

1989

Shakespeare and astrology

William Bruce Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses>

 Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, William Bruce, "Shakespeare and astrology" (1989). *Master's Theses*. Paper 1083.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

ABSTRACT

The popularity of astrology in Elizabethan England is reflected by the large number of references to it in the works of William Shakespeare. The majority of astrological references in the Shakespearean canon are "commonplaces" and do not add significantly to our understanding of his work, although they are of interest in studying exactly how much astrological knowledge he possessed. There are astrological references in the plays, however, that are of significance in the study of character in Shakespeare. In certain plays (Romeo and Juliet, The Winter's Tale) a judgement concerning various individuals' inner nobility may be reached by examining the way in which they react to varying starry influences. Those characters that strive against the stars may be seen as heroic, while those that surrender to the stars may be seen as ignoble.

Shakespeare and Astrology

by

William Bruce Smith

Approved

Marcia E. Whitehead
Committee Chairman

Examining Committee

Bert Carder II

G. O. Gunter

16 August 1989
Date

SHAKESPEARE AND ASTROLOGY

By

WILLIAM BRUCE SMITH

B.A., Hampden-Sydney College, 1985

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the University of Richmond

in Candidacy

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

English

August, 1989

Richmond, Virginia

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
VIRGINIA 23173

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to the following persons who have helped make this study possible: Dr. Marcia Whitehead, director of my study, for her patience and many hours of advice; Drs. Bert Cardullo and Garland O. Gunter, the other members of my committee, for their constructive criticisms. I would also like to thank my father, James G. Smith, Jr., for his support during my college career. I would also like to recognize my wife, Janis Richardson Smith, for her assistance and encouragement, without which this paper would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE MECHANICS OF ASTROLOGY	8
III. ASTROLOGY IN THE ELIZABETHAN ERA	21
IV. SHAKESPEARE'S STARS	38
Varieties of Astrological Reference in Shakespeare	38
Character, Fortune, and the Stars	53
V. CONCLUSION	68
ENDNOTES	72
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED	82

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In what might very well be Shakespeare's first play¹, The Comedy of Errors, Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant, Dromio, find themselves in a very strange predicament when they arrive in the town of Ephesus. Although this is their first visit to the town, they are approached by the inhabitants and treated as old friends, even called by their proper names. Adriana, a woman unknown to Antipholus, claims to be his wife, much to his chagrin. Of course Antipholus and Dromio are very disturbed by this situation. It is their considered opinion that they are bewitched. Antipholus exclaims: "There's none but witches inhabit here" (III.ii.111). The simple Dromio is even more distraught:

O, For my beads! I cross me for a sinner.
This is the fairy land. O spite of spites.
We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites;
If we obey them not, this will ensue:
They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue.
(II.ii.189-193)

The reaction of the Ephesians to the strange behavior of their "friends" is also of a superstitious nature. Adriana considers her "husband" mad or worse yet, possessed. This opinion is supported by the good Doctor Pinch, who, after a cursory examination of the Syracusan Antipholus, exclaims:

I charge thee Satan, housed within this man,
To yield possession to my holy prayers,
And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight;
I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven.
(IV.iv.55-58)

As it turns out, there is an entirely un-supernatural, though very convoluted, explanation for this odd state of affairs.

Unbeknownst to all, the Syracusan Antipholus and Dromio are the twins of a pair of men, raised in Ephesus, who also bear the same names.

What is interesting about the above passages is the way in which Shakespeare's characters automatically blame these strange happenings on the supernatural. They consider no other explanation. A person of our culture and time would be highly unlikely to blame his problems on witchcraft should he find himself in a situation similar to that faced by Antipholus. He might believe that he was experiencing a nervous breakdown, had been drugged, or was the victim of a practical joke, but would probably not worry about being "pinched black and blue" by sprites.

While blaming the supernatural for unexplained events might seem odd to a modern theatre audience, it would seem perfectly normal to the Elizabethan audience that Shakespeare labored for. Indeed, the Elizabethans were a very superstitious people. Belief in witchcraft, astrology, sorcery, devils, and fairies was widespread. This is not to say that every Elizabethan Englishman believed in all of these systems of occult lore. It is difficult, for example, to envision a sophisticated Londoner believing wholeheartedly in the likes of Puck, Oberon, and Titania. It may be said, however, that the average Elizabethan (if such a creature existed) would probably have evinced some varying degree of credence in one or more of these occult belief systems.

Why were Elizabethans so superstitious? One reason is the sheer history of some of these beliefs. Astrology, witchcraft, sorcery, and devils are all mentioned in the Bible and no doubt

date back much further. Astrology, for example, can be dated back at least as far as 2000 BC to the ancient Summerians². These beliefs had remained strong (in varying degrees) through the centuries and were very much a part of the Elizabethans' cultural heritage. If you had asked a group of sixteenth-century Englishmen and women why they believed in witches, they might well have answered you with suspicious stares.

Secondly, the Elizabethans (like their forbears) desperately needed their occult beliefs. These superstitions helped them in their attempt to make sense of a world in which events were often inexplicable. Their various occult systems afforded them a means to control, or at least explain, what Keith Thomas has so aptly called the "baffling state of human affairs."³ Indeed, the Elizabethans had plenty to be baffled about. When we look back on Elizabethan England we tend to think about the great intellectual ferment of London during this period or of the glory of Elizabeth's court. What we forget about are the harsh living conditions that sixteenth-century Englishmen and women faced. At a time when science was still in its infancy, Elizabethans had little or no defense against famine and pestilence.

There were, for instance, some particularly bad harvests during the 1590s, just when Shakespeare's theatrical career was taking off.⁴ Even more devastating were the frequent outbreaks of plague. In 1592-1594 one-sixth of London died of plague.⁵ It has been estimated that almost seven years of Shakespeare's dramatic career were lost due to this scourge. Theatres could not operate during plague time for fear of increasing the chance of contagion.⁶

The helplessness of the average man in the face of war, famine, and disease was a great contributor to the popularity of occult beliefs in Elizabethan England.⁷ Another contributor, it has been theorized, may have been the reformation of the English church. Reform had sought to eliminate from the Church of England the more supernatural aspects of its Roman Catholic heritage. The intercession of the saints together with several of the sacraments had been eliminated. No longer could the priest be called upon to battle the unexplained in his office as exorcist. This void left by religious reform may have accounted for much of the rise in the popularity of astrology during the Elizabethan era.⁸

Thus, occult beliefs were important in that they gave Elizabethans some increased sense of control in their lives. At least an Elizabethan might be able to attach some cause to his misfortunes. If, for instance, his favorite pig died, perhaps the old woman down the lane was a witch. It was probably her doing. Certainly Doctor John Dee, the great Elizabethan mathematician-astrologer-conjuror, understood the role of a scapegoat well. In 1583 some of his London neighbors, convinced that their bad luck stemmed from the local sorcerer, broke into his home, destroying his laboratory and many of his books.⁹

If disease and famine were not enough to disturb the Elizabethan mind, there was always the prospect of war and its attendant disorder. The Elizabethans especially hated any disruption of social, natural, or political order.¹⁰ Although Elizabeth's reign had been remarkably peaceful, the twin spectres of the Spanish Armada and the Northern Rebellions of 1568-1569¹¹

still loomed in Elizabethan minds. In addition the chaos-producing wars of the houses of York and Lancaster had not occurred so long ago that their terrible effects had been forgotten. Indeed, the history plays of Shakespeare and the chronicles of Raphael Holinshed on which they were based served to reimpress the horror of those awful times on Elizabethan minds. Elizabeth's refusal, until practically the last minute, to name an heir also stirred uneasy thoughts in the hearts of Englishmen who were worried about the prospect of political turmoil.

Astrology was one type of occult belief that Elizabethans practiced in their attempt to deal with the inexplicable in their lives. It was probably the most popular occult system of belief in Elizabethan England. The average citizen could frequent his favorite astrologer with little or no fear of persecution. Astrology's popularity is suggested by the fact that one Elizabethan astrologer, Simon Forman, held over one-thousand private consultations in a single year.¹²

As with other occult beliefs, the level of credence in astrology could vary greatly from one person to another, although almost all Elizabethans were of the opinion that the stars and planets did exert some sort of influence over man.¹³ Some believed only in "natural astrology," what we might call a combination of meteorology and astronomy. This science used careful celestial observations to predict general phenomena such as eclipses and the weather.¹⁴ It was largely the popularity of these predictions that fueled the enormous sales of almanacs in Elizabethan England. The popularity of almanacs among commoners is shown by the fact that,

in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Bottom, a rustic, asks that an almanac be consulted to ensure that a bright moon will be present for the craftsmen's production of Pyramus and Thisbe.¹⁵

Other Elizabethans believed in "judicial astrology." This art attempted to predict human behavior and its consequences, again through careful observation of the stars and planets. In this case, however, careful calculations were also made based on a person's time and place of birth.¹⁶ Belief in this branch of astrology could vary from the feeling that the stars exerted an influence, but that this influence could be overcome or exploited by a person (provided that he or she had, of course, consulted with his or her astrologer),¹⁷ to the attitude that man was but a puppet of the stars. The latter belief is apparently evinced by Romeo (though not Shakespeare himself) in Romeo and Juliet: "...O, here\ Will I set up my everlasting rest\ And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars\ From this world wearied flesh." (V.iii.110-112) He makes this comment as he stands outside the Capulet tomb, wrongly believing that Juliet is dead. This sort of absolute belief, however, conflicted rather strongly with the Christian doctrine of free will and was quite unacceptable to the church. Most astrologers got around this problem by being careful to assert that the stars had influence only through the permission of God.¹⁸

Shakespeare makes many references to astrology in his plays and appears to have possessed a thorough commonplace knowledge of the subject.¹⁹ While tracing the references to astrology in Shakespeare is an interesting exercise and will indeed comprise a major portion of this study, I believe that the examination of

Shakespeare's astrology is most important for the illumination it adds to our study of his characters. If the stars do rule absolutely, then studying the motivation of individuals in the plays is useless; every action is the fault of the stars. However, if the stars have influences that may be overcome, we have a new yardstick by which to measure Shakespearean character. Do various characters show the inner strength to overcome starry influences, or do they instead exhibit moral weakness by surrendering without a struggle?

CHAPTER II
THE MECHANICS OF ASTROLOGY

Mankind has always possessed a keen interest in the stars and planets. The idea that the heavens had some sort of influence on the earth and its inhabitants was no doubt a primeval one. Early man was surely aware of the relationship between the moon and tides and of the sun and the growing season.¹ Crops were planted by the rising and setting of the constellations as seen from earth.² As Richard Furnald Smith has noted, it did not take a giant leap of the imagination to go from thinking celestial signs marked events to believing that they were the cause of these events.³

Although the Summerians were, as far as is known, the inventors of the astrology that we recognize today, the Babylonians (the astrological heirs of Summeria) are the most famous early practitioners of astrology. Theirs was a highly sophisticated system presided over by learned priests.⁴ At this time astrology was the property of the elite, not of the commoners.⁵

As noted in the introduction, there were two major branches of astrology. "Natural" astrology studied and interpreted celestial events in order to predict general phenomena relating to a country or people. Predictions of this sort might involve the weather, eclipses, plagues, or war. These predictions were applied to the nation in general and not to the individual (with one important exception). "Judicial" astrology, however, assumed that the stars and planets wielded a strong influence over individuals and that these influences could be studied with an eye toward predicting events for the individual's benefit.⁶

For the most part the Babylonians practiced natural astrology. The priests spent most of their time working on general predictions and charting celestial events. By 600 BC, for example, they were able to predict the hour and day of eclipses.⁷ The one important instance of judicial astrology practiced by the Babylonians was in regard to their king and royal family.⁸ The priests would make astrological predictions in regard to royal personages. Indeed, the Babylonian king was given daily astrological reports.⁹ In a way, however, this practice of judicial astrology in regard to the king was really a form of natural astrology. The welfare of the king was of obvious importance to the entire Babylonian state and he carried the weight of a natural force. Thus, while the Babylonians did practice a form of judicial astrology, they were really applying it in a manner that reflects the ideals of natural astrology.

