

ASTROLOGY AS ART

Representation and Practice

Edited by
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PICTURING THE PRACTITIONER: TOWARDS AN ICONOGRAPHY OF ASTROLOGICAL PRACTICE

Richard Dunn

ABSTRACT: In the preface to his *Monas Hieroglyphica* of 1564, John Dee offered up an evocative image. The powerful symbolic language his text described would, he claimed, reform the observational practices of the ‘astronomus’ (astrologer/astronomer), who would, ‘regret all the sleepless vigils and cold labors he has suffered under the open sky, when here, without any discomfort from the air, under his own roof, with windows and doors shut on all sides, at any given time, he is able to observe the movements of the heavenly bodies? And, indeed, without any mechanical instruments made from wood or brass?’ Dee’s textual image is the inspiration for this chapter, which will explore the possibility of using visual and literary iconography as evidence of astrological practice. Focusing on European representations of astrologers and the attributes of their work in the period 1550–1800, it will examine the extent to which such images might allow the historian to think about the practices of astrology and the relationship of astrologers to their apparatus and clients.

This chapter explores the possibility of using visual and literary iconography as evidence of astrological practice in the early modern period. It focuses on European representations of astrologers and the attributes of their work between the mid-sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries, and on surviving evidence of the practices of English consultants including Richard Napier, Simon Forman and William Lilly. Through a comparison and discussion of these and other sources, it will examine the extent to which visual and literary images might allow the historian to think about the practices of astrology and the relationship of astrologers with their clients as mediated by the spaces of practice and the tools (broadly conceived) that they used.

In exploring these questions, it is important to recognise some of the issues arising. One concerns terminology and identification. In a period when terms such as astrologer, astronomer, magus or philosopher could be used in a range of sometimes ambiguous, sometimes interchangeable, ways, one could easily ask, when is an astrologer an astrologer? For the sake of simplicity, the images discussed in this chapter focus on those specifically identifying their subject as an astrological practitioner, or where the image is part of an astrological text (e.g., its frontispiece). There are clearly striking similarities with contemporary images of astronomers, such as Johannes Vermeer’s ‘The Astronomer’ and Gerrit Dou’s ‘Astronomer by Candlelight’, but a discussion of these would require a longer exposition than is possible in this chapter.¹

¹ Johannes Vermeer, ‘The Astronomer’, oil on canvas, 1668 (Musée du Louvre, 1983–28); Gerrit

A second issue concerns the different forms of astrological practice one might identify. Loosely following Patrick Curry's division of astrology into categories such as natural or judicial (itself comprising several modes) and popular or high/elite, the practice of astrology might range from tasks such as the composition of almanacs and manuals, through receiving or visiting clients and giving them advice, to philosophical speculation and writing about the nature and operation of astrological influences.² What follows will predominantly think about the client-based practices of judicial astrology, using English consultants of the seventeenth century as the main examples.

Setting the tone: Iconographic considerations

A useful image with which to open the discussion is a depiction entitled 'Der Astronomus' (FIGURE 8.1). This appeared in the German poet Hans Sachs's *Eygentliche Beschreibung Aller Stände auff Erden* (Exact Description of All Ranks on Earth) (Frankfurt, 1568) and in Hartmann Schopper's Latin edition of the work, *Panoplia omnium illiberalium mechanicarum* (Book of Trades) (Frankfurt, 1568), both of which were illustrated with woodcuts by a Swiss printmaker, Jost Amman. The two works feature a series of illustrations of different occupations, each accompanied by a short description in verse, with the whole arranged according to a 'natural' social hierarchy. In each case, the importance of hard work and modest living are emphasised as routes to a pious existence and a harmonious society: these are essentially moral texts.³

For the 'Astronomus', the inscription that accompanies the image makes it clear that this is a man whose trade is astrological forecasting. He can 'predict eclipses / By reading the sun, moon and stars', enabling him to forecast whether 'the coming year will be fruitful, / Or whether increased prices and the dangers of war / Or other misfortunes are to be expected'. The illustration itself shows a lone figure in a study, using a pair of dividers to measure points on a globe, surrounded by other globes and time-telling instruments, including two sundials on the windowsill. In its depiction of solitary, contemplative activity, Amman's image seems to draw most explicitly on representations of St Jerome, the iconography of which was well established

Dou, 'Astronomer by Candlelight', oil on panel, late 1650s (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.PB.732).

² Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 7–15.

³ Alison M. Kettering, 'Men at Work in Dutch Art, or Keeping One's Nose to the Grindstone', *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 4 (2007): pp. 694–714.

