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THE COMPOSITE CHART

by Liz Greene

Relationships and how to survive them

This seminar was given on 27 April 1997 at Regents College, London as part of the Summer Term of the seminar programme of the "[Centre for Psychological Astrology](#)".

One plus one equals three

The concept behind the composite chart - or, as Erin Sullivan sometimes calls it, the compost chart - is that it represents the relationship itself as a third factor. Two people create a third thing between them. The composite chart is like an energy field, which affects both people and draws certain things out of each individual as well as imposing its own dynamics on both.

The composite doesn't seem to describe what either person feels about the other. In this way it is very different from synastry, which describes the chemistry between two people in terms of how they affect each other. When we are exploring the synastry in a relationship, we say, "Your Venus is on my Mars. You are activating my Mars and bringing a Mars response out of me, and I am activating your Venus and invoking a Venus response in you. Consequently we feel a certain way about each other." When we are looking at a composite chart, we are not exploring what two people activate in each other or feel about each other. We are interpreting the energy field they generate between them. The composite chart is like a child, a third entity which carries the genetic imprints of both parents but combines these imprints in an entirely new way and exists independently of either of them.

Because the composite has all the same features as a birth chart, we need to approach its interpretation in more or less the same way. The composite chart has a core identity which signifies its "purpose" (the Sun) and a characteristic set of emotional responses and needs (the Moon). It has a mode of communication (Mercury) and a distinctive set of values and ideals (Venus). It has a mode of

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expressing energy and will (Mars). It has its own way of growing and expanding (Jupiter) and it has innate limitations and defence mechanisms (Saturn). It has a specific vulnerability to the collective due to patterns from the collective background of the relationship (Chiron). It reflects certain collective ideals which strive for change and progress (Uranus). It has innate aspirations which reflect certain collective fantasies (Neptune). It has a bottom-line survival instinct which can prove supportive to the relationship's continuity but can also be destructive if the relationship is under threat (Pluto). It has an image or role to play in the eyes of society (MC), and it has a "personality" which will express itself in certain characteristic ways to the world outside (Ascendant). The signs in a composite chart describe the basic stuff or "temperament" of which the relationship is made; the planets describe the motivating energies; and the houses describe the spheres of life through which the planets express themselves. All this is basic astrology, and it is no less applicable to the composite than it is to the individual birth chart.

Relationship as an entity

We do not usually think of our relationships as independent entities. More often, we think in terms of our own feelings and attitudes, or the feelings and attitudes of the other person. Yet every relationship creates its own ambience. None of us behaves in the same way when we are half of a couple as we do when we are operating solo. We might have characteristic behaviour patterns when we are alone, but the moment we are with our partner, a certain kind of energy dynamic is set in motion and we behave in particular ways which are sometimes very noticeable in the company of other people.



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Two people in relationship create an atmosphere around them, not by conscious choice, but because that is simply what happens. Other people will often reflect this back to us. "The two of you seem such a lively, attractive couple," a friend might say, or, "What an exciting life the two of you must have!" Meanwhile, one is thinking to oneself, "What on earth are they talking about? That isn't how I feel." We might see something like composite Jupiter rising in Sagittarius and Libra at the composite MC, and other people perceive the relationship as an exciting and glamorous Jupiter-Venus entity. But one's partner's Saturn might be conjunct one's Moon and opposition one's Sun, and the synastry between the birth charts might make one feel more like Sisyphus and his rock than Mick Jagger and Jerri Hall. The opposite can also occur. The composite may have Saturn rising and Chiron culminating, and the world sees something quite heavy when one is with one's partner. But the synastry may involve lots of Venus-Jupiter-Uranus contacts, reflecting an excitement within the relationship which both people personally feel but which does not express itself to others.

We can learn a lot about the angles of the composite chart for an important relationship by asking other people how they see the relationship. Often we might be in for quite a shock, because the answer may not reflect how we actually feel about the other person. The composite, like a natal chart, presents itself to the world according to its Ascendant and MC. It has a ruling planet which will focus the expression of the relationship in a certain house or sphere of life. The houses of the composite work in the same way they do in a birth chart, reflecting spheres of

emphasis through which the dynamics of the relationship are manifested. When composite planets highlight a composite house, that area of life will be extremely important to the relationship, and both people will be impelled to focus on it, even if the same house is empty in both birth charts. A relationship can push us into having to confront certain areas of life, even if natively we are neither predisposed nor well equipped to cope in that area.

Composites have their own laws and energies, and these have nothing to do with whether we are "well matched" with someone. A composite in itself will not tell us about compatibility. That is what synastry is for. The composite won't reveal whether the relationship is "good" or "bad" in terms of the chemistry between two people. The composite says to us, "If you choose to enter this relationship, here is its meaning and pattern of destiny. This is what it is made of and what it is for." If we want to get a sense of whether or not that meaning and destiny are going to make us feel good, we have to compare the composite with our own chart.

If we examine the synastry between the composite and the chart of each individual in the relationship, we can learn a lot about how the relationship makes each person feel. We can also take a third party and compare that person's chart to the composite. This is a fascinating exercise. Let's say that I am in a long-term relationship, but also have a lover. I can take that third party's chart and look at how it affects the composite chart between me and my partner, and I can get a very clear picture of how my lover affects the relationship. We can also look at the chart of a child in relation to the composite between the parents. This is very useful in terms of understanding family dynamics. Some children have a way of really disrupting the parental relationship, while others help to glue it together. We can see this by looking at the child's chart in relation to the parents' composite. We might not see this dynamic by merely exploring the synastry between the child and each individual parent.

Freedom and fate within relationship

Working with composites makes us think in terms of something larger than ourselves as individuals. Wherever we go, we create interfaces with other people, and we may not have the same amount of choice in dealing with those interfaces as we might when we deal with our own personal issues. If one has a Sun-Saturn square in the birth chart, one can actively do something with it. One doesn't have to be its victim, or live solely from the darker side of it. It may be a difficult aspect in early life, and it may reflect deep feelings of insecurity or inadequacy. But one can say, "I know that a lot of my self-doubt is connected with my father and my childhood. I sabotage myself because I am sometimes afraid to aim high. I am often too hard on myself, and expect too much. But I'm going to try to work on these issues. I'll make an effort to understand what they are about. I may need some psychotherapy to help me to learn to trust myself more. And I'll try to develop my Saturn sign so that I have more confidence." Gradually one can shape that Sun-Saturn square into something very strong and creative, if one is willing to put the necessary effort into it.

But when a Sun-Saturn square appears in the composite chart, the relationship cannot go into psychotherapy. The relationship cannot say, of its own volition, "I'm going to work on these feelings of limitation and self-doubt." The relationship does not "feel" self-doubt. Both individuals can work on their own Saturns. But neither may have a Sun-Saturn square, and neither may really understand why, when they are together, something in the relationship thwarts and



frustrates their joint goals. The external limitations which often accompany a composite Sun-Saturn may seem strangely impersonal and beyond one's control.

