



# SPICA

POSTGRADUATE JOURNAL FOR COSMOLOGY IN CULTURE

**Traditional Xhosa cosmology and contested space**

**What Japanese astrologers think about astrology**

**A critical biography of Dane Rudhyar**

**The sky journal as a representation of the world**

**Reviewed: *Stonehenge***

The Sophia Centre for  
the Study of  
Cosmology in Culture  
at



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
Trinity Saint David

**Vol. II No. 2 AUTUMN 2014**

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The cover is a photograph of a South African *sangoma* in trance while dancing.  
photograph by Sheila Dorjé, used with permission.

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*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://www.sophia-project.net/Spica>

# Editorial

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Many of the students of the Sophia Centre are drawn to the groundbreaking postgraduate programme to further their knowledge of the cultural significance and history of astrology or astronomy or to venture further into the exciting field of archaeo-astronomy. Few are prepared for the excitement of the discovery that the course will also expose them to aspects of cosmologies of contemporary and historical cultures. From magic to sacred geography, the study of cosmology is a field as wide as it is deep.



In this issue we reflect some of that in two of our articles on offer. My own study of how Xhosa notions of sacred space and its relationship to cosmology caused some controversy takes us deep into South African belief systems and a dynamic shamanistic tradition very much alive today, and Sean Thornton's interviews with Japanese astrologers offer a refreshing insight into another way of thinking about something which is familiar to many on the MA course.

Interest in astrology is probably one of the most common bonds that draws together many of the students from different countries and cultures, and the opportunity to learn more about it academically has led many students to contribute to a growing body of high-quality information about its history and context. In this issue, Sanaa Tanha contributes a fascinating study that contextualises one of the most influential of all twentieth century astrologers, Dane Rudhyar.

In our ongoing series of student sky journals, where students are able to explore their own relationship with the sky, Mara Steenhuisen-Siemonsma contributes a fascinating view through the eyes of an artist following an important tradition of skywatching in the visual arts. For the less artistic amongst us, this paper gives us great insight into an inner world rarely understood by outsiders.

And finally, Pam Armstrong's review of Mike Parker Pearson's *Stonehenge* comes at a time when new discoveries and studies are revealing more than ever about this important ancient site, and revealing the ongoing relevance and future prospects of our fascinating field. We learn more every day.

Rod Suskin

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# Dramatised and Real Xhosa Ritual in a Contested Urban Theatrical Space

by Rod Suskin

This research explores how the use of profane space as sacred space caused conflict over the use and meaning of theatrical space at a performance in Cape Town. The aim of the research is to explore Bender's notion of 'contested space' from the viewpoint of differing 'contestants' for the theatrical space. The research examines the Xhosa notion of sacred space and how it was applied in the context of an urban theatrical performance through interviews with the key players in the conflict. It will also consider contemporary dramatic theory in the light of ritual and drama. It will be argued that the contest over theatrical space and meaning at this performance is a manifestation of the contested historical discourse of the assassination of Xhosa king Hintsa in 1835 by colonial forces as well as between traditional and urban cultural expression.

## Background

In 1996, a Xhosa *sangoma* (South African healer/diviner) called Nicholas Gcaleka had a dream in which he was told to travel to the United Kingdom to recover the skull of legendary Xhosa king, Hintsa. According to oral tradition the skull had been taken there after Hintsa's assassination by British soldiers in 1835.<sup>1</sup> Gcaleka was told in his dream that returning the skull to its place of origin would 'usher in an era of peace.'<sup>2</sup>

Hintsa's killing marks a turning point in the colonial domination of the Xhosa.<sup>3</sup> Even at the time it aroused some controversy, both because of the murder of a royal hostage and because of the mutilation of the body.<sup>4</sup> According to the colonial archive, Hintsa's skull was shattered, his ears cut off and the rest of his

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<sup>1</sup> Premesh Lal, *The Deaths of Hintsa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Premesh Lal, *The Deaths of Hintsa*. p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Pimlico, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Premesh Lal, *The Deaths of Hintsa*.



Approximate position of Xhosaland in 1835 here shown on a map of modern South Africa

remains abandoned.<sup>5</sup> Gcaleka's pronouncement was also controversial as it conflicted with the historical record and because some regarded him as a fraud. His mission to reclaim the skull so that the king's soul would find a place to rest provoked both ridicule and aroused many supporters.<sup>6</sup> When he eventually returned to South Africa with a skull in hand, the Xhosa royal family demanded to have the skull tested and found it to be that of a European woman.<sup>7</sup>

The controversy saw Gcaleka being denounced as a charlatan by the royal family and hounded by the press as a crazed guru figure.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, he had many supporters, one of whom was the noted South African playwright and theatre director Brett Bailey, who wrote 'the point is this: exactly whose neck the skull once sat upon is really irrelevant ... no scientific test can ascertain the symbolic value of an item, the importance it has for the people who revere it.'<sup>9</sup>

Bailey produced a play called *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997), which explored the skull affair. In his discussion of this play Bailey states his intention 'to fuse ritual and theatre in some way, to make drama that would transport performers and spectators ... this is a trip akin to those we take in dreams that leave us haunted,

<sup>5</sup> Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*. p. 725.

<sup>6</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*.

<sup>7</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*.

<sup>8</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*.

<sup>9</sup> Brett Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003). p. 99.

enchanted, disturbed.<sup>10</sup> The production featured an account of the contested histories of both Hintsa and the skull, as well as an enactment of a ritual in which actors played Gcaleka and other *sangomas*, and during which the sacrifice of a chicken was feigned.

Amongst the performers in the 2003 Cape Town production of the play was an actual practicing Xhosa *sangoma* of the Pondo tribe, Ntombethongo Tutsu.<sup>11</sup> He was called upon nightly to pretend to be dancing in trance and pretend to slaughter a chicken. On the final night of the performance, instead of feigning it, he actually slaughtered a chicken during the onstage ritual.<sup>12</sup> At this performance, which drama critic Judith Rudakoff says took place in a theatre of predominantly white people in a middle class area, the audience reacted with outrage and large numbers of them walked out of the theatre.<sup>13</sup> Some laid complaints with the authorities, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) or wrote to the press.<sup>14</sup> The complaints were about a wide variety of issues, notably animal rights as well as about the appropriateness or legality of conducting a ritual sacrifice in a public space.<sup>15</sup> The Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals later laid charges with the police, although the prosecutor later declined to pursue the charges.<sup>16</sup>

Prior studies of the events surrounding Hintsa's death have shown that the colonial record which has entered into history 'was extensively stage-managed by Colonel Harry Smith and is of little relevance to the historian seeking to construct an alternative or truthful account of events.'<sup>17</sup> In this account, which Premesh Lalu asserts has been treated by historians with the utmost brevity, Hintsa was taken hostage by British soldiers who killed him and cut off his ears as souvenirs.<sup>18</sup> Peires, who also acknowledges the unreliable nature of the record, describes the 'Kafka-esque' nature of the subsequent inquest and its entry into history.<sup>19</sup> This remains the generally accepted historical discourse, while the

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<sup>10</sup> Brett Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder*. p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Yunus Kemp, 'Big Flap Over 'Senseless Murder' of Chicken,' *Cape Argus* August 12, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Yunus Kemp, 'Big Flap Over 'Senseless Murder' of Chicken.'

<sup>13</sup> Judith Rudakoff, 'Why Did the Chicken Cross the Cultural Divide?: Brett Bailey and Third World Bunfight's Imumbo Jumbo,' *TDR* (1988-) 48, no. 2 (2004): 80-90. p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Yunus Kemp, 'Big Flap Over 'Senseless Murder' of Chicken.'

<sup>15</sup> Judith Rudakoff, 'Why Did the Chicken Cross the Cultural Divide?: Brett Bailey and Third World Bunfight's Imumbo Jumbo.' p. 86.

<sup>16</sup> Yunus Kemp, 'Chicken 'Killers' Set to Land Up in Court,' *Cape Argus* October 2, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*. p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of Their Independence* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981). p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of Their Independence*, p.112-113n.



Xhosa one, which has been in writing since at least 1905, remains outside of the discourse of history.<sup>20</sup>

Recent studies have been done of the suppression of historical discourse concerning the conflict between the colonial record and Xhosa oral and written history. Postel emphasises the symbolic relevance of the skull in the context of a culture which too readily accepts scientific reality.<sup>21</sup> For example, Xhosa historian Nomalanga Mkhize argues that the skull is an appropriate symbol for the 'horrors' of the frontier wars and, along with dreams, is entirely valid within an African way of representing reality.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Lalu offers a Marxist analysis of the attempts to control the historical discourse and the resulting effect on Gcaleka's skull retrieval mission, saying that,

a healer-divine brought an encounter between the colonial past and the post-apartheid present to the fore, in which it became not only possible but imperative to inquire into history's relation to the exercise of power...the healer-diviner unwittingly solicited responses from within a discourse of history, organised around competing constructions of colonialism and anti-colonialism.<sup>23</sup>

Lalu asserts that Gcaleka is excluded from the historical discourse because his claims are based on the oral history of the vanquished culture and on a dream.<sup>24</sup>

Bailey's work has been studied in the context of theatre, ritual and 'body theatre' by a number of recent theses and papers, as well as politically. Tang discusses Bailey's attempt to create the 'shamanic presence' in his work.<sup>25</sup> O'Connor refers to Bailey's 'use of ritual and history, both rooted in the South African context. Through ritual he establishes a spatial dialectic, invoking the clash and tensions between the local and global contexts.'<sup>26</sup> Keevy analyses *iMumbo Jumbo* in the light of 'interracial' cultural representation, suggesting that

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<sup>20</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*.

<sup>21</sup> Gitte Postel, 'Media, Mediums and Metaphors: The Modern South African Sangoma in Various Texts,' *The Free Library* (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Nomalanga Mkhize, 'Nicholas Gcaleka and the Search for Hintsa's Skull,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 211-21.

<sup>23</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*. p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*.

<sup>25</sup> Cheong Wai Acty Tang, 'Gazing At Horror: Body Performance in the Wake of Mass Social Trauma' (Master's dissertation, Rhodes University, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Lloyd Grant O'Connor, 'Summoning the Healing': Intercultural Performance, Immediacy, and Historical and Ritual Dialectics in Brett Bailey's the Plays of Miracle and Wonder (2003) (Master's dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006). p. iii.