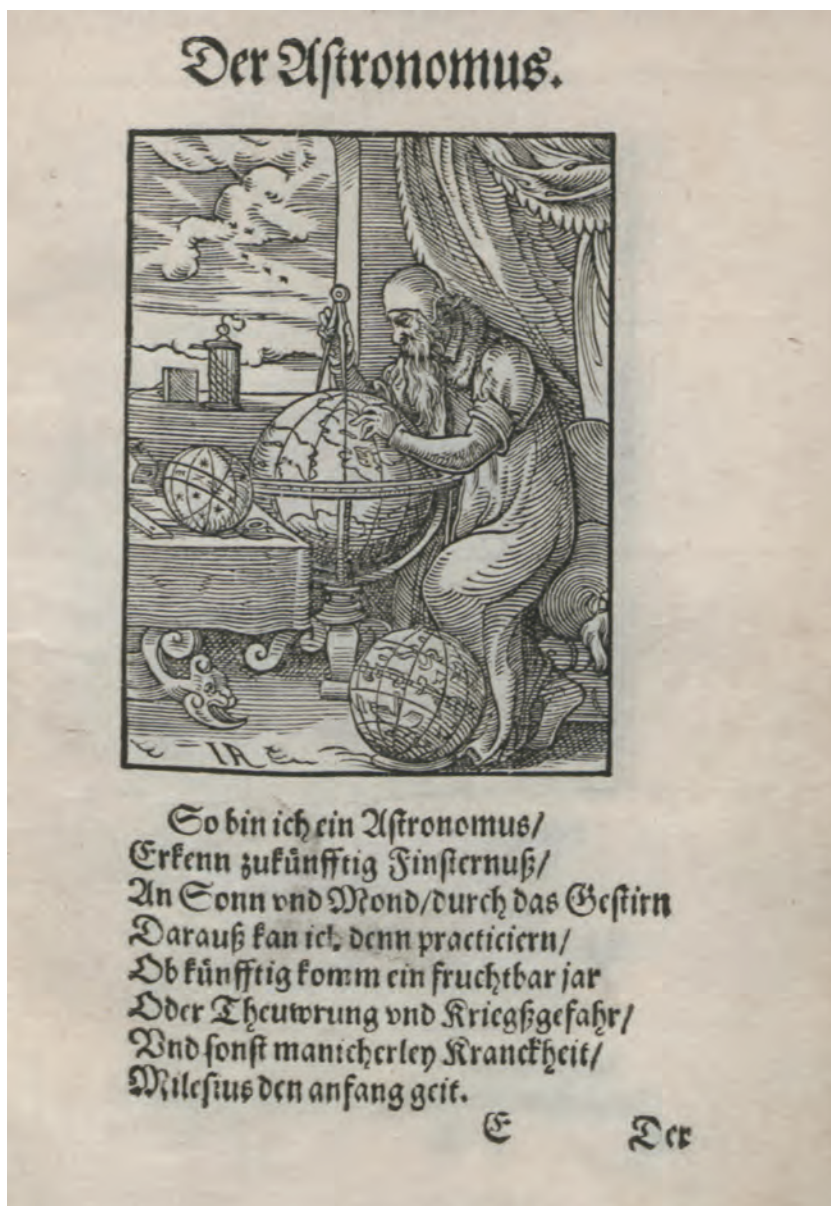


FIGURE 8.1: Jost Amman, 'Astronomus', from Hans Sachs, *Eygentliche Beschreibung Aller Stände auff Erden* (Frankfurt, 1568) (Saxon State and University Library Dresden (SLUB)). Photo: SLUB/Deutsche Fotothek.

by the sixteenth century and became the model for later illustrations of scholars of all sorts in their studies, either locked away from sight or with a window onto the outside world.⁴

The instruments Amman depicts draw on additional iconographies and are significant in symbolic terms. The dividers (which are sometimes identified as compasses) can be linked, among other things, to the disciplines of astronomy and geometry, to justice and prudence, and to acts of creation.⁵ Globes can simply be a symbol of the heavens, but can also have richer and more ambiguous meanings, as Catherine Hofmann has explained:

On the one hand, the rotating sphere evokes the fickleness of love and the reverses of Fortune, but also the world doomed to impermanence and death, along with the vanity of all earthly things. On the other, as the perfect geometric figure, the globe evokes the power of the mighty or the knowledge of the learned, but also the ultimate heavenly refuge, the firmament that encompasses everything and is supposedly perfect and immutable.⁶

In addition, a point that will be relevant later, a sphere held in the hand may offer the reading that free will and wisdom can counteract or overcome the influence of the stars or fate. In the same manner, 'fato prudentia maior' (prudence is greater than fate) was a common motto in books of emblems and other works.⁷

The instruments depicted by Amman for his astrologer are, unsurprisingly, those that also typically appear in images of Astrologia or Astronomia as muses or personifications of one of the seven liberal arts. An image from such a series by Georg Pencz in 1541, for example, shows Astrologia and a putto with a globe, dividers and a quadrant (an astronomical observing instrument); a similar image published by Hieronymous Cock in 1565 has a globe, dividers and sundials.⁸ What Amman's 'Astronomus' seems to draw on, then, is an established set of attributes

⁴ A. Jasińska, 'The Portrait of a Scholar in Painting. An Outline of the History and Development of Iconographic Types', in A. Jasińska and E. Wyka, eds, *Uczony i Jego Pracownia. The Scholar and his Study* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Museum, 2005), pp. 9–23.

⁵ James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (Revised edition, London: John Murray, 1979), p. 73; Juan Eduardo Cliriot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (Mineola, NY: Dover Pub., 2002), p. 61.

⁶ Catherine Hofmann, 'The Globe as Symbol in Emblem Books in the West, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Globe Studies* 49/50 (2002): pp. 81–120 (quote pp. 119–20).

⁷ Hofmann, 'The Globe as Symbol', p. 105.

⁸ Georg Pencz, 'Astrologia', from 'The liberal arts', engraving, about 1541 (British Museum, E,4.280); Cornelis Cort, after Frans Floris, 'Astrologia', from 'Seven Liberal Arts', engraving, published by Hieronymous Cock, 1565 (British Museum, F,1.292).

for the representation of astrology or astronomy and for the scholar as a solitary and contemplative figure.