Although astrology in the judicial sense did begin to become popularized among the general public in the declining years of Babylon, it was really the Greeks who made astrology a popular phenomenon, specifically, Macedonian Greeks living in Alexandria.¹⁰ Prior to their exposure to Babylonian astrology the Greeks had already been making astronomical observations.¹¹ Although the Greeks at first rejected astrology, they soon embraced this new system of study wholeheartedly. Indeed, deterministic astrology fit in very well with the stoic philosophy of the Greeks.¹² The popularity of astrology in Greece is evidenced by the compilation of weather almanacs for that country from the fourth century BC on.¹³

Astrology also caught on quickly in Rome. Commoners liked the religio-magical aspects of the art, while intellectuals liked its

mathematical side (a situation that occurred in Elizabethan England also).¹⁴ The Romans contributed to astrology the idea that each day of the week was ruled by a particular planet.¹⁵

It is necessary at this point to mention Claudius Ptolemeus, better known to English speakers as Ptolemy.¹⁶ His works were the codifying force behind the astrology that was practiced in late Roman, medieval, and Elizabethan times.¹⁷ A true scientist (in the terms of his era) and not a charlatan¹⁸, he wrote great works on both astronomy and astrology, between which he saw absolutely no conflict on scientific grounds. His Almagest explored astronomy, while his Tetrabiblos mapped out the course of astrology¹⁹ for the next thirteen centuries.²⁰ Except for some innovations added by the Arabs, Ptolemy's was the astrology that the Elizabethans would practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²¹

Ptolemaic astrology was characterized by a fixed set of astronomical assumptions (many of which were wrecked by the advent of Copernican theory and the telescope)²² that were necessary for its calculations. Their first assumption was that the solar system was geocentric: the planets (including the sun and moon)²³ circled the earth on their progress through the heavens.²⁴ Hence, they were often termed "wandering stars."²⁵ The planets extended out from earth in the following order: moon, Mercury, Venus, sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.²⁶ Each planet was fixed on a sphere that provided the planetary movement seen from earth. Seen from above, the planetary spheres moved in a counter-clockwise direction.²⁷

The movement of the planets was set against the panorama of fixed stars that resided in the eighth sphere. This sphere was

known as the "primum mobile," because it was supposed to exert an influence on the movement of the other spheres. The primum mobile moved about the earth in a clockwise direction in opposition to the planetary spheres."

Upon these astronomical conditions were based several astrological assumptions. The sphere of stars was divided into twelve sections corresponding to the twelve major constellations that make up the twelve signs of the zodiac. Although the actual size of each sign was unequal, for convenience's sake they were each assigned arcs of influence measuring thirty degrees." The astrological year began with the Spring Equinox (March 21). The sun then travelled an average of one degree a day until it had moved through each sign." The twelve zodiacal signs were the ones with which we are familiar today: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.

To complicate matters further, the sky was divided into twelve "houses" or "mansions." In contrast to the daily movement of the signs the twelve houses remained fixed in relation to earth. For example, a person would always be confronted with the same exact same houses as long as he remained stationary. He could, of course, make calculations based on the position of any of the houses. Of particular importance was the "ascendant" house, which was always located just under the eastern horizon. The sign and planets that occupied this house at the moment of a calculation were especially important."

Another important assumption made by astrologers (and astronomers; the two were basically interchangeable until the mid-

seventeenth century²²) was that the heavens were perfect in both their nature and their structure. One reason for this belief was that the movement of the celestial bodies was observedly regular (therefore perfect) as opposed to the chaos of earth.²³ Another reason for positing the superiority of the superlunar skies was the very shapes of the planets and spheres. Spheres and circles were thought to be the ideal of both shapes and figures.²⁴ This belief in the superiority of the heavens was very important in asserting the dominance of the stars and planets over earthly events.²⁵ The earth's inferiority was exemplified by the fact that the music of the spheres, that melodious scale produced when the note made by each moving sphere was heard, was inaudible on the corrupt earth.²⁶

Planets, signs, and mansions all possessed varying characteristics and powers (influences). The following physiological influences were assigned to the planets: the sun heated and dried (this certainly made sense); the moon moistened and purified; Mars dried and warmed; Jupiter heated, humidified, and provided fertilizing winds; Venus warmed and humidified; Mercury humidified and dried.²⁷ The planets, being the most powerful influences astrologically, supposedly imposed their qualities on the respective signs that each ruled. Therefore, since the moon was considered watery, Cancer (ruled by the moon) was also watery.²⁸

The planets were also assigned various influences on character and intellect. Following is Richard Fernald Smith's summary of these attributes:

sun = power, masculinity, self-expression
 moon = fertility, femininity, intuition
 Mercury = intellect, communication, mobility

Venus = love, emotion, harmony
 Mars = energy, courage, combativeness
 Jupiter = expansiveness, wealth, authority
 Saturn = inhibition, caution, old age"

Although most of the above qualities may seem attractive, the fact remained that certain planets were thought to exert a beneficial influence, while others were considered to be the cause or harbinger of ill-fortune.¹⁰ Venus and Jupiter were thought to exercise a favorable influence, while Saturn and Mars were considered bad news. Mercury, the moon, and sun were generally thought to be neutral in their influence,¹¹ although there were exceptions to this rule. The sun, as the middle planet, was thought to exert a moderating influence on the power of the other planets.¹² Thus, the position of a planet in regard to the sun was very important in astrological calculations.¹³

The moon could also swerve from neutral status. For example, since the moon was considered both a major influence on women and also inconstant due to its changing phases, it was thought that the moon could produce the effect of inconstancy in women.¹⁴ Mercury could also prove an evil influence in certain situations. Ptolemy felt that when Mercury was "badly placed" it could make people:

extravagant, avaricious, savage, venturesome, daring, prone to change their minds, excitable, easily aroused, liars, thieves, blasphemers, perjurers, ready to take the offensive, seditious, lighters of fires, creators of disturbance in theatres, insolent, piratical, burglars, murderers, forgers, villains, wizards, magicians, sorceres, homicides.¹⁵

Therefore, even a supposedly neutral influence could create havoc.

The zodiacal signs also possessed special influences and qualities. One important fact that the astrologer had to be aware of was that the different signs were considered alternately

masculine and feminine beginning with Aries." Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, and Aquarius were thought to be masculine, while Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn, and Pisces were thought to be feminine. This was extremely important in that, according to astrology, the masculine was considered fortunate, while the feminine was considered unfortunate."

The signs were also classified as belonging to the influence of either day or night. The night signs (Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, and Cancer) were ruled by the moon, while the day signs (Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Capricorn) were ruled by the sun.

Each sign also served as a "house" for a particular planet (not to be confused with the twelve mansions), depending on whether it was day or night. For example Mars had Aries as its night house and Scorpio for its day house. Whenever Mars was in one of these houses it gained extra power. The sun and moon only had a day and a night house, respectively." The twelve signs were also divided into four groups of three called "trigons." Each group had special influence over one of the four earthly elements (earth, air, fire, and water)."

Also important was the idea that each of the signs rules some part of the human body. For example, Aries was thought to govern the head." The concept that the heavens influenced human physiology made astrology a necessary component of any medical study." As a result, astrology was a major part of the curriculum at medieval and Renaissance universities." In 1437 the University of Paris stated that every doctor should keep a current almanac in his

possession. This link with medicine made astrologers esteemed members of the royal courts of Europe.”

The twelve houses, like the planets and signs, had characteristic powers. First, it is important to note that not all houses were of equal power. The first, fourth, seventh, and tenth houses were termed "angular" houses and were thought to be the most powerful. The second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh houses were called "succeedent" and were of middling power. The "cadents" (the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth houses) were the weakest of the twelve. Houses, like signs, were considered to be masculine or feminine. The odd-numbered were the former, while the even-numbered were the latter.”

Each house governed particular aspects of human life. The following are their respective influences:

- 1 = self, appearance
- 2 = possession, loss and gain
- 3 = communication
- 4 = home
- 5 = pleasure, love affairs
- 6 = health, well-being
- 7 = partners, marriage
- 8 = death, legacies
- 9 = philosophy, travel
- 10 = career, status
- 11 = friends
- 12 = restraints”

Other celestial bodies and phenomena were thought to possess great influence. Some individual stars had special power. For example, the Dog Star, Sirius, was considered evil since it was the star that appeared to come closest to the sun and was evident during the nastiest days of summer.”

Comets were also thought to be an evil influence, especially

in the area of political change." Eclipses were an even grimmer matter and also betokened change."

While it is acknowledged that the individual characters of the stars, planets, and mansions were extremely important to the astrologer's calculations, the spatial relationships between them were also vital in making a forecast." Among the major factors that an astrologer had to consider were the respective "aspects" of the various planets, that is, their various positions relative to one another. These relationships were myriad and complicated. A "conjunction," for example, occurred when two planets were observed in the same zodiacal sign. "Opposition" occurred when two planets were located in signs directly opposite one another (for example, one planet in Aries, another in Libra). Opposition was thought to be very unfavorable. A "trine" planetary relationship occurred when three planets in different houses formed an equilateral triangle. Trine was considered favorable. A "quartile" situation was realized when four planets (again in different houses) formed a square in the heavens. Quartile was thought to be unfavorable, although some astrologers disagreed with this prognosis."

As discussed above, the sign a planet occupied had a heightening or diminishing effect on its power. When Mars was in Capricorn its influence was greatest. This phenomenon was termed "exaltation."⁶¹ When Mars was in Cancer, however, its power was at its weakest. This was called "dejection."⁶² Although the signs remained fixed in regard to one another and the houses were stationary, the relation of signs to houses was variable and

therefore of great importance to the astrologer. One of the most important calculations an astrologer could make was the determination of an "ascendant." An ascendant was the sign that occupied the first house just below the horizon at the moment a calculation was being made." Initially this ascendant sign was known as the "horoscope" but due to its importance the prediction as a whole came to be known by this term." Ascendants were especially important in casting nativities, as will be discussed below.

By studying a horoscope an astrologer could divine the celestial influences reaching the earth at a particular moment and predict the most likely course of events for an individual." Astrology was, as Ptolemy termed it, "prognostication through astronomy." "With accurate information and a thorough knowledge of his art a judicial astrologer could supposedly determine many items of interest to his clients, including these mentioned by John Wilson in his The Cheats (1662):

...the sick, whether they shall recover or not; the party absent whether living or dead; how many husbands or children a woman shall have;...if a man be wise or fool; whether it be good to put on new clothes;...whether a child be the reputed father's or not, or shall be fortunate or otherwise."

Before any of these questions could be answered, however, an astrologer had to possess his client's natal horoscope, or "nativity." The nativity, the basis of all predictions that might be made, was a geocentric map of the heavens as they appeared at the moment of a client's birth," if the astrologer had accurate information about the time and place. The first important

consideration when casting a nativity was the location of a person's birth. Since different stars and planets had influence over various locations at various times it was important that the astrologer know the exact time and place of birth to ascertain the influences that reigned over his client.⁶⁰ Even countries were subject to particular influences. Most of England, for example, was ruled by Aries and the moon, while the Holy Land (interestingly enough) was ruled by Mars. For this reason almanacs were issued with differing astronomical charts for different towns and counties in England.⁶¹

The next step in casting a nativity was to check the actual positions of the stars and planets at the moment of birth. Especially important was the ascendant sign at birth.⁶² It was thought that the ascendant sign was a determiner of the outer personality. Inner character was determined by the sun sign, that is, the zodiacal house that the sun occupied at the moment of birth.⁶³

The nativity of a person was supposed (by followers of judicial astrology) to be the "base determinant" of his or her personality.⁶⁴ Ptolemy himself subscribed to this doctrine.⁶⁵ Most astrologers, however, were wise enough to concede that breeding and environment also played a large role in character development.⁶⁶

Nativities were, however, a difficult astrological calculation to make.⁶⁷ Inaccurate time-keeping and the great chance of mathematical error in determining the exact position of the planets left plenty of room for mistakes. The result was that most astrological predictions were very subjective matters relying on

the best guess of the practitioner."

