPLE TESTIMONIES NEEDED:**

Always look for “three testimonies”. *Chronic Depression is a potential if three or more of the below listed testimonies are observed in the same chart.* If only one of the below fifteen conditions is present, don’t assume the native suffers this malady. Most people will have one of these conditions in their natal charts! *Give added weight to the first five signatures in the list. These five are very strong indicators.*

**GROSS IMBALANCE OF ASTROLOGICAL ENERGIES:**

Should the astrological conditions listed here occur simultaneously with a deficiency of the opposite and balancing energies, we then have gross imbalance, a one sided teeter-totter! This important point cannot be more forcibly emphasized! Mental health extremes occur alongside astrological extremes. E.g. someone born with a predominance of water signs and also a dominant Moon (also of cold, moist influence), would be further pushed to their liquid extremes should they lack warm and dry fire signs and/or a strong Sun and Mars in their birth chart! And, vice versa. (Signatures #11-12)
WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE FIFTEEN SIGNATURES OF CHRONIC DEPRESSION

Although I’ve established the below list of fifteen chart signatures for Chronic Depression from decades of observation, it is undeniable that other researchers have, and will continue to make new findings! For instance, midpoints, harmonics and asteroids are neglected here. I’ve limited my case research to immediately obvious elemental, planetary, house and sign patterns. The isolation of recognizable shared energy ‘signatures’ from highly unique individual chart patterns is a bit like herding cats, but can be approximated. This is after all, the chemistry of combinant cosmic vibrations.

FIFTEEN ASTROLOGICAL SIGNATURES OF CHRONIC DEPRESSION

1) SUN, MOON, ASCENDANT OR MERCURY IN WATER SIGNS, ESPECIALLY PISCES AND CANCER (TWO OR MORE PLACEMENTS).

Scorpio appears more prone to Major Depression, the more extreme form of the disease.

Note: Water is the most receptive and easily imprinted of the four elements\(^1\). It is my observation that natives of the water signs appear to more strongly retain childhood, ancestral and past life memory then do other signs. Additionally, these same signs are also famous for psychic and emotional sensitivity, hence their low threshold to psychic interference. Though unrecognized by clinical psychiatry, psychic sensitivity can significantly support Chronic Depression in those sufferers whose charts are dominated by water signs in affliction.

2) SUN, MOON, ASCENDANT, MERCURY, VENUS OR JUPITER IN SATURN’S SIGNS (CAPRICORN OR AQUARIUS, MOST ESPECIALLY AQUARIUS).

Note: This is much stronger when the planet is found simultaneously in hard aspect to Saturn, or when two or more planets are in Saturn’s signs. E.g. Moon in Aquarius conjunct Saturn.

3) LIGHT DEPRIVED BIRTH CHARTS AND DEPRESSION: A NEW FINDING.

Birth near dark of Moon, (in Last Quarter, Balsamic or early New phase), especially when also born a night, and also during Winter (Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces). A midnight, winter birth at New Moon would present the most extreme case! Last quarter Moon qualifies.

Note: This condition suggests a deficiency of astral light, and a great need for sunlight. Not surprisingly, light deficiency is now associated with depression in some individuals,
and is called ‘Seasonal Effective Disorder.’ Serotonin levels decrease in the low light of winter. Serotonin assists dopamine production. Lack of dopamine produces difficulty feeling pleasure. Could it be that folks born in the winter signs Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces; and/or at the dark of the Moon, or at night, are prone to low levels of serotonin?

4) **Saturn dominant in any sign or angle, or in hard aspect or quincunx to Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus or Neptune (especially to the Moon), contributes to this malady.**

This condition is even stronger if conditions #1 or #2 are concurrent. Saturn’s cold, oppressive beams were traditionally considered a preeminent cause of depression, because melancholy was thought energetically “cold”.

5) **Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter or Neptune closely conjunct the natal South Node.**

6) **Heavily tenanted water houses (4th, 8th 12th whole sign houses)**

*Note:* The 12th house is the traditional ‘house of sorrows.’ If there is a primary house of depression, this is it! Saturn, Moon, Mercury or South Node in this house offer testimonies for possible depression. (See also #15). Note: Early astrologers were dimly aware of the mental health implications of this house (in opposite to the 6th house of physical health). Writers assign depressive terms to this house: “fear”; “secret enemies”; “imprisonment”; “lament”; “solitude”; “enslavement”; “self-undoing”; “nightmares”; “regret”; “unfinished business”; “karma” etc. We must remember that this house also has fine positives i.e.: “charity”; “universal love”; “spiritual work”; etc.