The impersonal feeling of the composite may be very uncomfortable for us if we are psychologically inclined, because psychological astrology implies individual responsibility and a belief that we can change many things in our lives if we are prepared to do the inner work. Because we view the birth chart as an inner picture, we can take responsibility for how we express it, and consciousness can make a huge difference. A psychological approach to astrology allows us to transform many things if we make sufficient effort. But one can be deluded by the fantasy that one can change anything, and some things lie beyond the individual's scope of influence. I am not suggesting that composites are not psychological, or that we should abandon this approach when interpreting them. But "psychological" does not always mean free, and change may mean a change in the attitudes of both people toward the relationship, rather than a change in the endemic pattern of the relationship itself.

We can do nothing to change the fundamental patterns in the composite chart. Of course the same may be said of an individual chart. But we seem to have more room to affect the levels on which we express our natal patterns. This gives us the inner sense - valid or not - that we have the power to participate actively in, or even create, our own future. Maybe we do, at least in some areas of life. But a composite presents us with a different experience, if not a different reality at core. We can change how we react to the patterns in the composite, and we can make the effort to provide creative outlets for its energies. But even with the maximum cooperation with a partner, the patterns of a composite still feel "outside" our sphere of personal influence. A composite will not say, "This is a bad relationship - get out of it." But it may say, "This relationship has got an inherent restriction which neither person is going to be able to alter. If you want this relationship, accept this issue." If the composite chart has a Sun-Saturn square or a Sun-Chiron conjunction, it contains built-in limits, often of a very concrete kind. These limits may prove to be creative and positive for either or both individuals. But they feel as though they have been imposed on us. A Sun-Saturn square or a Sun-Chiron conjunction in the natal chart also contains built-in limits, but we experience them differently.

Let's take composite Sun-Chiron aspects. I have seen these many times when a relationship involves the unavoidable inclusion of limits from the past. The past may be an ex-partner who wants big maintenance payments, or it may be children from a former marriage. These situations can cause a lot of pain, especially where children are involved, because no matter how mature and conscious the two people are, there will be conflicts, divided loyalties, hurt feelings, and perhaps also financial restrictions. It is not a question of altering attitudes; a priori families, for any couple, are a built-in fact which will always impose limits. If a couple do not experience limits in such circumstances, then we probably won't see Sun-Chiron in the composite chart.

We know that Chiron is connected with experiences of wounding, particularly those which seem unfair and unmerited, and which are a product of the state of the collective at the time rather than some particular person's fault or act of malice. Sun-Chiron contacts in a composite suggest that the relationship itself carries an unhealable wound, usually from the past of both parties, or from the nature of the world in which the two people are living. At the same time, the relationship may provide deep healing for both people, or for others who come in contact with the couple, because the inherent limits invoke suffering and consequent understanding and compassion.

I have sometimes seen Sun-Chiron in a composite when two people want very badly

to have children but are unable to do so. This is a wound which can make people think much more deeply about who they are and what purpose their lives serve, because they do not have the collectively sanctioned "purpose" of a family to give them a direction in life. Another example might be a partnership where there is a great age difference, and the younger partner must watch the other grow old and frail. No amount of love and commitment can turn the clock back. Or there might be a physical handicap in one partner which may be genuinely and deeply accepted, but which limits the mobility of both people. Yet another example might be a racially mixed marriage, or a homosexual relationship, both of which may provoke animosity among neighbours who are xenophobic or too rigid in their definitions of normality. Xenophobia and rigid opinions are characteristic of many, many people, and no amount of agonising or raging will alter this unfortunate flaw in human nature. Both people may be hurt through the relationship, not because it is "bad", but because there is something about the way the relationship "sits" in the collective which limits its possibilities.

I am not saying that it is a static picture. As far as healing is concerned, it depends on what you mean by the word. Chiron's wounds do not heal in the sense of going away. Something has been permanently twisted out of shape, even if the poison has been released and cleansed. One cannot regain innocence once it has been destroyed by the kind of wounding this planet reflects. But one's attitude toward the wound can change, and greater tolerance, compassion, and wisdom can result. That is a kind of healing; but it cannot undo the past. One cannot, for example, make one's children by a former partner vanish in a puff of smoke. One can try to numb the wound by cutting off from the children emotionally, and never seeing them again; and then there is another sort of wound that must be dealt with. Or one can work very hard to face all the emotional complications, and eventually establish rewarding relationships with everyone concerned. But there will always be compromise and sadness and a sense of loss. Such aspects in the composite chart do not mean that the effects of the difficulty remain static and unchanging. Both people may be deeply and permanently transformed. But the past cannot be remade.

The composite chart progresses like a birth chart, and this reflects changes within the relationship just as it does within the individual. But the composite chart as an entity doesn't have the same capacity as an individual for deciding of its own volition to change or fight against something. It is not a conscious individual. Both people may work to become more conscious, and the ways in which they experience the relationship may change accordingly. But the basic patterns of the relationship unfold like a seed growing into a plant, with a natural inevitability that may feel alien to our ego-centred consciousness.

Taken from

Liz Greene:

Relationships and how to survive them.

Part One: The Composite Chart, Part Two: [The Eternal Triangle](#)

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The Eternal Triangle

by Liz Greene

Apollon, April 1999

Liz Greene has the knack of writing about the most complex and murky areas of life with a sparkling astringent clarity, and a compassionate appreciation that there are always two sides to a story. In this article, she explores one of the knottiest human patterns, looking at those relationships in which there are three sides.

Relationship triangles are an archetypal dimension of human life. We do not ever escape them, in one form or another. We also tend to handle them rather badly when they enter our lives. That is understandable, because triangles are usually evocative of very painful emotions, regardless of the point of the triangle on which we find ourselves. We may have to cope with feelings of jealousy, humiliation, and betrayal. Or we may have to live with the sense of being a betrayer - of being dishonest, of injuring someone. We may feel all these



feelings at once, as well as the conviction of being a failure. The emotions that are involved in triangular relationships are often agonising, and cut away at self-esteem. Because triangles confront us with very difficult emotions, we will usually find ourselves trying to blame someone for the presence of a triangle in our lives.

Either we blame ourselves or we blame one of the other two people. But triangles are indeed archetypal - and if we have any question about their universality, we need only read the literature of the last three thousand years. Anything archetypal presents us with a world of purposeful patterns and intelligent inner development. There is something about the experience of the triangle which can be one of our most powerful means of transformation and growth, unpleasant and painful though it is. Betrayal, whether one is the betrayer or the betrayed, does something to us which potentially could be of enormous value.