Despite the chance of inaccuracy, however, Ptolemy and his spiritual heirs felt that astrology was a very worthwhile pursuit. Even a chance of foreknowledge could help people avert disaster. Although the stars supposedly fated certain aspects of life (i.e., station of birth) and character, the majority of astrologers believed in a "mutable fate." People who were aware of the implications of the stars could alter the course of their lives for the better, presumably with the help of their friendly local astrologer."

Once an astrologer possessed a nativity for his client, he was in position to provide a number of useful services. A horoscope could now be constructed for a future time or be compared with the client's country or the people he was dealing with." This enabled the astrologer to perform "elections" for his customer or to answer "horary" questions.

An "election" involved choosing an appropriate time for an action. This ensured the greatest likelihood of success for a client in his pursuits. For example, an astrologer might calculate the best time for a marriage or for taking a trip."

While elections involved choosing the right time for an action, "horary" question involved choosing the action itself."¹ This type of astrological prediction was the newest and most controversial, having been invented by the medieval Arabs."² Picking a bride, choosing a business partner, or embarking on a career were all ventures that could be begun with more confidence with advice from the horary astrologer. Doctors familiar with astrology would

make a horary calculation to determine the nature of an illness and how best to treat it."

The many services that an astrologer could provide ensured the popularity of the art even in the face of frequent errors. While religions could only blame the gods' willfulness or assert that misfortune was the result of God's unknowable providence, astrology could explain events by specific rules and render the exact answers that are most satisfying to men."

CHAPTER III

ASTROLOGY IN THE ELIZABETHAN ERA

The astrology practiced in the Elizabethan era was essentially similar to that codified by Ptolemy some 1,400 years earlier. The major difference was the addition of the horary consultations developed by the medieval Arabs. However, while the actual mechanics of astrology remained the same, the environment of Elizabethan England proved a much more fertile ground for a rapid growth in the popularity of that art than the England of earlier times.

Late medieval England was, in the words of Bernard Capp, an "astrological backwater."¹ There were, for instance, no English works published concerning the famous 1524 conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter.² That no major native astrological works had ever been published in the country shows just how little astrological knowledge had heretofore reached the island nation.³ The only people who had access to astrological consultation were those of noble birth.⁴

An example of the nobility's use of astrology is the hiring of one "Master Welch" to choose a propitious time for the coronation of Henry VI.⁵ Surely this consultation must go down as one of the colossal failures of all time, since Henry's reign was an unmitigated disaster and he was eventually murdered. Henry VII, Henry VIII, Mary Tudor, and Elizabeth all had court astrologers.⁶

Indeed, astrology may have played a role in thwarting Mary's desire for a royal line descended from herself. Philip II of Spain

was apparently discouraged from visiting her because his court astrologers believed there was a conspiracy against him waiting in England.'

The common people, however, had no recourse to astrology in the first half of the sixteenth century. The only astrological knowledge they possessed was folklore about the eclipses of the moon and the rising and setting of the Dog Star.'

The limited social role of astrology was, however, to undergo a great change in the latter half of the 1500's. The three great agents of this change were: religious reform; a mathematical revival; and the development of the English almanac.

On an intellectual level, the great interest in astrology was fired by a revival in English mathematics.' Many of the computations involved in astrology were intricate and this appealed to the great mathematicians of the Elizabethan era. Applied mathematical sciences like navigation required a firm grounding in astronomy, which quite naturally led to an interest in astrology for many.¹⁰ John Dee is a prime example of this. A fine mathematician (he translated the first English Euclid¹¹), he was also intensely interested in astrology. However, he is far from being the sole example. His peers Thomas Allen and Leonard Digges were also avid astrologers. The interest of these great minds in astrology helped give the art a new-found intellectual acceptance during the Elizabethan era.¹²

On a more popular level, the reformation of the English church left a void that astrology was very neatly able to fill. The English reformation church viewed many of the more

supernaturally oriented rituals of its former affiliation as Papist and, as a result, many of the sacraments (including exorcism) and the intercession of the saints were stripped away.¹³ The priest lost his semi-magical standing and became an ordinary man.¹⁴ Bernard Capp sums up the effect that the Reformation had on the popularity of astrology in the following manner:

The popularity of astrological practitioners, and later of printed guides, supports the suggestion that they were supplying a need apparently ignored by the English Church after the Reformation: the harnessing of supernatural powers to help men avert danger and overcome obstacles in their daily lives.¹⁵

While the reform of the English Church left a convenient vacancy for astrology to fill, it was the rise of the almanac that made astrological knowledge available to the general public.¹⁶ An almanac was basically a table of the astronomical and astrological events of the coming year (including eclipses, conjunctions, etc.). Almanacs had a fairly established heritage and could be traced back to calendars of church festivals produced during the Middle Ages. Their importance is indicated by the fact that one of the first works printed by Guttenberg was an almanac in 1448.¹⁷

Considering that England was a backward country astrologically, it is not surprising that the first almanacs to appear in England were foreign translations in the years 1498-1503. These were Italian almanacs translated by William Parron, an Italian astrologer at the court of Henry VII. However, when Henry's queen died soon after Parron had predicted she would live to old age, the astrologer "disappeared"-- a misfortune both for him and the development of the English almanac. After this, only small

almanacs were published in England until the 1520s, when foreign translations again began to be brought out.¹⁸ Bernard Capp attributes the lack of native almanacs to fear of causing political offense through prophesies.¹⁹

Andrew Boorde was the first native Englishman to compile an almanac, which he published in 1545.²⁰ He was soon followed by Anthony Askham, who published almanacs for 1548-1557.²¹ By this time the English press had developed enough strength to take advantage of the burgeoning interest in astrology. Interest in these cheap, printed almanacs was roughly equivalent to the popularity of printed ballads.²² One can imagine Autolychus of Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale selling some cheap almanacs to the rustics along with the ballads he hawks in the play.

The incorporation of the Company of Stationers in 1547 was another reason for the growth of the English almanac.²³ It is interesting that there was no copy limit (as was also the case with The Bible) imposed by the Stationers on the publication of almanacs. Perhaps this says something about the importance of almanacs in Elizabethan England (or the greed of the Stationers). At any rate, by 1600 six-hundred almanacs had been published by the English press.²⁴

Exactly what were the contents of these almanacs? One compiler, Richard Allestree, described the contents of his almanac in the following manner:

Wit, learning, order, elegance of phrase,
Health and the art to lengthen out our days,
Philosophy, physic, and poesie,
All this, and more, is in this book to see.²⁵

"All this and more," indeed, for Elizabethan almanacs were chock full of useful information for the Englishmen of the era. As English compilers became dominant in the late 1500's²⁶ the almanac began to assume a standard form.²⁷ The first section of a typical almanac consisted of a calendar of astronomical events. Here were described the eclipses that would occur for the year as well as the projected movement of the stars and planets.²⁸ Another feature of this section was a "zodiacal man," a chart of the areas of the body that the different stars and planets influenced.²⁹ Some almanacs even included daily tables of the positions of the stars and planets. The second section of the almanac contained a calendar of that year's days and months. Among its contents were a calendar of church festivals,³⁰ a list of fairs, and tables with the dates of English kings. Some almanacs also contained blank facing pages to be used as a diary.³¹

The third, truly astrological, section of the almanac was called the "prognostication." In it the four quarters of the year were discussed with prophecies concerning the weather, outbreaks of disease, harvests, and hints for better medical practice and farming. Respected almanacs usually stuck to these more general sorts of predictions.³²

However, there were also almanacs (usually anonymous) that offered advice for the individual, as classified by his or her nativity.³³ These types of almanacs also offered the rules of astrological divination so that the reader could supposedly calculate his own horoscope.³⁴ An almanac called Erra Pater was the most successful of the lower sort, although there were many others,

including the intriguingly named Compost of Ptolemeus. One especially interesting feature of the lesser almanacs was that some offered rules for the now sadly neglected art of prophesying by thunderstorm."

The compilers of almanacs also engaged in an early form of editorial writing. Quite often they would verbally assault those individuals or groups of people they saw as detrimental to the commonweal. Their favorite targets included corn-hoarders, lawyers, and landlords.³⁶ However, the compilers were (if they were wise) content to couch their attacks in very general terms and to criticize only those who were the objects of universal disdain. The compilers realized that their editorial power was sharply limited by forces which will be discussed further below. Conscious of the tightrope they walked (searching for both popularity and the favor of the nobility), they would, for example, encourage philanthropy on the part of the rich but urge patience on the part of the poor."

The public awareness of astrology created by almanacs translated into increased business for the private astrological counselors, many of whom were also compilers.³⁷ The popularity of astrological consultation is suggested by the fact that it was common practice for wealthy families to have nativities cast at the birth of their children.³⁸ Much is known about the sheer volume of Elizabethan astrological visits because many of the leading astrologers' records are preserved at the Bodleian Library at Oxford.³⁹

If the almanac was the great disseminator of astrological

knowledge, it was the Elizabethan emphasis on order which helped make the minds of Englishmen and women so receptive to this (to them) relatively new science. Order or "degree" was perhaps the overriding idea of the Elizabethan era. This concept was usually envisioned as a "great chain of being" in which each member of the chain (excepting God) was both superior and inferior to various other members. Categorizing its members by their respective powers, the chain was arranged in the following order: God, angels, planets (including the stars), man, animals, plants and inorganic matter. The chain could also be divided into subhierarchies. For example, God was the chief heavenly being; the sun was the chief planet; a king was the chief of men."

To the Elizabethans nothing was more horrible than disorder and its attendant chaos." They had only to look back a scant century to the Wars of the Roses to remind themselves of the disaster that could ensue when political order was broken due to the usurpation a king's rightful power. The political powers of Elizabethan England, anxious to maintain the status quo, made a point of propagandizing the importance of order among the people they ruled. Sermons stressing the importance of degree (sanctioned by the powers that be) were often read at the mandatory church services that all Elizabethans attended. As Sylvan Barnet notes, order was also strongly emphasized in the regular liturgy: "when catechized, an Englishman affirmed his duty 'to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters.'"

The Elizabethan obsession with order goes a long way towards explaining the great astrological interest of the era. Although

the stars and planets were seen as having a disruptive influence upon human affairs, this was not seen as the fault of the celestial bodies themselves. Rather, this was the result of the original sin committed in the Garden of Eden, which broke God's order.⁴⁶ The stars themselves were thought to be inherently good. However, due to the Fall, their powers were set in opposition to the sublunar realm, resulting in varying good and bad influences upon men and women.⁴⁷ The stars were not disordered in their effects, however, but were instead part of God's ordered will,⁴⁸ producing the "vagaries of human fortune" as a punishment for mankind's sin.⁴⁹

Despite the negative effects that the stars might have on a sublunary level, it was still the fault of men and women that these influences were commuted into evil. As long as men and women depended on their God-given faculties of reason, it was thought that negative starry influences might be defeated. However, when they gave in to their animal passions, the harmful effects of the stars were greatly increased.⁵⁰

Astrology theoretically provided a means of controlling the chaos that might be caused by the combination of celestial influences and human weakness. While the stars contributed to earthly disorder, their own movements were regular and should have been predictable, allowing the astrologer a means of counseling his clients as to the best manner in which they might avoid or counteract any negative influences which fell upon them. However, it was thought that man's corrupt nature kept the stars' movements and influences from being fully understood; thus, complete accuracy in astrological predictions was impossible.⁵¹ Despite the

inaccuracies inherent in astrology, however, its popularity during the Elizabethan era seems to indicate that any chance of avoiding disorder through potentially correct predictions was warmly welcomed.