‘the ritualistic and exotic caters basely to the colonial gaze.’<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Moyo looks specifically at cross-cultural and racial issues, suggesting that Bailey’s work confronts ‘intellectuals... [with] the difficult question of *identity as cultural ownership*. The artist’s class-race background had exposed him to unofficial forms of artistic censorship.’<sup>28</sup> (Italics in original.)

Bailey has stated that he is ‘fascinated with entranced performance and the interaction of ritual and drama ... I spent several months living in the rural villages of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa investigating the ceremonies of the local traditional healers (*sangomas*), who dance themselves into trance to channel the healing wisdom of their ancestors.’<sup>29</sup>

Other performance theorists have also studied the relationship between ritual and drama. In one example, Richard Schechner examines theatre in the context of its efficacy, asserting that in the post-Elizabethan era theatre took on ritual’s role of effecting personal and social change.<sup>30</sup> He sees post-1970s theatre as deliberately modeled on aspects of medicine and religion and says ‘no wonder shamanism is so popular amongst theatre people: shamanism is the branch of doctoring that is religious and the kind of religion full of tricks, that is theatrical.’<sup>31</sup>

The work of anthropologist Victor Turner is also relevant in the context of this episode. Working with Schechner he suggests the use of performance as an ethnographical method.<sup>32</sup> He identifies drama and ritual as mirrors of society and suggests that performance may even be a way to study society reflexively.<sup>33</sup> He sees both theatre and ritual as having an important role in ‘social metacommentary,’ both of them involving ‘liminal events and processes’ which allow for the containment, diffusion and resolution of social dramas.<sup>34</sup> Theatre is able to do this in forms not usually allowed and like ritual is an effort to

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<sup>27</sup> Jacqueline Keevy, ‘Interracial Mumbo Jumbo: Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and Brett Bailey’s Theatre’ (Master’s dissertation, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2008). p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> Arifani James Moyo, ‘Deconstructing the Native/Imagining the Post-Native: Race, Culture and Postmodern Conditions in Brett Bailey’s ‘Plays of Miracle and Wonder’’ (University of KwaZulu Natal, 2009). p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Brett Bailey, ‘Playing in the War Zone,’ *TDR* (1988-) 48, no. 3 (2004): 180-85. p. 181

<sup>30</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*. p. 122.

<sup>32</sup> Victor Turner, and Edith Turner, ‘Performing Ethnography,’ *The Drama Review: TDR* 26, no. 2 (1982): 33-50.

<sup>33</sup> Victor Turner, ‘Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Anthropology,’ *The Kenyon Review New Series* 1, no. 3 (1979): 80-93.

<sup>34</sup> Victor Turner, ‘Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual and Drama?,’ in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner, and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). p. 8.



restabilise the cosmology and 'produce cosmos.'<sup>35</sup> The available major texts about Xhosa culture will be discussed later in this paper, and an interview with a Xhosa *sangoma* is used as the primary source on which the current research is based.

### Methodology

The current qualitative research focuses on interviews with Ntombethongo Tutsu, the Xhosa healer-diviner taking part in the performance, Brett Bailey, author and director of the performance, and 'Brad', a member of the audience at the performance who was identified through readers' letters to the press. Through the interviews it was possible to explore whether the process of social and ritual drama leading from breach to resolution, as defined by Victor Turner, successfully led to re-integration and explored the actors' understanding of the use of the theatrical space as sacred in this play. Turner provides a model to understand the common functions of ritual and drama:

A social drama is initiated when the peaceful tenor or regular...life is interrupted by the *breach* of a rule containing one of its salient relationships. This leads swiftly or slowly to a state of *crisis* which...may split the community into contending factions and coalitions. To prevent this, *redressive* means are taken by...the most legitimate or authoritative representatives of the relevant community. Redress usually involves ritualized action [which may be] religious (involving belief in the retributive action of powerful supernatural entities), and often involving an act of sacrifice.<sup>36</sup> (Italics in original.)

If the sacrifice is successful, re-integration will follow.<sup>37</sup> This process of breach-crisis-redress-integration is central to Turner's thesis that examines the parallel processes and functions of ritual and theatre, and is critical in gaining an understanding of the motivation and behaviour of Gcaleka and Tutsu.

### Discussion

Tutsu was questioned over his motives in slaughtering the chicken. According to him he wanted to appease his ancestors' possible anger or confusion over being called for a fake ritual and so he decided, in consultation with Bailey, to offer a chicken as a sacrifice to redress this problem. He expressed the need for protection:

I told Brett I can only be involved in this play if we are going to make a small ceremony right in the beginning to join the ancestors and the cast

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<sup>35</sup> Victor Turner, 'Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual and Drama?' p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> Victor Turner, 'Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Anthropology.' p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> Victor Turner, 'Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Anthropology.' p. 83.

together ... and at the closing we have to have a special time to do it again, to say, now we are done... that is when we decided we must do it on stage... To say thank you so much, *we were safe*... Actually, this is [a ceremony]. That piece of time, we have to do it right through, not to do it as an act anymore...to be like a serious [ceremony] because people are here, attending [it]. So I asked Brett, he said yes.

In an interview with the author, audience member Brad acknowledged the capacity of theatre in 'raising consciousness because we were shocked' but stressed that for him, 'the real issue is that it was inappropriate. I don't have a problem with ritual sacrifice, I just don't think it's entertainment. It's inappropriate. Sacred things should be kept in sacred places.' This is consistent with statements made to the press by other audience members.<sup>38</sup>

Barbara Bender has discussed the social, economic and political control of space and its meaning from a Marxist perspective, using examples of ritual to show that space deemed culturally significant '[operates] at the juncture of history and politics, social relations and cultural perceptions.'<sup>39</sup> She uses Stonehenge to illustrate how those in power control access to and interpretation of sacred space.<sup>40</sup> She defines the ensuing conflict over access and meaning as 'contested space.'<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Christopher Tilley elaborates this notion stating that 'control over space is crucial for the maintenance of power relations within and between individuals and groups.'<sup>42</sup>

Following Turner's model, the breach created by the murder of Hintsa and the alleged removal of the skull led to what Gcaleka perceived as a critical state of conflict in South Africa. His attempt to redress this through a dream-inspired pilgrimage to fetch the skull aimed at establishing peace in the land and to achieve the 'reintegration' of the various conflicting elements of the postcolonial society. Tutsu experienced the same process. According to him:

When Brett first approached me I told him I was uncomfortable, because I am supposed to play a *sangoma* but this is my real life, I am supposed to heal people. I am supposed to work for my ancestors, not just for a play. Something feels wrong about it. So something right has to be done to be able to get into that job, which came from my ancestors, *because I dreamed it before I answered his request* [my italics].

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<sup>38</sup> Yunus Kemp, 'Chicken 'Killers' Set to Land Up in Court.'

<sup>39</sup> Barbara Bender, 'Introduction,' in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Bender (Providence: Berg, 1993). p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Barbara Bender, 'Stonehenge - Contested Landscapes (Medieval to Present Day),' in *Stonehenge: Making Space*, ed. Barbara Bender (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Bender, 'Stonehenge - Contested Landscapes (Medieval to Present Day).'

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Tilley, 'Art, Architecture, Landscape [Neolithic Sweden],' in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Bender (Providence: Berg, 1993). p. 81.

Referring to the sacrifice he performed, Tutsu said he did it 'so that our ancestors don't create some sort of anger, because they might get the anger from some people's ancestors not understanding exactly what was happening.' The breach created by the raising of the ancestors without intention created a potential crisis, the ancestors' anger. So the actual ritual sacrifice would be performed to redress the problem with the ancestors and achieve peace.

According to Tutsu, sacred space and sacred places in nature in Xhosa culture are generally not fixed and are not sacred because of their location or physical characteristics. It is the actions of the *sangoma* and the ritual participants which make it sacred, or the presence of the ancestors. Xhosa spirituality has many characteristics commonly used to define shamanism.<sup>43</sup> For example, dreams guide the role of the *sangoma* in performing his duties.<sup>44</sup> Geertz states 'in a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing [an] idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality.'<sup>45</sup> Accordingly both Gcaleka and Tutsu were told in dreams to perform the redressive action.

Bailey's intentions with the play are similar. Observing the powerful effects of Xhosa ritual he aimed to 'summon a healing ... [to create] dramatic battles to restore health and harmony to communities invaded, assaulted, diseased.'<sup>46</sup> Gcaleka also attempts to achieve redress through pilgrimage, which according to Janzen in Nguni cultures such as the Xhosa, may be used to fetch a symbol of the tribe to restore wholeness.<sup>47</sup> His claim that he can restore peace to the nation is consistent with the Nguni worldview 'in which individual experience is brought together with culturally normative knowledge. It is therefore not an exaggeration to speak of particular spirits as specific paradigms and the realm of spirits as a generalized paradigm.'<sup>48</sup> Correspondingly Hammond-Tooke states that it is the role of a Xhosa chief to sacrifice to ancestral chiefs 'during times of national emergency' and Gcaleka sought just such a global healing.<sup>49</sup> These notions

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<sup>43</sup> W. D. Hammond-Tooke, 'Selective Borrowing? The Possibility of San Shamanistic Influence on Southern Bantu Divination and Healing Practices,' *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 53, no. 167 (1998): 9-15.

<sup>44</sup> John Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992). p. 102

<sup>45</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973). p. 112.

<sup>46</sup> Brett Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder*. p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> John Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa*. p. 120

<sup>48</sup> John Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa*. p. 141.

<sup>49</sup> W. D. Hammond-Tooke, 'Worldview,' in *The Bantu Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, ed. W.D. Hammond-Tooke (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974). p. 350.

suggest that to Gcaleka the authenticity of the skull is less significant than its function.

Monica Hunter defines two types of ritual amongst the Xhosa, family based and community based.<sup>50</sup> Gcaleka pursued the latter while Tutsu the former. Tutsu used the theatre to create the traditional dance space for Xhosa ritual and stated that ritual always calls the ancestors, their presence creating a sacred space:

Tutsu: [The ancestors] have their own sacred place where they live, and then come to attend us and look at us and give us some news or messages. Their sacred places are forests, rivers, the sea, mountains. Those places are sacred only because the ancestors are living there. Once a [ritual] starts, right in the beginning when we're preparing the [traditional beer], we know that the ancestors are always there. They always come. Its like you make a shout out once you make beer, because you are calling all of them... that they must come to bless this dance. Once they come, this place becomes more powerful than ever.

