



THE SMITHSONIAN ASTROLOGY AND COSMIC SOCIETY LIBRARY
PRESENTS

FATE FORETOLD: A BRIEF HISTORY ON ASTROLOGY

BY: ARIELE DASHOW
LIS5937: RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



EXHIBIT DESCRIPTION

Embark on a celestial journey through the ages, delving into the fascinating world of astrology. Explore the origins of this ancient practice and the visionary thinkers who shaped its foundations. Discover how astrology has been embraced by diverse cultures, from ancient Egypt to modern-day society. Unravel the intricate tapestry of divination and occult practices, where astrology intertwines with other mystical arts. Witness the profound impact of astrology on art, literature, and medicine. Unlock the secrets of your own birth chart and gain insights into your unique cosmic identity. This exhibit seeks to take viewers on a journey through the heavens to garner a better understanding of the origins of astrology, its significance and influence within society, and the modern-day hype over the zodiacs, planetary alignments, and daily horoscopes. Take a chance with fate and explore this collection of rare texts, sketches, and artifacts that demonstrate our time-defying connection to the stars.



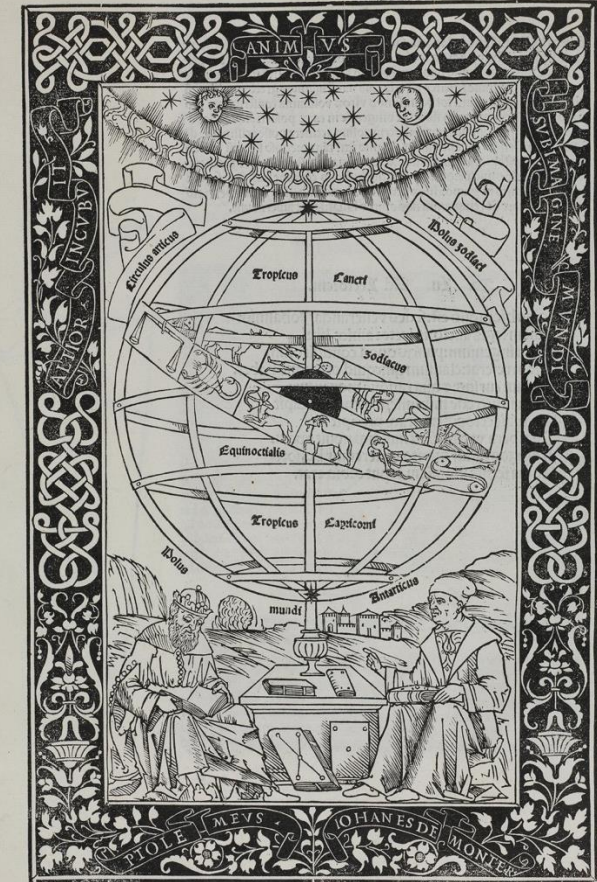
EXHIBIT SECTIONS



THE ORIGINS OF ASTROLOGY

The origins of astrology can be traced back by thousands of years and to multiple different cultures. Each with their own subset of beliefs and practices within the zodiacs, astronomers, mathematicians, scientists, philosophers, and scholars alike have written about our ever-turning cosmos. Before man's concrete comprehension of the natural and unnatural forces of the planets, sun, and moon, astrology was the belief we turned to.

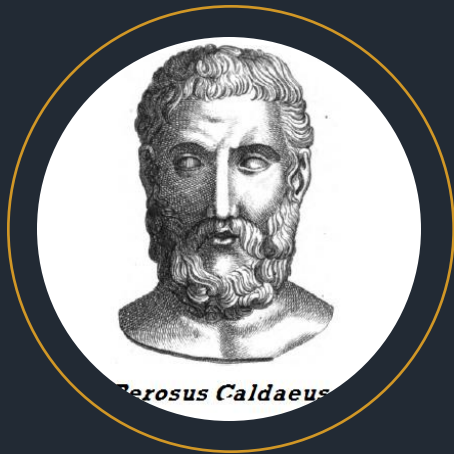
Leaders in this field, such as Ptolemy and Kepler combined their practical understandings of science with the uncontrollable nature of the world around them to bring forward a glimpse of our heavens in ways still not entirely understood.



The Almagest, Ptolemy

Source: [The University of Oklahoma Libraries](#)

THE ORIGINAL STAR CHARTERS



BEROSSUS
~ 290 BC

Priest, Astrologer,
Historian



PTOLEMY
100 CE-170CE

Astrologist, Astronomer,
Mathematician,
Geographer



TYCHO BRAHE
1546-1601

Astronomer, Astrologist,
Engineer



JOHANNES KEPLER
1571-1630

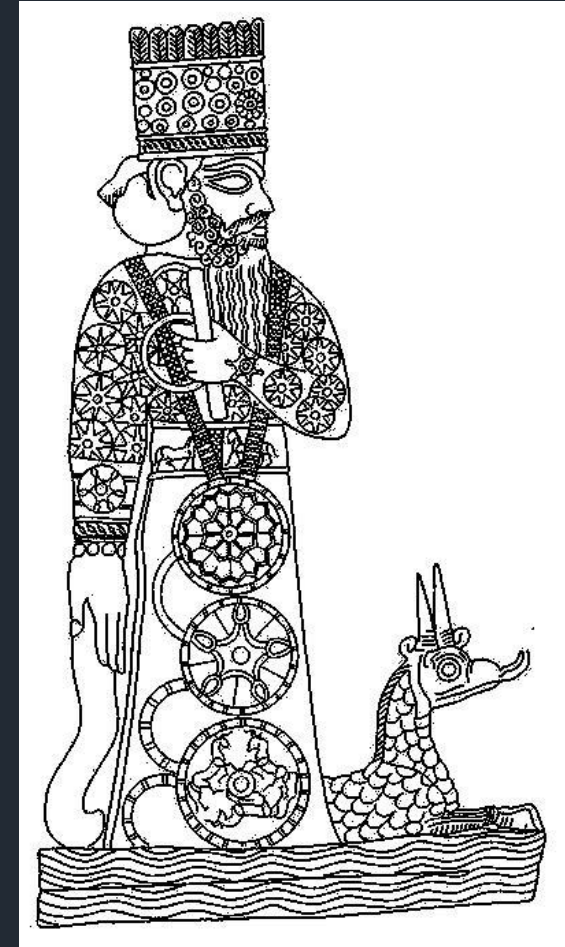
Astronomer, Astrologist,
Scientist

THE ORIGINAL STAR CHARTERS

BEROSSUS

Berossus is a historically renowned figure in Greek and Babylonian history. As an early priest in Babylonia, he recorded the history and culture of the empire over a series of three books, which later heavily used by Greek scholars and the recipients of their work. While a Priest by title, Berossus described the Babylonian religious views in ways of Chaldean astrology, a belief system based on the astrological teachings of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Persia. This charted the beginning of what we know to be the Zodiac Signs.

