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**THE ROLE OF ASTROLOGY IN THE POETRY OF JANUS
PANNONIUS**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

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by

Áron Orbán

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, **Áron Orbán**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies **or** MA degree in Comparative History, with the specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 14 May 2012

Signature

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CUP	Cambridge University Press
Itk	Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények
OSZK	Országos Széchényi Könyvtár
SISMEL	Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino

Introduction

1. Objectives and previous research

As the title suggests, my thesis pertains primarily to literary history and the history of astrology, but my investigations will draw on the results of a number of other scholarly fields: political history, art history, Classical and Renaissance philosophy, Classical philology and so on. In other words, this thesis concerns the intellectual history of the Renaissance and relies on the interest of those who are interested in the culture and intellectual life of this age in general.

The significance of astrology in the Renaissance demonstrates that in general the people of the age had a different mindset from ours, but it is the different ways of thinking and the seemingly strange cultural phenomena that arouse our modern interests. Since my topic pertains to humanist poetry, I will mostly analyze texts which do not involve technical astrological details and understanding the essence of my argument will not require a thorough technical knowledge of Renaissance astrology.¹

It is conspicuous how frequently the stars appear in the poetry of Janus Pannonius, even compared to contemporary humanist poetry; moreover, a great many of these astral references are clearly astrological in nature. Why is this so? This basic question leads to at least two main sub-questions. What could Janus' real attitude have been towards astrology – more exactly, towards the various forms of astrology? Scholarly opinions vary concerning how far the poetry of a

¹ In the first chapter I will summarize the terminological problems and the different types and attitudes of Renaissance astrology. Those who are interested in the rudiments of astrology, in the system itself (which is not so difficult and does not require mathematical or astronomical knowledge), may look into it in a number of handbooks or websites, since the elements of modern astrology do not basically differ from those of Renaissance astrology (signs, planets, aspects and houses are the most important elements). For the Medieval Latin terminology of astrology, see Charles Burnett, "Astrology," in *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical guide*, ed. F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

humanist allows the reader to identify the poet's views;² it is certainly a difficult task to look behind the rhetoric and find the real author. It requires the thorough investigation of all the related poems, together with an exploration of the historical-biographical background; even so, unanswered questions will certainly remain. In general, I will mostly employ various kinds of textual analysis.³

The problem becomes even more complicated because his astrological ideas could appear in the framework of different philosophical or mythological world views, in addition, not in a systematic way, but – as is usual in poetry – in different forms depending on the genre, the addressee, and many other circumstances. However, this seems to be an even more interesting facet of the research: How can astrology be connected to other sets of ideas in humanist poetry? Seen through the example of Janus' works, why was humanist poetry suitable for expressing astrological ideas, either on their own or involved in other world views? The answers to this second group of questions concern the poetry of the period in general, and the strange Renaissance phenomenon of melding the various world views. Since there is hardly any scholarship on the relation of astrology and poetry in general,⁴ I will at best suggest some further

² Illustrating the problem, I quote here two greatly differing opinions: "the humanist poem is always very abstract, stylized, it hardly allows to trace back its motives." Éva Kocziszký: "A csillaghit Janus költészetében. (Előtanulmány)." [Astral belief in the Poetry of Janus (Preliminary Study)] *Collectanea Tiburtiana. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor tiszteletére* [Collectanea Tiburtiana. Studies in honor of Tibor Klaniczay], ed. Géza Galavics et al., (Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 1990), 57. "The external ornaments and formal elements of rhetorics, the vast number of *repetitio*, *interrogation*, *anaphora*, *locus communis* etc. are not autotelic humanist flourishes, but the means to suggest deeper inferences and to express an always present basic philosophical attitude." István János, "*Immensus nil sole praestantius orbis*" (*Neoplatonista vonások a Guarino-panegyricusban*) [Neoplatonic ideas in the Panegyric on Guarino], *Studium* 10 (1979), 4.

³ The fact that I look for the authorial intent also means that my approach to the works by Janus is basically traditional in terms of literary theory. My methods will become clear as my thesis develops: in general, I will investigate the biographical background, the rhetorical characteristics, the sources, sometimes the grammatic problems of the texts, and if required, I will compare them to contemporary texts. My highly interdisciplinary topic makes it sometimes necessary to collate the texts with horoscopes or to check the planetary positions of a given date (see later).

⁴ I have not found any theoretical study dealing directly with this problem, but some typical forms of astrological symbolism in poetry are identified in some historical monographs, like in Francis A. Yates, *Astraea* (London: Routledge, 1976), 59-66. (Although Yates does not mention the important fact that the Virgin was the Ascendent sign of Elizabeth's horoscope.)

possible directions of research; the first question has already aroused the interest of some scholars.

József Huszti was the first to realize the importance of astrology in Janus' poetry and wrote a short study in 1927,⁵ which in fact did not go beyond a superficial overview of the relevant poems, though he made the first important observations which undermined the earlier image of the "enlightened" Janus.⁶ In later generations of scholars only two short studies analysed certain poems with astrological references, those of Lajos Bartha, jr.,⁷ and Éva Kocziszky.⁸ The scholar who brought about a turn in the research was János Bollók, a Classical philologist, with his last work entitled "Astral Mysticism and Astrology in the Poetry of Janus Pannonius,"⁹ published posthumously in 2003. Still today this is the only general analysis of the aspects specified by the title; he identified nearly all the poems with astrological references. Due to his thorough knowledge of antique poetry and scientific literature, he explored most of the astrological sources of the poems, even some hidden references which would normally escape a modern scholar's attention. His work includes two bold and intriguing hypotheses, about Janus' nativity and a comet identified by the poet.

These scholarly works hardly took into account the context of contemporary astrology and astrological poetry in Italy not at all, but they must not be expected to have done so; they were the first, relatively short, pioneering works on the topic and these scholars did not have the research facilities (first of all the internet) that scholars have nowadays. Nevertheless, they also neglected

⁵ József Huszti, "Janus Pannonius asztrológiai álláspontja" [Janus Pannonius's Attitude Toward Astrology], *Minerva* 6 (1927) (henceforth: „Huszti, „Asztrológiai”).

⁶ This view was held, for example, by János Erdélyi, Ernő Ompolyi M., Dezső Csánki. The problem is summarized by Huszti, „Asztrológiai,” 44.

⁷ Lajos Bartha, Jr., "Janus Pannonius két csillagászati verse" [Two Astronomical Poems by Janus Pannonius], *Itk* 82 (1978): 340-345.

⁸ Kocziszky, "A csillaghit."

⁹ János Bollók, *Asztrális misztika és asztrológia Janus Pannonius költészetében* [Astral Mysticism and Astrology in the Poetry of Janus Pannonius] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2003).

to differentiate theoretically within the different astrological attitudes, so their conclusions remained ambiguous. All the scholars mentioned above perceived that Janus was interested in astrology, Huszti¹⁰ and Bollók¹¹ even concluded that he believed in astrology – but what kind? Bollók contrasts Janus’ belief at the end of his life with an earlier period; it is clear that Bollók thinks of clear judicial astrology (in my terms), but then it is not clear whether natural astrology or the total rejection of astrology would be the opposite attitude. My research has to begin with a careful differentiation within the various kinds of astrology, then I will have to continue with the exploration of the concrete biographical-historical context of Janus’ astrological views, before investigating these views themselves.

Beyond the few works which directly discuss my topic, I had to collect the scattered data and results of various branches of scholarship, primarily the history of astrology and literary-philological research. The main tendencies of the former will be outlined in the next chapter (I. 3); here only the basic works of literary history will be mentioned which concern my topic, all other studies I drew on will appear in the discussion of the different aspects. Janus was and is the most famous humanist of Hungary, consequently the literature on him is immense. The edition of primary texts, not only of Janus but also of the authors related to him, has great traditions; modern editions have been based on a number of manuscripts and early printed books.¹² The first

¹⁰“He sets great value on astrology, studies it in detail and believes in the influence of the stars.” (Huszti, “Asztrológiai,” 49); “Janus Pannonius studied astrology and believed in the power of the stars just as much as most of his contemporaries and his astrological standpoint differed at most in nuances from that of, for example, János Vitéz, who were stigmatized as a superstitious astrologer” (Ibid., 45.).

¹¹ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 109.

¹² The most important manuscripts are the “Viennese” (ÖNB Cod. Lat. 3274) and the “Vatican I.” (Vat. Lat. 2847); among the printed books, which appeared from 1476 onwards, the editory activity of János Zsámboky has to be highlighted (1559 Padova, 1569 Vienna). See more in Csaba Csapodi: *A Janus Pannonius-szöveghagyomány* [The tradition of the texts of Janus Pannonius] (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), 8-19; for the elegies: Gyula Mayer, “Janus Pannonius elégiáinak szöveghagyományához” [To the Textual Tradition of the Elegies of Janus Pannonius], in *ΓΕΝΕΣΙΑ. Tanulmányok Bollók János emlékére* [Studies in Memory of János Bollók], ed. László Horváth et al. (Budapest: Typotex, 2004), 131–144.

critical edition was issued in Utrecht as early as 1784,¹³ on the level of the age; later, newly found works were also issued.¹⁴ A new critical edition of all his known works is being edited; so far only the epigrams have been issued,¹⁵ but the earlier texts of the other genres are reliable.¹⁶

The only existing monography on Janus is that by József Huszti;¹⁷ although it was published in 1931, it cannot be considered out of date, most of his collected data and observations are still valid and useful.¹⁸ As for the various fields of research into Janus' work, I especially build on certain biographical, rhetorical, and philological studies; in these fields the most significant and productive scholars nowadays seem to be László Jankovits, Ágnes Szalay Mrs. Zsigmond Ritoók, and Marianna Birnbaum. Compared to the vast literature on Janus, there is a relative lack of individual interpretations of his poems, and I have found hardly any studies on Janus and the history of ideas, the problem of his world view(s).¹⁹ The standpoint of István János about the meagreness of intellectual historical research²⁰ is still valid today.

I will discuss Janus' poems against the background of the Neo-Latin poetry of contemporary humanists. This does not mean a comprehensive comparative analysis – it would be far too long for this thesis – but it will be fruitful to compare poems by different authors which have similar or opposite astrological ideas. It will help to interpret Janus' texts from a grammatical or intellectual historical point of view, while on a large scale the foreign poems will

¹³ *Iani Pannonii Poemata quae uspiam reperiri potuerunt omnia*, 1-2. vol., ed. Sámuel Teleki, Sándor Kovásznai (Utrecht: Wild, 1784) (henceforth: JP-Tel.).

¹⁴ For example: *Adalékok a humanismus történetéhez Magyarországon – Analecta ad historiam renascentium in Hungaria litterarum spectantia*, ed. Jenő Ábel (Budapest-Leipzig: Akadémiai-Brockhaus, 1880) (henceforth: AH-Ábel), 31–144, 295–296.

¹⁵ *Iani Pannonii Opera Quae Manserunt Omnia. Vol. I. Epigrammata.*, ed. Gyula Mayer et al. (Budapest: Balassi, 2006) (henceforth: JP-Mayer).

¹⁶ Here I would like to give thanks to Gyula Mayer for pieces of information concerning the editions. A special textual problem concerning a Sevillian codex will be mentioned in chapter III.2.

¹⁷ József Huszti, *Janus Pannonius* (Pécs: Janus Pannonius Társaság, 1931).

¹⁸ László Jankovits, "Egy hetven éves monográfiáról – Huszti József: Janus Pannonius" [On a seventy-year-old monography – József Huszti: Janus Pannonius], *Jelenkor* 44 (2001), 970–972.

¹⁹ Except for the research on the influence of Neoplatonic ideas, analyzed primarily by István János.

²⁰ János, "Immensus," 3.

help mark out the frameworks within which Janus' astrology may be placed. I will use the Italian poetry, both because Janus was trained in Italy and because in the third quarter of the fifteenth century almost all humanist poems were still composed in Italy.²¹ Compared to the relative abundance of astrological ideas in these poems, research on them is meagre. Even these few scholarly works focus mostly on the longer, explicitly astronomical-astrological poems (the basic monograph on these was written by Soldati²²), mainly on those by Pontano (De Nichilo,²³ Tateo,²⁴ Roellenbleck²⁵). General works on the relevant greater poets (like Paparelli's monography on Callimaco²⁶) may contain useful information, but for the "lesser" poets there is hardly any scholarship at all. The relevant poems have been published in modern, twentieth-century critical editions; the collected passages from any Italian poet are basically the results of individual research.

2. Janus Pannonius' life

Janus was born near the mouth of the Drava River (in the Hungarian Kingdom, today Croatia) on 29 August 1434. His original name was probably János Kesincei or Csezmicei, or Ivan Česmički.²⁷ From 1447 he studied in Ferrara at the expense of his uncle, János Vitéz, bishop of Várad (today Oradea), later the archbishop of Esztergom and royal chancellor; Vitéz was the central figure in the launch of humanistic culture in Hungary. Janus was trained in the humanist

²¹ Indeed, even in Italy, poets outside the humanist centers pursued the typically medieval *versificatio*. J. Ijsewijn, "A latin nyelvű költészet Janus Pannonius korában" [Latin Poetry at the Time of Janus Pannonius], in *Janus Pannonius. Tanulmányok* [Janus Pannonius. Studies], ed. Tibor Kardos, Sándor V. Kovács (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1975).

²² Soldati, Benedetto. *La poesia astrologica nel quattrocento*. Florence: Le Lettere, 1986.

²³ Mauro De Nichilo, *I poemi astrologici di Giovanni Pontano: storia del testo* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1975).

²⁴ F. Tateo, *Astrologia e moralità in Giovanni Pontano* (Bari: Adriatica, 1960).

²⁵ Roellenbleck, Georg. "L'astrologia nella poesia del Pontano." In *L'astrologia e la sua influenza nella filosofia, nella letteratura e nell'arte dall'età classica al Rinascimento*. Milano: Nuovi orizzonti, 1992.

²⁶ Gioacchino Paparelli, *Callimaco Esperiente* (Salerno: Beta, 1971).

²⁷ Janus's original nationality has long been debated among Hungarian and Croatian scholars.

school of Guarino Veronese, who had European fame. Guarino and his pupils made Ferrara one of the most important literary centers in Northern Italy,²⁸ and Janus was one of the most talented and most renowned students of the school.²⁹ The impact of Guarino, who represented the typical humanist world view and values (indeed, he laid even more stress on rhetorical education, Latin and Greek language than was usual by the humanists), was definitive throughout Janus' life and poetry. The young poet proved productive; his poems are traditionally classified as epigrams, elegies, and panegyrics (he only wrote in Latin). Among his many Classical guides (Virgil, Ovid, etc.) Martial has to be highlighted; he gave patterns for Janus' ironic and erotic epigrams, the genres which probably contributed the most to his popularity.³⁰ He made the acquaintance of members of the Ferrarese court and university, patrons from outside Ferrara, and famous or less famous contemporary poets. From 1454 he studied in Padua and graduated in canon law in 1458; meanwhile, he continued composing poems and even translated Greek authors.

By the time Janus returned to Hungary in the summer of 1458, the political situation there had turned favorable for him: Matthias Corvinus (1458-90) had just acceded to the throne, and János Vitéz, having long had a close relationship to the Hunyadis, had immense political influence at the side of the young king. Vitéz's nephew, Janus, worked at the chancery for a while, and he soon became bishop of Pécs. He spent most of his time at Matthias's Buda court. Most of his surviving letters and orations pertain to his political and diplomatic activity. He definitely composed fewer poems in Hungary than in Italy; less than one quarter of his epigrams can be dated to the Hungarian years and he ceased to write panegyrics. One of the reasons may have been the lack of inspiration which the vivid literary life in Ferrara and his many humanist acquaintances had provided for him (though humanism itself had a strong position at Matthias's

²⁸ Casimir von Chłędowski, *Der Hof von Ferrara* (Munich: Müller, 1919), 48.

²⁹ For primary sources supporting this evaluation, see Huszti, *Janus*, 24-29.

³⁰ Huszti, *Janus*, 58-62.

court as early as the 1460s, and Janus had some humanist friends in Hungary, like Galeotto Marzio, his best friend). In 1465 he was appointed a legate to lead a visit to Pope Pius II. They succeeded in inducing the pope to provide financial support for Matthias' war against the Turks, and Janus also managed to obtain papal approval for the foundation of the *Universitas Istropolitana* in Pozsony (today Bratislava). The Italian travel, which included visits to Ferrara, Padua, Florence, and the acquisition of many books, gave him new inspiration for poetry, but, his literary activity soon decreased again. His tuberculosis became more and more serious and he did not agree with the politics of the king. In 1471 he participated in a conspiracy against Matthias organized by János Vitéz, but the plot failed. During the flight, Janus died of his illness in Medvevár (Medvedgrad, Croatia) on 27 March 1472.

Chapter I.

The notion of astrology in the European Renaissance

The medieval mind considered the science of the heavenly bodies as one discipline. One could differentiate between two complementary *aspects* of this discipline, which can be called astronomy and astrology. The difference can be summarized following the definitions of Isidore of Seville: astronomy investigates the motions and positions of the heavenly bodies, while astrology deals with their effects on the sublunar world.³¹ The differentiation is explicit in the works of the major authorities in astrology like Ptolemy³² or Albertus Magnus.³³ However, the two notions were often used interchangeably in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and one always has to keep in mind that the sharp differentiation only exists in our modern minds.

A more serious problem is the tendency in modern scholarship to lump together the various types and concepts of Renaissance astrology. In order to clarify the attitude of any humanist toward astrology – in this case, that of Janus Pannonius – one has first to explore the world of astrology from a theoretical point of view. Before this, it seems necessary to outline in a few words the major turning points in the history of astrology up to the fifteenth century, mentioning the most basic handbooks used in the Renaissance.³⁴

³¹ *Etymologiae*, III, 27.

³² Two of his works, *Almagest* (*Mathēmatikē Syntaxis*, *Almagestum*) and *Tetrabiblos* (*Quadripartitum*) can be considered as works on astronomy and astrology, respectively.

³³ Albertus Magnus, *Speculum astronomiae*, 1. (*Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet et al. [Paris: Vives, 1890-1899], Vol. X)

³⁴ For a general historical survey, see, for example, W. Knappich, *Geschichte der Astrologie* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988) or Kocku von Stuckrad, *Geschichte der Astrologie: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003).

1. Historical frameworks

Astrology as a refined system with several variables (planets,³⁵ signs, houses, aspects, rulers, etc.) developed in the Hellenistic period. In Europe, its first popularity seems to have been the last centuries of the Roman Empire. Ptolemy wrote the *Tetrabiblos*, which became the most authoritative astrological handbook for the Middle Ages and Renaissance, in the second century; the most detailed handbook, the *Mathesis*, was compiled by Firmicus Maternus in the fourth century. In the Early Middle Ages the attitude of Christianity, which basically rejected it, pushed astrology into the background,³⁶ but the translation of Arabic texts from the beginning of the twelfth century increased its significance again, bringing back and improving the Classical material a great deal. After being “qualitative and cosmological,” astrology was again “mathematical and predictive.”³⁷ Arabic authors were the most popular (Albumasar, Alcabitius), but Latin authors (Scot, Bonatti) also started to write books. Among the *summae* written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the *Speculum astronomiae* of Albertus Magnus can be regarded a representative summary.

A second wave in the spread of astrological ideas came in the fifteenth century, and the golden age of European astrology can be put between around 1450 and 1650.³⁸ Italian humanists propagated, rediscovered, and translated into Latin literary, philosophical, and hermetical texts which had a world view based on analogical thinking. Astrology could be combined with Neoplatonism, magic or any other set of ideas which were based on the correspondence between

³⁵ I will use the terms “planet” and “star” in the sense that is usual in astrological writings: the “planets” are the seven heavenly bodies which were held to revolve around the Earth, while “stars” will mean any heavenly object, not only the “fixed stars.”

³⁶ Nevertheless, this period also yielded astrological works; various star beliefs continued to exist on a popular level, and astrological ideas infiltrated into Christianity itself: see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of Pagan Gods. The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (New York: Princeton University Press, 1953), 42-51.

³⁷ Roger French, “Astrology in Medical Practice,” in *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*, ed. Luis García-Ballester, Roger French et al. (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1994), 34.

³⁸ Knappich: *Geschichte*, ch. 7.

microcosm and macrocosm, a commonplace in the Renaissance.³⁹ Astrological texts were also translated, primarily the *Tetrabiblos*; ancient works were rediscovered, like the *Astronomicon*, a long didactic poem by Manilius (first century AD), which was found in 1417 by Poggio Bracciolini and became a model for astrological poetry in the Renaissance. From around 1470 printing made works widely available both for popular (almanacs, annual predictions) and professional (ephemerids, etc.) usage. Many kings, princes, prelates held it indispensable to have a court astrologer who could, first of all, predict future events. The attitude of the Church varied, but even some popes had a predilection for astrology.⁴⁰

2. The problem of the heterogeneity of astrology

While the various elements of horoscopes and the basic methods of astrology have a satisfactory terminology in modern scholarship, this is not the case with the various possibilities for the types of star-effects. A basic dichotomy is sometimes expressed by opposing, for example, judicial and natural astrology, or *astrologia naturalis* and *superstitiosa*, but the meaning of these, if at all defined, varies with the different authors. Similar, but not identical, things are understood under the notion of judicial astrology:⁴¹ astrology not accepted by the church; the complex methods of astrology; divinatory astrology; the practice of astrologers; or astrology in general. The other opposition goes back to that of Isidore of Seville,⁴² whose differentiation between

³⁹ The high medieval *Picatrix* provides a good example. It came to be widely read in the Renaissance; it put astrology and magic into Neoplatonic and hermeticist frameworks, thus “justifying” astrology and magic. Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life*, trans. C. Jackson and J. Allen (London: Routledge, 1983), 46.

⁴⁰ For example, Julius II, Leo X, Paul III (Seznec, *Survival*, 57).

⁴¹ *Iudicium* meant the “judgment” of the stars, hence the expression *scientia iudiciaria* and its variants, which for Albertus designated astrology in general, Burnett, “Astrology,” 372.

⁴² *Etymologiae*, III, 27: *Astrologia vero partim naturalis, partim superstitiosa est. Naturalis, dum exequitur solis et lunae cursus, vel stellarum certas temporum stationes. Superstitiosa vero est illa quam mathematici sequuntur, qui in stellis auguriantur, quique etiam duodecim caeli signa per singula animae vel corporis membra disponunt,*

“natural” and “superstitious” astrology is useful but ambiguous. Therefore, the whole problem has to be rethought by an analysis and comparison of all possible forms of Renaissance astrology in order to clarify the terminology; there is no other way to explore the astrological standpoint of Janus or any other humanist successfully.

Astrological inferences could pertain both to individuals or greater communities, often whole nations and countries, or the world itself. The latter is called general or mundane astrology. However, the difference between person-related and general astrology is not stressed by the handbooks, and the fate of a king – the most typical subject of prediction in the surviving sources – pertains both to him and the community; the leader represents his country. The following three divisions are more important.

a.) The degree of complexity and the main types of astrology

The most typical method of inquiring into the message of the stars was the casting of horoscopes, which required difficult astronomical calculations. This complex astrology can be divided into four branches: “revolutions” (this pertains to general astrology), natal, horary and catarchic astrology (these generally pertain to individual astrology). “Revolutions” (*revolutiones*)⁴³ has two main subtypes. According to the one, the events of a year are predicted from the planet considered the most important in the horoscope (*dominus anni*, the lord of the year); this was done when the Sun returns to the first minute of the Ram, the astronomical beginning of the year, hence the name *revolutio annorum (mundi)*. When the conjunctions of the

siderumque cursu nativitates hominum et mores praedicare conantur. Later, in natural philosophy, the term “natural astrology” was used in a similar sense.

⁴³ I follow here the terminology of Albertus Magnus, *Speculum astronomiae*, 7; other handbooks called this “revolutions and conjunctions.”

planets (in particular the farthest ones, Saturn and Jupiter) are held to be the most definitive for the future, this is called *coniunctiones*.⁴⁴

The second branch of complex astrology, genethliology or natal astrology (*nativitates*, the term referring to nativities, i. e. birth horoscopes) was the most popular: The chart was drawn up for the date of birth. Since not only the whole course of life but also the character of the person could be read from the nativity, this is not only a predictive method. Horary astrology (*interrogationes*) was applied when someone had a question and had a horoscope cast for the moment when the question was uttered: The horoscope gave the answer of the stars. Catarchic astrology (*electiones*) meant that the astrologer helped choose the date of an important undertaking (operation, battle, city foundation, etc.) by defining the moment when the positions of the stars were the most favorable.⁴⁵

As opposed to the complex methods, several simple astrological methods existed, like taking into consideration the critical days in case of illness, recalling the stereotyped predictions connected to comets, or applying the simple version of chronocrator-astrology (examples for all these will be seen later). These did not require difficult astronomical knowledge, so others than astrologers⁴⁶ could also practice them. In fact, in the different fields of daily life a particular astrological application could be graded on a scale of complexity. In medical astrology, when the physician required information about the course of an illness, it was not only the Sun that the moon could be related to (simple astrology), but the other planets, moreover, the signs, the houses as well (complex astrology). The comet could simply signify the death of the king of the country

⁴⁴ Albertus Magnus treats astrometeorology (*de temporum mutatione*) as a third type besides *revolutio annorum* and *coniunctiones*, but in fact astrometeorological predictions are involved in revolutions or conjunctions, or in simpler kinds of prediction.

⁴⁵ The making of astrological talismans, which Albertus Magnus adds as the last branch of astrology, can also be considered as a kind a magic (Burnett, "Astrology," 376).

⁴⁶ Henceforth I will use the words „astrologer” / „astrology” or „astronomer” / „astronomy” in accordance with the dominant aspect of the particular scholar’s activity; in fact each of these scholars pursued one and the same science.

or catastrophes in general, but astrologers could work out a detailed prediction based on the color, direction, zodiacal sign or house of the comet. Furthermore, mixing the various methods (either simple or complex) was common, for example, the comparison of birthday-horoscopes (“solar returns”) with the nativity could tell something for the next year.

b.) The object of the effects

A subsequent problem is the following: what exactly do the stars influence? It was generally accepted that they had effects on the material world. With a modern term, this could be called a “physical” effect. However, a greater variety of such effects was recognized in the Middle Ages than in our modern age; the changing phases of the moon caused not only the ebb and flow of tides, but also menstruation or some illnesses. All these effects were treated in scholastic natural philosophy;⁴⁷ for Thomas Aquinas, a disciple of Albertus Magnus, the greatest representative of scholastic thinking, it was natural that the stars affect the body, but not the soul, at best only indirectly (for example, through the four bodily humors).⁴⁸ However, a number of people – mainly in the Renaissance – did not make this differentiation and believed that the stars influenced body and soul alike. Indeed, these celestial powers can define the unchangeable properties of a human; this idea is involved at least in the nativities.

After all, when one classifies the astrological statements with respect to the object of the effects of the stars, there are two possibilities: one can tell whether it is rather about a bodily, material effect or a total effect. Within general astrology, for instance, astro-meteorological statements refer to changes in the material world, while conjunction or comet predictions which foretell wars, death, catastrophes foretell total effects.

⁴⁷ Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos, 1200-1687* (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1994), 569 ff.

⁴⁸ *Summa Theologica* I. a, q. 115, a. 4.

c.) *The relation of stars, fate and God*

The most difficult but perhaps the most interesting question is the following: In what different ways can astrology fit into someone's religious, theological, metaphysical views? It seems that the different answers outline three main types of world views concerning astrology.⁴⁹

Augustine, a church father authoritative also for the Renaissance, maintained that the stars only signify the will of God; God endowed them with this ability.⁵⁰ This Church Father could not reconcile a belief in the effect of the stars with the role of God and human free will; his refutation of astrology, which partly goes back to Classical authors,⁵¹ was exemplary for later criticism. Still, his consideration of stars *only* as signs was not common after him; the "physical" effect of the stars, obvious in the case of Sun and Moon but extended also to the other heavenly bodies, was natural for medieval or Renaissance people.⁵² "The celestial configurations were both signs and causes, in fact, they are signs *because* they are also causes."⁵³

The most common standpoint, held by Thomas Aquinas, Pietro d'Abano and many other thinkers, was that the stars are the instruments of God. They do not have their own wills; they merely warn about or help execute the will of God. He is omnipotent; he can bring fortune or misfortune to man, but this also depends on the behavior of man. The future is in the hand of

⁴⁹ For the threefold differentiation itself, see Enikő Békés, *Galeotto Marzio De doctrina promiscua című művének eszmetörténeti vizsgálata* [An Intellectual Historical Analysis of *De doctrina promiscua* by Galeotto Marzio], PhD dissertation, Szegedi Tudományegyetem, 2012), 43-45.

⁵⁰ *De civitate Dei*, V.1.

⁵¹ *De civitate Dei*, V.1-7. Cicero had already written about the problem of free will in this context and had argued with the problem of twins: twins are born under the same constellations, still they have different fates (*De fato V*).

⁵² The Augustinian idea occasionally recurred in the Renaissance, for example, in the debate over whether comets are signs or causes (Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1923-1958], IV. 417) or in Ficino, who held the stars to be signs rather than causes; but Ficino put astrology into a unique system of ideas, his astrological standpoint is far from being representative, Garin, *Astrology*, 69.

⁵³ Garin, *Astrology*, 16.

God, of Providence, not in that of the stars. Man has free will, and this attitude fits well with another often-emphasized idea: *astra inclinant, non necessitant*. The stars induce man to go in a direction defined by them, but man can avoid this fate.