Interviewer: Does making the [ritual] there make the space become a sacred space?

Tutsu: Exactly. I think the whole drumming thing changes the place to become a sacred space, because the people who belong to this drumming sound [the ancestors] come to this place. It calls them.

He reported that once the ancestors arrive, strict rules must be followed, such as the audience participating by clapping and singing and removing their shoes. Hunter confirms the same sequence of events and rules operational since precolonial times.<sup>51</sup>

Turner identifies ritual sacrifice as the key means by which ancestors are appeased, saying it functions to restore the 'flow' or general good of the group.<sup>52</sup> Turner describes the shaman as being in a divided state with sacrifice intended to resolve this division.<sup>53</sup> In the ritual the participant audience should move from an exposed to a protected state.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact With Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

<sup>51</sup> Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact With Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*.

<sup>52</sup> Victor Turner, 'Sacrifice as Quintessential Process: Prophylaxis Or Abandonment?', in *Blazing the Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols*, ed. Edith Turner (Tucson, London: University of Arizona Press, 1992). p. 104.

<sup>53</sup> Victor Turner, 'Sacrifice as Quintessential Process: Prophylaxis Or Abandonment?'

<sup>54</sup> Richard Schechner, 'Magnitudes of Performance,' in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner, and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

In the case of both Tutsu and Gcaleka, the ritual cannot be said to have succeeded in these terms. In the case of Gcaleka, rather than bring harmony to the country, he aroused ridicule, argument and contest over the sacrality of an object as well as displeasure from the Xhosa royal family. In the ritual that Tutsu performed, many people present felt unsafe and unprotected. Not only the audience felt unprotected, but the actors participating in the performance were taken by surprise. Bailey confirmed, 'the cast had no idea it was going to happen, Ntombethongo [Tutsu] was the only one who knew it was going to happen.' In addition, Tutsu had exposed himself to criminal charges. He was 'safe' spiritually but not in the world. Geertz says the ritual fails because:

ritual is not just a pattern of meaning; it is also a form of social interaction... the attempt to bring a religious pattern from a relatively less differentiated rural background into an urban context also gives rise to social conflict...because the kind of social integration demonstrated by the pattern is not congruent with the major patterns of integration in the society generally.<sup>55</sup>

In both situations, it is the contested discourse of history and space that causes the ritual to fail in these terms. Similarly in the case of the failed Javanese ritual reported by Geertz, the 'chaos' and failure of the ritual arise from 'a basic ambiguity in the meaning of the rite for those who participated in it.'<sup>56</sup> The symbols used in the ritual 'were charged with both sacred and profane import.'<sup>57</sup> Therefore the people were not sure whether they were engaging in a sacred or a secular act. In terms not unlike those of Bender's contested space, Geertz says 'the conflict occurred not because of secularization/skepticism but because the participants did not share an integrated common cultural tradition. It occurs because of a 'discontinuity' between the existing social structure (urban) with the cultural structure (traditional).'<sup>58</sup> Tutsu acknowledged these problems but did not feel that the ritual had failed. While it did not conform to traditional rules of ceremony:

Tutsu: In my opinion I don't think it was perfectly correct or right [for the audience and cast] but there was no way we could stop the show and tell them what was going to happen. On the other hand, we had to do something for the ancestors because that's what we believed in, *because the spirits will come even though those people are wearing shoes*. We believe that the ancestors are there with us whether people are wearing shoes or no shoes. That's more important. So I felt we would be right in doing it (my italics.)

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<sup>55</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. p. 165.

<sup>56</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. p. 165.

<sup>57</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. p. 165.

<sup>58</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. p. 164.

Schapera found that 'to conduct all ceremonies in the correct formal way and to deal with all crises of life according to traditional pattern is the foremost commandment of Bantu religion.'<sup>59</sup> In addition, Broster explains that 'the fact that every person participates accounts for much of the psychic and emotional efficacy of the [Xhosa ceremonial] dance.'<sup>60</sup> This illustrates one of the central problems with the audience's lack of awareness, or misunderstanding, of the process. However, Hunter notes that a *sangoma* 'might command that a traditional custom be modified in a certain way...claiming as his authority inspiration of his [ancestral spirits]' although she says this is less common in contemporary times because *sangomas* tend to function more frequently as 'keepers of the traditions'.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Tutsu did experience a certain amount of conflict regarding his own identity and role:

Tutsu: we would start dancing knowing that we are doing a play, but because this thing is just going inside, its pushing up, the ancestors are starting to realise, this is the place, here are people, then it starts to happen exactly as it happens in the [rural] hills...[the challenge to me] was not to get into the trance, because I would actually [start diagnosing] the audience and pick people out if I can see they have a problem...once we start dancing then the connection just happened so quickly. So then it's like the [ceremony] happens.

In effect, this is a conflict between Tutsu the actor and Tutsu the *sangoma* - Turner's 'blemished' and 'unblemished' selves.<sup>62</sup> Myerhoff, following Schechner, says 'it is essential that the performer maintains a measure of control and awareness, is not utterly 'lost' in his/her own portrayal or obliterated by it.'<sup>63</sup> Although Tutsu does not lose consciousness of which 'self' is which during his performance, he experienced Geertz's 'discontinuity' through the demands of his two roles, that of traditional healer and that of urban performer. In doing so, he introduced a sacred space into one which was deemed profane. As in the contest over space between police and 'free festivalers' at Stonehenge in the 1980s, the

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<sup>59</sup> Isaac Schapera, 'Religious Beliefs,' in *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa: An Ethnographical Survey*, ed. I Schapera (London, Cape Town: Routledge, 1937). p. 259.

<sup>60</sup> Joan Broster, *Amagqirha: Religion and Medicine in Transkei* (Cape Town: Via Afrika, 1981). p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact With Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*. p. 344.

<sup>62</sup> Victor Turner, 'Sacrifice as Quintessential Process: Prophylaxis Or Abandonment?' p. 111.

<sup>63</sup> Barbara Myerhoff, 'Transformation of Consciousness,' in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner, and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). p. 254.



contest over the meaning of the space had immediate effect – leading to Turner’s ‘crisis’ point.<sup>64</sup>

It can also be seen that the failure of the ritual to bring protection brings into question whether the play itself succeeded at the level of containment and diffusion of social drama as laid out in the model of Turner’s four stages. Bailey acknowledges the failure of his original intention, reflecting in interview as to, ‘whether it was a healing or not ... I think it failed to summon a healing. It caused an uproar ... that was a stupid decision. It was a shock to the cast, it wasn’t particularly wise.’ Nevertheless, he also analysed it in dramatic terms, saying

For me the interest of that historical moment lay in this conflict between the different world-views. I don’t think I ever believed it was Hints’a’s skull, for me Gcaleka’s voice and viewpoint were the most interesting thing. At the time I thought, I hate the sterility of theatres, lets turn the theatre space into a ritual space. I was so bowled over by these Xhosa rituals, that theatre could have that sort of impact on people, where it can really turn a theatre audience into ... a congregation, where they could all be swept up. But what I’ve learned in the interim is that ... the sense of congregation does require some sort of shared belief system. Otherwise the cultural symbols, the songs that go along with it, are too foreign, you know, we stand on the outside and look in.

This is congruent with Gurney’s view of theatrical space: ‘Drama is a fundamentally communal experience, and ... we go to plays to celebrate being part of a particular congregation.’<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Tilley states that space defines our understanding of what happens in it: ‘A social space ... is above all contextually constituted, providing particular settings for involvement and the creation of meanings. The specificity of place is an essential element in understanding its significance.’<sup>66</sup> Bailey connects this element to his experience of theatrical space:

Bailey: But who decides what our spaces are for? Who decides which sort of ethics control those spaces or govern those spaces? I feel that about the theatre as well. Somewhere in the past it lost its connection to ritual. It lost its power base, as we all have as human beings. But I have realised that the ritual does not give me everything I desire because of its cultural limitations. Theatres are spaces which are governed by commercial imperatives. For me there’s already a problem there in terms of [trying to create] sacred space. So maybe it’s impossible.

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<sup>64</sup> Barbara Bender, ‘Stonehenge - Contested Landscapes (Medieval to Present Day).’

<sup>65</sup> Albert Gurney, ‘A Sacred Place,’ *JAE* 29, no. 2 (1975): 4-5. p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Christopher Tilley, ‘Art, Architecture, Landscape [Neolithic Sweden].’ p. 11.

The responses given by interviewees show that the relationship between the contested space and Turner's breach-to-reintegration model – and why reintegration fails - is evident when the steps from breach to resolution are, as Tilley noted, 'contextually constituted,' for Bailey and Tutsu in the contested space of the theatre, and for Gcaleka in the contested discourse of history.<sup>67</sup> When each narrative of breach-to-resolution follows the path of its proper context, resolution or re-integration is achieved and the ritual results in protection. Thus a *sangoma* in a traditional context can achieve re-integration through ritual, and an actor in a theatrical context can achieve re-integration through the safety of the artificiality of the slaughter (no police charges), but as soon as one context is contested the re-integration fails. Thus when Tutsu's action of redress occurs in the context of a theatrical space the ritual fails, as does Bailey's attempt to heal with drama by using real ritual in the wrong context. Equally, Gcaleka's pilgrimage and symbolic act could succeed in a context that acknowledged his historical narrative and fails when the contest over history occurs.

### Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the notion of contested space in the context of a theatrical performance of a ritual when a real ritual is performed instead. It found that the successful production of 'cosmos' and the process of re-integration after a religious or social breach, as modeled by Victor Turner, can only be understood and achieved in the light of Barbara Bender's notion of contested space, whereby the context, function and meaning of the space is subject to conflict concerning historical discourse and the conventions of the prevailing social, political and economic powers at work in the society. Furthermore, it showed that this contest was at the heart of the events which succeeded the final performance of *iMumbo Jumbo*.

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<sup>67</sup> Christopher Tilley, 'Art, Architecture, Landscape [Neolithic Sweden].'

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# A Critical Biography of Dane Rudhyar

by Sanaa Tanha

Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985), is best known as one of the leading 20th century astrologers, although he was also a skilled composer, 'transcendental artist' and philosopher. Rudhyar's career as an astrologer spanned nearly fifty years and his extensive body of work includes more than a thousand articles and several dozen books on astrology and related topics. This paper is a critical biography, which concentrates on the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of Rudhyar's astrology - and is specifically concerned with the influences that shaped his astrology. Campion portrays Rudhyar as the most 'significant' astrologer to arise from the U.S.A., and Hillenbrand argues that he was of fundamental importance in the modern reformulation, and popularisation, of astrology. Scholarship has identified various sources of influence on Rudhyar's astrology and this study proposes to investigate these claims and attempt to discover any further influences – internal or external – which might have moulded his distinctive approach to astrology.