Despite these texts only existing in fragmented citation in modern times, his description and experience with Chaldean astrology are innately tied to widespread astrological influence among societal and scientific explorations alike.



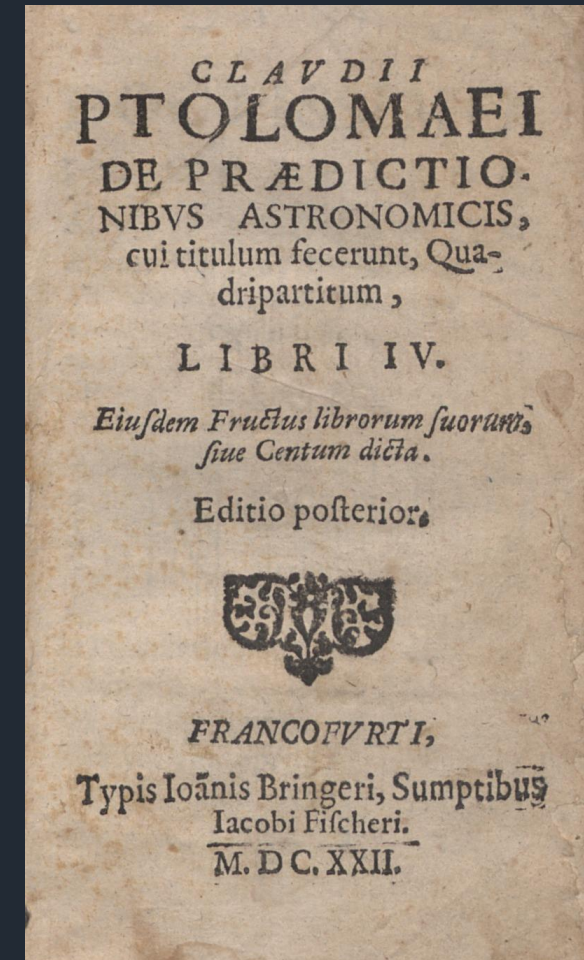
Marduk, The Chief God of Babylon and his Snake Dragon
Source: [Livius](#)

THE ORIGINAL STAR CHARTERS

PTOLEMY

Claudius Ptolemy (100CE-170CE) widely cited for his influence and landmark discoveries as to the regular and irregular planetary movements of the Sun, Moon, and other recognized planets. These mathematic discoveries and early charts helped lay the foundations to the astrological beliefs that dominated the Western world.

His texts, the *Apotelesmatika*, (later renamed *Tertrabiblios* for its entire four volumes) described the tangible effects the heavens had on the physical world. This remains one of Ptolemy's most complicated works to those who do not fully embrace the interplay between the intangible, the known, and prophecy. His last works were also heavily influenced by Aristotle.

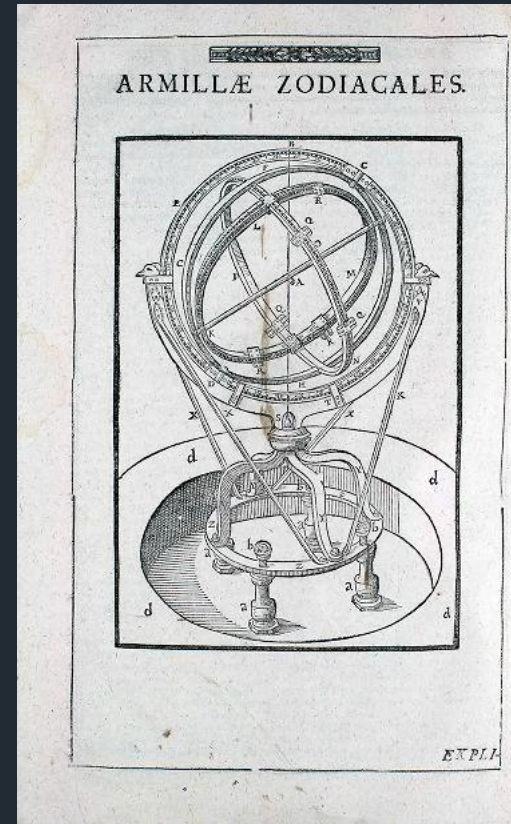


THE ORIGINAL STAR CHARTERS

TYCHO BRAHE

While originally a scholar of law, Tycho Brahe became fascinated with the cosmos after witnessing a solar eclipse and discovering the horrible inaccuracy of his provided almanacs. He quickly found Aristotle's few attachments to the study of astrology to be more accurate than Ptolemy's. From there, Brahe dedicated the rest of his studies and travels to the furthering of cosmic study and discovery.

His astrological works became heavily influenced by the constellations and his discovery of a new star in the Cassiopeia constellation. By the end of his life, he had corrected almost every astrological record and almanac.



