

*In a horoscope he cast in 1647 for Charles I, William Lilly, a noted English astrologer, made the following judgment: "Luna is with Antares, a violent fixed star, which is said to denote violent death, and Mars is approaching Caput Algol, which is said to denote beheading." Two years later the king's head fell on the block. "Astrology must be right," wrote the American astrologer Evangeline Adams, a claimed descendant of President John Quincy Adams, in a challenge to skeptics in 1929. "There can be no appeal from the Infinite."*

*The Fated Sky* explores both the history of astrology and the controversial subject on its influence in history. It is the first serious book to fully engage astrology in this way.

Astrology is the oldest of the occult sciences. It is also the origin of science itself. Astronomy, mathematics, and other disciplines arose in part to make possible the calculations necessary in casting horoscopes. For five thousand years, from the ancient Near East to the modern world, the influence of the stars has been viewed as shaping the course and destiny of human affairs. According to recent polls, at least 30 percent of the American public believes in astrology, though, as Bobrick reveals, modern astrology is also utterly different from the doctrine of the stars that won the respect and allegiance of the greatest thinkers, scientists, and writers--Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Arab and Persian--of an earlier day. Statesmen, Popes, and kings once embraced it, and no less a figure than Thomas Aquinas, the medieval theologian, thought it not incompatible with Christian faith. There are some 200 astrological allusions in Shakespeare's plays, and not one of their astrological predictions goes unfulfilled. The great astronomers of the scientific revolution---Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler---were adherents. Isaac Newton's appetite for mathematics was first whetted by an astrological text. In more recent times, prominent figures such as Churchill, de Gaulle, and Reagan have consulted astrologers and sometimes heeded their advice. Today universities as diverse as Oxford in England and the University of Zaragoza in Spain offer courses in the subject, fulfilling Carl Jung's prediction decades ago that astrology would again become the subject of serious discourse.

Whether astrology actually has the powers that have been ascribed to it is, of course, open to debate. But there is no doubt that it maintains an unshakeable hold on the human mind. In *The Fated Sky*, Benson Bobrick has written an absolutely captivating and comprehensive account of this engrossing subject and its enduring influence on history and the history of ideas.