7) **Great stress across the 3rd-9th house axis (whole sign houses).**

Saturn or Lunar Nodes in 3rd, or 9th are typical, or several malefic posited across this axis.

8) **Mercury or Moon at 27-29 degrees of water signs or earth signs or Saturn’s signs (Aquarius or Capricorn.)**

These degrees are reliably productive of depression.

9) **Neptune afflictions and conjunctions to Sun, Moon, Ascendant, Mercury, Saturn. In particular, the Sun conjunct Neptune within one degree produces strong utopian longings for escape from this world.**

*Note:* Although symptoms may concur, “Neptunian” depression is of a different psychological and energetic origin than is Saturnian depression.
10) **Moon ‘afflicted’:**

Being our most emotionally responsive celestial body, the Moon was considered a preeminent influence in all mental illness, once termed “lunacy”! There are a great many ways a natal Moon qualifies as afflicted. Extreme and multiple afflictions can reflect in odd mental states or derangement of various kinds. However, Chronic Depression requires cold, dark energies, and their consequent emotions of fear, sorrow, hopelessness or loneliness. We would look for afflictions suggestive of these feelings. Obviously, some Moon signs would be more prone then would others.

**Brief List:** Moon ‘Besieged’ between malefic Saturn, Mars; in hard aspect to Saturn or Neptune (#4, 9); conjunct either Node (especially the South); in “the bends”, i.e. closely square her nodes; in 8th or 12 houses; in fall or detriment (Scorpio or Capricorn); isolated by standing in a hemisphere or quadrant alone as a “singleton”, eclipsed, center of T-square or Yod; quincunx Saturn, Mars, Uranus or Pluto; closely conjunct outer planets Uranus, Neptune or Pluto.

11) **An absence of natal fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) occurring with any of the above testimonies.**

**Note:** Fire is hot/dry and antidotes cold/wet energies of depression. Fire signs bring warmth, purpose, fun, cheer, muscular activity optimism and stimulation. (Saturn in fire signs does not necessarily help, because his cold nature suppresses fire.)

12) **The Sun and Mars weak by sign and placement in the chart (occurring with any of the above testimonies.)**

The Sun is not only the giver of Light, but opposite Saturn by rulership.

Mars gives energy and courage. Energetic Martial types are seldom depressed, (they have their other problems.) It takes skill and experience to weigh the strength of planets and there are many ways that weakness occurs.

**Brief example for Sun:** Cadent, conjunct South Node, in hard aspect to Saturn or Neptune, in Aquarius, Libra, Cancer or Pisces, in 6th, 7th or 12th whole sign houses.

**Brief example for Mars:** In Cancer, Libra, in hard aspect to Neptune, in 4th or 7th houses, center of Yod.
13) **VENUS weak and afflicted: Lack or loss of affection and pleasure contribute to depression.**

Skill is required to judge the weakness of Venus.

*Brief example:* *In detriment or fall (Virgo, Aries or Scorpio), conjunct South Node, in hard aspect to Saturn, in 6th or 8th house, conjunct South Node.* (Also see #2)

14) **JUPITER afflicted, especially in earth or water signs: Deficient joy and hope.**

*Note:* A strong Jupiter does not necessarily check depression. A dominant Jupiter juxtaposed to a depression signature or equally powerful Saturn produces extreme highs and lows, so typical in bipolar signatures! If other testimonies agree, Jupiter in its home sign Pisces can exacerbate depression (producing floods of tears). (Also See #2)

15) **Malefic emphasis in the natal 12th whole sign house from the natal Moon.**

Saturn, South Node or other fearful combinations can sometimes testify to depression when found in the sign posited just previous to the natal Moon. (See # 6).
THE CASE STUDIES

Let’s observe and compare the elemental, planetary and sign patterns in the charts of three Chronic Depression sufferers: “Morris”, “Jennie” and the famous melancholic Abraham Lincoln. Will their natal charts show the expected excess of cold, moist, dry or dark and slow energies? Will Saturn or Saturn’s signs dominate? Will water or earth signs be in excess with no counterbalance from the warming, playful fire signs? Will their charts be “light deprived”?