The main question for this chapter, however, is whether images such as this can tell us something meaningful about routine astrological practice in the early modern period. In exploring this, I am particularly interested in thinking about the practice of consultant astrologers and their relationships and interactions with their clients. Amman's astrologer is not a consultant. Rather, he is identified in the accompanying verse as the author of predictions found in printed almanacs. Images of astrological practitioners one might identify more specifically as consultants do appear, however, in other books of trades in the same vein as Sachs's. Christoph Weigel's 1709 work, *Centi-folium stultorum in quarto, oder, Hundert ausbündige Narren in folio*, for instance, shows an astrologer and client in discussion (FIGURE 8.2). A woman, accompanied by two children, is shown paying the astrological consultant, who points to the sky, where zodiacal and planetary symbols appear. Behind the astrologer are the tools of the trade: books (open on the table as well as in the bookcase); a celestial globe; dividers; a telescope; and what appears to be a lens. These items hint at the different activities on which the astrologer's practice draws: observation (telescope); representation and measurement (globe and dividers); codification and calculation (books). Strikingly similar is another image of an astrologer with a client, from Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia*, a long, dense and copiously illustrated philosophical discussion of the macrosocsm and microcosm (FIGURE 8.3). Again, the celestial globe and dividers are placed prominently, this time between the client and the astrologer, who is drawing up an astrological figure, while what appears to be an astronomical or astrological text is open on a table behind the client, with a pair of spectacles next to it. Further books can be seen on the shelf high up on the wall above the astrologer. The scene is imagined, but again clearly draws on recognisable iconographies.

Identity and image: Seventeenth-century frontispieces

Switching to images of real astrologers, the most obvious source is portraits produced as frontispieces. As Inga Elmqvist Söderlund notes, frontispieces and title page illustrations, which might be a book's only printed image in this period, act as advertisements, signalling to the potential buyer or reader what kind of book it is.⁹ According to Bernard Bauhuis, writing in 1617, for instance, 'At the beginning of the book ... many people would like to see some engraving ... It amuses the reader

⁹ Inga Elmqvist Söderlund, *Taking Possession of Astronomy: Frontispieces and Illustrated Title Pag-*



FIGURE 8.2: 'Astrologischer oder Nativität-Narr', from Christoph Weigel, *Centi-folium stultorum in quarto*, oder, *Hundert ausbündige Narren in Folio* (Vienna: Johann Carl Megerle; Nuremberg: Johann Christoph Weigel, 1709) (Getty Research Institute).



FIGURE 8.3: Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia*, 2 vols (Oppenheim: Johann Theodor de Bry, 1617–21), 2: Book I, Section II, Part IV, p. 71 (Getty Research Institute).

wonderfully, it attracts the buyer, it decorates the book and it does not add much to the price.¹⁰ While the frontispiece might be able to do no more than hint at the book's detailed content, it is the place to establish the author's credentials, assuring the potential reader of the writer's legitimacy as an authority on the subject at hand. This certainly appears to be the case with frontispiece portraits of English astrologers.

es in 17th-Century Books on Astronomy (Stockholm: Center for History of Science, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2010), pp. 88, 313.

¹⁰ Bernard Bauhuys to B. Moretus, 1 August 1617, quoted in Söderlund, *Taking Possession of Astronomy*, p. 89.

A good example of this genre is the portrait of William Lilly (1602–1681) (FIGURE 8.4), which appeared as the frontispiece to his seminal *Christian Astrology* (1647), the first major astrological textbook in the English language.¹¹ Lilly appears in the clothes of a gentleman and is accompanied by familiar attributes: the celestial globe on which his right hand rests; a printed text showing the symbols for the signs, planets and aspects; writing implements (a pen and inkstand); and an astrological figure in his left hand. Through the window is a more obviously symbolic scene: Saturn and Jupiter shown in conjunction near the cusp of Pisces and Aries, above a pastoral scene that includes a shepherd and a fisherman. As Catherine Blackledge explains in her biography of Lilly, this background image draws on known aspects of his life. The zodiacal positions of Jupiter and Saturn are those they occupied at their most recent conjunction in 1643, from which Lilly had predicted the downfall of King Charles I. Their positions also reflect the then current suggestion that the birth of Christ had been heralded by a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter on the cusp of the same two signs. The pastoral scene below alludes to Lilly's childhood as a farmer's son in Lincolnshire (although he lacked any agricultural bent) and to a straightforward Christian reading of the two figures as 'Fisher of Souls' and 'Shepherd of Men'.¹²

As Blackledge notes, the astrological figure in Lilly's left hand is also significant. It has the representation of the twelve houses as triangles within a square, the conventional form for an astrological chart or figure in this period, although it lacks the numerical indications and symbols for the house divisions and planetary positions. Lilly's age ('Aetatis 45') is written at the top, while the centre of the figure has the words 'Non cogunt' (they do not compel) written across it. According to Curry, these words appear in every extant portrait of Lilly and were hugely significant to his position on astrological determinism. The idea that the stars incline but do not compel was a crucial maxim throughout Lilly's astrological writings. This was in contrast to the hard-line beliefs of a few of his contemporaries: the frontispiece to Elias Ashmole's *Fasiculus Chemicus* (1650), for example, includes a figure for Ashmole's nativity with the inscription 'Astra regunt homines' – the stars rule men – at its centre.¹³ Lilly's less emphatic assertion, with which the majority of astrologers at this time

¹¹ Patrick Curry, 'Lilly, William (1602–1681)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (hereafter ODNB), at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16661> [accessed 28 September 2018].