In contrast, some emphasized that all earthly events are caused by celestial laws represented by the stars. This fatalist attitude cannot be easily grasped: it was maintained by a few Aristotelians who did not explicitly oppose the Christian world view.⁵⁴ In fact, it was not so much the identity of the supreme power that counted but the fact that this power necessarily prescribes the future, so it can be called destiny. This view allowed that God stands behind fate, but the Stoic notion of *heimarmenē* could also be adopted or the power of the stars was stressed alone. Though fatalism is the most typical world view associated with astrology, it occurred with even the fatalist believers of astrology that they acted as if they were non-fatalists. Here an interesting contradiction emerges, analyzed by Garin,⁵⁵ horoscopes were generally cast in order to *avoid* destiny, to escape bad fortune. In theory, free will is excluded: “At birth the stars choose the destiny of man,” Ptolemy said,⁵⁶ but in practice, these people were looking for the alternatives still open to them and they liked better the other saying attributed to Ptolemy and quoted by Albertus and Aquinas:⁵⁷ *Vir sapiens dominabitur astris*, “The wise man will dominate the stars.” (They might also cite this as a defense against attacks by the mainstream orthodox theologians.⁵⁸)

d.) Conclusions on terminology

One must face the problem that a particular astrological idea can be characterized by any of these variables outlines above, almost in every combination (not to mention the possibility of

⁵⁴ Békés, *Galeotto*, 44-45.

⁵⁵ Garin, *Astrology*, 33-37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁷ *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Thomas Glick et al. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

mixing astrology with the various theological, philosophical, mythological systems). Fortunately, if one makes an overview of concrete astrological acts and ideas it becomes clear that certain combinations were a great deal more frequent than others, and this renders it possible to classify astrology on a larger scale. General classifications always distort to some extent; the task is to find the least distorting categories, which facilitate and do not overcomplicate the scholarly discourse on astrology.

When the complex methods are applied, it is almost always assumed that the stars influence both body and soul or earthly events in general. This was the kind of astrology which was pursued generally by astrologers and which was only debated in the learned discourse on astrology. It is rather predictive and practical, rather initiated by the person than a reflection on a natural phenomenon. In its clear form I will call it *judicial astrology* based on the existing, though vague, terminological tradition. In contrast, the idea that the stars affect the body and the material world was generally accepted; the simpler methods and stereotypes (critical days, simple astro-meteorology, etc.) usually relate to this idea, and if such ideas occur in predictions, these predictions are usually reflections on some relatively spectacular celestial event and it is not the person who looked into the positions of the stars. In its clear form I will call this kind of astrology *natural astrology*, based primarily on the distinction of Isidore of Seville.⁵⁹ The aspect of fatalism and non-fatalism cannot be systematically connected to judicial or natural astrology, since the two attitudes were shared by both, although fatalism is slightly more characteristic of judicial astrology. The classification of astrological ideas as predictions and not predictions cannot be related to the differentiation of natural and judicial astrology either: nativities were often consulted only for the character of the person and not the future, while natural astrology involved both simpler predictions and observations of the effects. It seems that three aspects can

⁵⁹ Etymologiae, III, 27 (See the quotation above).

be taken into account in the differentiation of judicial and natural astrology: the degree of complexity, the object of the effects, and whether the astrological idea is reflective or initiative. Since the characteristics of a particular astrological idea may occur in any combination, in most cases they cannot be univocally classified under judicial or natural astrology. In other words, *judicial and natural astrology cannot be treated as two parts of astrology, but rather as two ends of a scale, two “ideal forms” of astrology*, with a continuous spectrum in between. This terminological system might, on the one hand, facilitate the discourse on astrology, on the other hand, it makes it possible for the particular cases not to be forced into either of two kinds of astrology. The main variables and the ideal forms of astrology can be illustrated in a table:

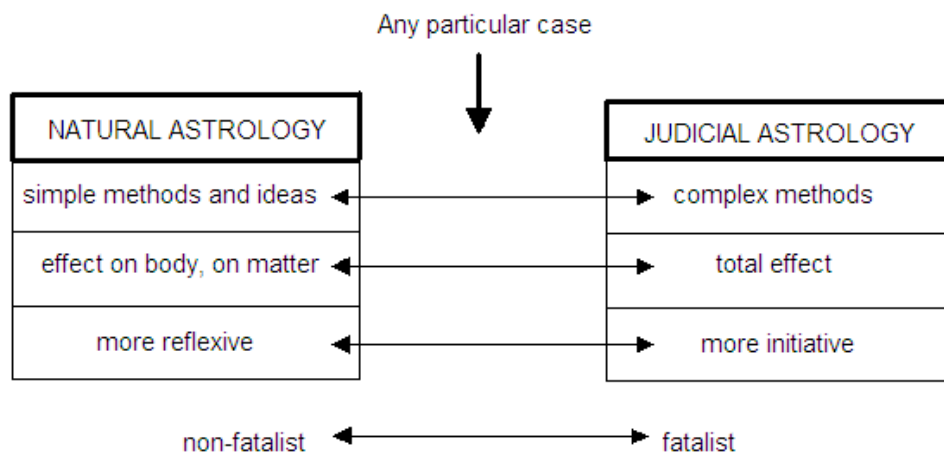


Fig. 1. The classification of astrological ideas

When, for example, a comet appears, it often occurs that it recalls the popular, simple beliefs connected to this heavenly object, which refer in general to material effects (e.g. flood, draught), sometimes to total effects (e.g. wars); what happened is a prediction, though motivated by the phenomenon, not initiated by the “seer;” after all, this case belongs rather to natural

astrology. When predicting the course of an illness, the physician takes into account the full arsenal of astrology (signs, aspects, etc.), he applies a complex method, though his investigations focus on bodily astral effects: this case falls somewhere between natural and judicial astrology. An astrologer may have thought that the future events seen in the horoscope were changeable or unchangeable. All these examples remind one of how important it is to avoid oversimplified dichotomies. If one has to summarize the character of an astrological idea, one has more than two possibilities; some cases can univocally be classified under natural or judicial astrology, other cases stand closer to this or that astrology, and it may even occur that the natural-judicial dichotomy does not apply. This whole terminology will be useful when I outline the attitudes of particular humanists toward astrology.

3. To what extent was astrology accepted in the Renaissance?

The fashion of astrology in the Renaissance was largely neglected in the older scholarship, mostly because it did not fit the nineteenth-century concept of the Renaissance, which was seen as a preliminary phase to the Enlightenment. From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards scholars (e.g., Aby Warburg, Francis Yates and Eugenio Garin, just to mention the most important names) have revealed the real significance of astrology in scientific development, philosophy, arts, literature and daily life. By now it is generally agreed that astrology, inseparable from astronomy, had the prestige of a science. Indeed, I feel a tendency in the scholarship of the last decades to overestimate the reputation and presence of astrology in everyday life. Lemay sees clearly why modern scholars had or have a false opinion about the Renaissance reputation of astrology: the activity, indeed, the quackery of astrologers is too much

in the foreground.⁶⁰ Still, he might exaggerate in saying that, although there were abuses, astrologers “practiced it in good faith as service to the enlightened community.”⁶¹ French declares: “Indeed, almost everyone believed in ‘astrology’, and it can even be argued that our ‘astronomy’ was simply the necessary theoretical background to being able to practise ‘astrology’.”⁶² Bini concludes that Renaissance astrology was “omnipresent and total, so it is astrology that the study of art, science and the politics of that time must account to.”⁶³ It will be useful to cast a glance on the debates on astrology among the humanists, the main representatives of the Renaissance, just to the extent required to provide the basic contextual framework for my topic.

Beginning with Petrarch,⁶⁴ humanists often attacked astrology radically – but which kind of astrology? “Petrarch realized that astrological determinism ended up by reducing culture to nature, ‘civil justice’ to ‘natural justice’ – or rather to the necessity of natural laws.”⁶⁵ This observation of Garin harmonizes with that of Seznec, French and others: astrology was criticized on moral and religious, not rational, grounds;⁶⁶ the problem was free will and human dignity.⁶⁷ And although some extremes of astrology were also targeted by Petrarch and other fourteenth-century humanists,⁶⁸ the target was not astrology as a whole. The “palace of truth” in Petrarch’s *Africa* is interwoven with astrological ideas,⁶⁹ and Bocaccio ascribes the possible errors of

⁶⁰ Richard Lemay, “The True Place of Astrology in Medieval Science and Philosophy: Towards a Definition,” in *Astrology, Science and Society: Historical Essays*, ed. Patrick Curry (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), 57.

⁶¹ Ibid., 62.

⁶² French, “Astrology,” 34.

⁶³ Daniele Bini, “Introduction,” in *Astrologia: arte e cultura in età rinascimentale – Art and Culture in the Renaissance*, ed. Daniele Bini, Ernesto Milano et al. (Modena: Il bulino, 1996), 12.

⁶⁴ Garin, *Astrology*, 8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁶ French, “Astrology,” 34.

⁶⁷ Seznec, *Survival*, 58.

⁶⁸ Petrarch strongly criticized the “swindling astrologers” (*Rerum senilium* I, 6). The old counter-argument with the twins was recalled, for example, by Salutati (Garin, *Astrology*, 34.)

⁶⁹ Garin, *Astrology*, 27.

astrologers to the difficulty of their task: celestial life is “so difficult to explore.”⁷⁰ After all, one can observe that the criticisms were limited to certain characteristics of *judicial* astrology – the boldness of astrologers and the fallibility of their methods, the stars’ alleged total effect, the propensity for fatalism – and the same seems to have been true for the fifteenth century.

There were public debates and controversies about astrology,⁷¹ and there were humanists who incorporated astrology into their own unique world view. Ficino did so, not holding firm to his criticism against astrology, and in the end he remained loyal to the *Corpus Hermeticum* because for him “the total resumption of astrology does not contrast with liberty.”⁷² In the 1480s and 1490s the enthusiasm in Italy for astrology grew significantly; this was one of the factors which launched the most famous criticisms – again, primarily on moral and Christian grounds. Girolamo Savonarola concludes in his *Trattato contra gli astrologi* (1497) that “divinatory” astrology is not a true science, as opposed to “speculative” astrology.⁷³ His opposition is basically that of judicial and natural astrology; it is the former which Pico della Mirandola attacks in the *Disputationes* (1495), saying that it “corrupts all science, adulterates medicine, weakens religion, generates and reinforces superstitions, renders one miserable, anxious, unquiet and, from being free, it makes them slaves and unhappy in almost all their actions.”⁷⁴

After all, it seems that at least natural astrology was generally accepted even by the most critical spirits in the Renaissance; however, various forms of judicial astrology were often refuted

⁷⁰ “L’arte astrologica contenga in sè molto di vero ed abbia una base sicura; se essa erra talvolta, la causa è da cercare soltanto nella grandezza della vita celeste, tanto difficile ad esplorare, e nella cognizione imperfetta, che gli uomini hanno dei moti e delle congiunzioni dei pianeti.” Quoted by F. Gabotto, “L’astrologia nel Quattrocento in rapporto con la civiltà,” *Rivista di filosofia scientifica* 8 (1889): 379.

⁷¹ For example in Florence around 1430, between Paolo Toscanelli and Matteo Palmieri; see Soldati, 200.

⁷² Garin, *Astrology*, 68-73. For astrology in Ficino’s work, see Melissa M. Bullard, “The Inward Zodiac: A Development in Ficino’s Thought on Astrology,” *The Renaissance Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1990): 687-708.

⁷³ Garin, *Astrology*, 84-85.

⁷⁴ “...Philosophiam omnem corrumpit, medicinam adulterat, religionem infirmat, superstitiones parit aut roborat, idolatriam fovet, prudentiam aufert, polluit mores, caelum infamat, homines miseros, anxios, inquietos, et de liberis servos, et in rebus paene agendas omnibus plane facit infortunatos. G. Pico della Mirandola, *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem libri 1-5*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, 1946), p. 44.

by them as a superstitious, fatalist, fallible discipline, not worthy of the name science. Within this, the practice of astrologers was criticized the most. Thus, one can say that both tendencies of modern scholarship are right, seen from the proper angle; some kinds of astrology were generally approved, other kinds were held to be superstition. The next chapter will involve the context of mid-fifteenth century Italian humanist poetry which directly concerns the poetry of Janus: this Italian poetry will also show that judicial astrology was in question, not astrology in general.

Chapter II

Astrology in Janus' Environment

1. Astrology in Janus' Italian environment

a.) Education

Guarino's school played by far the most important role in shaping Janus' world view, therefore one has to begin the search for the sources of his astrological ideas here. Astronomy-astrology did not form part of the syllabus as a distinct discipline, but Janus seems to have studied it in the last part of his education in the framework of rhetorical-philosophical studies.⁷⁵ Battista Guarino, the old master's son and heir, wrote a letter in April 1467⁷⁶ stating that Janus dealt with *mathematica* and *physica* together with *moralis philosophia*,⁷⁷ and Huszti correctly relates this passage to the last years spent at Guarino.⁷⁸ Astronomy-astrology was among the meanings of *mathematica* after antiquity, also used by Battista Guarino. In one of his lectures where he outlined a classification of sciences, *astrologia* (astronomy-astrology) is part of *mathematica*, which is in turn part of *philosophia naturalis*.⁷⁹ Evidence of Janus' astrological interest (see below) reinforces this interpretation of *mathematica* and *physica*, and it is also probable that Janus came to be acquainted with Manilius (and Ptolemy?⁸⁰) already at Guarino, set out from the

⁷⁵ Huszti, *Janus*, 21-22.

⁷⁶ Ágnes Szalay, Mrs. Zsigmond Ritoók: "Janus Pannonius versei Battista Guarino egy kódexében" [The Poems of Janus Pannonius in a Codex of Battista Guarino], in "Nympha super ripam Danubii". *Tanulmányok a XV-XVI. századi magyarországi művelődés köréből* [Studies Concerning the Culture of Fifteenth-sixteenth-century Hungary], (Budapest: Balassi, 2002, 73.

⁷⁷ *Iam Pannonia hoc tanto tamque mirando ingenio laetabatur et exultabat, cum ipse non contentus sola poetarum et rhetorum cognitione ad mathematicas disciplinas et physicae partes ac omnium virtutum parentem moralem Philosophiam traduxit animum* (AH-Ábel, 207).

⁷⁸ Huszti, *Janus*, 148

⁷⁹ László Jankovits, "Janus Pannonius filozófiai alapműveltségéről" [On the Basic Philosophical Education of Janus Pannonius], in *Janus Pannonius és a humanista irodalmi hagyomány* [Janus Pannonius and the Humanist Literary Tradition], ed. László Jankovits and Gábor Kecskeméti (Pécs: Janus Pannonius Tudományegyetem, 1998), 26.

⁸⁰ János, *Immensus*, 3.

relevant *fontes similia*⁸¹ of the Janus epigrams. As for Guarino Veronese himself, I have not found any references to his opinion on astrology in his surviving works, but he seems to have been inclined to mix mythology and astrology and to play with the thought that the Classical gods survived in the planets which bear their names.⁸² Melding the planets and gods was a frequent phenomenon in the Renaissance, also by Janus, for example, in his Guarino panegyric (see below).

The University of Ferrara was one of the three universities (Ferrara, Padua, Bologna) with the strongest astrological traditions.⁸³ Under the patronage of the Este dynasty, it played a leading role in the development of astronomy;⁸⁴ more related to my topic is the other aspect of the celestial science, the astrological or even magical⁸⁵ usages, which had no less prestige or scholarly attention. Medicine was not simply an *ars mechanica*, but its theoretical, scientific aspect was in the foreground,⁸⁶ and this medicine was indissolubly linked to astrology.⁸⁷ The activity of Michele Savonarola, the physician of the Este princes from 1440 to 1464 (and the grandfather of Girolamo Savonarola), exemplifies the close affinity of medicine, astrology, alchemy, magic, chiromancy, and related fields, as can be seen in his most important work, the

⁸¹ Under *fontes similia* I will always mean those of the new edition of epigrams (JP-Mayer).

⁸² Ian Thomson, *Humanist Pietas. The Panegyric of Janus Pannonius on Guarinus Veronensis* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988), 45. Compare the idea with these words from a letter by Guarino: *Mercurius interea, ut poetae aut astrologi dicerent, immo ut verius Christiana de fide loquar Mercurii creator Dominus et moderator deus nostram miseratus imperitiam Manuelem Chrysoloram misit ad nos...* (*Guarinus Veronensis suo dilecto filio Nicolao*, in Remigio Sabbadini: *La scuola e gli studi di Guarino Guarini Veronese* (Catania: F. Galati, 1895), 213.)

⁸³ Békés, *Galeotto*, 75.

⁸⁴ Cesare Vasoli, “L’astrologia a Ferrara tra la metà del Quattrocento e la metà del Cinquecento,” in *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane*, ed. Paolo Rossi et al. (Bari: De Donato, 1977), 471-4. Peurbach and Regiomontanus also taught there for a while, although Janus met them neither in Ferrara nor in Padua (Peurbach left Padua in 1453, Regiomontanus arrived in the 1460s).

⁸⁵ Vasoli, “L’astrologia,” 462.

⁸⁶ Békés, *Galeotto*, 34.

⁸⁷ French, *Astrology*, 33; Graziella Federici Vescovini, “L’astrologia all’Università di Ferrara nel Quattrocento,” in *La rinascita del sapere*, ed. Patrizia Castelli (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1991), 297.

Speculum philosophiae.⁸⁸ Janus knew Savonarola; one of his epigrams⁸⁹ reveals his close relationship with and respect for the physician.

Padua was famous for its training in medicine. This discipline originally based upon Galen and Avicenna; the famous Pietro d'Abano gave it a more definite astrological coloring. The *Differentia X.* of his *Conciliator*⁹⁰ (c. 1300) deals entirely with astrological medicine.⁹¹ He explains how the celestial lights and motions change the four qualities and thus the four bodily humors, endangering their equilibrium; the physician has to identify the influence of the stars and give counter-remedies. In contrast to the Galenic concept, d'Abano took into account all the planets, their conjunctions and other aspects, and the day of birth of the patient. The *Conciliator* was a basic textbook in Padua in the fifteenth century.⁹² Although Janus studied canon law there, he must have heard about these medical-astrological views, either through Savonarola, a representative of the d'Abano-tradition, or through Galeotto, who was studying medicine in Padua at the time and whose works reveal a thorough knowledge of d'Abano.⁹³ However, it is probable that Janus only began to care seriously about medicine in Hungary.

b.) Patronage

A number of rulers in the fifteenth century had a predilection for the science of the stars, notably in Italy. In Ferrara, astrology was continuously supported by the Este rulers, therefore it permeated “all aspects of culture.”⁹⁴ The successive princes collected more and more “celestial”

⁸⁸ Thorndike, *History*, IV, 182-214.

⁸⁹ JP-Mayer, Ep. 288

⁹⁰ *Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum et praecipue medicorum*: the title refers to the author's intent, the reconciliation of Galen's physiological attitude with Aristotle's natural philosophical attitude (Békés, *Galeotto*, 34).

⁹¹ Graziella Federici Vescovini, “Pietro d'Abano and Astrology,” in *Astrology, Science and Society: Historical Essays*, ed. Patrick Curry (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), 30.

⁹² Békés, *Galeotto*, 34.

⁹³ In his *De doctrina* (*Galeotti Martii Narniensis De doctrina promiscua liber* (Florence: Laurentius Torrentinus, 1548) Galeotto, besides drawing on the works of d'Abano, often mentions his name explicitly. On Galeotto and d'Abano: Békés, *Galeotto*, 63-72.

⁹⁴ Stefano Caroti, *L'astrologia in Italia* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1983), 234.

books in their library (works by Pietro d'Abano, Bonincontri, Lunardi, and so on; the most famous is the *Sphaera* of De Predis).⁹⁵ Giovanni Bianchini, the renowned mathematician-astronomer-astrologer of the University of Ferrara, was made Principal under Niccolò III (1393–1441). The color of the clothes in which Leonello (1441–1450) appeared in public reportedly harmonized with the color of the planet that ruled that day of the week.⁹⁶ Leonello, the prince especially beloved by the poets, had a deep humanist interest in many spiritual disciplines involving Platonism⁹⁷ and he was the “soul” of the Ferrarese literary circle.⁹⁸ Janus also visited banquets organized by him.⁹⁹ After Leonello's death, the poet commemorated him in more epigrams¹⁰⁰ in the framework of astral mysticism. The range of interests of the next princes – Borso (1450-1471) and Ercole I (1471-1505) – also included astrology.¹⁰¹ The most spectacular monument is undoubtedly the fresco series in Palazzo Schifanoia, the astrological program of which was revealed by Aby Warburg in 1912.¹⁰² Pellegrino Prisciani, the main person responsible for this program, drew on the works of Manilius, Abumasar, and Pietro d'Abano. Borso ordered the painting of the frescos in 1469-70,¹⁰³ so Kocziszky is not correct in saying that Janus could see the beginning phases of the work, because he was elsewhere at the time.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the frescoes may be seen representating earlier astrological traditions which involved an interest in minute technical details (e.g., decans) and elements of the horoscope. The

⁹⁵ Vasoli, “L'astrologia,” 477.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ On the Ferrarese Platonism see Eugino Garin, “Motivi della cultura ferrarese nel rinascimento,” in *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano* (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1961), 402-31.

⁹⁸ Huszti, *Janus*, 115.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰⁰ JP-Mayer, Ep. 200, 201, 202.

¹⁰¹ Vasoli, “L'astrologia,” 478.

¹⁰² Aby Warburg, “Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara,” in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, ed. A. Warburg et al. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999), 563-591.

¹⁰³ Marco Bertozzi, *La tirannia degli astri. Gli affreschi astrologici di Palazzo Schifanoia* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1985), 25.

¹⁰⁴ Kocziszky, “Csillaghit,” 61.

world of the Ferrarese court, which was part of Janus's Ferrarese environment, was imbued with judicial astrology.

The Mantuan rulers had a similar predilection.¹⁰⁵ “The Ambassadors of the Gonzagas collected and sent off to Mantua as many prognostications and horoscopes as they could find.”¹⁰⁶ As it will be seen below, Janus contacted Lodovico II, who visited Ferrara, wrote a panegyric on him and later wrote about Bartolomeo Manfredi, Lodovico's favorite astrologer in a letter. The poet must also have known about the significance of judicial astrology in other Northern Italian cities, primarily Milan,¹⁰⁷ whose powerful Visconti and Sforza rulers “supported and protected those beliefs and studies in various ways.”¹⁰⁸ Under the famous Florentine leaders, Cosimo and Lorenzo Medici, processions, buildings, and poems sometimes contained astrological symbolism (Janus went to Florence twice).¹⁰⁹ In general, Janus may have seen astrological frescoes in Italy, in Florence (San Lorenzo) or in Padua (Il Salone),¹¹⁰ for instance, although most of the paintings of this kind were composed only after Janus' stay in Italy.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Here I mention just two items of clear judicial astrology: in 1494 Marquis Francesco consulted a horoscope before a battle (Ernesto Milano, “The Success of Astrology in Northern Italy,” in *Astrologia: arte e cultura in età rinascimentale, Art and Culture in the Renaissance*. Ed. D. Bini et al [Modena: Il bulino, 1996], 38); the grouping of the planets in a fresco at Castello di San Giorgio, ordered by Federico II Gonzaga, refers to his birth date (András Végh, “Egy reneszánsz felirat töredékei és a budai királyi palota csillagképei” [Fragments of a Renaissance Inscription and the Star Depictions of the Royal Palace of Buda], *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 59 no. 2 (2010): 219.)

¹⁰⁶ Milano, “The Success,” 38.

¹⁰⁷ Janus knew at least one Milanese poem which frequently cites Sforza and the stars; in 1465 in a poem he praises the *Sfortiada*, a panegyric written about Francesco Sforza. Marianna D. Birnbaum, “Janus Pannonius ismeretlen milánói kapcsolatai” [The Unknown Milanese Connections of Janus Pannonius], in *Janus Pannonius. Tanulmányok* [Janus Pannonius. Studies], ed. Tibor Kardos, and Sándor V. Kovács (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1975), 317-8.

¹⁰⁸ Milano, “The Success,” 32. The Milanese rulers most relevant from this perspective are Filippo Maria Visconti, Francesco Sforza and his sons (Ludovico il Moro, Galeazzo Maria, Ascanio).

¹⁰⁹ Békés, *Galeotto*, 72.

¹¹⁰ Seznec, *Survival*, 76-81.

¹¹¹ Here I can only enumerate the locations of some intriguing fifteenth-century frescoes: Tempio Malatestiano – Rimini; Pazzi chapel – Santa Croce, Florence; Sala dei Pontifici – the Vatican; Villa Farnesina – Rome; Collegio del Cambio – Perugia.

c.) *Poetry*

Astrology is less spectacular and detectable in poetry than in the visual arts, scientific books (on astronomy, medicine, philosophy) or horoscope documents, and it has aroused much less modern scholarly attention; however, from Janus' point of view, this was the most important aspect of the Italian astrological context. The relevant poems fall into two general categories: long astronomical poetic works and other kinds of poems with short astrological references.

Based on Classical patterns (Aratus, Hyginus, Manilius), some humanists composed long, didactic astronomical-astrological poems in the second half of the fifteenth century.¹¹² The author of the *Astronomicon*, Basinio da Parma, was a classmate of Janus at Guarino, although only for a short while. He had to leave Ferrara in 1449 and he ended up at the court of Sigimundo Malatesta in Rimini. The poem which Basinio composed there for his patron in 1455 is rather astronomical in character; the *De rebus naturalibus et divinis* (around 1470) by Lorenzo Bonincontri and the *Urania* (between 1469-75¹¹³) by Giovanni Pontano are longer and more astrological. Both works were composed in Naples, at the court of Alfonso II d'Aragon. Pontano's *Urania*, the most famous poem of the genre, differs from all the others in its psychological interest.¹¹⁴ He speaks, for example, about the general characteristics of someone born under this or that star (sign). "According to Pontano, astrology is the knowledge of man, not the practical art of individual prediction."¹¹⁵

Though Janus could only know Basinio's poem, all three works provide an important basis for comparison. Basinio seems skeptical about judicial astrology,¹¹⁶ while Bonincontri was

¹¹² On the three following works the basic scholarly literature is Soldati, *Poesia*.

¹¹³ Mauro De Nichilo, *I poemi astrologici di Giovanni Pontano: storia del testo* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1975), 16.

¹¹⁴ Georg Roellenbleck, "L'astrologia nella poesia del Pontano," in *L'astrologia e la sua influenza nella filosofia, nella letteratura e nell'arte dall'età classica al Rinascimento* (Milan: Nuovi orizzonti, 1992), 192.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ See Soldati, *Poesia* 84; moreover, the following passage from Basinio: *Nec tibi iamprimum fato quem credis amorem / Crede nec astrorum conditione datum. / Nam quaecunque agitis, quaecunque audetis amantes, / Cuiusque*

a practicing astrologer,¹¹⁷ and Pontano defended the true, quackery-free astrology against, for example, Pico della Mirandola.¹¹⁸ However, the problem of practical astrology does not emerge in the poems: They are theoretical works describing the cosmos in accordance with the Christian world view and aspects of astronomy, natural and judicial astrology are not clearly visible. The planets are the instruments of God;¹¹⁹ from this point of view, the poems represent the most general theoretical standpoint in the Renaissance. They also provide typical examples of the poetic worlds which mixed astronomy-astrology with Christianity, Greek mythology, and, indeed, Neoplatonism.¹²⁰ Finally, the poems provide information on some typical astral ideas of the age and how they were expressed in high-style Latin.

The poems which contain astrology only as a secondary aspect or short reference provide an even more important background for my topic, since Janus' relevant works themselves fall into this category. Below, I will cite Neo-Latin poets and passages only to the extent required to see the main kinds of different attitudes towards astrology in the poetry of Janus' wider Italian surroundings.

Tito Vespasiano Strozzi was a pupil of Guarino and one of the most renowned Ferrarese poets; Janus and Strozzi, who was ten years older, knew each other well, once they even had a poetic "competition."¹²¹ Strozzi inserts his opinion about the practice of astrology in his epic, the *Borsias*: The stars

ex proprio provenit arbitrio. Isottaeus II. 4. 35-38 (*Le poesie liriche di Basinio: Isottaeus, Cyric, Carmina varia*, ed. Ferruccio Ferri (Turin: G. Chiantore, 1925))

¹¹⁷ Thorndike IV, 410

¹¹⁸ Soldati, *Poesia*, 230.

¹¹⁹ This idea appears explicitly in *De rebus* II. 12 ff. (Laurentius Bonincontrius Miniatus: *De rebus naturalibus et divinis: zwei Lehrgedichte an Lorenzo de' Medici und Ferdinand von Aragonien*, ed. Stephan Heilen. Stuttgart, Leipzig: Teubner, 1999) and *Urania* I., 924-947 (*Ioannis Ioviani Pontani Carmina*, ed. Benedetto Soldati. Florence: G. Barbera, 1902)

¹²⁰ Roellenbleck, "L'astrologia," 191.