Nothing enters our lives that is not in some way connected with our individual journey. This does not imply blame or causality, but it does imply a deeper meaning which may be transformative for the individual who is prepared to seek that meaning. If a triangle enters one's life, it is there for something. If we choose to react solely with

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bitterness and rage, that is our choice. But we could also choose to make the triangle a springboard for some real soul-searching. This is particularly difficult because the experience of humiliation usually invokes all the defence systems of infancy, and it is very hard to move beyond such primal responses to a more detached perspective. As astrologers, we may find it worth exploring whether there is such a thing as a pattern in the chart that is conducive to triangles; whether there are deeper reasons why any individual gets involved in a triangle, by their own or someone else's choice; and why some people are more prone to triangles than others. We might also consider what possible approaches might help us work with triangles more creatively, which will involve looking at them psychologically and symbolically.

The universality of triangles

There are many kinds of triangles, not all involving an adult sexual relationship. Even if we restrict ourselves to sexual triangles, we would find many different varieties. Sexual triangles are not always made of the grand dramatic stuff of Tristan and Isolde. In some adult love triangles, all three points are fixed. There are two partners and there is a third person involved with one of the partners, and there is no movement in the triangle. It is static and may go on for many years, until one of the three participants dies. In other love triangles, one of the points is constantly changing. One can practise serial adultery - sometimes, as in the case of John F. Kennedy, with an astonishing rate of turnover. But both these situations are triangles, even though we tend to accord a higher romantic value to the first; and both will evoke the same spectrum of archetypal emotions.

Apart from triangles where a sexual involvement exists between any combination of the two sexes, there are many other kinds of triangles. The most fundamental are those involving parents and children. Triangles may also involve friendships. More complex are the triangles which involve non-human companions. One partner may feel a sense of jealousy and betrayal about the other one's dedication to work or artistic involvement or spiritual development. Such triangles can evoke exactly the same feelings of jealousy as the sexual variety. When one withdraws into a creative space, one has somehow "left" the person one lives with, and it can create enormous jealousy on the part of one's partner. The creative process is an act of love, which is perhaps why the 5th house is traditionally said to govern both. If one loves one's work, it may evoke enormous jealousy. There are even triangles involved with pets. This might sound absurd, but one partner can feel extremely jealous, hurt, upset, and abandoned because the other partner is deeply attached to his or her cat or dog - even if one does not wish to admit to such feelings in public. All these different kinds of triangles may seem unrelated. The one thing they have in common is the component of one or another variety of love, which, in a triangle,



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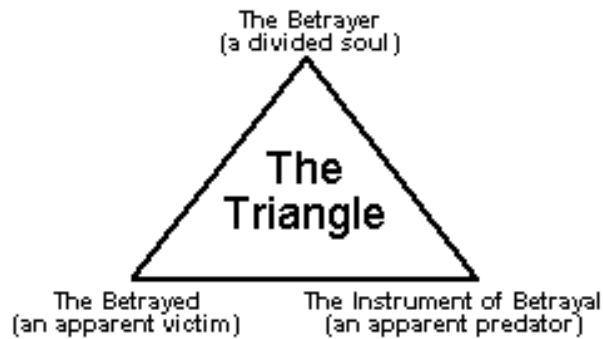
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is no longer exclusive. And when we must share someone's love, whether with another person or with something ineffable like the imagination or the spirit, we may feel betrayed, demeaned, and bereft.



This little diagram is a simplistic picture of the three points of the triangle. For the moment, the astrological signifiers have been left out. Some people experience only one of these points in a lifetime, and some are experienced in all three.

The Betrayer is the person who apparently chooses to get involved in the triangle. I use the word "apparently" because one cannot always be sure how much conscious choice there really is, and one cannot be sure how much collusion exists between Betrayer and Betrayed as well. But whatever might be at work beneath the surface, the Betrayer is a divided soul. There is a love or attraction or need for two different things. Most of us carry the assumption that love should be exclusive, even if on a conscious level we profess a more liberal perspective. Because of the values of our Judeo-Christian heritage, we are brought up to believe that if our love is not exclusive, it is not love, and we are no longer "good" people. We have failed, or we are selfish and unfeeling. When we experience this kind of deep inner division, it is therefore extremely difficult to face. It is much easier for the Betrayer to come up with a list of justifications for why he or she is committing the act of betrayal. We do not often hear the Betrayer say, "I am divided. I am torn in half." More commonly, what we hear is: "My partner is treating me very badly. He/She is not giving me A, B, C, and D, and I need these things in order to be happy. Therefore I have a justification for looking elsewhere."

At the next point of the triangle is the Betrayed, who is apparently the unwilling victim of the Betrayer's inability to love exclusively. I have used the word "apparent" here too because, once again, there may be some question about the unconscious collusion involved in this particular role. All three points on the triangle are secretly interchangeable. They are not as different as they first appear. But the Betrayed generally believes that he or she is loyal, and it is the other person who is disloyal. It is someone else who has initiated the triangle. Usually we think of the Betrayed as having the hardest time in a triangle, because this is the person who generally acts out all the pain and jealousy and feelings of humiliation.

Finally, at the third point of the triangle, there is the Instrument of Betrayal. This is the person who apparently enters an already existing



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relationship between two people and threatens to destroy or change it. This point of the triangle usually gets a rather bad press, being seen as "predatory" or a taker of someone else's beloved possession. If we happen to occupy this point, we may receive only limited sympathy, and none at all from those in established relationships who feel the cold wind of their own possible future. In fact, the Instrument of Betrayal may feel himself or herself to be a victim, and may perceive the Betrayed as the predator. We can begin to glimpse the secret identity between these two points of the triangle. There are people who move round the triangle and try all three points during the course of their lives, sometimes many times. There are other people who stick with one point exclusively, and always get betrayed in their relationships, or always wind up playing the Betrayer. Or they are always the Instrument of Betrayal, and keep getting involved with people who are attached elsewhere.

We might also think of triangles as belonging to four basic groups. These may overlap, but they may also be associated - up to a point - with distinctive astrological configurations. There is the ubiquitous family triangle, about which this article is primarily concerned. There are also power triangles and defensive triangles. These two varieties of triangle are not really separate, although there are some slight differences. Both have a distinctive flavour, and the reasons for their entry into one's life may not be entirely rooted in the family background. A defensive triangle would be, for example, a man or woman who needs to form an additional relationship outside their established partnership because of feelings of deep inadequacy. They may be plagued by great insecurity, and may feel very frightened that if they commit themselves too much, and put all of their eggs in a single basket, they would be too vulnerable, and rejection would be utterly intolerable. A triangle is then unconsciously created as a defence mechanism. If they are abandoned by one partner, they have always got the other. This is not usually conscious, but it is a powerful motivating factor in many triangles.