Although the mechanics of Elizabethan astrology remained the same as in earlier times, the era did have its peculiarities in regard to the art. This is reflected in the types of cases that Elizabethan astrologers took on. Especially popular during this time were questions concerning buried treasure,³⁰ missing servants, and missing ships.³¹ Some insurance firms consulted astrologers as to the propitiousness of a venture (especially in regard to sea trade).³²

Considering the era's fascination with witchcraft, it is not surprising that many astrologers touted their services as a defense against witchery.³³ Medical astrology was also wildly popular, to such an extent that critics called astrologers "piss-prophets."³⁴

Two sorts of astrologers seem to have manifested themselves during the Elizabethan era. Belonging to the first type were the scientifically minded astrologers who were very earnest in their studies and among whom were numbered many mathematicians. Dee, Thomas Allen, Digges, and Anthony Askham would be members of this group.³⁵

Unfortunately many astrologers were charlatans. These men were among the most zealous defenders of judicial astrology and no wonder since it was their livelihood.³⁶ Many of them had names that were probably aliases, such as Edward Alevantrevor.³⁷ The most famous of these men was the aforementioned Simon Forman, whom Ben

Johnson called "Oracle Forman."³⁸ An uneducated, though successful, Don Juan, he did little for the reputation of astrology as true science.³⁹ While there was obviously money to be made in prognostication, it is worth noting that astrology was not a notably secure profession. John Dee ended up selling off his beloved books to pay for his meals.⁴⁰

Despite the popularity of astrology, there were very clear limits as to how much power practitioners could claim for their art. There were also limitations as to the type of prophecies that they might make public. The two major forces that proscribed astrology were politics and religion.

The government of Elizabethan England made certain that public political prophecies by both private astrologers and almanac compilers were practically nonexistent during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. The politically powerful were very aware of the dangers that astrology could pose.⁴¹ Henry VIII, for example, had been plotted against by a Spanish astrologer named Jehan.⁴² Suspicion of the involvement that prophesy may have had in the Northern Rebellion of 1568-1569 led to a clampdown on the number of almanacs published from 1569-1571. The number of almanacs dropped from nineteen to six during these years.⁴³ Woodhouse's almanac of 1601 was suppressed for stating that more troubles would follow the Essex rebellion.⁴⁴ The Stationers' Company, in order to protect their trade and reputation, imposed a lifetime ban on one compiler, Abel Jeffes, for printing a seditious almanac.⁴⁵

The government was also sensitive to the predictions of private astrologers. It was considered treasonable to give bad

astrological reports on royal personages⁶⁶ and in 1581 Parliament made it illegal to cast Elizabeth's horoscope or to predict who her heir would be.⁶⁷ Due to government pressure, public political prophecies disappeared until the 1640s.⁶⁸

Another limiter of astrology was the Church of England. Natural astrology was generally accepted by the clergy,⁶⁹ but there were major conflicts between judicial astrology and accepted Christian doctrine. The determinism of extreme judicial astrology did not jibe well with the Christian concepts of free will and individual moral responsibility,⁷⁰ not to mention that ascribing power to the stars conflicted with the role of God as supreme being.⁷¹ If the stars were the controllers of human destiny, why worship God?⁷² Prayer would be useless in the face of celestial determinism.⁷³ The religious also argued that foreknowledge was the sole province of God and that, by making predictions, astrologers were wresting power from God.⁷⁴ Calvin, who clearly believed that foreknowledge was not for man, argued that "to desire any other knowledge of predestination than that which is expounded by the word of God is no less infatuated than to walk where there is no path, or to seek light in darkness."⁷⁵

If it was evil for astrologers to arrogate the power of God unto themselves, there were even worse consequences if it was accepted that the stars were the rulers of man's fate. If man's fate and character were set by the stars, then an individual could commit any sort of atrocity and claim that he bore no moral responsibility. It was, after all, the stars' fault for the influence they had on him.⁷⁶ This negation of personal

responsibility nullified the rewards and punishments on which the order of Christian society was based," an untenable idea in a society as devoted to order as was Elizabethan England."

The practices of certain astrologers were guaranteed to further inflame the religiously minded against them. Some astrologers cast horoscopes for Jesus and Mahomet to explain the changing fortunes of Christianity and Islam." Some early astrologers had gone so far as to declare that all who were born during certain conjunctions would be saved."

It easy to see how these practices, together with the doctrinal conflicts between Christianity and astrology, could infuriate the devout (especially the Puritans)," and cause them to view astrologers as in league with the devil and deserving of a witch's death." The orthodox could also quote The Bible to support their opinion:

Stand fast in your enchantments
and your many sorceries,
with which you have labored from
your youth;
perhaps you may be able to succeed,
perhaps you may inspire terror.
You are wearied with your many
counsels;
let them stand forth and save you,
those who divide the heavens,
who gaze at the stars,
who at the new moons predict
what shall befall you.

Behold, they are like stubble,
the fire consumes them;
they cannot deliver themselves
from the power of the flame.

Isaiah 47:13,14"

In reality, however, excepting certain extremist elements on both sides, astrology and Christianity had long ago reached an

accommodation with one another. To leave room for the supremacy of God, astrologers asserted that God was the first cause. Whatever power the stars wielded was by divine permission." The stars were, indeed, within the scheme of God's providence." Some believed that, infuriated by the sin of Adam and Eve, God set the planets' influences at odds with one another to arbitrarily affect the earth." The stars were the "commuting agents of eternity to mutability."

Having assented to the supreme power of God in the manner described above, the astrologers also found a place in their world view for the free will of man. Judicial astrology's tenets were modified so that the "stars inclined but did not compel." Man, if properly informed, could defeat the influences of the stars by action on his own part." Prayer, for example, could overcome a bad conjunction of Saturn and Mars." Compilers of almanacs could placate the clergy by declaring that it was man's wickedness which brought on disaster." The concept that man could overcome the stars' influences was actually convenient to the astrologers in that it provided an excuse when prognostications did not come true." Most Elizabethan astrologers were no doubt quite eager to reconcile their art and Christianity since they were themselves Christian. Furthermore, it is undoubtedly true that they did not want to end up like the Florentine Cecco d' Ascoli, who was burned at the stake in 1327 for asserting that the stars were the absolute rulers of destiny."

In addition to the political and religious constraints upon astrology, the art also had its critics among the general public.

One popular way to attack astrology was by comparing predictions with the actual results. One famous example of this was the long life that the astrologer Cardan predicted for Edward VI, who died soon after the calculation was made." Such a tack was taken by William Perkins, who published his Foure Great Lyers in 1585." A large part of this volume is devoted to examining the daily predictions of four astrologers and showing how they disagree." There were also satirical almanacs with bogus predictions like A Merry Prognosticon (1544), which included the following sham prediction:

If the ninth day of November,
Had fallen upon the tenth day of December,
It had been a real hot year for bees,
For then the Moon would be like a green cheese."

One of the earliest and most logical attacks on astrology was by the printer William Fulke. A Puritan and yet a natural astrologer, he vehemently scorned judicial astrology. His Antiprognosticon (1560) is really a very sensible assault on the shortcomings of the judicial astrologers. He argues that astrologers are unsuitably vague in their predictions and often irresponsible, citing bad economic predictions which resulted in public panic." He very interestingly attacks judicial astrology as being unscientific and, a good four decades before Baconian science really began to gather momentum, urges that more observation and trial be made."

Despite the resistance that astrology faced from critics, the government, and religion, prophesying by the stars remained very popular with the general public." Although unbelievers certainly

existed, most Elizabethans acknowledged some sort of celestial influence upon mankind.¹⁰⁰ Almanacs and astrologers found no shortage of customers because, as de Camp notes, "for excuses, praise, and hope, people will pay, and pay well."¹⁰¹

While the attitudes that the general public, the government, and organized religion had toward astrology were diverse, the opinions of Elizabethan intellectuals were both diverse and ambivalent. Although many Elizabethans had books outlining the new theories of Copernicus postulating a heliocentric solar system,¹⁰² rejection of astrology, especially natural astrology, seems rare.¹⁰³ This is certainly odd in that a heliocentric system completely debunks all of the astrological calculations based on a geocentric view. Tillyard theorizes that although "recent research has shown that the educated Elizabethan had plenty of textbooks instructing him in Copernican theory, ... he was loathe to upset the old order by applying his knowledge."¹⁰⁴

Perhaps a good place to start in considering the attitudes of the learned toward astrology is with the two monarchs who ruled during Shakespeare's lifetime, Elizabeth and James I. James's position is fairly straightforward. He allows for natural astrology but condemns judicial astrology in his Daemonology.¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth's position on the subject is much more obscure. It is known that John Dee was commissioned to choose a propitious date for her coronation and¹⁰⁶ during part of her reign he was consulted for astrological advice almost every day.¹⁰⁷ There is also a letter that Elizabeth wrote to Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1588 that seems to support a belief in astrology:

...if it were not that I consider that by nature we are composed of earthly elements and governed by heavenly, and that I am not ignorant that our dispositions are caused in part by supernatural signs, which change every day, I could not believe that in so short a time such a change could take place.¹⁰⁸

Yet Elizabeth also made a point of viewing the comet of 1582, even though comets were thought to be deadly to monarchs. Certainly her reaction to this event, as quoted by the courtier Henry Howard, seems to deny judicial astrology:

Affirming that her stedfast hope and confidence was too firmly planted in the province of God, to bee blasted or affrighted with those beames which eyther had a ground in nature whereupon to rise, or at least no warrant out of Scripture, to portend the mishaps of Princes.¹⁰⁹

In view of such conflicting evidence it would seem impossible to determine just what Elizabeth thought about astrology.

Sir Walter Raleigh takes a more definitive view toward astrology. He seems to have believed that the stars had an influence on men's dispositions at birth and on their future careers, but that this influence could be amended by prayer and education.¹¹⁰ That Raleigh also felt that the stars had no power over man's immortal soul is made evident in his The History of the World:

... and the same God, who hath thretned unto us the sorrow and torment of Offences, could not, contrary to his merciful nature, be so unjust, as to bind us inevitably to the Destinies or Influences of the Stars...¹¹¹

While Raleigh seems to have believed in some starry influences, he was sure they were far from absolute.

Surprisingly, Sir Francis Bacon, the father of modern scientific observation, also took a very moderate view toward

astrology.¹¹² Despite the fact that he was cognizant of the new astronomical discoveries¹¹³ and was suspicious of judicial astrology¹¹⁴, he seems to have believed that astrology was salvageable as an important branch of "physic." Although he was aware of the scientific inaccuracies of astrology, he declares in his De Augmentia Scientiarum that he "would rather have it purified than altogether rejected."¹¹⁵ Thus, even Bacon seems to affirm some sort of belief in the stars' influence.

Ben Jonson, possibly the most learned of the Elizabethan playwrights, also seems to have possessed conflicting views toward astrology. In his plays he often mercilessly satirizes the astrologers' art, most explicitly in his The Alchemist. One instance of this is the patently fake astrological discourse that the alchemist Subtle spouts off to the naive Abel Drugger:

The thumb in chiromancy, we give Venus;
 The forefinger to Jove; the midst to Saturn;
 The ring to Sol; the least to Mercury,
 Who was the lord, sir, of his horoscope,
 His house of life being Libra; which foreshadowed
 He should be a merchant, and should trade with balance.
 (I.iii.52-57)

Yet, while Jonson derided astrology in his plays, he himself had horoscopes cast, though he claimed not to believe them.¹¹⁶ His attitude toward astrology, therefore, may be seen as ambiguous.

While Elizabethan intellectuals saw many flaws in astrology and even openly mocked it, they seem to have been reluctant to dismiss it entirely. Don Cameron Allen theorizes that maybe they just could not bring themselves to suffer a complete split from the opinions of their youth.¹¹⁷

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S STARS

I: Varieties of Astrological Reference in Shakespeare

Johnstone Parr estimates that there are over one-hundred astrological references in Shakespeare.¹ The question, however, is what, if any, significance do these many astrological allusions have? Are they merely figures of speech, as Theodore Oscar Wedel asserts in his The Mediaeval Attitude Toward Astrology,² or do they indicate, as Bruce King believes, that Shakespeare's characters are merely puppets of the stars?' In my opinion the stars in Shakespeare's work do influence the actions of men but do not dictate them. By studying the ways in which various characters react to fortune or misfortune caused by celestial influence, we gain further insight into their respective moral strengths and weaknesses.