¹²¹ Huszti, *Janus*, 122-132.

saepe feruntur
Multiplices hominum ac rerum portendere casus;
Quos ego non facile adducor mortalibus ullis
Ut rear omnino scrutantibus aethera notos,
Cum dubitem, paucis stellarum ex ignibus omnes
An liceat caeli vires motusque futuros
Colligere atque ausis ingentibus abdita fata
*Extorquere polo et caelestia pandere corda.*¹²²

...are often believed to show in advance the various vicissitudes of things and people; but I am not easily convinced that these events are known to those inspecting the ethers. For I doubt one could read all the celestial energies and future motions from a few fiery stars, and wring with huge audacity the hidden fates from the sky, opening up the inner heavens.¹²³

As Walther Ludwig comments on this passage, “this skepticism against astrological prophecies is remarkable, since astrology was highly respected in the Ferrara of Borso.”¹²⁴ It is just the contrast between Strozzi’s and his patron’s attitude that makes the passage authentic as a personal confession: It cannot be said Strozzi inserted these lines for the sake of the Este princes. However, it has to be noted that Strozzi only speaks against the predictability of future events, not against the effect of the stars, and this relates the passage to the attitude of Boccaccio (seen above) toward the secrets of the celestial forces. While Strozzi had a moderate opinion, others attacked more strongly the practice of the astrologers, like the Milanese Lodrisio Crivelli, who condemns in his *Carmen ad Pium Secundum* the self-seeking of the astrologers, and contrasts with them the true representatives of the celestial science.¹²⁵ Those who believe for the

¹²² *Die Borsias des Tito Strozzi: ein lateinisches Epos der Renaissance*, ed. Walther Ludwig (Munich: Fink 1977), IV, 191-8.

¹²³ My translation. The fifteenth-century Latin poems that I will cite are either not translated at all into any modern languages or have only literary translations; in order to follow my analyses, the reader will have to understand the meaning of the texts, therefore I have provided English raw translations of the Latin texts, pushing into the background the aesthetic considerations. I used other translations in two cases, two Classical poetical passages where the literary translations followed the meaning closely enough (see below).

¹²⁴ *Borsias*, p. 277.

¹²⁵ *Dispereant atra qui bile et mente gravantur / Et quorum cerebri pars bona laesa furit: / Nam genus est hominum falso qui nomine gaudent / Seque velint vates astrologosque cani. / Hii quicquid rogites audent praedicere, quicquid / Praedicunt lusus somniaque esse solet. / O quantum dispar Ptholomaeo quamque Seleuco / Quisquis es, aut Hebano, vir furibunde, venis!* In *Carmen ad Pium secundum*, 17-24. in Paolo Garbini, “Poeti e astrologi tra Callisto III e Pio II: un nuovo carne di Lodrisio Crivelli,” *Studi umanistici*, 2 (1991).

astrologers or fear concrete heavenly positions could also be targeted: for a representative example, see Giannantonio Campanino's reprimanding epigram.¹²⁶

These are criticisms against judicial astrology. Similarly to the humanist debates, already seen above, the range of the attacks did not reach natural astrology; this was the case even with Francesco Filelfo, perhaps the most skeptical poet in this respect.¹²⁷ On the other hand, there are a number of poems which reveal a star-belief that has some or all the characteristics of judicial astrology. The *Amyris* of Giovanni Mario Filelfo is interwoven with astrological ideas, and from the context these seem to be based on true belief.¹²⁸ Several poems by Callimaco Esperiente (Filippo Buonaccorsi), who might have actively practiced astrology,¹²⁹ reveal an explicit fatalistic attitude long perceived by modern scholars.¹³⁰ His lines *ad Glaucum Enetum* provide a representative example:

*Caucasei quamvis fugias post culmina montis
Illic a fatis inveniere tuis:
Sideribus celoque patent quicumque recessus,
Et nihil in terris astra latere potest.*¹³¹

Even if you should escape over the peaks of the Caucasus, your destiny will find you there: all shelter is uncovered for the heavens and the stars, and nothing on earth can hide from the constellations.

Other poems by Callimaco express similar thoughts;¹³² one of his epigrams remembers how he once turned to an astrologer.¹³³ However, I have found the most judicial astrological passages in the works of Naldo Naldi, whose poetry contains several phrases similar to those of Janus according to the *fontes similia*. The literary activity of the Florentine, Naldi, a friend of Ficino,

¹²⁶ *Quid vitare cupis Saturni tempora, Phineu? / Esse negas nostris commoda principiis. / Non opus est stellis, opus est non augure nobis: / Quodlibet inceptum dat mihi sidus idem. / Addeque, si placeant tibi nunc primordia nostra, / Illa placere deis sideribusque puto.* Campanino, Carm. 4. (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>, accessed 03.05.2012)

¹²⁷ Thorndike, *History*, IV. 394.

¹²⁸ Examples from the fourth book of Giovanni Mario Filelfo, *Amyris*, ed. A. Manetti (Bologna: Patron, 1978): IV. 95-113, 154-6, 183-201.

¹²⁹ Paparelli, *Callimaco*, 48.

¹³⁰ See Thorndike, *History*, IV. 386.

¹³¹ Paparelli, Carm 3. 15-18. (*Callimachi Experientis Carmina*, ed. Francesco Sica [Naples: F. Conte, 1981])

¹³² Carm 2. 13-14; carm. app. 1. 138-9.

¹³³ Ep. 29. (Philippi Callimachi epigrammatum libri duo, ed. C. F. Kumaniecki [Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1963]): *Astrologus fatis natum me dixit amicis / Et bona praemonuit multa futura mihi. / Non ea proveniunt, sed quod non vidit in astris, / Afficior multis nocte dieque malis.*

covered the second half of the fifteenth century;¹³⁴ he is the poet who most willingly went into technical astrological details.

*Et quid agis? Caram reprehendere, Nalde, puellam
Desine, namque tibi mitior illa foret.
Sed tua Saturnus subvertit vota malignus
Disiungens radiis astra propinqua malis.
Nam iungi poteris Marti, Cytherea, furenti,
Obstet ni veteris stella maligna dei.*¹³⁵

And what are you doing? Cease to reprimand the dear girl, Naldus, because she would be more kind to you. But the malign Saturn upset your plan, separating with his bad rays the stars close to each other. For you, Venus, could have joined the raging Mars, had the maligned star of the old god not stood in your way.

This passage, taken from his elegy, *Ad Albam*, attributes the failure of their love affair to planetary positions which can be read from the lines: Mars and Venus are (almost) in conjunction, but they have an unfavorable aspect (opposition or quadrate) with Saturn. In other poems Naldi speaks about the harmful effect of Mars¹³⁶ and Saturn,¹³⁷ the benign effect of Venus,¹³⁸ the various possibilities with Mercury,¹³⁹ and other complex situations.¹⁴⁰

What is important here in all these examples is not the personal attitude of this or that author – which could anyway change or waver, even within one poem¹⁴¹ – but that they outline the possibilities for the different viewpoints and the great range among the main possibilities. Destiny or Providence, consulting astrologers or mocking astrologers, the belief in the stars' complex and total effect or the rejection of these; each extreme may occur. However, judicial astrology was what was in question, with either a positive or a negative attitude, and not astrology in general. One also has to differentiate within the various characteristics of judicial astrology; astral fatalism or the appreciation of the practice of astrologers seems to appear rarely, while the

¹³⁴ On the life of Naldi see W. Leonard Grant, "The Life of Naldo Naldi," *Studies in Philology* 60, no. 4 (1963), 606-617.

¹³⁵ *Elegiarum libri III. ad Laurentium Medicen*, ed. László Juhász (Leipzig: Teubner, 1934), I. 10. 55-60.

¹³⁶ *Elegiae ad Laurentium Medicen* I. 6, 1-3.

¹³⁷ Ibid. III.7; Ep.82, 25-26. (*Epigrammaton liber*, ed. A. Perosa, [Budapest: K. M. Egyetemi Nyomda, 1943]).

¹³⁸ *Hastiludium* 96 (*Bucolica, Volaterrais, Hastiludium, Carmina varia*, ed. W. L. Grant [Florence: Olschki, 1974]).

¹³⁹ Ep. 183. 3-4, Ep. 159, 11-12.

¹⁴⁰ Ep. 181.

¹⁴¹ See the Italian tercets of the *De excellentium virorum principibus* (1465) by Antonio Cornazzano, where the author first speaks about the effect of the stars, then, with an abrupt change, about Christ and Providence (Gabotto, "l'Astrologia," 388).

mention of complex astral positions and the lack of differentiation between bodily and mental effects are more frequent.

In Janus' Italian environment astronomy-astrology was accepted as a science; within this, certain forms of judicial astrology were refuted or criticized, but not by the representatives of political power. Even in case of the universities many ideas taught there went beyond the borders of traditional scholastic natural astrology. Janus could have heard astrological ideas and their manifestations wherever he went, so he was almost forced to shape an opinion. In general, his standpoint is expected to have ranged between clear natural and clear judicial astrology. In order to see this standpoint throughout his whole life, one has first to address the Hungarian context.

2. Judicial astrology at the court of Matthias Corvinus

In Hungary, Janus spent most of his time at Matthias Corvinus' Buda court, therefore, the astrology around the Hungarian king has to be investigated in more detail than the astrological culture of the Italian courts mentioned above. The relevant surviving sources suggest that judicial astrology at Matthias' court was at least as significant as in the main centers of astrology in Italy; in contrast, scholarship "up to now has undervalued the importance of this issue,"¹⁴² as András Végh properly puts it in his recent article. Though some aspects of this court astrology have already been touched on by various scholars, a thorough analysis or even a superficial overview of the topic is still missing from the scholarly literature.¹⁴³ In this subchapter I will provide a

¹⁴² Végh, "Reneszánsz," 218.

¹⁴³ The only summary on astrology in the court of Matthias is: László Szathmáry, "Az asztrológia, alkémia és misztika Mátyás király udvarában" [Astrology, Alchemy and Mysticism in the Court of Matthias Corvinus], in *Mátyás király emlékkönyv születésének ötszázéves fordulójára* [Festschrift for the Five Hundredth Anniversary of Matthias Corvinus] Birth], ed. Imre Lukinich, (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1940) 415-452 (Or: <http://members.iif.hu>, accessed 24.02.2012). This article, though informative, lacks any kind of references, so it is not really a scholarly work. Summaries on astronomy in this period (for example Zoltán Nagy, "Asztronómia a Mátyás-korabeli Magyarországon" [Astronomy in Hungary in the Time of Matthias Corvinus], *Világosság*. 17,

brief overview of judicial astrology related to Matthias Corvinus; I will go into detail only to the extent required to provide a context for Janus' relation to judicial astrology.¹⁴⁴

Acquiring a court astronomer or astrologer was among the first measures taken by the young king. He invited Johannes Gazulo, an astronomer from Ragusa, to his court: this is known from the reply letter by the council of Ragusa dated 24 February 1459, in which the royal request was courteously turned down.¹⁴⁵ The king's idea, and his enthusiasm in general toward astrology may have come first of all from János Vitéz (c. 1408-72), who had been the king's tutor, and had correspondence with several famous astronomers of that time.¹⁴⁶ Vitéz had a great library in Váradi, then in Esztergom, and himself emended several of his books, among them an exemplar of Manilius' *Astronomicon*.¹⁴⁷ In his Esztergom palace he had an observatory and a *studio* with several frescoes of astral topics, the remnants of which are still visible.¹⁴⁸ He was interested both in astronomy and astrology, the latter most clearly expressed in a passage of Galeotto Marzio: Vitéz was "so keen on astrology that he always brought the ephemerids with himself and did not do anything without consulting the stars."¹⁴⁹

(1976), 775–781.), though discussing persons who are astronomers and astrologers at the same time, focus only on astronomical development pointing toward a modern perception of the world.

¹⁴⁴ Though Janus' life overlapped only with the first half of Matthias' reign, data on astrology in the second half of the king's reign must also be analysed: Matthias' attitude towards astrology does not seem to have changed during his reign, and in order to get a general picture on this astrology, it is important to involve every data from this period.

¹⁴⁵ Huszti, *Janus*, 213.

¹⁴⁶ For instance with Martin Król from the university in Cracow or Georg Peurbach from the university in Vienna (Nagy, "Asztronómia," 778). Some of Peurbach's astronomical treatises were commissioned by and dedicated to Vitéz, among them the *Tabulae Waradienses*, one of the most frequently used astronomical handbooks in Europe up to the seventeenth century.

¹⁴⁷ Ferenc Földesi, "Tudósok és könyvek társasága. Vitéz János könyvtára" [The Company of Scholars and Books. The Library of János Vitéz], in *Csillag a holló árnyékában* [A Star in the Shadow of the Raven], ed. F. Földesi (Budapest: OSZK, 2008), 88-100.

¹⁴⁸ For example, a great arch of the zodiac, individual figures of signs and planets. Mária Prokopp, "Vitéz János esztergomi platójája" [The Esztergom Palace of János Vitéz], *Janus Pannonius*, ed. Tibor Kardos et al. (Budapest: Academic, 1975), 255-264.

¹⁴⁹ "...*Astrologiaequ adeo deditus, ut Ephemerides secum gestitans nihil nisi consultis astris ageret.* (Galeotto Marzio: *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Mathiae ad ducem Iohannem eius filium liber*, ed. László Juhász [Leipzig: Teubner, 1934] [henceforth: *De egregie*], ch. 30)

In 1467 Vitéz invited Regiomontanus, Martin Bylica and other astronomers to the newly founded *Universitas Istropolitana*, university of Pozsony. Regiomontanus (Johannes Müller of Königsberg; 1436-76) is generally held to be one of the most renowned astronomers of his time.¹⁵⁰ The astrological aspect of his activity is less discussed in literature, although testimonies of it appeared all throughout his life; in Hungary, he was consulted by Vitéz and Matthias.¹⁵¹ While Regiomontanus left Hungary as early as 1471, the Pole, Martin Bylica (Marcin Bylica z Olkusza, 1433?-93) stayed in the royal court even after the death of Matthias. From the testimonies of his activity in Hungary, he was a typical court astrologer of his time. First he was rivals with another Polish astrologer, Jan Stercze, who had made divinations based on the solar eclipses of 1463 and 1467.¹⁵² Bylica strongly criticized the interpretation Stercze gave of the nativity of the son of his patron János Rozgonyi. The last phase of this debate took place in the Hungarian diet (!) of 1468, in front of the king and several barons. Bylica won: Stercze was ridiculed.¹⁵³ This public discourse, which also involved technical details of interpreting horoscopes, is only one of the testimonies which show most explicitly the king's interest in astrology. Both the comet predictions and the horoscopes of Bylica had their clearly definable agenda. For instance, the appearance of a comet on 22 September 1468 (which Janus also reacted

¹⁵⁰ His activity was pioneering in the reform of the Julian calendar and the transformation of the old Ptolemaic world concept into the Copernican one; his calendar, ephemerids and other works containing tables with exact astronomical data were later widely used by astronomers, astrologers, and mariners because of the reliability of these works.

¹⁵¹ Here I just refer those traces of his astrological activity that pertain to Matthias' court. At the invitation of Matthias Corvinus he arrived in Pozsony in 1467, but his primary task was not to teach astronomy at the newly found university, rather to produce the tables (Ernst Zinner, *Leben und Wirken des Joh. Müller von Königsberg, genannt Regiomontanus* [Osnabrück: Zeller, 1968] 107.) which were necessary for computing planetary positions; these tables were commissioned by Vitéz, who allegedly kept such kind of books always with himself, as noted above. The most important among Regiomontanus' works was the *Tabulae directionum projectionumque*, dedicated to Matthias, whose primary court astrologer, Martin Bylica contributed to this work with his advice and emendations (Darin Hayton, "Martin Bylica at the Court of Matthias Corvinus: Astrology and Politics in Renaissance Hungary," *Centaurus* 49 [2007], [henceforth: "Bylica"] 188). A piece of data attests to Regiomontanus' direct medical-astrological advice to the king: in Buda he considered a lunar eclipse as the cause of the king's heart failure, and he advised a special diet (Zinner, *Leben*, 111) In 1468 he acquired an exemplar of Firmicus Maternus' *Mathesis*, the most detailed among the antique astrological handbooks (Zinner, *Leben*, 113).

¹⁵² Mieczysław Markowski, *Astronomica et astrologica Cracoviensia ante annum 1550* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1990), p. 94.

¹⁵³ Hayton, "Bylica," 186.

to, as explained below) gave Bylica the opportunity to write a *iudicium*¹⁵⁴ (prediction) concerning the conflicts of Matthias with George Podebrady, the Utraquist king of Bohemia, and other political adversaries of Matthias. The behaviour of the comet, as interpreted by Bylica, predicted events which were favourable to Matthias and unfavourable to his rivals.¹⁵⁵ The *iudicium* must have, on the one hand, reassured the Hungarian king in his military enterprise against Podebrady, and, on the other hand, further strengthened Bylica's position as the primary royal astrologer.¹⁵⁶ Besides those mentioned above, many other astrologers visited the court, mainly after the king's marriage with Beatrice in 1476.¹⁵⁷

Besides patrons and their astrologers, others around Matthias also contributed to the relative popularity of astrological ideas at the court. Galeotto Marzio (c. 1424 – c. 1495), Janus' best friend both in Italy and Hungary, studied in Ferrara and Padua, then conducted a life full of wandering and looking for opportunities to make use of his humanistic knowledge. He found a generous patron in the person of Matthias, who liked his happy, funny character; Galeotto stayed in Hungary several times in the 1460s and 1470s. A belief in the power of the stars constituted an integral part of his world concept. As revealed by Enikő Békés' recent dissertation, astrological ideas can be found in all of his treatises,¹⁵⁸ in the greatest proportion in his last, main work, *De doctrina promiscua*; these ideas together outline a world concept in which astral determinism is a

¹⁵⁴ *Judicium de cometa que apparavit Anno Domini Mcccc 68*, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm. 9024, 107r–13v.

¹⁵⁵ The comet of 1468 was harmful on the one hand for George Podjebrady, Frederick III, and Pope Paul II and others, on the other hand for countries whose representatives were the persons themselves. His repeated statement that the comet would “be followed by earthquakes in places ruled by the sign of the Lion” (*cometem nostrum... terre motus sequetur in locis signo leonis suiectis*) must relate to Bohemia, the target of Matthias' campaign, because the lion is both the heraldic animal of the Czech kingdom and sometimes the direct astrological symbol of Bohemia, and not because Leo is associated with Matthias, as Hayton suggests (Hayton, „Bylica,” 191). His *iudicium* on the comet of 17 January 1472 was of a similar nature (*Judicium de comete qui apparavit Anno Domini Mcccclxxij*, Stiftsbibliothek Cod. Mellicensis 751/2, 319r–25r)

Hayton, “Bylica,” 192–3).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 189–192.

¹⁵⁷ See for instance Antonio Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, ed. László Juhász et al. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1936–1976) (henceforth: *Decades*), IV. 7. 87.

¹⁵⁸ Békés, *Galeotto*, 13–20.

consistent element.¹⁵⁹ The first chapter of *De doctrina* provides a good example of the power of the astral spheres: even the name of a newborn is determined by fate and relates to the characteristics of the soul given by the stars; the name of *Aristo-teles* is interpreted as *optimus finis* (“best end”), because he is the one who leads us to uttermost happiness...¹⁶⁰ The inscription on the reverse of Galeotto’s medal¹⁶¹ – *Nascentes morimur finisque ab origine pendet* –, a quotation from Manilius’ *Astronomicon* (IV. 16), summarizes his astral determinism succinctly.¹⁶² There is no data on Galeotto’s astrological practice in the court, however, with respect to his predilection for astrology and his loquacious character both in scholarly works and reality, he certainly at least mentioned and spread such ideas wherever he went. It is known that his knowledge of astrology and ancient astrological works was appreciated at least by János Vitéz, who emended the exemplar of Manilius’ *Astronomicon* with the assistance of Galeotto, according to an autograph note of Vitéz as archbishop of Esztergom: “*legi et emendavi cum Mgro Galeotto 1469. Jo. Ar. Strg.*”¹⁶³

Astrology seems to have been a discipline practiced or at least appreciated by various key figures in the environment of Matthias. What about the king himself? The king’s predilection for astronomy/astrology is well attested by the quantity of *Corvinae* containing Classical or – to a lesser extent – medieval astrological works. Up to now several of such codices have been demonstrated by scholars to have belonged to the *Bibliotheca Corviniana*: Manilius’ *Astronomicon*, Ptolemy’s *Quadripartitum*, Pseudo-Ptolemy’s *Centiloquium*, Albohali’s *De*

¹⁵⁹ Since he was educated primarily as a physician, his astrological advice pertains primarily to the field of medicine – for example, he dwells on the relation of melancholy and the planet Saturn. In fact, in Galeotto’s opinion the stars determined every aspect of life.

¹⁶⁰ *Galeotti Martii Narniensis Liber de doctrina promiscua* (Florence: L. Torrentinus, 1548), 12.

¹⁶¹ See Péter Meller, *Mercurius és Hercules találkozása Galeotto emlékérmén* [The Meeting of Mercurius with Hercules on the Medal of Galeotto] (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1955)

¹⁶² On the reception of Manilius by Galeotto: Békés, Galeotto, 86-93.

¹⁶³ Ms.: Vat. Palat. Lat. 1711.

iudiciis nativitatum, some Greek manuscripts on astrological instruments.¹⁶⁴ Naturally, works of contemporary astronomers could also be found there, mainly works by Regiomontanus.¹⁶⁵ More importantly, in three different rooms in (or adjacent to¹⁶⁶) the library one could see painted pictures of the starry sky at a given moment, each accompanied by a distich.¹⁶⁷ András Végh has recently investigated the context of these paintings, clearing up many misunderstandings in previous scholarship;¹⁶⁸ two of his conclusions are important here. The relevant words of Bonfini – *celum universum suspicere licet* – probably do not relate to any observatory, but to these paintings, which looked down from the hemisphere-shaped vaulted ceiling. They were not horoscopes,¹⁶⁹ but images of the sky at the moment when the event mentioned in the epigram happened, with figurative constellations, probably similar to those of Bylica's globe (now kept in Cracow).¹⁷⁰ They might have functioned as horoscopes, as far as the confines of houses, signs and the positions of the planets could be properly seen, but they fulfilled primarily a representative

¹⁶⁴ Csaba Csapodi – Klára Csapodiné Gárdonyi: *Bibliotheca Corviniana* (Budapest: Helikon, 1990), *passim*.

¹⁶⁵ At least these works of Regiomontanus: *Tabulae directionum*, *Tabula primi mobilis*, its commentary, *Epitome Almagesti*, *De usu astrolabii armillaris*, *Ephemerides astronomicae ab anno 1475–1506*, *De torqueto*, *Defensio Theonis contra Trapezuntium*; furthermore, works by Peurbach, Bylica, Johannes Angeli, Johannes Tolhopff, Torquato etc. could also be found there (Jean-Patrice Boudet – Darin Hayton, “Matthias Corvin, János Vitéz et l’horoscope de la foundation de l’Université de Pozsony en 1467”, in *Matthias Corvin, les bibliothèques princières et la genèse de l’état moderne*, ed. Jean-François Maillard et al. [Budapest, OSZK, 2009], 208).

¹⁶⁶ According to Végh, “only the place of the *Cum rex...* inscription can be safely identified as the vaulted place described as the king’s library.” (Végh, “Reneszánsz,” 216.)

¹⁶⁷ The paintings have not survived, but testimony to their existence and the epigrams themselves were recorded by several travellers. One of the distichs referred to Matthias’ birth: *Aspice Matthiae micuit quo tempore regis / Natalis coelis qualis utroq(ue) fuit* (Look, what ski[es] shone in both directions in that time when King Matthias was born). The second distich pertained to the election of Matthias as king of Bohemia in 1469: *Cum Rex Matthias suscepit sceptrum Boemae / Gentis, erat similis lucida forma poli* (When King Matthias gained kingship over the Bohemian nation, the bright sight of the sky was similar to this one). The third distich referred to the coronation of Vladislaus II.

¹⁶⁸ Végh, “Reneszánsz.”

¹⁶⁹ Painted horoscopes were mentioned for example by Szathmáry; Bollók, *Asztrális*, 54.

¹⁷⁰ Végh, 222. On the globe of Bylica: Zofia Ameisenowa, *The Globe of Martin Bylica of Olkusz and Celestial Maps in the East and in the West*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk., 1959).

function (just as the library itself): they suggested that the birth or the election of Matthias happened in accordance with the will of heavens.¹⁷¹

Some foreign humanist poets indeed celebrated the birth of Matthias as favored by the stars (as it occurred with other European – mainly Italian – patrons as well in the second half of the fifteenth century¹⁷²). Besides the poems with only superficial astrological references,¹⁷³ there is at least one poem, the *Laudes bellicae* by Alessandro Cortesi, which directly refers to the planetary positions found in the Matthias' nativity:

*Quanta tibi placidi favet indulgentia coeli!
Qualibus aegoceros radiis, que lumine Mavors
Prospicit, et quanto rutilus Iove fulgurat aether!*¹⁷⁴

How favored you are by the grace of the serene sky! With what rays the Capricorn, with what a light Mars looks at you, and how brilliantly the glowing ether shines forth with Jupiter!

Aegoceros is the general poetical expression for the Capricorn, the sign of the Ascendant in Matthias' nativity. Mars as the god (or planet) of war was often associated with Matthias; here Mars is represented as a planet in favorable position at his birth, so this may relate to the king's nativity where Mars ruled the important tenth house (the house of *mores*, character).¹⁷⁵ These references do not necessarily mean that Cortesi knew the king's nativity itself; information on the most important or most emphasized elements of the nativity may have been widely available that time.

¹⁷¹ This kind of representation came to fashion in Italy by those whose origin was more humble – as in case of Matthias – than that of the members of ancient royal dynasties. See Vég, “Reneszánsz,” 220.

¹⁷² For example, Janus himself wrote poems with this motif, for Lodovico Gonzaga and Francesco Barbaro: see the next chapter (III. 3. a).

¹⁷³ For example Tito Strozzi's epigram *pro Matthia rege Ongariae*, v. 3-4: *Laeta novum mundo natura faventibus astris / Addidit, in lucem te veniente, decus.* (*Analecta nova ad historiam renascentium in Hungaria litterarum spectantia*, ed. Jenő Ábel, István Hegedűs [Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor, 1903] [henceforth: AN-Ábel], p. 191)

¹⁷⁴ A. Cortesi: *Laudes Bellicae Matthiae Corvini Hungariae regis*, ll. 198-200, in *Olaszországi XV. századbeli íróknak Mátyás királyt dicsőítő művei* [Fifteenth-century Italian Literary Works Praising Matthias Corvinus], ed. Jenő Ábel (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1890) p. 307. (henceforth: Olaszországi-Ábel)

¹⁷⁵ On Matthias' nativity and the association of Mars with the king, see the next chapter (III. 3. b).

The king's knowledge about the stars is often mentioned in texts originating either from the court or from abroad. In most cases – as in the case of Ransovius,¹⁷⁶ Simon de Phares,¹⁷⁷ Eustachius,¹⁷⁸ Galeotto's *De egregie...*¹⁷⁹ – the statements are so short and general that they do not reveal what kind of knowledge or interest Matthias had concerning the stars. However, the more detailed references stress the astrological aspect. Bonfini's skepticism about such a predilection of the king can be detected all throughout the *Decades*, mostly in the passage where he compares Matthias and Frederick III and considers this “vain superstition of astronomers and astrologers” as the king's only weakness, the only characteristic he had in common with Frederick III's.¹⁸⁰ Galeotto's attitude was naturally different: in his *De incognitis vulgo* he dedicates a whole paragraph to the king's enthusiasm and expertise in astrology, praising him as *rex et astrologus*, and claiming that he “reached such a perfection” in this discipline “that he predicts with full veracity either the rainy or the good weather, the condition of the crops, the favorable hours to choose, and the genitures of men.”¹⁸¹ From among the poetical references it is worth quoting a longer passage by the Florentine Naldo Naldi, which shows an astrological purpose behind the astronomical studies of Matthias:

*Mente quidem celsa quam sit domus ampla deorum
Hunc didicisse iuvat; Leo quid sibi quaerat in altis
Sedibus et quicquid Virgo sibi poscit honoris,
Tunc ubi Mercurius coniungitur ordine pulchro*

It delighted him to study, with his mind high in the spheres, how rich the gods' house [the sky] is; what honor the Lion claims in his high position, and what honor the Virgin asks for;

¹⁷⁶ Heinrich Ransovius, the sixteenth-century Danish astronomer wrote in *Catalogus imperatorum...: Matthias Corvinus... propagator et admirator omnium doctrinarum fuit et delectatus est maxime historiarum cognitione, didicit etiam studiose multa de stellarum motibus et effectionibus* (Cited by Végh, “Reneszánsz,” 228, note 62).

¹⁷⁷ Simon de Phares in his “Collection of most famous astrologers” (*Le Recueil des plus celebres astrologues*) speaks about Matthias as an “astrologer ruler”: “Mathias, roy de Hongrie, fut aussi souverain astrologien...” Cited by Boudet – Hayton, *Matthias*, 205.

¹⁷⁸ He wrote in his *iudicium* for Matthias for the year 1486: *Huiusmodi scientiae [astronomiae] te oblectari et omni virtutis genere te esse praeditum nemo ignoret.* (AN-Ábel, p. 104.)

¹⁷⁹ *De egregie*, ch. 10: *Tenebat praeterea astrologiam et in operibus Apulei Platonici ita detritus, ut eius dogma omnino calleret, unde et apud eum theologi, philosophi, medici, poetae et oratores et astrologi et qui omnes disciplinas profitebantur, frequenter errant.*

¹⁸⁰ *Decades* IV. 4. 112.: *Par utrique religio, par quoque superstitio astronomorum, mathematicarumque vanitatum...*

¹⁸¹ *Eo autem perfectionis devenit, ut et pluvias et serenitatem et annonae conditionem horasque electiores et hominum genituras summa cum veritate praevideat.* (Olaszországi-Ábel, p. 255.)