There are also triangles in pursuit of the unobtainable. These can overlap with family triangles as well as with defensive and power triangles. But there is a special ingredient to the pursuit of the unobtainable, and often the deeper motivation is artistic or spiritual. Sometimes, when we seek unobtainable love, it actually has little to do with human beings. But we may translate our creative or mystical longings into the pursuit of those we cannot have. In this way we open up a dimension of the psyche which has more to do with creative fantasy than with relationship. The artist's "muse" is rarely his or her wife or husband. This kind of triangle can involve elements of early family dynamics, and it may also incorporate defensive motives; but it needs to be understood from a different perspective.

The last group - triangles which reflect unlived psychic life - subsumes all the

others. When we look more deeply at family triangles, we always need to ask why we want so badly to be close to a particular parent. What does that parent mean to us? Why can we cope with indifference from one parent but require nothing less than absolute fusion with the other? In the end, inevitably, we will find bits of our own souls farmed out along the points of the triangle - any triangle, whether motivated by family dynamics, power, defensiveness, or all of the above. There are exceptions, because there are always exceptions to any psychological pattern. But in the main, when a triangle enters our lives, regardless of the point we are on, there is some message in it about dimensions of ourselves which we have not recognised or lived. If a pattern of triangles keeps repeating, then it is a very strong message, and we need to listen to what it is trying to tell us.

The family triangle

Family triangles do not finish in childhood, but have repercussions throughout life. If unresolved, they may secretly enter our adult relationships. If a family triangle is unhealed, we may recreate it, once or many times, hoping on some deep and inaccessible level that we will find a way to heal or resolve it. Freud developed the idea of the Oedipal triangle - also known as "the family romance" - in a very specific context. In his view, we attach ourselves passionately to the parent of the opposite sex, and enter into a situation of rivalry and competitiveness with the parent of the same sex. Depending on how the Oedipal triangle is resolved in childhood - and this includes the parents' responses as well as one's own innate temperament - our later relationships will inevitably be affected. If we unequivocally "win" and get the exclusive love of the parent of the opposite sex, we suffer because we never learn to separate or share. We experience a kind of false infantile potency because we feel that we have beaten the rival. We are all-powerful, which may open the door to a later inability to cope with any kind of relationship disappointment. And one's relationships with one's own sex may also be disturbed accordingly.



If, for example, a boy sees his mother and father in conflict, and "wins" the Oedipal battle by becoming his mother's surrogate husband, he may experience deep unconscious guilt toward his father. Also, he may lose respect for his father, whom he has apparently pushed out of the way with

great ease. The boy's image of father may then be of someone weak, impotent, and easily beaten, and somewhere inside he will fear this in himself, because he too is male. This boy may have to keep affirming his Oedipal victory later in life by turning every male friend into a rival, and relating exclusively to women. Such men do not connect with other men, but only to the women who are attached to other men. The bond with his mother will have cost this man his relationship with his father, which may mean he has no positive internal masculine image on which to draw, and no sense of support from the community of men around him. His sense of male confidence and male sexual identity must rely entirely on whether his women love him - and the more, the better. That is a very insecure and painful place in which to live. We could apply

the same interpretation in the case of a woman and her father.

If we entirely lose the Oedipal battle - and the operative word is entirely - we also suffer. Absolute Oedipal defeat is a humiliation which can severely undermine one's confidence in oneself. By "absolute", I mean that the child feels that no emotional contact of any kind has been achieved with the beloved parent, and a profound feeling of failure ensues. One simply cannot get near the parent, who may be incapable of offering any positive emotional response to his or her child. Or the other parent is always in the way. Later in life, such an emotional defeat can generate a gnawing sense of sexual inadequacy and inferiority. It can contribute to many destructive relationship patterns - not least the kind of triangle where one is hopelessly in love with a person who is permanently attached elsewhere. One may become the unhappy Instrument of Betrayal, forever knocking at the closed door of a lover's marriage. Or one may become the Betrayed, helplessly repeating the Oedipal defeat in the role of the established partner who is humiliated by the greater power of the mother- or father-rival. With both unequivocal Oedipal victory and unequivocal Oedipal defeat, we are unable to establish a psychological separation from the beloved parent, and a part of us never really grows beyond childhood. We may then become stuck in repetitive relationship dynamics where we keep trying to "right" the original difficulty through a triangle.

Freud thought that the healthiest resolution of the Oedipal conflict is a kind of mild defeat, where we get enough love from the beloved parent but are still forced to acknowledge that the parents' relationship is ultimately unbreachable. We may then learn to respect relationships between other people, and build confidence through establishing relationships beyond the magic parental circle. We are here in the realm of what Winnicott called "good enough" - a good enough parental marriage, a good enough relationship with both parents, and sufficient love and kindness for the Oedipal defeat to be accompanied by a reasonable sense of security within the family and a knowledge that one will continue to be loved. It is also important that we do not fear punishment from the parent-rival. Sadly, many parents, themselves emotionally starved and resentful in an unhappy marriage, do punish their children for "stealing" the partner's love. We need to recognise that we cannot supplant one parent in order to have the other, but we also need to know that we will be loved by the parent we have tried to overthrow. Naturally this is an ideal which few families can achieve. A great many people suffer from one degree or another of excessive Oedipal victory or excessive Oedipal defeat. What really matters is what we do with it, and how much consciousness we have of it. And nothing is quite so potent an activator of consciousness as a relationship triangle.

There is considerable value in Freud's psychological model, and there do seem to be many situations where absolute Oedipal defeat or absolute Oedipal victory are linked with a tendency to become involved in triangles later in life. But there are serious limitations to this model of the family romance. The parent to whom we attach ourselves is not necessarily the parent of the opposite sex. The parent may be one's own sex. Oedipal feelings are not, after all, "sexual" in an adult sense, but have more to do with emotional fusion. So, in fact, do many of our apparently purely sexual feelings in adulthood; sexuality carries many emotional levels which are not always conscious. An Oedipal defeat or victory

involving the parent of one's own sex may have equally painful repercussions,



and be equally conducive to later relationship triangles. One may feel dislocated from

one's

own sexuality, because the beloved parent is a model for that sexuality and the bond is too weak or negative to allow the model to be internalised in a positive way. A man may forever try to win his father's love by proving how manly he is. He may then unconsciously set up triangles which are not really about the women with whom he becomes involved, but are unconsciously aimed at impressing other men - or punishing them for the father's rejection. And a woman may try to win her mother's love and admiration in the same way, or punish other women for her mother's failure to love her. The rival in an adult triangle may be secretly far more important to the individual than the apparent object of desire. We have only to listen to the obsessive preoccupation the Betrayed and the Instrument of Betrayal have with each other to recognise that the situation may be psychologically far more complex than it seems.

