Cosmological beliefs of Galacian farmers

Exploring the mythology of Pluto

The meaning of clouds: a phenomenological study

Experiencing the summer sky: Amsterdam

Reviewed: The Value of Astrology
features

A review of the cosmological beliefs and traditions that have influenced farmers in Bueu, a rural village in Galicia
   Benito Vilas Estevez
   4

The Meaning of Clouds: A phenomenological study
   Ada Blair
   20

Pluto, Lord of the Underworld: an analysis
   Sanaa Tanha
   44

Amsterdam City-Sky Journal: 21 May-July 2013
   Elizabeth Hathway
   52

regulars

Editorial
   Rod Suskin
   3

Reviews: The Value of Astrology: from ancient knowledge to today’s reality. by André Barbault
   Anna Estaroth
   42

inbox
   74

The cover is a detail from the card “The Moon” in the tarot deck
Tarot Egyptien: Grand Jeu de l’Oracle des Dames III (c.1865).

EDITOR: Rod Suskin
EDITORIAL BOARD: Student volunteers at the Sophia Centre
ADVISORY BOARD: Teaching staff at the Sophia Centre, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Published bi-annually by the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, with the Sophia Centre Press.
Published and available at: http://astronomy-and-culture.org/journal/journal.html
One of the exciting things about the field of Cultural Astronomy is that since culture is a living, experiential part of our lives, our studies are not just about the past but also the experience of the sky in the present day. This issue of Spica showcases both the meaning and use of the sky deep in history, and in the context of the contemporary world.

The fundamental value of studying the human relationship with the sky lies in its application to actual life, and nowhere is that more significant than in the application of cosmological beliefs to farming. Benito Vilas Estevez goes back to his roots to discover how cosmological beliefs influence the farming practices in a rural village in Galicia. His unique insider position gave him access to rare knowledge and makes for fascinating reading.

History is not the only place we find our relationship with the sky, and a number of students have undertaken reflexive research projects to examine the application of sky cosmology in their contemporary lives. These sky journals give us an insight into how the MA programme encourages a relevant and “living” approach to the ongoing unfolding of the human story revealed in how we see the sky. Ada Blair takes a phenomenological approach to the study of the meaning of clouds, creating a sky journal of her experience of cloud types and patterns in early summer in Edinburgh, while Elizabeth Hathway studies the sky over Amsterdam during the same period.

Astrology in Culture is also an important part of the students’ research, and in this issue Sanaa Tanha presents a deep textual analysis of the mythology of Pluto in various sources and compares them with the 20th Century astrologer Dane Rudhyar’s use of these concepts in the astrological Pluto.

Between the “family fun” of the annual Summer School and the close community on Facebook and in online classrooms, the students are also a dynamic and fertile intellectual resource in this growing field. Our inbox page this issue tells the story of how online ‘connectedness’ enables unexpected new avenues for research and discovery.

I hope you’ll find that reflected in this edition of Spica.

Rod Suskin
editor@astronomy-and-culture.org
This paper explores the role that cosmological beliefs played in the traditional agricultural practices and planting cycles of the farmers and villagers of Bueu (Galicia), where plants were sown, tended and harvested in specific months and on particular days in relation to the lunar cycle. Data were collected in a series of interviews with elderly residents of the area conducted by the researcher, who has insider status in the community. The information collected concerning the specific lunar lore relating to each crop and other related subjects is reported and compared with relevant primary sources in Galicia and with secondary sources in Galicia and Spain; the lack of academic scholarship on this subject is noted and further research is recommended to capture traditional knowledge such as this before it is lost.

Introduction

The aim of this project is to explore and compile information about the role that cosmological beliefs played in the traditional practices and views of planting cycles in Bueu, a rural village in Galicia, where specific plants were sown, tended and harvested in specific months and on particular days, in specific relation to the lunar cycle. I investigated what the people who maintain and use this traditional knowledge today think about how cosmology affected planting cycles, especially what they reported to have occurred when they did not plant at what was considered to be the appropriate time, and the implications of this. I also explored why they think these traditional practices are disappearing.

I interviewed people living in the village of Bueu, who have used these techniques and have lived according to their inherited traditional agricultural lore. The term “cosmology” will be used in this paper in line with a definition outlined by Juan Antonio Fernández De Rota Monter, who suggested “when in anthropology we talk about cosmology we refer to the specific way in which a
human group mentally and operatively as well as cosmically and socially organizes its world, because both are implied”.1

**Bueu: Geography and Locale**

Bueu is a council situated in Galicia (northern Spain) in the province of Pontevedra, in the Rías Baixas (Galician for lower Rias) on the peninsula of Morrazo. Bueu is integrated with the councils of Cangas, Marín and Moaña. The council of Bueu occupies 31.5 square kilometers. In the northeast, it shares a border with Marín, in the east with Moaña, in the south with Cangas and in the west with Aldán Ría and the Atlantic Ocean. Bueu contains three parishes: San Martiño de Bueu, Santa María de Beluso and Santa María de Cela and an island named Ons (Fig 1). The total population of Bueu is approximately 13,000 people, and their principal source of income is fishing.2 The people from Bueu speak a dialect of Galician known as “Galego do Morrazo”.3

Fig 1. Map of Bueu

Until the 1960s, Bueu was a completely rural area, and agriculture, stockbreeding, and coastal fishing were the most significant resources for its inhabitants.

---


Literature Review

The study of the role that cosmology played in the traditional theories and practices of planting cycles in Spain has not been thoroughly explored, although some work on the subject has been published. Josep Maria Anglés I Farrerons studied the beliefs of Levant communities in Spain as they related to agriculture which he reported in his *Influence of the Moon in Agriculture*. He reports that “in 1976 I started to compile beliefs that pointed to our satellite, in relation to the agriculture”. But as he does not record details of the size or nature of his target group, his work is used in this paper as a primary source rather than a secondary source of scholarship. In 2001 Juan Antonio Belmonte Avilés and Margarita Sanz de Lara Barrios published *The Magicians´ Sky*, reporting details of their work in the Canary Islands. They say that “this book presents the fundamental core and the more important results in a study about the use of natural celestial character phenomena (astronomical and meteorological) in the agricultural and stockbreeding practices among peasants living on the islands”. Their study is based on 36 interviews with the shepherds and farmers in different parts of the Canary Islands, with an average age of 42 years (the youngest was 29 and the oldest was 88).

As far as Galicia, the target area for this research project is concerned there is no evidence of any serious and documented studies on this topic having been published. A literature search revealed only a few articles, and not all were from academic journals. One paper entitled *Lunar Influence on Vegetation*, was written in 1954 by J.M.B (the journal provides no name) and published in *Alma Gallega*, a journal published in Montevideo (Uruguay) from 1919 to 1967 by Galician immigrants. The author took what might be termed a scientific approach to the subject matter rather than a sociological one, comparing studies on the influences
of the moon with studies of light and the magnetic field of the earth during planting cycles.

In 1998 the journal *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos*, which focuses on academic studies and historical research, and targets scholars, published two articles related to this topic, *Religiosity, Beliefs and Vital Practices from Galician Peasantry*, by Enrique Bande Rodriguez and *Galician Dance in Honour of the Moon* by Fina M. Antón and M. Mandianes. Both articles deal with various traditional lunar-oriented practices of the Galician peasantry, and both present a little information about the attributed influence of the moon on planting cycles in Galicia, although this is not their central focus.

Finally, in 2002, Fernando Leis Pérez wrote *The Influence of the Moon on Crops*, which was published in *Feiraco*, an advertising magazine aimed at farmers (Feiraco is a brand of milk). Pérez explains how to plant according to the phases of the moon, but unfortunately he does not give the source of the traditional lore he promulgates.

Fortunately there are some useful primary sources on this topic, some of which date back to the classical period. For example, Hesiod the Greek poet (eighth century BCE) wrote *The Works and the Days*, a long poem that contains at its centre a farmer’s almanac that Hesiod used to instruct his brother Perses in the agricultural arts (verses 380-617).

An important primary and historical source in respect of the area of Galicia is Saint Martin of Dumio (or Braga) (d.580 CE). He converted the Suevan Kingdom in the Gallaecia to Christianity (Gallaecia comprised Galicia and part of modern-day northern Portugal). Saint Martin of Dumio wrote several treatises, two of which are relevant to this project. *De Correctione Rusticorum*, is addressed to Polemio, bishop of Astorga after the second Council of Braga in 572 CE. It focuses on ways in which to correct the beliefs of the peasantry, among whom

---

13 Hesiodo *Trabajos y los días* trans María Ángeles (Madrid, Alianza, 1998)
14 Hesiodo, Verses 380-617
paganism and superstitions were more deeply-rooted than among the educated classes.\textsuperscript{16}

In \textit{Capitula Martini}, a work of canonical and liturgical character addressed to Nitigesio, bishop of Lugo, Saint Martin’s objective was to recapture what he conceived to be the purity of the original canons.\textsuperscript{17} He rewrote and adapted these canons to the Suevans, dividing them into 84 canons. Canons 69 to 84 are dedicated to the secular aspects of society and, reference uses of the moon by Galician peasantry, thus being particularly relevant to this study.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Methodology}

I used qualitative methods to gather data by conducting informal interviews with people from the village of Bueu who have used the inherited lunar-related agricultural techniques under review. My enquiry centred on the question: Which were the cosmological beliefs and traditions that have most influenced farmers in Bueu? I interviewed a group of 16 people with an average age of 83, the youngest being 68 and the oldest 98. My focus was on the older members of the community because, among members of the adult population who are younger than 60, traditional agricultural lore has been compromised by the arrival of technology: devices such as television, radio, the Internet, watches, farm machinery, etc have created a different lifestyle, in which agriculture is no longer the primary occupation. The interviews were set up through personal contacts with the people of the village. Recently, during a course on archaeoastronomy in Galicia during which this project was discussed, one of the participants said to me:

\begin{quote}
I find your work very interesting, especially because we might do archaeoastronomy studies on structures in the future, and it will be practically impossible to do what you are doing in 15 years, because this knowledge is disappearing. So I find these approaches very interesting, because we have to understand that these approaches can be practised here, and not just in indigenous cultures.
\end{quote}

I was persuaded to use qualitative research methods by the arguments presented by David Silverman, who says: “if you want to discover how people intend to vote, then a quantitative method, like a social survey, may seem the most appropriate choice. On the other hand, if you are concerned, with exploring people’s life histories or everyday behavior, then qualitative methods may be

\textsuperscript{16} Martiño de Braga, \textit{De Correctione Rusticorum} p. 145.
\textsuperscript{17} Martiño de Braga, \textit{Capitula Martini}, (trans Urcino de Val (Madrid, Fundación Universitaria, 1990)
\textsuperscript{18} Martiño de Braga, \textit{Capitula Martini}, prologue
favoured”.19 I was looking for personal experiences and responses to capture; to study what Alan Bryman calls “the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts”.20 I researched my own community from the inside because, as Bryman notes, “for qualitative researchers, it is only by getting close to their subjects and becoming an insider that they can view the world as a participant in that setting”.21

Possible criticism of a researcher’s predominant use of unstructured interviews has been countered by Charlotte Aull Davies, who states:

Interviewing carried out by ethnographers whose principal research strategy is participant observation is often virtually unstructured, that is, very close to a ‘naturally occurring’ conversation. However, even in such unstructured interviews ethnographers have in mind topics they wish to explore and questions they would like to pose, thus they tend to direct the conversation with the research in mind, without imposing much structure on the interaction.22

I opened each interview by introducing myself, and checking whether I could ask some questions and record the responses. Then I asked a general question: What was the agriculture like in the past and what was planted? Once this question had been answered, and I knew what was planted (which was fundamental information), I asked: “how did the phases of the moon affect the planting cycles?”

