ASTROLOGY IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

VOL. I

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

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* * * * *

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1987

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INTRODUCTION

What we know today about the astrological allusions in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer we owe primarily to the efforts of five scholars. Walter W. Skeat's encyclopedic explanations of the astrological terms and procedures in Chaucer's works at the close of the nineteenth century is the very solid foundation upon which all twentieth-century scholarship is ultimately based. Walter Clyde Curry's study of Chaucer's use of the medieval sciences, published in 1926, was heavily indebted to Skeat, and Curry's interpretations of the configurations in the Knight's Tale, the Man of Law's Tale, and the Wife of Bath's Prologue have remained standard reading for sixty years. More recently, Chauncey Wood has updated Curry's interpretations and provided some valuable information about Chaucer's attitude toward astrology and about the role of astrology in the Middle Ages. Sigmund Eisner is perhaps the most knowledgeable authority on Chaucer's Treatise on the Astrolabe today, and in addition to his study of the treatise, Eisner has provided a valuable guide to the use of Nicholas of Lynn's Kalendarium and a recent assessment of Chaucer's abilities as a technical writer. Most recently (1984), J. G. Eade explained the mathematics of celestial motion as well as some of the methods employed by astrology. In this important work, Eade has not only analyzed most of the references in Chaucer's works, but also the allusions that appear in the works of a good many other major English writers of the Middle Ages and the
Renaissance. To be sure, there are other scholars—but not a great
many—who have contributed to our understanding of Chaucer’s use of
astrology in this tale or that one, and they will be recognized in this
study: I have made every attempt to include the best interpretations
known to me at this time. One should not overlook the lessons to be
learned from the recent studies of B. F. Hamlin (Wife of Bath’s Pro-
logue), D. Brooks and A. Fowler or Edward Schweitzer (Knight’s Tale),
or J. D. North (Astrolabe, Knight’s Tale), for instance, and they will
receive full consideration. Helpful as these and other studies have
been, however, what we know about Chaucer and astrology, we know
because of the work of the five major critics, and it is with what they
and the others have accomplished that my work will begin.

In spite of the excellent work that has already been done, many of
the astrological references in the Canterbury Tales have been only
partially explained or not explained at all. The role of the stars in
the Man of Law’s Tale, for example, remains a puzzle because critics
have as yet been unable to agree on the nature of the configuration.
The significances of the references in the Merchant’s Tale and the
astrological error in the Parson’s Prologue have been only partially
explained, and the role of Mercury as a planet in the Knight’s Tale
has not been assessed at all.

The reason that there is still work to be done with the allusions
in the Canterbury Tales, I believe, has to do with the modern attitude
toward astrology. The procedure for analysis that critics have used
for the most part is one which looks up the general characteristics of
a planet or sign as one looks up the definition for a word in a diction-
ary. Just as the definition may or may not apply according to
the context in which it is placed (and may actually confuse or mislead), so the astrological conditions have to be "right" before the general characteristics can be applied or even revealed. In order to fully understand the meanings of such allusions, it is first necessary to suspend the modern view of astrology as superstitious nonsense and to accept that, in Chaucer's day, it was a valid scientific discipline that employed a step-by-step analytic process. Once those methods are understood, one is not only in a position to follow an allusion as far as the laws of astrology will permit, but also in a much better position to recognize the kinds of configurations one can and cannot expect an audience to understand. Over the years, critics have gone to considerable effort to propose interpretations of the allusions that, while technically possible in some cases, place impossible demands upon either a listening or a reading audience. If we understand the scientific methods of astrology, it will be much easier to remember that whatever we have to go through to analyze an allusion, all members of an audience would have to go through. If we have to use tools to arrive at our conclusions that Chaucer's actual audience would not have had available, it is a good indication that we may well be off the track.

For all of these reasons, therefore, and for the reason that all students of Chaucer and of literature in the Middle Ages and Renaissance have to deal with astrological allusions, the first half of this dissertation is dedicated to an explanation of what Chaucer could have expected his contemporary audience to know about astrology and how configurations are to be analyzed according to its scientific methodology. The second half of this study will explain the meaning of each of the astrological allusions in the Canterbury Tales according to those same methods.
I hope to demonstrate thereby that the pilgrims use astrology for plot and character development in their tales and autobiographical comments because they are curious about the causes of inexplicable events in this world. They make the stars representative of the powers of destiny and, by so doing, raise the issues of providence and free will. Their concern with cause thus generates an interlaced discussion of providence, destiny, and free will (in Bosthian terms) between the Knight, the Miller, the Man of Law, the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Squire, the Franklin, and the Nun's Priest that also considers astrologers, the use of astrology, and what man should and should not seek to know about the workings of God. The stars as representatives of the powers of destiny are the link that joins the discussion together as the astrological pilgrims try to find the cause of good and ill fortune in the world. For they do not discuss sin or the causes of contrition as the Parson would prefer, nor do they dwell on penance and personal salvation as pilgrimage ideally requires. Instead, they are concerned with lust, aggression, untimely deaths, successes, failures, and generally speaking with the rise and fall of men in the pursuit of worldly power and pleasure. I hope to demonstrate that Chaucer used judicial astrology in his story of a Canterbury pilgrimage as a means of emphasizing the worldliness of his pilgrims, the lengths to which they would go to avoid responsibility for the pursuit of their worldly ideas of the "good," and to show how far removed from God and the ideal goals of pilgrimage they are.

As Love set the forces of Nature and destiny into motion, so the Canterbury pilgrims ought ideally to have been motivated by the
Love of God. D. W. Robertson, Jr. declares that

The Tales are set in a framework which emphasizes this journey and its implications. The opening in April, the month of Venus, under the sign Taurus, the house of Venus, with its showers and singing birds, suggests the love which may move the pilgrims to Canterbury toward either one spiritual city or the other. And as the journey draws to a close, with Libra's scales of justice hanging in the sky in a curious but irrelevant echo of Homer, the parson offers to show "the wey in this vilage/Of thilke parfit glorigus pilgrimage / That highte Jerusalem celestial." 8

Every pilgrimage imitated man's separation from God, his lifelong homelessness and wandering through the world, and the return "home" to God. The good pilgrim would concentrate all of his time and effort on his destination, desiring nothing more than to come "home" to the celestial Jerusalem as quickly as possible. He would shun bad company and ignore the distractions of the world, and as one fourteenth-century religious treatise points out, faith and love are the only companions he would choose to accompany him on his journey:

Good pilgrymes . . . thinketh noght elles but to make her iournees nyght and day til thei come to that contre aforesaid, that is her right heritage . . . . Such pilgrymes, if thei wole passe siker-liche, thei putteth hem all wey in good company of stedfast byleve and parfite love. ffor, til thei come home into her contre and rightfull heritiage, on whiche thei setten her thoght and desire so sadliche that the wey thiderward greueth hem nought. 9

Thus, the journeys to the literal or the figurative Jerusalem were ideally moved by love of God and faith in His goodness; the goals of pilgrimage were a swift arrival at the destination and, before that arrival, a journey on which the pilgrim silently concentrated on his
sins, his need for penance and forgiveness, the love of God, and eternal salvation.

Perhaps there were "perfect" pilgrims who were able to meet the goals of the ideal pilgrimage whether the way was short or long, easy or difficult. But, for a good many of them, pilgrimage was no doubt seen as a way to combine pleasure with the business of salvation and a way to satisfy one's curiosity about strange places and people. Consequently, pilgrims were warned against being victimized by *curiositas*, that inordinate curiosity about, and fascination with, the places and people on their journeys which could lead them away from thoughts of God and personal salvation: "Curiositas diverts man's spiritual sight from otherworldly goals and distracts him with the spectacle of worldly landscapes from contemplation of self. This was exactly why Gregory the Great saw curiositas as a grave fault: men seeking to gain knowledge of the world around them end up ignorant of themselves." 11

Although *curiositas* is a natural hazard of pilgrimage, curiosity about cause and effect in the world or the motivation of God is not a result of pilgrimage itself. The pilgrims are involved in a tale-telling contest on this pilgrimage, and in the tales told by the astrological pilgrims, external power is the agent and man is the object acted upon. It is in the nature of tale-telling to explore motivation, to provide cause and effect. Without motivation, without cause and effect, a story does not develop: it stands still. Thus, when the astrological pilgrims tell a tale, different views of the workings of providence and destiny, of free will emerge, and the role of God in the destiny of man comes under scrutiny. Man's responsibility for his behavior is thus minimalized, and the awareness of sin and error becomes blurred.
Thus, when some of the pilgrims employ astrology in their tales to provide motivation or cause and effect and the whole providential scheme of things comes under consideration, tale-telling is the culprit, not the institution of pilgrimage.

Understanding cause was an important goal of educated men in the Middle Ages. The translations of Arab treatises on the physical sciences and the rise of the universities from the 11th through the 13th centuries had brought with them an intense curiosity about the cause of things which was often at odds with Christian doctrine. In its enthusiasm to explain cause—to justify the ways of God to men, as it were—the new learning fostered an attitude of pride in knowing the unknowable that was naturally abhorrent to the Church:

The world of physical nature, as much as the world of books and the universities, was a prominent stimulus to curiosity. The great intellectuals of the twelfth century and their successors of the next centuries resurrected a naturalistic scientific attitude toward the physical world which had been dead since the early Church Fathers placed a barrier between wisdom and human knowledge. From the twelfth century on, as M. D. Chenu has explained, "These men were bent upon a search for the causes of things—the most keen and arduous as well as the most typical of the activities of reason when, confronting nature, men discovered both its fecundity and the chains of necessity by which it is bound; an activity proper to science, and one which clashed violently with religious consciousness, which when it was yet inexperienced and immature, was willing to engage in its characteristic activity of looking immediately to the Supreme Cause, at the expense of disregarding secondary causes." 12

Looking directly to the Supreme Cause while overlooking secondary causes unavoidably brought into question man's responsibility for his actions, the "fairness" of life, and as a result the wisdom and goodness of God
Himself. For if God controlled what He had created, how does one explain such inexplicable events as the sufferings of the innocent and the successes of evil in the everyday world. Where was the order in God's providential plan, and how might man understand it?

Astrology provided a convenient means of making the issues of providence, destiny, and free will available to the imagination, and it was commonly used for such purposes of instruction by artists in the Middle Ages. C. S. Lewis began the concluding chapter of his *Discarded Image* by declaring that "No one who has read the higher kinds of medieval and Renaissance poetry has failed to notice the amount of solid instruction--of science, philosophy, or history--that they carry." Recognizing that this sort of "instruction" may be not only problematic but also tedious for the modern reader, he went on to explain that (p. 198)

Sometimes such matter is organically connected with a theme which, by our standards, seems well able to have dispensed with it; as the character and influence of the planets are worked into the *Knight's Tale* or the *Testament of Cresseid*. It may also seem to us to be "dragged in by the heels" where, I believe, the medieval author would have felt it to be wholly relevant.

The relevance, Lewis said, was in the search for cause, for order in a "model": it was a matter of "obeying the principle of 'a place for everything and everything in its proper place'" (p. 198). Medieval audiences were aware of the order implicit in the stars and their supposed effects, and authors were aware that the use of astrology in their works both stimulated interest and presented the opportunity to display artistic talent. "Henryson might expect," Lewis said, "and
justly, to be admired for describing the characters of the planets so vividly; hardly for knowing them" (p. 199).

For modern readers, it is puzzling to find an author telling an audience what it already knows, and it is therefore naturally puzzling to find medieval authors using the planets to explain cause in situations that can already be explained by custom or common sense. The behavior of Arcite and Palamon in the grove, for instance, can be explained by the knightly code of conduct without reference to the stars. The moon moves from Taurus to Cancer in the Merchant's Tale to tell us that May left her retirement at the end of four days when it had already been explained that brides customarily retired for that length of time following the wedding night.

Lewis said that he once believed this sort of thing took place because of the rarity of books and a hunger for knowledge of any sort. Eventually, he concluded that medieval audiences "enjoyed books that told them what they already knew," and that "the glory of the best medieval work often consists precisely in the fact that we see through it; it is pure transparency" (p. 208). What Lewis might have added was that this sort of "transparency" allows for yet something else to take place. When a situation can be explained both by means of stellar influence and by means of custom, the situation takes on the form of a proposition. Either the event takes place because of custom or because of the stars. The proposition thus poses the question: does custom cause men to behave in such and such a fashion or are the stars the cause? In the desire to understand, to discover order, men wanted some visible display of cause and effect that would make it possible to know the workings of providence and especially of destiny.
And the stars were there, for all to see. They provided perhaps the most practical means of following Augustine's advice to pilgrims to use the visible things of the world to understand God's invisible things. They seemed to hold the key to universal cause and effect, but they also created the greatest problems regarding the position of man in God's providential plan. If God had set the stars in motion to carry out the supreme good of the plan, then whatever they decree must occur of necessity. What responsibility must men take for their actions then? Was there really any choice about the course their lives would take? Were they not actually helpless in the hands of destiny? "Men were far less prone," Lewis said, "to think they could control the translunar forces than to think that those forces controlled them. Astrological determinism, not imitative magic, was the real danger" (p. 202). In their efforts to "reproduce in earthly mimicry the great operations of nature" (p. 202), medieval artists (in contrast to Chaucer's Squire and Franklin) were not interested in the mumbo-jumbo of magic, but in using the stars to create a dependable and rational model of universal order.

Thus, what Lewis found commonly to be the case in medieval art was curiosity about the cause of things and an inclination to "continually re-state what was believed about the universe" (p. 201). Citing the sculpture on the cupola above Chigi's tomb as an example, he pointed out that the planets were used to make concrete to the imagination the Boethian abstracts of providence and destiny. Medieval art, he said, recognized the difficulty of understanding the relationship between providence and destiny and sought by means of astrology to provide a
model for that order in their work: "just as the planets are not merely present in the Testament of Cresseid but woven into the plot, so in the buildings the cosmological material is sometimes woven into what we may call the plot of the building" (p. 201).

The problem with all of this, of course, was that men became so preoccupied with trying to govern their lives by the movements of the stars that they neglected to look to themselves or beyond them to God when evil unexpectedly or "undeservedly" took place. In their curiosity about cause, effect, and the stars, Chaucer's pilgrims stop short of God, and the tales told by the astrological pilgrims indicate that submitting one's life to the governance of the stars is no different than submitting one's life to Fortune's Wheel. As a matter of fact, astrology (whose prognostications are utterly dependent upon the positions of the planets and the aspects they form) when misunderstood, is a perfect allegory for Fortune's Wheel. When all is well with a man, he praises his good fortune from atop Fortune's Wheel. As Beethius' Lady Philosophy explains, however, it is in the nature of Fortune to change; i.e. it is her natural function. Her wheel will turn and turn again, and "good" fortune will be followed by "ill" fortune time and again into infinity. Only a very foolish man indeed would choose to rely on Fortune whose nature is to change.

By the same token, when all is well with a man, and the planetary aspects happen to be "fortunate," he believes that his good fortune was "decree" by the stars. But, the planets are subject to natural laws and are ever in motion. It is in the nature of the laws of celestial motion for the positions of the planets and thus the aspects they form
to change. "Good" aspects will separate, and "evil" aspects will form; beneficent planets now joined to beneficent planets will move on and come into aspect with maleficent planets, and "ill" fortune will follow "good" fortune as the planets continue to circle the zodiac into infinity. Only a very foolish man indeed would choose to rely upon any of the powers of destiny in the interests of their worldly pursuits. The wise man will not waste his time investigating the affairs of God according to his earthly ideas of the "good," but instead will look beyond the stars to the forgiveness and love of God, recognizing that each man is alone responsible for the course his life takes. This, I believe, is part of the point of the Narrator's observations at the end of Troilus and Criseyde (v. 1849-55):

Lo here, of payens corses olde rites,  
Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle;  
Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites;  
Lo hers, the fyn and gerdoun for travaile  
Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rasaille!  
Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche  
In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche.

The use of judicial astrology was thus at odds with the legitimate goals of pilgrimage, and was thereby one of the "witnesses to the late-medieval relinquishment of the ideal of pilgrimage and the espousal of curissity" that C. K. Zacher explains in his book on curiositas and the Canterbury pilgrims. Curiosity about cause and the stars diverts the pilgrims' attention away from their personal need for salvation, away from God Himself, and fosters an attitude that inevitably calls into question the wisdom and goodness of His plan. Since such an attitude neither leads to penance and personal salvation nor to an awareness of the need for either, the pilgrims that discuss the stars
as cause are examples of the seductive nature of curiositas and the conflict that had developed in the Middle Ages between the ideal goals of pilgrimage and the satisfaction of curiosity about the world.

Although a discussion of astrology was inappropriate for pilgrimage on religious grounds, its presence could have been justified from a literary and "hygienic" point of view. According to Glending Olson, poetry in the Middle Ages was expected to conform to the Horatian formula of providing pleasure and profit, and Chaucer's works show him to be generally in compliance with that formula. The use of allegory, of course, was one means of meeting those requirements, and like allegory, astrology provided simple, puzzle-solving situations in which underlying "truths" might be discovered. For the purposes of pilgrimage, however, astrology is superior to allegory in that instead of generalizing to the whole family of man, astrology deals with the sort of individual circumstances that each pilgrim ought properly to consider in his quest for personal salvation. Indeed, the well-documented dispute over the credibility of astrology in the Middle Ages took place precisely because it raised questions regarding providence, destiny, and free will.

In addition to the fact that the appearance of astrological allusions leads to the contemplation of the providential scheme of things, they could also be justified on the grounds that they provided recreational activity which produced a healthy state of mind. According to the medical authority of the day, reading or listening to tales, solving simple allegorical or astrological puzzles, provided a release from tension through relaxation. Olson has convincingly argued on such authority that the relaxation of listening to, and finding the
profit in, a series of tales ought to have made it easier for the pilgrims to seriously contemplate salvation and the celestial Jerusalem when the Parson finally put an end to both the allusions and the tales. 16

Thus the pleasure and profit of the astrological allusions in the Canterbury Tales. Lewis has declared that astrology made reading or hearing stories "more interesting and more pleasureable if, by being properly fitted in, it carried one's mind back to the model as a whole" (p. 203). To be "carried back" to the contemplation of the model as a whole was to be carried back to the contemplation of God, for the significance of the model was in its "manifestation of the wisdom and goodness that created it" (p. 204). And the contemplation of the supreme wisdom and goodness of God's providential plan for the salvation of mankind was the legitimate goal of pilgrimage.

In order to understand the use of astrology to discuss cause and effect, however, it is necessary to understand the abcs of astrology. It is to what those abcs meant for Chaucer's actual audience that I will turn in the following chapter. I hope to demonstrate that because of the university background shared by most of his actual audience, he could have expected them to understand that there were at least two kinds of horoscopes: the natal horoscope (dealing with the stars at the moment of birth) and the election of times (dealing with the "best" time for an undertaking). He could have expected his audience to know the rules of planetary motion, the ascension of the signs, the locations and functions of the equinoctial and meridional lines, the meaning of the word "ecliptic," the four angles dividing the heavens, the kinds of planetary aspects and their effects, the laws of planetary rulership,
the most common characteristics and influences of the planets and signs, the fixed precession and opposition of the signs and houses, the relative power of the houses, the key phrases for house affairs, and the analytical method of prognostication. Those abcs are, of course, what members of Chaucer's implied audiences also need to know, and I will make that information available in the second chapter of this study.

By the time this study has been concluded, I hope to have made it clear that the planets, signs, houses, and aspects used by Chaucer in the Canterbury Tales create truly situational allegories because they will always indicate the same kinds of activity. The moon will always be representative of women, trouble from women, and the tides. She will always be an indicator of inconstancy, sudden change, fickleness, living for the moment, emotional irrationality, and indecisiveness.

Mercury will always be used to underline eloquence, cleverness or downright cunning, underhandedness, or notoriety. Chaucer exploits Mercury's double-dealing or "turncoat" nature; he is "good" with beneficent planets and "evil" with malefics.

Venus appears quite often and is involved in lust and love triangles. She will be found in situations where adulterous affairs, song, dancing, beauty, and unusual popularity are concerned. She will be involved in festivities, drunkenness, and trouble with women (usually in association with Mars). Seldom, if ever, will the Venus of pure love appear in the Canterbury Tales.

With very few exceptions, Mars will reflect the malevolence ascribed to the planet. He will be involved in lust, love affairs, love triangles, battle, and strife of all sorts. He is most often associated with Venus
to indicate lust, jealousy, and bloodthirsty aggression.

The sun is used occasionally to designate royalty and the expectation of obedience or respect. But he will most often appear in reference to the seasons, the month, or the hour of the day. Very often, he will be declared to be in one of the equinoctial signs (Aries or Libra) or in one of the solstitial signs (Cancer or Capricorn) to indicate the time of year. He also appears in opposition to the moon to imply the existence of a full moon and high tides.

Jupiter appears infrequently. He most often doubles for the pagan version of God or providence and may be found in situations where good sense or justice prevails. Occasionally, he is used in rain-producing situations with Saturn or the sun, and when with Saturn in Cancer, he is connected with heavy rainfall.

Saturn, without question, appears as the most powerful of the maleficent planets; he is the planet of "evil." Whenever he appears, the worst can be expected. Alone, he brings imprisonment and death. When he is associated with Mars and Venus, the point of lechery is being emphasized, and the event will have disastrous consequences. He is also used to underline old ago, coldness, and slowness. The positive qualities of Saturn never emerge in the Canterbury Tales.

The signs of the zodiac are most often used to indicate the time or the seasons. Very often, Aries, Libra, Cancer, and Capricorn appear as indicators of spring (Aries, the vernal equinox, March 12-April 12), summer (Cancer, the summer solstice, June 12-July 12), autumn (Libra, the autumnal equinox, Sept. 12-Oct. 12), and winter (Capricorn, the winter solstice, Dec. 12-Jan. 12). They may also be used to indicate
physical appearance and behavior because the influences of the planets Chaucer most frequently uses happen to be implied through their ruler-
ships of those signs: Mars rules Aries, Venus rules Libra, the moon rules Cancer, and Saturn rules Capricorn.

The other signs used by Chaucer in the tales are Taurus, Gemini, Leo, and Pisces. Taurus is significant because it is under this "earthly" sign that the pilgrimage takes place. The sign is also used for charac-
ter delineation (Wife of Bath's Prologue, Merchant's Tale) and to indi-
cate time (Nun's Priest's Tale). Gemini is used to indicate the passing of time in association with the sun and is used to imply the influence of its ruler, Mercury. Leo is also associated with the sun to indicate time (Squire's Tale), and it receives mention as the sign from which Saturn carries out "vengeance and pleyn correcioun" (Knight's Tale). Pisces is used as the exaltation of Venus to explain the sumptuousness, drinking, gaming, and wenching at royal festivities (Squire's Tale).

The house most used by Chaucer is the ascendant, or 1st house of a horoscope. When the ascendant is used, the emphasis is on physical appearance and personality, and on the fact that the 7th house (of mar-
riage) lies directly opposite. Where marriages are concerned, he ex-
pects us to be able to deduce the sign governing the 7th house from the sign he gives as governing the ascendant. With the exception of the 12th house (of secret enemies, suffering, and death) in the Man of Law's Tale, one seldom needs to be concerned with any house affairs except those of the 1st (ascendant) and 7th houses.

Interestingly enough, Chaucer never uses favorable aspects. Thus, whenever he implies the existence of an aspect, trouble may be expected.
Even the conjunction (usually a favorable aspect) couples maleficent with beneficent planets (i.e. the moon and Mars in the Man of Law's Tale) to indicate a stressful situation. The quartile and the opposition (both evil aspects) are used in the same way. The opposition, however, is also used for the sun and moon to indicate full moon and high tides. The sextile and the trine (both favorable aspects) do not appear. Chaucer's point about planetary aspects simply reinforces the point about planets, gods, Fortune, or any of the other powers of destiny: one cannot depend on any of them to be "favorable."

Thus, Chaucer uses a few of the planets with regularity, a few of the signs, a few of the houses and aspects, and he uses them in a thoroughly predictable fashion in the Canterbury Tales. That is why, armed with only the abcs of astrology, his actual audience would have had little trouble with his astrological "puzzles."
NOTES


10 Zacher, p. 46.

11 Zacher, p. 23.

12 Zacher, p. 37.

13 C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), p. 198. All subsequent quotations are taken from this source and will henceforth be entered in the body of this chapter by page number.
Zacher, p. 58.

Glending Olson, Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 155-163. On page 145, Olson says: "Chaucer's thinking is based more or less on the broad Horatian formula, which appears in varied terminology throughout his work. In the Preamble of Foules, the narrator reads books for 'lust' and 'lore' (15); at the beginning of the Canterbury Tales Harry Bailly proposes to reward the pilgrim who tells 'tales of best sentence and moost solaas' (A798); later he asks Chaucer for a story that will offer either 'som nurthe or som doctrine' and warns the Monk that 'sentence' without 'desport ne game' will not appeal to an audience (B2 2125, 3979-92). The end of the Nun's Priest's Tale, whatever Chaucer's purpose in raising the theoretical issue, offers a standard allegorical version of delectare and prodesse, in which the literal level of the fable becomes 'char' and the 'moralite' the profitable 'fruyt' (B2 4628-33). It is with this conceptual habit in mind that we must read the last line of the apology before the Miller's Tale, where, after a series of witty gambits that call attention to the forthcoming 'harlotrie' without really offering a satisfactory defense of it, Chaucer advises that 'men shall nat maken ernest of game' (A 3186). This line needs to be taken in light of the tradition of literature seeking to please rather than to profit; 'ernest' and 'game' are another Middle English equivalent of the Horatian polarity, translating the two different goals of fiction into the distinction between frivolous and serious matter, a tendency we have seen throughout the Middle Ages. Chaucer here affirms that the tales of the Miller and the Reeve, and by implication other similar 'harlotrie;' are more playful than the rest of the Canterbury Tales, meant essentially to delight rather than to give moral instruction."

Olson, pp. 94-98, says that "the immensely popular Disticha Catonis" presents the view that "Human labor and intention direct themselves to an end, but like the bow the mind and body cannot sustain the pressure of unrelieved pursuit of that end. Relaxation in the form of gaudia offers a temporary release, enabling people subsequently to return to their work and continue it more effectively" (p. 94). The idea is carried forth by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas where the hygienic justification is assumed: "The particular kind of gaudium that comes in ludo seems implicitly to be the cheerfulness of disposition which conserves health. Here, as in other discussions of recreation, the physiological understanding of delight tends to be assumed rather than argued. The recreational approach usually presupposes the medical rationale . . . and spends its time on psychological and moral considerations" (p. 96). Finally: "To summarize very briefly the medical view of literature discussed in this chapter: literary delight is one species of the delectatio that results from attaining a desired good; it instills gaudium in the reader or listener, which when appropriately moderated is the ideal emotional state, useful not only in preserving health but also in attaining the finest disposition of body and mind. Thus literary pleasure promotes physical and mental well-being. This is, to be sure, an argument made by physicians, and when we hear them in regimens and consilia recommending entertainment as a means of inducing cheerfulness, we may
well ask whether their view of literature is anything more than one profession's use of an art form for its own ends, whether some brief allusions in manuals of health really have much to do with literary thought. But when we hear scholars and theologians discuss theatrics as a remedy for bodily weakness, and Laurent de Premierfait claim that the Decameron will reinvigorate the Duke of Berry's spiritus and hence prolong his life; when we see Don Juan Manuel explicitly and Chaucer implicitly invoke the principles of confabulatio as a means of unburdening the mind and promoting sleep, then we have evidence for an answer to those questions, one that later material in this book will confirm: the hygienic justification of fiction is an important aspect of medieval literary theory" (p. 89).
CHAPTER I
CHAUCER'S AUDIENCE AND ASTROLOGY

Whether astrology is a respectable scientific discipline or supernaturl humbug has been a matter of debate in the Christian West from the time of Augustine to the present. Although the seriousness of the debate has all but vanished in our own day, there was a great deal of controversy surrounding the subject in England and on the Continent during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. To put it briefly, there were those who accepted and defended the use of astrology as a valid scientific endeavor, those who granted scientific credibility only to its use for forecasting the weather, and those who rejected it altogether as a superstitious, heretical practice. I mention these classifications because they are of some value for an understanding of the cultural atmosphere in which Chaucer wrote and because they are perhaps suggestive of the way in which astrological allusions might generally have been received.

For the purposes of this study, it is unnecessary to explain in greater detail the actual attitudes and beliefs about the science. Belief in, and attitudes toward, astrology in England during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance have been thoroughly evaluated by Theodore Wedel and Don Cameron Allen. ¹ Lynn Thorndike's multivolume History of Magic and Experimental Science provides a detailed account of the debate
on the Continent, and Walter Clyde Curry and Chauncey Wood have just as
thoroughly explained what Chaucer's own attitude toward astrology might
have been. ²

What is of greater value, I believe, is an examination of the kind
of astrological background Chaucer could have expected to find in his
audience. I believe that his Treatise on the Astrolabe indicates that
he recognized the value of astrological training for a well-rounded
education, and that his connections at Oxford and Merton College would
have made it possible for him to know what sort of training was involved.
In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that the courtly audience for
whom he wrote consisted primarily of university-trained clerks and
civil servants. As such, they would have studied the stars in the
quadrium and would have received considerable exposure to astrology.
By explaining the English preoccupation with science in general and
astronomy in particular in the Middle Ages, and by examining fourteenth-
century educational practices, I hope to present a reasonable assess-
ment of the kind of astrological exposure that the members of Chaucer's
audience would have received through their university educations. By
so doing, it should become clear that Chaucer could have expected at
least the kind of astrological knowledge in his audience that would
have been acquired through an introductory course in that science (the
customary content of which I will present in the second chapter of this
study).

It should be understood that the study of astrology was not new
in Chaucer's day. It did not "emerge" in fourteenth-century England
as a kind of fashionable "parlor-game." To find the roots of
astrological study in England, one must begin with the Latin translations of Islamic scientific writings which were made a full two centuries before Chaucer's time. To find the roots of astrological learning in Europe, one must begin still farther back in time with the translations of Greek philosophical and scientific treatises composed by the Arab scholars of Islamic Spain and Sicily.

For a period of nearly four hundred years, Arab scholars at Toledo, Cordova, and Palermo had assembled, translated, and studied the scientific and philosophical knowledge of ancient Greece. The core of Islamic scientific knowledge in Europe was formed by translations of, and commentaries on, the astronomical works of Ptolemy, Hipparchus, and Aristarchus; the medical treatises of Galen and Hippocrates; the philosophical work of Aristotle and Plato; and the works of mathematical physicists like Archimedes. The absorption of Greek learning by the Arabs, in turn, made possible the extended treatises on astrology by Abu Ma'Shar (Albumasrar), on medicine by Ibn Sina (Avincenna), and on Aristotle by Ibn Rushid (Averroes) that were widely translated into Latin between 1128 and 1200.

By the middle of the tenth century, Latin translations of Arabic texts in astronomy and geometry existed at the Monastery of Santa Maria in northern Spain, and by the late eleventh century, Constantinus Africanus had translated both Greek and Arab medical treatises into Latin at Salerno. Until the closing years of the eleventh century, however, both Greek and Arabic scientific knowledge remained almost the exclusive property of Islam. At that time, Moslem power in Europe all but ended with the fall of Toledo (1085) and Sicily (1091), and Christian Europe
came into possession of the great centers of Arab learning. 3 For the first time, scholars from an intellectually starved Europe were able to examine four centuries of Arab thought, and a remarkable effort was made to make the "new" sciences of Greece and Islam available in Latin translation:

The international character of this extraordinary activity is revealed by the very names of the most significant translators, such as Plato of Tivoli, Gerard of Cremona, Adelard of Bath, Robert of Chester, Hermann of Carinthia...John of Seville; and in the thirteenth century came Alfred Sabeshel (or Alfred the Englishman), Michael Scot, and Hermann the German. 4

Although medical and philosophical treatises were enthusiastically translated as well, the most concentrated efforts of the twelfth-century Latin translators were directed toward works of astrology and those sciences that served astrology:

The importance of astrology in stimulating Christian interest in Islamic science can hardly be overestimated. One recent survey (David G. Lindberg, ed., Science in the Middle Ages, 1978) of early (eleventh and twelfth century) translating activity shows that nearly 30 percent of all translations from Arabic to Latin were specifically astronomical, and that nearly 50 percent involved either astrology, astronomy, or mathematics (which was in large measure utilized for astrological purposes). 5

"Either astrology, astronomy, or mathematics." There is a modern problem in terminology here that did not exist in the Middle Ages, a problem that requires some explanation. Today, one speaks either of astronomy (a scientific discipline), or of astrology (an occult practice), and the terms are not used interchangably. The question is, when medieval writers used the word "astronomy," did they mean the study of
the physical properties and movements of the celestial bodies, or did they mean the study of the influences of the planets and signs of the zodiac upon the lives of men? The answer is that they meant both. The various scientific disciplines of the Middle Ages "went together in pairs, some of them so closely linked as to be hybrids. Chemistry went with alchemy, astronomy with astrology, mathematics with cosmology." 6 The separation of astrology from astronomy reflects a relatively modern change in scientific attitude and classification, and the examples of eminent medieval writers who did not take pains to distinguish between the two extends literally from Albumasar to Tycho Brahe in the sixteenth century. 7

By the end of the twelfth century, the study of astrology was firmly established in the curriculum of the medieval universities, as a "veritable flood of translations rendered into Latin a significant part of Greek and Arab science with more to come in the thirteenth century." 8 Under the leadership of Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, the scientific reputation of Oxford University grew to major proportions. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw Oxford surpass the great universities of Paris and Bologna as a center of scientific learning, and with the rise of Merton College, England's reputation as the center of astronomical study was established. Medieval scholastic science reached its fullest development by the early fifteenth century, 9 and by the time Chaucer had written the Canterbury Tales, astrology had been a major part of that development for nearly two hundred years.

It is a commonplace among historians that the universities of Western Europe underwent a period of rapid growth in the twelfth and
thirteenth centuries. Part of the reason for that growth was a shift in emphasis from sacred to secular learning. 10 By the end of the twelfth century, the responsibilities of teaching were passing from the hands of monks into those of the secular clergy, and a new class emerged that "might almost be described as a new type of man: the academic and the intellectual." 11 There were two major political and social developments which gave rise to the increased emphasis on secular and especially scientific learning. First (as I mentioned earlier), Spain and Sicily were no longer controlled by Islam, and Christian scholars had intimate access to the best of Greek and Arab knowledge for the first time. Second, the repopulation, urbanization, and commercialization of Western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries created a natural demand for more and more bureaucrats, lawyers, medical men, and theologians. That demand contributed directly to the secularization and expansion of the medieval universities. 12 By the end of the twelfth century, Paris, Bologna, and Oxford (as well as about eighty others modelled on Paris and Bologna) were established centers of secular learning. 13 Paris and Oxford received recognition as seats of philosophical and scientific learning, while Bologna's reputation derived primarily from its excellence in law and medicine. 14

Typically, the universities of medieval Europe established close relationships with each other. In order to survive and to grow, they had to be aware of, and conform to, the practices and curriculum that were universally accepted if they were to attract masters and scholars. It was not unusual for students and masters to study and teach outside as well as within their national boundaries, and the practice of
secession due to civil and ecclesiastical pressures indeed contributed to the founding of new universities. 15 Oxford's connections with the universities of Bologna and Paris were well established by the middle of the twelfth century. It is believed that Oxford itself was probably formed by an exodus of English masters and students from Paris in 1167, and that the University of Paris, consequently, had always had "particularly close connections with English intellectual life." 16 Students and masters were often at odds with the authorities in Paris, and secessions and migrations to Oxford, Cambridge, and the other universities of Europe were common. 17 At Oxford, similar disputes drove the university population to Paris and elsewhere. 18 In Italy, the situation was very much the same. The University of Padua, for instance, was founded through the secession of scholars from Bologna in 1222 and continued to grow through still later migrations in 1306 and 1322. 19 The relationship between England and Italy was as solid as that between England and France and was based on commercial as well as academic interests: "Oxford clerks studied at both Padua and Bologna; Bolognese merchants came regularly to London." 20

Although it seems clear that the universities of Europe were closely connected, and it is clear that the undergraduate programs at medieval universities required the teaching of the trivium and the quadrivium, 21 course descriptions for the disciplines within those divisions do not exist for all universities. Consequently, it has become the practice of historians to accept as valid the course descriptions that are available for those universities where records of the curriculum do not exist. If there were no records of the required texts in geometry at Oxford, for
example, and such records for the period were available on the Continent, the procedure would be to use the available records for the subject from the continental universities. 22

There are at least five factors that make plausible the probability that a uniform curriculum existed for all medieval universities. First, in many cases the founding of universities in medieval Europe can be traced ultimately to the migrations of scholars from one location to another. Where secession and migration were the results of civil disputes between town and gown, curriculum was not the issue: it is unlikely that what had been required at one university would be discarded with the founding of another. Moreover, when the curriculum was the cause for migration (as was the case with the ban on the teachings of Aristotle at Paris in the thirteenth century), new universities were founded to perpetuate the existing curriculum.

Second, universities that were established saw themselves as international rather than local centers of learning, and the ability to attract scholars and masters naturally depended upon a universal curriculum. 23

Third, there seems to have been little concern among students and masters about completing an education or teaching at any of the universities of Europe. If the curriculum was significantly different from university to university, the additional time involved with new course work and the additional expense of travel and housing would have been impractical.

Fourth, the universities relied upon authorities for the content of the curriculum. In order for masters and scholars to teach and
study at different universities, the prescribed texts would have had to be the same or at least in agreement with one another.

Finally, the very existence and status of the *ius ubique docendi* (the right to teach everywhere) indicates that the curriculum at certain universities was closely followed. Many universities never achieved this prominence despite their international reputations: Oxford did not. But for Bologna and Paris, the *ius ubique docendi* was already a part of their lists of credits by the late thirteenth century. 24

Although Paris and Bologna were considered the archetypal universities of Western Europe in the Middle Ages, the reputation of Oxford as a center of scientific learning surpassed that of both universities by the end of the thirteenth century. The twelfth-century translators had brought about not only a great deal of interest in the natural sciences, but also an increased emphasis on the subjects of the *quadrivium*. 25 England, from the twelfth century onwards, had shown an exceptional interest in all areas of the new scientific knowledge, 26 while at Paris, the works of Aristotle dominated the undergraduate curriculum. The heavy dependence of the Paris curriculum upon Aristotelian philosophy and science, however, was to cost the university its scientific prominence. Aristotle's teachings were found to be in conflict with Christian doctrine: his theory that the world was without beginning or end, for example, flatly denied the Christian belief in the creation of the world by a beneficent God, a day of final judgment, and the ultimate destruction of the planet. 27 Ecclesiastical bans were thus issued against the teachings of Aristotle and his Arab commentators at Paris throughout the thirteenth century, and Oxford
became the leading center of scientific learning in Western Europe.  

The study of Aristotle was important to Oxford and to the other universities on the Continent, but it was viewed as only a part of the new learning and did not control the curriculum as it did at Paris: "Aristotle was but one element, if the most formative philosophically; but there were other lines of development in the Greek and Arabic scientific writings that did not entail a clash with Christian belief (at Oxford)." 29 The works of Ptolemy and Plato and the whole range of Arab mathematics, alchemy, and astronomy as well as the works of Aristotle were pursued with equal enthusiasm at Oxford. 30

If Oxford enjoyed a reputation for scientific excellence, much of that reputation derived from the standing in mathematics and astronomy achieved by the Fellows of Merton College. Founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton to house candidates for the master of arts degree, Merton College "was destined to play a major role in the history of medieval science during the fourteenth century." 31 Merton was a Mecca for European intellectuals in search of the best astronomical instruments and methods, and to this day, it houses perhaps the finest collection of medieval astrolabes and quadrants in England. Besides its fame for astronomy, Merton was also known for its production of theologian-astronomers of the stature of Bradwardine and William Reed. 32

That Chaucer was familiar with Oxford studies and life can be deduced from his works with little difficulty. His pilgrim Clerk, the "hende" Nicholas of the Miller's Tale, and others are associated with Oxford for the reason that Oxford supplied most of the clerks to the courts of England. 33 It is believed that the ascent through the
heavens and the theory of sound in the *House of Fame* are indebted to Robert Grosseteste and the Merton school of astronomy in general. Of greater significance, however, is the fact that Chaucer was close enough to prominent Oxford and Merton figures to know the kind of astro-
logical training offered in his day. Both John Somer and Nicholas of Lynn were Oxford astronomers from about 1380-1395 or later, and both men are cited as authorities by Chaucer in the *Introduction* to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*. Bishop Bradwardine is cited in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* (4432), and *Troilus and Criseyde* is dedicated to Ralph Strode. Both men were Mertonians, and Strode in particular could have provided Chaucer with any information he might have needed about English or continental curricula. In short, the available information suggests that Chaucer was aware of the Oxford curriculum in astronomy and that he could have been aware of any variations on the curriculum at the continental universities as well. Perhaps J. A. W. Bennett sums the situation up best when he says that it is "Enough for our present purpose to note that from Strode and his Oxford friends Chaucer could have learnt most of what he needed to know about Oxford books, Oxford studies, Oxford life." 

There is little reason to doubt, therefore, that Chaucer knew that every undergraduate (or "artist") attending a university in the Middle Ages was expected to demonstrate proficiency in the arts. All undergraduates were required to complete the courses of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and the *quadrivium* (geometry, arithmetic, music, astronomy) regardless of their intended professions. No one could receive the bachelor's degree, teach, or enter the higher faculties
of theology, medicine, or canon law without having passed through the full arts course. As might be expected, students in the arts were by far the most numerous at the universities, and the arts faculty was much larger than the faculties of the three higher disciplines. Courses were taught by means of ordinary and cursory lectures on the pro forma (or, required) texts and were followed by disputationes and responses by students to a master's "questiones." The bachelor's degree was awarded after a period of disputation and examination. The evidence suggests that the universities were open to all of the social classes, that a relatively high percentage of the male European community attended, and that many of the students were of modest backgrounds.

Originally, the academic year was divided into four terms stretching from October to mid-September. By the mid-thirteenth century, however, the year had been reduced to three terms beginning with the feast of St. Remigius (October 1) and ending in July: "The period from October until Easter was called the Grand Ordinary; and the period from Easter until the end of June the Little Ordinary. A few days' holiday were given at Christmas and Easter, but this was compensated by the numerous festival days that were nonlegible and nondisputable," i.e. without ordinary lectures or disputationes.

Ordinary lectures (lectiones ordinaries) were formal lectures on the prescribed texts of the trivium and quadrivium and were delivered by masters. They were in-depth expositions which "were normally more analytical and speculative (than cursory lectures), raising philosophical or theological questions as well as expounding on the text. They could begin as early as 6 a.m., and could continue until 1 or 3 p.m."
Undergraduates were expected to read the *pro forma* texts and to attend the ordinary lectures given by their own masters; so long as they were present for their masters' *questiones* (a process of questions and answers about the texts and lectures) and for his division of the text, they were granted permission to hear the lectures of other masters as well.  

Lectures were a serious business, and care was taken to insure diligent attention:

The student of arts, it would seem, was expected to repeat the master's lecture daily and to give a weekly repetition of the doctrine acquired through the whole week. This was the case at Paris, Bologna, Genoa, Metz, and Brives, and the practice at Oxford in the early Fourteenth Century was not vastly different.

Consequently, students had little choice but to attend ordinary lectures in order to receive the exposure necessary to summarize and respond to their masters' *questiones*.

Cursory lectures (*lectiones cursorie*), on the other hand, were running commentaries on the *pro forma* texts delivered by bachelors, and they were designed to leave the "deeper questions to those qualified to deal with them." Cursory lectures often took place in the afternoon, but they could be given at any time when ordinary lectures were not taking place. Ordinary lectures were not scheduled for festival days, for example, and students quickly learned to take advantage of the opportunity to hear the texts of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* summarized in a more straight-forward and less formal manner on those days. Cursory lectures played a significant role in the undergraduate program, and these holiday summaries had an effect upon student progress that should not be underestimated: "There were between sixty and one hundred
holidays during the medieval university Calendar Year, and so the extraordinary or cursory lectures were by no means to be overlooked in estimating the amount of materials in the medieval curriculum." 48 Students attended cursory lectures in order to become familiar with whole texts without having to deal with the "special difficulties" of ordinary lectures: "It was an advantage to the student to hear the actual text of Aristotle, Boethius, Euclid, Ptolemy, and Cicero, for example, and to have the text clearly paraphrased and summarized." 49 Cursory lectures thus supplemented and prepared the student for the more complex matters discussed by the masters during ordinary lectures.

In addition to attending lectures, students were required to demonstrate their understanding of the texts through disputation. Such disputations were presided over by masters, and students were expected to answer not only questions raised by the masters, but also any objections to their responses. 50 Besides these ordinary (or, magisterial) disputations, there were also private disputations (collationes) held by a master for his own pupils, and quodlibetal disputations in which any subject could be raised, and any person could either ask questions or respond. 51 In order to receive the bachelor's degree, students had to participate in ordinary disputations for at least two years, and bachelors themselves "had to take part in public disputations for about two years before presentation." 52

Before a student could be granted the status of bachelor, he had first to determine -- dispute over the whole period of Lent (i.e., for forty days). 53 Determination became "a definite examination in the 1252 statutes of the English-German nation at Paris." As set out there,
it entailed the delegation by the proctor of two electors who then appointed three examiners; they were to swear to act impartially toward both the candidates and the masters who presented them. Before being admitted to determine, however, the candidate had to satisfy the examiners that he had met the requirements for the degree. There were two kinds of requirements to be fulfilled. First, the student had to be at least twenty years of age and had to have attended the courses of the arts faculty for at least four years (five years, if the candidate came from another university). Second, the candidate had to have "listened to lectures on the prescribed books for the prescribed periods; the Old Logic, twice in a course of ordinary lectures...and once in cursory lectures," for example. Moreover, candidates for determination had to swear that they had diligently attended the disputations of their masters for two years and had themselves taken part in sophistical exercises (sophismata) during the same period. Another of the nation's statutes required the passing of a preliminary examination to determining which "consisted in responding to questions put by the master who presided in the exercises prescribed by the statutes. The candidate had thereafter to participate in public disputations under a master and also in the determinations of bachelors -- during Lent -- as a respondent (respondens)." In addition, the candidate was usually expected to respond in disputations for a year following his determination. To receive the bachelor's degree, then, the candidate had to satisfy his examiners that he had read the pro forma texts and that "he understood them well enough to dispute on the questions they raised."

This, then, was the kind of training in the trivium and quadrivium normally received by the undergraduate in the Middle Ages. It was not
a matter of merely reading the prescribed texts or of merely attending lectures, or of merely disputing the questions raised by the texts. Rather, it was a combination of all three aimed at developing a thorough understanding of the workings of grammar, logic, rhetoric, and of mathematics, music, and astronomy.

Of the four subjects of the quodrivium, the course in astronomy is of greatest interest for the purposes of this study. According to J. A. Weisheipl, the reconstruction of the Oxford curriculum in the fourteenth century is rather difficult due to the scarcity of surviving statutes.\(^55\) Gordon Leff, on the other hand, believes that "the circumstantial evidence we have" makes it seem "almost certain that the libri naturalis of Aristotle, as well as Arabian scientific writings, after reaching Oxford in the last decades of the twelfth century, were thenceforth openly read."\(^56\) In any case, it will be recalled that in instances where records of the curriculum are lost or incomplete, the existing records from other universities are considered valid. Such records for the course in astronomy do exist from fourteenth-century Bologna.

Granting that the course work in astronomy at Bologna is circumstantial evidence for the course work at Oxford, the reconstruction of any part of the Oxford curriculum before the fifteenth century has to be based upon this kind of evidence. Moreover, the universal translations of Greek and Arabic scientific writings in the twelfth century (several prominent translators were English, it will be recalled), the status of Bologna as an "archetypal" university, and the international reputation of Merton College in astronomy make it seem likely that what was considered important in that science at Bologna would certainly have been
considered important at Oxford. Bologna is a particularly fortunate example from which to draw, since it was considered one of the model universities of Europe, enjoyed the status of a studium generale, and had granted the ius ubique docendi in the late thirteenth century. Thus, by considering the fourteenth-century reading list in astronomy at Bologna, it is possible to have a more detailed idea of the kind of background in the science that was available to the educated members of Chaucer's audience.

At Bologna, there is evidence that there were to be four years of study in astronomy in the fourteenth century. The first two years consisted of readings and lectures on astronomy as we understand it and on the astrolabe; the third and fourth years were dedicated to the study of astrology. The curriculum in astronomy at Bologna required students to read the Theorica Planetarum of Gerard of Cremona, or Campanus Novara's free translation of Ptolemy's Almagest. These texts deal with the mathematical formulations for determining the velocity, motion, and magnitude of the planets, stars, and constellations. They also read the Canones super tabulis de linearis, i.e., rules for the use of astronomical tables by John of Linieres (Lignieres). Finally, they read the Tractatus astrolabii of Mashallah (Messahala). The rest of the pro forma list contained works for the astrological analysis of astronomical configurations. From Alhabitus, they are believed to have read the Isagoge to judicial astrology, translated by Gerard of Cremona. They read the Quadripartitum (i.e., the Tetrabiblos) and the Centiloquium of Ptolemy with the commentary by Albohazen Haly, which were works on judicial astrology and weathercasting. They read a work on medical
astrology by William of England called de urina non visa, and finally, they read portions of the Canon of Avincenna.

The pro forma texts in astronomy at Bologna indicate a balance between the study of that discipline and astrology that is understandable from an astrological point of view. For two years, students learned the mathematics of planetary motion and the use of astronomical instruments that would enable them to locate the celestial bodies with some degree of precision. For two more years, they received the instruction that made it possible for them to forecast the weather, make simple medical diagnoses, and develop all sorts of prognostications according to the principles of astrology. The system is both efficient and practical if the goal is to make one competent in astrology, for no astrological prognostication can be made without first being able to locate the planets, stars, and signs of the zodiac according to the rules of astronomy. 60

At that time in England, the Fellows of Merton College made frequent astrological prognostications, and the similarity of approach to the study of astronomy shared by Bologna and Merton College is evidenced by the books on both astronomy and astrology bequeathed to Merton and to Oxford by their Fellows. A few examples from the wills of two eminent Merton Fellows (Bishop Reed and Simon Bredon) should make it plain that the study of astrology at Oxford in general, and at Merton College in particular, was a serious and detailed business in Chaucer's day. 62

From the will of Bishop Reed in 1385, we find the following works on judicial astrology: Tholemei de iudiciis astronomie quadripartitum (the Tetrabiblos), Haly Abenragel de iudiciis astronomie, and Albumasar minus introductorium, Albumasar in majori introductorio (the
Introductorium in astronomiam). From the will of Simon Bredon in 1368, we find not only Albumasar's Introductorium, but also his Flores, De partibus latitudines planetarum in signis xii, and De magnis conjunctionibus. To these books are added Arzachel's Astronomical Tables, Alchabitius' Liber introductorius ad magisterium judicorum astrorum, and Albucacim's de Astrolabio.

By citing these examples of astrological works assembled at Oxford and Merton College in Chaucer's day, I do not mean to imply that he owed his knowledge of astrology to any of them in particular. He could have found the same principles of astronomy and astrology explained in the works of John de Sacrobosco, Michael Scot, Albertus Magnus, or any other competent astrologer. As J. A. W. Bennett rightly observed, these books are mirrors of culture, and

we gain something by envisaging the books that Chaucer knew not as separate and disparate items but as part of collections deliberately made and constantly used. . . . if we are to make any useful comments on Chaucer's learning we must find out what his acquaintances and other contemporaries read. The Merton list gives us as convenient and illuminating a cross-section as we can hope for.

But what, specifically, can be said of the audience for whom Chaucer wrote? Did they or did they not have university backgrounds? It can be argued, of course, that they must have possessed some sort of background in astrology or Chaucer would not have introduced it in his works, and it is my thesis that the allusions he chose were designed to be understood by those with a fundamental understanding of astrological principles. Chaucer had to be careful not to "overload" his audience with
numerous or complicated references in order to avoid making impractical analytical demands on them, and yet, he had also to be certain that his references were "scientifically" correct because the evidence suggests that the greater portion of his audience very likely had university training and had thereby studied astrology themselves.

But, what do we mean by Chaucer's "audience?" Paul Strohm has provided the critical terminology most commonly used in such discussions, and a brief explanation of his classifications will be of use at this time. 65 According to Strohm, Chaucer's audiences can be best classified into four groups: the fictional, the implicit, the intended, and the actual. The fictional audience consists of an imagined group appearing within a work itself: the Canterbury pilgrims and Harry Baille are such a group. The implied audience is what Strohm calls "the sum total of all of the author's assumptions about the persons he or she is addressing." 66 The implied audience is rather an "ideal" audience which reflects what an author expects to be brought to his work. All non-fictional audiences, including ourselves, are members of his implied audience in one way or another. The intended audience are those individuals (Richard II, Henry IV, Scogan, Bukton) for whom a work is actually intended. But it also includes those members of the implied audience whom the author feels are "like" his intended audience. Finally, the actual audience consists of those people physically present when Chaucer read his works or his contemporaries who may have read the works for themselves. It had been my intention in the previous portion of this chapter to examine the kind of educational background in astrology available to Chaucer's actual audience in order to assess the kind of knowledge he could have assumed
for his implied audiences.

As R. T. Lenaghan points out, identifying Chaucer's actual audience has been a difficult and risky business. Hypotheses have often enough been made, "proved," and eventually disproved. At the present time, however, there is a general agreement among critics that Chaucer's actual audience was made up not only of the king, the aristocracy, and a few upper-class women, but primarily of civil servants like himself who were both sophisticated and well-educated. In Donald R. Howard's opinion, Chaucer's actual audience was "of high social standing and advanced literary taste," and its members were "sophisticated enough to think the bourgeois mentality absurd and to know bad poetry" when they heard it. The General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales, he says, and the "unity and complexity" of the work itself is contrary to the expectations of an audience with "limited expectations in mind." 68

Along these same lines, Patricia Eberle believes that the very style of the General Prologue indicates that the work was intended for an educated audience, since "the first eighteen lines resemble works like Boccaccio's Filocolo or the Historia Trojana of Guido della Colonna, works that assume a courtly or learned outlook on the part of an audience." 69 According to Strohm, Chaucer's actual audience was "a tiered circle of gentlemen and clerks," who were for the most part the "household knights and officials, career diplomats, and civil servants who constitute the 'court' in its wider sense." 70 Richard Green concurs, and from his research into the royal households of the period, he declares that the number of women likely in Chaucer's actual audience would have been quite small, and that their presence at Chaucer's readings should by no
means be taken for granted:

If, then, in calling Chaucer a court poet we mean that he would have read his poems aloud after supper in the king's chamber or hall (as Froissart had read Meliador to the Count of Foix), we must think of him reading to an audience which was primarily, if not exclusively, male. 71

With T. F. Tout and K. B. McFarlane as his sources, Lenaghan adds that there was a "nascent civil service" in the court of Richard II, and he argues that the existence of this corps of civil servants implies a "lateral reading" of Chaucer's works. Citing the envoys of Chaucer to Bukton and Scogan, Lenaghan says they are "joking interchanges between identifiable equals," and declares that the envoy to Scogan is meant to remind the man "that he and Chaucer are friends alike as literary men and civil servants -- two styles of clerk." Pointing to Richard II's struggles to control his governmental offices, Lenaghan says it follows "that administrative experience and expertise were valuable and, what is more important, would have been defined and assessed within the institutions, at least at the lower levels." 72

Rising to the rank of civil servant in Chaucer's day was itself an indication of learning and talent. Thomas F. Tout explains in his "Literature and Learning in the English Civil Service in the Fourteenth Century" that civil servants were men of wide learning and diverse interests who were "to a large extent clerks, that is actual or potential ecclesiastics, capable of ordination to minor or holy orders, and often were ordained priests or deacons." Tout is convinced of the literary sophistication and talents of the English civil service, and in his opinion, "an
appreciable proportion of fourteenth-century English literature came from the civil service of the state." 73

It should be clearly understood that the civil service is a matter of business, of the efficient control of the affairs of state. Monarchs and their advisers were no less practical men than the governmental officials of our day, and in order to place the affairs of state in the most competent possible hands, they actively recruited civil servants from the universities. According to Bennett, "Westminster looked to the universities for its civil servants, and by 1370 Langland was complaining that B.A.'s and M.A.'s and even doctors in orders 'serven the kyng and his silver tellen, / In Cheker and in Chancerye chalengen his dettes' (Piers Plowman, Prol. 92-3)." 74 Friedrich Heer, moreover, states that the universities were the "instruments of kings, prelates, and religious orders," and his comments about recruiting are particularly enlightening:

Clerks trained in the university law schools became indispensable functionaries of the newly-developing and rising states of the high Middle Ages, particularly France and England. Kings, Popes, princes, prelates, towns and corporations all competed for the services of this new class. The clerici were the equivalent of our 'managerial class.' They were administrators and bureaucrats, often the only people capable of manipulating the levers of power. . . . the men of the new class were doggedly and systematically building up and enlarging the structure of the state, in France, in England and in the territorial principalities of Germany; no less important, they were turning the Church itself into a bureaucracy. 75

In Hastings Rashdall's view, the greatest service performed by the medieval universities was to place the affairs of state in the hands of educated men. The actual rulers might be less educated than their corps of civil servants, and they therefore "had to rule through the
instrumentality of a highly educated class." 76 Even so, it is possible that civil servants could have acquired their posts without the benefit of a university education: Chaucer, it is said, did not attend a university. Nevertheless, the recruiting practices in England in his day make it seem likely that Chaucer was the exception rather than the rule, and that he would have found it necessary to assume a university background in astronomy among the members of his actual audience.

The methods of recruiting civil servants in Chaucer's day make it seem probable that the greater portion of his courtly audience consisted of men with university educations who would have had considerable exposure to astrology through meeting the requirements of the quadrivium. As the Bologna syllabus suggests and the Merton books indicate, astrology was taught as a usual part of the course in astronomy. Chaucer himself had ample opportunity to become aware of the normal course of study through his Oxford and Merton connections, and his friendship with Strode, his work at the Port of London, and his Italian journeys made it possible for him to have been aware of the course of study in astronomy at Bologna. Indeed, I hope to demonstrate in a later chapter that there is a marked similarity of organization between the Bologna syllabus and Chaucer's outline of study in the Treatise on the Astrolabe.

It is significant to observe, I believe, that the teaching methods and the completion of the course requirements for undergraduates in Chaucer's day make it almost certain that the educated members of his actual audience would have been his equals in astrological expertise, and in some cases, his superiors. One needs only to recall the rigorous schedule of lectures, disputationes, and responses to questions about
the lectures and the pro forma reading lists for both the "artists" and bachelors to appreciate the seriousness of the attempt to instill students with a thorough understanding of the subjects of the quadrivium.

Nevertheless, one must not forget (as Chaucer certainly did not) that complicated astrological configurations place unreasonable analytical demands even upon experts. One must also bear in mind, as Chaucer certainly did, that not all students attending a university in fact completed the full course in the arts, and that then, as today, students were probably far more interested in graduating and finding a position in the world or entering one of the three higher faculties than in becoming astrological experts. In addition, there may have been a few exceptions, like himself, among his actual audience who had not attended a university at all.

Consequently, Chaucer had to face solving the problem of either making his astrological allusions accessible to all of the various levels of expertise, of taking the risk of using allusions too complicated to be understood by the greater portion of his audience, or of not using them at all. What he attempted and accomplished, I believe, is the first of those alternatives. His apparent knowledge of the university course in astronomy made it imperative that his references be scientifically correct in order to avoid censure or even ridicule by those members of his audience who knew as much or more than he did about the science. The references had to be simple both because astronomy was, after all, a "required" subject which lawyers and civil servants may well have just regarded as one more tortuous step in the educational process of acquiring a degree, and because complicated configurations create too
many variables to be understood at a single sitting. They had also to
be kept simple because the few who may have become civil servants without
benefit of a university education could not be expected to have had much
training in the science.

Finally, for those members of his audience who had forgotten what-
ever they had struggled to learn about astronomy once they had left the
university, the allusions had to be made independent of the story line.
Consequently, the references are little more than embellishments of the
time, the weather, or the seasons in many cases. In those cases where
character delineation and plot development are astrologically explained,
the sense of the story remains intact even though the reinforcing sense
of causation is lost. Readers of today, I believe, would agree that for
the most part the inability to understand the full meaning of Chaucer's
astrological allusions does not confuse or detract from an understanding
of his works. What is lost, however, is a complete understanding of
his artistic achievement through the use of astrology.

In order to provide for all levels of expertise among his actual
audience, he carefully selected astrological configurations that were
scientifically accurate, simple enough to be understood while listening
to or reading his works, and independent of the story-line in the sense
that the uninformed members of his audience are satisfied that little
or nothing is lacking. What this amounts to is an assumption on Chaucer's
part that the majority of his implied audience would possess at least
the kind of astrological background normally acquired through an
introductory course in the science. That means that he expected little
more than a knowledge of the most common characteristics of the planets,
houses, and signs, and a knowledge of only the fixed and unchanging rules that govern their behavior. Indeed, it would have been presumptuous and futile on his part to expect more.

As members of Chaucer's implied audience five hundred years removed in time, and for the most part even farther removed in training in the study of astronomy and astrology, it is necessary that we have at least those abcs of astrology at hand that Chaucer expected of his peers if we are to fully appreciate his artistic achievement. In the chapter to follow, I will present that sort of information in the hope that it will provide a greater understanding of the accomplishments Chaucer has made through his knowledge of astrology.
NOTES


3 The influence of Islamic learning on Europe during the Middle Ages is well documented by all historians of science and education. For this summary, I am particularly indebted to Richard Olson, *Science Deified and Science Defied: The Historical Significance of Science in Western Culture* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982), pp. 183-90.


5 Olson, p. 184.


7 Richard Lemay, *Abu Ma'Shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the Twelfth Century* (Beirut: American Univ. of Beirut, 1962), pp. 49-55. In his *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1934), 2, Lynn Thorndike provides many examples of men who throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance used the words "astrology" and "astronomy" interchangably. Archdeacon Gundissalinus, who is believed to have assisted John of Spain with his translations, defines *astrologia" as we would astronomy, while he explains that *astronomia is the science of answering questions from the positions of the planets and signs* (p. 81). In his *De eodem et diverso*, Adelard of Bath refers to the celestial bodies as "superior and divine animals" who are "the causes and principles of inferior natures." Although such matters are confined to astrological theory today, they were the proper concerns of what Adelard calls astronomy: "One who masters the science of astronomy can comprehend not only the present state of inferior things, but also the past and the future" (p. 40). William of Conches, Adelard’s great contemporary, also sees astrology and astronomy as one and the same discipline (p. 56). Guido Bonatti (d. ca. 1300), whose *Liber astronomicus* was one of the most important astrological works of the thirteenth
century, says that the terms are synonymous: "Bonatti generally uses the word 'astronomy' where we should say 'astrology' and vice versa. He states, for instance, that nativities, elections, interrogations, and revolutions are four varieties of 'astronomy,' which he distinguishes from other forms of divination. He also says, however, that the words 'astronomy' and 'astrology' may be used interchangably. He regards both as of great value in the study of first philosophy" (p. 829). Peter of Abano (ca. 1250-1318) supported the common belief that a knowledge of astrological methods was necessary for the practice of medicine. In his Lucidator, Peter says that "those who pursue medicine as they should and who industriously study the writings of their predecessors, these grant that this science of astronomy is not only useful but absolutely essential to medicine" (p. 893). At Oxford, Robert Grosseteste included both astronomy and astrology as a part of the study of mathematics: "If for Grosseteste mathematics included astronomy, astronomy also included astrology...Grosseteste accepts astronomy or astrology as the supreme science and says in his treatise on the liberal arts that natural philosophy needs its aid more than that of the others" (p. 445). Roger Bacon also believed in the importance of astrology for medicine and was convinced that the doctor who practiced medicine without a knowledge of "astronomy" was taking unnecessary risks. In Bacon's Opus Tertium (Caps. 9, 30), he "uses the words 'astrology' and 'astronomy' indifferently; sometimes speaks of 'astrology' as speculative and 'astronomy' as practical; sometimes distinguishes between speculative and practical astrology, of which the last includes judicial astrology" (pp. 669-70). Pierre D'Ailly (1350-1420) opens his Second Apologetic Defense of Astrology by asking why eminent theologians and mathematicians "who have praised astrology concerning the motions of the heavenly bodies, nevertheless have condemned extremely the astronomy dealing with judgments" (pp. 109-10). Aeneas Sylvius (who later became Pope Pius II) considered the knowledge of "astronomy" to be essential to rulers: "In his educational treatise he affirms that 'a prince must not be ignorant of astronomy, which unfolds the skies and by that means interprets the secrets of Heaven to mortal men' (p. 393). Marsilio Ficino, the close friend of Pico della Mirandola, says in his De vita coelitus comparanda (1485) that "astronomy should be our guide in procreation of offspring, in preparation of banquets, in building and clothing" (p. 565). Finally, in The Discoverers: A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), p. 305, Daniel J. Boorstin says that Tycho Brahe, in the sixteenth century, studied astrology as "an 'interdisciplinary' study combining astronomy and medicine, which made astronomers seem useful in everyday affairs." In other words, when one spoke of astronomy in the Middle Ages, astrology was meant as well.

8 Grant, p. 16.

9 Grant, p. 18.

10 Olson, p. 192: "By quite early in the thirteenth century, then, the medieval university gave rise to a relatively large class of men whose specializations were in secular learning -- especially in the
topics of the old quadrivium (mathematics and natural science) -- and who were therefore intensely committed to incorporating the newly recovered Islamic and Aristotelian scientific learning into their teaching."

11 Heer, p. 257. See also, Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1968), pp. 2-4, where Gordon Leff observes that "Unlike the monastic and cathedral schools of the preceding epoch, learning, not the cultivation of religious understanding was its purpose; the university professionalized knowledge. It consisted of masters whose function was to teach the different subjects and students concerned to qualify themselves for a career, the majority in secular professions: teaching, medicine, and law and the vast array of notorial occupations associated with it. . . . The universities in thus preparing men for a career not only professionalized teaching but also made learning vocational." See also, Olson, p. 192; Grant, p. 21; and Hastings Rashdall, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), 2, II, pp. 696-97.

12 Olson, p. 181.

13 Leff, pp. 1-2. Theology remained important, according to Leff, but it "was never more than the pursuit of a minority even at Oxford and Paris -- one among the three higher faculties --" at the universities.

14 Grant, p. 20.

15 Leff, p. 8, says that "The friction that arose from the close involvement between members of a university and the local inhabitants was the most frequent cause of the many affrays and riots in the university towns of the Middle Ages; one of their accompaniments was the secession of universities from town to town. Thus Padua's university originated from the migration of scholars from Bologna in 1222; the university of Cambridge arose from the dispersion of Oxford University in 1209." See also, Heer, p. 249.

16 Heer, pp. 250-52.

17 Heer, p. 249, declares that "The first and largest migration of students and teachers from Paris (in 1228-29) was occasioned by carnival riots. The emigrants dispersed to Oxford, Cambridge, Angers, Toulouse, and Rheims, there to escape the vigilence of Parisian officials, ecclesiastical and lay. . . . The banns of the 13th century on Aristotle and his commentators at Paris was yet another cause for student-teacher migrations." See also, Leff, p. 135; Olson, p. 192; Grant, Studies in Medieval Science and Natural Philosophy (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 2, p. 269.
18 Leff, pp. 78-9.

19 Heer, p. 254.


21 In his "Curriculum of the Faculty of Arts at Oxford in the early Fourteenth Century," **Medieval Studies**, XXVI (1964), p. 147, J. A. Weisheipl declares that "From the time a student enrolled under a master until his examination ad gradus, he was an undergraduate. In general, he had to attend both ordinary and cursory lectures on the trivium, quadrivium, and 'the three philosophies'; he had also to attend disputations, to respond de sophismatibus for at least one year, and to respond de quaestione at least during the summer preceding his determination." See also, Leff, p. 5; Grant, **Physical Science**, p. 145; and M. L. Clarke, **Higher Education in the Ancient World** (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1971), p. 141.

22 Weisheipl, p. 145, declares that "It is particularly difficult to reconstruct the Oxford faculty of arts, for the meager statutes do not present a very clear picture of the organization of studies in the early Fourteenth Century. . . . Whatever may be said of the faculty of arts in the later Middle Ages, it is safe to assume that the general practice at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century closely resembled that of Paris, and by way of Paris that of Toulouse, Montpellier and other continental universities. Further, it may be safely assumed that the practice in the early Fourteenth Century did not differ from that of the late Thirteenth Century, unless there is evidence to the contrary."

23 Leff, p. 3, says that "As the guardians of knowledge they dealt in an international medium which, unlike wool fells or foodstuffs, could not simply be regulated as a local monopoly. On the contrary, to be a university (a studium generale) was to have attained to a universal eminence that attracted masters and scholars from all parts. The positions of Paris and Oxford, Bologna and Padua, until the later fourteenth century, was the antithesis of local. Universities during the high Middle Ages were, in fact, nearer to constituting an independent order, as Alexander of Roes recognized when he said, in about 1281, 'By these three, namely the priesthood, the empire, and the university (studio), the holy Catholic church is spiritually sustained, increased and ruled as by three virtues.'"

24 Leff, pp. 18-19, states that "the ius ubique docendi became the juridical hallmark of a university by the end of the thirteenth century. . . . It was designed to control the founding of new (universities). The power to do so had by then become associated with either papal or imperial recognition; at first this conferred the general privileges of a studium generale, but by the end of the thirteenth century it meant primarily the ius ubique docendi. Thenceforth whether an institution of higher learning was a general or merely particular place of studies
depended upon whether its degree was valid elsewhere, which for new universities turned on possession of the *ius ubique docendi*. By the fourteenth century its grant was usually included in the foundation charter. . . Bologna and Paris . . . received in 1291-2 the privilege of *ius ubique docendi* from Nicholas IV. . ." Even though Oxford did not have the *docendi*, it is clear from Leff’s discussion that the Oxford curriculum matched that of the universities possessing it, since both Oxford and Paris imposed mutual examinations upon migrating scholars.

25 In his *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 3, 9, Brian Stock observes that "Owing to the translation of hitherto unavailable doctrines like the Aristotelian physics and Ptolemaic astronomy, a new emphasis was placed on the quadrivium, while within the European intellectual tradition itself, interest in logical rationalism and mathematics helped to lay the groundwork for a scientific methodology. . . . The reception of Ptolemaic astronomy and the Aristotelian physics as transmitted by the Arabs combined with a new emphasis on the *quadrivium* rather than the *trivium* to reformulate the whole question of cosmology."

26 Leff, pp. 129, 133, 120, explains that "The diffusion of the new knowledge that came from these translations is to be seen especially in England during the twelfth century because of the close connection with many of the translators who were English. . . . It was here (England) above all, in the vast assemblage of mathematics, natural science, astronomy, medicine and philosophy that the strongest element for change is to be found. . . . Of the subjects of the *quadrivium* Oxford, always the more scientifically oriented university, prescribed books and periods of study specifically for each of them: but at Paris metaphysics was dominant." See also, Bennett, p. 61.

27 For summaries and discussions of Paris and Aristotle, see Leff, p. 128; Heer, pp. 261-77; Grant, *Physical Science*, pp. 20-24; and Olson, pp. 191-93.

28 Grant, *Studies in Medieval Science*, p. 269, says that "Left unchallenged, Aristotle’s eternal world would have undermined if not destroyed, one of the central themes of Christianity. The creation of the world by a God of infinite goodness and the end of that world in preparation for a final day of judgment would have to be repudiated."

29 Olson, p. 192, declares that "Thus, at Paris there was a constant tension between the theologians and arts masters which led to at least three official prohibitions of Aristotle and his Arab commentators in the first third of the thirteenth century, in 1210, 1228 and 1231. At Oxford the leading theologian and intellectual, Robert Grosseteste, embraced the new learning, leaving Oxford free to become the leading center of scientific study in the thirteenth century." See also, Leff, p. 135, who states that "The theological conservatism of the cathedral authorities at Paris held back the development of science and metaphysics there in striking contrast to Oxford, where Grossetest fostered them; hence the different relations of Paris and Oxford to ecclesiastical
authority had also important intellectual repercussions."

30 Leff, p. 142. See also, Olson, p. 193, who says that "elsewhere (than at Paris) Aristotle, while important, was not totally dominant, and this made for a slightly different kind of science and a dramatically diminished conflict between theologians and the emerging natural philosophers. In general, at Oxford and elsewhere outside of Paris, Arabic mathematics, astronomy and/or astrology, and alchemy as well as the newly translated Timaeus of Plato and the Almagest of Ptolemy, played a more significant role. Since such works tended to conform more closely to the Platonic and Neoplatonic attitudes dominant in Christendom and embodied in the works of Augustine and Basil, for example, they were in some sense less wrenching. At the same time they were much more mathematical; and it was not until the late fourteenth century that Parisian scientific work attained the mathematical sophistication of that at Oxford."

31 Bennett, p. 71, states that Merton was "a nest of astronomers and weathermen." See also, Leff, p. 113 and Grant, Physical Science, p. 21.

32 In Early Science in Oxford (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), 2, p. 42, R. T. Gunther explains that "in a little more than a century Merton College sent out six Archbishops of Canterbury; the best training to be had in England for physicians was obtained within its walls; the works of the Merton astronomers acquired a world-wide reputation. Thus the Oxford of the fourteenth century was second to no other university in scientific obtainment, but the cult of natural science was largely confined to Merton College."

33 Bennett, p. 15, declares that "the chances were overwhelmingly in favour of a clerk’s being an Oxford man. Enden’s Oxford Biographical Register contains about four times as many entries as his Cambridge volume -- which means, incidentally, that Chaucer could count on far more Oxford readers than Cambridge ones." See also, pp. 31-34, where Bennett explains that "the 'hende' Nicholas, who 'had lerned art' -- i.e. was probably a Bachelor of Arts... The most notable item among this clerk’s possessions is the astrolabe... Nicholas, like Lewis, could probably work out the 'verrey degree of an maner sterre', the altitude of planets, and so forth."

34 Bennett, p. 62, believes that Chaucer "could hardly have made that poetical survey of the starrey regions and the laws of sound but for the impetus given by the Merton School. The eagle’s discourse on sound waves (HF 765-803) follows closely the theory formulated by Grosseteste in his commentary on Posterior Analytics, of which commentary Merton possessed four copies."

edition and will be cited with line numbers in the body of the text.

36 Bennett, p. 58, points out that "Two men named by Chaucer -- and not at random -- had close associations with the university of Oxford. To 'philosophical' Strode he dedicates his greatest poem, while his Nun's clerkly priest cites Bishop Bradwardine in the same breath as Boethius and Augustine. . . . Both Bradwardine and Strode were Mertonians; and the respect Chaucer accords them is a mark both of the pre-eminence of Oxford and within Oxford of the college that had provided six of the university's Chancellors within a century." On pp. 63-4, Bennett explains that Strode's Consequentiae and Obligationes "were set texts at Padua in the fifteenth century -- another indication of interchange between Oxford and Padua." Bennett goes on to say, p. 65, that Strode was the tutor of 'little Lewis' in "one late manuscript of the Astrolabe."

37 Bennett, p. 75, states that "one by one every astronomical trail in Chaucer leads us to Oxford, and in Oxford to Merton. Whether 'litle Lowys' for whom he wrote the treatise on the astrolabe was fictional, illegitimate, a godson, or in some vaguer relation, the tables it refers to were 'compounded after the latitude of Oxenforde', and the promised tables of equations of the planetary mansions were likewise to be adjusted to that latitude. In view of the fact that so many astronomical tables were produced in Oxford, these references are not in themselves remarkable. But in showing how to establish the latitude Chaucer adds: 'wel I wot the latitude of Oxenforde is certain minutes lasse, as I might prove', which suggests that he is not merely translating an Oxford text."

38 Bennett, p. 65.

39 Leff, pp. 5-6, says that "above the arts faculty came the three higher faculties of theology, law, and medicine, which could normally only be entered after having first passed through the arts course." Grant, Physical Science, p. 21, goes on to explain that "the required program of study culminating in the Master of Arts degree at the universities of Paris and Oxford was not, as those unfamiliar with the Middle Ages may suppose, top-heavy with courses in theology and metaphysics. Rather, it consisted for the most part of courses in logic (which had absorbed much that was grammatical, physics, which embraced physical change of all kinds, cosmology, and elements of astronomy and mathematics. Since virtually all students in arts in the Middle Ages studied a common curriculum, it becomes clear that higher education in the Middle Ages was essentially a program in logic and science. Never before, and not since, have logic and science formed the basis of higher education for all students." See also, Weisheipl, p. 147; and Heer, p. 246; Olson, p. 191.
Leff, p. 10, says that "many clerks already in holy orders attended a university to better themselves or because the ecclesiastical authorities from the pope down, sponsored them. They constituted a more mature element compared with the mass of arts students -- by far the most numerous -- who were mostly adolescents and young men between fourteen and twenty years of age." See also, Olson, p. 191. As to the number of masters making up the arts faculties, Heer, p. 247, says that by 1362 "there were 441 masters in the faculty of arts as compared with 25 in theology, 25 in medicine, and 11 in canon law" at Paris.

Leff, pp. 4-5, explains that "virtually all studying in all the faculties of a medieval university consisted in commenting and discussing a prescribed body of writings. Knowledge, however relative, as in, say, the works of Aristotle, was to be found in the expositions of the accepted authorities; the supreme authority was the Bible, in the light of which all others were to be judged. Commentary, disputation, and question were the means of elucidating their meaning and reconciling apparent contradictions, or, when this could not be done, of establishing logically the correctness of one interpretation over another... the very act of learning was carried out as the investigation of the accepted sources of truth. The mode was the same for all -- for a mere master and for a St. Thomas Aquinas... The majority of its members were governed by the... demands of the syllabus and examinations; they were graduated into a... hierarchy in which status went with the attainment from mere student to bachelor and then master or doctor." See also, Weisheipl, p. 147, who says that "from the time a student enrolled under a master until his examination ad gradus, he was an undergraduate. In general, he had to attend both ordinary and cursory lectures on the trivium, quadrivium, and 'the three philosophies'; he had also to attend disputations, to respond de sophismatibus for at least one year, and to respond de quistione at least during the summer term preceding his determination."

In Lowry J. Daly's The Medieval University: 1200-1400 (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1961), p. 210, we are told that when "the various indications are all put together and compared with the population of the medieval world, as our scanty records indicate it, the results show a comparatively high percentage of people engaged in university work. From the viewpoint of numbers, as indicating influence on the cultures of the time, the medieval university compares favorably with modern times, and certainly with the comparative student population figures for the United States in the 1800's to the 1850's, for example." See also, Leff, p. 9, who says that "all the indications are that there was no neatly defined (social) sector from which they (students) came. Negatively, it can be firmly stated that the universities were not primarily aristocratic preserves, as they were to become from the fifteenth century onwards. As we have said, universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were essentially places of vocational training and accordingly, those who went to them were in the main concerned to qualify themselves for a future career... There is a good deal of evidence from the letter collections of medieval students... to suggest that many of the students were from comparatively modest backgrounds; they
were supported at a university by their parents to learn a profession and were expected to apply themselves."

43 Leff, pp. 182-83.

44 Leff, p. 182.

45 Weisheipl, p. 150, states that "Normally students who were not bachelors actually teaching, determining (involved in the 40 days of disputation during Lent required for the bachelor's degree), or preparing for inception (admission to mastership) were expected to attend the ordinary lectures of their own masters every dies legibilis (scheduled reading) . . . a master could allow his student to attend the lectures of another master, although the student had to be present for all his master's questiones and division of the text. This would be necessary to allow the student to hear all the books required pro forma."

46 Weisheipl, pp. 152-53.

47 Leff, p. 182, explains that cursory lectures were "Usually but not exclusively given by bachelors. They could not be held in the official hours for ordinary lectures in the morning; they frequently took place in the afternoon, but they could also be at any time when ordinary lectures were not taking place and on days when lectures were allowed. They could be delivered outside the schools and out of term. As their name suggests, they were more rapid than the ordinary lectures, and not supposed to be more than a running commentary on the text, leaving the deeper questions to those qualified to deal with them."

48 Daly, p. 81.

49 Weisheipl, pp. 151-52.

50 Leff, p. 168, declares that ordinary disquisitions "were presided over by a master who put the question (e.g., Whether the act of willing presupposes the act of understanding); an appointed student (respondens) attempted to reply (respondere de questione); he also had to answer objections put by the master or others. At Oxford . . . respondents did not have to be bachelors. At the end the master would sum up at least briefly (determine), even if this was only to confirm what the respondent had said; it did not, however, have to be a formal determination in which all the points raised pro and contra were resolved."

51 Weisheipl, p. 153, explains that "The disputationes magistrorum which the undergraduate was obliged to attend were more than the morning questions presented as a part of the ordinary lectures. They were the disputatio ordinaris, or solemnis, which every master was supposed to hold at least once a week on a dies disputabilis in the afternoon. The ordinary lecture in the morning consisted not only of an exposition of the text, but also of a discussion (or disputation) of a question pertinent to the text previously expounded." Of quodlibetal
disputations, Leff, pp. 171-72, says: "On those days when they were held all the schools closed, the masters and scholars gathering in the place where they were to be held. . . . The quodlibetal disputes began early in the morning; the subjects were not announced in advance, so that it was for anyone present to raise a question. They thus provided an outlet for the more contentious and unquiet spirits. The range of subjects was great, including debates on Averroism -- and their doctrinal aftermath on the nature of the soul, plurality forms, the will and intellect -- the mendicants' privileges granted by Martin IV, the suppression of the Templars, and so on."

52 Weisheipl, pp. 154-55, 162.

53 For the discussion and summary of "determination," I am indebted to Gordon Leff, pp. 149-54.

54 Leff, p. 154, explains that "There was a fundamental similarity between the requirements at Oxford and Paris, but it must not be pressed too far because the first full statutes at Oxford date from the first decade of the fifteenth century."

55 Weisheipl, p. 145.

56 Leff, p. 146.

57 Leff, p. 3, declares that "to be a university (a studium generale) was to have attained to a universal eminence that attracted masters and scholars from all parts." Throughout the thirteenth century, the term remained "perfunctory," but by the fourteenth century, "it had become a technical term for those studia that had the right to confer a general license to teach (ius ubique docendi). In theory this carried universal recognition, the possessor of a degree from a studium generale being accepted at any other university without further examination." See also, Leff's discussion on pp. 17-18.

58 Lynn Thorndike, University Records and Life in the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1944), pp. 281-82.


60 An important point should be made about the kind of astrological experience students could have acquired through this kind of course in astronomy. The function of astronomical texts like Ptolemy's Almagest was to teach the student to make the mathematical computations necessary to determine exactly the positions of the stars at any time. The function of astrological texts like the Quadripartitum was to provide analyses for every observable astronomical configuration and every conceivable combination of configurations in the heavens. By means of "astronomy," the student discovered, for instance, that Mars was in Aries
at a given moment, that Venus was in Libra, the moon in Cancer, and so
on. By means of "astrology," the student was able to determine the
meaning of Mars in Aries in the first house, for example, opposed by
Venus in Libra in the seventh house, and in quartile with the moon in
Cancer in the fourth house. This example is only the tip of the ice-
berg, moreover: each of the six remaining planets would have to be loca-
ted and analyzed in the same fashion as Mars in order to make an accu-
rate prognosis. It should be clear that it would be very difficult
to retain and analyze all of this information mentally; that is the
reason that horoscopes were developed as maps of the heavens.

If the student was not expected to apply the principles of astro-
logy to his astronomical observations, it makes little sense that two
years of training in judicial and medical astrology were required in
the curriculum. There is no reason to doubt that university students
were expected to compute the positions of the stars and then make
prognostications based upon those computations in order to prove com-
petency in astronomy. Indeed, there would have been no other way to
prove competency given the pro forma list. Since the information nece-
sary to make even one prognosis requires the positions of all
seven planets and the analysis of the configurations they form as well
as the positions of all twelve signs of the zodiac, some sort of chart
would have had to be employed on which the many variables could be re-
corded and the analyses demonstrated. What that means, is that the
student of astronomy in the Middle Ages could not have avoided knowing
how to "cast" a horoscope himself in order to satisfy his master that
he knew what he was doing.

The astrological works of Ptolemy, of William, of Avincenna, and
the others are meant specifically to be applied to horoscopes, and
without a horoscope at hand, they are of little use. What good, for
instance, is the knowledge that serious operations should not be per-
formed under unfavorable celestial conditions if the surgeon cannot
determine whether or when those conditions exist? The only way to be
sure that the budding physician of the Middle Ages in fact could make
these calculations was for him to demonstrate his ability to cast at
least an ephemeris of time (a horoscope designed to predict the most
propitious moment for an event to occur). But physicians aside, the
only way the candidate for the bachelor's degree could demonstrate
that he had fulfilled the astronomical requirements of the arts course
would be to construct and present for examination a horoscope that re-
lected his astronomical observations and astrological analyses for a
specific date and time. What all of this indicates is that Chaucer's
astrological references would have hardly seemed abstract, confusing,
or unfamiliar to the educated members of his audience. Indeed, the
simple configurations he uses, the basic rules of astrology, and men-
tal horoscopes would probably have come to mind as readily as the
meanings of the references to the myths and poets his audience had
studied in the trivium.

61 John Ashenden (or Ashindon, or Eastwood), for example (a Her-
ton Fellow from 1338), made prognostications in 1345, 1346, 1349, 1357,
and 1365. The same is true of Bishop Reed (Fellow from 1344), Reginald
Lambourne (Fellow from 1363), John Somer, Nicholas of Lynn, and others. Gunther observes, p. 2, that "the home-made instruments of the Merton School were doubtless used, or partly used, for astrology; but this does not detract from, it rather adds to, their human interest."

62 Bennett, p. 66, says that the libraries at Oxford and Merton were "built up largely by gifts from former fellows; each being expected to bequeath his books, or to give them if he entered religion or took a post outside Oxford. . . . All these gifts added to the number of books which could be distributed to fellows for private study at the annual election."

63 Gunther, pp. 53-4, 380-85. See also, Bennett, pp. 65-74. To Gunther's list of books bequeathed by Reed, Bennett, pp. 73-74, adds "John of Spain's translation of the 'Introduction to the Mystery of Judgments from the Stars' by Abdilazi -- the Alchabitius of Chaucer's treatise on the astrolabe" and "the famous astronomical Tables of Toledo, Tabulae Tholotanae de Cursibus Planetarum." These are the tables, of course, that will be cited by the Franklin in his tale (FranklI t273).

64 Bennett, p. 69.


66 Strohm, p. 140.


70 Strohm, p. 143.


72 Lenaghan, pp. 155-57.

73 Thomas F. Tout, "Literature and Learning in the English Civil Service in the Fourteenth Century," Spec, 4 (1929), 566-68. See also, Leff, p. 2, who says that "the function of the universities was to teach the different subjects and students concerned to qualify themselves for a career, the majority in the secular professions: teaching, medicine, and law and the vast array of notorial occupations associated with it"; and Olson, p. 181.
74 Bennett, p. 19.

75 Heer, pp. 241, 258. See also, Leff, pp. 2-4; Olson, p. 181; and Hastings Rashdall, who says in The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), 2, p. 707, that "Kings and princes found their statesmen and men of business in the Universities -- most often, no doubt, among those trained in the practical Science of Law, but not invariably so . . . . It was not the wont of the practical men of the Middle Ages to disparage academic training. The rapid multiplication of Universities during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was largely due to a direct demand for highly educated lawyers and administrators."

76 Rashdall, p. 708.
CHAPTER II
THE ABCS OF ASTROLOGY

One of the more difficult problems facing Chaucer's readers today is that of understanding the significance of the scientific references that permeate his works. The "sciences" to which he refers (i.e. geomancy, alchemy, and astrology) are no longer considered scientific in any sense of the word, and the problem is compounded since disuse has caused the terms that they employ to become unrecognizable. ¹ Astronomy has no scientific credibility, and the scientific community has long since seen fit to abandon its study to the occult world of magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans. Although astronomy remains a legitimate scientific discipline today, its study is no longer regarded as necessary for a well-rounded education. Consequently, the disadvantages of our scientific backgrounds are sorely felt when we are faced with astronomical or astrological references in Chaucer's works.

That, however, is our problem and not the problem of the artist who uses astrological references to provide another level of motivation or to illuminate his work. Chaucer lived in an age when allegory was a common literary device, and writers (Langland, for example) certainly expected their audiences to understand what they meant. Allegory is said to have been used to make ideas clearer; it was not a device which intended to cloud issues. Surely, Chaucer expected his implied audience to understand the underlying significance of the Wife of Bath's
Mars in Taurus configuration (WOB Plq. 613) as well as the significance of the "folye of kyng Salomon (KnT 1942) for the temple of Venus in the *Knight's Tale*. There is no reason to assume that Chaucer's contemporaries failed to understand either reference. "Christian doctrine in the Middle Ages made the story of Solomon's lechery and his subsequent fall from grace through idolatry a common lesson, and as we have seen, the study of astronomy and astrology in the *quadrivium* assured that the educated members of Chaucer's actual audience would have understood the commonplaces of both sciences.

That does not mean, however, that the members of Chaucer's actual audience were particularly versed in the works of any specific astrologer, or that he expected them to understand a reference because it appeared in this or that source. That not only would have been unnecessary, but also would imply an audience of experts in astrology rather than a group of civil servants who had probably retained no more than an abc knowledge of the science by completing university requirements. It is unrealistic to suppose that his audience heard or read an astronomical reference and were expected to "remember" the system of Albusas, for instance, in order to get at its meaning. One does not need to have read Albusas's *Introductorium in astronomiam* to know that the Wife of Bath's Mars in Taurus configuration means lust, warfare, and the will to dominate. One does not even need to know who Albusas was. The meaning is an astrological commonplace, and the same explanation of the configuration would have appeared in Ptolemy, William Lilly, or in the works of any competent astrologer. It was the system in which his peers were educated that supplied them with an awareness of the methods
and commonplaces of astrology and not their familiarity with any particular astrological system.

My intention in this chapter is to explain the kind of information normally presented in introductions to astrology. This information, I believe, will provide a reasonable approximation of what Chaucer's actual audience could have been expected to know about the science. What is equally important is that the principles of astrology, once known, make clear what no audience could be expected to recognize in a literary work. Having a fair idea of what kind of expertise Chaucer could and could not expect provides insight into the limitations he faced in the selection of his allusions and thereby provides insight into his artistic accomplishment through the use of astrology.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to say a few words about my source and about my method. The apparent problem today is one of locating works from the Middle Ages that are actually introductions to astrology. Even those works that claim to be introductions tend to specialize either in astronomy or astrology. In each case, the kind of information presented and the lack of explanation of the terminology employed indicates that prior knowledge is expected. Chaucer's primary sources for the Astrolabe, Messahala's Operatio astrolabii and John de Sacrobosco's De Sphaera, for example, deal almost exclusively with matters of astronomy. The same is true of Ptolemy's Almagest where the emphasis is on the higher mathematics of celestial motion. His Tetra-biblos and Centiloquium, on the other hand, assume a knowledge of basic astronomical principles and dwell almost entirely upon matters of judicial astrology and the weather. The same sort of emphasis (with
constant references to Ptolemy) is placed upon astrology in Albumasar's *Introductorium in astronomiam.* Consequently, even though such works are of great assistance in the final analysis of Chaucer's astrological references, they do not provide much in the way of the fundamentals of astrology; they assume that those fundamentals are known.

Still, the lack of medieval introductions to astrology is an apparent problem if one intends to deal only with the basics of the science. To be sure, one should try to keep to the legitimate sources for any period in question whenever possible, but it is not necessary to do so in order to present valid information about the commonplaces of the science. The commonplaces of a science do not change with time once they have been established because they are rules proven by the application of the science, not interpretations. For the purposes of explaining the commonplaces of astrology, therefore, William Lilly's *Introduction to Astrology* can be relied upon to present the same basic principles of Ptolemaic astrology to be found in any authoritative work in any period of history. I have chosen Lilly's work for three reasons. First, Lilly is reputed to have been one of the two or three most knowledgable astrologers England has produced. Second, the work is written in English rather than in Latin, and the liklihood of mistranslation and misunderstanding is considerably lessened. Finally, unlike the works from the Middle Ages, Lilly's book explains the fundamentals of erecting and analyzing a horoscope without expecting prior knowledge or experience. Lilly clearly and efficiently summarizes what Ptolemy describes and explains in depth, and my method will be to make myself to Lilly what Lilly was to Ptolemy. I do not intend to
document every astrological commonplace that appears in Lilly’s work, but rather to summarize the principles of astrology that appear throughout the work as clearly and briefly as possible. Part I of this chapter will deal with the erection of a hypothetical horoscope. In this section, I will explain what the novice would be taught in order to locate the planets and signs and place them in a horoscope and how the aspects between the planets are determined. In Part II, I will explain the astrological commonplaces ascribed to the planets, houses, and signs, and outline the analytic process used by judicial astrology to arrive at general prognostications. As an aid to understanding the discussion, I will provide elementary tables and a glossary of essential astrological terms.

I. ERECTING THE HOROSCOPE

A horoscope, Lilly explains, "is merely a map to represent the heavens at any particular moment, such as when a child is born or a question asked, &c." Three circles are to be drawn, one inside of the other, in which the planets and signs will be written once they have been located. The outermost circle represents the zodiac (a "band" 12° in width) through whose center the ecliptic line passes. Moving inward from the zodiacal band, one finds the circle of the houses, and the innermost circle represents the earth. A horizontal line is to be drawn from east to west to represent the horizon, and a vertical line is then to be drawn which bisects the horizon from north to south to represent the meridian. "Thus," Lilly says, "will be shewn the natural
divisions formed by the rising and setting of the Sun, and by his passing the meridian at noon and midnight. Each of these quarters or quadrants is to be again divided into three equal parts forming The Twelve Houses.”