Helpful Oedipal hints - Venus as a parental significator

The birth chart can tell us a lot about our images of our parents, and the experiences we have encountered through them. When we look at a chart, we may find some helpful Oedipal hints. The parental significators usually show up very powerfully, and in such a way as to involve one's emotional and sexual needs and one's image of oneself as a man or woman. We might find planets in the 10th or the 4th house, which immediately suggests the parent is a carrier for or representative of something mythic and archetypal. Having no planets in the parental houses does not mean there are no conflicts with the parents, or no subjective image which we project on them. But it is often easier to perceive the parent as another person, another human, however flawed. When planets occupy these houses, the planetary gods appear with the parent's face, wearing the parent's clothes. A piece of our own destiny, our own inner journey, comes to meet us in very early life, disguised as mother or father and passed down through the family inheritance. While this is not "bad" or "negative", it does imply something powerful, fascinating, and compulsive about the parental relationship which requires a greater degree of consciousness and a greater effort at integration.

Repeating triangles in adult life are frequently linked with planets in the parental houses. Often we will see Venus in the 10th or 4th. Venus describes what we perceive as beautiful and of value, and therefore what we love, both in ourselves and in others. If a parent appears in the birth chart as Venus, that parent is going to be a symbol of what we recognise as most beautiful, most valuable, and most worthwhile. That in itself is not negative. But it may mean

that we project our own beauty and worth on the parent, and a lot then depends on how the parent handles such a projection. We see deeply lovable, worthwhile qualities or attributes in the parent and we fall in love with the parent because we are in love with the attributes. Hopefully, as we mature, we eventually introject these things, and recognise that they belong to us as well as to the mother or father. This process can help to create a lasting, loving bond between parent and child - a mutual valuing of the other for qualities which are shared. But not every parent is free of hidden agendas regarding his or her children. If the parent is too hungry for love and admiration, he or she will unconsciously work to maintain the projection and remain forever Venus in the child's eyes. Venus is not known in myth for her emotional generosity. She is a vain goddess and is repeatedly implicated in love triangles. If we leave the Venusian image projected on the parent, we may never recognise it in ourselves. Then we will keep looking for parental surrogates on whom we can place this image of all that is worthwhile and desirable in life, and we will keep finding Venusian love-objects who seem worth so much more than we do ourselves. Or we may try to reclaim Venus by playing her ourselves, pitting one lover against another in order to convince ourselves that we are really of value after all. Where Venus is, we love.

Rivalry is one of the most characteristic attributes of Venus placed in the house of the parent of one's own sex. We may wind up feeling a lot like Snow White a good deal of the time. With Venus in the 10th in a woman's chart, there may be deep and painful rivalry between mother and daughter. From the daughter's point of view, the mother may appear to be very jealous, although the jealousy may be expressed covertly as incessant criticism or subtle undermining of the daughter's feminine confidence. Sadly, the jealous or competitive mother is often an objective reality. But it is one's own Venus in the 10th, and one must sooner or later acknowledge one's own jealousy as well. If Venus is a same-sex parental signifier, then Venusian attributes are shared between parent and



child. The archetypal love-goddess, who must be the fairest and best-loved of all, is an image which has passed down through the family line. This image needs to be individually expressed and not forever relegated to a battle as to who will win the love-object. In this case the love-object may not be as important as beating the rival. Rivalry and envy are closely related, and when Venus is a same-sex parental

signifier, we may see beautiful, enviable qualities in the parent and wish we had them ourselves. Then we begin to compete in order to prove that we are Venus too - a bigger and better and more beautiful Venus.

Parents may also feel a sense of sexual threat when confronted by a child who is growing into sexual maturity before their eyes. This sense of threat may be based on heightened sexual awareness. When Venus is a parental signifier, it may not be felt purely on the parent's side, but may happen in both parent and child. Recognising that erotic feelings may be shared between parent and child does not constitute an excuse for child sexual abuse. Nor does it imply an "abnormal" relationship. But children can be very seductive, in a childlike way. They are "trying on" their sexuality. They neither want nor expect an adult

sexual response, but they need to discover their own physical and emotional identity through expressing it to the parent. These things are simply part of family life. They are not pathological; they are human, and intrinsically healthy. The erotic energy that is part of any person's development process in childhood is going to be unleashed in the family because that is the appropriate place for the child to unleash it. It is also natural and appropriate for the parent to respond positively - although it is not appropriate for this to be acted out in destructive ways. Some children may carry more of an erotic energy pack than others; this may depend on factors such as where Venus and Mars are placed in the child's birth chart. Likewise, some parents may be more susceptible than others, and the synastry between parent and child may help to illuminate why this should be so. A reasonably stable parental relationship is important, and also a sufficient degree of consciousness, for the parents to be able to contain this natural process without falling into a triangle. If one is a little girl with Venus in the 4th house, one may well try to split the parents, because father is the beloved with whom one shares some very lovely and pleasurable feelings. And if the parental marriage is insecure, and the mother unconsciously begins to behave in a hostile or competitive way, is her behaviour surprising?

Divided loyalties

Even in the happiest and most emotionally stable of families, one may feel both deep love for and intense rivalry with the parent. One may find, for example, Venus in the 4th and Moon in the 10th. This is the case in the chart of Prince Charles, who has offered us one of the more notorious triangles of modern times. With such configurations there may be a strong identification with the rival. The child may wind up in a position of being the Betrayer as well as the Instrument of Betrayal. That is not conducive to feeling good about oneself, so



something is likely to be suppressed. The young ego simply cannot cope with such ambivalence. If one expresses Venus in the 4th, with all its implications of love for the father, one will hurt and betray the mother. And if the Moon is in the 10th, how can one do this to someone whose feelings one is so identified with? Then Venus may get suppressed, and later in life one may wind up in a triangle without understanding the early pattern which is fuelling it. Or the feelings for the mother may be suppressed. One may become a "marriage wrecker", as they used to call it in the days when there were still marriages. A "marriage wrecker", psychologically speaking, is a person who

moves in on an established relationship, not only because of genuine affection and desire for the love object, but also because there is a compulsive need to take on the role of - to literally become - the rival with whom one is secretly identified.

It is very difficult to acknowledge such a pattern in oneself. If we wind up in the role of the Instrument of Betrayal, we like to think that we have truly fallen in

love with someone, and the fact that they are already in an established relationship is just bad luck. They made a mistake and married the wrong person, or they married against their will because there was a child on the way. Whatever rationalisations we give ourselves, we may justify our role as Instrument of Betrayal by devaluing the importance of the already existing bond. This may sometimes prove extremely naive, and lead to a great deal of disillusionment and hurt when one discovers that the "unwanted" spouse means far more to the beloved than one has ever been able to acknowledge. One may also discover, to one's horror, that one begins to behave exactly like the despised rival whom one has initially relegated to the "he/she only stays with her/him because of the children" bin. When parental issues are unresolved, the urge to unseat a couple may be extremely powerful - especially if the rival is also one's close friend, which facilitates recreating the feelings of the original family triangle.