The severity and duration of chronic depression makes an ideal subject for the astrological study of natal energetics. The above fifteen signatures reveal how chronic depression, (dysthymia), requires multiple testimonies, brilliantly displayed by the natal charts of all three subjects.

Because of space limitations, a discussion of the transits and progressions of depression onset are the province of another discourse.

THE CHARTS (1, 2, 3)

The skeptic might propose that these three birth charts were cherry picked to fit my list of fifteen astrological signatures for Chronic Depression. Absolutely not. Our first two depression cases (Morris and Jennie), were my only personally documented depressives for whom I could obtain permissions. Depression sufferer Abraham Lincoln is included because he is perhaps America’s most noted historical melancholic.

The multiple signatures of chronic depression observed in these cases are typical of most in my files. Still, this does not constitute scientific style research because we would need a ‘sample’ of at least one hundred charts, plus replication studies. What we have here is a useful guide extrapolated from one researcher’s years of observation. Those who would enjoin this research should make sure to segregate their samples by established depression type.
CHART 1: MORRIS

Grandson of Holocaust survivors, Morris was born depressed, medicated for years, nothing really helps. He seeks relief to no avail, remaining bereft of all joy. Despite remarkable achievements, he feels without purpose. Friendly, caring, generous and interested in friends, he suffers constant extreme emotional pain and intolerable self loathing. Memories of past events torture him (water signs govern memory, most especially Cancer). Unusually handsome, he pays scant concern to personal grooming or worldly demands. Eschewing exercise, he dresses in dark clothes and maintains a sad, flat affect, punctuated by an amazing array of cryptic facial expressions. Morris presents a classic Piscean of the chronically depressed type, so often seen.
The Birth Chart

Please refer by numbers below to the Signatures Listing

Morris’ chart shows undeniable testimonies of depression. Light Deficiency: Morris was born at the dark of the Moon, in late Winter (signature #3) His Sun and Moon are in water sign Pisces, while water sign Cancer rises, qualifying him as “triple water”, or energetically cold and moist (#3). Mercury is also in Pisces (3). The only astrological body in a warming fire sign is his North Node in Aries, suggesting more the cure. Fire is lacking (#11). His Sun and Moon are both cadent in the 9th, and in mutable Pisces, diffusing his vital force, sense of purpose and will to live (#12). Additionally, Saturn in Virgo afflicts both Lights, (Sun and Moon), and Mercury by opposition, across the mental 3rd and 9th houses (#7). This suggests acute mental distress. Three planets tenant ‘Saturnian’ signs: Venus and Mars are in Saturn-ruled Aquarius while the ‘benefics’ Jupiter and Venus are in Saturn’s signs (#15). Their normal ability to antidote Saturn are thus removed by their placement in Saturn’s own signs.) Neptune is also near the South Node, increasing psychic sensitivity and apathy, (#5).

The Moon indicates in part, our emotional comfort level in life and plays a large role in all mental states. Morris’ natal Moon is extremely afflicted. Notice Luna’s severe entrapment between her combustion with Sol, her opposition to Saturn plus a close conjunction with Mars! (#10). Additionally, a weak Yod (two quincunxes) to the Moon from Pluto and Neptune is the proverbial cherry on this depressing cake. No trines or squares relieve the Moon (the ruler of his chart and indicator of feeling nature).

Comment: This horoscope is a classic example of an excess water/deficient fire depression combined with an oppressively strong Saturn affliction. The chart suggests Light, Oxygen and Exercise Deprivation! The uplifting planets Jupiter and Venus are too weak to lend joy (#13-15). Furthermore, there are no strong squares in this chart to help out. Squares, being activating, are not always “bad”. This chart needs them! Energies are slowed. Morris’ Pisces-Cancer dominance suggests family PTSD, past life memory burden or supernatural interference. Born depressed, there is also the possibility of a past life memory “hangover”.
Born into the grinding poverty of immigrant Jewish Brownsville, New York. Jennie was reared on over-salted herring and potatoes, in tenements crowded with pogrom survivors. She fled her cruel mother at sixteen, commencing her lifelong cigarette habit of five packs a day. Kind, brilliant, remote yet friendly, she drifted through life overwhelmed by grief, convinced she would die before her 21st birthday. Lost in reverie, Jennie escaped into books, art, writing, work. Her life long sadness deepened upon receiving news that her partner had committed suicide after receiving his draft notice. She suffered tunnel vision and sleep apnea.