As an insider within the community, it was easy for me to connect with the residents and they agreed that I could interview them. We speak the same language, and to some extent, they “know” me. I was easily recognised due to my family’s nickname (Ministro from my grandfather, and Da Cova from my grandmother).

In my otherwise advantageous insider position, the only challenge I encountered was that my informants were willing to give me extended periods of their time and expected me to conduct lengthy and detailed interviews with them. Because I conducted informal interviews, they often told me about things unrelated to the research subject, veering away from the main topic. However, in the course of the time I spent among members of my target community, I learned

much and gained a fuller understanding of how people of this area lived in the past. The rich data I collected have provided ideas for possible future research projects aimed at capturing traditional knowledge which may otherwise go unrecorded and be lost to the research community.

In what follows I will present the information collected from my interviews, and report the beliefs of the people of Bueu as described to me with reference to the literature reviewed above. As far as my role as a researcher with an ‘emic’ or insider bias is concerned, it will do well for me to remember the words of Dell Hymes who, elaborating on the attributes of the ‘emic’ orientation and the insider position, was clear that “the notion does not imply that those whose behavior manifests an emic system are conscious of its nature or can formulate it for the investigator”.23 The ‘emic’ perspective of my research has, therefore, been complemented by an ‘etic’ or outsider perspective to assist in analysing the broad-based data I have collected.

The advisability of moving between insider and outsider perspectives is argued by David J. Hufford, who suggests that “we can also speak personally about our beliefs, and at times that may be useful to our students or colleagues—but only if we are aware and clearly state that we are now using our personal voice … We must distinguish our personal voices from our scholarly voices”.24 Jo Pearson considers the insider position to be as valuable as outsider information and, if the two perspectives can be combined, it is possible to achieve an understanding that is ethical and informative.25 Therefore I have attempted to be an insider in terms of the community and an outsider in terms of the vantage of the researcher, taking into account that to be absolutely objective is impossible, a chimera, and that the research field and its residents will always have an effect on the researcher.26

**Findings and Discussion**

According to the literature review relating to Galicia, the moon was the only planet used to guide agricultural labour; this was corroborated by my field-

---

26 Jo Pearson p.108.
work in Bueu. One interviewee noted “it was she who guided us,” and this was the case not just in agricultural labour, but also in wider related and seemingly unrelated activities such as slaughtering pigs, fishing, and even conceiving children. It is important here to note that this appears consistent with the definition of cosmology by de Rota above. This project however, will focus only on the influence of cosmological lore on planting cycles (in relation particularly to the moon).

The focus of my informants on the moon is at variance with Hesiod’s work, in which the stars seem to have been more important in the agricultural working seasons; therefore it seems that Hesiod’s work has not been disseminated as far as the surviving folklore of contemporary villagers. However, in Galicia it appears that there has been a connection between the influence of the moon and agricultural cycles dating from the fifth century CE, as evidenced in the *Capitula Martini* by Saint Martin of Dumio. Canon 82 refers to “taking the elements, the course of the moon, or the stars into account with regard to the construction of housing, sowing or tree planting or the celebration of marriage”. The problem here is that unfortunately it is not possible to ascertain which particular cycles of the moon the ancient Galicians took note of.

The information that it is only the moon which influenced planting cycles is echoed in the modern Galician works presented. In his Spanish publications, Angles - I Farrerons confirmed that it was the moon that ruled the fields in the Levant communities. On the other hand, Belmonte and Lara Sanz proved that, in the case of Canary Islands, it was not only the moon which was influential but also stars such as the Pleiades and Sirius, and constellations such as “El Arado” (the belt and sword of Orion), Mars and even the Milky Way.

Because not all crops followed the same cultivation pattern, they will be presented separately in what follows. In Bueu, as I discovered from my informants, the crops they used to sow consisted of the following: rye (no longer sowed in Bueu), corn, potatoes, lettuces, onions and legumes. The moon was also consulted in the application of fertilizer, the pruning of trees and the making of wine, all of which activities were conducted in line with its prescribed phases.

When talking to me of the moon´s phases, my informants did not use the expression “the waxing moon”; rather, they always referred to “the strong of the

---

27 “Ela era quen nos guiaba”
28 Hesíodo, verses 380-385.
29 My translation “Recollendo os elementos, o curso da lúa, o das estrelas en relación coa construcción de casas, da sembra, da plantación das arbores e dos casamentos”. San Martiño de Braga, *Capitula Martini* canon 82.
30 Angles I Farrerons p. 45.
31 Belmonte and Sanz Lara pp. 34-43.
moon”, and the full moon was sometimes referred to as “when the moon is strongest”. This is particularly curious as Anton and Mandianes use the expression “waxing moon” and report that their informants refer to the full moon as “the old moon”. Even Bande Rodriguez according to their informants uses the expression “the old moon” to refer to the full moon too, but he also adds the expressions “the bad moon” (referring to the new moon) and “the good moon” (meaning the full moon) as common expressions of the Galician peasantry. I can report that, according to my data, these expressions are no longer used in Bueu.

Also absent from the literature reviewed is any mention of how people knew the current phase of the moon or for that matter the date and day of the week. The latter would have been significant in historical times as, in relation to some crops, there existed and indeed still exists the notion of important calendrical days. People from Bueu had a poetic proverb: “Paunch looking to the West means waxing moon and Paunch looking to the East means waning moon”. To inform themselves of the day, the date and the current phase of the moon, the people of Bueu have, in modern times, been able to avail themselves of a copy of the farm almanac or calendar O Gaiteiro de Lugo which was published continuously from since 1857 to 1973.

As regards the sowing of rye, the sixteen interviewees were all in agreement that “with rye you do not pay attention to anything external; the most important thing was to sow at Saint Stephen (26th December)”. To schedule when to harvest rye, again people did not look to the moon: “we cut it when it was ready”. This contrasts with work by Fina and Mandianes in which it is stated that “rye sowed with the full moon would produce only straw”. On the other hand Bande Rodriguez stated “the rye was better sown with the full moon or the waning moon”, and Leis Perez noted the following variation to the rule for the time of sowing: “rye, corn and wheat, if the soil is good with the last days of the waning moon, but if the soil is poor it is better to sow with the waxing moon”.

---

32 Cando ten toda a forza
33 A forza da lua
34 Fina M y Mandianes p. 251.
35 Enrique Bande p .313.
36 Barriga para ponente cuarto crecente e barriga para Levante cuarto minguante
37 O centeo non se lle facía caso, o importante era botalo por San Esteban.
38 Cortábamolo cando xa estaba listo
In the context of the Levant communities, Anglés I Farrerons agreed with Leis Perez.

To move from rye to corn, all interviewees said that it was not important when they sowed this crop, although one noted that “it does not matter, but the waning moon does something”. The most important aspect of tending this crop was not the sowing but the cutting of the tassels: “The important thing was to cut the tassels when they were big and yellow in order for the ear to get stout. This task was carried out between Saint John (24th June) and Saint Jacques (25th July)”. But when it came to harvesting the corn, all the interviewees said that this task was carried out at the time of the waning moon: “the corn was cut with the waning moon to better conserve it, to give to the animals during winter” and “to make a loft full of straw, this was also done during the waning moon, because shucking the leaves of the corn, at that time, was held to conserve them and make them tan better”, otherwise “if it was cut with the strong of the moon and allowed to go mouldy, then what were you going to give to the animals? And also, to sleep on, because the good corn leaves were used for the beds or do you think that we had beds then as we have today”.

Curiously all studies referencing corn discuss the time for sowing corn as being the same time for sowing rye; yet none mention what happened during the harvesting process although, for the people of Bueu, the latter was the time when the moon’s phase was important.

Regarding potato crops, according to my interviewees “potatoes were sown with the waning moon and the new moon, and they were dug with the waning moon, because with the strong of the moon it was always said that the plants

---

40 My translation “El centeno, el maíz y el trigo si el suelo es bueno deben ser plantados con la luna menguante, pero si el suelo es pobre es mejor sembrar con la luna creciente”. Bande Rodriguez p. 313.
41 Leis Perez p. 12.
42 Angles I farrerons p. 41.
43 Non importaba cando se botase aínda que a minguante algo lle facía
44 O importante era cortarlle o pendon cando xa está grande e amárelo para que engorde a espiga, cortábase entre San Juan e Santiago
45 Se empalleiraba coa minguante, para que despois o esfollar se conservara e curtirá mellor
46 A palla do maíz córtabase coa minguante para que se conservara millor para darlle o inverno os animais
47 Se o cortabas coa forza da lua enton aborolecia, e despois haber que lle dabas os animais, e ademais para durmir por que o follaco bo empregábase para durmir, ou pensas que tiñamos camas como as de agora.
grew a lot of foliage and little fruit". This is potentially ambiguous, and when I asked the informants to clarify when they thought the new moon started to wax, their answers were very different. According to five of them, during the first three days of a cycle the moon is still weak, while others thought the weak period lasted for the first five days, and just one of them thought it was the first seven days. They were only in agreement that after the ‘counting days’, the moon started to get strong and you could not sow then. According to Enrique Bande and Fina and Mandianes, potatoes sown with the new moon produce only foliage, which seems to be the opposite of what the people of Bueu think, although perhaps not if the differences in opinion regarding how long the new moon remains weak and when it begins to strengthen are taken into account. At the same time, in the Levant communities, according to Anglés I Farrerons, “all the operations that concern potatoes should be performed with the full moon and if it is possible with the waning moon”. According to Belmonte and Sanz Lara, referring to the Canary Islands, it is better to sow and to harvest potatoes with the waning moon, because if done with the waxing moon they will rot.

In the case of legumes I discovered that this is a crop about which my interviewees disagreed. According to fourteen of my informants, legumes should be sown with the waning moon, but two disagreed. Another said that “a little bit of the strong of the moon is good” while another asserted that “legumes have to be sown with the strong of the moon”. As far as the literature on this subject goes, J.M.B held that legumes should be planted with the waxing moon and Leis Pérez agreed. Of interest here would be to explore how widespread this discrepancy is in other regions.

