

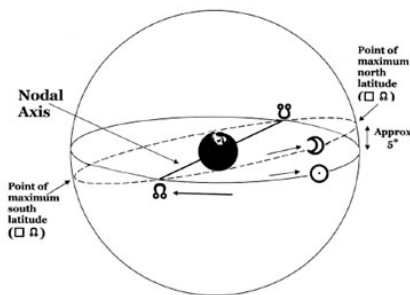
# The Moon's Nodes in Action

by Anne Whitaker

*... this book is about... Nodal Returns, Nodal synastries, Nodal 'trawls' and Nodal moments. A knowledge-gathering journey through the lives and charts of the famous and not so famous - yet with the excitement of a personal quest and the inestimable benefit of coming through the pen of a gifted writer. Herein are facts - not theories - that you can use to enrich your own astrological interpretations and personal understanding of the Moon's Nodes in Action...  
Paul F. Newman in his preface to the book.*



## From Chapter 1: The Moon's Nodes



*The Moon's north and south Nodes are not planets but are the two points at which the Moon's monthly path crosses the Sun's annual path (ecliptic) around the Earth. These are abstract points, but astrology accords them the power and effective status of planets... (definition from "The Practical Astrologer" by Nicholas Campion, Times Mirror Books 1987, p12.)*

## The eclipses

There are thirteen lunations or New Moons each year, in which the Sun and Moon share the same zodiacal longitude. At least two of them are solar eclipses, and occur during the twice yearly eclipse seasons, each being a period of 37 days when the Sun in its orbit crosses the Nodes, applying for 18.5 days/degrees then separating for the same measure.

At solar eclipse times the Sun, Moon, Earth and Nodes are aligned in the same plane, so that the Moon blocks the Sun totally or partially from the Earth's view. A total solar eclipse occurs when the Node and luminaries occupy the same zodiacal longitude up to an orb of  $\pm 9$  degrees 55 minutes. A partial eclipse occurs from an orb of  $\pm 11$  degrees 15 minutes up to an orb of  $\pm 18$  degrees 31 minutes. (Annular, partial or total solar eclipses can occur from an orb of  $\pm 9$  degrees 55 minutes to  $\pm 11$  degrees 15 minutes.)

Lunar eclipses occur in the same eclipse seasons - again a minimum of twice a year. At these times the Sun, Moon, Earth and Nodes are aligned differently, with the Moon opposite the Sun in zodiacal longitude. In this case, the Moon moves opposite the Sun through the shadow of the Earth often taking on a reddish/coppery tone which is very dramatic to watch. A total lunar eclipse occurs when the Node and luminaries have an orb of up to  $\pm 3$  degrees 34 minutes. A partial lunar eclipse occurs from an orb of  $\pm 6$  degrees.

There is a regular rhythm to the alternation of solar and lunar eclipses first with one Node, then the opposite one, six months apart. The Nodes themselves regress at 1.5 degrees a year through the zodiac, following the regular pattern of the eclipses as they thread their way through time and space. The North Node returns to its own place, having completed a 360 degree cycle through the entire zodiac, every 18.6 years. The eclipses, like the New Moons, also have their return cycles, the most striking being the Metonic returns in which an eclipse recurs on the same day and the same degree as it did 19 years previously.

## Nodal symbolism - summary

In symbolic terms, the Nodes offer insights not so much into an individual's personality as into their life pattern, and with this the developing and unfolding of their relationship with issues of direction and of meaning.

Thus the natal Nodes, their location by signs and houses, and their links with planets and angles, sketch out a map of what the person's route may be, some of the conditions which might be encountered, and the main paths s/he is likely to be inclined to explore.

