

An Introduction to Medieval Astrology Natal Charting

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The natal chart is a blueprint of an individual's life and potentialities; however before the astrologer can unlock the promise of the chart, he or she needs to have a solid grounding in the nature and influence of the planets in the signs and houses. Additionally, there are several key factors we need to consider when interpreting. Listed below are some basic interpretation guidelines and a couple of "Golden Rules" that work extremely well in practice.

The planet, sign and house relationship

The planet, sign and house relationship determine to what extent the essences of the planets are realised in the nativity. The natures of the planets are transcendental; i.e. the source of their power lies beyond rational explanation. We cannot comprehend their power we can only see their actions. They draw their power from the One - the Formless One Life - from which all forms originate. Each planet represents an action of the One. For instance, Venus is the essence of pure love, Jupiter is the essence of wealth and success, and Mars is the essence of warlike action and impulsiveness. How these and the other planets manifest their essence in the chart is determined by their positions in the signs and houses. Which brings us to the first Golden Rule: **Position is everything**. A planet's position in a sign and house will establish whether it has Essential Dignity and where and how it will express its essence.

Essential Dignity

There are five levels of Essential Dignity. A planet in any of these Essential Dignities realises its essential nature. The dignities are: Rulership, Exaltation, Triplicity, Term and Face (aka Decan.) Rulership is the strongest of the five and is simply a planet falling into the sign it rules, e.g Venus in Taurus. When this happens it has great power and is able to deliver its promise easily and constantly. The next level of dignity is rulership by Exaltation. Planets in their signs of Exaltation are like honoured guests; they shine brightly but cannot hold their influence for long periods. An example of Exaltation is Mars in Capricorn. Not all signs have planets ruling them by Exaltation: The exceptions are Gemini, Leo, Scorpio, Sagittarius and Aquarius (see Figure 1.) After Exaltation, comes Rulership by Triplicity, which relates to the four Elements. If a planet is in an Element that it rules it gains dignity. There are three systems of Triplicity Rulership: Dorothean, Ptolemy's and Lilly's. The last two Essential Dignities are Term and Face. These are respectively uneven and even divisions of the 30° zodiacal signs. A planet falling into the degrees it rules in Term or Face is dignified but at a reduced level. As with the Triplicity Rulers, there are several Term and Face rulership systems. The Term systems are: Egyptian, Chaldean, Ptolemy's and Lilly's; and the Face systems are: Chaldean and Oriental. We will be using the Dorothean Triplicity rulers and the Egyptian Terms and Chaldean Face rulers in our case studies. Figure 1 shows the 5 Essential Dignities and their respective strengths measured in points.

**Rulerships
5 points**

☉	♈
☽	♌
♃	♈ / ♉
♀	♈ / ♎
♂	♈ / ♉
♄	♈ / ♉
♅	♈ / ♉

**Exaltations
4 points**

☉	♈
☽	♌
♃	♉
♀	♋
♂	♈
♄	♌
♅	♎

Triplicity Rulers (Dorothean) 3 points

	Diurnal	Noct.	Part.
Fire	☉	♄	♅
Air	♅	♃	♄
Water	♀	♂	☽
Earth	♀	☽	♂

Egyptian Terms 2 points

♈	♄ 6	♀ 6	♃ 8	♂ 5	♅ 5
♌	♀ 8	♃ 6	♄ 8	♅ 5	♂ 3
♈	♃ 6	♄ 6	♀ 5	♂ 7	♅ 6
♌	♂ 7	♀ 6	♃ 6	♄ 7	♅ 4
♈	♄ 6	♀ 5	♅ 7	♃ 6	♂ 6
♉	♃ 7	♀ 10	♄ 4	♂ 7	♅ 2
♎	♅ 6	♃ 8	♄ 7	♀ 7	♂ 2
♉	♂ 7	♀ 4	♃ 8	♄ 5	♅ 6
♈	♄ 12	♀ 5	♃ 4	♅ 5	♂ 4
♈	♃ 7	♄ 7	♀ 8	♅ 4	♂ 4
♈	♃ 7	♀ 6	♄ 7	♂ 5	♅ 5
♃	♀ 12	♄ 4	♃ 3	♂ 9	♅ 2