Astronomiæ Instauratæ Mechanica by Tycho Brahe

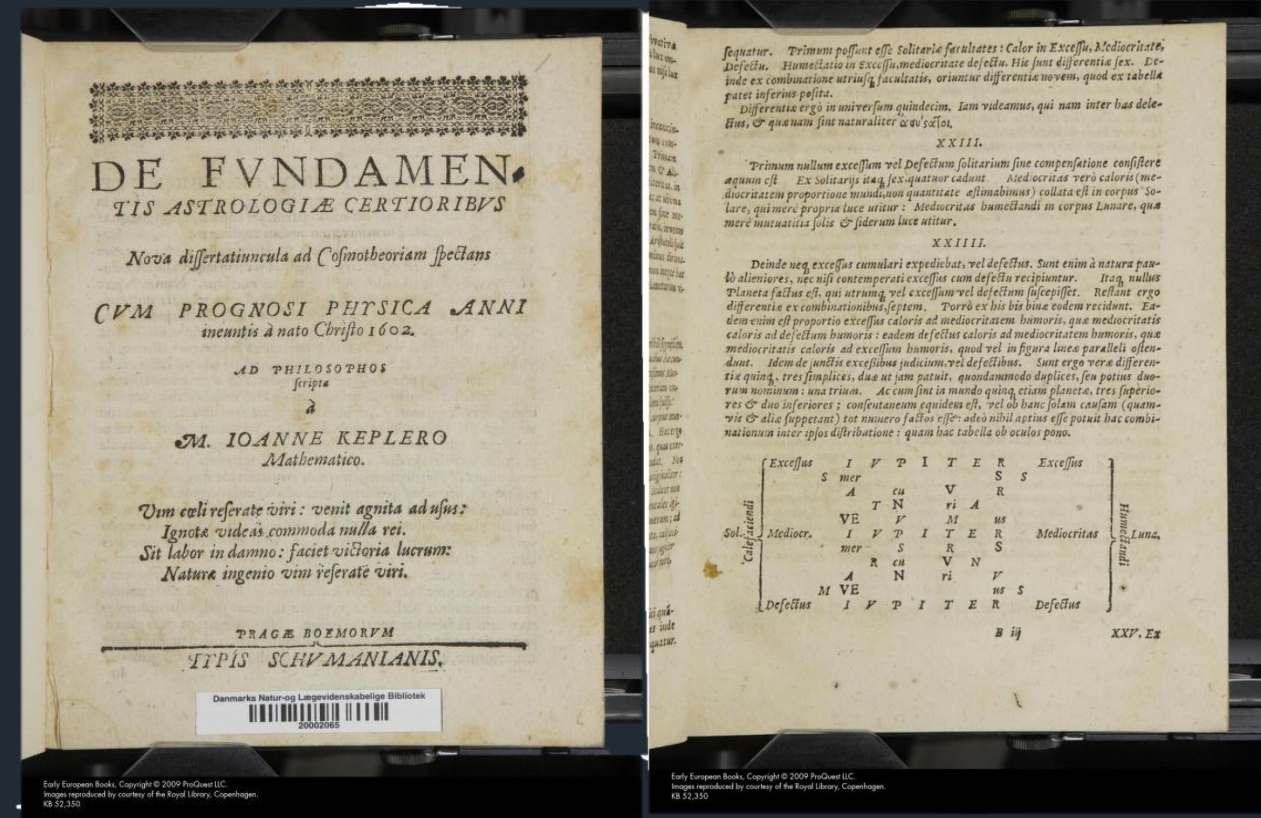
Source: [Smithsonian Libraries](#)

THE ORIGINAL STAR CHARTERS

JOHANNES KEPLER

Johannes Kepler reshaped the foundations of astrology through his practiced works in astronomy and the laws of planetary motion. While he did not term these as “laws” like some of his predecessors, but instead attributed these discoveries to celestial harmonies between God and His universal design.

Kepler’s list of achievements do not do him justice as to the wisdom and advancements he provided in his scholarly and worldly disciplines. Within astrology, his principles helped with making annual predictions on individuals, cities, the weather, and the human body.



De Fundamentis Astrologiae Certioribus by Kepler
Source: [The Royal Library \(Copenhagen\)](#)



UNDER THE SAME HEAVENS: EAST MEETS WEST

ASTROLOGY HAS BEEN INTERPRETED MANY DIFFERENT TIMES OVER MANY DIFFERENT CULTURES. HOWEVER, THERE IS A STARK COMAPRRISON TO BE MADE BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF OUR COSMOS. FROM ANCIENT CHINA TO THE NEW AGE OF AMERICANA, ASTROLOGY HAS LEFT ITS UNIQUE TRACE THROUGH THE HEAVENS AND EARTH.

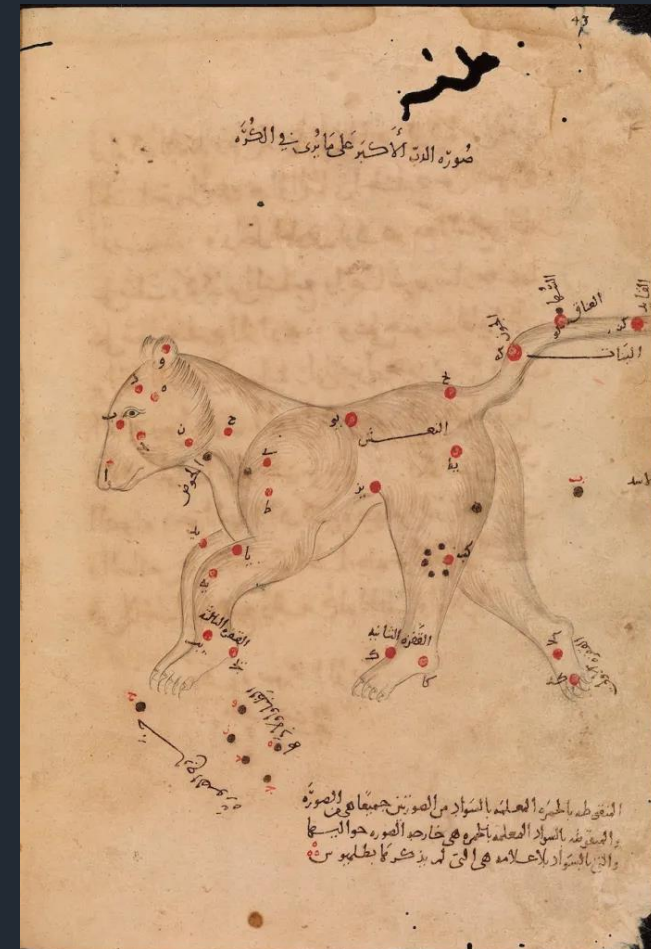


UNDER THE SAME HEAVENS: THE EAST

Eastern Astrology ties back to the older practices of Chinese, Hindu, and Islamic practices, where the representation of the the “traditionally” known zodiac signs are distinguished through different animals and names, and sometimes even by older Gods. Major astrological influences came about during times of exploration, struggle, war, and new age, as each experience brought on new or different reasons to indulge on or embark from their ancient traditions. Events such as the Silk Road during the Chinese Tang period brought in outside astrological influences and adopted a more scientific foundation.



Islamic representation of Sagittarius, 'The Archer' (above)
Source: [Library of Congress](#)



Animal Sketch from *The Book of Fixed Stars*
by Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi
Source: [Library of Congress](#)



UNDER THE SAME HEAVENS: THE WEST

Western Astrology embodies what is more understood as the standard 12 zodiacs, planetary alignment, and the individual's alignment to those heavens. It was recognized, and disputed by many in early English, Italian, and French works, but did not find popularity in the United States until the 1930's, when daily horoscope column became popular in newspapers. Astrology has seen a consistent rise and fall in popularity and practice due to evolving religious and societal beliefs but has resecured its following in mainstream media and holistic practice. In modern times, most astrology beliefs and practices are tied to modernized witchcraft, herbalism, and holistic medicine. Some individuals even use their astrological beliefs to connect themselves with their ancestors and heritage.