Once the horoscope was drawn, of course, the signs and planets were located in the heavens according to their celestial coordinates and placed in the circle of the houses. Since matters of space in the horoscope made it impractical to spell out the names of the planets, signs, and aspects formed between them, symbols were used to represent each of the heavenly bodies. For the purposes of understanding how a horoscope is erected, it is necessary to know the symbols, but it is not necessary to remember them in order to understand Chaucer’s use
of astrology in his works.

### TABLE 1: THE CELESTIAL SYMBOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs</th>
<th>Planets</th>
<th>Planetary Aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARIES ☉</td>
<td>LEO ♌️</td>
<td>SAGITTARIUS 🎃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAURUS ☁️</td>
<td>VIRGO ♊️</td>
<td>CAPRICORN 🐐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEMINI ☋</td>
<td>LIBRA ☐️</td>
<td>AQUARIUS ☚</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANCER ☐️</td>
<td>SCORPIO ☊</td>
<td>PISCES ☉️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATURN ☜</td>
<td>MARS ☜️</td>
<td>VENUS ☇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUPITER ☝️</td>
<td>THE SUN ☉</td>
<td>MERCURY ☎️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CONJUNCTION ☎ | SEXTILE ☢️ | TRINE ☬ |
| QUARTILE ☡️ | OPPOSITION ☠️ |

The position of a celestial body refers either to the ecliptic or the celestial equator, and in Chaucer’s day, the ecliptic was the preferred point of reference. The exact locations of the planets and signs in the heavens, therefore, are measured in degrees of celestial latitude and longitude relative to the ecliptic line. Consequently, their positions are directly affected by the geographical location of the observation, the year, month, day, and hour of the event.

### THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC

There are 12 signs in the zodiac, each of which contains 30°, creating the 360° into which the ecliptic circle is divided. Since the
diameter of the zodiacal belt is said to be 12°, the area of a sign may be imagined as a rectangle which is 30° from "end to end" and 12° from "side to side." The order in which the signs move through the zodiac is unchanging. Beginning with the vernal equinox, Aries is always followed by Taurus, Taurus is followed by Gemini, Gemini by Cancer, and so on. Each sign has a descriptive name or title. Aries is called the Ram, Taurus, the Bull; Gemini, the Twins; Cancer, the Crab; Leo, the Lion; Virgo, the Virgin; Libra, the Scales; Scorpio, the Scorpion; Sagittarius, the Archer; Capricorn, the Goat; Aquarius, the Waterman or Waterbearer; and Pisces, the Fish.

The apparent annual path of the sun through the circle of the 12 signs is along the ecliptic line and is directly related to the seasons of the year. If one imagines the circle as the face of a clock, the motion of the sun (and the planets) through the signs may be imagined to be counter-clockwise from the eastern horizon (9:00). The sun entered Aries on the eastern horizon at the vernal equinox (9:00) on or about March 12 in Chaucer's day. Its course then took it northward from the equinoctial line (counter-clockwise) to the point of the summer solstice in Cancer (6:00) on about June 12. The sun then moves southward from the Tropic of Cancer toward the western horizon until it arrives at Libra (3:00) at the point of the autumnal equinox on September 12. Since the sun has no declination from the equinoctial line at this time, the hours of daylight and darkness are equal throughout the world. After crossing the equinoctial line, the sun continues its journey to the south until it reaches the Tropic of Capricorn (12:00) at the point of the winter solstice on about December 12. Its course then takes it
northward along the ecliptic toward the eastern horizon where it will again enter Aries (9:00) at the point of the vernal equinox.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southern Declination</th>
<th>Tropic 23-1/2° South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Northern Declination | Tropic 23-1/2° North |

FIGURE 2: THE MOTION OF THE SUN THROUGH THE ZODIAC

Each of the 12 signs rises and sets every day. Contrary to the motion of the planets, the movement of the signs is clockwise from the eastern horizon. Six of the signs (Cancer through Aquarius) are called the signs of Direct, or Long Ascension. That is, they are those signs which rise at a more directly "upward" angle from the celestial equator (equinoctial line). The six remaining signs (Capricorn through Gemini)
are called variously the signs of Short Ascension, the "tortuous" signs, or more commonly, the signs of Oblique Ascension. That is, rather than rising "steeply" along the celestial equator, they instead rise obliquely from it. Since each of the signs rises and sets every day, each of them will govern the affairs of different houses in the horoscope during the course of the day. Moreover, as they rise, some of their thirty total degrees will be spread over two houses rather than just one.

**FIGURE 3: THE RISING OF THE SIGNS AND THEIR OVERLAP OF THE HOUSES**

Since the locations of the signs in the heavens will vary according to the location of the celestial equator (or latitude of the point of observation), the geographical location of the event as well as the year, month, day, and hour it takes place must be known in order to
determine which signs are governing the houses in that latitude at that
time. The celestial coordinates for the signs must be calculated to
the exact degree if the planets are to be placed in the proper houses
of the horoscope once their positions along the ecliptic are calculated.
It does no good to know that Mars is at 22° Pisces if one does not know
in what house of the horoscope the 22nd degree of Pisces is located.

The procedure by which the celestial coordinates for the signs
governing the houses are determined is called right ascension. Right
ascension is the measurement in degrees of the angle along the celest-
ial equator from the vernal equinox to the circle through the celestial
poles that also passes through the sign. Figure 4, in which NCP and
SCP stands for the north and south celestial poles and \( \odot \) stands for
the point at which the vernal equinox cuts the celestial equator indic-
ates how the right ascension system is used.

\[\text{FIGURE 4: THE RIGHT ASCENSION SYSTEM}\]
Put briefly, finding the right ascension of the signs involved the conversion of the right ascension of the meridian (midheaven, or 10th house sign) to celestial longitude based upon its position relative to the right ascension of the ascendant (1st house sign). Once the coordinates for the sign on the meridian were discovered, the procedure was to turn to a Table of Houses to find the degrees for the signs governing the five remaining eastern houses. To finish the task for all 12 signs and houses was a simple matter since, as Lilly explains, "the six opposite or western houses have the same degree of the opposite signs on their cusps" (p. 21). Thus, the degrees for the signs governing the six eastern houses of the horoscope (10, 11, 12, 1, 2, 3) are discovered by calculating the right ascension of the meridian and the ascendant, from which the degrees of the signs governing the six western houses (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) are derived. Mathematically, this is a complicated process, but it should be realized that it is a problem that Chaucer does not require us to solve. The point is that his audience would have known that the right ascension had to be calculated in order to pinpoint by degree the location of a celestial body, not that they would ever be asked to do so. 8

"The student," Lilly says, "must become well acquainted with the above particulars; but especially with the northern and southern signs, the former being opposite to the latter" (p. 16). The northern signs (Aries through Virgo) and the southern signs (Libra through Pisces) probably derive their names from the myth surrounding the creation of the zodiac. Because Aries was originally observed at the point of the vernal equinox on the eastern horizon, and because the signs which follow
Aries (Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, and Virgo) were, by the fixed procession of the signs, north of the celestial equator between the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, they came to be called the northern signs. Naturally, the six remaining signs (Libra through Pisces) occupied the area in the sky south of the celestial equator at that time and were called the southern signs. Lilly points out the importance of remembering these classifications because he wishes to emphasize the rule for the fixed opposition of the signs (a rule which is essential for placing the signs on the house cusps). No matter where Aries appears in the horoscope, for example, Libra will always be directly opposite, just as Scorpio is directly opposite Taurus, Sagittarius is perpetually opposite Gemini, and so on. Consequently, when the Wife of Bath tells us that her ascending sign (the sign on her 1st house cusp) was Taurus, we automatically know that Scorpio (always opposite Taurus) is on her 7th house cusp (always opposite the 1st house). If the student learns these rules, Lilly says, he will readily come to understand the figure of the heavens, and the relative situations of the planets" (p. 16).

**TABLE 2: ORDER OF THE SIGNS THROUGH THE ZODIAC AND THEIR FIXED OPPOSITIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NORTHERN</th>
<th>OPPOSITE TO</th>
<th>SOUTHERN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ARIES</td>
<td>OPPOSITE TO</td>
<td>7. LIBRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. TAURUS</td>
<td>OPPOSITE TO</td>
<td>8. SCORPIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. GEMINI</td>
<td>OPPOSITE TO</td>
<td>9. SAGITTARIUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CANCER</td>
<td>OPPOSITE TO</td>
<td>10. CAPRICORN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leo</td>
<td>OPPOSITE TO</td>
<td>11. AQUARIUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. VIRGO</td>
<td>OPPOSITE TO</td>
<td>12. PISCES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aries and Libra are the equinoctial signs (the signs of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes: spring and autumn), and Cancer and Capricorn are the solstitial signs (the signs of the summer and winter solstices respectively).

This is the information that is essential for locating the signs in the heavens and placing them on the house cusps of the horoscope. Before one becomes unnecessarily discouraged, however, it should be understood that Chaucer does not expect his audiences to know all of the details and calculations in order to understand his astrological allusions. Chaucer expects his audiences to know that there are 12 signs in the zodiac and he expects them to know what the names of the signs are. If one does not at least know the names of the signs, one cannot know that a reference is astrological. He expects it to be known that the zodiac is made up of degrees (it does not matter if one does not know where the degrees actually come from) and that each of the signs contains a total of 30°, because he refers both to degrees in general and to planets located at various degrees in the signs. He expects it to be known that the signs rise and set every day, and that they are visible above the horizon when they rise and invisible when they set. It is not necessary, most of the time, to know which of the signs rise directly and which rise obliquely, but it is necessary to understand that the sign emerging on the eastern horizon is called the ascendant.

Chaucer assumed that his audiences would know the order in which the signs proceed through the zodiac because it is fixed. He did not require one to know what the northern and southern signs were, but he did expect it to be understood that there is a fixed opposition between
the signs. That sort of knowledge enabled the members of his audience to quickly recognize an "implied" sign when only one sign was given. Given one sign (the Wife's Taurus, for instance), it is simple to know what sign must be directly opposite (Scorpio, in this case). Indeed, knowing the fixed procession and fixed opposition of the signs enables one to determine where all of the signs in a horoscope have to be if one is given the location of only one sign.

Finally, Chaucer expects his audiences to know what the ecliptic is, and that the ecliptic line is the path taken by the sun through the signs. He expects us to be aware that the sun and the rest of the planets normally move through the zodiac, relative to the ecliptic line, in a counter-clockwise fashion from the eastern horizon. For the purposes of suggesting time and the seasons, he expects us to know the locations and meanings of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes (the equinoctial line) and the summer and winter solstices (the meridional line) and that the equinoxes are represented by Aries and Libra respectively, while the solstices are represented by Cancer and Capricorn.

On the other hand, Chaucer does not require his audiences to know the symbols for the signs since they are necessary only when one actually constructs a horoscope. He does not expect one to actually calculate the right ascension in order to understand where the signs are located because the process is far too complicated to be practical. But he does expect it to be known that the exact degrees of celestial longitude for each sign must be found in order to know where the signs belong in the horoscope and in order to know in what houses governed by the signs the planets should be placed. He expects it to be understood that
without knowing the geographical location (latitude) of an event and
the year, month, day, and time in which it took place, there is no way
to know the exact degrees for the signs and planets at that time, and
consequently, no way to know which signs were governing the houses of
the horoscope or in which houses the planets belonged. Chaucer depends
upon his audience being aware of those requirements so that they will
not unnecessarily complicate the allusions he presents. Because he
counts on our being aware that without the details of time and location
we cannot make exact calculations, he is able to present us with a ref-
ERENCE that he knows we will have to evaluate as it stands because the
information to complicate the matter has been omitted.

THE HOUSES

There are 12 houses in the horoscope. Each of the houses (for
purposes of constructing the horoscope) occupy 30° of the circle, and
are counted counter-clockwise beginning with the first house (the ascen-
ant) at the point of the vernal equinox on the eastern horizon. Thus,
the fourth house, for example, begins 90° north of the eastern horizon
at the point of the summer solstice at the meridional line, the seventh
house lies opposite the first at the point of the autumnal equinox on
the western horizon, and the tenth house is located south of the eastern
horizon, opposite the fourth house and 90° distant from the first and
seventh houses, at the point of the winter solstice.

The boundary lines drawn to separate the houses are called the
house "cusps." The symbols for the signs governing the houses, along
with their degrees, are drawn on the house cusps in the horoscope.
The extreme eastern point of the equinoctial line marks the beginning
of the first house. Thirty degrees north of that point along the ecliptic marks the location of the beginning of the second house, 60° north of the same point of reference marks the beginning of the third house, 90° north, the beginning of the fourth, and so on. The twelfth house cusp, on the other hand, lies 30° south along the ecliptic, "above" the first house cusp, the eleventh house cusp is 60° south, the tenth is 90° south, and so on. Finally, the houses are divided into three classes which are used to evaluate the power of the influence of planets in the horoscope. These three divisions are called the angles, the succeedent houses, and the cadent houses.

![Diagram of house cusps and their locations in relation to the ecliptic and Earth's equator and horizon.]

**FIGURE 5: THE LOCATION AND RELATIVE POWER OF THE HOUSES**
Thus, the lines joining east to west and north to south are the locations of the cusps or beginnings of the 1st, 7th, 4th, and 10th houses, and it is at those points that the signs governing those houses would be drawn. As the diagram shows, the 1st, 4th, 7th, and 10th houses are the "angles" (or angular houses) of the horoscope. Houses 2, 5, 8, and 11, on the other hand, are called "succeedent" houses because they follow or "succeed" the angles. Those houses preceding the angles (3, 6, 9, 12) are called the "cadent" houses because they are said to be "falling from" the angles. Any sign appearing on the cusp of an angle and any planet appearing within the boundaries of an angular house is said to be in a position of power. Those appearing with the succeedent houses are less powerful, and those with the cadent houses are said to be quite weakened. The order of the houses is always the same: the 1st house, or ascendant, is always at the eastern horizon (the Orient), and counting counter-clockwise from that point, the circle always ends with the 12th house above the horizon and cadent to the 1st.

Just as the signs of the zodiac always oppose each other in the same way, so are the houses in a condition of fixed opposition in the horoscope.

**TABLE 3: THE FIXED OPPOSITION OF THE HOUSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Always Opposes</th>
<th>1st House</th>
<th>2nd House</th>
<th>3rd House</th>
<th>4th House</th>
<th>5th House</th>
<th>6th House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st House</td>
<td>ALWAYS OPPOSES</td>
<td>7th HOUSE</td>
<td>8th HOUSE</td>
<td>9th HOUSE</td>
<td>10th HOUSE</td>
<td>11th HOUSE</td>
<td>12th HOUSE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contrary to the perpetual movement of the planets and signs along the ecliptic, the houses are stationary. Since that is true, it should now become clear as to why the exact celestial coordinates of the heavenly bodies must be known in order to place the signs with the proper houses and the planets in their proper locations. Proper placement in the houses is essential because the natures and influences of the signs and planets differ, and the affairs governed by each house are different. The 1st house deals primarily, for instance, with matters of physical appearance and the personality, and Aries governing those matters produces much different results than Taurus or any other sign. In the same way, Mars in Aries in the 1st house produces much different effects than Mars in Aries in the 2nd house, because the affairs of the 2nd house are primarily pecuniary rather than personal. With these fundamental matters in mind, the student can transfer the signs he has located by calculating the right ascension to the proper house cusps of the horoscope.

To illustrate the process, let us assume that we have calculated the right ascension of the meridian and the ascendant, and that we have found the longitudinal degrees for the sign on the 10th house cusp to be 22° 4' of Capricorn. The coordinates for the ascendant, or 1st house cusp are 17° 8' of Aries, and the latitude of the event in 39° N. Having completed these calculations, it will be recalled, the next step was to turn to a Table of Houses in order to determine the coordinates of the signs for the remaining eastern houses. Tables of Houses are constructed and used in the following manner.

The longitudinal degrees of the sign for the 10th house head up the many individual tables that appear in such a work. Since we have
arbitrarily selected 22° 4' of Capricorn as the right ascension of the meridian, or 10th house, the first step is to find that table whose heading is closest to that reading. Suppose, for the sake of the example, that a table exists that matches the required 22° 4'. Having found the right table for the 10th house coordinates, the next step is to read down the column for latitude that appears to the right of the table, find the latitude of observation (39° N, in this case), and read across, copying down the signs with their degrees for the five remaining eastern houses.

**TABLE 4: LOCATING THE SIGNS FOR THE HOUSE CUSPS**

<p>| | | | | | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>ASC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>LAT.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10° 29'</td>
<td>5° 14'</td>
<td>17° 21'</td>
<td>15° 19'</td>
<td>26° 45'</td>
<td>38N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10° 6'</td>
<td>5° 4'</td>
<td>17° 8'</td>
<td>15° 9'</td>
<td>26° 5'</td>
<td>39N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the signs and degrees corresponding to 39° N latitude would be placed on the cusps of the 11th, 12th, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd houses in the horoscope, and the sign heading up the column would be placed on the 10th house cusp. The task that would then remain is to assign the signs and degrees to the western (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) houses, which is easily done since it is already known that the signs and houses are in a condition of fixed opposition and that the degrees for the signs governing the western houses are to be exactly the same as those established for the opposing eastern houses. Capricorn at 22° 4' on the 10th house cusp, for instance, requires that 22° 4' of Cancer be assigned to the 4th house cusp.
TABLE 5: ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE 12 HOUSE CUSPS, GIVEN EXAMPLE TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EASTERN HOUSES</th>
<th>WESTERN HOUSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th HOUSE CUSP</td>
<td>4th HOUSE CUSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10° 6' 6'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>5° 6' 4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st/ASC</td>
<td>17° 8' 8'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>15° 9' 9'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>26° 5' 5'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>10° 6' 6'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>5° 6' 4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>17° 8' 8'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>15° 9' 9'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>26° 5' 5'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should now become easier to see why, when we find Capricorn on the 10th house cusp in a literary work, we should know (not assume) that Aries is ascending, Cancer is on the 4th house angle, and Libra is on the 7th house angle. Let us now place the signs we have "calculated" on the house cusps of our hypothetical horoscope. When this has been done, the first step in erecting the figure has been completed.

![Figure 6: Placing the Signs on the House Cusps](image-url)
What, then, does the modern reader need to know about the houses at this point? It must be known that there are 12 houses in a horoscope and that they are numbered 1-12 counting counter-clockwise around the circle from the eastern horizon. It must be known that the house cusps mark the beginnings of the houses and that the signs of the zodiac in their degrees and minutes are drawn on the cusps of the houses they are to govern. It must be understood that the houses are in a state of fixed opposition, and that opposition (1-7, 2-8, 3-9, etc.) must be known. The concept of fixed opposition is especially valuable since it allows one, for instance, to hear the Wife of Bath speak of her Taurus ascendant (1st house) and quickly recognize that Scorpio must, therefore, rule her house of marriage (7th house); Scorpio ruling the 7th house (as I hope to show in my chapter on the Wife of Bath's Prologue) is an ominous condition indeed for marital affairs.

In addition to the concept of fixed opposition, the three classifications of houses must be known. It must be understood that the angular houses are places of power for the planets, that succeedent houses follow the angles and are positions of less power, and that cadent houses precede or "fall from" the angles and have a debilitating effect upon planets within their boundaries. Finally, it must be known that the angles are equal to houses 1, 4, 7, and 10; the succeedent houses are numbers 2, 5, 8, and 11; and the cadent houses are numbers 3, 6, 9, 12. When this information is absorbed, the modern reader will have all of the information he needs to understand any references Chaucer makes to the houses of a horoscope, except when he alludes to specific house affairs. The affairs of the houses, those areas of life "controlled"
by each house, will be explained in the second part of this chapter with the analytic process employed by judicial astrology.

THE PLANETS

In Chaucer's day, astrologers dealt with only seven "planets." Technically speaking, there were actually five planets and two luminaries (the sun and the moon), but traditionally, all seven bodies were referred to as "planets" or "stars." The "planets" are, then, in their order of distance from the earth, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. In the geocentric universe of the fourteenth century, Saturn's sphere (or, orbit around the earth) was said to be the "highest" and "slowest" of all the planets. Directly "below" his sphere is Jupiter; below Jupiter's sphere is Mars, and so on. It was from this system that the planetary rulers for the days of the week and the hours of the day were derived. The first hour of sunlight was traditionally assigned to the planet ruling the day, and each succeeding hour was assigned to the remaining planets. The sun, for instance, rules Sunday. To find the rulers of the first eight hours of Sunday (beginning at dawn), one merely applies the descending order of the planets to the hours. The first hour of Sunday is ruled by the sun; the second hour belongs to Venus; the third, to Mercury; the fourth, to the moon; the fifth, to Saturn; the sixth, to Jupiter; the seventh, to Mars; the eighth again to the sun, and so on. 11

The motion of the sun (Fig. 2) is counter-clockwise along the ecliptic line from the eastern horizon. He passes through all 12 signs of the zodiac in a year. The movement of the planets is also counter-clockwise relative to the ecliptic, and they move at various speeds
through the zodiac. It takes Saturn roughly 30 years to travel through all 12 signs (29 years, 16 days, 5 hours). Jupiter completes one cycle in about 15 years (14 years, 314 days, 12 hours); Mars, in about 2 years (1 year, 321 days, 22 hours); Venus, in 224 days, 7 hours; Mercury, in 87 days, 23 hours; and the moon, in less than a month (27 days, 7 hours, 43 minutes, 5 seconds).

While the planets are moving counter-clockwise through the signs, their motion is called "Direct." When, however, they appear to "stop," and then seem to move "backwards" (clockwise), their motion is termed "Retrograde." In Ptolemy's system, retrogradation was explained by the theory that while the planets orbit the earth in a counter-clockwise fashion, they are also moving in a counter-clockwise circle called an epicycle which is centered on their orbital path. Thus, a planet viewed from the earth that is on its "upward swing" along its epicycle appears to be moving ahead of the earth ("direct"). When it goes into its "downward swing," however, it reaches a point that is parallel with the earth (or with a planet or fixed star used as a point of reference), and the planet appears to have "stopped." Naturally, as it continues "downward" on its epicycle, it seems to be moving "backwards" from the earth (retrograde). Of the seven planets, only the sun and the moon were said never to be retrograde. It was believed that Saturn was retrograde for 140 days per year; Jupiter, for 120 days; Mars, for 80 days; Venus, for 42 days; and Mercury, for 24 days. When a planet was retrograde, its effects were said to be unfavorable. Retrogradation was said to be a debility; that is, the power and influence of a retrograde planet was viewed as weakened, and at times, perverted.
FIGURE 7: RETROGRADE MOTION ACCORDING TO PTOLEMY'S THEORY OF EPICYCLES

Since the planets are constantly in motion through the signs (direct or retrograde), and since their positions are determined according to their degrees of celestial longitude along the ecliptic, they must be located by means of the same criteria used to locate the signs: the latitude of observation, the year, month, day, and hour of the event. Without this information, the celestial coordinates for the planets cannot be known. Without the exact degrees of celestial longitude for each planet, the houses of the horoscope in which they belong cannot be determined. 12

When the celestial coordinates for each of the planets have been calculated, they are placed in the houses of the horoscope, and the second step toward the completion of the figure is finished. To
demonstrate how this is done, let us assume the following coordinates for the planets and place them in the hypothetical horoscope under construction (Fig. 6, p. 61).

Saturn is at 23° 5' Capricorn
Jupiter 28° 15' Sagittarius
Mars 20° 6' Libra
Sun 12° 2' Aquarius
Venus 18° 2' Aries
Mercury 21° 7' Scorpio
Moon 25° 10' Cancer

Figure 8: Placing the Planets in the Houses

Notice that no planets appear in five of the houses (2, 3, 5, 6, 12) and five of the signs (Pisces, Gemini, Taurus, Virgo, Leo) in the
horoscope. In Chaucer's day, at least five of the signs and houses would always be "empty" because there were only seven known planets. It should be understood, however, that the laws of planetary motion make it possible for two, or three, or more planets to be occupying one sign and one house in the horoscope at the same time; in that case, there may be even more "empty" houses and signs in the horoscope. Since the affairs of all 12 houses must always be considered whether or not there are planets in each of them, the planetary rulers of the signs governing the houses that are empty (as I will explain in the second part of this chapter) determine how the affairs of those houses are being influenced.

Regarding the planets, Chaucer expects his audiences to understand the order in which they appear in the heavens, and he expects that their names will be known. He does not expect his audiences to calculate the positions of the planets, and he expects them to know that they cannot do so without specific information as to latitude and time. He assumes that it is understood that the planets normally move counter-clockwise through the circle of the signs ("direct"), but that at times they may move clockwise ("retrograde"), and that when they do, the situation is ominous. Unless Chaucer provides a clue that a planet is retrograde, he expects planetary motion to be understood as direct. It must also be known that the planets move at different rates of speed. The actual speeds do not need to be remembered, but it should at least be known that Saturn's speed is the slowest and the moon's speed is the fastest through the signs. Chaucer does not expect us to know the symbols for the planets since they are used only for erecting a horoscope.
When the signs are placed on the proper house cusps and the planets are placed in the appropriate houses of the horoscope, the astronomy of erecting the map of the heavens is complete. There remains, however, one final step prior to the analytic process. In order to determine exactly how the individual or the event will be affected by the configurations in the horoscope, the relationships between the planets must be assessed. In astrology, this procedure is called determining the aspects (how the planets and signs "view" or "testify" to each other based upon their location along the ecliptic). Unless the planetary aspects are calculated, very little indeed can be said with certainty about the individual or the event.

THE ASPECTS

There are several different kinds of planetary aspects possible in astrology, but the five most powerful are of greatest importance and are always considered in every horoscope. Aspects are usually referred to as being either partile or platic. The most powerful (and least frequent) of the two is the partile aspect, which occurs only when two planets are exactly in the same degree of celestial longitude in the same sign, or when they are not in the same sign, in the same degree of longitude and exactly (to the degree and minute) 60° (in "sextile"), 90° (in "quar- tile"), 120° (in "trine"), or 180° (in "opposition") apart along the ecliptic. The platic aspect (which occurs with much greater frequency) occurs so long as two planets remain within the prescribed orb (the distance surrounding each planet to which its influence actually extends). As might be expected, each of the aspects was assigned a symbol for the purpose of easily "reading" the planetary relationships in the horoscope.
**TABLE 6: THE PLANETARY ASPECTS AND THEIR SYMBOLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Occurs At</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>180° intervals on the ecliptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trine</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>120° intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartiile</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>90° intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sextile</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>60° intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>30° intervals in the same sign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existence of an aspect is first determined by measuring the distance between the planets in degrees along the ecliptic. If the planets are not within the prescribed range, there can be no aspect (partile or platic) between them. There are 360° in the zodiac and in the horoscope. Since we are dealing with a circle, two or more planets located in signs opposite to each other are 180° apart. Whenever planets are 180° apart, the conditions for an opposition exist. If the opposition is then halved (or the circle quartered), we have 90°, and whenever planets are within 90° of each other, there is the possibility of a quartile aspect between them. The trine occurs at a distance of 120°, and the sextile, at 60°. Conditions for the conjunction exist only when two or more planets are in the same sign and within the prescribed orb.

"Aspects," according to Eade, "are reckoned from sign to sign, not from house to house... Strict convention required the angular relations of the planets, their aspects, to be read in multiples of 30°."14

Thus, in our hypothetical horoscope (Fig. 7), for example, Mars is in Libra at 20° 6' and Saturn is in Capricorn at 23° 5'. To find the
distance between Mars and Saturn, we add increments of 30° along the ecliptic beginning with Scorpio and including Capricorn. It should be clear that a right angle exists, as the sum of 90° would indicate, between Libra on the 7th house cusp and Capricorn on the 10th house cusp, and that the conditions for a quartile therefore exist. Moreover, if we count clockwise from Mars in Libra to the moon in Cancer (beginning with Virgo and including Cancer), we will discover another right angle and another possible quartile between those planets as well. What has been done with Mars' relationship with Saturn and the moon must then be done with Mars and the remaining planets before it will be possible to explain how Mars is operating in the horoscope. Naturally, the same process must be completed for Venus, Mercury, the sun, and the rest of the planets.

FIGURE 9: MARS, SATURN, AND THE MOON IN QUARTILE RANGE
It should now be clear how one might hear that Mars is in Libra and Saturn is in Capricorn (without knowing their degrees) in one instant, pause to count the signs in increments of 30° (Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn), and in the next instant deduce a quartile aspect. It is just this kind of simple configuration and deduction that works well in literature. 15

Nevertheless, the student would be taught that the existence of an aspect based only upon the distance between planets along the ecliptic is an assumption and not a certainty. The orbital relationships of the planets must also be within a prescribed range before the aspect may be said to actually exist. Mars in Libra and Saturn in Capricorn may be 90° apart and may be in quartile aspect with each other. In order to be certain, however, they must also be within an orb of 80°. 16 Since Mars is at 20° 6' and Saturn is at 23° 5', they are within an orb of 2° 59' (23° 5'- 22° 55' minus 20° 6' = 2° 59'). Since the orb between the two planets is less than the prescribed 80°, they are in platic quartile with each other. The same rules apply, of course, when two planets are in the same sign. Although the possibility of a conjunction exists when Mars and Venus, for instance, are in the same sign, both planets must also be within a 7° orb for the conjunction to actually exist. Thus, if Mars was at 18° 5' of Taurus and Venus was at 4° 5' of Taurus, they would not be in conjunction with each other (having an orb of 14°) even though they occupy the same sign.

One final point should be made about the aspects. Consider again the platic quartile between Mars in the 7th house in Libra and Saturn in the 10th house in Capricorn (Fig. 8). It is easy to understand
that one must consider the quartile Mars forms with Saturn in the horoscope, but it must also be noted that Saturn is forming a quartile with Mars. Indeed, it would be a serious mistake to overlook it. Mars, from the 7th house and in quartile with Saturn is analyzed to determine the effects specifically of Mars in Libra in the 7th house upon 10th house affairs. Saturn in Capricorn in the 10th house is analyzed separately to determine the effects of the quartile he forms with Mars on 7th house affairs. The aspects are read both ways in astrology.

In order to determine the certain existence of planetary aspects, therefore, the distance between the planets along the ecliptic must be calculated. Whether or not the planets are in the prescribed range tells the astrologer if an aspect can exist, and if it can, what kind of aspect it must be. He must then determine the orbital spheres of influence for the planets in question, and if the planets are in that prescribed range, the aspect actually does exist. Only after completing this process can one say with certainty that an aspect does or does not exist.

Chaucer expects his audience to know that the five most common planetary aspects are the conjunction, the sextile, the trine, the quartile, and the opposition. One must know the distances along the ecliptic that make aspects possible, because Chaucer will suggest the existence of platic aspects by placing planets in the prescribed range of one another. Thus, he expects us to know that a sextile can exist when planets are two signs (60°) apart, that a quartile can exist when planets are three signs (90°) apart, and so on. He assumes that if we know the fixed order of the signs in the zodiac and the ranges required for
aspects to exist, we can easily recognize the possibility of an aspect when he suggests one.

And Chaucer usually does no more than suggest the existence of an aspect. One must not expect him to "say" that an aspect exists when he makes use of one. Instead, he will usually imply their existence by means of words like "joined," "knitted," "with," and so on. Moreover, he will often suggest the existence of quartiles or oppositions by referring to the cardinal points of the compass.

The cardinal points of the compass correspond to the angles and angular houses in a horoscope. North equals the 4th house angle; south, the 10th house angle; east, the 1st house or ascendant; and west, the 7th house angle. North is, of course, 180° distant from south, and the same is true of east and west. 180° is the prescribed range for an astrological opposition to occur. In the same way, each cardinal point is always at right angles to those points it does not oppose. Thus, east is always 90° from north and south as is west, and north and south are always 90° from east and west. 90°, of course, is the prescribed range for quartile aspects. Consequently, when Chaucer suggests that planetary influences are located at any of the cardinal points of the compass, we are expected to understand that oppositions or quartile aspects are being implied.

The arena built by Theseus in the Knight's Tale (KnT 1887-1913) is a good example of how Chaucer implies the existence of planetary aspects to foreshadow plot development by means of references to the planets at the cardinal points of the compass. In this passage, the Knight emphasizes the circular shape (like a horoscope) of the arena
and then declares that the temple (or, house) of Venus is at the eastern gate, while the temple of Mars is at the western gate, "opposit" the temple of Venus. Clearly, Venus in the east and Mars in the west are 180° apart in the circle of the arena-horoscope, and a condition for the opposition exists. Since an opposition is an "evil" aspect according to astrological lore, the relationship between Mars and Venus should prove to be stressful, one of conflict. After the construction of the arena, and after the prayers of Arcite and Palamon, of course, Mars and Venus are found to be in conflict through their patronage of the two knights.

Chaucer does not expect his audiences to do mathematical problems to understand the existence of an aspect. He seldom supplies the degrees of celestial longitude for the planets and signs when he wants to suggest an aspect, because to do so would imply to an audience that it was expected to calculate whether an aspect can exist by 1) remembering the orbs assigned to each planet; 2) halving the sum of those orbs and determining whether or not the aspect was plactic or partile or possible at all. That is unnecessarily complicated for Chaucer's purposes, and would turn his work into astrological exercises.

When the celestial coordinates for all of the signs and all of the planets have been calculated according to the specific location and time of the event and properly placed in the horoscope, and when the aspects formed between all seven of the planets have been diagnosed, the student is ready to learn the commonplaces of astrology which allow for a general prognostication and apply them to the analytic process.
II. ASTROLOGY: THE ANALYTIC PROCESS

Before the student is in a position to make even the most general prognostication, he must first learn the most common characteristics of the signs, planets, and aspects, and he must become acquainted with the most common affairs governed by the houses. I say "most common," because the lists of characteristics and house affairs are far too long to commit to memory. Certain elements are said always to be the case in astrology: Taurus, like the bull from whom he takes his name, is obstinate and plodding; Saturn, as can be seen in the Knight's Tale, is the author of disaster; the 2nd house in a horoscope is "the house of wealth," and so on. The length of the lists develops from these kinds of "primary" characteristics, and it is not a simple task to determine when "secondary" characteristics do and do not apply. One learns, therefore, the most common characteristics ascribed to the planets, signs, aspects, and houses in order to make an initial, general prognostication. More detailed analyses require the assistance of authoritative texts and case histories, and most important, the interpretive skill of experience.

THE 12 HOUSES

One usually begins the learning process by becoming familiar with the affairs of the houses of the horoscope. Each house governs a different area of life, and it is consequently of little use to understand how the planets and signs are conducting themselves if one does not know in what area of life to apply their behavior. Since the affairs of the houses are many and worded somewhat differently from text to
text, the student learns various key phrases for the primary affairs of each house. The 7th house, for instance, is commonly referred to as "the house of marriage, partnerships, and public enemies," and the 8th house is said to be a "house of death" (pp. 31-2), and so on, as if no other affairs existed in those houses. In the final analysis, those phrases are simple working definitions; the student knows that they are not the only affairs controlled by those houses, and he knows that he must rely on the authorities in order to complete his analysis.

### Table 7: Commonplaces for the Houses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE</th>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>EFFECT</th>
<th>OPPOSITE</th>
<th>KEY PHRASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st/Ascendant</td>
<td>Angle</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Personality/Appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Succ.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Wealth/Finances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Cad.</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Communications, Siblings, Short Journeys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Angle</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Home, the Father, Hidden Things, the End of Things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Succ.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Love, Creativity, Children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Cad.</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Illnesses, Injuries, Occupations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Angle</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Marriage, Partnerships, Public Enemies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Succ.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Death, Inheritances, Legacies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Angle</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Careers, Professions, the Mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Succ.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Friends, Hopes and Dreams, Wishes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, when a student sees a maleficent planet like Mars in the 7th house, he can immediately consider the possibility of marital problems
or disagreements between partners in business. Or, if Saturn and Venus (a combination denoting lechery) appear in Leo in the 5th house, he can quickly recognize the possibility of dissipation and many love affairs, but no children (Leo is barren); or, if a marriage is involved, there is the possibility of no issue or no living issue from such a union.

THE SIGNS

When the key phrases for the affairs of the houses have been learned, more keys would have to be absorbed for the signs of the zodiac. Again, only the information essential for a general prognostication would be memorized: A) the Lord, or ruler of the sign; B) the Triplicity (group of three signs) to which the signs belong; C) the planets ruling the triplicities; D) the planetary rulers of the Faces (the three 10° divisions of each sign); and E) the parts of the human body ruled by each sign. It would be understood that Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius were assigned the element of fire; Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn, the element of earth; Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius, the element of air; and Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces, the element of water. It would be known, moreover, that Aries and Libra were the equinoctial signs, while Cancer and Capricorn were the solstitial signs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGN</th>
<th>OPPOSITE</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>PARTS OF THE BODY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARIES</td>
<td>LIBRA</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>HEAD, FACE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAURUS</td>
<td>SCORPIO</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>THROAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEMINI</td>
<td>SAGITTARIUS</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>SHOULDERS, ARMS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANCER</td>
<td>CAPRICORN</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>BREAST, STOMACH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEO</td>
<td>AQUARIUS</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>♂</td>
<td>♀</td>
<td>HEART, EYES, RIBS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8 (CONTINUED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGN</th>
<th>OPPOSITE</th>
<th>PARTS OF THE BODY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIRGO</td>
<td>PISCES</td>
<td>ROWELS, TESTICLES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBRA</td>
<td>ARIES</td>
<td>BACK, KIDNEYS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCORPIO</td>
<td>TAURUS</td>
<td>REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAGITTARIUS</td>
<td>GEMINI</td>
<td>THIGHS, BUTTOCKS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPRICORN</td>
<td>CANCER</td>
<td>KNEES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQUARIUS</td>
<td>LEO</td>
<td>LEGS, ANKLES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISCES</td>
<td>VIRGO</td>
<td>FEET.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, one may understand the reasoning behind a prognostication that calls for impaired vision and heart trouble for the individual with the sun (ruler of the right eye and heart) in Cancer (ruler of the breast) which is ruled by the moon (ruler of the left eye) in the 6th house (whose affairs include illnesses and injuries), or for scars and marks on the face or head of that person with warlike Mars in Aries resulting from a violent, contentious personality.

THE PLANETS

When learning planetary keys, the student would be cautioned to remember that even though certain planets are considered beneficent or maleficent by nature, there are two sides to the behavior of all planets. The way in which a planet manifests its influence is dependent upon whether it is "well-dignified" (in good aspect, in an angle, in its own house, etc.) or "ill-dignified" (the reverse). Well-dignified planets exhibit their positive characteristics (more positive where maleficent planets are concerned), while ill-dignified planets produce negative behavior. Consequently, the student must be aware of both sides of the question if he is to know what qualities of a planet are to be
applied to any configuration. The following table illustrates the natures and essential dignities of the planets with the exclusion of the Faces. The ruling planets of the faces of each sign are listed in Table 8 (pp. 77-8).

**TABLE 9: PLANETARY DIGNITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLANET</th>
<th>NATURE</th>
<th>SIGNS</th>
<th>TRIPLETILITY</th>
<th>DAY OF WEEK</th>
<th>EXALTED IN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUN</td>
<td>BENEF.</td>
<td>☉</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
<td>ARIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOON</td>
<td>BENEF.</td>
<td>☾</td>
<td>☾ ☾ ☾ ☾</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>TAURUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARS</td>
<td>MALEF.</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>TUESDAY</td>
<td>CAPRICORN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERCURY</td>
<td>EITHER</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>WEDNESDAY</td>
<td>VIRGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUPITER</td>
<td>BENEF.</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
<td>CANCER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VENUS</td>
<td>BENEF.</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>FRIDAY</td>
<td>PISCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATURN</td>
<td>MALEF.</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>☉ ☉ ☉ ☉ ☉</td>
<td>SATURDAY</td>
<td>LIBRA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that Saturn and Mars are considered the "greater" and "lesser" malefics respectively, while Jupiter and Venus are called the "greater" and "lesser" benefics. Mercury is either maleficent or beneficent according to the nature of the planets to whom he testifies. Planets may be ill-dignified by "detriment" (a condition of weakness) when they appear in the signs opposite their exaltations. Thus, the sun is in his detriment in Libra (opposite Aries), the moon is in detriment in Scorpio; Mars, in Cancer; Mercury, in Pisces; Jupiter, in Capricorn; Venus, in Virgo; and Saturn, in Aries.
### TABLE 10: COMMONPLACE CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE PLANETS

**SATURN**
Well-dignified: Saturn can be profound, austere, reserved, patient, studious.  Ill-dignified: He is evil, malevolent, the author of all cruelty, imprisonment, pestilence, and misery. He is solitary, vengeful, merciless, and determines long-term results. **Parts of the body ruled:** right ear, teeth.

**JUPITER**
Well-dignified: Jupiter is the bane of Saturn and Mars, the author of justice, temperance, sobriety, modesty, nobility, philosophy, and religion.  Ill-dignified: These qualities are perverted, opposed, or lacking altogether. **Parts of the body ruled:** ribs, lungs, liver, blood, and semen.

**MARS**
Well-dignified: Mars can be noble, courageous, bold, honorable, the champion of the weak.  Ill-dignified: He is a bully, treacherous, murderous, rash, a boaster, lecherous, unwilling to concede to anyone, the author of quarrels and strife. **Parts of the body ruled:** left ear, reins, and cods.

**THE SUN**
Well-dignified: The sun is the spirit of faithfulness and loyalty; he brings the desire to command, good judgment, majesty, whatever is honorable.  Ill-dignified: He brings arrogance and pride, recklessness, foolish boasting, and the belief that all men owe him allegiance because of his noble birth. **Parts of the body ruled:** brain and right side of the body, right eye (in men), left eye (in women).

**VENUS**
Well-dignified: Venus is quiet, pleasant, artistic, and brings the tendency to become entangled in love affairs. She causes one to be loved and appreciated by all, she is musical, theatrical, and the spirit of all pleasures and amusements.  Ill-dignified: She is wholly given to dissipation, lust, lechery, incest, adultery, poisonings, and is the authoress of a multitude of trouble through women and illicit love affairs. **Parts of the body ruled:** belly, loins, kidneys, buttocks.

**MERCUARY**
With beneficent planets he manifests his good qualities, with maleficent planets, his bad.  Well-dignified: Mercury brings ease and success in communication of all kinds, as well as in learning and adaptation. He is the author of eloquence and debate, brings success in short journeys and perfection in the sciences, occult matters, and mercantile affairs.  Ill-dignified: He is a hypocrite, deceiver, and confidence man. He creates liars, boasters, cheats, and ingenious thieves. He is the author of the pseudo-intellectual, of the pretended knowledge of the very idiot. **Parts of the body ruled:** tongue, hands, and thighs.
TABLE 10 (CONTINUED)

THE MOON
Well-dignified: The moon brings quiet composure, but inconstancy and a preoccupation with the moment. She brings timidity and a love of peace and wishes to be free from the cares of daily existence. She is emotional, sympathetic, fickle, unpredictable. Most often connect with inconstancy, she is representative of women in a horoscope, particularly, the mother. Ill-dignified: She produces vagabonds, idleness, spiritlessness, dejected people who constantly complain about their condition in life and are never satisfied in fortune or misfortune. Since hers is the lowest and fastest course through the zodiac, she is the authoress of sudden change. Parts of the body ruled: brain and left side of the body, left eye (in men), right eye (in women), the belly, and privy parts (in women).

Finally, the student must also consider the nature of the aspects formed between the planets in order to determine whether positive or negative behavior will result: "evil" aspects bring out the worst in the planets, while "good" aspects bring out the best. The conjunction, the sextile, and the trine are considered "good," or "fortunate" aspects. Even they may be considered "evil," or "stressful," however, when they are formed between two maleficent planets, between a "greater" malefic and a "lesser" benefic planet, or between a maleficent planet and Mercury. The quartile and the opposition are considered "evil," or "stressful" aspects. Maleficent planets in evil aspect with each other, with a beneficent planet, or with Mercury portend misfortune and the perversion of the good qualities of the beneficent planets. The results of two malefics in evil aspect are particularly disastrous as they will vie with each other in the attempt to do evil.

When the commonplaces ascribed to the houses, signs, planets, and aspects have been learned, the student is already in a position to make very general prognostications. Were he to observe Mars in Aries in the
1st house and Venus in Libra in the 7th house of a horoscope, for example, he could quickly and easily predict incessant battle in relationships with women regarding who shall control the situations, and one who will not rest in marriage until his wife is absolutely conquered and submissive. Mars, it will be remembered, is the warlike planet that will concede nothing to anyone. He is in essential dignity (a position of power) in the sign he rules (Aries), and he is powerful because he occupies an angular house (1st). The 1st house is the house of the personality, and it will be in the individual's nature to demand submission from any and all who oppose him. The 1st house is opposite to the 7th house (the house of marriage and partnerships), Aries (1st house) is opposite to Libra (7th house), and Mars opposes Venus. Obviously, the aspect formed between the houses, signs, and planets is an opposition, an evil aspect, indicating stress. Venus, in essential dignity in the sign she rules (Libra), represents love and women. Consequently, the individual with this configuration will attempt to dominate those women with whom he becomes emotionally involved, will meet resistance from them, and will therefore live in a condition of constant stress through love affairs in general and through marriage in particular. Of course, to determine whether this kind of general prognostication was actually the case, all of the planets, houses, and signs, and whatever aspects were formed between them would have to be analyzed. The point is that the student would instantly recognize the possibilities in a single configuration through his knowledge of the primary characteristics of the planets, houses, signs, and aspects.
The methods of analysis normally applied by judicial astrology involve considering one set of configurations and one house at a time in order to arrive at a general prognostication for that house before the final analysis is undertaken. That is, one applies the analytic process to the 1st house, draws general conclusions from the nature of the sign governing the house, and determines in what ways the influences of the various planetary rulers of the sign and the house (aspects and dignities) will affect first house affairs. Once that is done, the student moves on to the 2nd house, applying the same principles to its affairs, and so on, until each of the 12 houses have been analyzed. By so doing, the student has a much better idea of how to make an accurate prognostication when all of the configurations for all of the 12 houses are put into relationship with each other. This method allows the student to understand the meaning of a configuration in isolation (i.e. alone, without considering any other configuration in the horoscope), and he thereby is able to adjust his initial prognostications for the houses when he has all of the information at hand instead of moving back and forth between the houses as new information emerges.

The analytic process involves minimally five basic steps. First, the power (angle, succedent, cadent) and common affairs of each house must be considered. Second, the elemental makeup and the natures of the signs governing each house must be analyzed. Third, the natures of the planets in the houses and the aspects they form with other planets and houses must be considered to determine how the affairs of each house are being affected. Fourth, the influence of the planet ruling the sign on each house cusp must be considered even if the planet itself
is elsewhere. Fifth, just as the influences of the planetary rulers of the signs on the houses must be considered whether or not the planets themselves are physically present, so must the influences of the planetary rulers of the triplicity and faces of each sign be analyzed. 18

Since the kind of astrological configurations Chaucer uses are always given in isolation, and since an explanation of the final analysis of all of the planets, houses, and signs in a horoscope would force an already lengthy chapter to become even more lengthy and complicated, I will explain how the analytic process works when applied to one, isolated configuration. 19 The same process, it should be noted, would be applied to every planet, house, and sign if an entire horoscope was under consideration.

For the sake of illustration, suppose that we have a work in which one of the characters fears imprisonment and death because Saturn was in Capricorn in the 12th house when he was born (Arcite, it will be remembered, implies that Saturn is responsible for his and Palamon's imprisonment in the Knight's Tale, 1087-91). If we apply the analytic process to this configuration, what can we expect to take place as the story unfolds?

The first step in the process would reveal that the 12th house is a cadent house, and it might be supposed that Saturn's power to do evil would be somewhat weakened. As Lilly points out, however, "Saturn does much delight in that house, for he is naturally the author of mischief" (p. 34). The house affairs upon which he will work his mischief in this case are those of misery, self-undoing, secret enemies, imprisonment, and death (Table 7).
Noting that the affairs of the house in question in fact indicate the possibility of imprisonment, the elemental makeup and nature of the sign ruling the house considered in the second step reinforce the anticipated misery and indicate that the place of imprisonment may be cold, dark, and away from human habitation. Capricorn is by nature of the earth, cold, dry, and melancholy, and it governs isolated, barren areas and "dark places, near the ground or threshold" (pp.64-5).

The third step indicates that the nature of the planet in the 12th house influencing these unfortunate affairs is the greater maleficent, Saturn. The fourth step reveals that his power to do evil from this position will overcome the debility ascribed to cadent houses because he is in the sign he rules (Capricorn) and in a house where he is particularly well-received (the 12th). Since we know that Saturn is in a position of power in Capricorn in the 12th house, and since we know that the 12th house is the house of imprisonment and death, it is no surprise that our character is concerned about his future. But we can be more specific about what may take place than that.

With a maleficent planet like Saturn in the sign he rules, and given the affairs governed by the 12th house, we can expect that imprisonment may come about through the treachery of parties whom the character least suspects, and that he must share the responsibility for his undoing. Because of the nature of Saturn alone, we can expect that the suffering and imprisonment will be long and may well result in serious illness or death.

Still more details about the situation can be deduced by means of the fifth step in the process. Step five reveals that Capricorn is a
member of the Taurus-Virgo-Capricorn triplicity which is ruled by Venus and the moon, and that Jupiter, Mars, and the sun rule the three faces of the sign (Table 3). The influences of Venus and the moon indicate that the treachery which brings about imprisonment may be the result of an illicit love affair with a woman who is perhaps an intriguer and a prostitute (Venus + Saturn in Capricorn) and that there is danger of death by poisoning. Since Saturn brings out the darker qualities of the moon (representative of women and the mother), it is possible to deduce that the reason for the woman's treachery is her fickleness, and that the mother of the character in question may have an important role to play in his misfortunes for reasons known only to herself. With Jupiter ruling the first face of the sign, we can speculate that the crime for which the character will be imprisoned will be religious in nature, that he will be tried by the highest court in the land and that his judges will include ecclesiastics. Since Mars rules the second face of the sign, the crime itself may involve treason in time of war, and with the sun ruling the third face, it may even involve an attempt on the life of the ruling monarch himself.

This is as far as we can go since we know only that Saturn is in Capricorn in the 12th house, and we have no other information about the other planets, houses, and signs. Nevertheless, with only this information to work with, it is clear that the configuration is capable of providing much more specific details about the destiny of our character than that he will be "unlucky," or that Saturn is "responsible" for all of his misfortunes because the planet is "malevolent."
This, then, is the kind of knowledge that could reasonably be expected in an introductory course in astrology. One of the advantages of an awareness of these abcs is that it provides insight into what Chaucer's audience could not reasonably be expected to recognize. Without the latitude, the year, month, day, and hour of the event, nothing can be known for certain. Without that information, there is no way to determine the degrees of celestial latitude and longitude for the planets and signs, and consequently, there is no way to know with which houses they belong. Without knowing to which houses they belong, there is no way to evaluate their effects upon an individual or event. When one thinks of an audience listening to or reading a work being expected to recognize where the planets and signs were on a given date as well as what aspects they formed at the time, the impossibility of such a task becomes clear. The planets and signs are constantly moving at different rates of speed through the zodiac, some of the planets are direct, some are retrograde, and so on. Imagine the problem of trying to understand the meaning of an allusion that depends on a knowledge of the sign and house even one planet was located in a week ago, a month ago, a year ago. One cannot be expected to understand a reference whose meaning requires total recall of tables of houses and ephemerides and the mental reconstruction of an entire horoscope. The demands of recognition are utterly impossible.

Moreover, there is no need for an author to choose a specific date in order to find an astrological configuration that will fit his purposes, because he can simply create the configuration he needs according to the situation he intends to develop. Chaucer would have known that
he did not have to "find out" when Taurus was rising with Mars in order to use that configuration in the Wife of Bath's Prologue, and he would have been aware that his audience did not need to have the date of the configuration to understand his meaning. The meaning of an astrological configuration is not dependent upon a knowledge of the date on which it last occurred.

Chaucer's references occur in isolation and are comprised of commonplaces whose explanations can be found in the work of any competent astrologer. He does not expect his audience to be versed in the works of Albumasar, Alchabitus, Ptolemy, or anyone else. It never happens that one must turn to Ptolemy alone, or Albumasar alone, for example, to discover the meaning of his references. The "meaning" would appear in each of them. It was the system under which his peers were educated that provided them with the exposure to the astrological commonplaces Chaucer employs and not their "study" of the works of a particular astrologer.

The method employed by Chaucer to delineate character or foreshadow plot development through astrology is one in which configurations are presented in isolation. This immediately suggested to the educated members of his actual audience that there was no reason to try to make the references complicated because the information to do so did not exist. Since the information necessary to complicate the matter was absent, the audience was forced to consider only the configuration at hand. One could do no more than apply the basic analytic process for a quick, general prognostication and wait for further information. Most of the time, no further information was given; what happened
instead was the unravelling of the plot or the delineation of a character
based entirely upon the isolated configuration given or read moments ago.
Chaucer's message to his implied audiences seems to be that this is
simple "abc stuff": we are to take the configuration as it stands, apply
the fundamental steps of the analytic process, and he will do the rest.

It seems to me that Chaucer understood astrology well enough to
realize that his actual and implied audiences could not be expected to
recognize allusions requiring more than a rudimentary knowledge of
astrology. His references seem complicated to us because we do not have
the background in the fundamentals of the science that his peers enjoyed.
In the following chapter, I hope to demonstrate that Chaucer was well
aware of exactly what constituted the kind of knowledge normally acquired
at the introductory level of astrology.
GLOSSARY

Affliction  A planet or the cusp of a house in evil aspect to any other planet or in conjunction with a malefic.

Airy Signs  Gemini, Libra, Aquarius.

Angles  The 1st, 7th, 4th, and 10th houses of a horoscope, corresponding to the Orient (east), the Occident (west), the Immum Coeli (north), and the Medium Coeli (south). Locations of power for the planets.

Ascendant  The 1st house of a horoscope.

Aspect  The angular distance and orbit of influence between planets measured along the ecliptic.

Barren Signs  Leo, Virgo, Aquarius.

Benefics  Jupiter, the greater benefic, Venus, the lesser. Also the sun, moon, and Mercury when unafflicted.

Cadent  Those houses of the horoscope said to be "falling away" from the angles: 3, 6, 9, 12.

Common  Neither masculine nor feminine, beneficent nor maleficent. A planet which assumes the qualities of the planets with which it is associated. Mercury is the only common planet.

Conjunction  A "good" aspect between planets, except when malefics are involved. To exist, two or more planets must inhabit the same sign and be within the prescribed orb.

Cusp  The beginning boundary of a house; signs ruling the houses are placed "on" their cusps.

Decans  Also called "Faces." The three 10° divisions of each sign, ruled by specific planets.

Degree  The thirtyeth part of a sign, the 360th part of the circle of the zodiac, units for measuring the celestial coordinates of planets and signs.

Descendant  The 7th house of a horoscope.

Detriment  The sign opposite the sign ruled by a planet. Mars is in detriment in Libra, since he rules Aries. It is a position of weakness for a planet.

Dignity  When a planet is in the sign it rules, in the sign of its exaltation, in its triplicity, term, or face, well-aspected or in an angle.
Direct Motion  The counter-clockwise motion of the planets through the zodiac.

Earthly Signs  Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn.

Election  A horoscope cast to determine the most propitious moment for an event to take place.

Exaltation  That sign other than the sign ruled by a planet in which he is in a position of power. Saturn is said to be "exalted" in Libra, etc.

Fall  Also called "depression." When a planet is in the sign opposite the sign of its exaltation. It is a position of weakness.

Fiery Signs  Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius.

Feminine Signs  All of the even-numbered signs, counting Aries as number one: as, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, or, Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn, Pisces.

Houses  The twelve 30° divisions of the horoscope.

Immum Coeli  Also called the line of midnight, or the northern angle, or the 4th house angle. A position of power for planets.

Influence  The effects of planets, signs, and aspects upon the affairs of men.

Judicial Astrology  A horoscope cast for a specific individual which his physical and psychological makeup as well as talents and liabilities.

Luminaries  Technical term for the sun and the moon.

Malefics  Evil in influence. Saturn is the greater malefic and Mars, the lesser.

Masculine Signs  The odd-numbered signs, counting Aries as number one: as, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, or, Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, and Aquarius.

Medium Coeli  Also called the line of noon, the southern angle, the midheaven, or the 10th house angle. A position of power for planets.

Meridian  The vertical line joining the lines of midnight and noon (north to south, 4th to 10th houses).

Natal Horoscope  The term applied to that horoscope cast for the time and location of an individual's birth.

Native  The term usually applied to the individual for whom a natal horoscope is cast.

Occident  The 7th house angle: a place of power for planets.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>An evil aspect. To exist, two or more planets must be within a range of 180° along the ecliptic and within the prescribed orbital range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orb</td>
<td>The distance around a planet to which its influence actually extends. Half the sum of the planstary orbs are taken to determine whether or not an aspect between two or more planets exists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orient</td>
<td>The 1st house angle, or ascendant, of a horoscope. A position of power for planets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartile</td>
<td>An evil aspect, also called the &quot;square.&quot; To exist, two or more planets must be with a range of 90° along the ecliptic and within the prescribed orbital range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrograde</td>
<td>That condition wherein planets appear to &quot;stop&quot; and move &quot;backwards&quot; (clockwise) along the ecliptic. Retrograde planets are said to be a debility and the bringers of misfortune.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rulership</td>
<td>The planetary lord of a sign, the planetary rulers of its triplicity, terms, and faces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sextile</td>
<td>A good aspect. To exist, two or more planets must be within a range of 60° along the ecliptic and within the prescribed orbital range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succeedent</td>
<td>Those houses of a horoscope which &quot;succeed&quot; or follow the angles: 2, 5, 8, 11. A position of intermediate power for the planets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony</td>
<td>The relationships or aspects formed between planets and signs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triplicity</td>
<td>The four-part division of the signs by elemental makeup, earth, air, fire, and water. Thus, the earthly triplicity of Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn; the airy triplicity of Gemini, Libra, Aquarius; the watery triplicity of Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces; and the fiery triplicity of Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trine</td>
<td>A good aspect. To exist, two or more planets must be within a range of 120° along the ecliptic and within the prescribed orbital range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watery Signs</td>
<td>Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zodiac</td>
<td>A belt which surrounds the earth, about 12° broad, in which the sun and the planets continually move.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES

1 In the Knight's Tale, for example, Chaucer makes use of the ancient science of geomancy (the random drawing and interpretation of "dots") when he alludes to the figures of Puella and Rubeus in the temple of Mars (KnT 2045). There is little chance that the modern reader will have heard of geomancy, and there is even less chance that the figures will be recognized as "geomantic," or that it will be understood that the significance of the allusion lies in the figures' service to Venus and Mars. In addition to geomantic references, there are also references to alchemy in Chaucer's works. Perhaps because alchemy was somewhat longer-lived (it appears in such renaissance works as Jonson's Alchemist), today's reader may at least have heard of this ancient discipline, but it is not likely that references to its terms and practices are readily understood. Thus, the significance of the Canon Yeoman's alchemical remarks, for instance, remain largely incomprehensible to most readers, and if the truth were known, they are probably ignored.

Fortunately, Chaucer's astrological and astronomical references occur with much greater frequency than his allusions to geomancy and alchemy. I say fortunately, because some of the terminology of both disciplines is recognizable today. It must be admitted that astrology is a somewhat popular diversion in our twentieth-century world even though its original purposes and methods are grossly misunderstood. Astrological predictions are printed daily in almost all newspapers of any importance, and magazines or "handbooks" on astrology offering daily prognostications for those born in each of the signs appear with monotonous regularity in the bookstores. There is little of the old science of astrology in these publications, and the educated man of Chaucer's day would find them far too general to be valid. In fact, because Chaucer's peers understood the scientific methodology of astrology, they would have found these modern "prognostications" to be beneath serious consideration. Finally, astrology is still practiced today; horoscopes may be commissioned from licensed astrologers or from computers around the world. Consequently, with the help of an explanation of the commonplaces of the science, we are in a better position to recognize and make sense of Chaucer's astrological references than we are his references to geomancy or alchemy.

2 William Lilly, An Introduction to Astrology (1647; rpt. Hollywood: New Castle Publishing Co., Inc., 1972). In this regard, see J. C. Eade, The Forgotten Sky: A Guide to Astrology in English Literature (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 41, 27, who says that "The primary doctrines of astrology very largely remained stable from the time of Ptolemy onwards -- as indeed they were bound to do. Until the discovery of Neptune, Uranus, and Pluto, for instance, there was no motivation (and no warrant) for distributing the planets differently among the signs of the zodiac.

The Arab astrologers did make additions and refinements, many of
them of a highly technical variety. One can find Messahala, Alkindus, Haly, and Alchabitius cited by such as Bonatus as equal authorities with Ptolemy; but as regards the positional elements outlined here -- the basic grammar of the subject -- there is little change.

Much of our topic, then, remains stable. For this reason I have concluded that it is unnecessary and would be unduly onerous, to document in detail each source for the doctrines expounded here. One may look equally to Haly (a medieval Arab authority), or to William Lilly (a major English renaissance authority), or to a hundred authors in between to justify (for instance) the assertion that the exaltation of the sun lies at Aries 19 (II. 14) . . . . In my experience of checking several hundred medieval and Renaissance values against modern computer-generated tables, I am satisfied that within the margins acceptable to a literary scholar or an historian (as opposed to an astronomer, whose criteria are much more stringent) the agreement is very high."

3 What Lilly has to say about astrology differs from Ptolemy himself only in approach. Ptolemy was not writing for novices, and his work shows it in the lengthy and detailed technical explanations he gives for why the laws of astrology are laws. Lilly, on the other hand, gives the beginner all he needs to know and no more; the theories behind the laws are at best briefly summarized or omitted altogether. Lilly, for example, briefly and simply lists the planetary aspects and then, in two sentences, explains that trines and sextiles are considered to be "good" aspects while squares and oppositions are "bad" (p. 24). Ptolemy, in his Tetrabiblos, trans. F. E. Robbins, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 73-5, on the other hand, not only verifies Lilly's aspects, but also explains how they came to be regarded as "good" or "bad": "We may learn from the following why only those intervals have been taken into consideration. The explanation of opposition is immediately obvious, because it causes the signs to meet on one straight line. But if we take the two fractions and the two superparticulars most important in music and the sesquiquadrum, and if the fractions one-half and one-third be applied to opposition, composed of two right angles, the half makes the quartile and the third the sextile and the trine. Of the superparticulars, if the sesquialter and sesquiquadrum be applied to the quartile interval of one right angle, which lies between them, the sesquialter makes the ratio of the quartile to the sextile and the sesquiquadrum that of the trine to quartile. Of these aspects trine and sextile are called harmonious because they are composed of signs of the same kind, either entirely of feminine or entirely of masculine signs; while quartile and opposition are disharmonious because they are composed of signs of opposite kinds."

4 Lilly, p. 21. Since all references to Lilly will come from his Introduction to Astrology, page numbers will henceforth appear in the body of this study.
5 What appears in one's sky is determined by the position of the celestial equator in one's geographical location. Otherwise known as the equinoctial line, the celestial equator extends from the point of the vernal equinox (Spring/Aries) on the eastern horizon to the autumnal equinox (Autumn/Libra) on the western horizon. To find the celestial equator for a given geographical location, one locates first of all the intersection between the terrestrial equator and the meridional line. This intersection will be at a point 90° distant from the poles of the ecliptic circle. The "arc" which joins due east to due west and passes through this point of intersection defines the visible part of the celestial equator and the altitude of the equator where it passes the meridian defines the latitude of the location. Thus, in Eade's example of London at 52° N latitude (p.7), the celestial equator intersects the meridian at a point (90° - 52°) 38° above the south horizon, whereas the celestial equator for Columbus, Ohio (latitude 39° N) intersects the meridian at a point (90° - 39°) 51° above the horizon. It can easily be seen by this comparison why the latitude of the location is necessary to find the positions of the planets and signs.

The ecliptic is made up of the twelve signs of the zodiac. The ecliptic line is the apparent path of the sun through the signs. To locate the ecliptic, one plots the point of the winter solstice on the Tropic of Capricorn and the point of the summer solstice on the Tropic of Cancer. These two points define the diameter of the ecliptic circle whose center (the ecliptic line) lies midway between. The ecliptic crosses the equator at points corresponding to the vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox.

6 Eade, p. 5, says that "Distance along the ecliptic is measured in degrees of **celestial longitude**, and was thus traditionally counted by signs, each of 30°. Thus, the longitude of a body would not be expressed as 40°, but as Taurus 10, Taurus being the second of the signs. Distance in a north-south sense was measured at right angles to the ecliptic in degrees of **celestial latitude**. The sun has, by definition, a zero latitude, but that of the planets varies, north and south."

7 E. R. Capriotti, G. H. Newson, W. M. Protheroe, eds., *Exploring the Universe*, 3rd ed. (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1984), p. 66. It is explained herein that "For cataloguing the positions of stars it is desirable to have a coordinate system fixed to the stars, where both coordinates are unchanging, rather than a system fixed to the observer, who is actually in motion because of the earth's rotation. . . The coordinate measured along the equator can also be fixed by using a fixed point on the equator from which to measure. The point of reference which is chosen is the vernal equinox, indicated by the sign of Aries the Ram, ♈. The vernal equinox is the point where the ecliptic (the sun's apparent annual path) cuts the equator such that a body travelling eastward on the ecliptic would pass from the southern to the northern hemisphere of the sky. The **right ascension** of a star is defined as the angle along the equator from the vernal equinox to the circle through the celestial poles which also passes through the star."
Ende, p. 44, explains that the right ascension system for assigning the signs to the house cusps derives from Alchabitus and "had a wide currency in the middle ages. It is implicit, for instance, in the Alphonsine Tables (compiled in the 1270's) and in the tables compiled in 1386 by Nicholas of Lynn (ed. Eisner, pp. 146 ff). It is also implicit in the outline Chaucer gives in his Treatise on the Astrolabe (I. 36, 37)." Ende's formula for calculating the right ascension (p. 222) indicates the complexity of the matter. The formula, he says, is to "find the right ascension of the meridian... The purpose here will often be to convert a celestial longitude to a right ascension, in order to make a calculation, and then to convert it back to a new celestial longitude." For Ende's formula, let RA equal the right ascension; L equals celestial longitude, and E equals the obliquity of the ecliptic.

Formula: \( \tan RA_{10} = \tan L_{10} \cos E \).

Example: to find \( RA_{10} \) when \( L_{10} = \text{Pisces} 5 \).

\[
\begin{align*}
\tan RA_{10} &= \tan 33^\circ \cos 23.525^\circ \\
&= -0.4275 \\
RA_{10} &= 338.8508^\circ
\end{align*}
\]

"This calculation," Ende says, "relates to bodies located on the ecliptic; their celestial latitude is therefore 0°, and disregarded."

In his example of how the formula works (p. 44), Ende uses 10° Taurus as the celestial longitude and sign on the meridian (10th house cusp) and has Leo ascending (on the 1st house cusp) at 23°. Using the Tables of Houses for his conversions, Ende explains the procedure in the following manner:

- take the distance along the celestial equator between the right ascension (not the oblique ascension) or the ascendant and the right ascension of the meridian. Divide this interval by three and successively add the result to the right ascension of the meridian. Conversion of these new right ascensions to longitudes will define the intervening houses. Continuing our example: the right ascension of Taurus 10 is 37° 34'; the right ascension of Leo 23 is 145° 22'. A third of the difference is 35° 36'. The longitude answering to (37° 34' + 35° 36' =) RA 73° 30' equals Gemini 14 for the 12th (house); the longitude answering to (73° 30' + 35° 36' =) RA 109° 26' is 107° 56' equals Cancer 17 for the 12th. Finally, (as a check), 109° 26' plus 35° 56' equals 145° 22', whose answering longitude is Leo 23, as required (on the ascendant, or 1st house cusp). For the other houses, the right ascension of the 11th plus 120° gives the right ascension of the 3rd, and the right ascension of the 12th plus 60° gives the right ascension of the 2nd.

So much for the mathematics of calculating the right ascension. Lilly's explanation for beginners, however, reflects more clearly the process that was actually involved (pp. 22-3):

1. Learn in an ephemeris for the year what was the right ascension of \( \odot \) at the noon previous to the required time, in hours, minutes, and seconds. To this right ascension add the number of hours and minutes which have elapsed since that noon: the sum will be the right ascension
in time of the meridian above the earth (the midheaven) at the required
time.

2. Find the longitude answering to this right ascension, in the
column marked 10th house in the Table of Houses, which longitude is to
be marked over the line which denotes the midheaven or 10th house.

3. In a line with this will be found the longitude on the cusps
of the 11th, 12th, 1st, 2d, and 3d houses; which copy out from this
table, and enter over the lines which denote those respective houses.

4. Having thus completed the six eastern houses, find the signs
and degrees exactly opposite to each of them, and enter it over the
cusps of the opposite or western houses, in the following order; --

| 10th house | opposite | 4th house |
| 11th       | do.      | 5th       |
| 12th       | opposite | 6th house |
| 1st/Ascendant | do. | 7th       |
| 2d         | do.      | 8th       |
| 3d         | do.      | 9th       |

Lilly is exceptionally clear about how the process works. If, for
example, the longitude for the right ascension of the meridian is 23°
and the sign is Capricorn, then 23° Capricorn is placed on the 10th
house cusp. Since the 4th house is always opposite the 10th house, and
since Cancer is always opposite Capricorn, the sign and degree on the
4th house cusp must be 23° Cancer.

9 These 30° house divisions preserve the integrity of the circle
of the horoscope. According to astrological doctrine, however, it is
not unusual for a house to contain more than one sign and more than
thirty total degrees of the signs within its boundaries. Suppose, for
example, that the sign on the 1st house cusp is 15° Aries and that the
sign on the 2nd house cusp is 24° Taurus. What that means is that 16°
of Aries (the 15th through the 30th degrees) lie in the 1st house of
the horoscope and that the first 23° of Taurus are also in that house.
Thus, even though the 1st house contains 30° of the circle of the horo-
scope and is ruled by Aries, it nevertheless contains a total of 39° from
both signs. See Fig. 3 for a working example of how the signs overlap
the houses.

10 An example of the importance of understanding the classifications
of the houses can be taken from The Man of Law’s Tale where the narrator
laments the weakened condition of Mars, who "is helpeles falle, allaas/
Out of his angle into the derkeste hous!" (MLT 303-4). As I hope to show
in my chapter on the Man of Law’s Tale, these lines are a very important
cue not only to the position Chaucer assigns to Mars in the tale, but
also to the location of the "derkeste hous" of the horoscope.

11 All of the old astrologers agreed that Sunday was ruled by the
sun; Monday, by the moon; Tuesday, by Mars; Wednesday, by Mercury; Thurs-
day, by Jupiter; Friday, by Venus; and Saturday, by Saturn.
An example taken from the horoscope (Fig. 6, p. 61) will make the reason for exact degree clear. Capricorn, it will be remembered, was the sign placed on the 10th house cusp at a celestial longitude of 22° 4`. Suppose that the position of the planet Mars was found to be in Capricorn at the time and that the degrees of longitude had been erroneously calculated as 23° 5' when its true position should have been 20° 5' in the sign. In that case, Mars would mistakenly be placed in the 10th house instead of in the 9th house where he belongs. Since the affairs governed by the 9th house are different than those of the 10th, the prognostications for both houses would be incorrect. The reason this is true may require a little more explanation.

It will be recalled that the rules of astrology assign 30° of the zodiac to each sign and to preserve the circle of the horoscope, 30° to each house. The signs are perpetually rising and setting along the celestial equator while the houses remain stationary. Because of that condition, the signs "overlap" the houses almost all of the time. Due to its "length" (30°), a sign cannot overlap more than two houses at the same time. Thus, even though Capricorn "governs" the 10th house in the example, the sign is actually spread out over the 9th and the 10th houses. Consequently, the mere appearance of Mars in Capricorn, without knowing its exact degrees, does not tell us in which house the planet belongs. To illustrate the matter further, imagine the signs to have a "head" constituting its 30th degree at the farthest extreme, a "body," and a "tail" whose tip holds the 1st degree of the sign (see Fig. 3, p. 50). If (as in our example) the 10th house begins at 22° 4' Capricorn, then only 70° 56' of the sign are in the 10th house (each degree is equal to 60 minutes of clock time; thus, 29° 60' = 30° minus 22° 4' = 70° 56' of Capricorn in the 10th house). The first 22° 3' 59" of the sign must be somewhere, however, and that "somewhere" is in the 9th house. In short, the "head" of the sign has entered the 10th house, while the "body" and the "tail" of the sign are still in the 9th house. It is for this reason that the exact degrees of celestial longitude must be known for each sign and each planet in order to place them in the proper houses in the horoscope.

Ende, pp. 79-80, explains that "For the purposes of calculating whether or not a platonic aspect was in operation, simple arithmetic was employed. The aspect continues while the two planets concerned remain within the range of half the sum of their orbs. An example will demonstrate the thinking. Let us suppose that Venus (the faster moving of the two) is approaching a situation in which she will adopt an exact sestile aspect with Saturn, in other words is 'applying to a sestile' with Saturn, after which she will be 'separating from a sestile' with him. The scheme would appear as follows:
When \( \beta \) equals \( 60^\circ \), the platic phase begins and the planets will be \( 69^\circ \) apart. Then they pass through partile (exact) aspect, and when thereafter \( \alpha \) equals \( 50^\circ \), the platic aspect ends and the planets will be \( 51^\circ \) apart.

14 Eade, p. 78.

15 Technically speaking, of course, Mars is separating from a quartile with Saturn since they are separated by \( 92^\circ 59' \) (\( 9^\circ 54' \) of Libra + \( 30^\circ \) of Scorpio + \( 30^\circ \) of Sagittarius + \( 23^\circ 5' \) of Capricorn) rather than by exactly \( 90^\circ \). As Eade pointed out, however, the first step was to determine if the range was right for an aspect to exist, and that was calculated by counting the signs in increments of \( 30^\circ \). Thus, the right angles and the signs between Mars and the moon and Saturn would indicate to the astrologer that the latter planets were roughly \( 90^\circ \) distant from Mars and that a quartile aspect was likely between the three. The range, thus indicates the kind of aspect that may exist. To find out if the aspects actually do exist, it is then necessary to use the exact location of the planets and, most important, to calculate the planetary orbs. If the orbs do not correspond to the prescribed distance, no aspect exists.

16 Lilly, pp. 24-5, explains that "The conjunction, marked thus \( \sigma \), is when two planets are in the same degree and minute of the zodiac; when it is exact, it is very powerful, and is called a partile \( \sigma \); but if within the planets' orbs it is called a platic conjunction, and is less powerful. To know whether it should be considered at all, the orbs of the two planets should be added together, and one-half the sum taken; if the planets go beyond that distance, they are not even in platic \( \sigma \). The same holds good with regard to the other aspects." Lilly gives the orbs for each of the planets as follows: Saturn, \( 9^\circ \); Jupiter, \( 9^\circ \); Mars, \( 7^\circ \); the sun, \( 15^\circ \); Venus, \( 7^\circ \); Mercury, \( 7^\circ \); and the moon, \( 12^\circ \).

In our example (Fig. 8) we have determined that there is roughly \( 90^\circ \) separating Saturn and Mars along the ecliptic, and we now want to decide whether or not a quartile exists between them. Thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Saturn's orb} & = +9^\circ \\
\text{Mars' orb} & = 2^\circ \\
\text{Sum} & = 16^\circ
\end{align*}
\]

1/2 the sum of the orbs = \( 8^\circ \) required for a quartile to exist.

To work the simple arithmetic alluded to by Eade (p. 73), we first convert Saturn's celestial longitude of \( 23^\circ 5' \) to \( 22^\circ 65' \) so that we may subtract the longitude of Mars at \( 20^\circ 6' \) from it. The result is \( 2^\circ 59' \) orb which is less than the prescribed \( 8^\circ \). Consequently, both planets are in platic quartile, and when Mars applies the remaining \( 2^\circ 59' \) to Saturn's longitude, they will form a partile quartile until the faster moving Mars begins to separate from the aspect.
Lilly, pp. 69-71. The so-called "essential dignities" of the planets must always be considered in the analysis of the horoscope. Indeed, consideration of the dignities makes up a considerable portion of the analytic process. A planet may be dignified "by house"; that is, a planet is in essential dignity when it is discovered to be in the house it rules. When a planet appears in the sign in which it is "exalted" it is said to be well-dignified. Essential dignity also occurs when a planet appears in any of the three signs of the triplicity it rules. Triplicities, it will be recalled, are groups of three signs whose classifications are determined by their elemental makeup. Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are said to be "earth" signs and constitute the "earthly" triplicity and are ruled by Venus and the moon. Should either planet appear in any of the three signs, it would be "dignified by triplicity." Faces are another form of planetary dignity. Also called "decans," the 30° in each sign are divided into three equal (10°) parts, each of which is assigned a planetary ruler. When a planet appears in the face he rules in any sign, it is said to be "dignified by face." Finally, the 30° in each sign are also divided into five parts called Terms (each of which is also assigned a ruling planet). To be "dignified by term," a planet must appear in the term it rules of any sign. Of the essential dignities, Terms seem to be the only form that Chaucer does not refer to, and for whatever reason, the old astrologers do not seem to take the terms as seriously as the other dignities.

This is the most fundamental level at which one understands the meanings of the configurations in a horoscope. There is a great deal more that must be done before the final analysis is complete. The experienced astrologer considers critical degrees, degrees of declination of the planets, transits, phases of the moon, eclipses of the sun and moon, and so forth. Moreover, every planet, house, and sign must be put in relationship with each other, and those relationships must be analyzed before the final prognostication can be made. But one must learn to walk before one is able to run, and the application of the subtleties of astrology requires skill and experience beyond the range of the beginner. Chaucer does not require us to know these things.

Chaucer decided to use Mars in Taurus in the Wife of Bath's 1st house (ascendant), for example, because it is the 1st house that governs the personality and physical appearance. Thus, Mars in Taurus in the 1st house quickly and effectively explains the Wife's appearance and her domineering, lecherous personality. Suppose, however, that during the course of analysis, we found Mars in Aries in the 1st house of a horoscope. That configuration would be a cause for concern when examined in isolation because of the bloodthirsty nature of the planet in a position of power (in his own house and sign). If, however, during the course of examining the other houses in the horoscope, we discovered that Jupiter was in Sagittarius in the 9th house (the greater benefic, also in power in his own house and sign), the trine aspect (implied by 120° distance between them along the ecliptic) he formed with Mars would indicate the possibility that the hot-headed, contentious personality indicated by Mars in Aries in the 1st house would probably be tempered by the justness and the philosophical nature of Jupiter. It would also
cause the student to realize, however, that since the 9th house is the house of religion and philosophy, decisions made by the individual regarding those matters, however just, may be grudgingly given due to the trine from Mars to Jupiter. Such a configuration, by the way, could easily be applied to characters like Chaucer's Theseus in the Knight's Tale.

20 If an author is taking his audience into consideration, he cannot expect them to understand complicated allusions that require the mental gymnastics necessary to recognize planetary configurations for a specific date. I cannot understand, in the first place, how one can believe it possible to deduce the date of a literary work from the common kinds of astrological configurations used by Chaucer. His configurations are not at all unusual: the signs rise and set daily, the planets move through the signs in cycles year in and year out. B. F. Hamlin, in her "Astrology and the Wife of Bath: A Reinterpretation," ChauR, 2 (1974), pp. 153-65, recently reconstructed the Wife's horoscope in toto because she found that in 1342 Mars was rising in Taurus at the degree of celestial longitude she had deduced from the Wife's "children of Mercury and Venus" comments. In the first place, it should be clear that there is little chance that anyone in Chaucer's audience could have reconstructed the Wife's horoscope even if Hamlin's configurations had not occurred roughly fifty years before the Prologue is said to have been written. In the second place, Taurus rises every day of every year, and the rules of planetary motion would place Mars in the degree of Taurus Hamlin discovered in 1342 roughly every two years, since he in fact goes through all of the signs in that amount of time. Even more recently, Edward Schweitzer, in his "Fate and Freedom in the Knight's Tale," SAC, 3 (1981), pp. 13-45, dates the battle in the Knight's Tale on his belief that Saturn's power to do evil is especially strong in the 7th degree of Leo, and that Saturn was at 7° Leo on only one possible date in Chaucer's "literary lifetime." I do not think that is possible. In the first place, Saturn takes nearly 30 years to travel through the 12 signs: thus, 30 divided by 12 equals an average of nearly 2-1/2 years, or 30 months in each sign, which in turn equals an average of about one month per degree of each sign. An actual check of modern ephemerides in Neil F. Michelsen's The American Ephemeris: 1921 to 1980 (New-York: Astro Computing Services, 1976), January to August, 1947, at 30 year intervals showed Saturn at 7° Leo for no less than seven days at a time. Between January and August of 1947, for example, Saturn was at 7° Leo for 14 days. There is no reason to suppose that the situation was significantly different in Chaucer's day. Given the cyclical nature of astrological configurations and the laws of planetary motion, I doubt seriously that the date of a literary work can be deduced from a common astrological reference.
CHAPTER III

ASTROLOGY AND THE TREATISE ON THE ASTROLABE

To this time, critical discussions of Chaucer's Treatise have been directed toward the fulfillment of three purposes: the identification of Chaucer's sources, clarification of the technicalities that appear in each chapter of the work, and assessments of Chaucer's personal opinions about astrology. Walter Skeat, for example, not only identified Chaucer's sources, but also explained in detail the technical problems in the work and corrected any errors Chaucer may have inadvertently committed.\(^1\) Sigmund Eisner has devoted a lifetime to the study of Chaucer's views on the astrolabe and most recently has provided valuable insight into Chaucer's abilities as a technical writer.\(^2\) Chauncey Wood, on the other hand, deduces Chaucer's attitude toward astrology from an examination of the comments about astrology and astrologers in the first two parts of the Treatise.\(^3\) To be sure, assessments of Chaucer's attitude toward the science are of value for an understanding of the manner in which the poet viewed the practice of astrology, and an explanation of the use of the instrument which clarifies the technical propositions in each chapter is invaluable to an understanding of the work. It is because of the excellence of the existant scholarly work in these areas that the path to further examination has been cleared.

Who Chaucer's sources were, however, how he arrived at his conclusions, whether he was right or wrong, or what his personal views may have
been are not pertinent to the purpose of my examination. What is more to my purpose is an examination of the kind of information Chaucer has chosen to include in the Treatise and what the uninformed reader would be able to do with it. The outline for the Treatise that appears in its Prologue (65-108) very closely follows the university curriculum in astronomy established at the universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, and I believe that Chaucer intended to provide "Lite Lowys" with the kind of background in the science usually acquired through such a program.

I believe that the Treatise was designed to function as an introduction to astrology as well as to the astrolabe, and that Chaucer intended ultimately to make it possible for the boy and for the uninformed reader to make astrological prognostications. The kind of information to which Chaucer draws attention in the Treatise is the same kind that is to be found in Lilly's Introduction to Astrology. Whether his comments are digressions or not is beside the point; they seem out of place primarily because a fifth section on astrology was promised in the Prologue, not because they are irrelevant to the topics under discussion in Parts I and II.

In order for Chaucer to make statements about the operations of astrology, he had to first understand the principles behind his statements. Consequently, if the rules behind the astrological comments in the first two parts of the work are explained, and if we assume no more than that Chaucer would have explained those rules when he wrote the fifth part of the Treatise, then we can assess the kind of astrological principles Chaucer believed could be absorbed by a ten-year-old boy,
and we can assess the minimal level of Chaucer's own knowledge of the rules of astrology.

There is a striking similarity in organization and general content between the program outlined in the Prologue to the Treatise and the actual fourteenth-century curriculum in astronomy at the University of Bologna. It will be recalled that the first two years of study at Bologna were devoted to matters of astronomy as we understand it today. One studied the construction and use of the astrolabe according to Messahala and the rules of celestial motion, and for calculating the celestial coordinates, of the heavenly bodies according to Ptolemy and John of Lignieres. The final two years consisted of the study of medical and judicial astrology according to William of England, Avincenna, Alchabitius, and Ptolemy. The process, it will be remembered, made it possible for student to locate the exact positions of the planets and signs, place them properly in a horoscope, and then make astrological prognostications based upon their calculations in astronomy.

Similarly, the first two parts of Chaucer's Treatise are largely translations from Messahala's De Compositione Astrolabii and De Operatio Astrolabii, and they deal with a description of the astrolabe and its use. In order to explain the use of the instrument, examples of the rules of planetary motion and the rules for calculating the celestial coordinates are employed, with Chaucer citing Alchabitius (I.3.8-13) and Ptolemy (I.17.5-10) as authorities. The unwritten third and fourth parts of the work were to provide more of the same kind of information and the astronomical tables to which the locations of the celestial bodies must be applied. Once these principles of astronomy had been
learned, the fifth part of the Treatise was to explain "the generall rewles of theorik in astrologie" (Prlg. 107), and was to include Tables of Houses for the latitude of Oxford, an explanation of the dignities of the planets, and "othere notefull thinges" (Prlg. 107).

As was the case with the curriculum at Bologna, Chaucer proposed to move from the study of the astrolabe and astronomy to the study of astrology. To those familiar with the methods employed in the erection and analysis of a horoscope, this particular schedule of study was exactly as it had to be. One must know the exact locations of the heavenly bodies before a horoscope can be erected (a matter of astronomy). When the celestial coordinates of the planets and signs are known, they can be placed in a horoscope, and the aspects can be determined. Only when this process is mastered can the process of astrological analysis begin. Thus, if one intends to teach astrology as well as astronomy, the proper place to do so is after the rules of astronomy have been learned.

Chaucer, therefore, must have been well aware of the usual curriculum in astronomy and must have had a good working knowledge of the scientific methods of astrology when he outlined the five parts of his Treatise in its Prologue. It would be too much of a coincidence for an inexperienced poet to have decided to present just that kind of information in just that particular order if he had no knowledge of the usual course of study and had never personally investigated the science himself. Chaucer knew what he is talking about in his Treatise on the Astrolabe.

At an earlier point in this study, I have demonstrated that the established scientific principles of astrology do not change significantly with time, and that a comparison of those principles would reveal little
difference in essentials between astrologers as widely divergent in
culture and time as Ptolemy and William Lilly. If it was Chaucer's
intention, therefore, to provide introductory knowledge of astrology
as well as astronomy in his Treatise, it should come as no surprise
that the kind of information he chooses to present in Parts I and II of
the work is the same kind of information that Lilly saw fit to include
in his Introduction to Astrology.

It will be recalled that Lilly's comments began with a discussion
of the signs. Their number is twelve, their names are given, and it is
explained that each of the signs contains 30° of the circle of the zodiac.
Lilly explains the locations of the equinoctial line and the meridian in
his discussion on how to draw the horoscope. In Chaucer's description
of the astrolabe, he quickly locates the meridian, the equinoctial line,
the cross designating the point of the ascending sign (I. 1-7), and then
turns to the signs in general, explaining that "Under the compas of
thilke degrees ben / writen the names of the Twelve Signes: as / Aries,
Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aqua-/ rius, Pisces" (I. 8. 1-6). That it is to be understood
that each of the signs contain 30° of the zodiac is clear through Chau-
cer's attention to the ascendant and to the faces of the signs. In these
passages, Chaucer explains that technically speaking the ascendant is
the specific degree of a sign seen to be rising on the eastern horizon
at any given moment, but that it has been the custom of astrologers to
include the 5° above and the 25° below the ascending degree in order
to make any portion of the sign that falls within that 30° range the
ascendant (II. 4. 18-30). Of the faces, he says: "For they seyn that
every / signe is departid in thre evene parties by / 10 degrees, and
thilke porcioun they clepe a / face" (II. 4. 60-3).

In Lilly’s work, emphasis was placed upon learning the signs as
"northern" and "southern," because the latter are in perpetual opposi-
tion to the former. This method was important, it will be recalled, for
the purpose of assigning the proper signs to the western houses of the
horoscope once the right ascension for the eastern houses had been ascer-
tained. It is a matter of the service of astrology by astronomy to which
Chaucer also draws attention (II. 28. 12-22):

And understand wel that alle the signes in thy / zodiac
fro the heved of Aries unto the ende / of Virgo, ben
clepid signes of the north fro / the equinoxiall. And
these signes arisen bi- / twyxe the verrey est and the
verrey north in / oure orisonte generaly for evere. And
alle the / signes fro the heved of Libra unto the ende /
of Pisces ben clepid signes of the south fro / the equin-
xiall; and these signes arisen / evermore bitwexe the
verrey est and the / verrey south in oure orisonte.

In his explanation of the method for determining the time of dawn
and the end of evening, Chaucer points out the fixed opposition of the
signs (II. 6. 12-18):

The nadir of the sonne is thilke degre that / is opposyt
to the degre of the sonne, in the / 7 signe, as thus: --
every degre of Aries by / ordir is nadir to every degre
of Libra by ordre, / and Taurus to Scorpioun, Gemini to
Sagitarie, / Cancer to Capricorne, Leo to Aquarie, Virgo /
to Pisces.

Through these comments, another bit of astronomical law is easily de-
duced. Since the order of opposition between the signs is fixed, so
must the procession of the signs through the zodiac be fixed. The
unchanging order of the signs through the zodiac was also one of Lilly's points, as was the clockwise motion of the signs along the equinoctial line to which Chaucer refers (I. 17. 14-28):

The myddel cercle in wydness, of these 3, / is clepid the cercle equinoxiall, upon which / turnith evermo the hevedes of Aries and Libra. / And understand wel that evermo thyss cercle / equinoxiall turnith justly from verrey est to ver- / ey west as I have shewed the in the speer / solide. . . And all / that moeveth withinne the hevedes of these / Aries and Libra, his moeyng is clepid northward.

To clarify the problem of planetary motion, Chaucer refers to the movement of the Primum Mobile, or "first moev-able of the 8 speer" (I. 17. 37-40), which forces the planets to move counter-clockwise from the eastern horizon. Briefly, in this particular cosmogony, the earth was said to be at the center of the universe surrounded by eight (others say nine, or ten) spheres, much as an onion is surrounded by layers of skin. Each of the first seven spheres contained one of the planets, while the eighth sphere contained the signs. The natural tendency of the planets was to move clockwise from the eastern horizon. Bordering the eighth sphere, however, was the Primum Mobile which made one counter-clockwise revolution every 24 hours and forced the seven spheres containing the planets to move in the same direction. The "sound" supposedly caused by the friction of the Primum Mobile in motion contrary to that of the planets was what was commonly called "the music of the spheres."

When Lilly described the motion of the planets and signs, he went on to explain that the signs may be classified according to their elemental makeup, temperamental, and so forth. Since he was writing an introduction to astrology, he then moved to a discussion of the astrological
commonplaces ascribed to the signs (i.e. each sign rules a particular part of the human body). In the midst of Chaucer's description of the astrolabe, he departs from the affairs of astronomy and begins to discuss the astrological background of the signs (I. 21. 50-77). Explaining that he is not certain as to why the zodiac is called the "cercle of the / bestes," he speculates that the reason may be that the Latin translation of the Greek *zodia* is "beasts" (I. 21. 51-2). To this proposition, he adds that it is also possible that the name may have developed because of the nature of the influences of the signs (I. 21. 55-62):

for whan the sonne entrith into eny / of the signes he takith the propryte of suche / bestes, or ellis that for the sterres that ben / ther fixed ben disposid in signes of bestes or / shape like bestes, or elles whan the plan-etes / ben under thilke signes thei causen us by / her influence operaciouns and effectes like / to the operaci-ouns of bestes.

This is a particularly significant passage, because it draws attention not only to the astrological idea of the influence of the signs upon the planets, but also to the existence of planetary influences upon men which Lilly naturally points out as well. Having departed thus far into astrology, Chaucer goes on to mention six of the classifications of the signs and the parts of the body to which three of the signs are given rulership (I. 21. 63-77): 9

And understand also that whan an hot plan- / ete cometh into an hot signe, than encresith / his hete; and yf a planete be cold, than amet- / usith his coldnesse by cause of the hoote sygne. / And by thys conclusion maist thou take en- / sample in alle the signes, be thei moist or drie, / or moeble or fixe, rekynynge the qualite of the / planete as I first seide. And everich of / these 12 signes hath respect to a certeyn / parcel of the body of a man, and
hath it in / governaunce; as Aries hath thin heved, and / Taurus thy nakke and thy throte, Gemini thin / armholes and thin armes, and so furth, as shal / be shewid more pleyn in the 5 partie of this / tretis.

Since Lilly intends to explain how to erect a horoscope, he naturally finds it necessary to discuss the houses. This is done so that once the means of locating the planets and signs are learned, they can be placed in and on the appropriate houses of the horoscope. Lilly first explains that the houses are twelve in number, and that by counting counter-clockwise from the 1st house on the eastern horizon (the ascendant), one comes to the 12th house just "above" the 1st. Chaucer likewise explains the division of the circle into twelve houses (II. 36, 37), and points out the connection between the 1st house and the ascendant when he declares that "the hous of the ascendent, that / is to seyn, the first hous or the est angle, is a thing more brod and large" (II. 4. 16-18). Lilly goes on to explain that the houses have power according to whether they are angles, succeedent, or cadent. Chaucer also explains the houses that are angles (II. 37. 1-7), and he refers to the relative power of the houses in his discussion of the ascendant. The lord of the ascendant, he says, is said to be fortunate "whan he is in god place/fro the ascendent, as in an angle, or in a suc- / cident (house) where as he is in hys dignite" (II. 4. 44-7). Moreover, Lilly shows that there is a fixed opposition between the houses (1-7, 2-8, 3-9, 4-10, 5-11, 6-12) that must be learned in order to properly place the signs in the horoscope. Of the opposition of the houses, Chaucer says (II. 36. 18-25);
The be / gynynge of the 7 hous is nader (opposite) of the ascendent (1st house), and the begynnyng of the 8 hous / is nader of the 2 hous, and the begynnyng / of the 9 hous is nader of the 3, and the be- / gynnyng of the 10 hous is nader of the 4, / and the begynnyng of the 11 hous is nader of the 5, and the begynnyng of the 12 hous / is nader of the 6.

