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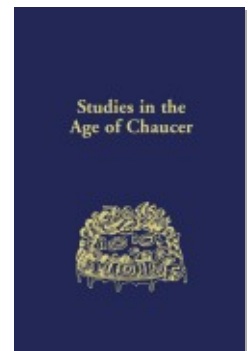
*The Forgotten Sky: A Guide to Astrology in English
Literature* by J. C. Eade (review)

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J. C. EADE. *The Forgotten Sky: A Guide to Astrology in English Literature*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1984. Pp. xiii, 230. \$34.50.

Medieval and Renaissance authors assumed that their audiences possessed a knowledge of astronomy, astrology, and literary tradition. Formerly this assumption was warranted, but in today's atmosphere of specialization only a few possess expertise in all three areas.

J. C. Eade is one of these few. *The Forgotten Sky*, which he modestly calls a "handbook," is divided into three sections: a compendium of simple astronomy, an explanation of the mysteries of astrology, and the application of both to passages selected from Chaucer and his successors.

Eade, whose home base is the Humanities Research Centre of the Australian National University, begins with a section of pre-Copernican astronomical truisms known to most literate people in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. These facts, and they are facts, are based on observations made with the naked eye. For instance, one does not need a telescope to learn that the courses of the stars are regular and that the place of the planets can be observed and predicted. The astronomy chapters form a useful prelude to the discussion of astrology, defining azimuth, conjunction, declination, ecliptic, equinox, latitude, longitude, meridian, oblique ascension, right ascension, tropic, and zodiac. These terms, of course, have relationships to each other, and the relationships are customarily expressed mathematically. Unlike some scholars of literature, Eade shows no fear of mathematics. He lucidly describes the differences of, say, right ascension from longitude or declination from latitude, and for those who wish to delve further he provides an appendix with the relevant trigonometric equations.

Astrology, as Eade points out, is a bogus science. Its basic tenets are illogical, without factual foundation. But given the basic false premises, what follows is entirely rational and so schematic that he who discusses it without proper grounding is in jeopardy of revealing his own lack of expertise. Astrology may be compared to the deepest mysteries of a ritualistic lodge, such as the Loyal and Beneficent Order of Whatever, which exists only to perpetuate its own mysteries and exclude those not conversant with them. Astrology takes off from astronomy: where astronomy tells us the past and future positions of celestial bodies, astrology arbitrarily gives them anthropomorphic properties on a sliding scale which alters the power of the heavenly bodies as they move from place to place.

The various localities of celestial bodies allegedly affect human activity in complex and mysterious ways known only to the competent astrologer. Fortunately for the reader, Eade not only explains astrology but also defines its terms as thoroughly as he does those of astronomy. The astrological definitions include accidental, *alchocoden*, *almuten*, antiscion, aspect, cusp, dignity, dragon's head, dragon's tail, essential, exaltation, face, *gaudium*, horoscope, house, hyleg, lord, mansion, orb, partile, platic, term, and triplicity. An almost infinite number of conditions may be postulated with seven planets believed to be circling the earth and each at a given time having a varying spatial relationship to the earth and to each of the others.

The third section, which is the longest and presumably the most interesting to readers of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, is the application of astronomy and especially astrology to selected literary texts. The first third of this section is devoted to the many astrological passages found in Chaucer. Giving full credit to earlier scholars, Eade analyzes each reference, casts a horoscope when appropriate, and properly relates the astrological balance thus received to the literary quality of the text. This is very valuable information indeed. Eade then applies the same treatment to selections from Lydgate; James I of Scotland; the author of *The Flower and the Leaf*; Blind Harry, the minstrel; John Skelton; Sir David Lindsay; John Bellenden, of *The Bannatyne Manuscript*; Gavin Douglas; Robert Greene; Herbert Spenser; Shakespeare; John Webster; John Fletcher; Philip Massinger; John Wilson, the Restoration dramatist; Dryden; Congreve; Hogarth; and Sterne.

Occasionally I question Eade's conclusions. In spite of his excellent argument, it still seems hard to believe that in the *Prologue to The Man of Law's Tale* (lines 1-14) Chaucer confuses the artificial and azimuthal arcs: the Host does. Second, in the *Tale* itself (lines 310-15) it is not Chaucer who bemoans the absence of a judicial astrologer to warn Custance's father against permitting her to leave home. It is the narrator, the Man of Law. Chaucer clearly states that he does not subscribe to judicial astrology directly after he defines it in *The Treatise on the Astrolabe* (2.4) in a passage quoted by Eade. Then Chaucer says firmly, in an immediate subsequent passage which Eade does not quote, that "these ben obseruances of judicial matere and rytes of payens in whiche my spirit hath no feith." But these are small matters. They are open to dispute, and I have disputed some of them before with Eade. They do not by any means subtract from the excellence of his study.

The book is well documented and well indexed. The trigonometric formulas in the appendix should certainly be welcomed by those readers who wish to carry out their own experiments with astronomical and astrological references. Eade is kind enough to his readers to provide them with frequent and logical cross references, human enough to complain from his Australian viewpoint about "northern hemisphere discrimination," and gracious enough to give full honor to his predecessors. The result has unquestioned value. Modern scholars and critics, who may be steeped in the niceties of historical and critical theory, might do well to bring to their medieval and Renaissance texts the astronomical, astrological, scientific, and mathematical information which Eade offers. Mercury and the Head of the Dragon must have been in ascendency at the hour of his nativity.

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LOIS EBIN, ed. *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*. Studies in no. 16. *Medieval Culture*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984. Pp. xi, 293. \$12.00.

This collection of eleven essays provides us with studies on poetic creation, speaking in broad terms, in the Middle Ages. Four were originally delivered as papers at the meeting of the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University at a special session in 1977; the other seven presumably were solicited by the editor. The book's long gestation period explains why some of the studies seem to be recent (J. B. Allen refers to his own publication of 1982) whereas others are of an earlier vintage (. . . a certain work, Madison, 1978, "is a valuable contribution which appeared after the writing of this essay;" p. 244).

Many of the contributors touch upon general poetic theory in passing; more often than not, though, what we find are studies of poetic developments among specific national groups, more being specifically English than others. This reviewer wishes that the national boundaries had more frequently been overlooked. For example, the last essay in the collection, "Poetics and Style in Late Medieval Literature," by the editor, treats the