Face Rulers (Chaldean) 1 point

Sign	1 st 10°	2 nd 10°	3 rd 10°
♈	♂	☉	♀
♌	♃	☽	♅
♈	♄	♂	☉
♌	♀	♃	☽
♈	♅	♄	♂
♉	☉	♀	♃
♎	☽	♅	♄
♉	♂	☉	♀
♈	♃	☽	♅
♈	♄	♂	☉
♈	♀	♃	☽
♃	♅	♄	♂

Figure 1

Debility

The flip side of Essential Dignity is Debility. This is a weakening of a planet's power through being in Detriment or Fall (i.e. being placed in a sign opposite its sign of Rulership or Exaltation) or affliction. The four main afflictions are cadency, combustion, retrograde and conjunct, square or opposition a malefic planet. Afflicted planets cannot realise their nature and the promise of the houses they reside in or rule. A debilitated planet cannot realise what it promises and a debilitated malefic can be very troublesome.

Benefic/Malefic Planets

The benefics are: the Sun when it is more than $8\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ away from a planet, or less than $17'$ conjunct a planet (i.e. cazimi); Jupiter and Venus; and the Moon when waxing and/or in friendly aspect to the planets. The malefics are Mars and Saturn, but these can be accidentally benefic if in good zodiacal state (i.e. in their signs of Rulership or Exaltation.) Mercury is benefic by itself and when connected to the benefics, but it can be inclined to malice if connected to the malefics. [The North Node is of the nature of Venus & Jupiter, and the South Node is that of Mars & Saturn.]

Peregrine

This term describes a planet lacking Essential Dignity in a sign. Such a planet assumes the nature of the ruler of the sign it is in; e.g. a peregrine planet in Sagittarius adopts the nativity's Jupiter. A peregrine planet depends on its dispositor (i.e. the planet ruler of the sign the peregrine planet is in) to realise its promise. If the dispositor is dignified it will realise, if it is debilitated or also peregrine, it will not. An example of a peregrine planet is the Sun in Cancer. In this sign the Sun lacks Essential Dignity because it does not rule Cancer by sign or exaltation, nor is it one of the triplicity rulers of Water or one of the term or face rulers of Cancer.

Accidental Malefic/Benefic

A benefic planet is considered to be accidentally malefic if it is in detriment or fall and ruling bad houses and in hostile aspect to a malefic - e.g. Jupiter in Virgo in the 2nd House, opposing Mars and ruling the 8th and 12th House (by exaltation.) NB. If there is no aspect to a malefic, the planet is merely impeded or afflicted. Likewise, a malefic planet in rulership or exaltation is considered accidentally benefic – e.g. Saturn in Capricorn in the 11th House.

The Twelve Houses

The houses represent the areas of life which are considered common to all such as the ability to think and communicate, to have a family life, to establish relationships and friendships and so on. The events of an individual's life are mapped according to the placement of the planets in the houses and their cusp rulerships. For example, Saturn in Cancer (in its detriment) in the 4th house indicates difficulties for the native through the family and in all domestic matters, whereas Jupiter in Pisces in the 4th promises domestic harmony and good family circumstances. Furthermore, the planetary ruler of the sign on the cusp of a house and its placement in the chart also provides us with information about the house. Applying the second Golden Rule (attributed to Jean Baptiste Morin de Villefranche) that **the good or bad signified by a house emanates from the ruler of the house** we see how the houses are connected. For instance, if Virgo is on the cusp of the 2nd house and its ruler, Mercury, is in Gemini in the 11th the individual's finances are fortuitously linked to his or her friends (because Mercury is dignified in Gemini). However, should Mercury be in Sagittarius (in detriment) and conjunct Mars in the 5th house, the individual encounters financial problems through lovers and/or gambling.