¹² Catherine Blackledge, *The Man Who Saw the Future: A Biography of William Lilly* (London: Watkins, 2015), pp. 47–50.

¹³ Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 30.

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FIGURE 8.4: William Lilly, engraved by William Marshall, from *Christian Astrology* (London: Thomas Budenell, 1647), frontispiece (Private collection). Photo: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

would have agreed, was an important point in the ongoing battle to demonstrate that the celestial art was compatible with religion and, above all, the principle of human free will on which a Christian notion of salvation depended.¹⁴ Intriguingly, the iconography of the published portrait seems to support this reading in other ways, in particular in the placing of Lilly's right hand on the celestial globe. This seems to draw on representations of a sphere held in the hand, which, as discussed above, can convey the idea that wisdom or the wise man can overrule the stars.

A number of strikingly similar portraits appeared in other English astrological works in this period, including that of Lilly's amanuensis, Henry Coley (1633–1707), who had a flourishing practice as a consultant astrologer and teacher from his home in Baldwin's Gardens, off Gray's Inn Road in London.¹⁵ In the image of a 35-year-old Coley from his astrological manual, *Clavis Astrologiæ; or, a Key to the whole Art of Astrologie* (1669) (FIGURE 8.5), a celestial globe and dividers are once again prominent. In this instance, however, it is the dividers rather than the globe that are in Coley's hand, allowing him to draw or measure the astrological figure on the table.

The apparatus of astrological consultations

Thinking about these images of known consultants – in the examples illustrated of Lilly and Coley, both are from manuals of the art of judicial astrology – it is interesting to speculate on what they can tell us, if anything, about their routine practices with clients. To do so, however, one must draw on other sources to think about the details of the consultation. Frontispiece portraits were not, after all, presented as realistic representations of the astrologer in his working environment.

Surviving casebooks for English astrological consultants including Lilly, Simon Forman (1552–1611), Richard Napier (1559–1634) and John Booker (1602–1667) give a few tantalising details.¹⁶ These indicate that clients normally consulted the astrologer in person, although they could also pose their questions by letter or through a

¹⁴ Ann Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind: William Lilly and the Language of the Stars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 9–10; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 361–64.

¹⁵ Bernard Capp, 'Coley, Henry (1633–1704)', *ODNB*, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5899> [accessed 28 September 2018]; Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, pp. 88–89.

¹⁶ Jonathan Andrews, 'Napier, Richard (1559–1634)', *ODNB*, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19763>; Lauren Kassell, 'Forman, Simon (1552–1611)', *ODNB*, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9884>; Jonathan Andrews, 'Napier, Richard (1559–1634)', *ODNB*, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19763>; Bernard Capp, 'Booker, John (1602–1667)', *ODNB*, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19763>.

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FIGURE 8.5: Henry Coley, from *Clavis Astrologiæ; or, a Key to the whole Art of Astrologie* (London: Printed for Joshua Coniers, 1669), frontispiece (Private collection). Photo: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

messenger or other intermediary. On receipt of the question, the astrologer recorded the precise time at which it was asked, then drew up a figure for that time and gave a judgement. For an experienced consultant, the whole operation from receiving the client to offering advice or a judgment might take less than a quarter of an hour.¹⁷ The practice was based on horary astrology, the most deterministic form of the art, but astrologers such as Lilly would carefully reiterate that their predictions were not absolutely binding – ‘non cogunt,’ he would insist.

The consultation generally took place in a study or similar room at the astrologer’s house. William Lilly had a ‘Corner House on the Strand’ in London, where he administered to nearly 2000 clients a year.¹⁸ Forman occupied a number of residences in or near London during his working life, and certainly had a study for his consultations and other work. A casebook entry for 15 June 1596 records, for example, ‘Halek [had sex] prius Elizabeth Hipwell ... studio,’ i.e. in the study.¹⁹ Twenty years later, Forman’s wife stated that he often remained ‘alone with Mistress [Anne] Turner in his study for hours at a time.’²⁰ Lauren Kassell notes that some of Forman’s consultations also took place at his clients’ homes.²¹ Like Forman, John Booker operated from addresses in London, while Richard Napier worked from his rectory in Great Linford in Buckinghamshire. Intriguingly, John Aubrey later wrote of Napier that, ‘When a Patient, or Querent came to him, he presently went to his Closet to Pray: and told to admiration the Recovery, or Death of the Patient’, suggesting, at least in Napier’s case, the use of more than one space for the operation.²²

The number of clients seen by these consultants was impressive. Forman recorded over 10,000 consultations between 1596 and 1603, and his practice had begun at least a decade earlier and continued until he died in 1611. Napier’s records, which survive from the start of his astrological work in 1597 to his death in 1634, give

com/view/article/2865; all URLs here accessed 28 September 2018.

¹⁷ Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, pp. 8–9; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline*, pp. 286–87, 305–7.

¹⁸ Curry, *Prophecy and Power*, p. 29; Curry, ‘Lilly, William’.

¹⁹ Simon Forman, figure for Elizabeth Hipwell, 15 June 1596, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 234, fol. 59v, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/view/case/normalised/CASE443> [accessed 28 September 2018].