Lilly, of course, describes the affairs governed by the houses as well: those particular details were evidently reserved for the fifth part of Chaucer's Treatise.

Returning to matters of astronomy, Lilly points out the necessity of knowing the degrees of right ascension in order to place the signs on the proper house cusps in the horoscope. To do so, one calculated the degrees of the right ascension of the meridian and the ascendant, matched the degrees of celestial longitude for the meridian (10th house) in a Table of Houses, and copied the signs in their degrees for the remaining eastern houses (for Chaucer's explanation, see II. 28. 29-39). When that had been done, it was a simple matter to place the signs in their degrees on the cusps of the six western houses because of the rules of fixed opposition between signs and houses and because of the rule of sameness of degree between eastern and western houses.

Having already established the opposition of the houses (II. 36. 18-26), Chaucer describes the method Lilly recommends in his second discussion of the houses. Working up and down the eastern side of the horoscope, one finds (II. 37. 15-24):

the begynnyng of everich / of these same houses fro the ascendent; that / is to seyn the begynnyng of the 12 hous next / above thin ascendent, the begynnyng of the / 11 hous, and than the 10 upon the meridi- / onal lyne, as I first seide. The same wise / worch thou fro the ascendent
No introduction to astrology could be considered complete without a discussion of the planets, and Lilly begins at a most elementary level. The planets are seven in number, and in descending order from the outermost sphere to the earth are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon. Since Chaucer did not explain his reference to the "8 speer" surrounded by the Primum Mobile (I. 17. 39), it is likely that his audience was aware that the spheres contained the planets and signs. If his audience (or, "Lewis") was not already aware of the names of the planets and the order in which they appear in the heavens, Chaucer makes them aware of it in his discussion of planetary hours (II. 12. 18-28): 14

And ever as the sonne clymbith up- / er and upper, so goth his nadir downer and downer, teching by suche strikes the / housres of planetes by ordir as they sitten/ in the hevene. The firste housre inequal of / every Sat- urday is to Saturne, and the seconde / to Jupiter, the thirde to Mars, the fourthe to / the sonne, the fifte to Venus, the sixte to Mer- / curius, the seventhe to the mone. And then / ageyn the 8 housre is to Saturne, the 9 to / Jupiter.

Lilly, it will be remembered, explained that the motion of the planets was counter-clockwise from the eastern horizon except when they are retrograde (when they appear to "stop" and begin to move clockwise). 15 Again, Chaucer's reference to the motion of the Primum Mobile and the eight spheres suggests that it is understood that the planets normally move in this counter-clockwise fashion. That it is to be understood that the planets can be retrograde as well is clear from Chaucer's
discussion of the effects of retrogradation on the lord of the ascendant (II. 4. 50-1), and from the chapter in which he describes the method for determining whether a planet is moving retrograde or direct (II. 35).

Since Lilly is teaching the principles of judicial astrology, he naturally assumes that the influence of the planets on the lives of men is understood. Chaucer, too, draws attention to this kind of influence when he says that the planets "causen us by / her influence operacions and effectes like / to the operacions of bestes" (I. 21. 60-2). Moreover, when he explains how one determines whether a planet is in horoscope, he emphasizes the importance of the idea of planetary influence by describing how seriously astrologers take the ascending planet and sign (II. 4. 1-4): "The ascendent sothly, as wel in alle nativites / as in questions and eleccions of tymes, is a thyng which that these astroloqiens gretly ob- / serven." This passage is significant for yet another reason: Chaucer has shown here that he has knowledge not only of natal horoscopes (birth), but also of those horoscopes cast to determine the answer to various kinds of questions (who the thief is, when so and so will wed, etc.), and elections (horoscopes cast to discover the most propitious time for an event to take place).

Lilly, of course, found it necessary to explain the conditions that affect the behavior of the planets. Among many other variables, he explains that planets may be masculine or feminine, maleficent or beneficent (Saturn and Mars are the former, Jupiter and Venus the latter), hot or cold, and so on. In addition, he summarizes the most common characteristics of each planet. Although this sort of information
rightly belongs in the fifth part of Chaucer's *Treatise*, he nevertheless draws attention to these kinds of concepts in both Part I and Part II of the work.

When he is describing the astrolabe, Chaucer digresses long enough to point out the hot and cold natures of the planets (I. 21. 63-70). In his discussion of the lord of the ascendant, he specifically refers to the maleficent natures of Saturn, Mars, and the Dragon's Tail (II. 4. 35-7). That he is aware of both good and evil planets is clear when he refers to a "wicked planete" (II. 4. 35) and to a "fortunat / planete (II. 4. 39-40) and to their effects upon the ascendant. Lilly makes it clear that although a planet may be considered maleficent or beneficent by nature, there are two sides to the nature of every planet. Chaucer brings this idea to light when he explains how one knows if the lord of the ascendant (any planet to whom rulership of the ascending sign is assigned) is fortunate or unfortunate (II. 4. 44-56).

To determine whether a planet is fortunate or unfortunate, and thereby whether its influence will be good or evil, Lilly says that one must consider such variables as planetary aspects, the power of the house (angle, succeedent, cadent) in which the planet is found, whether it is well- or ill-dignified, retrograde, or direct, and so forth. Chaucer also directs our attention to the importance of these variables.

The ascendant is said to be fortunate, Chaucer says, when no "wicked planete" is present, and when "no wicked planete have / noon aspect of enemyte upon the ascendent" (II. 4. 37-8). The planet ruling the ascendant is said to be fortunate when "he is in god place / fro the ascendent, as in an angle, or in a suc- / cident (house) where as he is in hys
dignite and com- / fortid with frendly aspectes of planetes" (II. 4. 44-7). Finally, the lord of the ascendant is said to be fortunate if "he be not retro- / grad, ne combust (within an 8-1/2° orb of the sun), ne joyned (in conjunction) with no shrew (maleficent planet) in the same signe" (II. 4. 50-2).

Lilly explains that the signs and their divisions are ruled by the planets, and as we have seen, Chaucer uncovers the subject of planetary rulership in his discussion of the lord of the ascendant (II. 4. 30-56) and in his explanation that the very hours of the day are ruled by the planets (II. 12).

Finally, Lilly makes it clear that the exact celestial coordinates must be calculated for each of the planets and signs in order to position them in and on the appropriate houses of the horoscope. He explains that in order to do so, one must know the latitude of observation and the year, month, day, hour, and (if possible) minute of the event.

Calculating exact degrees takes up a good deal of the discussion in Part I (chapters 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 21) of Chaucer's Treatise, and in Part II, no less than eleven chapters (1, 3, 5, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 26, 34, 40) are devoted to the subject. Where the planets are concerned, for example, we find chapter headings that promise to explain how "To knowe the verrey degre of eny maner sterre, straunge or unstrauenge, after his longitude" (II. 17). Another allows us "To knowe sothly the degre of the longitude of the mone, or of eny planete that hath no lati- tude for the tyne from the ecliptik lyne" (II. 34). Yet another promises to enable us "To knowe with which degre of the zodiak that eny planete ascendith on the orisonte, whether so that his latitude be north or south"
(II. 40).

That finding the exact degrees for the signs was equally important can be seen from the chapter which promises to teach us "to knowe by nyght or by day the degre of any signe that ascendith on the est orisonte, which that is clepid comonly the ascendent, or ellis horoscopum" (II. 3). Indeed, Chaucer promises to teach us "To knowe the declinacioun of any degre in the zodiak fro the equinoxiall cercle" (II. 20), and he warns us that we will be expected to be precise in our calculations of the celestial coordinates (II. 26. 25-30):

Trust wel that / by mediacion of tylke ascension demes / / trollogians, by her tables and her instru-ments / knownen venneily the ascencion of every degre / and minute in all the zodiak in the embelif / cercle as shal be shewed.

As Lilly had done, Chaucer explains that exactness of degree is dependent upon exactness of time (I. 8. 9-16):

But understand wel that these dese- / gres of signes ben everich of hem consid- / red of 60 mynutes, and every mynute of 60 / secundes, and so furth into smale frac-ciouns in- / finite, as saith Alkabucius. And theryfore knowe / wel that a degre of the bordure contenith 4 minutes, and a degre of a signe contenith 60 / minutes and have this in mynde.

This information, especially the explanation that one degree of a sign is equal to sixty minutes of clock-time, has its astrological as well as its astronomical purposes.

Astrology deals with what are known as "critical" degrees in the signs: that is, it is of importance to know whether or not a planet occupies a critical degree of a sign when one evaluates its influence.
Chaucer's reference to the fact that for a planet to be in the ascendent, it must be in the exact degree of the ascending sign (technically speaking) may serve as an example of a critical degree. It may at first seem as if there should be no problem in determining whether or not a planet is in a critical degree if the coordinates of the planet and the sign are known. If, for example, 15° of Taurus was a critical degree, and Mars was located at 14° of Taurus, the planet apparently is not in a critical degree. To be certain, however, one must know Mars' exact coordinates, to the minute; for if Mars was at 14° 59', it would be necessary to consider him to be at 15° (in that he only lacks one minute of actually being there). A position of 14° 58', 57', down to 14° 0', of course, causes the possibility of critical degree to come under less and less consideration.

Chaucer continues to emphasize the importance and the complications of time for locating the planets and signs, and uses his own experience for an example (II. 3. 74-81):

And / more over, by experience I wot wel that in / our orisonte, from xi of the clokke unto oon / of the clokke, in taking of a just ascendent in / a portatif Astrable it is hard to knowe -- / I mene from xi of the clokke before the / hour of noon til oon of the clokke next / folowyng.

In addition to the problem of calculating a "just ascendent," the movement of the equinoctial circle and thus the location of Aries and Libra is also a matter of time (II. 7. 18-22): "But the day naturell, that is to seyn 24 hours, / is the revoluucioun of the equinoxial with as / muche partie of the zodiak as the sonne / of his propre moevyng passith in the mene / while." Of course, it is also necessary to have the exact
time in order to determine whether a sign that appeared on the eastern horizon is still ascending or has moved on and been replaced: "also every signe / betwixe the heved of Capricorne unto the ends / of Geminis arisith on oure orisonte in lasse / than 2 hours equales" (II. 28, 22-5). 17

There is little doubt, moreover, that Chaucer was aware that the month and day of an event are needed in order to calculate the locations of the planets and signs, since in his description of the astrolabe, he points out the "cercle of the daies" beneath the circle of the signs (I. 9), and the "cercle of the names of the monthes" directly beneath that of the days (I. 10). That the year is also necessary is suggested by Chaucer's example for finding the exact degree of the sun: "Ensample as thus: -- The year of oure Lord / 1391, the 12 day of March at midday, I wolde / knowe the degre of the sonne!" (II. 1, 6-8). He explains how to do so with the astrolabe and shows the sun to be in the first degree of Aries for that date and time. Then, as if to emphasize that the exact date and time determines the celestial coordinates, he offers a second example for December 13 of the same year, demonstrating that the sun at midday on that date was in the first degree of Capricorn (II. 1, 17-24).

Finally, that Chaucer wishes to emphasize the importance of the latitude of observation for locating the celestial bodies is clear. The astrolabe he has given Lewis is constructed only for the latitude at Oxford (Prig. 8-10). 18 The phrase "in oure orisonte" appears everywhere, and there are no less than seven chapters that deal specifically with latitude (II. 21, 22, 23, 25, 34, 39, 40).

Lilly's work goes into much greater detail than is to be found in the completed portions of Chaucer's Treatise. That is to be expected,
since Lilly's work was finished and Chaucer's was not. But, and the
point is significant, Chaucer does draw attention to the same basic
principles that appear in Lilly's work. The outline in the Prologue
clearly indicates that Chaucer intended to explain the rules of astrology
in Part Five of the work, and one finds many of the commonplaces of
astrology in Parts I and II. What possible reason can be given for
these astrological "digressions" or for the proposed section on astro-
logy if the treatise was not intended to function as an introduction to
the science? How else does one explain the existence of the same kind
of information in the finished portions of Chaucer's Treatise as is to
be found in a work that is specifically an introduction to astrology --
a text designed to teach the astronomy of erecting horoscopes and the
astrology of analyzing them? How does one account for the close similar-
ity between Chaucer's outline of study and actual university curricula
in astronomy in his day? Surely, the similarities are too great to be
coincidental.

If, therefore, Chaucer intended to explain no more than the rules
behind the astrological comments he makes in the first two parts of the
work when he wrote Part Five, this is what Lewis would have learned
about the workings of astrology. The exact coordinates of the planets
and signs must be calculated in order to place them with the proper
houses of a horoscope. The signs are calculated to the exact degree
by means of finding the right ascension of the meridian and the ascend-
ant, and the planets are located according to their degrees of celestial
longitude relative to the ecliptic. In order to calculate the locations
of the celestial bodies properly, the latitude of observation, and the
year, month, day, hour, and minute of the event must be known.

When the planets and signs have been properly located and have been placed in the horoscope, one must note the signs governing the houses, whether they are on an angle, succedent, or cadent, and what the effects of the signs will be on the affairs of the houses they govern and on the behavior of any planets appearing in those houses. Moreover, the influences of the planetary rulers of the signs (the lord of the sign, the rulers of its triplicity, terms, and faces) must be considered for their effect upon the same matters. The positions of the planets must be carefully noted. Whether they appear in angles, succedent, or cadent houses is important for measuring the power of their influences; whether they are by nature benefic, malefic, or common must be considered; whether they are well- or ill-dignified, whether their motion is direct or retrograde, and whether they are in good or evil aspect with one another must be considered in order to determine the effects of their influences on one another, on the affairs of the houses they inhabit, and upon the affairs of the houses governed by the signs they rule.

All that is lacking in Chaucer's explanation of the use of the astrolabe in regard to the analytic process of astrology are the rules for placing all of the planets, houses, and signs into relationship with one another for a final prognostication. The kind of information he presents is commonly found in introductions to astrology, and it is quite enough to understand any astrological references in his works. To be sure, details would have to be filled in here and there: the affairs of the houses would have to be explained, how to determine the aspects would have to be learned, the characteristics of all of the planets and
signs would have to be taught, and so forth. But the knowledge and the intention to teach is there, and the process is there. The seeds of the analytic process were planted in the seemingly out of place astrological remarks in the first two parts of the work and apparently never grew. But Chaucer's almost casual references to them make it clear that he had seen them full grown.

Explaining the rules of astrology that enabled Chaucer to make the kind of comments he does in Part I and Part II of the Treatise by no means explains the extent of Chaucer's knowledge of the science. But it does give a fair idea of what he believed could be absorbed by a ten year-old boy. Moreover, since his program of study is very much like that of the university curriculum in astronomy in his day, and since the Treatise contains information very much like that in Lilly's Introduction to Astrology, it is probable that what he expected to teach to Lewis he assumed the educated members of his actual audience would also know: that is, the abc's of astrology.

Of more importance, however, is the fact that an understanding of the rules which allowed Chaucer to make the kind of astrological observations he does in the Treatise shows that he knew no less about the workings of astrology than has been explained in Chapter II of this study. Whether Chaucer approved of the practice of astrology or not, it is safe to say that he knew how to erect a horoscope and how to apply the analytic process of astrological prognostication.
NOTES


4 That Chaucer may have intended the Treatise to function as an introduction to astrology in order to provide the background in the science normally found among his peers has been touched upon by both Robert K. Root and by Karl E. Elmquist. Elmquist, who concludes in his "An Observation on Chaucer's Astrolabe," MLN, 56 (1941), p. 531, that "the Astrolabe as we now have it was expected to be read (or heard) by others than Lewis," quotes Root's opinion (p. 531) that "Chaucer's Treatise is an attempt to expound on ... the uses of the instrument and the elements of astronomy and astrology." Elmquist points to lines 41-9 of the Prologue as evidence of "a direct address to a general reading audience, similar in its opening to the well-known 'retraction,' showing an anticipation that others than Lewis will peruse the treatise or hear it read:

'Now wol I preie mekely every discret per- / sone that redith / or herith this litel trety to have / my rude endityng for excusid, and my super- / fluite of wordes, for two causes. The first cause / is for that curious endityng and hard sentence is ful hevy at onys for such a child to lerne. / And the secunde cause is this, that sothly me / semith better to writen unto a child twyes a / god sentence, than he forgete it onys.'

As further evidence, Elmquist cites lines 59-64 of the Prologue:

'But considere wel that I ne usurpe / not to have founden this werk of my labour / or of myn engyn. I n'an but a lewd compila-/ tor of the labour of olde astrologiens, and have it / translatid inyn English shal onely for thy doc-/ trine. And with this swerd shal I aleen envie.'

Of this latter passage, Elmquist believes that "the concluding words,
'And with this sword shall I sleep envie,' cannot well be taken to reveal that Chaucer feared criticism from a ten-year old reader. They seem rather addressed to possible readers or hearers who might have such knowledge of the subject as to cavil at Chaucer's treatment of it" (p. 533). If what Elmqvist believes to be the case is true, then it follows that Chaucer constructed the Treatise in such a way as to make it conform to his expectations for an implied audience.

Indeed, Sigmund Eisner in his "Chaucer as a Technical Writer," ChauR, 3 (1985), pp. 180, 181, 188, agrees that the Treatise was probably written for readers at various levels of expertise, and that Little Lewis may have been nothing more than an audience persona through which Chaucer was able to clarify his instructions:

Like teachers, technical writers instruct on a variety of levels to a variety of teachable audiences, including the very informed, the partially informed, and the uninformed ...

Chaucer, who says he is writing for a child, certainly is writing for an intelligent yet uninformed person.

Therefore, Little Lewis, who apparently did exist as a breathing individual, becomes a sort of persona, let us say an audience persona, a character created or used by the author as a device to augment the effect of what he is writing.

I think the child as an audience is necessary as a device so that Chaucer may offer simple clarity to all of his intelligent yet uninformed readers.

5 See chapter one of this study. It is not my intention to assert that Chaucer made it his business to discover what the actual curriculum in astronomy was at the University of Bologna or at any of the other Italian or European universities. I do believe, however, that the Bologna curriculum would not have differed significantly from that at Merton College, Oxford, and I have already explained Chaucer's Merton connections (with Ralph Strode, for example). In addition, Chaucer's diplomatic journeys to the Continent would probably have brought him into contact with men who had been educated at Bologna, and the length of his visits to Italy and his post as controller of the customs at the Port of London would have provided him with ample opportunity to absorb a good deal of information about all facets of Italian life. According to Martin Crow and Clair Olson, Chaucer Life and Records (Univ. of Texas Press, 1966), p. 40, Chaucer was probably chosen for his missions to Italy "because he knew Italian already (rather) than that he first became acquainted with Italian on this journey (to Geneva and Florence). He probably had contact from youth with the Italians of London, especially the pepperers with whom his father had associated. Chaucer's visit to Italy doubtless facilitated the work which he was about to undertake... as controller of the customs in the Port of London, where he was in direct contact with Italian creditors of the king and with numerous Italian merchants using the port." Chaucer was probably on the Continent for 106 days in 1368. Although the purpose for this mission is unknown, the amount of money he was known to be carrying would have allowed him to go
almost anywhere in Europe. There is naturally a good deal of speculation as to how he spent his time, including the opinion that he may have visited his earliest patron, Prince Lionel (p. 30), who was then in Italy. It is also believed that Chaucer may have spent 100 days in Italy in 1372 (p. 40), and again there are interesting speculations about the possibilities of his having met Petrarch and Boccaccio during this time. If Chaucer's acquaintance with Petrarch could be proven, it would be of real value to this study, because Petrarch studied at the University of Bologna (1323-26), returned there again between 1343 and 1345, and was offered professorships at both the Universities of Paris and Florence.

6 Robinson, p. 544.

7 Skeat, pp. 191-92, declares that "The ascendant at any given moment is that degree of the zodiac which is then seen upon the Eastern horizon. Chaucer says that astrologers reckoned in also 5 degrees of the zodiac above, and 25 below; the object being to extend the planet's influence over a whole 'house,' which is a space of the same length as a sign, viz. 30°."

8 For a detailed explanation of the movement of the Primum Mobile and of the spheres, see Skeat, p. 355.

9 Lilly says (pp. 57-9) that Aries is responsible for "All gum-boils, swellings, pimplies in the face, smallpox, hair lips, polypus, ringworms, falling sickness, apoplexies, megrims, toothache, head-ache, and baldness." Taurus rules "The king's evil, sore throats, wens, fluxes of rheums falling into the throat, quinsies, abscesses in those parts." And Gemini "signifies all diseases, accidents, or infirmities in the arms, shoulders, or hands."

10 Skeat, p. 365, explains that "The 'equations of houses' means the dividing of the sphere into equal portions, and the right numbering of those portions or houses. The most important house was the first, or ascendant, just rising; the next in importance was the tenth, which was just coming on the meridian; then come the seventh or descendent, just about to set, and the fourth, just coming to the line of midnight. The next in importance were the succedents, or houses immediately following these, viz. the second, the eleventh, the eighth, and the fifth. The least important were the third, twelfth, ninth, and sixth."

11 Skeat, p. 365, says that "'these 3 howsez,' That is, the nadies of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th houses give the houses that 'follow,' i.e. the 6th, 9th, and 10th. The word 'follow' here seems to refer, not to position, but to the order in which the houses may most conveniently be found. Chaucer omits to add that the beginnings of the 5th and 6th houses can be found in a similar way, because it is sufficiently evident. It is all from Messahala."

12 Skeat, pp. 208-9, explains that "The signs which Chaucer calls 'of right (i.e. direct) ascension' are those signs of the zodiac which
rise more directly, i.e. at a greater angle to the horizon than the rest. In latitude 52°, Libra rises so directly that the whole sign takes more than 2-3/4 hours before it is wholly above the horizon, during which time nearly 43° of the equinoctial circle have arisen; or, in Chaucer’s words, 'the more part' (i.e. a larger portion) of the equinoctial circle ascends with it. On the other hand, the sign of Aries ascends so obliquely that the whole of it appears above the horizon in less than an hour, so that 'a less part' (a smaller portion) of the equinoctial ascends with it."

In Chaucer’s time, the actual calculation of the degree of the zodiac for the right ascension was found relative to a fixed star (p. 201): "By observing the degrees of the equinoctial, instead of the ecliptic, upon the Eastern horizon, we have at the first observation 272°, at the second 332°, and the mean of these is 302°; from this subtract 90°, and the result, 212°, gives the right ascension of Arcturus very nearly, corresponding to which is the beginning of the 5° of Scorpio, which souths along with it."

13 Skeat, pp. 218-19, observes that "Here the 10th house is at once seen to be on the meridional line. In the quadrant from 1 to 10, the even division of the quadrant into 3 parts shows the 12th and 11th houses. Working downwards from 1 we get the 2nd and 3rd houses, and the 4th house beginning with the north line. The rest are easily found from their na-
dirs."

14 Skeat, pp. 196-97, says that "This 'hour of the planet' is a mere astrological supposition, involving no part of astronomy. Each hour is an 'hour inequal,' or the 12th part of the artificial day or night. The assumptions are so made that the first hour of every day may resemble the name of the day; the first hour of Sunday is the hour of the Sun, and so on. These hours may be easily found by the following method." Here, Skeat offers a number code of his own that seems a bit overdrawn. The planetary hours simply follow the descending order of the planets in the firmament. Since, to use Skeat’s example, the first hour of Sunday is assigned to the sun, the second hour is assigned to Venus, the third, to Mercury, the fourth, to the moon, the fifth, to Saturn, the sixth, to Jupiter, the seventh, to Mars, and the eighth, again, to the sun, as Chaucer shows in his example.

15 Skeat, p. 216, explains that "The motion of a planet is called direct, when it moves in the direction of the succession of the zodiacal signs; retrograde, when in the contrary direction."

16 Chaucer says that the lord of the ascendant is considered fortunate if, among other things, "that he be not retro-/grad."

17 Skeat’s chart for the ascension of the signs at Oxford shows clearly why Chaucer emphasizes the importance of knowing exact time (p. 209).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBLIQUE SIGNS</th>
<th>TIME TO ASCEND</th>
<th>DIRECT (RIGHT) ASCENSION</th>
<th>TIME TO ASCEND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capricornus</td>
<td>1 hr. 44 min.</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>2 hr. 36 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquarius</td>
<td>1 hr. 4 min.</td>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>2 hr. 48 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisces</td>
<td>0 hr. 56 min.</td>
<td>Virgo</td>
<td>2 hr. 52 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aries</td>
<td>0 hr. 56 min.</td>
<td>Libra</td>
<td>2 hr. 52 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taurus</td>
<td>1 hr. 4 min.</td>
<td>Scorpio</td>
<td>2 hr. 48 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemini</td>
<td>1 hr. 44 min.</td>
<td>Sagittarius</td>
<td>2 hr. 36 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 Skeat, p. 208, says that “By help of a globe it is easy to find the ascensions of the signs for any latitude, whereas by the astrolabe we can only tell them for those latitudes for which the plates bearing the almicaneras are constructed.”

19 Skeat, pp. lxxvii-lxxix. In Skeat’s opinion, all one needs to know about astrology to understand Chaucer’s references are the lords of the signs, the rulers of the triplicities, what triplicity each sign belongs with, the rulers of the faces of the signs, the classifications of the signs (mobile, fixed, common, masculine, feminine, northern, southern, eastern, and western). Of the planets, he says one needs to know their exaltations, when they are in fall, and their depressions. Apparently, he is assuming that one knows that the characteristics of the planets, houses, and signs must be understood.
CHAPTER IV

PLANETS, GODS, BOETHIUS, AND
THE ASTROLOGICAL MODEL

I

PLANETS AND GODS

Distinguishing between the mythological power of the gods and the astrological influences of the planets bearing their names is at times a problem for the modern reader. Today, when one reads of Saturn or Mars, for instance, it is usually clear that either the planets or the gods of myth are meant. In works like the Knight's Tale, however, this sort of distinction may not at all be clear for the modern reader, and consequently, one cannot help wondering whether the influence of the planet or the intervention of the god is meant as each deity appears in the tale. The first allusion to Saturn, for example, is to the planet. According to Arcite, some "wikke aspect" of Saturn in his and Palamon's nativities is responsible for their misfortunes (1087-89). In the Third Part of the tale, however, Saturn promises his aid to Venus as god to goddess (2438-53). He then describes himself in terms of his planetary powers (2454-69), and then he returns to the god-goddess relationship again (2470-78).

Perhaps what needs to be understood is that these relationships were not a matter of "either-or" to the medieval mind: no distinction was made between the gods and the planets. C. S. Lewis has already
explained that to think of the god was simultaneously to think of the planet, and consequently, the idea that the planets were alive and inhabited by beings in the forms of angels, souls awaiting incarnation, gods, or "intelligences" appeared in numerous cosmologies both before and during Chaucer's time.

The works of Macrobius, for example, were well-known in the Middle Ages, and Macrobius receives mention in Chaucer's works. In the *Saturnalia*, Macrobius explains why the stars and the constellations are also gods:

Homer's words: 'All the gods followed him,' refer to the constellations which by the daily motion of the heavens are borne, together with the sun, to their settings and risings and are nourished by the same moisture as the sun. For the constellations and the stars are called 'gods' because the word is derived from ἉΕΛΛΩ, that is, 'to run,' since they are always in motion, or else from ἁνάπηστος, since they are the objects of contemplation.

According to the widely-read *Timaeus* of Plato, there were two classes of "created gods": the visible and the invisible. To them, the Demiurge assigned control of the movements of the heavens, the creation of mortal life, and the care of human souls. The visible gods were the fixed stars, the planets, and the constellations: they were living, intelligent, immortal beings. The invisible gods, likewise living, intelligent, and immortal, were those beings who resided in the air or water that "reveal themselves as far as they will." They were the gods of myth whose contact with man through "visions, dreams, prophecies, or clairvoyance at the hour of death" gave rise to "beliefs in individuals and states and widespread forms of worship." Once the Demiurge had himself created the immortal souls of men and had sown
them among the stars, the destiny of mankind and indeed of all mortal
life was "committed to the care of the gods" (my italics), and no
distinction was made between those that were visible (the planets and
the stars) and those that were invisible (the gods of myth). 4

The deities in the Knight's Tale, for example, retain the qualities
of the invisible gods of myth and the visible planetary gods of the
Timaeus. Just as there is ultimately no distinction made between either
class of gods in the Timaeus, there is no distinction in the Knight's
Tale between the gods as gods and the gods as planets. Chaucer was
able thereby to use astrological references for purposes that could not
otherwise be assigned to the gods of myth, and he could at the same
time use the characters of the mythological gods who are susceptible
to the prayers or supplications that are not a part of the action of
the planets. Consequently, the "gods" in the Knight's Tale are free to
utilize their full potentialities in the development of the conflict as
both gods and planets. Thus, Chaucer's audience would have known almost
without thinking that the gods and planets were "one." The idea was
commonly understood and commonly used by his contemporaries as well.
For us, perhaps Lydgate has most clearly expressed the idea in a little
known work titled the Assembly of Gods:

By nature thus as the seyyn planettys
Haue her propre names by astronomers,
But goddys were they called by oold poetys,
For her gret furuency of wyrkyng in her speres--
Expereyence preueth thyss at all yeres.
And for as other that goddes callyd be
For sotyll wytee, that shall I teche the. 5
II

BOETHIUS AND THE ASTROLOGICAL MODEL

The importance of Boethius' views of Providence, Destiny, Free Will, True and False Happiness, and the Supreme Good to Chaucer are indicated by his translation of the Consolation of Philosophy and by the fact that this translation is the only work that is named in his Retraction for which the poet thanks "oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Moodar, and alle the seintes of hevene" (1082-84). The appearance of Boethian elements in tales like those of the Knight and the Man of Law has long since been explained, and one of the reasons Chaucer may have decided to make his retraction could be that through his pilgrims' misunderstanding of particularly the role of the stars in the Providential scheme of things, he may have unintentionally encouraged others to make the same mistakes.

In the Canterbury Tales, the stars are perhaps the most visible representatives of the Forces of Destiny. Fortune and Chance appear as powers over which man has no control as well, but it is the position that the planets cause good or ill fortune to occur that is most dramatically emphasized. Because the pilgrims believe --or at least are curious as to whether -- the stars control the lives of men, they make the error of sitting in judgment of God (what Lady Philosophy would describe as creation believing itself superior to its creator). By passing judgment on the "fairness" of life and thus on the wisdom and goodness of God, they delegate responsibility for their own and their characters' shortcomings to Him. The planets, however, indicate what is happening in the overall scheme of things in the Boethian
cosmos and do not "cause" anything to happen. They are indicators of the direction the Providential Plan is taking because of the choices man makes. The wise man, therefore, will look at what is happening through these indicators, try to discover what good can come of the situation, and choose to work for and with that good. If he is unwise, he will look to the stars as the cause of what must happen, resign himself to having had no choice in the matter, and allow himself to be carried along by the Destinal Forces that carry out the good in the Providential Plan. The latter choice defines the position taken by Chaucer's pilgrims. When such a position is taken, the road of life will be bumpy and full of trouble from an earthly point of view because Providence has seen and anticipated the freely chosen errors of man within the Plan, and those who submit themselves to the Destinal Powers ask to suffer the consequences of all of those errors.

At least, that is Lady Philosophy's position, and it would be advantageous for an understanding of the pilgrims' misunderstanding of the role of the stars to summarize her views of cosmic order at this point.

The problems of man's earthly existence begin because of his inability to distinguish between true and false happiness and the supreme and false good. All men desire the good and strive to achieve it in diverse ways. To achieve the good is to achieve happiness, but true happiness exists only when its attainment leaves nothing more to be desired (III. Prosa 2. 11-17):
And this thyng forsothe is the soverayn good that conteneoth in hymself all maner goodes; to the whiche good if ther fayled any thyng, it myght nat ben soverayn good, for thanne wer ther som good out of this ilke soverayn good, that myght ben desired.

True happiness and the supreme good are one and the same thing, and the desire for the supreme good has been implanted by God in every man's heart. Nevertheless, "myswandrynge errour mysledeth hem into false goodes" (III. Prosa 2. 23-25). The error that leads to the false good and false happiness is that every man equates the supreme good and therefore happiness with his most fervent earthly desires: that is, with wealth, honors, power, glory, or "to plowngem hem in voluptuous deylt" (III. Prosa 2. 25-43). As Lady Philosophy explains (III. Prosa 2. 66-82):

it semeth oonly that blisfulnesse is desyred; forwhy thilke thing that every man desireth moost over alle thynges he demeth that it be the soverayn good; but I have diffyned that blisfulnesse is the soverayn good; for which every wight demeth that thilke estat that he desireth over alle thynges, that it be blisfulnesse.

Now hastow thanne byforn thyne eien almost al the purposede forme of the welefulnesse of mankynde; that is to seyn, rychesses, honours, power, glorie, and delitz. The whiche deylt oonly considered Epicurus, and juggid and establissyde that deylt is the soverayn good for as moche as alle othere thynges as hym thoughte, byrefte awey joye and myrthe from the herte.

None of these earthly pursuits are sufficient in themselves, however, since they can be taken away at any moment. Consequently, they are not the supreme good, and their acquisition does not mean true happiness. Wealth fails the test because "rychesse ne mai nat al doon awey nede" (III. Prosa 3. 97-98). Great wealth causes a man to worry about
keeping it, and it creates the need for "forsyn help" to protect it, whereas "hym nedide noon help yif he ne hadde no mooneye that he myghte leese" (III. Prosa 3. 69-75). Moreover, wealth creates the desire for more wealth, and "certes to avarice inowgh suffiseth nothyng" (III. Prosa 3. 95-96).

The acquisition of honors is not the supreme good because when one's honors are viewed by people who "ne knowen nat thilke dignytees, hir honours vanysschen away, and that anoon" (III. Prosa 4. 75-77). Furthermore, honors in one's own country have a habit of passing out of memory so that they are no longer recognized as honors (III. Prosa 4. 77-93). No matter how powerful a man becomes, there will always be those over whom he has no power and those whom he knows are capable of taking his power from him. Because of this constant threat, Lady Philosophy says "kynges han more porcioun of wrecchidnesse than of welfulnesse" (III. Prosa 5. 21-23). Of what use is this power, she asks, "that though men han it, yit thei ben agast; and whanne thou woldest han it, thou n'art nat siker; and yif thou woldest forleeten it, thow mayst nat eschuen it?" (III. Prosa 5. 60-64).

The pursuit of beauty and bodily pleasure is most heartily condemned as "ful of anguyssch, and the fulfilynges of hem ben ful of penaunce" (III. Prosa 7. 16-18). If a man chooses the pleasures of the body as his supreme good, he is little better than a beast, and (III. Prosa 8. 19-26):

every wight schal despysen the and forleeten the, as thow that art thrall to thyng that is right foul and brutyl (that is to seyn, servaunt to thi body). Now is thanne wel yseyn how litle and how brotel possessioun thei covetyten that putten the goodes of the body aboven hir owene resoun.
The body, after all, is "swiftly passynge" and "transitorie" (III. Prosa 8. 37), and it "mai ben destroyed or dissolvid by the heete of a fevere of thre dayes" (III. Prosa 8. 53-54). Regarding the pursuit of false happiness, then, Lady Philosophy concludes that (III. Prosa 8. 55-61):

Of alle whiche forseide thynges Y mai reducen this schortly in a somme: that thise worldly goodes, whiche that ne mowen nat yeven that they byheesten, ne ben nat parfite by the congregacioun of alle goodis; that they ne ben nat weyes ne pathes that bryngen men to blisfulnesse, ne maken men to ben blisful.

The supreme good cannot exist in the natural world because it is in the nature of things to degenerate from their original perfection: "For the nature of thinges ne took nat hir begynnynge of thinges amen-used and inparfit, but it procedith of thinges that ben alle hole and absolut, and desendith so doune into uttereseste thinges and into things empty and withouten fruyt" (III. Prosa 10. 25-30). True happiness, the supreme good, therefore, is not to be found in earthly pursuits but at the center of the intelligible universe in the mind of God. Lady Philosophy's prayer for Boethius is that God "yyve thou to the thought to steyen up into thi streyte seste; and graunte hym to envirowne the welle of good; and, the lyght ifounde, graunte hym to fycchen the clere syghtes of his corage in the; and skatere thou and tobreke the weyghtes and the cloudes of erythly heynnesse" (III. Metrum 9. 38-45).

Supreme goodness resides in the perfection of God. God's perfection, His perfect goodness, is understood because He is unchanging, because He has no superior in goodness, and because that which has been
created cannot be better than its creator (III. Prose 10. 42-53):

For, so as nothyng mai ben thought betere than God, it mai nat ben douted thanne that he that nothing nys betere, that he nys good. Certes, resoun scheweth that God is so good that it proeveth by verray force that parfyt good is in hym. For yif God nys swich, he ne mai nat be prince of alle things; for certes somthing possessyng in itself parfyt good schulde be more worthy than God, and it scholde semen that thilke were first and eldere than God.

Since God has no superior, He does not receive the supreme good from outside Himself, but instead contains it within Himself (III. Prose 10. 70-96). His very essence is the supreme good, and since by definition true happiness is in the supreme good, happiness is to be found in God and not in the natural world: "we han establisshed that the sovereyne good is verray blissfulnesse. Thanne moot it nedis be that verray blissfulnesse is set in sovereyn God" (III. Prose 10. 59-62).

The supreme good and true happiness are therefore divine, and all things that are good are so because they participate in divine goodness (III. Prose 11. 40-43). God's plan for creation is based on goodness, and it is the natural inclination of all things to freely seek that goodness (III. Prose 12. 87-94):

God governeth alle thinges by the keye of his goodnesse, and alle thise same thinges, as I have taughte the, hasten hem by naturel entencion to come to good, ther ne may no man doute that thei ne ben governed voluntariely, and that they ne converten hem of here owene wil to the wil of here ordeynour.

Thus, the supreme good and therefore true happiness reside in the divinity of God, not in earthly pursuits, and that goodness and happiness
may be achieved through divine participation in His Plan. Unlike the wealth, honors, fame, power, or pleasure of earthly desires, God is perfect and unchanging, moving creation by its Love for Him while He remains stable at the center of creation: "thilke devyne substaunce tornith the world and the moevable cercle of things, while thilke devyne substaunce kepith itself withouten moevyng. (That is to say, that it re moeveh nevere mo, and yet it moeveh alle othere thingis)" (III. Prosa 12. 194-99).

We now come to the weightier matters regarding what Lady Philosophy calls Providence, the ordering of Destiny, the haphazard nature of random events of chance, divine foreknowledge and predestination, and the freedom of the will (IV. Prosa 6. 28-30). To lay the groundwork for her discussion, she explains that everything that has movement and is subject to change receives its cause, order, and form from the unchanging mind of God. He has one unified Plan for the good of creation that takes into account the multitude of events and the free choices made by men in the course of time. The whole Plan, from God's view in eternity, is called Providence. The same Plan viewed in terms of those things whose motion and order in the course of infinite time are controlled by God, however, is called Destiny (IV. Prosa 6. 42-56).

Providence includes all things at the same time, no matter how diverse or infinite, while Destiny controls the motion of different things in different places and in different times. Providence is the divine reason itself, and it decides how all things will work together for the good of the Plan. The components, or the moving, working parts of the same Plan are the Destinal Powers. Providence has made sure
that each part is where it should be, doing what it should do to keep the whole functioning perfectly to accomplish the good of the Providential Plan. Consequently, the unfolding of the Plan in time when brought together as a unified whole in the foresight of God's mind is Providence, and the same unified whole when dissolved and unfolded in the course of time is Destiny (IV Prosa 6. 60-78). The wise man will see that Providence and Destiny are not the same things, if he examines both carefully. Even though they are two different things, however, their goal is one and the same thing: that is, the accomplishment of the supreme good in the Providential Plan. Destiny carries out the work of the Plan, but Providence is the cause of its workings. Destiny does not work independently of Providence, and since Providence contains the supreme good, the workings of the Destinal Powers cannot be evil.

At about this time, Boethius objects that everything that happens must happen of necessity if God has seen them happen at the creation of His Plan and has adjusted the Destinal Powers accordingly. To this, Lady Philosophy replies that His seeing the events of infinity and the choices made by men did not necessitate those events and choices. To make the matter clearer, she uses the example of a craftsman and his work. The craftsman "sees" the plan of the whole thing he intends to make in his mind, and then he puts into motion the execution of the work, carrying out in time the construction of what he had seen all at one moment in his mind. But, Boethius still is not satisfied that man has any freedom of choice. In Book V, he again says that because God knows what will happen, it therefore must happen, and there is no free will. Consequently, man is not responsible for his acts because he acts from
necessity.

To again explain that foreknowledge does not create necessity, Lady Philosophy uses the example of a man watching a craftsman going about his work to illustrate that simply because we know how he will go about it does not mean that our knowing has caused him to go about it in the way he does (V. Prosa 4. 74-95):

But certes, ryght as we trowen that the thingis whiche that the purveaunce woot byforn to comen, ne ben nat to bytiden. But that ne scholde we nat demen; but rather, although that thei schal betyden, yit ne have thei no necessite of hir kynde to betyden. And this maystow lyghtly aperceyven by this that I schal seyn. For we seen many thingis whan thei ben don biforn oure eyen, right as men seen the car- tere worken in the tornynge or in atemprynge or adressynge of his cartes or chariottes. And by this manere (as who seith, maistow undirstonden) of alle othere werkmen. Is ther thanne any necessite (as who seith, in our lookyng) that constreynith or compelleth any of thilke thingis to ben done so?

Boethius concedes the point because if such things happened of necessity, the exercise of skill would not exist. Lady Philosophy concludes that just as our knowledge of events in the present do not cause men to behave as they do, so God's foreknowledge does not force men to behave according to His Plan. The acts of men (V. Prosa 4. 101-17)

ne han no necessite that men doon hem, eek tho same thingis, first er thei ben don, thei ben to comen withoute necessite. Forwhy ther ben some thingis to betyden, of whiche the eendes and the bytydnyges of hem ben absolut and quit of alle necessite. For certes I ne trowe rat that any man wolde seyn this: that tho thingis that men don now, that thei ne weren to bytiden first or thei weren idoon; and thilke same thinges, although that men hadden iwyst hem byforn, yit thei han fre bytydnyges. For ryght as science of thingis present ne bryngith in no necessite to thingis that men doon, ryght so the
To understand this idea, however, one must understand that God sees all of the events of infinity at the same time from His eternal present. One must, therefore, be able to distinguish between eternity and infinity.

Eternity is the complete, simultaneous, and perfect possession of whatever exists in time even though it had no beginning and its life extends into infinity. It contains every detail of the infinite past and the infinite future in its eternal present (V. Prosa 6. 8-95).

Infinity, on the other hand, has a past, present, and future that progresses step-by-step in time. Infinity does not embrace the past, present, and future simultaneously: its past is lost, and its future is yet to come. God is eternal, and the world is perpetual. From His eternal present, He sees the events of creation taking place in the infinite past, present, and future simultaneously. All events, all choices that take place in the unfolding of His Plan in time, He sees at the same instant He creates it, and the Plan compensates for the events and choices that are made rather than "causes" them to occur.

This sort of foreknowledge is better defined as a "looking forth" than as "seeing beforehand" (V. Prosa 6. 98-121):

God is 'eterne,' and that the world is 'perpetuel.' Thanne, syn that every jugement knoweth and comprehendith by his owene nature thinges that ben subject unto hym, ther is sothly to God alwayes an eterne and presentarie estat; and the science of hym that overpasseth alle temporel movemetuel duellethe in the simplicite of his presence, and embraceth and considereth alle the infnit spaces of tymes preteritz and futures, and lokith in his simple knowynge alle thingis of preterit ryght as thei weren idoon presently ryght now. Yif thou wolt thanne thinken
and avise the presciencce by which it knoweth alle things, thou ne schalt naught demen it as pre-
sceinece of thinges to comen, but thou schalt demen more ryghtfully that it is science of presence or
of instaunce that nevere ne fai leth. For which
it nis nat ycleped 'previdence,' but it scholde
rathir ben clepid 'purveaunce,' that is establis-
shed ful far fro ryght lowe thinges, and byholdeth
fro afar alle thingis, right as it were fro the
heyse heighte of thinges.

God thus "sees" all of the choices man is making from His eternal present at the moment of creation. If man chooses to do this thing or that thing, it does not disrupt the good of the Plan. Man is not forced to "fit" the Plan; the Plan is adjusted at its inception for all of the choices man is freely making. Similarly, the Destinal Forces that carry out the good of the Plan in time reflect the direction the Plan is tak-
ing because of the choices men are making. Because man makes the choices he does throughout infinity, the Destinal Forces were adjusted to keep the Plan for the supreme good functioning properly in spite of those choices. They do not "cause" good or ill fortune (V. Prosa 6. 131-41):

ryght so as ye seen some thingis in this temporel present, ryght so seeth God alle thinges by his eterne present. Wherfore this devyne prescienc ne chaungeth nat the nature ne the properte of thinges, but byholdeth swiche thingis present to hym-ward as thel schollen bytanye to yow-ward in tyme to comen.

If man chooses wisely, focusing on the mind of God and attempting to understand and participate in the supreme good of the Providential Plan, he will have chosen the path to true happiness and will be beyond the control of the Destinal Powers. If, however, he chooses unwisely and focuses on his earthly desires for power or pleasure, he will
have chosen the false good that leads to false happiness. The Destinal
Powers that carry out the supreme good because of his choices will con-
tinue operating to achieve that good, and he will be carried along with
them. In short, the supreme good will be achieved in spite of the fact
that man has freedom of choice. It is true that God sees all choices
being made and compensates for the choices to bring about the supreme
good. It is also true that the Destinal Forces have been adjusted to
carry out the Plan according to the choices made and that they reflect
the direction the Plan is taking. Therein lies the opportunity for a
wise man to choose the path to true happiness and defeat the Destinal
Powers.

By knowing that the Destinal Powers (i.e. the stars) reflect the
adjustments to his and all other choices, a wise man will take responsi-
bility for his own choices and will realize that those powers are work-
ing to bring about the supreme good. He will understand that they are
indicators of the direction of the Providential Plan, and will try to
understand the supreme goodness written in the stars instead of trying
to use them to foretell good or evil events. By focusing on the Love
and unworldly goodness of the Godhead at the center of creation rather
than on his earthly desires, he can participate in the Plan and will be
completely unaffected by the Destinal Powers. There is no evil in the
Powers of Destiny, but only the apparent evil on earthly terms when
man's errors appear reflected in the configurations they form.

As I indicated in the Introduction to this study, C. S. Lewis has
already explained that artists in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
commonly used the stars in their works as a model of universal order
and that the astrological system was well-equipped for making a model of Boethian philosophy available to the imagination. The ascent of Troilus through the spheres following his death in Book V of *Troilus and Criseyde* is a good example of how the standard Ptolemaic universe can serve as a model of cosmic order as is the *Knight's Tale*, which inverts the Ptolemaic universe.

Beyond the fatalistic mutterings of Theseus and the tragic elements in the *Knight's Tale*, there is an implied providential benevolence at work in the destinies of Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye. Through the sufferings and death of Arcite, Theseus and the Athenians recognised the nobility of the man and the depth of their own love for him. Arcite was a Theban, and with the new perception that Thebans may be noble and worthy of love, the marriage between Palamon and Emelye becomes desirable, and the results of that marriage are an alliance between Athens and Thebes as well as between "certain contrees" (*KnT* 2973), thus ending international strife. The death of Arcite and the intervening time for consideration of the irresponsible self-centeredness that brought it about make clear the importance of the bonds of kinship and brotherly love and the disastrous results of love that is merely lust. A sadder, but wiser Palamon will be restored to his ancestral rights, and the line of Cadmus can go on. Emelye, too, no longer appears to be a child in fear of love, but rather a woman matured through her experiences with forgiveness and love.

That this final peace and reconciliation had to come about through trial and tragedy is beyond the comprehension of man. It is with that thought in mind that Theseus looks to Jupiter, the god of gods, and
voices his hope that in the overall scheme of things the catastrophe
that had taken place was necessary: "What maketh this but Juppiter, the
kyng, / That is prince and cause of alle thyng, / Converynge al unto
his propre welle / From which it is dirryved, sooth to telle? / And
heer-agayne no creature on iyve, / Of no degree, availeth for to
stryve" (3035-40).

It will be recalled that the supreme good and therefore true
happiness resides not in self-centered earthly desires but in the love
at the center of creation, in the Unmoved Mover, in God. The Destinal
Forces are moved by their love for the Unmoved Mover, seek to become
the same as that by which they are moved, and thereby participate in
the Providential Plan. The Destinal Forces are subject to Providence
and therefore cannot cause "evil" to occur in a Plan that is good.
Whereas the Godhead at the center "sees" the Plan from His eternal
present, the Destinal Forces are the machinery that carry out that
Plan in time. Thus, the Providential Plan and the Destinal Powers
have one and the same goal: the supreme good.

The farther removed one's thoughts are from the center, how-
ever, the less able one is to distinguish between the supreme good and
apparent evil, between true and false happiness. When man's choice to
pursue earthly happiness conflicts with the supreme good, the forces of
Destiny nevertheless continue operating to bring about that good. For
the pursuit of false happiness amounts to an attempt to work outside of
the Plan, and it will be recalled that the function of those forces is
to carry out the Plan. When man does not focus on the supreme good at
the center but instead focuses on the false good of earthly pursuits,
he is inevitably at odds with the Plan, views the workings of Destiny
as somehow "evil," and erroneously views his life as controlled by Fate, Fortune, or Chance.

By focusing on earthly power and delight, Theseus, Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye chose the paths of false happiness that put them in conflict with the supreme good and at the mercy of the Destinal Powers. The supreme good in the Knight’s Tale, universal peace and reconciliation through Love, might have been accomplished in compliance with the Providential Plan had each of them chosen to focus on the unworldly values of friendship, forgiveness, and Love. Instead, happiness meant the power and pleasure of himself deciding men’s destinies to Theseus, the pleasure of reputation in "warre" and "pees" to Arcite, the pleasure of possessing Emelye to Palamon, and the reverence attendant to perfect chastity to Emelye. The temple painting revealed to each of them the results of the pursuit of false happiness in its various forms, and yet they were so blinded by their own views of the good that they could not see how far removed from true happiness their desires were. Being so blinded, they were not in harmony with the Providential Plan, and they actually prayed for the Destinal Powers (the planet-gods) to decide the issues.

Theseus chose to put the entire affair in the hands of the planet-gods when he built the arena with temples for each of the planetary deities overlooking the contest. Instead of this "wise" ruler choosing to rule the stars, he invited the stars to rule the outcome of the tournament. Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye also unwisely chose to be governed by the Destinal Forces rather than compromising for the good, by praying that Mars, Venus, and Diana take charge of their lives. All of them freely chose the courses they pursued, all of them are
responsible for the outcome of the tournament, and therein lies an
element of irony and tragedy in the tale.

Lady Philosophy told Boethius that "Hony is the more swete, if
mouths han first tasted savours that ben wikke" (III. Metrum 1. 5-6)
and that by "byhooldyng fyrst the false goodes," one is able to shake
off the yoke of "erthely affeccions; and afterward the verry goodes
schullen entren into thy corage" (III. Metrum 1. 12-15). And so it
happens. In spite of their choices, good does come to all of them
through the apparent evil of Arcite's death. By seeing the false
happiness of rejecting brotherly love in the pursuit of lust and power,
Arcite and Palamon come to understand the unworldey values of forgiveness
and genuine Love. By experiencing the false happiness of reject-
ing suitors in the pursuit of chastity, Emelye is able to see the ex-
plusive results of beauty's resolve to remain chaste for the lives of
others and the more positive behavior in relationships based on Love.
By experiencing the unexpected results of the tournament, Theseus dis-
covers that combat is perhaps not the only or the best way to settle
differences. Peaceful alliances (the restoration of order) can be
achieved perhaps more profitably by means of the understanding, for-
giveness, and compassion implied by brotherly love than by war.

Thus, Theseus' view that Arcite's death was an unavoidable disaster
because it had been decreed somehow for the good by Jupiter is incorrect.
Jupiter's plan for the good was reconciliation and peace through Love
and forgiveness. Love and forgiveness were the elements of "necessity"
in the plan, not the death of Arcite. Had each of the characters
focused on the plan at the Godhead instead of selfishly focusing on
their own ideas of the good, Arcite could have survived. His death
and their unhappiness were the results of their choices to operate outside of the Providential Plan. Operating outside of a Plan for the supreme good cannot be other than evil, and evil cannot bring true happiness no matter how successful in gaining its ends it seems to be. The attainment of victory, the possession of Emelye, the preservation of chastity, the restoration of order through combat and marriage meant happiness to Arcite, Palamon, Emelye, and Theseus respectively. Or, so they thought. It was precisely because each of them was allowed to choose to try to operate outside of the Plan, and that each of them was allowed to have exactly what they asked for that their unhappiness occurred.

This all seems fairly clear when one has Chaucer’s El Cce at hand, but even then, it is only clear if one accepts Lady Philosophy’s words as true without trying to actually visualize how the system works. What does it mean to say, for example, that the farther away from the Center that man seeks happiness, the less able he is to distinguish between true and false happiness, between good and apparent evil? And, where is this Center that is so far removed from earthly desires?

The positions and motion of the planets are an effective way to make such Beethian abstracts more concrete. Boethius himself suggests such an example, and it may be that Chaucer had that example in mind when he wrote the Knight’s Tale. 8 Chaucer lived in a Ptolemaic universe: the earth was at its center, and circling the earth in ever-widening, slower, and more distant orbits were the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. As C. S. Lewis has explained, however, the intelligible universe is turned inside-out in medieval philosophy with God or the Unmoved Mover at its center:
All this time we are describing the universe spread out in space; dignity, power and speed progressively diminishing as we descend from its circumference to its center, the Earth. But I have already hinted that the intelligible universe reverses it all; there the Earth is at the rim, the outside edge where being fades away on the border of nonentity.  

What this means is that the order of the planets is reversed in the intelligible universe. With the Unmoved Mover at the Center of creation, the earth is the most distant planet from the Center and would therefore have the widest, slowest orbit relative to the Center. Man, of course, resides on the earth, and the model thus easily demonstrates the error of false happiness based upon earthly criteria because of its distance from the Center. It is easy to see, moreover, that when man believes happiness or the good is to be found in earthly power or pleasure and relies upon the gods or the planets to grant that happiness, he places himself at the disposal of all of the Destinal Forces (i.e. the seven planets separating the earth from the Center). It is just as easy to see by the astrological model that seeking the good and happiness beyond the earth, beyond the planetary agents of Providence (Mars, Venus, Diana/ the Moon, and Saturn in the Knight's Tale), and by being moved directly by Love for, and in imitation of, the Center, one is no longer subject to the Forces of Destiny.
In Chaucer's works, both the Ptolemaic model and the inverted model appear. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, for instance, the standard Ptolemaic system is the model used to demonstrate that Divine perspective is located far from worldly considerations and beyond the spheres of the Destinal Powers, that the stars move in absolute harmony with the goodness at the Godhead, that man loses his sense of suffering and worldliness and gains an understanding of the nature of true happiness and the supreme good when he leaves the world behind and joins himself to God, and quite simply, it shows where the soul goes after the pilgrimage of life and death is complete: home to God.

Following his death, Troilus' spirit ascends "to the holughnesse of the eighth sphere" (*Td* V. 1807-9). Having quickly passed through the elements of earth, air, fire, and water that comprise the earth's atmosphere and the seven spheres containing the planets, he views the
earth from a point beyond the influence of the Destinal Powers, from the vantage point of God Himself. From God's vantage point, he is able to see that the Destinal Forces do not indifferently "cause" good or evil to befall mankind, but instead that their movements indicate the order and goodness of God's creation: "And ther he saugh, with ful avysement, / The erratik sterres, herkenyng armony / With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie" (TC V. 1811-13). When he looks at the earth far below, he "fully gan despise / This wrecched world" (TC V. 1816-17). But, he does not despise the world itself or its inhabitants because they are worthless or "evil" because God creates only that which is good. What he despises is man's lack of perspective, his belief that worldly happiness is comparable if not superior to heavenly bliss. He "held al vanite / To respect of the pleyn felicite / That is in hevene above" (TC V. 1817-19). It is this earthbound perspective that leads man away from true happiness and into needless suffering.

From his celestial vantage point, from the unchanging bliss of eternity, Troilus is able to laugh at the grief that is generated by his death. He does not laugh because man grieves for the loss of a loved one; he knows that they do so because they are earthbound and their ideas of the good are based on temporal things. He does not laugh because he feels contempt for mankind. He laughs because they grieve when a man dies as if death meant a loss of peace and happiness rather than a gain of both (TC V. 1821-25). They are simply too close to the earth and too far from God to understand. Besides, the difficulty of viewing life with Divine perspective seems clear since Troilus himself has only been able to do so after death. But at least there is no doubt that Genuine Love and True Happiness exist for man at the
Godhead, even if it is after death in this case. Troilus goes forth in bliss "Ther as Mercurye sorted him to dwelle" (TC V. 1827). 11

This is a far cry from the Knight’s comments on Arcite’s death. In that instance, there is real doubt that there is anything to be expected after death except coldness (Knt 2809-15):

His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher,
Therefore I stynte, I nam no divinistre;
Of soules fynde I nat in this registe,
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they xritten wher they dwelle.
Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gyve!

But in the Troilus, the Narrator makes it clear that happiness is to be found in the Love of God in life or death and not in worldly pursuits, or pagan rites, or any of the Destinal Powers (TC V. 1835-55). And where is God and happiness to be found? As the model indicates, far beyond the world, beyond the four elements, beyond the seven planets that do not rule our lives for good or evil.

In the Knight’s Tale, on the other hand, the inverted Boethian model demonstrates man’s inability to distinguish between apparent evil and the supreme good through the role of the planet-god, Saturn. Viewed from an earthly perspective, Saturn is a planet of evil; all astrological authority agrees that he is the most malevolent of planets. It is Saturn who brings about the death of Arcite in the tale (an apparent evil that turns out to work for the good). In a universe with the earth at its center, his is the slowest, widest course relative to the earth. For those reasons, he is seen as cold and indifferent to the happiness of men. But in a universe turned inside-out, Saturn is actually the closest of the Destinal Powers to the Center, to the
wisdom and Love of the providential plan, to God, and the model makes it simple to understand how the workings of the most maleficent of planets (from a worldly point of view) are not evil but in close harmony with, and participating in, the supreme good.

The astrological models thus make it easy to imagine how the wise man rules the stars by recognizing them as agents of providence and not as "causes" of good or ill fortune. He knows they are indicators of the direction the providential plan is taking, and he looks beyond them to the source of true happiness at the Center of creation. The choice is his: he may look to the Center, try to understand the direction the plan is taking by its indicators, and do his best to participate in the plan. 12 Or, he may look to himself or to Fortune, or to the stars in the pursuit of his earthly desires and be tossed about by the destinal forces when his endeavors conflict with the supreme good.

Whether one chooses the easier path of participation or the hard road of separation and self-interest, the supreme good will take place. When Chaucer uses the planet-gods in the Knight's Tale, he provides an astrological model that illustrates freedom of choice within a benevolent providential plan. Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye are driven by their earthly desires for power and pleasure and freely subject themselves to the destinal powers. The model makes it clear to the mind's eye just how far removed their desires and their patron planets are from the supreme good at the Center, and how it can happen that an apparently "evil" planet can work for the supreme good.
NOTES


2 An early example of the belief that the planets are alive and intelligent can be found in *Dodi Venechdi (Uncle and Nephew)* of Bera-chys and Adelard's *Questiones Naturales*, trans. Hermann Gollancz (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1920), pp. 158-59, where Adelard explains that "Whatever is in a state of motion is moved either by Nature, force, or by its own will." The stars are not moved by nature, he says, because that which is moved by nature moves either upward (as fire) or downward (as earth): "But this is not the movement of the stars, which therefore are not moved by Nature." Neither are the stars moved by force. Adelard declares that the most powerful force in nature is the turning force of the Aplanos (the Primum Mobile, which is free of hindrance by any sphere), and since the planets travel in a direction opposite to that of the Aplanos, their movement is not forced. By the process of elimination, then, he concludes that they are moved by will or intelligence and argues, by citing their effects upon life and death on earth, that they have life: "When the sun withdraws -- and winter comes, living things on earth and in the sky wither and die. When it returns to Cancer life is renewed and born... We must admit then that it is impossible to imagine that what provides life in others is itself devoid of life; only an irresponsible jester would do so... Whatever observes a determinate arrangement, and a fixed principle in its movement must employ reason; and nothing can have a more definite arrangement, or a more absolute order, than the course of the stars. When have the planets gone outside the zodiac?" Since the movement and arrangement of the planets are constant, since the sun and the planets rush to the extreme end of Capricorn, check their courses, and do not return beyond the confines of Cancer, Adelard reasons that "there is therefore no difference between them and other rational creatures."

Consistent with Adelard's conclusions yet more specifically Christian in formulation are the views of Bernard Silvestris in Winthrop Wetherbee's translation of *Bernard Silvestris: Cosmographia* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 75, 95-100. Bernard explains that there are principles of existence that, while depending on principles of their own, nevertheless are also dependent upon knowledge. Knowledge is to be found in God, in Noyo, and it is transferred throughout the universe in an unbroken chain. In agreement with the teachings of Dionysius the Areopagite, Bernard says the spheres are inhabited by Nine Orders of Angels: the knowledge of God descends through them to man which elevates them to a status of "lesser" gods: "I call 'gods' those beings whose presence is ever attendant upon God, those whom true
day preserves in its true light. For a region of calm, exempt from
tall the tumult of the atmosphere, secluded into itself, sets apart
their secret dwelling places. Far on high, beyond the limits of this
universe, belief places the being of God." For Bernard, the constellat-
ions were the abode of pure souls yet to be born and the home to which
they would return following their sojourn on earth. As Nature descends
through the spheres, she arrives at the tropic of Cancer where she sees
"a numberless throng of souls clustered about the abode of Cancer. All
these, it appeared, wore expressions fit for a funeral, and were shaken
by weeping. Yes, they who were destined to descend, pure as they were,
and simple, from splendor to shadow, from heaven to the kingdom of
Pluto, from eternal life to that of the body, grew terrified at the
clumsy and blind fleshly habitation which they saw prepared for them."
At death, the soul of man returned to the stars and inhabited them with
the other divinities: "By the laws of the firmament, man is assigned
at birth his term of life and the means of its final disposition. Once
having cast off the body he will come again to his native stars, one
more divinity in the host of celestial powers." Finally, in Bernard's
descriptions of the planets as viewed through the eyes of Nature and
Urania, the back-and-forth movement between myth and astrology does
not differ significantly from that employed by Chaucer. The planet-
god description of Saturn is typical: "an old man everywhere condemned,
savagely inclined to harsh and bloody acts of unfeeling and detestable
malice. Whenever his most fertile wife had borne him sons, he had put
them off at the first budding of life, devouring them newly born.
Ceaseless on guard against childbirth, he neither paused for deliberat-
on nor succumbed to pity, whereby he might sometimes have been sparing
because of the sex or comeliness of the child. . . . By the spectacle
he presented he prefigured the hostility with which he was to menace
the race of man to come by the poisonous and deadly propensities of his
planet." Nature and Urania then "hastened their courage, and crossing
the barren and frozen wastes of Saturn they stopped at the abode of the
mild and beneficent Jupiter," where the mix of myth and astrology con-
tinues to dominate the descriptions. The same admixture of mythological
and astrological characteristics appears when Prudence encounters the
planets in her ascension through the spheres in James L. Sheridan's
translation of Alan of Lille's Antiglaedonianus or The Good and Perfect

3 William Harris Stahl, trans., Macrobius: The Saturnalia (New
York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), p. 149. See also, Percival V. Davies' 
translation of Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio (New York:
Columbia Univ. Press, 1966), p. 158, where Macrobius explains how the
gods of myth found their way into the spheres: "When Cicero called the
outermost sphere, whose revolutions we have just explained, the supreme
god, he did not mean to imply the First Cause and All-Powerful God,
since this sphere, the sky, is the creation of Soul, and the Soul eman-
ates from Mind, and Mind from God, who is truly the Supreme. Indeed,
he called it supreme with respect to the other spheres lying beneath,
as witness the words immediately following, confining and containing


Lady Philosophy presents the argument as follows (IV. Prosas 6. 82-110):

For ryght as a werkman that aperceyveth in his thought the forme of the thing that he wol make, and moeveth the effect of the work, and ledith that he hadde looked byforn in his thought symplely and presently, by temporel ordenaunce; certes, ryght so God disponith in his purveaunce singularly and stablaly the thinges that ben to doone; but he amynis-treth in many maneris and in diverse tymes by destyne thilke same thinges that he hath disponyd. Thanne, whethir that destyne be exercized outhir by some devyne spiritz, servantz to the devyne purveaunce, or elles by som soule, or elles by alle nature servyng to God, or elles by the celestial moevynge of sterres, or elles by vertu of angelis, or elles by divers sublilte of develis, or elles by any of hem, or elles by hem alle; the destinal ordenaunce is ywoven and accomplisid. Cartes, it es open thing that the purveaunce is an unmoeyvable and symple forme of thinges to doon; and the moevable bond and the temporel ordenaunce of thinges whiche that the devyne symplie of purveaunce hath ordeyned to doone, that is destyne. For which it is that alle thingis that ben put under destyne ben certes subgitz to purveaunce, to which purveaunce destyne itself is subgit and under.

See Book IV. Prosas 6. 115-73:

For ryght as of cerklis that tornen aboute a same centre or aboute a poyn, thilke cerkle that is innerest or most withinne jyneth to the symplese of the myddle, and is, as it were, a centre or a poyn to that other cerklis that tornen abouten hym; and thilke that is utterest, compassed by a langere envyrownynge, is unforden by largere spaces, in so moche as it is ferdhest fro the myddel symplie of the poyn; and yf ther be any thing that knytteth and felawchipeth hym-self to thilke myddel poyn, it is constreyned into simplicite (that is to seyn, into unmoeyvalite), and it ceseth to ben schad and to fleten diversely; ryght so, by semblable reson, thilke thing that departeth ferrest fro the firste thought of God, it is unforden and summittid to grettere bondes of destyne; and in so moche is the thing more fre and laus fro destyne, as it axeth and hooldeth hym neer to thilke centre of thingis (that is to seyn, to God); and yf the thing clyveth to the stedfastnesse of the thought of God and be withoute moeyynge, certes it surmounteth the necessite of destyne. Thanne ryght swich comparyson as is of skillynge to undirstondyng, and of thing that ys engendrid to
thing that is, and of tyme to eternite, and of the cercle to the centre; ryght so is the ordre of moveable destyne to the stable symplicite of purveaunce. Thilke ordenaunce moveth the hevene and the starres, and atemprieth the elements togidire amonges himself, and transformeth hem by entrechaungeable mutacioun. . . And this ordre constreyneweth by his propre stabelette the moveable thyngeis, or elles thei scholden fleten follyly. For which it is that alle thingis semen to ben confus and trouble to us men, for we nowne nat considere thilke ordenaunce. Nathale the propre maner of every thing, dressyng hem to godes, dispo[n]ith hem alle; for ther nys no thing doon for cause of yvel, ne thilke thing that is doon by wikkid folk nys nat doon for yvel . . .


10 On p. 210 of Chauncey Wood's *Chaucer and the Country of the Stars* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), Wood says that "If there is a single, supersalient theme in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, it is that providence is superior to Fortune, and it is worth remembering a point already made: the figure Boethius chooses to represent the wise man is an astronomer, who comprehends the motions of the heavens (Bk. I, m.2). For Boethius, then, the study of the stars is a step upward toward providence and is not to be confused with judicial astrology, which studies the stars' influence on earthly things. Boethius argued that the stars, the planets, even devils, are all agents of the divine will (Bk. IV, pr.6), and that we can only understand this world by looking beyond Fortune or destiny to providence."

11 As Wood has rightly pointed out, pp. 189-90, Troilus resides in the eighth sphere (among the fixed stars) because of his lechery until he ascends to the final heaven and to God. The point is, however, that his revelation takes place when he is beyond the spheres of the planets that supposedly control men's lives. Wood's argument for the assignament of the eighth sphere to the lecherous comes from the *Parlement of Foules* and from Boethius.

"In Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* there is a retelling of the Scannium Scipionis, and here we find an appropriate place for Troilus. In the dream as Chaucer recounts it, Scipio is taken to 'a sterry place' (*PF*, 43), which is presumably outside of all the movable spheres, for from it he is shown the galaxy, the nine spheres, and the little earth (*PF*, 55-61). Scipio is then told that the earth is little and full of torment, so he should not delight in it, but hope to come to heaven (*PF*, 64-72). It is then made very clear that the virtuous arise to heaven, which is beyond the spheres, but the unvirtuous are condemned to dwell for a long time within the moving spheres before they are permitted to enter the realm of stability:

... Know thyself first immortal,
And loke ay beayly thow werche and wisse.
To commune profit, and thow shalt nat wisse.
To come swiftly to that place desere.
That ful of blyssse is and of soules cleare.

But brekers of the lawes, sothe to seyne,
And likenous folk, after that they ben dede.
Shul whirle aboute th' erthe alwey in peyne,
Tyl many a world be passed, out of drede,
And than, foryeven al hir wikked dede,
Than shul they come unto this blysfull place,
To which to come God the sendeth his grace.

(PP, 73-84)

Troilus may be justly accused of being one of the 'likeros folk,' and it would be quite appropriate to the tone of the poem if Chaucer sent him to a place more like the Christian purgatory than either the Christian hell or the Christian heaven. We may hypothesise then, that Mercury does not lead Troilus away from the eighth sphere of the fixed stars into some other realm, but merely leads him to some spot within the eighth sphere. . . . For this we may once more go to Boethius who said that the soul ascending to wisdom ascends to the 'houses that bear the stars,' which seems to mean the fixed stars. He then specifies that the soul remains in the 'circle of the stars,' which is surely a reference to the sphere of the fixed stars, until it leaves the 'last heaven' and, passing through the Primum Mobile, arises to the light of God. The reference to the 'last heaven' seems to clinch the matter:

. . . he areseth hym into the houses that benen the sterres, and joyneth his weles with the sonne, Phebus, and felawshipeth the wele of the olde colde Saturnus . . . and thilke soule rennethe by the cercle of the sterres in alle the places there as the schynynge nyght is ypainted . . . And whan the thought hath don there inogh, he schal forlesthen the laste hevene, and he schal pressen and wenden on the bak of the swifte firmament, and he schal be makid parfit of the worshipful lyght of God. There halt the lord of kynes the septre of his nyght and atemprith the governemts of the world, and the schynynge juge of thinges, stable in hymself, governeth the swifte wyn (Bk. IV, m. I).

Thus we see that even the wise man must spend time 'inogh' in the eighth sphere of the fixed stars, and only after that time can he go to the 'back' of the next sphere to arise to that realm where all is stable. In remanding Troilus to the eighth sphere of the fixed stars, Chaucer sends him as one who is 'likeros' to a place where the wise pause for some time and the lecherous must remain 'Tyl many a world be passed' (PP, 81). For both the wise and the not-so-wise, the eighth sphere in the Neoplatonic concept is a place of purification and penance."

All of what Wood says makes very good sense, but I think, however, that the messenger of the gods (Mercury) has met Troilus in the eighth sphere to guide him on the final ascent to God. If Troilus is to spend time in the eighth sphere, it will be a short time, and he is already close to God. Troilus' condition at the end of the story is hardly one in which we expect him to shortly "whirl aboute th' erthe alway in peyne, / Tyl many a world be passed." Instead, I think that the loving forgiveness of God (contrary to the vengeful God of the Parlement of Foules) is intended and the pain of purgatory denied.

12 Wood says on p. 53, that "Because the essential religious concern of the men of the Middle Ages was the relationship of this world and heaven, and because so much verbal and pictorial art is related in
one way or another to religious concerns, astrological or astronomical motifs are commonplace in areas that are not at all astrologically oriented. For St. Bonaventure the heavenly bodies did not need to be put into either a providential or an astrological chain of determination in order to be employed in a figure of thought; they served to illustrate the link between heaven and earth by their philosophical 'nature.' One sees, he argues, that some things are earthly and therefore mutable and corruptible, others are celestial, hence mutable but incorruptible, and it follows that some things are supercelestial and consequently both immutable and incorruptible. After this image of the stars and planets as a tertium quid Bonaventure explains the utility of the figure: 'From these visible things, therefore, one mounts to considering the power and wisdom and goodness of God as being, living, and understanding; purely spiritual and incorruptible and immutable.' Here, as in Boethius, images of the planets are used only as a means and not as an end in themselves.
CHAPTER V

THE KNIGHT'S AND MILLER'S TALES

I. THE KNIGHT'S TALE

MERCURY AND ARCITE

Although an actual horoscope plays an important role in the Knight's Tale, its purpose is primarily to demonstrate the nature of the coming conflict between the gods and to act as a warning of the results of that conflict. The horoscope provides information about the behavior and attitudes of Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye, but planetary configurations are not the only means by which Chaucer provides astrological explanations for the behavior of his characters in this tale. Instead, as D. Brooks and A. Fowler have recently observed, he relies at times upon a recognition of the common characteristics assigned to the planets and combinations of those characteristics to develop his characters.\(^1\) The Knight's Tale, they say, "depends on a system of correspondences between the tale's planetary deities and human characters,"\(^2\) and the paintings in the temples make the dependency clear because "in each Chaucer has made use of the familiar convention whereby a planetary deity's influence was shown by portraying a group of his 'children.'" That Theseus, for example, is a child of Jupiter is demonstrated by his role as a just and wise king throughout the tale. Brooks and Fowler point specifically to the "imperial virtue of Clementia" when he avenge the wrongs of the Theban Widows and
in his role as arbiter (2657).

What is more important, however, is their recognition that "additional planetary influences are clearly at work in Theseus' character." Theseus acts under the influence of Mars when he rides against Creon (975-77), and it is Mars that he invokes when he stops the duel in the grove (1708-9, 1747). The influence of Venus (which tempers Mars) is seen at work when Theseus spares the lives of the combatants at the instigation of the ladies and exclamations at the power of love (1785 ff.). Since Jupiter was said to mediate judiciously between rough Mars and soft Venus, Theseus is said to be operating under the combined influences of Jupiter, Mars, and Venus in the grove. Finally, Theseus as a child of Jupiter is said to have already "united Mars and Venus -- though as martially as possible -- in his marriage with the Amazonian queen Ypolita." The same process of analysis is applied to Egeus, whom Brooks and Fowler see as a child of Saturn, to Emelye as a child of the moon and Venus, to Palamon as a child of Venus, and to Arcite as a child of Mars. Nothing, however, has been written by Brooks and Fowler or elsewhere about the astrological role of the planet Mercury in the tale or about his influence on the character of Arcite.

It is appropriate that Mercury should provide the first example of a planet-god in action without any reference to the zodiac or to planetary motion since he was believed to be the founder of astrology. From the time of Arcite's dream in Thebes to his discovery in the grove by Palamon, he is under the influence of Mercury the god and Mercury the planet. Chaucer uses Mercury in his role as messenger of the gods to deliver the dream-prophecy to Arcite which motivates his return to Athens and makes inevitable his confrontation with Palamon. The
position at court to which Arcite rises, his eloquence and popularity, and his shrewdness in the handling of his financial affairs are typical of the general characteristics of the planet. But the planet Mercury is not operating alone: it is through his alliance with the planetary influences of Jupiter and Venus that the explanation for Arcite's success and popularity at court may be found. The favor of Theseus for Arcite, however, disappears when the duel in the grove is interrupted, and Arcite's fames eloquence similarly deserts him. The reason Arcite loses both Theseus' favor and his own eloquence is to be found in the "turncoat" nature of the planet Mercury. 5 When Mercury combines his qualities with those of Jupiter and Venus, he enhances the beneficent qualities already present. Should Mars or Saturn control an event, however, he will align himself with one or both malefics, and his own malignant qualities will become manifest. Chaucer presents a clear picture of the double dealing of the planet first by demonstrating the benefits Arcite receives from the combined influences of Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus, and next by the shift in allegiance by Mercury to Mars when that planet controls the events in the grove. Finally, Mercury combines his influence with that of Saturn on the morning of the duel (which robs Arcite immediately of his eloquence and eventually of his life).

Mercury appears in the Knight's Tale a year or two after Arcite has gained his freedom through the intervention of Perotheus. Following his conditional release from prison, he returns to Thebes where he displays the traditional symptoms of lovesickness attributed to the servants of Venus and to the medieval malady called amor hereos. 6
Even so, we should not be too hard on Arcite. Palamon passionately blames the gods, the planets, and almost everything else for his imprisonment and his suffering. For him the gods are cruel, unjust, and care nothing for man (1303-12). The innocent are made to suffer worse than beasts (1313-24), and there is no justice when "a serpent or a thief, / That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef, / Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne" (1325-27). Evil seems to be rewarded or at least goes unpunished while he must rot in prison because of the whims of Saturn, Juno, and Venus (1328-33). Thus, by the time Arcite receives his prophetic dream, the atmosphere of the tale has already been saturated by the weight of destiny.

Before the appearance of Mercury, the gifts of eloquence and song for which Arcite will receive great praise are conspicuously absent. Music depresses him: "And if he herde song or instrument, / Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent" (1367-68). His voice and manner of speech have become almost unrecognizable: "So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe, / And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe / His speche nor his voys, though men it herde" (1369-71). Then Mercury appears to Arcite in a dream and ambiguously prophecies that a return to Athens will end his suffering: "To Athenes shaltow wende, / Ther is thee shapen of thy woe an ende" (1391-92). The end, of course, is death not the acquisition of Emelye's love, and the event foreshadows the unreliability of the planet-gods that is so evident in the temple paintings.

Following the visitation by the god, Arcite is a changed man. Under Mercury's influence, he sees the possibilities of disguise, and in true Mercurian fashion, he decideds to use it to deceive Theseus and
his court. 12 In the guise of Philostrate, he swallows his nobility and like the "Fair Unknown" of Arthurian romance, he successfully carries out the humble duties of a servant in order to be near Emelye. 13 He is first assigned to "drugge and drawe" (1416), and he is found to be well-suited to "hewen wode, and water bare" (1422). He becomes "Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte" (1427) and is finally elevated to the position of squire to the chamber of Theseus himself (1437-40). All of the positions held by Arcite in the Athenian court are those traditionally assigned to the children of Mercury. Lilly says, for example, that Mercury's children will be "carriers, messengers, footmen," 14 and there is ample evidence that the roles of page or squire or attendant were services performed by Mercury the god as well.

Perhaps by understanding that the legitimate effects of amor hereos on Arcite's appearance would have been severe was intended to make it easier for an audience to accept his admission to Theseus' court. But acceptance does not necessarily follow from admission, and Arcite seems to have earned the attention and admiration of the entire court. This situation, of course, is entirely in keeping with the Fair-Unknown theme. One of the reasons for Arcite's success was his ability to play the part expected of him as a mere retainer. Although he was noble by birth and accustomed to the privileges of rank, he was quickly able to emulate the behavior of underlings by observing them: "For he was wys and koude soon espye / Of every servaunt which that serveth here / ... To doon that any wight kan hym devyse" (1420-25). In this regard, Ptolemy says that Mercury delights in performances and deceptions, and that he consequently makes a man "speculative, gifted, emulous ...
partakers of mysteries, successful in attaining (his) ends." Moreover, Arcite's popularity at court is also due to his eloquence (1437-38): "And thus withinne a while his name is spronge, / Bothe of his dedes and his goode tonge," another trait specifically assigned to the influence of Mercury. Finally, Mercury is at work in the shrewdness with which Arcite handles his finances so that the Athenians will not become suspicious of his income (1442-45). Along these lines, Ptolemy explains that those under the influence of Mercury are "wise, shrewd, thoughtful, learned, inventive," and since, as Macrobius says, Mercury is the god of merchants, it is not surprising that the children of the planet-god are both shrewd and imaginative in the handling of money.

Arcite's behavior and occupations and his general success and popularity in Athens can thus be accounted for by both literary convention and by the single influence of the planet-god Mercury. His decision to return to Athens in disguise is the result of the visitation by the god, and it is under the influence of the planet-god that he finds acceptance at court. The details of Arcite's success, however, point to an association of Mercury with the beneficent planetary-gods, Venus and Jupiter.

It will be recalled that Venus is no more favorable toward Arcite than Palamon at this point in the tale: both are her "servaunts," and the gods do not take sides until after the prayers in the temples. There is thus no reason to doubt the cooperation of Venus with Arcite based on her later patronage of Palamon. And there was already a precedent for the involvement of Jupiter with Mercury in Statius (it will be remembered that it was Jupiter who sent Mercury on his disruptive missions in the Thebaid). Moreover, if, as Brooks and Fowler
suggest, Theseus operates primarily as a child of Jupiter, it is fundamental that Mercury will adapt his influence to the Jupiterean influence that dominates the court.

It is the unique nature of Mercury to be beneficent with beneficent planets and maleficent with malefics. Thus, when his influence is combined with that of Jupiter and Venus, it is to be expected that Arcite's return to Athens will be exceptionally successful. In Ptolemy's words, "(if) Jupiter and Venus are the rulers of the places which govern travel . . . they make the journeys not only safe but also pleasant. . . . Often, too, if Mercury is added to these, profit, gain, gifts, and honour result from this good fortune." 19 Arcite's songs in the grove and his ability to delude Theseus and the court that he is Philostrate is also evidence of an association between Mercury and Venus: "Again, when two planets are found to rule action, if Mercury and Venus take the rulership, they bring about action expressed by the arts of the Muses, musical instruments, melodies or poems, and rhythm. . . . they produce workers in the theatre, actors." 20 Finally, through an alliance between Mercury and Jupiter, it is possible to understand Arcite's general popularity and to realize why Theseus was so impressed with him that he made him a favorite. The Knight said, after all, that "Ne was ther never in court of his degree; / He was so gentil of condicioun / That thurghout al the court was his renoun" and that "Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre" (1430-32, 1448). In this regard, Ptolemy clearly states that when Mercury governs action, and "it is Jupiter that witnesses," those affected "will be lawmakers, orators, sophists, who enjoy familiarity with great persons." 21
As was the case following Arcite's dream in Thebes, a sudden change takes place in his temperament in the grove. The shift from joy to melancholic pensiveness, to unreasoning rage is further evidence of the turncoat nature of Mercury's involvement in Arcite's affairs. But the season is also right for Arcite's activities, and we must wonder whether that is the cause for his behavior or Mercury, or both. It is Friday, the day assigned to the rulership of Venus as well, and it is May 3, the time of pagan festival. (It is) a time of erotic pleasure and rebirth ritual, a fusion of human impulse and natural forces. The time is therefore not sinful in itself, and is a part of God's plan. But to make Friday, May 3, into a festival of praise for Venus is to misplace the emphasis on Love, and to concentrate on the erotic . . . as do the two lovers of Emily.

The scene thus seems to present the proposition that the season or the planet-gods are behind Arcite's behavior or a combination of both. Given the concern in the tale for discovering the cause of incomprehensible events, the proposition may well be a question directed to the pilgrims as to which of these powers "cause" Arcite to behave as he does.

When Arcite first enters the grove, he sings in celebration of May and of his love for Emelye. His songs and the nature of the day, however, lead him to recall that Emelye is beyond his reach and that Palamon remains a prisoner. His mood changes to thoughtful silence as he considers the danger of extinction to his line, and he places the blame for that danger upon Juno and Mars (1543-44, 1559-60). He sees Palamon as an imprisoned martyr (1561-63), and he bemoans his unrequited love.
for Emelye (1563-71). Even in that, it is Love that he holds responsible (1564) rather than Theseus, Palamon, or Emelye, and his thoughts are divided between erotic longing for his beloved and brotherly concern for his kinsman. In short, his frame of mind prior to his discovery by Palamon is one in which he bears no malice toward any man: there is nothing hostile or bloodthirsty about his thoughts or his behavior.

He becomes contentious and is provoked to jealous rage by the words of Palamon, who brings the fury of the planet Mars with him into the grove (1574-79): 25

This Palamon, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
He felte a coold sword sodeynliche glyde,
For irs he quook, no lenger wolde he byde,
And whan that he had herd Arcite's tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke.

Fletcher observes that Palamon "is seen as a hunted wild beast hiding in fear, yet the fact that he is crouching in the undergrowth makes him full of menace for the unsuspecting Arcite . . . His jealousy is so intense that he feels it as a physical pain." 26 Palamon is not interested in talk or reconciliation. As a warrior, he will settle the issue by force, and he is fiercely determined to die rather than surrender Emelye to his kinsman: "I wol be deed, or elles thow shalt dye, /
Or thow ne shalt nat loven Emelye. / Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!" (1593-95).

Once Palamon's challenge is uttered, Mercury shifts his allegiance to the planet controlling the situation, Mars, reviving and adding fire to Arcite's sense of outraged knightly honor. His earlier compassion for Palamon vanishes, and his eloquence turns to furious ranting. It
is only Arcite's adherence to the knightly code of conduct and his belief that Palamon is "sik and wood for love" (1600) that prevents him from dispatching his unarmed kinsman on the spot. Or is it the fact that Jupiter has also some influence in the matter? Again, we cannot say for sure since both propositions are possible. The underlying current of rage in Arcite's response to Palamon's challenge indicates that he has become immersed in the furious combination of Mercury and Mars and that he is hard pressed to exercise chivalric self-control (1596-1607):

This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,  
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,  
As fiers as leon pulled out his swerd,  
And seyde thus: 'By God that sit above,  
Nere it nat thou art sik and wood for love,  
And eek that thow no wepane hast in this place,  
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,  
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.  
For I defye the seurete and the bond  
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.  
What verray fool, thynk wel that love is thee,  
And I wol love hire maugre al thy myght!'

The duel that follows is steeped in the animal savagery engendered by the association of Mercury and Mars. Both men circle each other like hunter and prey (1607-43). Palamon fights as if he were a "wood leon" (1656), and Arcite responds as though he were "a crueel tigre" (1667). The effects of the Mercury-Mars combination continue when Theseus arrives, and the weight of his wrath falls heavily upon both combatants (1706-9): "Hoo! / Namoore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed! / By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed / That smyteth any strook that I may seen." And when Palamon demands death for himself and for Arcite, Theseus cries: "Ye shall be deed by myghty Mars the rede!"
(1747). It is only the intervention of the ladies that saves their lives.

By himself, Mars is responsible for the "raising of bloody, swift, and violent deaths, especially in the prime of life; similarly violence, assaults ... the wrath of leaders." 27 Albertus Magnus says that Mars makes his children "rough, wild, fierce, invincible, bold, contentious," 28 and as Lilly points out, "scorning that any should exceed (them); subject to no reason, bold, confident, immovable, contentious, challenging all honour to themselves ... hazarding (themselves) in all perils, unwilling to obey or submit to anybody." 29 According to Ptolemy, "Mars and Mercury produce enmities, noisy disputes," 30 to which Lilly adds that even when Mercury and Mars oppose each other, those involved will be "violent, furious, contentious." 31 When Mars is prominent in a horoscope, Lilly declares that the native is a born warrior and leader, for Mars produces "Generals of armies, colonels, captains, or any soldiers having command in armies; all manner of soldiers." 32 When the maleficent Mars controls the action in events where men are not born warriors, moreover, Gervase Marstaller (Marstallerus) declares that even though it does not mean immediate war, the planet causes "an inclination among men to war." 33

When one views the deadly animosity that developed between Arcite and Palamon and recalls that it was Mercury that inspired Arcite to return to Athens, one is once again reminded of the similar functions of Mercury and Mars in the Thebaid and in the Knight's Tale. Just as Statius' Mercury and Mars bring about the violent dissolution of the kindred bond between Eteocles and Polynices, so do Chaucer's deities contribute to the severing of the bonds of kinship and loyalty between
Arcite and Palamon. Love is the force that ruptures the bonds between them, and it is love that finally brings about a reconciliation. As Joseph Haller has observed, the implications in Chaucer's variation are cosmic:

To be specific, Chaucer has made Palamon and Arcite's rivalry over the love of Emelye the equivalent of Polynices and Eteocles' struggle over the throne of Thebes in the Thebaid, and has thereby made love the means whereby the cosmic and political implications of the epic are conveyed. In this regard, the Knight's Tale is both parallel with and a continuation of the Thebaid, depending on its predecessor in much the same way that Virgil depends upon Homer. 34

One of the clearest indications that Mercury (the god of eloquence) has aligned himself with the maleficent planets and against the interests of Arcite is the sudden loss of Arcite's eloquence and his loss of the favor of Theseus. When Mars entered the grove with Palamon, the success granted Arcite by the benevolent cooperation of Mercury with Jupiter and Venus disappeared and was replaced by the malevolent association of Mercury with Mars. In the initial confrontation between the two kinsmen, Arcite is bereft of his eloquence and can only fume and rage in the same manner as Palamon. Moreover, he is completely at a loss for words when confronted by Theseus until he offers his prayer to Mars in the temple some 711 lines later. In addition, from the time that Theseus enters the scene and Arcite is exposed, neither he nor Palamon receive special consideration from the duke. Formerly, Theseus had the highest regard for Arcite, but when Mercury shifted his allegiance from Jupiter and Venus to Mars, not one shred of that esteem remained. But this is only a part of Mercury's involvement in Arcite's destiny.
The shift by Mercury from the benevolent company of Jupiter and Venus to a malevolent association with Mars explains why Arcite did not try to reason or effect a reconciliation with Palamon, why the usually reasonable Arcite foolishly allowed himself to be drawn into a duel through which he could gain no real advantage in his pursuit of Emelye, and why the anger of Theseus fell upon his head as well as that of Palamon. It is an alliance with Mercury and Saturn, however (thus balancing in the second half of the tale his association with the two benefics in the first half), that made reconciliation out of the question, disregarding the bonds of kinship inevitable, the duel itself bloody and pitiless, the loss of Arcite's eloquence understandable, and the loss of his life probable. 35

Just as Mercury allied himself with Jupiter and Venus in the first half of the tale, so does he cooperate not only with Mars but also with Saturn in the latter half. It will be recalled that Palamon escaped from prison on the "thridde nyght" of May (1463), a date of "ill luck in love and in general" because of the Christ-Venus conflict attributed to the day. 36 On Friday, he meets Arcite in the grove, and Mercury aligns himself with Mars; both men rail furiously at each other and arrangements are made for the duel on the following day. The duel takes place on Saturday, the day astrological doctrine assigns to the rulership of Saturn. Arcite gathers together the armor and weapons for himself and Palamon "er it were dayes light" (1629), rides to the grove, and both men arm themselves.

Astrology assigns the first hour of daylight to the planet having rulership of the day. 37 Granting that Arcite and Palamon did not begin to fight before it was light enough to see means that the hour
in which the duel commenced belonged to Saturn. Moreover, Theseus' habit of rising before dawn in order to hunt (1673-78) and his need to look "under the sonne" (1697-99) in order to clearly see Arcite and Palamon suggests that the sun had not been long risen when he interrupted the duel. Having already joined forces with the lesser malefic, Mars, on the previous day, Mercury now casts his lot with the greater malefic, Saturn, who rules the hour and the day.

It is an astrological commonplace that Saturn is "an enemy of mankind . . . evil disposed, and counted the greater misfortune," 38 and when one recognizes that Mercury will always align himself with whatever planetary influence that is in power, it is easy to understand the pitiless savagery with which the two kinsmen attack each other. As Ptolemy says, whenever Saturn and Mercury join forces, their children are "malignant, with no pity in their souls, given to toil, hating their own kin." 39 They also can be counted upon to bring about "impediment of speech . . . or difficulty in enunciation." 40 That these characteristics emerge in Arcite is clear from the description of the duel (1636-62) and by his failure to speak, indeed, to utter a single word of self-defense in the presence of Theseus.

The final act performed by Mercury in association with Saturn may be found in the illness that leads to Arcite's death. Walter Curry has explained in great detail that Saturn is responsible for the death of Arcite through his power over the expansive virtue in the human body, 41 and Schweitzer has recently expressed the view that the malady from which Arcite suffered in Thebes (amor hereos) reasserts itself at the conclusion of the tournament and brings about Arcite's death. 42 Although it is true that Arcite's inability to discharge the infectious fluid caused
by his wound is due to Saturn's malevolence, it does not seem true that he alone is responsible for Arcite's death because of the planet's dry nature and because of his dominion over long-term affairs. Instead, it seems likely that Mercury provided special assistance to Saturn which resulted in the build-up of fluids in Arcite's body and his death in the short-term. Before discussing the results of the Mercury-Saturn combination on Arcite's illness and death, however, it will be useful to remind the reader of the exact nature of the complications that arose from Arcite's wound (2743-60):

Swellieth the breast of Arcite, and the sore
Encreesseth at his herte moore and moore.
The clothered blood, for any leechcraft,
Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,
Ne dryynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural
Ne may the venym voyden ne expelle.
The pipes of his longes gone to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
Hym gayneth neither, for to gete his lif,
Vamyt upward, ne dounward laxatif.
Al is tobrosten thilke regioun;
Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certeinly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
Fare wel phisik! go ber the man to chirche!

