

# REVIEW : TREATISE ON THE BRIGHT FIXED STARS, ANONYMOUS OF 379

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In the 90s, a variety of ancient texts were translated to English as part of Project Hindsight, marking a revival of astrological traditions which are called Hellenistic. The *Treatise on the Bright Fixed Stars* by Anonymous of 379 is part of these translations; it was translated by [Robert Schmidt](#), edited by [Robert Hand](#), and [published in 1993 via The Golden Hind Press](#). The book is 32 pages long, appendix included. Since I take tremendous interest in the fixed stars, this text made me curious.

As is the case with a good number of ancient texts from that time period which we inherit, **this *Treatise* is somewhat fragmentary**: it alludes here and there to passages which aren't there. Studying such ancient texts always necessitates contextualising and reconstructing, whether or not one might self-define as « reconstructionnist » (which is to say, trying to reproduce as faithfully as possible the era's traditions). **I have immense gratitude for the pioneering work of people working in Project Hindsight** (which is currently undergoing its Saturn return!) **as well as people who have supported it** – Project Hindsight being entirely funded by the astrological community through subscriptions and donations.

Robert Hand's introduction highlights that **while other works of the same time period deal with fixed stars, this one by Anonymous of 379 is remarkable for the extent of the delineations given**; Ptolemy, for instance, only gives planetary correlations for the fixed stars. In the time since the publication translation of this *Treatise* in 1993, [Bernadette Brady](#) presented her extended research on fixed stars, allowing a renaissance of their study through the parans method; **some of Hand's remarks are not necessarily up to date** as a result, but I still think it very interesting to situate what was going on regarding fixed stars at the time.

The translator's preface, by Robert Schmidt, gives precisions regarding the translation of specific words. The word *paranatellō* is included : from this, we get the abbreviation « paran » . Schmidt underlines that *paranatellō* simply

means « to rise alongside » and that in this context, it signifies to rise alongside a certain degree in the zodiac. Schmidt thus translates it by « co-rise » . Robert Hand adds that the word underwent major change in becoming the modern abbreviation « parans », which includes all ways in which planets or stars can cross the several angles at the same time. The word as used by Anonymous of 379 only refers to co-rising. This change of terminology appears to have emerged, according to Hand, through the usage of the Western Sidereal School of Fagan and Bradley.

Anonymous of 379 groups fixed stars by planetary associations. He thus gives a list of stars described as a mixture of Aphrodite and Hermes (Venus and Mercury): Spica of constellation Virgo, the bright star of Lyra (Vega), the bright star on the mouth of the south half of the great Pisces (Fomalhaut), the bright star of Cygnus (Deneb Adige) and the bright star of northern Corona (Alphecca).

Personally, I do not find studying the fixed stars through the filter of the planets in this manner to be particularly pertinent. The planetary correspondances are shortcuts which can help familiarise oneself with the stars, but it seems crucial to me to get to know them on their own terms, without confining them to the seven planets.

While the signs of the zodiac are considered to be ruled by the seven planets visible to the naked eye (Mars ruling Aries and Scorpio, Venus ruling Taurus and Libra, and so on), it's important to remember that signs and constellations are not equivalent. The zodiac signs are symbolic parts of the sky – be it the tropical or sidereal zodiac, none is exactly matching up to the constellations which are actually in the sky. Constellations (at least part of them!) are obviously more ancient than the concept of the zodiac, and the stars which compose them are *absolutely not* governed by the planets.



As such, it seems to me very reductive to describe a star as being « of the nature of x and y planets » as if the mixture of these planets somehow gave

*birth* to the star. However, the planetary associations can be useful to describe an affinity, a sort of vibe, if you will. For instance, describing Regulus as being akin to a Mars-Jupiter combo evokes a certain flamboyance, fervor, victory, combativity tempered with generosity (among other things), which indeed fits what we might know of Regulus. Be that as it may, fixed stars hold a rich depth which seems important to explore outside of strictly planetary considerations.



My esteemed colleague [Amaya Rourke](#) remarked, during a discussion on a particularly passage dealing with the Taurus constellation, that there seems to be a retroactive analysis of the constellation according to the zodiac signs and their rulers in this *Treatise*. Indeed, when Anonymous of 379 discusses people born under Aldebaran (brightest star of the Hyades, in constellation Taurus), he describes them as having « a beautiful neck » In the field of medical astrology and its famous « zodiac man » which correlates each zodiac sign to a body part (starting with