Perhaps the best place to begin any discussion of Shakespeare and astrology is with a consideration of the playwright's beliefs. Unfortunately, any consideration of Shakespeare's personal beliefs will always remain speculation. The poet left no autobiography cataloguing his thoughts, nor did his acquaintances take the time to write down his beliefs. Any speculation about Shakespeare's thoughts on astrology must be based entirely on the plays, sonnets, and narrative poems he left behind, together with a consideration of his social context.

A study of the plays can provide little concrete proof as to

Shakespeare's opinion of astrology. While the use of so many astrological allusions seems to reflect both the fact that many astrological terms had passed into the English language during this time period¹ and that astrology was very popular with the Elizabethans,² this does not mean that Shakespeare himself had any great faith in astral prophecy.³ From the evidence in the plays it seems that Shakespeare had a good general knowledge of astrology but was by no means an expert in the art; he never, for instance, mentions its more technical aspects.⁴ Even if he did know more it would have been unlikely for him to include arcane information in the plays, since it might have confused his audience.

We must also remember that Shakespeare wrote for dramatic effect, so that it is dangerous to attribute any one of his character's astrological opinions to him.⁵ At any rate, his characters exhibit all sorts of beliefs in regard to astrology. Some, like Romeo, see the stars as an absolute influence. A few, like Hotspur and Edmund, laugh at the idea of celestial power over man. Others, like Coriolanus and Macbeth, do not appear to acknowledge the stars in any manner at all. Some admit astral influences but fight to overcome them; these include Hermione and Helena. Considering the vast variety of astrological beliefs presented in the plays, it would be a mistake to assign Shakespeare a particular opinion from this evidence.

The Sonnets would seem to be the writings where we are likely to discover something about the poet's belief in astrology. If we agree with W. H. Auden's view that The Sonnets were a very private body of work and that Shakespeare was quite probably horrified at

their publication,' it would seem that in these poems we might find the opinions of the "real" Shakespeare.

Indeed, in many of the sonnets celestial influences are mentioned. Sonnet 26 is offered as a token of duty from Shakespeare to his friend. The poet acknowledges the inferiority of his work, but hopes that in the future his star will shine more favorably so that his work will be better and more worthy:

To thee I send this written ambassage,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit.
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In my soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it,
 Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
 Paints on me graciously with fair aspect,
 And puts apparel on my tattered loving
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect.

(4-12)

The mention of the personal, guiding star would seem to betray some sort of belief in judicial astrology.

Similarly, in Sonnet 15 Shakespeare again seems to show some credence in the existence of starry influences on man:

When I consider everything that grows
 Holds in perfection but a little moment,
 That this huge stage presenteth naught but shows
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
 When I perceive that men as plants increase,
 Cheere'd and checked even by the selfsame sky,
 Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
 And wear their brave state out of memory;

(1-8)

However, it would be a mistake to attribute to Shakespeare any particular belief in astrology based on The Sonnets. While it certainly seems as if a conviction in the power of the stars is being shown, the fact remains that, even if he was writing for a private audience, Shakespeare was still creating art. It is

certainly possible that these planetary references are merely part of the great store of language and metaphor that Shakespeare was able to call upon when writing in order to perfect his conceits. In Sonnet 26, for example, the idea that Shakespeare needs the influence of an amicable star to improve his writing accentuates the implication that the writer is unworthy of his friend. Similarly, in Sonnet 15 the concept that the stars "cheer" or "check" men leads into the notion that the poet values his friend's beauty (which he will "engraft" anew with his work) all the more due to its ephemeral nature. As in the case of the dramatic works, it is a mistake to assign Shakespeare any particular belief in astrology based on the evidence of The Sonnets.

While our evidence for asserting that Shakespeare had some sort of belief in astrology is meager, it seems likely that he did possess some form of credence in celestial influences. The sheer number of astrological references in his work makes this probable. Don Cameron Allen notes that Shakespeare mentions astrology more than most other writers of the period,¹⁰ while Richard Furnald Smith notes that acting is a notoriously superstitious profession.¹¹ The superstitious outlook of his chosen profession may well have influenced Shakespeare's attitude toward astral prophecy. Considering that the general trend was toward belief in astrology during the Elizabethan era and that many of the leading intellectuals appear to have accepted some sort of astral influence on man, it appears likely that Shakespeare would also have had room in his world picture for some form of celestial sway over man. If

he did believe in astrology, however, it is highly probable that his was a moderate conviction, perhaps allowing for starry influences over man but also leaving room for man (through the exercise of free will) to counteract them. Perhaps his beliefs regarding astrology were much like those of Raleigh (see Chapter III, p. 41). It seems unlikely that Shakespeare, with his natural understanding of and great empathy for the human condition, could ever have subscribed to absolute judicial astrology, with its concept that men are the merely puppets of the stars.

The great majority of astrological references in Shakespeare's work are "commonplaces."¹² That is, while they do refer to some commonly known (in Elizabethan times) aspect of astrology, most references add little to our critical understanding of Shakespeare when studied individually. However, they can prove of value when considered in conjunction with other astrological allusions. It is worthwhile, nevertheless, to examine some typical references in order to understand just how thoroughly astrology permeates the Shakespearean canon.

One common type of astrological in Shakespeare is the nativity, the influential position of the stars at the moment of a person's birth. References to nativities are myriad in the plays. One occurs in 2 Henry VI and concerns Queen Margaret's lover, Suffolk. Suffolk knew the following information from his natal horoscope: "A cunning man did calculate my birth,/ and told me by 'water' I should die" (IV.i.33-35). Indeed, Suffolk dies at the hand of the vengeful pirate Walter (pronounced "water")¹³ Whitmore.

A more humorous mention of a nativity occurs in Much Ado About

Nothing. Benedick, preparing to woo Beatrice, tries his hand at poetry with the following result:

The god of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve-- (V.ii.26-29)

Benedick wisely realizes that he does not have the makings of a poet and declares that he "was not born under a rhyming planet,..." (V.ii.40-41).

A rather inappropriate nativity is that of Parolles in All's Well That Ends Well. A cowardly fop, Parolles was nevertheless born under the planet of warlike Mars, for which Helena mocks him:

Helena: Monsieur Parolles, you were born under a charitable star.

Parolles: Under Mars, ay.

Helena: I especially think, under Mars.

Parolles: Why under Mars?

Helena: The wars hath so kept you under, that you must needs be born under Mars.

Parolles: When he was predominant.

Helena: When he was retrograde, I think rather.

Parolles: Why think you so?

Helena: You go so much backward when you fight.
(I.i.197-207)

A much more appropriate nativity than that of Parolles is that of the roguish Autolychus in The Winter's Tale. A born thief, he soliloquizes that "My father named me Autolychus, who being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles" (IV.iii.24-26). That Autolychus was "littered" under Mercury is altogether fitting since the planet's

namesake was the patron of thieves.

Probably the most famous nativity in Shakespeare is that of Edmund in King Lear. Although he mocks the idea that his nativity makes him what he is, the fact remains that it fits Edmund perfectly:

My father compounded with my mother
under the Dragon's Tail, and my nativity was
under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough
and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I
am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament
twinkled in my bastardizing. (I.ii.139-144)

Harry Rusche believes that this statement shows a somewhat more arcane side of Shakespeare's astrological knowledge, since the passage mentions the Ptolemaic idea that the position of the stars at conception could also influence character.¹⁴ The fact that his conception occurs under the Dragon's Tail (a particularly ominous spot on the moon's orbital path)¹⁵ and Ursa Major, a constellation dominated by Mars but in this case containing the additional influence of Venus (making him lecherous), practically guarantees that Edmund will have a predisposition toward being a scoundrel.¹⁶ It is likely that Elizabethan audiences would have been very suspicious of Edmund due to his disbelief in such an obviously correct nativity.¹⁷

Prophecy and celestial omens are other aspects of astrology that appear quite often in Shakespeare's plays. In Richard II King Richard's hopes of defeating Bolingbroke are destroyed by the appearance of meteors and a frightful looking moon. These astral phenomena cause his much needed Welsh reinforcements to believe that he is already dead:

Captain: 'Tis thought the king is dead; we will not stay.

The bay trees in our country are all withered,
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven,
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth.

(II.iv.7-10)

As a result of the Welshmen's decision Richard is left with too few men to fight Bolingbroke and is doomed to eventual death by his capture. The prophecy of the skies comes true, at least partly because the Welsh believe in such prophecies.

The wild state of the skies of Rome in Julius Caesar just prior to the assassination of Caesar is one of the best examples of an evil astrological portent in the plays. So full of omens are the skies that the stunned Casca remarks:

But never till tonight, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dripping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction. (I.iii.9-13)

The sky of Rome is so full of fiery portents that Brutus has no need of a torch to read a recently delivered letter: "The exhalations whizzing in the air/ Give so much light that I may read by them" (II.i.44-45). Caesar's wife, Calphurnia, is fully aware of the significance of these omens: "When beggars die, there are no comets seen;/ The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes" (II.ii.30-31). Unfortunately, Caesar ignores these signs of disaster and goes forth to his death.

In Hamlet Horatio echoes the celestial disturbances at Caesar's death when, seeing the appearance of the elder Hamlet's ghost as an evil omen, he likens it to the significance of "...stars with trains of fire and dews of blood" (I.i.117).

Not all astrological references in Shakespeare are so dire, however. In Twelfth Night, for example, there are two allusions that are quite humorous. In one instance Sir Andrew Aguecheek congratulates Feste on his excellent clowning of the previous night, quoting some doggerel that apparently mocks the high-flown technical language of astrology:

In sooth thou wast in very gracious fooling
last night, when thou spok'st of Pigrogomitus, of
the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Queubus.
'Twas very good, i'faith. (II.iii.22-25)

Another humorous moment based on astrological lore occurs when Sir Andrew and Sir Toby Belch have a good-natured, though rather misguided, argument over which zodiacal sign governs the legs (they are interested in dancing):

Andrew: ...Shall we set about
some revels?

Toby: What shall we do else? Were we not born under
Taurus?

Andrew: Taurus? That's sides and heart.

Toby: No sir; it is legs and thighs. (I.iii.134-137)

This conversation echoes the astrological concept that different signs had an influence over certain parts of the body. In reality, however, Taurus governed the head and neck, while Sagittarius governed the legs and thighs. Shakespeare's audience would have known this and understood the joke.¹⁴

The acerbic Thersites of Troilus and Cressida uses a witty astrological allusion to denounce the Grecian Diomedes' bragging ways. He mocks the pompous warrior in the following manner:

He

will spend his mouth and promise like Brabblers

the hound; but when he performs, astronomers foretell it. It is prodigious, there will come some change. The sun borrows of the moon when Diomed keeps his word. (V.i.94-99)

Here Thersites compares Diomedes' rare honest actions with seldom seen celestial events. It is also interesting that Shakespeare uses the term "astronomer" in an instance when "astrologer" would be the correct expression. This seems to indicate the minimal difference between these two professions during Elizabethan times.

Most astrological allusions in Shakespeare are used metaphorically, as in the above instance." For example, witness Leontes' comment in The Winter's Tale in which he likens adultery (of which he suspects his wife, Hermione, and his friend, Camillo) to a disruptive planet:

...Physic for't there's none;
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powerful, think it,
From east, west, north, and south. (I.ii.200-203)

Astrological metaphors are also used to describe happier relationships between men and women. In Hamlet Claudius describes his love for Gertrude in the following manner: "She is so conjunctive to my life and soul,/ That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,/ I could not but by her" (IV.vii.14-16). Queen Margaret takes a similar view of Suffolk in 2 Henry VI when she learns of his death at the hands of pirates:

Ah, barbarous villains! Hath this lovely face
Ruled like a wandering planet over me,
And could it not enforce them to relent,
That were unworthy to behold the same? (IV.iv.15-18)

Both of the above examples use the astrological term "conjunction" (in this case meaning a favorable relationship between two planets

occupying the same sign) to illustrate the magnitude of the affection existing between the lovers.