Concerning lettuce, there was no discrepancy of opinions among the interviewees, all of whom told me that it has to be sown with the waning moon “Lettuces with the waning moon, for if they are sown with the strong of the moon, they do not close well, and I have said that to everybody”. J.M.B concurs

---

48 A patata botábase coa luna nova, e cavábase coa minguante, pois coa forza da lua sempre se dixo que medraba moita ramada e pouco fruto
49 Enrique Bande p. 313.
Fina M y Mandianes p. 251.
50 My translation “Todo lo relacionado con el cultivo de las patatas debe ser hecho con la luna llena y si es posible con la menguante”. Angles I Farrerons p. 86.
51 Belmonte and Sanz Lara p. 41.
52 Un pouquiño da forza da lúa non ven mal
53 As legumbres teñen que levar a forza da lua
54 J.M.B p. 84.
55 Leis Pérez p. 11.
56 As leitugas teñen que ser plantadas coa minguante, senon non pechan ben e iso digollo eu a calqueira.
with the view of my informants, stating “when we look to the profit of the vegetative part, it has to be sown with the waning moon”.\textsuperscript{57}

In the case of onions, this crop must be sown and collected with the waning moon for, if it was not done this way, the result would be, as one of my interviewees stated, “When onions sprout with a brown wooden shaft inside it is because they were harvested when the moon was with the strong. And that happens today, because now young people do not look to the moon; before it did not happen”.\textsuperscript{58}

When it comes to fertilizing the fields, all of the interviewees were in agreement that “fertilizer has to be applied with the strong of the moon, if it is not it creates crack and mould”.\textsuperscript{59} Anglés I Farrerons supports this assertion in the case of the Levant.\textsuperscript{60}

To prune trees, there is a proverb that all of the interviewees related to me. “After Saint Vincent (22\textsuperscript{nd} January) nor waning nor waxing”, which means that, after Saint Vincent, it does not matter when the pruning is done.\textsuperscript{61} When I asked the reason for this, one of the informants answered, “it is due to the fact that after Saint Vincent, the sap is more or less already at the top of the tree, and this makes it bleed no matter what, even so, if you want it to bleed less you prune with the waning, but it does not matter at that point”.\textsuperscript{62} But before Saint Vincent it is important to prune trees with the waning moon. This is especially important for pruning the ‘Xestas’ or \textit{Cytisius scoparius} (a kind of woody bush) for the vineyard, because “the vineyards before were made of wood, and there were no wire fences, that came later. So to do the vineyards you pruned the ‘Xestas’ with the waning moon in order not to leave the wood to season, with the waning moon they were resistant”.\textsuperscript{63} Enrique Bande supports the idea that pruning with the waning moon does not leave the wood to season, but he does not mention the proverb. In the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item My translation “Cuando lo que se pretende es el crecimiento de la parte vegetativa, tiene que ser plantada con la menguante”. J.M.B p. 85.
\item As cebolas cando lles medra como unha rama de madeira marrón por dentro, é por que foron recollidas coa forza da lúa, e iso antes non pasaba, sucede agora por que os xóvenes non mirades para a lúa, antes non pasaba.
\item O abono ten que ser pousado coa forza da lua, senon cuártease e colle barolo.
\item Anglés i Farrerons p. 53.
\item Despois de San Vicente nin minguante nin crecente
\item Débese a que despois de San Vicente mais ou menos a savia xa chegou acima da árbore, e este vai sangrar se o cortas, aínda así se o queres podar millor coa minguante por que sangra menos, pero xa non importa.
\item As viñas antes eran pura madeira e había que traer muita madeira, facíanse coa madeira da xesta, o alambrar as viñas e moi moderno, e podábase coa minguante para que non se apolillara, coa minguante aguantaba máis a madeira.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
case of the Canary Islands, Belmonte and Sanz Lara said that people also used the waning moon for this task.\textsuperscript{64,65}

To make wine, the interviewees said that the waning moon was crucial, as it influences the entire process. The first step should be to clean the barrels from the previous year, and this task should be performed with the waning moon. “The barrels to make the wine have to be cleaned with the waning moon, because if you do this with the strong of the moon, they get dry and mouldy and create a bad substance”.\textsuperscript{66} The next step is the grape harvest, “This is done with the waning preferably, because the grape has all the sugar, but if it is raining you grape the harvest with good weather, because you cannot wait for the waning or the grapes could be damaged”.\textsuperscript{67} Once this was done, at the end of grape harvest, “People put in the vineyard, a branch of a laurel”.\textsuperscript{68} Saint Martin of Dumio, in the “\textit{Correctione Rusticorum}” drew attention to this tradition of using branches of laurel.\textsuperscript{69} Next, to press or tread the grapes people used the waning moon: “it (wine) was made with the waning moon because then it would ferment well”.\textsuperscript{70} Decanting and bottling the wine were also done with the waning moon: “we bottle the wine with the waning moon, if you have a lot of bottles because they will hold up better”.\textsuperscript{71} The work of Angles I Farrerons only makes mention of the belief that the waning moon was considered important to the wine harvest.\textsuperscript{72} Belmonte and Lara Sanz note the influence of the waning moon on the grape harvest and on the decanting of the wine once it was made.

Another important aspect related to the moon and to the sun, the latter having been so far unmentioned, was the influence on crops attributed to an eclipse. There is no mention of eclipses in any of the literature reviewed. The people of Bueu refer to eclipses as “moon crises and solar crises”, a crisis being suggested by the apparent disappearance or deviation from the usual colour of the sun or the moon.\textsuperscript{73} The Galician anthropologist, Cristina Sánchez Carretero, told me that this terminology could be accounted for as example of popular

\textsuperscript{64} Bande Rodriguez p. 313.  
\textsuperscript{65} Belmonte and Sanz Lara p. 41.  
\textsuperscript{66} Os barris para facer o viño teñen que lavarse coa minguante, por que se o fas coa forza da lua, están secos igual pero aborolecidos e crían mala substancia  
\textsuperscript{67} Isto faise coa minguante preferiblemente por que así a uva ten todo o azucre. Pero se está chovendo as colles co bo tempo, porque senón se esperas as uvas botánse a perder.  
\textsuperscript{68} Cando se terminaba de vendimiar unha finca puñase unha rama de loureiro na finca.  
\textsuperscript{69} Saint Martin of Braga \textit{Correctione Rusticorum} p. 27.  
\textsuperscript{70} Facíase coa minguante para que fervera ben o viño  
\textsuperscript{71} Para embotellalo coa minguante, se tes muitas botellas por que aguanta máis.  
\textsuperscript{72} Angles I Farrerons p. 29.  
\textsuperscript{73} Crises de lúa e crises de sol.
etymology: people take one word that has a certain meaning for them and link it with a similar word with a different meaning. In the Galician language “eclipse” and “crise” sound similar.

According to my interviewees, eclipses are a bad sign and “solar crises are worse than lunar, because the day turns to night, they were longer and shorter [the terms longer and shorter refer to the difference between total and partial eclipses]. They were held to affect the crops in the sense that they could be accompanied by unusual winds which scorch the crops”.\(^{74}\)

When I asked my interviewees if they still believe in the influence of the moon, fifteen answered unequivocally “yes”; only one said “no”, despite recognising that the moon has an effect on wine. As one informant said, “if we did not follow the rules, it was very difficult to eat. Before we could not choose what we wanted to eat, the mission was to put food on the table, and eat”.\(^{75}\) This powerful idea of following these rules in order to increase the chances of survival is present in the work of Hesiod:

Strip to sow and strip to plough and strip to reap, if you wish to get in all Demeter’s fruits in due season, and that each kind may grow in its season. Else, afterwards, you may chance to be in want, and go begging to other men’s houses, but without avail; as you have already come to me. But I will give you no more nor give you further measure. Foolish Perses!\(^{76}\)

Regarding the question of why they think these practices are disappearing, my informants remembered that “life was a misery and younger people do not want to live like that anymore …Young people do not listen and they do not want to learn, they believe that it is just old stuff …With the chemical products for everything there is no need to see … Now as you have watches, television and the Internet you know everything”.\(^{77}\)

**Conclusion**

What, then, can it be concluded, is the influence of the inherited horticultural lore, based on the traditional cosmology of the region, on

\(^{74}\) As crises de sol son peores ca de lúa por que o día voltábase noite, as había mais largas e menos. Afectáballe os cultivos en que traen uns aires raros que queimaban moito as cosechas.

\(^{75}\) Senon seguíamos estas regras era moi difícil comer, antes non se podía escoller que querías comer, a misión era poner un plato enriba da mesa e comer.

\(^{76}\) Hesiod verse 388-392

\(^{77}\) Esa vida era unha mseria e a xente xoven non quere vivr diso nunca mais. A xente xoven non escuita e non quere aprender, eles cren que son cosas de vellos. Coa química para todo non fai falta nada. Agora como tendes reloxes, televisión e internet o sabedes todo.
agricultural practices in Bueu? In terms of Fernandez de Rota´s definition of cosmology given, at the beginning of this paper, it is clear that the sowing and harvesting of all crops and related agricultural tasks were planned and executed in line with the moon´s phases. It can therefore be said that the rhythm of the life of this agricultural community was dictated by the moon in line with the received wisdom of its members. This knowledge was considered essential by members of the community who were dependent on the food crops which they grew as fundamental survival tools. Consequently they inhabited an interactive cosmos as was evidenced by their responses to my questioning; they paid attention to the moon´s phases in order to live and farm in accordance with them. The moon´s phases drove the organization of their lives and their manner of pursuing their livelihoods.

It is regrettable that, with the exception of the work of Belmonte, there have been no other serious and scientific research projects conducted into traditional Spanish moon-related agricultural lore. This small case study has endeavoured to capture and report some small part of the hitherto unrecorded knowledge of a bounded community, in order to ensure its survival. It would be interesting to expand this investigation beyond its narrow focus on crop production to include the other areas mentioned above as having been thought susceptible to lunar influence, such as fishing, slaughtering pigs and human conception. It is to be hoped that further studies of all the above subjects to extend to the wider ethnoastronomy of the Galician region will be conducted in order to record variations between villages and judge whether, despite these, the inherited lunar lore conforms to an overarching regional cosmology or is separately devolved.

Future research should additionally consider the opinions of younger members of these communities to gauge whether this knowledge is in fact disappearing; and if this is found to be the case, to collect young people´s views on this subject.

Works cited
Anglés I Farrerons Josep Maria, Influencia de la Luna en la Agricultura y otros temas de principal interés (Madrid, Mundi-Prensa, 1993).


Belmonte Juan Antonio and Lara Sanz de Barrios Margarita, El Cielo de los Magos. (La Marea, Islas Canarias, 2001).


Hesiodo *Trabajos y los días* trans María Ángeles (Madrid, Alianza, 1998).


This is a qualitative research project in which, over a period of a month, I observed cloud types and patterns and explored how they impacted me. I took a phenomenological approach to creating my sky journal and recorded in text my reflexive considerations on the subject of clouds. The text was amplified with photographs and simple line drawings that illustrate, or have some relationship to, the topic. In order to place my observations into the context of this particular sky feature as a cultural resource, I also considered climactic sky myths, weather lore, cloud divination and examples from art, music, and literature.