*Saturnoque gravi levis ille Iovique benigno
 Quid ferat alma Venus, pulcherrima sola dearum
 Laetitia, quid luna frequens, quid sol et amicus
 Afferat ipse boni; quid et adversarius idem
 Ipse mali tribuat nobis; quid triste minetur
 Mars, dum bella gerit, dum saevus et arma ministrat,
 Corvinus sapiens excelsa in mente repostum
 Sic tenet, ut nihil hunc possit latuisse, quod instat*¹⁸²

when the light Mercury conjoins in an orderly fashion with the heavy Saturn and the benign Jupiter; what [fortune] the beautiful Venus, the only goddess of happiness, brings, and what the hastening Moon; what good the Sun brings unto us as a friendly planet, and what bad as an inimical planet; what the baleful Mars threatens with, when he makes war and fiercely takes up arms; all this was stored in the excellent mind of the wise Corvinus so that nothing in the near future could remain hidden before him...

The versified *Oratio* of Thebaldius also eulogizes the Matthias expertise in astrological matters, in addition, he explains some of the consequences for his behaviour: he could cancel and postpone his planned actions if the stars threatened with bad fortune.¹⁸³

If all these words of flattery and poetry were the only evidence of Matthias' astrological interest, one would not need to take them too seriously; but other, historically more valid narrative and horoscope sources can now be discussed below. All these sources will complement each other and point toward the same, so far quite neglected, characteristic of the Hungarian king and his court. Prose narrative sources reinforce that Matthias, cautioned by an astrologer, tended to take the unfavorable planetary positions seriously. "Enthusiasm" is not the best expression to describe Matthias' attitude toward the stars. If the stories quoted below are true, Matthias was – at least in some periods of his life – dependent on the stars, which had the power to impede him in many of his activities, and even make him fearful. Bonfini reports that, Matthias, staying in Buda in 1489, wanted to convoke the diet and make peace with Frederick III, but he had to postpone these plans continuously because of his illness. When at Christmas "he got

¹⁸² Naldo Naldi: *De Laudibus Augustae Bibliothecae libri quatuor ad Matthiam Corvinum Pannoniae Regem Serenissimum*, ll. 105–118., in *Olaszország-Ábel*, p. 273.

¹⁸³ ...*Nec rectius alter / Depicti nitida sedes metitur Olympi / Annua non Phoebi, non te via menstrua Lunae / Praeterit: in cunctis coelestia sidera rebus / Observas. Ideo facili tibi prospera cursu / Omnia succedunt: nam si tibi saeva minantur / Astra, pedem retrahis melioraque tempora semper / Exspectas. Sed qui confisi viribus audent / Omnia, nec coeli motus cognoscere curant, / Dispereunt; neque enim terrena potentia magna est / Usque adeo, ut superis valeat contendere stellis.* (A. Thebaldius: *Oratio ad Matthiam invictissimum Pannoniae regem*, ll. 88-98; cited by Huszti, "Asztrológiai," 43. note 1)

even worse horoscopes, which he was dependent upon, he sent the carts forward and hastened to Vienna as if threatened by death.”¹⁸⁴ In the German chronicle of Peter Eschenloer, town clerk of Breslau (today Wrocław), a funny story has been preserved which illustrates to what extent astrology could function as a magical belief compared to common sense.

Matthias... arrived in the village of Grebilwitz next to the city of Breslau on the Thursday before the day of Trinity [25 May 1469], before noon, and he could have entered Breslau on the same day at dinner-time, [but] he denied doing this, for the sake of an astrologer [*Sternseher*] whom he had by himself and who did not allow him to enter on that Thursday. The councillors were surprised and sent him some wine, fish and beer from the council in order to pay homage to him, and he received all this with pleasure, spent there a happy day with his nobles, and said to the Breslauers that he would enter the city early in the morning. This camping gave opportunity to great rumors to arise in Moravia, Hungary and Austria, narrating how the Breslauers did not want to let Matthias in, so that he had to stay in front of the city.”¹⁸⁵

In order to clarify what kind of astrology the court pursued, the contemporary astrological documents themselves have to be investigated. Testimonies of *practice* – documents of concrete cases which contain technical data and sometimes interpretations – are more telling than the theoretical treatises and handbooks. The sheer quantity of surviving documents, as compared to the number of such documents from other European courts of the same period, suggests the relative significance of astrology as an aspect of the courtly culture around Matthias. Besides the two *iudicia* of Bylica mentioned above, the Bolognese Eustachius Candidus sent Matthias a *iudicium* for the year 1486 to Matthias,¹⁸⁶ Torquato sent him a *Prognosticum* for the same year;¹⁸⁷ another *iudicium* – made for Matthias’ fifteenth birthday by an unknown astrologer –

¹⁸⁴ *Decades* IV. 8. 175: ...captato deteriore horoscopo, cui nimis erat obnoxius, praemissis curribus utpote cuitato mortis periculo, Viennam contendit.

¹⁸⁵ “Mathias... quome am donirstag vor Trinitatis [25 May 1469] bey die stat Breslow in das dorff Grebilwicz vor mittagis vnd hette denselben tage wol zu Breslow mogen einkomen vff die vesperzeit, das er nicht tun wolde vmb eyns sternsehers willen den er bey jm hatte der jm is denselben donirstag nicht wolt gestatten. Die ratmanne vorwunderten sich vnd santen aws dem rate mit wein, fische, bire zu seinen gnaden erende, das er allis frölich vffnome vnd hatte do einen frölichen tage mit seinen herren vnd sagte den Breslernn, frw vff mittag in die stat zu czihen. Aws disem leger entstunt vil rede bis in Merhern, bis in Vngernn, Osterreich, wie die Bresler Mathias nicht hetten wellen einlossen, hette vor der stat müssen bleiben.” (Peter Eschenloer, *Geschichte der Stadt Breslau*, ed. Gunhild Roth [Muenster: Waxmann, 2003], p. 761.)

¹⁸⁶ *Eustachii Candidi Bononiensis canonici Regularis Iudicium*. In: AN-Ábel, p. 104.

¹⁸⁷ A. Torquato (or Arquato): *Prognosticum de Europae eversione, ab anno 1480 usque ad annum 1538*. Vienna, ÖNB, cod. 8849.

survives in a codex of the Cracovian Jagiellonian Library.¹⁸⁸ Another important Cracowian codex¹⁸⁹ contains a series of horoscopes: for Matthias' birth, his crowning as king of Hungary, his ceremonial sword-cut, the launching of the war against Frederick III, the birth of Frederick III (a "truer" – *verior* – version, with a few interpretative sentences), the coronation of Frederick III, the birth of Beatrice, the birth of János Corvin, the arrival of the Hungarians in Pannonia (!). Furthermore, a group of horoscopes related to Matthias forms part of a larger collection in a Vatican codex once owned by Christine, queen of Sweden.¹⁹⁰ It also has Matthias' nativity, for the same date, and the horoscope of his crowning as king of Hungary, for a different date;¹⁹¹ in addition, it has the horoscope of his election as Hungarian king in 1458. The only horoscopes that have interpretations are those for János Corvin's birth and twelfth birthday in a third Cracovian codex.¹⁹² The horoscope for the opening of *Universitas Istropolitana* (5 June 1467) was added to the last page of a *Corvina*, an exemplar of Ptolemy's *Almagest*.¹⁹³ Except for this last document, it was most probably Bylica who cast (and interpreted) the horoscopes.¹⁹⁴

Among these sources, one can find documents of both natal and catarchic¹⁹⁵ astrology. Casting and interpreting nativities has always been the basic and most popular branch of astrology, but the importance of catarchic astrology seems to have been a specific trait of "Corvinian" astrology. One group of these documents relates to Matthias becoming a king: the

¹⁸⁸ Grażyna Rosińska: *Scientific Writings and Astrological Tables in Cracow: a Census of Manuscript Sources (15th-16th centuries)* (Wrocław, 1984), no. 190.

¹⁸⁹ *Natititates*, Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225.

¹⁹⁰ Cod. Vat. lat. 1208; analyzed by József Huszti: "Magyar királyok horoszkójai egy vatikáni kódexben" [Horoscopes of Hungarian Kings in a Vatican codex], *Magyar Könyvszemle* 35 (1928), 1-10.

¹⁹¹ Within the long date only one number is different: in the Vatican codex 18 March stands for 28 March in the Cracowian, and the latter seems to be the historically valid one, since "28 March 20 hours" means 29 March 8 hours in the modern dating system, and 29 March is the accepted date of Matthias' crowning. The 18 March version might be simply the result of the slip of the compiler's pen.

¹⁹² Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 2858; the two horoscopes were described by János Csontos, "Corvin János két horoscopja Krakkóban" [János Corvin's two horoscopes in Cracow], *Magyar Könyvszemle* 1880, 382-7.

¹⁹³ *Figura coeli hora institutionis Universitatis Istropolitanae*, ÖNB, cod. lat. 24, 212r.

¹⁹⁴ Hayton, "Bylica," 193.

¹⁹⁵ Astrological forecast for the near future.

moments of his election, crowning, and sword-cut are recorded in horoscopes, while his election as Czech king was “illustrated” in the painting of the Corvinian Library. Given the king’s predilection, it is highly probable that he did not leave it to chance when these events should happen, and that his court astrologers had a say in the matter of choosing the date. The hypothesis that these are electional horoscopes seems to be reinforced by the charts themselves. Although they do not have any interpretation, the application of the basic and widely accepted rules of interpretation yields interesting results: the horoscope of Matthias’ coronation is conspicuously fortunate.¹⁹⁶ Though it is also possible that astrologers subsequently found a favorable date *around* the real date of the event, this would have been an extreme kind of rectification,¹⁹⁷ since it is difficult to find a really good date and at the same time remain close to chronological reality. Another application of catarchic astrology was the military usage: looking for the right date to start a campaign, a siege or a battle.¹⁹⁸ There are no traces of horary (interrogational) astrology in the sources. All the kinds of person-related astrology discussed so far require detailed calculations and are usually based on horoscopes; other, simpler astrological methods were also applied at the court, but only slight traces of them have survived.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225. There is a close triple conjunction of Saturn (Matthias’ birth ruler), Jupiter (*fortuna maior*, in the Fish, in dominion!) and Venus (*fortuna minor*). All this in the tenth house (house of honor, character etc.). These relations would be fortunate enough, but in addition the conjunction is the summit of a sextil-sextil-trine triangle, the trine being between Moon and Mercury. Though the moon and Mars are in detriment, Venus and the (for kings most important) sun are in exaltation.

¹⁹⁷ Rectification: the specification of the *exact* date of an event by the astrologers. For example, it is usually not recorded on the level of minutes and seconds when the event happened, but the astrologers tend to look for the minutes and seconds which yield planetary positions as favourable as possible.

¹⁹⁸ Although only one relevant document has survived (the horoscope for beginning the war against Frederick III), Bonfini records this habit of Matthias several times. On the one hand, the historian formulates it as his general habit: “As for starting a new campaign, it is dubious whether he was cautious or audacious, though he never undertook anything without consulting the horoscope” (*Decades* IV. 8. 276). On the other hand he mentions concrete cases: Matthias consulted the stars before setting out from Buda for the campaign in 1477 (IV. 5. 1), then before the siege of Vienna in 1485 (IV. 6. 254), a siege of Vienna New Town in 1488 (IV. 8. 1), and marching into that city after the successful siege (IV. 8. 79). The military astrological aspect is even more ignored by scholarship than the previous aspects: a thorough analysis, taking into account the references to astrology, the known dates of military events and the European parallels for military forecasting, might yield interesting results.

¹⁹⁹ On chronocrator-astrology, see the next chapter (III.3.b)

Not surprisingly, the few examples of interpretation found in the documents, all having the royal family as their addressee, share the common characteristic of partiality in favor of the patron. “King of kings, you will be victorious and fortunate in the war, you will have great dominion in consequence of the death of the emperor because of the conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars in the first [grade] of Capricorn,”²⁰⁰ predicts Eustachius Candidus; Bylica’s comets are harmful for practically all enemies of Matthias;²⁰¹ Frederick III’s military failures are shown by his “truer” nativity;²⁰² nearly all the planets at János Corvin’s birth were in a position advantageous for him.²⁰³ Rectification could also help make the interpretations favorable: at least the data on minutes and seconds, present in every horoscope, are rarely historically correct. The purpose of currying favor is also clear if one considers which solar return was chosen to cast a horoscope on.²⁰⁴ Statements about events unfavorable for the royal family, if any, usually take the form of warnings instead of predictions of inevitable future events.

Naturally one cannot take the authenticity of every source for granted; however, if one considers the sheer quantity, the great variety and at the same time the consistent message of these sources, one must draw a conclusion which does not necessarily fit the traditional image of Matthias. He strongly believed in judicial astrology and was himself the main source of its practice at the court; the traces of this practice show up all throughout his reign. A thorough critical analysis of the sources, together with a comparative analysis of astrology in the various

²⁰⁰ *Tu rex regum in bello victor eris et fortunatus, dominium magnum habebis propter mortem imperatoris ob coniunctionem Iovis Saturni et Martis in prima Capricorni.* (AN-Ábel, p. 104.) (He uses the term *coniunctio* not in the ordinary sense: in January 1486 only Jupiter and Mars were in conjunction, the involvement of Saturn must be due to its rulership over the sign Capricorn and thus over Jupiter and Mars. Checked with “ZET 8 Astrology” program.)

²⁰¹ Hayton, “Bylica,” 191-3.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 193-4.

²⁰³ See the interpretation of his nativity in Csontos, “Corvin,” 385.

²⁰⁴ Jupiter, traditionally the *fortuna maior* among the planets, in the first house of Corvin’s geniture, close to the ascendant, in the Archer (his own sign), was to yield great fortune to him; it was twelve years later that Jupiter, having made his circle around the Sun, reached the same grade of the Archer, and this must be one of the reasons why the astrologer chose the twelfth birthday.

courts of Europe, will be needed to clarify the exact nature of the astrological belief of Matthias and some other members of the court. So far we can conclude that he preferred the complex, seemingly more scientific astrological methods (horoscopes or *judicia* applying horoscope elements).²⁰⁵ At least two types of astrology, natal and catarchic, were often practiced. Astrology could be applied for various purposes: to forecast one's fortune in general, to forecast political and military events, to support institute foundations, or for medical counseling. Matthias's court provided one of the most significant examples of those courts in Europe where the patron's habit of mind made judicial astrology an integral part of courtly culture.

How does Janus come into the picture? He was a humanist poet at the court of Matthias; he was János Vitéz's nephew, Galeotto's best friend, an acquaintance of Gazulo, Bylica, and Regiomontanus; he used astrological terms in many of his poems. Set out just from these facts, one could suppose at first thought that Janus should be a friend of judicial astrology, and write for example panegyrics to the king with astral references. This was not the case, however, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter III. Astrology in Janus' poetry

²⁰⁵ The general trend is that of making complex predictions, but the variables a prediction is based on are not always the same in the surviving documents. While the basic horoscopic factors – twelve signs, seven planets, twelve houses (*loci*, usually with Regiomontanus' method of unequal houses), four elements, house rulers, aspects – are generally present in the horoscopes, other, not so common factors could also appear: very detailed position data, complex table of aspects, consideration of some non-zodiacal fix stars, and so on. Not all these factors are signified in the horoscope: terms and decans, for example, though not marked, seem to have a role in the interpretation of the university founding horoscope.

1. The frequency of astrological symbols

The fashion of astrology in Europe fit into a more general spiritual phenomenon of the age, the reemergence of analogical thinking, on which magic, astrology and various forms of hermetic philosophy, and resurrected religions were based. The world is the macrocosm, the human is the microcosm: this was a commonplace of the age.²⁰⁶ Janus was also receptive towards analogical thinking in general; this appears, for example, in the poems which István János cited in a study and which he considered as representatives of a “pantheistic” or kind of “Neoplatonic” thinking.²⁰⁷ The magical power of the *carmen*,²⁰⁸ bird omens,²⁰⁹ the organic perception of nature at the spring of Feronia²¹⁰ (Ferogna): these ideas of Janus reveal a predilection for analogies. In analogical thinking in general, the most obvious direction of secret correspondences is between the earth and the sky, and Janus’ analogies provide several examples of this.

Besides, the stars as eternal lights of the heavens have always been among the favorite symbols applied by poets worldwide. The emergence of analogical thinking and the stars’ suitability for poetry are two general reasons for the popularity of astrological symbolism in Renaissance poetry; in addition, Janus happened to live in cities and courts where astrology was especially popular, even compared to other regions of Italy. One cannot be surprised about the frequency of astrological symbols in Janus’ oeuvre, and that this symbolism infiltrated into other conceptual frameworks with a “vertical” world view²¹¹ that appear in the poet’s works: Greek-

²⁰⁶ Here I cite just one typical statement about the microcosm-macrocosm correspondence: according to Pomponazzi, “man is microcosm, that is a little world, whence we see in man that there is one chief member on which all the members, though they be very different, depend... this world is governed by the heavenly bodies since the heavenly bodies are like the heart...” (trans. Garin, *Astrology*, 12.)

²⁰⁷ István János, “Neoplatonista motívumok Janus Pannonius itáliei költeményeiben” [Neoplatonic Motifs in the Italian Poems of Janus Pannonius], *Itk* 84, no. 1(1980): 10-12.

²⁰⁸ JP-Tel. El. II. 8 (*de annulo*), 89-98.

²⁰⁹ JP-Tel. El. I. 15 (*in Racacinum*), 15-16.

²¹⁰ JP-Tel. El. I. 1.

²¹¹ Under vertical world view I mean a structuring of the world in a way that the different levels represent different kinds of existence; the entities share in spirituality to a different extent. There are entities above humans who are

Roman mythology, Neoplatonism, Stoicism. However, it is just this tendency of infiltration which cautions against drawing too bold conclusions about Janus' astrological thinking. As will be seen, when a clearly astrological idea appears one cannot be sure about the poet's deep belief in astrology. The use of astrological *symbols* themselves is even more frequent, however, and there are a number of cases when the expression with the planet, constellation or other heavenly body has only a superficial astrological meaning, lacking the astrological conceptual framework; in these cases the symbol is clearly an element of some other world view, and the expression cannot be regarded as an astrological idea. First I will discuss this latter phenomenon because what does and does not belong to Janus' astrological ideas has to be clarified.

The melding of Classical gods and their corresponding planets was a general literary fashion in the Renaissance. Naturally, this phenomenon had antique origins,²¹² but it seems to have become even more frequent in the fifteenth century. As Roellenbleck points out when discussing the *Urania* of Pontano, "the stellar material" was "easily transformable" in the poetic world of Greek-Roman myths.²¹³ As for Janus' poetry, János has already observed that a god and a planet could "become totally blurred," most frequently in case of the sun (*Phoebus*).²¹⁴ In Renaissance poetry, it is most often just a poetic play, if at all a conscious device of the poet; both the gods and the stars affect earthly life and the power of the Classical gods can be revived to some extent with the melding. In Janus' poems, it is often clear from the context that the melding happens so to speak automatically, or as a playful device, without any deep astrological meaning.

more spiritual and have more power: this idea is shared by practically all religions and theologies in the world. Since astrology believes in the power of the stars, it is theoretically possible to adjust astrology to other vertical world views.

²¹² See for example the *Aetna* 33-35; according to the *fontes similia* of JP-Mayer, Ep. 269, Janus knew this poem.

²¹³ Roellenbleck, "L'astrologia," 191.

²¹⁴ János, "Neoplatonista," 5.

The goddess Venus may radiate with the light of the stars (*sidereo lumine*),²¹⁵ and Mercury the god wanders, for instance, in “the third circle” (*tertius orbis*)²¹⁶ of the sky.²¹⁷

The astro-meteorological ideas of Janus which are typical Classical commonplaces cannot be considered as true astrological ideas either. The Orion constellation brings tempests,²¹⁸ the Scorpion brings poisonous rains,²¹⁹ and the Fish the mild temperature of spring.²²⁰ These ideas generally appear isolated, in non-astrological contexts, and they are foreign to the systematizing spirit of the astrological handbooks.

Astrology may touch on some Neoplatonic ideas. János, who has thoroughly analysed the latter aspect of Janus’ poetry, concludes that “pure Neoplatonism does not” appear, but “those ideas which the eclecticism of Renaissance Neoplatonism incorporated in his own philosophical system often influenced him in a determinant way.”²²¹ Neoplatonism provided frameworks for astral mysticism, the basic idea of which is the return of the soul to the sphere of the stars from whence it descended. Astral mysticism appears in several of Janus’ epitaphs – satisfactorily analyzed by Bollók²²² – and in other, longer, poems of praise. In this latter case, when the topic is the birth of the eulogized person somehow supported by the heavens, it may occur that the presence of the platonic idea facilitates the appearance of the astrological idea of favorable birth, as will be seen below. But even in these cases, the two ideas themselves are clearly separable;

²¹⁵ JP-Tel. El. II. 12. (*Ad Antonium...*) 46.

²¹⁶ Ian Thomson, *Humanist Pietas. The Panegyric of Janus Pannonius on Guarinus Veronensis* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988) (henceforth: JP-Thomson), II. 889-890: *tertius orbis*, / *Qua rarus visu Cyllene errat alumnus*.

²¹⁷ Interestingly, there are two particular sources which may be related to the last example from the Guarino-panegyric: Guarino himself, in one of his letters, speaks about the Mercury of the “poets and astrologers” (See the full quotation above, II. 1. a); Guarino also had a medal which depicted Hermes with golden staff and lyre, standing on a globe and elevating Mercury to cosmic dimensions (Nagy, “Vitéz,” 272); Janus spoke about the medal in a letter dating from 8 December 1450.

²¹⁸ JP-Tel. El. I. 4 (*De stella...*), 29-30.

²¹⁹ JP-Tel. El. I. 13 (*De inundatione*) 77.

²²⁰ Ibid., 71.

²²¹ János, “Neoplatonista,” 13.

²²² Bollók, *Asztrális*, 22-29, 99-106.

they are not mixed. The connection between the two sets of ideas, astrology and Neoplatonism, was most often discussed in the discourse on *Ad animam suam*, perhaps the most famous elegy by Janus. In older literature (even in Huszti²²³), a hypothesis appeared which argued, based on superficial resemblances, that Janus described his birth horoscope in lines 9-12.²²⁴ As his soul descends, the planets give him those properties which are characteristic of the planets themselves, and in most cases these are the traditional astrological properties (*Saturnus rationem*, etc.). In fact, these astrological elements had infiltrated into Neoplatonism as early as late antiquity, and Janus just followed the description of Macrobius' commentary²²⁵ without adding any astrological thoughts, which are also missing from the other parts of the poem. Astrological thinking is foreign to this elegy; the planets in question have nothing to do with horoscopes, and modern scholarship has disproved this hypothesis, as Jankovits did recently in his eighty-page interpretation of *Ad animam suam*.²²⁶

Finally, there is a branch of astrology which is in fact not clear astrology and which belongs at least as much to geography as to the science of stars. Some Classical handbooks – Ptolemy,²²⁷ Manilius²²⁸ – divide the known world among the planets and signs of the zodiac, which would define the internal and external properties of those born under the relevant stars. Describing the characteristics of each region and nation, the authors are forced to distort reality to a great extent in order to make the nations adopt the traditional characteristics of the planets and signs. The alleged effect being collective and continuous, this kind of astrology is not suitable for divination. Indeed, it does not seem to have been popular in the Renaissance. According to

²²³ Huszti, "Asztrológiai," 58.

²²⁴ JP-Tel. El. I. 12 (*Ad animam suam*), 9-12.

²²⁵ Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, I, 12, 13–15

²²⁶ László Jankovits, *Accessus ad Janum. A műértelmezés hagyományai Janus Pannonius költészetében* [Traditions of Interpretations in the Poetry of Janus Pannonius] (Budapest: Balassi, 2002), 141-42.

²²⁷ *Tetrabiblos*, II. 2-3.

²²⁸ *Astronomicon*, IV. 711-817.

Bollók,²²⁹ it does appear in some epigrams by Janus.²³⁰ Indeed, when contrasting Italy and Hungary, Janus seems to have at least played with the thought of Mars' effect on *Pannonia*. Here I cannot go into a deeper analysis; this astrological geography is peripheral in Janus and isolated from the star beliefs which most often appeared in the Renaissance.

This survey provided examples for the “empty” usage of astrological images; however, they are apt to be filled with definite astrological meaning when placed in the proper context. The question is how far this happens in Janus' poetry. In the following three subchapters I will analyze all the works of Janus which clearly have astrological ideas.

2. References on the practice of judicial astrology

Erotic epigrams were among the genres greatly favored by this eminent student of Guarino's school; Lucia was the protagonist of a series of such epigrams, composed around 1450.²³¹ One sounds like this:²³²

*Pisaeo a stadio doctissimus ille sophorum,
mensuram plantae repperit Herculeae;
Lucia cum nasum cuiusquam mensa videndo est,
inguinis extemplo conicit inde modum.
Vel physiognomon es, Lucia, vel geometres,
Tale magisterium sola mathesis habet.*²³³

He, the wisest of the sages, reckoned the size of Hercules's sole based on the stadium²³⁴ of Pisae. When Lucia measures somebody's nose with her eyes, she immediately guesses the size of the loins. Lucia, you are either a physiognomist²³⁵ or a geometrician; only mathematics has such knowledgeable skill.

²²⁹ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 59-62.

²³⁰ JP-Mayer, Ep. 1; 39; 214; 377; 404.

²³¹ In the dating of the epigrams, I follow primarily the chronological order made by Ágnes Szalay-Ritoók in the new critical edition (JP-Mayer).

²³² According to László Juhász, the following four lines were in the first half of the epigram: *Fecit Virgilius prognostica, fecit Aratus / praesciat unde imbres rusticus, unde notos. / Hoc, iuvenes, vestris prognosticon addite libris, / quod nec Virgilius, sed nec Aratus habet*. The new critical edition treats the two passages as two distinct epigrams (JP-Mayer, Ep. 193, 194). In any case, the longer version does not essentially change the meaning of the epigram.

²³³ JP-Mayer, Ep. 194.

²³⁴ Antique linear measure, 1 stadium (stadion) = c. 192 m.

²³⁵ Physiognomy: the assessment of someone's character from the face.

The name of Lucia had already been charged up with an ironic effect by the previous Lucia epigrams. Here, the poet's target is both her sexual appetite and certain forms of divination.

Since the term *mathesis* appears in the context of divination, it must primarily mean astrology.²³⁶

Furthermore, *mathesis* is degraded to the same level as physiognomy, which had been despised in Cicero's *De fato*,²³⁷ surely read by the poet.²³⁸ This observation of Bollók can be completed by another passage from Cicero; in the same book of *De fato*, Cicero mocks the absurdity of astrological prognoses.²³⁹ Janus and Guarino – who preferred original sources to handbooks – laid special stress on Cicero, one of the greatest Classical authorities in the Renaissance, and naturally held him in high esteem.²⁴⁰

A later Italian epigram, traditionally entitled:²⁴¹ *Cur stellatum sit caelum* (Why is the sky starry?), has the stars as the primary topic:

*Ante fuit simplex caeli color; ast ubi furto
Titanum paene est regia capta Iovis,
arcis Olympiacae tum demum in turribus altis,
astrorum excubias disposuere Dei.*²⁴²

In former times, the heaven were single-colored, but since the palace of Jupiter was almost captured by the stratagem of the Titans, in the end the gods disposed the stars as watches in the high towers of the Olympian castle.

Taken on its own, this epigram would not be more than just a poetic play, a micro-myth that had no relation to the real significance of the stars for a medieval mind. However, taking into account Janus' basic negative attitude towards the practice of astrologers (see above and below), this epigram takes on a similar meaning, and Bollók is basically right (though perhaps exaggerating

²³⁶ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 111.

²³⁷ *De fato* V. 10: *Socraten nonne legimus quem ad modum notarit Zopyrus physiognomon, qui se profitebatur hominum mores naturasque ex corpore, oculis, vultu, fronte pernoscere?*

²³⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 112.

²³⁹ *De fato* V. 12: *Sint igitur astrologorum percepta huius modi: 'Si quis (verbi causa) oriente Canicula natus est, is in mari non morietur.'*

²⁴⁰ Huszti, *Janus*, 21.

²⁴¹ It is in general uncertain what titles Janus originally gave to his poems; in most cases, the titles appearing in the Teleki edition became traditional in the scholarship.

²⁴² JP-Mayer, Ep. 269.

slightly) in calling it an “anti-astrological program poem.”²⁴³ This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that judicial astrology had a strong position in Ferrara and was a subject of discourse in poetry; consequently, any poem having the stars as the main topic necessarily would include the author’s standpoint to some extent. It is just the poet’s almost meaningless story about the stars which takes on an anti-astrological meaning in this particular intellectual historical context.

The two epigrams help to interpret a third one (the earliest), which is based on a Greek text.²⁴⁴

*Hauserat intentum stellis scrobs caeca Thaletem,
cui super illudens talia dixit anus:
Tu, qui fata aliis te pandere posse ferebas,
nescisti vitae fata videre tuae.*²⁴⁵

While Thales was watching the stars, a pitch-dark pit absorbed him; later, a granny said to him scornfully: ‘You, who always kept saying that you could uncover the fate of others, have not been able to see the fate of your own life.’

This short story can have many meanings; one of the most obvious possibilities is the interpretation of Thales as an astrologer. He investigates the stars and foretells fates. It is again the later, similarly ironic, poems and Janus’ surroundings that reinforce the validity of this explanation.

One must not forget that these were indirect references, and that the humanist poems – even the ironic epigrams – do not *necessarily* mirror the standpoint of the author sincerely and consistently; for all these limitations, it seems probable that during his years in Ferrara Janus adopted a skeptical standpoint toward judicial astrology, or at least the practices of the astrologers. If this is so, it will be interesting to see whether his opinion changed in Hungary; on the one hand, there he was again close to his uncle, János Vitéz, and other friends of astrology and he read new scientific literature; on the other hand, Matthias’ court did not differ essentially

²⁴³ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 112.