We might rightly suspect an excess of water signs, (especially Cancer for family PTSD), Neptune (sensitivity and discomfort with this world), Saturn (cold, dark feelings); and perhaps a strong Moon (tenderness, good memory).
THE BIRTH CHART
Please refer by numbers below to the Signatures Listing

Jennie’s Sun, Moon and Mercury are all three in the sentimental water sign Cancer (signature #1). Light Deprivation is again obvious: Her night birth in a water sign under a dark balsamic Moon testifies to extreme astral light deprivation (#3). Her close and ‘cadent’ Sun-Neptune conjunction explained her tendency to fall involuntarily into light trances. I’ve rarely encountered someone born with an exact (partile) conjunction of Sun with Neptune that was not depressed, (#9).

Cold Saturn is situated in the 12th house position to the Moon, (i.e. one sign behind both Moon and Mercury), (#15), and in close conjunction to her Moon across the sign border from previous sign Gemini. Luna is highly stressed between her across-sign conjunction with chilly Saturn and a close same sign conjunction with intense Pluto in the sign governing family memory: Cancer, (#10).

Jennie’s Moon reflects an excess of cold, moist, slow and dark energies, and explains her bereaved emotional state (#10). Her Saturn-ruled Aquarius Ascendant tops off the load of prominent depressive prone signs (#2). Jupiter is also in a Saturn ruled sign (#15). Venus, planet of love’s happiness is thrice afflicted by its detriment in Virgo, conjunct both the South Node and Mars, and in square by sign to Saturn (#13).

Notice the curious absence of close major aspects, suggesting inner disconnection. Jennie suffered mental disconnects, often unaware of her surroundings.

The presence of her cheering first house Jupiter didn’t alleviate her sorrows because it resides in Saturn’s sign Aquarius (#4), and lends no helpful aspect to either Sun nor Moon. Instead, her life uplifted others! As a strong advocate of civil rights, desegregation and peace, Jennie opened her table to many. Sadly, deepening depression contributed to her untimely death at age fifty-five.

Gross Imbalance: Excess Water/Fire is Deficient

Notice the complete lack of warm, dry fire signs that would have counteracted Jennie’s excess cold, moist water element! (#11). This is remarkably similar to Morris’ case. Both examples are cold/moist with deficient hot/dry energies for balance. To reiterate: Depression, as are most mental and emotional disorders, is energetically produced or represented in a horoscope by a set of extremes: one energy is in excess while simultaneously, its balancing energy is deficient.

Another testimony lies with the conjunction of Venus (love and happiness) to the South Node (loss), (#5). The suicide of her first love burdened her heart with grief. Mars, the “fiery” planet, is also disturbed by its conjunction on the Natal South Node. The partile conjunction of her cadent Sun and Neptune testifies to a diffused vital force (#12), and showed her disinclination towards the earth plane. Jennie sometimes fell into involuntary light trances, and loved poetry. How Neptunian!
Comment: Jenny's chart provides another 'classic example' of light and oxygen deprivation, with possible sad family or tribal memory overtones (Cancer dominant and Venus conjunct South Node), plus longing for her true spiritual home (Sun conjunct Neptune). The world is a harsh reality for Neptune's natives! Could she have suffered Inherited Depression? Water signs can signal “Family PTSD”. Both our above examples came from Jewish families immediately, if not currently devastated by genocide. Did Biblical King Saul's epic depressions presage the fact that depression is indeed higher in Jewish populations? (#10, 11). We speculate that generationally inherited sorrow is somehow imprinted in our DNA and also reflected as “sadness imprints” in the horoscopes of heirs.12, 13
American President Abraham Lincoln is well known for torturous depressions throughout his adult life. The 1835 death of Lincoln’s sweetheart Ann Rutlege plunged him into a depression so profound that we are still hearing about it!

Lincoln biographer Joshua Wolf Shenk presents the facts in his 2005 book: *Lincoln’s Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness*. An excerpt reads:
“For whatever reason, or combination of reasons, in the late summer of 1835 Lincoln’s depression was pushed out into the open. After several weeks of worrisome behavior, talking about suicide, wandering alone in the woods with his gun, an older couple in the area took him into their home...When he had improved somewhat, they let him go, but he was, Mrs. Green said, “quite melancholy for months”.