In cases of illness and injury, Saturn "increases the phlegm, makes them (those afflicted) ... meagre, weak, jaundiced ... coughing."43 There is, no doubt, a connection (however loose) here between the clotted blood and infection caused by the wound, and it is quite possible (if not certain) that even though Saturn actually causes an expulsive activity like coughing, he may malignantly withhold that power. The build-up of infectious liquid in Arcite's body, however, seems odd when
attributed to a "dry" planet like Saturn. This too, it seems to me, does damage to Schweitzer's medical explanation of Arcite's death through the increasing heat and dryness of amor heros in that advanced stage which multiplies the melancholic humors in the vital organs. In addition, when Ptolemy discusses the "Quality of Death," he specifically explains that Saturn "brings about the end through long illnesses (my italics) . . . chills and fever . . . or hysteric conditions, and such as arise through excesses of cold." \(^44\) One can clearly see Saturn's hand in some of Arcite's symptoms, but there is a problem with death through "long illnesses." Given the circumstances surrounding Arcite's illness and death, it does not seem likely that he survived over a long period of time. He is wounded on the day of the tournament, Theseus feasts the surviving knights for three days (2731-38), sends them on their way, and with no further reference to the passing of time, Arcite dies some 62 lines later. If Saturn alone was responsible for his death, there should have been some suggestion of a long or lingering illness, and there is none.

There is no suggestion of a long illness because Saturn is not working alone. When Arcite wins the tournament and Mars has been pacified, Saturn takes control of the event, brings about the injury to Arcite, and is joined by Mercury to bring about Arcite's death. Where illness and death are concerned, Ptolemy says that Mercury "assists the maleficent planets chiefly to prolong the evil effects, when he is allied to Saturn inclining toward cold and continually stirring into activity rheumatisms, and gatherings of fluid, particularly about the chest, throat, and stomach" (my italics). \(^45\) These are the elements in Arcite's illness that are missing when full responsibility for his
death is given to Saturn. To be sure, Saturn can cause the retention of phlegm and can bring about death through the chills and fever accompanying infection. But it is through the influence of Mercury that a complete explanation of the observed symptoms is possible. It is Mercury who brings about the "gatherings" of infectious fluids thus helping to impede the healing processes involved in the expulsion of those fluids. And it is through the assistance of Mercury that the specific details and locations of the complications are best explained: the swelling of the breast, the gathering and clotting of the blood and the increasing infection, its settling in the stomach. Ptolemy declares that Mercury portends death by "all such ailments as arise from the excess of deficiency of dryness," 46 and from the Knight's description, Arcite appears to be drowning in his own infection, filling up with his own fluids.

Last, but certainly not least, since Mercury's sphere is much lower than Saturn's, and since his movement along the ecliptic is consequently many times faster, the death by "long illnesses" assigned to Saturn needs not be a problem. Chaucer's audience would have known that the speed of Mercury, cooperating with and compensating for, Saturn's slowness, would have made it possible for Arcite to die in the short space of three or four days, a feat not consistent with the power of Saturn alone.

The illness and death of Arcite is the final function of the turncoat planet Mercury in the tale. Chaucer made use of him in a manner consistent both with his role as a god of myth and with his behavior as a double-dealing planet. The god provided the motivation for the return to Athens that allows for the conflict to develop between Arcite
and Palamon and also makes the mythical connection between the plight of these young men and the earlier Theban kinsmen, Eteocles and Polynices. As a planet, Mercury functions to explain the successes and failures, the life and death that was the destiny of Arcite.

THE COSMIC ARENA

When Theseus enters the grove and forces his courser between the duelling kinsmen, he is obviously outraged by the breach of civil order and by their unchivalric conduct. The inappropriateness of the location and conditions of the duel present little more to his eyes than an uncouth brawl, and as the voice of order and authority in Athens, he demands that the hostilities be terminated on pain of death. When Palamon makes his suicidal declaration that both he and Arcite are deserving of death, Theseus grimly agrees: "Youre owene mouth, by youre confession, / Hath dammed yow, and I wol it recorde; / It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde" (1744-46). But Ypolita and Emelye intercede, reminding Theseus that "pitee rennethe soone in gentil herte" (1761), and their lives are spared. At that point, Theseus' mood shifts from anger to incredulity at a lovers' dispute in which the lady "woot namore of al this hoote fare, / By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!" (1809-10) and then to understanding as he recalls having committed similar follies of his own (1811-17).

The "wise" Theseus does nothing to effect a reconciliation or a compromise between the two kinsmen, and it never occurs to him to ask Emelye if she might have a preference or was interested at all now that she knew of their suits. Instead, he demands that the dispute be settled in the only way he knows how: through trial by arms. Arcite
and Palamon are therefore commanded to swear allegiance to Theseus, and each of them is ordered to assemble a force of one hundred knights and return to Athens in fifty weeks to settle the issue by combat. Again, it does not occur to the two kinsmen to try to settle their differences without violence. Deciding the issue in this manner is accepted with joyful anticipation by Arcite, Palamon, and the court (1870-77), and the enthusiasm with which Theseus prepares for the return of the opposing forces and the care with which he orders the construction of the arena are typical of the preparations made by rulers for tournaments in Chaucer's day. As Stuart Robertson has shown, kings were anxious to hold tournaments even when there was no particular demand for them, and "the general plan of the tournament, the hundred knights on each side and the rules for fighting... are very characteristic of the age." 47 It is possible, Robertson continues, that the feasting and dancing that take place prior to the battle were drawn from Chaucer's own experience since they closely resemble events he may have witnessed in a tournament given by Richard II in London in 1390. 48 Interesting as the descriptions of the feast, the seating arrangements, the giving of gifts, and the general merriment are, however, it is the architectural design of the arena that is most significant for the tale.

As Brooks and Fowler have suggested, the arena serves as a representation of a horoscope that foreshadows the celestial conflict between the planetary gods. 49 Having deduced that the battle took place on Tuesday, May 7, and that Arcite entered "'westward, thurgh the gates under Marte' (2581), that is, under the house of Mars situated above the western gate," and that Palamon "is under Venus, estward in the place' (2584 f)," Brooks and Fowler set the arena-horoscope in the
following manner. Based upon "sunrise on May 7 in the late fourteenth century," Taurus (a house of Venus) was on the ascendant, in the west was Scorpio (a house of Mars), while Cancer (the house of the moon) was in the north. Instead of Sagittarius or Pisces (ruled by Jupiter) in the south, however, they found a "subtlety. For on May 7, there culminated not the domicile of Jupiter we expect but Capricorn, a domicile of Saturn."

Brooks and Fowler are correct in assuming the existence of a horoscope in the architecture of the arena. It does indeed have the circular form of a horoscope, and the "degrees" described also call to mind the twelve 30° divisions that make up the 360° of the zodiac. Specifically, our attention is drawn to points on the eastern and western sides of the structure (1893-94) which correspond to the eastern and western angles of a horoscope: "Estward ther stood a gate of marbul white, / Westward right swich another in the opposit." Again, there is a verbal clue in the choice of the word "opposit," which, while making the location of the western gate somewhat more specific, also draws attention to the astrological concept of opposition. We are told that the temple of Venus is located above the eastern gate, which allows for the location of the influence of Venus on the eastern angle (1903-5). Opposing Venus, on the western gate, is the temple of Mars (1906-7). Thus, there is an opposition between Venus and Mars at the eastern and western angles, and obviously, when the combatants enter the arena, they will ride "under the influence" of Venus and Mars. Finally, the temple of Diana (the moon) is located in the northern wall (1909-12).

Consequently, when the Knight describes the arena, he not only describes the scene of a human conflict, but also foreshadows the nature
of the celestial conflict that will take place following the prayers in the temples. A horoscope takes shape that presents Venus and Mars in evil aspect (opposition) with each other, and the influence of the moon at the line of midnight is in evil (quartile) aspect with both Venus and Mars. Mars and Venus are 180° apart in the arena, and the temple of Diana (the moon) is 90° north of those planets. As I explained earlier in this work, Chaucer does not give the celestial degrees for the planets when he implies aspects because they would complicate matters (calculating planetary orbs, etc., to see if an aspect actually existed and whether it was partile or platic). The aspects are understood because the planet-gods are within the proper ranges along the implied ecliptic circle for such aspects to take place. Since Venus and Mars in evil aspect was the formula for lechery in the Middle Ages, the satisfaction of lust is one of the issues of the tournament. Diana (the moon) as the goddess of chastity is naturally at odds with lust or physical love of any kind. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the patron deities of Arcite and Palamon are placed in a position of opposition in the arena-horoscope, or that the patroness of Emelye is placed in a relationship of stress with Venus and Mars.

But what of Saturn? Certainly, the importance of his role in the tale should allot to him a position in the arena-horoscope. Yet, no specific location is provided for him by the Knight even though Saturn will soon ally himself with Venus and against Mars. Nevertheless, his influence is present in the horoscope, and it can be located by following the fixed procession of the signs and by applying the rules of planetary rulership. Astrology places the first of the signs, Aries, on the ascendant and always opposite Libra, Capricorn on the midheaven.
always opposite Cancer at the line of midnight, and so on; that is the
fixed, or "created" order of the signs. By imagining this natural and
fixed order, it is easy and almost instantaneous to suspect that Aries
is where it should be, in the east, which automatically and always
places Libra in the west, Cancer at the line of midnight in the north,
and Capricorn on the midheaven in the south. As far as the planetary
influences go, we know that Venus' influence is located in the east,
Mars in the west, the moon in the north. Since Saturn is the ruler of
Capricorn, and the rules of astrology say that the influence of the ruler
of a sign is present even if the ruler himself is absent, the influence
of Saturn can be placed "overlooking" the arena-horoscope on the mid-
heaven, opposing the influence of the moon in Cancer in the north and
in quartile aspect with Venus and Mars in the Orient and Occident.

The configurations in the arena-horoscope, then, would indicate
Venus in Aries in the east in opposition to Mars in Libra in the west,
and in quartile aspect with the moon in Cancer in the north and Saturn
in Capricorn in the south. Mars, opposing Venus from Libra, also is
in quartile with the moon and Saturn (90° distant). The moon in Cancer
opposes Saturn in Capricorn (180° distant) and is in quartile with Mars
and Venus. Saturn, of course, opposes the moon and forms quartiles
with Venus and Mars. The prognostication for such configurations would
at best be "unfavorable" for all parties.

How these configurations apply in the context of the tale remains
to be explained. The conflict between Arcite and Palamon and between
Venus and Mars is one in which none of the parties have an initial
advantage over the others. Part of the reason for this condition is
the location of the influences of Venus and Mars in signs ruled by each
other. Generally speaking, that means that the gentle, procreative love of Venus is distorted in Aries causing her to manifest her lusty nature, and also that the malevolent power of Mars is tempered in Libra by Venus' rulership of the sign (the effect also being lust). The Wife of Bath will later make use of just such a configuration (Mars in Taurus ascending -- Taurus is ruled by Venus) in an attempt to lay the blame for her lusty, domineering nature on the stars. The opposition between Mars and Venus in the *Knight's Tale* is almost a standoff. Since, however, Mars' power to do evil is greater than Venus' unassisted power to do good in any case, it is his influence that will eventually prevail. Consequently, Venus must appeal to the greater maleficent, Saturn, to negate the effects of the inevitable victory of Mars and turn it in the long term (Saturn's dominion) to her advantage.

Moreover, when the moon is in Cancer at the line of midnight, she is at home in an angle (unlike Venus and Mars) and in the sign she rules. By placing her in a position of essential dignity, she is able to withstand (but not overcome) the evil aspects formed upon her by both Venus and Mars. In her double role as the champion of chastity, the signs and aspects are appropriate in that she opposes not only the lust represented by Mars and Venus, but also the lechery attributed to Saturn in such configurations.

Finally, by placing the influence of Saturn in Capricorn on the midheaven, he becomes the deciding factor in the horoscope and in the tale. In essential dignity in the sign he governs, the power of the greater malefic is greater than that of the ill-dignified Venus and Mars and far greater than that of the moon. Since his influence is always maleficent, Saturn's location and the aspects he forms with the
other planets are as they should be: no one will get exactly what they want under the conditions they would like to have it. Without an understanding of astrology, we get a premonition of a coming *deux ex machina* when the Knight places the temples of the gods in the arena. By understanding the fundamentals of astrology, there is a sense of even greater uneasiness as the powers of love, war, and chastity are set in opposition to one another under the cold and watchful eyes of the old, cold-blooded devourer of children, Saturn. Our sense of impending celestial intervention and doom is thus reinforced by natural, as opposed to mythological events (the orderly course of the stars) which enriches our first reading of the passage and emphasizes the heavy weight of destiny at work in the outcome of the tourney.

Since Saturn's influence is in evil (quartile) aspect with Mars on the Occidental angle, since the Occidental angle corresponds to the seventh house in any horoscope, and since the seventh house is the house of marriage, when Saturn allies himself with Venus against Mars and Arcite, the likelihood of marriage or any other desireable partnership between Arcite and Emelye is almost non-existent. It is perhaps for this reason that there is no death-bed marriage between Arcite and Emelye in Chaucer's tale to parallel that in Boccaccio's *Teseida*.

Even though Saturn does ally himself with Venus, Palamon (in contrast to the situation in the *Teseida*) certainly does not enjoy Emelye as he had hoped. In addition, his attitude toward the dying Arcite and his behavior after the death of his kinsman do not indicate that he was satisfied to have won the lady at the cost of Arcite's life. In spite of his intense desire to possess Emelye, in spite of his "ultimate" victory, he does not enjoy the fruits of his success (as might be
expected due to the nature of Saturn) until the passing of a "lengthe of certeyn yeres" (296?)

The result of Saturn's malevolence, however, is a dynastic marriage which brings with it reconciliation and peace. What had appeared to be an act of evil turns out to work for the good. The personal desires of Palamon and Emelye were such that they freely chose to place their lives in the hands of the destinal powers to the exclusion of compromise and love. Each of them got exactly what they asked for, but the way in which they got it overwhelmingly makes the point that the planet-gods are not to be relied upon. The death of Arcite and the mourning which follows diverts their attention from their personal goals, and they are moved by the forgiveness and love evinced by Arcite from his death-bed. Time allows them to learn the value of understanding, compassion, and brotherly love, and the marriage that takes place some years later appears to be one in which lust has become unimportant, and the possibility of love between Emelye and Palamon is truly present. Love is the power that places man beyond the powers of destiny, and in the end, Love brings peace on earth, good will toward men as the Bible says in its description of the entrance of Love into the world. And in that case as in the Knight's Tale, it is the wisdom of the providential plan (as Arcite had once suspected) that teaches mankind the meaning and value of love through the suffering, forgiveness, and death of a noble man.

THE ARENA-HOROSCOPE AND THE TEMPLE PAINTINGS

The Knight’s description of the "noble theatre" shows that the construction of the arena is designed to represent a horoscope which foreshadows the conflict between the gods and displays the stressful
relationships that will develop between them. Because of the evil aspects of the horoscope, the quality of influence generated by each of the planet-gods will be negative. The same negative manifestation of celestial influence appears in each of the temple paintings. Each of the deities is capable of exerting positive influences, but as Kathleen Blake says,

Emphasis falls upon the woes of love (in the temple of Venus) (broken sleep, sighs, tears) and on the histories of woeful lovers (Salomon, Cresus). All this is hardly more attractive than what is offered in the temple of Mars: portraits of Felonye, Ire, and Drede, scenes of slaughter, tyranny, razing of cities, all manner of violent accidents . . . she (Diana) can inflict misfortune upon men to vie with Mars', turning woeful Calistopee into a bear, for example (2056-59). There is a whole painted catalogue of other unfortunates to whom 'Dyane wroghte hym care and wo' (2072). 55

The individuals portrayed on the temple walls are examples of those who once enjoyed the patronage of the gods, but the legends behind the paintings indicate a loss of patronage by the negative situations they portray. The paintings are indicative of a rather pessimistic view of the operation of the destinal forces in human life and are, in a sense, warnings that combine history, myth, and astrology to reflect the stressful situations foretold by the evil aspects in the arena-horoscope. They are, the Knight seems to be suggesting, the visual manifestations of the astrological configurations, the "effects" of the astrological "cause." Each of the legends has elements in common with the predicament in which Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye find themselves, and they point to unfortunate results for the tournament and for those who are foolish enough to rely upon the planet-gods.
When the legends behind the paintings are understood, it is clear that they are tragic examples of what may be expected to take place through lust engendered by the adulation of physical beauty, through pride and self-complacency in conquest, and through the determined resolve of beauty to remain chaste. There is tragedy in each of the legends, and they foretell tragedy for all who selfishly pursue pleasure, power, and reputation. Arcite's prayers to Mars are concerned above all with conquest: he desires Emelye, but it is fame and power that he most desires. Had he attended to the examples portrayed in the temple of Mars, he might have noticed that the patronage of Mars, the pride and glory of conquest enjoyed by the Caesars and Antonys of the world were temporary and were closely followed by treachery and death. Emelye desires nothing more fervently than the preservation of her chastity. Had she taken careful note of the paintings in the temple of Diana, she might have observed that great beauty and avowed chastity become an explosive combination whenever the decision to remain chaste is seriously challenged. She might also have noticed that Diana turns on her children with no less ferocity than Saturn on his and that she does so whether her devotees are deserving of her wrath or not. From the beginning of the tale, Palamon is possessed by the beauty of Emelye. His prayer to Venus is that he may enjoy that beauty whatever the outcome of the tournament may be, and if Venus will grant his request, he vows to become her champion (2233-37):

Considre al this and rewe upon my soore,
As wisly as I shal for everemoore,
Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,
And holden werre alwey with chastitee.
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe!
Had Palamon had eyes to see, he might have realized that his consuming desire to possess the beautiful Emelye might easily have unforseen and tragic consequences. What we have here is an example of what Boethius would describe as the pursuit of worldly power and pleasure. Such pursuits, of course, have nothing to do with the supreme goodness and Love that orders the universe and indicate that the path of false happiness has been chosen. An indication that the wrong choice has been made in such cases usually occurs only after those worldly goals have been accomplished and one discovers that one is in fact not happy. The Knight does not make such statements, but his tale does, and the problem of whether or not worldly pursuits lead to unhappiness and tragedy is left to the pilgrims to solve.

The legends surrounding the individuals portrayed in the temple of Venus (1941-46) are examples of the catastrophe and death that follow a life of pride, lust, and jealousy in the pursuit of physical beauty. With the exceptions of Narcissus, Solomon, and Croesus, all of the characters portrayed in her temple are involved in love-triangles. In each of the triangles, the love described (by Ovid) is that which is conceived and perpetuated by the beloved's appearance. The lovers in these paintings are servants of the Venus who governs lust rather than spiritual love, and as D. W. Robertson, Jr. has observed in this context, "he who seeks assistance from Venus almost inevitably suffers misfortune." 56

Echo is entranced by the beauty of Narcissus and when she is rejected by him, she wastes away to nothing, leaving only her voice to "echo" among the rocks. Narcissus, whose vow to remain chaste creates the same sort of misery for his other suitors, is caused by Nemesis to
fall in love with his own beauty because of his vanity and similarly wastes away and dies. 57 Solomon, whose fame for wisdom was legendary, was also well-known for his insatiable appetite for beautiful women. He ignored Yaweh's injunction against marriage outside of the faith, was led into idolatry by his foreign wives and concubines, and lost the grace of God. It was Hercules' pride and self-complacency that caused him to place Dianira in jeopardy when he gave her to Nessus to be carried across the river rather than keeping her safely with himself. When the centaur attempted to abduct her, he was shot down by Hercules, and Dianira was placed in a position whereby (in fear of losing the love of Hercules) she accepted the gift that would ultimately bring about Hercules' death.

According to Ovid, when Medea first saw Jason, she was "seized by an overwhelming passion of love." Like Dianira, she was capable of great jealousy. Before she decided to aid Jason in his quest, she was already concerned that he might abandon her and marry another woman. That her love was based upon Jason's physical beauty is apparent in the scene that finds her on the way to the altar of Hecate, resolved to be loyal to her father and to ignore her passion; the mere sight of Jason changes her mind. When he later abandons her to marry Creon's daughter, Medea's jealous fury brings about the agonizing death of the princess and her father. Circe is driven to the same sort of excesses through her adulation of physical beauty, her lust, and her jealousy. Overcome by the beauty of Glaucus, Circe is rejected by him in favor of Scylla, and the sorceress transforms Scylla into the monster of classical myth. Enamored of Picus of Laurentum, Circe is similarly rejected by him in favor of his wife, Canana, and transformation and death are again the
results.

In the story of Turnus, the establishment of the Trojans in Italy is played out against a background of love and jealousy. Turnus was betrothed to Lavinia, the daughter of Latinus, but for political reasons was deprived of his bride by the arrival of Aeneas of Troy. In the war that followed between the Latins and the Trojans, Turnus was slain in single combat by Aeneas, and Aeneas took the beautiful Lavinia for his wife. The final, and perhaps most puzzling example in the temple of Venus is that of Croesus. His pride, his belief that the source of human happiness was to be found (again, contra Boethius) in great wealth and the fabled notion of Lydian luxury are well-documented by both Herodotus and Plutarch. Convinced by an ambiguous prophecy (as Arcite was) from the Delphic Oracle that he should invade Persia, he is ultimately defeated at Sardis and enslaved. His place in the temple of Venus is derived from the connection between the goddess and the idea of Lydian luxury, which was in turn associated with the unseemly voluptuousness attributed to the Lydians following their defeat. 58

All of the paintings in the temple of Venus, therefore, are illustrative of the situation in which Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye find themselves. All that is lacking in the situation as the kinsmen prepare for battle is the intervention of the gods, ambiguous prophecies that result in a treacherous turn of events, and death (all of which occur) for the legend of Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye to take its place among the rest of the paintings in the temple of Venus. 59

Treacherous events may also be found in the temple of Mars. Julius Caesar, Nero, and Mark Antony are all men who enjoyed (for a time) the favor of Mars. All three men became famous for their conquests and
for their sexual adventures. Indeed, the love affairs between Caesar and Cleopatra, and Antony and Cleopatra, and the sexual perversions of Nero are legendary in themselves. All is not necessarily fair in love and war, however, and the spoils gained by the victor may only be enjoyed for a short time or not at all. Power does not insure happiness; misguided love does not equate with bliss. Beyond their conquests, Caesar, Nero, and Antony are remembered for the treachery and death that followed their military successes.

Caesar is a good example of the Boethian notion that glory and power are temporary and that they do not guarantee loyalty, security, or happiness. Nero’s case demonstrates the disaster that awaits the conqueror who misuses his power to do evil and to pervert the beauty of love. Antony’s story reveals the tragic results that can occur when the thirst for pleasure leads the soldier to plunge his country into civil war, bringing brother against brother, kinsman against kinsman. Pleasure and power under the governance of the violent Mars is an unyielding, explosive combination, and to seek the patronage of Mars is no safer than to depend upon the whims of Fortune.

The fortunes of those individuals portrayed in the temple of Diana are even less appealing than those in the temple of Mars. Not only can Diana’s favor turn to animosity without warning, but also when her devotees have been forced into "sin" against her, she is absolutely without compassion and knows nothing of forgiveness.

The extraordinary beauty and fanatical chastity of Callisto, Atalanta, Daphne, and Diana herself have disastrous results for the devotees and for many of the suitors who become fascinated with their beauty. Callisto, Atalanta, and Daphne are absolutely loyal to Diana.
They are determined to remain chaste and they actively resist the attempts of those who would possess their beauty. In Callisto's case, the result of her resistance is the transformation of her son, Arcus, and herself into constellations so that they might escape the vengeance of Juno. Atalanta's indifference to Meleager's lovesickness and her resistance to marriage result in the deaths of Meleager, his uncles, and his mother in the incident of the Calydonian boar, in the deaths of countless suitors whom she defeats in foot-races, and in the transformation of Hippomenes.

As a reward for her devotion to Diana, Callisto is raped by Jupiter, impregnated, cast out by the goddess, and transformed by Jupiter. Atalanta's reward is transformation at the hands of Juno when Venus decides to withdraw her patronage of Hippomenes. And Daphne is relentlessly pursued by Phoebus until she prays for and receives transformation into the Laurel tree. Diana makes no attempt to intervene on behalf of her devotees, regardless of the circumstances. She is cold, indifferent, and intolerant. When Callisto is discovered pregnant as a result of her rape by Jupiter, the goddess indignantly exiles her, concerned only that Callisto does not pollute her sacred pool. In another incident, Actaeon accidentally views the nude body of Diana, and he is transformed into a stag and torn to pieces by his own dogs. What better example do the pilgrims need to understand the folly of putting one's trust in the planet-gods?

There seems to be no way for the beautiful woman to remain uninvolved in love affairs or perpetually chaste regardless of her devotion or innocence. 61 It seems true that if Callisto, Atalanta, and Daphne made a choice among men and surrendered to the inevitable and honorable
loss of chastity through marriage, many lives might have been spared, many tragedies averted. Their perception of the "good" of chastity and their refusal to accept the inevitable incited men to disregard all things in pursuit of their beauty and led, in the end, to death or disaster not only for their suitors but for themselves as well.

Information was available to Chaucer both in mythology and in astrology which would have allowed him to make use of the positive qualities of the planet-gods in the Knight's Tale. But he chose to present only their negative attributes. If the paintings in the temples are visual manifestations of the evil aspects in the arena-horoscope intended to demonstrate the unreliability of the destinal forces, then the aspects formed between Venus, Mars, the moon, and Saturn should produce the kinds of situations that take place in the legends behind the paintings.

Mars, Venus, and Diana/the moon are all in positions of power in their own temples, but each of them is also in a dishonorable position because of the evil aspects in the arena-horoscope. Moreover, Mars and Venus are doubly undignified since each is located in a sign ruled by the other. The bloodlust, madness, cruelty, and murder attributed to Mars are indications of the evil aspects formed on and by the planet (1995-2020) and of the nature of Mars when he is in his own sphere of power and in a dishonorable position. When this is the case, Ptolemy says that Mars makes his subjects "savage, insolent, bloodthirsty, makers of disturbances ... loud-mouthed, quick-fisted, impetuous, drunken, rapacious, evildoers, pitiless, unsettled, mad, haters of their own kin, impious." 62 Venus, in her own sphere of power and in
a dishonorable position provides an astrological explanation for the lovesickness and the generally reproachful behavior that pervades the paintings in her temple. Ptolemy declares that when Venus has dominion over the soul and is in a dishonorable position, she makes her subjects "careless, erotic, effeminate, womanish, timid, indifferent, depraved, censorious, insignificant, meriting reproach." 63 And, as Lilly says, when the moon is in a dishonorable position, "it shews a changeable, unsettled life, great troubles in marriage, and much ill-fortune . . . attended with indigence and poverty, and much trouble from females." 64

With this general information in mind, it is possible to explain the prognostications for the aspects in the arena-horoscope, beginning with Mars and Venus in opposition and quartile with the moon and to apply them to the legends behind the temple paintings.

Ptolemy explains that when Mars is in quartile with the moon, "he causes the subjects to be slaughtered in civil factions or by the enemy, or to commit suicide." 65 In addition, the subjects will "die because of women . . . whenever Venus testifies to them (Mars and the moon)." 66 According to Lilly, when Mars and the moon are in quartile, the subject will "travel into foreign countries as a sailor or soldier, amidst innumerable dangers and hardships, and die by pestilence, dysentery, or the sword." 67

Several of the characters in the temple paintings were famous warriors whose adventures led them into strange and exotic lands or military leaders who waged wars of global conquest. In the temple of Mars are Caesar, Nero, and Antony; in the temple of Venus are Solomon, Hercules, Turnus, and Croesus; in the temple of Diana, there is Meleager.
Caesar met his death at the hands of a civil faction (by assassination); Nero, with the Roman populace in rebellion, committed suicide; Antony was engaged in civil war with Rome, and following his defeat and the loss of Cleopatra, he took his own life. In the battle for Italy, Turnus dies by the sword for his country and for the love of Lavinia; Croesus crosses the Ionian border, the Lydian empire falls to Persia, he is enslaved, and his countrymen become known for their effeminacy.

Venus, Mars, and the moon in evil aspect also called for much trouble and death through women. Death and disaster in many of the temple legends are directly or indirectly brought about by females. In the temple of Mars, Cleopatra is responsible for Antony's rebellion and suicide. In the temple of Venus, Solomon's fall from grace may be traced to the idolatry of his foreign wives and concubines. Dianira is the unwitting agent of Hercules' death, and Medea brings catastrophe and death to Jason through the murders of her rival and their sons. Circe mercilessly transforms those who reject her or stand in her way, and the hand of Lavinia plays as large a role in the death of Turnus as the war against the Trojans. In the temple of Diana, the beauty of Callisto causes her and Arcus to be transformed into constellations to preserve their lives. The beauty and fanatical purity of Diana herself causes the transformation of the innocent Actaeon and his bloody death. The beauty of Daphne causes her transformation into a Laurel tree, and Atalanta is indirectly responsible for the deaths of Plexippus, Toxeus, Meleager, and Althea. She is directly responsible for the deaths of the suitors who attempt to win her in a foot-race, and it is the wrath of Juno and Venus that transforms Atalanta and Hippomenes into lions.
This "trouble with women" is a prognostication that is repeated in all of the aspects in the arena-horoscope.

The kind of trouble with women to be expected from a Venus-Mars-moon combination is to be found in the Mars-Venus opposition. Curry and Wood have already shown that Venus-Mars combinations in Chaucer's day were viewed as a formula for preoccupation with physical beauty and the lust it generates (see their discussions of the Wife of Bath). Indeed, the formula was so common that Lilly still described a Venus-Mars opposition as an aspect that causes "lust, excess, prodigality, disease, and injury by loose women, and complete waste of fortune" in the mid-seventeenth century. According to Ptolemy, "if Venus is together with Mars only, or is in some aspect to him, she makes them (her subjects) lustful and depraved and more heedless." As to the nature and durability of such relationships, Ptolemy adds that "Mars and Venus cause associations through love, adultery, or illegitimate relations, but they are unsure and flourish only briefly."

The results of the Venus-Mars opposition are clearly presented in each of the temples: the worship of physical beauty is there as is lust and excess, obsessive love and jealousy, and the unsatisfactory nature of the relationships. It is there in the legends of Caesar, Nero, and Antony in the temple of Mars. It is there in the temple of Venus in the stories of Narcissus and Echo, of Solomon, of Hercules, Nessus, and Dianira, of Medea, of Circe, and of Turnus. It is there in the voluptuousness and effeminacy that marked the reign of Croesus. It is also present in the tales of Callisto, Atalanta, and Daphne in the temple of Diana. None of the relationships were of any duration, and all of them ended unsatisfactorily. In all cases, the results of lust were
treachery, cruelty, violence and murder, depravity and impiety, and the more brutish elements in each of these affairs can be traced to the evil aspect between Mars and Saturn.

Ptolemy declares that when Mars and Saturn are in evil aspect, the very worst is to be expected. In such cases, Mars makes his subjects "robbers, pirates, adulterators, submissive to disgraceful treatment, takers of base profits, godless, without affection, insulting, thieves, perjurers, murderers, eaters of forbidden food, evildoers, homicides, poisoners, impious, robbers of temples and tombs, and utterly depraved." 71 According to Lilly, when Mars is in quartile with Saturn, "it is the aspect of cruelty and murder and the person so signified is extremely unfortunate; he generally lives a most dejected life, and dies a violent death." 72

Certainly, many of the characters in the temple paintings die "violent deaths"; many lead "dejected lives," and there can be no doubt that all of them are "extremely unfortunate." In the temple of Mars, there is the murder of Caesar by the crafty Brutus, the murderous cruelty and godless depravity of Nero, and the apparent "treachery" of Cleopatra which costs Antony his life. In the temple of Venus, the insult of rejection and the cruelty of unrequited love, the lack of affection destroy Narcissus and Echo. The lust of Solomon brings about the impious acts that cost him the grace of God; Hercules dies, poisoned by the treachery of Nessus and his poison shirt; Jason is assisted in his theft of the sacred Golden Fleece by Medea, who horribly murders her rival and cruelly takes the lives of her own sons. Moreover, the temple of Diana is filled with chaste, beautiful women
who are "without affection." There is treachery and depravity in the case of Jupiter and Callisto, the cruel pursuit of Daphne by Phoebus, the indifferent and intolerant craftiness and cruelties of Juno, Venus, and Diana herself, in the murders of his kinsmen by Meleager, the equally impious killing of Meleager by Althea and her own suicide, the deaths of the many suitors of Atalanta, and in the unnumerable transformations of innocent victims.

The list of atrocities goes on and is further explained by the quartile between Venus and Saturn. Lilly explains that when Venus and Saturn are in quartile, at the worst "it shews dissipation, and the person leads a most detestable life, connected with the lowest order of prostitutes, by whom he is eventually brought to ruin and disgrace." 73 At the best, the person is "very sly, artful, full of mischief, and much addicted to dissipation, though not suspected; mostly fortunate." 74 According to Ptolemy, when Venus testifies to Saturn, her subjects are "dealers in goods used for pleasure or adornment, sorcerers, poisoners, panders, and those who make their living from similar occupations." 75 In matters of love or marriage, Ptolemy adds that when Venus is in evil aspect with Saturn, "the marriage will be unstable, harmful, and full of jealousy." 76

Surely Nero is a prime example of the Venus quartile Saturn configuration. He certainly led "a most detestable life, connected with the lowest order of prostitutes," and there is no doubt that he was "much addicted to dissipation . . . full of mischief," and certainly (as was Croesus) a dealer in "pleasure and adornment." Hercules is poisoned by the shirt of Nessus and Medea poisons her rival in a similar fashion. Medea and Circe are both sorceresses, and the marriages
of Hercules and Medea and the love affairs of Circe and the other characters in the temples are certainly "unstable, harmful, and full of jealousy."

The theme of dissipation, of jealousy, of great trouble from women and marriage continues with the prognostication for the Venus-moon quartile. Ptolemy ascribes all irrational, sensual behavior to the moon, and her effect upon beings in the sublunar world was thought to be particularly powerful. 77 To this, Lilly adds that when Venus and the moon are in quartile, it means at best "a changeable, unsettled life, great troubles in marriage, and much ill-fortune." At the worst, it "shews a dissolute, extravagant life, attended with indigence and poverty, and much trouble from females." 78 From what has already been explained, the application of this configuration should be clear in the irrational and often obsessive behavior of the characters in the paintings, in their excesses of emotion, in their "unsettled lives," in their "great troubles in marriage, and much ill-fortune," and in the very prominent and repeated existence of "much trouble from females." Moreover, the final aspect between the moon and Saturn reinforces these unfortunate prognostications, and may help to explain the desire to remain unmarried (beyond the lack of affection) that is so evident in the temple of Diana.

Lilly says that an opposition between the moon and Saturn "shews a wandering, unsettled, and changeable person . . . always very fretful, and appearing full of trouble; not of a good disposition, nor to be depended upon." It goes without saying that these qualities can easily be applied to the gods and mortals in all of the temples. In the same explanation, Lilly adds that the subject "seldom attains any
high situation, but if he does, he soon falls into disgrace again . . . seldom living a long life, and generally dying a miserable death." 79
Surely, the examples of Nero and Antony, Narcissus, Hercules, and many others are cases in point. Ptolemy explains, furthermore, that when Saturn dominates the moon and is in a dignified position (as his influence is on the angle of the midheaven and in the sign he rules), "he makes his subjects lovers of the body, strong minded, deep thinkers, austere, of a single purpose, laborious, dictatorial, ready to punish, lovers of property, avaricious, violent, amassing treasure, and jealous." 80
The instances of "love of the body, singleness of purpose," the tyranny of dictators, the readiness to punish, the "amassing of treasure" so important to Croesus, and the jealousy and cruelties of both gods and mortals occur with such great frequency that there is no need to repeat them.

It is significant to note, moreover, that Ptolemy also says the moon, if under the rays of the sun (within 15°) and in aspect with Saturn, creates subjects who "do not marry." 81 Admittedly, we do not know if the moon is under the sun's rays, but we do know that she is in evil aspect with Saturn. It may be something more than a coincidence that when we have an aspect between the moon and Saturn and when we have the subjects of Diana/the moon (including Emelye) doing their utmost to avoid marriage (as they should, according to myth), we also have a configuration capable of giving an astrological explanation for the avoidance of marriage. It is speculation, of course, but if the moon under the rays of the sun occurred to members of Chaucer's audience, it would have shed light on Emelye's wish to remain unmarried (to parallel the mythological reason, since she is not a character of myth in
the tale) because the aspect physically exists in the heavens for her.

As I suggested earlier, the legendary circumstances surrounding the temple paintings can be applied to the situation in which Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye find themselves. It is also true that the situations in the legends accurately reflect what is to be expected astrologically according to the evil aspects in the arena-horoscope. Although the aspects apply to the temple paintings, they also exist in the "here and now" of the tale for all three characters. They should, therefore, apply to their destinies as well. If the aspects are not meant to apply to Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye, then the astrological parallels between the arena, the temples, and the alliances between the gods are reduced to mere cleverness and do not have any bearing on the outcome of the tournament. The aspects in the arena-horoscope quite adequately explain, however, the personalities of all three characters, the nature of the problem at hand, and the probable outcome of the tournament. In order to shorten the explanation of how the aspects apply to the tale, I will refer to them by their astrological symbols. $\circ$ indicates the planet Mars; $\varphi$ Venus; $\mathbb{D}$, the moon; $\mathbb{H}$, Saturn; $\ominus$, quartile aspect; $\odot$, opposition.

$\circ \mathbb{D} \odot \varphi$ reveals that the combatants in the tournament are military men who have traveled to foreign countries; in this case, they have been gathering their hundred knights. All of the aspects indicate that they have led unfortunate lives, and that presently they have no permanent homes ($\varphi \mathbb{D} \mathbb{H}$). They are related, and a serious problem has broken the bonds of kinship since $\circ \mathbb{D} \mathbb{H}$ shows them to be "haters of their own kin." The problem came about because they are both
worshippers of physical beauty (οί δίκτυοι) and lovers of the body (τῶν συγκόμιστοι). Thus, the conflict arose between them because of their lust for a beautiful woman (οί δίκτυοι, οί θηρία των), and in their pursuit of her love, they have been irrational and reckless. They are men that have never been champions of licit love, and they are not really much interested in marriage. They are unsettled and changeable in their moods (οί δίκτυοι, τῶν συγκόμιστοι), with a tendency toward dissipation (τῶν συγκόμιστοι). As a result, their relationships with women usually begin illicitly, and their affairs with them are of short duration (οί δίκτυοι). Their real interest is in the satisfaction of their sensual desires, and they have no wish to marry at the time of the tournament (τῶν συγκόμιστοι). The love-triangle is evident, and the outcome will be unfortunate since οί δίκτυοι and οί θηρία των clearly shows much suffering and even death over females. That the rivalry cannot be resolved peacefully is indicated by the stubborn single-mindedness of τῶν συγκόμιστοι combined with the fact that τῶν συγκόμιστοι and οί θηρία των makes them obsessively and violently jealous. As for the lady in question, the aspects indicate that she too is unsettled and changeable and has no affection for either man (οί θηρία των, τῶν συγκόμιστοι); she is naturally unable to choose between her suitors. The problem is further complicated since she prefers to remain unmarried (τῶν συγκόμιστοι).

The prognostication for the outcome of the tournament is overwhelmingly in favor of disaster and death despite Theseus' "precautions." As God set in motion the destinal forces to carry out the good of the providential plan, so does Theseus set the planet-gods in motion for the "good" of his plan. By so doing, he has unwittingly "stacked the deck," as it were, against a satisfactory conclusion of hostilities on the human level. The prognostication for marriage in the short-term,
regardless of whoever is victorius, in unfavorable; the hope of Emyle
to remain unmarried in the long-term is highly unlikely. The tourna-
ment is a civil enterprise; it is not a war, and the intention is not
that two enemies battle to the death. Nevertheless, ὁδος indicates
death by civil faction, ὅδε and ὁδος indicate extreme misfortune
in the event, a short life, and a violent, miserable death for some of
the participants. The suffering and death in the tournament will be
the result of injury (ὀδοφό) and disease (ὀδοπο, ὁδο). Since
wounds are likely in a tournament, death will probably come about
ultimately through the poison of infection (ὁδος, ὁδοφό). Finally,
the source of all the trouble, the reason for the battle, the cause of
the suffering and death is the dispute over a woman (ὀδος, ὁδοφ, ὁδοφό).

This, of course, is what happens. Palamon and Emyle do not lose
their lives even though Arcite dies because Saturn commits himself,
after the prayers to Venus, to the goddess' aid. But Saturn has given
his aid to gods, not to mortals: he is still a maleficent planet even
when he appears to be beneficent among the gods. It must be remembered
that even though he allies himself with Venus as a god, he is still in
evil aspect with her and the other planets in the arena-horoscope as a
planet. Since the proposition is that the planets affect the destinies
of men and not of gods, Saturn can aid Venus as god to goddess and
beneficently work for the celestial good while remaining true to the
apparently evil nature of his influence to work havoc among men. He
will keep his promise to Venus, and she will be able to grant Palamon’s
request, but the promise will not be kept in a way that Palamon, Emyle,
Arcite, or Theseus would prefer. Thus, the unreliability and the inability
of man to fully understand and depend upon the destinal powers again is
reinforced.

Theseus, Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye all have different hopes for the outcome of the tournament based on their notions of the "good." For Theseus, the good is a marriage decided by combat that will end the hostilities and restore order. For Arcite, victory is the most important issue; for Palamon, the supreme good means the immediate possession of Emelye. For Emelye, the good is to remain unmarried, and denied that, being married to the suitor that loves her best. None of them, with the exception of Theseus, is interested in marriage. That is not surprising, considering that Mars on the western angle of the arena-horoscope corresponds to a position in the seventh house, and the primary affair of the seventh house is marriage. We have repeatedly seen that Mars in evil aspect with Venus and Saturns equals lust and illicit love affairs and not the desire for licit love or marriage. Moreover, the power of the moon at the line of midnight (corresponding to the fourth house, the house of the "home") as the sole representative of chastity is negated by the evil effects of both maleficients and by the lustful aspect from Venus. Consequently, the probability of any marriage or the establishment of any family or home at the time of the tournament is out of the question.

Since Mars has precedence in battle, Saturn cannot prevent the victory promised Arcite without extending the strife in the heavens. As a god, he wishes to "stynen strif and drede" among the immortals (2450), but as a planet, to work toward a satisfactory conclusion to the affairs of mortals is "agayn his kynde" (2451). Since his planetary
influence operates over the long-term rather than the short (2454-55), he will keep peace in the heavens by allowing Arcite a temporary victory while denying him the possession of Emelye (thus satisfying both Venus and Mars). Arcite's victory is momentary; it does not include the possession of Emelye, and the long-term result is death. In the short-term, Palamon is defeated; in the long-term, he will satisfy his lust for Emelye, but only when "by processe and by lengthe of certeyn yeres, / Al stynted is the moorninge and the teres" (2967-68). Emelye is not to be Palamon's mistress, but his wife, and his lust for her is satisfied only through the death of his kinsman (which he obviously regrets), through a prolonged period of mourning, and finally through marriage. Emelye, in turn, is granted feelings of love for Arcite at the moment of his victory (2680-83) only to have him snatched from her at once. Her love grows during his illness until, following his death, she too suffers and mourns his loss in the ensuing years. Emelye's wish to remain chaste and unmarried is, of course, granted in the short-term. But in the long-term, she will lose her unmarried status and her virginity to Palamon in fulfillment of Saturn's promise to Venus and in fulfillment of the prophecy Emelye received from Diana. That the results are less than satisfactory for Theseus is also clear. Although Emelye eventually is married to one of the kinsmen and order is restored, the price had been much higher than he had expected. He recognizes the loss of a noble and valiant man in Arcite and can only resign himself to the apparent fact that his plan for the good was not the plan of Jupiter. Unable to find a cause for the apparent tragedy and unable to discern the good that resulted from the event, he can only express the hope that in the overall scheme of things Arcite's death was
permitted and necessary for the ultimate good. God/Jupiter knows what he is doing, and there is nothing man can do when his destiny has been decreed. except to make the best of the disaster and get on with living (3035-40): "What maketh this but Juppiter, the kyng, / That is prince and cause of alle thyng, / Convertynge al unto his propre welle / From which it is dirryved, sooth to telle? / And heer-agayne no creature on lyve, / Of no degree, availeth for to stryve."

Whatever shortcomings Theseus may have, he has consistently tried to impose order on disorder according to his idea of the good of all. Arcite and Palamon also try to impose order on their lives by proposing causes for the undeserved and unexplainable turns their fortunes take. In the search for cause, Arcite outstrips Theseus in Bothian musings, although he arrives at essentially the same conclusions. Arcite can find no order, no "good" in his "destiny." In his search for that good, however, he soliloquizes about the workings of Fortune and the influence of the planets in one's nativity. He ironically assigns the irresistible power of the laws of Divine Love to human lust to justify his break with Palamon. He speculates upon the natures of true and false happiness, the difficulty of distinguishing between apparent evil and the supreme good, and on Providence and Destiny. His only means of explaining the senselessness of life is by attributing the cause of evil to the destinal powers. By the end of the tale, he will imply that neither God nor those powers are particularly interested in man (in agreement with one of Palamon's notions), for Arcite feels he has nothing to look forward to except the grave.

Palamon's views of the workings of Providence and Destiny are initially as bitter as Arcite's final words. He too makes it clear
that the only way to explain the unexplainable is by placing the guilt squarely on the destinal powers. Before Theseus makes his statement about the responsibility of Jupiter in the death of Arcite, Palamon has already suggested that a greater power controls the forces of destiny. The proposition is that God and the planet-gods work independently of each other and that the planet-gods may intervene for good or evil in the lives of men unless they are forbidden to do so by that "eterne" power. The implications are that God is not often interested in intervening, and that proposition is reinforced later by Jupiter's disinvolve-ment in the dispute between the gods. Palamon can find no justice or order in punishing the good and rewarding evil, and he assigns the suffering of the innocent to the cruel indifference of the destinal powers. Borrowing yet another view of Beethius, Palamon proposes that men are merely toys for the gods and that the best thing in the world for a man would have been to be born an animal.

The Knight's Tale begins with Theseus returning in victory to Athens. By means of conquest and marriage, order has been restored to his life and to the realm. Before he reaches Athens, however, he is confronted by a group of Theban women whose husbands' bodies are being desecrated by Creon of Thebes. In the attempt to explain the inexplicable, Fortune is made the cause of all things. Just as Fortune had reduced the widows from royal status to slaves, so had they chosen Theseus to champion their cause since Fortune had given him the life of a conqueror. They neither envy his high estate, nor do they question the justice of their misfortune since "no estaat assureth to be weel" (926). They ask only for the honorable disposition of their husbands' bodies and not that Theseus restore their former rank; only Fortune can raise them again.
Theseus himself never speculates about why the women have been brought so low. He is moved by his sense of justice and honor when he hears them speak (952-53), but what saddens him is that he "saugh hem so pit-ous and so maat, / That whilom weren of so greet estaat" (954-56).

But Theseus' first reaction to the suppliants was irritation, not pity. The wars were over; he was coming home in triumph with his bride. It was a time for peace and celebration, yet at the height of his "wele" and "mooste pride" (895), he finds his path blocked by a crowd of shrieking women. Is the highway the place for such displays? Do they have a grievance of some sort? If so, the Athenian court is the place to state their case. Order is the supreme good for Theseus, and the disorder of the incident, the inappropriateness of the place for supplication, his flash of anger followed by understanding, and his determination to restore order foreshadow the incident in which he discovers Arcite and Palamon duelling in the grove. It is thus Theseus' determination to impose order on disorder that leads to the sack of Thebes, the imprisonment of Arcite and Palamon, and ultimately to the former's death. Since Fortune, or destiny, took Theseus to Thebes and his victory resulted in the discovery of Arcite and Palamon, it would appear that the tale proposes that their imprisonment was a part of their destiny and that it was destiny that intertwined their lives with the lives of Theseus and Emelye.

As the tale goes on, the number of propositions regarding cause and effect increase. During the imprisonment of Arcite and Palamon, the Knight suggests that yet another of the supernatural powers is at work to join the destinies of the kinsmen with that of Emelye. Emelye
is brought into Palamon's view because of the power of Nature. It is the time of year, May, that "maked Emelye have remembrance / To doon honour to May, and for to rise," walk, and sing in the garden near the dungeon (1042-47). When Arcite sees Palamon's reaction, his first words are a statement of cause for Palamon's agitation. Their imprisonment, Arcite says, "may noon oother be" (1085) because "Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee" (1086) and because of the condition of the heavens at their births. "Som" wicked aspect of Saturn in some sign of the zodiac was to blame, and there was nothing to be done about it. The proposition here is that Fortune and the stars are the causes of good or evil in the lives of men. Man has no choice in the matter and can only resign himself to his fate. It is important to notice, moreover, that the emphasis has shifted from the fortunes of war to the destiny of man.

Of course, Arcite has misread the cause of Palamon's distraction. Palamon was not looking for the cause of his imprisonment and was generally in agreement with Arcite in that respect (1093-95). But he is looking for the cause of an occurance that is equally inexplicable to him. He has been stunned by the beauty of Emelye, a beauty that defies explanation unless she is the goddes, Venus (1098-1102). His next step is to pray to her to help them escape (1104-7), thus reinforcing an earlier proposition (Theseus' conquest of Thebes under the banner of Mars) that the destinal powers intervene in the lives of men. Palamon believes that Venus can intervene on their behalf unless another, greater power decrees otherwise. He concludes his prayer by asking that the line of Cadmus be allowed to prosper if his "destyne" by "eterne word" is to be death in prison (1108-11)
In both instances, Arcite and Palamon are attempting to impose order on disorder by seeking causes for that which they have no explanations. Arcite is similarly "wounded" by Emelye and disorder follows disorder as, from Palamon's point of view, Arcite has broken their oaths of kinship and chivalry by opposing his suit for Emelye (1129-51). And again, Arcite tries to restore order by stating cause. He is not responsible. Again, it is an incomprehensible law, the law of Love, that authority declares supercedes all earthly laws that is responsible (1163-71).

The propositions regarding cause and effect, order and disorder, continue when Arcite is released from prison. Aside from Theseus' questions about the senselessness of Arcite's death, this incident deals more directly with Boethian ideas of Destiny, Free Will, True and False Happiness, and the Supreme Good in apparent evil than any other in the tale. In this episode, Arcite and Palamon both believe that Fortune has given happiness to the other. Trying to understand the cause of his "unfortunate" release from prison, Arcite bemoans the day he met Perotheus and declares that destiny has given Palamon the advantage in the winning of Emelye (1223-37). Fortune has given Palamon the ability to see her (1238-39), and since Fortune is changeable, she may also give him access to the lady (1240-42). What follows is Arcite's recognition that it is futile to try to make sense of his life. When he had complained about Fortune putting him in prison, release had been his "true" happiness and "supreme" good. With his release, he discovers that what he thought was "evil" (his imprisonment) was really "good" (since he could see Emelye then), and that what he thought
meant "true" happiness (his release) was really "false" happiness (in that he was separated from Emelye).

Arcite begins his soliloquy by asking why we complain so much about God's providence and the workings of the destinal powers when they seem to provide better for us in the end than we know how to provide for ourselves (1251-54). Here, of course, he is referring to the providential wisdom that caused his incarceration and brought Emelye to him. The "trouble" with providence and destiny is that since we don't understand their purposes, we are unable to distinguish between what seems evil and what is good. Because each of us has his own idea of the good, we often make errors, and as it turns out, "we witen nat what thing we preyen heere" (1260). This remark, of course, is an ironic foreshadowing (as is the whole argument) of Arcite's prayers to Mars later in the tale. We are all seeking true happiness, Arcite says (echoing Boethius), but more often than not, we choose what turns out to be false happiness (1261-67). God knows the cause of things, and nothing short of the intervention of the destinal powers (Fortune, in this case) can help a man achieve true happiness (1268-74).

Palamon is in agreement with this latter proposition. Man is at the disposal of the destinal powers and has no control over his own life. If Fortune decides to help him, Arcite has the chance to win Emelye since he is free (1281-98). Thus, it is Arcite who has "true" happiness. Whereas that position verifies Arcite's suggestion that we have difficulty understanding what true happiness and the good are because of our personal goals, Palamon diverges sharply from his kinsman's view that providence and destiny provide better for us than we can for ourselves.
Unable to understand why Arcite should have the good fortune to be free while he remains in prison, Palamon attributes the cause to the only powers he knows. The order of things, contrary to Arcite's views, are in the control of the gods, and the gods are indifferent if not actually hostile toward man. They are unjust and uncaring, and what they have decreed will occur whether man likes it or not (1303-6). There is no purpose that man can find behind their behavior; their ways are incomprehensible. Everything seems predestined, and at this point, Palamon raises another of Boethius' objections: men are killed like beasts, are imprisoned, and suffer even though they are innocent. Evil is rewarded. Where is the sense in that? (1309-14). He bitterly observes that animals are better off in this world and are spared any suffering in the next as well (1315-22). Unable to find any justice or order in the condition of man at all, he concludes that he will leave the answer to this question "to dyvynys" (1323). In order to impose at least a semblance of order on the chaos he endures, therefore, he says that he is in prison because of the planets and the gods, that the strife between him and Arcite exists for the same reason, and that he is innocent and suffering in prison while Arcite is free and happy because of the whim of Fortune. (1328-33).

When the Knight asks the pilgrims which of the two men are better off (1337-46), he is using the literary convention of the love-problem (demande d'amour or questione d'amore). But there is a larger question that evolves from the convention. True happiness and thus the supreme good have come to mean the sight of Emelye for both men: that is, the earthly love of beauty and pleasure have come to be the supreme good. Thus, the larger questions for the pilgrims become: how does one know
what true happiness and the supreme good are? Is earthly pleasure the
supreme good? Will it bring true happiness? Both men seek happiness
and the good, but each of them has a different idea of what that means.
Which of them is right? Both? Neither? The pilgrims are to consider
the problem, and the Knight implies that since he has no answer, he
would be interested in hearing their opinions if not now, perhaps later:
"Now demeth as yow liste, ye that kan, / For I wol telle forth as I
bigan" (1353-54).

In Part II, greater emphasis is placed upon the intervention of
the planet-gods, and where Mercury in particular is concerned, the stage
is being set for the unreliability of the destinal powers that will be
so obvious in the temple paintings.

After the Knight has explained how drastically Arcite has changed
either because of Venus or because he may have amor hereos or perhaps
because of a combination of both, he explains that Arcite risks a re-
turn to Athens because of the influence of the planet-god Mercury. Mer-
curry's prophecy foreshadows the ambiguous promises of the other planet-
gods in the temples, and the incident reinforces the proposition that
man is powerless until destiny moves him. Moreover, Arcite's unquestion-
ing acceptance of the prophecy as positive for him follows from his
assertion in Part I that the destinal powers provide better for man's
happiness than he can for himself. As will become the case later,
Arcite submits his life to the destinal powers now and returns to Athens.

In the incident that follows, the Knight proposes that Palamon's
escape from prison after seven years was predestined. How else can
the tale explain the close coincidence of the escape and the confronta-
tion in the grove? Palamon escaped at this particular time "by
aventure or destynee -- / As, whan a thyng is shapen it shal be --"
(1465-66). And why did Palamon happen to hide in the grove? Because
dawn was breaking, and he had to hide (1476-86).

The cause of events continues to be attributed to the destinal
powers as Fortune leads Arcite to the same grove that conceals Palamon
(1488-90). The first confrontation and the duel in the grove are
structural echoes of the incidents in Part I in which Theseus happens
on to the Theban women and in which Emelye is first seen and disputed
for by Arcite and Palamon.

The Knight again cites Nature and the destinal powers as the order
which governs man's existence. Just as Emelye had risen to walk, sing,
and pick flowers because it was May, so does "aventure" and the month
of May bring Arcite to the grove where he makes "a gerland of the
greves" and where he "song ayeyn the some sheene" (1505-12). Just as
the season led to the proposition that Venus was involved in the strife
between Arcite and Palamon over Emelye, so does the same season lead
to the implication of Venus' influence in the grove, and these influences
result in battle between Arcite and Palamon over Emelye. Just as
Arcite had suggested that the planet-gods were behind his and Palamon's
imprisonment, so do the Knight and Arcite imply that Venus, Mercury,
Mars, Saturn, and Juno are at work in the grove. Just as Arcite cites
the laws of Love as controlling the behavior of man while in prison,
so does he blame Love for his and Palamon's misfortunes, and so does
Theseus exclaim at the incomprehensible power of Love.

Just as Theseus believes the realm to be in order as he rides in
triumph to Athens, so does he believe that order prevails as he rides
on the hunt. Just as he suddenly comes upon disorder in the clamorous
and inappropriate supplication of the Theban widows, so does he stumble onto the brawl between Arcite and Palamon in the grove. Just as his first reaction to the widows is anger and then is tempered by compassion and the imposition of order, so is his first reaction to the combatants anger, then understanding, then the imposition of order. Just as marriage was the final step in the restoration of order when Theseus defeated the Scythians, so now does he propose that the victor of the tournament will have Emelye as his prize.

The major proposition that is raised in Part II regarding the order of things, however, is predestination. Whereas the idea that man is helpless in the hands of incomprehensible powers had been suggested by Arcite and Palamon in Part I, the Knight now proposes that the destinal powers do control the lives of men, but that they do so because of God's foreknowledge of events. The implications are that God's providence is for the good, and since he "hath seyn biforn" (1665) the acts of men that are contrary to His plan, he has arranged for the destinal powers to thwart those acts (1663-72). God knows what will happen, therefore, it must happen. The error in the reasoning from the Boethian point of view, of course, is the neglect of God's eternal condition. He does not see what will happen; he sees what is happening from an eternal present. The destinal powers were set to compensate for the free choices of man, not to eliminate freedom of choice.

Order is the good for Theseus, and the construction of the lists is his attempt to control the outcome of the tournament. Since he seems unable to make a decision regarding the disposition of Emelye, he submits the outcome of the tournament to the destinal powers,
literally inviting Venus, Mars, Diana, and Saturn to take charge. He is so involved in keeping the tournament fair and orderly, however, that he fails to notice that his temple paintings show that the gods are unreliable and very often work negatively and indifferently in the lives of men. If he did know the message the paintings delivered, he chose to remain silent (which again reveals him behaving somewhat like God Himself) and to allow Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye to choose for themselves what their courses of action would be.

Palamon, Arcite, and Emelye believe that the destinial powers can intervene on their behalves and submit their lives to the control of the planet-gods. In this, the proposition is that destiny can work for good or evil and independently of providence, and that the destinial powers themselves can work independently of each other for their own purposes. The emphasis on planetary influence is intensified as Palamon chooses the astrological hour assigned to the planet Venus for his prayers (2217-20), while Emelye goes to the temple of Diana at the hour of the moon (2271-74), and Arcite goes at the hour of Mars (2367-70). Emelye's visit reinforces the position is Parts I and II that the destiny of man is fixed, and that the powers can intervene for good or ill, but not if the overall plan prohibits such interference: "And if so be thou wolt nat do me grace, / Or if my destynee be shapen so / That I shal neded have oon of hem two, / As sende me hym that moost desireth me" (2322-25). The result of the prayers voices another Boethian proposition. Evil (in this case, the pursuit of worldly ideas of the good based on pleasure, power, or reputation) is not rewarded with true happiness. The earthly pursuit of power and pleasure is the path to false happiness and that becomes clear when its goals
are achieved. Everyone is granted what he prays for only to find out that what he thought was happiness and the supreme good was actually error and led to unhappiness. And the question from Part I again emerges: what is the supreme good? What is true happiness?

The stars continue to be important in the temples, especially in the temple of Mars (2021-45). It is clear in the description of the planetary powers of Mars and in the passage regarding the inevitable fulfillment of their decrees (2031-38):

Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deeth depeynted ther-bifour
By manasynge of Mars right by figure.
So was it shewed in that portreiture,
As is depeynted in the sterres above
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.

It is also emphasized by Saturn's list of his planetary powers (2453-69). Here the tale again suggests the proposition that God and the stars can work independently of each other, that God is hard pressed, if able at all, to control the planet-gods, and that the existing order is disorder. Notice that Saturn takes Jupiter's "chair," as it were, to settle the strife between the gods as Lucifer had taken God's chair in the Genesis B account of the Fall of Angels. Notice also that Jupiter does not intervene in the movements of the destinal powers, and the supreme good is still achieved. Still, if Jupiter does not bother to settle the issue himself, perhaps Palamon was right: Jupiter and the powers of destiny are indifferent to man, and nothing can be done.

Part IV leaves the pilgrims with two thoughts. God has allotted so much life to each person and nothing shall be eternal. Since there
is no way to understand God's motives, the best one can do is make the best of whatever happens. There is no understanding why Arcite had to die except that it was time for him to die, and nothing could have been done to save him. The second proposition is even more disturbing than the proposal that man has no control over his life. Man is warned against making earthly pleasures the goal of his life and told to focus on God and the bliss promised (and fulfilled in the Troilus) in life after death. What if, however, there is no afterlife or if it is not what we think it is? Then the buffeting man receives at the hands of destiny is even more senseless, and all things are a matter of chance or accident.

These are the ideas that occupy Arcite's last moments on earth. Where is the sense, the order in existence, he asks? "What is this world? what asketh men to have? / Now with his love, now in his colde grave / Allone, withouten any compaignye" (2777-70, my italics). There is nothing here but disorder and perhaps nothing beyond but the grave. Olympus (and Hades) existed even for pagans, and heaven and hell existed for the pilgrims, but Arcite calls those beliefs into question. The Knight himself says he has no idea what happens after death; all he knows is that "Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gyse!" (2815).

It is perhaps because of the existential questions that naturally arise from the Knight's profession that his tale opens the pilgrimage with propositions about cause and effect, providence, destiny, free will, true and false happiness, good and evil, and life after death. As a Christian knight, he had waged war for Christ all over the world, had participated in fifteen bloody battles, and had slain three foes
in the lists (CP 45-63). He was also a mercenary soldier, and one may wonder whether his choice of profession was not as much for adventure, money, and the hope of glory (power and pleasure) as because of any deep Christian commitments.

It stands to reason that a man of his background and experience would have become progressively more aware of the senseless cruelties, sufferings, and injustices of war. No doubt, he had witnessed events in which men undeservedly lost reputation or life among both Christians and pagans, and he had probably been forced to compromise his ideals at one time or another because of the fortunes of war. As a man who had faced death on a daily basis, it was natural that he might develop an interest in providence and destiny and a concern for his own salvation.

To a man who treasured truth, justice, honor, and order, the displays of falseness, injustice, dishonor, and disorder in war must have reached a point where there were questions that demanded answers. His weary horse, his decision to undertake pilgrimage without changing his soiled clothing, his late arrival at the Tabard Inn may not be only an indication of hard times or of pious humility. These things also suggest haste: perhaps a sudden decision in middle age to search for the answers to his questions on pilgrimage. Even though a crusade commonly ended with a pilgrimage, there is no evidence that the Knight was returning from such a venture, nor is there any evidence that he had undertaken pilgrimage before. Perhaps he had suddenly decided to "doon his pilgrymage" (CP 78) because it was time to search for order, for the cause of the inexplicable in the love of God instead of in war. Perhaps together, he and the pilgrims could come to an
understanding of the workings of providence and destiny that he had failed to deal with alone. This, I think, is the spirit in which he utters his challenge to the pilgrims very early in the tale (889-92):
"I wol rat letten eek noon of this route; / Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute, / And lat se now who shal the soper wynne; / And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne." The Knight, I think, is here inviting the pilgrims to consider carefully what he is about to propose and to try to deal with the issues he will raise better than he does if they can. What do they think about Arcite, Palamon, Emelye, and Theseus? Were they helpless in the hands of the destinal powers? Were the planet-gods responsible for turning love to lust and thereby working against the possibility of an orderly and honorable marriage, for creating strife and destroying brotherly love, and for bringing about the death of innocents? Was it true that Arcite's death was part of the providential plan, and nothing could have been done to save him? Is it enough to know that Jupiter/God has His reasons for what occurs even when we don't understand them? Should we forego life's pleasures on the chance that we may miss out on an afterlife that may not even exist? What is the good? If there is any good to be found in his tale, he is unable to find it or chooses not to emphasize it. These are the issues the Knight introduces for the company's consideration, and the propositions raised by his tale do, as this study intends to show, elicit responses from several pilgrims.
II. THE MILLER'S TALE

The Miller, of course, is extremely anxious to respond to the 

Knight's Tale: "'By armes, and by blood and bones, / I kan a noble tale 
for the nones, / With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale'" (Miller's 
Fig. 3125-27). He asks that any misbehavior on his part be attributed 
to his being drunk (3137-40), and announces that his tale will show 
that "An housbonde shall nat been inquisityf / Of Goddes pryvete, nor 
of his wyf. / So he may fynde Goddes foysen there, / Of the remenant 
edeth nat enquire" (3163-66).

In the Miller's Tale (as in the Knight's Tale) a combination of 
astrology and myth is used, this time to convince John the carpenter 
that Nicholas's prediction of a second Deluge is possible. By exploit-
ing the myth that Noah was an astrologer, by taking advantage of John's 
belief in biblical tradition (the mysteries of God are revealed only to 
the elect), and by relying on John's belief in his reputation as a 
weathercaster, Nicholas is able to gull the old carpenter and gain 
access to his wife.

The Miller's Tale has an Oxford setting, and the choice of Oxford 
"explains -- overpoweringly explains -- the presence of a clever 
clerk." 82 Oxford accounts for Nicholas's interest in astrology (Merton 
College, Oxford led the world in astronomical investigation), and it 
accounts for the carpenter's crude familiarity with the science: "Oxford 
was the right place for predictions such as those of Nicholas, and that 
the carpenter should have already been exposed to prognostications of 
an astronomer clerk (3457) is altogether likely." 83
As for Nicholas himself, we learn that he (3191-98)

Hadde lerned art, but al his fantasye
Was turned for to lerne astrology,
And koude a certeyn of conclusiouns,
If that men asked hym in certein houres
Whan that men sholde have droghte or elles shoures,
Or if men asked hym what sholde bifalle
Of everythyng; I may nat rekene hem alle.

Apparently, Nicholas had passed through the arts course (probably at Oxford University) which required the study of astronomy in the quadrivium. He appears to be somewhat amateurish, still learning about astrology, since he is able to deal only with "certeyn" conclusions (questions about the weather or almost any other future event) even when he is asked to do so under the most favorable conditions ("in certein houres").

It should be noted that his amateur standing allows the Miller to be as simple and as vague about astrology as he likes when he tells his tale. Nicholas's specialty is forecasting the weather, but he is not above dabbling in judicial astrology ("what sholde bifalle / Of everythyng") if he is asked to do so.

It is pertinent to note that the Miller shows a clear idea of how the astrological system works because he provides Nicholas with exactly the right tools of application. In his room, the clerk has "His Almageste, and bookes grete and smale, / His astrelabl, longynge for his art, / His augrym stones layen faire apart, / On shelves couched at his beddes heed" (3208-11). Notice the presence of Ptolemy's Almagest and the absence of works like his Tetrabiblos in Nicholas's library.

The Almagest was a book dedicated to the higher mathematics of planetary motion essential for plotting the course and locations of the
planets, stars, and constellations in the heavens and was essential to forecasting the weather. The Tetrabiblos, on the other hand, while containing general information about the weather, was primarily a work on judicial astrology. The Miller has given Nicholas the book he needs as a weathercaster, but he has not provided him with the tools for judicial astrology. As to the other tools of his trade, Nicholas has his astrolabe for locating the planets, stars, and signs of the zodiac (see Chaucer's Treatise on the Astrolabe). He has his "augrym stones," the numbered counters for an abacus that enabled him to make the mathematical calculations for his trade. Nicholas misuses the tools of his trade to satisfy his lust, but that does not detract from his understanding of astrology. Given the items in his room, both he and the Miller understand the process of making astrological prognostications well enough:

The special book for which he reached was not Aristotle's philosophy (as was the case with the Clerk, GF 293-96), but Ptolemy's Almagest, the famous and well-known treatise on astronomy as it has come down to fourteenth century England . . . . Then, to assist him in his mathematical 'conclusions,' which he had made through the Almagest and reckoned through his astrolabe, he had also his 'augrym stones,' counters essential for his abacus, the lightning calculator, applied arithmetic.

Nicholas's plan, of course, is to dupe the unwitting carpenter into believing that a Deluge more devastating than that of the first Flood is approaching. In order to do so, he must first convince John that he has a means of knowing this kind of information. To accomplish this end, he relies upon his reputation as an astrological weathercaster.
Since the Carpenter suspects, however, that astrologers may be violators of "Goddes pryvetee" (3454) and that predicting future events can be therefore a dangerous undertaking, Nicholas must also justify the fact that he alone has been granted foreknowledge of the impending flood and that he has gained that foreknowledge without invading God's privacy. In order to accomplish these ends, he compares the coming deluge to Noah's Flood: "I have yfounde in myn astrologye, / As I have looked in the moone bright, / Shall falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood, / That half so greet was nevere Noes flood" (3514-18).

It has been suggested that Nicholas is playing a "theological joke" in this passage, "since in ParsT 839 we are told that 'by the synne of lecherie God dreynyte al the world at the diluge,' and Nicholas's flood is planned as an excuse for lechery." More important, however, Nicholas is relying on the carpenter to associate this flood with Noah's Flood and the patriarch's reputation as an astrologer:

Chaucer was by no means original in connecting judicial astrology with an impending flood. He knew, and would have expected his audience to know, the astrological tradition of the Deluge. This tradition, that Noah was a skillful astrologer who was aware of the approaching cataclysm through his study of the stars as well as through divine revelation, was current in western Europe at least from the thirteenth through the seventeenth century.

To the credulous carpenter, who could scarcely pronounce the word "astronomy" (3457) let alone understand its workings, the fact that Noah had been given foreknowledge of the Flood through his astrological prognostications and by divine revelation as a servant of God apparently satisfied any doubts he might have had about Nicholas or about the
"dangers" of astrology. As to Nicholas being the sole individual to whom this new catastrophe had been revealed, he, as Noah, had somehow been chosen by God, and God's will was not to be questioned. Thus, the carpenter is not suspicious when Nicholas warns him that no one besides John and Alisoun are to know of the event. Noah had been instructed by God to reveal the coming of the Flood to his family and was forbidden to warn any other persons of the event.

The carpenter is thus satisfied on all counts with Nicholas's prognostication and himself opens the door for Nicholas to Alisoun's favors. God had chosen to reveal the second Deluge to Nicholas by means of astrology, just as he had done for Noah. Apparently, the carpenter had forgotten God's covenant with Abraham in which he promised never again to destroy the world by water. As was the case with Noah and his family, Nicholas and his "family," John and Alisoun, are the only beings on earth to be spared from death. As to the very pertinent questions of why Nicholas happened to receive the revelation and why the three of them had found such favor with God, the carpenter is content to accept Nicholas's "explanations" that "it is Goddes owene heeste deere" (3588), and that he "wol nat tellen Goddes pryvetee" (3558), for the carpenter himself had already observed that "men sholde nat knowe of Goddes pryvetee" (3454).

Finally, when Nicholas locks himself in his room as part of his plan to deceive the carpenter, the distraught servant observes that he was "evere carpyng upright, / As he had kiked on the newe moone" (3444-45). The astrological references to lunacy, or madness, brought about by gazing too long at the moon occur so frequently that they deny the
necessity of documentation. It should be pointed out, however, that Nicholas's own reference to the moon (3515) is not to the "same" moon that the servant mentioned. There should be no confusion here because the servant meant that Nicholas looked "like" he had been staring at a new moon (he looked "mad"), and not that he was actually doing so at the time.

I take Nicholas's examination of "the moone bright" to mean that he was contemplating a full moon (astrologically, a time when the sun and moon are in opposition to each other). At new moon, when the moon lies in the same direction from the earth as the sun, the side toward the earth will be dark, not bright. Full moon, of course, guarantees high tide. Furthermore, the flood is to occur on Monday, and Monday is a time when the influence of the moon is particularly powerful: she is the astrological ruler of the day. Thus the clerk has created an election of times that is most propitious for the earth to be covered by water.

So it is that the Miller makes use of astrology and myth in his tale to allow Nicholas to dupe the carpenter and to seduce his wife. He exhibits a knowledge of astrology and its methods through the Oxford background for his tale and through the selection of astronomical tools with which he provides his weathercaster, and he displays his biblical knowledge by alluding to Noah's Flood. By alluding to the first Flood Nicholas becomes, as it were, a second Noah to the carpenter, with God-given foreknowledge of the coming catastrophe. Noah learned of the first Flood through his knowledge of astrology and by the grace of God, and Nicholas makes the same claims. It was God's will that Noah and a select few be spared, and it is God's will that only Nicholas, John,
and Alisoun will be spared. Now, as then, it is not for man to question "Goddes pryvetee." Finally, the Miller reinforces Nicholas's position that a flood will take place by providing the appropriate astrological conditions: the moon is full, and as governess of the rivers, streams, tides, and the day on which the deluge is to occur, the full moon guarantees that the earth will be covered by water. This moon-induced flood and the views of astrology and astrologers expressed by the tale may well have been of special interest to at least one of the pilgrims, for the Franklin will later cause Aurelius to pray for just such a condition to take place in order to make the coastal rocks of Brittany "disappear" (Franklt 1031-76).

Since Nicholas uses astrology to exploit the credulous in order to satisfy his lust, the Miller's Tale suggests not only that nothing good ever came of its practice, but also that it is the domain of charlatans. More important, however, is the declaration that astrology is a dangerous invasion of God's privacy, for his motives and plans are, in fact, none of our business.
NOTES


2 Brooks and Fowler, pp. 124-25. For the discussion of Theseus as a child of Jupiter, of Egeus, Emelye, Palamon, and Arcite, I am indebted to Brooks and Fowler, pp. 124-28. Egeus, they say, manifests the positive qualities of the planet Saturn. Just as it is Jupiter's father, Saturn, who resolves the heavenly conflict in the tale rather than the king of the gods, so Egeus as Saturn's earthly counterpart and the father of Theseus brings the human action to a resolution. Saturn and Egeus have wisdom and age in common, and Egeus' "sole function" is the instruction of Theseus about the proper attitude toward Arcite's death. Emelye is the child of Diana-Luna since she prays to Diana that "Palamon's and Arcite's love may be quenched or turned from her (2318-21)." She is also associated with Venus, because Palamon mistakes her for the goddess (1101-2, 1136-37), and because of her habit of rising with the sun (commonly the case with Venus in her role as the morning star). In Brooks' and Fowler's view, the point of Emelye's prayer in the temple of Diana is that virginity is only one of the stages of life ruled by the goddess. Reading the incident as a "psychological allegory," they believe that Emelye is "afraid to enter on the next stage of life, marriage, with all that it signifies." Since she is aware that her attitude may be inappropriate, however, she agrees to submit to marriage if her "destyn see shapen so" (2323 f)." She asks for "hym that moost desire me" (2325) and is answered by the quenched altar fire." The omen signifies marriage because "the blazing brand is an attribute of Venus and Hymen, while the blood dripping from it represents the blood shed in menstruation, defloration, and childbirth." Thus, Emelye is to grow up, to "pass from the patronage of Diana to that of Venus, and learn Venus' ways." The point is made, they say, by the fact that Monday, prior to the tournament, was spent in the service of Venus. Monday is the planetary day of the moon, and the moon has "surrendered her day to Venus." Based entirely upon the prayers and "signs" given in the temples, Palamon is simply said to be a child of Venus and Arcite is a child of Mars "at the time of the tournament." For similar views of the planetary influences at work on the characters in the Knight's Tale, see also Jeorg C. Fichte, "Man's Free Will and the Poet's Choice: The Creation of Artistic Order in Chaucer's Knight's Tale," *Anglia*, 93 (1975), 335-60 and Richard Neuse, "The Knight: The First Mover in Chaucer's Human Comedy," *UTG*, 31 (1962), 299-315.

3 In the *Astronomica*, trans. and ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977), ll. 29-37, Marcus Manilius says: "You, God of Cyllene, are the first founder of this great and holy science; through
you have gained a deeper knowledge of the sky -- the constellations, the names and courses of the signs, their importance and influences -- that the aspect of the firmament might be enhanced, that awe might be roused not only by the appearance but by the power of things, and that mankind might learn wherein lay God's greatest power." See also, Lynn Thorndike's Michael Scot (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1965), pp. 14-15. Thorndike cites Scot's Liber introductory as saying that Mercury "delights particularly in astronomy, natural science, law, divinity, and in adulterine arts such as interpretations of dreams, auguries, and lots."

Chaucer probably had Statius in mind when he used Mercury to bring about the conflict between Arcite and Palamon. In the Thebaid, Eteocles and Polynices (the sons of Oedipus) spurn their father and assume the rulership of Thebes. To avoid conflict, the brothers agreed that while one of them ruled in Thebes, the other would reside in Argos. Oedipus, in his distress, prayed to Jove for justice against his sons. Although Jove had no love for Oedipus, he granted the request because of the seriousness of the sin against pietas, and because Oedipus had expelled his sins by self-inflicted blindness. Consequently, Jove sent Mercury to the Underworld to raise the shade of Laius so that he might appear to Eteocles, incite him to hatred of his brother, and bring about the dissolution of their agreement. Mars, in the meantime, was ordered through Mercury to arouse warlike passion in Argos to match that in Thebes, and the conflict between Eteocles and Polynices took place. In the Knight's Tale, Arcite's decision to return to Athens is also brought about by Mercury the god, and the result is the combat between the two kinsmen that eventually costs him his life. For a more detailed discussion of the connection between Eteocles and Polynices and Arcite and Palamon, see Christel Van Bohemen, "Chaucer's Knight's Tale and the Structure of Myth," DQR, 9 (1979), 180; Dale Underwood, "The First of the Canterbury Tales," ELH, 26 (1959), 460-61; and Robert S. Haller, "The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition," Chaucer, 2 (1966), 67-84, where Haller explains that "there is, at the same time, considerable evidence of Chaucer's direct borrowing from Statius' Thebaid, enough to show Chaucer's familiarity with the original epic. To be specific, Chaucer has made Palamon and Arcite's rivalry over the love of Emelye the equivalent of Polynices' and Eteocles' struggle over the throne of Thebes in the Thebaid, and has thereby made love the means whereby the cosmic and political implications of the epic are conveyed. In this regard, the Knight's Tale is both parallel with and a continuation of the Thebaid, depending on its predecessor in much the same way that Virgil depends upon Homer."

Manilius, p. xcviii, says that "Mercury ('mercurial') is a turncoat, benefic in company with benefics, malefic with malefics." See also, Ptolemy, p. 39, who declares that "Mercury . . . they thought to have both powers hot and cold because they have a common nature, and to join their influences with those of the other planets, with whichever of them they are associated." See also, Sextus Empiricus, Against the Professors, trans. R. G. Bury, ed. T. E. Page (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1929), p. 335; Albertus Magnus, The Book of Secrets of
6 This "loverie maladye / Of Hereos" (1373-74) is caused initially by the observation of a particularly pleasing member of the opposite sex. The image of the beloved becomes fixed in the sensory apparatus of the observer, agitating his mental faculties and disrupting his normal way of life. If the sexual appetites are satisfied, he returns to a state of normalcy. If, however, the beloved is unapproachable, and the fixation continues without relief, the estimative faculty becomes corrupted by the concentration of the senses on the object. The corruption of the estimativa results in what may be called an over-estimation of the need to possess the beloved to the exclusion of all other considerations. Since the estimativa controls the imaginativa (imagination), the beloved (or phantasma) becomes fixed in the memory and separation or physical absence does not effect a cure. It is this fixation that causes the form of lovesickness known as Amor Hereos. Once contracted, the lover suffers a physical wasting away (emaciation, drying of the body fluids, hollowness of the eyes, and tearlessness). Those symptoms are accompanied by paleness, insomnia, incessant sighing, increasing and decreasing pulse rates in moments of joy or sorrow. Numerous treatments are suggested (from sleep, blood-letting, and intercourse, to music, walking in flowery gardens, and conversations with friends), and if all these fail, a build-up of melancholic humors will take place (melancholia adusta), the skin will darken, and the result will be death. Thus, when the Knight asks his audience to believe that Arcite's appearance is so changed by lovesickness that he can merely change clothes and pass for Philostrate, he is neither making a joke nor implying that Theseus and the Athenian court are simply blind fools. The effects of the disease were such that the disguise could work. For a detailed discussion of Amor Hereos in the Knight's Tale, see M. Ciavolella, "Mediaeval Medicine and Arcite's Love Sickness," Florilegium, 1 (1979), 232-33, and Edward C. Schweitzer, "Fate and Freedom in The Knight's Tale, SAC, 3 (1981), 23-7, who, after explaining that Arcite exhibits the symptoms of the disease in Thebes and in the grove, sees the malady as also being the cause of his death. Schweitzer declares that "Once we know so much, the correspondences between the conventional course of amor hereos and the circumstances of Arcite's death is . . . inescapable and striking. The fury appears while Arcite is looking at Emelye and she at him (2678-83), though there is no such connection between Arcita and Emilia in the Teseida, just as Arcite's malady ultimately began with the figurative wound or hurt (1114-16) caused by his first sight of Emalye. The fury is summoned by Saturn just as hereos is a variety of Saturnian melancholia and is engendered like the mania to which it leads, from that Saturnian humor; and in the Knight's Tale the fury rises up 'out of the ground' -- and the earth is cold and dry like Saturn and melancholy -- whereas in the Teseida it comes down into the stadium from above (gui nel campo. 0. 7. 3.) . . . As in Thebes Arcite could not expel Emelye's image from his imagination, with the result that the normal operation of his body was upset and he could not eat or drink or sleep, so in Athens he cannot expel the corrupted blood from his chest, with the result that 'Nature wol nat wirke' (2759) and he dies. And as in Thebes the fire of love made Arcite 'pale as
asshen colde' (2957), in the very grove where he suffered the 'hoote fires' of love (2862) . . . . If, in accord with Arnold's (of Villanova) explanation of how the lovers' judgment is overwhelmed when he sees the beloved, we understand that the friendly glance Emelys cast upon Arcite just before the appearance of the fury causes the overthrow of Arcite's reason by spirits which rush to his head, then the accident realizes with technical precision Arcite's earlier and fundamentally figurative (or at least conventional) complaint, 'Ye slee me with your eyes, Emelys!' (1567), providing one last star in the constellation of such correspondences between Arcite's love-sickness in the first half of the tale and his fatal injury in the second.'

7 P. C. B. Fletcher, "The Role of Destiny in the Knight's Tale," Theoria, 26 (1966), 47.

8 Robert A. Pratt, "Chaucer's Use of the Teseida," PMLA, LXII (1947), 616.


10 Fletcher, p. 49.

11 For another instance of Chaucer's use of Mercury and the dream-prophecy, see his Legend of Dido (1294-1300) where Aeneas, searching for an excuse to abandon Dido says: "'Certes!' quod he, 'this nyght my faderes gost / Hath in my slay so sore me tormented, / And ek Mercury his message hath presented, / That nedes to the conquist of Ytale / My destine is sone for to sayle; / For which, me thynketh, brosten is my hert.'"

12 That cunning was one of the first characteristics of Mercury in Chaucer's mind is clear from the unfinished remark in the Squire's Tale concerning the planet: "Appollo whirleth up his chaar so hye, / Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye . . . ." (SQT 671-72). Mercury, the god of thieves, is fond of disguises and tricks. See Albertus Magnus, p. 72, for the mercurial love of secrecy, and Lilly, p. 48, where Mercury is the "author of subtlety, tricks, devices, perjury, &c." Don Cameron Allen, quoting from Adam Eyedropper cites the involvement of "politicke . . . craftie Mercurie" in the affairs of rich London widows in search of bumpkin husbands (p. 172). In Shakespeare's Winter's Tale, we meet the master of disguises and skullduggery, Autolycus, whom we are told was "litter'd under Mercury" (IV. iii. 24-6). For other examples of Mercury's love of deception and disguise, see Ovid, The Metamorphoses, trans. Mary M. Innes (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), I. 47; II. 68-9, etc. The story of Mercury and Chione provided an example: impregnated by Mercury, "Chione bore twins: to the wing-footed god an artful child, Autolycus, who was up to all manner of tricks, accustomed to turn black to white and white to black, a true son of his crafty father" (Meta. XI. 254).
Arcite's situation at this point displays several elements commonly found in medieval romances from King Horn to Malory's Morte D'Arthur. One can see, for example, such romance conventions as the "Exile and Return Theme" (see Havelok the Dane and King Horn) in which a young man is deprived of his inheritance and driven from his homeland. He distinguishes himself, wins wealth, and weds a princess. He then returns to triumph over his enemies and regains his prestige. One may also find elements of the "Proof of Knighthood" theme in Arcite's behavior. The pattern of this theme shows the hero in a lowly position (a kitchen knave like Malory's Gareth, or a captive like Lancelot, for example). The servitude is a plot on the hero's knightly character that must be removed by proof of prowess, usually through individual duels and finally a tournament. Finally, Arcite's activity at Theseus' court, in the grove, and in the tournament has elements in common with the so-called "Fair Unknown" theme; four of Malory's knights, La Cote, Alexander, Gareth, and Lancelot are later examples of this convention. In this particular situation, a young man either does not know or conceals his identity. He usually serves as a menial at court until a lady appears with whom he travels in order to rescue her mistress. The lady abuses the young man verbally until he proves himself. He is unrecognizable even to members of his own family, and he undertakes the adventure to prove himself worthy of his real name, his lady, and so on. Arcite, of course, spends a year assembling his followers and eventually proves himself worthy of Emelye. The Fair Unknown is being educated at the same time that he is proving his prowess -- he learns noble manners, especially self-restraint. In Gareth's case, for example, self-control is evidenced by his silent suffering at his companion's abuse. In Arcite's case, chivalric self-restraint is exhibited in the grove when he is abused by the unarmed Palamon and resists the temptation to kill him. This incident, too, is a part of the Fair Unknown theme in that the theme is incomplete until the hero meets and fights to a draw a member of his own family. This kind of incident is then usually followed by the Proof of Knighthood theme: which required, after a preliminary battle, success in a tournament and then a quest in which an evil custom is abolished. Chaucer's development of the fate of Arcite does not include all of the elements in any of the themes common to medieval romances, but it seems relatively clear that he was aware of some of the patterns and that he made use of them in Arcite's case. Arcite's behavior, therefore, follows a well-established chivalric pattern that is reinforced by the planetary influence of Mercury. The question for the tale is, however, does he do so because of tradition or the planets or both? For a thorough discussion of the above-mentioned themes, see Larry D. Benson, Malory's Morte D'Arthur (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976) in which the chivalric patterns in the Arthurian romances of the early and later Middle Ages are repeatedly discussed.

Lilly, p. 49. See also, Thorndike's Michael Scot, p. 14, where Scot is quoted as saying that a "Mercurial person naturally delights in easy, honourable and peaceful occupations, albeit unprofitable at certain times of the year." For Mercury's role as messenger of the gods and son of Jupiter, see Ovid's Metamorphoses, I. 47; II. 72; VIII. 195 and his Fasti, 2. 605-22; 5. 445-49, and especially 5. 664-66.
15 Ptolemy, p. 361. See also, Thorndike's Michael Scot, pp. 14-15, where Scot says that Mercury "is serious and a great reader, notes important questions, and wants to know all of the answers... (He wants) to engage in business... is laborious, ingenious, fluent, eloquent, thoughtful."

16 Chaucer's awareness of the attribute of eloquence to Mercury through his marriage with Philology is evident from the Merchant's Tale: "Hoold thou thy pees, thou poete Marcian, / That writest us that ilke weddyng murie / Of hire Philologie and hym Mercurie, / And of the songes that the Muses songe!" (MerchT 1732-35). See also, Ovid, Fasti 5, 324-30; 666-71. John of Salisbury says in The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury, trans. Daniel D. Mcgarry (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1955), 4, 245-46: "Mercury, the god of eloquence, in accordance with the exhortations of his mother, wed philology." Moreover, in Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Silvestris (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 179-80, Brian Stock explains that Bernard believed that the human soul received "from Mercury pronuntiandi et interpretandi (natura), the power to speak and to interpret." From Macrobius' Saturnalia, p. 115, we learn that "that power from which comes speech has received the name of Mercury," and p. 134, "as Appollo presides over the Muses, so speech, a function of the Muses, is bestowed by Mercury." See also, Albertus Magnus, p. 72, and Lilly, pp. 48-9.

17 Ptolemy, p. 359.

18 Macrobius, Saturnalia, p. 87. See also, Thorndike, Michael Scot, p. 14; Ovid, Fasti, 5. 671; and Lilly, pp. 48-9.

19 Ptolemy, p. 425.

20 Ptolemy, p. 387.

21 Ptolemy, pp. 383, 385. See also, Thorndike's Michael Scot, pp. 14-15, where Scot is quoted as saying that "Very pleasing to him (Mercury) also are arts and apothecaries, the exchange, and the company of wise men.

22 Schweitzer declares that such shifts of mood are to be expected through the increase in melancholic humors common to advanced stages of amor herocis, and the Knight does imply that Arcite suffers from something very like that malady in Thebes. This explanation does no harm to my thesis, since Mercury also governs melancholy.

23 Lilly, p. 48, says, for example, that Mercury "of his own nature... is cold and dry, and therefore melancholy." He is also responsible for "all stammering and imperfection in the tongue" (p.50). See also, Albertus Magnus, p. 71, who says that Mercury "hath dominion over the frenzy, madness, melancholy." When Robert Burton discusses the effects of the stars upon the disease of melancholy in his The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), I.4. 207, he says that "Jovianus Pontanus, in his tenth book
and thirteenth chapter . . . will have (all intemperance) chiefly and primarily proceed from the heavens, 'from the position of Mars, Saturn, and Mercury.' His aphorisms be these: 'Mercury in any geniture, if he shall be found in Virgo, or Pisces his opposite sign, and that in the horoscope, irradiated by those quartile aspects of Saturn or Mars, the child shall be mad or melancholy.' Again, 'He that shall have Saturn and Mars, the one culminating, the other in the fourth house, when he shall be born, shall be melancholy, of which he shall be cured in time, if Mercury behold them.'"

24 George R. Adams and Bernard S. Levy, "Good and Bad Fridays and May 3 in Chaucer," *MLN*, 3 (1966), 247-48. They go on to explain that "The story of the Invention of the Cross, available to readers in the Breviary, makes clear the condemnation of Venus. When the Cross was found by Queen Helen on May 3, a church was dedicated to it on the spot where a temple of Venus stood, 'overcaste' when the church was built. The Invention of the Cross is thus a concrete reenactment of the replacement of the Old Law by the New, in terms of a Venus-Christ conflict . . . As the Knight's Tale shows, the right view of Love means a movement away from the courtly-erotic devotion to Venus, through a ritualized expression, the tournament, to a view of Love that sees it as the force behind the anity of man and man, nation and nation, and the marriage vows of man and woman." For a further discussion of the Venus/Christ conflict, see W. F. Bolton, "The Topic of the Knight's Tale," *Chaur*., 1 (1967), 219.

25 Chaucer may have taken the idea for instilling martian characteristics in Palamon from the Teseida. In Bernadette M. McCoy's translation of *The Book of Theseus* (New York: Medieval Text Association, 1974), p. 118, Boccaccio explains "how Mars, too long at rest, entered the bosom of Palamon who was newly roused to suspicion when he heard that his comrade had returned . . . Then it tells of their embraces and the quarrel over each one's yearning for Emilia. Whoever reads more into this can see Mars here very plainly."

26 Fletcher, p. 47.

27 Ptolemy, pp. 183-84.

28 Albertus Magnus, p. 68.

29 Lilly, p. 40.

30 Ptolemy, p. 419

31 Lilly, p. 331.

32 Lilly, p. 41.

33 Allen, quoting Marstallerus, p. 61.
35. In Greek lore, taking the life of a kinsman was to be avoided at all costs. One needs only recall the extreme measures taken to prevent Oedipus' killing of his father as was prophesied by the Delphic Oracle or the soul-searching by Althea when placed in a position that demanded she kill her son (Meleager) to avenge his murder by her brothers. Moreover, loyalty (Arcite's "seurete" and "bond" with Palamon) was an important matter of knightly honor in the Middle Ages. Perhaps a good example of perfect knightly loyalty is the war of vengeance waged against Lancelot by Gawain and Arthur in Malory's _Morte D'Arthur_. Because of the bonds of kinship with Gawain's family, Arthur is obligated to assist Gawain in avenging Lancelot's accidental killing of Gawain's brother, Gareth. Lancelot, on the other hand, refuses to take the field against Arthur, even though he recognizes the justice of Gawain's challenges. Moreover, it should be noted that when kinsmen were killed in the above-mentioned examples, the action taken was under the influence of passion. Oedipus unwittingly kills his father in a fit of anger during a dispute on the road. Meleager kills his uncles in his rage at their objections to his awarding the spoils from the killing of the boar of Calydon to Atalanta because of his lovesickness for her. And in the _Morte D'Arthur_, Arthur is so angered by the destruction wrought by his son, Mordred, that is spite of the prophecy of Gawain's ghost, in spite of the warnings of Sir Lucan, and in spite of having won the day, Arthur kills his son and is in turn wounded to the death by Mordred.


37. Albertus Magnus, p. 63, declares that Monday is ruled by the moon; Tuesday, by Mars; Wednesday, by Mercury; Thursday, by Jupiter; Friday, by Venus; and Saturday, by Saturn; Sunday was ruled by the sun. There is no disagreement among any sources about these assignments.