Conjunction is also used by Prince Hal in 2 Henry IV to describe a kiss between the prostitute Doll Tearsheet and Falstaff: "Saturn and Venus this year in conjunction! What says th' almanac to that?" (II.iv.269-270) In this case, however, the astrological metaphor is clearly a jest. Doll, as a prostitute, is obviously associated with Venus, while Falstaff is associated with Saturn, a planet identified with old age. This would seem to be an odd, if not unfavorable, conjunction.

An astrological metaphor is also used to describe the face of Bardolph in the same scene as he kisses Mistress Quickly. Poins describes him as the "fiery Trigon" (II.iv.271) referring to his friend's red face. The "Trigon" mentioned is the conjunction of the zodiacal signs Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, all of which were associated with the element of fire in astrological lore." In Bardolph's case, however, his red face is more probably the result of excessive drinking than of passion.

The power of the planets is sometimes used to describe the martial prowess of certain men in the plays. In Coriolanus Comminius, the friend of Caius Marcius (soon to be dubbed Coriolanus for his deeds), uses an astrological metaphor to describe Marcius' bravery at the battle for Corioles:

Alone he ent'red
The mortal gate of th' city, which he painted
With shunless destiny, aidless came off,
And with sudden reinforcement struck
Corioles like a planet. (II.II.111-115)

Presumably "to strike like a planet" compares Coriolanus' martial power to that of a malignant planetary influence, or perhaps Comminius is imagining the devastation that might ensue from a planetary collision.

Timon of Athens uses a similar metaphor when he describes how he wishes the exiled military leader Alcibiades to crush Athens. Timon tells Alcibiades to be to Athens "...as a planetary plague" (IV.iii.109). This reflects the astrological belief that epidemics were the result of bad planetary influences.

In Troilus and Cressida an astrological allusion is used as a metaphor for order. Achilles' refusal to fight or to acknowledge Agamemnon's superior social status has brought chaos to the Greek cause, which the wise Ulysses describes in astrological terms:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this center
 Observe degree, priority, and place,
 Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
 Office, and custom, in all line of order.
 And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
 In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
 Amidst the other; whose med'cinable eye
 Corrects the influence of evil planets,
 And posts, like the commandment of a king,
 Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets
 In evil mixture to disorder wander,
 What plagues, and what portents, what mutiny,
 What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
 Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
 Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
 The unity and married calm of states
 Quite from their fixture? O, when degree is shaken,
 Which is the ladder of all high designs,
 The enterprise is sick. (I.iii.85-103)

This passage is Shakespeare's clearest and most famous use of an astrological metaphor for earthly order and disorder. In it the horrors of political disorder are clearly delineated as Ulysses makes his point using cosmic order as an example. Whatever their

nationality, be it French, Italian, or Danish, Shakespeare's characters almost always reflect an Elizabethan sensibility, and nowhere is this clearer than in this speech of Ulysses. His words obviously mirror the Elizabethan obsession with order discussed in Chapter III. Many of the astrological passages in Shakespeare do, indeed, allude to this concern, as will be shown below.

That the astrological references that permeate Shakespeare's work are not incidental becomes clearer when we examine the role of the stars as influences upon human fate in the plays. Most of the characters in the plays seem to believe that the stars are an influence upon their lives. There are some thirty-six direct statements of this doctrine²¹ in the over four-hundred lines of astrological allusion present in the plays.²²

Quite often in the plays the characters directly blame the stars for their misfortune. Hermione, wrongly accused of adultery by Leontes in The Winter's Tale, asserts, "There's some ill-planet reigns;" (II.i.105). Othello, realizing too late that Desdemona was, indeed, innocent, sadly terms her an "ill-starred wench" (V.ii.269). In Twelfth Night Sebastian, feeling that the stars are against him (he has been shipwrecked and believes his sister dead), implores his friend Antonio to leave him:

Antonio: Will you stay no longer? Nor will you not that
I go with you?

Sebastian: By your patience, no. My stars shine darkly
on me; the malignancy of my fate might perhaps
distemper yours. (II.i.1-5)

A more ominous reference to the power of the stars is made in Measure for Measure by Duke Vincentio. Disguised as a friar, he

visits Claudio in jail, and, while preparing him for death explains:

...a breath thou art,
 Servile to skyey influences,
 That dost this habitation, where thou keep'st,
 Hourly afflict; (III.i.8-11)

It seems that a real friar might have told Claudio that he was "servile" to the providence of God but not to "skyey influences."

Are the characters of Shakespeare mere puppets of the sky, "Fortune's fools," to paraphrase Romeo? If so, the study of character in Shakespeare is greatly simplified. We need seek no further motivation than celestial influences. Iago is evil because of the stars, while Miranda is virtuous due only to her nativity. However, a close examination of certain astrological references will show that, while the stars do appear to exert an influence, their power is far from absolute. Certain characters are able to overcome negative astral influences; others struggle and fail but are ennobled by their efforts. Some characters give in to despondency and make no attempt to overcome the stars. They will be seen as ignoble.

Furthermore, political and social order are closely linked to the astrological allusions present in the plays to be discussed. While astrological references are used metaphorically in these plays to represent order and disorder, even more important to the maintenance of "degree" are the ways in which these characters react to their varying starry influences. Invariably, those characters who retain their will and reason in the face of the stars make a positive contribution toward maintaining order, while

those characters who give in to their animal passions when oppressed by malign influences tend to foster the disorder so feared by the Elizabethans. Studying the ways in which various individuals react to negative (and sometimes positive) astral influences furthers our understanding of character in Shakespeare, for it provides a yardstick by which true inner nobility may be judged.

Before we discuss those characters who strive against or surrender to the skies, it must be acknowledged that there are still other characters who do not admit the influence of the stars at all. It is not that they reject astrology, but that they ignore it. This type of character is so single-minded in his purposes and has such a powerful will that the influence of the stars simply does not come into play. Examples of this personality type are Richard III, Iago, Timon of Athens, Cassius, Hotspur, Coriolanus, and Macbeth. These individuals, while they may mention astrology, never acknowledge that they themselves are subject to any planetary influences. Their personalities are so powerful that is likely they would overcome any planetary influences contrary to their will. This idea is supported by the fact that there are so few astrological references in Macbeth, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, and Richard III. There are only an average of two astrological allusions in each of these plays as opposed to an average of seven references in other plays. In the cases of Hotspur, Cassius, and Iago, these characters either do not believe in astrology or decline to acknowledge its power, although there are a goodly number of astrological references in 1 Henry IV, Julius Caesar, and

Othello. Hotspur openly mocks the portentous nativity of Owen Glendower, while Cassius is famous for observing that "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves..." (I.iii.140-141). Iago, in his consuming desire to destroy Othello, acknowledges no starry power and mentions it only in deceit when he wishes to cover up his involvement in provoking a fight between Cassio and Montano. When Othello demands to know the cause of the brawl, Iago replies that maybe "some planet...unwitted them" (II.iii.181).

This does not necessarily mean that these men are immune to the influence of the stars; they all do come to bad ends. But the stars are not mentioned in conjunction with their respective fates, and since they themselves do not assent to celestial power, they must be considered apart from our main discussion of the men and women in Shakespeare who do acknowledge the influence of the stars.

II. Character, Fortune, and the Stars

Our discussion of the way in which various characters respond to heavenly influences begins with the longest and most famous astrological passage in Shakespeare." It occurs in King Lear, a play that is very much concerned with political order and responsibility. In this play, chaos ensues when the ruler of England, Lear, abdicates his position and divides his kingdom among his daughters. Lear thus breaks political order by removing himself from his natural place in God's scheme. Lear further violates his

duty by allowing his passions to overrule him when he makes the actual division of his domain. Enraged by Cordelia's refusal to flatter him in the manner of her sisters, Regan and Goneril, Lear leaves her portionless. This is a further betrayal of his duty to maintain order in that, of the three sisters, Cordelia is most fit to rule. Lear's actions result in disaster for his kingdom and death for Cordelia and himself.

The longest Shakespearean astrological passage, mentioned at the beginning of the preceding paragraph, occurs in I.ii. as the Duke of Gloucester, speaking to his evil bastard son, Edmund, inveighs against the damage that recent astral events have wrought on earth, particularly the disloyalty (so he believes) of his son Edgar and the disinheriting of Cordelia by Lear:

These late eclipses in the sun and moon
portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature
can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature
finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love
cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide. In
cities, mutinies, in countries, dischord; in palaces,
treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and
father. This villain of mine comes under the pre-
diction, there's son against father; the King falls
from bias of nature, there's father against child.
We have seen the best of our time. Machinations,
hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders
follow us disquietly to our graves. (I.ii.112-127)

Gloucester reasons that celestial influences are at the root of the present problems and that the situation is not likely to improve. Edmund, however, considers his father a fool for blaming the stars.

This is the excellent foppery of the world,
that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits
of our own behavior, we make guilty of our dis-
asters the sun the moon, and stars; as if we were
villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compul-

sion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence.

(I.i.128-135)

Edmund's soliloquy is a stinging critique, not of the doctrine of planetary influence, but of those who see it as immutable and blame their self-caused woes upon it. Note that, while he mocks the idea that there is an "enforced obedience" to planetary influence, he does not deny that the planets have an influence upon man. Although Edmund may wrongly mock his evil nativity (it seems obvious that by declining to admit the influence of his inauspicious birth, Edmund has allowed its effects to run wild; he is the monster that it portended), it must be granted that he at least accepts responsibility for being the villain that he is.

Certainly, Gloucester pays for his folly of blaming the recent troubles upon the stars and remaining passive in the face of them. Assuming that nothing can be done about Lear's foolish division of the kingdom, he makes no objection to the ill-fated disposition between Regan and Goneril. Similarly, assuming that the stars have ordained that Edgar rebel against him, he makes no effort to discover the truth and uncover Edmund's treachery. His passiveness in the face of bad celestial influences that both portend and contribute to earthly disorder costs him dearly when he does try to assist Lear. The evil sisters have become too powerful and Gloucester, betrayed by Edmund, suffers blinding at the hands of Cornwall.

Kent, however, takes a very different course from Gloucester. Kent apparently also believes in astrology. Indeed, he sees starry

influences at birth as the reason for the great difference between the temperament of Cordelia and the temperaments of Regan and Goneril:

It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our conditions;
Else one self mate and make could not beget
Such different issues. (IV.ii.34-37)

Presumably Kent would have seen the same dire eclipses as Gloucester and realized their ominous meaning, but, unlike Gloucester, he does not remain inactive in the face of the present dangers. It is he who has the courage to stand up to Lear and tell him that his actions are foolish, even though Lear banishes him for his honesty. Kent could not do otherwise; it is his duty as a good nobleman to do his utmost to maintain the political stability of the kingdom. Even when banished, Kent returns in disguise (risking death should he be discovered) to aid his sovereign in any way he may. It is clear that Kent is intent on bringing order to the realm by restoring the rightful monarch to his throne. Although Kent fails to save Lear and Cordelia, he is brave in his attempt. He no doubt realizes that the stars portend no good, but this does not deter him from following the logic of his heart. Indeed, the "degree" that exists at the end of the play (in the form the of presumed regime of Albany and Edgar) is in large part a direct result of the actions of the valiant Kent.