²⁰ Quoted in Judith Cook, *Dr. Simon Forman: A Most Notorious Physician* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001), p. 194.

²¹ Lauren Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London: Simon Forman: Astrologer, Alchemist and Physician* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 137.

²² John Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London: Printed for Edward Castle, 1696), p. 133.

details of around 70,000 consultations.²³ Booker dealt with over 16,500 enquiries in the period from 1648 to 1665.²⁴

Garnering more specific details of the environment, practice and tools of the consultation is more challenging, however, since most casebook entries simply show the question asked, the figure cast and the judgement in brief; some do not even give as much detail as that.²⁵ In a few places, however, there are tantalising scraps of evidence. Based on his reading of the casebooks, Michael MacDonald eloquently reconstructs Napier's routine:

Napier treated between five and fifteen patients a day, repeating with each of them a ritual of interrogation and annotation that invoked the axioms of astrological medicine. ... When the precise coordinates of the patient's identity had been recorded, the astrologer noted the time and date and drew a cross-hatched box [the figure] on the page. Deciphering the ephemeris at his elbow, he mapped the heavens at that moment, positioning the symbols of the planets and the signs of the zodiac along the celestial frame. The purpose of this astral cartography was to situate the patient in the cosmos, placing him at the vortex of the natural forces that impelled the universe, discovering the correspondences that linked microcosm and macrocosm.²⁶

The main material element MacDonald identifies, therefore, is the horary figure, which was drawn up and noted in the casebook as part of the consultation (so pen, ink and paper were needed). Kassell concurs in her discussion of Simon Forman's London practice, noting that the casebook, containing the horary figures and notes drawn up each day, was the main item present at consultations. 'Astrology', she emphasises, 'was by definition a written art'.²⁷ MacDonald goes even further, suggesting that the key difference between the astrologer and other medical practitioners was the astrological figure itself, which not only acted as an aid to the astrologer but also had some palpable effect for the client.²⁸

The other supplementary aid identified in MacDonald's reconstruction is the

²³ Casebooks Project, 'Introduction to the casebooks, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/the-manuscripts/introduction-to-the-casebooks> [accessed 28 September 2018]; Kassell, 'Forman, Simon'.

²⁴ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline*, p. 307.

²⁵ Casebooks Project, 'How to read the casebooks', at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/the-manuscripts/how-to-read-the-casebooks> [accessed 28 September 2018].

²⁶ Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 26.

²⁷ Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, pp. 129, 132.

²⁸ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 30.

ephemeris, the set of tables of astronomical data needed to construct the horary figure. As Lilly noted in *Christian Astrology*, ‘without a present *Ephemeris* and *Table of Houses* it’s impossible to instruct you to set a figure, without which we can give no judgement, or perform anything in this art’.²⁹ Further evidence of the use of named ephemerides can be found in the casebooks of Richard Napier and Simon Forman (who had instructed Napier in the astrological art). Napier, it seems, kept more than one ephemeris on hand and occasionally recorded the data from different authors, suggesting that there was some art in balancing or choosing between the alternative interpretations that might result from their differing values. Casting a figure for William Colles on 15 May 1599, for example, he records data for the lunar aspects from ‘Everart[us]’ and ‘Stadius’. Likewise, ‘Orig.’ and ‘Everart[us]’ are identified as sources in January 1602.³⁰ These entries presumably refer to Martin Everart’s *Ephemerides novae et exactae* (1597 and later editions), Johannes Stadius’s, *Ephemerides novae et exactae* (1556), or perhaps his *Tabulae Bergenses* (1560), and the *Ephemerides novae* (1599) of David Origanus. In another instance, Napier’s judgment seems to hinge on which ephemeris, one of which is identified as Everart, he chooses to trust in the matter of a possible pregnancy, although the alternative set of tables is not named.³¹ Overall, references to Everart’s ephemerides seem to be slightly more common, indicating some preference on Napier’s part. Forman refers to Everart’s ephemerides in several casebook entries as well. He also claimed during his examination by the College of Physicians in 1593 that he practised his art, ‘using no help but the *Ephemerides*’, perhaps supporting MacDonald’s interpretation.³²

References to instruments and their use are, however, frustratingly absent from the surviving casebooks, with Forman’s evidence to the College of Physicians perhaps suggesting that instruments were of little use in his work. One notable excep-

²⁹ William Lilly, *Christian Astrology* (London: Thomas Budenell, 1647), p. 32.

³⁰ Richard Napier, figure for William Colles, 15 May 1599, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 228, fol. 164r, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/view/case/normalised/CASE12464> [accessed 28 September 2018]; Napier, figure for Mrs Garnar, 2 January 1602, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 404, fol. 256v, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/view/case/normalised/CASE20187> [accessed 28 October 2015].

³¹ Napier, figure for Mrs Troughton’s servant, 2 January 1602, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 404, ff. 256v–257r, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/view/case/normalised/CASE20189> [accessed 28 September 2018].

³² For example, Simon Forman, figure for himself, 1 January 1599, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 219, fol. 135r–v, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/view/case/normalised/CASE5888> [accessed 28 September 2018]; Forman’s evidence to the College of Physicians quoted in S. P. Cerasano, ‘Philip Henslowe, Simon Forman, and the Theatrical Community of the 1590s’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1993): pp. 145–58 (p. 146).

tion occurs in Richard Napier's casebooks. In July 1598, he cast a figure on behalf of Harry Mun, who had sent him a urine sample. Napier noted that, 'Mun sent his water to me about ... 6 ... but we aymed the houre because it was rayny'.³³ This suggests that Napier normally used a sundial or similar instrument for determining the time during the day (as Amman's 'Astronomus' does), but was unable to do so on this occasion and had to estimate (aim) the time instead – a victim of inclement English weather. It seems likely that most consultants would have used sundials to find the time, since they were cheaper and more reliable (weather aside) than clocks and watches until at least the end of the seventeenth century. Further research may, however, shed more light on this question.