We may also see things in the beloved parent which are not so lovely. For example, a man with Venus in the 10th may also have a Moon-Pluto square or a Moon-Saturn opposition, or Venus conjunct Saturn or Chiron. There are two very different images of mother expressed by such combinations, one of which is beloved and beautiful, the other of which is threatening or hurtful. These two attributes tend to manifest in one's later life as two people - the Betrayed and the Instrument of Betrayal. This is what Jung called a "split anima", or the female equivalent - a "split animus". Jung was quite preoccupied with the psychological dynamics of this pattern because he suffered from it himself. Although his definitions are somewhat rigid and in need of greater flexibility in interpretation, they are useful in helping us to understand why we need triangles, and why the three points are secretly interchangeable. All three people are likely to suffer from the same unresolved parental dynamic. The inner split seems to be particularly strong and conducive to compulsive triangles when apparently irreconcilable opposites appear in the same beloved parent. There are parents in whom the opposites are not terribly opposite, but there are also parents in whom they are very extreme. Such parents are fascinating and often exercise great sexual charisma because they are so unfathomable. The parent is beautiful and beloved, but also hurtful, cruel, unfeeling, devouring, or otherwise indigestible. It is very hard for the human psyche to accept extreme opposites in one package, so one needs two people through whom one can experience the ambivalent feelings. One will get to be Venus, and the other will get to be Pluto or Saturn or Chiron or Mars or Uranus.

Parental images which convey extreme opposites may contribute to a propensity for triangles in adult life. We get involved with someone, and over time that person begins to take on the image of one side of the parent. After a few years of living together, we begin to say to ourselves and our friends, "My partner's so possessive, I just have to have some breathing space," and there sits Venus in the 10th or the 4th, square Pluto. Or we say, "My partner is so restrictive and conventional, I just have to be free to be myself," and there sits Venus in the 10th with Moon opposition Saturn. We feel we aren't enjoying the kind of beautiful, erotic, amusing relationship that we hoped we would find in partnership. We then justify the lover who plays the role of Venus. The split is acted out, but in fact it reflects two opposite qualities that we have not come to terms with in the relationship with one parent. Of course such splits connected with the parents are, at the deepest level, concerned with opposite qualities that

have not been resolved within oneself. All triangles, including those arising from the family background, are ultimately concerned with our own unlived psychic life. If we were able to reconcile our own opposites, we could allow our parents to be contradictory as well. There is nothing extraordinary about a parent having both a charming, lovable Venusian side and a withdrawn Saturnian side or a demanding Plutonian side. Human beings are multifaceted, and they may both love us and hurt us. But we may find these contradictions in our parents intolerable if the parents themselves cannot cope with their own contradictions. Then we get no help in learning to integrate our contradictions. And some of these, in astrological terms, are simply too extreme to deal with in early life. By this I mean configurations which link Venus or the Moon to Saturn or Chiron - these require a wisdom only time and experience can make available - or to the outer planets, which are quite impossible for a young child to integrate on a personal level.

Split families - oppositions from 4th to 10th

Triangles may develop within the family through the parents splitting up. Often this is portrayed in the birth chart by oppositions from the 4th to the 10th. Such oppositions do not inevitably indicate that the parents have separated, but usually there is conflict and separation on a psychological level, if not a physical one. One experiences the parents in opposition, and when this happens we are usually forced to take sides. Our own inability to cope with the situation impels us to do so, and sometimes one parent cannot refrain from trying to elicit the child's loyalty as a weapon against the other parent. In this situation the bottom line, as ever, involves a contradiction within the individual, experienced first through the parents, reflected by opposing planets in the chart, and ultimately needing to be dealt with on an inner level. But unconsciousness on the part of the parents can make this a longer and harder process. Even if we are subjected to no parental pressure, it is unlikely that we can cope with divided loyalties at such a young age. And in such circumstances it would take extremely wise and conscious parents to be in sufficient accord with each other to place no emotional pressure of any kind on their child. Usually, if the parents are so unhappy that they are separating, they are not in the mood to be cooperative. Separations release primal emotions in us, and these may involve considerable vindictiveness - especially if the separation is triggered by a triangle.

Often the child winds up feeling like a football in a particularly aggressive football match. One parent - especially if he or she is the Betrayed - may attempt to claim possession of the child, overtly or subtly, in order to hurt the Betrayer. There are certain scripts which appear to be read by lots of people. For example: "Your father left me because he was a bastard. He was incapable of loving. He didn't love any of us, otherwise he wouldn't have gone off with that woman." The message to a male child might be: "I hope you don't grow up to be like him." The message to a female child might be: "I hope you don't grow up to marry somebody like him." Such messages do not have to be spoken. They may be communicated through martyrdom and ongoing misery. The Betrayed, when parents split up, will usually have great power over the child's psyche because of the compassion he or she can draw out of the child. Children are not equipped to step out of the fray and look objectively at the break-up. It must

be someone's fault, either their own or one of the parents. And children also dare not reject those messages, because they are terrified of angering the parent who is now the sole caretaker. In our society, when parents split up, the mother usually gets the child - even if this is not psychologically the best solution for that particular child. There are many instances where the father might be emotionally better equipped to raise the child, but the courts of law do not see it that way. The mother must be quite floridly appalling to have her child taken away from her. If the parents are not actually married, the father's rights may be nonexistent in terms of access. One might well question whether a father really merits having his child torn away and turned against him solely because he has betrayed his wife. But triangles have a way of generating very unpleasant emotional consequences which carry on down the generations and breed more triangles.

The permutations of human blindness are many and various, and divorcing or separating parents - or even those who remain living together but are emotionally alienated - will generally demand that the child choose one or the other. The love for the other parent must be denied, suppressed, silenced. This is terribly human. If we are hurt by someone, we find it hard to bear if someone else we love shows affection to the person who has hurt us. If there are oppositions between the 4th and the 10th in the child's chart, then the child's own inner division colludes with the parents' division. I have seen many, many examples over the years where the person has had to deny great love for a parent in such circumstances. The denial may be believed even by the person himself or herself. When we see Venus, Moon, Neptune, Sun, or Jupiter in a parental house, we know that there is a powerful positive bond with the parent, even if the relationship has also been very difficult. If any of these planets are in the 4th, they are likely to describe strongly positive and even idealised feelings for the father. But if there has been a break-up and the father has gone off - or if there are oppositions from planets in the 10th, even if he hasn't gone off - it may prove impossible for the person to keep such feelings in consciousness. The ambivalence may be too painful, and the sense of disloyalty to the mother may be too great to bear. Perhaps the father has left because of another relationship. Perhaps he marries again, and has other children. Then the problem is compounded, because the child's own jealousy allies with the jealousy of the mother and makes it quite impossible for the emotional bond with the father to be recognised. The relationship is destroyed, and the child, who is now grown up, says, "Oh, I haven't seen my father much since the divorce. I have very little to do with him. I see him occasionally, but we don't have much of a relationship." All the positive, loving feelings have been pushed underground, because we do not cope well with divided loyalties. We suppress them because we have to survive psychologically; and we have to live with mother.