Pagan Gods Astarte and Head of Neith by John Singer Sargent. c/ 1895
Source: [John Singer Sargent Gallery](#)



Zodiaque "La Plume" by Alphonso Mucha, c. 1896
Source: [The Art Institute of Chicago](#)



ASTROLOGICAL INFLUENCE

ASTROLOGY HAS DONE MORE THAN JUST INFLUENCE PHILOSOPHERS AND ASTRONOMERS ON THEIR ADVANCEMENTS BUT HAS ALSO TAKEN AFFECT INTO SOCIETIES AND THEIR CULTURAL AFFECTS ACROSS THE GLOBE. EACH WITH THEIR OWN REPRESENTATION OF THE HEAVENS, ASTROLOGY BECAME A RECURRING THEME ACROSS ART, LITERATURE, AND MEDICINE.



ASTROLOGICAL INFLUENCE: ART

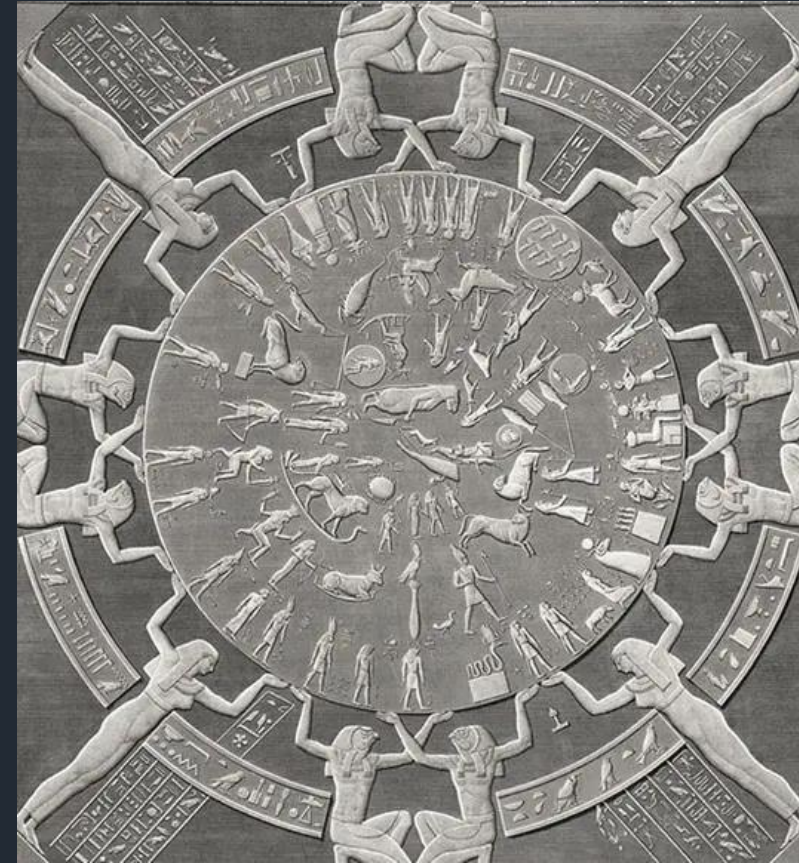


Très Riches Heures de Jean de Berry, illustrated by the Limbourg Brothers, c. 15th century

Source: [Château de Chantilly Institut de France](#)

Astrology and art have arguably one of the most natural influences on each other, as the representation of astrology itself requires intricate art and representation that can change between cultures and individuals. Art, in turn, acts as an outlet for unearthly expression and exploration.

As astrology is present in nearly every early civilization, its recognition in those culture's art is mirrored. Unless focusing on a specific zodiac, the common structure of astrologically-inspired art marries the governing religion or belief system to the heavenly signs. As comparable between the 15th century French print and the 14th century Egyptian carving, both display the 12 zodiac signs in a wheel-like shape and connect them to the human experience.