Introduction

This essay describes a qualitative research project in which, over a period of a month, I kept a sky journal and used the sky as a primary document to observe cloud types and patterns and explore the impact they had on me. To enable me to place my observations into the context of this particular sky feature as a cultural resource, I consider climactic sky myths, weather lore, cloud divination and examples from art, music, and literature in my discussion. The personal background to my journal is a long-standing sense of awe at the ever-changing patterns and shapes in the clouds and my desire to assign meaning and significance to what I see. Also, I hoped that by observing clouds, I might learn more about cloud classification and meteorology. Literature that informed my thinking includes work by scholars, artists and folklorists and ranges from
Aristophanes comedy, The Clouds, written around 423 BCE, to the 21st century Cloud Appreciation Society’s blogs.¹

Methodology

I took a phenomenological approach towards the topic and recorded in text in my journal my reflexive considerations on the subject of clouds. The text was amplified with photographs and simple line drawings that illustrate, or have some relationship to, the topic. According to Dermot Moran, the function of phenomenological description is to focus on ‘…the structure and qualities of objects and situations as they are experienced by the subject.’² Further, Charlotte Aull Davies defines reflexivity as a ‘…turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference…’ - and the style of journal keeping I adopted is intrinsically an experiential, reflexive activity.³

My field notes were handwritten into a notebook and drawings were kept simple to enable the journal to be “accessible” for recording. My iPhone was used for photographs - again, as I find it to be an accessible device. I also used its voicemail facility to “capture” my thoughts when I was outdoors without my journal to widen my researcher perspective. Excerpts from the journal are


Sky Journal – excerpts from field notes and images

6th May 2013, 1-5 p.m.

Large, puffy clouds against increasingly larger patches of blue sky (see fig. 1). Sun to come? Want to find something to be happy about (my mother died on 7th April). Thinking about phrase “blue sky thinking”. This cloudless blue sky lifts my mood, suggests possibility. Often associate clouds with trouble/low mood. Weighing up likelihood of rain and need to paint shed. Don’t know enough yet about what these clouds indicate, won’t paint today.

Fig. 1. Clouds from garden, 4 p.m.

Fig. 2. Cloud “word cloud”.

10th May 2013, 7 a.m.

Light grey sky, no clouds. Aware intensely of garden smells and birdsong. Birds and other animals seem to be able to predict weather. Swifts flying very low. Can I learn to predict weather by smell? Thinking about who lived here before us in this cottage. Mill workers working at the flourmill down the road. What they observed in the sky would have a different importance to them. Rain clouds would have meant swollen river and provided water. What’s my cultural view of clouds? Do they affect my working day?

11th May 2013.

Scattered mum’s ashes today at stone circle near her house. Dark grey skies full of rain clouds making it all even harder to bear. Our tears are like the rain. Some ashes rise into the air, some fall to the ground. Will she become part of the clouds? When it rains will she come back to earth? Druids believed clouds were made of souls, holding this in mind as I cast her ashes.
13th May 2013, 7.45 a.m.
Constable painted over 100 cloud scenes on Hampstead Heath. A true cloud-lover! He called clouds the chief organ of sentiment. Who appreciates clouds in this way today? Dark clouds move quickly against the windy sky (see fig. 3). The birds are frantic, flying back and forth. I’m feeling a sense of foreboding/unease. What’s to come?

Fig. 3. Clouds through conservatory roof, 8.20 a.m.

The heavens open, rain pours down. Huge puddles form reflecting the clouds; always the sky is on the earth. Feeling frustrated with my narrow view of the sky from garden, go out onto road to see the whole weather drama unfolding.

14th May 2013, 2.06 p.m.
Wow, Saint Andrews crosses in the sky (see fig. 4)! Wonderful saltires, Alex Salmond (Scotland’s First Minister) would love this! Cirrus clouds streaking
across the sky at different altitudes. Pictish king Angus saw a cross like this the day before battle over the Northumbrian Angles. He took it as a good omen. He won the battle.

Fig. 4. Clouds from garden, 2.06 p.m.

16th May 2013, 8.58 a.m.
Thinking about religious images of clouds, paper “scraps” from childhood of cherubs on fluffy clouds, images in my Rohan Book of Hours. These were the clouds I recognised when I was young. “Cloud angel” seen in sky in Florida on day new pope was named. Our brains are so wired up to recognise/seek faces and other humanlike patterns we find them everywhere. Cirrocumulus clouds - deteriorating weather (see fig. 5)? Weather proverbs about mackerels’ scales/mares’ tails.
17th May 2013, 7.30 a.m.
Rain last night. Long, thin layers of clouds like strips of cotton wool, stratocumulus (see fig. 6)? Boundaries between cloud types constantly changing.
Have started taking pictures on walk to work, want to see a bigger sky, feel expansive not constricted? Want to notice changing weather fronts and cloud patterns, be more intellectually satisfied?

19th May 2013, 8.30 p.m.

Looking at mythology attached to clouds- Greek, Celtic, etc. They’ve been important in many cultures. What are my Scottish cloud stories? Sky overcast. An enveloping blanket, no definition between sky and earth. Birdsong seems different when sky’s overcast, more plaintive/mournful or am I projecting my emotion onto birds and sky?

20th May 2013, 9.30 p.m.

Overcast sky. Feeling frustrated, sky isn’t offering me anything. I want it to perform, produce interesting cloud shapes, entertain. I make my own
entertainment and brainstorm cloud sayings: Have your head in the clouds, have your judgement clouded, every cloud has a silver lining, under a cloud (of suspicion), living in cloud-cuckoo land. We can’t use clouds to mark time in way we can with e.g. planets. They can’t be appropriated in this way, maybe watching them is aimless? Allows me to relax.

21st May 2013, 9.45 p.m.

Less overcast sky but after watching devastation wrecked by Oklahoma typhoon feel grateful for my boring sky. Interesting that all the storm chasers and weather forecasters didn’t see that one coming. The sky can always surprise us.

22nd May 2013, 8.15 a.m.

On walk to work took pictures minutes apart of very different clouds, amazing how quickly they shape-shift (see figs. 7-9).

Fig. 7. Clouds from Old Church Lane, 8.15 a.m.
Fig. 8. Clouds from Old Church Lane, 8.18 a.m.

Fig. 9. Clouds from Queens Drive, 8.38 a.m.
Decided to stop trying to work out what kind of cloud I’m seeing and just enjoy the view. Let my imagination and creative self have free rein and just look and see what I could see. So this is what I saw: 2 fish, a swan, an eagle, a curled cat. Wondering about their relationship to some astrological signs/constellations/archetypes and how the shapes we see in the sky may be determined by our culture/individual interests, etc. (I often see animals or objects from nature).

Fig. 10. Scan of sky journal, 22nd May 2013.

25th May 2013.

Today I’ll take pictures of full moon. Will the Edinburgh moon appear to me tonight? Just now sky is clear, bright blue. Birds singing heartily and the shepherds will be delighted!
12.45 a.m.

Voice message to self, ‘Walking back from dinner at friends’ but no sign of moon! Where is she?’ Thought of terror Aztecs felt when sun disappeared during eclipse. And then walking through park suddenly there she was! Nestling on Arthur’s Seat. Just in time I got pictures - they don’t do justice (see fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Full moon from Holyrood Park, 12.45 a.m.

26th May 2013, 6 p.m.

Posted 2 pics from last night on HD Facebook page. Some great ones from other people. Odd that they can all look so different yet it’s the same moon and it’s connected to us all through our shared observing. Feels like we’ve participated in a moon conversation, a heavenly discourse. All day clouds have been filling the sky with patches of blue peeping through occasionally – stratocumulus, I think. Blue sky is where “pockets of cold air are beginning to sink” (p. 35 PCB). Book also says they’re most common clouds on earth but for me they’re still beautiful as they move in a stately motion across the sky.
27th May 2013, 7.45 a.m.

Little cumulus clouds coming in from the west, scudding across the windy sky. Haven’t heard of scudding referring to anything other than clouds, ships or waves. Are there any other cloud-specific words? Love that ‘scud’ comes from O.E. ‘scut’ for rabbit’s tail. Sometimes they look just like lots of little rabbits scampering about.

28th May 2013, 8.20 a.m.

Layers of stratus nebulosus clouds fill sky, weather moving in from west. Can see how the phrase “feeling under the weather” relates to grey/gloomy skies. Pentland Hills have a cap of clouds (see fig. 13). Difficult to look up and feel inspired or cheered by the sky today.
30th May 2013, 6 p.m.

Clouds of all shapes and sizes, constantly morphing and moving. Feeling like the whole universe is dancing and I’m a fixed point on the earth. But the earth is moving, spinning, rotating through space. Stand in wonder watching the skies...

2nd June 2013, 3.30 p.m.

Out walking South Edinburgh – big blue sky and try to take photo of little fluffy cotton wool cumulus clouds when I glance behind me and see another kind of Jacob’s ladder. Sun’s brightness means I can’t get a good photo. Struggle trying to for a minute or so then just gaze at the sky in wonder. Crepuscular rays by any other name? At this moment, “Jacob’s ladder” describes the moment and the image better.
3rd June 2013, 2.30 p. m.
Watching clouds in central Edinburgh, part of the cityscape (see fig. 15).
4th June 2013, 11.35 a. m.

Was unsure when exactly to end a month of observing. There are no clouds to be seen right now so feels like time to stop. Somehow this encapsulates their elusiveness. So final picture is of a cloudless blue sky (see fig.16). But in a few minutes it could all look so different...
Discussion

I kept a journal for one month, from 6th May to 4th June 2013. My intention was to observe clouds from a particular location - a northwest facing garden at the back of my house in Edinburgh. During the process of keeping the journal my intention and ideas inevitably evolved and I widened my “lens”; these developments are illustrated by journal entries. A favourite song of mine, very much in my mind during my observations, was Little Fluffy Cloud by The Orb. The first line - ‘What were the skies like when you were young?’ - was a question I found myself reflecting on often, and remembered lying on my back with friends, spotting shapes in the clouds.

The following discussion attempts to place my fieldwork in the context of the sky as a cultural resource. As I observed how the various cloud types and patterns impacted me - both psychologically in terms of mood and practically regarding what weather was in store - I explored material on climactic sky myths, weather lore and cloud divination and found examples from art, music and literature.

Tim Ingold suggests that the aim of observing clouds is, ‘...not to view the furniture of the sky but to catch a fleeting glimpse of a sky-in-formation, never the same from one moment to the next.’\(^5\) Throughout my reflexive, phenomenological observations I attempted what Moran describes as an ‘...unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to consciousness...’, no matter how transitory the experience.\(^6\) My fieldwork stands alongside work by other individual observers of clouds, such as Kelly DeLay, whose Clouds 365 project was begun in 2009 and who has been photographing clouds every day since; and fieldwork by the Cloud Appreciation Society, founded in 2005, a mass observation project which has over 32,000 members worldwide.\(^7\) Some of the Society’s members, however, appear to observe sporadically rather than for a sustained period of time, unlike in my project.