Depression episodes were recurrent, long and intense. Clearly he suffered from “double depression” with episodes of the more serious Major Depression. Lincoln was also a perfect physical example of lanky, deep, philanthropic and individualistic “Saturnian Aquarian” type, seen occasionally in some Aquarians. Also, a good Saturn type14. As we have noted, both Saturn and Aquarius have long standing traditional association with “melancholy”.

What can Lincoln’s birth chart show us? Does it reveal signatures typical of chronic depression? Was Saturn dominant or afflicting? Were Saturn’s signs or water signs emphasized? Was he born in winter, at night, or in the dark of the Moon?

THE BIRTH CHART
Please refer by numbers below to the Signatures Listing

Lincoln’s Sun, Moon and Ascendant are all three in Saturn ruled signs (#2). Both his Sun and Ascendant were in Aquarius and his Moon was in Capricorn. Furthermore, Lincoln’s chart is Light Deficient (#3), a theme observed for both previous cases Morris and Jennie. He was born in Winter during the Moon’s late waning phase, the ‘Balsamic’ Moon. Saturn, as Abe’s unrivaled chart ruler is near the Mid-heaven, (#4), and conjoined Neptune (#4), while also afflicting Mercury (#4, 9). Mercury is in sorrowful Pisces (#1). Lincoln was a perfect “Saturnian”. His Capricorn Moon is posited on the 27th degree of this sign (#8), plus also “void of course” in the 12th house of sorrows (#6), while strongly afflicted from Mars (#10). Saturn afflicts the 3rd axis of the daily mental function by opposition (#7).

Comment: An aware astrologer would spot the overwhelming trend to chronic depression in Abraham Lincoln’s birth chart. One might assert that baby Abraham was born with a life-long disability that could be remediated but not entirely prevented. Shenk’s research suggests that both of Lincoln’s parents displayed symptoms of the affliction, suggesting the chart may reflect a genetic inheritance.

Had Lincoln realized his natal tendency toward chronic depression, could he have been helped? Astrology is useful, or why do it! The Renaissance physician-astrologer and the ayurvedic medicine-astrology tradition of India both have wide palettes of remedies for adjusting the excesses and deficiencies of planetary and elemental energies inherent in our birth energy patterns and reflected in the birth chart.
Knowledge of the natal chart is extremely useful in understanding and assisting victims of a wide array of psychiatric disorders, including chronic depression. Space allows a brief example from Chart 1: Morris.

We saw how Morris suffered a chronic depression of the excess water sign + Saturnian variety. His is a classic cold, moist Chronic Depression. The pattern is in gross imbalance, offering little in the way of balancing warm, dry fire signs.

A “triple water” Winter birth at New Moon suggests both light and oxygen starvation. Indeed, he suffers sleep apnea. Today’s “Astrological Physician” might well suggest breathing exercises or ‘Pranayama”. (His natal air sign planets can’t help much because they are drowning in water houses).

Fire energy “starvation” is as obvious as his loathing for aerobic exercise. Muscular exercise is a fantastic remedial for deficient fire signs. Morris’ sole fire sign placement is his North Node in Aries - sign of the head and eyes. Perhaps light or color therapy directed to this bodily region would help because the North Node represents a natural entry portal. Dance is enjoyed by Piscean natives who otherwise hate to move, and forces the needed oxygen intake!

The Liver is assigned to Jupiter and Virgo. Morris’ chart shows two testimonies of a sluggish liver, because Jupiter falls in Capricorn and Saturn tenants Virgo. Jupiter’s emotions are expansive and joyful. Protracted liver damage affects the victim’s ability to feel these uplifting feelings.

Piscean natives in particular respond to vibrational remedies such as flower essences, homeopathy, gemstone prescriptions or music therapy. They are notably vulnerable to supernatural interference and this should be investigated in many cases of mental derangement. Where Pisces dominates, (as in Morris’ case), one might suspect past life memories and/or negative psychic influences as contributing factors.

Morris’ dominant 9th house (Sun, Moon, Mars) is obviously central for both cause and solution. However, he rebels against religion, (as one might suspect with the tense Mars/Saturn opposition across his 3rd-9th house axis.) Perhaps a worthy battle would help. Indeed, Morris’ immense courage awakens when fighting subversive causes against all odds.