## Introduction

Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985), is best known as one of the leading 20<sup>th</sup> century astrologers, although he was also a skilled composer, 'transcendental artist' and philosopher.<sup>1</sup> Deniz Ertan describes Rudhyar as 'a unique cultural polymath', who investigated the interface between different branches of the humanities.<sup>2</sup> Rudhyar's career as an astrologer spanned nearly fifty years and his extensive body of work includes more than a thousand articles and several dozen books on

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Davis, 'Dane Rudhyar', *Lives of Celebrated Astrologers*, Urania Trust., <http://www.uraniatrust.org/lives-of-celebrated-astrologers/dane-rudhyar.html> [hereafter Davis *Dane*].

<sup>2</sup> Deniz Ertan, 'The Wholeness of Dane Rudhyar', *From Beyond the Stave* (2009), Deniz Ertan, *Dane Rudhyar: His Music, Thought and Art*, Rochester (N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2009), [hereafter Ertan, *Thought*], p. 1.

astrology and related topics.<sup>3</sup> This paper is a critical biography, which concentrates on the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of Rudhyar's astrology - with possible incursions into his astrology when this is warranted by the subject matter – and is specifically concerned with the influences that shaped his astrology. A segment of Rudhyar's opus is explored, as are works by Plato, H. P. Blavatsky, Jan Smuts, C. G. Jung, Roberto Assaggioli, Abraham Maslow and Richard Wilhelm.<sup>4</sup> Up to date, scholarly literature on Rudhyar has not been very extensive but biographical studies by Ertan, Nicholas Campion, Ian Davis, Michael Meyer and Candy Hillenbrand are taken into consideration, in order to place his work in a critical and historical context.<sup>5</sup> Campion portrays Rudhyar as the most 'significant' astrologer to arise from the U.S.A., and Hillenbrand argues that he was of fundamental importance in the modern reformulation, and popularization, of astrology.<sup>6</sup> Scholarship has identified various sources of influence on Rudhyar's astrology and this study proposes to investigate these claims and attempt to discover any further influences – internal or external – which might have moulded his distinctive approach to astrology.

### Seed-man

Daniel Chennievre was born in 1895, in Paris, France; and in 1917, while Europe was in the throes of World War I, he emigrated to the United States and,

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<sup>3</sup> Candy Hillenbrand, 'Towards an Astrology of Meaning and Purpose: The Legacy of Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985)', *The FAA Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (March 1999), [hereafter Hillenbrand, *Legacy*].

<sup>4</sup> Plato, 'Timaeus', *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, trans. W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1925), [hereafter Plato, *Timaeus*]; H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (London and New York: The Theosophical Publishing Company Ltd., 1999 [1888]), [hereafter Blavatsky, *Doctrine*]; Jan Smuts, *Holism and Evolution* (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1927), [hereafter Smuts, *Holism*]; Carl Gustav Jung, *Answer to Job*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002 [1954]), [hereafter Jung, *Job*]; Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, trans. Aniela Jaffe (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), [hereafter Jung, *Memories*]; Roberto Assaggioli, 'Dynamic Psychology and Psychosynthesis', Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, pp. 57-76. (1959), [hereafter Assaggioli, *Psychosynthesis*]; A. H. Maslow, 'A Theory of Human Evolution', *Psychological Review*, n. 50, (1943): pp. 370-396., [hereafter Maslow, *Evolution*]; Richard Wilhelm, trans., *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Cary F. Baynes, trans. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1947 [1931]), [hereafter Wilhelm, *Flower*].

<sup>5</sup> Ertan, *Thought*; Nicholas, Campion, 'The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology' (PhD diss., University of the West of England, 2004), [hereafter Campion, *Astrology*]; Davis, *Dane*; Michael R. Meyer, ed., 'An Illustrated Biographical Sketch', <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/bio1.shtml>; [hereafter Meyer, *Sketch*]; Hillenbrand, *Legacy*.

<sup>6</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 118.; Hillenbrand, *Legacy*, p. 2.



shortly after his arrival, changed his name to Dane Rudhyar.<sup>7</sup> According to Ertan, this new name invoked traits of ‘integrity and self-sufficiency’ for Rudhyar, who associated it with the Hindu god Rudra, the primeval form of Shiva, ‘...the god of radical transformation and therefore of death-rebirth.’<sup>8</sup> In line with the above, Hillenbrand comments that he consciously decided to be a ‘seed-man’ in the *New World* - thus making it imperative to renounce ‘past conditioning’ and embrace an essential ‘mutation’.<sup>9</sup> A lifetime later, at the age of eighty, Rudhyar recalled his encounter with astrology in 1920: ‘It was while staying in Hollywood near the Krotona Institute [...] that I became interested in astrology.’<sup>10</sup> The Krotona Institute was the base of operations of the American Theosophical Society [TSA], founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891).<sup>11</sup>

That same year in Hollywood, Rudhyar met and befriended two theosophists who were to have a great importance for his life and work: B. P. Wadia, editor of the journal *The Theosophist* and chief assistant of Annie Besant (the president of the TSA at the time); and Alice Bailey, the future founder of the ‘Arcane School’ (an offshoot of the TSA).<sup>12</sup> Wadia inspired Rudhyar to study Blavatsky’s books in depth, and published Rudhyar’s first article in English; while Bailey later published his first book.<sup>13</sup> Rudhyar also reported that he met the astrologer Marc Edmund Jones in 1930 and studied from the mimeographed courses that Jones sent to the members of the ‘Sabian Assembly’ - a group of students of esoteric astrology.<sup>14</sup> Campion observes that Jones, who was the leading promoter of theosophical astrology in the USA, followed in the steps of the theosophist and astrologer Alan Leo (1860-1917), the initiator of the above-mentioned discipline in Britain and the original translator of ‘theosophical cosmology’ into ‘practical astrology.’<sup>15</sup> *The Astrology of Personality* - Rudhyar’s first, and seminal book - was published in 1936 by Bailey’s theosophical Lucis

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<sup>7</sup> Meyer, *Sketch*, part 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ertan, *Thought*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Hillenbrand, *Legacy*, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Dane Rudhyar, ‘From Humanistic to Transpersonal Astrology’, Palto Alto, CA: The Seed Center, (1975) [http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/fromhtot\\_1.shtml](http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/fromhtot_1.shtml), [hereafter Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*].

<sup>11</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1; Meyer, *Sketch*, part 3.

<sup>12</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1; Meyer, *Sketch*, part 3; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 118.

<sup>13</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1; Meyer, *Sketch*, part 3; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.

<sup>15</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 117, p. 112.

Press.<sup>16</sup> Bailey had encouraged Rudhyar to write a book developing the articles he had been writing since 1933 for the periodical *American Astrology*.<sup>17</sup> Rudhyar dedicated the book to Bailey and acknowledged the influence on his work of Blavatsky's books, in particular *The Secret Doctrine*, 'which had meant so much to the development of my historical sense and my deeper mind.'<sup>18</sup>

### **'Wheels within wheels'**

In *The Secret Doctrine*, published in 1888, Blavatsky claimed that there once was an ancient and universal civilisation whose religion was at the core of all contemporary religions.<sup>19</sup> She stated that this primal religion had been kept veiled but alive by an 'Occult Brotherhood' of which she was a member.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, she specified that the purpose of her disclosure of this 'life-giving sacred lore' was to show humanity the 'occult side of nature' and 'to assign man his rightful place in the scheme of the Universe.'<sup>21</sup> According to this doctrine - anchored in a combination of Western esoteric Neo-Platonic and Hermetic traditions with 'eastern teachings' - the universe has soul, the history of the world is 'written in the stars', and humanity is subject to the law of karma and reincarnation.<sup>22</sup> Campion argues that Blavatsky's 'teleological, evolutionary, spiritual cosmos' was fully endorsed by Rudhyar and both Campion and Ertan assert that his theosophical fervour never diminished through the years.<sup>23</sup> In 1929, Rudhyar wrote that Theosophy 'is the *pi* of the Cosmos, the LAW', but in 1975, he alluded to 'difficult experiences' that compelled him to reassess his worldview and to 'question many things [he] had accepted at first unquestioningly.'<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, he did not elaborate further, and there seems to be no evidence in his writings of a distancing from Theosophy's basic tenets, but the above at least raises the possibility of a private disenchantment with some of its aspects. In fact, in an interview in 1977, Rudhyar spoke of the necessity for 'a new formulation of

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<sup>16</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.; Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Personality* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970 [1936]), [hereafter Rudhyar, *Personality*].

<sup>17</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.

<sup>18</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1; Blavatsky, *Doctrine*.

<sup>19</sup> Blavatsky, *Doctrine*, p. viii; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> Blavatsky, *Doctrine*, p. viii.

<sup>21</sup> Blavatsky, *Doctrine*, p. xxxv, p. viii.

<sup>22</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, pp. 55-56, p. 57; Blavatsky, *Doctrine*, p. vii, p. viii, p. 639.