Observations by others of cloud shapes and patterns may be found in literature. In Aristophanes’ comedy, The Clouds, Socrates asks Strepsiades: ‘Have you ever gazed up there and seen a cloud shaped like a centaur, or a leopard, wolf, or bull?’\(^8\) Shakespeare’s characters muse in a similar vein; in Antony and Cleopatra, Antony comments, ‘Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish; a vapour sometime like a bear or lion.’\(^9\) In Hamlet, Polonius agrees that a certain cloud is ‘Very like a whale.’\(^10\) This echoes my own speculations about the various animal shapes I saw and what meanings they held for me.

There have been many efforts, similar to mine, to describe and predict meteorological and mundane events through cloud observation. In the Meteorologica, Aristotle elucidates his theories on meteorology, including the formation of rain, clouds, wind and lightning, and asserts - ‘It is concerned with events that are natural, though their order is less perfect than that of the first of the elements of bodies. They take place in the region nearest to the motion of the

\(^7\) DeLay, *Clouds 365*; *Cloud Appreciation*.
\(^8\) Aristophanes, *The Clouds*.
stars.’ 11 The Assyrian omen collection, the Enuma anu Enlil, describes the observation of clouds to predict weather changes and how they may affect the king - ‘If the sun is surrounded by a halo and a cloud bank lies to the right, there will be catastrophe everywhere in the country.’ 12 My observation that impending bad weather may be forecast in bird behaviour corroborates the views of Aratus in his Phenomena - ‘Oft before a gale the wild ducks or sea-wheeling gulls beat their wings on the shore.’ 13 Irish druids practiced cloud divination and examples occur in a number of medieval Irish texts, in particular the late Middle Irish tale, Acallam na Senórach. 14 For instance, when Fionn says to Càinnelsciath - ‘Over the hostel I see three clouds brightly. Tell everyone what the explanation for it is, if it be allowed?’ 15 More recently, in Ghost riding, poet Robert Edgar Burns comments on seeing a cowboy shape in the clouds, ‘This never is a good sign, so I tried to ride away’. 16 Perhaps Burns saw, as I did with the saltires, what was culturally familiar to him.

During my observations I noted that weather lore is usually local, based on community observations rather than scientific measurement. There are many current Scottish proverbs relating to rain clouds over hills, which often produce valid predictions, for example, ‘When Cheviot ye see put on his cap, of rain ye’ll have a wee bit drap’. 17 Some weather lore appears more universally accepted, in particular lore relating to a red sky in the morning - described in Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis - ‘Like a red morn that ever yet betokened, wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field.’ 18 However, the Gaelic proverb, ‘Tha’n cat’s an luatli, tliig frasan fuar’ (The cat is in the ashes, cold showers are coming), is perhaps less universally reliable. 19 Exploring Manilius’ use of multiple explanations in the Astronomica, Daryn Lehoux comments, ‘Reason does not supplant myth’; perhaps we prefer our familiar myths and lore, even when they fly in the face of reason. 20

---

11 Aristotle, Meteorology.
12 Van Soldt, Solar omens, p. 128.
13 Aratus, Phenomena.
14 Williams, Druids.
15 Williams, Druids.
17 Inwards, Weather Lore, p.62.
As the journal excerpts show, I am interested in the impact clouds may have on mood and I concur with Ken Bushe’s view that clouds have ‘...a character as distinct and complex as we do ourselves. They affect our mood and our daily lives.’\(^\text{21}\) I like the comparison by Gavin Pretor-Pinney, of the Cloud Appreciation Society, of clouds to ink blot images; we are free to let our imagination project anything we want onto them.\(^\text{22}\) In various mythologies there are stories of deities who preside over weather such as Indra, the Indian god of rain and thunderstorms, and Tlaloc, the Aztec god of lightning and rain.\(^\text{23}\) Some deities, such as the Greek nymph Nephele, are themselves clouds.\(^\text{24}\) I wanted to find a Celtic weather deity on whom I could project the blame for Edinburgh’s overcast skies. I chose the Cailleach who rules over weather forecasting and is said to live on nearby Arthur’s Seat.\(^\text{25}\) I observed that my moods were affected depending on whether the sky was overcast or cloudless and that I, in turn, projected my mood onto the sky. Similarly, David Abram suggests anger may have come from our ‘...ancestral, animal experience of thunderstorms...’ and tears, ‘...by our experience of rainfall’.\(^\text{26}\) There were days when I felt that the dark clouds validated my own low mood and a blue sky would have seemed discordant. Perhaps the transitory nature of clouds gives hope that all things pass and that there may be sunny times ahead.

**Conclusion**

This essay describes a qualitative research project in which I observed clouds for a month and explored their impact on me. I have attempted to place my observations into the context of this particular sky feature as a cultural resource by considering climactic sky myths, weather lore, cloud divination and examples from art and music.

Adopting a phenomenological, reflexive approach enabled me to enjoy gazing at the ever-changing patterns and shapes that clouds conjure up, as well as to note the meaning and significance I attached to what I saw and the impact it had on me. Initially I was also interested in learning more about cloud

\(^{24}\) Ovid, *Fasti*, p. 184.
classification and meteorology but as my observations proceeded, the psychological impact rather than the forecasting aspects of cloud watching became more meaningful. Based on the examples I have presented I conclude that the activity of cloud watching may be universal and long-standing. I had a feeling of loss as I concluded my journal and a sense of what David Abram calls, ‘...our yearning for engagement with the more-than-human otherness.’ 27 I have decided therefore to keep observing clouds and hope for frequent cloudy skies.

**Works cited**


---


Reviewed by Anna Estaroth

This is the first English translation of Barbault’s 2006 book, originally entitled L’Astrologie Certifiée [Connaissances, Statistiques & Prévisions] (Knowledge, Statistics & Forecasting). The translation by Kate Johnston is superb: Barbault is extremely erudite, using his knowledge of the French language to elaborate subtle nuances and succinctly express complex issues. It makes you pause and contemplate the full significance of what he says.

This book has a bit of everything: he extrapolates useful ideas from the early history of astrology; from natural to genethliacal, from Mesopotamia to Mesoamerica. He considers peak astrological progress through Hellenistic times to the Renaissance and throughout Europe, describing those for, and against, astrological philosophy, while picking apart the arguments of astrology’s detractors.

Illustrating his point with quotations from Ptolemy’s Tetrabiblos (Dr Doreen Greenbaum aided the choice of English translation) he reminds us that ‘the science of astronomical certainty and astrological conjecture shouldn’t be confused.’

is Barbault’s extensive knowledge of European philosophical thought that ties together the scholarly tradition, as he explores the works of Morin, Brache, Kepler, Krafift and Descartes, amongst others. He explains how the psychological character of astrology was ‘sacrificed for the benefit of external reality,’ then proceeds to explain how astrology’s perspective is compatible with 21st century physics, from ‘biological clocks’ to ‘chronogenetics.’

His section on statistical analyses is comprehensive; discussing the works of Michel Gauquelin, Paul Choisnard and Didier Castille, he takes us further in. He describes the relevance of hereditary similarities and places this firmly in Plotinus’ philosophical framework of ‘sympathetic action’ and ‘harmonic correspondence.’

Barbault favours demystifying astrological forecasting and focuses on mundane cycles. Citing examples, from his pioneering published predictions of détente during Sun-Jupiter conjunctions, he describes the resolution of major world conflicts of the 20th century as well as the roles of larger cycles such as Saturn/Neptune.

He also explores the psycho-analytical approach: by projection we ‘anthropomorphise’ the stars, and by introjection we ‘cosmomorphise mankind.’ This section is most poetic – writing about instincts he says “it is in this dark night of the being that ‘astral determinism’ lies.” A chapter is devoted to fate and free will.

Discussing the metaphysical rationale for astrology he delineates the effects of the environment, to neutralise, or amplify, innate character and asks if liberty is an illusion; concluding that enhancing potential is a valid astrologer’s role.

Barbault even ventures into possible pitfalls in practicing astrology, recommending simple, realistic language during consultations, which he describes as voyages of discovery. Using the four elements to access the ‘soul’ of the artist, his expert portrayal of Pablo Picasso’s birth chart is intriguing.

Finally he pleads eloquently for astrology to be taken seriously in the 21st century. This book does not attempt to summarise Barbault’s considerable expertise, but it provides fresh avenues of thought and a much-needed scholarly approach to a neglected subject in the academy.

Anna Estaroth is currently studying for the MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at the University of Wales, Trinity St David. She has a B Sc in psychology and is a Fellow of the Association of Professional Astrologers International.
Pluto, Lord of the Underworld: an analysis

by Sanaa Tanha

The following comparative textual analysis of primary sources follows Pluto’s mythical footsteps through cultures and history – from Mesopotamian Inana’s descent to the Netherworld, to Greek Demeter’s search for her daughter Persephone who was abducted by Hades into “the misty realms of darkness”, and to Plato’s etymological analysis of the name Hades. The findings are measured against 20th century astrologer Dane Rudhyar’s descriptions of the astrological Pluto in order to ascertain to what extent his portrayal is true to form. This analysis posits that the “Lord of the Underworld” and his realm are elusive and occult; that the dead are seeds of abundance and new life; that Pluto’s words enchant and transform; and that in the Underworld, everyone is equal. Furthermore, this study conjectures that Rudhyar’s astrological Pluto not only treads in Hades’ mythical footsteps - but overcomes them.

Introduction

This paper explores three of the titles bestowed upon the mythological Pluto - “The one known by many names”\(^1\); “Plouton - the giver of wealth”\(^2\); and “The one who receives many guests”.\(^3\) To this end, a comparative textual analysis of three ancient and three modern primary sources was undertaken. The examined texts are: the Homeric Hymn to Demeter (8th century B.C.E.)\(^4\); Plato’s etymological analysis of the name “Hades” in Cratylus, (4th century B.C.E.)\(^5\); the Mesopotamian epic of Inana’s Descent to the Nether World (c. 1900-1600 B.C.E.)\(^6\);
and three articles about the astrological Pluto written by the 20th century astrologer Dane Rudhyar.7

The rationale for the inclusion of the Mesopotamian myth is Bernadette Brady’s argument that the Greek myth of Pluto’s abduction of Persephone (the subject of the Hymn to Demeter) so strongly parallels the Mesopotamian myth of Inana’s visit to the underworld, that there is a great possibility that it is a “male rewrite” of the latter and Nicholas Campion’s suggestion that although those suffering from “Western Hellenophilia” prefer to view Greek myth as self-generated in Greece, there is increasing evidence of Mesopotamian influences on ancient Greek culture and mythology.8 This paper concentrates on some of the earliest extant writings on Pluto and on one of the most important astrologers of the 20th century, who witnessed the astronomical discovery of the planet Pluto in 1930, and notably contributed to its consequent incorporation into the astrological pantheon.9 Additionally, scholarly work by Carl Kerenyi and Mara Lynn Keller on the Eleusinian mysteries (ancient Greek mystery rites honouring Demeter, Persephone and Pluto) is taken into consideration, as well as Johanna Stuckey’s study of Inana’s epic and Jane E. Harrison’s study of the Olympian Hades.10

A primary concern of this analysis is to gather insights into the nature of the mythological and astrological Pluto and his realm, through the contrasting of ancient and modern sources. Another aim is to ascertain to what extent Rudhyar - one of the pioneers who shaped the astrological Pluto - reflected some of the

9 Rudhyar, Pluto.
earliest recorded mythology on Pluto through his writings. The third aim is to investigate in what measure an examination of the Eleusinian mysteries can shed light on the “Lord of the Underworld”.