Other modes of representation: Polemic and satire

To find additional evidence of the other aids that astrological consultants might have used or at least had in the room, one has to look further afield, and with some caution, to other types of text and image. The most striking description of an astrologer's consulting room from this period can be found in John Melton's *Astrologaster, Or, The Figure-Caster* (1620). This source must be treated carefully, however, since it is an attack on astrology and its false practitioners, as the book's subtitle makes clear:

the arragnment of Artlesse Astrologers, and Fortune-tellers, that cheat many ignorant people under the pretence of foretelling things to come, of telling things that are past, finding out things that are lost, expounding Dreames, calculating Deaths and Nativities ...

Nonetheless, the description of the consulting room is highly evocative. Having come to the house of 'Doctor P. C.' in Moorfields, whom he already believes to be a charlatan, Melton describes the study of the 'Wise-man':

Before a Square Table, covered with a greene Carpet, on which lay a huge Booke in *Folio*, wide open, full of strange Characters, such as the *Ægyptians* and *Chaldeans* were never guiltie of; not farre from that, a silver Wand, A Surplus, a Watering Pot, with all the superstitious or rather fayned Instruments of his cousening Art. And to put a fairer colour on his black and foule Science, on his head hee had a foure-cornered Cap, on his back a faire Gowne (but made of a strange fashion) in his right hand he held an Astrolabe, in his left a Mathematicall Glasse.³⁴

³³ Napier, figure for Harry (Henry) Mun, 24 July 1598, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 228, fol. 4v, at <http://www.magicandmedicine.hps.cam.ac.uk/view/case/normalised/CASE11572> [accessed 28 October 2015].

³⁴ John Melton, *Astrologaster, Or, The Figure-Caster* (London: Barnard Alsop, 1620), p. 8.

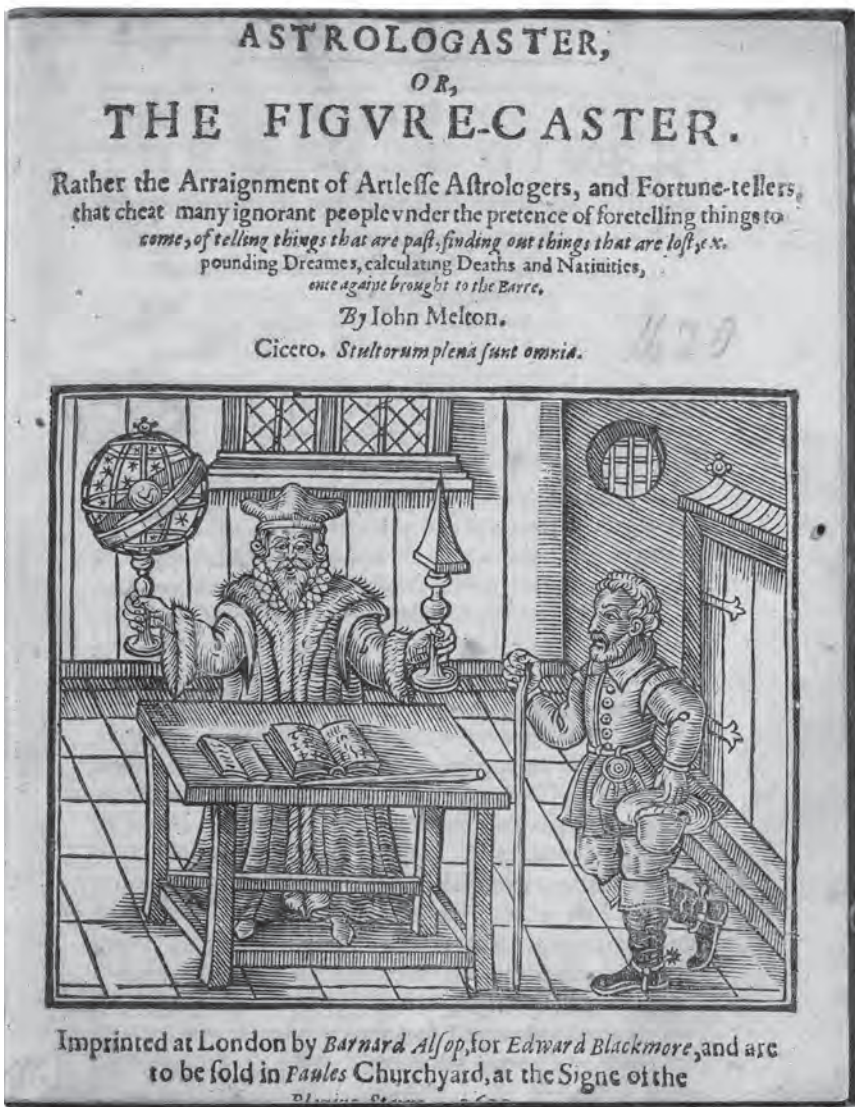


FIGURE 8.6: John Melton, *Astrologaster, Or, The Figure-Caster* (London, 1620), title page. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Melton describes a range of aids therefore, some of them seemingly magical, such as the silver wand and watering pot, others more clearly for celestial observation or calculation, notably the astrolabe, although the author later derides all the astrologer's apparatus as 'meere superstitious Ornaments' akin to the trappings of papists (the

