In Gregory Benford's novel, *In the Ocean of Night*, one of the characters asks her husband for the daily horoscope. The husband, apparently bored with the daily horoscope routine, offers to "nip out for a small goat, put him to the knife and give ... a prognosis". Such, he believes, is a more gutsy form of fortune-telling. Indeed.

Benford's passage is noteworthy because it illustrates two points: first, fortune-telling in one form or another appeals to most everyone, and second, there are alternatives to the daily horoscope. More than one hundred of these alternatives are listed below, each a compound word ending in "-mancy" (from the Greek "-manteia", meaning "divination").

All of the "-mancy" words presented here can be found in either Webster's 2nd or the Oxford English Dictionary. A dozen or so additional "-mancy" words were discovered while researching this article, but they have not been included because they do not appear in either the W2 or OED.

The vast majority of "-mancy" words actually end in "-omancy", hence the title of this article. Only seven words listed below delete the "o": onimancy, onymancy, scapulimancy, spatulamancy, spatalamancy, arithmancy and tephramancy.

Group I (for the literate): readers of Word Ways will probably appreciate the forms of divination presented below.

- **BIBLIOMANCY** - divination by books or by verses of the Bible
- **GRAPTO MANCY** - by handwriting
- **LOGOMANCY** - by words
- **ONOMOMANCY, NOMANCY, ONOMANCY** - from names or the letters of a name (number of vowels, etc.)
- **RHAPSODOMANCY** - by picking a passage of poetry at random
- **STICHOMANCY** - by lines of verse in books taken at random

Group II (for the gourmet): the foods listed below may not be haute cuisine, but they can be used to tell your fortune.

- **ALEUROMANCY** - divination by means of meal or flour
- **ALPHITOMANCY** - by means of barley-meal
- **HALOMANCY, ALOMANCY** - by means of salt
OENOMANCY, OINOMANCY - by means of wine
OOMANCY - by means of eggs
TYROMANCY - by means of cheese

Group III (for the anatomically inclined): the following forms of fortune-telling are based on observations of the human anatomy. Note, however, that gastronomy has a second, totally unrelated definition.

CHEIROMANCY - divination by means of the hand
CHIROMANCY, CHYROMANCY - by the hand (palmistry)
GASTROMANCY - by the belly; also, by crystal-gazing
ICHNOMANCY - by traces of posture, position, and footsteps
METOPOMANCY - by the forehead or face
OMPHALOMANCY - predicting the number of children a mother will have by counting the knots in the umbilical cord of her first born
ONYCHOMANCY, ONIMANCY, ONYMANCY - from the finger-nails
PODOMANCY, PEDOMANCY - from signs derived by inspection of the feet
SCHEMATOMANCY - personal history inferred from an individual’s form and appearance
SPASMATOMANCY - diagnosing the disease by which a person is about to be attacked by observing the convulsive twitches of the limbs
STERNOMANCY - by the breast-bone

Group IV (for the naturalist): the list below is the largest category of "-mancy" words. They are all based on observations of either plants, animals, or the spoor of animals.

ALECTOROMANCY, ALECTRYOMANCY - by means of a cock with grains of corn
AMNIOMANCY - by means of the embryonic sac
ARMOMANCY - by shoulders of animals
BOTANOMANCY - by plants
CEPHALOMANCY - by means of a head (boiling an ass's head on burning coals)
CRITHOMANCY - by meal strewn over sacrificed animals
HEMATOMANCY, HAEMATOMANCY - by blood
HIPPOMANCY - from the neighing of horses
ICHTHYOMANCY - by means of heads or entrails of fishes
MYOMANCY - by the movements of mice
OPIOMANCY - by means of serpents
ORNITHOMANCY - by means of the flight and cries of birds
OSTEOMANCY - from bones
PHYLLOMANCY - by leaves
SCAPULOMANCY - by studying a charred or cracked shoulder blade
SCRATOMANCY - by the examination of feces
SPATILOMANCY, SPATALAMANCY - by observing animal droppings
SPATULAMANCY - by an animal's shoulder blade
STIGONOMANCY, STIGNOMANCY - by writing on tree bark
SYCOMANCY - by figs or fig leaves
THERIOMANCY - from the movements of animals
XYLOMANCY - with pieces of wood
ZOOMANCY - by observing the actions of animals

Group V (more for the naturalist): the fortune-telling words in this category are based on observations of natural phenomena. Note that sideromancy has a second unrelated definition.