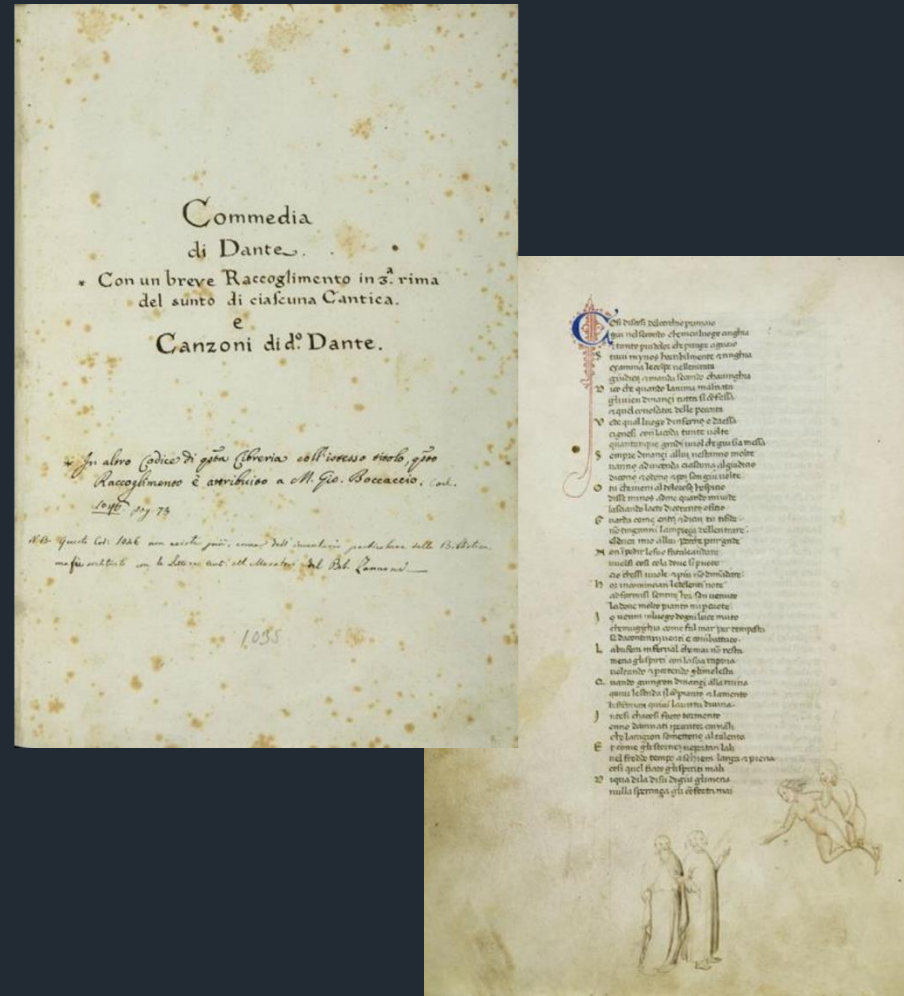


Description de l'Égypt by Edouard Devilliers du Terrage

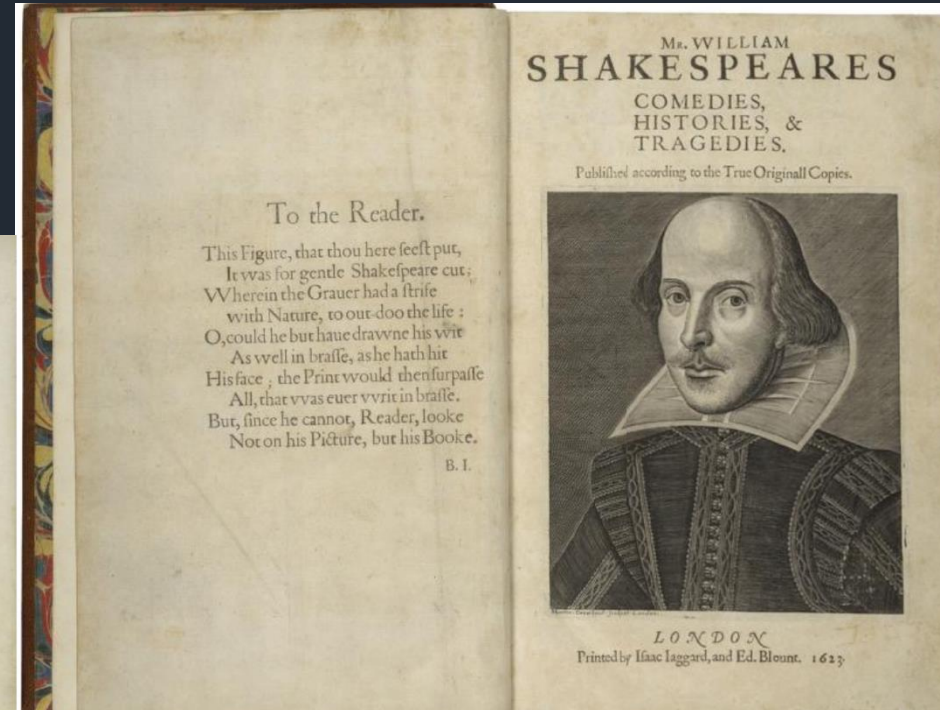
Source: [Linda Hall Library](#)

ASTROLOGICAL INFLUENCE: LITERATURE

Astrology in literature, outside of written horoscopes, became a matter of poetry, criticism, enlightenment, and acceptance. Two noteworthy authors, Dante Alighieri and William Shakespeare reveled in the topic of astrology within their works, sometimes heavily denying its existence such as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where fate is forever a step ahead, or by celebrating it through an anthology of poetry like in Dante's *La Divina Commedia* in which plays on the physical manifestations of the heavens, hell, and divine comings.

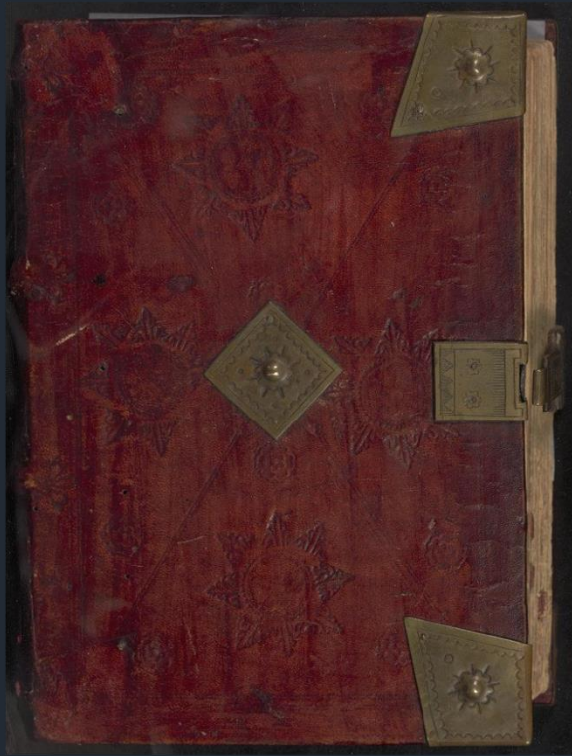


La Divina Commedia by Dante Alighieri (above)
Source: [Library of Congress](#)

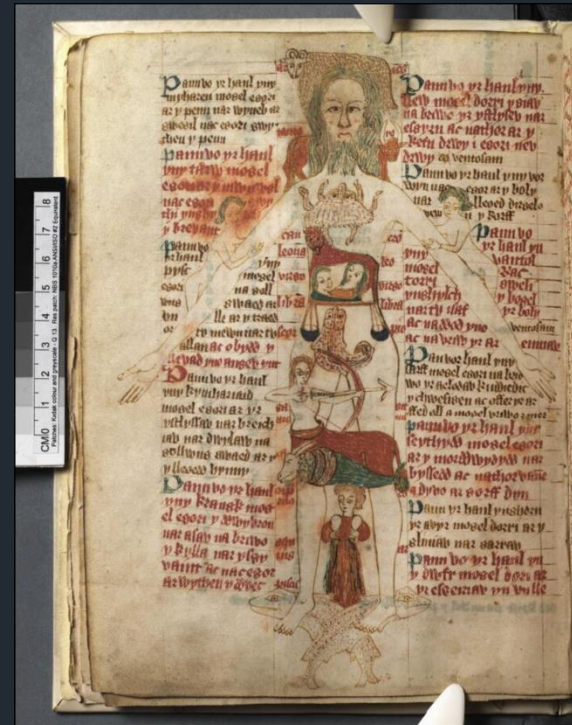


The First Folio of William Shakespeare, c. 1616 (right)
Source: [Library of Congress](#)

ASTROLOGICAL INFLUENCE: MEDICINE



Margarita Philosophica Cover and Sketch, Gregor Reisch, c. 1503 (left and center)
Source: [Library of Congress](#)



A Treatise on Urine, Gutun Owain, c. 1488-98 (right)
Source: [The National Library of Wales](#)