²⁴⁴ *Diogenes Laertii Vitae philosophorum*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999-2002), 1. 34. (JP-Mayer)

²⁴⁵ JP-Mayer, Ep. 22

from the court in Ferrara over the significance and even extremes of horoscope-oriented astrology.

Two of Janus' letters have survived which touch on astrological practice. One is his reply to Gazulo, the Raguzan astrologer who had declined to work for Matthias. Unfortunately, Gazulo's letters are lost, and Janus' letter can only be dated within a wide interval, between 1460 and 1465.²⁴⁶ Janus speaks in first person plural, which can stand for both singular and plural in his letters; here the singular meaning is more probable from the context. Janus gives thanks for a book sent to "them": it was telling, eloquent, readable, and useful. "We confess that you have clearly explained there [in the book] some difficult statements of the ancient astronomers which we have long been yearning to understand." After encouraging the astronomer to work further, the poet continues: "On the other hand, we ask you most diligently to provide for the preparation and making of the rings of Ptolemy at our expense and at your place, as well as of other instruments you mention in your work,"²⁴⁷ because there is no craftsman in Hungary who could make them.

The ancient astronomers-astrologers whose books Janus may have studied seem to have been Ptolemy, Manilius, and Firmicus Maternus²⁴⁸ (the two first are more probable with respect to their influence detectable in certain of his poems). The "rings of Ptolemy" was one of the names for the ringed astrolabe,²⁴⁹ which was used for defining the position of heavenly bodies

²⁴⁶ Alajos Fleck, "Janus Pannonius, Gazulus és a gyűrűs asztrolábium" [Janus Pannonius, Gazulus and the Ringed Astrolabe], *Geodézia és Kartográfia* 86, no. 6 (1984): 442.

²⁴⁷ JP-Tel. II. p. 101-2. *fatemur, scrupulosas quasdam veterum astrologorum sententias, quas jam pridem clarius intelligere desiderabamus, ibidem nobis fuisse luculenter explicatas....*

Ceterum rogamus vos quam diligentissime, ut armillas Ptolemaei, et alia instrumenta, de quibus in opere vestro mentionem facitis, nobis ad expensas nostras istic apud vos paranda et conficienda procuretis...

²⁴⁸ Huszti held Manilius and Firmicus Maternus as the most probable possibilities (Huszti, "Asztrológiai," 52).

²⁴⁹ The main difference between a ringed astrolabe and a ringed globe (*sphaera*) is that the first is two-dimensional, while the second is a three-dimensional model of the cosmos.

(with relatively many mistakes).²⁵⁰ Janus' Hungarian poetry corroborates that he became more interested in astronomy-astrology there, and Bartha is certainly right in highlighting János Vitéz as the most probable stimulator of this interest.²⁵¹ However, the nature of Janus' investigations – how far they were oriented to complex, predictive methods – cannot be read from this letter alone, his other works written in Hungary also need to be examined. A further element of uncertainty is a possibility that the usage of the first person plural allows: Janus might have ordered the ringed astrolabe and other instruments for the king.²⁵²

The other letter provides perhaps the most important information about Janus' attitude towards judicial astrology. The antecedents can be outlined from the letter itself: at the beginning of 1462 Vitéz or a member of his circle entrusted Galeotto with the task of persuading Bartolomeo Manfredi, the astrologer of the Gonzagas, to come to Matthias' court. Bartolomeo turned down the request and Janus refers to this event in his reply to Galeotto:

Though I am not a good astrologer, I think that Master Bartholomeus is a man who does not know how to take advantage of his fortune. With God's help, so far we have been doing quite well without horoscopes and compilers of nativities; I hope we will live like that in the future as well.²⁵³

Some scholars have underestimated the significance of this passage because it did not fit well their concept about Janus and astrology. In Huszti's interpretation, Janus did not need astrologers "because he is not a practicing astrologer ... he is an astrologer of another type than either János Vitéz or Matthias Corvinus."²⁵⁴ According to Bollók, by these two sentences Janus means that: "though he knows astrology, it does not play an essential role in his life."²⁵⁵ I think there is more

²⁵⁰ Fleck, "Janus," 443.

²⁵¹ Bartha, "Janus," 340.

²⁵² Fleck, "Janus," 445.

²⁵³ JP-Tel. II., p. 90: *De Magistro Bartholomeo, quamvis ego non sim bonus Astrologus, tamen ita iudicio, quod ille homo nescit fortuna uti. Nos hactenus, Deo iuvante, satis feliciter viximus sine Horoscopis et Genethliacis; spero vivemus et in futurum.*

²⁵⁴ Huszti, "Asztrológiai," 47.

²⁵⁵ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 113.

behind the lines of the passage; with his usual, fine irony Janus is expressing his thoughts against *genethliacis* (astrologers who cast nativities) and *horoscopis*. Although he had studied and was interested in astronomy-astrology, he seems to have rejected the most typical aspects, mainly the practice, of judicial astrology, not the practice of particular astrologers, but the practice in general. In addition, as contrasted to the Italian epigrams, this is a private letter, the most reliable genre concerning Janus' thoughts, and he speaks directly about astrology. This interpretation of the letter might be further reinforced by an epigram which the new critical edition dates to around 1465.²⁵⁶

*Lumen ad hibernae vigilans, Zacchaeae, lucernae,
dum Siculo aethereas quaeris in orbe vias;
improvisa leves rapuere incendia circos
nec se deprendi sustinuerunt dei.
Quis iam mentitos contenderit omnia vates?
Forsitan hoc Phaëton usserat astra modo.*²⁵⁷

On a winter night, while you, Zaccheus, were investigating the ethereal ways in the Sicilian orb, holding a night-light, suddenly the light circles caught fire, and the gods did not allow that it should be extinguished. Who would maintain that the poets always lie? Perhaps Phaëton burnt the stars in this manner.

János Horváth published this epigram from the recently found Sevillian codex in 1974.²⁵⁸ As read and translated by Horváth, what is now *Zacchaeae* in the new edition was *Matthee* (Mattheus in the vocative), and *Siculo* was *situlo* (bucket). It was János Bollók who has clarified through a long and brilliant analysis²⁵⁹ that Horváth, setting out from his own false reading, misinterpreted the text. The right reading is *Siculo*, which can thus be linked to *orbe*, and *Siculus orbis* in antiquity meant the famous globe of Archimedes, mentioned by Ovid, for example.²⁶⁰ A smaller parallel of this globe was the *sphaera armillaris* used by Renaissance astrologers. Thus, the astrological interpretation of the poem becomes obvious: Zacchaeus (a person as yet

²⁵⁶ See JP-Mayer, p. 34 and the numbering "Ep. 407."

²⁵⁷ JP-Mayer, Ep. 407.

²⁵⁸ János Horváth, "Janus Pannonius ismeretlen versei a Sevillai-kódexben" [Janus Pannonius' Unknown Poems in the Sevillian Codex], *Itk* 78 (1974): 604; the epigram is found on 105v.

²⁵⁹ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 40-51.

²⁶⁰ *Fasti* VI. 277-8

unidentified by scholarship) was investigating the positions of the heavenly bodies on the globe,²⁶¹ but he held the torch or night-light too close to the instrument, which caught fire. The last two lines suggest that Zacchaeus was curious about his nativity: Phaeton also wanted to know the secrets of his birth. The famous story related by Ovid²⁶² ends with Phaeton's catastrophic celestial ride; he burnt the stars, just as Zacchaeus did. It cannot be said that Janus' irony targets only a particular person; a poet who appreciated the practice of judicial astrology would have chosen another topic.

It can be concluded that there are at least five pieces of text which point in the same direction concerning Janus' opinion on the question, namely, a rejection of the practice of judicial astrology. Taken on their own, these texts could be considered as manifestations of temporary opinions or feelings, but seen together, they outline a standpoint which was consistently held by Janus throughout his life or at least until around 1465. The texts by Janus that would lead to understanding the exact reasons for this opinion are not known; however, the general characteristics and the biographical circumstances of this humanist make his standpoint understandable. Janus was a critical spirit, even compared to humanists in general; he was inclined towards mockery. He happened to live in places where he could often see or hear the manifestations, sometimes the extremes, of judicial astrology – the conceited astrologers and their horoscopes, the devotedness of Leonello d'Este, Galeotto, Matthias Corvinus and so on. In addition, a negative opinion of astrologers could be supported in Classical sources. Cicero's *De fato* was mentioned above, but Janus might have also read the *De divinatione*, where Cicero

²⁶¹ It is improbable that the *leves circos* meant a nativity drawn on light paper, since the Renaissance horoscopes were square and Janus must have known that.

²⁶² *Metamorphoses* I. 747 – II. 330. Epaphus charged Phaeton's mother, Clymene with having lied about his father. Clymene swore an oath to his son, but he did not believe her. Clymene directed him to Helios, who allowed Phaeton to ask for anything in order to prove that Helios was his father, thus he had divine origins. Phaeton asked to ride the Sun's chariot, which resulted in disaster.

thoroughly criticizes astrological practice,²⁶³ or a passage in Juvenal's *Saturae* with a similar opinion.²⁶⁴

However, the rejection of practice does not necessarily mean the rejection of judicial astrology in general. As Thorndike warns, one should not conclude from few passages, “that this or that humanist was a foe of all superstition and occult science.”²⁶⁵ In order to clarify the problem, all the poems where astrological ideas are expressed in more detail have to be investigated.

3. *Astrological ideas in poems of praise*

The idea of triumph was one of the basic ideas of the Renaissance and it could be manifest in various – political, moral, philosophical – frameworks. Guarino himself spread the frequently appearing thought of the humanists that humans are able to become *quasi in terris deus* (like a god on earth), through artistic creation, for example.²⁶⁶ It is natural that triumph often came to be associated with the celestial sphere and the stars; there are at least two sets of ideas which could provide frameworks for this association: astral mysticism and astrology.²⁶⁷ The planets themselves often appeared triumphantly, as on the walls of Vitéz's *Studio*.²⁶⁸ The patronage system in Europe resulted in the emergence of panegyrics and other genres of praise and these poems were quite suitable for using the idea of triumph. Consequently, astral and astrological

²⁶³ *De divinatione*, II. 42-47.

²⁶⁴ *Saturae* VI., 553

²⁶⁵ Thorndike, *History*, IV. 387

²⁶⁶ János, “Neoplatonista,” 2.

²⁶⁷ Zoltán Nagy suggests implicitly that the appearance of the Renaissance idea of triumph, expressed through astral symbols, might have been disadvantageous to Christianity: “In line with the Renaissance idea of triumph... the use of *sidera*, *polus* and other words related to astronomy instead of *coelum* is dominant.” Zoltán Nagy, “Vitéz János művészeti alkotásai Janus Pannonius műveiben” [The Artworks of János Vitéz in the Works of Janus Pannonius], in *Janus Pannonius. Tanulmányok* [Janus Pannonius. Studies], ed. Tibor Kardos, Sándor V. Kovács (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1975), 267.

²⁶⁸ The planet-*trionfi* on the walls of the *Studio* followed Italian patterns. For instance, the *trionfi*-series in the Cappella di Zodiaco (Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini), the Ferrarese-Venetian *Tarocchi del Mantegna* or the Florentine *Pianeti* series show similar features (Nagy, “Vitéz,” 273).

ideas can be expected to occur in Renaissance eulogies. In addition, astrology was especially favored in that particular space and time where Janus lived.

The presence of astrology in some panegyrics by Janus is generally mentioned by scholars, but they usually confine themselves to stating the purely rhetorical usage of astrology in the poems of praise.²⁶⁹ This seems to be true, but the poems deserve a deeper analysis: Janus goes into technical details in them and important conclusions may be drawn on his knowledge and views about judicial astrology. Particular horoscopes may have been related to the poems, and the motives for applying astrological terms have to be clarified as well as their possible relation to other conceptual frameworks.

a.) Italian poems of praise

Janus composed the *Carmen ad Ludovicum Gonzagam*²⁷⁰ in 1450 or 1451²⁷¹ and gave it to Lodovico II Gonzaga himself, who visited Ferrara; it is improbable that Guarino ordered Janus to do this.²⁷² The style of the panegyric reminds one of Claudian²⁷³ (who had also applied astrology²⁷⁴), however, in shaping the structure Janus “followed the precepts of the rhetoricians.”²⁷⁵ The explicit appearance of astrology near the end of the poem has some preliminaries not perceived before by scholars. Within the traditional praise of the father’s *prudentia* the ability to predict the future is highlighted,²⁷⁶ and later the poet praises the same

²⁶⁹ Huszti, “Asztrológiai,” 58; Kocziszy, “Csillaghit,” 58; Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.

²⁷⁰ JP-Tel. I. p. 238.

²⁷¹ Pekka Tuomisto, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Janus Pannonius’ *Carmen ad Ludovicum Gonzagam*,” in *Humanista műveltség Pannóniában* [Humanist Culture in Pannonia], ed. István Bartók, László Jankovits, Gábor Kecskeméti (Pécs: Művészetek háza, 2000), 47.

²⁷² Ibid., 48.

²⁷³ Huszti, *Janus*, 80.

²⁷⁴ Tuomisto, “Rhetorical,” 56.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 58.

²⁷⁶ *Carmen ad Ludovicum* 34-36: *Mirandum innotuit divinae mentis acumen / In genitore tuo; saepe ut ventura videre / Posset, et innumeris praediceret ante diebus...*

ability of the son.²⁷⁷ In the transition to the battle, the war gods which helped Lodovico are associated with the stars.²⁷⁸ In the end astrology appears explicitly. This part is well built into the rhetorical structure of the panegyric: it is placed among the final comparisons and the poet applies the figure of *rogatio*.²⁷⁹

*Ergo ego dum tacitus mecum tua fata retracto,
Sum dubitus, quo te genitum sub sidere dicam,
Marsne ferox, mitisne Venus, facundus an Hermes,
Phoebeumne tuis natalibus arserit astrum?
Hoc iubet eximiae splendor me credere formae,
Hoc solers animi vigor, et doctrina, sagacis,
Hoc lepor, hoc studium Mavortis et ignea virtus.
Scorpion incurva minitantem praelia cauda,
Te roseus nascente dies, rapidumve leonem,
Clara vel Astraeae possedit Virginis ora;
Iustitiam quod amas, duris quod es acer in armis,
Iupiter ipse tuos per cetera vindicat ortus.*²⁸⁰

So, as I silently think over your deeds, I wonder which star I should say you were born under. Was it the fierce Mars, the mild Venus, the eloquent Hermes, or the star of Phoebus, which shone upon your birth? The one is strongly suggested by your pleasant and excellent form, the other by your soul's vivid ingenuity, another by your charm, still another by the ambition and the fiery strength of Mars. When you were born, was the rosy day in the Scorpion that threatens with war with its curly tail, or in the seizing Lion, or in Virgin Astraea with a bright face? But since you love justice and are valiant in the battle, and in all other respect, it is Jupiter himself who vindicates your birth.

At the end the poet opted for Jupiter, certainly because it gives royal virtues (and because it is the *fortuna maior* in astrology). Presenting the options, he enumerated four planets and three signs, and the signs are the domiciles of the planets, as Bollók observed²⁸¹ (Mars – Scorpion, Mercury – Virgin, Sun – Lion, only the domicile of Venus is missing). Bollók is not correct in saying that Janus, in defining the birth ruler, takes into account the sign where the Sun is.²⁸² *Roseus dies* rather signifies the dawn, referring to the reddish Sun appearing on the horizon: this is the Ascendant of the horoscope, and, indeed, this was the basic method of defining the birth ruler in the Renaissance.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 185-8: *Quin de venturis aliquid praedicere rebus, / et secreta soles longe praenosceret fata, / An cladem, an laetam portendant Numina palmam. / Vera cano...*

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 139-140: *At cum pugna vocat, pro te vel sidera certant, / et tua descendens ad classica militat aether.* (Observed by Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.)

²⁷⁹ Tuomisto, "Rhetorical," 50.

²⁸⁰ *Carmen ad Ludovicum*, 207-218.

²⁸¹ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.

²⁸² Ibid.

The rhetorical usage of the astrology is clear, but what could motivate the poet to use such expressions so abundantly? The passage reveals the humanist's basic astrological knowledge, however, the Italian epigrams mocking astrology, written around the same time (see above), make it improbable that Janus' knowledge came from an enthusiasm about horoscopes. Furthermore, Janus does not seem to have followed any poetic pattern in this passage. Such astrological enumerations are foreign to Classical poetry and I have not found parallels in contemporary Neo-Latin poetry either. It was a literary commonplace that the Classical gods gave all the good properties to the eulogized person at his birth and the gods sometimes fused with the planets (see Landini²⁸³ or Corsini²⁸⁴). Sometimes the birth of the ruler is accompanied by celestial signs,²⁸⁵ but such an explicit description as that of Janus is peculiar in this genre. Was it motivated by the Gonzaga ruler's predilection for the stars?

Tuomisto assumes that "Janus may exactly have known Ludovico's sign, the Lion."²⁸⁶ The marquis' Ascendant is known: "Your birth was on the day [for which] you had Leo as Ascendant and the sun was your signifier...",²⁸⁷ said an astrologer, Giovanni Cattani, to Lodovico. He was reportedly born on 5 June 1412, 13 hours and 13 minutes after sunset (around 8:45 in the morning), which date indeed gives a horoscope with the Lion as the Ascendant.²⁸⁸ A number of data support that Lodovico always kept the Lion in mind and also used it for representative purposes.²⁸⁹ If Janus would have known about the Lion Ascendant, he would

²⁸³ Carm. 8. 61-68 (*Christophori Landini carmina omnia*, ed. A. Perosa, Florence: Olschki, 1939)

²⁸⁴ Amerigo Corsini, *Compendium in vitam Cosmi Medicis*, I. 39-69. (*Compendium in vitam Cosmi Medicis ad Laurentium Medicem*, ed. László Juhász, [Leipzig: Teubner, 1934]).

²⁸⁵ Tito Strozzi, *Borsias*, III. 202-4.

²⁸⁶ Tuomisto, "Rhetorical," 56.

²⁸⁷ Quoted by Joanna Woods-Marsden, *The Gonzaga of Mantua and Pisanello's Arthurian Frescoes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 45, note 86.

²⁸⁸ Checked with "ZET 8 Astrology." In this thesis I used two computer programs, "ZET 8 Astrology" and "CyberSky 3.3.1 in order to check the positions of the heavenly bodies on a certain date; the one produces horoscopes, the other gives the sight of the sky over the horizon.

²⁸⁹ In 1461 Bartolomeo Manfredi sent him "a little gold lion to wear next 'next to his skin' at dawn on the nineteenth of July, when 'the sun is ascending in Leo on the eastern horizon...'" (Woods-Marsden, *Gonzaga*, 46). The Lion

certainly have highlighted it in his poem. In contrast, among the descriptions of the signs, that of the Lion is the shortest (*rapidumve leonem*). He rather seems to have drawn on Manilius in finding poetic expressions for the signs.²⁹⁰ It is understandable that Janus did not know about Lodovico's favorite sign, since the Mantuan ruler only came to Ferrara just before Janus gave him the panegyric. However, Janus could have known about Lodovico's predilection for astrology in general, since the content of the panegyric reveals that he was informed about Lodovico's basic biographical circumstances. Among all the addressees of Janus' panegyrics, the Gonzaga marquis was the most renowned for his predilection for the stars; it is certainly not by chance that the most detailed judicial astrological passage in Janus' oeuvre can be found in the *Carmen ad Gonzagam*. The planet symbolism in the epigram on Matthias and Frederick III (see later) was certainly motivated by similar reasons.

Two other poems with astrological passages survived from the Ferrarese period; these passages are more peripheral than those in the Gonzaga panegyric. It seems that astrology was on the way to being incorporated into the poetic arsenal of Janus, and in the two poems there seems to have been no special external reason for its use. In January 1453, Janus composed an *epithalamium* on the occasion of the marriage of Paula Barbaro and Giacomo Balbi.²⁹¹ The *epithalamium* was a favored genre in the fifteenth century and it traditionally contained praise of the bride's or bridegroom's father, but in this particular poem, Janus' praise of the father is so dominant that in fact the work becomes a panegyric; Janus wanted to introduce himself and win

appears in some frescoes, like in Pisanello's painting from the 1440s. Lodovico also used the sun (the Lion's ruler) as his symbol, for instance on a medal made by Pisanello in 1447, cited in Tuomisto, "Rhetorical," 56.

²⁹⁰ In line 214, *Scorpion... cauda* is in the same metrical position as in Manilius' *Astronomicon* IV. 218, and in Manilius' description of the Lion (IV. 176-189) expressions deriving from *rapio* (to seize and carry off) are frequent, which probably explain Janus' adjective, *rapidus*.

²⁹¹ AH-Ábel, p. 108-119. *Epithalamium ad Francescum Barbarum*.

favors with Francesco Barbaro, the famous humanist patrician of Venice.²⁹² The astrological passage appears again in the figure of a *rogatio*:

*Non ego Franciscum caelesti e semine cretum
mentiar, hoc unum dubito, quod in axe superno
affirmem regnasse iubar, quae sidera dicam
concordes iunxisse globos, qua venit in auras.
Ille die miro caelum properasse rotatu
certa fides, ac signa novum servasse*

*tenorem.*²⁹³

I won't lie that Francisco is a divine offspring, I am just wondering which light I should declare to have ruled in the uppermost sky,²⁹⁴ which globes should I mention as harmoniously joining the stars, when he came forth to the world? It is sure that the sky moved forward in a miraculous rotation on that day (?), and the signs kept this new course.

The waves of praise ran high here, and this resulted in a series of strange ideas, some of them with dubious meanings (moreover, the last lines seem to have been corrupted²⁹⁵). According to the most probable interpretation of the text, the poet takes into account the MC axis (*axe superno*) in defining the birth ruler²⁹⁶ (a rare method in the Renaissance), perhaps because a constellation in the highest heavens is more spectacular than the Ascendant. *Concordes iunxisse globos* can mean at least two things: the planets either coincide with their domiciles, or have a favorable aspect with each other; both signify fortune in general in astrology. The last sentence of the passage, which clearly presents an absurdity,²⁹⁷ shows most definitively how far Janus was from taking astrology seriously. A “believer” poet would have praised the patron with more real expressions, even in a highly rhetorical genre: see Cortesi’s or Naldi’s panegyrics to Matthias quoted above.²⁹⁸

The Guarino panegyric,²⁹⁹ an often interpreted Janus poem, finished probably in 1454,³⁰⁰ does contain an astrological idea, though it is so peripheral that the previous scholarship has not

²⁹² Huszti, *Janus*, 98.

²⁹³ AH-Ábel, Epithal. ad Franc. Barb. 185-190.

²⁹⁴ *Axis* can refer both to the sky itself and the axis of *medium caeli* in a horoscope.

²⁹⁵ The sentence would make sense if *illo* or *illa* stood for *ille*; *illa/illo die* would mean “on that day.” (Although the ablatives *illa/illo* were pronounced with a long *a* and *o* in Classical Latin, which would not fit the metrics.)

²⁹⁶ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 65.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Chapter II. 2.

²⁹⁹ I used the newest edition in Thomson, *Guarino*.

³⁰⁰ Thomson, *Guarino*, 57.

detected it. The ideas and images which show a Renaissance Neoplatonic influence – for example, the sun as spiritual symbol³⁰¹ or the stars providing a home for the soul – do not mix with astrology; the signs appear at best in playful images: “the Scorpion draws back its tail” when the soul approaches the celestial spheres.³⁰² However, the poet’s propensity for exaggerating and magnifying the mythical figures into cosmic dimensions had the result that astral mysticism changed over to astrology for a moment:

*Nonne vides eadem totus portendat ut aether,
Uraniae numeris sibi respondentia faustis?
Quam bene fatorum concordant sidera pensis!*³⁰³

Can’t you see that the whole ether is predicting the same events, which correspond to the favorable numbers of Urania? How well the stars harmonize with the decision of the fates!

The “theme of restoration after a period of ruin”³⁰⁴ was a basic idea of panegyrics in general; here it is Guarino’s birth, supported by the heavens, which will bring a new golden age for the world. In a type of general astrology, great historical events were often linked to peculiar planetary positions, *coniunctiones*, and Janus seems to have drawn on this type of astrology in order to express the celestial justification of the new golden age. The rhetorical usage is the same as in the previous examples; what makes the passage interesting is how different ideas – the divine support of Urania, the descent of the soul from the stars, and the restoration of the golden age – which all have different conceptual frameworks – Greek mythology, Neoplatonic astral mysticism, and history – meet in an astrological synthesis, in an idea which shares the common conceptual framework of astrology.

There might have been other works by Janus colored by astrological features, mainly among the lost poems of praise. Janus composed, for instance, a long *epithalamium* praising

³⁰¹ János, “Neoplatonista,” 7.

³⁰² Thomson, *Guarino*, praef. 31-2: *alta manet meriti te regia caeli / Contrahit et caudam Scorpios ecce tibi*.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, ll. 1033-5.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54

Leonello,³⁰⁵ which may have contained such ideas, taking into account Leonello's enthusiasm for the stars. In Hungary, Janus turned away from the panegyric-like genres, nevertheless, praise of Matthias Corvinus – and mockery of his enemies – could also be expressed in epigrams; one of these applied astrological symbolism. This epigram deserves a deeper analysis. While the above passages seem to be based on Janus' own thoughts, the Hungarian epigram forms an organic part of the astrological culture at Matthias' court.

b.) An epigram on Frederick III

The political context of this poem³⁰⁶ seems to have been the debate between Frederick III and Matthias Corvinus over the Hungarian Crown.³⁰⁷ When Matthias acceded to the Hungarian throne in 1458, he could not be crowned, because Frederick had previously seized the royal crown. Matthias was in great need of legitimizing his power with a traditional crowning, but he asked Frederick in vain for it, and he had to wait until 1463, the year when the Vienna New Town contract about the conditions of the returning of the crown was signed³⁰⁸ (this may be regarded as a *terminus ante quem* for the epigram). Janus, as a poet by Matthias' side, gave voice to the royal claim in a witty epigram:

*Romula res olim Fabio cunctante revixit,
nunc, cunctante eadem te, Friderice, perit.
Nam tu continue consultas, nec facis umquam,
mallem aliquid faceres vel sine consilio.
Quid tibi cum gelido Saturni sidere inertis?
Caesaribus mores Martis inesse decet.*

Long ago, the Roman state survived by the tardiness of Fabius; now the same [state] perishes by the tardiness of yours, Frederick. For you are consulting all the time, not doing anything; I would rather you did something without any advice. What have you got to do with the icy star of the sluggish (or: cowardly)

³⁰⁵ Huszti, *Janus*, 95.

³⁰⁶ JP-Mayer, Ep. 384

³⁰⁷ The notes of the 1972 jubilee edition (*Janus Pannonius összes munkái* [Complete works of Janus Pannonius], ed. Sándor V. Kovács, [Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1987], 683.) put the epigram in this context, and the new critical edition reinforces this by placing the poem chronologically just after the one which is undoubtedly about the crown issue (JP-Mayer, Ep. 383.).

³⁰⁸ The delegation of János Vitéz was unsuccessful in 1458, the pressure of the prince electors on the emperor was also in vain in 1461. In the next year, prompted by the request of Landus, the papal legate, he agreed to sell the crown for no less than eighty thousand gulden, but it was not until July of 1463 that the Vienna New Town contract was signed. Karl Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1975), 14-18.

Saturn? For an emperor, it comes to have a Martial character.

The expression with Saturn makes it clear that the epigram has an astrological meaning. To be more precise, it must be natal astrology, the branch of star beliefs according to which the character (*mores*), the permanent, substantial properties of a person are defined by the position of the stars at his birth. Why does Janus express himself through astrology? One of the reasons must be the predilection of Matthias, already discussed above in detail. In addition, Frederick, the central figure of the poem, had a similar interest in astrology. This fact was noted by some of the court historians of the Habsburgs,³⁰⁹ and reinforced by modern scholarship, the results of which has recently been summarized by Pangerl.³¹⁰ As Heinig says, Frederick III “subjected important decisions to the constellations of the stars and the advice of his astrologers.”³¹¹ Since astrology played a significant role in the courts of both rulers presented by the epigram, one can suspect that Janus’s words on planetary influences may refer to particular astrological beliefs or opinions about the births of these rulers, so it would be interesting to investigate this concrete astrological context of the epigram.

János Bollók, after a thorough analysis of the epigram, arrives at the conclusion that the astrological references are based on “chronocrator-astrology”³¹². This “chronocrator” must not be mistaken for the chronocrator in the more widespread meaning of “ruler of lifetime”, as used by Ptolemy, Firmicus Maternus, and their followers. Instead, Bollók refers to the most simple branch of astrology, in which the planets (or the antique gods with the same names), were associated

³⁰⁹ For example by Joseph Grünpeck, *Die Geschichte Friedrichs III. und Maximilians I.*, ed. & trans. Theodor Ilgen (Leipzig: Dyk, 1891), 20.

³¹⁰ Daniel Carlo Pangerl, “Sterndeutung als naturwissenschaftliche Methode und Politikberatung. Astronomie und Astrologie am Hof Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440-1493)”, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 92 (2010), 309-327.

³¹¹ Paul-Joachim Heinig, *Kaiser Friedrich III. (1440-1493)*, *Hof, Regierung und Politik*, Vol. I, (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 747, quoted by Pangerl, 311.