<sup>23</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 122, p. 121, Ertan, *Thought*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Dane Rudhyar, Zahaz D. Rudhyar, 'Theosophy – The Triune Soul of the Cycles', *The Canadian Theosophist*, (1926) <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/triunesoul.shtml> [hereafter Rudhyar, *Triune*]; Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.

archetypal truth' and argued for the inclusion of modern psychologies within the traditional theosophical teachings.<sup>25</sup>

*The Secret Doctrine* establishes a complex theory of cyclic evolution, wherein 'cycles of matter' and 'cycles of spirit' interact in time and calibrate individual, racial, national and universal destinies.<sup>26</sup> Blavatsky described these cycles in time as 'wheels within wheels' and Rudhyar remarked that Blavatsky's repeated allusions to cycles confirmed a spontaneous revelation he had had at the age of sixteen 'that all life processes and the very essence of 'Time' were cyclic.'<sup>27</sup> In 1926, Rudhyar defined a cycle as a 'unit of organization in time', in which a soul 'differentiates from the bosom of cosmic substance, grows, matures, and is reabsorbed into the One' and in 1936, he stated that astrology is 'philosophically meaningless' if not based on a profound awareness of cycles and of the 'creative potency' of each moment in time.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Davis affirms that for theosophists an impending *New Age* implied a state of readiness for radical transformation and according to Campion, this last notion was pivotal to Rudhyar's 'entire body of work'.<sup>29</sup> In the book *Occult Preparations for a New Age*, published in 1975, Rudhyar asserted 'a New Age dawns!' and erected an elaborate astrological teleology for the coming of 'tomorrows that sing'.<sup>30</sup> Considering this, it can be surmised that Rudhyar's astrology found echo in two basic theosophical principles. The first is the ensoulment of the universe, a notion descending in a direct line from Plato (428 BC - 348 BC), who repeatedly described the cosmos as 'a Living Creature' and the second is the theory of cyclic time and 'zodiacal eons' - an elaboration of the Hindu esoteric tradition of *yugas* or 'great ages' - leading to the expectation of the coming *New Age*.<sup>31</sup>

### Operative Wholeness

In an article written in 1975, Rudhyar looked back on his astrological career and wrote that he had felt the growing need to approach the birth-chart holistically and to readjust his astrology to his 'general philosophy of existence'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> William Quinn, 'An Interview with Dane Rudhyar', *The American Theosophist* (1977), [http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/at\\_interview1.shtml](http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/at_interview1.shtml)

<sup>26</sup> Blavatsky, *Doctrine*, p. 638; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Blavatsky, *Doctrine*, p. 641; Meyer, *Sketch*, part 3.

<sup>28</sup> Rudhyar, *Triune*; Rudhyar, *Personality*, p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Davis, *Dane*, p. 1; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> Dane Rudhyar, *Occult Preparations for a New Age* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975), [http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op\\_c1\\_p1.php](http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c1_p1.php), [hereafter Rudhyar, *Occult*], ch. 12, part 2.

<sup>31</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* [32d]; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.

In 1930, four years after the publication of the book *Holism and Evolution* by Jan Smuts, for which Rudhyar had shown a deep interest, he coined the term 'the philosophy of operative wholeness'.<sup>33</sup> Smuts, a South African statesman and philosopher, argued that the redemption of 'the soul of our civilisation' depended on 'the great saving unities' - of which the ultimate was 'the unity of man's spirit with the mystery of the Cosmos'.<sup>34</sup> Campion holds that Rudhyar's holism was an apt addition to his theosophical teleology and that it was based on the assumption that the cosmos is inevitably advancing towards increasing wholeness.<sup>35</sup> In 1936, Rudhyar contended that *true* astrology is primarily concerned with 'operative wholes' and wrote of the 'whole-making energy which is the inner-most reality of time'.<sup>36</sup> Ertan asserts that Rudhyar was ultimately interested in the 'wholeness of experience', and Hillenbrand comments that he perceived the universe as a 'system of interpenetrating wholes'.<sup>37</sup> Taking into consideration all of the above, it could be proposed that holism mirrors Plato's cosmology, in which God moulded the Cosmos 'to be One single Whole, compounded of all wholes, perfect and ageless and unailing'.<sup>38</sup> Smuts observed that a 'Metaphysic of Holism' remained to be written – had Plato already written it and had Rudhyar adapted it to the 20<sup>th</sup> century?<sup>39</sup>

### Individual and Collective

Rudhyar recorded that he got 'fully acquainted' with the work of C. G. Jung (1875-1961) in the summer of 1933, when he read all of his translated books. He declared that, suddenly 'the idea that I could develop a series of connections between Jung's concepts and a reformulated type of astrology came to me'.<sup>40</sup> Davis relates that Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical work had been an essential influence on Rudhyar, although he ultimately found Freud's apparent absence of spirituality dissatisfying, but he considered Jung to be 'a modern spiritual guide'.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the development of esoteric astrology, 'astrology of the soul',

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<sup>33</sup> Smuts, *Holism*; Rudhyar, *Personality*, p.7; Dane Rudhyar, 'A Philosophy of Operative Wholeness', part 1, The Glass Hive (1930), [http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/pow\\_1.shtml](http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/pow_1.shtml)

<sup>34</sup> Smuts, *Holism*, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 120.

<sup>36</sup> Rudhyar, *Personality*, p. 58, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> Ertan, *Thought*, p. 4, p. 2; Hillenbrand, *Legacy*, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* [33a].

<sup>39</sup> Smuts, *Holism*, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, *Dane*, p. 3.

by the likes of Leo and Jones, was, according to Campion, the basis upon which psychological astrology – centred on personality and not on the prediction of events – could flourish.<sup>42</sup> In *The Astrology of Personality*, Rudhyar’s adoption of Jungian terms and concepts in his reformulation of astrology is impressive: for example, he contended that the astrological Sun is the symbol of ‘the process of individuation’ – the gradual conscious integration of the elements of the unconscious.<sup>43</sup> Jung had formulated the *individuation process* as the psychological technique through which ‘consciousness must confront the unconscious’ until the tension between opposites is integrated and ‘the personality is permeated by light’<sup>44</sup> Campion claims that Rudhyar amalgamated ‘twentieth-century psychology’ with ‘nineteenth-century theosophy’, and contrived for the first time – for an English readership – to effectively apply depth psychology to astrology.<sup>45</sup>

Jung postulated that the human psyche carries ‘a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness’ and designated this substratum as the ‘collective unconscious.’<sup>46</sup> Rudhyar embraced Jung’s formulation incorporating it into astrology, and asserted that an individual psyche draws its substance from a ‘vast reservoir’ of the generic unconscious of humanity, or from smaller – racial, tribal, national, familial – categories within it.<sup>47</sup> Incidentally, it might not be contentious to assume that Jung had read Blavatsky – since his work was admittedly influenced by many aspects of both Western and Eastern esoteric traditions: an example of this would be his avowal that the Chinese esoteric treaty *The Secret of the Golden Flower* had a crucial influence on his formulation of the unconscious.<sup>48</sup> Campion shows that Jung partially adopted the theory of the ‘astrological eons’ from Blavatsky – without citing her.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Jung repeatedly referred to the astrological ‘great ages’: for example, he maintained that the thousand years from 1 A.D. to 1000 A.D., ‘correspond astrologically to the first half of the Pisces aeon.’<sup>50</sup> In Campion’s opinion, Jung established a ‘historical philosophy’, where cultural transformations reflect major variations in the collective unconscious, mirrored in the heavens through ‘psychic

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<sup>42</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Rudhyar, *Personality*, p. 251.

<sup>44</sup> Jung, *Job*, p. 138.

<sup>45</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 120, p. 121.

<sup>46</sup> Jung, *Flower*, p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> Rudhyar, *Personality*, p. 195.

<sup>48</sup> Jung, *Memories*, p. 197.

<sup>49</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup> Jung, *Job*, p. 109.

projection'.<sup>51</sup> If Jung had not read Blavatsky, this last articulation would be intriguing, since it appears to clearly echo her aforementioned concept of 'cyclic evolution', which raises the question of the actual extent of theosophical influences on Jung's ideas.

In 1936, Rudhyar acknowledged that the work of Abraham Maslow, the founder of 'humanistic psychology', had notably influenced his thought.<sup>52</sup> Maslow proposed that one of the five basic human needs is the need for 'self-actualization', the urge to evolve into the totality of one's being, and declared 'What a man *can* be, he *must* be.'<sup>53</sup> In the 1930's, Rudhyar held freedom to be the intrinsic faculty to manifest the potential of an 'individual self-hood' - but in 1966, he admitted that 'if you are *really* your true self, then you are no longer free' because you are impelled to live in line with your personal truth.<sup>54</sup> Thereupon, in the last year of his life, Rudhyar asserted that depth psychologists degraded metaphysics to the status of psychology, and accused Jung of opportunely dumping into the collective unconscious anything that perturbed 'his subservience to the scientific and empirical assumptions of the European culture.'<sup>55</sup> Davis affirms that Jung's exclusive concern with life processes was limiting from Rudhyar's theosophical viewpoint.<sup>56</sup> He adds that Rudhyar's aim was that of creating a 'specific transpersonal astrology' where personal development was only the beginning of a wider process of universal integration.<sup>57</sup> In fact, Rudhyar is credited by Hillenbrand with inventing the term 'transpersonal' in the article 'From 'Personal' to 'Impersonal'', written in 1929, where he argues that 'instead of impersonal, let us use another word more telling – *transpersonal*'.<sup>58</sup> Rudhyar held that a human birth is the embodiment of the 'Universal into the Particular'; that 'a soul can manifest only through a

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<sup>51</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 68.

<sup>52</sup> Rudhyar, *Personality*, p. ix.

<sup>53</sup> Maslow, *Evolution*, p. 382.

<sup>54</sup> Rudhyar, *Personality*, p. 470; Dane Rudhyar, 'Blueprint for the Total You, A Prelude to Humanistic Astrology', *American Astrology Magazine*, (1966), <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/astroarticles/blueprintforthetotalyou.php>, [hereafter Rudhyar, *Blueprint*]

<sup>55</sup> Dane Rudhyar, 'Human, All Too Human and Beyond', *What is Enlightenment?* (1985), <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/toohuman.shtml>, [hereafter Rudhyar, *Human*]

<sup>56</sup> Davis, *Dane*, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Davis, *Dane*, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Hillenbrand, *Legacy*, p. 2; Dane Rudhyar, 'On 'Personal' and 'Impersonal'', *The Glass Hive* (1929), [http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/per\\_imper.shtml](http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/per_imper.shtml), [hereafter Rudhyar, *Impersonal*], p. 2.



personality'; and that a transpersonal stance is one where the 'universal unconditioned self' uses the personality as a tool.<sup>59</sup>

### Supreme Synthesis

Eight years after the publication of the above article, in 1937, Rudhyar travelled to Italy where he met and befriended Roberto Assagioli, founder of 'Psychosynthesis' – an integrative and holistic approach to psychology, specifically concerned with the study of the states of consciousness.<sup>60</sup> Like Rudhyar, Assagioli was Bailey's close friend and had been a student at her theosophical 'Arcane School'.<sup>61</sup> Assagioli adopted the term 'transpersonal' and argued that there is a 'true self', a 'synthesizing center' located outside the personality, and that the 'personal conscious self', can be regarded 'merely as its reflection, its 'projection' in the field of the personality.'<sup>62</sup> These words seem to reflect almost exactly Rudhyar's foregoing affirmation, shorn of its theosophical coating, and according to Davis, Assagioli conceded that Rudhyar's thinking reflected the 'spirit of psychosynthesis'.<sup>63</sup> In another parallel, Rudhyar wrote that 'the creative' is the 'reconciling operative principle' between the individual and the collective; while Assagioli posited that the 'realization of one's true self' can be achieved only through the discovery of a 'unifying center'.<sup>64</sup> In addition, Rudhyar asserted that 'the spirit of synthesis' can function both in a limited way within an individual and on a global and planetary level; whereas Assagioli affirmed that Psychosynthesis is the personalised form of a universal law of synthesis.<sup>65</sup> In Assagioli's words, the 'Supreme Synthesis' is the Spirit working upon and within all creation ... shaping it into order, harmony and beauty, uniting all beings.'<sup>66</sup> To wit, the postulation of a universal, ensouled, integrative principle can be seen as another echo of Plato's thought, for whom the universe was 'a perfect body compounded of perfect bodies', and soul was 'stretched throughout the whole of it.'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Rudhyar, *Impersonal*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>60</sup> Meyer, *Sketch*, part 6; Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Sørensen and Hanne Birkholm, Roberto Assagioli - His Life and Work, trans. Gunnar Hansen, ch. 4., <http://www.psykosyntese.dk/a-146/>

<sup>62</sup> Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 61, p. 63, p. 64.