Prior to our endeavors into westernized medicine, practitioners believed that certain parts of the body were connected to the Zodiac signs. As represented by both *Margarita Philosophica* by Gregor Reisch and *A Treatise on Urine* by Gutun Owain, the human body is diagramed with different representations of the zodiacs and their affect on that body part is subsequently noted. Based on the ideas of Plato, this idea of stemmed from the belief that the human body is “the microcosm of the human body was thought to contain cosmic relationships of the macrocosm of the universe. Each part of the body was associated with astrological sign”

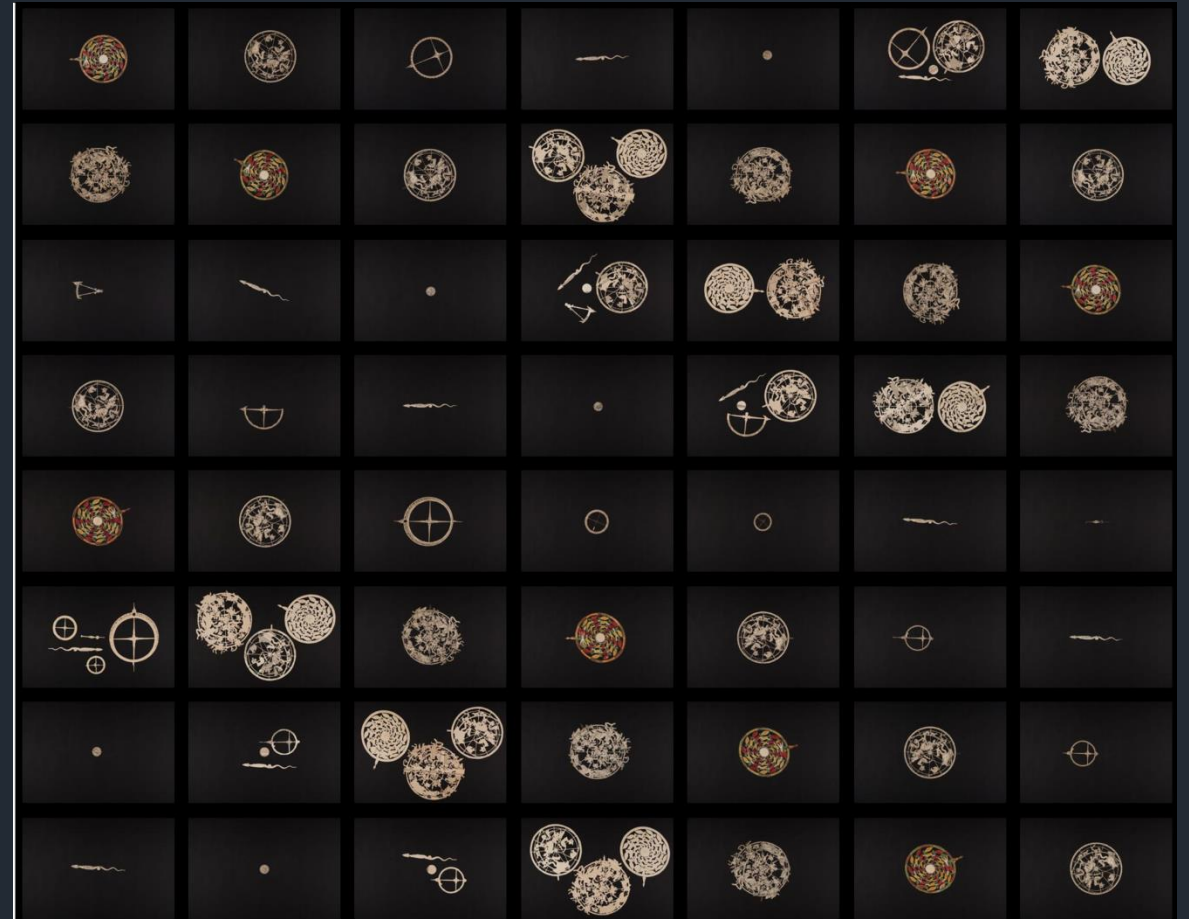


DIVINATION AND THE OCCULT

READING THE STARS AND PREDICTING YOUR HOROSCOPE IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO PRACTICE ASTROLOGY. ANCIENT PRACTICES SUCH AS TAROT CARD READING AND PALMISTRY ARE TWO OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT WITH FATE AND UNDERSTAND YOUR PATH THROUGH LIFE. THESE ARE TWO PRACTICES THAT HAVE MADE THEIR WAY INTO OUR MODERN PRACTICE OF ASTROLOGY AND REMAIN A CONSISTENT CONNECTION TO OUR UNKNOWN.