**The one known by many names**

“The one known by many names” is one of Pluto’s titles in the *Hymn to Demeter*. To the ancient Greeks, *Hades* was the name of both the Lord of the Underworld and of the Underworld itself and Plato affirms that “...most people think that this [Hades] is a name of the Invisible (ἀειδής), so they are afraid and call him Pluto.”\(^{11}\) It appears that his “real” name was largely avoided and he was usually referred to indirectly by aliases and titles. He is named as *Hades* only six times in the entire Hymn, being invoked as “He” or by his formal titles throughout the rest of the text.\(^{12}\) Furthermore, his character is veiled, elusive, and of the six times that *Hades* is mentioned more informally, he is described in terms that allude to invisibility and furtiveness: he is depicted as giving Persephone, “…stealthily, the honey-sweet berry of the pomegranate to eat, peering around him...” and we are told that he “smiled with his brows” - which translates, according to Nagy, as “smiled knowingly”.\(^{13}\)

In the same vein, the Eleusinian rites themselves were shrouded in mystery, and Demeter refers to “…the holy ritual, which it is not at all possible to ignore, to find out about, or to speak out.”\(^{14}\) In agreement with this last, Kerenyi writes of ceremonies that nobody could “describe or utter” and Keller notes that the mysteries’ “mystical insight” was beyond words.\(^{15}\) Moreover, the entrance to Pluto’s underworld realm at Eleusis was one of the very few recognised entrances to Hades in the ancient world. Harrison quotes Pausanias who claimed that the people of Eleusis were the “only known worshippers of *Hades.*”\(^{16}\) The Mesopotamian epic of Innana’s Descent reflects the mysteries at Eleusis and is also reflective of the stealth of the Olympian *Hades*, and of the invisibility of his realm. Inanna is repeatedly admonished: “…you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld.”\(^{17}\)

From the above, it can be deduced that both Pluto and the rites that surrounded him were occult (invisible, hidden); and accordingly, Rudhyar associated the Plutonic realm with “occultism in its true character” - as opposed

---

11 Nagy, *Demeter*, [18], Note 1; Plato, *Cratylus* [403a].
12 Nagy, *Demeter*, [2], [78], [84], [347], [357], [376].
13 Nagy, *Demeter*, [371-374], [357-358], Note 42.
14 Nagy, *Demeter*, [477-480].
to what is commonly understood by the term - describing it as “cosmic depth-psychology”. Rudhyar further compared the “Plutonian descent” to the process of individuation, as formulated in Jungian analysis, and added that it should not only lead to a personal “centering” but, more importantly, to the “permanent realm of the Self”. Summing up the foregoing, it could be argued that Hades’ title, “The one known by many names”, is particularly fitting, since cunning Pluto (in Rudhyar’s words) “...merely reflects one’s own hidden face...”

Plouton - The Giver of Wealth

In contrast to the furtive and deathly image conjured above, Hades was often invoked as Plouton (the Roman Pluto), and Plato tells us that he was known as “...the giver of wealth (πλούτος) [Plouton], because wealth comes up from below out of the earth.” Kerenyi likewise finds that the Eleusinian mysteries were surrounded by “names and images of wealth”. In parallel, the creatures that were sent to retrieve Inana from the underworld were offered a “river with its water” and a “field with its grain” instead of Inana’s corpse – referring to which, Stuckey asserts that fertility was of the underworld and that the dead were “seeds of new life”. In line with this, Rudhyar writes of the astrological Pluto as associated with “the abundant life”, “the life full of seed”, and states that “...in the seed rests [...] the mystery of immortality.” It would appear that the association of the underworld with the fertility and abundance of nature is solidly supported by Mesopotamian and Greek mythologies as well as by Rudhyar’s work.

But another aspect of the concept of abundance can be glimpsed in Plato’s words when he asserts that, according to him, the word Hades “...is not in the least derived from the invisible (ἀειδές), but far more probably from knowing (εἰδέναι) all noble things...” Plato adds that Hades is a “perfect sophist”, and is called Plouton - the abundant - because “... so beautiful, [...] are the words which Hades has the power to speak...” In turn, Rudhyar asserts that both Mercury and Pluto refer to the mind and while the astrological Mercury represents the individual mind, the astrological Pluto represents “the mind of the human species”. In the Hymn, Hermes (the Roman Mercury) is sent to the Underworld to convince

18 Rudhyar, Galactic.
19 Rudhyar, Galactic.
20 Rudhyar, Galactic.
21 Plato, Cratylus, [403a].
22 Kerenyi, Eleusis, p. 31.
24 Rudhyar, Pluto.
25 Plato, Cratylus [404b].
26 Plato, Cratylus [404a].
27 Rudhyar, Planets.
Pluto, “with gentle words”, to permit Persephone to leave “the misty realms of darkness”.

Hermes’ characteristics of agility and intelligence, reflected in his title Argos-killer (the form argos conveys “swiftness and brightness”), are mirrored in the two small and flitting creatures that the Mesopotamian God Enki sends to redeem Inana from the underworld.

Considering the above, it could be argued that the Greek Hermes and the two agile Mesopotamian creatures represent the same notion of the quick, practical, individual mind – the astrological Mercury – and furthermore, that Mercury and Pluto are bound together in a significant relationship as two aspects of the mind. According to Rudhyar, “Pluto’s Great Work”, is the “…revelation of oneself to oneself in every remotest part of one’s being…” It could, therefore, be suggested that both within Plato’s philosophy and Rudhyar’s cosmology, the wealth ascribed to Pluto is not only material, but also spiritual: the implication would seem to be that piercing intelligence and unadorned wisdom combined with the power of the word, of logos, can operate change in the common human condition.

The One Who Receives Many Guests

In the Hymn to Demeter, Pluto is obliquely referred to as “The one who receives many guests” - a delicate way of naming “all-devouring” death. The question of grief is a central theme in the Hymn, and Demeter is depicted at various times as sitting unmoving and silent, mourning for her daughter Persephone – “For a long time she sat on the stool, without uttering a sound, in her sadness.” Keller writes of Demeter’s “sense of inexplicable loss” and of the “ritual identification” with her grief that the participants in the Mysteries had to undergo. Concurrently, Inana, who had to accept the ruling of Ereshkigal (the Mesopotamian goddess of death) in the underworld, became the “afflicted woman”, who “…was turned into a corpse. And the corpse was hung on a hook.” From this evidence, it could be surmised that the grief of the encounter with the Plutonic realm turns the living into simulacra of corpses – dark, silent, unmoving – in a ritual identification with death.

---

28 Nagy, Demeter, [335-337].
29 Nagy, Demeter, Note 39; Black et al, Inana, [226-235].
30 Rudhyar, Pluto.
31 Nagy, Demeter, [404]; Kerenyi, Eleusis, p. 16.
32 Nagy, Demeter, [98], [100], [197-199].
33 Kerenyi, Eleusis, p. 38, Keller, Fertility, p. 51.
34 Black et al, Inana, [164-172].
In Cratylus, Plato asserts that humans are “...terrified because the soul goes to him [Pluto] without the covering of the body.” In fact, in both Demeter's and Inana's case, the “Plutonian descent” is accompanied by a shedding of garments and personal decorations in a possible analogy to the shedding of the body in death: we are told that Demeter tore off her headband (which identified her as a goddess) and shrouded herself in a “dark cloak”; while Inana was forced to shed a piece of clothing at every successive gate to the underworld until she “crouched down” naked. Unerringly, Rudhyar writes of the “Plutonian process of total denudation”, and argues that its essential task is to constrain us to “...plumb as profound a depth of human experience as our mental, affective, and spiritual condition can withstand.” Furthermore, Rudhyar writes of “the Void” which this process leads to, where the “scattered fragments” of the person's old self are rearranged – and concludes that “...Pluto is the ultimate Integrator.”

The process of “total denudation”, which deprives humans of all the symbols of identity and status, would appear to – again, in a caricature of death - cancel the differences between people in a great democratic sweep. Kerenyi quotes Vettius Agorius Praetextatus who stated that the Eleusinian mysteries were thought to “hold the entire human race together”. Rudhyar asserts that the “descent to hell” thrusts the individual into “the common and the undifferentiated”, and cancels all pretension of individuality. Considering the above, the title “The one who receives many guests”, could be taken as an indication of Pluto's generosity in playing host (“Ultimate Integrator”) at such a communal feast and allowing mortals to taste the fruits of deep Plutonian transformation.

**Conclusion**

Plato’s etymological analysis of the name *Hades* opened fruitful venues for exploration; in particular, the identification of Pluto’s powers as a “perfect sophist”, which appears to have influenced Rudhyar's recognition of Pluto as the “mind of the human species” - as opposed to the individual mind - and in bringing to light Pluto's significant relationship with Hermes/Mercury. Rudhyar's writings on the astrological Pluto have been amply supported by the examined mythological material, and his intuitions have proven to be based on a profound understanding of the mythology in question – it could be argued that he has

---

35 Plato, *Cratylus* [403b].
37 Rudhyar, *Galactic*.
38 Rudhyar, *Galactic*.
40 Rudhyar, *Galactic*.
driven the Plutonic myth to its ultimate conclusions and firmly embedded it in the “modern times”. Furthermore, Kerenyi’s and Keller’s studies of the Eleusinian Mysteries correlated with the findings of the analysis of the primary sources. Also, Brady's and Campion's arguments on the probable Mesopotamian seeding of Greek mythology were loosely confirmed by the comparative analysis of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and of *Inana’s Descent to the Nether World* – although a more thorough and lengthy comparative study would be more conclusive.

The “Plutonian Descent” was seen to be accompanied by grief and mourning, which seem to transform the living into simulacra of corpses in a ritual identification with death - as does the process of “total denudation” which follows a “descent to hell” and which strips away identity and status to arrive at the common and undifferentiated – in Pluto's realm, everyone is equal. However, Pluto's generosity could prove hard to appreciate - loss, grief, “the Void”, disintegration of the personality; and then, (hopefully) an arduous ascent from hell to a new and integrated life. To conclude, within the examined primary sources, the “Lord of the Underworld” has been found to be an elusive and paradoxical figure suspended between invisibility and ruthlessness, between base cunning and sublime wisdom and between the stench of decaying bodies and the seeds of new life.