As life unfolds, the transiting Nodal axis, transiting planets to the natal Nodes, and progressed planets/Angles triggering off the natal Nodes, show important points of challenge and the potential to take a step further along the road of actualising full potential. The eclipses are of critical importance in highlighting transitional points which have an especially powerful feel to them. Alexander Ruperti puts this really well:

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*Eclipses simply measure intense confrontations with all those things in human nature which hinder spiritual progress by keeping one in a rut, albeit a comfortable and happy rut. They are opportunities to use the past and the present - all that one has previously acquired, as well as where he stands at a given moment - in order to build a more creative future. Since they always challenge an individual to discard all limiting influences and to start something new, they may be stressful times.*  
(my emphasis) [1](#)

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## The soli/lunar relationship

The Nodal axis is a reflection of the soli/lunar relationship. The Sun moves very slowly indeed compared to the Moon - one degree a day, when the Moon moves thirteen to fourteen degrees. If we transpose this astronomical fact into the symbolism of the unfolding of the progressed horoscope throughout a lifetime, we can see that by the age of 60, the Sun in an individual's life will have progressed around only one sixth of the zodiac. The Moon, however, will have completed two whole journeys round the entire zodiac, and the first quarter of a third one.

Thus we have two very different types of energy, and relationship with time. The Moon seems much busier and more active than the Sun, much more driven towards ranging over a spectrum of different types of experience, and experiencing faster change. Despite all this activity, it nevertheless goes through the same cyclic routine month after month, year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium, albeit changing its starting and ending points very gradually as it moves through the heavens. The Sun seems much more inclined to take its time, to process and make sense out of experience.

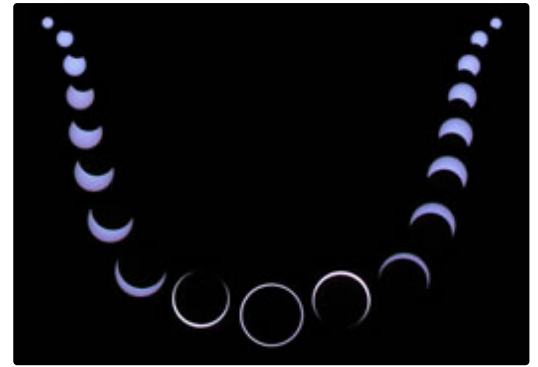
Liz Greene in *The Luminaries* clearly illustrates this point:

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*So the Moon, our antenna for life's perennially changing drama, goes out and soaks up a little taste of experience, and then comes back to offer its responses to the Sun for processing. Then the Moon ventures forth again, and another chunk of life is absorbed and brought back home. Lunar encounters with life, as the Moon progresses through the twelve houses of the horoscope, eventually build up a reservoir of experience which the Sun can gradually transform into 'my' vision of life, 'my' worldview, and 'my' identity .....Without the Moon, there would be no connection with life or other people.* [2](#)

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In the Sun - Earth - Moon system, the Moon represents the container which makes ordinary life on Earth possible, keeps its rhythms going. But both Earth and Moon are subordinate to the life-giving Sun; must turn towards it, honour it. Without the Sun, neither Moon nor Earth could exist. There could be no life, in the terms in which we understand it.





There is something in us, culturally, nationally, and personally, which is inimical to change of any kind; which is purely instinctive and irrational in response to life, needs to feel connected to the patterns and rhythms of time, nature, local and family custom, and habit. This part of us likes to know and work from what we can do and can comprehend. It seeks safety.

There is nothing wrong with this fundamentally lunar approach. We need it. But stagnation would result if there were nothing in life to present a challenge to this way of being. The contrasting

solar impetus is to get out there, risk, learn and grow, expand our vision to encompass more than the purely material - find out why it is that we are alive at all, ask questions regarding what life might mean.

There is a beautiful passage from Genesis, the first chapter of the Christian Old Testament, which runs thus:

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*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*And God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light.'*

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This Christian imagery vividly conveys the contrasting life principles illustrated in astrological symbolism by the Moon, and the Sun.

The archetypal relationship between fundamentally contrasting and complementary principles is at the heart of existence at every level - without that there could be no collective or individual life at all.

Another way of imaging the Soli/Lunar link is through mythology. In Greek myths, the Sun god Apollo is often seen pitting his solar power against that of the female, lunar goddesses whose realm concerns the limits imposed by time, the body and mortality, and fate - the very limits which Apollo seeks to defy.

The Sun symbolises our drive towards individuation, the pursuit of our personal destiny, shadowy and chimeric though it may often seem, if indeed it is ever even glimpsed. The Moon symbolises our rooting in the Earth plane which gave us our life, to which we are subject through our physicality, where we must live out our span as dictated by the limits imposed by our mortality.