book is vehemently anti-Catholic). The title page also illustrates the scene (FIGURE 8.6), with the astrologer shown holding the astrolabe (in fact rendered as an armillary sphere) and the 'Mathematical Glasse', an object with which he claims he can see 'all things done in Christendome'.³⁵ The wand sits with his books on the table. Books such as the ephemeris have their place in the text, the astrologer declaring that, 'this Booke (meaning his *Ephemerides*) with my Art and Industrie, shall be the Instrumentall Causes to make you happie in the recoverie of that which is worthie both of my Care and your Cost'.³⁶

It is worth noting the resemblance of *Astrologaster's* title page to that of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, which was published the same year and most likely used Forman, who was gaining some notoriety by then, as a model for its main protagonist.³⁷ This image shows Faustus standing inside a magical circle marked with astrological and other glyphs, with a book in his hand, while a demon stands to the right in the foreground. The image used for *Astrologaster* also subsequently appeared on the title page of a very different work, *The Dutch Fortune-Teller ... Brought into England by John Booker* (1650 and later editions). This sets out the principles of a divinatory system combining letters, words and numbers, and making use of dice, 'wheels' and 'globes' to make predictions. Booker thought of the system as a form of natural magic to be taken seriously, but complained that others seemed to see it as a jest.³⁸ The title-page image for *Astrologaster* seems, therefore, to have aligned easily with magical readings.

Like *Astrologaster*, Thomas Tomkis's *Albumazar. A Comedy*, first performed and published in 1615, attacked astrology and its false practitioners. In the play's tale of love and marriage, the astrologer Albumazar, who claims to practise alchemy and necromancy as well, is a fraud who bamboozles his intended victims with verbose gibberish, saying at one point that,

... with scioferical instrument,
By way of Azimuth and Almicantarath
I'll seek some happy pointe in heaven for you.³⁹

³⁵ Melton, *Astrologaster*, p. 10.

³⁶ Melton, *Astrologaster*, p. 9.

³⁷ Cerasano, 'Philip Henslowe', esp. pp. 146–50.

³⁸ Capp, 'Booker, John'.

³⁹ Thomas Tomkis, *Albumazar. A Comedy* [1620], ed. Hugh G. Dick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), p. 89.

In another place, he coins the wonderfully overblown compound 'Necro-puro-geo-hydro-cheiro-coscinomancy'. Albumazar's material aids include an ephemeris and an increasingly fantastic set of instruments, from the plausible, recently invented 'perspicill' (telescope), to an 'Otacousticon' for improved hearing, which turns out to be no more than an artificial pair of ass's ears, and a 'wind instrument' that can be used to speak in ten languages.⁴⁰

Pulling these threads together can perhaps shed a little more light on perceptions, and thus the practices, of the consultant astrologer. As Melton's and Tomkis's descriptions indicate, the role of instruments such as an astrolabe or telescope, as well as other objects, may be as much about credibility and claims of disciplinary grounding as about actual use within the routine practice of consultation. Such objects might be there to assure the client that the practitioner has the right tools for the job – in this case tools for measuring and studying the heavens – and knows how to use them in the execution of their art. In the case of a celestial globe, which provides a map of the whole sky, one can also imagine it taking on a didactic role, helping to explain the principles or specifics of a case. There is an obvious theatricality in this use of props to create an aura of credibility for the client, a theatricality that Melton and Tomkis play up, both suggesting that such props and the lengthy explanations the practitioner has for them are intended to befuddle the unwary client. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to imagine consultants like Lilly or Forman deploying instruments in a more didactic/symbolic way, although perhaps not the exaggerated cap, silver wand and mathematical glass.

Secondly, deploying such paraphernalia, printed and manuscript texts included, may not in itself ensure that others will agree that the practitioner is legitimate and virtuous. Rather, an observer might interpret such items as the deliberately deceptive trappings of a deceitful practitioner or of a magical (and thus possibly suspect) one – as Melton certainly does in his extended diatribe and Tomkis does by confounding different practices in Albumazar's eclectic mix of systems. In other words, the tools deployed might equally raise suspicions for those who suspect that something is amiss. This is an important point to bear in mind given the close and generally assumed links that existed between astrology, magic and other often suspect arts in the period.⁴¹ Not all associations were happy ones.

It is not surprising, therefore, also to see images of astrologers within satirical contexts that are strikingly similar to those intended to be taken straight. Indeed, the two might be all but indistinguishable. The best satire, after all, trades on plausibility.

⁴⁰ Tomkis, *Albumazar*, pp. 80–82, 85, 96.

⁴¹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline*, pp. 631–35.