If there are planets in the 4th which suggest love and idealisation, and the parents split up, the suppressed feelings for the father may provide fodder for

later triangles. This can apply to both sexes. It should not be surprising if a woman coming from this kind of family background, with this kind of chart configuration, winds up playing the Instrument of Betrayal and hurls herself at a married man. Equally, she may find herself as the Betrayed, married to someone just like her father. Or she may become the Betrayer as a defence, because she is determined not to wind up like her mother. A man with this background and chart placement may wind up unconsciously choosing a woman like his mother and then, to his horror, finds himself in his father's shoes. A triangle may be inevitable, because the more unconscious the feelings are toward this beloved missing parent, the more certain they will be to emerge later in an adult relationship.

These unconscious feelings may also cross sexes. They do not necessarily limit themselves to women who seek the missing father in other men, or men who find themselves in the same situation as their fathers. A man who has lost his father, and who has Venus or Neptune or the Moon in the 4th, may seek the qualities of the father in women. Or if he is gay, he may seek them in another man. We need to think of these dynamics not from a perspective of rigid sexual demarcations, but as a way of attempting to heal a wound. Also, they reflect our efforts to contact archetypal qualities in our adult relationships which we glimpsed first in the parent and which we ultimately need to find in ourselves. Because we carry something unresolved and unhealed, we may faithfully recreate our parents' marriage. Then we may find ourselves in the same triangle, on any of the three points, with either or both sexes. These underlying dynamics seem very obvious when we start thinking about them. The difficulty lies in thinking about them when we are in the middle of a triangle. It is very easy if we are the detached astrologer or psychotherapist - if there is indeed such a thing as an entirely detached person - or even the friend with a certain amount of psychological knowledge. We may clearly see the familial roots of many adult triangles if we are observers, but it is extremely difficult to see them when we are involved in the triangle. And the more unconscious we are of our parental dynamics, the more emotionally compulsive the triangle is likely to be, and the harder it is to see clearly.

Even if we do see, we may still be bound, because we have to live something through. We do not heal anything through the exercise of reason alone. But the emotions which the triangle brings to the surface may change, and the outcome may be very different, internally if not externally. The sad thing about triangles is that everybody loses. Sooner or later, on one level or another, all three people wind up hurt. Even if the Instrument of Betrayal succeeds in breaking up an existing relationship and "getting" the love-object that he or she has been fighting for, it is a Pyrrhic victory. The Betrayer has to choose in the end, so even if something is won, something is also lost. And the victory is no less Pyrrhic for the Betrayed who succeeds in "getting back" the erring partner. We have exercised our Oedipal power and reversed the original Oedipal defeat that we suffered in childhood. But what have we really won, and what must we live with afterward? Resentment seems to be inevitable, no matter which point of the triangle we favour. If we are the Instrument of Betrayal, we have led someone else into making a very painful choice, and often there will be a lot of suffering, not only emotionally but also financially, and so there will be resentment. But even more importantly, if we remain unconscious, we have done nothing to heal the inner split which lies behind the triangle. We have only

achieved an external solution. Nothing has really changed.

Insecurities which generate triangles - Saturn and Chiron

There is another consequence of family triangles - the potential alienation between oneself and others of one's own sex. An unresolved Oedipal battle may result in a loss of trust in one's own sexuality. If a situation of intense rivalry and competitiveness occurred with the same-sex parent, there will inevitably be effects in terms of our friendships and the way that we interact with our own sex later. If a woman has a mother who is an insurmountable rival, at whose hands she has suffered a painful and humiliating childhood defeat, confidence in her femininity may be undermined. And because she does not trust herself, she will not trust other women. They will all seem to have the power to "take away" those she loves. This mistrust of one's own sex can be very acute. A woman may have a wonderful friendship with another woman, and then she meets a really lovely man, and they get involved, and what does she do about introducing her friend to her partner? The undercurrent of anxiety and suspicion may make things very difficult, and unconsciously she may even set herself up for betrayal. She may unconsciously select as friends those of her own sex who act out her unresolved conflict with her mother, because they have unresolved conflicts with their mothers. The same applies to men. If a man has experienced a situation of destructive competitiveness with his father, then, in any later relationship in which he becomes involved, the issue of rivalry will always raise its head, because other men always seem to be potential rivals. One must be on guard all the time. This is not possessiveness in the ordinary sense. Its roots are quite different.

Placements such as Venus aspecting Saturn or Chiron can contribute to this dynamic, not because they are in themselves Oedipal, but because they reflect certain insecurities which can be compounded by the family triangle. Mars aspecting Saturn and Chiron may also reflect deep sexual insecurities which are heightened by family triangles and lead to feelings of defeat. These sets of aspects may compel a repetition of the failure later, or an attempt to heal the hurt by proving one's sexual potency through triangles. There is no single astrological pattern which describes a propensity for triangles, but rather, many different combinations which can describe different images of and responses to the parents, and different ways of reacting to the natural and inevitable Oedipal phase of childhood. Venus-Saturn and Venus-Chiron do not "cause" a person to be drawn into triangles, but they describe a deep and innate awareness of human limits which, in childhood, when there is no real comprehension of what this could offer in a positive sense, can lead the child into feeling inadequate and damaged. The loss or alienation of a beloved parent will then be attributed to one's own failings, and later in life one may feel one cannot "keep" a partner because a rival will always take him or her away.

Oedipal experiences often come out with a bang in midlife, because the planets making their cycles at that time - Saturn, Neptune, and Uranus - may trigger configurations which connect us to childhood issues. There is a great deal of un-lived life clamouring for expression under the midlife group of transits, and unresolved family triangles that have managed to remain buried may finally

break out because they are carrying unlived psychic life with them. But it depends on how powerful the conflict is. It may come out much earlier. There are people who experience triangles from the very beginning of their relationship lives. Not all triangles have parental roots, and parental roots may also involve something deeper. We may well wonder what could be deeper than the Oedipal dynamic, but as Jung was reputed to have once said, even the penis is a phallic symbol. If there is a family pattern which is unresolved, such as the Venusian issues we have been looking at, it stands a good chance of erupting in one's outer life under the appropriate transits. That, for some people, may be the only way any kind of healing or resolution becomes possible. But behind the parental issue is the archetypal issue - why do we seek the love of that particular parent, and what does the parent symbolise for our own souls? This is invariably linked with what needs to be developed in oneself - one's own destiny.

At midlife, if important bits of oneself have remained undeveloped, they will come bursting out, especially under the Uranus opposition to its own place. And often, the first place we meet these occluded bits of ourselves is in somebody else. It is the most characteristic way in which the psyche knocks on the door and demands integration. This need to become more of what one really is may begin with a sudden attraction. Unlived bits of ourselves may also appear in a rival. Surprisingly, the rival may be more important psychologically than the person over whom one is fighting. But if there has been no pattern of triangles earlier, the eruption of one at midlife may not necessarily imply an unresolved family problem. And if it does, the problem needs to be seen in a larger context.