³¹² Bollók, *Aztrális*, 56-59.

with the hours of the day as “rulers of time,” and the planet of the hour of birth was supposed to have a definitive influence on the personality. Later, the planet (god) of the first hour of the day came to be associated with the day itself, and this system left its mark on the names of the days of the week in a number of European languages (in English: Saturday, Sunday, Monday).³¹³ Bollók argued that while the day and month of Matthias’ birth is certain, the exact year is debated in secondary literature, the two possibilities being 1440 and 1443, and the year 1440 has “more support” from the sources. The date 23 February 1443 falls on a Thursday, the day of Jupiter, while 23 February 1440 falls on a Tuesday, the day of Mars. The date of Frederick’s birth is certain: 21 September 1415, which falls on a Saturday, the day of Saturn. According to Bollók, Janus knew 1440 as the birth year of Matthias and also knew Frederick’s birthday, so he could make use of the different planetary influences (Mars and Saturn) in his poem .

Bollók’s argument can be refuted by the fact that the debate around Matthias’s birth has now been settled. Indeed, as early as 1943, Kálmán Guoth has proved that Matthias was born in 1443,³¹⁴ and this was generally accepted by later scholars.³¹⁵ Janus must have known the right birth year of his king, at least indirectly from János Vitéz, who had the closest relationship to both the king and his nephew. Anyway, Frederick still could be associated with “Satur-day” in Matthias’s court, but it is hardly possible that Janus mixed two different astrological systems while creating a clear opposition between the two figures of the epigram, chronocrator-astrology in the case of Frederick and some other system in the case of Matthias. Bollók’s reasoning seems to have more truth concerning his thoughts on the related horoscopes. Although in the end he did

³¹³ Furthermore, the first day of a month came to define the astrological nature of the whole month. Bonfini’s *Decades* has a sentence which associates both the birth and death of Matthias with Mars, based on chronocrator-astrology: *Et, quemadmodum mense Martio natus erat, ita die et hora Martis vita decessit.* (IV. 8. 200)

³¹⁴ Kálmán Guoth, „Mikor született Mátyás király?” [When was King Matthias born?] *Kolozsvári Szemle* 3 (1943).

³¹⁵ Guoth’s argument can be summarized briefly: the year 1440 was only weakly supported by few foreign sources (Thomas, a Venetian legate; Enea Silvio Piccolomini), while a host of other primary sources – narrative ones, horoscopes and other documents – gave the year 1443.

not see much sense in using these horoscopes to interpret the poem, it now seems fruitful to rethink this issue.

While two codices give exactly the same nativity for Matthias (Fig. 2), a nativity for Frederick appears in a sixteenth-century printed book, Johannes Schöner's *Opera mathematica* (Fig. 3; the maker of the horoscope is unknown).

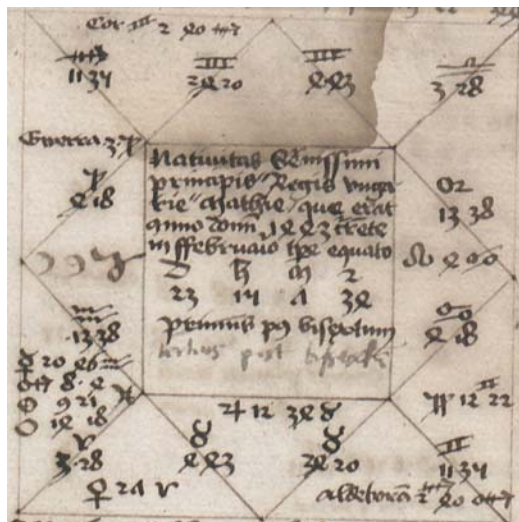


Fig. 2. The nativity of Matthias Corvinus
(Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225)

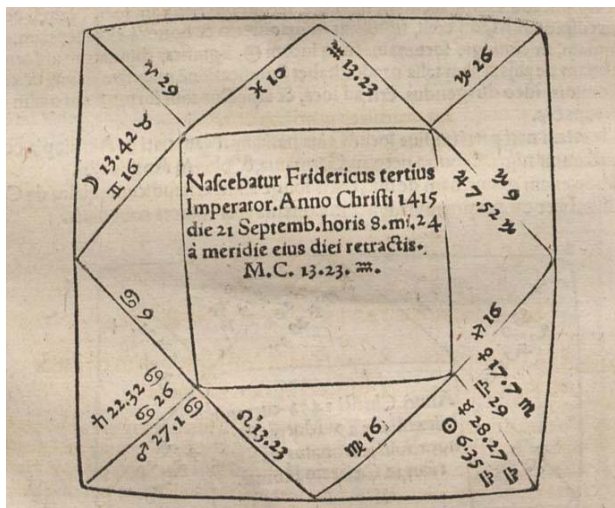


Fig. 3. The nativity of Frederick III
(Johannes Schöner, *Opera mathematica*, Nürnberg 1561, LXVI/a)

From what point of view could Saturn be the birth ruler (the most important planet) in Frederick's horoscope and Mars the birth ruler in Matthias's chart? Bollók, after trying out all the possibilities (the Ascendant, the Sun, the astrologically strongest planet, the MC as signifiers of the birth ruler) arrives to the correct conclusion that the only imaginable possibility for making Mars and Saturn respectively the dominant planets is taking the MC into consideration.³¹⁶ The MC of Matthias's nativity is in the Scorpion, ruled by Mars; Frederick's MC is in the Water-Bearer, ruled by Saturn. The MC – explicitly identified by the maker of Frederick's nativity – and its adjacent house, the tenth house was generally considered the house of honors, career, acts; this

³¹⁶ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 54-55.

would also fit the content of the epigram. However, Bollók was still not convinced that Janus had the MC and the birth rulers of the horoscopes in mind, and I do not think it probable either, though for other reasons than those of Bollók.³¹⁷ First of all, when the birth ruler was defined indirectly in Renaissance astrology, it was not the MC but the Ascendant which was generally taken into consideration.³¹⁸ Furthermore, it is not at all certain that the nativity in Schöner's book was really in use in Frederick's time. In addition, while Janus could be easily informed about the details of Matthias's nativity, this was not case with Frederick's birth charts, at least those made in Vienna.

There is one more version of Frederick's nativity: his "more true" (*verior*) geniture (Fig. 4); found among horoscopes of the Corvinus family, it must have been cast in Matthias's court.

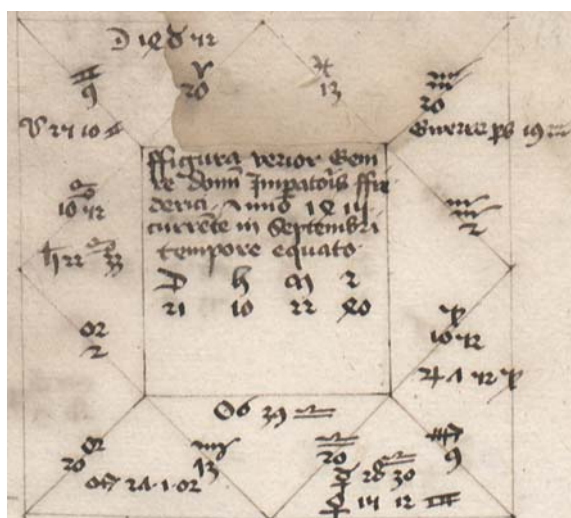


Fig. 4. The *verior* nativity of Frederick III
(Bibliotheka Jagiellonska, cod. 3225)

³¹⁷ Bollók's counter-argument (Bollók, *Asztrális*, 55.) seems problematic to me: "Though Saturn in the Crabs is in exile – so his harmful effects are increased –, but Mars, situated in the Water-Bearer, between the confines of Saturn, is not able to exert his positive effect because of its position." Mars is not in the Water-Bearer in Matthias's horoscope, but in the Fish; furthermore, the investigation of confines (*termini*) was rather peripheral among the methods of horoscope-interpretation in the Renaissance.

³¹⁸ See, for example, the case of Lodovico Gonzaga discussed above, or the case of Cosimo Medici, who also had representations of his Ascendant (Scorpion) and its ruler (Mars) (Békés, *Galeotto*, 75).

This *verior* nativity was made for a date two hours later than the Schöner version. Judging from a note under the horoscope, it was made after 1483, so Janus could not have known this exemplar, at best an earlier, preliminary version of it. Neither does the horoscope itself help in the interpretation of the epigram. Here the MC is not the Water-bearer but the Fish; and though Saturn “jumped” from the second to the first, most important house, a parallel situation in Matthias’s nativity is not known. Still, this horoscope provides some important information. One of the reasons for “deferring” Frederick’s birth date may have been to find a more spectacular place for his Saturn in order to satisfy those in Matthias’s court who wanted to see Frederick as a Saturnine figure.

Thus, there is no firm ground for an explanation that Janus, who was otherwise skeptical about the practice of judicial astrology, would have looked into the nativities of the rulers himself (though this possibility cannot be excluded). Still, the current ideas about the two rulers in Matthias’s court certainly lurk in the background of the astrological interest of the epigram. To apply such astrological terms, it was enough for Janus to know two things: first, Matthias was held to be a Martial personality in a positive sense, and Frederick a Saturnine personality, with the darker side of Saturn; second, these characterizations were based on concrete astrological facts, so the characteristics were – allegedly – defined by superior heavenly laws. There are strong reasons to think that this was the case at Matthias’s court.

The association of Mars, the god (and planet) of war, with Matthias, as part of the Corvinian propaganda, is a well known fact.³¹⁹ Janus himself, in a late epigram,³²⁰ represents

³¹⁹ I just refer here to the study of Klára Pajorin, “Janus Pannonius és Mars Hungaricus” [Janus Pannonius and Mars Hungaricus], in *Klaniczay-emlékkönyv. Tanulmányok Klaniczay Tibor emlékezetére* [Klaninczay-Festschrift. Studies in Honor of Tibor Klaniczay], ed. József Jankovics (Budapest: Balassi, 1994), 57-72. “Mars Hungaricus” was one of the current “epithets” of Matthias, used, for example, by Ugolino Verino in a poem which exhorts the Hungarian king against the Turks: *Hungarus Mavortius (Triumphus...* l. 79; in Ábel-Olaszországi)

³²⁰ Mayer-Ep. 426

Mars both as a pagan god and a planet, standing for Matthias according to Birnbaum³²¹ and Pajorin.³²² It is natural that any astrological calculations which could connect Matthias to a favorable Mars were welcome at the court. Bonfini referred to Mars as the royal chronocrator;³²³ the conjunction of Mars and the Sun, the royal planet, in Matthias's nativity was most probably exploited as well.

Similar tendencies to connect Frederick to his Saturn, but with a negative sign, must also have been present at the Hungarian court. It was not difficult to create the association itself. If one tries to outline the character of Frederick, based on different (not only "Corvinian") primary sources, one must conclude that the emperor really had several basic properties which were considered Saturnine qualities in astrology: misanthropy, avarice, slowness, indecisiveness.³²⁴ Even those in the service of the emperor sometimes referred to these qualities, like Enea in these lines of his exhortatory poem *Ad Fridericum Caesarem*:

*Otia te ignorent, convivia, balnea, somni
Et stimulus rapide si quis avaricie est.
(...)
Cur tantum differs perituro consulere orbi
Et te principibus associare tuis?*³²⁵

Rest should not know you, nor feasts, baths, sleep,
and whatever spurs on robber avarice.
(...)
Why are you so slow to help the world which is
going to perish, and do not join your princes?

Naturally, the negative side of Frederick's character was much more overtly expressed in Matthias's environment; the best example is perhaps provided by Bonfini's detailed comparison of the two rulers. I enumerate here the properties which are expressed by the statements of the comparison: Frederick is petty-minded, thrifty, greedy, a lover of peace and rest, negligent, sluggish, envious, deviser of plots, inconsistent, self-restrained, solitary, misanthropic,

³²¹ Marianna Birnbaum, "Matthias, the 'Flagellum Dei' of the Renaissance," in M. Birnbaum, *The orb and the pen* (Budapest: Balassi, 1996), 125-6.

³²² Pajorin, "Janus," 67-69.

³²³ *Decades* IV. 8. 200.: *Et, quemadmodum mense Martio natus erat, ita die et hora Martis vita decessit.*

³²⁴ For example, according to a contemporary document, *Dominus imperator tardus est admodum in [de]liberationibus suis et in eis presertim, in quibus pecuniam effundere oportet* (Quoted by Huszti 1931, 374, note 37.).

³²⁵ *Enee Silvii Piccolominei ... Carmina*, ed. Adrianus Van Heck (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994), Ep. 38., v. 29-30, 37-38.

headstrong, rigid, playing for time.³²⁶ Matthias represents just the opposite qualities.³²⁷ Bonfini's summary of Frederick's character reminds one of Saturn. One can compare it, for example, with the negative mental qualities given by Saturn, as enumerated by no less authority than Ptolemy: "dictatorial, ready to punish, lovers of property, avaricious, violent, amassing treasures, and jealous... sordid, petty, mean-spirited, indifferent, mean-minded, malignant, cowardly, diffident, evil-speaker, solitary, tearful, shameless, superstitious, fond of toil, unfeeling, devisers of plots against their friends, gloomy, taking no care of the body."³²⁸ It is not by chance that Enea, in the same poem that was quoted above, selected Saturn to express the emperor's tardiness metaphorically:

*Quid facis in patria Saturni tardior astro,
Dum ruit imperium, dum ruit ecclesia?*³²⁹

What are you doing in your homeland, slower than
the star of Saturn, while the empire, while the
Church perishes away?

Frederick was certainly held to be a Saturnine personality, at least in Matthias's court; this is corroborated by Janus's epigram itself. It is also most probable that, as in the case of Matthias, any astrological fact that supported such a characterization of the king's rival was demanded at the court. Frederick's birth on Saturday, his MC in the Water-bearer or his Saturn in the first

³²⁶ Decades IV, 4, 104ff.: ...*contra Fridericus imperator non modo parcus et frugi, sed avarus: et plus pecuniarum, quam honoris appetens... hic otii et quietis amator, quin et plus aequo negligens, desidiosus et tardus... hic invidus quandoque habitus, nobilia aliorum facinora intercept, in pace bellum, in bello pacem optare solitus fuit, et nullam in utroque constantiam retinere... huic arte, consilio, calliditate, et pro iudicio cuncta suo genere placuit, et nihil consiliis amicorum tribuere, demum ad utrumque difficilis... huius cultus modicus, continentissimus fuit animus, inimicus crapularum, quin et semper abstemius, hydropotesque perpetuus, solitudinis et contemplationis amator... hunc vita recondita, severus, tristis, et a suorum consuetudine admodum aliena... Imperator pertinacia omnia perpeti, et iacturam parui facere, adversarium obstinatione defatigare, malle omnia perdere quam nummum ex arca promere, pecuniis potius quam sociis parcere, sperare cunctando instaurari omnia, et a rigiditate solitudineque sua non recedere.*

³²⁷ Interestingly, one of Matthias' good habits is *Mars apertus*, the meaning of which is clear from the context: "open, unconcealed military strategy." Decades IV, 4, 107: *hic invidus quandoque habitus, nobilia aliorum facinora intercept, in pace bellum, in bello pacem optare solitus fuit, et nullam in utroque constantiam retinere... illi liberum ingenium, Mars apertus, animus ad pacem bellumque perfacilis...*

³²⁸ Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* (In Greek and English), ed. G. P. Goold, trans. F. E. Robbin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), III. 13. 158

³²⁹ *Carmina*, Ep. 38, ll. 5-6

house, the detrimental position of the planet in the Crabs (in both nativities): any of these could have been taken into account.

Janus does not seem to have applied any of the above mentioned astrological elements directly and systematically in contrasting the Martial and the Saturnine rulers. However, his opposition must have been based on a common courtly opinion (one could also say: common prejudice or element of propaganda): Matthias's Martial and Frederick's Saturnine characters were (also) defined by heavenly constellations. It was enough for Janus to know that there were horoscopes which supported these characterizations. As already observed by Bollók,³³⁰ it is just the astrological interpretation of the poem which makes the punch line of the epigram powerful and the irony of Janus devastating for the emperor. He calls upon Frederick to behave in a way he is not able to, because he cannot change his personality defined by the stars.

This subchapter provided examples of the highly rhetorical usage of astrological symbolism. The general reason for using it seems to have been the fashion of judicial astrology in the parts of Europe where Janus lived and worked; in some poems the application of astrological ideas was further facilitated by the particular patron's interest in the effect of the stars or by the presence of those "celestial" ideas – human triumph, astral mysticism – which were natural in Renaissance panegyric-like poems. The rhetorical usage is so apparent that in fact there is no contradiction between these texts and those of the previous subchapter which mock judicial astrology. In the praise poems the lyrical subject is not at all identical with the poet, while in the ironic epigrams and details of the letters – which show an opposite attitude towards judicial astrology – one hears the voice of the poet. Janus does not seem to have appreciated the world of horoscopes. However, he wrote some elegies in Hungary which contain more sincere

³³⁰ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 58.

manifestations of Janus' astrological standpoint than those of the praise poems seen above; until this point these elegies have been waiting for a deep investigation.

4. Astrological ideas in some Hungarian elegies

a.) "De stella aestivo meridie visa"

The elegy which is entitled *De stella aestivo meridie visa in mense Iulio A. D. MCCCCLXII*³³¹ ("On a star seen on a summer day at noon, in July 1462") in the Teleki edition is the longest of Janus' poems with an astrological topic. The famous 44-line elegy consists of a description of a star (*ekphrasis*, ll. 1-14), an invocation (15-20) and a prayer (21-44), the last two composing the structure of a hymn.³³²

*Quodnam hoc tam clara sidus sub luce refulget,
nec timet in medio praenituisse die?
Fulva Cleonaei certe per terga Leonis,
celsius aestivos, Sol agit acer, equos,
5 nec prodire vagas permittens longius umbras,
in caput Aethiopum spicula recta iacit.
Omnia nunc flagrant, nec caligantia puri
aspectum coeli lumina ferre valent.
Cetera caeruleam Noctis variantia pallam,
10 praestricum radiis occuluere iubar,
una tamen longe reliquis audacior astris,
contempto Phoebi stella nitore micat.
Quantus conspicuo rutilans fulgore cometes,
nuntiat horrenda, bella cruenta, iuba,
15 sed tu (sive Iovem mavis te forte vocari,
grata est Idaliae, seu tua flamma, Deae,
sive novum coelo modo te Deus addidit ignem,
ac solis fessae, iussit adesse, faci,
felix cui soli fas est haud cedere Phoebos,
20 non tantum noctis quae potes esse decus),
nil dirum, nil triste feras, sed lumine dextro
pelle procul quicquid fata sinistra parant.
Saturni tu frigus iners, tu Martis iniqui
ardores placida corrige temperie.*

Which is the star that is shining in such a clear daylight, not afraid of glittering in the middle of the day? The Sun drives his summer steed higher and higher straight through the russet back of the Lion of Cleonae; (5) he does not allow the stray shadows to extend further, and throws his [radiant] spears straight onto the capital of the Ethiopians. Everything is set alight now, and the dizzy eyes cannot bear the sight of the clear sky. All the other [stars] that speckle the bluish mantle of the Night, (10) hid their lights dazzled by the rays [of the sun]. One star alone, much bolder than all the other stars, keeps shining, and cares little about the brightness of Phoebus. Such a large comet, shining bright with red light, signifies bloody wars with its dreadful halo. (15) But you, whether you like to be called Jove, or it is the Idalian goddess to whom your flame is dear, or again if God has set you up in the sky as a new fire ordering you to reinforce the torch of the tired Sun, you fortunate one, who are allowed not to yield to Phoebus, (20) and can be more than just the ornament of the night, do not bring anything dreadful or sorrowful, but banish with your favorable light whatever sinister events the

³³¹ JP-Tel. El. I. 4.

³³² László Jankovits, "The Stars, the Poet and the King," 2. (Yet unpublished. Here I want to give thanks to László Jankovits for placing his study at my disposal. It will be published in the *Mária Font Festschrift* soon.

25 *Perfice ne terris noceant Arcturus et Haedus,*
Arcturus ventis, saevior Haedus aquis,
Grandine flaventes ne pulset Scorpius uvas,
ne segetes nimio torreat igne Canis,
neu miseros turbet nautas nimbosus Orion,
 30 *Orion clava, nec minus ense ferox,*
sed pius insanis defendat Castor ab undis
limite quas certo duxerit Ursa rates.

fates prepare for us. Counterbalance with your mild temperature the rigid coldness of Saturn, the heat of unrestrained Mars. (25) Make it so that Arcturus and Haedus do not harm the fields, Arcturus with his winds, the fearsome Haedus with his waters. Let the Scorpion not destroy the ripening grapes, let the Dogstar not scorch down the grain fields; and let stormy Orion not harass the wretched sailors, (30) Orion, who is as fierce with his sword as with his club; but, instead, let benevolent Castor protect any ships that the [Great] Bear leads on a safe path from the storming waves.

In the last twelve lines the poet asks the new star to bring peace, prosperity, and concord to Hungary. The first question that arises is what the poet could have seen in reality. This is an intriguing and debated issue; however, I cannot discuss the question in detail here, since my topic concerns rather the question of what the heavenly object, whatever it was, meant for Janus. Bollók, after a long analysis with complicated calculations, ended up with a conclusion that the “star” was a comet,³³³ seen on 14 July.³³⁴ However, he was not able to eliminate the earlier arguments of Bartha against the theory that Janus saw a comet.³³⁵ Janus asks the “star” (*sidus/astrum/stella*) “to neutralize the baleful, harmful effect of the other heavenly bodies;”³³⁶ however, in the Renaissance it was the comets themselves that were generally considered to have these baleful effects. Furthermore, European astronomers did not record a comet in 1462. Bartha argued for another hypothesis: Janus saw Venus. The brightness of this planet doubles every 584 days, and “*between 10-20 August 1462 Venus was in the most favorable position with respect to*

³³³ In the following I will use the word “comet” in its ordinary sense. In the Renaissance *cometes* sometimes meant any star which appeared suddenly (Bartha, “Janus,” 343). It is improbable that Janus followed this terminology; he uses *cometes* only once for a star (l. 13) in the ordinary meaning of comet (a heavenly body with a tail, with dreadful effects, etc.).

³³⁴ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 67-80. Bollók set out from lines 5-6: this position of the sun would mean, according to a passage in Pliny, the 14° Lion, which corresponds to 4 August in the traditional Julian calendar. Bollók argued that Janus took into account the precession and the lateness of the Julian calendar, so 4 August meant for him 14 July; Janus could see a comet on 14 July, because this date falls in the period of a comet appearance (29 June – 16 July) recorded by Chinese astrologers.

³³⁵ Bartha, “Janus,” 343-4.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 343.

its diurnal visibility”³³⁷ (Bartha’s italics). Jankovits added three new arguments against the comet theory,³³⁸ and still other arguments can be made against Bollók’s reasoning.³³⁹ All in all, Jankovits seems to be right in arguing that Bartha’s hypothesis is more probable.³⁴⁰ The simple observation of Venus was theoretically possible on the days given by Bartha: Venus was not in conjunction with or too near to the sun.³⁴¹

Even if it was not a comet, one must investigate whether *Janus* could have considered it to be a comet. At first sight, it may seem as if Janus assumed that it was a *cometes*, and then started to guess its nature, whether it could be called Jupiter, Venus or something else (ll. 13-18); this guesswork might be related to one of the Classical theories about comets, according to which a comet may assume the nature of any planet.³⁴² However, in the Renaissance comets were generally considered, with a few exceptions, to bring misfortune and catastrophes. To find data supporting this view, it is enough to look at the fifteenth-century comet predictions summarized by Thorndike³⁴³ or the references to comets in fifteenth-century humanist poetry.³⁴⁴ Janus made a similar judgment in *De inundatione* (see below). Indeed, a close reading of the text reveals that Janus did not suspect a comet. He mentions the comet in a simile: *such* a great comet would

³³⁷ Ibid., 344.

³³⁸ The latitude of Hungary was north to northernmost of the fifteenth-century Chinese Empire. The appearance of the comet as described in the Chinese records differs from the appearance given by Janus. Moreover, the clause where Janus mentions the comet seems to be just a simile (see below). Jankovits, “The Stars,” 3-4.

³³⁹ Bollók’s calculation would involve that Pliny had also taken into account the precession in figuring out his data (14° Lion), but this is improbable.

³⁴⁰ Jankovits, “The Stars,” 3.

³⁴¹ Checked with “CyberSky.”

³⁴² Bollók, *Asztrális*, 79-80. He refers to theories about comets in the *Tetrabiblos*, II. 9. 90 and Servius, *ad Aen. X.* 272.

³⁴³ Thorndike, *History*, IV. 413-432.

³⁴⁴ The frequent adjectives of the comets – *dirus*, *ferus* – in contemporary poetry already signify their nature, but longer descriptions on the negative effects of the comets also exist, e.g., in Pontano. Examples: Giovanni Carrara, *Bucolicum Carmen* 6. 117 (*Iohannis Michaelis Alberti Carrariensis Opera...* ed. G. Giraldi, Novara: De Agostini, 1967); Naldi, *Volaterrais* I. 272-3; Pontano, met. liber 1222-35 (in *De Nichilo, I poemi*); Gabriele Altilio, *carm.* 7. 67 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>, accessed 03.05.2012).

signify wars.³⁴⁵ It can even be said that Janus applies here the rhetorical figure of exclusion. The sentence is, “rhetorically, an *apostrophe*: if such a big star were a comet, it would regularly foretell cruel wars and not be touched by any prayer, but there the case is different. It is this exclusion which makes possible the invocation.”³⁴⁶

What kind of astrology was referred to in the elegy? Most of the effects the poet speaks about are astro-meteorological in nature; the star should neutralize frost and heat, tempest, flood, hail, drought, and it should promote good winds, good harvest, and general prosperity. At the end the poet wants the star to banish war and discord;³⁴⁷ these expected effects, in contrast to the previous ones, already go beyond the material world. Interestingly, the negative effects (those which should be neutralized) altogether are typically those of the comets. In fact, one can say that Janus wants the star to be an “anti-comet.” Furthermore, the poet does not go into complex predictions, indeed, he just meditates rather than makes predictions for the future. After all, this is natural rather than judicial astrology. Janus did not hold the star to be a comet, but it evoked ideas that represented the same kind of astrology typical for comets.

Finally, it has to be investigated how serious the fears and expectations of the poet could have been. Bollók observed how far Janus was from a fatalist attitude:³⁴⁸ “Banish with your favorable light whatever sinister events the fates prepare for us,” says the poet, as if the stars would be lords over destiny. As for the particular ideas themselves, Janus probably drew on

³⁴⁵ Although in ll. 13-14 the verb of the sentence – *nuntiat* – is in the indicative, not in the subjunctive, still, *quantus* makes the meaning of the sentence conditional.

³⁴⁶ Jankovits, “The Stars,” 4.

³⁴⁷ ll. 33-44: *Semina centeno reddat cum foenore tellus, / unda ferat pisces, aura salubris aves. Per te vexato redeat concordia mundo, / Ianus et aeterna comprimat arma sera. / Esto quidem late populis tu prospera cunctis, / sed magis afflictas respice Pannonias. / Verte pharetratos Phryxi trans aequora Turcos, / quos male nunc Hister submovet amne suo. / Fac regem observent procures, rex ipse, fidei / consilio procerum, se regat et patriam. / Omnia sic roseis / cedant tibi sidera flammis, / sic tuus occiduas, nesciat ignis aquas.*

³⁴⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 82.

Ptolemy for the effects of Saturn and Mars;³⁴⁹ in general, the astrological ideas are generally based on Classical literary patterns, most of them identified by Bollók and Jankovits.³⁵⁰ An especially important general pattern for the prayer for prosperity was the prayer in Claudian's *De consulatu Stilichonis*.³⁵¹ The Classical background is so dominant that one has the impression that Janus was motivated more by his respect for (or showing off his knowledge of) Classical literature or astrological literature than by a special interest, let alone belief in, the particular effect of this or that star.³⁵² The essential role of the Classical astrological patterns is further reinforced by another passage from Claudian (in the panegyric on Honorius' fourth consulate) which I add to the sources already known:

*Visa etiam medio populis mirantibus audax
stella die, dubitanda nihil nec crine retuso
languida, sed quantus numeratur nocte Bootes,
emicuitque plagis alieni temporis hospes
ignis et agnosci potuit, cum luna lateret:
sive parens Augusta fuit, seu forte reluxit
divi sidus avi, seu te properantibus astris
cernere sol patiens caelum commune remisit.*³⁵³

(In the Loeb translation:) Even at midday did a wondering people gaze upon a bold star ('twas clear to behold) – no dulled nor stunted beams but *as great as Boötes is reckoned at night*.³⁵⁴ At a strange hour its brilliance lit up the sky and its fires could be clearly seen though the moon lay hid. May be it was the Queen mother's star or the return of thy grandsire's now become a god, or may be the generous sun agreed to share the heavens with all the stars that hastened to behold thee.

The event is strikingly similar to the one described by Janus, both on the level of Latin expressions and the general content. A star (*stella*) suddenly becomes visible (*visa*) at noon (*medio die*), it is bold (*audax*) enough to rival the Sun (*Sol*), and its great size (*quantus...*) is compared to another heavenly body; the new star shone forth (*reluxit* / *refulget sidus*), while the others lay hidden (*lateret* / *occuere*). This parallel seems to justify Kocziszky's suspicion that

³⁴⁹ *Tetrabiblos*, II. 8. 84 (Bollók, *Asztrális*, 81).

³⁵⁰ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 83-85; Jankovits, "The Stars," 5-8.

³⁵¹ *De consulatu Stilichonis* II. 453-467. (Jankovits, "The Stars," 6.)

³⁵² Bollók puts it even more strongly: Janus "considered astrology as a kind of auxiliary science for the exact understanding of the Classical authors," Bollók, *Asztrális*, 85.