House Strength

There are three levels of house strength: Angular (1,4,7 & 10) 100%; Succedent (2,5,8 & 11) 50%; Cadent (3,6,9 & 12) 25%. A planet will deliver its power percentage-wise according to

the strength of the house it is in. For example, Venus in Libra in the 10th house promises a successful career in areas such as art, fashion or beauty. However, by contrast, Venus in Libra in the 3rd house delivers limited success in writing or education.

Derived Houses

Each house has 12 derived houses. The house under investigation is taken as being the 1st house and then the other houses relate to it according to their placement from it. For instance, the natal 9th house is the sibling of the partner (i.e. 3rd from the 7th).

Linked to the planets and houses are the zodiacal signs. These determine whether the planets are dignified or debilitated and if they and the houses are active or passive. The signs have three main modes of expression: Gender, Elemental and Modal.

Masculine/Feminine signs

The signs alternate between masculine and feminine polarities. The Masculine signs are AR, GE, LE, LI, SG & AQ. They are active and expressive; they are the doers and the initiators. They don't need input from others when deciding on what action to take. The Feminine signs are TA, CN, VI, SC, CP & PI. These signs are reactive and receptive; they have things done to them. They look for people who can tell them what to do. A planet in a masculine sign takes the initiative, whereas a planet in a feminine sign is acted upon. For example, Mars in Aries is quick to anger or take action; whereas Mars in Pisces tends to attract the anger of others and finds it hard to deflect it. This same action applies to the house cusps: a masculine sign, for instance, on the 7th cusp describes partners who take the initiative, whilst a feminine sign there describes partners who are inclined to follow another's lead.

Fire/Air/Earth/Water

As with the Masculine/Feminine polarities, the four Elements modify the way the planets and house cusps express themselves. A planet or a house cusp in a Fire sign (AR, LE & SG) seeks power, self-expression and freedom of action. For example, someone with Leo rising and the Sun in Leo in the 1st house is highly motivated to make his or her mark on the world through applied personal effort. Planets and cusps in Air (GE, LI & AQ) seek freedom of expression and movement. In Earth (TA, VI, & CP) they seek material security and in Water (CN, SC & PI) they seek emotional security.

Quadruplicities

There are three modalities: Cardinal/Fixed/Mutable. The motion of the Cardinal signs (AR, CN, LI & CP) is active, initiating and outwardly inclined. The masculine Cardinal signs work well in all circumstances, whereas the feminine Cardinal signs work best within structures established by other people. The motion of the Fixed signs (TA, LE, SC & AQ) is enduring, tenacious, centripetal and inwardly inclined. The Fixed signs hold onto things: Taurus hoards material possessions and money, Leo is attached to glory and praise, Scorpio treasures power and knowledge of hidden things, and Aquarius accumulates knowledge. The Mutable signs (GE, VI, SG & PI) are flexible and alternate between the other two motions each in accordance with their elemental nature.

The final consideration is given to the aspects between the planets. Traditional astrology de-emphasised the importance of the aspects, unlike modern astrology which places great stock in them and their meanings. The Medieval astrologer was, at first, concerned with the quality and strength of a planet by sign and house, and its rulership of the house cusps. The last thing he looked at was the aspects it was making to the other planets and angles. Also,

his method of defining an aspect was based on the orb of influence generated by the planets themselves. This orb of influence is called the moiety.

Moiety

A planet is considered to have an orb of influence much like an aura around itself. There are no fixed opinions as to the size of the orbs around each planet, but typically they range, as in the case of the Sun from 12 degrees to 17 degrees. The moiety is half this orb and extends an equal distance before the planet and after it. If the moiety of one planet overlaps the moiety of another, by conjunction or Ptolemaic aspect, they are considered to be in aspect. NB. Planets have orbs, aspects do not. Bonatti and Al-Biruni give the following orbs:

Sun 15°, Moon 12°, Saturn 9°, Jupiter 9°, Mars 8°, Venus 7° and Mercury 7°.