<sup>63</sup> Davis, *Dane*, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Rudhyar, *Personality*, p.153; Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Rudhyar, *Occult*, ch. 2, part 1; Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 76. p. 75.

<sup>67</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* [34b].

In 1966, Rudhyar expounded on the future of astrology and distinguished two trends since 1900 – the first hinged on ancient astrological traditions transmitted by the ‘Greco-Roman-Alexandrian’ scholars; and the second on a reformulation of astrology ‘better attuned to the psychological needs of humanity.’<sup>68</sup> Differentiating further, Campion contends that the two ‘distinct but related’ forms of modern astrology stemming from Theosophy are esoteric astrology (centred on the soul), and psychological astrology (focused on the ‘development of personality’) - this last being what most Western astrologers actually practice.<sup>69</sup> From the body of evidence presented in this paper, it can be surmised that Rudhyar was a pioneer (if not *the* pioneer) in the development of person-centred, psychological astrology. Rudhyar claimed that astrology ‘deals with subjective interpretation of objective facts’, since an event in itself is meaningless until we give it meaning.<sup>70</sup> He described astrology as a ‘discipline of thought’, a practice that fosters the intuitive apprehension ‘of deep sea-currents underneath the play of surface-waves.’<sup>71</sup> Ertan observes that Rudhyar’s approach to astrology was fundamentally ‘nonhierarchical and nonabsolutist’, Campion notes his ‘profound relativism’, and Hillenbrand comments that he was alert to the ‘context-bound nature of interpretation’.<sup>72</sup> Rudhyar himself, always understood astrology to be a symbolic language striving to translate ‘an immensely complex structure of relationships between the universe and man.’<sup>73</sup> Hillenbrand asserts that the concept of astrology as a symbolic language was a revolutionary step in astrology’s history and credits Rudhyar with a ‘postmodernist perspective’.<sup>74</sup> It could be argued that if Rudhyar was postmodernist because he perceived astrology to be a language, so were the Mesopotamian astrologers of 2000 B.C., who described the starry sky as the ‘writing of heaven’.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

As assumed by his biographers, the theosophical influence on Rudhyar’s astrology cannot be understated, but evidence for a specification has emerged

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<sup>68</sup> Rudhyar, *Blueprint*.

<sup>69</sup> Campion, *Astrology*, p. 107.

<sup>70</sup> Rudhyar, *Blueprint*.

<sup>71</sup> Rudhyar, *Blueprint*.

<sup>72</sup> Ertan, *Thought*, p. xii; Campion, *Astrology*, p. 124; Hillenbrand, *Legacy*, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Rudhyar, *Transpersonal*, part 1.

<sup>74</sup> Hillenbrand, *Legacy*, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Erica Reiner, ‘Astral Magic in Babylonia’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol.85, no. 4, (1995).

from this paper: he was primarily influenced by Theosophy's basic tenets as divulged in Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, and had little patience for the later theosophical establishment of dogma. In particular, Rudhyar endorsed, elaborated and perfected Blavatsky's concept of 'wheels within wheels' - of cyclic evolution and the consequent expectation of a 'New Age', in an elegant and all-embracing astrological teleology based on the cycle. Furthermore, the importance of Jung's thought in his formulation of a psychological astrology has been shown to be remarkable – in particular through his adoption and incorporation into astrology, as of 1936, of the Jungian concepts of 'the individuation process' and of the 'collective unconscious.' Maslow's postulation of the human need for self-actualisation has been found influential in the formulation of Rudhyar's person-centred perspective, but his disillusionment with the idea of an astrology geared only towards the development of the personality was seen to lead to his articulation of a transpersonal approach to astrology. Furthermore, it has been shown that the consequence for Rudhyar's astrology of Smuts' and Assagioli's work was momentous, since it inspired Rudhyar to move away from what he considered to be the excessive analysis and fragmentation of depth psychology and to seek integration, wholeness and synthesis in the birth-chart. Moreover, a line of evidence that runs through the entire paper, is the underlying influence of Plato's cosmology – on Blavatsky, Smuts, Jung, Assagioli, and Rudhyar himself. To conclude, it could be argued that the three great influences on Rudhyar - theosophical teleology, depth psychology, and Smuts' and Assagioli's great integrative principles, all stem from Plato's cosmology – which thus becomes the major and ultimate influence on Rudhyar's astrology.

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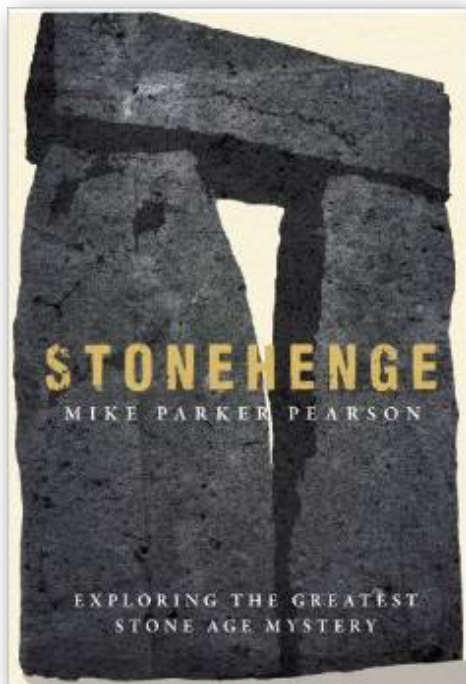
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*Stonehenge: Exploring the greatest  
Stone Age mystery*

by **Mike Parker Pearson (London:  
Simon and Shuster 2012.)**

*Reviewed by Pam Armstrong*

The crucial thing to know about  
Mike Parker Pearson's book  
'Stonehenge' is that it not only

discusses the famous megalithic stone circle; it also explores the history of two other circles close by, Woodhenge and Bluestonehenge, as well as exploring the lives of the people who built all three. Professor Parker Pearson's overview of the monument that we think of as Stonehenge is really about the most recent archaeology carried out on the entire hillside leading down from Stonehenge itself, to the newly discovered Neolithic settlement of Durrington Walls close to the River Avon. As Parker Pearson tells it the extensive excavations across this entire hill and riverside reveal new information about the way people lived and buried their dead in what was essentially Europe's largest community 4500 years ago.

Once the settlement by the river was discovered it became clear that the two sites, Stonehenge and Durrington Walls were not separate as everyone had thought, but were in fact two halves of the same complex. In other words, to understand Stonehenge, one has to decode Durrington. And that is precisely what Parker Pearson's book does. His easy to read and well illustrated text details the archaeological excavations which became known as the Riverside Project. This project ran for seven



years from 2003 and counted as one of the world's largest of its time. In all, forty five excavations occurred across the 26.6 square kilometres that we loosely designate 'Stonehenge.'

As Parker Pearson himself points out Stonehenge was not one monument, built at one moment in history, but many monuments built over many centuries. His book covers this evolutionary process, and then broadens in scope to look at the wider social patterns of the time. It explores long-distance mobility and trade, architectural developments and funerary customs all of which provide an essential key to understanding the Neolithic peoples who inhabited this landscape then.

Parker Pearson is bold in his claims that the discoveries of the Riverside Project must now re-shape our view of this unique World Heritage site. He claims for instance that the design of megalithic Stonehenge was not influenced by distant cultures but followed architectural fashions of the time, reflecting local vernacular. In terms of Stonehenge's social function, the discovery of animal bones and lipids within pots at Durrington Walls point he says to midwinter and summertime gatherings. This reinforces the view that the circle's solstitial and lunar alignments were not part of an abstracted calendar, but marked key moments of annual gathering and celebration. Perhaps most importantly the Riverside Project has reassessed

radio carbon dating old and new and so is in a position to argue for a revised chronology of Stonehenge's building phases.

Thus Parker Pearson's 'Stonehenge' anchors this spectacular monument in time and place in a new way and for this alone the book is a most useful reference point for those interested in the continuing debate about Neolithic Europe. Highly recommended.

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# What do Japanese Astrologers Believe about the Astrology that they Practice?

*by Sean Thornton*

This study provides a window into the beliefs and motivations of Japanese astrological practitioners. Their answers are weighed against Bertrand Russell's opinion that modern astrologers operate, either knowingly, or unconsciously, from a false basis. Four guided interviews were conducted with four different Japanese astrologers. Their beliefs were elicited primarily by asking about how they became astrologers and how they explain astrology to themselves and others. The key findings were that each astrologer held complex beliefs in understanding and explaining their own relationship with astrology, and that they felt that they had to defend those beliefs a lot less than astrologers living in "the west". Most of the respondents expressed an intuitive confidence in astrology as a functional and effective system of symbolism that manifests and is expressed particularly well by psychological astrology's handling of natal charts.