³⁵³ *Panegyricus de Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti (VIII)*, 188-195.

³⁵⁴ Here I have changed the literary translation for a more literal one.

Janus “probably followed antique patterns” throughout his poem.³⁵⁵ Using the passage from Claudian does not mean that Janus’ elegy was not based on external experience. However, Claudian’s lines certainly helped shape the original experience, whatever Janus saw. It was not by chance that Janus compares the star to a *cometes*: Claudian’s star was itself a comet,³⁵⁶ compared to Bootes (Arcturus). The similarity of the comparisons (*quantus... Bootes / quantus... cometes*) reveals where Janus took the idea from. A further comparative analysis of the two poems may yield further results, but here I cannot discuss the – for instance, political – aspects which do not concern astrology directly.³⁵⁷ For the present, it can be concluded that Janus’ strong inclination to follow Classical literary astrological texts in this poem should dissuade one from taking the thoughts on the lyrical subject at face value; it is uncertain how far Janus believed in the stars’ effects (which generally fall into natural astrology); other of Janus’ poems have to be investigated in order to help clarify this question.

b.) Two elegies mourning the death of Janus’ mother

The astrological ideas of the following poems need to be analyzed in depth, especially since these poems played an essential role in the reasoning of some scholars – Huszti, Bartha, Bollók – who have maintained that Janus basically believed in “astrology.”³⁵⁸

On 10 December 1463 Janus’ mother, Borbála Vitéz, died.³⁵⁹ Janus expressed his pain in two successive elegies, first in a 172-line *threnos*. In this the poet desperately looks for the cause

³⁵⁵ Kocziszky, “Csillaghit,” 55.

³⁵⁶ The expression *nec crine retuso languida* makes it clear that Claudian speaks about a comet.

³⁵⁷ The differences between the genres of the poems and the wider contexts of the star appearances are telling. Claudian’s star was one of the heavenly signs that represented the triumph and divinity of his lord; Janus makes the star a central figure and relates it to the whole country, within which the king and the nobles should mutually respect each other. Jankovits has already observed that according to Janus’ lines (41-42), “the king could have been also responsible for the *discordia*,” (Jankovits, „The Star,” 6.) and the lack of Matthias’ praise becomes more conspicuous when contrasted to Claudian’s panegyric. However, an analysis of the political aspect would exceed the scope of this thesis.

³⁵⁸ Huszti, “Asztrológiai,” 49; Bartha, “Janus,” 344; Bollók, *Asztrális*, esp. 87-89.

of the death. First he charges the month of December with his mother's death; this is the month with the longest nights and it had also killed his master Guarino (ll. 23-38). Then the poet finds other objects to vent his grief on:

*Vana queror demens, nil unquam tempora peccant,
Quae peragit verso mobilis orbe polus.
Vos potius nostri moeroris crimen habetis,
Sidera, fatales volvere nata vices.
Vos penes est vitae pariter cum morte potestas,
A vobis causas inferiora trahunt.
Quid iuvat o Superi, fixisse nocentia coelo
Astra? quid errantes constituisse globos?
Sponte sua letum mortalibus imminet aegris,
Sponte sua, e fragili corpore vita fugit.
Si laesura homines stellarum signa fuerunt.
Debebat simplex aetheris esse color.³⁶⁰*

I am complaining foolishly and in vain, the time never sins; it is driven by the motion of the sky revolving in full circle. It is rather you who are responsible for our grief, you stars, born to bring about dangerous turns. Life and death are both under your control, and you are the causes of everything in the world below. What is the use, oh gods above, of having set up harmful stars in the sky? Why did you create errant globes? Death, of its own accord, threatens the ill mortals, life, of its own accord, leaves the fragile body. If the constellations were meant to harm humans, then it would have been better for the ether to remain single-colored.

This passage presents that kind of astrological world view which is fatalist and reckons with both the spiritual and the material effects of the stars. Kocziszky is not correct in declaring that here the stars are said to influence only "the bodily existence":³⁶¹ *inferiora* means more, it refers to the whole sub-lunar world. The last two lines may even be regarded as an allusion to the *Cur stellatum caelum* epigram, the narrative of which began with the "single-colored" (starless) sky; then the stars were simply subjects of the poet's mythical fantasy, but now he seems to yearn desperately for a starless sky. Is this the sign of a turn in Janus' attitude towards astrology?

If one considers the general rhetorical characteristics of the passage and the content of the whole poem in which the passage is imbedded, it becomes clear that these lines cannot be regarded as the expression of a consistent and firm world view. If one took the meaning of the line *vos penes est vitae pariter cum morte potestas* literally, it would contradict the statement just four lines below: death visits people in any case, either with or without the stars. In fact, the

³⁵⁹ Bollók's data, giving the year as 1465, is a misprint, the Teleki edition (JP-Tel. El. I. 6) and the secondary literature univocally give the year as 1463. Janus circumscribes 10 December based on the Classical calendar: *Atra dies, Nonas, sequeris quae quinta, Decembres* (l. 11).

³⁶⁰ JP-Tel. El. I. 6. 39-50.

³⁶¹ Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," 59.

poet's exaggerations, his utterances on the total effect of the stars, seem to have come from his temporary emotional state. Moreover, one cannot be sure whether the thoughts and feelings expressed by the lyrical subject are exactly those of the poet itself. This general problem of humanist poetry, which emerges to various extents in the different genres (as seen above), becomes an especially delicate matter in this elegy. The poet accuses first the month December – but its guilt was certainly not taken seriously by Janus himself. The accusation of the stars, the search for an astrological cause of the death, had its roots in the European astrological traditions – however, in the poem the astrological passage appears in a similar style and a similar length as the passage about December. In addition, in the remainder of the elegy the problem of fate appears in other contextual frameworks than astrology. Clotho, the Parca, was spinning and counting how many days were left until the death.³⁶² In the end, Janus “sent” his mother to the Christian heaven, to God.³⁶³ Finally, it has to be mentioned that the accusation of the stars by Janus was not unique in Renaissance poetry; it also occurred in some humanist poems, although typically in shorter, one- or two-line passages. In Naldi's *Alpheus*, the deep grief of the mother who lost her son is expressed by such poetic questions:

<i>Huius in interitu quis non dedit ore querelas?</i>	Has there been anybody who did not wail when their
<i>Astra quis in tanto non dixit saeva dolore?</i> ³⁶⁴	son died? Who did not accused the cruel stars in such a
	grief?

Similar ideas can be found in an elegy by Naldi³⁶⁵ and in Orazio Romano.³⁶⁶ It cannot be excluded that Janus knew this literary motif and developed it further.

This passage does not suggest a turn in Janus' attitude toward astrology. On the one hand, one cannot doubt that Janus was upset by his mother's death and it is possible that he was

³⁶² ll. 116-7.

³⁶³ ll. 163-172.

³⁶⁴ Naldi, *Alpheus*, 131-2, in: Naldi, *Bucolica*.

³⁶⁵ Naldi, el. 9. 45-6, in: Naldi, *Bucolica*.

³⁶⁶ O. Romano, carm. 2. 2. 36-7, www.perseus.tufts.edu (accessed 04.05.2012).

seriously thinking on the power of the stars; on the other hand, the style and the wider context of the passage reveal the rhetorical character of the text and the temporariness of the idea. Analysis of the next elegy, the pair of *Threnos*, will clarify the problem further.

This elegy, entitled *Invehitur in Lunam...* (“He reproaches the moon...”) in the Teleki edition, addresses the stars at the beginning:

*Vos divini ignes, mundi quibus ima reguntur,
Aurea quis magni pingitur aula Iovis;
Tam quos legitimus propriis agit orbibus error.
Quam quorum coelo lumina fixa micant;
Vos inquam aeternis animati mentibus ignes,
Ad quorum motus, stamina fata trahunt;*³⁶⁷

You divine fires, by whom the world below is governed, and who speckle the golden palace of the great Jupiter; both who wander along their orbit with a regulated movement and whose fixed lights shine in the sky; you fires, I say, who are animated by the eternal soul, and whose movements are followed by the Fates when spinning their thread...

In this passage the poet works out and refines the relevant passage of the previous elegy, defining more clearly the identity and the role of the stars. With the differentiation of the planets (*quos legitimus propriis agit orbibus error*) and the fixed stars (*lumina fixa*) the poet reveals how conscious his meditations on the stars are. According to lines 5-6, the stars have a mediatory role, which has a consequence correctly observed by Bollók: “Ultimately, it is not they who are the real sinners: they are just the executors of the will of fate, of destiny.”³⁶⁸ The stars are animated as celestial fires, vivified by *mentibus*. It is especially this last idea that reveals the Stoic framework of the astrological passage; it was the Stoics who maintained that the stars are manifestations of the primordial fire, which is basically identical with the universal *logos* or the *heimarmenē*, the fate which governs the world. The basic Stoic metaphysical ideas, the power of destiny and the cosmic sympathy which made divination possible, fitted astrology well;³⁶⁹ the two sets of ideas supported each other in many respects, and in many ancient works, especially from the Roman period (Manilius, Firmicus Maternus), the science of the stars was treated in a

³⁶⁷ JP-Tel. El. I. 7 (*Invehitur in Lunam, quod interlunio matrem amiserit*), 1-6.

³⁶⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 87.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

kind of Stoic framework. Here there is no need to discuss in more detail the relevant Stoic ideas themselves, these and their influence on Janus' Hungarian elegies have been analyzed by Kocziszky³⁷⁰ and Bollók;³⁷¹ however, it has to be briefly outlined what the possible sources of the Stoic coloring of Janus' thoughts could have been.

Janus does not seem to have adopted the Stoic ideas which are at the same time astrological ideas from the Stoic philosophers themselves, but indirectly, through other works read widely in the fifteenth century. It is probable that Stoicism and astrology came to be related in Janus' mind as early as his years in Italy.³⁷² The most important source of Janus' "Stoic-astrological" thoughts was certainly Manilius' *Astronomicon*. According to the famous lines of this work,

*Fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege
longaque per certos signantur tempora casus.
nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet.*³⁷³

(In G. P. Goold's translation:) Fate rules the world, all things stand fixed by its immutable laws, and the long ages are assigned a predestined course of events. At birth our death is sealed, and our end is consequent upon our beginning.

The astrological context of the passage assigns an astrological meaning to the expressions *signantur per certos casus* or *nascentes morimur* (besides their more general meaning). The idea of the divine mind (*mens, anima*) which animates the material world can also be found in Manilius³⁷⁴ (just like in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*³⁷⁵). Set out from the *fontes similia* and the

³⁷⁰ Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," *passim*.

³⁷¹ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 28-29, 87-89.

³⁷² Poseidonios, an ancient Greek Stoic devoted to astrology – who also inspired Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, an important source of a number of Janus' poems – was one of the main "philosopher-astrologers" according to the *De civitate Dei* (V. 5-6) of Augustine (Bollók, *Asztrális*, 28). The *De civitate Dei* was read in Guarino's school, just as several works of Cicero (Huszt, *Janus*, 20-21), who attacked both Stoic determinism and astrology. In the *De natura deorum*, it is obvious from the dialogue that the author himself, Cicero, had a basically negative opinion on Stoic determinism; in the *De divinatione*, he mocks the superstitiousness of the Stoics (II. 41) and his statement on astrologers in this same work has already been noted. Cicero's antifatalism in the context of astrology is discussed by Caroti, *L'astrologia*, 39 ff.

³⁷³ *Astronomicon* IV. 14-16 also quoted by Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," 59, with a misprinted reference).

³⁷⁴ *Astronomicon* I. 247-254; IV. 888-890.

³⁷⁵ *Somnium Scipionis* VII. 16: *iisque animus datus est ex illis sempiternis ignibus, quae sidera et stellas vocatis, quae globosae et rotundae, divinis animatae mentibus*. The last words are the same as in the passage from Janus. The *Mathesis* of Firmicus Maternus also has this expression: *corpora, quae inspiratione divinae mentis animantur* (IV. 1.

Lodovico panegyric, Janus drew on Manilius while he was still in Italy, but he probably re-read parts of the *Astronomicum* in Hungary as well, encouraged perhaps by Vitéz or Galeotto (who stayed in Hungary in 1461-62, and whose medal has the *Nascentes morimur* inscription). Manilius is one of the authorities who may lurk behind the words “ancient astrologers” in the letter to Gazulo.³⁷⁶ The increased astrological interest shown in the Hungarian elegies discussed in this subchapter, the reputation of astrology among Janus’ Hungarian friends, and the letter to Gazulo all complement each other.³⁷⁷

What has been said above about the dangers of attributing a firm astrological standpoint to Janus is in part valid also for this passage; Janus may have had rhetorical motivations and to some extent followed Classical patterns. Still, he definitely declares here for an astrological standpoint, indeed, for a fatalist one, and the reader would be inclined to take the poet’s “Stoic astrology” seriously, did he not continue like this:

*Erravi fateor, confessae ignoscite culpae,
Contingat vobis sic aliquando quies;
Uni debueram, cunctis convicia feci,
Omnes damnavi cum foret una nocens.
Privatum quod crimen erat, communia putabam.
Non bene mens verum, caeca dolore videt.
At nunc deprensus numeris innotuit auctor,
Causa fuit cladis, Cynthia sola, meae.*³⁷⁸

I admit I was wrong, forgive me for the sin I confessed; hereafter you will be left alone in peace. I reproached you all, but only one I should have reproached; I damned you all, but only one proved guilty. What was an individual sin I held to be a common one. A mind blended by his grief does not see the truth clearly. But now the sinner became known caught by the numbers: The cause of my misfortune have been you alone, Cynthia³⁷⁹.

Here he begins reproaching the moon,

*Nam tua, germani dum proximat orbita, flammis,
Paullatim morbo, tabuit illa, gravi.
Ac pariter te lux, illam sua vita reliquit,*

Because, during your circuit was approaching the flames of your brother,³⁸¹ she was slowly wasting away in her serious illness, and in the moment the

5). However, it is much more probable that Janus borrowed the expression from Cicero, taking into account Janus’ other borrowings from the *Somnium Scipionis*.

³⁷⁶ Firmicus Maternus, another author that Janus might have read, also discussed astrology in a Stoic framework, and he often drew on Manilius.

³⁷⁷ It would be interesting to know what books Janus had in his library; however, those few books which the scholars could identify as belonging to Janus’ library do not concern astrology. See Gábor Kelecsényi, *Múltunk neves könyvgyűjtői* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988).

³⁷⁸ JP-Tel. El. I. 7. 7-14.

³⁷⁹ Cynthia was another name for Artemis in antiquity, who could be identified with the moon.

*Heu quod deterior sors sua, sorte tua est!
Tu quippe ecce nites reparato splendida cornu,
Illius aeterna lumina nocte rigent.*³⁸⁰

light abandoned you, it abandoned her as well.
Because, look at you, you are shining brilliantly with
your horns completed, but her eyes lie under the
cover of the eternal night.

In the following 115 lines the poet develops a huge invective against the moon, in which he assembles all kinds of arguments taken from Greek-Roman mythology and antique astronomical-astrological knowledge. The moon is inconstant, worthless among the planets, she causes plagues, illness, madness, death in every possible way. The invective provided a good occasion for the humanist to show off again his knowledge of Classical mythology and science;³⁸² the astronomical facts he enumerates, however, mainly those taken from Macrobius' commentary, reveal Janus' real interest in astrology-astronomy. For my investigation, the most important parts of the elegy are those quoted above, which speak about the causes of Janus' peculiar anger with the moon.

According to a recurrent thought of Classical and Renaissance astrology, the moon, having the lowest sphere among the planets, mediates all the effects of the upper planets.³⁸³ However, this is not the case in the elegy; Janus definitely excludes the effects of any other planet than the moon (ll. 7-11). Indeed, line 13 (*At nunc...*) suggests that the cause of Janus' anger was a concrete effect that he perceived as real: the moon was "caught by numbers."

This statement gives weight retrospectively to the accusation of the stars, and the theoretical possibility even emerges that Janus investigated some horoscopes. Since no horoscopes are known for either the poet or his mother, the investigation of this hypothesis would have technical obstacles, but the possibility remains theoretical; no data supports the contention

³⁸⁰ JP-Tel. El. I. 7. 19-24.

³⁸¹ Phoebus-Apollo, the sun.

³⁸² Kocziszky identified Plutarch's *De facie in orbe Lunae* as one of the sources (Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," 59-60), and Bollók found practically all the other Classical sources: Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, and further passages from Plutarch (Bollók, *Asztrális*, 93-98).

³⁸³ In Ptolemy, this idea is expressed in *Tetrabiblos*, I. 4; I. 6.

that Janus used horoscopes seriously at any time.³⁸⁴ As for Janus' second, final, idea, namely, the accusation of the moon, the interpretation of *numeris* as numbers of horoscope calculations is improbable; there is hardly any date when such planetary positions would make the effects of the moon so obvious that it would *exclude* all possible effects (coming from aspects, etc.) of the other planets.³⁸⁵ What could these "numbers" be, then? Kocziszky enumerated four reasons why the poet may have accused the moon, but even if some of the reasons are acceptable, they are too general and do not explain "the numbers."³⁸⁶

If one looks at the lines below *numeris*, one reads about characteristics of the moon that are emphasized through repetitions:

*Summa tuae cum sint virtutis, frigus et humor,
Esse salutaris qua ratione potes?
Frigus et humor agunt, ut vexent corpora morbi,
Ut nata intereant, frigus et humor agunt.*³⁸⁷

Since your whole power consists of coldness and moisture, how could you be beneficial? It is because of coldness and moisture that sicknesses plague the body; it is because of coldness and moisture that all who was born dies.

Ever since Parmenides (at least), the moon had often been related to the qualities of coldness and moisture, and correspondingly to the element of water.³⁸⁸ It was mainly because of the "watery" character of the moon that she was supposed to cause tidal ebbs and flows, putrefaction, and illnesses in general. These ideas were commonplaces in contemporary Renaissance poetry as well.³⁸⁹ The new moon was naturally the most dangerous phase, and indeed, Janus says that his mother died at the new moon (*Ac pariter te lux, illam sua vita reliquit*). Also, in reality, on 10

³⁸⁴ See Chapter III. 5.

³⁸⁵ On the particular day of the death of Janus' mother, for instance, there was an exact Saturnus-Mars conjunction and a Jupiter-Venus conjunction (the one is obviously unfavorable, the other favorable). (Checked with "ZET 8 Astrology").

³⁸⁶ Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," 62. She observes that Janus' mother died 1. at night, 2. in the colder half of the year which falls to the moon is astrology; 3. in December, which corresponds with Diana in Manilius' system; 4. on 10 December, which is the birthday of the Erinnyes. I think the first two facts are trivial; I did not find in Janus' oeuvre any trace of using Manilius' peculiar system of signs and Olympian gods; and the Erinnyes are mythical figures, they could not be taken into account seriously.

³⁸⁷ JP-Tel. El. I. 7. 27-30.

³⁸⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 92-93.

³⁸⁹ See, for example, G. M. Filelfo, *Amyris*, IV. 199-202; T. Strozzi, *Borsias*, IV. 181-3; Pontano, *Eridanos*, II. 27. 1-2, in *Ioannis Ioviani Pontani Carmina*, ed. Soldati.

December 1462 at night it was a new moon.³⁹⁰ Furthermore, if one can believe the poet, his mother fell ill around the time when the full moon started to loose its light, so around two weeks before she died (ll. 19-20). However, the phenomena of new and full moon alone would not make the poet use the term *numeris*.

The only remaining possibility seems to be Bollók's assumption that Janus took into account the so-called critical days. The idea of critical days meant that the disease passed through some decisive moments (crises) that accompanied some lunar phases.³⁹¹ Reckoning the critical days in the case of an illness was "particularly popular" in the Renaissance,³⁹² but various methods existed for calculating the dates, and in general one can differentiate two main approaches to critical days. The two approaches come from the more general opposition of two different attitudes in medieval medicine; the one applied judicial astrology, the other was skeptical about it.³⁹³ The first was more general in the Middle Ages and the followers of this judicial astrological medicine investigated the moon in a horoscope cast on the critical day, for example, in this way: the moon represents the patient, the sign the part of the body, the planet in aspect the nature of disease, the aspect its strength.³⁹⁴ Pietro d'Abano was perhaps the main representative of this tradition.

The other view in medicine became more and more accepted in the Renaissance; its followers in the fifteenth century referred primarily to Galen, whose original works were

³⁹⁰ This day the moon entered day 28 at 1:11 AM (checked with "ZET 8 Astrology").

³⁹¹ Concetta Pennuto, "The Debate on Critical Days in Renaissance Italy," in *Astro-Medicine: Astrology and Medicine, East and West*, ed. Anna Akasoy et al. (Florence: Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino, 2008), 75.

³⁹² Monica Azzolini, "Reading Health in the Stars: Politics and Medical Astrology in Renaissance Milan," in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*, ed. G. Oestmann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 188.

³⁹³ Pennuto, "The Debate," 82: "During the Renaissance, there were strong arguments, both for the supporters of the astrological interpretation of the doctrine and for those who opposed the application of astrology in medicine."

³⁹⁴ French, "Astrology," 42.

gradually rediscovered in the Renaissance.³⁹⁵ Galen (although he was not entirely against astrologers³⁹⁶) strongly doubted the possibility of a judicial astrological predicting the course of an illness. In his work, “On critical days” (in Latin: *De diebus decretoriis*), he tried to find more rational explanations for the critical days than Hippocrates had done, and he basically took into account the relation and the main aspects of the sun and the moon.³⁹⁷

Bollók argued that Galen had involved among the critical days the 7th, 14th, 20th and 27th days of a month, and that Janus, who could have known about the Galenic days through any astrological calendar, reckoned the 14th day of the month as the beginning of his mother’s illness, and the 27th day as day of death; these would have been the “numbers.”³⁹⁸ Bollók’s short and simple reasoning is problematic from two points of view. In fact, the exact days of his mother’s fall into illness and death are not known, so Bollók’s hypothesis cannot be proved; furthermore, the reasoning of Galen in the “On critical days” is complicated and can be interpreted in many ways.³⁹⁹ Galen thinks basically in seven-day units, but does not give an explicit number series of critical days; these come from later interpretations of the text. Bollók interpreted the text in one way (and one can point out sentences which support his view⁴⁰⁰), while Pennuto, for instance, figured out other series of critical days.⁴⁰¹ Janus certainly drew on an astrological handbook, not

³⁹⁵ Vivian Nutton, “Greek Medical Astrology and the Boundaries of Medicine,” in *Astro-Medicine: Astrology and Medicine, East and West*, ed. Anna Akasoy et al. (Florence: Sismel, 2008), 18.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 21-22.

³⁹⁷ French, “Astrology,” 42. In the fourteenth century, followers of the Galenic concept were, for example, Bartholomew of Bruges and Gentile da Foligno; later, Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni Mainardi and others criticized the concept.

³⁹⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 93.

³⁹⁹ *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, ed. Karl Gottlob Kühn (Leipzig: Cnobloch, 1821-1833), IX. 3. 304ff.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 904.: *Vehementiores itaque mutationes eveniunt ubi ipsa [Luna] cum sole coit, insuper in apparitionibus plenilunii, minores his contingunt dum dimidia apparet, imbecillae, dum utrinque gibba et falcata videtur.*

⁴⁰¹ Pennuto, “The Debate,” 78. In her interpretation of the Galenic text, six half-week units give a twenty-day period, and these twenty-day periods come after one another.

directly on Galen, but these are not consistent in the exact day numbers, either. It is even possible that Janus drew on popular *lunaria*, which were widespread in the fifteenth century.⁴⁰²

It seems the poem does not make it possible for the modern interpreter to figure out what numbers Janus could have been thinking of. However, for my topic it is enough that the following conclusions can be drawn. Janus certainly based his explanation of his mother's death on a particular series of critical days, and these calculations certainly followed the "Galenic" tradition, in the sense that the poet unambiguously *excluded* the reckoning of the planets. Janus used a simple astrological method, and he attributed to the moon effects that basically pertain to the body and the material world. As for his sources, he drew on antique astronomical-astrological material, not on judicial astrological material. In other words, Janus applied natural astrology, which was generally accepted in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. There is nothing peculiar in Janus' astrology, except for the exaggerations about the moon which can be explained, on the one hand, by his grief and emotion, on the other hand, by the requirements of the genre of invective (or, from another point of view, the genre of palinode⁴⁰³). Janus did not side with Pietro D'Abano's judicial astrological tradition, though he certainly knew about it.

c.) Short references in two later poems

In the surviving poems composed after 1463 astrological ideas are few and peripheral. One appears in an epigram from around 1464, commemorating a baleful event which happened during a hunt:

⁴⁰² A *lunaria* (*lunaris*, *lunares*) gave predictions for every day of a month; it generally reckoned with constant, 30-day months, but sometimes counted the month from the new moon. A special type of *lunaria* dealt only with diseases, and reckoned the position of the moon on the day when the patient fell ill. Though the *lunariae* seem too popular for Janus to have used them, it cannot be excluded that he found a prediction that fit his mother's death well. In fifteenth-century Central Europe there were a number of Latin *lunariae* in circulation. (Christoph Weisser, *Studien zum mittelalterlichen Krankheitslunar: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte laienastrologischer Fachprosa*, Pattensen: Horst Wellm Verlag, 1981)

⁴⁰³ Huszti, *Asztrológiai*, 55.

*Quem meus aligera venator cuspide cervum
Perculerat, ravi diripuerunt lupi.
Omne perturbor, ne forsitan improbus hostis,
Petre, tibi sacras depopuletur oves.
Astra minantur idem; sed tu sanctissime mundi
Ianitor, in melius, tristia monstra, refer.*⁴⁰⁴

The hart, that had been hit by my hunter with his winged weapon, was torn to pieces by the wild wolves. This omen upsets me; [Saint] Peter, I fear that your sacred flock might be destroyed by the evil enemy. The stars threaten with the same; may you, most blessed gate-keeper of the world, change these baleful signs for the better!

In the second half of the epigram the poet continues to pray to Christian saints; besides Peter, he asks Paul, a saint armed with a sword, to defend the people. The reference to the stars – *astra minantur idem* – is short but significant; the poet mentions it incidentally, without any rhetorical interest, and one has no reason to doubt that Janus really perceived bad omens (the wolves and the unfavorable stars). According to Bollók, the passage reveals that Janus predicted the near future.⁴⁰⁵ However, the passage does not suggest that the poet would have a *special* interest in astrology. On the one hand, Janus certainly believed in some kind of star-effects and omens, and this may be one of the factors which explain the Christian context (which is relatively rare in Janus' poetry), with the request *in melius tristia monstra refer*. On the other hand, Janus seems to have just been reflecting on some spectacular or easily identifiable celestial event, for instance, a conjunction, which in that age was associated with misfortune. Janus, as a fifteenth-century poet sensitive to sky-earth correspondences, reckoned with the stars – just as in the previous elegies – but one has no reason to suppose a more complex or more initiative astrology behind the enigmatic expression than in other poems.

A late elegy by Janus, entitled by Teleki *De inundatione*⁴⁰⁶ ("On an inundation") is instructive with respect to the possible motives for applying astrological ideas. In the autumn of 1468, a flood gave the humanist the opportunity to compose an elegy on a disaster magnified to

⁴⁰⁴ JP-Mayer, Ep. 396. 1-6.

⁴⁰⁵ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 40. Bollók speaks here about "catarchic astrology;" he uses this expression not in the traditional sense (catarchic astrology as a complex method), but in the sense that the poet deliberately made a prediction about the near future. I think this interpretation exaggerates a bit.

⁴⁰⁶ JP-Tel. El. I. 13

mythical dimensions: local rain and flood gradually developed into a world catastrophe. Not surprisingly, the most explicit conceptual framework of the poem is Classical mythology. Some passages also reveal that the poet's interest in Classical natural science – especially what would now be called physics, geography, astronomy, natural astrology – did not decrease; for instance, right at the beginning he describes how the sun circulates water through evaporation and rain.⁴⁰⁷ In fact, the elegy presents a peculiar mixture of mythological and “scientific” material (as in many other Hungarian elegies, e.g., *Invehitur in Lunam*), studded with Christian and Stoic ideas, the whole on a thin biographical basis; the application of the different ideas mainly depended on how they fit the agenda of the elegy. The *De inundatione* reminds one of the statement of Kocziszký about humanist poems in general (though her opinion is exaggerating slightly): „The typical humanist poem is such an artwork that has only structure and function, but does not have a poetically worked out meaning and an autonomous view or concept about the world.”⁴⁰⁸

The stars fit this „structure and function” well, from both the mythical and the scientific points of view. The flood has to be cosmic, it has to purify the world; it is preceded by omens, the rains come from the sky, the whole event is a phase of mythical history. The stars are suitable for predicting, they can cause physical effects, and they can be personified as gods, figures of star-myths or animals of the zodiac. It is the rhetorical agenda that should caution one against taking astrology too seriously. For instance, at the beginning of the poem the poet meditates on the cause of the event:

*Non tamen a levibus, manant tam grandia, causis,
Nec de consuetis, rara venire solent.
Iste poli furor est, ista est gravis ira deorum,
Aëris et fluxus, sidera summa iuvant.*⁴⁰⁹

Such great events do not come from insignificant causes, nor do rare things derive from customary ones. This is the rage of the sky, the heavy anger of the gods, assisted by the flows of the air and by

⁴⁰⁷ *Saepe exhalatos, ima de parte, vapores, / Smintheos igniferi sustulit acre iubar. / Nec potuit tantum radiis consumere, quantum / Traxerat, in tenues sed solvit pluvias...* (ll. 7-10)

⁴⁰⁸ Éva Kocziszký, “Az újlatin tárgyas költészet megszületése Janus Pannonius elégiáiban” [The Birth of the Neo-Latin Objective Poetry in the Elegies of Janus Pannonius], *ItK* 3 (1979), 236-7.