**Works cited**


Rudhyar, Dane, “Pluto and the Experience of Depth, Void and Recentering”, in *The Galactic Dimension of Astrology: The Sun Is Also A Star*, Aurora Press, 2004


This paper is based on a Sky Journal I kept during the Spring and Summer of 2013. It focuses on the experience and exploration of the summer sky in Amsterdam, and the thoughts and associations that emerged from reflection upon those experiences. Long days and short summer nights lend themselves well to an examination of the promise of summer itself in a wider cultural context. The paper argues that both space and summer can serve as creative repositories for imaginary flights, and can be used both metaphorically as well as synecdoche.

In a world in which Daniela Bertol suggests that stargazing has been replaced by Internet images, and where our direct connection with cosmological events and nature itself has been lost; the initial aim of my sky journal was to explore the heavens and orientate myself in the night sky.\(^1\) However, despite Norman Davidson’s bold claim that all we need to do is “step outside, and look upwards” in order to be filled with natural wonder, and rediscover our direct personal experience of the universe; in reality, inner city night skies can be frustrating, refusing to open up and reveal anything much at all.\(^2\) Poor weather conditions during the period my journal was kept brought about a change in focus as I began to free myself of preconceived ideas; and I engaged with space and sky as it presented itself to me. This opening up brought about a relationship that focused more on the summer itself, and skies that have a whimsical sense of promise attached to them. This paper explores the sky in relationship to ancient and modern concepts of space; and asks whether summer skies and space can serve as creative repositories for imaginary flights that can be used both metaphorically and as synecdoche. It also looks specifically at the role the sky plays in creating the idea of summer.

---

Methodology

The primary source in this paper is the sky. My sky journal is autoethnographic and the research is qualitative, placing an emphasis on personal experience and meaning derived from that experience. The writing phase of the project commenced on May 21, however selected photographs taken with an Iphone camera, between May 4th and July 12th, are included. These sky images capture moments that the sky chose to impress itself upon me, and though there is no accompanying text, they do have a voice of their own. Sarah Pink notes that visual representations sometimes unexpectedly become part of an ethnographic project and claims their inclusion should be creatively developed and “considered an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work.” The qualitative researcher can be described as a bricoleur; deploying whatever methods and empirical materials are available, and if necessary invent or piece together new tools or technique. The first section of the paper consists of actual journal entries while the second, reflects on the experience and places the journal in a wider a cultural context.

Sky Journal Entries

On the evening of May 21st 2013, I somewhat hesitantly looked out of a small, west facing bedroom window, on the second floor of my apartment in Amsterdam. I had been photographing the sky for some weeks, but as yet had no idea how to interview the sky.

---

May, 21st: 23.00 hours: “Cold wind, zero visibility, heavy grey clouds and no sight of the Moon. Viewed the sky twice, and only by using the ‘Night Sky’ app on my iphone, was I able to see that the Moon had moved position.”

May 22, 07.20: “Same tonal grey, though lighter, the evenness of the colour is striking, looking closer I see in fact that darker clouds - quite spread out – are moving across a light grey backdrop. This does not make me feel happy!!”

10.15: “A stiff cold breeze and yet there is sun!! Several layers of cloud around the border of the skyline range in colour, dark grey underbelly – to white and fluffy at the top. The upper part of the dome like sky is blue – with only an occasional wisp of cloud.”

11.38: “All change. Blue has totally disappeared now, lighter grey patches taken over by darker grey extended streaks of cloud – wind – everything moving.”

12.21: “All change. Above blue sky are visible-shafts of sunlight – as the sun dodges the many clouds. Clear blue holes open up some keyhole like, others part of a much larger expanse of blue. The clouds are white in the higher part of the heaven, darker around my horizon line. Clouds move quickly, blue disappearing in some zones, very quickly yet now the sun emerges from behind a cloud and I instantly feel warmth and heat on my skin – even from inside, behind a window. Large darker cloud removes the sun from view, yet the general feeling
is lighter even for that one small opening of blue. Now, only seconds later, blue is disappearing fast. Much less blue. Smokey grey, dark grey everywhere. “

12.28 “Suddenly feels like rain – Just as I need to go out!!”

22.10 “After the rush and movement of the day, with threatening rain clouds and weather changing fast, the sky now looks and feels completely still!! Even though sun has set – area of the sky in that region is lighter than the rest.”

24 May, 2013 Image 3: “Autumn Continues” Het Parool
May 24, 00.32: “Good view of the Moon which I have watched rising since around 23.10 yesterday evening. I think that the planet to the left might be Saturn. Satellite program says so and the bright star higher up is Arcturus in the constellation Boötes. Through my little window right ahead, herring like clouds.”

Image 4: 23 May, 23.21, Full Moon

30 May 2013: “What is striking about the clouds is that they are constantly moving and changing. Here cirrus clouds against a clear blue backdrop promise fair weather, yet there on the horizon and moving along, nimbus clouds lay claim to the sky and threaten a walk, an outing with rain. This movement reminds me of Heraclitus: “They do not step into the same rivers. It is other and still other...
waters that are flowing,” or as Sri Aurobindo put it “All is in flux, for all is change.”6 I might take the sun’s rising between two-windows diagonally left of my own window as a permanent marker… While the houses remain fixed, the heaven’s above move on. Heraclitus wrote: “every day it is a new sun that rises;” Aurobindo: “but if the sun is always new, it exists only by change from moment to moment like all things in Nature, still it is the same ever living Fire that rises with each Dawn.”7 Have discovered a new word, pareidolia: seeing faces in clouds.”

Image 5: Seeing Faces in Clouds


7 Heraclitus, Fragments, fragment 20; Aurobindo.

57 SPICA ------------ BEGINNING • CONTENTS
Image 6: Fast Moving Clouds  May 31st

Image 7: June 2nd Early Sunday Morning Walk
June 4th 04.30 “The dawn chorus.” “All is morning hush, and bird beautiful”.8

June 5th, 05.17 Rose Fingered Dawn

08.10 “Sun has risen. Boring block of flats! Can see a strong halo of light coming from behind them...the street is lit up by the sun’s rays even though it has not visibly risen above the buildings alongside mine. Roofs are illuminated. Shadow on the square.”

June 7: 03.55 “The sky is a deep dark blue. Though the street lights are still on, it is clearly early morning. I hear the occasional vehicle in the distance. After 4 am, a solitary bird began to sing – this went on for ages. By 5.15, this had stopped.”
June 10th: “Bernadette mentioned that the three triangle forming stars I have occasionally seen are part of the summer triangle!!9 Vega in the constellation Lyra, Deneb in Cygnus, en Altair in Aquila.10 I feel elated, privy to some secret knowledge. The Milky-Way runs through this triangle.”

June 11th: 06.14: “Rose early. Beautiful but extensive bulbous clouds cover the sky, revealing here and there openings of dazzling clear shiny blue… There is a sense of living beneath or inside a dome.”

June 12: 09.15 “The weather is close. I understand now what this means. So much cloud cover makes the sky feel lower, as if it is pressing itself down. The air is heavy with pollen and the scent of blossoms. Yet the air is warm despite a cool breeze. It is as if pleasant warmth and cooling breeze exchange places in the ether. Now a chill. Now a warmth from the sun”

June 13, 06.30 “The sky is made up of multiple layers of ash grey cloud. There is a brisk cold breeze and the temperature is very cool.”

June 14, 08.50 “Noting a sense of disappointment. At 06.45 the sky was blue and the sun was shining gloriously. Now, uniform grey clouds have largely taken over. As I write a weak shaft of sunlight broke through the cloud cover, but this was a short lived blaze of glory. “

---

9 Bernadette Brady, during online seminar discussion on sky journal
June 14th, 10.19  “Note: The clouds cut me off from the sky, make it feel lower. As Tim Ingold suggests: “Each is rather an incoherent, vaporous tumescence that swells and is carried along in the currents of the medium. To observe the clouds is not to view the furniture of the sky but to catch a fleeting glimpse of a sky-in-formation, never the same from one moment to the next.”\textsuperscript{11}

June 19, 00.01 “ First quarter moon, the yellowy coloured light of it, makes the clouds look surprisingly brown like a spoonful of clay in a glass of water. There is lot of moisture in the air. It is warm and very, very humid.”

June 20th: “Uniform light grey sky – deep rumbling – very little wind – quite cold.”

12 Het Parool, Dutch Newspaper, 21 June 2013
June 26, 06.10 “…This summer seems to have lost its way...It has rained. The gutters are still wet, but there is bird song. The sky is an unconvincing blue.”

08.00: “All has changed. Where once was blue now all is grey. I hear heavy rain falling. What a totally depressing summer this has been so far.”

Image 17: Weather Forecast, Saturday 29 June

June 30th: Sunset over the Amstel River 20:42 – 21.39 pm
3 July, 07.45: “Grey start. It has once again rained quite heavily. The perspective is not a joyous one. How much grey can a summer take and still dare to call itself by that name? Hope tomorrow will be dry for our trip to Emmen. Apparently after that, weather will improve! So looking forward to getting some sun.”

4 July, 8.56: “All is hustle and bustle. Substantial cloud cover, yet pure white and non-threatening. People are under dressed. At Amstel Station, an air of casualness. Relaxed. Take your time-ness. Hey its summer…. This all looks very promising.”

10.50: Hmmm still no sun. A breeze with a slight chill in it. At Dalfsen on my way to see Spiral Hill. Very rural. Seen lots of swallows. But as yet…no sun… Though the weathermen predicted it!”

5 July, 10.17: “Yesterday was a big disappointment as far as the weather is concerned. At one point it even specked with rain. Though the sun made a very, very welcome appearance just as we entered the quarry…turning the manmade lake pale blue. Today, now, 10.15, the sky from my little window is almost
uniformly blue!!!! What clouds there are, are so fine as to be almost translucent. There is light. Sun is up.”

July 7th: Glorious summer has arrived!! The sky is filled with light. Tim Ingold comes to mind: “The sky was not something we saw in the light, it was luminosity itself!!!!”