## North and south - spirit and matter

If the dialectic as just imaged and described is held at the core of the soli / lunar relationship, what 'take', slant, or angle on that dialectic is provided by the North and South Nodes as distinct, for example, from what is provided by contemplation of either the New or the Full Moon? As Alexander Ruperti eloquently puts it:

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*...as the Ecliptic (geocentrically considered) reveals the relationship of the Earth to the Sun, and the Moon's orbit reveals the relationship of the Earth to the Moon, and since the nodal axis is the link between the planes of these two orbits, the nodes may be said to symbolise the relationship of the Earth to the two 'Lights' - the Sun and Moon.* [3](#)

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Thus the Nodes can be interpreted as revealing particular points of dynamic tension between the contrasting drives of Sun and Moon, points where the product of the struggle between the two must be earthed, and take some definite form in a way which has a profound influence on the life pattern of the person (event, organisation, nation) concerned.

As the Moon moves in its monthly orbit, its checkpoint for crossing the Ecliptic is the North Node, latitude zero, the beginning of two weeks' travel in Northern latitude. At the end of this phase, the checkpoint of the South Node is reached, also latitude zero - the start of two weeks' travel in Southern latitude.

At the North Node gateway, the Moon can be viewed as orienting itself toward the pull of the Sun, an orientation lasting for the whole period in which it is travelling in Northern latitude. Traditionally, as Ruperti puts it, the North Node connotes

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*"...a point of divine protection or providence or of success through the use of the spiritual will..." [4](#)*

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In the natal chart, a planet or planets closely square the Nodal axis on the northern side falls on the northern bendings<sup>5</sup>, emphasising that planet's role in driving the future development of the individual concerned. The transiting Nodal axis with a transiting planet squaring it at the northern bendings, challenges the individual/nation/collective concerned to face and take on the challenges of the future in relation to the radix planets/axes picked up by the transiting pattern.

On arriving at the South Node gate, the Moon symbolically turns its back on the challenge to grow, become all it can be, through exercise of maximum awareness aided by the strength of spiritual will, and moves into the fiefdom of matter and the concerns of the material world. This period lasts for the duration of the journey in Southern latitude, and represents a time of taking whatever perspective has been gained in the Northern journey, and perhaps, at best, integrating it with that part of life which will always have to be lived in the material and physical dimensions. Transiting planets at the southern bendings<sup>6</sup> partake of this tone. Natal ones at that point emphasise inherited challenges which tend to hold the person back, and really need to be grappled with if he/she is to move on.

Again, as Ruperti puts it,

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*...this alternating orientation first toward spirit and then toward matter is the key to the meaning of the nodal cycle... [7](#)*

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I think that it also offers us Earthlings a very profound piece of cosmic advice, especially to those inclined to think that the spiritual dimensions are innately superior to merely earthbound concerns. For the last two thousand years, the Christian West has had great trouble with the relationship between spirit and matter. The summits of our achievements and the nadirs of our destructiveness are connected to the imbalance which exists within our culture between those two great poles. The tension between them has been the fuel which has driven us, for good and for ill.

But the body is the carrier of the soul. We should strive to value them both equally. There are many metaphors to be derived from this essence. One is that the quest for meaning and significance, represented by the Sun, has to have a home base, represented by the Moon, from which to start the journey, to which to return at the end of it. The Odyssey could never have been written without Ithaca...

So it is important not to forget, whilst contemplating the different emphases given by the North Node and its Southern opposite that the whole axis needs to be taken into account if one is to appreciate the full depth of symbolism on offer. At core, the challenge is that of finding a way to reconcile spirit with matter in finding as effective a way as possible to live on the Earth to which we are bound. The Nodal axis speaks not only about the thrust to reach as full as possible actualisation, but also about valuing and appreciating, and if possible integrating, the gifts which were ours as we embarked from the starting point.



Both individually and collectively, the more prominently placed the Nodal axis in the Horoscope, the more vivid the dialectic as described above within the life of that individual, nation, and event.