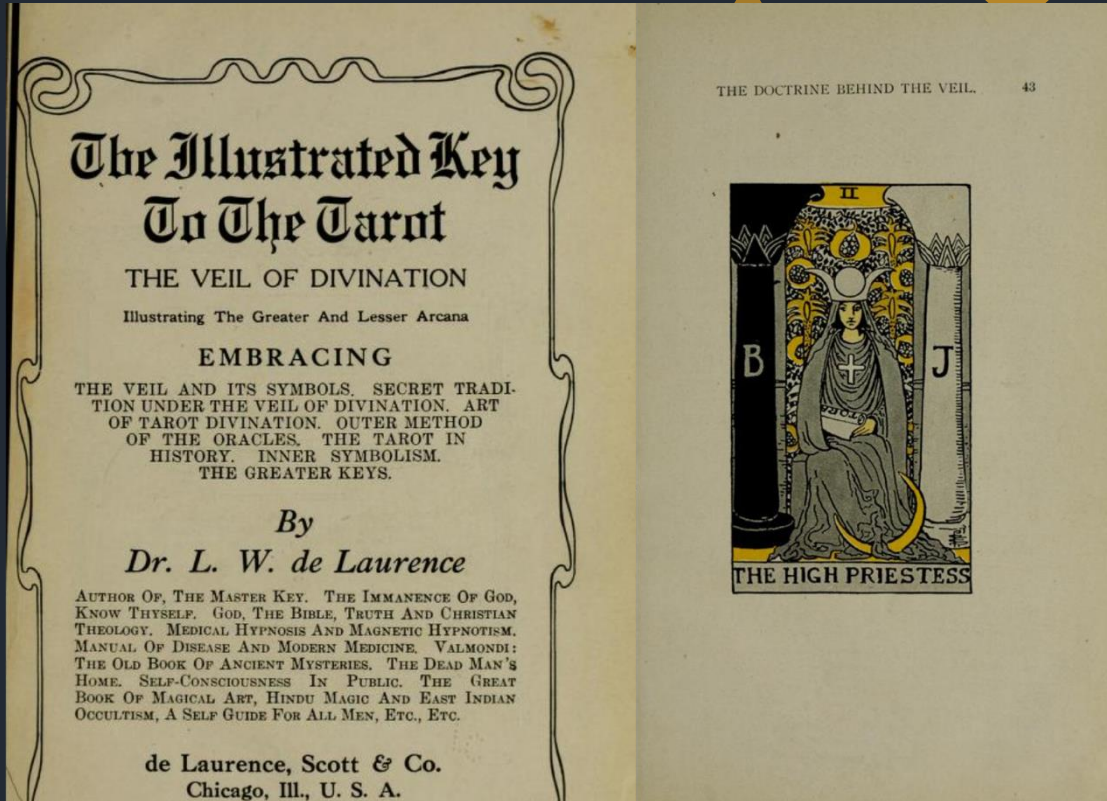
HOROSCOPES



Astrolabium from *The Archidoxa*, (above) and its many pieces (right) by Leonhard Thurneisser c. 1575

The Astrolabium is a complex series of paper rings and charts that can be interchanged depending on the necessary planets, constellations, zodiacs, and other heavenly influences that were to be featured for any given horoscope prediction. These types of charts were extremely popular to use to make horoscopes for individuals, the city, weather predictions, and other natural disasters. To make predictions for different days, the various discs were able to turn and realign to the planetary alignments for any given day. Typical practice would only allow for predictions for the current or upcoming year, and they would be done all at once and written down for the individual to use in their daily lives

TAROT CARDS



The Illustrated Key to The Tarot by Dr. L.W. Laurence

This book encompasses the wide variety of methods of divinity associated with Tarot card reading, including its history, message and card interpretation, Arcana meanings, and symbolism. To the right of the title page (above) is the print of the High Priestess card from the book. This card represents sacred knowledge and femininity; but meanings can change when the card is reversed...

Source: [Library of Congress](#)



Italian/Milanese Tarot Cards, Artist Unknown, c. 19th Century

Tarot was practiced amongst many different cultures, as the cards were seen as a direct correlation to divine messages. The typical deck has 78 cards, split by the Major Arcana and Minor Arcana. The Major Arcana held cards such as The Tower, Strength, The High Priestess, and The Hermit, who were indicative of a major change in life or person. The Minor Arcana are split into four suits: cups, swords, wands, and pentacles. This minor cards held meaning to smaller changes, feelings, and forthcoming

Source: [McClosky's Antiquarian Books and Cards](#)

PALM READINGS



Chiromancy, Artist unknown c. 1533. (above)

This diagram shows practitioners the relative relationships between the planets and the etched lines on the palm of an individual's hand. Each line and sector of the palm had a distinct connection to its ruling planet and that facet of your life. These lines were interpreted to know when someone may find love, their lifespan, future wealth, and others.



The Palmistry Entertainment Of Praetorius, c. 1661 (right)

Some practicing palm readers took advantage of the common person's lack of understanding of palmistry and the cosmos. Many charlatans would travel from town to town, claiming to be able to predict someone's future for a small price, only to be making predictions up as they went along. While a common ploy used even in modern astrological tricks, many were still willing to pay to beat fate.

Source: [National Library Of Medicine](#)



Source: [The Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia](#)

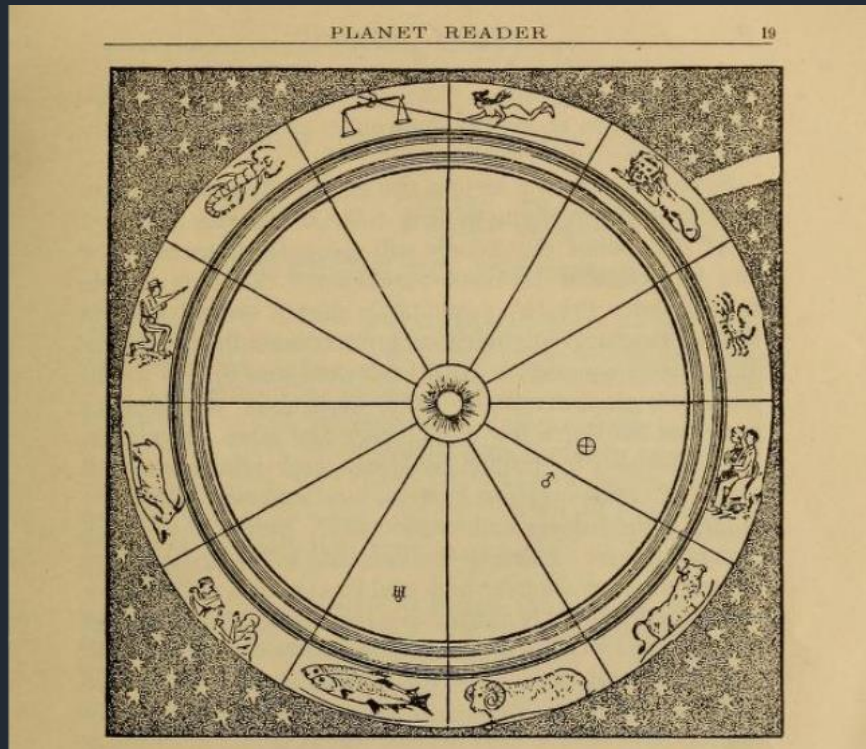


UNDERSTANDING YOUR BIRTH CHART

EVERYONE IS BORN WITH A PLACE IN THE STARS. A BIRTH CHART MAPS THE PLANETARY ALIGNMENTS AT THE DAY, TIME, AND LOCATION THAT ANY GIVEN PERSON WAS BORN. BY USING THE ZODIACS, THEIR ATTRIBUTING PLANETS, AND THE ASTROLOGICAL HOUSES, YOU CAN USE THESE PLACEMENTS TO PREDICT FUTURE FORTHCOMINGS IN YOUR LIFE, SUCH A CAREER, LOVE, PERSONALITY, AND MORE.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR BIRTH CHART



Zodiac Wheel from *Jamieson's Planet Reader, Astrologer's Magazine*, c. 1922

Source: Library of Congress

When it first comes to understanding your own astrology, you must look to where the stars aligned the day you were born. For this you need to have your date, time, and location of birth. Before the rise of technology and apps, astrologers would plot your birth chart by hand by aligning the position of the stars to your birth and comparing it to the location of the zodiacs.