Shakespeare's Henry VI is also very concerned with political order. In these plays, also, disorder is linked both to the stars and to the unwillingness of a man (Henry VI) to face up to his

responsibilities as a ruler. Disorder is imminent from the beginning of 1 Henry VI, emanating from the fact that Henry V has died while Henry VI is still an infant. Henry VI's long minority (and subsequent weak-willed ineffectiveness) creates political instability, eventually leading to the Wars of the Roses, as the English nobles fight to control their monarch. Indeed the initial source of Henry's problems and the planets are linked from the very first lines of the play when Bedford bemoans his brother's recent death:

Hung be the heavens with black, yield day
to night!
Comets importing change of times and states,
Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,
And with them scourge the bad revolting stars
That have consented to Henry's death! (I.i.1-5)

Although no astrological portents have yet appeared, Bedford believes that they should, since Henry's death will undoubtedly result in political turmoil. Indeed, some forty lines later Bedford prays that Henry's ghost will combat malign planetary influences for the sake of England: "Henry the Fifth, thy soul I invoke:/ Prosper this realm, keep it from civil broils,/ Combat with adverse planets in the heavens!" (I.i.52-54)

Unfortunately, King Henry VI is a prime example of someone who does surrender in the face of unfavorable stars, thus defaming his royal title and subjecting his kingdom to political disorder. Although Henry VI is undoubtedly a good man, he no doubt lacks moral courage. An example of his refusal to strive against the stars occurs in 2 Henry VI at the battle of St. Albans. Rather than fleeing to fight another day (the Yorks have already won the field)

as Queen Margaret would have him do, he asks her, "Can we out run the heavens?" (V.ii.73) His statement implies that bad celestial influences cannot be overcome and that it is futile to try. That Henry would rather surrender to the starry powers than strive against them is further illustrated in 3 Henry VI. Following his capture by the Yorks and his imprisonment in the Tower of London, Henry willingly cedes his kingly power to Warwick:

Therefore, that I may conquer Fortune's spite
 By lying low, where Fortune cannot hurt me,
 And live that the people of this blesse'd land
 May not be punished with my thwarting stars,
 Warwick, although my head shall still wear the crown,
 I here resign my government to thee,
 For thou art fortunate in all deeds.

Henry would rather surrender his birthright than struggle against the stars. Warwick is very aware of Henry's weak temperament and plays on it by congratulating his monarch for his good sense:

Your Grace hath still been famed for
 virtuous;
 And now may be seen as wise as virtuous,
 By spying and avoiding Fortune's malice,
 For few men rightly temper with the stars.
(IV.vi.26-29)

Warwick knows very well that Henry is not a man who would "temper with the stars" and encourages him in this tendency. By giving in to fear and not fulfilling his God-given role as monarch, Henry VI condemns his kingdom to decades of civil war.

In direct contrast to Henry's weakness is Lord Talbot's strength in 1 Henry VI. His job as the English general of France is to maintain order (from the English point of view) and retain France as part of Henry's domains. He never gives a thought to turning away from his duties, even when faced with an impossible

military situation at the French city of Bordeaux. With no hope of reinforcements due to the political intriguing of Suffolk and York, Talbot curses the stars when his son arrives at the scene, calling them "malignant and ill-boding" (IV.v.6). However, rather than despair at this ill-fortune, Talbot fights bravely in the ensuing battle. Although he and his son both perish, Talbot is ennobled both by his willingness to struggle against the evil celestial influences that he curses and his unfailing desire to do his duty.

While the Henry VI plays and King Lear explore the realm of political disorder, Othello explores what happens when a man's mind becomes disordered. Although he is intrinsically noble, Othello succumbs to burning jealousy (believing his wife, Desdemona, to be an adulteress) and, duped by the wiles of Iago, murders the woman he loves. Immediately after the murder Emilia, Iago's wife, enters the chamber and tells Othello of another murder: the death of Roderigo at the hands of Cassio. Othello, still in shock, mutters: "It is the error of the moon./ She comes nearer earth than she was wont/ and makes men mad" (V.ii.108-110). Emilia, unaware that Desdemona is dead, thinks that Othello refers to Cassio. However, Othello is really speaking of himself. Overcome by the enormity of what he has done, he is as yet unable to accept the responsibility for his wife's death, and his disturbed mind blames it on the unnatural influences of the moon. Later, after he discovers that he was horribly mistaken about Desdemona, Othello does take responsibility for his actions. To atone for the life he has wrongly taken, he satisfies justice and his conscience by slaying himself.

Romeo and Juliet is a play in which social order and the stars are closely linked. This is evident from the words of the Chorus at the play's beginning. The Chorus calls the lovers "star-crossed" and asserts that their death has at least restored order between their two feuding families in Verona:

A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught could
remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
(Prologue 6-12)

However, while the deaths of Romeo and Juliet do serve to restore order, we must consider whether their being "star-crossed" necessarily doomed them to this fate.

What does the Chorus mean when it terms the young lovers "star-crossed"? Certainly they do seem to suffer from very bad luck that might very well emanate from the stars. Unfortunate coincidences abound in the play. Indeed, the unlucky stroke of Tybalt that slays Mercutio as Romeo attempts to separate the two brawlers marks the moment when the play makes its turn toward the tragic. Similarly, the quarantine of Friar John as he attempts to deliver the all-important letter telling Romeo that Juliet is not really dead sets the stage for the play's disastrous ending. The phrase "star-crossed" may, indeed, be seen as referring to these supremely unlucky events.

However, the reason that Romeo and Juliet are really "star-crossed" is that they are born into two feuding families. The hatred between the Montagues and the Capulets is one of the major

factors behind the deaths of the lovers. Family hatred results in Romeo's banishment as he becomes involved in the fatal street fight and slays Tybalt. Friar Laurence's disastrous "sleeping beauty" stratagem must be employed to keep the Montagues from marrying Juliet to Paris, since the news of her previous marriage would presumably outrage them. At the end of the play Prince Escalus clearly sees social strife as the primary cause of the deaths that have occurred:

Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague,
See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
The heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
And I, for winking at your dischords too,
Have lost a brace of kinsmen. All are punished.

(V.iii.291-295)

The term "star-crossed" may be seen as a metaphor for the social disorder that helps to precipitate the lamentable ending of Romeo and Juliet.

However, while there are many forces working against the love of Romeo and Juliet, it is really the fatalistic attitude of Romeo toward starry influences that turns the play into tragedy. From the beginning of the play we are aware that he has a belief in the influence of the stars. On the way to the Capulet's feast he confesses that:

...my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of a despised life, closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death. (I.iv.106-111)

It is worth noting that Romeo appears to have, even at this early stage of the play, a very fatalistic attitude toward the stars. He assumes that the influence he suspects will have bad consequences

in store for him.

Romeo's negative disposition becomes vividly apparent in the depths of depression he sinks to in III.iii. as he hides at Friar Laurence's after the fatal street brawl. While he obviously has reason to be upset (his banishment, Mercutio's death), he takes his emotion to such extremes that both the Friar and the Nurse are shocked. Upon entering the Friar's cell and finding the blubbering Romeo prostrate on the ground, the Nurse sternly reprimands him: "Stand up, stand up! Stand and you be a man./ For Juliet's sake, for her sake, rise and stand!/ Why should you fall into so deep an O?" (III.iii.88-90) After Romeo attempts to stab himself later in the same scene, the Friar rebukes him even more sternly:

Hold thy desperate hand.
 Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art;
 Thy tears are womanish, thy wild acts denote
 The unreasonable fury of a beast.
 Unseemly woman in a seeming man!
 And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both!
 Thou hast amazed me. By my holy order,
 I thought thy disposition better tempered.

(III.iii.108-115)

It is only the promise of a night with Juliet that redeems Romeo from this violent fit of despair.

The combination of Romeo's belief in negative starry influences and his predisposition toward despair proves fatal, however. When he is falsely informed that Juliet is dead he quickly exclaims "Is it e'en so? Then I defy you stars!" (V.i.24) But Romeo has no intention of defying the stars. Later in the same scene we find that, instead of struggling with the stars, he intends to escape them by killing himself. That Romeo's purpose is not to defy but to surrender is further illustrated by his words

at the "dead" Juliet's side as he prepares to take his poison:

O, here
 Will I set up my everlasting rest
 And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
 From this world-wearied flesh. (V.iii.109-112)

While Romeo and Juliet do face many obstacles beyond their control (hostile families, the unfortunate street brawl that results in Tybalt's death), it is, nevertheless, Romeo's decision to surrender to the starry influences that brings events to tragedy. His decision to commit suicide costs not only his own life, but those of Paris, whom Romeo slew to enter the tomb, and of Juliet, who stabs herself upon waking and finding the dead Romeo beside her.

Happily, there are characters in Shakespeare's plays who combat the stars and triumph. Some even use favorable celestial influences to their advantage. Prospero of The Tempest is such an individual. Interestingly enough, in this case the stars provide the opportunity for the restoration of political order. Marooned on an island following the usurpation of his Milanese dukedom by his evil brother, Antonio, Prospero, at the play's beginning, is at last granted the chance by Fortune (the stars) to regain his birthright. A fortuitous storm has brought the ship of his enemies within reach of his magical powers. Prospero acknowledges this opportunity as the working of Fortune:

Know thus far forth.
 By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune
 (now my dear lady) hath mine enemies
 Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
 I find my zenith doth depend upon
 A most auspicious star, whose influence
 If I now court not, but omit, my fortunes
 Will ever after droop. (I.ii.177-184)

However, Prospero realizes that while Fortune, which is really equated with the stars in this passage, has provided him with a chance for revenge, it is his duty to take advantage of this chance. He must "court" the "auspicious star" on his own. Prospero swiftly takes advantage of these benign celestial influences, wisely realizing that Fortune will not always be his "dear lady."

While Hermione of The Winter's Tale does not have any benign starry influences to court, she does manage to overcome some bad ones. Wrongly accused of adultery by her husband, Leontes, Hermione blames her situation on the stars: "There's some ill-planet reigns;" (II.i.105). However, rather than despair, she decides (one line later): "I must be patient, till the heavens look/ With an aspect more favorable." (II.i.106-107). Hermione's strategy, then, is to simply wait out the negative celestial influences she is experiencing. This is, indeed, what she does. Feigning death to avoid her death sentence, she remains concealed at the home of her friend Paulina for some sixteen years until Leontes has repented properly for his mistakes and the situation is favorable for her to return. By not despairing at her bad fortune but instead struggling through it, Hermione is able to return to her home in happier times.

Hermione's decision is important in that it is part of the restoration of order that occurs at the end of The Winter's Tale. Leonte's foolish actions have resulted in the dissolution of degree in his kingdom. Although no civil war results from his wrongful deeds, he has created a terrible situation in that he has destroyed any chance for a smooth succession after his death. His son,

Mamillius, dies of grief following the wrongful accusations against his mother, while his daughter, Perdita, is left exposed on the "seacoast" of Bohemia. The sin of this destruction of order is shown by the death of Antigonus, who is eaten by a bear after he (on Leontes' orders) abandons Perdita. His wife, Paulina (blaming Leontes), sees this as a heavenly punishment for his effectively taking part in an attempt to break order by disposing of a king's child: " 'Tis your counsel/ My lord should to the heavens be contrary,/ Oppose against their wills" (V.i.44-46).

Although the order of succession is effectively reestablished by the return of Perdita near the end of the play, the reappearance of Hermione is also important. The reuniting of this brave queen and Leontes adds to the sense of "order restored" at the play's conclusion. This reunion is made possible only by Hermione's determination in the face of negative astral influences.

Helena of All's Well That Ends Well is perhaps the Shakespearean character with the most affinity for astrology. She mentions the various influences of the stars many times, which is, in her case, quite natural since she is the daughter of a physician and would presumably have learned about astrology from her father, from whom she has, indeed, learned her medicine.²⁴ Helena's problem in the play is that she loves a nobleman, Bertram, who is both above her station and not in love with her. She herself acknowledges that her birth is not worthy of him:

... 'twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star,
And think to wed it, he is so above me,
In his bright radiance and colateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere. (I.i.91-95)

To marry Bertram would be a breaking of social order.

But Helena does not despair or blame the stars for keeping her from Bertram; instead she takes action to place herself on his level, declaring:

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven; the fated sky
Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.