Both North and South points have their own seductions. The challenge to move on, explore, become all you can be offered by the North, is exhilarating, exciting - but also frightening, and hard work! It's easier to stay in bed than get yourself sitting in front of the word processor, excited at what you may achieve.... but fearful of where you may fail.

Staying South is very tempting - it's the comfort zone, it's the family base and its past history, the place of safety where we know who and where we are, what our talents are, and what we can comfortably cope with - but staying there cannot reveal "...what we may be..." [8](#)

## Thus the natal Nodal Axis symbolises a lifelong struggle

Identifying with the South Node position too strongly means leading a life which depends on using the abilities we already have to keep us safe from risk, challenge and therefore growth; whose main priority is comfort; whose mode is a habitual and largely automatic response to life.

Taking up the challenge of the North Node, on the other hand, brings with it a life which feels meaningful and open to new experience; which takes opportunities to develop innate talents and new insights and skills through responding positively to the impetus for change; whose mode is of acceptance of conflict and discomfort as a necessary part of developing as a person.

At the heart of the fullest, most creative expression of the struggle both collectively and individually lays a deep paradox - to move on as human beings we must individuate, follow the path of the North Node, and leave the South Node behind. But we must also make the return journey, to honour that which we ideally do not leave behind at all, but incorporate in our movement towards our own destiny.

## From Chapter 4: Nodal moments

For this chapter I have chosen four different people's lives. From those lives I have chosen key defining moments, points at which one would expect to see strong Nodal signatures. [Two will be discussed in this article.]

### Andrew X.

In this example, Andrew's 'Nodal Moment' is so closely bound up with family fate issues that it is important to set a biographical context before exploring the astrology.



Andrew was born in January 1963 into a small seafaring community, the only son of parents in their forties. His two sisters were 15 and 8. He was the late compensation for what had become a deeply unhappy marriage. His father had left his mother when their first daughter was only 3, but had returned because of the child's distress. He was a colourful Jupiterian character who combined being a senior local government officer with being a renowned poacher. A heavy drinker, he was sometimes violent towards Andrew's mother. She was a sensitive, but emotionally immature and unstable woman who acted out the victim to the bully in her husband, whilst at the same time having highly developed emotional blackmail skills

and an unbreakable survival capacity.

Much of his childhood was spent preparing to live out his father's unfulfilled dream of going to sea, and responding to his mother's need for protection from his father.

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*I was afraid to leave home in case he killed her.*

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He felt desperately pulled, because they both loved him and in their own ways were good to him, whilst at the same time putting in place conditions which threatened to blight his future life.



Venus. The overall pattern completes another, mutable Grand Cross -'I'm out of here-I want a bigger life than this!' Furthermore, the transiting Nodal axis is 45/135 the radix MC/IC axis, and transiting MC/IC is closely conjunct radix Nodes.

I have never seen such a powerful, fateful Nodal moment in anyone's chart. It speaks so strongly of the gate to the future opening, offering a different level of expression of energy than that dictated by the family past.

The eclipse seasons in the year prior to Andrew's walk-out are eloquent. The lunar eclipses of 9 December 1992, 4 June 1993, and 29 December 1993 at 16 Gemini, 14 Sagittarius, and 7 Gemini respectively, all charge up the turbulent Mars/Uranus/Pluto in Virgo opposite Moon/Jupiter/Chiron in Pisces as the transiting Nodes regress through the 9th/3rd House. Images of the wounded family past surging up through his life, of great anger towards the feminine principle, of the build-up of battle rage running with a huge sense of woundedness and neediness, and the restless desire for pastures new, are powerfully evoked from those images.



The partial solar eclipses, of 21 May 1993 at 0.5 Gemini and 29 December 1993 at 21.5 Scorpio, both trigger the difficult, combative Venus/Mars square which is also being transited by Saturn square Pluto. The picture is of a relationship explosion brewing up; there were several explosive episodes between him and his partner between those two eclipses. Interestingly, the 21.5 Scorpio solar eclipse a month before Andrew left picks up his pre-natal lunar eclipse degree of 22.5 Aquarius which represents his 5th house cusp in his natal chart, and attendant Saturn/Uranus and Moon/NNode midpoints. There is a powerful picture offered here of his intense feeling for his child, and his sense of duty and commitment, clashing with his self-focused, freedom oriented drive to get out.