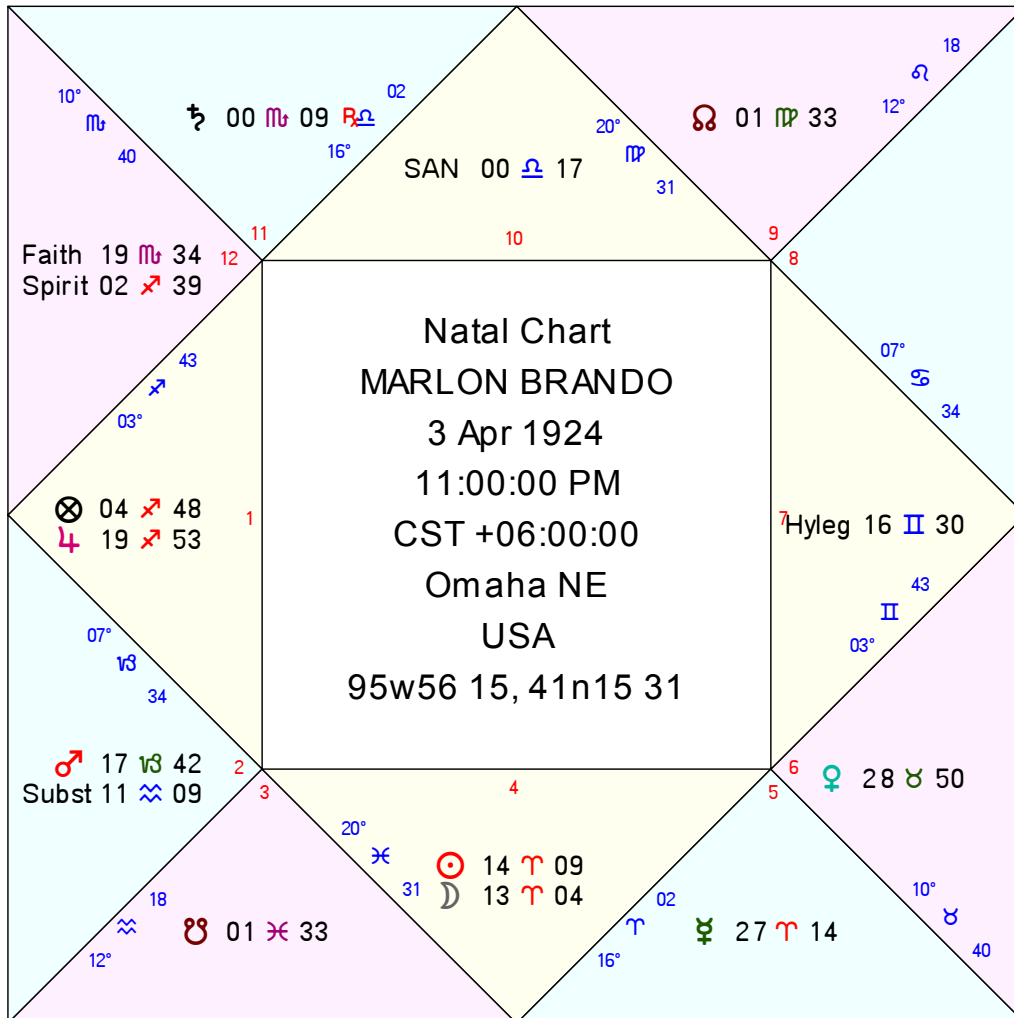
The Nature of the Aspects

The conjunction can be positive or negative depending on the planets involved; for instance a conjunction between the Moon and Jupiter is generally fortunate, whilst one between the Moon and Saturn is generally unfortunate. The opposition and square are tension inducing and the trine and sextile are generally harmonious and affirmative.

Now that we have our basic guidelines in place let's put them into practice by delineating the 1st and 10th houses of Marlon Brando's nativity (Figure 2.)