AEROMANCY - by air, including augury (flight of birds)
ANTHRACOMANCY - by inspection of burning coals
ASTROMANCY - by the stars (astrology)
ASTROMANCY - from observation of the wind
CAPNOMANCY - by smoke
CEREAUNOMANCY - by thunderbolts
EMPYROMANCY - by fire
HYDROMANCY, HIDROMANCY, YDROMANCY - by signs derived from water, its tides and ebbs, or spirits therein
LITHOMANCY - by signs derived from stones
MARGARITOMANCY - by pearls
METEOROMANCY - by observations of meteors
PEGOMANCY - by springs or fountains
PYROMANCY - by fire, or by signs derived from fire
SELENOMANCY - by observation of the moon
SIDEROMANCY - by means of the stars; also, by watching burning straw
SPOMANCY - by means of ashes

Group VI (for the technocrat): the methods of divination presented here involve the use of man-made objects.

ASPIDOMANCY - by means of a shield
ASTRAGALOMANCY - by means of dice or huckle-bones
AXINOMANCY - by means of an axe-head
BELOMANCY - by means of arrows
CARTOMANCY - by playing cards
CATOPTROMANCY, CATOPROMANCY - by means of a mirror
CHALCOMANCY - by means of vessels of brass
CLEIDOMANCY, CLIDOMANCY - by means of a key
COSCINOMANCY - by the turning of a sieve held on a pair of shears
CRYSTALLOMANCY - by means of crystal
CUBOMANCY - by the throwing of dice
DACTYLIOMANCY - by means of a finger-ring
ENOPTROMANCY - by means of a mirror
IDOLOMANCY - by idols
LAMPADOMANCY - by the flames of a torch
LYCHNOMANCY - by lamps
PSEPHOMANCY - by drawing marked stones from a vessel
RHABDOMANCY - by means of a rod (divining rod)
SCYPHOMANCY - by means of a cup

Group VII (for the necromancer): these forms of divination delve deep into the occult, much more so than all the others listed.

ANTHROPOMANCY - divination by the raising of dead men, or by the
entrails of men
DEMONOMANCY - by demons
PSYCHOMANCY - through communication with spirits of the dead
NECROMANCY - by means of communication with the dead; magic in general
NECYOMANCY - by summoning Lucifer
SCIOMANCY - by communication with the shades of the dead

Group VIII (miscellaneous): the following "-mancy" words defy categorization, but they are by no means less intriguing. There are some delightful entries here -- note, for example, the word gyromancy.

AMBULOMANCY - by walking
ARITHMANCY, ARITHOMANCY - by numbers
CEROMANCY - from the figures produced by dropping melted wax into water
CHRONOMANCY - divination to determine the favorable time for action
CLEROMANCY - by lots, or with dice
GYROMANCY - by walking in a circle until felled by dizziness -- the divination is based on the point of falling
HIEROMANCY - from sacred things; from observation of objects offered in religious sacrifices
JUDAEOMANCY - by means of Jews
LECANOMANCY - by inspection of water in a basin
LOGARITHMOMANCY - by means of logarithms
MOLYBDOMANCY - by noting motions and figures in molten lead
PSEUDOMANCY - consciously false or pretended divination
UNIROMANCY - by means of divination of the urine

Group IX (for the skeptic): if none of the above divinations sound plausible, and if you're not particularly fascinated by your daily horoscope, then you might be inclined to classify all fortune-telling as

MOROMANCY - foolish divination

But if you believe it's all moromancy, you might well be in the minority. A lot of people have had to be interested in fortune-telling to come up with all these variations.

Interestingly, Webster's 2nd lists a total of eight "-mancy" words which do not refer to a form of divination. Of these eight, four are technical terms (adiathermancy, athermancy, diathermancy and electrothermancy), and two more are rather obscure (aldermancy, the position of aldermen; labiomancy, lip-reading). The final two are more common, and they are not long or difficult. Can you guess them? If baffled, see Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.