## Introduction

This study is based on interviews with four Japanese astrologers concerning their beliefs in, and involvement with, astrology. Their answers are weighed against Bertrand Russell's opinion that modern astrologers operate, either knowingly, or unconsciously, from a false basis. Russell asked of astrologers

Do they believe themselves in the sciences that they profess? This is a difficult question. Everything marvellous is believed by some people, and it is not improbable that professional astrologers are of this type. And even if they are aware that their own performances are largely guesswork and inferences from information obtained otherwise, they probably think that there are superior practitioners who never resort to these inferior methods.<sup>1</sup>

The respondents in this study are from Japan. Three of them focus on Western astrology, and one on Vedic astrology. In searching online for academic studies into the practice of non-Japanese astrology in Japan no other papers were

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<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Russell, 'On Astrologers', *Hearst Newspaper* 1932, p. 1.

found. As such this study has the aim of revealing something new about modern astrology, Japan, and globalization.

The interviews were intended to encourage the respondents to tell their own stories about how they became involved in astrology and how that involvement has developed and manifested over the years. There was an emphasis on how they understood and explained the workings and systems of astrology to themselves and to others. The findings of the interviews were in turn related to Russell’s 1932 lamentations on astrology wherein he challenges contemporary (at his time of writing) astrology on a number of grounds. It was hoped that answers to Russell’s questions could be inferred from the interviews.

The literature review will attend to Russell’s article, as well as attempt to clarify what ‘belief’ means, particularly in the context of astrology. The section on methodology will account for the choice of the interview technique and give details of how the interviews were prepared for and conducted. The discussion section will confront the contents of the interviews and how they relate to the discourse of ‘belief’ raised by Russell. The conclusion will try to estimate how the interviewees would respond to Russell’s challenges.

**Review of the Literature**

It seems appropriate to begin by clarifying Russell’s perspective. His initial concern is that in recent centuries astrology has been trivialised and marginalised. In relation to astrology no longer being something that is of central concern to rulers such as it was in ancient Babylon or Rome he remarks that ‘there is always something pathetic about a great and ancient tradition which has fallen on evil days.’<sup>2</sup> He goes on to describe twentieth century astrology as ‘sadly modernised’ on the basis that it is too neat: being typed, rather than ‘inscribed cabalistically upon parchment.’<sup>3</sup> There is a sense that the point he is trying to make is about disenchantment such as that with which Patrick Curry also concerns himself.<sup>4</sup> To illustrate the core of disenchantment, Curry references Max Weber, saying ‘the fate of our times is characterised by rationalism and intellectualisation’ - which manifests primarily in the form of forcing everything into an empirical model and dismissing anything that can’t be explained by it.<sup>5</sup>

Both Russell and Curry seem to contend that the modern world has reduced everything to a product. Indeed, there is a strong sense in Russell’s

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<sup>2</sup> Russell, ‘On Astrologers’, p. 1.  
<sup>3</sup> Russell, ‘On Astrologers’, p. 1.  
<sup>4</sup> Roy Willis, and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture – Pulling down the Moon*, (Berg, 2004), pp. 77 – 84.  
<sup>5</sup> Willis & Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture*, p. 77.

comments that he suspects that some modern astrologers are financially motivated, 'hard-working and highly meritorious business men or women, with an aged mother or an invalid husband to support'.<sup>6</sup> In his closing address, Russell's possible grief for lost enchantment is swept aside with his statement that for 'any person with even the vaguest idea of the nature of scientific evidence, such beliefs as those of astrologers are of course impossible'.<sup>7</sup> His blanket dismissal of modern astrology could be taken as a disclaimer in the face of his nostalgic reverence for its ancient versions.

Closer consideration of the nature and meaning of belief is pertinent to adequately approach Russell's questions about the beliefs of astrologers. Carl Bankston defines belief as 'statements about the supernatural which are taken as true', and elaborates on this by portraying beliefs as socially negotiated cosmologies that offer the possibility of access to benefits that are not available through typical material means.<sup>8</sup> Bankston sees belief as being a combination of the individual psychological need to understand one's place in the universe, and the desire to share these understandings and potentially form groups on the basis of shared perspectives.<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Campion takes the strictly psychological aspect of belief to a logical conclusion by identifying what technically constitutes belief as a psychological concept: that which a person accepts or agrees with about a matter or subject or object.<sup>10</sup> He adds that 'a belief does not have to be true, but neither is it necessarily false: it is the perception of the believer which counts' - and this may be applied to anything, including religion and science.<sup>11</sup>

Campion presents both sides of the argument and adds that belief in general originates in a personal tendency in some people towards believing. He notes that prior research has indicated that 'strong belief in the paranormal, including astrology, is likely to correlate with strong belief in either religion or science or both. In other words, the unifying principle is belief, and the object of belief may be irrelevant'.<sup>12</sup> However, at the same time he cites a number of surveys that failed to find correlations between strength of belief in astrology and religion, or science and the paranormal.

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<sup>6</sup> Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Carl L. Bankston, 'Rationality, Choice and the Religious Economy: The Problem of Belief', *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2002, pp. 311, 312.

<sup>9</sup> Bankston, 2002, p. 314.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement: the extent and nature of contemporary belief in Astrology' (PhD thesis, Study of Religions Department, Bath Spa University College, 2004), p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 155.

<sup>12</sup> Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 182.

In his paper on the paranormal, Joseph Laycock suggests that over the last few decades the grouping methods of believers have been diversifying. He cites the proliferation of television shows concerned with the paranormal and the supernatural, such as ghosts, UFOs, angels, or astrology. For him, this is a demonstration of popular cultures harnessing and expressing beliefs that are shared by a significant portion of the population (of the USA in the case of his study).<sup>13</sup> This could be a public aspect of the privatisation of belief. Campion also suggests that 'astrology may exist as part of the process of privatization, the increasing pluralism of religiosity'.<sup>14</sup> For both Bankston and Laycock belief seems to be about people figuring out what is true to them and then communicating these thoughts and feelings to others. In his study of schoolgirl beliefs, T.L. Brink found that an admixture of incompatible beliefs is quite common, one example of this being the combining of Catholic beliefs with a belief in reincarnation.<sup>15</sup> Reincarnation is a belief that Tony Walter and Helen Waterhouse identify as a key example of the privatisation of religion in Britain and as a possible instance of said privatisation being a vehicle for deviance in beliefs.<sup>16</sup> Campion sees another side to it, and observes a tendency for positivists and empiricists to wield the term 'belief' like a cudgel and use it as a pejorative term to imply something that is accepted without evidence or without a rational basis.<sup>17</sup> Drawing upon Campion and Bankston's perspectives in particular, belief in the context of my research is defined as statements about the nature of reality that a person expresses as being true either to themselves or to others.

## Methodology

The study attempted to gather insights into Japanese astrologers and their beliefs concerning astrology. There were three options: face to face, online, or a combination of both. William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson point to a number of techniques that have proved suitable for understanding and explaining people's experiences - including case studies, interviews, questionnaires and

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Laycock, 'Paranormal Belief: A New Frontier?' (Nova Religion: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2011, University of California Press), p. 95.

<sup>14</sup> Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 177.

<sup>15</sup> T. L. Brink, 'Inconsistency of Belief among Roman Catholic Girls: Concerning Religion, Astrology, Reincarnation' (Review of Religious Research, 20, 1978), p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Tony Walter & Helen Waterhouse, 'A Very Private Belief: Reincarnation in Contemporary England' (Sociology of Religion, Vol. 60, No. 2, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', pp. 159, 160, 163.

surveys.<sup>18</sup> The length and depth of a case study as described by Judith Bell was deemed not viable for the research in question.<sup>19</sup> Bell also highlights the issue that ‘Surveys can provide answers to the questions ‘What?’, ‘Where?’, ‘When?’, and ‘How?’, but it is not easy to find out ‘Why?’”<sup>20</sup> A response to Russell’s concerns that does not attend to the ‘Why?’ might be described as hollow.

I had previously met four astrologers in Japan and felt that there was a good chance that they could be recruited as respondents, and perhaps introduce me to additional potential interviewees. Both the small sample size and the subject matter of ‘belief’ pointed towards the use of an interview technique. The expectation was to talk in detail to a limited number of astrologers about their relationship with, and understanding of, astrology. Robert Stake identifies the task in such a case to be that ‘qualitative researchers perceive what is happening in key episodes or testimonies, represent what is happening with their own direct interpretation and stories’.<sup>21</sup> This approach is supported by Bernadette Brady’s research, which inquired into astrologers’ thoughts and experiences about fate. In that study, Brady’s interviews were ‘designed to ask broad questions’ and ‘drift into personal anecdotes about their experiences of fate and/or their attitude to it’.<sup>22</sup> A comparable approach seemed suitable for this study as a way of investigating personal experiences and explanations of the interviewees’ belief(s) about astrology.

The four respondents lived close enough that a group meeting would have been possible, however it was determined that individual interviews would have a better chance of yielding pertinent and detailed responses due to certain aspects of Japanese culture. The primary point of concern was that a group interview could be overly influenced by *kohai/sempai* dynamics. The basic meaning of these terms is junior (*kohai*) and senior (*sempai*), literally in the sense of one person being older than the other. There is a tendency in Japan for the *kohai* in any situation to defer to or seek consensus with the *sempai*. Yuko Nippoda shows that this manifests primarily in the sense of children obeying adults, but as people progress through adulthood the hierarchy develops to include all elders as well as people with a clear expertise in the matter at hand.<sup>23</sup> Pauline Taylor discusses the

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<sup>18</sup> William Braud and Rose Marie Anderson, ‘Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences’ (USA, Sage Publications, Inc., 1998), p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, (Suffolk, McGraw-Hill, 2010), pp. 8 – 9.

<sup>20</sup> Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Robert E. Stake, ‘The Art of Case Study Research’ (SAGE Publications, Inc., 1995), p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Bernadette Brady, ‘Theories of Fate among Present-day Astrologers’ (PhD thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2011), p. 248.

<sup>23</sup> Yuko Nippoda, ‘Japanese Culture and Therapeutic Relationship’ (Online Readings in Psychology, 10 [3], 2012), p. 4.

dynamics of Japanese group hierarchy in relation to students on overseas study programmes - students who are newer to overseas study assume the *kohai* role and turn to their *sempai* for support, guidance, and decision-making.<sup>24</sup> This 'deference effect' is not unique to Japan and attention was already drawn to it by Monique Hennink's, Inge Hutter's and Ajay Bailey's work on qualitative research methods.<sup>25</sup> I considered it to be a potential problem in interviewing my Japanese astrologers, and firmly decided against a group interview on this basis. If a group interview were conducted, I assumed that the respondents would internally evaluate who the *sempai* was regards each matter and wait for that person to answer first. Thereafter the other participants would not contradict that response, and might even adjust their contributions to validate what had already been said. Although my comprehension of this dynamic is at an outsider level, I understand *kohai/sempai* dynamics enough to know that my research should minimise their impact.

