

MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Astrology, History, Spirit and Soul
Week 5
Astrology in Medieval Europe: Required reading
Nick Campion

Required Reading for all students
Historiography

Evans, Richard, *In Defence of History*, London: Granta Books 1997, Chapter 4.

Kassell, Lauren (5 May 2010). "Stars, spirits, signs: towards a history of astrology 1100–1800". *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* **41** (2): 67–69.

[doi:10.1016/j.shpsc.2010.04.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsc.2010.04.001).

Nick Campion Notes on Astrological Historiography
Remember, as lecture notes these are not quotable, but you can use them as a resource.

Secondary Sources

Campion, Nicholas, *A History of Western Astrology*, Vol. 2, Chapters 1-6.

Primary Sources

The primary source reading this week is lighter and tends to the theoretical. Only the section from Bonatus on 4th House Elections gives you a flavour of practical astrology. Elections, of course, are horoscopes set for auspicious moment to launch new enterprises. A 4th house election would concern property matters, amongst other things.

Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans James F. Anderson, Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975, books two and three, extracts.

Book 3, chaps 84 – 100, 104.

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/44934/>

Thomas Aquinas was called upon to provide a response to the challenge of astrological material which implied that the soul was subject to the stars, and hence the ability to make moral choices and choose salvation through Christ was

restricted. These chapters are the crucial passages in which he reconciled Christian doctrine with astrological influence.

Bonatus, Guido, 'Considerations' trans. William Lilly, London 1676.
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A48494.0001.001/1:6.2?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>

Paras 1,2,3, 7, 10, 11 and 12.

Bonatus, or Bonati, was one of the most famous astrologers of the 13th century. The Considerations was a set of preliminary rules on the interpretation of horoscopes. Many of the paragraphs are highly technical but the ones we have recommended give a flavour of the cosmological ideas underpinning technical astrology.

Bonatus, Guido, 4th House Elections, extracted from Bonatti, Guido, *Liber Astronomiae*, trans. Benjamin Dykes, 2 Vols., Golden Valley MN, The Cazimi Press, 2007.
<http://www.skyscript.co.uk/4elect.html>

The language may be unfamiliar and you should not be daunted by the technicalities, but this passage gives an idea of the kind of questions which astrologers were asked.

Ptolemy, Claudius, *Centiloquium*, transcribed and annotated by Deborah Houlding from the Henry Coley edition. Paragraphs 1-14.
<http://www.skyscript.co.uk/centiloquium1.html>

It is now known that Ptolemy was not the author of the *Centiloquium*. However, it was translated into Latin in the 12th century and became an essential work for students of astrology, based on the understanding that Ptolemy was the author.

Required Reading if you intend to write on medieval astrology

Secondary Sources

Grant, Edward, 'A New Look at Medieval Cosmology, 1200-1687', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 129, No. 4 (Dec. 1985), pp. 417-432. (Available on JSTOR).

Laird, Edgar, 'Heaven and the Sphaera Mundi', *Culture & Cosmos*, Vol. 4 no 1, Spring/Summer 2000, pp.10-35.

http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/pdfs/4-1/4-1_Laird_Sphaera_Mundi.pdf

Poss, Richard L, 'Stars and Spirituality in the Cosmology of Dante's *Commedia*', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 5 no 1, Spring/Summer 2001, pp. 49-66.

http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/pdfs/5/5-1-dante_stars_spirituality.pdf

A good insight into astrology and literature in the fourteenth century.

Avelar, Helena, with an introduction by Charles Burnett, 'The Interpretation of a Horoscope Cast by Abraham the Jew in Béziers for a Child Born on 29 November 1135: An essay in understanding a Medieval astrologer', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 18 no 2, Autumn/Winter 2014, pp. 19-40. (PDF on Moodle)

Hendrix, Scott, 'Choosing to be Human: Albert the Great on self-awareness and celestial influence', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 12 no 2, Autumn/Winter 2008, pp. 23-41.

http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/pdfs/12/12-2_hendrix_self_awareness.pdf