A further point of interest is that the full moon on 27 January, the day before he walked out, fell at 7 degrees 23 minutes of Leo - his pre-natal solar eclipse being 7 degrees and 49 minutes of Leo. This alignment falling on his 10th house Leo part of Fortune, triggering his natal Sun/Uranus midpoint, adds weight to the existing emphasis on the pull between his attachment to his son and the necessity of freeing himself from circumstances stifling his creative growth.

One year on, Andrew reported himself to be in good shape. He has regular contact with his little boy. He has put up barriers to Alexis' powerful attempts at emotional blackmail. He has been taken back by his former Company and is working his way quickly up the promotional ladder again. He will probably do an Open University degree and is pursuing studies of a spiritual and symbolic nature. His life feels far more creative, despite the pain of not living with his child...

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*What I did the day I left I now see as vital to the rest of my life. Had I stayed, I would have repeated my father's life...I now feel I have a good chance to make my life my own.*

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## Anna X.

Anna was born in the West of Scotland in 1952. I have known her for over 10 years since she came to study astrology with me in 1987. She is a big personality, whose persistent courage, questioning spirit and lateral intelligence I admire. Astrologically, she has a Scorpio Ascendant with Pluto, her ruling planet, in Leo square the Ascendant from the ninth house, conjunct the South Node in Virgo. (Cvii)

She has had a tempestuous life, having fought her way from a very dysfunctional family of origin through family crisis and tragedy, early motherhood and marriage, and difficult, sometimes violent relationships with men towards a greater understanding of who she is, what she can offer the wider world, and in what form she should offer it. Last year in a letter from Africa where she now works, she said

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*...my inner life is a rampant beast with all sorts of questions and demands...*

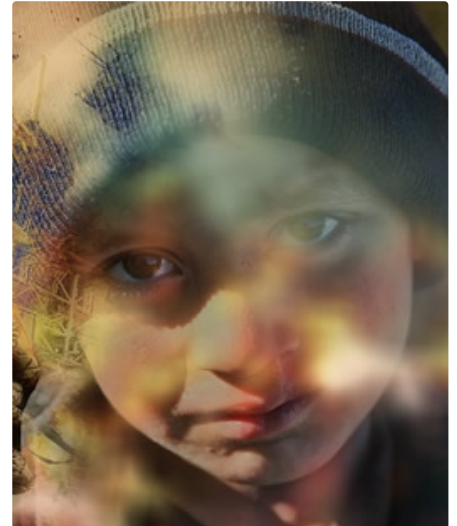
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To me this sums up what drives Anna!

The turbulent nature of her life, her perennially questioning struggle towards a gradually widening perspective, and her drive towards creating meaning for herself through service to others are well described by the Nodal pattern in her chart and its planetary links. Furthermore, Mars in Scorpio from the 11th House trine the NNode in the 3rd in Pisces, sextile the SNode in Virgo in the 9th, shows her commitment to fighting hard for what she believes in, and what will serve the wider human community.

It also shows that she is called on to battle against the darker forces in life and in society - she started her professional career as a Women's Aid volunteer in 1979, with her three children aged 8, 5 and under a year old. In the same year her sister was diagnosed as suffering from cancer; she died a month after Anna started her professional training in September 1982. Following a custody battle with her parents re her dead sister's little son Alan, he came to live with Anna and her children in 1984, the same year that she separated formally from her husband; he had left the family home in April 1982.

In 1985 she qualified as a social worker and got her first professional job. By 1994, she was working as a project leader for a major children's charity, her mandate being work with ethnic minority communities, anti-discrimination and children's rights work. In the early autumn of 1994, as the North Node crossed her Ascendant, she obtained a temporary Acting Assistant Director's post within her organisation. She was getting very restless - her sons had left home, her daughter was nearly sixteen and looking towards university in a year or two. Pluto, her ruling planet, was transiting the latter degrees of Scorpio, preparing to square her Nodes from the first House. She attended an evening tutorial I gave on the Nodes, and we light-heartedly speculated on what might happen when Pluto moved into Sagittarius - relocation perhaps?