In the second part of *Hudibras* (1664–78), a mock-epic poem satirizing the different factions in the English Civil War, Samuel Butler introduces an astrologer, Sidrophel, who is recognizably a parody of William Lilly.⁴² Sidrophel is not only dishonest, but also a fool, as Butler illustrates through his (mis)use of instruments and poor celestial knowledge. Outside the astrologer's house, his '*Mansion prudently contriv'd*', for example, stands an obelisk,

On which was written, not in words,
But *Hieroglyphick* Mute of *Birds*,
Many rare pithy *Saws* concerning
The Worth of *Astrologick* Learning:
From Top of this there hung a *rope*,
To which he fastned *Telescope*;
The *Spectacles* with which the *Stars*
He reads in smallest *Characters*.⁴³

Yet Sidrophel is no true astrologer and mistakes a light hung from a kite for a celestial omen of the world's end. In this respect he is a 'virtuoso', a dabbler in scientific ideas, full of speculation yet oblivious to the real world around him and easy to fool. In the post-Restoration era that witnessed the foundation of the Royal Society and reports of the extraordinary, and to some people's eyes ridiculous, things they saw fit to investigate and discuss, virtuosi became stock figures in satirical plays and poems, the predecessors of today's absent-minded professor.⁴⁴ Butler's conceit goes further as Sidrophel and *Hudibras* argue about astrology, resulting in a fight in which *Hudibras* overpowers the astrologer and turns out his pockets. The results are equally revealing:

First, He expounded both his Pockets,
And found a *Watch*, with *Rings* and *Lockets*,
Which had been left with him, t'erec
A *Figure* for, and so detect.
A *Copper-Plate*, with *Almanacks*
Engrav'd upon't, with other knacks,
Of *Booker's*, *Lilly's*, *Sarah Jimmers*,

⁴² Curry, 'Lilly, William'.

⁴³ Samuel Butler, *Hudibras. The Second Part* (London: T. R. for John Martyn and James Allestry, 1664), p. 160–61.

⁴⁴ Richard Dunn, *The Telescope: A Short History* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2009), pp. 52–54; Roslynn D. Haynes, *From Faust to Strangelove. Representations of the Scientist in Western Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 35–49.

And *Blank-Schemes* to discover *Nimmers*;
 A *Moon-Dial*, with *Napiers* bones,
 And severall *Constellation*-stones,
 Engrav'd in *Planetary hours*,
 That over *Mortals* had strange powers
 To make 'em thrive in *Law*, or *Trade*;
 And stab, or poyson, to evade;
 In *Wit*, or *Wisdom* to improve,
 And be victorious in *Love*.⁴⁵

Again, we have a range of tools the astrologer might use or have around him: the figure as the key artefact of the consultation; the plate with almanacs on it (the equivalent of an ephemeris); calculation aids (Napier's bones); and a time-telling device (the moon dial). What Butler also seems to be doing is deliberately confounding astrological and magical imagery to satirical and polemical effect. There are items not just for making predictions, but also for effecting changes in the world. Butler draws astrological and magical practice deliberately close.

William Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695) also knowingly references William Lilly for its virtuoso/astrologer, Foresight. In the play, Sir Sampson Legend believes he is to be married to the niece of the astrologer and at one point declares,

Where is this old Soothsayer? This Uncle of mine elect? a ha, Old *Foresight*, Uncle *Foresight*, wish me Joy Uncle *Foresight*, double Joy, both as Uncle and Astrologer; here's a Conjunction that was not foretold in all your *Ephemeris*. The brightest Star in the blew Firmament – is shot from above, in a Jelly of Love, and so forth; and I'm Lord of the Ascendant.⁴⁶

Shortly afterwards, Foresight's niece Angelica declares that she hopes her uncle will consent to act in the place of her father and give her away at the marriage. 'That he shall,' declares Sir Sampson, 'or I'll burn his Globes'.⁴⁷ This is an interesting detail – a rare identification of one of the instruments symbolically associated with astrological practice in images of consultant and other astrologers. Again, one must recognize the satirical intent, but also acknowledge the use of what must have been plausible imagery at the time.

⁴⁵ Butler, *Hudibras*, pp. 209–10.

⁴⁶ William Congreve, *Love for Love. A Comedy* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1695), p. 60.

⁴⁷ Congreve, *Love for Love*, p. 60.

Conclusion

In trying to pin down some practical aspects of the astrologer's art in the early modern period, this chapter has drawn on disparate sources: frontispieces and other images; satirical and polemical writings; astrological casebooks and text-books. A number of suggestions can be drawn from this brief survey. The surviving records of astrological consultants such as Richard Napier and Simon Forman suggest that the key artefacts within the consulting space – the astrologer's study – were paper-based: manuscripts (horary figures and client notes in the casebooks) and books (ephemerides). Time-telling instruments, sundials in particular, played a role in determining the hour of the question/judgement, although they are rarely mentioned because their role was so unproblematic. The use of other instruments, however, was less obviously active during the consultation. Nonetheless, images of Lilly, Coley and others, as well as polemical and satirical descriptions, suggest a symbolic, legitimising and perhaps didactic role for material aids such as globes (which Lilly certainly owned) and observing instruments, although the suspicion that these and other artefacts were the trappings of false or dangerously magical practices might arise.

The relative stability of the iconography of astrologers, often shown accompanied by a fixed set of attributes including globes and dividers suggests, therefore, an image of 'rhetorical practice' rather than an image of working practice as it routinely took place in the astrologer's workspace. The authority of the practitioner, these images suggest, comes from observations of the heavens based on and codified with instruments and texts, then made concrete through the act of inscribing the horary figure and passing judgement. The astrologer, through his interpretation of the heavenly dispositions with the help of these aids, uses his art to bring stability and order to what might otherwise seem a chaotic universe and to help the client negotiate their future path.

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