(I.i.223-226)

Helena hits upon the idea that, if she can cure the King of France of his mysterious disease, he will reward her and elevate her to Bertram's social level. In this manner she will be able to attain her love without forcing Bertram to marry beneath himself. She accomplishes this goal but runs into an obstacle when Bertram, who really does not want to marry her, declares that he will never bed her. Rather than giving up, however, she feigns death and follows him to Florence, where, substituting herself for a local maid that Bertram wished to seduce, she does succeed in having the marriage consummated, although Bertram remains unaware of this until the end of the play. When it is revealed at the French court that she is alive, Bertram, sorry for his past conduct, finally declares his love for her. Thus, by her persistence and her belief that the stars do not dictate (though they may influence) a person's life, Helena is able to marry the man she loves, yet still avoid breaking the social order.

The fact that characters like Hermione, Helena, and Prospero are able to overcome, or even make use of, starry influences indicates that the power of the stars is far from absolute in the plays of Shakespeare. Men and women do appear to possess free will.

This concept is highlighted further by the ability of other characters to ignore the power of the stars totally. Individuals like Richard III, Iago, and Macbeth are such creatures of pure will that planetary influences just do not seem to apply to them.

While it is apparent from the above examples that men and women are not the puppets of the stars in the context of the plays, there are still those characters who view the stars as unopposable. Both Romeo and Henry VI abjectly submit to planetary influences that they perceive as omnipotent. Their surrender is especially ignoble when compared with the actions of a Kent or Talbot. These latter men, although they do acknowledge the power of the stars, nevertheless strive mightily to thwart their influences. Although they fail in their endeavors, they should be accorded respect for their brave efforts.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER I

1. Sylvan Barnet, ed. The Signet Classic Shakespeare (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1963), 5.
2. L. Sprague de Camp and Catherine C. de Camp, Spirits, Stars, and Spells: The Profits and Perils of Magic (New York: Canaveral Press, 1966), 20.
3. Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 287.
4. Bradbrook, M. C., Shakespeare: The Poet In His World (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 18.
5. Bradbrook, 65.
6. Bradbrook, viii.
7. Bernard Capp, English Almanacs 1500-1800: Astrology and the Popular Press (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 15.
8. Capp, 20.
9. Peter J. Zetterberg, "The Mistaking of 'the Mathematicks' for Magic in Tudor and Stuart England." Sixteenth Century Journal 1 (1980), 85.
10. E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York: Vintage Books, 1943), 16.
11. Capp, 29.
12. Thomas, 307.1
13. Derek Parker, Familiar to All: William Lilly and Astrology in the Seventeenth Century (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1975), 42.
14. A. J. Meadows, The High Firmament: A Survey of Astrology in English Literature (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 44.
15. Capp, 27.
16. Meadows, 44.
17. Parker, 49.
18. Capp, 17.

19. Johnstone Parr, Tamburlaine's Malady (University: University of Alabama Press, 1943), xi.

CHAPTER II

1. Thomas, 333.

2. Richard Furnald Smith, Prelude to Science: An Exploration of Magic and Divination (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 44.

3. Smith, 49.

4. Mark Graubard, Astrology and Alchemy: Two Fossil Sciences (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 9.

5. de Camp, 21.

6. Meadows, 44.

7. Graubard, 13.

8. de Camp, 21.

10. Smith, 40.

11. Graubard, 13.

12. Graubard, 14.

13. Smith, 40.

14. Graubard, 16-17.

15. Smith, 43.

16. Graubard, 10.

17. Smith, 40.

18. Graubard, 55.

19. Ibid., 10.

20. Ibid., 48.

21. Capp, 15.

22. Thomas, 349.

23. Meadows, 5.
24. Ibid., 19.
25. Smith, 52.
26. Meadows, 9.
27. Ibid., xii.
28. Ibid., xii.
29. Smith, 52.
30. Ibid., 50.
31. Meadows, 45.
32. Ibid., 43.
33. Thomas, 285.
34. Meadows, 4.
35. Thomas, 285.
36. Meadows, 22.
37. Graubard, 56.
38. Meadows, 47.
40. Graubard, 56.
41. Meadows, 50.
42. Ibid., 54.
43. Graubard, 56.
44. Meadows, 50.
45. Smith, 49.
46. Meadows, 46.
47. Ibid., 48.
48. Ibid., 46.
49. Ibid., 49.

50. Ibid., 48.
51. Thomas, 285.
52. Meadows, 38.
53. Capp, 17.
54. Meadows, 46.
55. Smith, 58.
56. Meadows, 56.
57. Ibid., 57.
58. Ibid., 58.
59. Graubard, 57.
60. Meadows, 52.
61. Ibid., 46.
62. Ibid., 47.
63. Smith, 57.
64. Meadows, 45.
65. Capp, 16.
66. Graubard, 48.
67. Thomas, 283.
68. Smith, 51.
69. Graubard, 57,
70. Thomas, 294.
71. Meadows, 49.
72. Smith, 57.
73. Thomas, 324.
74. Graubard, 51.
75. Thomas, 324.

76. Graubard, 51.
77. Thomas, 287.
78. Graubard, 53.
79. Thomas, 285-287.
80. Ibid, 285.
81. Capp, 16.
82. Ibid., 17.
83. Ibid., 16.
84. Ibid., 15.

CHAPTER III

1. Capp, 18.
2. Ibid., 21.
3. Thomas, 280.
4. Capp, 19.
5. Ibid., 18.
6. Ibid., 19.
7. Ibid., 18.
8. Ibid., 19.
9. Thomas, 288.
10. Capp, 19.
11. Zetterberg, 84.
12. Capp, 19.
13. Ibid., 20.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 21.
17. Ibid., 25.
18. Ibid., 26-27.
19. Ibid., 28.
20. Thomas, 294.
21. Capp, 28.
22. Ibid., 20.
23. Ibid., 29.
24. Thomas, 297.
25. Capp, 23.
26. Ibid., 30.
27. Ibid., 29.
28. Thomas, 293.
29. Capp, 64.
30. Thomas, 293.
31. Capp, 30
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 31.
34. Thomas, 293.
35. Capp, 31.
36. Ibid., 104.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 20.
39. Thomas, 290.
40. Ibid., 305.
41. Barnet, 29.

42. Tillyard, 16.
43. Barnet, 29.
44. Tillyard, 54.
45. Ibid., 55.
46. Ibid., 54.
47. Ibid., 52.
48. Ibid., 57.
49. Ibid., 54.
50. Thomas, 317.
51. Ibid., 308.
52. Ibid., 305.
53. Capp, 31.
54. Thomas, 315.
55. Don Cameron Allen, The Star-Crossed Renaissance (Durham: Duke University Press, 1941), 102.
56. Allen, 49.
57. Ibid., 105.
58. Thomas, 315.
59. Parker, 58.
60. Thomas, 317.
61. Capp, 67.
62. Allen, 101.
63. Capp, 29.
64. Ibid., 69.
65. Ibid., 70.
66. Thomas, 342.
67. Ibid., 344.

68. Capp, 29.
69. Ibid., 131.
70. Allen, 148.
71. Thomas, 131.
72. Capp, 31.
73. Thomas, 364.
74. Ibid., 356.
75. Ibid., 370.
76. Capp, 131.
77. Thomas, 362.
78. Tillyard, 121.
79. Capp, 132.
80. Ibid.
81. Thomas, 367.
82. Ibid., 362.
83. Smith, 39.
84. Capp, 17.
85. Tillyard, 54.
86. Ibid., 55.
87. Ibid., 52.
88. Thomas, 335.
89. Ibid., 364.
90. Capp, 102.
91. Thomas, 335.
92. de Camp, 26.
93. Meadows, 64.

94. Allen, 116.
95. Ibid., 117.
96. Capp, 33.
97. Allen, 108.
98. Ibid., 110.
99. Capp, 33.
100. Tillyard, 54.
101. de Camp, 27.
102. Allen, 155.
103. Capp, 17.
104. Tillyard, 8.
105. Allen, 154.
106. Thomas, 290.
107. Parker, 56.
108. Ibid., 56.
109. W. D. Smith, "The Elizabethan Rejection of Judicial Astrology." Shakespeare Quarterly IX (1958): 164.
110. Allen, 153.
111. W. D. Smith, 161.
112. Allen, 152.
113. Ibid., 158.
114. Meadows, 62.
115. Allen, 150.
116. Thomas, 356.
117. Allen, 158.

CHAPTER IV

1. Parr, 57.
2. Theodore Oscar Wedel, The Mediaeval Attitude Toward Astrology (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 156.
3. Zolar (Bruce King), The History of Astrology (New York: Arco Press, 1972), 209.
4. Capp, 21.
5. Allen, 181.
6. Ibid., 156.
7. Parr, 64.
8. Parr, ix.
9. W.H. Auden, "The Sonnets." In The Signet Classic Shakespeare edited by Sylvan Barnet. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1963), 1728.
10. Allen, 165.
11. Smith, 33.
12. Parr, 57.
14. Harry Rusche, "Edmund's Conception and Nativity in King Lear" Shakespeare Quarterly XX (1969): 161-162.
15. Ibid., 162.
16. Parr, 82.
17. Parker, 52.
18. Meadows, 48.
19. Parr, 62.
20. Ibid.
21. Allen, 165.
22. Parr, 68.
23. Ibid., 70.
24. Parker, 53.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Shakespeare, William. The Signet Classic Shakespeare. ed. Sylvan Barnet. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1963.

MONOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Allen, Don Cameron. The Star-Crossed Renaissance. Durham: Duke University Press, 1941.

Bradbrook, M. C. Shakespeare: The Poet In His World. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Campbell, Oscar James, ed. The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966.

Capp, Bernard. English Almanacs 1500-1800: Astrology and the Popular Press. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979.

Chute, Marchette. Shakespeare of London. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1949.

de Camp, L. Sprague, and Catherine C. de Camp. Spirits, Stars, and Spells: The Profits and Perils of Magic. New York: Canaveral Press, 1966.

Garvin, Harry R., ed. Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Approaches. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1980.

Goldberg, Jonathan. James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

Graubard, Mark. Astrology and Alchemy: Two Fossil Sciences. New York: Philosophical Library, 1953.

Gurr, Andrew. Playgoing in Shakespeare's London. London: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Meadows, A. J. The High Firmament: A Survey of Astronomy in English Literature. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969.

- Parker, Derek. Familiar to All: William Lilly and Astrology in the Seventeenth Century. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1975.
- Parr, Johnstone. Tamburlaine's Malady. University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1943.
- Smith, Richard Fernald. Prelude to Science: An exploration of Magic and Divination. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.
- Speight, Robert. Shakespeare: The Man and His Achievement. New York: Stein and Day, 1977.
- Thomas, Keith. Religion and the Decline of Magic. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.
- Tillyard, E. M. W. The Elizabethan World Picture. New York: Vintage Books, 1943.
- Wedel, Theodore Oscar. The Mediaeval Attitude Toward Astrology. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1920.
- Zolar (Bruce King). The History of Astrology. New York: Arco Publishing. 1972.

PERIODICAL SOURCES

- Draper, J. W. "Shakespeare's Star-Crossed Lovers." Review of English Studies. 15 (1939): 16-34.
- Rusche, Harvey. "Edmund's Conception and Nativity in King Lear." Shakespeare Quarterly XX (1969): 161-164.
- Smith, W. D. "The Elizabethan Rejection of Judicial Astrology." Shakespeare Quarterly IX (1958): 159-176.
- Zetterberg, J. Peter. "The Mistaking of 'the Mathematicks' for Magic in Tudor and Stuart England." Sixteenth Century Journal XI (1980): 83-97.

Vita

William Bruce Smith was born November 7, 1962, in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from the Collegiate Schools in Richmond in 1981. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hampden-Sydney College in August, 1985. In 1988 he entered the graduate program in English at the University of Richmond, receiving his Master of Arts Degree in August, 1989. In August, 1989 he enrolled in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to begin work toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with special interest in American literature.