40. Ptolemy, p. 347.


42. Schweitzer, pp. 23-7.

43. Ptolemy, p. 327.

44. Ptolemy, p. 429.

45. Ptolemy, p. 329.

46. Ptolemy, p. 431.
Stuart Robertson, "Elements of Realism in the 'Knight's Tale,'"

Robertson, p. 235.

According to Brooks and Fowler, p. 128, "The account of the
design of the lists -- 'Round was the shap, in manners of compass, /Ful of degrees' (1889 f.) -- leaves no doubt that a mathematical con-
struction is intended. In one sense, of course, the degrees are simply
the graduated levels on which the spectators will be set (1891); but we
are also told that the design occupied the attention of every available
'crafty man / That geometrie or ars-metrike kan' (1897 f.). What can
this round construction be, with its carefully calculated positions for
domiciles of planetary deities? Only a zodiac. The Knight's statement
that 'swich a place / Was noon in erthe' (1895 f.) has a special sense
for the reader that it did not have for the pilgrims. It hints that the
lists are a cosmic model. In confirmation of this is the vast size of
the lists -- a mile in circumference," Richard Neuse, in "The Knight
The First Mover in Chaucer's Human Comedy," UTQ, 31 (1962), p. 302,
declares that "The stadium is the artistic microcosm within which is to
be performed the central ritual of chivalry . . . Surrounding the lists
and defining in a precise way the limits of this little world are the
temples of the gods." See also, Schweitzer, p. 17, who says that Brooks
and Fowlers' "suggestion that the stadium is an image of the zodiac is
persuasive and is supported by the changes Chaucer has made in the
Teseida." See also, John Halverson, "Aspects of Order in the Knight's
Tale, SP, 57 (1960), p. 615; and Underwood, pp. 459-60.

Brooks and Fowler, p. 129.

Brooks and Fowler, p. 129. This statement is rather a problem
on astrological grounds. The "late fourteenth century," it seems to me,
is far too general. There is no doubt that Taurus may have been ascen-
 ding on May 7 in some year of the fourteenth century since it in fact
rises every day of the year. In order for the location of the signs
they present to have significance, we need to know what year they are
referring to. Moreover, there would have been no real need for Chaucer
to look up or calculate the location of Taurus unless he wanted to "date"
the tale (which, again, would call for Brooks and Fowler to mention the
year in which they found Taurus rising on May 7). One must inevitably
ask how Chaucer's audience could have possibly recognized what sign was
rising on what date in what particular year without consulting an almanac
themselves. If Chaucer had intended a Taurus ascendant, I believe he
would have provided a more readily recognizable clue, as he always does,
and would have simply created a Taurus ascendant as he does for the Wife
of Bath. The actual time that a configuration takes place, at any rate,
has no effect upon the meaning of the configuration.

Brooks and Fowler, p. 129. The problem of Capricorn at the Mid-
heaven is not resolved. There is another problem, however, with the rules
of astrology in placing Taurus on the ascendant, Cancer at the immum coeli
(north, or the line of midnight), Scorpio in the Occident, and Capricorn at the medium coeli (south, or the Midheaven). Since J. D. North, "Kalenderes Enlymned Ben They," RMS, 20 (1969), pp. 429-54, arrives at the same locations by a different method, it would be expedient to explain the nature of the problem at this point. Basing his argument upon Saturn's assertion that he does "vengeance and pleyyn correcioun" in Leo (2461-62), North says that in order to date the battle, "we must look for a year in which the positions of Saturn in early May were in the sign Leo." It should be noted, however, that Saturn does not say he is in Leo, and I would suggest that his statement "Whil (my italics) I dwelle in the signe of the leoun," is just one more in the list of powers he ascribes to himself. Arriving at May 5, 1388 as the date of the battle (Robinson says there are arguments for dating the poem as late as 1393), North presents the same signs and locations for the arena-horoscope as Brooks and Fowler, and like Brooks and Fowler, he is stumped by the unexpected appearance of Capricorn at the medium coeli: "The domicile of Saturn in medio coeli is something of an enigma, which might be solved by correlating Saturn with Theseus 'ful riche and hye,' but which might be nothing more than an indication of Saturn's supremacy." The problem here has to do with the rule of astrology that fixes the procession of the signs through the zodiac. With Taurus ascending, it is not possible to arrive at Cancer at the immum coeli without the use of an almanac, and even then the condition is hardly "normal." Taurus ascending (on the first house cusp) must be followed by Gemini on the second house cusp, Cancer on the third house cusp, and Leo on the fourth house cusp or immum coeli. The only way these signs can work astrologically is if Aries ascends with Taurus intercept (located between the first and second house cusps); this uncommon condition, of course, places Taurus in the ascendant (i.e. in the first house), but Aries is the ascending sign. Whether or not Brooks and Fowler or North were aware that they had found an intercept in their research, the locations they describe require an Aries ascendant even though Taurus is also rising according to the rules of astrology. If an intercept took place on the dates noted by Brooks and Fowler and North (as must have been the case), then the location of Cancer at the immum coeli is correct. Notice, however, that the intercept while giving an Aries ascendant, also causes a Libra descendant since the rule of fixed opposition of the signs places Scorpio opposite Taurus and thus intercept in the seventh house and not on the seventh house cusp (or western angle) itself. What we arrive at, then, by following the rules of astrology, is Aries ascending in the east (a house of Mars), Cancer at the immum coeli (a house of the moon), Libra on the western angle (a house of Venus), and Capricorn at the medium coeli (a house of Saturn). As I will explain in this chapter, these are the signs and locations I believe Chaucer intended for the arena-horoscope. Finally, by consulting the almanacs for May 5, 1388 (North's date of the battle), he finds Mars at 17° of Aquarius, Saturn at 7° Leo, and Venus at 15° Gemini. North does not provide the locations for the sun, the moon, or Mercury. Mars, he says, "is in a sorry plight," since he is in a house of Saturn and "near opposition" to him. Venus, on the other hand, is in "an ambiguous situation with respect to Mars" since she is in his face but her own term. Saturn and Venus are within
"seven or eight degrees" of a sextile aspect, Mercury and Saturn are also close to sextile, and Venus and Jupiter are close to quartile. The problem with these planetary configurations is that there is no way to know in which house the planets belong, and consequently, no way to determine their significance in the course of the Knight's Tale. We do not have the degrees for the signs; thus, if Aquarius is on the eleventh house cusp, we do not know if Mars at 1° Aquarius belongs in the tenth or the eleventh house. If Aquarius was at 20° on the eleventh house cusp, for example, then Mars would belong in the 10th house; if the sign was at 15°, then Mars would belong in the 11th house, and so on. Without knowing what house the planets should be in, we do not know what affairs of life they influence, and we do not know what if any aspects exist between them.

53 Following North's lead, Schweitzer, pp. 17-20, believes that Saturn's comments on "vengeance and playn correcioun" mean that he is in Leo at the time of the tournament. Moreover, he agrees that we are meant to understand that the tournament thus took place of May 5, 1388 (when Saturn was at 70 Leo) "since that date accords perfectly with the chronology of the tale and Chaucer's own career, and is the only one in Chaucer's literary lifetime that does so." Convinced that the tournament began at 9 a.m. due to the remarks about "pryme," Schweitzer calculated the ascendant with astrolabes "using modern tables of ascendants . . . which shows 20 Leo ascendant in London at 9:00 a.m., May 15 (equals Chaucer's May 5), 1952 (a leap year like 1388)." Saturn at 70 Leo on that date, he says, places Venus in sextile aspect with him at 15° Gemini and Mars in opposition to him at 17° Aquarius (North's configurations). Thus, the configurations reflect the relationship between Saturn, Mars, and Venus on the day of the tournament and its outcome. Schweitzer then points out, quoting Haly, that Saturn signifies "cruelty, evil deeds, violence, suffering to be endured, audacity, and lust." Since Leo governs the heart "and it is about the heart that Arcite is injured by his fall," the configurations "determine not only the general outcome of the tournament . . . but the hour of his accident, the area of his injury, and the manner and day of his death." Enlightening as Schweitzer's thesis is, I believe it must be ultimately rejected on the following grounds:

1. As I have indicated, I believe Saturn's remarks about vengeance and correction are no more than a part of the list he provides of all of his powers. It is not at all clear to me when he makes those remarks who is deserving of vengeance or correction.

2. In order to recognize the date of the tournament from the allusion, an audience would have to do the same things that Schweitzer did. It is also difficult for me to accept Schweitzer's statement that Saturn was a 7° Leo specifically on Tuesday, May 5, 1388, and only on that date "in Chaucer's literary lifetime." What disturbs me about this assertion is the fact that Saturn travels through all twelve signs of the zodiac every thirty years. Simple arithmetic tells me that he therefore averages a period of 2-1/2 years in each sign (12 signs by 30 years) during that period. 2-1/2 years are equal to 30 months, and Leo, like every other sign, has 30 degrees. Consequently, considering planetary motion, Saturn would average about one month in each degree of each sign:
obviously, that puts him at 70° Leo for about a month every 30 years and not for only one day.

I am also aware that even though averages of this sort are mathematically true, the way in which those averages take place is not necessarily in consecutive days because of direct and retrograde planetary motion. Consecutive days or not, however, Saturn will spend at least 30 days in a sign once he enters it, and the likelihood that he would be at a given degree of a sign for only one day is, in my opinion, nonexistent.

Using first Neil F. Michelsen's *The American Ephemeris: 1931-1980* (Pelham: Astro Computing Service, 1976), and then his *Ephemeris* for the years 1901-1930 (Pelham: Astro Computing Services, 1977), I randomly selected the year 1946 and found Saturn entering Leo at 0° 3' on August 3. On October 6, 1946, Saturn was at 70° 2' Leo and remained within 56' of 70° Leo for 15 days. His motion at that time was direct; that is, on October 21, he was at 80° Leo, proceeded to 90°, and so on. His course, however, changed from direct to retrograde, so that by December 23, 1946, he was once again at 70° Leo where he remained until January 6, 1947, another 15 days. Since Saturn completes his cycle every 30 years, I moved back to 1916 and found him at 70° 1' Leo from August 19 to August 26 -- 8 days. Moving forward from 1946 to 1976, I found him at 70° 0' Leo from August 2 to August 9 -- 7 days. His motion was direct during those periods, and I did not check to see if he returned to 70° Leo later through retrogradation; I saw no need. Saturn spent a minimum of 7, 8, and 15 days at 70° Leo in 1916, 1946, and 1976, and there is no reason to believe that he has not always done so. It is difficult for me to accept, therefore, that Saturn at 70° Leo allows for pinpointing the date of the tournament as Tuesday, May 5, 1388. It is doubly difficult for me to accept that an audience (even of experts) would know on exactly what date Saturn was at 70° Leo especially if they were aware of the rules of planetary motion and of Saturn's slowness through the signs.

No doubt, Schweitzer is correct when he places the start of the tournament at about 9:00 a.m., and since he computed a Leo ascendant at 2° in London, he is right that Saturn at 70° Leo would be in the ascendant at that latitude. What is not clear to me is the reason for calculating the ascendant for the latitude of London. That the tournament took place in Athens is an insignificant matter; but Chaucer talks about the latitude at Oxford, not London, when he discusses such matters, and indeed, the astrolabe constructed for little Lewis was specifically built with plates for that latitude.

With Leo ascending and Saturn at 70° of the sign, Schweitzer claims a favorable aspect between Saturn and Venus (at 15° Gemini) and an opposition between Saturn and Mars (at 17° Aquarius). First, Venus at 15° Gemini places the planet either in the 11th or in the 12th houses with Leo rising--we don't know which because we do not have the degrees for Gemini. Yet, the Knight locates the temple of Venus above the eastern gate where Schweitzer places Leo (which is ruled by the sun). The orb is correct and the aspect is favorable, but the 11th house is the house of "friends," and as Lilly says, p. 277, Venus "in the 11th . . . denotes the friends of the querent to be sincere." If we knew that Venus was in the 12th house, at least we could say something about "secret enemies," but we in fact don't know where the planet belongs in this scheme.
The same sort of problem exists for the opposition between Saturn and Mars, with an added complication. Again, with Leo rising, Aquarius must be opposite Leo on the 7th house cusp (above the western gate). And again, what becomes of the temple of Mars we are told is in the west since Aquarius is the domicile of Saturn? And without the degree for Aquarius, we can't know if Mars at 170° belongs in the 7th or the 6th house. Moreover, no aspect exists between Saturn and Mars at any rate, given the coordinates Schweitzer presents because they are not within the prescribed orbs.

To the quote from Haly about Saturn's malignancy in the ascendant, it must be noted that those are most often his characteristics regardless of his location.

Finally, that these configurations reflect the hour of Arcite's accident is doubtful. I can only point out that the positions Schweitzer offers, as he says, occurred at about 9 a.m., while the accident actually took place close to sunset, "er the sonne unto the reste wente" (2637). As to Saturn in Leo accounting for the area of injury, I can only say that even though Leo does rule the heart and Saturn does rule the retentive virtue, the parts of the body ruled by the planet are the teeth and the right ear. Last, as to the configurations showing the day of his death, I can only add that Arcite does not die on the day of the tournament, but at least three days later (2730-42).

54 When one learns the order of the signs through the zodiac, one is taught that Aries is the "first" sign, Taurus, second; Gemini, third; Cancer, fourth; and so on. Aries, moreover, is always associated with the east (as it is the sign of the vernal equinox), Libra, with the west (the autumnal equinox), Cancer, with the north (the summer solstice), and Capricorn with the south (the winter solstice). To postulate the location of the signs outside of this common, or "natural" order (as North and others have done in the attempt to date the tale) is to place demands of recognition and analysis on an audience that are entirely unreasonable. To place Taurus, on the ascendant, as these gentlemen have done, would require an audience to know not only the specific year and date (the time that Taurus rose on that day) in order to then figure out which signs were located at what points at that time, but also to calculate the right ascension to do so. Naturally, as each day passes from that date (even if it were known), the demands upon the memory of the audience become increasingly difficult. It would take a prodigious memory indeed to listen to the tale being read aloud or even to read it oneself and recall where the planets and signs were located at whatever time the author had in mind (especially when he does not choose to give us that information).

55 Kathleen A. Blake, "Order and the Noble Life in Chaucer's Knight's Tale," MLQ, 34 (1973), pp. 7-8. See also, Bolton, pp. 222-23; Neuse, pp. 301-3; and Linda Tattlebaum, "Venus' Citoles and the Restoration of Harmony in Chaucer's Knight's Tale," NM, 74 (1973), pp. 649-52. Clearly, only the negative influences of the planet-gods appear in the temple paintings. In terms of myth and in terms of astrology, however, Venus, Mars, and Diana/the moon possess positive and benign qualities as well as negative characteristics. The reason, I believe, that the
positive influences of the planet-gods do not appear in the paintings is astrological. The aspects formed between the planet-gods in the arena-horoscope do not allow for positive results. It will be recalled that when the aspects between planets are evil, the more positive influences of those planets are weakened or perverted, and the results are expected to be unfavorable. The aspects between Venus, Mars, and the moon in the arena-horoscope are evil. It should follow, therefore, that if the paintings in the temples representing each planet-god are intended to be visual manifestations of the effects of the aspects formed in the arena, those paintings must illustrate only the more negative influences generated by each planet. Each of the gods and each of the planets do have positive influences that have been intentionally suppressed.

That there was a mythological foundation for the existence of a Venus who inspired licit as well as illicit love has been demonstrated by Robert P. Miller, Chaucer: Sources and Backgrounds (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 337. When Miller discusses the Venus of Mt. Githaron (KMT 1936-39) in reference to Boccaccio's Gloss to Teseida VII. 50-56, he says: "This Venus is twofold, since one can be understood as every chaste and licit desire, as is the desire to have a wife in order to have children, and such like. This Venus is not discussed here. The second Venus is that which through all lewdness is desired, commonly called the goddess of love." The moral, procreative qualities of Venus do not serve the Knight's purposes nor do they fit the evil aspects in which Venus is involved; consequently, they do not appear in the tale.

Mars, too, is capable of inspiring the most noble, courageous, virtuous qualities of manhood. In the Middle Ages, Venus was the culprit most commonly blamed for the faults of Mars, as Miller points out in his discussion of the seduction of Mars by Venus: "Medieval mythographers read the story as an allegory of virtus corrupta libidine (virtue (manliness) corrupted by lust), a significance which Arcite ignores in his prayer to Mars (Knight's Tale, 2283-92)" (p. 444, n. 2).

The characteristics displayed by Diana in her temple are those of impatience, intolerance, and indifference. Yet there are several instances in the Metamorphoses, for example, that show her being merciful, understanding, and intervening on behalf of her subjects. In the story of Cephalis and Procris (Meta, pp. 176-77), Diana gives a special dog, Laelaps, to Procris for her services even though Procris was not a virgin, was in fact married and temporarily estranged from her husband, and eventually returned to him. A compassionate, merciful Diana appears in the story of Iphigenie (Meta, p. 269) when the goddess, within her rights to demand the sacrifice of the maiden, "was won over; she cast a veil of cloud over the eyes of the assembled company and . . . substituted a stag in place of the princess from Mycenae." It was also Diana who made possible the restoration of Hippolytus (Meta, pp. 348-49), who preserved his life in defiance of Dis, and who eventually made him a minor god. This is not the Diana of the Knight's Tale. The temple paintings not only have the negative characteristics of Venus, Mars, and Diana in common; they also share another common element. The favor of each of the deities is not to be relied upon. This too is in accord with astrological theory.

Put briefly, when the planets are in favorable aspect, one enjoys the "favor" of those planets. Since the planets inevitably continue on their courses through the zodiac, however, once-favorable aspects begin
to separate, or "wane," and eventually evil aspects will form between
them: one "falls" from "favor." A few examples of the benign influences
of Venus, the moon, and even the so-called "malefics," Mars and Saturn,
will illustrate that the planets as well as the gods of myth possess
positive as well as negative qualities. Although literally any area of
human life could be used to demonstrate positive activity among
the planets, I will deal with Ptolemy's chapter on love and marriage (pp.
393-399), since those are the matters at stake in the Knight's Tale.

In matters of love, Ptolemy explains that Mars is not merely a
planet of lust: "In general we shall, in the case of men, investigate
through Mars what will be their disposition with respect to matters of
love. For if Mars is separated from Venus and Saturn, but has the testi-
mony of Jupiter, he produces men who are cleanly and decorously in love
and who aim only at its natural use" (p. 405). Nor does Venus have to
be the planet of fornication: "In the genitures of women one must examine
Venus. For if Venus is in aspect with Jupiter or likewise with Mercury,
she makes them temperate and pure in love" (p. 407). Nor does the pres-
ence of Saturn have to mean disaster: "Again, if Venus happens to be with
Saturn, she produces merely pleasant and firm unions, but if Mercury is
present, they are also benefic" (p. 401). Add Mars to the latter
potion, however, and one has the recipe for lechery. The moon, too, can
be beneficent or maleficent according to the circumstances: "And if the
planets to which she (the moon) applies, either by propinquity, or by
testimony are beneficent, the men get good wives; but if they are malefic-
cent planets, the opposite. If she applies to Saturn, he makes the wives
hardworking and stern; Jupiter, dignified and good managers; Mars, bold
and unruly; Venus, cheerful, beautiful, and charming; Mercury, intelligent
and keen. Further, Venus with Jupiter, Saturn, or Mercury makes them
thrift and affectionate to their husbands and children, but with Mars,
easily roused to wrath, unstable, and unfeeling" (p. 395).

When Ptolemy or Lilly speak of favorable aspects, they are referr-
ing to conjunctions, trines, and sextiles. Speaking of Mars in conjunc-
tion with Venus, Lilly declares that when Mars is the significator, "the
querent is kind and gentle upon the whole, though at times rather hasty;
he is moderately fortunate, extremely fond of women, and not always very
particular as to their respectability" (p. 320). When Mars forms a sex-
tile or a trine with the moon, "he is very passionate and changeable,
with a high spirit and good abilities" according to Lilly (p. 326).
Lilly goes on to say that when Mars is in good aspect with Saturn, he can
produce exceptional courage and honesty: "(Mars) increases the courage
of the person so signified, and renders him more open in his resentment"
(p. 324). Finally, Lilly says that when Venus is in trine or sextile
with the moon, "it is a very fortunate aspect; it shews a person who is
much assisted by female friends; and one who, though unstable, often
obtains considerable property" (p. 327). When Venus is in favorable
aspect with Saturn, a man may be produced who "is modest, shy, and re-
tired in his manners; he gains the favor of elderly people, and sometimes
inherits their property" (p. 324).

56: D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Prince-

58 In Anthon's Classical Dictionary (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), p. 773, Charles Anthon explains that "With Croesus ended the line of the Medes, and Lydia became, on his dethronement, annexed by Cyrus to the Persian empire. The Lydians had previously been a warlike people, but from this time they degenerated totally, and became the most voluptuous and effeminate of men . . . . The conquest of Lydia, so far from really increasing the power of the Persians, tended rather to weaken it, by softening their manners and rendering them as effeminate as the subjects of Croesus; a contagion from which the Ionians had already suffered."

59 Chaucer emphasizes the same points about the characters in the temple of Venus when he alludes to them beyond the confines of the *Knight's Tale*. When he refers to the legend of Narcissus, the emphasis is placed primarily upon unrequited love and upon Echo. In his translation of the Romaine of the Rose, fascination with beauty, self-love, and the lack of opportunity to express love are the elements most stressed (1469-89, 1517-30). The inability to make love known is also the issue in the Franklin's Tale, where Echo is used to demonstrate the position of the lovesick Aurelius (951-52): "And dye he moste, as dide Eko / For Narcissus, that doste nat telle her wo." In the *Book of the Duchess*, the emphasis is again on Echo and on the foolishness of the pursuit of unrequited love (735-37): "And Ecoue died, for Narcissus / Nole nat love hir; and ryght thus / Hath many another foly doon." Solomon is quoted or honorably mentioned for his wisdom in the Manciple's Tale (314-15), the Clerk's Prologue (6), the Squire's Tale (250), the Canon Yeoman's Tale (961), the Cook's Tale (4330), the Miller's Tale (3529); and he is most liberally praised in the Tale of Melibe and the Parson's Tale. For Chaucer's pilgrims, however, Solomon's lechery was as well known as his wisdom. For the Wife of Bath, it is Solomon's sexual advantages that she admires more than his reputation for wisdom (WBP 35-44), and the indignant Proserpina of the Merchant's Tale comes directly to the point about the folly of Solomon's lechery and pride (2291-2302). When Chaucer alludes to Hercules, the references are to his strength and heroism (MT 3285-3325) and to the fact (MLT 197-200) that his death was written in the stars. In all cases, with the exception of the Man of Law's Tale, however, the emphasis is placed upon the love triangles first between Hercules, Dianira, and Nessus, and later between Dianira, Hercules, and Iole. Almost half of the Monk's account of the life of Hercules (3310-30) is dedicated to his death at the hands of the jealous and unwitting Dianira. In the Wife of Bath's Prologue (724-26) and in the *Parlement of Foules* (288-94), the subject under discussion is Hercules, Dianira, and death. The same aspect of Hercules' career is stressed in the *House of Fame* (I. 397-404) with the addition that here Iole is cited as Dianira's rival for the love of Hercules. When Chaucer alludes to the sorceress, Medea, in his works, the references are inevitably to her pride and
to her fascination with the beauty of Jason as well as Jason's infidelity and Medea's murder of their children (Intro. MLT 72-4; BD 723-37; HF I. 397-401) and to her supernatural powers (HF III. 1259-71). Circe is mentioned, however, only as a sorceress (HF III. 182). Although Chaucer, does not often allude to Turnus, when he does it is to draw attention to two aspects of his story. The first is that his death is the result of a conflict not only between Troy and Latinum, but also between himself and Aeneas for the love of Lavinia (HF I. 451-58). The second reference to Turnus points out that his death, like that of Hercules, was written by the stars (MLT 201). When Chaucer alludes to Croesus (MT 2727-2766) it is to demonstrate that the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake weakens the character of man, is unmanly, and can destroy both kingdoms and family lines. Moreover, no mortal should be so proud or so foolish as to assume when he has received a prophecy from the gods that he has understood all of the implications of the prophecy. In this, the similarity between the ambiguous prophecy given to Croesus and the ambiguous nature of the prophecy and promises made to Arcite and to Palamon by Mercury, Mars, and Venus, at least, can be seen.

60 The "lessons" in the temple of Mars are the same points that Chaucer emphasizes about Caesar, Nero, and Antony beyond the confines of the Knight's Tale. As was the case with Hercules and Turnus, when Chaucer refers to Caesar it is to point out that his death was foretold by the stars and to illustrate the momentary glory and pomp attendant upon conquest (MLT 199, 401-j). In the Monk's Tale, however, another aspect of conquest is presented through the story of Caesar's victory over Pompey (2687-3882). Pompey, a conqueror himself, is beheaded by a traitor, and the head is given as a trophy to the victorious Caesar. Caesar returns to Rome to enjoy the fruits of victory, and is himself betrayed by Brutus and assassinated. Moreover, in the House of Fame, both Caesar and Pompey are painted on the pillar of Mars as examples of the folly of pride and complacency through conquest. According to the Monk, Nero was another great conqueror whose pride and vanity drove him to the commission of unspeakable atrocities (2463-3740). In sexual perversion, Nero was the equal of his infamous predecessors, Tiberius and Caligula, and in the pursuit of pleasure, neither the country nor his own kinsmen were of any consequence. The emphasis in the Monk's Tale and in the Nun's Priest's Tale (4560-63) is on Nero's murder of the Roman senators, the murder of his own mother, and on the burning of Rome. He is an example of what is to be expected when "myght is joyned with cruelte" (MT 3683), of "hye pryde" (MT 3710), and is in stark contrast to rulers like Theseus. Fortunate in war, a conqueror of the mighty, Nero held the most powerful nation in the world subject to his slightest whim. But in the end, his many victories, the power brought to him by the favor of Mars, was negated by his private and public atrocities. Sickened by the continued perversion of power for purely personal reasons, the people of Rome revolted, and the great conqueror died a suicide. The story of Mark Antony, of course, combines the temporary nature of martial successes with his consuming love for Cleopatra. In the Legend of Cleopatra, Antony is portrayed as a great soldier and conqueror (580-613). His misguided desire for Cleopatra, however, causes him to leave his wife (sister to Caesar) and
brings the adversity of Rome upon him. He is defeated in battle by the Roman forces, and seeing what he believes to be the treachery of Cleopatra in flight, he commits suicide. Again, the complacency of the warrior who has long enjoyed the favor of Mars is destroyed, and in Antony's case, what sets the machinery of self-destruction into motion is his determination to possess the beautiful Egyptian queen at any cost.

61 Chaucer, in fact, actually refers to two of the ladies in the temple of Diana as women who are wasting their time in her service (PT 280-87): "And further in the temple I can espy / That, in dispite of Dyane the chaste, / Ful many a bowe ibroke heng on the wal / Of maydenes swiche as gonne hire tymes waste / In lyre servyse; and peynte overal / Of many a story, of which I touche shal / A fewe, as of Calyxte and Athalante, / And many a mayde of which the name I wante."

62 Ptolemy, p. 353.
63 Ptolemy, p. 357.
64 Lilly, p. 332.
65 Ptolemy, p. 435.
66 Ptolemy, p. 435.
67 Lilly, p. 332.
68 Lilly, p. 331.
69 Ptolemy, p. 407.
70 Ptolemy, p. 419.
71 Ptolemy, p. 343.
72 Lilly, p. 328.
73 Lilly, pp. 328-29.
74 Lilly, pp. 328-29.
75 Ptolemy, p. 385.
76 Ptolemy, p. 401.
77 Ptolemy, p. 333.
78 Lilly, p. 332.
79 Lilly, p. 329.
80 Ptolemy, pp. 339-41.
81 Ptolemy, p. 393.


85 In his "Characterization in The Miller's Tale," in Vol. I of Chaucer Criticism (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1965), p. 124, Paul E. Beichner observes that "Nicholas and his room are described briefly yet in sufficient detail to make him thoroughly individual; though a student of the arts he is more interested in astrology than in his studies and he has acquired a local reputation as a weather prophet which serves him to good purpose in deceiving the carpenter."

86 Robinson, p. 684.

87 Robinson, p. 684, explains that "augrym stones" are "stones or counters marked with the numerals of algorism and intended for use on an abacus. 'Algorism' (augrym) is derived from the name of Al-Khwarizmi, an Arab mathematician of the ninth century. His treatise on numbers was translated into Latin, 'De Numero Indorum,' early in the twelfth century. A second version was entitled 'Liber Algorismi,' and the name 'algorism' came to be transferred to the science itself." See also, Skeat, V. p. 97.


89 Chaucer Variorum, pp. 196-97.


91 Albertus Magnus, p. 63
CHAPTER VI
THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

The horoscope in the Man of Law's Tale has received little attention since the first quarter of the twentieth century. When the issue was under discussion, critics could not agree about the ascending sign and its lord or about the location of the house and sign in which the moon and Mars are conjoined. Some critics theorized that Aries is the ascending sign, that Mars is lord of the ascendant, and that the moon-Mars conjunction occurs in the 8th house in Scorpio. ¹ Others believed that Pisces is the rising sign, that Venus is mistress of the ascendant, and that she herself resides in Scorpio. ² Since both hypotheses could be shown to be in error, and since neither point of view offered an alternative interpretation, the issue appears to have closed and has yet to be resolved.

Although I agree that there is sufficient evidence to verify Aries as the ascending sign, Mars as the lord of the ascendant, and a conjunction between Mars and the moon, I do not believe that the configurations have been properly located or explained in either case. Until the planets and signs in this horoscope have been properly located, of course, very little can be said about Chaucer's use of astrology in the Man of Law's Tale. In the first part of this chapter, therefore, I intend to explain why the previous locations of the celestial bodies are incorrect, and what I believe to be their intended locations. It is my contention
that the Man of Law is speaking of an election of times (a horoscope designed to choose the most propitious moment for an undertaking) and not a natal horoscope, as some critics have proposed, and that Mars as the lord of the ascendant is retrograde and forms, by refraction, a conjunction with the moon in the 12th house in Pisces. By means of these configurations, I hope to demonstrate that Constance’s marriage to the Sultan was destined to fail utterly from the outset. It will also be seen that the configurations predict Constance’s exiles at sea, the trials she faces when set adrift, and the difficulties and delays she experiences before returning to her native land. The same configurations, moreover, foreshadow and explain the massacre of the wedding party and the death of the Sultan and reveal that there will be a deadly conspiracy against both marriages generated by the mothers of both husbands.

Explaining the condition of the heavens, the Man of Law says (295-308):

O firste moeyng! cruell firmament,
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay
And hurlest al from est til occident
That naturely wolde holde another way,
Thy crowdyng set the hevene in swich array
At the bigynnynge of this fiers viage,
That cruell Mars hath slayn this mariage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helplesse falle, alas,
Out of his angle into the derkest hous!
O Mars, o atazir, as in this cas!
O fieble moone, unhappy been thy paas!
Thou knytttest thee ther thou art nat receyved;
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.

From this information, Walter Skeat placed Aries on the ascendant, explaining that Aries was said to be one of the tortuous signs. With Mars as
his lord of the ascendant, Skeat then placed the planet in Scorpio because "Mars was not then in an 'angle,' but in his 'darkest (i.e. darker) house.' Mars had two houses, Aries and Scorpio. The latter here is meant." 3 Since the moon is said to be in her depression in Scorpio (thus, "nat receyved"), Skeat assumed that she is in conjunction with Mars in that sign. 4

William Hand Browne briefly raised two pertinent objections to Skeat's theory and offered an interpretation of his own:

In the first place, Scorpio is not Mars' "darkest house," but one of his proper mansions, in which he is very powerful. His darkest house--domus perigrina nocturna--is in Taurus (cf. Compl. Mars, l. 58). To fall from the angle Aries into Scorpio, he would have to pass the angles of Cancer and Libra and traverse more than half of the zodiac, a journey that would take him more than a year. This, surely, cannot be Chaucer's meaning. 5

Browne proposed instead that Pisces is the ascendant since it is also a tortuous sign. Since Venus is exalted in Pisces, he reasons, Venus is lord of the ascendant. Maintaining that Scorpio is the darkest house of Venus, he placed her there where she "could not protect her ward against the malignity of Mars." 6 Browne's theory, however, will not work for several reasons. First, the text says that the lord of the ascendant fell into the "darkest house" (as he points out) and not that it fell into any house of Venus. Second, Browne makes the mistake of confusing signs with houses (as Skeat had also done). Scorpio is not a "house" of Mars at all; it is a sign that is ruled by Mars. Even granting that Pisces is the ascending sign and that Venus is exalted in Pisces, the fact remains that Jupiter rules the sign, and he would be
the lord of the ascendant in that case rather than Venus. There is no mention of Venus or Jupiter by the Man of Law, and Venus as the mistress of the ascendant (and a feminine planet) does not ring true in the line that says the lord is falling from "his" angle.

As might be expected, the most detailed evaluation of the horoscope in the Man of Law's Tale is that by Walter Clyde Curry. According to Curry, the Man of Law is describing Constance's natal horoscope. In full agreement with Skeat's planetary positions, Curry placed Aries on the ascendant: "The lord of this sign, Mars," he said, "has just passed from an angle into Scorpio, which is his other, darker mansion... Luna, also falling from an angle into a succeedent is found in corporal conjunction with Mars without reception in Scorpio." Curry comes close to the mark when he explains that Constance will be unfortunate in marriage, because he bases his conclusions upon the nature of any moon-Mars conjunction. There are several objections, however, to his theory.

Of course, the fifteen-month time period for Mars to fall from Aries into Scorpio and the textual problem of the "derkest hous" fails for Curry as it did for Skeat. A further problem with his configurations is that the text says that the lord of the ascendant fell from "his" angle (Aries), not from "an" angle. For Mars to fall into the 8th house, into Scorpio, he would have to fall from the 7th house angle, governed in this case by Libra. Since Libra is ruled by Venus, the 7th house angle is "her" angle, not Mars', and it is difficult to see how he could fall from "his" angle in this case. Equally important to note, as I shall presently explain, is the fact that the astrological phrase "to fall from an angle" requires that the planet move from an angle into a cadent
house. The 8th house is *succeedent*, not cadent, and is not eligible by
to rules of astrology to contain Mars under the conditions given in the
text. Moreover, although it is true that the position of the moon must
be assumed by the location of Mars, the text will not support, as Curry
proposes, the conclusion that she too was falling from an angle in the
same sense that Mars was, or that she fell into a succeedent house.

But the disagreement between critics did not stop with the positions
of the planets. There was also disagreement concerning the kind of horo-
scope intended in the tale. Curry and others were certain that it was
natal, while still others concluded that it was an election of times.
The evidence for both conclusions came from the following passage (309-
(15):

> Imprudent Emperour of Rome, ala!  
> Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun?  
> Is no tyme bet than oother in swich case?  
> Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,  
> Namely to folk of heigh condiicion?  
> Noght whan a roote is of a burthe yknowe?  
> Alas, we been to lewed or to slowe.

Within a year of the publication of Curry's book, his theory was
challenged by Joseph T. Curtiss. 9 Curtiss immediately objects to Curry's
assertion that the horoscope is for a nativity. Explaining that an
election of times is applied in conjunction with a nativity, he says:
"If the nativity indicates that the child just born will be unfortunate
in marriage, it would be useless later to seek a fortunate *time* for
marriage; in such a case all *times* would prove unfortunate." 10 What
Curtiss is driving at is that since the Man of Law knows a natal chart
exists for Constance (the "roote is of a burthe yknowe"), there would
be no reason for him to chastise the Emperor's lack of interest in an
election of times if her natal configurations already predicted misfortune
in marriage. "When Chaucer tells us that Mars caused this trouble at the
beginning of the voyage," Curtiss says, "are we to suppose that the rest
of the astrological data coupled with it, refer to a configuration of
the heavens years before?" 11

What Curtiss implies, I will state. He is right in saying that
misfortune in marriage in a natal chart means that the native will never
enjoy an ideal marriage. But he is making the same mistake as Chaucer's
characters do about the stars when he says "all times would prove
unfortunate." Obviously, Venus conjuncting Jupiter in the 7th house (of
marriage) and either out of aspect, or in favorable aspect with the
malefics in an election of times would lessen the degree of misfortune
in marriage considerably. Curtiss is assuming that there was no choice
in the matter if Constance's natal configurations were unfortunate, while
the Man of Law is literally shouting that there was a choice and it was
not taken. Since the Man of Law calls for an election of times (as
Curtiss should have pointed out), it follows that her natal configurations
(whatever they were) did not show misfortune in marriage. Thus, by
casting an election as he suggests, the right moment for her marriage
could have been chosen and catastrophe averted if the Emperor had chosen
to act instead of passively allowing the stars to run their courses.

There is really no doubt that the Man of Law is describing an
election of times. It makes no difference how often the Primum Mobile
sets the planets in motion following the moment of birth; the position
of the planets at birth will never change. The native thus cannot
"choose" a "better" set of planets for his nativity in order to complete a given task. An election, on the other hand, operates precisely through the fact that the planets are constantly moving through all of the houses and signs. Thus, an election makes it possible to consult the heavens and choose the planetary configurations that would prove most advantageous for an event. To determine the success or failure of an event in the present, the planetary configurations for the present must first be observed. If the time for the event proves favorable, then the natal chart of the individual involved would be consulted to determine if he had the ability to carry out the event. That means that an election is cast to find a propitious time for an event like marriage and not a natal horoscope, which is cast to determine an individual's characteristics and talents (cf. the Wife of Bath). The configurations given by the Man of Law take place at the beginning of this undertaking (i.e. the decision to travel to Syria and marry), rather than at the time of Constance's birth. He refers to her natal horoscope when he speaks of a "roote" of a "burthe" in order to emphasize that the information was available to apply to an election of times and that the election should have been cast before any final decisions were made. His frustration is understandable, for the locations of the planets and signs at the time of Constance's departure were anything but favorable.

There are several reasons to believe that the Man of Law was convinced that Aries was the ascending sign and that Mars was the lord of the ascendant on the day of Constance's departure. "His" (Mars') angle (the angle from which he falls) is the 1st house angle. The 1st house angle, or ascendant, is "Infortunat" and "tortuous" (302). Skeat had
already shown that Aries was the most likely of the tortuous signs, and Mars is the ruler of Aries; therefore, the 1st house angle belongs to him. Moreover, by placing Mars in the ascendant before he falls out of his angle, the ascendant is made (according to the Astrolabe II. 4. 32-46 and all astrological authority) unfortunate. Finally, the Man of Law himself says that the unfortunate lord of the ascendant is Mars "in this cas" (305).

The "helpless" condition of the lord of the ascendant (303) does not mean that Mars' power to do evil has been weakened. What it does mean is that Mars does not determine his course (direct or retrograde) through the zodiac, nor do any of the planets. It is the power of the Primum Mobile that "hurlest al from est til occident / That naturally wolde holde another way" (297-98) against which Mars cannot prevent himself from being thrown out of his angle and into the darkest house. It is the Primum Mobile that arranges the heavens "At the bigynnyng of this fiers vlage" so that "cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage" (299-301).

Finding the house in which Mars resides has posed the greatest problem for critics to this time. He not only falls out of his angle, but he also falls "into the darkeste hous" (304). Since the Man of Law does not say that Mars has fallen into a darker house of any planet, what he is driving at is that Mars has fallen into the most forbidding house in the entire horoscope. But the question still remains: if that is true, how is this house to be found?

We have been told that Mars falls from "his" angle into this house (I have claimed the 1st house angle), and we know by the rules of
astrology that there are only four angles in a horoscope. 

Because the 

Man of Law says the lord of the ascendant is falling from his angle, Mars' 
motion must be retrograde, or backwards (astrology requires that the 
planet fall into a cadent, not a succeedent house). Since cadent houses 
are those houses preceding the angles (the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th houses), 
it is only necessary to examine the key affairs of each to find the 
"darkest hous." 13

There is nothing even slightly ominous about 3rd house affairs. It 
deals with "brethren, sisters, cousins, or kindred, neighbors, small 
journeys, or inland journeys. . . writing and forms of communication."

Even when Mars is in this house, "unless he is joined with J (Saturn), 
he is not very unfortunate." 14 The 6th house is no darker than the 3rd.

It governs the affairs of servants, laborers, farmers, and the profit to 
be expected from their livestock. Far from "slaying marriages," in this 
house it is said that Mars with Venus "in conjunction in this house are 
arguments of a good physician." 15 The 9th house is the house of reli-
gion and judgments concerning long voyages;

By this house we give judgment of voyages or long 
journies beyond seas, or religious men, or clergy 
of any kind, whether bishops or inferior ministers; 
dreams, visions, foreign countries, books, learning, 
church livings or benefices, and of the kindred of 
one's wife or husband. 16

There is nothing particularly distressing about this house, and if Mars 
is in the 9th house, the results are no worse than that "the querent has 
either been little better than an atheist or a desperate sectarian." 17

Consequently, ther is nothing in the affairs of the 3rd, 6th, or 9th 
houses to qualify them as the darkest house of a horoscope.
It will be recalled that Curry placed Mars in the 8th house under the governance of Scorpio because Scorpio is a darker mansion of Mars. There were immediate objections to this position because the text does not speak of any darker house of any planet, because Scorpio is a sign and not a house at any rate, because the time required for Mars to fall from Aries to Scorpio (fifteen months) is unreasonable, and because Mars cannot have fallen out of his angle into the 8th house because that house is succeedent rather than cadent. But the real reason Curry chose the 8th house for Mars, I believe, is because it was said to be a house of death. What he does not seem to have been aware of, however, is that the 8th house is only one of the two houses of death in a horoscope, and certainly the less distressing of the two. The affairs of the 8th house deal with

The estate of men deceased; death, its quality and nature; the wills, legacies, and testaments of men deceased; dowry of the wife, portion of the maid, whether much or little, easy to be obtained or with difficulty. In duels, it represents the adversary's second; in lawsuits, the defendant's friends; what kind of death a man shall die; it signifies fear and anguish of mind; also who shall be heir to the deceased. 18

Death, it appears, receives no greater emphasis than any other affair in this description. Lilly repeats himself about the nature and quality of a man's death in an almost absent-minded fashion, and the implications are that he is dealing with natural deaths. As can be seen, the 8th house is primarily concerned with inheritances and doweries and the like—those matters which are inevitable after a death has taken place. It is natural that there would be "fear and anguish
of mind" surrounding the death of a loved one or a relative, the questions of who shall inherit and how much, and the other legal matters concerning death. The 8th house is a "dark" house because it deals with the unpleasantness of settling money and property matters resulting from a death. It is not nearly so black, however, as the 12th house. This is the gloomy house that is almost entirely occupied with secret animosity, evil, hidden enemies, malicious informers, all manner of afflictions, suffering, jealousy, disease, imprisonment, torture, self-undoing and death. This is the baleful house whose perpetual welcome to the most maleficent of the planets, Saturn, certainly (as J. C. Eade mentions, but does not explain) is deserving of the title of "darkest hous."

The 12th house, bearing such appellations as "Carcer," and "Malus Daemon," is beyond all other houses in a horoscope a house of bondage, sorrow, and death. According to Maternus, it is the house of disease and slavery and the seat of Saturn. 19 Lilly, who claims that "This is the true character of the several houses, according to Ptolemeian doctrine, and the experience I have had myself for many years," 20 says that the 12th house

his significations of private enemies...sorrow, tribulation, imprisonment, all manner of affliction, self-undoing, &c; and of such men as maliciously undermine their neighbors, or inform secretly against them. It has consignificators $\Upsilon$ and $\Phi$. Saturn does much delight in that house, for he is naturally the author of mischief. 21

Robert Fludd, while agreeing that 12th house configurations will reveal secret enemies, adds that it also contains all "jealous persons and evil thoughts." 22 Finally, the 12th house like the 8th, is a house of death:
"The twelfth house, which, according to Maternus, was called "Malus Daemon" by the Romans, was most hospitable to Saturn. The later astrologers called the twelfth house the "House of Death and observed it carefully." 23

To sum up the location of the "darkest hous," it may be said that since the lord of the ascendant (Mars) is said to be falling out of his angle (the 1st house angle, or ascendant), the rules of astrology dictate that he must fall into one of the four cadent houses (3, 6, 9, 12). To do so, Mars must move, or fall, backwards: that is, he must be retrograde. An examination of the affairs of each of the cadent houses shows that the "darkest" of these houses is the 12th. The lord of the ascendant cannot be in the 8th house, as Curry and Skeat proposed, because the 8th house is a succeedent, not a cadent house. To this point, then, Aries is the ascending sign in the election proposed by the Man of Law, and Mars is the lord of the ascendant who has fallen from his angle (1st house) into the darkest house (12th) in the horoscope. With Aries ruling the ascendant, the sign governing the 12th house is Pisces (by the fixed procession of the signs). Mars is thus located retrograde in Pisces in the 12th house. But he is not alone; the moon is also in close relationship with him, and the task remains to provide her location and define her relationship to Mars.

Fortunately, the Man of Law openly reveals in what way the moon is affected by Mars (306-7), and I quite agree with Curry and Skeat that she is conjoined ("knytttest") to him. The way in which this conjunction came about, however, should be briefly discussed because of the way in which the moon is "received," and because the nature of the conjunction has significance for the election.
Before Mars fell out of his angle, he was obviously in his angle, or, in the 1st house. Since the conjunction occurs in the 12th house and not in the 1st, the moon, moving in her customarily swift, counter-clockwise course must have begun to transit the 12th house. She was initially well-received (308) in the 12th house in Pisces because she shares the rulership of the sign through Pisces’ membership in the watery triplicity. In the normal course of things, the moon’s motion would have carried her through the 12th house, bringing her inevitably into conjunction with the slower moving Mars in the 1st house, and the results would have been altogether different. But Mars (because of the First Mover) went retrograde (began moving in a clockwise course from the 1st house in Aries to the 12th house in Pisces) before the moon reached the 1st house; he met her and formed his own conjunction with her in the 12th house. The process by which this conjunction came about is known as refranation. Had Mars not fallen from his angle through retrogradation, the moon would have formed a conjunction with him in the 1st house and refranation would not have occurred. Before that could happen, however, Mars did go retrograde, and, as Lilly says, "When two planets are coming to any aspect, and one falls retrograde before the aspect is complete, it denotes that the matter will wholly fail."  

Thus, we have the moon temporarily (as the Man of Law says) received in Pisces in the 12th house suddenly finding herself met and conjuncted by refranation to a retrograde malefic, Mars. There is no question as to the success of the event at hand--it will fail. Since the moon’s influence is effectively dissipated by the evil conjunction she is forced to endure, we can well understand the Man of Law’s frustration when he
saying: "O fieble moone, unhappy been thy paas! / Thou knytttest thee ther thou art not receyved; / Ther thou were well, fro thennes artow weyved" (306-8).

The moon is the swiftest of the heavenly bodies. She passes through an entire sign in roughly two days. An election of times would have revealed her position at the time of the decision to marry and would have revealed that by waiting an additional two or three days to make a decision, the venture would have begun after she had left both Mars and the 12th house behind her. In short, had the "imprudent Emperor" consulted an election of times for the marriage, the misery resulting from Constance's marriages might have been prevented because it would have shown Mars retrograde and conjuncted with the moon in Pisces in the 12th house on the day she planned to sail.

One of the most obvious predictions from this configuration would have been that journeys would be undertaken which would prove to be long, difficult, and dangerous. The position of the moon in the 12th house and the role of the governing sign (Pisces) as a part of the watery triplicity would have suggested that these journeys would be taken at sea. According to Ptolemy, the moon is not only the governess of the oceans, but also "the greatest traveler among the celestial objects." The subject of travel, he says

receives treatment by observing the position of the luminaries to the angles, both of them, particularly the moon. For when the moon is setting or declining from the angles, she portends journeys abroad or changes of place, "if the maleficent planets regard (her), their (the natives') journeys will be laborious and dangerous, and the return difficult."
It should be understood that when the moon is declining, "she is in the occident (seventh house) or the so-called apoklinata (third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth houses). These and the zodiacal signs upon them are the 'signs that cause travel.'"\(^{30}\) Consequently, the fact that the moon was in the 12th house in Pisces, declining from the 1st house angle, and regarded by a maleficent planet (Mars), would have indicated that a marriage undertaken at that time would result in long, dangerous voyages from which there was real doubt of a quick or safe return.

Mars, of course, is also in the 12th house, retrograde and cadent to the 1st house angle. This position not only reinforces the hazardous nature of the voyages indicated by the position of the moon, but also indicates more clearly the danger involved. According to Albohazen Haly:

> If Mars is in an evil position or if he is evilly affected by being retrograde or by being cadent to an angle (both of which he is) it signifies... journeys unfortunate and dangerous for the stranger wandering out of his native place.\(^{31}\)

To this, Ptolemy adds that when Mars assumes a dominant position in an event, his is the power "that brings about...violence, assaults, lawlessness, arson and murder, robbery and piracy."\(^{32}\) As a result of her forced voyages, Constance is threatened with violent assault by a thief which terminates in her near-rape and his death (904–24). She also becomes involved in the murder of Hergnyld and again suffers exile through the fraud perpetrated by Donegild.

Just as Constance's hardships at sea could have been predicted from the planetary positions in the tale, so could the failure of the Syrian venture, the massacre of the wedding party, and the death of the Sultan
have been foretold. To begin with, Haly says that when the moon is
cadent from an angle "in the eighth or twelfth house, you may say that
evil shall come to both parties contracting the matrimony, and that
they shall have trials and tribulations according to the nature of the
house, the infortune, and the sign (my italics)." 33

The nature of the 12th house (see Lilly, Fludd, etc., above) would
indicate that the "tribulations" would come about through the power of
hidden enemies to the venture, enemies who would undermine the event
and secretly work against those contracted in marriage. The nature of
the infortune, Mars, would indicate sorrow in the venture through sedi-
tion, uprisings of some sort, and death. Ptolemy says that when Mars is
powerful in an event, he "brings wars, civil faction. . . uprisings, the
wrath of leaders, and sudden deaths from such causes. . . swift and
violent deaths, especially in the prime of life." 34 In Haly's opinion,
it is in the nature of Mars to be "a destroyer and conqueror, delighting
in slaughter and death. . . He is instrumental in stirring up seditions
. . . He rejoices in the outpouring of blood, in the afflictions of the
miserable, and in all kinds of oppression." 35 Lilly says that if the
moon is "in conjunction with Saturn or Mars, one of them (the husband
or the wife) shall die shortly," 36 and Maternus explains that the
presence of Mars in the 12th house represents "the husband in the event." 37
Finally, the nature of the sign, Pisces, reinforces the prognostication
that these hazardous journeys would be taken at sea. Furthermore, since
Pisces is a biciporeal sign which Ptolemy says is indicative of men and
kings, 38 the likelihood that tribulation would be visited upon the head
of a man (the Sultan, in this case) is clear.
Mars and the moon conjuncted in Pisces in the 12th house, therefore, would have predicted that a marriage undertaken at that time would have resulted in sedition brought about by the secret opposition to the event of a person in power who was motivated by ambition and jealousy. It would have shown that the marriage could terminate in slaughter and death and in the swift and violent death of a man in the prime of life who was probably the intended husband and a king.

The force behind the failure of the first marriage was the Sultaness. Clearly, she was able to create havoc because she cloaked her intentions in the guise of friendship, she consistently pretends to cooperate with the marriage while secretly planning to destroy the entire party. She convinces her countrymen to support her on religious grounds (330-42), concealing even from them her real motivation: "she hirself wolde al the contree lede" (434). She vows to embrace Christianity, professing her regret at having remained a heathen (375-80), and asks her son's permission to give a feast in honor of the wedding. She greets Constance "with also glad a cheere / As any mooder myghte hir doghter deere" (428-37) and promptly slaughters both Christians and pagans alike.

It is the business of the 12th house to reveal hidden enemies to an enterprise. The moon, which was the first heavenly body to enter the house, is representative of the hidden enemy. From the presence of the moon, it would have been recognized that opposition to the marriage would come from a female, and as Ptolemy and Maternus both affirm, the moon is always associated with the person of the mother. Mars, having entered the house under unnatural circumstances (retrogradation), indicates the scheming, bloodthirsty nature of the hidden enemy.
Since the moon is "fieble" in the house and in the power of Mars, it is understandable that this female adversary would be cunning and totally lacking in the feminine qualities of pity and compassion present when the moon is well-dignified. Indeed, the Sultaness has no compassion for her own son, and she is referred to as a mannish thing and a "feyned woman" (362). She is, of course, the secret enemy of the marriage. Corrupt and ambitious for power, she led, as Pico della Mirandola would say, "an irascible and ambitious life with Mars," 40 and she is portrayed as satanically evil. Though Mars is not Satan, certainly much of the malevolence of Satan is ascribed to him. Ptolemy says that when Mars is in an evil position (such as retrograde and cadent to an angle) and dominates the soul, he makes his subjects "savage, insolent, bloodthirsty, makers of disturbances, rapacious, evil-doers, pitiless...haters of their own kin." 41 The Man of Law said that "cruel Mars hath slayn this marriage" (301), and Haly would certainly agree. He says that when Mars is retrograde and cadent to an angle, "it signifies that he is powerful in planning and producing that which is in accordance with his nature, namely fears, terrors, anxieties, perturbations of the mind, evil thinking, wicked deliberations, and that which follows from the execution of such." 42

Had an election of times been cast from the configurations provided by the Man of Law, it would have thus revealed the existence of a mother who would be a secret enemy to the marriage for reasons of ambition and jealousy. Mars, unnaturally conjoined with the moon in Pisces in the 12th house would have indicated that the hidden adversary would be the mother of the proposed husband, that the husband was of royal blood, and
that the mother would not hesitate to destroy any person involved in the
marriage, including her own son, in order to realize her will to power.
The methods she would employ would have been equally apparent. By means
of heartless scheming and cunning, she would bring about an uprising which
would completely terminate the matter. Because of the secrecy of her
intentions and her fraudulent behavior, the attack would come as a
complete surprise. Failure, suffering, and death would have been the
prognostication for this event. As the Man of Law points out (with the
exactness of hindsight), it was a tragic error to ignore the stars on
such an important occasion; they even fulfilled the prophecy of the
Sultan's death through love in his own nativity (190-96). As it turned
out, it made very little difference what appeared in anyone's natal
chart: from the day Constance set out for Syria, the stars had ordained
that he would die.

But what of Constance? Why does she survive the blood bath? The
text explicitly attributes her survival to providential intervention,
but there is also an astrological explanation. This horoscope is an
election of times, not a natal horoscope. Consequently, the Sultaness
was an opponent of the event, not of Constance in particular. That does
not mean that she was against marriage in general or against a marriage
between the Sultan and Constance in particular. What it does mean is
that as the opponent of the event at hand, she is an obstacle to the
probability of any marriage taking its natural course. The Sultaness's
ambition is to rule: a living male heir thwarts that ambition and usurp-
ing the throne by openly murdering her son would leave her without support.
The Sultan's marriage to a Christian provided the opportunity to take the
throne and dispose of his closest followers. Because of the marriage, she could justify treachery and usurpation to her countrymen, assume the throne, and show her sacred and secular mercy by exiling Constance rather than executing her. Thus, the astrological reason Constance's life was spared was because in the election of times the Sultaness was the hidden enemy of the event, not of the person.

It may be argued that even though the failure of the Syrian marriage can be accounted for by the Man of Law's planetary configurations, Constance's adventures in "Northumberland" remain to be explained. I have explained earlier that the planets are constantly moving through the zodiac except in the case of natal configurations, and Constance was at sea for something over three years (498) before she reached Northumber-
lond. Since the Man of Law is silent about the stars in this part of the tale, how do we know where the planets were at that time? And how can the different details in the two marriages be accounted for without some reference to the conditions in the heavens in this marriage? Is the Man of Law trying to "have it both ways" here? Are we to take him seriously if he says the stars are involved in the first marriage and then implies by his silence that they are not involved in the second?

There is nothing inconsistent in the Man of Law's silence about the stars and Constance's second marriage. He does not mention their involve-
ment in that union because it is unnecessary.

It will be recalled that 1) a marriage contracted at the time an election should have been cast would have indicated misfortune. 2) It would have shown that there would be hidden opposition to the marriage and that the opposition would come from the mother of the prospective
husband. 3) The prospective husband would be a king. 4) The motivation for the opposition would be ambition and jealousy. 5) The means by which the marriage would be rendered unsuccessful would be treachery and deception on the part of the hidden enemy. 6) The method would be sedition and murder or fraudulently informing against one or both of the parties contracted in marriage. 7) The circumstances surrounding the marriage would be bloody, filled with suffering, sorrow, and death; difficult journeys at sea would take place in which there would be the possibility of no return.

It should be noted that there is only one pattern to be expected from the election, and the details of each marriage are no more than different elements in the same pattern. Both marriages were definitely unfortunate. There were hidden opponents to both marriages, both of whom were the mothers of the husbands, and both of the husbands were kings. The Sultaness was motivated by ambition; Donegild was motivated by jealousy. The manner in which each marriage was rendered unsuccessful was different, the motivation was different, but the approach was the same: fraud, deceit, and treachery. There is mass-murder on the one hand, and isolated murder, assaults, trials, and executions on the other. There is no question that each marriage was filled with suffering, sorrow, and death; and Constance is set adrift without sail or rudder after each marriage fails. It is true that the details of each marriage are different, but the plot or pattern of events is the same.

Chaucer does not supply the location of the planets when Constance arrives at Northumberlond because it is not necessary. Even though I
must repeat myself, it has to be understood that the horoscope in this tale is designed to predict the success or failure of an event, and the event in question is marriage. The planetary configurations at the time Constance first set sail were unfavorable toward the event. What has to be understood is that the configurations at that time remain unfavorable toward every event associated with the initial decision to marry. Since the second marriage was obviously a result of the failure of the first, it was thereby directly connected to the original election for marriage. It stands to reason, therefore, that the pattern of misfortune (indicated by the planets) in the second marriage would fit the pattern of the first, regardless of the difference in details. It is for this reason that the planetary positions originally cited by the Man of Law account for the unhappiness in both of Constance's marriages without assuming additional configurations.

Chaucer's use of astrology in the Man of Law's Tale, while somewhat more involved than his use of the science in the other Canterbury Tales, is marvelously creative and yet quite fundamental. The keys to the astral situation in the tale lie in the retrograde condition of Mars and in the realization that the 12th house is unquestionably the "darkest" house in any horoscope. To know Mars is retrograde, or moving "backwards," one needs only to know the rule of astrology that says when a planet falls from an angle, it falls into a cadent house. Since cadent houses (3,6,9,12) precede the angles (1,4,7,10), and planetary motion is normally counter-clockwise through the zodiac, a planet in the 1st house angle (ascendant) must move "backwards" (clockwise), or be retrograde, in order to fall into the cadent (12th house which precedes the 1st) house.
When it is understood that Mars (as lord of the ascendant) was in the 1st house before falling out of "his" angle (going retrograde) and that the house immediately cadent to the 1st house angle, the 12th, happens also to be the "derkeste hous" in the horoscope, it is not difficult to understand that Mars belongs in the 12th house in this chart. Since the Man of Law says the Moon was conjoined with Mars, her position in the 12th house can be understood in the space of a thought. Once the Arian ascendant is recognized, Pisces on the 12th house cusp is inevitable, and from there, one needs only to know the general nature of the planets and the common affairs of the houses and signs to see what the Man of Law was driving at when he called for an election of times.

Even though the Man of Law's configurations cleverly account for the events in his tale, however, Chaucer has shown us that this pilgrim's understanding of the role of the stars in the providential scheme of things is, to borrow a phrase from the Franklin, "nat worth a flye" (FT 1132). He believes that an election of times should have been cast so that the disastrous results of Constance's marriage could have been avoided. In this, he is guilty of misusing astrology in an attempt to make the stars (Mars in particular) the "causes" of a sequence of events he does not fully understand. It is ironically humorous that he is able to see Providence at work everywhere in his tale, and yet, like other characters in Chaucer who use astrology to "explain" misfortune, he is unable to distinguish between the apparent "evil" of planetary aspects and the supreme good of the Providential Plan. For Constance's marriages were only disastrous from a worldly point of view. In the cosmic scheme of things, numerous conversions to Christianity resulted from her marriages;
Both of her husbands were converts, and although the Sultan seems to have been drawn to her primarily by lust, her marriage with Alla was one of love. Constance is reunited with him and with her family in Rome (notice that happiness for her meant remaining in Rome with them at the outset of the tale), her son becomes a fine Christian emperor as a result of her union with Alla, and she herself provides a perfect example to others of patient faith in the goodness of the Providential Plan. The Man of Law would have placed her at the mercy of the Destinal Powers, while Constance herself chose to participate in the Plan and thereby defeated those Powers.

The Man of Law either fails to notice the good that came of Constance's trials, or he did not see it as worthy of emphasis: I would suggest that the former is the case. He is far too busy pointing out the innocent suffering of Constance, and in his anger at the apparent triumphs of evil, he fails to point out that evil is not rewarded in the tale but instead does not achieve happiness because it got what it wanted. The reason that the Man of Law seems blinded to the good that came from Constance's marriages, I believe, is that his vision is clouded by personal rather than universal values, by earthly rather than heavenly desires. He is a worldly man, and as such, he concentrates on what Lady Philosophy would call the path of false good to false happiness. To the man whose vision is earth-bound, happiness exists in the possession of those things he most desires, and the good, for that man resides in that happiness. Whereas the good and therefore happiness actually resides in the unworldly values of the Godhead, it seems to me that the Man of Law's Prologue shows him to be chained to his earthly desires for power or pleasure.

Notice that his state of mind before he begins to tell his tale is one in which wealth equals happiness. One of the reasons for the content
of his Prologue, I believe, is to show him bound to earthly power and pleasure since his discussion of the "evils" of poverty clearly implies his faith in the supreme good / happiness of wealth. Consider, for example, the following lines (113-26):

Hernwe what is the sentence of the wise:
"Bet is to dyen than have indignence;"
"Thy selve.neighbor wol thee despise."
If thou be povre, farwel thy reverence!
Yet of the wise man take this sentence:
"Alle the dayes of povre men been wikked."
Be war, therfore, er thou come to that prikke!
If thou be povre, thy brother hateth thee,
And alle thy freendes flean from thee, allass!
O riche marchauntz, ful of wele been yee,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas;
Youre bagges been nat fild with ambes as
But with syr cynk, that renneth for youre chaunce;
At Cristemasse myrie may ye daunce!

Wealth, as Lady Philosophy points out time and again (II. 6. 102-118; II. 5. 123-148, 169-188; III. 2. 22-82; III. 9. etc.), is not a source of happiness or even an indication of self-sufficiency. Essentially, she says that wealth brings the desire for more wealth and the anxiety of accumulating it. Moreover, wealth makes one dependent upon others for protection rather than making one self-sufficient. "Rychesse ne mai," she says, "nat al doon awey ned, / but richesses maken ned, what mai it thanne / be that ye wenen that richesses mowen / yyven yow suffisaunce" (III. 3. 96-100). And she is very clear about the fact that the desire for wealth or reverence does not indicate an understanding of the true good (III. 2. 22-32):
the covetise of verray good is naturely
iplaunted in the hertes of men, but the mys-
wandrynge errorr mysledeth hem into false
goodes. Of the whiche men, some of hem
wenen that sovereyn good be to lyven withoute
node of any thyng, and travaylen hem to ben
habundaunt of rycheasses. And some othere
men demen that sovereyn good be for to be
ryght digne of reverence, and enforcen
hem to ben reverenced among hir neyghe-
bours by the honours that thel han igeten.

And (III. 2. 67-82):

thilke thyng that every man desireth moost over alle
thynges he demeth that it be the sovereyn good; but
I have diffyned that blissfulnesse is the sovereyn
good; for which every wyght demeth that thilke estat
that he desireth over alle thynges, that it be bliss-
fulnesse. Now hastow thanne byforn thyne eien al-
mest al the purposede forme of the welefulnesse of
mankind; that is to seyn rycheasses, honours, power,
glorie, and delitz. The whiche delit oonly considered
Epicurus, and juggid and establissyde that delyt is
the soverayn good, for as moche as alle othere thynges,
as hym thoughte, byrefte awaye joye and myrthe from the
herte.

Finally (II. 6. 102-118):

But certes rycheesse mai nat restreyne avarice
unstaunched; ne power ne maketh nat a man myghty over
hysmselfe, which that ne mowen nat ben unwbomden. And
dignytees that ben yyven to schrewide folk nat oonly
ne maketh hem nat digne, but it scheweth rather al
openly that they been unworthy and undigne. And whi
is it thus? Certes for ye han joie to clepen thynges
with false names, that beren hem al in the contrarie;
the whiche names, ben ful ofte reproved by the effect
of the same thynges; so that this ilke rycheasses ne
oughten nat by ryghte to ben cleped rycheasses, ne swych
power ne aughte nat ben clepyd power, ne swich dignyte
ne aughte nat ben clepyd dignyte.

Thus, the Man of Law's Prologue emphasizes his earth-bound ignorance
of the concepts of the true good and true happiness, and his call for
an election of times shows his misunderstanding of the workings of Providence and the Powers of Destiny.

Clearly, the Man of Law is of the opinion that the stars function to work good or evil in the lives of men. In this, he is presenting a view of celestial motion that is not at all unlike Fortune's Wheel. Surely, he does not recognize that he is doing so when he calls for the election unless it is granted that he wanted the whole affair to be in the hands of Fortune. Yet that was precisely what he was asking for when he called for the election to be cast, even though he thought it would have eliminated Constance's misfortunes. His reasoning (since he does not understand the relationship between Providence and Fate) would have gone as follows.

The stars formed evil aspects on the day of Constance's voyage. Since the motion of the planets would have caused those aspects to separate and change, it follows that waiting for favorable aspects would have changed the consequences of her marriages. He has forgotten that the planets are always in motion and that "evil" aspects will again form following those that were favorable, into infinity. Just as Fortune's Wheel is perpetually turning, bringing "good" then "bad" fortune according to her nature, so it is in the nature of the celestial bodies to constantly change, forming now "good," now "evil," aspects.

But that is not his only error. His assumption about the stars depends upon a universe governed by separation and change rather than one that is ruled by unity and stability. In this, he demonstrates the belief that Providence and the Destinal Powers work independently of one another, and that the stars can thus work for or against the supreme good of the
Providential Plan. His failure to recognize the good that came of Con-
stance’s trials because of the apparent evil of the planetary aspects
shows that he does not understand that the stars are merely the machinery
that carries out the supreme good of the Providential Plan, and that they
can in no way "slay" a marriage or "cause" any sort of evil. Again, this
is all made quite clear by Lady Philosophy (IV. 6. 60-82):

For purveaunce is thilke devyne resoun that is es-
tablissed in the sovereyn prince of thinges, the
whiche purveaunce disponith alle thinges; but,
cartes, destyne is the disposicioun and ordena-
clynynge to moevable thinges, by the whiche disposit-
ion the purveaunce knytteth alle thingis in hir
ordres; for purveaunce embraceth alle thinges to-
hepe, althogh that thei ben diverse and although
thei ben infinit. But destyne, cartes, departeth
and ordeyneth alle thinges, singularly and devyded
in moevynge, in places, in formes, in tymes. As
thus: lat the unfoldynge of temporal ordenaunce,
assembled and oonyd in the lokynge of the devyne
thought, be cleped purveaunce; and thilke same
assemblynge and oonynge, devyded and unfolden by
tymes, lat that be called destyne. And al be it
so that thise thinges ben diverse, yit natheles
hangeth that oon of that oother; forwhi the ordre
destynal procedith of the simplicite of purveaunce.

The stars, as the machinery that is subject to, and carries out in time,
the Providential Plan for the supreme good are indicators of the direction
the Plan is taking rather than causes of anything (IV. 6. 92-101):

Thanne, whethir that destyne be exercised by some
devyne spiritz, servaunts to the devyne purveaunce,
or elles by som soule, or elles by alle nature
servyng to God, or elles by the celestial moevynge
of stertres, or elles by vertu of angelis, or ellis
by divers subtilite of develis, by any of hem, or
elles by hem alle; the destinal ordenaunce of thinges
is ywoven and acomplissid.
Indeed, the Man of Law is so convinced that the stars can cause misfortune that he misses the point of his own examples of deaths written in the stars (190-203). By explaining that these deaths were "written" in the stars, he should have realized that the stars were not causes but indicators of God's plan for mankind. Knowing this, the wise man will seek to understand the direction of that plan by its indicators and strive to participate in it.

By calling for an election of times, he calls for an attempt to thwart the Destinal Powers rather than work with them. Since the Powers of Destiny and the Providential Plan have one and the same goal, such an attempt amounts to trying to operate outside of the Providential Plan. Since the Plan is good, such activity cannot achieve the good / happiness, and the Destinal Powers will see to it that the Plan is carried out regardless of resistance. Forced participation in the Plan because one does not understand the supreme good creates the illusion of ill fortune to those who can only see the false good of earthly power and pleasure. Since the supreme good will be achieved whether one tries to act in harmony with the Plan or chooses to do battle with the powers of Fate that carry out the Plan, it is wiser and actually easier to look "through" the stars to the Godhead and put one's faith and trust in Him rather than in the stars from the very beginning.

Thus, the Man of Law's call for an election of times was right, but for the wrong reasons. Rather than changing the results of Constance's marriages, an election would have indicated the direction of the Providential Plan, and by accepting that the Plan was good regardless of the apparent evil of the aspects, the opportunity to participate freely in
the Plan would have been possible. That is precisely what Constance did, without benefit of the stars. Throughout all of her experiences, she does not lament her "bad" fortune, nor does she "blame" the stars or any of the powers of Fate for her plight. Without complaint, and thereby exhibiting perfect faith in the goodness of God's Plan, she focuses on, and acts in imitation of, the unworldly values of the Godhead. By so doing, she actively and freely participated in the Plan, and her choice was justified by the good she helped to bring about. Both she and the Emperor were anything but "imprudent." Both of them chose to put their trust in God and chose not to be governed by the stars. By so doing, they were never subject to the Destinal Powers. It is ironic that the Man of Law would have had them ignore the goodness of God and put themselves in the hands of Fate. To the end, he implies that Providence intervened to preserve Constance's life and to bring about a "happy ending" as a reward for her goodness. He never recognizes that Providence intervenes in nothing and that the stars rule no man who does not choose to be ruled.
1. Skeat, 5, p. 150; see also, Curry, Medieval Science, pp. 171-94.


5. Browne, p. 53. To be more precise, Lilly says that Mars completes the circle of the zodiac in 365.25 days, 321 days, and 22 hours (p. 40). He is thus in a sign roughly 57.25 days. Consequently, for Mars to fall from his angle into Scorpio with an Arian ascendant would take 456 days, or about 15 months. It is also significant to note that of the nearly two years required for Mars to pass through all of the twelve signs, he "is retrograde 80 days; stationary two or three." It must be understood that although this amounts to an average of 3.33 days retrograde per month per cycle, the planet does not operate on averages. A random glance at any ephemeris will show that the planet may not be retrograde for months and then suddenly go retrograde and remain so for long periods of time. For example, Mars was Direct at 18° Leo on October 1, 1981 and remained so until Saturday, February 20, 1982. Mars was thus not retrograde at all for four and three-quarters months. On February 20, 1982, Mars went retrograde at 19° Cancer and remained retrograde until May 11, 1982 at 0° 23' Libra, the full 80 days allotted for retrogradation by Lilly. It should also be noted that for the period between January 1, 1981 and January 1, 1983, Mars was at no time retrograde except for the 80 consecutive days between February 20 and May 11, 1982. Thus, when a planet goes retrograde, it remains so for a much longer period of time than averages would indicate; Michelson, The American Ephemeris, January 1, 1981 through January 1, 1983. When planets are retrograde, they are said to be unfortunate; consequently, when choosing the right moment to perform an act, the hindering effect of any retrograde planets is evaluated. I have presented this information because I believe that Mars was in fact retrograde at the time of Constance's voyage.


10 Curtiss, p. 25.

11 This and the subsequent quotations are taken from Curtiss's essay, p. 25.

12 Skeat, 5, p. 150 says that "A planet is said to ascend directly, when in a direct sign; but tortuously, when in a tortuous sign. The tortuous signs are those which ascend most obliquely to the horizon, viz. the signs from Capricornus to Gemini inclusive. Chaucer tells us this himself; see his Treatise on the Astrolabe, part ii, sect. 28, in vol. iii. The most 'tortuous' of these are the two middle ones, Pisces and Aries. Of these two, Aries is called the mansion of Mars, and we may therefore suppose the ascending sign to be Aries, the lord of which (Mars) is said to have fallen. . . ."

13 In his discussion of the 12th house, Lilly, p. 338, says that it is cadent, which means "any of the houses said to be 'falling from an angle'(my italics): these are the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th houses." Obviously, since a planet must first move through a cadent house to enter an angle (the cadent 12th precedes the 1st house angle, etc.), the planet can only "fall out of the angle." or return to the cadent house it has just transited by moving backwards, or becoming retrograde. For Chaucer's knowledge of retrogradation, see the Astrolabe II. 35. 12-17 and II. 35. 1-8 where he explains what retrograde means and how to discover it so that "thou perceyve wel the moeving of a planete, / Whether so he moeve forward or bakward."

14 Lilly, pp. 29-30.

15 Lilly, p. 31.

16 Lilly, p. 32.

17 Lilly, p. 33.

18 Lilly, p. 32.

19 Maternus, pp. 56-7.

20 Lilly, p. 34.

21 Lilly, p. 34.


24 Ptolemy, p. 87.

25 Lilly, p. 344. See also, Curry, pp. 178-79, where he cites Albohazan Haly as saying that "If you discover Luna in an unfortunate position, such as cadent from an angle in the eighth or twelfth house (which she is), you may say that evil shall come to both the parties contracting matrimony, and that they shall have trials and tribulations according to the nature of the house, of the infortune, and of the sign."

26 Lilly, p. 50, declares that "She terminates her course through the whole twelve signs in 27 days, 7 hours, 43 minutes, 5 seconds."

27 According to Ptolemy, p. 423, the 12th house is one of those (3rd, 6th, 9th, 12th) "that cause travel."

28 Ptolemy, p. 423.

29 Ptolemy, p. 423.

30 Ptolemy, p. 423, n. 2.

31 Curry quoting Haly, p. 180.

32 Ptolemy, p. 185.

33 Curry quoting Haly, pp. 177-78.

34 Ptolemy, pp. 183, 185.

35 Curry quoting Haly, p. 123.

36 Lilly, p. 196.

37 Maternus, p. 57.

38 Ptolemy, pp. 67, 175.

39 Ptolemy, p. 241. See also, Maternus, pp. 56-7.

40 Thorndike, Magic and Experimental Science, 4, p. 494, quoting Pico Della Mirandola.

41 Ptolemy, p. 353.

42 Curry quoting Haly, p. 180.

43 The argument for the Man of Law's ignorance of the roles of the stars in the Providential Plan and for his failure to distinguish between the workings of Providence and Fate are taken from Chaucer's translation of Boece in Robinson's edition of the Collected Works. Henceforth all quotations from the translation will be documented in the body of the text by book number, Pros number, and line numbers.
CHAPTER VII

THE WIFE OF BATH'S HOROSCOPE

The horoscope in the Wife of Bath's Prologue is perhaps the best example in all of Chaucer's works of a character's determination to rationalize away all responsibility for the course her life has taken. The Wife makes it clear that she expects her audience to understand her desire to make love and domestic war was decreed by the stars, and the elements of her personality that she describes are text-book examples of the prognostication for those born with Mars in Taurus ascending (609-27):

For certes, I am al Venerien
In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse.
Myn ascendant was Taur, and Mars therinne.
Allas! allas! that evere love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacieun
By vertu of my constellacieun;
That made me I koude noght withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,
And also in another privee place.
For God so wys be my savacioun,
I ne loved nevere by no discretion,
But evere folwed myn appetit,
Al were he short or long, or blak or whit;
I took no kep so that he liked me,
How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.

The only astrological configuration the Wife supplies in this is Mars in Taurus ascending, and she offers no additional configurations in the remainder of her Prologue or tale. She uses astrological phrases
like "For carent, I am al Venerien" and in her later comments about the children of Mercury and Venus (697-710), but her remarks reveal nothing whatsoever about the location of any planet in her horoscope except Mars.¹ No doubt, the Wife expects her relationships with clerks to be justified on astrological grounds when she speaks of the children of Mercury and Venus, but it is only when she says "Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne" that there is a concrete astrological configuration with which to work. Simple, and to the point, the configuration is all that Chaucer needed. For the purpose of letting the Wife speak for herself, the use of the ascendant is entirely appropriate. It is in the nature of the affairs governed by the ascendant to provide poetic distance since it deals specifically with one's own views of oneself and the world.² Consequently, the Wife's rationalizations and her somewhat unorthodox opinions must be seen as her own formulation of herself and the world, and not at all as the views of the poet who reports them.

That the Mars in Taurus ascending configuration is responsible for the Wife's appearance and for her lecherous, domineering nature has long-since been shown by Walter Clyde Curry and amplified by both Chauncey Wood and B. F. Hamlin.³ Curry goes to great lengths to explain her dress, her physical appearance, and the psychological complexities of parts of her behavior through the configuration. His theory, however, is dependent upon the assumption of a conjunction between Mars and Venus in Taurus that cannot be verified by the text: the Wife does not tell us where Venus the planet is located, and for a conjunction to be possible, both planets must be located in the same sign. As Wood, and particularly Hamlin, have pointed out, when Curry says that Venus "is posited and at
home in its own house, Taurus," and "may be considered well-dignified or particularly beneficent in aspect toward the native," he is confusing planetary rulership of the sign with the presence of the planet itself. 4 Again, the Wife does not say that the planet Venus is in Taurus, but rather that the influence of the planet has a powerful effect upon her personality. The reason she does not tell us where the influence of Venus is located is because it is unnecessary. Venus is the ruler of Taurus, and the rules of astrology dictate that the influence of a planet is in operation wherever the sign it rules is located, even if the planet itself is located elsewhere. 5 Thus, the astrological clue that Chaucer provides for the Wife's character is to be found in the concept of planetary rulership of the signs and not in planetary aspects.

Certainly, Chaucer would have known that virtually any aspect between Venus and Mars could provide an astrological explanation for the characteristics Curry emphasizes. But he chose not to deal with planetary aspects, not to deal with a conjunction, because there is more to the Wife's character than a conjunction will explain. In order for planetary aspects to explain the other peculiarities of her character, he would have had to put more information into her mouth -- more planets, more signs, more configurations -- and would have had to add considerable length to her Prologue. Additional configurations would have placed additional demands upon his audience, and the Wife would have appeared to be an astrological fanatic rather than merely a woman who uses whatever is convenient to justify her behavior. With good reason, then, Chaucer chose not to delineate the Wife's character by means of planetary aspects, and instead directed our attention toward the planetary rulers of the signs.
The clue that the astrological explanation for the Wife's behavior is to be found in the concept of planetary rulership of the signs occurs when she says that she has always followed her inclinations according to her "constellacioun" (615-16). Taurus is the constellation, not Mars. Mars is the planet in the constellation at the time of her birth. It may be recalled that the effect of the constellations, or signs, upon the native is determined by the planets that rule them. Thus, the Wife's emphasis on her "constellation" immediately suggests the influence of the planet Venus (even though it is physically absent), for example, upon Mars through its rulership of Taurus. It is this kind of combination, working in this way, that accounts for the Wife's lusty, combative nature (as Curry describes it) and for her appearance.

In this chapter, I hope to shed new light upon the Mars in Taurus configuration based upon the principles of planetary rulership. Since Chaucer himself makes it clear that he is aware that there are "lords" that govern the signs, and since he sees fit to mention, of all the various divisions, the three "faces" into which each sign is divided, I will restrict my discussion to the effects of the lord of Taurus (Venus) and to the planetary lords of the faces of Taurus (Mercury, the moon, Saturn) upon Mars and ultimately upon the Wife's character. Once the influence of the moon is taken into account, it will be seen that there is an astrological explanation for the Wife's fickleness and inconsistent behavior. The roles of Mercury and Saturn will explain the Wife's occasional eloquence, her indiscriminate selection of sexual partners, her fundamental intelligence, her love of manipulation, of travel, of gossip, her apparent need for recognition to the point of notoriety, and
her marriages to old men.

Even though the Mars-Venus combination in Taurus helps one to understand that it is in the Wife's nature to be lusty and domineering, however, it does not explain why those characteristics particularly manifest themselves in her marriages. The ascendant, it will be recalled, is equivalent to the 1st house of a horoscope, and the 1st house governs the appearance and the personality, not the affairs of marriage. That distinction belongs to the 7th house. In order to determine the effects of those personality traits generated by her 1st house configuration upon the affairs of marriage, one must turn to the house of marriage and the natures of the sign and ruler of the sign that govern that house.

By following the Wife's clue that the key to her behavior is to be found in the concept of planetary rulership, her "tribulaciuon in marriage" (174) is quickly and easily understood through four fundamental laws of astrology. First, the signs of the zodiac are in a state of fixed opposition: Scorpio is always opposite Taurus. Second, the houses of a horoscope are also in a condition of fixed opposition: the 7th house is always opposite the ascendant (1st house). Third, the ascendant governs the personality, while the 7th house governs the affairs of marriage. Fourth (as we already know), the influence of a planet ruling a sign will always be present wherever the sign it rules is located. Thus, when the Wife says Taurus is her ascending sign, we know that the sign governs her 1st house and the the influence of the planet Venus is present in that house through its rulership of Taurus. In the same way, since Taurus governs the Wife's 1st house, we also know that Scorpio
must govern her 7th house (of marriage), and that the influence of Mars
will be present in the 7th house through his rulership of Scorpio.

Because Scorpio, ruled by Mars, reigns over the Wife's marital
affairs, the will to dominate already established by her 1st house Mars
in Taurus configuration is reinforced and made manifest in her marriages.
Her inherent "likerousnesse" makes the idea of marriage perpetually
attractive to her, and due to the natures of Scorpio and Mars, she will
always marry men who will contend with her for domestic mastery. Her
martian need to conquer will be matched by the partners she chooses with
Scorpio ruling her house of marriage, and battle will be an everyday and
almost grimly pleasurable experience.

It is in the nature of Scorpio to bring about a love of battle for
its own sake to those under its influence, and governing the affairs of
marriage, it assures a state of constant warfare. According to Ptolemy,
"the sign Scorpio as a whole is marked by thunder and fire," 9 and in
the view of Manilius, those under the influence of the sign are virtually
obsessed with fighting:

By virtue of his tail armed with its powerful sting... the Scorpion creates natures ardent for war and active
service, and a spirit which rejoices in plenteous blood-
shed and in carnage more than in plunder. Why, these men
spend even peace under arms; they fill the glades and
scour the woods; they wage fierce warfare now against man,
now against beast, and now they sell their persons to pro-
vide the spectacle of death and to perish in the arena,
when, warfare in abeyance, they each find themselves foes
to attack. There are those, too, who enjoy mock-fights
and jousts in arms (such is their love of fighting) and
devote their leisure to the study of war and every pur-
suit which arises from the art of war. 10
The influence of Mars, the ruling planet of Scorpio, makes the desire to carry on domestic warfare, to conquer completely and gain total mastery all the more inevitable. Mars' reputation for malevolence in the Middle Ages is almost legendary, and it is second only to that of Saturn. Regardless of Mars' location, he is "evil disposed, and termed the lesser misfortune." \(^{11}\) Ptolemy declares that when Mars has dominion over the soul, he makes his subjects "savage, insolent...makers of disturbances...loud-mouthed, quick-fisted, impetuous, drunken, unsettled,"\(^{12}\) and as Marsilio Ficino says, "Mars can stir the bile in old men and produce in them a bitter and irascible character." \(^{13}\)

Finally, in matters pertaining to the marital state in the Wife's horoscope, the specific combination of Mars in the 1st house angle as a planet, and his influence as the lord of the 7th house assures that her marriages will be full of strife, that her conduct will be "loose," and that she will gain the mastery over her husbands in the end. The situation is clearly explained by Lilly's comments on "How the Parties shall agree after Marriage":

If \(\text{Sun}\), \(\text{Saturn}\), or \(\text{Mars}\), be in the ascendant, or 7th, they will live unhappily. If the ill-planets (Mars or Saturn), or \(\text{Mars}\), be in the 1st, the querent is to blame; and if it be \(\text{Saturn}\), is given to quarrel, or be loose in conduct...The lord of the 7th angular, and the more weighty planet, the quesited will strive for mastery; and if neither the lord of the ascendant nor 7th be in angles, then note the weightier planet, for he points out the party who will rule. \(^{14}\)

Mars, of course, is in the Wife's ascendant (1st house) and is, therefore, responsible for her quarrelsome nature and for her loose conduct; the Wife must bear the major responsibility for the unhappiness in her
marriages. Since Mars is lord of the 7th house angular as well, her husbands will also strive for mastery, but since Mars is in the 1st house angle in her horoscope and is the only planet given in any angle, she will be "the party who will rule."

The battle for domestic mastery, of course, is the subject under discussion in the Wife of Bath’s Prologue. She opens the Prologue with a comment on her marital misfortunes: "Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me / To speke of wo that is in marioge" (1-3), and indeed implies that she is so accustomed to waging domestic warfare that there is no greater authority on the subject than herself: "And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale / Of tribulacioun in mariag, / Of which I am expert in al myn age, / This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe, -- / Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe / Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche" (173-77). 15 As Kenneth Oberembt has observed, the Wife’s marriages are "purgatorial" experiences with which she has little patience: "Shrewishness has been her typical method of reforming her wayward husbands, not the sweet reasonableness of Dame Prudence in the Tale of Melibee or the patient steadfastness of Griselde of the Clerk’s Tale." 16

The Wife constantly does battle with her three old husbands over clothing, staying at home, money, faithfulness, and so on. When they resist, she exerts further pressure until she finally wears them down: "I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey, / That many a nigh they songen ‘weilaway!’" (25-16). The brawls continued with her fourth husband, and with her fourth husband, the jealousy engendered by the mixed influences of Mars and Venus in Taurus became the focus of her domestic
quarrels: 17

I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit
That he of any oother had delit.
But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!
I made hym of the same wode a croce;
Nat of my body, in no foul manere,
But certesinly, I made folk swich cheere
That in his owene grece I made hym frye
For angre, and for verray jealousye.
By God! in erthe I was his purgatorie... 
Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste,
In many wise, how soore I hym twiste.

It will be recalled that Lilly's prognostication for Mars in the
ascendant and lord of the 7th house predicted "loose conduct" as well as
unhappiness after marriage. Accordingly, while husband number four is
in London during Lent, Alys takes advantage of his absence to go "into
the feeldes" with her gossip and Jankyn the clerk (548-49). At last,
she had "the bettre leyser for to pleye, / And for to se and eke for to
be seye / Of lusty folk" (551-53). With the cat away, the Wife is able
to make her "visitaciouns / To vigilies and to processiouns, / To prech-
yng eek, and to thise pilgrimages, / To pleyes of myracles and to mariages"
(555-58). And finally, she attempts to ensnare Jankyn in the event that
she again became a widow (667-84), an act which has led some critics to
believe that husband number four died at the hands of the Wife, or of
Jankyn, or of both. 18

The Wife's fifth marriage illustrates particularly well the love of
battle for battle's sake inherent in the sign of Scorpio. In that
marriage, physical combat took place between the Wife and Jankyn, and
their home became a veritable battlefield. Yet, Jankyn seems to have
been exactly the sort of man the Wife preferred. Steven Axelrod points
out that she "has a prediliction for clerks. . ." and that "she likes troublesome men. . ." Thus she scorned her first three husbands because 'they loved me so wel' (D 207), and she loved Jankyn the clerk 'for that he / Was of his love daungerous to me' (D 513-4)."

Jankyn was determined to be the master in his own home. The Wife, on the other hand, made it perfectly clear that so long as he did not allow her to have her way, she would resist him in spite of words or blows (633-40):

By God! he smoot me ones on the lyst,  
For that I rente out of his book a leef,  
That of the strook myn eere wax al deef.  
Stibourn I was as is a leonesse,  
And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,  
And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn,  
From hous to hous, although he had it sworn.

The incident to which the Wife refers took place when Jankyn tried to "reform" her by reading from his book of Wicked Wives (669-787). In utter exasperation, the Wife challenges his right to criticize her by ripping three pages from the book "right as he radde, and eke / I with my fest so took hym on the cheke / That in oure fyre he fil bakward adoun. / And he up stirte as dooth a wood leoun, / And with his fest he smoot me on the head, / That in the floor I lay as I were deed" (791-96). Admittedly, says the Wife, Jankyn was "to me the mooste shrewed / That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe, / And evere shal unto myn endyng day" (505-7). Nevertheless, she confesses that of all her husbands, she "loved him best" (513) precisely because of their turbulent relationship, recalling with obvious pleasure that their marital fisticuffs terminated with Jankyn giving her "al the bridal in myn hond" (813), and with his
relinquishing all the "maistre, al the soveraynetee" (318).

Love of battle and the will to dominate is what motivates the Wife in her marital affairs. Mars in Taurus in her ascendant ruled by Venus causes her to be attracted to all sorts of men and makes the will to conquer a part of her personality. Scorpio, governing her 7th house of marriage and ruled by Mars, assures opposition and conflict from her partners and assures that the nature of the conflicts will be to determine mastery in the partnership. Men in the Middle Ages, of course, were expected to take control of their households, but that does not mean that every husband made an effort to exercise absolute power over his wife. The Wife's partners, however, under the sign of Scorpio, would always be prepared to fight for domestic supremacy. With Mars ruling the sign and the house, they would expect nothing less than total conquest and complete submission. Thus, whenever the Wife married, an attempt was always made to force upon her a submissive role; she was to become the "conquered" who unconditionally surrendered. Since the will to conquer was part of her nature, however, her martial instincts immediately rejected the idea of submission, and was was waged until she had once and for all vanquished the "enemy" who would enslave her. Then and only then could she affect a submissive role: that is, with the total capitulation of the enemy forces, she was ready to impose a rather more benevolent kind of tyranny upon the vanquished. The vanquished then became the "victor" in name, thus keeping up male appearances. The Wife's martian need to conquer was satisfied, and she inevitably professed her love for all five husbands. She took no prisoners, and indeed, she was ready to sound the trumpets for a sixth campaign. And
why not? Mars and Scorpio love the heat of battle and the glory of conquest, and the Wife of Bath had never tasted defeat.

But the Wife of Bath is more than a domineering "wrangler" and "striker of blows." The games she plays in her love affairs are not without risk to herself. She chooses her partners according to her sexual appetite and is absolutely indiscriminate in her choices. She requires only that she is "liked" and that she be allowed to retain her freedom of movement. Mars in Taurus gives her the strength to stand up for herself, to stubbornly persist in her own interests, and it causes her to have no fear of the consequences. It gives her the will to dominate and the desire to satisfy her lust whenever she chooses, but it does not guarantee that she will be successful in her attempts to do so. She enjoys some success not merely because it is in her nature to want to dominate and to want to satisfy her sexual appetite, but because she is a cunning, calculating woman who lives by her wits and who is not above deceit, manipulation, and downright underhandedness when it serves her purposes.

She is also a creature subject to powerful emotions whose passion clouds her reason at times, causing her to become irrational and even violent. She is fickle in her love affairs and inconsistent in her overall behavior. She fluctuates between a degree of eloquence and utter coarseness, between feminine delicacy and masculine crudity, tenderness and violence, adultery and constancy, blasphemy and devoutness. She needs and seeks companionship and recognition. She is a traveler who enjoys both long pilgrimages and shorter "trips" from house to house. She loves to gossip and carouse, will not miss a festive occasion, and
does not hesitate to sing or dance whenever the opportunity presents itself. She dresses in a manner designed to attract attention, and is determined to be the first to present her offering at church. It matters very little that her dress and her behavior bring her recognition in the form of notoriety -- she obviously revels in it. Finally, although the Wife may well have been matched with her first old husband with little or no consent on her own part, she nevertheless continues to be receptive to the advances of old men through two succeeding marriages for purely pecuniary reasons: the marriages are business ventures.

All of these characteristics are consistent with the astrological information the Wife provides about herself in her Prologue. When the planetary influences operating on her personality are understood, it will be seen that Chaucer's accomplishment through the use of planetary rulership in a single Mars in Taurus configuration goes well beyond what has heretofore been revealed.

For over fifty years, critics have more or less sympathetically noted the inconsistencies in the Wife's behavior that make her so marvelously human and alive. To Walter Curry, she is so coarse and shameless in her disclosures of the marital relations with five husbands and yet so imaginative and delicate in her storytelling, that one is fascinated against his will and beset with an irresistible impulse to analyze her dual personality with the view of locating, if possible, definite causes for the coexistence of more incongruent elements than are ordinarily found in living human beings.

For Gloria Shapiro, the Wife's behavior is designed to make her appear to be a sexually attractive match in her quest for a sixth husband,
and therefore accounts not only for general inconsistencies, but also
for her suppression of any semblance of virtue:

In the total picture Dame Alice emerges as a
woman who is loudly but superficially vulgar
... She is full of gusto and bluster, yet
capable of fineness and of delicacy. She has
a mind potentially sharp but largely under-
developed. She is aggressively assertive, and
yet she is almost pathologically concerned lest
she present herself as virtuous. ... She is
garrulous and self-sufficient to the point of
innocence. Yet she is sophisticated in her lower
middle-class way. 22

James Cook believes the Wife to be under constant psychic stress due to
"the tension created by the ongoing warfare between her refined sensi-
abilities, on the one hand, and her shrewishness, lust, and coarseness
on the other are in themselves symptomatic of the uneasy state of her
soul and of her bondage to her appetites." 23 Charles Koban imagines
that if we were listening to Chaucer read the poem, "the effect of the
preface (A) would be... to raise at once in our minds the spectacle of
a woman jolly and buoyant on the surface but basically a slave of her
every whim and emotion." 24 And in a most recent study, Barbara Gott-
fried demonstrates that the Wife is "constantly improvising, adjusting
and readjusting her vision and desires to meet the needs or demands of
the moment." 25 To this list of psychological causes may at this time
be added, I believe, the influence of the moon in the Wife's horoscope
operating through her rulership of the second face of Taurus.