The 1st house cusp is also the Ascendant in the majority of house systems. We want to know the personality we are dealing with and his primary motivation in life. This we discover from the degree of the ascending sign, the planets, if any, aspecting it, the quality and placement of its rulers and any planets in the 1st house. Brando has 3° Sagittarius 43' rising. The fire signs rising are motivated to pursue power and recognition in life. Sagittarius is a masculine sign; hence he will act on his own initiatives – he may listen to the counsel of others, but he will ultimately do his own thing. Being mutable, he will alternate between being outgoing and flexible to stubborn and inflexible, especially in relation to his philosophical outlooks and beliefs. The Moon's North Node in the 9th house squares the Ascendant indicating he will travel but is likely to experience problems abroad. The South Node, also in square to the Ascendant, shows problems with neighbours and relatives. The Ascendant ruler, Jupiter, is in excellent zodiacal state by being in its own sign and triplicity and in the 1st house, where it can deliver 100% of its promise. He will be very successful in life and primarily through his own actions and efforts. Jupiter, the natural significator of wealth and glory bestows these directly on the native. Its trine aspects to both the Sun and Moon on the cusp of 5th house support the native in his ability to rise in life through a connection with the arts and entertainment industries. The triplicity rulers of fire are Sun, Jupiter and Saturn. The Sun, like Jupiter, is also in excellent zodiacal state by being in its sign of exaltation. It is the ruler of the 5th house by exaltation and the 9th by sign rulership, reinforcing a personal connection to the arts and opportunities to travel and experience foreign cultures. Saturn has medium strength (50%) by placement in the succedent 11th house of friends and benefactors; however its peregrine state and affliction by retrograde weakens its ability for good. His friends are likely to cause him discomfort and to take what they can get from him, especially money and possessions – see Saturn's dispositor, Mars, in the 2nd house. NB. Mars is also the dispositor of the Sun, confirming the connection between the entertainment sector and his ability to gain financial reward from it. Jupiter, in addition to ruling the Ascendant by sign and triplicity, is also its term ruler. As we have previously investigated Jupiter, we do not need to add anything further to what has been said about it already. The face ruler of the Ascendant is Mercury which is in the 5th house, reinforcing the importance of this house for

the realisation of his primary motivation. In addition, Mercury is the ruler of his 10th house of career, linking his vocation to the entertainment world. Recalling Morin's rule that **the good or bad signified by a house emanates from the ruler of the house**, we can see that Mercury's dispositor, Mars, is in excellent zodiacal state in the 2nd house, indicating that wealth is an outcome of the 10th house.