The main part of your birth chart will represent your cosmic relation to your Sun, Moon, and Rising Signs, these are your “Big Three” who make up the basis of your personality and character. You have attachments to each planet in our solar system based on your birth chart as well as “Houses” that represent the different facets of your life, such as career, love, health, and more.



Creating your own birth chart can be an incredibly difficult and inaccurate if you are not a trained astrologer! Scan the QR code above to create your own birth chart with Café Astrology, a free online system that creates and explains your cosmic placements!

FINAL WORD

I hope you have enjoyed your journey through the history of Astrology! While a complex and mystical series of predictions and star patterns, astrology has made its presence in nearly every corner of the world and across time.

We currently live in an age where we can uncover new surfaces of our existence by looking inwards to our conscious and soul, and upwards to the heavens and the unexplainable. Through the internet, social media, and our libraries, we have an untouched potential of garnering information about ourselves and the world around us. Whether its astrology, biology, archeology, or any other wonderful whim of yours, I hope this exhibit has inspired to accept the unknown and pursue the potential. Fate may be foretold in the stars, but the life you live on Earth is yours for the making, so be who you want, how you want, and take fate on your own journey.

Thank you!



PROMOTION

This exhibit will be promoted through the The Smithsonian Astrology and Cosmic Society Library's social media accounts and website, as well as the main Smithsonian Museum social media accounts and website. Subscribers to the Smithsonian's newsletter will be notified of this new exhibit.

Any donors, partners, or related institutions in the area will be notified via email flyer and will encourage them to share the word and join the Society for their grand opening of this exhibit. Signage will be displayed in the month leading up to the grand opening in and around the gallery where it will be held to stir up more interest and attendance.



EXHIBIT CATALOG

1. *The Almagest*

- * Author: Claudius Ptolemy
- * Date: 2nd century CE
- * Description: A foundational astronomical text that laid the groundwork for the Ptolemaic geocentric model of the universe.

2. Marduk and his Snake Dragon

- * Origin: Mesopotamia
- * Date: Date of creation unknown
- * Description: A print depiction of the Babylonian god Marduk battling a monstrous serpent.

3. *De Prædictio Nibus Astronomicis*

- * Author: Claudius Ptolemy
- * Date: Date of publication unknown
- * Description: A treatise on astronomical prediction, possibly covering topics like astrology or celestial mechanics.

4. *Astronomiae Instauratae Mechanica*

- * Author: Tycho Brahe
- * Date: 1615
- * Description: A key work in the scientific revolution, presenting Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion.

5. *De Fundamentis Astrologiae Certioribus*

- * Author: Johannes Kepler
- * Date: 1602
- * Description: A text on the supposed scientific basis of astrology.

EXHIBIT CATALOG CONT.

6. Animal Sketch from *The Book of Fixed Stars*, by Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi

- ✧ Author: Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi

- ✧ Date: 10th century CE

- ✧ Description: An illustration of a constellation or zodiacal animal from a renowned Islamic astronomical text.

7. Islamic representation of Sagittarius, 'The Archer'

- ✧ Artist: Unknown

- ✧ Date: Date of creation to be determined

- ✧ Description: An artistic depiction of the Sagittarius constellation within the Islamic astronomical tradition.

8. Zodiaque "La Plume"

- ✧ Artist: Alphonse Mucha

- ✧ Date: 1896

- ✧ Description: An artwork by the renowned Art Nouveau artist Alphonse Mucha, depicting the zodiac.

9. Pagan Gods Astarte and Head of Neith

- ✧ Artist: John Singer Sargent

- ✧ Date: 1895

- ✧ Description: A painting by John Singer Sargent featuring depictions of the ancient deities Astarte and Neith.

10. Très Riches Heures de Jean de Berry

- ✧ Artist: Limbourg Brothers

- ✧ Date: 15th century

- ✧ Description: A richly illuminated manuscript book of hours, containing prayers and illustrations depicting the months, labors of the months, and other scenes.

EXHIBIT CATALOG CONT.

11. Description de l'Égypt

- * Author: Edouard Devilliers du Terrage
- * Date: Date of publication needed for complete information
- * Description: A book documenting Egypt, potentially including its history, culture, and astronomical practices.

12. *La Divina Commedia*

- * Author: Dante Alighieri (1265 - 1321)
- * Date: Date of edition (if not the first edition) or specific manuscript date
- * Description: An epic poem by Dante that features a journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, with references to astronomical concepts.

13. The First Folio of William Shakespeare

- * Author: William Shakespeare
- * Date: 1623
- * Description: The first collected edition of William Shakespeare's plays, potentially including references to astronomy or astrology.

14. *Margarita Philosophica*

- * Author: Gregor Reisch
- * Date: 15th century
- * Description: An encyclopedia covering various scientific disciplines, potentially including astronomy and astrology

15. *A Treatise on Urine*

- * Author: Gutun Owain
- * Date: 1488-89
- * Description: A medical text focusing on uroscopy, a practice that used urine analysis for diagnosis.

EXHIBIT CATALOG CONT.

16. Astrolabium from *The Archidoxa*

* Author: Leonhard Thurneisser (1530 - 1596)

* Date: c. 1575

* Description: An astronomical instrument used for measuring celestial bodies' positions. This specific astrolabe is from a larger work, *The Archidoxa*.

17. Pieces of the Astrolabium from *The Archidoxa*

* Author: Leonhard Thurneisser (1530 - 1596)

* Date: c. 1575

* Description: Disassembled parts of an astrolabe from *The Archidoxa*.

18. *The Illustrated Key to The Tarot*

* Author: Dr. L.W. Laurence

* Date: 1918

* Description: A book interpreting the symbolism and meaning of Tarot cards.

19. 19th Century Italian/Milanese Tarot Cards

* Date: 19th century

* Origin: Milan, Italy

* Description: A set of Tarot cards from the 19th century, likely reflecting a specific regional style (Milanese).

EXHIBIT CATALOG CONT.

20. Chiromancy

* Author: Unknown

* Date: 1533

* Description: The practice of palmistry, using features of the hand like lines, mounts, and fingers to supposedly predict future events or character traits.

21. The Palmistry Entertainment Of Praetorius, c. 1661

* Author: Johannes Praetorius

* Date: 1661

* Description: A book on palmistry, likely including instructions on reading palms and interpreting their supposed meanings.

22. Zodiac Wheel from Jamieson's *Planet Reader, Astrologer's Magazine*

* Author: Jamieson

* Date: 1922

* Description: A depiction of the zodiac wheel from a specific astrology publication (Jamieson's Planet Reader, Astrologer's Magazine).

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