The moon brings restlessness, mutability, sensitivity, irrationality,
and a need for independence, to the lust and aggression of Venus and
Mars:
She (the moon) signifies...a lover of all honest and ingenious sciences, a searcher of and delighter in novelties, naturally inclined to flit and shift his habitation; unsteadfast, wholly caring for the present times...loving...to live free from the cares of this life...She signifies...all manner of women, as also the common people, travelers, pilgrims. 26

As governess of the tides, rivers, and streams, Ptolemy asserts that because of her close proximity to the earth, both animate and inanimate beings are "sympathetic to her and change in company with her." 27 She was said to have had a profound effect upon the mental faculties of both animals and men. Isidore of Seville ascribes dominion to her over nautical creatures and influence over the "brains of animals." 28 Albertus Magnus affirms that she "governeth in man's body the brain," 29 and her effect upon the human brain was so widely accepted that surgery performed on it was carried out according to her phases. 30 She could make thieves of men, 31 and as Roger Bacon puts it, "On account of the corruption of lunar motion and of lunar shapes it signifies the corruption of that law which will be corrupt in itself and a corrupter of others." 32 She had a powerful effect upon the imagination, 33 and as late as the fifteenth century, men were convinced that a conjunction of the sun and moon at birth could produce lunacy. 34 The assumption follows from Ptolemy's declaration that "the sensory and irrational part" of man's makeup "are discovered from...the moon." 35 Being feminine herself, her effect upon women was said to be particularly powerful, and men of letters did not hesitate to exploit the general inconsistency of women supposedly brought about when they were under the influence of the moon. 36
In short, the nature of the influence of the moon operating through her rulership of the second face of Taurus and intermingling her qualities with the temperaments of Venus and Mars accounts for the inconsistencies in the Wife's character that have puzzled Curry and others. Because of the element of sudden change inherent in the quality of the moon, intermingling with the lusty combativeness of Venus and Mars, because of its intermingling with the cunning and eloquence traditionally ascribed to Mercury and the profound malevolence attributed to Saturn (the rulers of the first and third faces of Taurus), it is to be expected that the Wife is neither good nor bad, that she can be both faithful and inconstant, self-willed and yielding, tender and violent, eloquent and coarse, and that she will attempt to justify her behavior with half-truths and rationalizations as the situation demands. The moon must be given her share of the responsibility for the Wife's inconsistent behavior; because of the moon, Alys is capable of changing her views and moods, as it were, with the weather and of concocting a "rational" reason for doing so.

There are yet other sides to the Wife's character that contribute to her success in love and war. Much of her success is due to the fact that she possesses a cunning, deceitful nature which loves underhandedness and manipulation and glories in notoriety. She revels in her ability to outwit, manipulate, and deceive her husbands in her quest for mastery, and she can be devious and untrustworthy to the point that one does wonder if she might have been capable of murder. Still, there is something in the Wife's character (perhaps it is her childlike inability to recognize anything "wrong" about her behavior) that makes one at least want to reject the idea that she could commit anything so cold-blooded
as murder. Nevertheless, she believes that deception is part of the
natural order of things, a God-given talent reserved for womankind (401-
6):

Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive
To women kyndely, whil that they may lyve,
And thus of o thyng I avaunte me,
Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,
By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,
As by continueel murmur or grucchyng.

There is something in her statement that rings like an appeal for under-
standing of what she considers merely to be "far" play. In defense of
the Wife's underhandedness, Gottfried says:

'Deceite, weeping, spinning' are God's natural
gift to women, the Wife of Bath claims, but her
Prologue makes it apparent that they are, rather,
the only tactics available to women in a patriarchal
society, though they are nevertheless held against
women by the very authorities who render those tac-
tics necessary in the first place. . . She is able to
succeed in consolidating her power in her first three
marriages both because her husbands are old and vain
and she plays on their vanity to achieve her own ends,
and because she herself is engaged contractually, not
emotionally. 37

Although the Wife is not above physical combat, she much prefers to
exercise her will to dominate by means of cunning. As T. L. Burton
points out, "In her arguments with her first three husbands the Wife is
intent on demonstrating her intellectual superiority," 38 and there are
several instances in her Prologue which could be cited wherein she
boasts of her victories. Typical of her pride in conquest through
cunning are the following lines: "As helpe me verray God omnipotent,
Though I right now sholde make my testament, / I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit. / I broghte it so aboute by my wit / That they moste yeve it up, as for the beste, / Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste" (423-28). Dolores Palomo observes that she "creates the public impression that she had taken a lover in order that the philanderer (husband 4) might know what it felt like to be scorned sexually," 39 and A. V. C. Schmidt explains that the Wife "is both calculating and sensual when we first see her, and her Prologue shows nature reasserting itself after the comparative idyll of her relations with her fifth husband." 40 Robert Cook maintains that in lines 534-38, the Wife "admits that she had at least three cronies to whom she would whisper any offense committed by her husband, whether trivial or capital," 41 and Rowland adds that she "has already declared, with reference to all her husbands, that she plukked (sic) the best 'bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste' (446)." 42 When the Wife remarks "Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt," Rowland says that she is commenting "on the way she used to forestall justifiable attacks on her own conduct by accusing her various husbands of misconduct themselves. Reproaches for her own behavior were forgotten as the poor wretches struggled to convince her of their innocence." 43 And finally, the Wife stoops to perhaps her lowest point in the fraudulent dream she uses to entice Jankyn.

Judging from the General Prologue (446-58, 463-76), when the Wife was fully attired, she presented an imposing figure which once seen would not soon be forgotten. Moreover, from the description she gives of her activities in her own Prologue (317-22, 348-56, 547-559, 637-40, etc.), it seems rather obvious that she sought recognition and consciously
attempted to encourage her notoriety. 44

The Wife jealously guards her right to her visits and "walking about" (it will be remembered that in her fourth husband's absence, she wished to be seen as well as to see); she delights in her gossips, and her eagerness to undertake long, unaccompanied journeys no doubt added to her reputation. 45 It is impossible to overlook her behavior in church or the uneasiness we feel for "her need for others to acknowledge her presence and validate her claims to prestige and a certain kind of status." 46 One can easily imagine her shouldering aside even her gossips in order to be seen as the first to present her offering.

Finally, it is quite likely that her boasts of indiscriminately choosing her lovers was part of her plan for self-advertisement. Since, however, she realizes that her implied promiscuity is unacceptable, "she exhibits a typical dichotomy; her compulsion towards confessional denigration vies with a craving for respect. She puts forth the deviate's timeless excuse that she is not personally responsible for her behavior. Her fate is in her stars; her constellation is to blame." 47

This delight in cunning and deceit, in domestic warfare waged as a battle of wits, in visiting and gossiping, in dressing and travelling in a manner designed to attract attention, this pride in a lack of sexual discrimination, this love of and need for notoriety, indeed, even the Wife's self-appointed role as instructress to the authorities and her utilization of astrology are all qualities inherent in the temperament of Mercury, the ruling planet of the first face of Taurus,
According to Albertus Magnus, Mercury "governeth in man's body the tongue, memory, cogitation," and "maketh the children stout, wise, and apt to learn...and eloquent." 48 Even more to the point, Michael Scot says that "A mercurial person...wants to be able to instruct scholars or disciples in white magic, to engage in business, and to perform tricks and subtleties which give pleasure to others." 49 The children of Mercury, Scot continues, "delight particularly in astronomy, natural science, law and divinity, and in adulterine arts such as interpretation of dreams, augeries and lots." 50

Ptolemy says that Mercury is "like whatever of the other planets that may be associated with him. In particular, he is above all stimulating, and in predictions concerning men, is keen and very practical, ingenious in any situation." 51 When associated with Mars or Saturn, he "makes the native precipitate, impetuous, light-minded, fickle, prone to change their minds...sinful, liars, undiscriminating, unstable, undependable...in general, unsteady in judgment." 52 Whenever the influence of Venus is added to that of Mercury and Mars, the natives will be "plotters, faithless, unreliable...adorners of their persons...malicious in censure and gossip...lending themselves to base acts and performing them, and subjected to all sorts of base treatment." 53 Furthermore, Mercury with Mars produces "enmities, noisy disputes, and lawsuits," 54 and "the rising and morning positions (in the ascendant, or Orient) of both Mars and Venus have a contributory effect, to make them (the natives) more virile and notorious...and Mercury tends to increase notoriety, instability of the emotions, versatility, and foresight." 55
Don Cameron Allen quotes Lilly as saying that the influence of Mercury was thought to add "deceit, prevarication, and eloquence" to feminine natures. And finally, there is a passage referring to the effects of Mercury in the satirical Renaissance work, Adam Evesdropper, which very much calls to mind the oft-widowed Wife and her husbands:

But politicke-craftie Mercurie euer and anon falling in among the Bunch of Planets, shows that some London Widdowes will be subtilly ynoogh for Countrey Gentlemen, and eyther bee made lusty Joyners, or else neuer ioyne battayle with them; their profitable wittes I applaud well, and I hope wittie Mercurie will bee good to their mourning Gownes, and not suffer their brittle Sere to repent within lesse than a moneth after their marraige day againe.

In Ptolemy's, Chaucer's, and Lilly's times, the influence of Saturn in any portion of a horoscope was considered unfortunate. As ruler of the third face of Taurus and as the most powerful and maleficent of the planets, his influence upon his lesser comrade in mischief, Mars, in the house that governs the Wife's personality, is ominous indeed. Ptolemy says that when Saturn is associated with Mars, the natives are "neither good nor bad. . .industrious, outspoken, nuisances, harsh in conduct. . .contemptuous, tenacious of anger. . .rash. . .deceitful. . .fond of strife . . .but at the same time adroit and practical, not to be overborne by rivals, and in general successful in achieving their ends." That these are among the Wife's most readily discernible characteristics surely needs no documentation. The influence of Saturn through Taurus keeps the pot boiling, so to speak, in the Wife's character, and he is also at work in her selection of "old" husbands.
Saturn and Mars are the planets of old age both for mankind and for the world itself. Their combined influence in the house that formulates the Wife's view of life makes it therefore predictable that she would be receptive to the advances of older men. Three of her husbands were, of course, old men. In her Prologue (195-99), she speaks more favorably about them than about her younger spouses: "I shal seye sooth, the housbondes that I hadde, / As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde. / The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde; / Unnethe myghte they the statut holde / In which that they were bounden unto me." Old men remove the possibility of extramarital affairs and the jealous battles she experienced with her fourth husband, and when one has nursed them in their final illnesses, they die and conveniently leave one all of their property.

The most significant aspect of her fourth marriage bears the mark of Saturn in combination with Venus, Mercury, and Mars. According to her report of the situation, this husband was her equal in lustiness (453-54), and although she felt herself the equal of any woman (455-59), she was beset with distrust and jealousy. According to Ptolemy, it is the combination of Saturn, Venus, Mercury, and Mars which produces jealousy and instability in marriage:

Again, if Venus happens to be with Saturn, she produces merely pleasant and firm unions, but if Mercury be present, they are also beneficial. But if Mars also is present the marriage will be unstable, harmful, and full of jealousy. 60

If one was asked to list the most glaring characteristics of the Wife's marriages, lust, deception, manipulation, and strife would probably head the list. But there is yet another element present in
all five affairs that she sees as central to her concepts of marriage and domestic supremacy. Granted, she at least professes "love" for the last of her husbands, but it is the acquisition of wealth through matrimony that she sees as the motivation to marry, as the determiner of mastery in the home, and as grounds for complaint and quarrel if not appreciated. Since her first three marriages appear to have been contracted for purely mercenary reasons, some critics have seen these alliances as little more than a legalized form of prostitution. Most critics, however, are of the opinion that the Wife is a shrewd businesswoman rather than a prostitute, and that she views marriage as a business venture. Alluding to her statement that she has wedded five husbands specifically "at chiroche dore" (6), Thomas Reisner explains the significance of the remark for the types of common-law and canon-law dowery to which a bride was entitled, one of which was bestowed at the church door (ad ostium ecclesiae) before the marriage:

Clearly, it was in the interest of the wife to stipulate the nature and extent of her dower before the marriage (at the door of the church). . . That the Wife of Bath, shrewd and circumspect as she was in the matter of husbands as well as finance, should have realized this, one may conclude with assurance; and Chaucer's emphasis on the specific condition upon which she entered her marriage alliances not only underscores her Venetian nature, but also sheds new and ironical light on her personality as a venal adventuress. 62

As a capable businesswoman, the time invested by the Wife in her marriages to three old men was well spent. Indeed, perhaps she is referring to the success of her investments when she refers to them as "good" whereas the two younger men turned out to be "bad" investments.
It is also possible that she views her three obviously mercenary marriages to the old men as good investments because their wealth enabled her to become a marketable commodity among younger, more desirable men; mastery of "lond and fee" certainly is evident in her last two marriages, and it is no less an issue than jealousy or spite.

In the short section on husband number four (452-502), one must infer a love match. The Wife does not tell us why she married him; nor does she say that she loved him. She rants instead about her jealousy of his "paramour," describing him as a "revelour" (453). Given his propensity for reveling and the Wife's often-cited remarks about drinking and "likerousnesse," it sounds as if it was a case of like seeking like, or, to use contemporary terms, as if the Wife simply "picked him up" at a tavern or elsewhere. Whether or not the marriage to him involved money and land for her (it seems more likely that her property may have attracted him), she obviously saw him as a bad investment, looked for a new commodity, and buried him accordingly. A shrewd businesswoman does not throw away good money on a losing venture (495-501):

He deyede whan I cam fro Jerusalem,
And lirth ygrave under the roode bean,
Al is his tombe noght so curyus
As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;
It nys but wast to burye hym precyously.
Lat hym fare wel, God yeve his soul reste.

The propositional nature of the Wife's fraudulent dream as presented to Jankyn illustrates her belief that the way love is shown in marriage is by turning over one's hard-earned property to the beloved (577-584):
"And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght / . . . For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught. / And al was fals; I dremed of it right naught, / But as I folwed ay my dames loore, / As wel of this as of othere thynges moore." 63  The two were married "with greet solemnitye" (629), and as an expression of her love, the Wife gave Jankyn "al the lond and fee / That evere was me yeven therbifore" (630-31). Once their appetites have been satisfied, however, both the Wife and Jankyn discover that they have made a bad investment. Jankyn has forfeited his career in the Church by marrying the Wife, only to find out that the compensation for his loss was an on-going struggle for domestic supremacy; his grant of "lond and fee" turned out to be conditional. Perhaps feeling contempt for himself regarding the blunder he had made, he attempts to "revenge" himself on the Wife by lecturing her from his book of Wicked Wives, which leads to physical combat between them. The Wife, on the other hand, has done nothing that is inconsistent with her beliefs about love and marriage. She gave the clerk her property as a demonstration of her love and expected to retain her freedom of movement, while Jankyn appeared to be the master in their home in return. When she is denied those rights, the contract is broken, and after the brawl, the situation is rectified in a good, businesslike manner as Jankyn turns over "the governance of hous and lond" (814), asking her to "Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat--" (821). What can this mean to the poor Wife except that Jankyn really loves her? With the young executive put in his proper place and the Wife restored as Chairman of the Board, peace and order returns to the business of marriage, and "After that day we hadden never debaat" (822).
I have already explained how Saturn and Mars in the Wife's ascendant, as the planets of old age, account for the Wife's receptivity to the advances of older men. It will be recalled that even granting her first marriage to have been against her will, she nevertheless married old men on two more occasions, and the indications are that she viewed marriage as the exchange of services which could lead to the accumulation of property. It is also apparent from her remarks about her fourth husband, her propositioning of Jankyn, and her subsequent remarks about their reconciliation that marriage is a matter of business as well as of love. The astrological explanation for the Wife's business-like attitude toward marriage, fortunately, requires much less space than the evidence for that attitude. The reason lies in Saturn's rulership of the third face of Taurus intermingling his qualities with Mercury, who rules the first face. Saturn rules the riches of the earth, and as Ptolemy says, "Saturn and Mercury make marriage and partnerships for the sake of giving and receiving, trade, or the mysteries." Accordingly, the Wife marries old men with their wealth in mind, and having successfully acquired wealth through three marriages, she naturally never loses sight of the business side of marriage with her younger husbands. With Saturn inclining her toward marriages of convenience with old men, it is no wonder that she equates love with property. Moreover, Saturn and Mercury also shed light on the Wife's attraction to "mysteries": miracle plays, pilgrimages, matters of divinity, and clerks.

The influence of Saturn through the third face of Taurus, therefore, acts upon the Wife's nature in three ways. First, it is an irritant which keeps the other planetary influences in the sign stirred up. It
enhances the aggressive, mischievous nature of Mars, it adds fire to the
sensuality of Venus, it malevolently encourages Mercury to the limits of
decit and underhandedness, and it frustrates the emotional tendencies
of the moon, redirecting uncertainty in stressful situations to wrathful,
irrational outbursts. Saturn is malevolent and slow. He will not allow
affairs of the heart to proceed with the speed that Mars, Venus, or Mer-
cury would desire; and he has absolutely no patience with the emotional
softness of the moon.

Second, by the combination of his influence with that of Mercury
(who becomes as the planets with which he is associated), it is in the
wife's nature to view marriage as she would trade, and the issue of
"mastery" that arises in each of her marriages derives essentially from
who shall control "lord and fee."

Finally, the influence of Saturn as the planet of old age provides
the astrological explanation for her inclination towards old men (from
which naturally evolves her business-like view of marriage). Certainly,
they were a means to power, wealth, and independence, and they enabled
her to attract younger husbands. Certainly, she found them appreciative
and easy to manipulate, which made it possible for her to satisfy the
demands made upon her by the other planetary influences in her ascendant.
Certainly, she voices no regrets about the ways in which she handled any
of her husbands. So far as her rather cold-blooded manipulation of her
old husbands is concerned, she probably would have agreed with Marsilio
Ficino that in May-December relationships, December got what it deserved:
"Old people should remember that Saturn is their star and that Venus, the
planet of youth, is of all stars most malign to them; therefore, the
children of Saturn should fly the things of Venus."

Thus, by following the clue of planetary rulership inherent in the nature of the signs in the Wife's horoscope suggested by the understood influence of Venus as the lord of Taurus upon Mars, it is possible to present a much more detailed picture of what Chaucer accomplished with a simple Mars in Taurus ascending configuration. To those unacquainted with the basics of astrology, the process of analysis may seem complicated, but to an audience with the sort of astrological background Chaucer's audience had, the process is fundamental.

Curry assumed a conjunction between Mars and Venus, the combination of which revealed an explanation for the Wife's appearance, lechery, and aggressive behavior. Criticism since his time has done little more than reveal the error of his assumption or draw conclusions that violate fundamental astrological rules. By returning to the clue Chaucer provides and by staying within the rules of astrology, we learn why the Wife's lechery and aggression manifest themselves particularly in marriage. Taurus rules the Wife's 1st house; consequently, Scorpio is opposite Taurus and rules the 7th house, of marriage, and is itself ruled by Mars. The rules of fixed opposition of houses and signs and of planetary rulership of the signs are elementary matters: recognition by the initiated is almost instantaneous. The Wife says she is combative by nature through her Mars in Taurus remarks: Scorpio ruling the house of marriage, ruled by Mars, says she will meet resistance from her husbands and that her marriages will be full of strife.

By understanding the rules of planetary rulership which say that the influence of ruling planets operate through the signs they rule even when
the planets themselves are absent, and by dealing only with the rulers of the signs which Chaucer mentions in the Astrolabe (the lord of the sign and its faces), it is at once understood that the influence of the moon as ruler of the second face of Taurus accounts for the Wife's inconsistent behavior, her emotionalism, her irrationality. In the same way, the influence of Mercury as ruler of the first face of the sign explains her desire for attention and her love of notoriety, her wish to travel and gossip, her unabashed use of deceit, underhandedness, and manipulation, her boast of a lack of sexual discrimination, and her interest in matters of religion and clerks like Jankyn. The influence of Saturn as ruler of the third face of Taurus rounds out the Wife's character by explaining both her receptivity to old men after her first marriage and her obsession with domestic mastery which, to her, derives from that part of her nature that says marriage and / or love cannot be separated from business.

Understanding these influences is as fundamental as the rules of opposition of houses and signs. Because Chaucer does not use planetary aspects, no modifications of the general characteristics of these ruling planets are necessary. Consequently, an audience does not have to pause and reflect, for example, on how the characteristics of Mars in Taurus may be modified, say, by a square or trine from Venus, Mercury, the moon, or Saturn. No aspects are given or implied, thus the only characteristics possible are the most general and fundamental ones: Mars and Venus = lust, aggression; Saturn, Venus = more lechery and aggression, old men; Saturn, Mercury = marriages for wealth; the moon, Venus, Mars = inconstancy, irrationality, irritability, sudden changes, etc. These are the short
methods of analysis for simple configurations by those acquainted with
the abc's of astrology -- and they take about as long to recognize as it
has taken to write them down.

Still, the configurations work. Does that mean that the Wife's life
was out of her control? Had she then no choice in the way she led her
life? Is Chaucer expressing a recognition of astrological determinism
through the Wife? To the first question, I would reply, of course she
had a choice in the way she conducted herself. To the final question, I
would suggest that the very manner in which the Wife uses astrology to
avoid responsibility shows that Chaucer knew that astrological doctrine
does not deny freedom of choice.

There is a good deal of irony and downright humor in the Wife's
remarks about the stars. For those who understood the workings of
astrology, her refusal to accept responsibility for her actions because
of her stars would have been a hilarious indication of her complete mis-
understanding of astrological doctrine. The phrase "A wise man rules the
stars" was very nearly a cliche by Chaucer's time, and goes back at least
as far as Roger Bacon. What the phrase means is simply that the stars
indicate situations that will arise in one's life, and because one's
horoscope reveals how one will prefer to behave in those situations, a
wise man will be aware of how the situation will naturally affect him and
adjust by utilizing his strong points to deal with any situation in a
positive and productive manner. By being aware of approaching events,
he is therefore always able to choose in what way any event will affect
his life, thereby lessening or avoiding altogether the negative possibilities.
Malevolent configurations, according to genuine astrological doctrine,
do not mean that disaster is inevitable. They do mean that a potentially
disastrous condition is developing. It is entirely up to the individual
to either stand passively by as the catastrophe occurs (which, since one
knows the nature of the disaster and one's own assets and liabilities
would be courting the disaster), or to be wise enough to note its
development and take action to lessen the effect, turn it to a positive
use, or eliminate it altogether.

This is what makes the Wife's remarks ironic and funny, not the fact
that she blames astrology for the turns her life has taken. One would
naturally wonder why, since she knew what the effects of her natal
configurations were, that she did nothing to deal with them so that she
could eliminate through understanding the "wo that is in mariage." It
would thereby be recognized that for all of the Wife's inferences that
she had no choice, she had, in fact made a choice: she chose to let the
stars rule her. The smiles, I should think, would have quickly gone
around Chaucer's audience at her remarks. She obviously knew enough
about astrology to make use of some of the basic rules of the science,
but the moment she used it as a scapegoat, she made it perfectly clear
to her audience that she did not know what she was talking about.
1 Of the somewhat controversial "children" passage, J. C. Eade, p. 145, has accurately observed that it "indeed sounds like respectable astrological doctrine; it is exactly what we would expect to be the case. The only damper on it is the consideration that in many situations Mercury is thought merely to be neutral." Rodney Delasanta, "Alisoun and the Saved Harlots: A Cozening of Our Expectations," ChauR, 12 (1978), p. 232, declares that the Wife always "keeps an eye to self-justification..." Her curious explanation of the 'children of Mercurie and Venus' relate to this contrariety; Mercury represents in her own words 'wysdam and science' and Venus 'ryot and dispence' (D 699-700). As exegete, of course, the Wife should have been a child of Mercury, but by her own admission she is 'Al Venerien in feelynge.'" Barbara Gottfried, in her "Conflict and Relationship, Sovereignty and Survival: Parables of Power in the Wife of Bath's Prologue," ChauR, 19 (1985), p. 222, sees the passage as another attempt by the Wife to deal with the problem of authority vs experience: "Unable to resist the powerful influence of authority, she resorts once again to an astrological explanation in which women and clerks are irreconcilably sundered by insuperable differences of temperament. She simply cannot find any other terms to explain the tribulation involved in male/female relationships," In Steven Axelrod's opinion, "The Wife of Bath and the Clerk," AnM, 15 (1974), p. 123, "These remarks against clerks are intended as seductive plays to amuse and attract the clerk; they attest to her skill in the art of love." B. F. Hamlin, on the other hand, "Astrology and the Wife of Bath: A Reinterpretation," ChauR, 9 (1974), 153-65, sees the passage as an indication that Venus is exalted and Mercury is in his depression in the Wife's horoscope. Since here is the most recent attempt to reconstruct the Wife's natal chart, an evaluation of her argument would be useful at this point.

In order to account for all of the Wife's characteristics, Hamlin draws a complete horoscope with proposed locations not only for the planet Venus but for all of the remaining planets as well. As evidence for her configurations, she cites the "children" passage:

The children of Mercury and Venus
Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarious;
Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.
And, for hire diverse disposicioun,
Ech falleth in othere exaltacioun.
And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat
In Pisces, wher Venus is exultat;
And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed.
Therefore no womman of no clerk is preysed.
What the Wife has just said is that Venus, while exalted in Pisces, is in her depression in Virgo, the sign ruled by Mercury, and that Mercury, while exalted in Virgo, is in his depression in Pisces, the site of Venus' exaltation: a fundamental rule of astrology. What she has inferred from that rule is that there will always be some degree of animosity between women and clerks because they are, in a sense, "natural" enemies. There is no indication that these configurations exist in the Wife's nativity.

In Hamlin's view, however, the Wife is claiming to have Venus exalted in Pisces and Mercury in his depression in the same sign. Since Venus is exalted at 270 of Pisces, and Mercury is in his depression at about 150 of the same sign, Hamlin moves to fourteenth-century astronomical history to discover if, when Mars was in Taurus, there was also a time when Venus and Mercury were in Pisces at or near the required degrees. In short, there was such a configuration on February 6, 1342. On that date, Mars was at 120 Taurus, Venus was at 280 Pisces, and Mercury was at 140 Pisces. Since, Hamlin reasons, we know that Taurus was ascending in the Wife's chart, we can, by simply following the progression of the signs, place the proper signs on the succeeding house cusps. It would seem then a simple enough task to place the planets listed for February 6, 1342 into the appropriate houses. Once that was done, it remained only to analyze the aspects between the planets and signs, and the Wife's character should unfold. Unfortunately, it is not so simple as that.

In the first place, the entire hypothesis rises or falls on Hamlin's interpretation of the "children" passage. However it "should" be read, it must be admitted that the Wife does not say (or really even imply) that she actually has any planet in exaltation or depression. Given the Wife's behavior, it is just as likely that her remarks may be a jibe directed against the Clerk, or just one more form of astrological justification for the marital conflict she intends to share with us concerning her marriage with the clerk, Jankyn. It seems peculiar that Chaucer, some eighty-odd lines earlier, would have the Wife frankly state an astrological commonplace about herself (that Mars was in Taurus ascending), and then would have her discuss the more complex matters of her own exaltations in a more subtle, if not hidden, manner.

Second, it seems to me that Hamlin's thesis does not take into consideration the burden her hypothesis places upon an audience. It would not have been asking too much of Chaucer's contemporaries to recognize and understand the natures of a planet and sign or two, but it would be expecting far too much for them to recognize the locations and implications of all of the Wife's planets and signs from the "children" passage. To do so would have taken a rather high level of astrological expertise combined with a prodigious memory since the configurations in question occurred roughly fifty years before Chaucer is thought to have written the tale. On the spot analysis would have been impossible; indeed, an audience would have to go through the same process that Hamlin did in order to reconstruct the Wife's horoscope -- and so would Chaucer when he wrote the tale. If that was what Chaucer did, one must inevitably ask why he would search out configurations fifty years old, astonish an audience by expecting them to "remember" them, and exasperate every member of his implied audience for generations to come. An author who was
knowledgeable in astrology, as Chaucer was, would have immediately recognized the difficulties of comprehension and analysis and would have known that for the purposes of writing fiction, there is no need to make use of an almanac or an ephemeris; once he had the situation or the characters firmly in mind, it would be a simple matter to simply create the necessary configurations.

Finally, Hamlin does not provide the celestial coordinates for any of the signs in her proposed chart. As was the case with North's planetary positions for the Knight's Tale, it is impossible to place the planets in their proper houses without that information. Hamlin says that Mars was at 12° Taurus and that Taurus was ascending on February 6, 1342. Unless we know that Taurus itself was, at that time, ascending at 0° to 12°, we cannot even know if Mars was in the ascendant. If Taurus was ascending at 13° or more, Mars at 12° would belong in the 12th house and not in the ascendant on that date. The same problem holds true for Hamlin's other planetary positions: without the degree of the signs on the house cusps, there is no way to know where the planets belong. Without knowing in which houses the planets belong, there is no way to analyze their various influences on the Wife's character.

2 Julius Firmicus Maternus, in the Matheseos Libri VIII, Primum Recensuit, Carolus Sitll (Lipsiae: in Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, MDCCXCV), pp. 53-4, for example, points out that the ascendant governs the life and spiritual qualities of the native: "Primum est locus (.i.) illa pars, in qua horoscopus est constitutus. In hoc loco vitae hominem et spiritus continetur, ex hoc loco totius geniturae fundamenta noscuntur, hic locus ab ea parte, in qua fuerit horoscopus, vires suas per residuas partes XXX extendit. Est autem cardo primus et totius geniturae compago atque substantia." See also, Lilly, pp. 27-8.


4 Curry, p. 93.

5 Wood recognized that Curry was close to the mark because he had dealt with the combined influences of Mars and Venus in the ascendant, and he confirms that it is a Mars-Venus combination in the Wife's 1st house that determines her appearance and behavior. He points out that Curry's assumption of a conjunction is both inaccurate and unnecessary, and although Wood declares that Venus operates upon Mars through Taurus, he does not explain how it works or why that is the case. Hamlin follows Curry and Wood in her evaluation of the configuration, and it is she who finally explains that the influence (not the planet itself) of Venus operates on Mars through Taurus because of her rulership of the sign (p. 161): "the signs themselves (retain) the qualities of their ruling planets, even where there are no planets within them." In this regard, see also, Ptolemy, p. 179. It is pertinent to note that Lilly explains that without any consideration of planetary aspects, Mars in Taurus gives "a middle stature, well set, rather short...gluttonous, debauched, given to drinking and wenching...a broad face, wide mouth...some scar or mark in the face...very quarrelsome." (p. 302). The description
fits what the Wife says of herself in general, and it is not difficult
to recognize the astral rationalizations for her lusty, pugnacious
personality without the use of conjunctions or any other planetary aspects.

6 There are numerous references to various kinds of planetary ruler-
ship in the Astrolabe, ranging from an explanation of the planets ruling
the hours to a discussion of the lord of the ascendant (see, for example,
II. 30-8). For Chaucer's mention of the faces, see II. 60-3. It should
not be assumed that because Chaucer does not directly refer to the remain-
ing forms of planetary rulership (i.e. the triplicities and the terms)
that he was not aware of those kinds of rulership. Indeed, the rulers of
the triplicities are "second in command" of the signs they rule, being
only less powerful than the lord of the sign itself. They are always
considered in making prognostications, and Chaucer would have known that:
whether or not he makes use of the rulers of the triplicities has to be
determined in each case. I am equally certain that Chaucer would have
known about the planetary rulership of the terms of the signs, and I am
not surprised that he does not mention them in the Astrolabe. For what-
ever the reason may be, I find very little emphasis placed upon the
terms by the old astrologers, and they are, for all intents and purposes,
ignored by contemporary astrologers. For the rulers of the faces of
Taurus (Mercury, the moon, Saturn), see Maternus, p. 42 and Ptolemy, p.
47.

7 The 7th house deals with all marital affairs, including the sort
of partners one will choose. Of the 7th house, Lilly says, p. 31, that
"It gives judgment of marriage; and describes the person inquired after,
whether it be a man or a woman. . . all quarrels, duels, lawsuits. . .
wives, sweethearts, their shape, description, condition, nobly or ignobly
born, etc." The 1st house Mars-Venus combination helps one to understand
that it is in the Wife's nature to be lusty and domineering, but it does
not explain why her love of combat is so prominent in her marriages,
rather than elsewhere. Steven Axelrod rightly observes, p. 117, that the
"sturdy hardynesse" contributed by Mars in the ascendant "manifests itself
in the battlefield of marriage," but "there is no evidence that the Wife
torments virtual strangers for no reason, much less if they are eligible
young bachelors." In spite of her combative nature, she evidently gets
along well enough with women (she has her gossips) and with men in gener-
al (so long as they are not her husbands). Even when the roguish Pardon-
er interrupts her Prologue (164-68) to imply that wives are far more
trouble than they are worth and sarcastically asks her to "teche us yonge
men of youre praktike" (187), she patiently endures the interruption.
Considering the provocation, one need only recall the earlier exchanges
between the Miller and the Reeve and compare their behavior to that of
the Wife in this situation to recognize that she is not constantly spoiling
for a fight in her relationships with men. She seems only unable to
exercise this kind of restraint in her marriages.

8 Curry, p. 95, notes that because Taurus is ascending, Scorpio
must govern the Wife's 7th house, but he does not explain why that is the
case or what significance it has for the Wife's behavior.
9 Ptolemy, p. 205.
10 Manilius, pp. 239-41.
11 Albertus Magnus, p. 67.
12 Ptolemy, p. 353.
13 Ficino quoted by Don Cameron Allen, p. 7.
14 Lilly, p. 195.
15 Michael Cherniss, in "The Clerk's Tale and Envoy, the Wife of Bath's Purgatory, and the Merchant's Tale," ChauR, 6 (1972), p. 244, declares that this "theme of 'wo that is in marriage' (D3), refers specifically to the 'wo' suffered by her husbands, both future, to whom she promises 'tribulacioun' (D 154-62) and past, to whom she has been a scourge, a 'whippe' (D 169-83). She demonstrates her technique for harassment in describing her old husbands (197 ff.), while her treatment of her young husbands (481 ff.) substantiates the Clerk's expectation of failure for men who would test the patience and humility of their wives." Beryl Rowland's study, "On the Timely Death of the Wife of Bath's Fourth Husband," Archiv, 209 (1972), p. 276, points out that the Wife implies that "the marital altercations were incessant," and that "whereas Alice clubbed her late (4th) husband metaphorically, Jankyn habitually assaulted her physically with such force that she declares she will feel his blows on her ribs until her dying day (506)." To this, James W. Cook adds in his "'That She Was Out of Alle Charitee': Point-Counter-Point in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale," ChauR, 13 (1978), p. 57, that the Wife is not particularly interested in achieving "harmony" or "perennial mutual affection which requires a positive and definite effort on the part of the spouses."
17 See Lilly, p. 45.
19 Axelrod, p. 120.
20 Curry, p. 112.
21 Curry, p. 91.

23 James Cook, p. 55.


25 Gottfried, p. 204.

26 Lilly, p. 51. The changes brought about by the moon are sudden in character for the same reasons that Saturn's effects are over the long term. His is the slowest course through the zodiac, hers, the fastest: "She terminates her course through the whole twelve signs in 27 days, 7 hours, 43 minutes, 5 seconds" (p. 50). Chaucer explains (Prlg. to the Astrolabe, 100-14) that he is prepared to discuss the moon in detail in the fourth part of the work. The fourth part, he says, will show especially "the verray mooving of the mone from houre to houre / every day and in every signe" (104-7). Moreover, had the fickleness of the moon not been an astrological commonplace, he would have seen it when he translated the Romaunt de la Rose. In the discussion of love for profit, for example, love is compared with the fickleness of the moon (RR 5329-50). The activity of the moon is also connected with Criseyde's change of mind in the Grecian camp and results in her decision not to return to Troilus (Tr V. 1016-29). And, in the Complaint of Mars, Mars questions a god who makes love a thing which "Hath ofter wo then changys the mone" (III. 227-35).

27 Ptolemy, p. 7.

28 Isidore of Seville cited by Wedel, p. 28.

29 Albertus Magnus, p. 72.

30 Thorndike, A History of Magic, 4, pp. 134, 228: "Petrus de Argellata's astrological bent is shown by his advising the surgeon not to operate on a fractured skull at the full of the moon, because then the brain increases in size and come closer to the cranium." There were several other surgeons who were in complete agreement with the procedure, including one Antonio Guaineri, who achieved historical notice through his treatment of the famed "mad woman of Savoy."

31 Thorndike, 4, p. 440. In his discussion of Jehan Colleman of Orleans, Thorndike says that the man, "from observing the moon too assiduously. . .was said to have become a thief. . .a sad case of planetary and astrological kleptomania."

32 Roger Bacon, Opus Majus, 1, p. 283.

33 Ptolemy, p. 333.
Among those who held the belief that the moon could bring about madness was Luther's lieutenant, Melanchthon: "The stars temper the body of man although much of his nature is derived \textit{a materia seu a semine}; an individual born during a conjunction of the moon and sun will," he (Melanchthon) writes, "probably be a lunatic." Allen, quoting Melanchthon, p. 64.

Ptolemy, p. 333.

Allen, p. 171: "In the main, however, the moon was thought of as a humid, altering planet which left such a mark upon women that it was assigned to them as their governing star, and the English writers were never weary of calling their readers' attention to this. Green, for example, refers often to the inconstancy that the moon breeds in its tender subjects, and the heroes of his romances comment unendingly on choleric man, who is faithful under the moon, and the phlegmatic woman, who is false under even the dominance of Mars."

Gottfried, pp. 215-16.


Palomo, p. 308.


In "The Perils of Pauline Theology: The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale," \textit{EAS}, 8 (1979), pp. 10-14, Philip West argues that authority is preceded by experience in structuring the Wife's Prologue and tale, describing her activities as what he calls "an Advertisement for Myself." James Cook, p. 55, adds that "her need for public approval despite private viciousness" is yet another example of the stress under which she operates.

In speaking of the "expansive quality" of her experience, Gottfried notes, p. 205, that "her penchant for pilgrimages and 'wandering by the waye'" has given her "an arcane knowledge of far-off places" that doubtless gave her a kind of elevated status among her more sedentary gossips.

Gottfried's observations concerning the seriousness of the Wife's need for recognition is so directly to the point that it deserves to be
reproduced in full. "Coupled with her insistence on being the first to make her offering at church," Gottfried says, p. 205, "where people gathered as much for social as for religious reasons, the Wife of Bath's physical projection of her created self becomes an emblem of our uneasy sense of her need for others to acknowledge her presence and validate her claims to prestige and a certain kind of status. Her transparently simple bid for attention, like a child's, is a demand not simply for attention, but for authorization, for a positive relationship to that generalized authority which, because she is unsure of its source, the Wife attributes to others. Her portrait points to that aspect of portraiture which is purely posturing, thereby subtly undercutting her stance of rebelliousness and autonomy."


48 Albertus Magnus, pp. 71-2.


51 Ptolemy, p. 187.

52 Ptolemy, p. 361.

53 Ptolemy, p. 359.

54 Ptolemy, p. 419.

55 Ptolemy, pp. 371-73.

56 Allen quoting Lilly, p. 177.


58 Ptolemy, p. 343.

59 Ptolemy, pp. 401, 447. See also, Thorndike, A History of Magic, 4, p. 108.

60 Ptolemy, p. 401.

61 Rodney Delasanta in "Sacred Harlots," p. 222, says "She has played the harlot in pursuing her five husbands, not to mention 'oother compaignye in youthe,' and she has no intension of changing roles now: 'Welcome the sixte, whan that euer he shal. / For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al' (D 45-46)." D. W. Robertson, Jr. elaborates on the Wife's assertion that her husbands cannot be masters both of her body and her wealth in his "'And For My Land Thus Hastow Mordred Me?' Land Tenure, the Cloth Industry, and the Wife of Bath," Chaur, 14 (1980), p. 404: "Indeed, she
charged for her services, demanding 'raunson' for them (411), and endured their lust for 'wynnyng' (406), thus converting her Pauline 'marriage debt' (153) into a means of prostitution, apparently for the sake of ostentatious dress, a common target for moral censure in prose and verse during the fourteenth century (cf. ParsT, 932-34)." Somewhat more sympathetically, Rowland observes in "Critics in Blunderland," pp. 390-91, that "The woman who gives herself for pay is not necessarily a harlot; he (Andreas Capellanus) adds, but she is animal venenosa, and one would be wiser to go to a brothel... But if prostitution can be defined as beginning 'the moment the giver of sexual pleasure becomes a seller,' then Andreas has described it, and Alys has committed it."

62 Thomas Keisner, "The Wife of Bath's Dower: A Legal Interpretation," MP, 71 (1974), p. 302. To this business of dower, Mary Carruthers adds in "The Wife of Bath and the Painting of Lions," PMLA, 94 (1979), p. 217, that "By the fourteenth century, the dower was being replaced by jointure, properly settled on the wife by the husband, usually as a condition of the marriage contract but sometimes at a later point in the marriage. Alisoun is obviously aware of the importance of jointures and other property gifts." Continuing her discussion of the Wife as a harlot in "Critics in Blunderland," p. 388, Rowland also introduces the business-like relationship of the Wife's marriages: "Only in return for a bribe (raunson) was she reluctantly accommodating. Otherwise she gave nothing... Basic in her attitude is the conviction that sexual relations are a commercial transaction. The debitum is something far more substantial than the traditional one: it must have 'profit' in it for her... The proper relationship between the sexes, as the words which she ascribes to her husband reflect, is that of buyer and seller." Finally, Gottfried, p. 216, agrees that the first three marriages were contracted for "essentially mercenary" reasons, and that they were "predicated on her need and desire to gain control of her own life. Because she has internalized the standards and values of patriarchal society, she comprehends that the route to power is through the ownership of property. To empower herself within the male tradition, she contracts with her three good old husbands to exchange the proprietary right to her sexual favors for 'hir land and hir tresor.'"

63 Both Rowland and Palomo see the "blood" passage as a promise to Jankyn of the Wife's property if he marries her. To this, Palomo adds, p. 305, that the words "to a young girl on the verge of marriage inform her that in exchange for the bloody rupture of the hymen the girl will acquire wealth."

64 Ptolemy, p. 419.

65 Allen, quoting Ficino, p. 8.
The Clerk, no doubt, was aware that the Wife was talking nonsense, for he produces no astrological rationalizations in his tale at all. If, as the Wife said, clerks and women are always at odds, he will not dignify her rationalizations by responding to them. In his tale, one simple astrological commonplace is used for purposes of emphasis and comparison rather than for suggesting cause. The sole astrological reference made by the Clerk occurs when the townspeople begin to voice their approval of Walter's new "bride" (C17 985-94). Completely disregarding their admiration of, and sympathy for, Griselde, they now "were glad, right for the nolentee, / To han a newe lady of hir toun" (1004-5). In utter disgust, the more constant members of the community remark: "O stormy peple! unsad and evere untrewel / Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane! / Delitynge evere in rumbue that is newe, / For lyk as the moone ay wexe ye and wane!" (995-98). The allusion, of course, is to the waxing and waning of the moon through her four phases. The point being emphasized here is that the moon's course through the zodiac is the swiftest of all the planets (her sidereal period, i.e., the time it takes her to complete one cycle about the earth relative to the stars, is 27-1/3 days), and that she is therefore the author of sudden change. By comparing the townspeople with the waxing and the waning of the moon, therefore, the Clerk thus emphasizes their fickleness. If the Clerk's Tale responds at all to the Wife of Bath's Prologue, it does so by the similar use of the moon for sudden change, love of novelty, and fickleness. The Merchant, perhaps recalling the Clerk's reference, will make the same sort of use of the moon except that he will use it moving from Taurus to Cancer to develop the plot of his tale. The point in the Clerk's Tale is clear, however. A love of novelty often destroys the sense of loyalty (something the peregrine will make clear in the Squire's Tale), and the loyalty of the townspeople is not to be relied upon because they can change their loyalties as rapidly as the moon changes her phases.
CHAPTER VIII

THE MERCHANT, THE SQUIRE, THE FRANKLIN

I. THE MERCHANT'S TALE

In Chauncey Wood's discussion of the Merchant's Tale, he suggested that the Merchant's, the Squire's, and the Franklin's tales are all linked by a "sub-theme" of eloquence. For that reason, he said, "Chaucer's abundant employment of very eloquent astronomical paraphrasing provides an echo of the sense." 1 Along those same lines, Florence Grimm had earlier observed that the poet often used the sun or the moon as a means of eloquently expressing the time of day, 2 and the Merchant's first astrological reference does just that (1795-1801):

Parfourned hath the sonne his ark diurne;
No lenger may the body of hym sojurne
On th' orisonte, as in that latitude,
Night with his mantel that is derk and rude,
Can oversprede the hemysperie aboute;
For which departed is this lusty route
Fro Januarie, with than on every syde.

In this passage, we are told that the sun has completed his daily ("diurne") journey from the point of his ascension on the eastern horizon to the point of his descent in the west: the artificial day is over. Since the sun's motion in the northern hemisphere is north by east from the celestial equator to south by west, his "body" may no longer be seen because his southerly motion carries him into the southern hemisphere. At that time, he is "invisible" to inhabitants of the northern hemisphere: one wonders if the Merchant is joking. The allusion is just another way to say night had fallen when Januarie's
wedding guests finally left the feast. The Franklin may well have taken special note of the Merchant's allusion, for when it is his turn to tell a tale, he provides his own dignified reference to sunset, good-humoredly adding, "This is as muche to seye as it was nyght" (FT 1016-18).

The Merchant goes on to describe May's wedding night with her repulsive old husband. We see the "thikke brustles of his berd unsofte" thrust against May's face as he "kisseth hire ful ofte," and feel with her the bristles "sharp as a brere" (1823-25). Januarie "labors" with her throughout the night, and when he sings to her, "The slakke skin aboute his nekke shaketh;/ While that he sang, so chaunteth he and craketh" (1849-50). May patiently endures it all, and the Merchant leaves to our imagination what may have passed through her mind "Whan she hym saugh up sittynge in his sherte;/ In his nyght-cappe, and with his nekke lene;/ She preyseth nat his pleying worth a bene" (1852-54).

Finally exhausted by his efforts, Januarie falls asleep at dawn and rises at "pryme," leaving May to keep to "hire chambre unto the fourthe day,/ As usage is of wyves for the beste" (1860-61). Damian, in the meantime, "So brenneth that he dyeth for desyr" of May (1876). He writes of "al his sorwe;/ In manere of a compleynt or a ley" (1880-81), places the letter in a silken purse near his heart, and May emerges from her four-day retreat.

Although the Merchant has already told us that May will keep to her chamber for four days (1859-61) and assures us that the four days have passed when she emerges (1893-96), he nevertheless sees fit in the meantime to tell us that the moon has traveled from the second degree of Taurus into Cancer by the time she comes forth (1885-89): "The moon,
that at noon was thilke day / That Januarie hath wedded fresshe May / In
two of Taur, was into Cancre glyden; / So long hath Mayus in hir chambr
abyden, / As custume is unto thise nobles alle." That is, on Januarie's
and May's wedding day, the moon was located at 2° Taurus at noon. By
the time she is seated with Januarie in the hall, the fourth day was
"compleet fro noon to noon" (1893), and the moon was in the first degrees
of Cancer (1887). One can only wonder that the Host did not shout "Namoore
of this!" as he had to Chaucer and the Monk after hearing that May will
stay in her chamber for four days, that the motion of the moon indicates
about four days have passed when she emerges, and then that the fourth
day was "compleet" when she finally rejoined Januarie.

In J. C. Eade's view, "the length of May's retreat is expressed as
a riddle. . . . the audience, as participants in the game, are expected
to have at their command certain elementary facts." ³ By that, Eade
means they are expected to realize that Gemini lies between Taurus and
Cancer, that the distance along the ecliptic traveled by the moon during
May's retreat was at least 59° (28° in Taurus, 30° in Gemini, and at
least 1° of Cancer), and that the mean motion of the moon is roughly 13°
per day. ⁴ Simple division of 59° by 13° gives a travel time of something
in excess of four days. As Eade points out, however, the Merchant tells
us the fourth day was complete even "before one has had a chance to put
thirteens into 59," and Eade does not "see any evidence that Chaucer
takes particular advantage of these considerations--any more than he
later capitalizes on the sun's being close to Jove's exaltation." ⁵

Eade is quite right about the four days necessary for the moon to
move from 2° Taurus to 1° Cancer. Even more simply, the members of
Chaucer's audience could have quickly estimated the four-day movement by remembering that the moon averages a little over two days in each sign (2.33 days, and she is never retrograde). Thus, it would take about two days for the moon to pass through the remaining 28° of Taurus and about two more days to go through Gemini and into Cancer.

But if the configuration is only a riddle-game between the Merchant and the Pilgrims, it seems odd that the answer to the riddle was provided directly before and directly after the riddle was presented. If the reference is meant only to verify the passing of time, what is the point? Why does the Merchant tell us both the number of days and the moon's positions? Of course, he is embellishing his tale, but just how clever was he trying to be?

The Merchant's moon in Taurus/moon in Cancer configurations can be seen as more than a poetic expression of time. It is also a neat bit of astrological foreshadowing. Those versed in astrology could deduce from the moon at 2° of Taurus on May's wedding day that her marriage would be one of obedient sacrifice to the lust of Januarie, that she would not have the tenderness and companionship usually expected of a husband, that she indeed would take a lover, and that the marriage would become problematic on those grounds. Moreover, the moon in Cancer on the day she is ordered to comfort Damian indicates that she would be particularly vulnerable to pathetic entreaties at that time, to sudden changes, and to the lure of infidelity.

The moon, in astrological lore, represents the woman in an event. Its position on her wedding day suggests by the specific degree and sign in which it is located what the nature of May's marriage will be.
According to astrological doctrine, 2° Taurus "denotes one capable of immense sacrifices, who surrenders self, expecting no reward. The life will be often lonely, but ever threatened by storms. In the end, wisdom and worth will triumph and the second half of life brings good promise." 7

That May's marriage requires great sacrifices and that she is capable of making such sacrifices is clear. She obediently surrenders herself not only to age, but to lust, and she neither requests nor receives any sort of reward for her "services." Unlike the Clerk's Griselda, she does not become a valuable helpmate for her husband; she is given no opportunity to assist in those daily affairs that earned universal love and respect for Griselde. She is a mere receptacle for Januarie, a plaything upon whom he practices perversions so abominable that the Merchant refuses to describe them (161-64). When her services are not required, Januarie ignores her and goes about his own affairs. After his "labor" with May on their wedding night, for instance, he regales her with "wantown cheere" (1846) and "coltish" behavior (1847) until daybreak. With a conspicuous lack of tenderness or concern, he announces that he will now sleep, gets up at prime, and leaves her in isolation for four days as was the custom. When she finally emerges, there is no expression of love, no joyous welcome after the four-day separation. She is allowed her supper, Januarie sends her to Damian, and business goes on as usual (1927-31). She is not to return to him before he goes to bed, and when she does, "He taketh hire, and kisseth hire ful ofte, / And leyde hym doun to slepe, and that anon" (1948-49). When she visits Damian for the second time, she again returns to Januarie "whan that he for hire sente" (2008). Thus the pattern of May's existence: she is to be with Januarie when he
sends for her, and he apparently sends for her only when he wants to satisfy his lust or have her run an errand. The rest of the time she is quite alone, save for her "women," and ripe for the entreaties of Damian. Whether or not "wisdom or worth" will triumph in the end, the second half of May's life holds promise if, for no other reason, she has learned to outfox old Januarie, and, of course, because she will simply outlive him.

We do not know what house the moon was in on May's wedding day, but the event suggests the 7th house, the house of marriage. An astrological configuration given in association with marriage would bring that house to mind almost automatically. It may well be that Merchant intended for such an association to be made between the moon and the house of marriage, for in Lilly's section on "Whether a Lady (during marriage) have a Lover besides the Querent," he says that the moon in the 7th house shows that "she has not yet, but will have more than one (lover)." The moon at 2° Taurus on May's wedding day thus suggests that her marriage will call for great personal sacrifices, that it will be a rather lonely relationship, that she will therefore indulge herself in extramarital affairs, and that the second half of her life (minus Januarie) will be much better than the first.

The moon, however, is in Cancer when May first meets Damian, not in Taurus. In Cancer, the moon is especially powerful in the sign she rules, and May will thus be especially susceptible to its influence.

From Ptolemy to Lilly, the moon was commonly held responsible for inconstancy and sudden change (see my discussion of the Clerk's references to the moon in Chapter IV). Moreover, preoccupation with things of the
senses and with emotional irrationality were ascribed to her influence. 
Ptolemy says, for instance, that "the qualities of the sensory and 
irrational part are discovered from the one of the luminaries which is 
the more corporeal, that is, the moon, and from the planets which are 
configurated with her in her separations and applications." 9 Furthermore, indecisiveness and a dedication to living for the moment are 
commonplace characteristics ascribed to her influence. 10 She is feminine 
by nature, representative of women in an event, and her influence was 
said to be particularly powerful upon them. In addition, Lilly says 
that when the moon is in Cancer, the subject's "mind is flexible, given 
to change. . . . fond of good company; one who is generally well-beloved, 
and fortunate in most affairs; unsteady, but free from passion or rash 
actions." 11

J. S. P. Tatlock long ago pointed out that the fact that May "is 
sensual with normal stimulus is shown by her instant response to Damian 
after only four days of marriage." 12 Whether her response is as "instant" 
as Tatlock proposes or not, she eventually responds to Damian's lust in 
kind. Initially, however, she appears to be moved by the squire's 
condition, "Confortynge hym as goodly as she may" (1935). Certainly, the 
"pites" she comes to feel for him is generated by lust, and there can be 
little doubt that she understood the meaning of his pleas for secrecy 
and "mercy" (1942) before she read his letter. When she does respond to 
the letter, she promises to grant "hym hire verray grace. / Ther lakketh 
noght, oonly but day and place, / Whan that she myghte unto his lust 
suffise" (1997-99). The relationship is purely physical, a matter of the 
body, and in that both of them are little better than old Januarie. As
Tatlock says, "Whatever this tale is, it is not a love story." 13

May's views of wifely duty and honor revolve around the body and payment of the marriage debt. When Januarie has become blind, for instance, he expresses his concern that she may decide to be unfaithful to him (2160-84). Her answer is short and to the point. She has no intention of jeopardizing her soul or her honor, nor will she betray her "wyfhod thilke flour, / Which that I have assured in youre hond, / Whan that the preest to you my body bond" (2187-92). There can be no doubt, however, that May's soul is indeed in jeopardy through her affair with Damian and that her honor is hardly intact. Her reasoning seems to be that her body is Januarie's to demand by right of marriage, and since she obediently submits to his lust whenever desires her, she is upholding her end of the marital contract. Since she is upholding her end of the bargain, her soul is in no danger, and her honor is intact. So long as she pays the marriage debt, therefore, she may do whatever else she chooses to do with her body. These views, of course, are absolutely groundless justifications for her adulterous affair with Damian, and if she in fact believes them, they are perfect examples of the rationalizations normally ascribed to the influence of the moon.

That the moon in Cancer has made her "flexible and given to change" is also demonstrated by her acceptance of Damian's advances four days following her marriage. There is never the slightest hint in the affair that an attempt will be made to "free" her from Januarie's grasp. Accepting that she is bound to him for life (and thus preserving her soul and honor), she decides to live for the moment by taking what pleasure she can whenever she can (1998-2000).
If May is operating under the influence of the moon on the day she receives Damian's letter, however, there should be some hesitation and indecision about her response to its contents. If Lilly is right, she should have acted dispassionately and with caution.

Although May decides in favor of Damian's requests during the same night that she received his letter, her response is neither instantaneous nor passionate. She accepts his letter and his entreaty in silence. Had her passion for him been instantly aroused, she might well have opened the letter at once and given him an answer on the spot. To do so in the presence of the attendant ladies, however, would have been an act of foolhardiness, and she never considers it. The moon may cause one to be irrational, but not reckless. Instead, she returns to Januarie and reads the letter in her privy. Of this incident, Tatlock says that "all possibility of glamour in the amour is destroyed by the fact that the place she needlessly selects for reading this first love letter is a privy, and that she tears it up and throws it therein -- another infallible indication of the mood intended by the poet." 14

What Tatlock says, I believe, reinforces my position that the moon in Cancer causes May to initially respond dispassionately and cautiously to Damian's pleas in spite of her own sensuality. She does not "love" Damian at this point, if indeed she ever does. She is receptive to the idea of an affair due to her own sensuality (it should be remembered that we are always kept in the dark as to her response to Januarie's lechery), but she is uncertain as to whether or not she should respond. She therefore does not open the letter or react to Damian in the presence of witnesses, but rather selects a place to read it where even Januarie may
not be expected to intrude. Tearing the letter in pieces and then scattering the pieces in excrement, I should think, shows as much good sense in eliminating evidence as a lack of sentimentality regarding a man whom she has not as yet decided to accept as her lover. She does not immediately send for pen and ink once she has read the letter. Instead, she destroys the evidence and thinks it over: "Who studieth now but faire, fresshe May?" (1955), until Januarie's newest assault, generated by an awakening cough (1956-63) subjects her to another set of indignities that presumably help her come to a decision. Her behavior throughout the incident shows her to be, as Lilly's moon in Cancer suggests, "unsteady, but free from passion or rash actions."

That she decides to accept Damian's advances is understandable, for the same configuration also makes her "fond of good company," and the portrait of Januarie painted by the Merchant makes him seem anything but good company. Damian is quite a popular figure in Januarie's court. Indeed, Januarie himself quickly misses the squire at his wedding feast and does all he can to provide him with comfort and assistance. In sharp contrast to Januarie's lack of concern for May's happiness, Damian "dooth al that his lady lust and lyketh" (2012), and he has long since mastered the art of making himself agreeable to all: "He is so plesant unto every man / For craft is al, whoso that do it kan / That every wight is fayn to speke hym good; / And fully in his lady grace he stood" (2015-18). Compared to the turkey-necked croaking Januarie who shows May little attention beyond his need for sex, the personable Damian would certainly represent the lure of good company.
At the point in the tale where May is still undecided about Damian, and the Merchant refuses to discuss the goings-on between her and Januarie, he interrupts his narration to consider how it could have happened that Damian approached May at such a propitious time (1967-74):

Were it by destynée or aventure,
Were it by influence or by nature,
Or constellacion, that in swich estaat
The heveme stood, that tyme fortunaat
Was for to putte a bille of Venus werkes--
For alle thyng hath tyme, as seyn thise clerkes--
To any womman, for to gete hire love,
I kan nat seye.

The Merchant "kan nat seye" whether the influence of the stars were such that the condition of the heavens was unusually fortunate for love affairs at that time, but that those who know about such matters declare that all things, including the love of women, are connected to time. As I intend to show, however, I believe his disclaimer is a "hint" to the cause of the affair, intended in reference to the moon in Cancer. Apparently unable to find a satisfactory solution to the problem, the Merchant concludes that God "knoweth that noon act is causelees, / He deme of al, for I wole holde my pees" (1974-76). But he remains puzzled about May's behavior. It is all well and good that God knows why Damian's advances were accepted, but (1976-81)

sooth is this, how that this fresshe May
Hath take swich impresaioun that day
Of pitee of this sike Damyan,
That from hire herte she ne dryven kan
The remembrance for to doon hym ese.

The Merchant had already anticipated the questions of timing, sudden change, and receptivity and provided the answers when he earlier mentioned
that the moon was in Cancer on "that day." If his audience had forgotten, he gave them a reminder by suggesting that perhaps "The hevene stood, that tyme fortunaat" for the workings of Venus because of the "influence" he had earlier noted of the moon in the "constellation" Cancer. As to May's "inexplicable" behavior, the moon in Cancer also accounted for her "impreasion," her "pitee of this sike Damian," and for her decision to "doon hym ese." Receptive to the sensuality, the sudden changes, and the fickleness of the moon, she nevertheless reacted dispassionately and with caution, thinking the possibilities over before making her decision. Once her mind was made up, she acted quickly, promising her love to Damian at the earliest opportunity. She rationalizes away her infidelity to Januarie by asserting that she pays the marriage debt whenever it is demanded of her and therefore is in no danger of losing her soul or her honor. She opts for living for the moments when she can be with Damian while accepting her obligations to Januarie. The moon in Cancer on the day of these decisions allows her to remain well-beloved by both men at the same time that she is inconstant to both. The point that she is "fortunate in most affairs" is emphatically made at the end of the tale when she convinces Januarie not to believe the testimony of his own eyes. The Merchant's moon in Taurus/moon in Cancer configurations, therefore, not only "needlessly" and humorously verifies his statement that May was in seclusion for four days, but also explains the nature of her marriage and her subsequent behavior.

The final astrological reference in the *Merchant's Tale* occurs just before the appearance of Pluto and Proserpine when we are told that the sun "was that tyme in Geminis, as I gesse, / But litel fro his declination / Of Cancer, Jovis exaltacion" (2222-224). What is meant here is
that the sun was in the latter degrees of Gemini (probably about June 8)
at the time and would enter Cancer (the exaltation of Jupiter) before
long. "Declynacion" simply refers to the sun's northward declination from
the celestial equator from the point of the vernal equinox (Aries) to the
summer solstice (Cancer). Since the sun entered Cancer on June 12 in
Chaucer's day, and is "but litel" from that point in the tale, the date
of the adventure in the garden is somewhere in the first two weeks of
June. 15

Eade mentions that Jupiter's exaltation occurs at 15° Cancer, but
also points out that the Merchant is alluding to the sign "at large"
rather than to any specific degree. 16 "In general terms," Eade says,
"Chaucer's point is simply that midsummer is not far off; and to have
the major fortune's (Jupiter's) exaltation lying in the middle of the
sign the sun is about to enter, adds to the general sense of cheerfulness." 17
Certainly, what Eade says has merit, although the blindness of Januarie,
it seems to me, detracts from the "sense of cheerfulness."

D. W. Robertson, Jr. has noted what appears to be yet another trace
of astrological character delineation in this configuration. In his
discussion of Januarie as a type of the medieval "grotesque," Robertson
explains that "the sign of January, usually included also in calendars,
is Aquarius, the house of Saturn who is a cold old planet (cf. Knight's
Tale, 2443 ff.)." 18 Characterizing Januarie as a type of Saturn, I
would add, also makes sense since one-half of the month represented by
his name belongs to Capricorn (December 12 - January 12), and Capricorn
is also ruled by Saturn. The same reasoning can be applied to May since
one-half of the month represented by her name is ruled by Gemini (May 12-
June 12).
That May is a type of Gemini at this point and is behaving in the fashion of that sign's ruler (Mercury) is also explained by Robertson:

Chaucer's lady May was probably suggested by the fact that kalenders sometimes show May as a young girl holding flowers (Fig. 105). Her sign is Gemini, and this figure is sometimes shown as a male and female figure together naked, in more or less suggestive postures (Figs. 105, 106); in any event, the month of May was associated with 'amoenitas' and luxuria (cf. Fig. 107). Gemini, the sign under which Januarie is deceived in the Merchant's Tale (line 2222), is the house of Mercury, lord of eloquence as well as Merchant's, and it is May's eloquence which triumphs in the end. 19

To this might also be added the cunning of Mercury (see SqT 671-72) used by May to deceive her husband and the allusion to the well-known legend of Mercury and Argus in the Knight's Tale (KnT 1381-92). In the latter case, of course, the parallel is Mercury's blinding of Argus and May's "blinding" of Januarie. If Mercury had a hand in Januarie's blindness through his rulership of May's sign, Gemini, it is appropriate that the old man's sight was restored when the sun was leaving that sign. The sun in Gemini preparing to enter Cancer, however, allows for further speculation regarding Januarie's blindness.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that the Merchant uses astrology to embellish his tale and I asked just how clever he was trying to be. His moon-in-Taurus/moon-in-Cancer configuration provided more than just a verification of the passing of time, and his sun-in-Gemini/sun-in-Cancer configuration also provides information about the restoration of Januarie's sight that could be deduced by those versed in astrology.

At the time Januarie's sight is restored, the sun is in Gemini, very near to Cancer. According to Manilius, Gemini is a double-bodied sign indicative of "duality," or dealing with both sides of an issue. 20 Thus,
Gemini has the "power to decide for good or ill." The sun is about to enter Cancer, and Cancer is ruled by the moon. The influence of the moon is present in the sign because of the astrological laws of planetary rulership, and her influence would be combined with that of the sun when he enters her sign. According to Lilly, the sun and the moon govern "infirmities" and "hurts" of the eyes. To this, Albertus Magnus adds that the sun rules the right eye in a man, and the moon rules the left. As Eade said, the point of exaltation of the greatest of the benefics (Jupiter) is also in Cancer. Thus, a combination of the influences of the sun and the moon (as rulers of the right and left eyes) under the most benevolent conditions could bring about the restoration of sight to both of Januarie's eyes. I do not wish to labor the point, since we do not know how "litel" the distance is between the sun's location in Gemini and the first degree of Cancer. That is to be expected, since Chaucer habitually implies configurations without giving exact degrees. Since the motion of the sun along the ecliptic is about 1° per day, however, and since the date of Januarie's restored sight is June 8, the sun would have been within 4° of Cancer at that time (the sun entered Cancer on June 12 in Chaucer's time) which is close enough for him to be in aspect with the sign and in range of the influence of the moon. In that case, the above-cited conditions would be in effect.

II. THE SQUIRE'S TALE

For the past twenty-five years, critical discussion of the Squire's Tale has focused on the Squire's failings as a story-teller. He has been accused of raising the reader's expectations and failing to fulfill them;
he has been granted a degree of eloquence, but denied rhetorical competency. He has been charged with the misuse of the fable genre and with the inappropriate use of astrological references, and he has been found guilty on all counts. Consequently, there is a tendency among critics to excuse his story-telling ineptitude on the grounds of youth and inexperience. He is only twenty years old, the "baby" of the pilgrimage, and because of his tender years, D. A. Pearsall sympathetically suggests that we "need, therefore, to remember the Squire as a young man among his elders. These elders are men of substance, men who have made their way in the world, merchants and lawyers, and although the Squire recognizes himself as their traditional social superior, he has a wholesome respect for them as 'operators.'" 24 Surely, the Squire wants to do well. Surely, he is conscious of the presence of his father when he begins his performance, and he has already listened to tales of romance and the astrological flights of such "operators" as the Miller, the Man of Law, the Wife of Bath, and the Merchant. In his eagerness to tell a good tale, his ambition unfortunately outdistances his talent, and as J. P. McCall has observed, his eagerness to impress shows "the same self-conscious affectation and enthusiastic discontinuity that one associates with the first performance of a fairly good student in Freshman Composition." 25

Noting the Squire's failures as a teller of tales, Chauncey Wood declares that "it follows that the Squire's astronomical periphrasis should be demonstrably weak, and so they are." 26 As an example of the Squire's astrological excesses, Wood points to the passage in which we learn that Cambyuskan's birthday is on the Ides of March (47-57):
We are told that the sun was in Aries; that Aries is a hot, choleric sign; that the sun was not only in Aries, but was indeed approaching the specific degree within the confines of the sign in which it has its astrological exaltation. What is more, that this particular degree happens to fall in one of the ten degree divisions of the signs known as faces, and the particular face happens to be one assigned to the planet Mars. This has to be parody. 27

Perhaps the Squire does overstate the fact that the sun is in Aries (he has just heard the Merchant "overstate" the length of May's retreat with his configurations of the moon), but at least what he says is in line with astrological doctrine. Moreover, his reference to the sun in regard to Canacee is correct for what he intends, but the reality he presents contradicts the reference. It will be recalled that Canacee leaves her bed one morning in preparation for a walk. She is promptly compared to the young sun "That in the Ram is foure degrees up ronne" (386). The Squire intends the reference to be complimentary, but as Wood explains: "since the sun goes round the zodiac at the rate of about one degree a day, the sense of the passage is that Canacee rose up looking like the ruddy, bright March sun and managed to get herself ready the same day! This is in fact no compliment, but is damning with faint praise." 28 Whether the reference is damning to Canacee or not, it turned out to be an embarrassment for the Squire. For when she "is once outdoors, the narrator finds himself apologizing for the fact that the morning is really rather hazy and misty (393-96)." 29

The Squire's use of astrology is overdone, but it is not much worse than that of the Merchant or the Franklin, even though he does "forget" to make the weather reflect the allusion in the Canacee incident. But
these failings should not lead one to conclude that the Squire knows nothing about the workings of astrology. He is not merely speaking meaningless gibberish when he makes an astrological reference. Granting that since he makes so many story-telling errors that he might also be somewhat vague and off the track in his astrological references, what might he have intended his audience to deduce from his use of them? I hope to demonstrate that a sympathetic audience (of the Franklin's temperament, for example) could have spotted the embellishments of time and season and the attempt to delineate character in the Squire's astrological allusions.

When it is the Squire's turn to tell a tale, he follows the precedents set by his predecessors with references to the season, the time of day, the character and career of Cambyuskan, and the propitiousness of the choice of the time for the birthday festivities. In the attempt, his references are of the same kind as those presented in the earlier tales, but he is definitely less imaginative, and his astrological expertise is probably more limited.

His first reference to astrology deals with the date and season of Cambyuskan's birthday feast. The songs of birds announce the end of winter in "lusty" and "benigne" weather (52), even though they do so to "geten hem protecciouns / Agayn the swerd of wynter, keene and coold" (56-7). It is spring (or it should be; the Squire seems somewhat "floored" by the weather), March 15 (the "laste Idus of March"), and the sun is in Aries (45-51):

He leet the feeste of his nativitee
Doon cryen throughout Sarray his citee,
The laste Idus of March, after the yeer.
Phlebus the sonne ful joly was and cleer:
For he was neigh his exaltacioun
In Martes face, and in his mansioun
In Aries, the colerik hoote signe.

J. C. Eade's reading of the passage claims that its meaning has to
do with the changing seasons, and that the position of the sun is either
an error by Chaucer or by a scribe. 30 For Eade, the problem with the
passage is that the sun is said to be in the first face of the sign ("In
Martes face") while his exaltation actually occurs near the end of the
second face of Aries (at 190°). Consequently, Eade believes that the sun
is not "neigh" enough to his exaltation in the first face of Aries, and
if the Squire is suggesting that the sun is exalted in the first face of
the sign, he is quite wrong.

The Squire says that Gambyuskan's birthday feast takes place on
March 15. Since the sun entered Aries on March 12 in Chaucer's day, and
since he travels through roughly one degree of a sign per day, his posi-
ton on March 15 would have been at 40 Aries, in Mars' face. 31 As the
sun's exaltation is located some 150° beyond his location on the day of
the feast, he will not reach that point for two more weeks. Indeed, the
sun is not "neigh" his exaltation when the Squire says he is. This error,
however, should be ascribed to the Squire rather than to Chaucer or to a
scribe: such mistakes are consistent with the Squire's character. Whether
he is right or wrong, he gives us the configuration he intends to give us.
Moreover, if Joyce E. Peterson is right, and the Squire's Tale is a
reaction to the Merchant's Tale, the Squire may well have simply "thrown
in" the term "exaltation" to quit the Merchant's reference to the sun in
Gemini approaching Jupiter's exaltation in Cancer at the end of his tale.
As far as the rules of astrology go, there is nothing wrong with what
the Squire says in the passage except that the sun is not really near its exaltation.

The passage actually serves two purposes. First, and most obvious, the passage says that it is spring because the sun is in Aries (the vernal equinox), regardless of the weather. Second, the passage shows the Squire's attempt at astrological character delineation. It is Cambyuskan's birthday, but the Squire does not call the event his "birthday" feast, but rather the feast of his "nativitie." The word "nativity," of course, is a term commonly applied to natal or birth horoscopes. It goes without saying that if the sun was in Aries on the day of the feast, we are to understand that the sun was in Aries on the day Cambyuskan was born.

What the Squire is trying to suggest is that Cambyuskan's personality and successful military career, as well as the respect he receives from the likes of the king of Arabia and India, are due to the fact that the sun was in Aries when he was born.

According to Lilly, the sun "signifies kings, princes, emperors, and others of high positions." 32 In addition, Lilly says that a well-dignified sun in a nativity shows a man who is "Prudent, and of incomparable judgment; of great majesty and stateliness...full of thought, trusty, speaks deliberately, and notwithstanding his great heart, he is affable, tractable, and very humane to all people." 33 The Squire characterizes Cambyuskan in just such terms (16-27):

Hym lakked noght that longeth to a kyng,
As of the secte of which that he was born
He kepte his lay, to which that he was sworn;
And thereto he was hardy, wys, and riche,
And pitous and just, alwey yliche;
Sooth of his word, benigne, and honourable;
Of his corage as any centre stable;
Yong, fressh, and strong, in armes desirous
As any bachelor of al his hous.
A faire person he was and fortunaat,
And kept alwey so wel rosal estat
That ther was nowher swich another man.

The sun is also responsible for those who love "sumptuousness and
magnificence," and it causes them to be "industrious to acquire honor and
a large patrimony, yet as willing to spend it again." 34 Cambyuskan's
birthday feast surely appears "sumptuous" and magnificent, which does him
honor, and the abundance of food and drink, music and dance, indicate that
he spared no expense for the festivities (57-62):

This Cambyuskan, of which I have yow toold,
In roial vestiment sit on his deys,
With diadem, ful heighe in his paleys,
And hale his feeste so solempe and so ryche
That in this world ne was ther noon it lyche.

The qualities of a well-dignified sun, of course, are a part of Cambyus-
kan's nature at birth. The sun and the planets continue to move through
the zodiac after one's birth, however, and although the sun will be in
the same sign on Cambyuskan's birthday as it was when he was born, that
does not mean that it is still well-dignifed (is in the same degree of
the sign it was in at his birth). Indeed, his behavior toward the Knight
and the gifts he brings indicates that the sun was ill-dignified at the
time of the feast.

Lilly says that an ill-dignified sun creates one who "thinks all men
are bound to him, because a gentleman born." 35 Cambyuskan's behavior
indicates that he is neither surprised nor awed by the gifts he receives,
but rather accepts them as his due. The Messenger-Knight, after all,
"Saleweth kyng and queene and lordes alle, / By ordre, as they seten in
the halle, / With so heigh reverence and obeisaunce, / As wel in speche
as in his contenaunce" (91-4); he delivers the respect and good wishes
of his king, describes the magical properties of the gifts (110-67), and
receives no word of appreciation or thanks from Cambyuskan. The entire
assembly is filled with wonder and speculation about the gifts (189-261);
only Cambyuskan seems unimpressed, apparently disinterested in his "toys"
once the packages have been opened, silently continuing his feasting,
until, having had enough to eat, he "gan fro the bord aryse" (262),
leaving the "trinkets" to gather dust.

Finally, an ill-dignified sun robs a man of "soberness in actions." 36

The Knight goes to great lengths to explain the marvelous properties and
controls of the magic horse to Cambyuskan. The king exhibits, in return,
the childlike joy of having a toy assembled and its workings demonstrated,
and promptly goes back to the feast without trying it out himself and
without considering any practical possibilities for the use of the horse
(335-39):

Enformed whan the kyng was of that knyght,
And hath conceyved in his wit aright
The manere and the forme of al this thyng,
Ful glad and blithe this noble doughty kyng
Repeireth to his revel as biforn.

Dismissing the horse from his mind, Cambyuskan returns to the assembly
where he and his "lordes" continue "festelynge, / Til wel ny the day
bigan to sprynge" (345-46).

The sun was in Aries when Cambyuskan was born, and was, of course,
in Aries on the day of the feast. Since Mars is the ruler of Aries, and
the sun is in his sign, Mars is the significator in the relationship
between himself and the sun. According to Lilly, when the sun is in Aries, "The man is noble, valiant, and courageous; delighting in warlike actions and enterprise; he gains victory, is famous, and a terror to his enemies." 37 Moreover, Lilly explains that when the sun is in Aries with Mars as significator, "it has been said in this case, with great truth, 'he has the favour of kings and princes.'" 38

Of course, the Squire explains that Cambyuskan is "Of his corage as any centre stable; / Yong, fresh, and strong, in armes desirous / As any bachelor of al his hous (22-4). The Squire also explains that Cambyuskan waged war thoroughly and in a manner which gained him both victory and renown (9-15):

At Sarray, in the land of Tartarye,
Ther dwelt a kyng that werreyyed Russye,
Thurgh which ther dyde many a doughty man.
This noble kyng was cleped Cambyuskan,
Which in his time was of so greet renoun
That ther was nowher in no regioun
So excellent a lord in alle thyng.

We know that Cambyuskan enjoyed the "favour of kings and princes" (probably due to his warlike tendencies) when the Knight rides into the feast proclaiming that "the kyng of Arabe and Inde, / My lige lord, on this solempne day / Saleweth yow, as he best kan and may, / And sendeth yow, in honour of youre feeste" (110-14) the magic horse, the ring, the sword, the mirror.

Finally, Lilly declares that when Mars is involved in an event, one is given to "drink, game, and wench." 39 Cambyuskan's love of "game" and "wench" is shown by the nature of the activities prepared for his feast (278-86):
Heere is the revel and the jolitee
That is nat able a dul man to devyse.
He moste han knowne love and hys servyse,
And been a feestlych man as fresshe as May,
That sholden yow devyse sen swich array.
Who koude telle yow the forme of daunces
So unkouthe, and swiche fresshe contenaunces,
Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges
For drede of jalouse mennes aperceyvynes?

Apparently, the Squire knew something about elections of time (choosing the most propitious moment for an event), for he selects a very favorable time for the dancing and wenching by placing Venus in Pisces: "Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere, / For in the Fyssh hir lady sat ful hye, / And looketh on hem with a frendly ye" (272-74). Venus, of course, is exalted in Pisces (the "Fyssh," at 270 of the sign), and thus is in a position of implied power over the event. When she is in such a position, Ptolemy says, for instance, that her children are "pleasant, cheerful, fond of dancing, eager for beauty." 40 But the company is given to drink as well as to dancing and wenching, as is shown by the generally drunken condition of the entire assembly (347-59):

The nobile of digesitioun, the sleep,
Gan on hem wynke and bad hem taken keep
That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;
And with a galpyng mouth hem alle keste,
And seyde that it was tyme to lye adoun,
For blood was in his domynacioun.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Hire dremes shul nat now been toold for me;
Ful were hire heddes of fumositee,
That causeth dreem of which ther nys no charge.41

Whatever we may say of the Squire's story-telling abilities, therefore, he creates a configuration to explain Cambyuskan's character that is as competent as that given by any of the other pilgrims. He shows
thereby that he has an understanding of natal horoscopes, and by his
election of Venus in Pisces at the time of the feast, he displays some
knowledge of the use of an election of times.

Having displayed his talent for astrologically indicating the season,
the date, and Cambyuskan's character, the Squire's next reference (perhaps
again with the intention of "quitting" the Merchant) is to the time of
day (263-67):

Rhebus hath left the angle meridional,
And yet ascendyng was the beest roial,
The gentil Leon, with his Aldiran,
Whan that this Tartre kyng, this Cambyuskan,
Roos fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye.

Here, the combination of the sun having passed the meridional line with
the incomplete ascension of the sign, Leo ("the beest roial," "Leon"),
places the time at somewhere between noon and two o'clock. The heavens,
it will be recalled, were divided into twelve equal parts, or "houses,"
and these twelve parts were in turn divided into four angles. The line
stretching from east to west held the points of sunrise and sunset which
were the locations of the 1st house and 7th house angles, respectively.
The meridional line, stretching from north to south (with the 4th and
10th houses contained therein) constituted the angles of midnight and
noon, respectively. As Skeat long ago observed, the "angle meridionel"
in this passage "was the same as the tenth mansion": 42 that is, the angle
of noon. Thus the Squire's first point: the sun had passed the meridian,
and it was after noon. To reinforce this assertion and to suggest that
it was considerably after noon, the Squire added that Leo was ascending
at the time. On March 15 in Chaucer's day, Leo began to ascend above the
horizon at about noon. Moreover, since he says that Aldiran (the star located in the forepaws of Leo) was visible as well, I am inclined to agree with Skeat that Cambyskan "Roos fro his bord" at about 2 p.m.: 

before the Tartar king rose from the feast, the time past noon had no increased that the star called Aldiran, situate in Leo was now rising above the horizon. In other words, it was very nearly two o'clock. It may be added, that, by the time the whole of the sign had ascended, it would be about a quarter to three. Hence Chaucer speaks of the sign as yet (i.e. still) ascending. 43

It is about two o'clock, the Squire is saying, because the sun had passed the meridian, Leo was ascending, and Aldiran was visible above the horizon.

The Squire's next reference is also to time. When Canacee arises, she is "As rody and bright as dooth the yonge sonne, / That in the Ram is foure degrees upronne -- / Noon hyer was he whan she redy was --" (385-87).

Here, of course, the Squire makes the mistake of forgetting to have the weather coincide with the allusion, but his point is that she looks like the young sun when it is ascending at 40 Aries. Canacee, consequently, looks as "rody and bright" as the sun when it has risen about four degrees above the horizon in Aries (i.e. at about 5:45 a.m.). 44

Apparently, the Squire was on his way to new astrological flights before he was (perhaps) mercifully cut off by the Franklin: "Appollo whirleth up his chaar so hye, / Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye --" (671-72). Again, the reference is to the sun with the usual mixture of mythology and astrology, and again, the reference is to the passing of time. The sun is about to enter one of the houses ruled by Mercury (i.e. Gemini or Virgo). Since the sun is repeatedly described as being in Aries in the tale, continuing his northward course along the
ecliptic would soon bring him to Gemini. Since the sun was last placed at 4° Aries (386), and since he moves through a sign at the rate of one degree per day, 26° of Aries plus 30° of Taurus equals 56 total degrees or days, and the Squire has told us thereby that about two months have passed since Canacee had her conversation with the Falcon. 45

Since the Squire is cut off before he is allowed to reveal the purpose of his final reference, we have no idea what he intended to do with it. Nevertheless, he is aware of the double-dealing nature of Mercury's influence ("Mercurius...the slye"), and it is possible that he intended to use the influence of Mercury to bring to a head the conflict between Cambalo and the "brethren two" (667-68) over Canacee, as the Knight used Mercury to bring about the strife between Arcite and Palamon in his tale (KnT 1381-97), and as Statius had used him to bring about the undoing of Eteocles and Polyneices long before.

Whatever we have to say about the Squire's ability to tell a story, we cannot justly condemn him for his use of astrology. With the exception of his mistake about the weather, his use of the rules of astrology is correct, and his ability to delineate character by means of the stars is no worse than many of the pilgrims that preceded him.

III. THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

It does not seem likely that the Franklin told his story of Dorigen, Averagus, and Aurelius merely to win a story-telling contest. The prize is a supper, and a meal would hardly motivate a man whose own table was always laden with "fisshe and flesshe, and that so plenteous, / It snowed in his hous of mete and drynke, / Of alle deyntees that men koude
thynke" (GP 343-46). The Franklin's interruption of the Squire's Tale and his praise of the young man's effort has generally been viewed as an act designed to "save" the Squire before his tale got completely away from him. Perhaps he really did enjoy the kind of tale told by the Squire, for his own effort has much in common with it, and "the exaggerated elements of the story reflect what the Franklin likes." 46 His praise of the Squire's skill and eloquence seems intended as flattery (677-79), however, especially since he very shortly implies that he is not qualified to judge such matters (719, 726-27): "I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn ... Colours of rethoryk been to me queynye; / My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere." Kenneth Kee recently observed that the Franklin is something of a social climber, and he believes that the Franklin's interruption of the Squire's Tale was intended as much to enhance his own "gentilesse" as it was to "save" the Squire. His whole performance, Kee says, indicates

a desire to cater to the tastes of the gentlefolk on the pilgrimage, and his remarks to the Squire when he interrupts the young man's tale are probably intended as much for the ears of the Knight as for those of the Knight's son, the Squire. 47

The way in which the Franklin uses astrology in his tale does seem to be one more step by which he hopes to exhibit his sophistication to the gentlefolk on the pilgrimage. By interweaving astrology and magic in his tale and by seeming to be confused about where one leaves off and the other begins, he can appear to be both inoffensively fashionable and conventional in his religious attitude. On the one hand, he can impress those pilgrims who had already used astrology themselves with his own
knowledge of the subject. Although he would not want to be classed with the likes of the "hende Nicholas" of the Miller's Tale, he cannot add to his social standing if he displays less knowledge or sophistication than the ruffian Miller. On the other hand, it would not enhance his standing to offend the Prioress, the Parson, or any others representing the Church's formal position against judicial astrology by appearing to be too knowledgeable. One should take care about how one used astrology and not go too far because the Church was careful to distinguish between legitimate scientific astrology (or 'magyk natureel') and astrology put to illegitimate use; judicial astrology or divination, for example, the predicting of the future with certainty, smacked too much of determinism... In instances where astrological methods were made to appear to be used when in reality other forces were at work, a fraud had been perpetrated and this was understandably seen as morally reprehensible. 48

Consequently, the Franklin restricts his own use of astrology to time and the seasons (satisfying the Church that he shared its views) and lets Aurelius and the pagan past bear the burden of judicial astrology (satisfying his secular companions that he knows how it works). His combination of magic with astrology, far from being a manifestation of confusion about the workings of the science, is instead a subtle disclaimer that allows him to appear conventional in his beliefs, but not ignorant: "more often than not, magic was associated in the medieval mind with astrology and hence shared the praise and censure directed at astrology at different times by various medieval thinkers." 49

The Franklin's use of astrology in his tale is, therefore, deliberately ambiguous and designed to impress all of the gentlefolk on the pilgrimage,
both secular and religious. He does not hesitate, for instance, to make use of it legitimately to embellish time and the seasons, and he claims to know nothing of judicial astrology. However, he believes in its illegitimate effects (779-84): "For in this world certein, ther no wight is, / That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys. / Ire, siknesse, or con-
stellacioun, / Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or spoken. / On every wrong a man may nat be wreken." Yet, when he mentions that the "yonge clerkes" of Orleans are in the habit of studying astrology as a part of "magyk natureel" (1118-31), he discounts it all as "swich folye / As in oure dayes is nat worth a flye, -- / For hooly chirches feith in oure bilee / Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve" (1131-34).

Whether or not the Franklin really believes that astrology is "worth a flye," he understands how it works rather well. Although he intends to create the illusion that he believes magic and astrology are the same thing, he demonstrates that he knows better than that in Aurelius' prayer to Phoebus (1031-70). In that passage, Aurelius makes it clear that he knows astrology deals with natural events and that magic is a supernatural condition. He and the Franklin know that in the natural course of events an opposition will occur between the sun and moon in Leo and Aquarius, and that when an opposition occurs between the luminaries, the moon will be full. They know that the moon influences the tides, and that high tide occurs at full moon. But because the Franklin knows that the laws of planetary motion will not allow the condition to remain stable, he betrays an understanding of the workings of astrology. As the planets move on, the opposition will inevitably separate, the tides will recede, and the rocks will reappear. Consequently, Aurelius is made to seek the
aid of supernatural power to perpetuate by "magic" an initially natural occurrence for two years which would otherwise be in what he knows is a violation of astrological and natural law.

Thus, the Franklin's "confusion" of astrology with magic is not a matter of ignorance, but a matter of appearances. His knowledge of the restrictions on celestial motion, his use of astrological jargon when he claims to know nothing about it, and the use of an election of times for a full moon by his Clerk all betray a knowledge of astrology. In order to stay in the good graces of the Church and in order not to be classed with the Miller, he gives the impression that he does not know the difference between astrology and magic. When he says, "I ne kan no termes of astrology" (1266), what he really means is that he rejects the "magic" of judicial astrology in compliance with the dictates of the Church. Obviously, he does understand the astrology of time and the seasons since he uses them, but that is something "legitimate," non-magical, and non-illusory that is not condemned by the Church. He knows how, and is able, to use astrology legitimately in his tale without compromising himself; it is up to the "heathenish" Aurelius to flaunt Holy Church with "his" use of the supernatural and the forbidden "magic" of judicial astrology.

Elaborate, dignified embellishments of time are common to the epic genre in keeping with the seriousness of the subject. In Virgil's national epic, for example, he describes midnight in terms of that time when "Forests and fierce seas were at rest, as the circling constellations glided in their midnight course." When he wants to announce the coming of dawn, he says: "By now Aurora, rising, had left the saffron bed of Tithonius and was sprinkling her fresh light on the world."
Franklin makes his first astrological reference a light-hearted mockery of this convention when he tells us that night had fallen: "the brighte sonne loste his hewe; / For th' orisonte hath reft the sonne his lyght, / This is as muche to seye as it was nyght!" (1016-18). That the Franklin was indulging himself in a bit of fun at the expense of those pilgrims who had already used such embellishments of time can be clearly seen when one considers mock-epic passages like those found in Swift's *Joseph Andrews*:

Now the rake Hesperus had called for his breeches, and, having well rubbed his drowsy eyes, prepared to dress himself for all night; by whose example his brother rakes on earth likewise leave those beds in which they had slept away the day. Now Thetis, the good housewife, began to put on the pot, in order to regale the good man Phoebus after his daily labors were over. In vulgar language, it was in the evening where Joseph attended his lady’s orders. 51

The good-natured humor of the Franklin is obvious: if that’s the way the story-telling game is to be played, he is ready to follow the rules with the best of them.

If the Franklin makes use of astrology for character delineation, it is very general, is covered by mythological overlaps, and is used only in the case of Aurelius. Perhaps taking his cue from the Merchant or the pilgrim Squire, the Franklin gives Aurelius the characteristics of a child of the planet Venus. He is "fressher" and "jolyer of array" than the month of May, and "He syngeth, daunceth, passynge any mar." Moreover, he is "wel-biloved, and holden in greet prys," and composes "Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes" about his unrequited love for Dorigen (925-52). Here, we see the blending of the characteristics of the planet and the goddess Venus that occurs throughout Chaucer’s works. Aurelius'
lovesickness is a traditional malady attributed to the servants of the
goddess, and his popularity and talents in singing, dancing, and composit-
ion, as well as his fine clothing, are commonplace characteristics ascribed
to the children of the planet.

The planet-god mixture continues in Aurelius' invocation of the sun
(1031-37):

Appollo, god and governour
Of evry plaunte, herbe, tree, and flour,
That yevest, after thy declinacion,
To ech of hem his tyme and his seson,
As thyner herberwe changeth lowe or heighe,
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable sighe
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorn.

The sun is addressed, first of all, as the god, Phoebus Apollo, and
second, as the planet "governour" of the growth and decay of plant life.
The "tyme and seson" of all life is controlled by the sun's "declinacion"
along the ecliptic from the equinoctial line as he changes his "herberwe"
from "lowe to heighe," from the vernal equinox to the summer solstice to
the autumnal equinox to the winter solstice, and back again. Thus,
Aurelius' invocation of the sun is merely in praise of its regulation of
the cycle of life and death through its control of the seasons.

In Aurelius' prayer, he refers to the moon following the sun "ful
bisily" (1051), adding that the sea, in turn, follows her since "she is
goddesse / Bothe in the see and ryveres moore and lesse" (1053-54). The
reference is to the moon's deriving light and heat from the sun, to
planetary motion, and it serves to remind the audience that the moon rules
the tides. As far as the moon following the sun goes, one needs only to
understand that the moon completes her course through the zodiac in
roughly 27-1/3 days, while the sun completes the circle in a year. The moon thus averages about 2-1/3 days in each of the 12 signs, while the sun averages about 30 days in each sign. The moon thus passes through all of the signs of the zodiac in less time than it takes the sun to pass through one sign. Simple division tells us from that information that the moon will "follow" and pass the sun "bisily" about 13 times a year.

Eventually, Aurelius comes to the point of his prayer. Requesting that the sun exercise his influence over the moon, he asks "That now next at this opposicion / Which in the signe shal be of the Leon, / As preith hire so greet a flood to brynge / That fyve fadme at the leeste it overspyrnyge / The hyeste rokke in Armorik Briteyne; / And lat this flood endure yeres twayne" (1057-62). The nature of Aurelius' request is simple. He selects an opposition which will take place when the sun exerts his influence, because an opposition between the sun and moon is always the condition that exists when the moon is full. Obviously, the tides are highest when the moon is full. The reasons he asks for the opposition to take place when the sun is in Leo are two-fold. First, the sun rules Leo and is therefore in essential dignity; it is a particularly powerful position for his influence on the moon. Second, for an opposition with the moon to occur from this position, she must be (by the fixed opposition of the signs) in the sign opposite Leo: that is, Aquarius. The "Waterbearer" is a "watery" sign, just as the moon is a "watery" planet or luminary, and the conditions would thus be favorable for rain, storms, floods. The moon in Aquarius, far from being able to resist the influence of the sun, is weakened by having no dignity in the sign, by the "evil" nature of the aspect itself (opposition), and by the malefic influence of
the ruler of Aquarius, Saturn. With the sun exerting his influence from a position of power through an evil aspect on the moon, with the influence of the most powerful malefic operating on the full moon in a watery sign, added to the fact that Saturn's specialties are floods and catastrophes in general, Aurelius has requested an excellent configuration for the actual disaster he proposes: a two-year flood in order to drown the coastal rocks.