The cold, moist water signs are traditionally balanced by stimulating herbs and spices. We would also suspect that cold, dark, moist environments would increase Morris’ “blues”, as would wintertime. Morris can be helped if the right remedies were found!
CONCLUSION

The understanding of Chronic Depression is enhanced through a clear understanding of each sufferer’s underlying astrological energetics as provided by their birth chart and current transits. Truly, astrology is in itself one of the most ancient and sophisticated systems for mapping the total human entity.

The traditional view that symptoms of ‘melancholy’ were produced by Saturn plus an excess of the Melancholic and sometimes Phlegmatic ‘humors’ was incomplete at best, and the influence of outer planets unknown. This ancient knowledge that cosmic cold, moist, dark and slow energies underly depression is as a veritable gold mine for psychologists. New research is also needed.

In understanding the astrology of Chronic Depression, we must first know its precise symptoms and familiarize ourselves with the potentially causative planetary, sign and elemental energetics. I’ve documented fifteen chart signatures that appear associated with symptoms of Chronic Depression.

Saturn’s traditional role seems accurate, as does a prominence of planets in Saturn-ruled signs Capricorn, and particularly Aquarius (maybe Capricorn types are too busy working to be aware of a depressed state!)

However, the traditionally ‘phlegmatic’ water signs appear to match the symptoms of chronic depression far better then do the supposedly ‘melancholic’ earth signs. This error appears to have been caused when Hippocrates’ bodily humor ‘melancholy’ (or black bile); and its assigned ‘melancholic temperament’ were wrongly conflated with the astrological earth element (and therefore the three earth signs).

Neptune’s diffusive rays by conjunction or hard aspect plays a role in this malady too, as does the South Lunar Node’s conjunctions. Both these bodies when negative can be productive of “downer” influences, apathy and psychic sensitivity. (Neptune was first discovered in water sign Cancer, and is now thought to be a co-ruler of water sign Pisces.) Neptune expresses as a longing for the “other side” and a desire to escape this world. It is also a notoriously sleepy planet.

Light deficiency in the birth chart appears an important theme! Winter births, night births and late Moon Phase natives appear more likely to experience depression, especially if all three conditions simultaneously attend the birth time. Curiously, I observed this phenomenon years before ‘Seasonal Affective Disorder’ was clinically established and light deficiency designated as a unique category of depression!
These examples show that Chronic Depression can occur when one energy is in excess with the simultaneous deficiency of counterbalancing energies that would antidote the swing. A skilled astrologer learns to rate the balance of energies by noting the preponderance of planets, signs and elements in the birth chart. To accomplish this, one must first memorize the manifold conditions of planetary strength and weakness in a birth chart, and understand how to realistically tally elements (see section on “Tallying the Elements”.)

Traditionally, astrological energies were used to determine the balance of the four states: hot, cold, wet and moist. We might also add dark/light, and fast/slow to this list. Unbalanced extremes underly many mental and physical conditions.

In sum, a gross imbalance of energies potentiating Chronic Depression can occur when a chart is cold/wet with little counteractive hot/dry. Cold/dry also shows depression. We have also demonstrated that dark without light is preemptively depressive! Wintertime night births during the Moon’s last quarter or New Moon are especially prone. Slow without fast is also contributive.

Furthermore, the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, including dysthymia, would greatly benefit by considering long suppressed etiologies. In Blagrave’s Physick, Renaissance physician-astrologer Joseph Blagrave documents wonderful cures of mental health victims by treating constipation, or sometimes by removing causes far more sinister.

It is time to reexamine the validity of at least three traditional etiologies no longer acceptable to modern psychiatry: astrological, supernatural interference, and past life memory imprints. To facilitate this need, I’ve created the annual Lost Secrets of Renaissance Medicine Conference © and Medical Astrology 101.

Understanding planetary energetics from a physical and mental perspective helps us qualify a world of unseen vibration ignored in all but the most maverick of psychiatric practices.

Let us look forward to the day when astrology is reinstated as a useful tool for examining the hidden energies and changing cosmic tides that contribute to mental illness, inclusive of Chronic Depression.

As the great “Astrological Physician” Nicholas Culpepper said: “A physician without astrology is like a pudding without fat”.

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