Astrology and Magic from the Medieval Latin and Islamic World to Renaissance Europe: Theories and Approaches by Paola Zambelli

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Arranged marriages do work. In her introduction to this volume, Paola Zambelli recounts how, as an 18-year-old undergraduate student, she arrived at the Florentine offices of Delio Cantimori and Eugenio Garin in 1955 with the intention of working on Karl Marx's ideas on the French Revolution. In what strikes us now as a stunning display of professorial sovereignty, Garin suggested that Zambelli work on Cornelius Agrippa and magic instead. And so it began. Seventeen books and 126 papers later, Zambelli is one of the most important intellectual historians of pre-modern magic and astrology alive.

This Variorum collection offers a selection of Zambelli's papers on four different themes:

- theories about magic and astrology in medieval and Renaissance intellectual history,
- the role of astrologers in Renaissance society,
- the pan-European debate of the early 16th century on an imminent universal flood produced by astrological great conjunctions, and
- theories about magic in 20th-century scholarship.

The collection is far from complete or even representative of Zambelli's output. Several classic papers are not present here (e.g., Zambelli's work on 'Magic and Radical Reformation in Agrippa of Nettesheim' or her mesmerizing essay on Alessandro Achillini's theories of magic). As a bonus, there is an up-to-date bibliography at the end of this volume.

Ashgate's Variorum series reproduces existing papers, warts and all. There is no attempt at internal pagination, at homogeneous layouts, or even at correcting erroneous spelling, grammar, or syntax in the original papers. Nevertheless, four of the 10 papers have been newly translated into English

by Lydia Cochrane. This may be related to Zambelli's overt concerns about the directions taken by American scholarship in Renaissance studies, which she finds insufficiently conversant with (the history of) philosophy [96]. Unsurprisingly, then, many of Zambelli's papers approach magic and astrology as the practice of philosophical ideas. In this area, she is at her best when calling attention to the multiplicity of relevant philosophical traditions: not only Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism but also the astrologizing Stoicism of al-Kindi or Albumasar and the radical philosophies of Avicenna or Averroes. Zambelli is also at her most insistent when marking off the difference between religion and magic on the one hand, and science on the other, while pointing out the ways in which magic could lead from one to the other. This shapes a profound interest in Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), whose *De incantationibus* dominates the background to Zambelli's paper on Arabic, scholastic, and Renaissance theories of the prophetic imagination; and which is also the explicit focus of a paper critically revisiting Pomponazzi's recruitment as the progenitor of later traditions of libertinism.

The prehistory of modern freethinking looms large in the second section of this collection, which begins by calling attention to the importance of pre-modern astrological thought. Zambelli specifically singles out the Arabic theory of cyclical conjunctions as the crucial source of modern, secularizing philosophies of history which could ground a difference between social and cosmological time. The actual importance and impact of this theory in early modern European culture is demonstrated in section 3, which reprints Zambelli's two contributions to a volume which she edited on the subject in 1984. Although far less encompassing and detailed than some of her other work on early modern conjunctionalism, these reprints do provide readers with a useful summary of Zambelli's main insights on the subject. Especially interesting is her attempt to make the history of astrology more conversant with Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History* (1949) by way of the broader history of early modern and 19th-century philosophy.

Moving away from the relative thematic unity of the first three sections, the last one offers three studies in theory which treat the history of science, the *histoire des mentalités*, and the history of philosophy. Once again, however, important internal convergences and unities of purpose emerge. Zambelli explores the influence of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl on Alexandre Koyré, provides a synthetic analysis of the work of her colleague Carlo Ginzburg, and reveals

the writing of a history of philosophy in the post-Hegelian age of social history. With its critique of the Renaissance as a 'rebirth of classical culture' and an identification of the history of philosophy with philosophy, this section considerably deepens our understanding of the important intellectual and political trajectory that Zambelli has carved out, regardless of what happened in 1955.