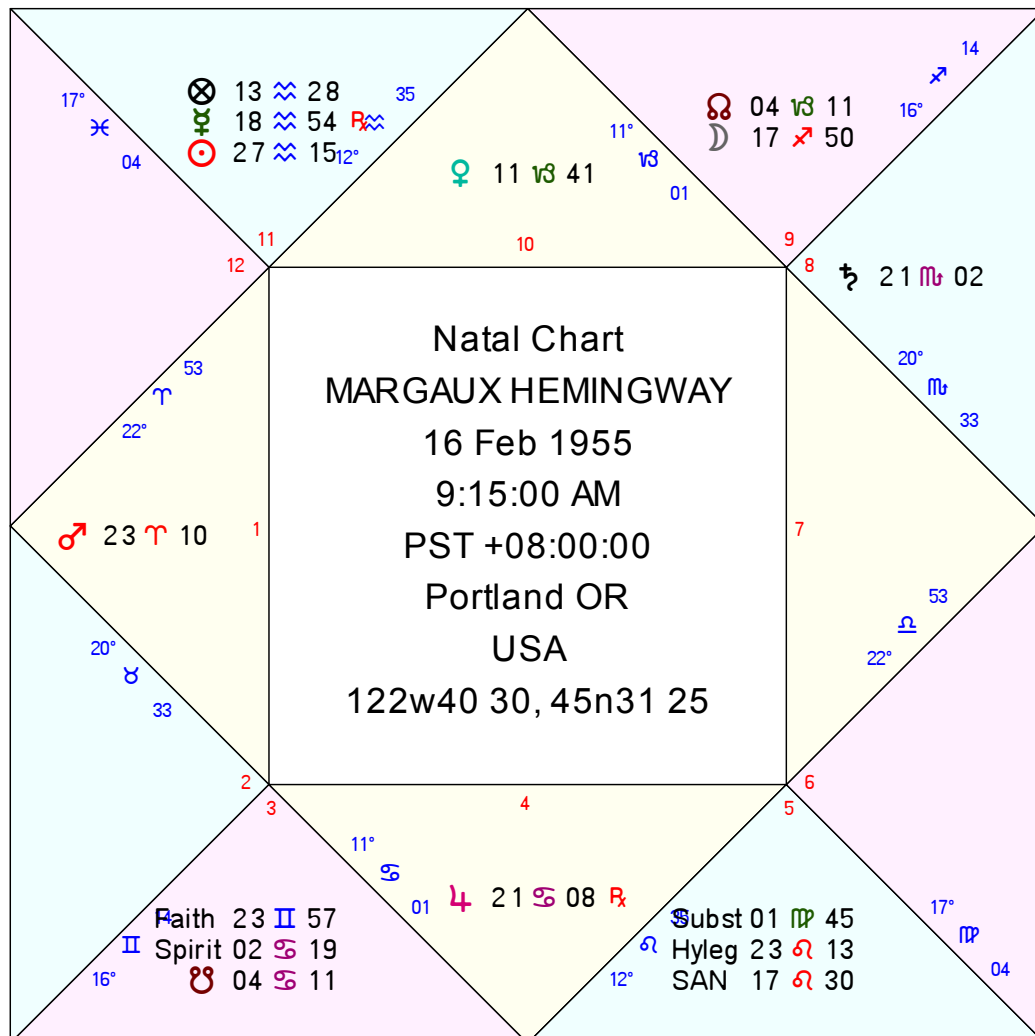


Dignities

Longitude	Rul	Exn	Trp	Trm	Fac	Det	Fal	Score	Ori	Sun	Almuten	Antiscia	Declin	Veloc	Speed
☉ 14°09'	♂	⊕+	♃+	♆	⊕+	♀	♄	8		☉	☉	15°05'	05n35'	+00 59	Mean
☽ 13°04'	♂	☉	♃	♆	☉	♀	♄	p	Ori cmb	☉	☉	16°55'	02n01'	+12 21	Slow
♆ 27°14'	♂	☉	♃	♄	♀	♀	♄	p	Occ usb	☉	☉	02°45'	11n17'	+01 54	Fast
♀ 28°50'	♀+	☽	☽+	♂	♄	♂		8	Occ	♀	♀	01°09'	22n22'	+01 05	Fast
♂ 17°34'	♄	♂+	☽+	♀	♂+	☽	♃	8	Ori	♂	♂	12°17'	22s57'	+00 37	Fast
♃ 19°53'	♃+		♃+	♆	☽	♆		8	Ori	♃	♃	10°30'	22s20'	+00 00	Slow
♄ 00°09'	♂		♂	♂	♂	♀	☽	p	Ori	♂	♂	29°50'	08s56'	-00 03	Fast
♁ 01°33'	♆	♆	☽	♆	☉	♃	♀			♆	♆	28°26'	10n55'		
♂ 01°33'	♃	♀	♂	♀	♄	♆	♆			♀	♀	28°26'	10s54'		
♂ 03°39'	♃		♃	♃	♆	♆				♃	♃	26°32'	20s52'		
♂ 20°26'	♆	♆	☽	♃	♆	♃	♀			♆	♆	09°33'	03n47'		
♄ 04°44'	♃		♃	♃	♆	♆				♃	♃	25°15'	17s43'		

Figure 2

Now let us have a look at the chart of someone who struggled with depression and alcoholism in her life. Margaux Hemingway (Figure 3) was the granddaughter of Ernest Hemingway and sister of actress, Mariel Hemingway. She was a top model in the 1970s for Faberge and appeared on the covers of Time and Vogue. She was found dead in her Santa Monica apartment, at the age of 41, from an overdose of phenobarbital.