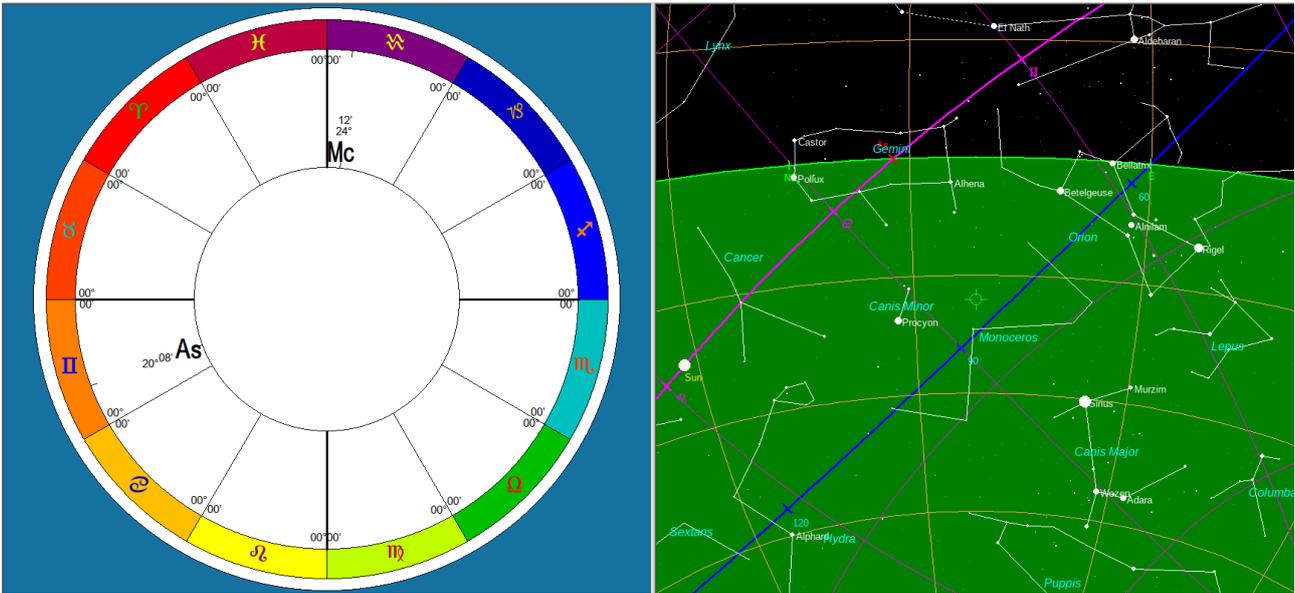
Aries and the head, finishing with Pisces and feet), the sign of Taurus is associated with the neck. As Amaya underlined, **this retroactive analysis is completely contrary to [the neoplatonic conceptualisation of the Spheres](#)** upon which Greek astrology is based.

Thus, there is some sorting out to do within the delineations given by Anonymous of 379. However, I found the treatise to be interesting nonetheless, for several reasons.

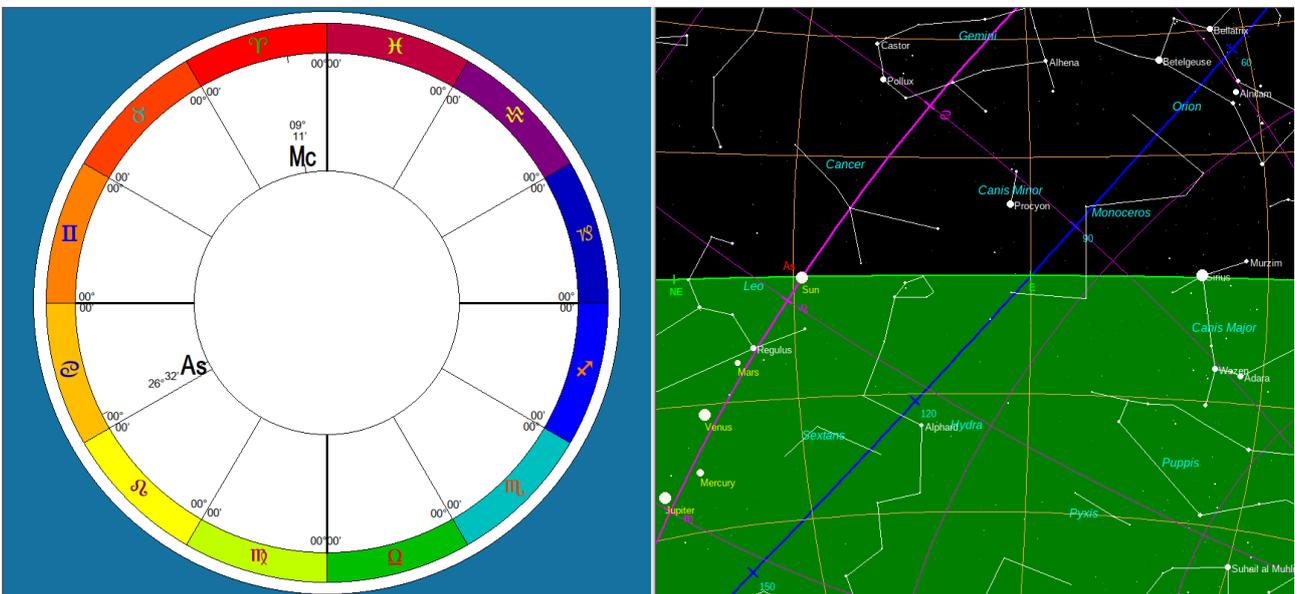
Anonymous of 379 most often describes the fixed stars without using the names we know them by nowadays, and to help situate them, he gives the degree of the zodiac with which they co-rise. In the treatise, he mentions that he is located in Rome, Italy. Out of curiosity, I looked it up in Starlight software to check on the data he gives.