This is fundamental astrological "stuff," an attempt to manipulate real and natural celestial conditions. The second part of Aurelius' request, however, departs from the "natural" conditions of astronomy and astrology and calls for a manipulation of the natural events by "unnatural," or supernatural, means. He begs the sun to exercise his influence over the moon during the opposition so that "she go no faster cours than ye; / I seye, preyeth your suster that she go / No faster cours than ye thise yeres two. / Thanne shal she been evene atte fulle alwey, / And spryng flood laste bothe nyght and day" (1066-70). What Aurelius asks is impossible under natural conditions, and that is the point of his prayer to the mythical sun-god, Apollo.

Aurelius has requested that the moon's speed be reduced to that of the sun after the opposition in Leo and Aquarius takes place so that a condition of perpetual opposition, perpetual full moon, and thus perpetual high tide will exist for two years. If the sun complies with his request (and he would need supernatural powers to do so), and opposition takes place when the sun next enters Leo, and the speed of the moon is made to match that of the sun henceforth, then thirty days of rain raises the water level throughout the planet, and the fulness of the moon insures
high tide. Then, since the sun and moon will move through the signs at an equal rate of speed, the tides will remain high because the opposition between the luminaries will never separate; the rocks will seem to have "disappeared." Aurelius is not confusing magic with astrology here. His requests indicate that he understands the workings of astrology well enough to know that magic must be added to the science in order to accomplish his ends. For that reason, the clerk who eventually causes the coastal rocks to "vanish" is versed in both astrology and magic, and is rightly called a "magicien."

Aurelius and "this magicien" arrive in Brittany in "The colde, frosty seson of Decembre," (1244) when the sun is in Capricorn (the sign of the winter solstice). At this point, the Franklin introduces more astrological terminology to explain the changes in the appearance of the sun from the summer to the winter solstice: "Thebus wax old, and hewed lyk laton, / That in his hoote declinacion / Shoong as the burned gold with stremes brighte; / But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte, / Where as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel seyn" (1245-49). There is nothing to be added to J. C. Eade's interpretation of the passage; it is both short and to the point:

In the latitude of London (52° N) the sun's altitude at noon on mid-summer's day will be 61° 30', and its altitude on mid-winter's day will be a mere 14° 30' (I.12.2). Its nearness to the horizon at the winter solstice is indeed likely to give it a coppery colour. (Its 'hoote declynacion' is its declination -- northern distance from the equator -- in mid-summer. Chaucer casts his description in terms that suggest it would be readily understood. Otherwise, the circularity in 'laton' -- 'gold' -- 'pale', reflecting the periodicity of the seasons, and the connection between 'wax old' and 'now in Capricorn' would simply be lost. 32
The passage in which the magician uses his Toledo Tables and "other gear" to cause the coastal rocks to disappear, however, is a good deal more confusing that any of the Franklin's other references (1273-93):

His tables Tolestanes forth he brought,  
Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakced nought,  
Neither his collect ne his expans yeeris,  
Ne his rootes,ne his othere geeris,  
As been his cenris and his argumentz  
And his proporcioneles convenienz  
For his equacions in every thyng.  
And by his eighte speere in his werkyng  
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was showe  
Fro the heed of thilke fixe Aries above,  
That in the ninte speere considered is;  
Ful subtily he kalkuled al this.  
When he hadde founde his firste mansioun,  
He knew the remenaunt by proporcionioun,  
And knew the arisyng of his moone weel,  
And in whos face, and terme, everydeel;  
And knew ful weel the moones mansioun  
Acordant to his operacioun,  
And knew also his othere observaunces  
For swiche illusiouns and swiche meschaunces  
As hethen folk useden in thilke dayes.

The passage, Bade says, was a "workaday" procedure to those who were moderately acquainted with astrology, and the manner in which it is described suggests that Chaucer

had it both ways here. The rank layman would be nonplussed by the jargon. The possible objections of the expert, on the other hand, are forestalled by the mumbo-jumbo implied in the "othere observaunces"--employed moreover, by "heathens" "in those days." 53

The interpretation of the passage depends upon the location of Alnath, through which the clerk determined the precession of the equinoxes. The extent of the precession of the equinoxes would have shown the clerk what the longitude for the star Alnath was, and that information would allow
for the locations of the moon and the "firste mansioun" of the moon. The Ellesmore Manuscript, Eade says, points the way to the significance of Alnath because of the gloss "Alnath dicitur prime mansio lune": Alnath is said to be the first mansion of the moon. Rather than regarding Alnath as merely the star of that name in the constellation of Aries, Chaucer intends it to be understood as the moon's first mansion. If we accept this explanation of the significance of Alnath, then we can see the rationality of the process designed to discover in which of its mansions the moon is located.

The longitudinal location of Alnath is necessary in order to provide a point of reference from which the longitudes of the remaining lunar mansions may be deduced in a horoscope. There are 28 mansions of the moon; consequently, their number is not equally divisible into the 360° of the ecliptic circle. It was commonly the practice, therefore, to assign 7 of the mansions to each quadrant of the circle, 6 of which contain 13° (6 × 13° = 78°) and one of which was 12° degrees in extent (78° + 12° = 90°). When the first lunar mansion was found (Alnath), and the quadrant within which it was located was established, the other three quadrants would follow the same pattern. Eade says, for instance, that if the second lunar mansion happened to be at 20° Taurus (50°), then the ninth mansion must be at 20° Leo (140°). Since his example may not be immediately clear, I will explain what he is driving at.

First, it must be remembered that each zodiacal sign extends for 30° along the ecliptic, and that the procession of signs along the ecliptic is fixed (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, etc.). Second, it must be understood that the horoscope is divided into four quadrants, each of
which contains 90°, that there are 7 lunar mansions assigned to each quadrant, and that 6 of them extend for 13° each while the 7th contains 12° of the quadrant. Thus, if the second lunar mansion is found at 20° of Taurus, then it appears 50° along the ecliptic (since all 30° of Aries precedes the first 20° of Taurus). What Bade implies in his example is that 20° Taurus not only marks the second lunar mansion, but also the end of a quadrant, since 20° Leo is exactly 90° distant from 20° Taurus along the ecliptic. This is true because Bade says 20° Leo marks the ninth lunar mansion (7 mansions from the 2nd), and there are seven mansions assigned to each quadrant (90°). Consequently, since there are 10° of Taurus "outside of" the second mansion, plus 30° of Gemini, 30° of Cancer, and 20° of Leo (= a total of 90°), 20° Leo marks the ninth lunar mansion and the end of the quadrant in which it appears. Moreover, since the point of reference, 20° Taurus for the second lunar mansion, equals 50° along the ecliptic, and the ninth lunar mansion is 7 mansions distant from the second (by definition, 90°), the ninth mansion of the moon lies 140° along the ecliptic, which, as we have seen, is equal to 20° Leo. This is the reason that the Franklin can say the clerk knew the "remenaunt" (the remaining mansions of the moon) "by proporcioun," once he had located Alnath (the first mansion of the moon).

The longitudinal position of the moon, however, is independent of the longitudinal dispersment of her mansions along the ecliptic: that is, the locations of each must be calculated separately. For that reason, the clerk consulted his Toledo Tables to find out what the longitude of the moon was at his time of operation ("knew the arisyng of his moone"). By then calculating the longitudes for the lunar mansions ("knew ful weel
No page 378
moones mansion"), he knows in which mansion the moon is located at the
time. To use Eade's example, if the second lunar mansion was found to
be at a longitude of 20° Taurus and the moon was then located at a
longitude of 18° Taurus, then her proper position is in the second
lunar mansion. The "phraseology" of the Franklin's description, Eade
concludes, "so far from being lame, matches the steps in the procedure"
of locating the moon and the mansions of the moon. 54

In his final reference, therefore, The Franklin shows his clerk
using a common astrological procedure to find a time when the moon
would be in a mansion powerful enough to cause the rocks to be submerged
by the tide. As Eade suggests, however, no reputable astrologer would
claim that one of the lunar mansions was specifically designed to
"drown rocks": "Dabbling in the Toledo Tables or making rocks disappear
and the moon stand still are widely differing occupations. Hence the
'othere (unspecified) observaunces' that the clerk needs to close the
credibility gap." 55

Once again, we see a disreputable man agreeing to create an astro-
logical illusion for the satisfaction of lust. Once again, the ruse
was successful: the rocks have apparently vanished, and Aurelius can
hold Dorigen to her promise. In spite of the stars, magic, and illusion,
however, Dorigen is released from her obligation by Aurelius, and he
in turn is released from his debt by the magician. The Franklin has
made a very worthwhile point considering that he knows "nothing" about
astrology. And that point is that genuine Love is indeed the force
that orders the universe and that the stars may affect the weather,
but not the lives of men.
NOTES

1 Wood, p. 93.


3 Eade, p. 133.

4 Skeat, 5, p. 363, declares, however, that Trywhitt tried to show that four days was insufficient time for the moon to move from 2° Taurus into Cancer by "taking the mean daily motion of the moon as being 13 degrees, 10 minutes, and 35 seconds. But, as Mr. Brae has shown, in his edition of Chaucer's Astrolabs, p. 93, footnote, it is a mistake to reckon here the moon's mean motion; we must rather consider her actual motion. The question is simply, can the moon move from the 2nd degree of Taurus to the 1st of Cancer (through 59 degrees) in four days? Mr. Brae says decidedly, that examples of such motion are to be seen 'in every almanac.' E.g. in the Nautical Almanac, in June, 1866, the moon's longitude at noon was 30° 22' on the 9th, and 90° 17' on the 13th; i.e. the moon was in the first of Taurus on the former day, and in the first of Cancer on the latter day, at the same hour; which gives (very nearly) a degree more of change of longitude that we here require... The motion of the moon is so variable that the mean motion offers no safe guide." See also, Grimm, p. 37.

5 Eade, p. 134.

6 Allen, p. 171.


8 Lilly, p. 199.

9 Ptolemy, p. 333.

10 Lilly, p. 51.

11 Lilly, p. 314.

Skeat, 5, pp. 365-66, explains that the passage "has to be taken in connection with ll. 2222-4 below, in which the date is said to be a little before June 12; see note to the line. Consequently, the 'eight days' mentioned in l. 2132 must be the first eight days of June. Again, if we refer to l. 2049, we see that January used to go to the garden 'in the summer season,' which would seem to be intended to begin with June. Accordingly, the month of June is here expressed in a mere parenthesis, by the phrase 'ere the month of July.' Hence the sense really is -- 'ere that eight days (of the summer season) were passed (of the month) before that of July.' And the whole passage merely means -- 'before the 8th of June was over, or simply, 'on June 8.' This date precisely agrees with that given, by quite a different method, in ll. 2222-4. . . . We are also told that he (the sun) was near his 'declination of Cancer,' i.e., his maximum northern declination, which he obtains when entering Cancer, at the summer solstice. In Chaucer's time, the sun entered Cancer about June 12, and therefore just before that day was in Gemini. Taking this statement in conjunction with the 'eight days' of the summer season mentioned in l. 2132, we may feel sure that the date meant is June 8, just four days before the sun left Gemini, and attained his maximum declination." This reference, of course, echoes that made by the Merchant earlier regarding the four days necessary for the moon to travel from Taurus to Cancer.

Eade, pp. 132-34.

Eade, p. 133.

D. W. Robertson, Jr., p. 256.

D. W. Robertson, Jr., p. 257.

Manilius, 2.171.

Manilius, 2.164-65.

Lilly, pp. 44, 52.

Albertus Magnus, pp. 69, 72-3.


McCall, p. 108.
Wood, p. 97.

Wood, p. 98.


McCall, p. 106.

Eade, pp. 141-42, declares that the "fact is, however, that the sun's exaltation lies at Aries 19 (II. 14), whereas the 'face' bounded by Aries 11-20 is not that of Mars (who owes, instead, the first ten degrees of that sign). What do we conclude? One obvious possibility is that Chaucer has slipped up; another is that the lines have not been correctly punctuated, that they have been construed by scribes and editors who did not catch their drift."

Skeat, 5, p. 372, explains that the sun "entered Aries, according to Chaucer (Treatise on the Astrolabe, 11.I.4) on March 12, at the vernal equinox; and as a degree answers to a day very nearly, would be in the first degree of Aries on the 12th, in the second on the 13th, in the third on the 14th, in the fourth on the 15th, and in the fifth (or at the end of the fourth) on the 16th. . . . The sign Aries was said, in astrology, to be the exaltation of the Sun, or that sign in which the Sun had most influence for good or ill. In particular the 19th degree of Aries, for some mysterious reason, was selected as the Sun's exaltation, when most exactly reckoned. Chaucer says, then, that the Sun was in the sign Aries, in the fourth degree of that sign, and therefore nigh (an approaching to) the 19th degree, or his special degree of exaltation. Besides this, the poet says the sun was in the 'face' of Mars, and in the mansion of Mars; for 'his mansion' in 1. 50 means Mars's mansion. This is exactly in accordance with the astrology of the period. . . . The first face of Aries (degrees 1-10) was called the face of Mars, the second (11-20) the face of the Sun, the third (21-30) that of Venus. Hence the sun, being in the fourth degree, was in Mars's face. Again, every planet had its (so-called) mansion or house; whence Aries was called the mansion of Mars, Taurus that of Venus, Gemini that of Mercury, &c."

Lilly, p. 44.

Lilly, p. 43.

Lilly, p. 43.

Lilly, p. 43.

Lilly, p. 43.

Lilly, p. 305.

Lilly, p. 320.

Lilly, p. 55.
Ptolemy, p. 357.

Skeat explains, 5, p. 382, that according to "the old physicians, blood was supposed to be in domination or chief power, for seven hours, from the ninth hour of the night (beginning at 8 p.m.) to the third hour of the day." The Shepheardes Kalendar (ed. 1656, ch. xxcix), Skeat adds, says that "Six houres after midnight bloud hath the mastery, and in the sixe hours afore noon choler reigneth, and six hours after noon raigneth melancholy, and six hours afore midnight reigneth the flegmatick. . . . Chaucer no doubt followed this latter account."

Skeat, 5, p. 374.

Skeat, 5, p. 374; see also, F. N. Robinson, p. 719.

Skeat, 5, p. 382.

Skeat, 5, pp. 386-87, observes that "We then have -- 'Apollo (the sun) whirls up his chariot so highly (continues his course in the zodiac) till he enters the mansion of Mercury, the cunning one'; the construction in the last line being similar to that in l. 209. The sun was described as in Aries, l. 51. By continuing his upward course, i.e. his Northward course, by which he approached the zenith daily, he would soon come to the sign Gemini, which was the mansion of Mercury. It is a truly Chaucerian way of saying that two months had lapsed. We may conclude that Chaucer just began the Third Part of this Tale, but never even finished the first sentence."

Wood, p. 271.


Luengo, p. 2.


Eade, p. 115.

Eade, p. 119.

Eade, pp. 115-18.

Eade, p. 119.
CHAPTER IX
THE NUN'S PRIEST, THE HOST, AND THE NARRATOR

I. THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

When it is the Nun's Priest's turn to tell a tale, it is evident that he has no intention of being outdone by the likes of a Merchant, a Squire, or a Franklin. Having just heard the Monk's catalog of depressing de casibus tragedies cut off and having been asked by the Host to tell a merry tale, he makes humorous use of astrological references to explain how roosters know that it is time to crow, how roosters otherwise determine the time of day, and how well hens are able to make astrological medical diagnoses. ¹ As a clergyman, it is appropriate for him to employ astrology only in these "legitimate" non-judicial forms, and he tells the pilgrims that he has no interest in speculating about the workings of providence or destiny (3236-51). That does not mean, however, that nothing can be deduced regarding plot and character development from his configurations. But it does mean that he intends only that the legitimate use of astrology emerges in the tale. If those that are knowledgeable in the science find elements of judicial astrology submerged in the configurations, it may be taken as coincidence, imagination, or a chicken-like mentality full of barnyard vanity and folly. Surely, he intends to undercut the serious use of astrology and provide some entertainment for the pilgrims by putting its practice within the reach of the chicken-coop. In any
case, it is the business of his audience if it chooses to take a bunch of chickens that seriously and no concern of his.

The Nun's Priest's first astrological allusion is to time. Chauntecleer instinctively "knew ech ascencioun / Of the equinoxial in thilke toun; / For whan degrees fiftene were ascended, / Thanne crew he, that it myghte nat been amended" (2855-58). The reference is to the equinoctial line or circle of the heavens in the plane of the earth's equator. At its eastern boundary lies Aries at the point of the vernal equinox (sunrise), and Libra lies on its western boundary at the point of the autumnal equinox (sunset). To understand the allusion, it must be understood that each degree of each zodiacal sign requires roughly four minutes to ascend above the horizon. The equinoctial circle makes one daily revolution, and 15° of each sign's 30° appears above the horizon each hour (4 min. x 15° = 60 min.). According to F. N. Robinson, it was believed that a cock crowed exactly on the hour, 2 and consequently, the Nun's Priest is having a little astrological fun with the myth by telling the pilgrims how Chauntecleer knew precisely when it was time to crow.

The next reference comes from the mouth of Pertelote, and here the Nun's Priest seizes the opportunity to show off his knowledge of medical astrology (2955-4150):

Ye been ful coleryk of compleccioun;
Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hoote.
And if it do, I dar wel lay a grote,
That ye shul have a fever terciane,
Or an ague, that may well be youre bane.
Chauntecleer, she says, already looks feverish, and she warns him of the possible complications of exposure to the sun in Aries. Aries rules the head, the sun generates the "heat," and it will be recalled that Aries is the "colerik hoote signe" (SqT 51). Pertelote's diagnosis is quite correct, for Lilly says that when the sun is in Aries, the querent is in danger of "infectious fevers" and "may fall a victim to some contagious fever." 3

If the pilgrims were unimpressed by the Nun's Priest's first reference to time, they could not fail to appreciate the cleverness of his final reference. Here, he goes to great lengths to inform them that it is now 9 a.m. (3187-99):

Whan that the month in which the world bigan,
That highte March, whan God first made man,
Was compleet, and passed were also,
Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two,
Bifel that Chauntecleer in al hys pryde,
His sevne wives walkyne by his syde,
Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore,
And knew by kynde, and by noon coother loore,
That it was 'tis, and crew with blissful stevene,
"The sonne, 'tis seyde, "is clomben up on hevene
Fourty degrere and oon, and moore ywis.

The first two lines repeat the common belief that the world was created at the time of the vernal equinox. 4 The Nun's Priest says that March is over ("compleet"), and that thirty-two days have passed since March "bigan." Since thirty-one of those days belong to March, and one more day has passed, it is Friday, April 2 (4531). 5 Chauntecleer instinctively knew it was "pryme" (9:00 a.m.) because he had observed the sun at 21° of Taurus and at an altitude of 41° above the horizon. Thus, the reference reveals that it was 9:00 a.m. on the morning of Friday,
April 2 when Chauntecleer's instincts told him it was time to crow. We have a rather bright rooster here.

As I suggested earlier, it would have been inappropriate for a clergyman to blatantly display a knowledge of judicial astrology during a holy pilgrimage. Apparently, the Nun's Priest displays no such knowledge, but instead restricts himself to the legitimate use of astrology for telling time and making medical diagnoses. Even in that, he does not seem to be taking astrology seriously since his adepts are chickens. But, let us suppose for a moment that we are pilgrims and non-clergymen who have already become accustomed to finding astrology being used to develop plot and character because of the efforts of the Nun's Priest's predecessors. What might we "mistakenly" deduce from Chauntecleer's allusion to the sun at 21° of Taurus besides the date and time?

Chauntecleer's overstatement of the time, 21° Taurus = the sun's elevation is 41° above the horizon = prime = 9:00 a.m. and vice versa makes us suspicious because we can recall the Merchant making a similar overstatement that doubled as plot and character development: May's retreat was to last four days = the moon was at 2° Taurus when she retired and had entered Cancer when she emerged = four days for the moon to travel that distance = May emerged from her retreat when four days were "compleet," and vice versa.

Taurus, we recall from the Wife of Bath's use of the sign, is ruled by Venus. That seems appropriate for the tale due to the emphasis on Chauntecleer's lusty behavior and his talents for crowing and singing. Thanks also to the Wife of Bath, we can expect some activity from the planetary rulers of the faces of the sign (see my chapter on the Wife of Bath's horoscope). Chauntecleer said that the sun was at 21° Taurus
which places him in the third face of the sign; the third face of Taurus is ruled by Saturn. Because of the rules of planetary rulership, therefore, we must consider the influences of Venus and Saturn in the tale. Venus must be considered not only because she rules Taurus, but also because the day on which Chauntecleer makes his observation is Friday, and Venus is the planetary ruler of that day.

We recognize then another "coincidence." Chauntecleer has chosen a specific sign and degree to indicate the time. From all of the possibilities (all 12 signs rise every day, and each of them would be visible at prime on one day or another), he chose Taurus and specifically the 21st degree of Taurus. He could have chosen any other degree so long as he kept the sun's elevation at $41^\circ$ above the horizon and still conveyed the information that it was prime. The Nun's Priest had already established that Chauntecleer knew his ascensions and crew exactly when $15^\circ$ of a sign appeared above the horizon (exactly on the hour). Why, then, didn't Chauntecleer make it simple to equate the degree of the sign with the time by saying $15^\circ$ of Taurus had risen, and it was therefore prime? Instead, he expects us to assume that $6^\circ$ of Taurus was above the horizon at 8:00 a.m., so that at prime, the 21st degree had risen. Why complicate the matter if his purpose was only to indicate the time by emphasizing the 21st degree of Taurus?

We would have to assume that the specific degree of Taurus was significant for something other than time, especially since the 21st degree of the sign happens to be the "critical degree" according to astrological doctrine. With all of these possibilities in mind, we would be quickly trying to analyze the combined influences of the sun, Venus, and Saturn located at a critical degree in Taurus just before
Chauntecleer's encounter with the fox. Let us see, then, what could be deduced from that information.

When a planet or a luminary is in a critical degree (as the sun is at 21° Taurus), it portends an event of great significance (either good or ill) for the querent. The near-fatal abduction by Daun Russell is surely a "significant" event for Chauntecleer. Moreover, the sun in Taurus gives an indication of the sort of being Chauntecleer will encounter in the event. Lilly says that the sun in Taurus indicates a short, well-set person who has a "dusky complexion, brown hair . . . wide mouth, and great nose. A confident, proud, and bold man, fond of opposition, proud of his physical strength, and one who is generally victorious." 7 The description seems generally to fit the fox, from the short body, dusky face, and brown hair to the wide mouth and perhaps the great nose. The fox exhibits confidence and boldness in his barnyard raids and seems to enjoy outwitting both his prey and their protectors (4473-82). He seems fond of opposition in that he takes Chauntecleer's advice to taunt his pursuers (3405-4604), and his pride is evident in his boasts regarding his victories over Chauntecleer's parents (3295-97). Since he is outsmarted by the rooster, however, he is only "generally victorious."

Venus rules not only Taurus, but also the day of the encounter, and Saturn is involved with her through his rulership of the 21st degree of the sign. The pilgrims have constantly mentioned these two planets in their astrological allusions. Have they no significance in this tale? Lilly says that the influence of Venus through Taurus
Gives a handsome person, though "the stature is not great the body is extremely well made, plump, but not gross... the complexion is ruddy, but not fair. ... The eyes are generally black, and very expressive. The temper is mild and winning, the disposition kind, humane, obliging, &c. They generally gain much respect from those with whom they converse, and are fortunate. 8

Furthermore, when the influences of both Venus and Saturn are present, it

Shews gain to the querent by means of ladies, to a considerable extent; he is much attracted to them, greatly addicted to pleasure, and very fortunate where females are concerned. If he be a man of property, he often wastes most of it by gaming or pleasure. If (Venus) be significator (which she is as the ruler of Taurus), the querent is very artful, sly. 9

This sounds suspiciously like a description of our rooster servant of Venus and has significance for the encounter with the fox as well.

Surely, Chauntecleer is a handsome specimen with his bright red comb, his jet-black bill, his azure legs and toes, and his lilly-white "nails." Lilly's description of stature -- "not great... extremely well made, plump, but not gross" -- certainly seems applicable to a well-fed cock of the walk, just as the "ruddy complexion" seems to apply to the "burned (burnished) gold" coloring of Chauntecleer's body. As to his temper and disposition being amiable, we recall that he is "gentil and murray," constantly singing or crowing in true venerian fashion, fascinating Pertelote and his other "wives" with his appearance and learning, and taking with good humor Pertelote's comments and advice. His situation, to understate the issue, is quite fortunate; the world belongs to Chauntecleer.
To complete the picture, there is no doubt that the rooster gains from his association with females. Beyond a doubt, he is "much attracted to them, greatly addicted to pleasure, and very fortunate where females are concerned." It should not be forgotten, moreover, that his "wives" and the "povre widow" raise the hue and cry that causes the mob to assemble in pursuit of his abductor. Their quick reactions provided him with the opportunity to play the "artful, sly" trick that caused the fox to release him.

It would appear, then, that the Nun's Priest may have used his sun at 21° Taurus configuration to double for time and plot development. Or has he? Perhaps we, as pilgrims ourselves, have become so used to astrological allusions that reveal plot and character developments by the time the Nun's Priest tells his tale that we find them doing so even when there is no intention that they do so. Perhaps it is only a coincidence that this allusion has both "legitimate" and "illegitimate" significance for the tale. We cannot with certainty accuse the Nun's Priest of willfully employing judicial astrology to develop his tale. If he may have smiled from time to time during his narration, it was no doubt in response to the humor of the situation or in satisfaction with the knowledge that he had told a good tale, and not because he may have slyly covered up a bit of astrological cleverness in a reference to time.

II. THE HOST

Just as the Narrator is not a part of the story-telling contest, but nevertheless takes advantage of the opportunity to display his
astrological "talent," so is the Host unable to resist the temptation to display his ability (or lack of ability) to calculate the hour of the day (Intro. MLT 1-15):

Our Hooste saugh wel that the brighte sonne
The ark of his artificial day hath ronne
The fourthe part, and half an houre and moore,
And though he were nat depe ystert in loore,
He wiste it was the eightetehe day
Of April, that is messager to May;
And saugh wel that the shadwe of every tree
Was as in lengthe the same quantitee
That was the body erect that caused it.
And therfore by the shadwe he took his wit
That Phebus, which that shoon so clere and brighte
Degrees was fyve and fourty clombe on highte;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clokke, he gan conclude,
And sodwynly he plighte his hors aboute.

The Host observes that it is April 18, and one-quarter of the artificial day has passed (the "artificial" day is the time during which the sun appears above the horizon, as distinguished from the "natural" day of 24 hours). The sun is at an altitude of 45° above the horizon, and the shadows cast by the trees are equal in length to their height; it is, therefore, 10 a.m. 10

The first observation made by the Host presents a problem, however. According to Sigmund Eisner, the sun rises at 4:47 a.m. in that latitude and sets at 7:13 p.m. on April 18:

The artificial day ... is 14 hours and 26 minutes long. One fourth of the artificial day is 3 hours and 36 minutes. Add that to 4:47, which is sunrise, and we have 8:23 a.m. Add half an hour to that and we have 8:53. Chaucer's words 'and moore' take us to 9:00 a.m. or a little after, unless by 'and moore' Chaucer means an unlikely 1 hour 7 minutes. 11
Even though the Host's mathematics leave something to be desired, however, the shadow charts in Nicholas's *Kalendarium* show that he is right when he says that at 10 a.m. on April 18 the shadows cast by the trees will be equal to their height. In fact, the proposition was recently tested by Eisner himself, who says that

> on one 27 Apr, our Gregorian equivalent to Chaucer's Julian 18 April, standing in the rare sunshine of Chaucer's island and latitude, I too measured a shadow and discovered that at 10:00 a.m. it was just as long as the object that caused it. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

### III. THE NARRATOR

The Narrator opens his *General Prologue* in the same way that he opened the final tale on the road to Canterbury: that is, with an astrological reference, this time to the season and month in which the pilgrimage began rather than to the time of day (*GP* 1-2, 7-8): "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote, / . . . And the yonge sonne / Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne," people from all walks of life begin to think about going on pilgrimage.

> It is spring, the date is sometime after April 12. The reasoning goes like this. The sun "ran" his *whole* course in Aries (the "Ram") between March 12 and April 12 in Chaucer's day. The sign following Aries, Taurus, began on about April 12 and extended through May 12, Gemini began on about May 12 and extended through June 12, and so on. Thus, the *first* "half" of each sign extended through the *second* half of each month, and the *second* "half" of each sign extended through the *first* half of the following month. In April, therefore, the sun ran
the second half of his course in Aries during the first half of that month and runs the first half of his course in Taurus during the second half of April. Since March is over, and it is April when the General Prologue begins, and since the sun "Hath in the Ram his halve cour yronne" (my italics), he has completed the second half of his course in Aries and is about to enter Taurus: the pilgrimage began on or about April 12 and is carried out under the sign of Taurus. It may actually have begun a day or two later, since the Host will date the Man of Law's Tale as April 18 (Intro. MLT 5-6), but the Narrator's reference is close enough for his purposes. The passage poetically indicates that it was spring, that March was over, that the pilgrimage got underway sometime after mid-April under the sign of Taurus. Since Taurus is an "earthly" sign (as opposed to signs composed of air, fire, or water), it is a fitting choice for a pilgrimage that is more worldly than spiritual.

The Narrator's use of solar altitude and shadow length to determine the hour in the Parson's Prologue is the only other instance in the tales where he employs astrological references (1-13):

By that the Maunciple hadde his tale al ended,
The sonne fro the south lyne was descended
So lowe that he nas nat, to my sighte,
Degrees nyne and twenty as in heighte.
Four of the clokke it was tho, as I gesse,
For ellevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,
My shadwe was at thilke tyme, as there,
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.
Therwith the moones exaltacioun,
I meene Libra, alwey gan ascende,
As we were entryng at a thropes ende.
Here, the Narrator is saying that since the sun is at 29° of altitude above the horizon (as distinguished from longitude along the ecliptic), the time must be about 4 p.m. According to Nicholas of Lynn’s *Kalendarium*, when the sun is at that angle, an object six feet high will cast a shadow eleven feet long at 4 p.m. To understand how the Narrator arrived at his conclusion, it will be useful to present J. C. Eade’s explanation of the process.

Eade supplies the following shadow tables from the *Kalendarium* for April under 4 p.m.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April</th>
<th>degrees</th>
<th>feet</th>
<th>parts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>27° 54'</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>28° 09'</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>28° 25'</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>28° 41'</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>28° 57'</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>29° 11'</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
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According to Eade,

These figures say that, for instance, at 4 p.m. on 16 April, in the latitude of Oxford, the sun will be elevated 28° 41' above the horizon, and an object six units high will throw a shadow 10-59/60 units long, Chaucer’s "nat ... Degrees nyne and twenty," together with his "ellene foot, or litel moore or lesse", would thus be valid for any date between the 14th and the 17th of April ... It is worth noting the carefulness of Chaucer’s phrasing here, which otherwise looks rather heavy-handed. The "feet" he talks of are "of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were / In sixe feet equal of proporcioun". Had Chaucer been only 5' tall, his "feet" would have been units of 10". Here, I believe, he may reflect what Nicholas's canon says on this subject. The user "should take his own shadow according to six feet of the same, or the shadow of some other perpendicular object divided into six equal parts" (ed. Eisner, pp. 189, 191; my translation).
Libra ascending (but not ascended) in the west, of course, reinforces the point that it is late afternoon, but when the Narrator makes Libra the sign of the moon's exaltation, he is in error. Libra is the exaltation of Saturn; the moon is exalted in Taurus. As Robinson has suggested, the Narrator may have confused the face of Libra ruled by the moon (the first 10° of the sign) with the sign of her exaltation, which would mean that somewhere between 1° and 10° of Libra were visible when the Narrator made his observation. That, of course, would reinforce his point that Libra "alwey gan" (was always ascending) at about 4 p.m.¹⁷ Since the time had correctly been established by shadow length, however, the error about the moon's exaltation does no harm to the allusion. The error does have significance for the pilgrimage at large, however, and as I intend to show in the concluding chapter, it represents the shift from the worldly atmosphere of the pilgrimage to the spiritual atmosphere of the Parson's Tale that takes place before the pilgrims enter Canterbury.
NOTES

1 Although the Monk does nothing particularly spectacular in his tale, he does make use of astrological weathercasting principles in his story of Croesus. Croesus had a dream in which "Upon a tree he was, as hym thoughte, / Ther Jupiter hym wessh, bothe bak and syde, / And Phebus eek a fairowall e hym broughte / To dryen hym with; and therefore wax his pryde" (MT 3930-2746). Seeking an explanation for the dream, he hears his daughter, Phanye, interpret it in the following manner: "'The tree,' quod she, 'the galwes is to meene, / And Juppiter bitokeneth snow and reyn, / And Phebus, with his towaill so cleene, / Tho been the sonne stremis for to seyn. / Thou shalt enhange be, fader, certeyn; / Reyn shal thee washe, and sonne shal thee drye!'" (2750-56). Here, the Monk has borrowed the astrological properties of the sun and Jupiter to explain the rain that shall "wasshe" Croesus and the sun that shall "drye" him. Common sense explains the sun's drying action, but even so, Ptolemy sees fit to mention that "the active power of the sun's essential nature is found to be in heating, and, to a certain degree, drying" (p. 35). Although it is easy to understand the sun's ability to dry Croesus' body without being aware of its astrological properties, it is necessary to know a little bit about astrological weathercasting to understand Jupiter's ability to "wasshe" the body of Croesus with rain. The "temperate force" of Jupiter, Ptolemy says, brings rain "because his movement takes place between the cooling influence of Saturn and the burning power of Mars. He both heats and humidifies" (p. 37). Moreover, Jupiter's involvement in the production of rain is a reflection of part of the theory of Superior Conjunctions. John O'Connor explained that "According to this theory, all great changes occurring on earth -- floods, fires, plagues, etc. -- were ascribable to the various conjunctions of the superior planets Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. Conjunction of the first two were thought to be particularly important." After the translation of Albumasar's De magnis coniunctionibus into Latin in the mid-twelfth century, "it was generally agreed among astrologers that the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of Cancer was the portent which foretold the Flood" (p. 121). The same conjunction in Cancer, of course, accounts for the torrential rainfall in Troilus and Criseyde (III. 624-28). The reasoning in these instances may be explained by the astrological commonplaces that Jupiter is a wet, humid planet while Saturn is cold and dry and governs such disasters as floods, plagues, and so on. Thus, the Monk uses the properties of the planet Jupiter and the luminary, the sun, working in conjunction with each other to "wasshe" with rain and "drye" with heat the body of Croesus.

2 Robinson, p. 752.

5. Eade, p. 135, sets the date as May 3, arguing that March is over, and since April consumes 30 of the 32 days, it is May 3. The Nun's Priest, however, says that 32 days have passed "Syn March bigan" (3190).


7. Lilly, p. 305.

8. Lilly, p. 308.


10. Robinson, p. 690, states that "In the present instance, the reckoning is as follows. On April 18 the sun was in the 6th degree of Taurus, which crossed the horizon at 22° north of the east point, or 112° from the South. The middle of this distance is the 56th degree, over which the sun would seem to stand at twenty minutes past nine. The Host's second observation was that the sun's altitude was 45°, a point which it reached at exactly two minutes before ten." Eisner, p. 31, however, notes that Robinson's interpretation is taken from the work of the nineteenth-century scholar, Andrew Edmund Brae, and discounts the theory because it makes the time too early: "The time at that moment is not 9:20 a.m. as Brae declares but 9:04 a.m. The Host's 'half an hour' moves the time to 9:34, and the words 'and more' have to signify an inappropriately long stretch to bring the time to 10 a.m."


13. Eade, pp. 114-15, says that "the sun has run 'his halve cours', not 'half his course'. Were it the latter, the 'half' would have to be the first half. The inversion is necessary because the half intended is the second half. In Chaucer's day the sun entered Taurus (completed his course in Aries) on or about April 12. From this it follows that on 1 April (having entered Aries on or about 12 March) the sun has 'half a course' in Aries still to run during that month." See also, "Astronomical Lore in Chaucer," *Studies in Language, Literature, and Criticism*, 2 (1919), p. 34, in which Florence M. Grimm states that "At the beginning of April the sun is a little past the middle of Aries and at the beginning
of May, roughly speaking, he is in the middle of Taurus. Thus the sun in April runs a half-course in Aries and a half-course in Taurus. Chau-
er means here that the former of these half courses is completed, so that it is some time after the 11th of April."

14 Eade, p. 115, says that the Narrator's allusion "is not cast in such a way as to imply a date to the very instant; but it does operate in such a way that argues an ability in his audience to see, in general terms, what is implied and to deduce what part of the month it was in which the pilgrimage began."

15 Eisner, p. 33, confirms the Narrator's calculations and offers an explanation for the problem that the Parson's Prologue occurs on April 17, while the Man of Law's Tale is dated April 18: "Because every identifiable date in the Canterbury Tales takes place between January and July and between 1387 and 1394, it would seem that these dates, rather than presenting a chronological sequence for the Canterbury Tales and their links, are useful only for symbolic purposes. Thus the 17 April date following the 18 April date is not significant. But consider: the tone of the Parson's Tale is fitting for Good Friday. The joyous arrival in Canterbury would be fitting for Easter. In 1394 Good Friday was 17 April." F. N. Robinson observes, p. 765, that "The altitude of the sun was 29°, which means for April 20th, that the time was about 4 p.m. With the sun at that angle an object six feet high would cast a shadow eleven feet long."


17 Robinson, p. 765.
ASTROLOGY IN THE CANTERBURY TALES
VOL. II
DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1987

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CHAPTER X

ASTROLOGY AND THE CANTERBURY TALES

In the preceding chapters, I have applied the scientific methods of prognostication to the astrological allusions in the Canterbury Tales in order to explain more clearly and in greater detail how the pilgrims used them for plot and character development in their tales. By so doing, it has been my hope to have shed additional light on Chaucer's knowledge and artistic use of astrology. It is also my hope that I have made it clear that if we are to understand the significance of an astrological allusion, the analytic methods of the science should be applied to it wherever it appears in literature. To my mind, a scientific approach to a scientific allusion will result not only in more detailed and accurate information, but also in the saving of time and effort put into interpretations that could not possibly be made by a listening or a reading audience.

I have suggested that solving the astral puzzles (like solving allegorical puzzles) could have provided amusement both for the pilgrims and for Chaucer's actual audience and that astrology became an element of good fiction in the story-telling contest. Over-concentration on serious matters for extended periods of time was seen as self-defeating and unhealthy in Chaucer's day. Glending Olson has shown that medical authorities in the Middle Ages believed that listening to or reading tales was a kind of recreation that afforded the relaxation necessary
for the healthy mind and body required to achieve one's goals. 1

Ideally, therefore, it could be argued that the tales ought to have made the pilgrims more able to concentrate on personal salvation as they approached their destination. The Canterbury pilgrimage is not an ideal pilgrimage, however. It has been shown instead that this pilgrimage is an example of the conflict between the spiritual and worldly motivations of pilgrims in the later Middle Ages. C. K. Zacher has observed that just as their tales led "to discord, enmity, and the breaking of bonds of friendship and Christian harmony; so also within the tales these issues of broken friendships, marriages, social and governmental pacts become more oppressively obvious." 2

One of the reasons discord takes place between people is the very human tendency to overlook one's own faults while being intolerant of the weaknesses of others. Rather than acknowledging human error, the astrological pilgrims look directly to the destinal forces (i.e. the stars, the gods, Fortune, and chance) for the causes of human misfortune. Since all of them are aware that God controls the destinal powers, however, the error of overlooking personal responsibility for one's behavior leads them to the more serious mistake of questioning the wisdom and goodness of God Himself. All of them misuse astrology, and none of them seems to understand the role of the stars in the divine scheme of things. Following the Knight's lead, the Man of Law, the Wife of Bath, and the Merchant make more or less serious use of astrology to explain developments in their tales or their lives, while the Miller, the Squire, the Nun's Priest, the Narrator, and the Host may (to borrow a phrase from C. S. Lewis) have "dragged it in by the heels." 3 Even so, the attempts
are significant because they indicate a desire to know, to impose order on disorderly conditions by proposing causes for inexplicable effects.

Nevertheless, preoccupation with a search for external causes of human error and misfortune is not consistent with the goals of pilgrimage. Concentration on one's responsibility for one's own sins and the need for penance and divine forgiveness—looking within and contemplating God's forgiving grace—are the proper pursuits of the good pilgrim rather than the misuse of knowledge for worldly purposes. One of the reasons Chaucer uses astrology in the _Canterbury Tales_, I believe, is to demonstrate through the pilgrims' existential "janglyng" just how far removed from God they are. As David R. Pichaske has rightly observed, "the Canterbury pilgrims are a fellowship badly in need of grace, of instruction, of reawakening, and regeneration." 4

Astrology serves at least three valuable, instructional purposes in the _Canterbury Tales_. First, it eliminates the need for any heavy-handed moralizing. Astrology was a pleasing way to keep the issues of providence, destiny, and free will alive in the midst of a wrangling, worldly band of pilgrims. Moreover, solving the astrological puzzles in a sense draws an audience into the literary pilgrimage, and the issues and errors discussed by the pilgrims become considerations for that audience without any direct moral advice. Second, C. S. Lewis has shown that the astrological system was commonly employed by artists in the Middle Ages and Renaissance as a model for the Boethian view of providence, destiny, and free will. 5 As we have seen, the _Knight's Tale_ contains just such a model in the first tale of the pilgrimage. When the model is understood, it becomes much easier to understand the
pilgrims' misuse of the role of the stars (and indeed their errors regarding all of the destinal powers) according to the providential scheme of things and to understand the folly of relying on their influences.

As Donald R. Howard has explained in his discussion of structure in the Canterbury Tales, there are themes running through groups of tales that link them together in interlaced discussions. As an example, one of the best known themes is the discussion of marriage that joins (according to George Kittredge) the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, the Clerk's Tale, the Merchant's Tale, and the Franklin's Tale. Marriage is the theme of the tales, and sovereignty in marriage is the link that joins them together. I believe that Chaucer used astrology (or, the misuse of the ideals of astrology) as just such a structural device as well, and it is to the explanation of that idea that I will dedicate the remainder of this final chapter.

The common concern shared by the pilgrims who use astrology is, first of all, the desire to impose order on inexplicable situations by proposing causes for the various effects they describe. As they raise propositions or pose questions regarding the stars and human events, the question of what man is able to know emerges and an interlaced discussion of cause and effect develops. As the theme of marriage is present in all of the tales in the Marriage Group, so is the theme of cause in general and cause and effect regarding human love and marriage in particular present in the prologues or tales told by the Knight, the Miller, the Man of Law, the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Squire, the Franklin, and the Nun's Priest. As sovereignty is the link that joins the Marriage Group together, so does the abuse of astrology link what
I shall call the Causal Group together.

Related to, but not directly a part of the Causal Group is yet another series of tales that do not make use of astrology: the Physician's Tale, the Pardoner's Tale, the Monk's Tale, the Second Nun's Tale, the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, and the Manciple's Tale. I have mentioned above that the excursion to Canterbury is generally viewed as representative of the conflict between the ideals and the realities of pilgrimage that had developed in the later Middle Ages. Consistent with this view is the fact that the pilgrims' misuse of astrology to pry into the affairs of God, to avoid responsibility for their own behavior, and to exploit the ignorant is clearly an abuse of the ideals of the science and of worldly knowledge itself. It is the application of knowledge without conscience, a matter of knowledge without God used for selfish reasons that lead to sin against one's fellowman and against God Himself. The tales mentioned above will be included in my discussion because they are linked to the Causal Group through the conflict they display between the ideals of science and knowledge and the abuse of those ideals for worldly gain. In order to facilitate an understanding of my argument, therefore, the tales are arranged thematically in this chapter rather than according to the order prescribed by any existing manuscript.  

The Knight begins the discussion, and it is important to realize that his propositions about providence, destiny, and free will evolve from a situation in which love and lust for a woman have destroyed the bonds of brotherly love between two kinsmen. In his tale, the responsibility for human love perverted by lust, jealousy, and anger are laid squarely on the shoulders of the planet-gods. The tale ends by asking
why Arcite's death had been "necessary." The tale suggests that all
things have a cause and that the cause must somehow be for the good.
The proposal is that since the knowledge of man is insufficient for an
understanding of the motives of God, man has no choice but to accept
that those motives are good and make the best of it.

The Merchant's Tale also shows confusion about the cause of things.
All things have a cause, and God knows that cause even though man can-
not understand. That should be enough for man, but it is not. Why did
May change so suddenly? Is there no way that man can understand the
mind of God through earthly knowledge? Such an attitude shows a lack
of trust and faith in the judgment of God, and the Merchant would prefer
to hold his peace. Instead, however, he asks the pilgrims if the stars
could have foretold and explained May's inexplicable behavior on "thilke
day."

The Man of Law's Tale attempts to take the confusion out of what
man can and cannot know. It provides answers both to the charges raised
against judicial astrology in the Miller's Tale and to the propositions
that the death of Arcite or the behavior of May were matters of necessity.
The tale proposes that by means of the legitimate use of astrology, we
not only can know the nature of approaching events but should take
advantage of the available information. Worldly knowledge thus can be
of help in avoiding disaster if that knowledge is not misused.

The Squire's Tale also suggests that worldly knowledge can make it
possible for man to understand the cause of astonishing events since
supernatural effects often have a worldly explanation. The magical
gifts become the products of craftsmen rather than magicians, and the
tale implies that a good deal can be understood about what takes place in the world by becoming more informed and less superstitious. Man cannot explain the cause of events in which he has no participation. Consequently, speculation about those things which lie outside of human experience is little more than mindless chatter and a waste of time. His tale, however, does honor the Knight, the Man of Law, and the Wife of Bath by its use of an explanatory nativity for Cambyuskan and an election of times for the ruler’s feast.

The Miller’s Tale clearly declares that man cannot and should not try to know God’s motives. That is forbidden knowledge, and prying into the affairs of God produces nothing positive for man. No good ever came of judicial astrology, and it is practiced by charlatans to exploit the ignorant. It is an abuse of worldly knowledge without God or conscience that corrupts both the practitioner and his victims. Nicholas, of course, misuses his weathercasting skills to create an opportunity for Alisoun to carry out her adulterous inclinations and to satisfy his lust for the carpenter’s wife. Ignorance, therefore, is bliss in the tale, for a lack of knowledge prevents its abuse.

For the Wife of Bath, worldly experience is the only worthwhile knowledge (which amounts to perpetual trial and error), and she is unconcerned about what God does or does not intend. It is enough to know that things do happen, and it makes no difference to her what the ultimate cause of it all may be. Such matters are beyond the understanding of man, and nothing can be done about them in any case. She abuses the ideals of astrology to justify her lustful, aggressive behavior and probably to ease her own conscience (thus perpetuating her errors) and
she cares only that we understand that she is not at fault. Having
heard the Man of Law explain that Mars had "slain" Constance's marriages,
she immediately applies the effects of Mars to love and marriage in her
own autobiographical Prologue.

In the Franklin's Tale, astrology is once again misused by a
charlatan in the interests of lust and personal gain. Through the
character of Dorigen, the tale suggests that earthly knowledge is not
sufficient for an understanding of the motives of God. The Franklin's
magician-astrologer has no qualms about abusing his science to deceive
Aurelius and Dorigen, nor is he concerned about making possible the
corruption of them both. Once again, what we have are the destructive
effects of worldly knowledge without God. In this tale (as in the
Squire's Tale), astrology is coupled with magic to create an illusion
that has a natural explanation. Recalling the full moon and flood in
the Miller's Tale, the Franklin provides one of his own to create the
illusion that the rocks of Brittany have disappeared. The proposition
that emerges in the Franklin's Tale, however, is that genuine love and
forgiveness are beyond the control of magic, worldly knowledge, or the
powers of destiny.

The Nun's Priest's Tale answers the lot of them by implying that
astrological determinism is a fit topic for chickens to discuss. His
rooster uses astrological double-talk to create the illusion of know-
ledge so that he may impress his wives and achieve his ends. It is a
matter of vanity and lust, and Chauntecleer shamelessly creates the
illusion the stars are the cause of what actually takes place by instinct.
The Nun's Priest flatly refuses to discuss cause or God in his tale,
declaring that such matters are beyond the understanding of the most "parfit clerk."

The Pardoner's Tale does not make use of astrology. The Pardoner himself, however, clearly abuses the ideals of his profession for personal gain and ironically preaches a sermon against avarice. His tale suggests that curiosity about forbidden knowledge ("Goddes pryvetee" in the Miller's Tale, the Philosopher's Stone in the Canon's Yeoman's Tale) in order to satisfy the lust for gold corrupts and destroys the seeker. The rowdies in his tale seek knowledge without God.

The Physician's Tale uses no astrology, but its teller is expert in the art. He is yet another example of a man who abuses worldly knowledge and the ideals of his profession to satisfy his lust for gold. Indeed, his desire to acquire gold has destroyed his sense of morality, for he is a man without a conscience. His tale will suggest that God resides in the conscience of man, and if man's conscience does not disturb him, he may do as he chooses. The Physician himself thus practices a godless kind of knowledge, and the characters in his tale practice a kind of justice and morality that is equally godless and void of conscience.

The Monk also has no interest in knowledge through God. He is concerned only with worldly knowledge and the satisfaction of his own desires. Without conscience, he flaunts the ideals of his profession by pursuing his worldly interests and is no less immoral than the Physician. He too avoids the study of the Bible through the writings of the Church Fathers and thereby avoids the pangs of conscience. As his tale indicates, however, earthly knowledge and the pursuit of power
and pleasure without God results in tragedy and a sense of hopelessness in a world that seems governed by Fortune alone.

The Canon's Yeoman's Tale is yet another example of the abuse of science and knowledge in the quest for gold. Like the Franklin's magician, the Miller's Nicholas, and the others, the canon-alchemist in the tale has no problem with misusing his knowledge to deceive others, nor is he concerned about corrupting himself and those he gulls. He is bound to the world of matter, reduced to poverty by his greed, and his science becomes a matter of sleight of hand and cheap tricks to gull the innocent and earn his daily bread. As was the case with the gold-seeking rowdies in the Pardoner's Tale, the worship of gold by the Physician, and the moral bankruptcy of his tale, the abuse of knowledge without God for worldly gain ultimately corrupts and destroys the abuser. The alchemist's desire to transmute base metals into gold is doomed to failure because such knowledge belongs to God alone. True knowledge, therefore, resides in God, and the practice of earthly knowledge without divine revelation cannot succeed.

The Second Nun's Tale declares (as the Canon's Yeoman suspects) that true knowledge and its proper application come from divine revelation. The tale is an example of the rewards of knowledge through God, and it goes one step beyond the marriage of mutual subjugation between man and wife in the Franklin's Tale. The marriage between Cecilia and Valerian is the ideal spiritual marriage void of lust in which husband and wife submit their wills not to each other but to the will of God.

The Manciple's Tale suggests that all worldly knowledge is nothing but words, and that words often conceal the real truth. This attitude
implies that man does not really want to know the truth, and that one
is better off (and safer) to say nothing and listen to no one. The
tale advises the pilgrims to guard their tongues because man is a base
creature, and liars and hypocrites are waiting to use their words against
them. What the tale perhaps realizes (but poorly expresses) is that
the truth, like science or any other kind of knowledge, can be abused
by mindless janglyng. Raw truth without concern for its consequences
(especially where love is concerned), may well destroy both the gossip
and his victim. When one speaks one’s truths without concern for one’s
fellowman, it is truth without conscience, without God, and the abuse
of knowledge. The irony is that silence would have been humane advice
for the crow in consideration of the effects of speaking on Phoebus,
not because Phoebus turned on the crow. In such cases, it is indeed
difficult to know when to speak and when to remain silent, but compassion,
conscience, and Christian charity would often recommend the latter.

The pilgrims, of course, have neither been silent nor shown any
particular concern for their fellowmen. They insist upon jabbering
about their "truths" to the disadvantage of each other and themselves.
In the Parson’s Prologue, the Narrator’s astrological "error" regarding
the moon and Libra is the final link in the discussion and foreshadows
the turning away from existential chattering, mutual slander, and the
preoccupation with human love, lust, and marriage to silence, penance,
and divine love. The Parson’s Tale then restores the spiritual balance
implicit in the sign of Libra to a pilgrimage that had been heavily
weighted toward worldly concerns and error.
There is an urgency surrounding the Merchant's confusion regarding cause and effect in his tale that appears nowhere else among the astrological pilgrims. His role in the discussion of love, marriage, and the planets is unique, and I believe that his tale is as intensely personal as the Wife of Bath's. Unlike the Wife (or perhaps because of her presence), however, he is unwilling to go into detail about his marital problems and instead cloaks them in his tale of Januarie and May. By that, I do not mean to imply that I think the Merchant is an old man who married a young woman. What the Merchant and Januarie have in common is not age, but the fact that both of them waited to marry until they had tired of their bachelorhood, both of them had to face the problem of controlling and being controlled by a wife, and that happiness for them both seems to depend upon their ability to willfully blind themselves to their wives' faults.

We can suspect (with reason, I think) that the Merchant himself wants to know how a man's wife can seem to change so unexpectedly and how it can be that men are so blinded by beauty and sex that they refuse to see what is right before their eyes. Indeed, the "Scorpion" passage (2058-68) in which he compares Fortune to the scorpion in the blinding of Januarie seems to be one of several echoes of the information in the shrewish Wife of Bath's Prologue. It may be recalled that the Wife's house of marriage was under the rulership of the scorpion. The Merchant had listened to her boast of her use of sex and deception to control her old husbands, and when we read his description of the effects of the scorpion, we find references to deceit (2062-64), to "brotil joye," and a possible pun on "sweete venym quente" (2061),
echoing the Wife's use of, and play on, the word "quoniam" and her specific use of the word "queynte" (*WBP* 332, 608) when she boasts of her sexual control of her husbands.

Still, the Merchant had just heard the Clerk's tale of the patient suffering and ideal love of Griselde for an unreasonable husband who was constantly testing her. Griselde ought to have reminded him of the exemplary behavior of the Man of Law's Constance in love and marriage as well. He does think of Griselde, but only as a favorable contrast to his own wife. Experience has taught him that married women are hardly like Griselde and Constance, but rather more like the Wife of Bath, and it is of her and what she said in her *Prologue* that he still seems to be thinking as the Clerk concludes his tale. 8

In her *Prologue*, of course, the Wife had described her own domestic battles for supremacy with five husbands. Her weapons in the on-going combat were shrewishness, deceit, and the marriage debt, and she badgered her old husbands unmercifully until she got her way (*WBP* 421-30). She boasted of being the scourge of her "bad" fourth husband and was proud to have used her fists to bring reason to her fifth. More important, she passed herself off as an expert on marital woes, telling the Pardoner that she would deliver a tale "Of tribulacioun in mariaghe, Of which I am expert in al myn age" (*WBP* 169-74). Moreover, she had opened her *Prologue* by declaring to the company that "Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynoth for me / To speke of we that is in mariaghe" (*WBP* 1-3). To a man who was also experienced in the woes of marriage and not likely to be a sympathetic listener, the Wife must have seemed the embodiment of all that is wrong with married
women. It seems to me that the Clerk has planted the Wife in the Mer-
chant's mind by "advising" wives to stand up for themselves at the end
of his tale and to let their husbands "wepe, and wrynge, and waille"
if they don't like it (C17 1211-12).

Notice, for example, that the opening lines of the Merchant's
Prologue are not only linked to the closing remarks of the Clerk, but
also echo the Wife's opening remarks both in their personal nature and
in their claims of expertise in marital strife (1213-17):

"Wepyng and waylyng, care and oother sorwe
I knowe ynoogh, on even and a-morwe,"
Quod the Marchant, "and so doon other mo
That wedded been. I trowe that it be so,
For wel I woot it fareth so with me."

The Merchant had been married only once, but his wife was even more
domineering and shrewish than Alisoun of Bath, and he obviously feels
trapped in an extremely unpleasant marriage (1218-28):

I have a wyf, the worste that may be;
For thogh the feend to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde hym overmache, I dar wel swore,
What sholde I yow reherce in special
Hir hye malice? She is a shrewe at al.
Ther is a long and large difference
Bitwix Grisildis grete pacience
And of my wyf the passyng crueltie.
Were I unbounden, also moot I thee!
I wolde nevyr eft comen in the snare.
We wedded men lyven in sorwe and care.

This is a serious matter for the Merchant, and he is still thinking
about what the Wife had said concerning marriage some 350 lines into
his tale.

At the end of the long discussion of marriage, Januarie asks
Justinius for his opinion of the proposed marriage to May (1654).
Echoing the Wife's triumphant remarks about the "correction" of husband number four—"By God! in erthe I was his purgatorie" (WBP 489)—and her reply to the Pardoner's interruption—"This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe" (WBP 175)—Justinius warns Januarie that May might "be youre purgatorie / She may be Goddes meene and Goddes whippe" (1670-71). Seeing that his warnings have been ignored, Justinius reminds Januarie of the female view of marriage as rendered by the Wife of Bath: "But lat us waden out of this matere, / The Wyf of Bath,if ye han understonde, / Of mariage, which we have on honie, / Declared hath ful wel in litel space" (1684-87). And the Wife of Bath had said that women should be granted apparent mastery and showed that they would have it whether it was granted or not. But, she also said that the planets caused her to be so lecherous and domineering. That is one proposition the Merchant tests in his tale, not so much, I think, to show astrological cause for May's behavior as to get an answer from the pilgrims about whether his destiny or the planets could be responsible for his own shrewish wife and miserable marriage. 9

To an even greater extent than the Knight, the Merchant is not sure what causes lust or deplorable marriages, and he does not directly state cause as the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath had. He creates a configuration, shows it at work, and then asks by means of several propositions whether the stars really could be the cause for domineering wives and stressful marriages. Consequently, unlike the Knight and the Man of Law who use love and marriage to address larger Boethian issues, the Merchant concentrates specifically on the effects of the stars on love during marriage.
I have already explained that the Merchant's redundant moon in Taurus / moon in Cancer configuration was offered as a cause for the nature of May's marriage and her adulterous affair with Damian under the guise of merely indicating the passing of four days. Taurus is a sign exceptionally suited for indicating lechery because the combined influences of its rulers (Venus, the moon, Saturn, and Mercury) can always be read as causing both lust and deceit. The Merchant's choice of Taurus is in apparent answer to the Wife's ascendant being Taurus (since the constant motion of the moon through the signs would have allowed him to choose any sign with the same results). The moon was chosen for the fickleness it causes in people in general (Clerk's Tale) and in women in particular (Wife of Bath's Prologue). The Merchant knew what his configuration meant. What he was unsure about was whether or not the stars could really cause that kind of behavior. Where some of his predecessors had declared that the effects of the planets on love and marriage were lust, aggression, adultery, and domestic warfare, the Merchant in effect asks them if that is really true.

At the point in his tale when he has fully described what the situation between Januarie, May, and Damian has become, he pauses to deliver the speech in which he reminds the pilgrims of his configuration and in which he questions them about the cause of such a miserable marriage (1967-81):

Were it by destynee or aventure,  
Were it by influence or by nature,  
Or constellacion: that in swich estaat  
The hevene stood, that tymes fortunaat  
Was to putte a bille of Venus werkes--  
For alle thyng hath tyme, as seyn thise clerkes--  
To any womman, for to gete hir love,
I kan nat seye; but grete God above,  
That knoweth that noon act is causelesse,  
He deme of al, for I wole holde my peas.  
But sooth is this, how that this fressshe May  
Hath take swich impression that day  
Of pitee of this sike Damyan,  
That from hire hert she ne dryve kan  
The remembrance for to doon hym ese.

Like the Knight, the Merchant follows his configuration with propositions, and the propositions became questions. He had heard the Knight repeatedly refer to "destyne" or "aventure" (see, for instance, KnT 1074) as cause, and he now asks whether destiny or change were involved in this case. The Knight, the Man of Law, and the Wife had all proposed that the influences of the planets produced negative effects on love and marriage. Moreover, the Knight had suggested that the mysterious power of love and of Nature herself (the celebration of May by Emelye and Arcite) had a powerful effect on human behavior. The Miller, it will be recalled, then took the Knight's "Nature" and used it to describe the lusty "natures" of Alisoun and Nicholas in animalistic terms. Having stated his case, the Merchant now asks them "Were it by influence or by nature"? The Wife of Bath had specifically stated that she was as she was because she "folwed ay my inclinacioun / By vertu of my constellacioun" (WBP 615-16), implying that it was in her "nature" to be lusty and domineering. To her and the others, the Merchant asks whether a "constellacion" really affects one's nature in that way.

The Man of Law had said that an election of times would foretell misfortune in marriage, and the Merchant wonders about that possibility. Could the cause for May's quick acceptance of Damian's advances be "that is swich estaat / The hevene stood, that tyme fortunaat / Was for
to putte a bille of Venus werkes--"?

Thus, the Merchant will grant what everyone else has been willing to grant: all things have a cause, and a benevolent God knows what that cause is. He agrees with the Miller's carpenter that such matters should be left to God since they are beyond the understanding of men, and he will hold his peace. At least, he would like to hold his peace. But somehow merely having faith that God knows what He is doing and accepting that whatever happens is for the good is not enough. The Merchant apparently needs a reason he can understand for May's behavior that goes beyond the mere telling of a tale, for immediately after leaving it all up to God, he says, "But (my italics) sooth is this, how that this fresshe May . . . ." Could nothing have been done to prevent what took place? Is there no way a man can know why such things take place? I believe that the Merchant is speaking directly to the Knight, the Miller, the Man of Law, the Wife or anyone else who might know and saying: I have given you a configuration that can explain the state of affairs between Januarie and May. We all know that the stars can tell us the passing of time, and you know that I did not need to use the configuration because I told you four days had passed. Could the stars really be the cause of such behavior in May (and more important, in my own wife)? Could an election of times have been cast for my marriage; as the Man of Law suggested, that would have shown me what a poor bargain I was making?

Apparently, the Man of Law's Tale had only added to the Merchant's confusion, and he only retained the assumption that the stars can help one to avoid disaster. Moreover, the Man of Law is busy answering the
propositions raised by the Knight and the Miller about what man can or should know rather than explaining the behavior of Constance.

To the Miller's suggestion that astrology is a dangerous practice used by charlatans and that ignorance is bliss, the Man of Law seems to reply that only a drunken Miller would hold such views when astrology was actually the proper business of a "philosophe" (310). The tale as much as tells the pilgrims that the reason we suffer is precisely because we think that ignorance is bliss (we recall the Miller's "Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man"). The Man of Law points out that all of the necessary information was available to see what was going to happen in Constance's marriage at the time of her voyage, but it was ignored. And why was it ignored? "Allas, we been to lewed, or to slowe!" (315).

Having heard the Miller refer to Nicholas's use of an election of times for predicting his flood, the Man of Law points out that natal configurations in combination with an election allow us to know what destiny has in store for us and allow us to do something about it. Thus, to the Knight's proposition that nothing could have been done to save Arcite, he suggests by a parallel that the stars would have shown the outcome of the tourney had the "imprudent" Theseus taken the trouble to check rather than turning the outcome over to the planet-gods (309-15):

Imprudent Emperour of Rome, allas!
Was ther no philosophe in al thy toun?
Is no tyme bet than oother in swich cas
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun?
Nought whan a roote is of a burthe yknowe?
Allas, we been to lewed, or to slowe!
To the Knight's proposal that we cannot understand the workings of providence and destiny and to the Miller's proposal that we should not try to understand, therefore, the Man of Law declares that we not only can understand but that we should use the stars to understand and avoid disaster (the one point in the tale that seemed to register with the Merchant).

To further emphasize that human destiny is written and can be read in the stars, the Man of Law alludes to the Knight's own references about the effects of the planet-gods in the temples of Mars and Venus. The Knight said that in the temple of Mars, for instance, "Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius, \Of grete Nero, and of Antonius; \Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn. \Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biform/ By manasynge of Mars, right by figure" (KnT 2031-35). But treachery, suicide, and murder were not the only means Mars used to bring about their deaths. The Knight immediately involves Mars in deaths for lust or love: "So was it shewed in that portreiture, / As is depeynted in the sterres above / Who shall be slayn or elles deed for love" (KnT 2036-38). Moreover, he had specifically cited the deaths of Hercules and Turnus for love in the temple of Venus, and his tale, of course, is based upon the Theban conflict between Eteocles and Polynices. To all of this, the Man of Law adds (197-203):

In sterres many a winter therbiform,  
Was written the deth of Ector, Achilles,  
Of Pompei, Julius, er they were born;  
The strif of Thebes; and of Eracles,  
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates  
The deeth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle  
That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle.
If the Knight was suggesting that Arcite's unfortunate nativity had decreed that he "shal be slayn or elles deed for love" under the influence of Mars, so does the Man of Law suggest that the Sultan's death for love was written in the stars (190-96):

Paraventure in thilke large book
Which that men clepe the hevene ywraten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love sholde han his deeth, alas!
For ni (sic) the sterres clere than is glas,
Is wraten, God woot, whoso koude it rede,
The deth of every man, withouten drede.

Of course, the influence of Mars on love and marriage was as unfortunate for Constance and the Sultan as it had been for Arcite since "cruel Mars hath slayn this mariag" (301).

Constance's story shows the Man of Law agreeing with the Knight's proposal that somehow providence and destiny are capable of working independently of each other. It is a proposition that keeps God free of any responsibility for evil. Palamon had declared that man was at the disposal of cruel, unjust powers and that the "eterne" power controlling them had little interest in checking their cruelties (KnT 1303-24). The Knight himself had suggested that Jupiter had some difficulty controlling the planet-gods and was in fact willing to allow them to act as they chose regarding man (KnT 2438-46).

To those propositions, the Man of Law produces a benevolent providence that "intervenes" to save Constance because of her goodness and in spite of the stars. Apparently, the Man of Law thinks that understanding the stars is enough, for they are the agents of "evil." There is no need to deal with God Himself since He is only good, and one needs not protect oneself against the good. What the Man of Law is suggesting
is nonsense, and his position reveals that he does not understand the relationship between providence and destiny.

If the Man of Law had not been so occupied with the bounds of human knowledge, he might have recognized that his tale should have had special significance for him and all of the pilgrims. Constance is a pilgrim herself, homeless and wandering through the world, eventually returning home. But she is a pilgrim (unlike the Canterbury pilgrims) who faces adversity with silent patience. Providence does not "intervene" on her behalf, and in that, the Man of Law has either missed the point or is leaving it to his audience to understand. She does not complain about the unfairness of her plight or question the motives of God. Instead, by her constant and uncomplaining faith in the goodness of God's motives and by her patient concentration on the values of the Godhead to the exclusion of Fortune and the planets, she freely participates in God's providential plan for the supreme good. The supreme good in the tale resulting from the apparent "evil" that befell Constance--beyond a marriage of love with Alla and reunion with her family--was the conversion of several pagans to Christianity and the birth of a son who was to become an exemplary religious leader. 10

Finally, to Palamon's objection that the good were made to suffer while evil was rewarded (KnT 1325-27), the Man of Law offers Donegild as proof that evil does not achieve happiness for itself. For Donegild, happiness and the good meant the exile of Constance. She accomplished just that, but her reward was death rather than happiness precisely because she got what she wanted. She also serves as an example that reinforces Arcite's proposal that we seldom can distinguish between
true and false happiness, between apparent evil and the supreme good because of our worldly appetites (KnT 1251-74).

The Squire's Tale also expresses a faith in worldly knowledge for an understanding of the incomprehensible, but not because of what can be read in the stars. By the time the Franklin interrupts the Squire, it would appear that the enthusiastic young man has completely missed the point of the pilgrims' use of astrology. He seems to have nothing to say about the effects of the planets on love and marriage and little to say about love at all except from the viewpoint of birds. 11 What he seems to have noted and admired about the pilgrims' discussion of the stars, love, and marriage was the clever and novel ways in which they developed plot and character or embellished the passing of time. There seem to be no serious existential considerations behind his allusions, and indeed, it seems that he only used astrology to demonstrate to the company that he could be just as clever with stories and the stars as they could. If he was attempting to show off his astrological cleverness, he honors all of his predecessors by taking something from each of them.

Generally speaking, he borrows the Knight's, the Man of Law's, and the Wife's ideas of a nativity to explain the character and successes of Cambyuskan, and he uses yet another configuration to describe Canacee's appearance on her early morning walk. He matches the Merchant's exaltation of Jupiter with an exaltation of the sun as well as matching him with an embellishment of time. The Knight is further honored when the Squire's peregrine recognizes in Canacee that "pitee reneth soon in gentil herte" (479), and again when she says that with the tercelet gone, she had made "vertu of necessite, / And took it wel, syn that it moste
be" (593-94). It is also possible that the Squire intended to involve Mercury in the dispute between Cambalo and the "bretheren two" over Canacee as his father had done with Arcite and Palamon over Emelye.

To show the Miller and the Man of Law that he knows how an election works and to show the Merchant that it does work, he places the feast at a time when Venus is exalted in Pices, implying that she is the cause of the drunken revelry that takes place. He had just heard the Merchant use the sun passing over the equinoctial line to explain that it was nightfall (MerchT 1795-99), and he answers that allusion with the sun leaving the meridional line while Leo is ascending to show that it is about 2 p.m. when Cambysskan leaves the feast (263-67). The only love affair that appears in the tale is that between the peregrine and the tercelet, and there are no astrological causes implied in her tale of woe. All the Squire appears to have done was throw in an allusion here and there to match what he had already heard and completely ignore the questions of cause that had occupied the others.

Or did he? Perhaps because of the objections to his story-telling skills (valid though they are) and because of the generally accepted view that he is trying to impress his elders, we may not have given him enough credit for independent thought. Perhaps it is a mistake to expect him to think like his elders or to be concerned with the effects of the stars on love and marriage. Perhaps he is only a dutiful son and has no religious reasons for joining his father on the pilgrimage. Perhaps more attention should be paid to the fact that he is a member of the younger generation.
Unlike the Knight, the Man of Law, the Wife, and the others, his life is not half-over; it is just beginning. Given his age, social status, and way of life, I doubt that he should be expected to be much concerned about the cause of tribulation in love and marriage or even about the cause of unexplainable events. To the young, salvation seems a long way off since death itself seems far away. Youth is restless; it has the capacity to let the marvelous be sufficient in itself when no simple explanation is forthcoming and to get on with life without wasting time unravelling Gordian knots. In order to assess the part played by the Squire in the discussion of cause and effect, it will be useful to look at his youth as a fact rather than as an excuse for his "failings," and the place to begin is in his characterization in the General Prologue (79-100).

What the narrator is able to report about the Squire no doubt came from what the Squire himself thought was worthy of mention. And what is important to this young man? That he is seen as one who meets the responsibilities of a son and of his rank, that his bravery is unquestioned, that he is fashionable, talented, popular, and above all, busy with the ladies. These are qualities hardly unique to twenty-year old males of Chaucer's day. He is first of all "A lover and a lusty bachelor" (GP 80) who has given a fair account of himself in combat "In hope to stonden in his lady grace" (GP 85-88). All day long, he occupies himself with the fashionable pursuits of the courtier, and all night, he pursues the ladies to the point that "He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngele" (GP 85-98). When he is not busy making himself popular with his peers and the ladies, he is humble, well-mannered, and respectful to his father (GP 99-100). In short, he is a man of fashion who is
satisfied to occupy himself with the pleasures of this world and not a man one would expect to have much interest in the next.

Thus, the position taken by the Squire's Tale in the discussion of cause and effect, I believe, is one that might be expected from a young man. The Squire seems to agree that the planets can affect human destiny, but his tale also suggests that many times the causes of events have a logical, earthly explanation we overlook because we are looking for the explanations in the heavens. In addition, I believe the tale suggests that there is no point in discussing the cause for anything that does not have an explanation that lies within the bounds of human experience. The pilgrims seem to enjoy telling themselves that Fortune, the stars, magic, or other mysterious phenomena have to be at work in what is not easily or immediately understandable, when a more informed approach to the event might take the mystery out of it altogether. If some human involvement, some form of illusion is not connected to the inexplicable, the Squire will be much surprised. On those rare occasions when human agents do not seem to be involved and no apparent cause can be discovered, further discussion of cause must be mere speculation and a waste of time. All of these things seem to me to add up to a world-view one might expect to find expressed in a tale by a happy and reasonably intelligent twenty-year old man.

The tale opens with astrology (Cambyuskan's natal configurations), and then links astrology to magic (anticipating the Franklin) by means of the marvelous horse. The horse can take Cambyuskan anywhere "in the space of o day natureel--/This is to seyn, in foure and twenty houres" (115-20) as opposed to the astrological artificial day between sunrise
and sunset. Echoing the Wife's and Merchant's "constellations," the Squire says that "He that wroghte koude ful many a gyn. / He wayted many a constellation / Er he had doon this operacion" (128-30). The link between magic and astrology is established, and yet human involvement is made directly responsible for the operations of the horse.

The tale then begins developing a thesis that the ignorant, or the uninformed, look for supernatural causes of events that have rational explanations when Cambyskan's court examines the magic gifts. Giving the horse their first attention, they are quite concerned because they don't understand its purpose. They go so far, for instance, as to fear that the horse (which seems to be of nearly normal size) might house an army like the Trojan horse (212-15), when the evidence of their senses should have told them that could not be the case. The Squire suggests that the uniformed are inclined to fear the worst and chatter mindlessly about causes of all sorts when they cannot at once understand mysterious phenomena. They initially react to the gifts as they do to the stage magic of "jogelours" whose craft they do not understand: "Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete, / As lewed peple demeth comunly / Of thynges that been maad moore subtilly / Than they kan in hir lewednesse comprehende; / They demen gladly to the badder ende" (219-24).

Still, his "lewed" characters do not ultimately look to the supernatural for explanations; in the end, they find rational explanations for the gifts in the craft of men. They wonder at the properties of the magic mirror, for example, and then conclude that there are explanations for its operations if one is versed in optics and physics. The mirror creates optical illusions; it is not really magic, but the craft of man at work (225-35):
Another answarde, and seyde it myghte wel be
Naturally, by composiciouns
Of anglis and of slye reflexions,
And seyde that in Rome was swich oon.
They spoken of Alooeen and Vituon,
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lyves
Of queynte mirours and of perspectives,
As knowen they that han hir bookes hemd.

The demonstration that astonishing effects have understandable human causes when one knows the craft goes on as the court speculates about the miracular sword. Again, the "magic" is undercut as they realize that healing medicines could be placed on the blade, and that a master-craftsman could probably make a sword with such cutting power: "They spoken of sondry hardying of metal, / And speke of medicynes therewithal, / And how and whanne it sholde yharded be, / Which is unknowe, algates unto me" (243-46). Not only is the process unknown to the Squire, but it also seems unimportant to him that it should be known. As I suggested earlier, the Squire does not speculate on what lies outside of his own experience, so he does not elaborate on the hardening process: it would be mere speculation and would have no "fruyt." He has often been criticized for refusing to explain the disappearance of the horse as well---"Ye gete nameore of me" (343)--and I think we should understand is that instance as in this that he sees no point in "janglyng" about what he cannot explain. Things happen like thunder happens (as the Wife also suggests), and sometimes that is all that one can say about them. As a personal world-view, there is nothing wrong with that attitude, but it does not make for good story-telling. Perhaps it is a family trait, for we recall that the Knight also refused to speculate about the destination of Arcite's soul since it had gone somewhere that he "can nevere, I kan nat tellen wher" (KnT 2809-10).
Finally, the "magic" of the ring is also more a matter of understanding the craft of ring-making than of magic. Indeed, to Cambyskan's courtiers, making any kind of ring is almost magical because they don't know the art (247-57):

Tho speke they of Canacees ryng,  
And seyden alle that swich a wonder thyng  
Of craft of rynges herde they nevere noon,  
Save that he Moyses and kyng Salomon  
Hadde a name of konnyng in swich art.  
Thus seyn the peple, and drawen hem apart.  
But naetheless somme seiden that it was  
Wonder to maken of fern-assenen glas,  
And yet nys glas nat lyk asshen of fern;  
But, for they han ykownen it so fern,  
Therefore cesseth hir janglyng and hir wonder.

The search for supernatural cause seems to be a waste of time since men are usually responsible for what takes place. In the cases where they are not responsible, it is enough to accept that some things happen because they happen and forego speculation about what lies outside of human experience. They mindlessly chatter about anything and everything not for the sake of understanding, but merely to pass the time: "As soore wondren somme on cause of thonder, / On ebbe, on flood, on gossomer, on myst, / And alle thyng, til that the cause is wyst. / Thus jangle they, and demen, and devyse, / Til that the kyng gan fro his bord aryse" (258-62). Whether or not it is the Squire's intention, the passage is a good lesson for the "janglyng" pilgrims. It would be just as profitable, if not more so, to simply remain silent and assume a rational cause for what seems inexplicable--when the cause is finally discovered (or when it at least seems to have been discovered), the chatter ceases.
Just as the Squire has his characters wonder at the "magic" of the gifts one moment and take the magic out of them the next, so does he take the complications out of cause in his astrological allusions and in the peregrine’s misfortune.

It will be recalled that the tale puts Venus exalted in Pisces over the feasting, dancing, dissembling, love-making, and so forth. Notice then that the Squire follows the suggestion that Venus "causes" this sort of thing by making sure that we understand that these people are also becoming intoxicated: it is a very unglamorous, worldly explanation for their behavior.

It may also be recalled that Canacee's ruddy complexion is connected with the sun at 40 Aries. The Squire provides an equally mundane explanation for that. Canacee had had trouble sleeping because of her excitement about, and dreaming of, the gifts. She "slepte hire firste sleep, and thanne awook" (367), and she gets up early "to walke aboute" (381) not because of the stars or to celebrate the season, but because she is too excited to sleep. It seems likely that she is "rody" and "bright" as the sun in Aries as much from lack of sleep, the early morning air, and being flushed with excitement over her gifts as from any stellar cause. What is equally interesting is that the sun itself does not look ruddy and bright because it is in Aries, but because "The vapour which that fro the erthe glood / Made the sonne to seme rody and brood" (393-94, my italics).

Finally, the peregrine's unfortunate love affair is an indication that birds (or people) cause their own misfortunes in love through poor judgment and through projecting their own sets of values on other beings.
Continuing his observations concerning cause, the Squire has Canacee ask the peregrine the reason she suffers so and indicates at the same time that Canacee's common sense already holds the answer: "Is this for sorwe of deeth or los of love? / For, as I trowe, thise been causes two / That causen moost a gentil herte wo" (450-52). Of course, the peregrine's physical wounds are self-inflicted, and her emotional wounds are the result of her own poor judgment in lovers. She has been naive, and she fell victim to that thoroughly human characteristic the Clerk and Merchant had earlier deplored: the pursuit of novelty (610-20):

Men loven of propre kynde newefangelnesse,
As briddles doon that men in cages fede,
For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,
And strawe hir cage faire and softe as silk,
And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed, and milk,
Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe,
He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,
And to the wode he wolde, and wormes ete;
So newfangel been thay of hire mete,
And loven novelries of propre kynde;
No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde.

Indeed, no "gentillesse" should be expected of a bird. The peregrine's woes are hardly due to the tercelet's love of novelty. There is nothing villainous about his behavior; he has simply behaved naturally, like a bird. In this, the peregrine is guilty of making the same mistakes as the pilgrims who have been questioning cause and effect. She has gone astray and cannot understand why she "has to" suffer just as the pilgrims cannot understand why there is suffering in the world because all of them project human values onto beings that are not human. The peregrine cannot understand that the tercelet's values are not the same as hers; the pilgrims cannot grasp that their worldly ideas of the "good" do not apply
to an extra-worldly God.

Thus, to the question of the effect of the stars on love and marriage and to the question of cause in general, the Squire's Tale submits that we would do better to become informed and to look for the cause of things in the nature of men and the ways of the world rather than in the supernatural. Indeed, everything does have a cause, but the tale suggests that there are rational, non-magical, non-mystical explanations for things if we are willing to become informed rather than Superstitious. There are things that obviously occur which are difficult to explain, like thunder and the presence of mist. But one should not waste time speculating about causes that lie outside of human experience. Human beings have no point of reference from which to evaluate non-human occurrences. Man can do little more than investigate the phenomena objectively and let it be enough that the phenomena simply do occur until an answer eventually emerges. The Squire seems to be suggesting that for all of their propositions about cause and effect, the pilgrims are merely speculating, and nothing can be known for sure that way. Although we cannot be certain, perhaps we can speculate that one of the reasons his tale is interrupted might be because his elders did not take kindly to this point of view.

Besides mocking the views presented in the Knight's Tale, the Miller's Tale makes a much more direct statement about worldly knowledge than the Squire's Tale, and it stands in direct opposition to the position taken by the Man of Law's Tale. Worldly knowledge is insufficient for an understanding of the workings of providence and destiny and to curiously pursue such matters amounts to an invasion of God's privacy.
Faith in God's goodness is the business of man, and how God accomplishes the good is none of man's business. Nothing good ever came of questioning what God is up to, and nothing good ever came of astrology since it tries to accomplish just that. In his tale, the Miller develops a theme that will appear in other tales and in the conduct of other pilgrims: the abuse of the ideals of science and knowledge for personal gain. Contra the Man of Law's "philosophre," the Miller's astrologer misuses his knowledge to exploit the ignorant in the interests of lust. Nicholas is a charlatan, and as Donald Howard has rightly observed, "the Miller views intellect with a healthy unacademic approval as a means to further vested sexual interests," and even the Reeve "sees intellect as trickery." 12

The Knight opens and closes his tale with the restoration of order. At the start, Theseus' wars seem to be over, and peace and stability seem insured by his marriage with the Scythian queen. Similarly, universal peace and order are restored at the end of his tale by the marriage between Palamon and Emelye. The Miller, on the other hand, opens and closes his tale with disorder both in the marriage between John and Alisoun and in his own condition. Where the condition of Arcite in the Knight's Tale had been caused by the planet-gods, nothing more cosmic or dramatic is behind the Miller's condition than his choice of ale: "but first I make protestiooun / That I am dronke, I knowe it by my soun; / And therfore if that I mysspeke or saye / Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye" (PrLg. 3136-40).

The emphasis in the Miller's Tale is on instability and disorder. To Arcite's "What is this world?" (KnT 2777) and Theseus' "What maketh
this but Juppiter, the kyng" (Knt 3035), John the carpenter replies that
God knows the cause of things, and we not only cannot know that cause
but should not ask such questions: "Men sholde nat knowe of Goddes
pryvetee" (3454). Echoing the Knight's words about "this worldes trans-
mutacioun" (Knt 2389) and the sudden, inexorable reversal of Arcite's
condition--"Fare wel phisik! Go ber the man to chirche!" (Knt 2760)--
John says, indeed "This world is now ful tikel sikerly. / I saugh to-
day a cors yborn to chirche / That now, on Monday last, I saugh hym
wirche" (3428-30).

In spite of John's belief that we cannot and should not seek to
understand divine motives, he nevertheless (with characteristic illogic)
assigns the cause for Nicholas's apparent mental disorder to the attempt
to invade God's privacy by means of astrology (3450-56):

A man woot litel what hym shal bityde.
This man is falle, with his astromye,
In som woodnesse or in som agonye.
I thoughte ay wel how that it sholde be!
Men sholde nat knowe of Goddes pryvetee.
Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man
That nght but only his bileve kan!

God does not take kindly to man's use of the planets to invade His
privacy, and it is dangerous to try to do so. Ignorance is bliss since
God confounds the worldly wisdom of man at any rate, and faith in the
goodness of God is all that is necessary. Contrary to the Man of Law
and the Squire, the Miller suggests that worldly knowledge cannot be of
any use to man.

Nicholas, on the other hand, uses astrology to impose disorder on
order by disrupting the sanctity of marriage and by turning Alisoun's
legitimate "love" for John to the illegitimate satisfaction of his own and her lust. Thus, where the Knight's Tale proposes that the planets generate lust in Arcite and Palamon, this tale suggests that the astrologer rather than the planets is at fault, shamelessly abusing his science to exploit the ignorant in the interests of lust. Through Nicholas's correct weathercasting tools and his lack of tools for judicial prognostications, the Miller's Tale implies that astrology is of use only for predicting the weather (the common position of the opponents of judicial astrology). By means of the animalistic characterization of Alisoun (3233-70) and her and Nicholas's behavior (3274-3306), the tale reinforces the position that lust is caused by man's animalistic approach to love, not by some stellar influence. Whatever the Knight might propose, we conclude that the stars had nothing to do with Arcite's and Palamon's lust for Emelye. 13

To further emphasize that astrology provides answers only about the weather and not about human destiny, the Miller has Nicholas explain the coming flood by a full moon and an election of times. The full moon and the use of Monday for the time of the flood insures high tides on the day astrology assigns to the rulership of the moon. Thus, the Miller's Tale agrees with the Knight's Tale (but only as far as the weather is concerned) that nothing can be done about what is written in the stars except to make a virtue of necessity. For the Knight's characters, that meant accepting Arcite's death as inevitable and bringing about peace, reconciliation, and order through the marriage of Palamon and Emelye. For the Miller's characters, it means constructing three tubs in order to survive the flood and rule the world. To the Squire's
proposition that it is futile to speculate about events outside of human experience, the Miller agrees, but for different reasons. To the proposal of the Squire that worldly knowledge can be of use and to the Man of Law's declaration that we not only can but should try to know the cause of things by means of the stars, the Miller implies that worldly knowledge is nothing and faith is everything, that we cannot and should not pry into knowledge that belongs to God alone. As far as the Knight's question about the necessity of Arcite's death goes, it is as if the Miller was looking him straight in the eye and saying, mind your own business.

If any of the pilgrims is concerned with minding his own business (at least in the sense of looking out for himself first), it is the Wife of Bath. She is concerned with the cause of things only in so far as she feels the effects. Her faith is in the worldly knowledge of experience, but she has no qualms about making use of bookish "learning" (colorful as her versions of it are) when it is to her advantage. As had been the case with Nicholas, the Wife abuses the ideals of astrology to justify her behavior and thus to soothe her conscience. She is, after all, a woman in a man's world, and she knows that her behavior is not acceptable. She had just heard the Man of Law confirm the Knight's suspicions that the planets are capable of affecting the destinies of men. She had heard him declare that the planet Mars was behind the lust, aggression, and failure of Constance's marriages, and having heard the Miller justify his behavior with Southwerk ale in his Prologue, she seizes the opportunity to justify her approach to love and marriage by means of astrology. Astrology is her scapegoat, for neither worldly nor otherworldly knowledge will support her behavior. She is willing
to admit that her life has been one of lust and the will to dominate in affairs of the heart, and to the Man of Law's "cruel Mars hath slayn this marriage," she replies on her own behalf that "Myn ascendent was Taur, / And Mars therinne. / Allas! allas! that evere love was synne!" (WBP 613-14). If she has been too lusty and too aggressive in love and marriage, the stars are at fault, not she.

On the other hand, she is disputing the Man of Law's position that when natal configurations are known, an election can be cast for the most favorable conditions under which to marry. Apparently, she does not believe that anything could have been done to prevent her marital difficulties. She sees no fault in herself, and she does not recognize that what was missing from her marriages was non-physical love, forgiveness, and understanding. She prefers instead to look away from her own shortcomings and to delegate the responsibility for her lecherous, domineering behavior and her battle-ridden marriages to her natal configurations just as Arcite had made Saturn in his and Palamon's nativities responsible for their misfortunes. The Wife seems to be telling the Man of Law that it is all well and good for him to say that an election can be used advantageously for an event, but when the stars have already decreed misfortune in love and marriage at birth, an election is of no use. She cannot help being lecherous and domineering because the stars had decreed her to be so at birth; one cannot choose a better time to be born. But (as the Wife does not recognize), one can choose to repent, one can choose to try to change.

To further emphasize that knowing her planetary configurations at birth did not allow her to do anything about them, she makes the Knight
a kind of corroborating witness by using Taurus as her ascending sign. By her so doing, the planetary rulers of the sign "causing" her lust and aggression become the same planets the Knight used to explain the lust and aggressive behavior of Arcite and Palamon: Mars, Venus, Saturn, Mercury, the moon. Conspicuously absent are the sun and Jupiter, both of which may traditionally stand for the supreme god.

Interestingly enough, to the Knight's proposition that Jupiter must have been behind all that finally happened, the Wife seems to reply that it makes no difference who is responsible for incomprehensible events. Foreshadowing a position regarding the mysterious that will be taken by the Squire, she supposes that the stars decree that certain events will take place, and it is enough to know that they do take place without further speculation. All one can do is accept one's destiny as inevitable and make the best of it without worrying about the cause of the event. As far as Arcite's and Palamon's complaints about the suffering of the innocent and the rewards of evil go, the Wife as much as asks why we should care what happens to others so long as we are satisfied with our own lot? Intelligent people--and for her, that includes astrologers--know better than that. The intelligent person makes looking out for herself in an unstable and aggressive world her number one priority. We recall again the Knight's "What maketh this but Jupiter, the kyng," the Miller's "Yblessed be alwey a lewed man," and the Man of Law's "Allas, we been to lewed, or to slowe" when the Wife says (WEP 323-30):

Of alle men yblessed moot he be,
The wise astrologian, Daun Ptholome,
That seith this proverbe in his Almageste:
"Of alle men his wysdom is the hyeste
That rekkest nevvere who hath the world in honde."
By this proverbe thou shalt understande,
Have thou ynoogh, what that thee reche or care
How myrilly that others folkes fare?

Thus, the Wife seems to be at odds with the Miller and in agreement with the proposition in the Knight's and the Man of Law's tales that the planets cause lust and strife in love and marriage. This, however, is the abuse of knowledge without conscience to justify her unacceptable behavior and (as is the case with Nicholas, Aurelius, Chauntecleer, and others) her lust. Contrary to the Man of Law's position that intelligent men can use the stars to change or at least shape their destinies, the Wife's position resembles that suggested by the Knight: we cannot understand why things happen as they do, and we have no choice but to make a virtue of necessity. She completely overlooks her own animal approach to love (she will accept any man who "likes" her, whether rich or poor, tall or short, black or white), a point fully recognized as contributing to marital difficulties by the likes of the Miller, the Nun's Priest, and even the Manciple. She counters the Man of Law's argument that lust and marital strife could be avoided by waiting for a favorable time to marry by proposing that there can be no "good" time to marry if the stars have decreed otherwise at birth. Consequently, she will make a virtue of necessity by looking out for herself. She does not agree that only charlatans make use of astrology, and she does agree with astrologers like Ptolemy that it doesn't matter who controls the destinal powers: what matters is that the stars control her. The same planets that caused the unfortunate circumstances in the Knight's and Man of Law's tales were responsible for her lust, her will to dominate, and the strife in all five of her marriages.
The Franklin's Tale, on the other hand, firmly disagrees that the
destinal powers are responsible for misfortune in love and marriage.
His views of the effects of the planets are similar to those of the
Squire, but his tale nevertheless presents a position that has not been
taken before. Like the Squire's Tale, the Franklin's Tale implies that
there is a human explanation for what is often attributed to the stars.
And once again, science and knowledge are abused in his tale in the
interests of lust and personal gain. But what is most important is that
Love and forgiveness are the keys to the position taken by the tale, not
lust, anger, or vengeance. Unlike the Merchant, the Franklin does tell
a tale of love. Unlike the Squire, the Franklin gives it a happy ending.
The tale makes it clear that we all need to recognize that human beings
make mistakes and must take responsibility for them, and that forgiveness
is not only humane but also begets forgiveness. Perhaps recalling John
the carpenter's "white pater-noster," the Franklin gives a concrete
meaning to the line from the Lord's Prayer--Forgive us our debts as we
forgive our debtors"--that is appropriate for all pilgrims in all ages.
Love and forgiveness are the keys to salvation, and in his tale, he will
demonstrate that genuine love and forgiveness are above the reach of the
destinal powers.

The courtship and marriage of Arveragus and Dorigen is a matter of
love, not lust. They are not Damian and May, and extra-marital sex as
a part of courtship was out of the question. They love each other's
worthiness, and their marriage agreement which, in essence, is a promise
not to abuse the love they have sworn for each other is somewhat like
that which the Wife had proposed as ideal (FranklT 734-60). But patience
is added and consideration for each other’s feelings. They understand
that human beings make mistakes for many different reasons, and that
loving forgiveness may become necessary if their marriage is to thrive.
They know that it is the plight of man to face adversity in the world
and that they will have to face adversity at some time in their marriage
unless they are extremely fortunate. It is therefore necessary to learn
patience (as the Nun’s Priest’s widow has learned to suffer patiently)
and to practice loving forgiveness, for love is to patience what impatience
is to rage. Unlike the Wife, they have no intention of spending their
time avenging “wrongs.” As Dorigen says (777-84):

Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,
Ye shal it lerne wher ye wole or noon;
For in this world, certein, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun
Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or spoken.
On every wrong a man may nat be wreken.

It is often said that the Franklin is a naive idealist. To that I would
reply that he is attempting to tell a tale of love, and I would ask how
it is possible to talk about genuine love be it worldly or spiritual
without being idealistic.

Dorigen, however, loses patience during Arveragus’ stay in England.
She is somewhat comforted by her friends and by her husband’s letters,
and it is her loneliness for him and her concern for his welfare that
causes her to question God’s creation of the coastal rocks (806-64). In
her prayer to God, she echoes the propositions in the Knight’s, the
Miller’s, and the Merchant’s tales that all things have a cause, that
God knows the cause, and that it must be for the good. Like Arcite,
she has trouble finding the good in the apparent evil of the rocks, and
like Palamon, she wonders if God really cares about what happens to men.
Like Theseus and John the carpenter, she does not believe that God's
motives can be understood. Like the Merchant, she believes it should
be enough to trust in God, but faith alone is just not enough.