Dignities

Longitude	Rul	Exn	Trp	Trm	Fac	Det	Fal	Score	Ori	Sun	Almutem	Antiscia	Declin	Veloc	Speed
☉ 27♌15	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	☉-		p		♄	♄	02♌44	12s24	+01 01	Fast
☽ 17♌50	♄	☉	♄	♄	♄	♄+	♄	1	Ori	♄	♄	12♌309	24s19	+11 55	Slow
♄ 18♌54R	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄+	☉	4	Ori cmb	♄	♄	11♌05	11s43	-01 00	Fast
♀ 11♌341	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	3	Ori	♄	♄	18♌18	20s36	+01 07	Fast
♄ 23♌10	♄+	☉	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	7	Occ	☉♄	♄	06♌49	09n11	+00 42	Fast
♄ 21♌08R	♄	♄+	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	6	Occ	♄	♄	08♌51	22n15	-00 04	Fast
♄ 21♌02	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	p	Ori	♄	♄	08♌57	15s45	+00 01	Slow
♄ 04♌11	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄			♄	♄	25♌48	23s22		
♄ 04♌11	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄			♄	♄	25♌48	23n23		
♄ 22♌53	♄	☉	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄			☉♄	♄	07♌06	08n54		
♄ 11♌01	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄			♄	♄	18♌58	22s58		
♄ 13♌28	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄	♄		usb	♄	♄	16♌31	18s09		

Figure 3

We see Aries rising with Mars well-placed by sign in the 1st house. This indicates a fiery personality with a proneness to quick and impulsive action and accidents, including self-injury. She is headstrong and self-motivated, direct in manner and able to attain her motivation for power and recognition through her own actions and efforts. Mars has rulership over her 8th and 10th (by exaltation) houses, emphasising the importance of a career and the potential for bouts of anxiety and anguish. Her own actions can also contribute to professional difficulties; she lost her position at Faberge due to her image as a hard partying regular at clubs like Studio 54. The Ascendant and Mars also square Jupiter indicating someone prone to excesses and disputes over outlooks and business contracts. By exaltation, the Sun rules her Ascendant. This is placed in the 11th house in Aquarius, the sign of its detriment. It is peregrine and disposed by Saturn in the 8th house which, itself, is also peregrine. Saturn squares both the Sun and Mercury causing a proneness to heavy thoughts and depression. Moreover, the square between the Sun and Saturn makes the Sun accidentally malefic, suggesting that her friends are unreliable and false. They are likely to be attention seekers and selfish. Possibly, they would have abandoned her when she needed them most. Jupiter, one of her Ascendant's triplicity rulers is in good state in the 4th house, indicating fortunate family circumstances and some support (Jupiter's retrograde state suggests support probably waxed and waned.) Her sister is represented by Mercury in the 11th. No doubt they were also friends, but Mercury's combust and retrograde state may have consigned her to the role of helpless bystander when depression kicked in. Margaux's success as a top model is confirmed by the unafflicted Venus in its triplicity and conjunct the Midheaven in the 10th house. Additionally, its rulership of the 2nd house confirms an ability to earn a living from the arts, fashion and beauty industries.

As you can see solid and valid information can be gleaned from the chart by applying these rules and making full use of the Essential Dignities.

Chart Data

Marlon Brando, actor. 3 April 1924, 11pm CST, Omaha NE, 95W56 15, 41N15 31.

Source: Birth certificate, AA rating. Astrodatbank.com

Margaux Hemingway, model. 16 February 1955, 9.15am PST, Portland OR, 122W40 30, 45N31 25. Source: From memory, A rating. Astrodatbank.com

Charts cast using Alchabitius houses.