When writing about fixed star Sirius, Anonymous of 379 gives 20° Gemini as the co-rising degree. You can see below what shows up in Starlight when

you set the Ascendant degree to 20° Gemini in 379 in Rome, Italy – here in late July, at 2:05am. Click the image to enlarge if you wish to get a better look.



As you can see, Sirius is still far from rising : the star is seen well below the horizon line. I looked up the moment when Sirius actually crosses the horizon line on the Eastern horizon, a few hours later, at the same time as the Sun, on that same day, July 20th 379, at 4:42am.



When Sirius effectively touches the Eastern horizon line, the Ascendant angle is at 26° Cancer. The degrees given by Anonymous of 379 are the degrees of the stars once projected onto the ecliptic, and not the ones who could be given for Sirius’ actual rise under Rome’s latitude. I find it interesting

to note that at that time already, what is actually going on in the sky with the fixed stars is overlooked in favour of the ecliptic.

Aside from these technical considerations (which I personally love to explore, but I suppose not everyone might be as enthusiastic about it), this text gives delineations which I find *relatively* unusual if you stick to what is most commonly written about some of the stars.

For instance, if you look to fixed star Spica of constellation Virgo, [as I wrote about previously](#), what you find most often is descriptions of abundance, gifts, brilliance. The Renaissance mage Agrippa wrote about talismans consecrated to Spica that «*it conferreth riches, and maketh one overcome contentions, it taketh away scarcity and mischief*» (*Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Book II, Chapter 47). Héloïse of [HéloAstro](#) takes the metaphor of a **clever peasant who knows their field well and knows how to work it so that the harvest be grandiose**. The immense majority of sources that I consulted about Spica put forward the idea of abundance and riches.

However, [Amaya Rourke](#) questions the belief, inherited from medieval and Renaissance eras, that Spica necessarily brings riches and renown. Indeed, Amaya didn't observe this to be the case in client work. On the contrary, Amaya remarks that most of her clients with Spica placements come from a background of hardship and creative constraints that they must overcome to **slowly build material stability and a solid reputation** around their devoted area of expertise. She cites Marcus Manilius, astrologer and poet of the 1st century CE : "*[Spica] will produce a man to supervise civil and religious law and keep a reverent watch over the temples of the gods. She will not give ways of acquiring wealth swiftly so much as investigating the origin and power of the universe.*"

It so happens that Anonymous of 379 gives a delineation that is similar ;

« The bright star Spica makes hierophants, greatly honored priests, philosophers, interpreters of certain sacred rites [...] it makes priestesses of the goddesses Demeter (or Meter), Persephone or Isis, or experts in hierophantic matters, mysteries, or sacrifices, or those who avoid certain meats and those are greatly succored by the gods. »

A passage about Sirius (of Canis Major, see above) and Pollux (one of the Twins), described by Manilius as being akin to Ares – planet Mars, particularly caught my attention because **he gives supplementary nuance to**

**his delineation depending on whether or not the nativity is diurnal.** Later on, discussing a star in the Libra constellation (at the time still considered part of the Scorpion, as its claws) and the other Twin's head, Castor, Anonymous of 379 mentions that these stars are more difficult in a night chart. Which is to say, he seems to consider that a chart's sect (whether it is diurnal or nocturnal) is relevant to evaluate a fixed star's influence on the nativity. **I wonder whether this interpretation is also influenced by the planetary filter put on the fixed stars by the author, or whether it is true that fixed stars can be more or less auspicious – or a minima express themselves differently – in a day chart vs in a night chart.** Research on this subject would be necessary to ascertain it!

The last part of the *Treatise* deals with difficulties pertaining to the eyes and health more generally; it gives **delineations for the deities that might help with it.** Thus, Anonymous of 379 explains that if some stars are placed in the 9th House or in the 4th House, or mark the Hour, then **he considers that the person can be greatly helped by the gods.** He gives the example of the bright star of Ophiuchus ([Ras Alhague](#)): « it treats those who are born through the manifestation of Asclepius ou Serapis or their power, or the friendship of physicians. »

Project Hindsight's translation includes additions which I found interesting: translation conventions, informations on the fixed stars identified by Ptolemy, a list of the stars mentioned by Anonymous of 379 with their contemporary name, and star maps (constellations) generated with EZCosmos, allowing a look at what the constellations mentioned by the author look like.

If you've read this book too and you have remarks, **don't hesitate to leave a comment, I'm interested in your opinion!** If you have questions, they're welcome too.