⁴⁰⁹ JP-Tel. El. I. 13. 11-14.

the stars on high.

In Bollók's interpretation, "the authors of the affliction are the gods, the executors of the will of the gods are the planets (*summa sidera*)... This is unadulterated astrology, not only in its phraseology but in its view of the world as well."⁴¹⁰ Without doubt, the idea itself is astrological; however, it is made weightless by the continuation:

*Nunc omnes Hyades, Haedi ambo, totus Orion,
Liquitur, et Delphin aequora multa vomit.
Nunc pariter geminas inclinant funditus urnas,
Hinc pater Eridanus, Troius inde puer.*⁴¹¹

Now all the Hyades, both Haedi, the whole Orion are flowing, and the Dolphin vomits oceans. Now both of the urns are turned entirely upside down, the one by Eridanus, the father, the other by Troius, the son.

The poet's rhetorical purposes are clear; he activated the Classical astro-meteorological commonplaces about the effects of certain constellations and developed them further into metaphorical images. From these alone, one cannot draw any conclusions concerning the Janus' astrological world view; nor from the other astro-meteorological images which occur later.⁴¹² The only serious reference to the effect of the stars is the reference to the comet of 1468:

*Hoc nobis, hoc nempe atrī nova cauda cometae,
Est nuper longa vaticinata iuba*⁴¹³

Indeed, this was recently predicted by the new tail of a black comet with a large halo.

This is the comet that appeared on 22 September 1468 (this date helped a great deal in dating the elegy), which was also investigated by Bylica. Naturally, Bylica, having another agenda, interpreted the comet's appearance in his own way; what is worth comparing are the comet-descriptions themselves. Both descriptions mention the black color of the comet.⁴¹⁴ Bylica also observed the tail's "rich cerulean blue color;"⁴¹⁵ Janus mentions only a "new tail," but he must have seen the blue color as well, and it cannot be excluded that he related this color to the

⁴¹⁰ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 64.

⁴¹¹ JP-Tel. El. I. 13. 15-18.

⁴¹² Images with the Fish (ll. 29-30), the Scorpion (l. 77), the moon (l. 136).

⁴¹³ JP-Tel. El. I. 13, 85-86.

⁴¹⁴ Hayton, "Bylica," 190.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

flood (if it was a considerable flood in reality). In the elegy, the lyrical subject naturally adjusts the meaning of the comet to the flood, the main topic of the poem; however, from these two lines it is almost certain that Janus really saw the comet; it certainly had a meaning for him (as for practically everyone in that age), and his real interpretation could not have been too far from that expressed in the elegy. His reflection on the comet is similar to his reflections on the enigmatic star of 1462 and the stars of the “hunt” epigram: these were simple, reflective “predictions” (fortune/misfortune) without complex methods, close to astro-meteorology in character. Janus reflected on the comet in terms of natural astrology, as contrasted to Bylica’s judicial astrological prediction which reckoned the signs, the direction of the comet and so on.

Furthermore, it has to be noted how peripheral the reference to the comet is in the elegy. This suggests that it was certainly not the comet that raised the idea of composing an elegy on a disaster, but the other way round; Janus involved the comet because it fitted the topic well and the cosmic dimensions of the poem. The fatalist and Stoic ideas about the cataclysms at the end of the *magnus annus*,⁴¹⁶ near the end of the poem, may also have supported the appearance of astrological ideas, but these two sets of ideas are not mixed in this elegy (in contrast to the Stoic-astrological passage in *Invehitur in Lunam*).

The *De inundatione* can be regarded as a representative poem with respect to the role of astrology in Janus’ poetry. The topic itself (cosmic disaster), the various conceptual frameworks (Greek-Roman mythology, natural science, Stoicism) and the rhetorical requirements (exaggerations, commonplaces of antique literature, etc.) of the poem all fitted astrological ideas.

⁴¹⁶ According to the cyclical view of history of some Stoics, every time at the end of the “great year” (*magnus annus*) the world is destroyed by water and fire, a deluge and an *ekpyrosis*. Cicero borrowed this idea in the *Somnium Scipionis* (VII. 23; 25), and Janus took it from Cicero (II. 151-164), as Kocziszky has demonstrated (Kocziszky, “Csillaghit,” 56). Janus continues with the idea of the divine soul which animates the world (already mentioned in the *Invehitur ad Lunam*): *Magne Deum genitor, tantos qui fusus in artus, / Vitali, hoc ingens, flamine corpus alis; / Qui propria humanas dignatus imagine mentes, / Nostra ad cognatos, erigis ora, polos*. It seems that this time Janus drew directly on Manilius (I. 247-254; IV. 893-5).

Natural astrology was part of the body of knowledge which Janus regarded as science, however, for the reasons above, astrological ideas (or at least symbols) in which the poet did not believe also appeared.

In the surviving late poems of Janus there is no trace of his attitude turning towards judicial astrology, which implies that there are no grounds for supposing any considerable external influence on his astrological views in these years coming either from Regiomontanus or other astrologers active in Hungary after the foundation of the Pozsony University or from Marsilio Ficino and the books bought in Italy in 1465.⁴¹⁷ This conclusion can only be valid if Bollók's hypothesis about Janus' devotedness to astrology in his last years proves false; this problem will be discussed below.

5. Did Janus use his own birth horoscope?

All the texts by Janus discussed so far seem to support or allow that he was basically skeptical about judicial astrology. However, Bollók has drawn just the opposite conclusion; he argues that Janus used his own nativity and it served as a basis for the poet's belief in judicial astrology in the Hungarian years, at least in the last five-six years of his life. Since this is the most important conclusion in Bollók's book, the most significant scholar on Janus' attitude to astrology, his argument has to be discussed before drawing the final conclusions of this thesis.

Bollók has attempted to recast Janus' hypothetical nativity using some of his poems.⁴¹⁸

Based on three epigrams,⁴¹⁹ Bollók first argues that Janus considered his birthday to be the day

⁴¹⁷ The correspondence with Ficino had some influence on Janus' *Ad animam suam*: however, there is in fact no astrology in this poem (see above). As for the *De inundatione*, Janus spoke about the comet as a bad omen, a sign of approaching disaster, not as something that affects the earth and Huszti mentions the possibility that this idea may have come from Ficino (Huszti, "Asztrológiai," 57.) However, although Janus used the word *vaticinata*, the context suggests that he also had the effect of the comet in mind; in general, where the poet involved astrology in his poems, he reckoned with the stars as heavenly bodies which both signify and affect the future.

⁴¹⁸ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 29-38.

which began at noon⁴²⁰ of the third day before the end of August, thus this day lasted from the noon of 29 August to the noon of 30 August (so far Bollók's reasoning seems to be correct). The knowledge of the day itself is not enough to cast a horoscope, but two pieces of text revealed, in Bollók's interpretation, the birth rulers of Janus' nativity. Battista Guarino, in his poem of praise for Janus, highlights his literary and military[!] skills, and relates the poet's birth to Mars and Mercury:

*Credibile est igitur patrem mandasse supremum,
Ortus Gradivo Mercurioque tuos.*⁴²¹

It is then credible that the Supreme Father put Mars and Mercury in charge of your birth.

The other text is an epigram by Janus assumed to give Venus as his birth ruler, because of the pronoun *nostra* before *Venus*:

*Alte,*⁴²² *vita, tuos quotiens contemplor ocellos,
Sidera me totiens bina videre puto.
Sidera sed toto longe pulcherrima caelo,
qualia sunt nitido cum Iove nostra Venus,
Aut inter fixos stellarum Sirius ignes,
Sirius Arcturo si coeunte micet.*

Alte, my dear, every time I look in your eyes, I see a pair of stars. But these stars are by far the most beautiful in the whole sky; just like our Venus with the shining Jupiter, or the Sirius among the fixed fires of the stars, the Sirius, when it glitters together with Arcturus.

Bollók looked for an exact date within Janus' birth day that would give a horoscope easily reconcilable with the three birth rulers. He has cast such a horoscope, supposing that Battista Guarino used one method of defining the birth rulers (concluding that the birth rulers were Mercury and Mars), while Janus used another method (for him, Mercury and Venus came to be

⁴¹⁹ JP-Mayer, Ep. 166, 167, 168; esp. 166, 3-4: *medio cum ardebit Olympo / mensis ab Augusti tertia fine dies*. The word *Olympus* here means "sky, heaven;" the term is only used frequently in this meaning in the *Astronomicum* of Manilius.

⁴²⁰ The reckoning of noon as the beginning of a day was the accepted astronomical-astrological practice.

⁴²¹ JP-Tel. I. *Baptista Guarinus*..., 662, ll. 17-18.

⁴²² The new edition of epigrams corrects *Agnes* (used in the Teleki edition and thus by Bollók) to *Alte*, another female name, and presents the six lines of JP-Tel. Ep. I. 341 in two epigrams: JP-Mayer, Ep. 283 (two lines) and 284 (four lines).

the birth rulers).⁴²³ This nativity is the one cast for 30 August 1434, 7 o'clock AM, with the following data (from the handbook of Tuckermann, reckoning equal houses):

Saturn in Water-bearer 26.49°, in house 6
 Jupiter in Virgin 4.35°, in house 12
 Mars in Virgin 2.60°, in house 12
 Sun in Virgin 11.12°, in house 12
 Venus in Scales 4.86°, in house 1
 Mercury in Virgin 28.29°, in house 1
 Moon in Crabs 28.50°, in house 11
 Asc. in Virgin 26.32°
 MC in Twins 26.32°

If one compares the horoscopes at the time of Matthias to those based on modern calculations and cast for the same day, the difference in the data of degree is only one or two degrees at most, therefore Bollók assumed that Janus used practically the same nativity as the one he cast. It is understandable – so Bollók argues – why Janus chose the method with the first house in defining his birth rulers: Mercury is the donor of literary and scientific talent, while Venus is the planet of beauty. The validity of this nativity is allegedly reinforced by collating late Janus poems with passages in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*.⁴²⁴ Janus read about certain positions of Saturn and Mars that fitted his nativity and this would explain a passage in the *Ad animam suam*. For Bollók, this is the final evidence supporting the conclusion that by the end of his life Janus came to believe in horoscopes.

There are minor technical inaccuracies in the nativity cast by Bollók,⁴²⁵ but it is rather the scholar's reasoning itself which is problematic; first, he bases the nativity on too few pieces of

⁴²³ The two planets given by Guarino can only be birth rulers together if the Ascendant falls in the house of the one planet and in the confines (*termini*) of the other planet. There are four variations for this situation, and one of them (Asc. in Virgin 22-28°, the house of Mercury and the confines of Mars) allows a horoscope that is also reconcilable with the birth ruler given by Janus. In this horoscope Mercury and Venus are in the first house, and Janus – allegedly – took into account the planets of the first house in defining the birth ruler.

⁴²⁴ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 106-110.

⁴²⁵ Bollók, using Tuckermann's 1964 handbook, gave degree data which differs slightly from the reliable data produced by a modern computer program ("ZET 8 Astrology"). Half of the data show more than a 1° difference, in case of the moon the difference is more than 10° (although these differences do not change the basic relations of the elements of the horoscope). Bollók's method of applying equal houses is also problematic, since the generally accepted method in casting horoscopes in the Renaissance was that of unequal houses.

evidence; second, these pieces of evidence all stand on uncertain ground. The conceptual framework of the passage from Guarino cited by Bollók is that of Classical mythology; after the two quoted lines, for example, one can read that Janus was nurtured by the Muses and educated by Minerva.⁴²⁶ The passage with Mars and Mercury can be simply interpreted as a usual commonplace of Renaissance poetry that the gods give good properties to a newborn child. It is a forced interpretation that Battista Guarino somehow acquired Janus' nativity and defined the birth rulers with an unusual method (taking into account both the signs and the *termini*).

As for the *Alte* epigram, Bollók is correct in arguing that a sexual interpretation of the epigram is improbable, and that the similar astrological characters of Jupiter and Venus (both are *fortunae*) may have played a role in that the poet used them in his simile.⁴²⁷ Indeed, it is even possible – as Jankovits observes – that Janus thought of the conjunction of the two planets.⁴²⁸ However, there is no reason to suppose that *nostra Venus* means Venus as a birth ruler. It is true that the pronoun *noster*³ could be used in the singular as well, but this pronoun can be simply interpreted in the context of love poetry: it is about “our Venus,” our love.⁴²⁹ Basinio da Parma, a student of Guarino, provides an example for how the name of the goddess can become a symbolic expression for a mutual love:

*Tolle faces, custos, lumen removete, ministri;
Grandia non quaerit lumina nostra Venus.*⁴³⁰

Take away the torches, guard, remove the light,
servants; our Venus does not need much light.

⁴²⁶ JP-Tel. I. *Baptista Guarinus*..., ll. 19-20.

⁴²⁷ Bollók, *Asztrális*, 32-33.

⁴²⁸ In his letter from 1464 Galeotto cites a passage from Virgil where Jupiter kisses Venus, and Galeotto interprets this scene as the conjunction of the two planets. Janus might have known this interpretation, from either Galeotto or Guarino. László Jankovits, “Agnes, Iuppiter, Venus,” in *Ritoók Zsigmondné Szalay Ágnes 70. születésnapjára* [For the Seventieth Birthday of Ágnes Szalay, Mrs. Zsigmond Ritoók], ed. Zsuzsanna Tamás (Budapest: Balassi, 2001), 11–12.

⁴²⁹ Jankovits (“Agnes,” 12) also refers – though implicitly – to such an interpretation.

⁴³⁰ *Cyris* 3. 15-16.

As for the simile itself, the comparison of the eyes and the stars is an age-old topos; the particular version of this simile, with Venus or with both Venus and Jupiter, does occur in fifteenth-century Italian poetry.⁴³¹

Mercury would be the other birth ruler that Janus kept in mind. In Janus' whole poetry oeuvre there is only one passage where the context allows that the name *Mercurius* or its parallel may have the meaning of Mercury as a birth ruler. In a Hungarian epigram (interestingly, not noticed by Bollók himself), Janus comforts Halesus, a soldier whom Galeotto defeated in wrestling; he should not feel ashamed of the defeat, "it is our Mercury who teaches us even these things!" (*Mercurius noster et ista docet!*).⁴³² It is theoretically possible that Janus referred to Mercury as his and Galeotto's common birth ruler, but no other data supports this interpretation and there are other, more probable, interpretations of the sentence.⁴³³

Bollók's complicated reasoning about Saturn in the sixth house of Janus' nativity can be only briefly discussed here. The sixth house of a horoscope signifies diseases in general. Janus' tuberculosis became more and more serious in Hungary, and according to Bollók, Janus found an astrological reason for this. He noticed that his Saturn (the less favorable among the planets) is in the sixth house, in dominion, in regression, and in opposition to Mars (these are all unfavorable). He found three passages in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* which almost exactly fitted the state of his health, which reinforced his belief in astrology. Some of the symptoms he read in Ptolemy he had

⁴³¹ Here I mention just two examples. Zovenzoni (a classmate of Janus), *Istrias I., Epitaphium Cicilidis virgunculae suae*, 11: *Lumina quid memorem Veneris vincentia sidus?* (Raffaele Zovenzoni: *La vita, i carmi*, ed. Baccio Ziliotto [Trieste: Arti grafiche Smolars, 1950]); Fabrizio M. Genesio, El. 17, 27-28: *Lucifer in summa posuit sua lumina fronte, / Inde oculi Veneris cum Iove sidus habent* (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>, accessed 08.05.2012)

⁴³² JP-Mayer, Ep. 416, 8.

⁴³³ Géza Vadász observes in his analysis of this epigram that Mercury is here the god of tournaments (*palaestra*); this role of Mercury is attested in Classical literature (Servius, *ad Aen.* IV. 559; Hor. I. Od. 10) (Vadász, *Janus*, 226). In Janus' *Racacinus* elegy, Mercury appears in this role (JP-Tel., El. I. 15. 61). Meller argues that Galeotto's medal (see above) has an astrological meaning (Meller, *Mercurius*, 174-6); since the medal refers to Mercury, it cannot be excluded that Galeotto alluded there to his birth ruler; however, I have found no other passage in Galeotto that would refer to him holding this idea.

already used in one of his earlier elegies (*Conquestio...*⁴³⁴, 1466), and he used the other symptoms in the *Ad animam suam* (1466).⁴³⁵ There are two general problems with Bollók's reasoning; first, he did not always interpret properly the – otherwise vague – astrological relations in the three passages of the *Tetrabiblos* which are supposed to be the causes of the symptoms.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, even if it is allowed that Janus related the passages to his nativity, a second problem emerges. The diseases described by Ptolemy and Janus do not overlap each other to a significant extent.⁴³⁷ Thus, there is no reason to suppose that Janus drew on Ptolemy and that he reckoned with Saturn in the sixth house and Mars in the twelfth house of his nativity.

After all, neither of these poems seem to refer to the poet's birth rulers or other planets in his horoscope, and one will arrive at the same conclusion if one investigates the question from the opposite angle, pointing out the *absence* of ideas that would certainly have appeared in the work

⁴³⁴ JP-Tel. El. I. 10. 9-20: *Nam male profluvio ventris cruciatus amaro, / Turbavi attonitae, gaudia paene, domus. ... Sic gravis, heu! miserum flammaverat hemitritaeos, / Tantus in accensis ossibus ardor erat. / Saevior en rursus capiti Fortuna minatur, / Incolumi tanquam faverit illa diu. / Quippe velut telis, costae punguntur, acutis, / Sputa simul large sanguinolenta fluunt. / Additur his, pulmo quod vix respirat anhelus, / Nec tamen interea torrida febris abest.*

⁴³⁵ JP-Tel. El. I. 12. 23-28: *Continua ex udo manat pituita cerebro, / Lumina, nescio quo, saepe fluore madent. / Effervent renes, et multo sanguine abundat, / Sub stomacho calidum frigidiorie iecur. / An te forte ideo gracilis compago juvabat, / Ut saperes, tenui carcere clausa magis?*

⁴³⁶ Bollók cited or interpreted three passages from *Tetrabiblos* and related them to the horoscope (I will cite the passages in Robbin's translation). First passage (III. 12. 149): if both luminaries (sun, moon) are in conjunction or opposition with the Saturn in the sixth house [?], this harmfully affects the eyes; "Saturn causes it by suffusion, cold, glaucoma, and the like." This passage cannot be related to the horoscope, since the Sun is not in opposition to Saturn; Bollók applied a too wide interpretation of the opposition. The second passage (III. 12. 151-2) speaks about Saturn alone: "For in general Saturn causes his subjects to have cold bellies, increases the phlegm, makes them rheumatic, meagre, weak, jaundiced, and prone to dysentery, coughing, raising, colic, and elephantiasis... Mars causes men to spit blood, makes them melancholy, weakens their lungs, and causes the itch or scurvy; and furthermore he causes them to be constantly irritated by cutting or cautery of the secret parts because of fistulas, haemorrhoids, or tumors, or also burning ulcers, or eating sores..." Third passage (IV. 9. 198-9): If Mars is the lord of death, "Mars kills by means of fevers, continued or intermittent at intervals of one and a half days [hemitritaeos], sudden strokes, nephritic conditions [kidney problems] and those that involve the spitting of blood, haemorrhages [bleeding], miscarriages, childbirth, erysepilas [red skin], and pestilence, and such diseases as induce death by fever and immoderate heat." Bollók relates this to the horoscope because Mars is in the "house of death" in the twelfth house; however, the original text does not describe such a situation that could be related to the twelfth house.

⁴³⁷ The diseases mentioned by both authors: hemitritaeos, kidney problems, spitting of blood, cold bellies, increase of phlegm, meagreness, dysentery, and perhaps jaundice, coughing, weak lungs (Janus: *costae punguntur*). This is a long list, however, the list of those diseases which *only* Ptolemy mentions is equally long: sudden stroke, haemorrhages, erysepilas, pestilence, rheumatic, raising, colic, elephantiasis, melancholy, itching or scurvy, irritation by cautery, etc. If such a loose overlap were enough to prove Janus' borrowing, one could find many other astrological handbooks with Janus' diseases and say that Janus borrowed them from the handbook. All the more so since the symptoms either fit tuberculosis or an upset of the humoral balance.

of a poet devoted to judicial astrology. The appearances of Mercury and Venus in Janus' poetry do not refer at all to the poet's personal attachment to these deities, although the good positions of Venus and Mercury (the givers of ingenuity, sensitivity, and so on) in the nativity would certainly have been especially important for a "believer" poet. As Giovanni Pontano pointed out, "Nobody becomes a good poet whose nativity does not have Venus and Mercurius in harmonizing signs, in advantageous houses and with favorable aspects."⁴³⁸ Mercury and Venus are in highly favorable positions in the hypothetical nativity; they are not only birth rulers but are also in domiciles. In addition, Janus had two other planets in domiciles (Saturn and the moon) and four domiciles altogether meant extraordinary skills in astrology; according to Firmicus Maternus, it makes the native similar to the gods.⁴³⁹ It is also unique that Janus had four planets in the Virgin (plus the Ascendant). The last two facts would have been valid not only in Bollók's horoscope cast for 7 o'clock AM, but also in any other nativities cast for any date within Janus' birth day. Still, the poet's works show no trace of making use of any of these astrological facts. It cannot be argued either that believers of astrology in the Renaissance were inclined to restrain from speaking about their *own* birth rulers or favorite signs; both Renaissance rulers⁴⁴⁰ and humanist poets⁴⁴¹ provide counterexamples to such an assumption.

⁴³⁸ *Nullus evasit bonus poeta, cuius in genitura Venus Mercuriusque in signis accomodatis, in locis idoneis, in appositis configurationibus inventi non fuerint...* (*De rebus coelestibus*, quoted by Soldati, *Poesia*, 233.)

⁴³⁹ *Mathesis*, II. 21 (Bollók, *Aztrális*, 38).

⁴⁴⁰ See chapter II.

⁴⁴¹ For example, Pontano, in his *Urania*, speaks about his Ascendant, the Ram (*Urania* II, 210).

Conclusions

In the previous chapter the astrological ideas in Janus' poetry have been investigated from different angles, and the analyses of the different groups of texts resulted in conclusions that are easily reconcilable. Concerning the main question of this thesis, this general conclusion can be drawn: Janus basically accepted natural astrology, but he was skeptical about judicial astrology, particularly horoscopes. The relevant surviving texts suggest that Janus held this general standpoint consistently throughout his life. His interest in astronomy-astrology increased in his Hungarian years – due to János Vitéz and his circle – and astrology came to the forefront in some of his poems, but these do not show an appreciation for judicial astrology. These conclusions differ from those drawn by all the previous scholars of the topic (although Kocziszky, having investigated only a small sample of poems, has pointed out the lack of positive references to elements of horoscopes and the limitations of the effects of the stars in Janus' poems.⁴⁴²) Still, however one classifies astrology, from all points of view it is rather the characteristics of natural astrology than those of judicial astrology which appear in Janus' poems.

He does not go into technical astrological details – elements of horoscopes and complex methods – in his works, at most in the clearly rhetorical passages of some poems of praise. When he sincerely or half-sincerely reckons with the effects of the stars, he is not the one who initiates a prediction about the future; he simply reflects on the given celestial phenomenon (an unknown

⁴⁴² In Janus's poetry "there is no explicit reference to elements of horoscopes or any other individual astrological thought; nowhere does the poet say that the stars determine or influence the person as an individual... In these poems the stars have mainly a harmful, demonic effect, but this effect pertains – besides illnesses and material existence – only to the determination of life and death, that is, the appointment of the date of birth and death." (Kocziszky, "Csillaghit," 58). Kocziszky's statement about "individual-astrological thoughts" is in general true, although the distinction between individual and general astrology is not always clear in the particular poems (see the accusation of the moon in the *Invehitur*). Furthermore, the only examples presenting the stars as determiners of "life and death" are the passages of the *Threnos* and *Invehitur* which present a temporary view in a slightly rhetorical style, as noted above.

star, a comet, or the phases of the moon) in line with the mainstream astrological ideas of his age. He generally reckons with material bodily star-effects, which are often astro-meteorological in character; in the few cases where he visualizes the total influence of the stars, the relevant passages are to some extent rhetorical and conceal the real thoughts of the poet. (Furthermore, general astrology dominates individual astrology.) In the context of mid-fifteenth century Italian humanist poetry, Janus belonged to the group of poets who were skeptical about judicial, horoscope-oriented, astrology (interestingly, two of these poets, Tito Strozzi and Basinio da Parma, were also both students of Guarino).

The problem of fatalism in Janus' poetry is more comprehensive and requires further research. In general, it can be concluded that astrological determinism, fatalism, is not characteristic of Janus' poetry. After coming to Hungary, his mentality clearly changed a great deal; he often thought about questions of fate and destiny and these thoughts left traces on some of the poems investigated here. Nevertheless, the primary meaning of most astrological passages contradicts a fatalist view; the effects of the stars are changeable (see, for instance, the *De stella* elegy or the "hunt" epigram). There is perhaps one moment when Janus seems to have thought seriously about astral determinism; the (Stoic) astrological passages of the *Threnos* and the *Invehitur* present these thoughts, but the *Invehitur* reveals that he soon changed his mind and limited his anger to the moon, excluding the effects of all other heavenly bodies.

The frequency of Janus' astrological ideas and symbols, which is conspicuous even compared to other fifteenth-century Italian humanist poetry, did not come from a personal conviction or a *special* interest in astrology, but rather from the "fortunate conjunction" of biographical, literary historical, and intellectual historical factors which all supported the appearance of astrological ideas. It is especially these aspects of my research which concern not

only one particular person but the intellectual life of the Renaissance in fifteenth-century Italy and Hungary.

On a general level, “astrology was a completely international spiritual fluid”⁴⁴³ in the Renaissance, but even beyond the general fashion, the places where Janus stayed for most of his life (Ferrara, Padua, the Buda court) were among the main centers of European astrology in that period. The devotedness of several members of his social circle challenged him, and he reacted in two ways; on the one hand, he mocked the astrologers and their practice; on the other hand, he involved technical astrological elements in poems of praise, partly for the sake of the addressee (interestingly, the Frederick epigram implies both praise of Matthias’ Mars and mockery of Frederick’s Saturn).

Besides the biographical factors, several characteristics of humanist Latin poetry favored the appearance of astrology, at least its symbols. The use of astrological symbols had Classical models (astro-meteorological commonplaces, comet appearances, and so on). The rhetorical character of humanist poetry – especially in such genres as the panegyric, the *threnos*, and the hymn – supported the method of magnifying the topic into cosmic astral dimensions. Furthermore, since humanist poets were not required to express their own views about the world consistently, they could assemble and mix the elements of various world views and conceptual frameworks. In general this eclecticism favored the appearance of astrology, since most of the possible conceptual frameworks could be reconciled with astrology.

The frequent use of astrology in other conceptual frameworks is an intriguing phenomenon of humanist poetry; this aspect of Janus’ oeuvre requires further research, but for the present, Janus seems to have provided a number of representative examples for the typical ways

⁴⁴³ Franz Boll, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung: Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie* (Leipzig: Teubner 1926), 41.

of connecting or mixing the different conceptual frameworks with astrology. Greek-Roman mythology and mythical history, a natural medium for a humanist poet, offered its antique gods who could “restore” their lost might by assuming the form of the corresponding planet; besides, mythology offered other characters who could activate astrological ideas. “Natural scientific” (*philosophia naturalis*, or *artes mechanicae*) ideas of the age could also be organic parts even of a fictional poetical world, and Janus was interested in various branches of natural science, notably in astronomy-astrology. Stoicism and astrology had appeared in symbiosis since antiquity; Janus was interested in both Stoicism and astrology, and the one could involve the other in his poetry. Neoplatonism gave a framework for astral mysticism, which was significant in Janus’ poetry; it did not mix with astrology, but the two sets of celestial ideas could be reconciled (a birth aided by the stars). The Christian religion provided perhaps the least “encouraging” conceptual framework for astrology, but Christianity is not so dominant in Janus’ poetry. Besides these philosophies or religions, other, less conceivable, ideologies could also have facilitated the application of astrological ideas; for example, the Renaissance idea of triumph, which could be reconciled with natal astrology, and the two could result in the idea of the “celestial justification” of a patron’s extraordinary character.

Furthermore, my research has yielded subsidiary results in two particular fields; these results did not clarify the relevant problems but rather just called attention to the importance of the problems themselves. Neo-Latin poetry in fifteenth-century Italy abounds in astrological passages, and so far they have not received as much scholarly attention as they deserve. I hope to contribute to future, comprehensive research by the identification of astrological passages, and it would be interesting to see how astrology (either natural or judicial) relates to other conceptual frameworks (those discussed above) and found a place in the poetic worlds of the Italian poets. The other issue which would require more research is astrology at the court of Matthias Corvinus;

a number of horoscope documents, literary and prose narrative texts, and visual sources await further investigations. Since this thesis concentrates on Janus, I could only give a short overview of “Corvinian” astrology and the related sources; future work could contribute not only to the history of astrology but to political, military, and art history as well.

Daniele Bini made a telling remark: astrology was “chameleon-like.”⁴⁴⁴ It was so flexible that it could adapt to various conceptual frameworks and could appear in various branches of European Renaissance culture. Research into astrology is indispensable for a better understanding of the Renaissance and the habits of mind of those living in that age.

⁴⁴⁴ Daniele Bini, „Introduction,” in *Astrologia: arte e cultura in età rinascimentale, Art and Culture in the Renaissance*, ed. D. Bini et al. (Modena: Il bulino, 1996), 12.

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