Triangles which involve unlived life

We now come to the issue of what might really lie beneath the dynamics of triangles - beneath the parental patterns and defences and power-plays and all the other apparently "causal" reasons why triangles enter our lives. I believe there is always an element of unlived life in every triangle, and for various reasons it seems we are sometimes unable to discover that unlived life except through the extreme emotional stress which triangles generate. Betrayal is an archetypal experience which is our chief instrument of maturation. This does not mean that we all need to become embittered cynics. But there is something



important in recognising how our fantasies of what we think life and love should be prevent us from growing up and becoming full members of the human family. Betrayal is the means through which these fantasies are punctured and recognised. We attempt to enclose ourselves and other people in our fantasy-world, which is meant to

compensate for childhood pain. Since all childhoods have pain, the naive assumptions we carry are also archetypal, and reflect an alternative child-world that resembles Eden in its innocence and fusion-state with the divine parent. The serpent in the Garden is therefore an image of this archetypal role of betrayal, which is inherent in the state of innocence and sooner or later rises up to destroy our fusion.

There is no formula to cope with the pain of betrayal. But an archetypal perspective can help us to look at things differently, although the pain cannot be explained or imagined away. There is no remedy for this kind of pain. But there is a difference between blind pain and pain that is accompanied by understanding. The latter has a transformative effect. When there is no consciousness, triangles do tend to repeat themselves - different characters, same script. Some triangles are truly transformative. They do break apart an old pattern, and the new relationship is genuinely much happier and more rewarding. Or the triangle serves the purpose of freeing energy, freeing inner potentials, and even if the old relationship is re-established, or one winds up with neither party, everything has changed. But we are still ourselves, however much we try to rearrange our outer lives, and if an inner issue has not been dealt with, the same patterns will begin to arise in the new relationship. The compatibility may be greater with another partner, but one must still deal with one's own psyche.

A triangle can be like a grand trine in a chart. The energy circles around and around; it flows back on itself and does not nourish anything else in one's life. Within triangles, all three people tend to project elements of themselves on each other. The triangle holds these projections in place, and there may be enormous resistance to change. We might even say that the triangle forms because there is resistance to change, so whatever is seeking expression from within is experienced through projection. When such a triangle breaks up, the projections come back home again. Psychic energy is released, whether it is through death or the voluntary relinquishing of someone. The timing of this is not accidental. In one or two or even all three parties, unconscious issues have finally reached a point where they can be integrated, even if this is expressed by simply letting it go. The moment we are able to do that, the projections begin to become conscious. I do not believe real forgiving comes in any other way. It is a kind of grace. It cannot be created by an act of will. It is very sad to hear the Betrayed saying, "I forgive you," not because it is truly heartfelt, but in order to get the straying partner back again. Underneath there may be no forgiveness at all - although this may not be entirely conscious - and then the punishment can go on and on. Forgiveness can only come out of a recognition of one's collusion in the triangle - whatever one's role - and the taking back of one's projections. Before that, forgiveness is not really possible. It only seems to emerge out of something being genuinely integrated in oneself. The entire process is transformative. We cannot manufacture forgiveness if we have been betrayed - nor can we manufacture it for ourselves if we are the Betrayer. We can only work to integrate what belongs to our own souls.

The Saturnian parent who rejects, and then turns up in a triangle as a cold and rejecting partner, may have something to do with our own need to acquire boundaries. If we view this fundamental Saturnian experience from a more detached perspective, what is rejection, in the end, except someone else drawing boundaries which we find intolerable? It may be our own lack of boundaries that attracts us into a triangle where we are the Betrayed, rejected by a Saturnian partner who says, "I can't stand this emotional claustrophobia. I want to be separate." Or we may be the Betrayer, fleeing from a partner whose emotional needs seem stifling but who secretly mirrors our own inability to cope

with loneliness. The hard and painful lessons that come from these kinds of experiences are lessons about what is undeveloped in ourselves. We may have to discover our primal passions if Pluto is in our 10th or 4th. But we may disown this at first, and say, "My mother was terribly manipulative," or, "My father was so controlling." Why do people become manipulative and controlling? If someone is expressing Plutonian qualities in a relationship, they are not doing it because it is fun; they are doing it because the relationship is equated with



survival, and there is a desperate need to ensure that the beloved remains close. Pluto is mobilised when one feels under threat. People become manipulative because they are terrified of losing the object of their love. That love object constitutes survival for

them, and manipulation seems the only possible way to ensure the continuity of the relationship. We are all capable of this, given the right level of attachment and the right level of threat. If we disown these Plutonian attributes and keep them firmly projected on the parent, Pluto may turn up in a triangle. Then we ourselves may have to discover how possessive we can be. Or we acquire a deeply possessive partner. We may get as far as saying, "Ah, yes, I have chosen someone just like my mother/father." That is a useful piece of insight, but it is only the beginning. This possessive quality in the parent is described by our own 4th or 10th house Pluto. We must still discover it in ourselves. Often we only discover we have a Pluto through the experience of betrayal. It is just a blank in the chart until a triangle unearths it, and then we suddenly find our Pluto for the first time. We discover that we feel passionately, that we need intensely, that desperation can make us treacherous and manipulative, and that control may seem the only way to survive. This process of self-discovery may be a frightening and humbling experience, but it allows us to fully become what we are.

Psyche integration is the teleology of all triangles. Even when the outer planets are involved in parental triangles, the thing to which we are so deeply attached in the parent is really something that belongs to our own souls. This "something" may involve our stretching beyond personal boundaries and allowing a deeper or higher level of reality into our lives, but nevertheless it is connected with our own life journey. When we see astrological symbols which we experience first through the parents and then later through a triangle in which the same experience repeats itself, there is something within us that needs to be lived, and it may keep coming back through triangles until we find a way to live it. Planets which are parental signifiers in the chart are not only descriptive of parental patterns. They are descriptive of unlived dimensions of ourselves, especially when they do not agree with the rest of the chart. Even if the parent embodies the planet in creative ways, it is still our planet, and belongs to our own destiny. A planet in the 4th or 10th, or in major aspect to the Sun or Moon, may not be enacted obviously by the parent, but it will be part of what we experience through the parent. If the parent has not creatively lived the archetypal pattern symbolised by the planet, it is harder to understand what we are dealing with. And therefore we may not realise what we are meeting through a triangle which appears in our life later. It is not just an unfinished parental complex, although that element may be important to explore. It is ultimately one's own planet, and therefore something of one's own soul. It is

part of our psychological inheritance, but we must give shape to it. Even triangles which appear screamingly Oedipal also have to do with our own inner lives, because what we love or hate in the parent is something that belongs to us. But we need to find our own way of living it.

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