As is the case with so many of the pilgrims, faith is enough so
long as the Deity does not "interfere" with their ideas of the "good."
This is the sort of "grucchyng" or second-guessing of divine providence
that indicates so clearly how little faith they really have and how far
removed from God they are. It is an example of placing knowledge above
faith, of obstinate pride and selfishness that leads to sin. And it is
another example of trying to understand spiritual, non-human motivation
by means of worldly, human values.

Thus, ideal though Dorigen's love may seem to be, it is earth-bound,
and it actually leads her away from God. "Eterne God," she says, "that
thurgh thy purveiaunce / Ledest the world by certeyn governaunce, / In
ydal, as men seyn, ye no thyng make" (865-67). But, since the presence
of the rocks now pose a threat to her happiness, she wants to know the
sense of creating things she had never questioned before: "It dooth no
good, to my wit, but anoyeth. / Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroy-
eth?" (868-82). She points an accusing finger directly at God. Echo-
ing Palamon's complaint that the gods are unjust and uncaring, she re-
minds God that He had made man in His image and seemed to favor him, so
"how thanne may it bee / That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen, /
Which meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?" (885-87). The reasoning
behind the creation of rocks is beyond her: "I woot wel clerkes wol
seyn as hem leste, / By argumentz, that al is for the beste, / Though
I ne kan the causes nat yknowe" (885-87). It seems to me that out of sheer frustration, Dorigen is rather implying that such "arguments" are evidence of the kind of brain-washing that produces stock answers for unanswerable questions. Like the Squire, she does not pursue what she cannot understand, and like Palamon who was at a loss to explain the suffering of the innocent, she resentfully resigns herself to the only answer she can understand; the rocks are there because they are there: "To clerkes lete I al disputacioun" (890).

The garden in which she first meets Aurelius is an ideal setting for poor judgment and error. Not unlike typical gardens of love in medieval literature, it is also described as an Eden, a "verray paradys" (912). It is here that Dorigen is tempted, and it is here that (as Milton might have said) she suffers the loss of "right reason." The stars do not bring Dorigen and Aurelius together as they had the principal characters in the Knight's Tale, nor do they "cause" her conditional acceptance of Aurelius' advances as they seemed to have May's acceptance of Damian in the Merchant's Tale. There is a far more common-sense explanation for what takes place. The opportunity for error took place because Dorigen's faith in God's wisdom and goodness was weak. It took place because Aurelius was her neighbor, a gentleman, and because of her own poor judgment. Unlike May's acceptance of Damian or the peregrine's acceptance of the tercelet (959-65),

nothyng wiste she of his entente.
Nathelees it happe, or they thennes wente,
By cause that he was hire neighebor,
And was a man of worshipe and honour,
And hadde yknown hym of tyme yoore,
They fille in speche; and forth, moore and moore,
Unto his purpos drough Aurelius.
No lecherous quality in Dorigen (contra young Alisoun, the Wife, or May) causes her difficulties: her love was as constant as that of Constance or Griselde. But unlike either of them, she has lost her faith in God and placed her faith in man. She is rather more like the Squire's peregrine who exercises poor judgment in playing a courtly game of love, a game founded on the satisfaction of selfish interests in which no one ultimately wins.

She knew the rules of the game, and she should not have played (989-1010). As Donald Howard has observed, "The lady, when she agrees to be his love if he removes the rocks which put her husband's life in danger, does so in the courtly style of ironic badinage. 'In play' (989) she sets an impossible quest, that Aurelius remove the rocks." First, she flatly refuses Aurelius' advances (979-86): that was to be expected by the rules of the game. Next, she believes that Aurelius cannot meet her demands (another part of the game). By responding to Aurelius at all, she creates the impression that she is receptive to his advances which in turn encourages Aurelius to try to win her. But she has underestimated his determination to possess her. As Howard says: "Aurelius, not prepared with the right ironic answer, cries that her request is 'an impossible' and eventually (it takes two years) makes a bargain with an astrologer, compromising himself by accepting an optical illusion. Consequently, Dorigen's poor judgment, her faulty, worldly "wit" is the cause of the problems she endures rather than anything supernatural. She is an example that even the best of women can make such mistakes when the conditions are "right" (just as she had indicated in her speech about learning to suffer patiently in the face of adversity).
In a humorous demonstration that common sense can reveal a more simple and understandable cause than the stars, the Franklin seems to reply to the Squire's sun leaving the meridian and the Merchant's sun crossing the equinoctial by having his own sun move below the horizon to indicate the obvious: "This is as much to seyn as it was nyght!—" (1016-18).

Aurelius' prayer to the sun suggests that even though he hopes it will help his cause, he knows that it can do so only through its role in the change of seasons or the weather. Since he knows that the planets are subject to the natural laws of motion, he also knows that he must have supernatural aid to accomplish his goal. Consequently, he asks the sun-god to become his patron (1041-42) in the hope that he (the god) will use his power to perpetuate an otherwise natural condition. He knows that in the natural course of planetary motion the sun will move into Leo and form an opposition with the moon, and we recall Nicholas's use of a full moon in the Miller's Tale for high tides as he asks the sun-god to perpetuate the full moon that will occur when it is in opposition to the moon so that the rocks will be submerged (1046-61). There is nothing supernatural involved in covering the rocks. Aurelius needs the supernatural to keep the rocks submerged; that is, supernatural aid is needed to perpetuate a natural condition. That the planet-gods do not have an effect on men is then reinforced by the fact that his prayer is obviously unsuccessful. And the continued submergence of the rocks is not caused by the stars to change the destinies of Dorigen and Aurelius but by an illusion created by a magician.

It is Aurelius' brother that thinks of magic and astrology. Like the Squire, he knows that the craft of men can create the apparently
miraculous. We recall the position taken in the Miller's Tale against astrology and against the deceivers who use it as the Franklin says it "is nat worth a flye.-- / For hooly chirches feith in oure bileve / Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve" (1132-34). The Church could tolerate astrology when it was employed for purposes of forecasting the weather or the changing of the seasons. What was intolerable was the suggestion of judicial astrology that the stars "caused" men's lives to be out of their own control and removed freedom of choice altogether. It could thus provide men with an excuse to avoid taking responsibility for their behavior and consequently their sins, which could in the end lead to damnation. What was naturally offensive to the Church was the tendency of some astrologers to fraudulently create the illusion that the stars caused events to take place that had other, perfectly natural explanations. As I said, such illusions could "greve" the credulous by reinforcing the position that the stars were responsible for their short-comings and sins, and the Church had every right to object to such practices.

But illusion is exactly what Aurelius' brother is after. He wants to find someone who is capable of using the natural motion of the stars to help create an illusion of the miraculous as the Squire's "jogelours" or the "tregetours" used stage magic to create whatever illusions they chose (1139-61). Where the Squire's Tale had suggested that the magical properties of the gifts could be explained by understanding the craft or by manipulating angles and reflections or by other stage magic, the Franklin goes to some length to show his magician's talent for doing the same kind of thing (1189-1204).
When the deal is made, Aurelius and the astrologer-magician arrive in Brittany when the sun is in Capricorn. The configuration says that it is December and winter: another fact easily determined without the use of the stars. The reason the magician has waited until the sun is in Capricorn is because his knowledge of weathercasting makes that configuration ideal for the illusion he wants to create. Saturn is the ruler of Capricorn, and the planet's role in weather forecasts is one in which rain and floods are produced. The wet winter weather is already at work, and the "bitter frostes, with the sleet and reyn, /
Destroyed hath the grene in every yard" (1250-51). The "subtil clerk" has simply waited for the weather to be right for creating his illusion just as the Squire's creator of the horse had "Wayted many a constel-
lacion" before going to work (Sqt 129). December is thus a naturally rainy month in the tale and in reality, and planetary motion (the swiftness of the moon) will eventually allow for an opposition to take place between the moon in Cancer and the sun in Capricorn = full moon and high tides. The moon must be in Cancer for the opposition to take place because the sun is in Capricorn, and Cancer is always opposite that sign. The magician, therefore, is guilty of using the stars to convince the superstitious that he can make rocks disappear when a natural course of events has simply covered them over with water: "So atte laste he hath his tyme yfounde / To maken his japes and his wrecchednesse / Of swich a supersticious cursednesse" (1270-72). Finally, using the methods of astrology to locate the moon and her mansions so that he will know exactly when in December the weather and the tides will be just right--"As hethen folk useden in thilke dayes" (1273-96)--the rocks seem to
have vanished.

Thus, the legitimate use of astrology for weathercasting once again is abused by an unethical man for the satisfaction of lust. The stars have merely run their natural courses; clearly, they have not caused anything supernatural to occur. It is man who makes it look as if they can cause the inexplicable to take place.

When the illusion takes place, Aurelius reminds Dorigen of her promise and asks that she keep it, leaving her to her sense of honor (1322-38). The impossible was possible after all, even though, as she observes, it "is agayns the process of nature" (1341-45). Consequently, like so many of the characters in the other tales, she tries to blame the destinal powers for her dilemma. It is Fortune that has caused her difficulties (1355-66), and she sees only two alternatives: death or dishonor. She cites many examples of women who chose death (1367-1456), but her reasoning is faulty in her attempt to avoid her own responsibility for what took place. The examples she cites are of women who were put in the position of choosing by situations beyond their control. They will not "beren witnesse" to her situation (1363) since she willingly entered the game of love, knew the rules, and could have refused to play at all.

When Arveragus learns what has happened, the point of Dorigen's earlier speech about patience, human error, and the inability of man to spend his life avenging himself is clear. This, the Franklin seems to be telling the pilgrims, is how genuine love works. Although Arveragus is much distressed, he recognizes that Dorigen has not lusted for Aurelius but rather has made a mistake for which she must pay the consequences. Since he truly loves her, his unhappiness is tempered by
forgiveness and compassion. Unlike the Wife of Bath and her fourth husband or the Merchant and his wife, Arveragus will not publicly denounce Dorigen or repay her in kind: "Ye wyf," quod he, "lat slepen that is stille. / It may be wel, paraventure, yet to day. / Ye shul youre truythe holden by my fay'" (1472-74). Taking responsibility for one's actions, courtesy, truth, and honor are more important than vengeance, and he relies upon the strength of his selfless love to get them through what must be done (1481-86, 1492):

But with that word he brast anon to wepe,
"... no wight telle thou of this aventure,--
As I may best, I wol my wo endure,--
Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse."
... He nolde no wight tallen his entente.

The increasing power of selfless love and forgiveness to negate the effects of evil and to bring about the good are further demonstrated when Dorigen is sent to Aurelius. Like Arveragus, he forgives her because of love and his own natural gentillesse (1514-21). He sees, perhaps for the first time, that this was not merely a game for her and feels compassion for the terrible consequences of his lust: "Considerynge the beste on every syde, / That fro his lust yet were hym leve abyde / Than doon so heigh a cherlyseh wrecchednesse / Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse" (1514-21). Like Arveragus, and unlike the typical courtly lover, he will not reprove or humiliate her with lover's complaints. Like Arveragus, he has no intention of avenging himself: "My truythe I plighte, I shal yow never repreve / Of no bieste and heere I take my leve, / As of the treweste and the beste wyf / That euer yet I knew in al my lyf" (1537-40). Realizing that a man does not do such things to
someone he loves, nor does a man of honor do such things to people who are really in love, he releases her from her obligation (1526-36). The stars are conspicuously absent. Love and forgiveness have brought about this change in the destinies of Aurelius and Dorigen.

Love begets forgiveness and serves as an example to others. Aurelius, like Dorigen, must also honor his obligation to the magician (1557-70). Payment of his debt is just as disastrous for him as Dorigen's debt was for her. When the magician learns, however, that the venture failed because of Love, he in turn forgives Aurelius his debts as Aurelius had forgiven his debtor.

Thus, the Franklin makes it clear in his tale that lust and making a game of love, making frivolous promises one is "sure" will not have to be kept, are the causes of tribulation in love and marriage, not the stars or Fortune. Even the best of wives are susceptible to this kind of temptation, and he warns all women to remember Dorigen's error: "But every wyf be war of hire biheeste! / On Dorigen remembrith, atte leeste" (1541-42). In all of the preceding tales, the rewards of lust were jealousy, anger, and disorder. The rewards of Love and forgiveness are now shown to be honor, respect, and happiness between Arveragus and Dorigen—"Nevere eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene" (1551-56)—and it is clear that selfless Love and forgiveness are really the powers that shape man's destiny for the good.

Chaucer's audience had listened to the pilgrims' questions and propositions about providence and destiny and had heard the likes of Palamon and Dorigen defer to "divynys" (KnT 1323) and "clerkes" (FranklT 890) for answers to the questions of cause and effect. When the Nun's
Priest tells his tale, a "divyne" finally has the floor.

The position taken by the Nun's Priest's Tale in the discussion is both tentative and ambiguous. The Nun's Priest is careful about the use of astrology, about the views of providence, destiny, and free will that emerge, and about the role of women in love and marriage. The Host had complained that the Monk had nearly put him to sleep with his tale, and when he asks the Nun's Priest to produce a story that "may oure hertes glade" (NPPlg. 2811), the Nun's Priest replies, "But I be myrie, ywis I wol be blamed" (NPPlg. 2817). With other members of the clergy, the Wife of Bath, and especially the Prioress closely at hand, it should come as no surprise that the Nun's Priest is somewhat cautious.

The tale is interesting because it does not imply that the stars do or do not cause things to happen. Instead, it suggests that things can occur that may or may not have been predictable, and if one is given foreknowledge of such events in some fashion, it is reckless to ignore them altogether. One should not forget, however, that such events may also have a natural explanation, and the wise man will simply be aware of the possibilities and take the proper precautions. Dreams, the stars, and Fortune aside, instinct, intuition, and good common sense ought to allow a rooster (or a man) to recognize approaching trouble most of the time if he pays attention to what he is doing and is not blinded by female beauty, lust, or pride.

As far as God is concerned, He knows what He is doing, and we ought to be satisfied with that. By the example of the "povre widow," it is clear that God knows what we need and will provide. Perhaps recalling Dorigen's call for patience in learning how to suffer, the Nun's Priest
points out that "Syn thilke day that she was last a wyf, / In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf, / For litel was hir catel and hir rente. / By housbondrie of swich as God hir sente / She found hirself and eek hir doghtren two" (2825-29). Like St. Paul (to whom he alludes at the end of his tale), the Nun's Priest makes a virtue of remaining unmarried as a widow, implying that it is not necessary to remarry in order to look out for oneself since God will provide (contra the Wife). And like Paul, he will be certain to let his audience know which words are his and which are the words of others.

I have explained earlier that for the initiated, the apparently legitimate use of astrology in the Nun's Priest's Tale also happens to say a great deal about his characters and plot. I have also suggested that since the allusions are the "cokkes wordes" (3265)—or so he says—and not his, he is not responsible for any judicial astrology his audience may "think" they find. If we want to find heresy in the blatherings of a conceited chicken, that is our affair and no business of his.

Chauntecleer is a very vain rooster, and he uses his astrological knowledge merely to impress the ladies. In a related, yet somewhat different fashion, the rooster uses astrology like the Miller's Nicholas and the Franklin's magician to help the cause of lust. Chauntecleer is, however, a beast, and he is only following his natural instincts in love (perhaps as the Wife "folwed ay" her inclinations and as Nicholas and Alisoun followed their animal instincts). His approach to love is "Moores for delit than world to multiplye" (3345) which rather reminds one of old Januarie.
Perhaps taking his cue from the Squire and the Franklin, the Nun's Priest shows Chauntecleer claiming astrological cause for events with natural explanations as a means of impressing his wives. It appears that Chauntecleer knows when to crow because "he knew ech ascension / Of the equinoxial in thilke toun" (2855-56), but that is only an illusion created by the rooster to display his "knowledge." Chauntecleer, like every other rooster, crew on the hour by instinct, not because of the stars. He "knows" his ascensions by "Nature" (2855), not because of his astrological expertise. 17

Instinct is also the means by which the tale explodes Chauntecleer's pretensions as he tries to impress his wives with his final allusion. The rooster says that the sun was at 21° Taurus (we recall the lechery in the Wife's ascending Taurus and the Merchant's moon in Taurus). If we missed the fact that instinct and not the stars caused Chauntecleer to crow in the earlier allusion, it is made clear at this time. The rooster "knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore, / That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene" (3192-97). He knows by instinct that it is pryme, and at pryme, the sun is always 41° above the horizon. Whatever his wives (or we) may think, he is no great astrologer or mathematician, and the position of the sun did not cause him to crow. His astrological comments are not evidence of any expertise in the science, but merely a kind of learned double-talk used to impress the credulous. His desire to impress the credulous is due to his own vanity and animal lust. Indeed, he has no choice but to crow on the hour, but that is because of his natural instincts and not because of the intervention of the forces of destiny. 18
Consequently, we may suppose that the Nun's Priest's Tale may have something in common with the Miller's Tale regarding the effects of the stars on love and marriage. Although uncertainty is expressed about the cause of things, there does seem to be an inclination to propose that an animal approach to love plays as decisive a role in the problems of love and marriage among chickens as do any of the destinal powers. For Chauntecleer, beauty and sexual delight outweigh the more acceptable purpose of sex in marriage for procreation. Because that is the case, he (like Januarie) is blinded to much more serious matters.

One such serious matter is Chauntecleer's prophetic dream. To emphasize the view that apparent divine intervention may have natural rather than supernatural explanations, the tale provides contrasting approaches to the dream by Chauntecleer and Pertelote. Chauntecleer accepts the prophetic nature of the dream without question: he is only concerned with the dream's content and the fear that it must come true. Pertelote, on the other hand, is more concerned with what caused him to have a nightmare and believes there is a natural cause whose cure lies in the barnyard, not in the heavens. 19

But Chauntecleer does not want such a simple explanation. In his example of the two pilgrims, he suggests that God will contact men when particularly abominable sins are about to be committed since his pilgrim example is told where to find the body of his companion through a dream. We should pay attention to such warnings: "Mordre wol out," he says, "this is my conclusioun" (4240-3057). And why not? Had the Nun's Priest not heard the Prioress say that the bereaved mother found her son's body because "Jhesu, of his grace, / Yaf in hir thought, inwith a lital space,/
That in that place after hir sone she cryde, / Where he was casten in a pit bisyde" (PrT 603-6)?

Disaster can be avoided by at least attending to what may be divine indicators of coming events. As the Man of Law had declared that it was "imprudent" to ignore an election of times for Constance's marriage, so Chauntecleer says it is reckless to ignore prophetic dreams (3105-8). Macrobius, he says, "affermeth dremes and seith that they been / Warn-ynge of thynge that men after seen" (3123-26), and he concludes that he "shal han of this avisoun / Adversite" (3152-53). It would appear that Pertelote's council was in fact ignored, and the view that paying attention to female advice helped to bring about his misfortunes does not ring true.

Instead of being thankful for being warned by the grace of God and resolving to be on the lookout for intruders, however, Chauntecleer's precautionary action in the face of "Adversitee" is sex. Pertelote's beauty is God's grace, he says, and when he looks at her or his other wives, he forgets about everything else (3159-86). Clearly, it is his animal preoccupation with beauty and sex (which several of the other pilgrims had also demonstrated in their tales) that caused him to fall into a trap and not the powers of destiny. And, it is beauty, lust, pride, and conceit that cause him to lower his guard and become easy prey for the fox, not Pertelote's council.

In the passage where the tale finally directly addresses cause (3231-66), the Nun's Priest says that Chauntecleer had been warned that the day itself was dangerous for him, and he had not paid sufficient attention to the warning (3231-32). Such information apparently comes
from the foreknowledge of God, and what God has seen must occur. But, only "After the opinion of certain clerks" (3233-34). It is extremely difficult to pin the Nun's Priest down on these matters, but his tale does seem to align itself with the Miller's Tale in the sense that man cannot and should not question God's motives and with the Squire's Tale in that it is idle to speculate about such matters.

"Any parfit clerk," the Nun's Priest says, knows that the issues of providential foresight, destiny, and free will are greatly disputed in school and have been disputed throughout the ages. He is not willing to say for certain with Augustine, Boethius, or Bradwardine whether all that happens must happen because of God's foreknowledge or whether man has freedom to choose the course his life will take. Where Palamon and Dorigen wanted to leave such questions for "divynys" to answer, this "divine" does not have the answers and has no intention of speculating: "I wol nat han to do of swich matere" (3250). Did Chauntecleer have any choice about being captured by the fox (did Arcite, Constance, the Wife, May, or Dorigen) have any choices? The Nun's Priest as much as says, who knows? Almost impatiently, he reminds his audience, "My tale is of a cock, as ye may heare. / That tok consel of his wyf, with sorwe" (3251-52). And yet, Chauntecleer did not follow her advice. Even in that, the Nun's Priest does not want to commit himself. The advice of women may be untrustworthy (Eve, after all, misled Adam), but he does not want the pilgrims to think that he is downgrading women. Perhaps with a wary eye on the Wife and the Prioress, he remarks that he "noot to whom it myght displese" (3259), and reminds them all that "Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne; / I kan noon harm of no womman divyne" (3265-66).
When the fox came on the scene, Chauntecleer need not have been captured. Not only had he been warned by his dream, but also his instincts told him that he was in danger. He is frightened at once, the Nun's Priest says, "For natureelly a beest desireth flee / Fro his contrarie, if he may it see, / Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his ye" (3279-81). The rooster ignores his instincts and falls into the fox's trap because of his vanity: "This Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete, / As man that koude his traysoun nat espie, / So was he ravysshed with his flaterie" (3322-24).

Even though the Nun's Priest had just said that he did not want to talk about cause, he turns right around and involves the destinal powers in the event, echoing the Knight's "destinee ministre general" speech (Knt 1663-72) and alluding ironically to Venus' rulership of Friday (Knt 1534-39). These are not the "cokkes wordes" (3338-46):

0 destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dreymes!
And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
0 Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,
And in thy service dide al his power,
Moore for delit than world to multipyle,
Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?

I do not think that the Nun's Priest "forgot" that he had said he did not want to discuss such matters. I believe that his speech is an ironic reply to the propositions and questions of the pilgrims regarding the effects of the destinal powers on human love. The excuse that Chauntecleer (and a good many other characters in the tales) suffered misfortune because they were servants of Venus will not work. It was his natural, animal instinct regarding love, his vanity, and his pride that distracted
him from impending catastrophe, not destiny, or Venus, or unfortunate Fridays. That, I believe is the message the tale conveys to those pilgrims who had taken such pains to blame misfortune on those powers.

Animal lust and pride were the causes of Arcite's and Palamon's, Constance's (through the Sultan), the Wife of Bath's, and Januarie's misfortunes in love and marriage, not Venus, or Mars, or any other planet. Let the pilgrims who want to blame misfortune on powers outside of themselves take note of that. Chauntecleer was captured for the same reasons. Nor was Fortune at fault when the fox lost his prey. After the hue and cry was raised, the Nun's Priest (with tongue firmly in cheek, I think) says: "Now goode men, I prey yow herketh alle: / Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly / The hope and pryde sek of hir enemy!" (3401-3). Chauntecleer, of course, finally "wakes up," and instead of simply letting things run their course, he takes action and secures his release by playing on the fox's vanity (3405-17). Fortune is not involved at all; this is a matter of a rooster taking charge of his own life, and the Nun's Priest then delivers an important observation: "God yeve hym meschaunce, / That is so undiscreet of governaunce / That jangleth when he sholde holde his pees" (3433-35).

This passage, I believe, echoes the Squire's remarks about uniformed people wasting time "janglyng" about the cause of the apparently miraculous when natural explanations are available. It is also consistent with the Nun's Priest's own refusal to speculate about the mysterious movements of God and about the council of women in love and marriage. As a man of God, I believe he is advising the company of the indiscretion of curiously prying into the affairs of God when man's own reckless pride,
lub and preoccupation with worldly delights in general are at the root of his problems: "Lo swich it is for to be recelees / And negligent, and truste on flaterye," he says with typical ambiguity (3436-37). It is up to his audience to decide whether Chauntecleer's recklessness was in not giving proper attention to perhaps a divine warning because he became distracted by beauty and sex, or in ignoring his instinct to flee because of his pride and vanity, or both. The Nun's Priest will only say that "seint Paul seith that al that writen is, / To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis; / Taketh the fruyt and lat the chaf be stille" (4630-3443).

This advice, I believe, anticipates the Parson and perhaps is intended to help direct the pilgrims back towards the legitimate goals of pilgrimage. Since the Nun's Priest flatly refused to speculate on God's motives in his tale, perhaps part of the "chaf" he refers to is the "janglyng," arguing, and noisy speculation about the stars, or Fortune, or chance "causing" good or ill fortune. Perhaps the "fruyt" in this context is the revelation that the pilgrims ought to be silently attending to their own sins (particularly lust and pride) rather than spinning yarns about the fortunes of others (fictional or not) and speculating about what God is up to in those yarns--a subject that even the most "parfit clerk" knows is beyond human understanding.

The astrological pilgrims have spent far too much time talking about "causes" beyond their control and no time at all acknowledging any fault in their characters or themselves. Silence, rather than "janglyng," selfless love and forgiveness rather than lust, jealousy, anger, and vengeance, faith in God's goodness and the silent contemplation of one's sins rather than complaints about the "unfairness" of
life should be the pilgrims' concerns, and nothing more. "Be still and
know that I am God" is one of the Deity's responses to the complaints
of man in the Bible (Psalms 46:10), and as C. K. Zacher has observed,
"There may be several morals Chaucer wishes us to draw from the priest's
fable, but certainly one of them is that a sense of time and place ought
to control the urge to speak." 22

If the Physician, the Pardoner, the Canon's Yeoman, and the Monk
had any sense of shame, they certainly would have controlled the urge
to speak as they did. This is a group of pilgrims who do not use
astrology (except for a bit of weathercasting by the Monk) but are
related to the Causal Group because of their blatant abuse of the ideals
of worldly knowledge, science, and their professions. As the Causal
Group abuse the ideals of astrology in the interests of lust, so do
these "professionals" abuse the ideals of medicine, religion, and
alchemy in the pursuit of gold or worldly pleasures. To me, they seem
to be examples of what may lie ahead for the Causal Group if they con-
tinue to blame the destinal powers for their own faults and the faults
of the world. The professionals, I believe, are representatives of the
ruthless use of worldly knowledge to the total exclusion of God for
personal gain. Knowledge without God is knowledge without conscience,
and these men exhibit the spiritual decay and elimination of conscience
and Christian charity emerging in the Causal Group that leads ultimately
to the forfeiture of salvation.

The character of the Physician reminds one somewhat of the modern
notion of the scientist who scoffs at the unscientifically verifiable
existence of God, who believes that cause is to be found in the physical
world, and that no knowledge is forbidden to man or out of his reach.
The unethical tactics of the Physician are doubly reprehensible because he is a gifted man and truly expert in the practice of his art. He thoroughly understands the use of medical astrology (GP 411-18), he knows the teaching of medical authority from "Esclapius" to "Gilbertyn," and is "a verray parfit practisour" who believes that medicine can supply the cause and cure for every malady (GP 422-29). For him the causes and cures for the human condition are to be found in the world of natural phenomena and in case histories. Since that is so, God is therefore unnecessary--"His studie was but litel on the Bible" (GP 438)--and consequently, there is no such thing as "forbidden knowledge" as far as he is concerned.

Charles Muscatine is on the mark when he says that the Physician exhibits "that complacent faith in science that despises God." We cannot say that the Physician pursues science for science's sake, for that would suggest that he is interested in knowledge whether it is profitable or not. Nor is he a practitioner of science because of his belief in progress, for that attitude implies concern for the welfare of the world and man at large. Learning and progress do not motivate the Physician. He pursues knowledge and practices his art to line his pockets; he has no concern for the welfare of his fellowman, and like the Canon's Yeoman, his god is gold. For all of his expertise, he is a man who abuses the ideals of his science, and like the Miller's Nicholas and the Franklin's magician, he uses his knowledge to exploit the ignorant for the sake of his misguided love of gold. 24

The Physician is no idealist; he shamelessly abuses both the ideals of knowledge and of his profession. Like the Wife, he makes looking out
for himself his first priority. He takes care of himself from the food
he eats--"Of his diete mesurable was he, / For it was of no superfluitee,/
But of greet norissyng and digestible" (GP 435-37)—to his conscience-
less exploitation of plague victims in his lust for gold (GP 442-43).
He conspires with "his apothecaries" to fleece his patients--"For ech
of hem made oother for to wynne" (GP 425-27)—and is what Howard calls
"a character still familiar: the perfectly competent physician whose
primary interest is money." 25 A man without ideals, without God, with-
out conscience, and it is his godless knowledge that is responsible for
the perverted morality of his life and tale.

The tale reflects the misguided moralism of the Physician from his
remarks about the beauty of Virginia, to the abuse of professional power
by Apius, to the misplaced charity of Virginius, and to the view that
sin is punished on earth. 26 It "seems" to him that Nature is in charge
of creation, and he has no comment about spiritual matters. Although
Nature works for the glory of God, she nevertheless is the authoress of
all sublunary creation (and consequently, the source of worldly knowlege),
and she and God are of "oon accord" about what takes place on earth: to
understand Nature is thus to understand God (19-29):

"For he that is the formere principal
Hath maked me his vicaire general,
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe;
And for my wark right no thyng wol I axe;
My lord and I been ful of oon accord.
I made hire (Virginia) to the worshipe of my lord;
So do I alle myne othere creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures."
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.
The Physician's God is thus a distant God who allows the destinal forces to work independently of Him (as the Knight and the Man of Law had suggested). Moreover, like the Wife of Bath, he sees nothing wrong in his use of authority and worldly knowledge to further his own interests. The irony that he sees nothing wrong in his abuse of his position to gull the ignorant is made clear in the passage in his tale where he warns the pilgrims against exploiting the innocent (87-92):

Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,
Lest ye be dammed for youre wikke entente;
For whoso dooth, a traitour is certeyn.
And taketh kep of that that I shal seyn:
Of alle tresons sovereyn pestilence
Is whan a wight bitrayeth innocence.

The role of Apius in the tale, of course, also reflects the Physician's abuse of knowledge and position for worldly gain. The judge uses his position and worldly law (as so many of the pilgrims' characters had done) in the interests of lust (126-32). Virginius is also so firmly bound by worldly law that it blinds him to the idea of any higher moral law. It is almost as if Virginius followed the letter of Christian law to show compassion for and love to his enemies (since he saves the life of Claudius), but since Virginia is not an enemy, he sees no choice but to follow the laws of the world. This oversight is doubly tragic because Virginius could have proved the lie (191-97), and the people would have supported him (260-66):

But right anon a thousand peple in thraste,
To save the knyght (Virginius), for routhe and for pitee,
For knowden was the false iniquitee.
The peple anon had suspect in this thyng,
By manare of the cherles chalangyng,
That it was by assent of Apius;
They wisten wel that he was lecherus.
There is no sense of a providential plan for the good in the Physician's tale; Virginia dies for nothing, and the tale suggests that the destinies of men are controlled by natural impulses and carried out on this earth. Virginia is naturally beautiful and virtuous, Apius is naturally lecherous, Claudius is naturally greedy and cowardly, Virginia is naturally short-sighted and literal-minded. The only justice that seems to exist (and it is more revenge than justice) is earthly. The punishment for sin takes place on earth: Apius is put in prison "Ther as he slow hymself; and Claudius, / Was demed for to hange upon a tree,/ But that Virginius, of his pitee, / So preyde for hym that he was exiled;/ And elles, certes, he had been bigyled. / The remenant were anhanged, moore and lesse, / That were consentant of this cursednesse" (269-76). As Howard says, when the Physician comments on sin, "What he means is that sinners will be struck down in this life; it is all very simple, like revenge tragedy or revenge itself. The moral is, forsake sin or sin will forsake you." 27

It seems to me that the Physician's moral is more a matter of avoiding sin because it is risky rather than because it is wrong (an idea which I think fits both his character and his tale). One must be careful because God is unpredictable and may strike the sinner down (again, sin is punished on earth). Moreover, God and the conscience share the same knowledge of man's activities, and if God does not strike the sinner down for his wickedness, conscience may well work his destruction (presumably, Apius' suicide is a result of his being tormented by his conscience). Thus, the real "sin" in the commission of evil seems to depend on whether or not one gets caught (278-86).
Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte
In no degree, ne in which manere wyse
The warm of conscience may agryse
Of wikked lyf, though it so pryvee be
That no man woot therof but God and he.
For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,
He noot how soone that he shal been afered.
Therefore I rede yow this consell take;
Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.

When we extend these propositions, we can understand the moral blindness of the Physician and his tale. For it follows from his moral, that unless God strikes one down or one is tormented by conscience, one needs not be troubled by whatever one chooses to do—and that includes taking advantage of one's patients to fleece them of their gold.

Like the Physician, the Pardoner is a talented man who abuses his learning and his profession in the pursuit of gold. Like the Physician, he shamelessly exploits the ignorant, but unlike the Physician, the Pardoner is very much aware of what he is doing (P.Prlg. 389-404):

By this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,
An hundred mark sith I was pardoner.
I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,
I preche so as ye han herd bifoore,
And tall a hundred false japes moore.
Thanne payne I me to streche forth the nekke,
And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
As dooth a dowve sittyng on a berne.
Myne handes and my toung goon so yarne
That it is joye to se my bisynesse.
Of avarice and of swich cursednesse
Is all my prechyng, for to make hem free
To yeven hir pens, and namely unto me.
For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,
And nothynge for correccioun of synne.

Thus, the Pardoner admits to the godless misuse of his knowledge and position to gull his congregations, and he feels no remorse for his lack of concern for their spiritual or material welfare: "I wolde have money,
wolle, chese, and whete, / Al were it yeven of the pooreste page, / Al sholde hir children sterre for famyne" (P. Plg. 448-51). There is really no reason for the Pardoner not to take this stance. The pilgrims have already decided he is corrupt (because Pardners are corrupt), and I think because of that (probably recalling parishioners whom he knows have paid him to actually perpetuate their vices), he sees them as equally corrupt. Moreover, their dishonesty is at least indirectly responsible for his dishonesty, and they are therefore in no position to pass judgment on him or his profession. This accounts for the tone of the Pardoner’s Prologue and Introduction: undisguised contempt. It also accounts for at least one "lesson" in his tale which I believe is directed against the pilgrims: those who intend to use gold to perpetuate their worldly vices are buying their own destruction.

The Pardoner's words amount to a public confession of the corruption attendant to his profession. It seems to me that the defiant tone of his confession suggests that what he says about himself is what the pilgrims expect to hear about him. In the Introduction to the tale, after all, the Host expects him to come up with "som myrthe or japes right anon" (319), and the company immediately assumes that the Pardoner will seize the opportunity to tell an immoral tale: "But right anon thise gentils gonne to crye, / 'Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudiye! / Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere / Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere!'" (323-26). He does tell them a moral tale, but if they understood it, it was not a tale they gladly heard. The pilgrims have cast him in the role of a corrupt Pardoner, and he in turn casts the pilgrims in the role of unrepentant sinners because they know he is a fraud. The rowdies in his tale are unrepentant sinners, and as the tale suggests,
the wages of sin are death. It is difficult even for a tolerant man to endure a label of corruption simply because the opportunity for corruption exists in his profession. He does not say that the way he abuses his position is as it ought to be (as the Physician seems to think his abuses are not abuses at all), but only that that's the way things are, and that he is not solely responsible. Perhaps he has the Physician's hypocritical reference to those "worst of traitors" who take advantage of the innocent in mind and is smarting under a blow that had to strike home. I do not mean to imply that the Pardoner is innocent of fraud (though I do suspect that he is laying it on rather thickly), but the pilgrims do not know whether he is or is not corrupt, and he has every right to resent their inferences.

Rather than telling the pilgrims something they did not already "know" about pardoners, therefore, the Pardoner's uncompromising admission of the confidence game he plays reveals an attitude of defiant contempt against the presumption of the pilgrims to judge him or his profession. His profession may tempt him to sin, but the cause for the existence of the brotherhood of pardoners in the first place is the weak, sinful, and unrepentant nature of man. If his weakness tempts him to take advantage of them to feed his avarice, so do they take advantage of him and his office to feed their vices. Both the Pardoner and the pilgrims must share the responsibility for the abuse of the doctrine of absolution because each believes the other is not sincere. One of the points of such a candid confession, I think, is to show that since both he and the pilgrims are insincere and unrepentant, each side is contributing to the damnation of the other by encouraging the perpetuity of vice on the one hand and avarice on the other. And each of them uses
gold to buy his own destruction by leaving God entirely out of it. If that is true, it is no wonder that he objects to the pot calling the kettle black and shows contempt for those who object to his taking their money when they would in fact dislike him even more if he refused to take it.

The connection between the Pardoner's attitude toward the pilgrims and his tale, I think, is clear. The rowdies are the most unrepentant of sinners who blaspheme the name of God in their numberless oaths and squander their lives and money in utter dissipation. In their search for Death, they find gold instead and can think of nothing except how to use it to perpetuate their vices. When the "tresor" is first found, they determine to use it "In myythe and joliftee our e lyf to lyven, / And lightly as it cometh, so wol we spende" (780-81). The power of gold to perpetuate vice divides them, however, and when the two "shrewes" have plotted to kill their younger companion, it is not to avariciously hoard gold, but "bothe our e lustes all fulfille, / And pleye at dees right at our owene will" (833-34). The same is true of the young man who decides to poison them both, for if he can get the gold for himself, "Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone / Of God that sholde lyve so murye as I" (842-43). Vice-ridden, unrepentant sinners are already on the road to self-destruction and death, and when they knowingly intend to use gold to continue in their vices, the reward is death. Thus, where the tale may be a sermon against the Pardoner's own avarice (Prol. 427-34, 459-60), it may also be a sermon against unrepentant sinners who abuse the office of the Pardoner in order to buy the "right" to sin.
At the same time, what put the Pardoner's rowdies on the path to self-destruction was their godless pursuit of knowledge that is forbidden to man. Without respect for the wisdom, judgment, or even the involvement of God, they drunkenly resolve to avenge their friend by murdering Death as soon as they can find him (702-10). The irony is that man can overcome death (ideally) by having faith in Christ and by trying to lead a righteous life, doctrine to which the revelers are oblivious. They are warned by the Boy that Death is a dangerous adversary who comes like a thief (675), and that they should "Beth re dy for to meete hym everemoore; / This taughte me my dame; I sey namoore" (683-84). The allusion is biblical and also ironic. Rather than being a lesson about the difficulty of overcoming death, its lesson is traditionally that since no man can know the moment of his death, he should always lead a righteous life so that he is always ready to face the judgment of God. Thus, one should always try to walk the path of righteousness in this life, for willfully straying from the straight and narrow path results in spiritual death, or damnation.

Nevertheless, the rowdies choose the path of sin, and they are determined to find Death. Perhaps they do find him in the Old Man who directs them to the gold. They call him a "false thief" (759)—we recall the Boy's reference to Death as a thief—and the Old Man tells them "To fynde Deeth, turne up this crooked way" (761)—proceed along the path of sin, and you will meet Death. Of course, they do meet Death because of the gold, but the use of gold in the interests of sin is only a secondary cause of self-destruction. Since no man can know when or where he will meet death (it comes like a thief in the night), the knowledge of
death (when, where, and especially why it comes) has been reserved for God alone and has been forbidden to man. In seeking knowledge about Death, the rioters have tried (as the Miller would put it) to invade "Goddes pryvetee," an error which both the Miller's and the Pardoner's tales imply will destroy the invader. It is thus the rioters' quest for forbidden knowledge that ultimately leads them to the gold and to their deaths in body and in soul.

The Canon's Yeoman's Tale also suggests that the use of worldly knowledge to try to understand the secrets of God leads to the destruction of the seeker. Although the tale itself is about the abuse of alchemy to exploit the ignorant for gold, the Prologue and concluding remarks deal more specifically with the obsessive nature of worldly knowledge when linked to the worship of gold, and what man can and cannot know. The secret of the Philosopher's Stone belongs to God alone, and all earthly knowledge without the aid of God is doomed to confusion and failure.

The Prologue opens with the Canon and his Yeoman furiously galloping in pursuit of the pilgrims. The Yeoman had seen the company depart and had advised the Canon, and that worthy "hadde ay priked like as he were wood" (570) in the hope to catch up with and gull the pilgrims. Indeed, the Yeoman is like a shill in a medicine show, praising the Canon's knowledge to the pilgrims. He emphasizes "how wel and craftily" the Canon could perform (603-4), that he is a "man of heigh discrecioun" (613), and "kan swich subtilitee" that he could turn the road to Canterbury to gold and silver (620-26). He is "gretter than a clerk" and"in wordes fewe" (617-18). It looks as if the Yeoman is setting the stage
for the Canon to fleece the pilgrims, when the Yeoman suddenly turns on him. Seeing that "his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee, / He fledde away for verray sorwe and shame" (700-2).

Worldly knowledge, like everything else, should be used with moderation. The Yeoman sees the Canon's preoccupation with the world of matter in the pursuit of gold as a vice which leads to the misuse of the science, and it is a practice with which he does not agree (644-51):

He is to wys, in feith, as I bileeve.  
That that is overdoon, it wol nat preeve  
Aright, as clerkes seyn; it is a vice.  
I holde hym lewed and nyce.  
For whan a man hath over-greet a wit,  
Ful oft hym happeneth to misuser it.  
So dooth my lord, and that me greveth soore;  
God it amende! I kan sey yow namoore.

Knowledge without God is insufficient to the task. It is doomed to fail, yet the misguided faith in worldly knowledge to provide answers and the worship of gold rather than God keeps alive hope where there is no hope. When their futile efforts have drained their purses, they resort to tricks to acquire more gold, knowing that they will become beggars in the end (670-83):

We blodren evere and pouren in the fir,  
And for al that we faille of our desir,  
For evere we lakken oure conclusiou.  
To muchel folk we doon illusioun,  
And broue gold . . . .  
And make hem wenen at the leeste weye,  
That of a pound we koude make tweye.  
Yet is it fals, but ay we han good hope  
It for to doon, and after it we grope.  
But that science is so fer us biforn,  
We mowen nat, although we hadden it sworn,  
It overtake, it slit away so faste.  
It wole us maken beggars atte laste.
It is not to worldly knowledge or even to alchemy itself that the Yeoman objects, but to the abuse of both. The legitimate practice of alchemy is a serious matter for him, and he laments his introduction to its principles only because it causes him to be obsessed with the acquisition of gold. The obsession with worldly knowledge deadens the conscience and leads to the abuse of the science to acquire gold. Thus, like the Canon, when one is introduced to the principles of the science, it becomes a vice so seductive that one is unable to withdraw even as one sees oneself being destroyed. As the Pardoner had suggested, the search for knowledge without God and the use of gold to perpetuate the vices is a kind of self-destructive madness, and the Yeoman is hopelessly addicted to his madness (708-14):

He that me brughte first unto that game,
Er that he dye, sorwe have he and shame!
For it is earnest to me, by my felth;
That feele I wel, what so any man seith.
And yet, for al my smert and al my grief,
For al my sorwe, labour, and meschief,
I koude nevere leve it in no wyse.

As the Pardoner (perhaps) had done, the Canon's Yeoman's Tale makes a confession about the corruption within the profession, in the Yeoman's case, perhaps, because he does regret the corruption of the science. 28

Part I, in fact, is a warning against the use of alchemy for several reasons. Nothing good comes of alchemy. Since it encompasses the whole world of matter, it is tremendously complicated. Even the "experts" cannot agree on recipes or the cause for so many failures. Its terminology is so complex that it sounds like mindless chatter to the uninitiated. It is addictive, develops a lust for gold, and destroys both the practitioner and his victims. It is knowledge that is beyond the
reach of man, knowledge who faith is in the natural world rather than in God, a kind of madness that promotes ire, division, and sin among men.

The Yeoman had spent seven years with the Canon, "And of his science am I never the neer" (720). As the Miller said of astrology, alchemy produces nothing good: "This cursed craft whoso wol exercise, / He shal no good han that hym may suffice;/ For al the good he spendeth theraboute/ He lese shal; therof have I no doute" (830-33). Even the experts are incapable of mastering the secrets of transmutation, so it is doubly impossible for the novice (838-45):

Ascaunc that craft is so light to leere? Nay, nay, God woot, al be he monk or frere, Preest or chanoun, or any oother wight, Though he sitte at his book bothe day and night In lernynge of this elvysshe nyce loore, Al is in veyn, and parde! muchel moore. To lerne a lewed man this subtilite-- Fy! spek nat therof, for it wol nat be.

Alchemists cannot agree on recipes or the cause of failure, and there is always strife between them (916-32). The Yeoman's Canon himself is no expert practitioner since his recipes often result in broken pots, walls shattered by flying metals, and objects that "iepe into the roof" (905-17).

The terminology of the science is so confusing that one seriously wonders if the terms mean anything at all. The Yeoman says that it is employed to create the illusion of knowledge (750-52): "Whan we been ther as we shul exercise / Oure elvysshe craft, we semen wonder wise, / Oure termes been so clerigial and so queynte." He sees no need to tell the pilgrims all of the terms, not only because he doesn't know them
all, but because in spite of all the jargon, "Noght helpeth us,oure
labour is in veyn" (777). Worldly knowledge without God thus becomes
little more than meaningless "janglyng" or parroting of high-sounding
words. Although the Yeoman is a "lewed man" and does not understand the
meaning or order of much that he says, he nevertheless knows the words
as the long lists of metals, alloys, and bits and pieces of formulas he
rattles off attest. Indeed, the lists are almost meaningless because
the recipes inevitably fail, but they give the appearance of knowledge
in whatever order they are given. The Yeoman, after all, has memorized
a great many items which he therefore must believe contain some "truth"
in them, and like most learning by rote, the words seem enough in them-
selves, and one eventually develops faith in words one may not even
understand (783-89):

    Ther is also ful many another thyng
    That is unto oure craft aperteyning.
    Though I by ordre hem nat rehearse kan,
    By cause that I am a lewed man,
    Yet wol I telle hem as they come to mynde,
    Thogh I ne kan nat sette hem in hir kynde.

It is a pathetic faith in the power of words to convince solely by means
of their mysterious sounds.

    Once the mystery has one in its grasp, however, one learns of the
crowning achievement of alchemy: the transmutation of base metals into
gold. The drive to learn the secret becomes an obsession to acquire
gold by transmutation which lays waste to the practitioner's purse so
that poverty causes him to dupe the credulous to feed his obsession.
The victim becomes similarly obsessed and continues the chain of exploit-
ation. The Yeoman wryly observes that one becomes so degenerate that
one takes a morbid kind of pleasure in adding converts who will share in the misery and madness of the great obsession. It is no wonder the Yeoman warns the pilgrims against dabbling in alchemy, for once caught in the snare, it destroys both practitioner and victim physically and morally (732-47):

That slidyngge science hath me maad so bare  
That I have no good, wher that ever I fere;  
And yet I am endetted so thery,  
Of gold that I have borwed, trewely,  
That whil I lyve, I shal it quite nevere.  
Lat every man be war by me for evere!  
What maner man that casteth hym therto,  
If he continue, I holde his thrift ydo.  
For so helpe me God, therby shal he nat wynne,  
But empte his purs and make his wittes thynne.  
And whan he, thurgh his madnesse and folye,  
Hath lost his owene good thurgh jupartye,  
Thanne he excite th oother folk therto,  
To lesen hir good, as he hymself hath do.  
For unto shrewes joye it is and ease  
To have hir felawes in payne and disease.

As the Yeoman points out once the Priest in his tale has fallen into the snare, "Thus maketh he his introduccioun, / To brynge folk to hir destruccioun" (1386-87). 29

Finally, the corrupt alchemist directs his energies and love toward gold not God, and it is their faith in salvation through the secret of the Great Carbuncle that keeps their hope alive, not their faith in God (862-72):

A! nay! lat be; the philosophres stoon,  
Elixer clept, we sechen faste echoon,  
For hadde we hym, thanne were we siker ynow.  
But unto God of hevene I make avow,  
For al oure sleighte, he wol nat come us to.  
He hath ymad us spenden muchel good,  
For sorwe of which almoost we wexen wood.  
But that good hope crepeth in oure herte,
Supposynge evere, though we sore smerte,
To be releved by hym afterward. 30

This obsession with the material world is truly the kind of godless
knowledge that leads to damnation. Indeed, knowledge without God seems
to suggest that such knowledge is the domain of the devil, and the Yeo-
man himself suspects that Satan is with the practitioners of alchemy
(915-19):

Withouten doute,
Though that the feend noght in oure sighte hym shewe;
I trowe he with us be, that ilke shrewel.
In helle, where that he lord is and sire,
Nis ther moore wo, ne moore rancour, ne ire. 31

The mind of God is ever clozed to His adversaries, and when man tries to
use worldly wisdom to invade His pryvete, God confounds that wisdom,
and their efforts are in vain. Notice the results of another aborted
experiment when the alchemists get together (954-61):

"Ther was deafeute in somwhat, wel I woot."
Another seyde the fir was over-hoot,—
But, be it hoot or coold, I dar seye this,
That we concluden everemoore anys.
We faile of that which that we wolden have,
And in oure madnesse everemoore we rave.
And when we been togidres everichoon,
Every man semeth a Salomon.

The confusion and the babble of technical jargon reminds one of the
biblical story of these who would be as God by erecting the famous tower
to the heavens. God confused their speech in that instance to thwart
their arrogance, and He seems to be doing the same thing to alchemists
who would know what only He can know (967-69): "He that semeth the wis-
este, by Jhesus! / Is moost fool, when it cometh to the preef. / And he
that semeth trewest is a thief."

The "philosophical post script" (as Muscatine calls it) at the end of the tale (1388-1481) expresses the lesson for alchemy that the Miller's Tale expressed for astrology: man cannot and "sholde nat knowe of Goddes pryvetee" (Millerst 3454). Indeed, as the Yeoman said, "althyng which that shineth as the gold / Nis nat gold, as that I have hard it told" (962-63), and the golden promises of alchemists is nothing more than learned janglyng used to dupe the ignorant and the greedy. Alchemy does not have the secrets of the transmutation of gold, and its practice leads inevitably to self-destruction and sin against one's fellowman (1394-1401):

Philosophres spoken so mystily
In this craft that men kan nat come therby,
For any wit that men han now-a-dayes.
They mowe wel chiteren as doon thisse jayes,
And in hir termes sette hir lust and payne,
But to hir purpos shul they neverse atteyne.
A man may lightly lerne if he have aught,
To multiplie, and bryng his good to naught.

Finally, alchemy is doomed to failure because worldly knowledge alone is insufficient to accomplish its goals (1442-47):

"Let no man biseye hym this art to seche,
But if that he th'entencioun and speche
Of philosophres understonde kan;
And if he do, he is a lewed man.
For this science and this konnyng," quod he,
"Is of the secre of secrees, pardee."

The secret of secrets is not to be found in worldly knowledge, and can only be known if Christ chooses to reveal it (1466-71):
Ne in no book is writen in no manere.
For unto Christ it is so liefe and deere
That he wold nat that it discovered bee,
But where it liketh to his deite
Men for t'en speire, and eek for to defende
Whom that hym liketh; lo, this is the ende.

Such an occurence happens among the elect, and the Yeoman advises the pilgrims to let alchemy alone because it is an invasion of privacy that God will not tolerate (1472-79):

    Thanne conclude I thus, sith that God of hevene
    He wil nat that the philosophres nevene
    How that a man shal come unto this stoon,
    I rede as for the beste lete it goon.
    For whoso maketh God his adversarie,
    As for to werken any thyng contrarie
    Of his wil, certes, never shal he thryve.

The Yeoman's conclusions that true knowledge, or the truth itself, resides in God, is revealed to those who submit to his will and whom he would inspire, and that it is concealed from those who worship false gods (gold) looks back on propositions he had not overheard in the Second Nun's Tale. Like Emelye in the Knight's Tale, Cecilia prefers to remain unmarried, but unlike Emelye, she does not place her chastity in the hands of destiny but directly in the hands of God (135-40). She submits to marriage with Valerian in spite of her prayer to remain chaste. Unlike Chauntecleer, Cecilia is not so reckless as to ignore divine revelation in the interests of lust. God, in apparent answer to her prayers, directs her to instruct Valerian to leave her untouched, thus setting off a chain of conversions, baptisms, and holy martyrdom as a result. In this, the tale goes a step beyond the ideal earthly marriage in the Franklin's Tale by presenting the ideal spiritual marriage that
"involves not the subjugation of the woman's will to the man's will but the mutual subjugation of both their wills to the will of God." 33 God's truth is revealed to the deserving faithful which, of course, results in their salvation, while truth is withheld from idolaters to their damnation. There are several examples of this doctrine in the tale.

Valerain learns the truth from St. Urban, and that truth is that faith in God is more important than anything, and that this knowledge is far more true than any earthly knowledge. When Urban mysteriously appears with his book, Valerian reads: "'O Lord, o faith, o God, withouten mo, / O Cristendom, and Fader of alle also, / Aboven alle and over alle everywher.' / Thise wordes al with gold ywriten were" (202-10). Inspired by the words, Valerian declares, "'For sother tyng than this, I dar wel say, / Under the hevne no wight thynke may'" (214-15). Shortly thereafter, the Angel of the Lord appears to him and offers to grant him a wish because of his faith. His request is that his "brother may han grace / To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place" (237-38). Later, when Valerian is converting his brother, Tiburce is told that he will learn the truth if he rejects his idols: "'The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught / Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt renyye / The ydoles and be cleene, and elles naught'" (267-69). Finally, that worshippers of false gods will be ever blinded to the truth is clear in Cecilia's remarks to Almache and bears remarkable resemblance to alchemy's futile adoration of the philosopher's stone (498-511):

"Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outher yen
That thou n'art bylynd; for thyng that we seen alle
That it is stoon,--that men may wel espyen,"
That ilke stoon a god thow wolt it calle.
I rede thee, lat thyn hand upon it falle,
And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,
Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde.

"It is a shame that the peple shal
So scorne thee, and laughe at thy folye;
For communly men woot it wel overal
That myghty God is in his hevenes hye;
And thise ymages, wel thou mays espye,
To thee ne to hemself mowen mought profite,
For in effect they been nat worth a myte."

Thus, the tale suggests that when men are convinced they have the answers, and the knowledge they possess is knowledge without God, they cannot and indeed will not see the truth when it is right in front of them.

If the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale looks back to the Second Nun’s Tale in the proposition that the worship of gold instead of God is futile, it also looks forward to the Manciple’s Tale in that words often conceal the truth because man does not really want to know the truth.

It seems to me that the relationship between Phebus and the Crow is not unlike that between the Canon and his Yeoman. The Canon makes the Yeoman a prisoner of gold, and the Yeoman learns to parrot the Canon’s "language" to the latter’s disadvantage in his tale. So it is with Phebus and the Crow (130-35):

    Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe
    Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
    And taughte it spoken, as men teche a jay.
    Whet was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan,
    And countrrefete the speche of every man
    He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.

Vain jabbering had nearly been the finish of Chauntecleer. The Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale had just shown how incomprehensible chatter leads to self-destruction, and now talking without consideration for the consequences
will be the ruin of the Crow. As Donald Howard has observed, "This fable about a talking bird teaches tale-tellers the same lesson as the Nun's Priest's Tale, that one is better off to hold one's tongue." 34

The Manciple's Tale advises one to hold one's tongue because it can be dangerous to do otherwise. But other reasons for silence are suggested in the tale of which the Manciple may not be aware. His tale implies, for example, that all worldly knowledge is nothing but words, and that words are often used to conceal truths man may be aware of but does not want to face (we recall the Yeoman's hopeless quest for the philosopher's stone). This attitude is most prevalent in the passages on euphemisms where, as Howard says, "there are no class distinctions" where morality is concerned, and "the only real difference is a difference of language" (212-34). 35

Ther nys no difference, trewely,
Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
If of hir body dishonest she bee
And a povere wenche, oother than this--
If it so be they werke bothe amys--
But that the gentile, in estaat above,
She shal be cleped his lady, as his love;
And for that oother is a povere womman,
She shal be cleped his wenche or his leman.
And, God it woot, myn owene deere brother.
Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.
Right so bitwixe a titeles tiraunt
And an outlawe or a theef erraunt,
The same I seye, ther is no difference.
To Alisaundre was tolled this sentence,
That for the tiraunt is of gretter myght,
By force of meyne, for to sleyn dounright,
And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,
Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitayn.
And for the outlawe hath but smal meyne,
And may nat doon so gret an harm as he,
Ne brynge a contree to so gret mescheef,
Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.
To me, the passage suggests that since there are "truths" that man feels he cannot face, he has created words to soften or even conceal those truths. Since that seems true, it can be dangerous to force the naked truth, without euphemisms, on others. Only those ignorant of the euphemisms or those who willfully and maliciously omit them to inflict suffering should be concerned, however.

Moreover, the tale seems to suggest that man has plenty of reasons to avoid the truth about himself. His lechery is so great that he is not satisfied to quench his lust with the best of wives, but actually prefers to degrade himself with sluts (189-95):

For men han ever a likerous appetit
On lower thyng to parfourne hire delit
Than on hire wyves, be they never so faire,
Ne never so trewe, ne so debonaire.
Flesshe is so newfangel, with meschaunce,
That we ne konne in nothyng han pleasaunce
That sowneth into vertu any while.

Men are naturally unvirtuous and base, but women are not supposed to be—"Alle thise enamples speke I by thise men / That been untrewe, and nothyng by wommen" (187-88). Women who so degrade themselves are thus unnatural, animals in heat, and if they are wives, they represent unspeakable shame to their husbands (double-standard, or not).

Although the Manciple claims he is only talking about faithless men, notice his description of the she-wolf who (like the Wife of Bath) will accept any mate she can find and his account of the adultery of Phebus' wife: it appears that women can be as naturally base as she-wolves or men (183-86, 196-202):
A she-wolf hath also a vileyns kynde.  
The lewedeste wolf that she may fynde,  
Or leest of reputacioun, wol she take,  
In tyme whan hir lust to han a make.  

This Phebus, which that thoghte upon no gile,  
Deceyved was, for al his jolitee.  
For under hym another hadde shee,  
A man of litel reputacioun,  
Hat worth to Phebus in comparisoun.  
The moore harm is it happeth ofte so,  
Of which ther cometh muchel harm and wo.

It seems to me that the Manciple is crudely suggesting that when she-wolves or women are in heat, they will satisfy their lust with whomever is available. These are truths no man wants verified about his wife, whether he suspects it or not, and it is doubly intolerable to learn that one has been replaced by "scum." Thus, the Crow's deliverance of the "truth" to Phebus was especially ill-advised because it is a truth too shameful and painful to bear without action of some kind being taken. But, as I intend to explain later, the Crow maliciously abuses the truth to inflict suffering on Phebus for the loss of his freedom, and the "lesson" that emerges is that the malicious abuse of truth without regard for the consequences destroys both the gossip and the victim.

Phebus takes good care of the Crow (from the human point of view), and he teaches it to imitate human speech. The Crow sings wonderfully well, but from a cage (130-38). No doubt, Phebus believes he has done a good thing for the Crow, but it is hardly "good" from the Crow's point of view. In an entirely different context, the Manciple declares that no man can change "a thynge which that nature hath natureely set in a creature" (160-62). Echoing the Squire’s Peregrine’s complaint against the Tercelet for abandoning the human comforts she had provided,
the Manciple says (163-74):

Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,
And do al thyn entente and thy corage
To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke
Of alle deyntees that thou kanst bithynke,
And keep it al so clenly as thou may,
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet hath this brid, by twenty thousand fooold,
Levere in a forest, that is rude and coold,
Goon ete wormes and swich wrecchednesse.
For evere this brid wol doon his bisynesse
To escape out of his cage, yif he may.
His libertee this brid desireth ay.

As has been the case in so many of the tales, human values have been projected onto a non-human entity. Phæbus has "civilized" the Crow; he has taught him human ways and human speech and has taken away his natural delights and his freedom. Put this way, the Crow is little more than Phæbus' slave, and I don't think that the bird is happy with exchanging his freedom for human habits and speech.

Notice that while Phæbus' wife and her lover are engaged, the Crow watches in silence "ay in the cage" (240-41). As a beast, what he sees is natural and of little interest, but Phæbus has imposed a kind of mock-humanity on him, and he seizes the opportunity to maliciously revenge himself on Phæbus by abusing his "gift" of speech, perhaps in the hope that Phæbus will angrily drive him away. I believe that the Crow relishes every moment of Phæbus' distress. This is 'truth with a vengeance; it is the abuse of truth to bring about suffering, the abuse of knowledge for purposes of revenge. Never before had the Crow sung so merrily in Phæbus' cage (242-47), and when Phæbus asks the reason, the Crow venomously replies (248-56):
"By God!" quod he, "I syng nat amys. Phebus," quod he, "for al thy worthyness, For al thy beautee and thy gentilesse, For al thy song and al thy mynstraloce, For al thy waitynge, biered is thyn ye With oon of litel reputacioun, Nght worth to theee as in comparisooun, The montance of a gnat, so moote I thryve! For en thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve."

Notice then how the Crow rubs salt into the wound by repeatedly supplying Phebus with all the sordid details. He is intentionally trying to anger Phebus so much that he will suffer in the extreme and then cast him out (257-61):

What wol ye moore? The crowe anon hym tolde, By sadde tokens and by wordes bolde, Now that his wyf had doon hire lecherye, Hym to greet shame and to greet vileynye; And tolde him ofte he saugh it with his yan.

Thus, the bird repays Phebus for humanizing him at the cost of his freedom and natural existence by abusing the gift of speech and the truth. He has reckoned right that Phebus would not want to hear and would not believe the truth and would cast him out, but he had not reckoned on the catastrophes that took place. 36

The obvious lesson of the tale is that one is better off to hold one's tongue because it can be dangerous to do otherwise. Howard says the Manciple "condeems janglyng because it isn't shrewd" (309-15): 37

Lorlynges, by this ensample I yow preye, Beth war, and taketh kep what that ye seye: He telleth neuer no man in youre life How that another man hath dight his wyf; He wol yow haten mortally, certeyn. Daun Salomon, as wisse clerkes seyn, Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel.
Whether the Manciple is aware of it or not, however, there is more sentence in his tale than that. Truth, like science or knowledge, can be abused. When one uses the truth maliciously and without regard for the consequences, it destroys both the gossip and his victim. Moreover, as man's invention of euphemisms suggests, there are truths which are too painful or shameful to be endured, and silence is more charitable in those cases. Truth used maliciously is truth without conscience; it is another instance of the abuse of knowledge without God which leads to ire, sin, and damnation. Malicious chatter, no matter how true the tales that are told, is an affront to Christian charity. "A jangler is to God abominable" (343) according to the Manciple, and according to Christ, a man is defiled and damned by what proceeds from his own mouth (Matthew 15:18-20).

The mouthings of this group of pilgrims (excluding the Second Nun) are damning evidence that they have fallen prey to the temptations of corruption in their professions. They talk endlessly about the abuse of knowledge, science, and truth itself in the pursuit of their personal desires as if (excluding the poor Canon's Yeoman) it was the most natural thing in the world. Indeed, listening to them makes one wonder if the world is that way by "nature." Their faith is in worldly knowledge, and gold is their god. In their preoccupation with earthly power and pleasure, we see a ruthless exploitation of the ignorant and what appears to be conscience and Christian charity in various stages of disintegration. Deeply immersed in materialistic values, they have lost sight of God (except as an interfering influence), and the sinful truth of their activities are hidden beneath scientific jargon and euphemisms.
Instead of scientific knowledge being used to relieve suffering or to otherwise benefit mankind, we find it preying on human misery and a tool of exploitation. Instead of Church doctrine discouraging sin and encouraging penance, it encourages the continuation of vice and the sin of avarice. Instead of truth being used profitably to enlighten and correct, it is distorted and avoided to soothe the conscience and to promote human suffering. The Second Nun's Tale had shown that true knowledge resides in God and that by seeking and applying that truth according to His will, salvation is assured. Worldly knowledge alone imprisons man in the world, in sin, as surely as Phoebus had imprisoned the Crow in his cage of gold. Knowledge with God frees man from the cares and sins of worldly existence and opens his eyes to the folly of worshipping the false gods of gold, of power, of pleasure. But these pilgrims are chained to the world. Their use of knowledge is purely selfish: they leave both God and man out of it. Without God, without consideration for their fellowman, their desires become obsessive, and they are hopelessly trapped in sin. Everywhere in their tales, we find distrust, deceit, and the alienation of man from man and man from God. We can only watch, as the Canon's Yeoman helplessly watches himself, as they work their own destruction and the destruction of others to the forfeiture of salvation.

Curiosity about the world and the powers of destiny are also far removed from God, and so are the pilgrims of the Causal Group. Distracted from their own faults and sins by curiosity, their use of astrology demonstrates the lengths man will go to in order to avoid responsibility for his shortcomings and how far removed from God and the ideal goals of pilgrimage they are. Instead of using the stars to try
to better understand the direction the providential plan is taking in
the hope of participating in that plan, they use them to "investigate"
what God is up to and to judge the "fairness" of His actions according
to their worldly ideas of the good. To judge God is to make oneself
not just God's equal, but His superior. This is not only error, but
sin, and it is the sin that sent Lucifer to hell. For when the pilgrims
blame the stars, or Fortune, or any of the forces of destiny for human
error and misfortune, they are blaming God since it is He who set them
in motion for the supreme good. And the pilgrims cannot claim that
they are not aware that God is the cause and control of all things, for
they mindlessly refer to that fact each time their jabbering leads them
to a dead end.

Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, the astrological pilgrims would
eat of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than
accept the goodness of God alone and obey his commandments. Like Adam
and Eve, they would know everything, and in so doing alienate themselves
from God. In a very real sense, the astrological pilgrims would be as
God, "seeing" the future and "determining" what the "good" and the out-
come of events "ought" to be.

Judicial astrology was forbidden knowledge as far as the Church
was concerned. The Miller had warned the company in his tale that
astrology was a dangerous invasion of God's privacy, and that no good
ever came of its practice. The Squire--the least experienced pilgrim
of the lot--pointed out the idleness of speculating about that which
lies outside of human experience. Even the Pardoner did not hesitate
to tell a tale that points out the inappropriateness and danger of curiously investigating what are not the affairs of men. According to Christian Zacher, the Pardoner's Tale is about disorder and curiosity:

The three young "riotoures," drunk, sinful, and given to incivility, earn their easy damnation through a mutually destructive quest for the curious man's most forbidden goal: not treasure, but the death that comes for those whose inquiry takes them too near to the tree of forbidden knowledge. The "olde charl" and the bushels of gold by the oak tree are rich symbols, but whatever other meanings we and the Pardoner extract from them, we cannot avoid realizing that the Old Man has knowledge no one should curiously tap, and the "faire and brighte" gold hides secrets no one should so curiously investigate. 38

The Canon's Yeoman had heard none of these propositions, and yet he draws essentially the same conclusions in his tale. There is knowledge that exists for God alone and is forbidden to man. Any attempts to acquire that knowledge without divine revelation is an invasion of God's privacy that is doomed to failure and leads to sin and self-destruction. The pilgrims have been ill-advised to talk so much about matters that do not concern them, and their curiosity about what man can and should know and their comments about the fairness of life and the questionable goodness of the providential plan are entirely out of line.

Although the pilgrims seem oblivious to the fact, the need for less janglyng and more silence has been suggested in many of the tales. The Miller suggests it when he warns the pilgrims against invading God's privacy. The Squire implies that such jabbering accomplishes nothing. As Howard says, the Physician's Tale suggests that it is "among the ironies of life that immoral people love to talk morality, that people don't know when silence says more than talk, that every one of us is his
own most attentive listener." 39 The Pardoner's Tale suggests the need for silence for the same reasons, and the Tale of Melibee also states the conflict between order and disorder, silence and noise, and draws attention to the inadvisability of talking too much and talking out of place. The Nun's Priest's Tale carries forth the call for silence by refusing to address the affairs of God and by stating that misfortune is due anyone "That is so undiscree of governaunce / That jangleth when he sholde holde his pees" (3434-35). The Canon's Yeoman's Tale unmistakably calls attention to the curiositas, abuses, and fruitless jangling inherent in the sciences that distract the pilgrims from the appropriate pursuits of pilgrimage. Astrological investigations designed to invade "Goddes pryvetee," like what Zacher calls the "Inquisitive alchemical pursuits of the pryvette of Nature, lead men literally and symbolically away from the pilgrimage road and into the labyrinthe byways of curios-
ity." 40 The pryvette of Nature or of God are not the proper concerns of men on pilgrimage, and by the end of the Manciple's Tale, the pil-
grims are emphatically warned (if for the wrong reasons) to "Beth war, and taketh kep what that ye seye" (310). Again (if for the wrong reasons) one should "kepen his tongue weel" (315), and when speaking of God, "thy tongue sholdestow restreyne / At alle tymes, but whan thou doost thy payne / To speke of God, in honour and prayere" (329-31). Moreover, one may as well be still since man does not want to hear the truth at any rate and since, as Howard has observed, "Language used well tells lies--that seems to be the moral." 41 Howard goes on to say that with the Manciple's Tale behind us,
The repetition of the one sentiment leaves echoing in our heads the two most frequently repeated words, "janglyng" and "tongue," which produce an auditory and a visual image: a disembodied chattering and a tongue wagging, the empty blah-blah of too much talk and the flapping of an open mouth. And with this image the tales of Canterbury are brought to a close. 42

The final astrological reference is the tales serves to remind the pilgrims that the day and the pilgrimage are coming to a close. The pilgrims who have used astrology in their tales have erred both in their use of the science and in their attitudes toward providence and destiny throughout the journey, and the Narrator's reference to the time of day in the Parson's Prologue is an even more glaring error than that made by the Squire regarding the sun's exaltation in Aries. Astrologically, the error is of no importance whatsoever since the Narrator had already established the time by means of shadow-length. But the error has real significance for the pilgrimage in that it can be seen as representative of all of the astral errors that have gone before and because it fore- shadows the restoration of spiritual balance to the pilgrimage that is to come in the Parson's Tale.

It will be recalled that the Narrator tells the pilgrims that it is late afternoon as the pilgrimage approaches its conclusion: "Therwith the moones exaltacioun, / I meene Libra, alwey gan ascende, / As we were entryng at a thropes ende" (ParcPrlg. 11-13). The error stands out starkly because Libra is the exaltation of Saturn (that most malevolent of planets responsible for everything evil from Arcite's death to Januarie's lechery). The moon is exalted in Taurus (that sign which the Wife, the Merchant, and the Nun's Priest had used to indicate lust or strife). There is to be no more of that. It is past time for a change
to take place from the worldly wrangling and curiosity about God to the silent, spiritual considerations that should have occupied the pilgrims' time.

It may be recalled that each of the signs of the zodiac is composed of one of the four elements: earth, air, fire, or water. The pilgrimage begins and is carried out under the sign of Taurus, whose element is earth, and the sign is suggestive of the worldly nature of the pilgrimage. But now, at the close of the pilgrimage, the sign Libra hangs conspicuously on the horizon. Contrary to the earthly makeup of Taurus, Libra's element is the air, and that fact, coupled with the fact that Libra is a mutable sign, suggests the change from worldly to spiritual concerns. Moreover, Libra is the sign of the zodiac that represents justice and balance (its symbolic name is the "scales"). The moon, as we have seen in all of the tales using astrology, is an indicator of change--and sudden change, at that--and the Narrator uses her a final time in combination with Libra to indicate the change in point of view the Parson will present. Thus, the Narrator's "error" draws attention to the need for, and foreshadows the change from, worldly to other-worldly considerations and the Parson's restoration of spiritual balance to the pilgrimage. 43

That the use of astrology has been an error that distracted the pilgrims from noting and taking responsibility for their sins seems clear since the Parson does not perpetuate the causal "janglyng" that has already taken place. He will not feed the curiosity of the pilgrims by telling a tale or by answering any astrological allusions or propositions about the activities of God. There have been errors enough and worldly distractions in plenty, and it is time to reestablish silence
and harmony.

The Parson concentrates on penance and reconciliation with God rather than on questioning His wisdom, and the astrological pilgrims are in need of such reconciliation. The Nun's Priest and the Miller had suggested that man's misfortunes are often the results of his own sins, and in order to receive the forgiveness of God and ultimately salvation, he must first recognize that he has sin and repent. Awareness of sin and the need to repent and be forgiven (and thus, salvation) are out of reach so long as mankind chooses to blame the stars and Fortune for its misfortunes. Moreover, since the stars are under God's control, blaming them for good or ill fortune amounts to blaming God as well.

The Parson suggests that in their tendency to thus blame God for the "unfairness" of life and in their proud hypotheses about universal order, the pilgrims are flirting with damnation and creating their own hell on earth. Those who would insist on their own version of the good and sit in judgment of the goodness of God's plan align themselves with the legions of the damned to whom the mind of God is ever concealed. In the hell on earth that several of the tales describe, as in Hell itself, there appears to be "noon ordre of rule. And al be it so that God hath creat alle thynges in right ordre, and no thyng withouten ordre, but alle thynges been ordeyned and nombred; yet, nathelesse, they that been damned been nothyng in ordre, ne holden noon ordre" (Parst 217-18).

From the lake of fire, Lucifer blamed God's unfair use of insurmountable power for being cast out of heaven. He in no way acknowledged the sin of pride that led him to bring disorder to heaven and to attempt to assume the throne of God. The astrological pilgrims are guilty of the
same kind of pride and are responsible for a world that seems to them to be turned upside down (ParsT 260-63):

And ye shul understonde that in manne synne is every manere of ordre or ordinaunce turned up-so-doun. For it is sooth that God, and resoun, and sensualitee, and the body of man been so ordeyned that everich of thise foure thynges sholde have lordship over that oother; as thus: God sholde have lordship over resoun, and resoun over sensualitee, and sensualitee over the body of man. But soothly, whan man synneth, al this ordre or ordinaunce is turned up-so-doun.

Astrology in the Canterbury Tales thus demonstrates the lengths to which the pilgrims will go to avoid responsibilty for their own behavior and demonstrates how far removed from God and the ideals of pilgrimage they are. Chaucer's use of astrology is not without irony, however. The pilgrims believe that cause and effect, the divine order of the providential plan can be read in the stars, and indeed it can. The very configurations they use in their tales in the search for that order—in which, incidentally, they see only evil and disorder—are themselves indicative of that order. But because they misunderstand the role of the stars in the providential scheme of things to be causes of good and evil, they fail to see what is right in front of them. The stars, which are moved for the supreme good by love for God, operate only for the good and indicate what is taking place in the providential plan and not what must take place in the lives of men. The very configurations they offer as the cause for events in their tales accurately show what is taking place because of human choices, just as the stars indicate the direction the providential plan is taking because of the choices God sees men making in His eternal present. Thus, divine order and the opportunity to participate in the supreme good of the plan is
right in front of them at the very moments they are wondering where to find it.

With all of the Boethian propositions in the tales told by the astrological pilgrims, it is not particularly surprising that the Consolation of Philosophy is the only work specifically named by Chaucer that he does not reject in his Retraction. Since he was close to the work through his translation of it, he probably assumed that his actual audience was familiar enough with its ideas to recognize that the pilgrims were misusing the stars according to the Boethian scheme of things. He may have thought that the Consolation was well enough known that the error of governing one’s life according to the stars would be reinforced among the members of his audiences and that if they used the stars at all, it would be to draw closer to God.

Perhaps, however, the tales and the errors reminded Chaucer himself of the uncertainty of knowing what the good really was. What if, by intending to help his audience come closer to God through the tales, he had accidentally reinforced the idea that the stars do control men’s lives in the minds of some of them? What if the good he intended was not really good for his audiences? If one does not know Boethius, the astrological tales do make it look as if man is helpless in the hands of destiny.

Chaucer did know Boethius, and I doubt if it would have taken long before he recognized the negative possibilities from his use of astrology. Perhaps it was this kind of recognition that was part of the reason the Retraction was written. If that is possible, it gives special significance to what I think is the most important part of the passage:
I think the **unkonnynge** Chaucer refers to here is the inability to be sure about what is good for others with only one's own values as a guideline. He has meant well, but he hopes that if his idea of the good has been misunderstood and thereby has led anyone astray, that they will realize that he at least thought he was doing the right thing.

Personally, I think if Chaucer's use of astrology was misunderstood by his audience, his intentions were not. Each allusion made by his pilgrims points to the error of attributing cause to the stars and to the fact that the destiny of man is determined by the choices he freely makes. As far as the *Retraction* itself goes, I like to think it inspires a good deal of merriment today between a short, plump poet and his God.
NOTES


5. Lewis, pp. 198-203.


7. Since I am also arguing for an interlaced discussion, I agree with Howard, who says (p. 213) that the "tales are related to one another more ways than the sequential or linear way, and the more complex structure which emerges makes serial order a minor issue."

8. The Merchant's resentment toward his own wife so occupies his mind at this point that he seems to have missed the lesson in the Clerk's Tale. Howard explains, p. 259, that the Clerk "lets us know the story really is not meant to teach wives humility but to teach us all to be constant in adversity, to understand that God tests but does not tempt us." For the Merchant, the story only emphasizes the shortcomings he already detests in his own wife.

9. Howard points out, for example (p. 260), that "Having heard the Wife's discourse and the Clerk's idealistic and ironic rebuttal, the Merchant pours forth in outrage his own disillusionment and disgust... .the important fact about the Merchant, that he has had a miserable marriage of two months' duration, is not introduced until the prologue to his tale... .I agree with those who think the Merchant is bitter and the tone of his tale cynical... .the fabliau he tells nevertheless reflects his disgust with himself--he heaps scorn on January with self-lacerating rage."
Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 192-244. Wood's view is that Constance participates in the providential plan and that the Man of Law misinterprets or fails to understand his own tale. Wood points out the worldliness of the Man of Law, his tendency to separate the powers of destiny and providence, and his passing judgments on the wisdom of God. On pp. 197-205, for example, Wood says that "While Custance may pray for an avoidance of or an end to suffering, 'she nevertheless accepts whatever God sends with thanks, and certainly does not seek any worldly gain. The Man of Law has different ideas about good and bad Fortune. For him there are value judgments to be made about Fortune: God is to be thanked and praised not for strengthening us by trial, but for accomplishing our deliverance; not for the promise of heavenly joy, but for the arrangement of our temporal satisfaction. . . . and in the final lines of the story Christ is saluted by the Man of Law as one who can bring good Fortune in this life: 'Jhesu Crist, that of his myght may sends/ Joye after wo' (1160-61). We may remark then, that the Man of Law differs from the heroine of his story both in the degree of his dislike of adversity and in the degree of his satisfaction with temporal prosperity. . . . He rejoices in divine intervention of the most dramatic kind, and is tellingly silent about the accomplishment of God's will when it involves the heroine's discomfort and danger. . . . The Man of Law's complaint against the First Moving is as much as a complaint against God himself. . . . More specifically, this is another instance of the Man of Law's reprimanding the providential order for not bringing about material happiness. . . . This insufficient distinction between the levels of providence and destiny, a distinction on which much of the Consolation rests, is the source of the Man of Law's misinterpretation of the proper use of worldly goods and the purpose of heavenly signs."

About the Squire's lack of comment on love and marriage, Howard says, p. 267, that "It is as if Chaucer asked 'what has the aristocracy to contribute to such a discussion?' And the answer is, nothing—nothing but fantasy and convention, nothing but courtly cliches and rhetorical posturing, bromides about love-longing, courtesy, honor, gentility, nothing but hearsay tales of distant princes. I think it is a moment when Chaucer shows himself out of sympathy with the knightly classes—"

Howard, p. 242.

Howard has already observed how the kinsmen's lust for the same woman had reduced them to living by their more animal passions, and that had it not been for Theseus, they would have been little more than animals (p. 237): "The story presents the fundamental passions of love and aggression which reduce the principals to an animal-like state; the imagery used of them, drawn from Boethius, enforces this conception and reveals a degeneration in them. But the knights are saved from this descent into animal behavior by the ruler's imposition of a code."
The Wife's frank approval of sexual delight, regardless of how natural she tries to make it all sound, was hardly acceptable behavior. Moreover, her unabashed admission that she married and remarried for pleasure and to acquire the wealth she needed to look out for herself, while good business, was equally unacceptable. The Nun's Priest's "povere widow," I think, is a jibe at women like the Wife intended to point out that God will provide for the widow's needs, and that marriage for the sake of sex or property (regardless of tradition) is the path of sin. Howard declares, p. 248, that "When the Wife speaks of the 'woe that is in marriage' she associates marriage at once with the medieval idea of 'perfection,' which placed the highest value on celibacy; widowhood was second best and marriage third. . . . Marriage after the death of one's spouse was therefore the least perfect choice: 'widowhood' was the circumstance in which a person married once and not again--the Wife, now a widow for the fifth time, has lost her chance. Behind this system lay the assumption that sexual intercourse for pleasure is wrong, that even in marriage intercourse performed to satisfy lust is a venial sin. The Parson quotes St. Jerome to this effect (ParsT X. 904 f.)."

Howard, p. 269.

Howard, p. 270.

Wood, p. 273, declares that "Chauntecleer's time-telling ability . . . is a natural and not an intellectual phenomenon. . . . Chauntecleer measures the sun's height by nature. . . . Note that he does it by 'knyde' not by reason." Wood also argues for a time-telling link between the Man of Law's Prologue, the Nun's Priest's Tale, and the Parson's Prologue on pp. 273-75. Accordingly, Chauntecleer's time-telling is an under-cutting of the Host's abilities in which the Nun's Priest pays him back for the remarks about the priest's horse. The Host, Wood says, is cast as a rooster himself over the flock of pilgrims (GP 823-24), and he does a poor job of leading them. The time-telling in the Parson's Prologue then, is linked to the Nun's Priest's Tale and the Man of Law's Prologue in order to cast the Parson as a rooster in favorable contrast to the Host: "This rooster (the Parson) is a better one than Harry and is to be the true, spiritual leader of the flock."

Howard points out, pp. 284-85, that "Everyone knows that roosters can tell time on instinct, and the Nun's Priest says so. . . . The rooster knows time on instinct; Intellect provides a science of astrology which expresses through the position of the heavenly bodies what the rooster already knows. A 'sorrowful cas' happens in the barnyard; Intellect provides the figure of Fortune and the theory of animal magnetism to explain why the fox approaches the rooster. The story is a simple everyday occurrence; Intellect gives us rhetoric and learning, and so pads, inflates, bloats.

This same uncertainty about dreams and the cause of dreams also appears in the Proem to Book I of the House of Fame (1-12):

God turne us every dreame to goodes!

For hyt is wonder, be the roode,
To my wyt, what causeth swevenes
Eyther on morwes or on evenes;
And why th’effect folweth of somme,
And of somme hit shal never come;
Why that is an avisioun
And this a revelacioun,
Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
And noght to every man lyche even;
Why this a fantome, why these oracles,
I not;

Howard says, pp. 284-85, that "The Nun's Priest's Tale sets up a contrast between what is natural and what is intellectual, between what is easily seen by common sense (the common evidence of the senses) and what is easily beclouded by ratiocination. ... The Nun's Priest keeps letting the intellectual hot air out by reminding us that the characters after all are barnyard fowls. Common sense, he suggests, isn't good enough: people always want to flesh it out with padding and filler—a dream whose warming is plain has to be argued about with elaborate theories, and the joke is that instinct, the sex instinct, makes Chaunticleer forget about the theories anyway. So when the Priest comes to the outcome of his story he must pause to ruminate whether it is predestined or not."

Howard believes, p. 286, that the Nun's Priest "has no quarrel with any of the theories, conventions, or ideas which he brings up, but with their capacity to flatter us and becloud our thoughts, to blind us in the realm of private conduct. We would do better to keep our eyes open and our mouths shut." The Nun's Priest's position is "an ironical, skeptical clear-headedness which is nothing if not Chaucerian."

Zacher, p. 119.


"The Physician's inordinate love of gold," Howard says, p. 335, suggests something askew in his motives and ideals. It is not just that he is thrifty; it is that he got rich from the Black Death, for which no physician knew a cure—'He kepte that he was in pestilence' (442). That many doctors did so was among the scandals of the age. His motive is evidently pure avarice—he is not in love with buying land like the Man of Law, nor with airs and pretensions like the Franklin, nor with making money like the Merchant, but with gold itself, with having it. In a credit economy money has a specterlike quality, but avarice in the fourteenth century would have been more primitive; moralists compared it to idolatry. And gold, that most precious metal, was the principal object of avaricious veneration. This might be seen as a possible link between the Physician's and the Pardoner's tales, for avarice is the Pardoner's besetting sin and avarice for gold central to his sermon." Howard might have added that idolatry, the misguided love for and worship of gold to the disadvantage of his fellowman is also the Canon Yeoman's "sin."
25 Howard, p. 335.

26 To the physician who practices his art without ideals, without compassion or charity, life is cheap. In this regard, Howard's statements about the worldly morality of the Physician are to the point, pp. 337-38: "In the Physician's tale this element of wonder and terror (that occurs in the Pardoner's Tale) is lacking; his is a coldly rational world in which a father can save his daughter's virtue by killing her, in which sinners get killed off mechanically. Underneath it all is a tacit feeling that life is cheap. And who more than an avaricious physician would be likely to harbor the callous estimate of human life? . . . Of course life was cheap in the Middle Ages, violence and sudden death were a part of everyday existence, and people were sticklers for virginity in unmarried daughters. But other tales present alternatives to the Physician's cold moralism (the Parson and Chaucer would not go along with it). . . . But a physician grown rich from the plague would be less sensitive. The grotesque tale and its grisly morality is a suitable prologue to the Pardoner's 'moral tale.' Simplistic as his tale is, the Physician must really think he loves virtue; but the Pardoner is not so subtle." Subtlety aside, however, both the Physician and the Pardoner are men without consciences.

27 Howard, p. 337.

28 Howard declares, p. 295, that the Yeoman "is criticizing not science but the abuse of science; he is not talking about honest canons (992-994) or his employer (1088-1090), but is warning others." See also Muscatine, p. 215, who explains that the obsession with alchemy and gold is a matter of misguided love: "The body of the poem, the first two parts, is an exposure of the alchemy without God, of faith in earth. Its skepticism is that of the believer, not of the scientist, who sees in technology another secular religion, as seductive in its way as the religion of Love (341-49):

This sotted preest, who gladder than he?
Was neuer brie gladder agayn the day,
Ne nyghtyngale, in the sesoun of May,
Was neuer noon that luste bet to synge;
Ne lady lustier in carolyng, 
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,
Ne knyght in armes to doon an hardy dede,
To stonden in grace of his lady deere,
Than hadde this preest this soory craft to leere.

The poem's dualism of attitude is conventional. It corresponds to the division of the science between the charlatans and puffers on the one hand, and the philosophers and mystics on the other."

29 Muscatine says, p. 216, that "The poetry everywhere evokes a profound sense of the futility, the cursedness, of a soulless striving with matter. The trickery of alchemical swindlers, illustrated by the "tale" proper, stands also for the nature of the science itself. The chartry priest is swindled by the alchemist in the second part just as the alchemist is swindled by the science in the first."
Muscatine says, pp. 217-19, that "The extremely naturalistic characterization of the Yeoman serves the conception of alchemy as a blind materialism. He is a simple, unlearned soul. His greatest gift is a dogged sense of the world of matter. There is not the faintest glimmer of spirituality or mysticism about him. . . . everything is lost but the world of rocks and stones. . . . His narrative can be trusted to describe the slightest motions in the physical world. . . . His commentary . . . is dully repetitive; it is analysis frustrated and strangled by a limited vision." But it is "a frustration beyond mere mechanical failure. It registers a failure of vision. It says that dealing with matter as matter has no end, that is, no teleology. Medieval philosophical alchemy was nourished on hylonomy, on the feeling that matter was instinct with life. The Yeoman's recitation, however, evokes an opposite feeling, of matter spiritless and contingent, of that primordial impurity 'corrupt,' 'floterynge,' from which only God can raise man."

Howard declares, p. 297, that "The quest of the alchemist had a moral lesson for medieval men; they saw it as a symbol of the great quest of life, so that the philosopher's stone symbolized Christ. Professor Rosenberg thinks that the Canan is therefore a devil or anti-Christ figure, placed here in the eleventh hour of the pilgrimage to remind us that in life's journey we have to know true coin from false. It is one allegorical reading that makes sense." See also, Muscatine, p. 221, who says the tale shows a faith in science that despises God, and that "Dante's Hell has its place for those who 'wished to see too far ahead.'"

Muscatine says, p. 215, that "This philosophical post script expresses the ruling attitude toward alchemy in the poem. In the light of it, the poem expresses neither credulity nor skepticism, but rather a distinction between false alchemy and true, between men's alchemy and God's." See also, Howard, pp. 295-96: "The tone of this dramatic monologue is what makes it so exciting. The Yeoman continues to believe in the experiments as a possibility, but as with most medieval quests the goal is so high that it is out of reach. In the background is the true practice of a Gnostic spiritual alchemy not tainted by abuse. He only condemns the avarice and falsehood of deceiving alchemists, not the science itself. His advice is to let it go, not because it is a fraud or a delusion but because Christ in His own good time will give the secret to those He would inspire (1467-1471). Then he contradicts himself by saying it is against God's will (1472-1475). He really poses the problem of reason versus revelation: men can struggle with thought and knowledge, but they cannot conclude anything unless God wills it . . . the vain alchemical experiments were the shabby leavings of an intellectual idealism which had fallen apart. And the poor Yeoman is a victim of this historical trend. He is intoxicated with the pursuit of knowledge but knows the pursuit can only succeed when God allows it; Milton had a similar way of treating 'forbidden knowledge' . . . Intellectual pursuit for its own sake or for earthly reward collapses half the time into despair; one is always asking what is the good of it."
The situation reminds me very much of an incident in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. The subhuman slave Caliban (being the progeny of a witch and a pagan god) has been civilized and taught human speech by Prospero. Resenting his slavery, Caliban complains to Prospero that he had the run of the island before the appearance of the latter, "and here you sty me/In this hard rock, whilsts you do keep from me/The rest o' the island" (I.i. 342-44). To this ingratitude, Prospero angrily replies: "I pitied thee,/Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour/One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,/Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like/A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes/With words that made them known" (I.i. 354-59). To which Caliban bitterly replies: "You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you/For learning me your language" (I. i. 363-65). Obviously, the inhuman Caliban sees the exchange of language for freedom in as poor a light as the Crow does.

Wood, pp. 163-72, 275-97, discusses this balance in terms of baptism, pilgrimage, the passion of Christ, and divine judgment. Wood says that "the Bible recounts a mid-April pilgrimage—the pilgrimage of Noah in his journey on the ark, which began on April 17 as recounted in Genesis 7:11." Since pilgrimages to Canterbury "normally" took place in December and July, not in spring, "we are not dealing with realism as historicity in this passage." In the Middle Ages, spring meant rebirth in nature and the planting of crops, and according to the Ecclesiastical calendar, it was the time of the beginning and end of Christ's life on earth. The spring floods came to be a symbolic kind of baptism, "the idea being that just as Noah was saved by the water of the flood and the wood of the ark, so the individual Christian is saved by the water of baptism and the wood of the cross." The significance of the April date thus lies in the fact that the sons of Noah are all mankind, and "when one is baptized, then one starts on the pilgrimage of life... From Nicholas' first invocation of the deluge as a means of salvation for John, we move to the position in which the lack of water is a form of punishment. The association of the flood with the sacrament of baptism—
a ceremony of purification—is certainly in Chaucer's mind here, for each character needs a portion of cleansing. On the other hand, an actual deluge is not needed, for the absence of water can punish as effectively as the presence of it. . . . Noah escapes punishment through God's grace (Genesis 6:8) and the Parson concludes Chaucer's group of tales with a sermon on how that grace may be achieved. Noah and the Parson are used by Chaucer to define what a pilgrimage should be, while the Tales themselves illustrate the range of human achievement and failing." As far as the appearance of Libra and the moon in the Parson's Prologue goes, Wood says that "Chaucer has chosen to preface the last of the Canterbury Tales with an astrological image that balances the image which opened the Tales in the General Prologue." In Wood's opinion, however, "the business about the moon is an inexplicable but certain error." Libra itself is seen as symbolic of balance, the crucifixion, and justice both individual and divine. Medieval poets "could use Libra as a symbol of judgment by the chief of gods, Jupiter, or, by a simple extension, as a symbol of God's judgment. Thus, at the end of the Iliad and the Aeneid the scales of God's justice appear, and it may well be that Chaucer's use of Libra at the end of the Canterbury Tales was intended to represent God's justice, which, of course, is of a somewhat different source. . . . Christ's judgment of the just and unjust, whether the sun is in Libra or only associated with it" is one of the reasons for the choice of the sign. Libra can also "be connected with the individual Christians free choice of how he will face judgment. At the very end of the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer takes a last chance to strike a blow for the individual's freedom of choice against those who try to rationalize their actions by reference to the stars. . . . Chaucer's choice of a sermon on penance to close the Tales strongly suggests that he intended to deny any shred of astrological determinism. This observation is bolstered by the fact that the image of Libra can also concern judgment in the sense of 'good judgment'. . . As in the Parson's Tale individual justice is linked with the crucifixion, so in the Parson's Prologue Libra no doubt links the crucifixion, individual justice, and God's justice. . . . We have been 'on the way' on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, which in the best sense, for some of the pilgrims, would be an analogy of the way of penance leading to the celestial Jerusalem. . . . Chaucer starts the poem in the morning (Gen Prol. 33-34) and finishes at eventide to suggest that it is time to set out on the true pilgrimage." The time may be 4:00 because Chaucer had arranged for the Parson's Tale "to be told at the eleventh hour so that that which was last in order might be pointed out as first in value for any pilgrimage."
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