I have chosen Anna's 'Nodal Moment' as 11th October 1995. On that day at 9.30 am she was successfully interviewed for the senior post which she flew to Africa to take up in January 1996. It is a very significant day in her life. Her mother was born on 11 October 1924, and her sister died on 11 October 1982...

The progressions and transits tell a very clear story. The progressed MC is just moving into Scorpio, applying conjunct 11th House Mars, sextile SNode in the 9th House, trine NNode in the third. Progressed Moon is in the 9th House in Leo, - the post concerns the welfare and protection of children through a major children's charity - due to cross the 0 degrees Virgo SNode in the 9th House when Anna went to Africa in January 1996.

Transiting Pluto is in the last degree of Scorpio (re-entering Sagittarius on 11 November 95) applying conjunct the Part of Fortune at 0 Sagittarius, square the Nodal axis at 0 Virgo/Pisces in the 9th/3rd Houses. [1](#)

The transiting Nodal axis is also prominent, transiting Node at 26 degrees Libra in 11th conjuncting the Mars/Neptune midpoint, triggering the Sun/Mercury midpoint. Anna had parted from her long-term lover the previous year, the last straw having been discovery of various of his infidelities, and he went to work in Europe only weeks before she got the African job. As the Node headed for her natal Moon Mercury/Saturn Neptune square, a close woman friend died: on 13 October, two days after her interview.

This pattern also foreshadowed her homesickness when she first went to Africa, and the uncertainty of her daughter's home base. Initially she came out with her mother to Africa; but after a couple of weeks returned home to Scotland where she is currently living with her father. The ill-health centring round lung problems which Anna had to fight from the end of 1996 is also foreshadowed in this pattern, although not manifesting acutely until the end of 1996/start of 1997 as the NNode crossed Chiron at 4.5 degrees Libra in the interview chart, squaring the 2nd House(note) Venus/Node midpoint in her natal horoscope.

However, Anna after a traumatic start seems to have adjusted well. She has many areas of responsibility in her job, and many stresses. One of the big satisfactions - and her work's main focus - has been her helping guide into law in the country in which she works, a Children's Statute, unique in Africa, founded





on the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child. This was the outcome of a seven year review of all existing laws which started in 1990. The Statute became law in August 1997 - with the North Node in 20 Virgo in her 10th House, opposite her natal lunar eclipse degree at 22 Pisces.

There are very strong links between the solar and lunar eclipses of the November 94-5 season and the chart for the interview on 11 October 1995. During this period, the transiting Nodal axis is retrograding through the 11th/5th Houses, providing very appropriate background indications that a process is at work in Anna's life which will push her towards

expressing her personal, pioneering creative energies in the greater collective at a more challenging level than she has ever done before. Her energies, as we have seen, involve pioneering work for children - a very literal expression of the 5th House.

The solar eclipses of 3 November 1994 and 29 April 1995, at 11 Scorpio and 9 Taurus respectively, appear as the Ascendant and Descendant point of the Interview chart, and echo Anna's own 19 Scorpio/Taurus natal axis. The lunar eclipse of 18 November 1994 at 26 Taurus widely conjuncts the Moon and closely squares the MC/IC axis of the interview chart, as well as picking up her natal Pluto/Node, Venus/Neptune midpoints.

The next lunar eclipse on 15 April 1995 at 25 Libra falls on her natal Saturn/Neptune conjunction in the 11th House. The autumn one at 15 Aries, three days before her successful interview, falls on the natal 5th House cusp, charging up her Jupiter/Saturn/Mercury T Square. The final, total solar eclipse of that season falls on 24 October at O Scorpio - conjunct her progressed Asc/radix Mars and the interview chart's rising Venus/Node conjunction. This eclipse also triggers her radix Venus/Node midpoint at 29.5 Capricorn. She hears at the end of October 1995 that she has got the job.

I think that Anna's Nodal Moment shows vividly the call to 'be all you can be!' which comes when the Nodes are strongly activated and potentised by the energy charges provided by the eclipses.