**Image 19: Glorious Summer Has Arrived**

**Summer**

“The arrival of summer was greeted with a sense of relief and elation” (entry July 7th). During the period my sky journal was kept, May drifted into a dreary June. I often checked the weather reports, the recent memory of a cold winter perhaps contributing to an increased longing and desire for summer. The inconstant, whimsical sky promised nothing and often left me feeling disappointed (entries May 22, June 14th, June 26, July 3rd). The sensation of a low heavy dark sky, pressing itself down and closing in, impending rain, stand in contrast with the key-hole openings in the cloud cover which were associated with a feeling of lightness (May 22nd). The speed and movement of the sky expresses the dynamic immensity of nature, threatening, spectacular clouds; as

13 Ingold, “Earth, Sky,” p.S29
Immanuel Kant noted, inspire our fear and respect. Under the warm ease of a clear blue summer sky (entry: May 22, June 14th & 16th, images 2,5,14), tension is replaced with physical comfort. As dark clouds disperse, the burden of the sky is lifted. Discussing deep space, Stevphen Shukaitis suggests that the image and idea of space, “through its circulation and elaboration within stories, myths, and artistic forms, composes a terrain of possibility that operates as an outside to the world as it is.” It could be argued that the absence of clouds, literally opens up the great and unfathomable depth of space whereby allowing us access to such a realm of possibilities, that contradict our earth bound existence. The sight of this boundless space brings about elation, because at Darren Jorgensen notes it: “implies an infinitude that lies not only in nature but also in one’s own mind.” As Manilius writes, “who could discern in his narrow mind the vastness of this vaulted infinite, the blazing dome of heaven.” Yet it could be argued that only when the skies open up and allow it, are we fully able to contemplate heaven.

Claudius Ptolemy (c. AD 90 – c AD 168) compared summer with the prime of life, “summer comes second, and, in its vigour and heat, agrees with the second age of animals; the prime of life, and the period most abounding in heat.” Summer is often used in literature as an analogy for full potential and promise followed by inevitable decline. In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott-Fitzgerald uses summer as synecdoche, “…the sunshine, the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.” Fitzgerald introduces Gatsby on a deep summer night, hands in pockets, “regarding the silver pepper of the stars.” Gatsby’s demise arrives with the first hint of autumn, the emptying of a

---

16 Jorgensen, p. 178
20 Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, p.25
swimming pool, thick drizzle, and a ‘motor hearse, horribly black and wet.’”

The novel brings the “Jazz Age” alive and that summer symbolically represents the dazzling decadence and excess of the 1920’s. Fitzgerald imagines a sidewalk as a ladder to the stars, where the book’s narrator could, “suck on the sap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder,” a clear reference here to the Milky Way and Hera’s breast. The novel frequently involves the sky, whereby suggesting that Fitzgerald, like Gatsby, had “looked up” and been creatively inspired by “his share of the local heavens.”

The ability of summer to capture and embody the full but elusive potential of fleeting moments in time, which express the summation of youth or culture, is not restricted to literature. Woodstock music festival, held in mid August 1969, epitomises the spirit of the 1960’s generation, and though a seemingly earth bound event, as Michael Doyle notes, it retains an enduring grip upon people’s imagination; indeed, “Woodstock as an idea is portable.” It could be argued that space like mind, allows things room to move whereby facilitating connections and interactions between different emotions, elements and dimensions, in the same way that the cool breeze and warmth intermingle in my journal (June 12th).

**The Summer Triangle**

The three bright stars I had seen in a triangular formation (entry June 10th) only acquired significance when identified as part of a group constellation known as the Symphalian Birds (Journal entry: 10th June). Deneb, Vega and Altair are found in the constellations Cygnus, Lyra and Aquila, which like all the constellations, have inspired myths and cultures for many thousands of years. The stars Aquila and Lyra, Ian Ridpath writes, visualise: “two lovers separated by the river of the Milky Way, able to meet on just one day each year when magpies

---

21 Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, pp. 146, 165
22 Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, pp. 106-107
23 Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, pp. 16,17, 25, 41, 42, 48, 56, 76, 90, 91,
collect to form a bridge across the celestial river.’”

William Shakespeare (b. 1582 – d. 1616) set his play of heaven’s “star crossed lovers,” Rome and Juliet, in mid-July, when the bud of love “by summer’s ripening breath, may prove a flower when we next meet?”

Shakespeare mentions that Juliette is born on Lammas eve under the summer zodiacal sign Leo, of which Draper writes, “Juliet is clearly of a hot, passionate temperament. She falls in love with Romeo at first sight.”

It is under a summer evening sky, that Romeo declared: “two of the fairest stars in all the heavens, having some business, do entreat her eyes to twinkle in their spheres till they return.”

Disappointment

Towards the end of June, when fine weather had still not materialised, I increasingly wanted to shrug off the sky, be free of its weight, exchange the imposing greyness for a vast blue empty canvas. To be cut off from the sky, is akin to being cut off from inspiration (entries June 12th & 14th). In Astronomica, Manilius envisioned the Earth as being poised in mid-air, “the firmament itself hangs thus and does not rest on any base.”

The iconic image of Earth rising from “the black abyss of space,” taken from Apollo 11 in August 1969, a scientific confirmation of the depth of the ancient philosopher’s inner vision.

As artist Elizabeth Goldring puts it, “the ascent into the sky is mirrored by the descent into inner space as it reflects the cosmos.”

It is clearly possible to imagine a universe. The physical conquering of space does not equate with understanding its mysterious immensity. The real journey into space, Warren Smith suggests, “was all a little disappointing,” after six visits to the Moon, people got bored, and the space program failed to retain the public imagination.

The “real” can have a “closed-off-ness” comparable to dense clouds which reduce the vision of what is beyond them.

---


30 Shakespeare, Romeo, Act.2, Scene 2, p. 741

31 Manilius, Astronomica, p. 19 (176-201)

32 Holly Henry and Amanda Taylor, “Re-thinking Apollo: envisioning environmentalism in space,” in Bell Parker, Space, p. 190

33 Elizabeth Goldring, “Desert Sun, Desert Moon and the SKY ART manifesto,” in Leonardo, Vol. 20, No.4, p.346

34 Warren Smith, “Conclusion: to infinity and beyond?” in Bell, Parker, Space, p. 204-205
Yet Warren also captures some of Manilius’ sense of wonder, suggesting that “space” is where: “the sublime is not a vision to behold but a sensation of relationship... that defies narrative.” An inherent risk of disappointment is always present when imagination, expectation and “what-is” collide.

**Conclusion**

When living under grey skies, we can seek respite by planning an escape from behind a computer screen. Something I actually did myself, in mid-June. My journal’s focus on the sky, made me acutely aware of the absence of summer and how much I longed for it to come. Holiday websites abound with images of blue skies reflected in dazzling oceans. A summer vacation can be seen as a space where work and worries are left behind, where it is possible to live it up, experience romance, even take on a different persona and where blue summer skies serve simultaneously as a repository for past memories and a generator of new ones.\(^\text{35}\) While a heavy sky can seem to compound life’s pressures, a restful summer sky, invokes ease (journal July 4\(^\text{th}\)). The long hours of daylight, create space for contemplation which in turn can stimulate and inspire the artistic imagination. Summer has utopian qualities causing it to be frequently idealised in memory. Through its varied associations with the prime of life, or summation of collective experience, it can be relived and endlessly reinvented. We are all “born anew” each year when summer arrives. As a fantasy, summer serves as a source of escape from the drudgery of the mundane. My journal suggests that the opening up and sheer luminosity of the sky has a significant, if not a primary role to play in facilitating all these experiences. Closed skies do not make for a memorable summer. However, my journal also suggests that summer is akin to deep space, and that it too can be viewed as, “a mobile territory of possibility rather than a fixed location,” a place where other realities become possible, something to look forward to, even if sometimes disappointing or short lived.\(^\text{36}\) I found it impossible to observe or interview the sky, I could only at times immerse myself in the fluxes of the medium and let “it” be my guide: let the wind be the blowing, the sun be the shining.\(^\text{37}\) In fact keeping the journal was quite a humbling experience because it involved a dialogue with something that is much greater than my self. It could be argued that the internet images of the sky, which Bertol suggests are replacing our direct connection with the cosmos, are little more than a two dimensional, screen sized, “surrogate sky,” which is

---


\(^{37}\) Ingold, “Earth, Sky,” S29-S30
incomparable with the unconfined depth of the “sky real.” My research suggests that even when there are no stars to wonder at, it is possible to have a meaningful engagement with the heavens. Perhaps Davidson was right, we need only look up.

Image 20: My Sky Journal

Works cited


Parool, Dutch Newspaper


Dear Editor,

I thought I’d share a little story with everyone, because it probably happens to us all at some time on the essay/dissertation journey and it would be nice to hear these anecdotes from other students too.

My research question is:
‘Does an exploration of extant texts and artefacts from the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean and Europe provide evidence that the Sun or its light was associated with generative or phallic power?’

This research is based on a few examples of solar phallism and one such piece of evidence is the Derveni Papyrus in which the author quotes Orpheus as saying that the Sun was ‘a genital organ’.¹

When marking the Chapter Outline, my supervisor explained that my subject was not really her field of expertise, but she recalled seeing somewhere evidence of a ‘self-inseminating Sun’ in the Egyptian corpus. In short, the evidence would show that ‘By the Middle Kingdom the Sun could be represented as a figure with a large phallus and each night as it set, it self-created and gave birth to itself again as an infant Sun the next morning.’

I explored this and couldn’t get anywhere. So in frustration, I went to the Old Kingdom Egyptology Facebook page and asked for help with the clue. Roz Park replied with some really helpful advice, suggesting that the evidence was not mainstream and therefore it might be difficult to construct a robust argument in the absence of supporting material. She recommended me to an Egyptology colleague, Peter Robinson, who has researched a genre of Afterlife text found in Ancient Egyptian coffins from a period known as the Middle Kingdom (about 2500BC to 1800BC) and known as ‘Coffin Texts’, so I duly wrote to him.

Peter was also helpful, but also suggested I would be better off with Min and Re, since they were more prolific. As I only have maybe 700 words to give to Egypt, this seemed sensible, so I delved into material on Re and dropped the other line of enquiry.

Peter then came back to me with the news that Bernard Van Rinsveld had JUST posted a French paper on academia.edu and in it were images of phalluses in Egyptian art. I translated the abstract and determined that it wouldn’t be useful, but flicked through the images any way. One of them seemed so strange. It stood out from all the others. I found the image elsewhere (it’s in the burial chamber of the tomb of Ramesses V/VI, KV9) and scanned it to Peter Robinson, asking if he knew anything about it.

His reply astonished me, for this ithyphallic god forms part of the Book of the Earth texts, which are concerned with the birth of the Sun each day. Although not named in KV9, this Sun god is elsewhere associated with the description ‘The One Who Hides the Hours’ and ‘the Birth of the Hours’ and it can be found in a number of Valley of the Kings tombs. Standing in a V-shaped funnel surrounded by disks and stars, this Sun god ejaculates fire and from his phallus falls a child and a sign for fire. The funnel sits in the centre of a great serpent called Mehen or The Enveloper.

Peter further explained that in another reference on the same image, the ithyphallic god seems to ejaculate fire to create the twelve goddesses who each hold a red disc, and he stands in what could be a water clock, thereby insinuating the passing of hours. In another text from the New Kingdom describing ‘the Amduat’ - a Secret Chamber/Underworld - Mehen protects the Sun god in the middle of the night, as he is regenerated from being a tired old Sun disk at sunset, to a reborn Sun at sunrise.

I concluded that this may or may not be research the tutor was referring to, but it seemed very coincidentally close!

-Alison Chester-Lambert

You can view the images here:


---