On the matter of introducing other respondents a complication arose. There were other possible interviewees, but not ones that were willing and able to be interviewed in English. Conducting interviews in Japanese was not a viable option since the high degree of accuracy of representation necessary in an academic study would only be possible with a bilingual interviewer. My knowledge of Japanese is conversational but not bilingual and the interview content would need to be translated for use, which is a time-consuming process that could easily result in a flawed translation. Charlotte Aull Davies raises the concern that ethnographers 'must remain aware that translation in any case is far from a theoretically neutral activity and that their own perspectives, both professional and personal, will influence translations'.<sup>26</sup>

Having established that individual interviews were going to be the core of the research method, the specific style of the interviews needed to be considered. The additional aim of responding to Bertrand Russell's challenge was to be approached in an indirect manner by eliciting the interviewees' beliefs. Under these conditions, Bell recommends guided interviews – which also allow respondents to focus on their own concerns within a general topic.<sup>27</sup> Davies describes semi-structured interviews as being 'formally bracketed, and set off in

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<sup>24</sup> Pauline Taylor, 'International Japanese Students: their Expectations and learning needs at Australian Universities' (PhD thesis, Sydney, University of Technology, 2008), pp. 120, 147, 186, 224, 251.

<sup>25</sup> Monique Hennik; Inge Hutter; Ajay Bailey, 'Qualitative Research Methods' (Ashford, Sage Publications, 2013), p. 164.

<sup>26</sup> Charlotte Davies Aull, *Reflexive Ethnography* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 125.

<sup>27</sup> Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 165.



time and space as something different from the usual social interaction'.<sup>28</sup> Semi-structured interviews seemed the appropriate choice, because, according to Alan Bryman, they avoid the risk of the rambling of unstructured interviews (due to the lack of guidance).<sup>29</sup> Unstructured interviews could have proven interesting but not necessarily useful. It would have been unreasonable to waste my interviewees' time by leaving so much to chance.

A list of approximate questions was composed, and the interviewees decided the time and location of the appointments. At the beginning of each interview, permission was requested to record it; a formal privacy statement was read aloud; and some background questions were asked about what else the respondents' lives involved other than astrology. This lead into how they got involved in astrology, what role it plays in their lives, how they comprehend and express their beliefs concerning astrology, and how they deal with hostile inquiry. Thereafter, the interviews began to wind down, and the option was given to make additional comments. Lastly, the respondents were thanked for their time, and asked to complete the interview release form. The interviews lasted between 24 and 42 minutes.

It is not easy to calibrate where one stands on the insider-outsider scale. For example, when I compared my situation to that of Jenny Blain in her paper about Seidr practitioners I felt that I was simultaneously less of an insider than her and less of an outsider too. Blain is deeply involved with the Seidr community - to the extent that she fields the possibility that, anthropologically speaking, she may have 'gone native'.<sup>30</sup> Blain devotes a number of sections of her article to the issues around academic positioning in relation to research, and conveys an understanding and concern for how ethnography can manifest and how it might be perceived.<sup>31</sup> My outsider dilemma was far simpler: to attend to the task at hand without reducing the interviews to a dry checklist.

In consulting Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, the insider-outsider positioning of this project can be somewhat clarified. The interviews were conducted with the intention of comprehending the experiences of the astrologers from their own perspectives. This places the interview set-up and execution within an interpretist paradigm, which Max Weber would identify as *Verstehen* intentions – that is, the focus and intention being to understand the respondents from their own

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<sup>28</sup> Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, (Oxon, Routledge, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Jenny Blain, 'Speaking Shamanistically: Seidr, Academia and Rationality' (DISKUS, Volume 6, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Blain, 'Speaking Shamanistically: Seidr, Academia and Rationality', p. 6.

perspectives.<sup>32</sup> Russell's challenge is sourced in positivism, containing as it does the hypothesis that astrologers are basically lying to themselves and that astrology has no actual empirical value.<sup>33</sup> Most of the parameters appear to fit the 'insider' classification, but with an 'outsider' agenda. My theoretical solution in regard to this last was Liz Greene's suggestion to adopt Ninian Smart's 'methodological agnosticism', since this paper has 'no specific hypothesis to prove or disprove' and a neutral position is pursued.<sup>34</sup> 'Methodological agnosticism', according to Russell McCutcheon, is 'a stance that avoids any and all stands on issues of knowledge'.<sup>35</sup>

A phenomenological approach to the interviews focusing on the respondents' experiences of astrology was an ideal goal, tempered by the agenda of attending to Russell's query. On account of this, it was necessary for the interviews to be guided rather than in totally free form - with an effort made to gather potential responses to Russell's challenge by way of what Dermot Moran describes as approaching phenomenological disclosure through a detour.<sup>36</sup> Kathryn Hayes points out that reflexivity is a balancing act between being considerate enough of the flaws in any given piece of research and not over-indulging in reflection at the expense of other areas during the production of a paper.<sup>37</sup> I was acutely aware that my interviews were shaped by the need to answer a particular question. This brought a level of formality to the interviews, which was less than ideal. Additionally, there was the concern that my work had a distinct sample bias in that all of my interviewees happened to also be people who were fluent in English as a second language.

## Discussion

After soliciting the initial background information about each respondent, the topics common to all respondents were discussed, after which some of the distinctive content to each interview was included. The interviews were semi-structured; the wording of the questions varied and there was no fixed order, although there were certain themes that the interviewees were guided towards.

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<sup>32</sup> Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey, 'Qualitative Research Methods' (Ashford, Sage Publications, 2013), pp. 12 – 17.

<sup>33</sup> Hennink, 'Qualitative Research Methods', p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Liz Greene, 'Mystical Experiences Among Astrologers' (Sophia Centre Press, Culture and Cosmos, 2006), p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, 'The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion' (Britain, Continuum, 2005), p. 216.

<sup>36</sup> Dermot Moran & Tim Mooney, *The Phenomenology Reader* (Routledge, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Gillian Symon & Catherine Cassell, 'Qualitative Organizational Research Core Methods and Current Challenges' (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), p. 76.

Pseudonyms have been assigned to the respondents throughout this paper. All respondents are from Japan and live there now. Yumi, who is 48 and works primarily as a conference interpreter, is involved with astrology professionally as a sideline, both by taking clients and facilitating astrology workshops. She has an educational background in international relations and social psychology. Miraa is 46 and a full-time media astrologer and has published over 200 books on western astrology in Japanese, including both original works and translations. He also works part-time as a Religious Studies lecturer at university level. His educational background is in transpersonal psychology. Ichii is 43 and works as both translator and interpreter for an advertising agency. He is also a practicing Vedic astrologer with a number of clients. He studied Politics in the UK and Ayurvedic medicine in India. Kibi is 31 and a full-time astrologer who has clients, writes articles, and teaches astrology. He had previously worked in information technology and studied philosophy at university.

All of the respondents have a professional relationship with astrology and earn at least some of their income from it. In addition their employment histories beyond astrology could all be classified as professional white-collar work. In this regard they match with at least one of Russell's claims, that astrologers are 'hard-working and highly meritorious business men or women'.<sup>38</sup> None mentioned engaging in astrology out of a necessity (or desire) to earn more money.

Each interviewee told the story of their involvement with astrology. Miraa first became interested in astrology around the age of ten and has the longest acquaintance with astrology; he was making natal charts and giving readings before he had even left school. He mentioning that he feels he was a product of the 'occult explosion' that occurred in the 1970's. At the age of 27, the university that he was working for effectively gave him an ultimatum: either be an academic, or be an astrologer. He chose astrology, but didn't give up on academia, remarking that 'there is such a thing as an intellectual astrologer'. Now, he is a successful media astrologer and writer.

Yumi and Ichii are both currently interpreters. Both became involved in astrology while in their twenties, and in each case their entry into it was rather more dramatic than childhood curiosity. At age 25, while travelling in New York, Ichii experienced a conversion to Hinduism that he described as 'miraculous'; he added that 'it wasn't my choice, it just happened', and also that in his youth he had been sceptical and cynical about religion and spirituality in general. Through the involvement in Hinduism he also got into Vedic Astrology and Ayurvedic Medicine. Yumi begins the story of her history at a particular point in time 'when Saturn returned, around that time. When I was around 29, many people start

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<sup>38</sup> Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

studying astrology around that time'. She was dealing with a number of struggles in her life and she felt 'I really needed an answer – why is this happening to me?' This led her to dabble in tarot, yoga, Chinese astrology, exorcism, and at one point she was a member of a cult. Many of them made a good first impression on her but over the long-term only Western astrology persisted.

Kibi had developed a keen interest in Jungian thought from his mid-teens onwards, which led to Psychological Astrology and the works of Liz Greene, Dane Rudhyar and Ryuji Kagami 'although at that time it was just a hobby for me'. He studied Philosophy with a focus on Greek thought because it combined his interests in astrology and archetypes (through mythology). Kibi grew up poor, and when it came time to seek employment he chose what seemed a safe and steady bet: the I.T. business. 'and then in 2008 there was the Lehman shock ... this was the time to take my life in a different direction'. 'Lehman Shock' is the economic crash of 2008 – a commonly referenced low point in the Japanese economy. With his business circumstances disrupted, he took the opportunity to return to his earlier interests and over the last six years he has developed a liveable career in astrology.

The significance of natal charts was the area of belief that all the respondents seemed to hold in common. Each expressed this in their own way, but all indicated that it was a fundamental element of their relationship with astrology. Miraa had actually undertaken experiments where divinatory readings generated using arbitrary non-traditional methods were compared to ones produced authentically using astrological charts. He found that when the diviner tries 'to create answers from nothing, just make them up, it's very difficult to get it right'; whereas with readings based on traditional astrological methods 'it's quite easy to apply, and get right answers'. Kibi said that for many years his sole astrological activity was extensive analysis and contemplation of his own natal chart, and that in turn primed him for working with other people's natal charts during consultations. Yumi sees birth charts in a more literal sense - they are the maps of celestial bodies, and those bodies have a direct impact of human life. On the astrologer's role she said, 'our job is to read the energy given on the day of your birth, we try to interpret the energy that each planet is giving you'. Ichii's first encounter with his own natal chart was rather profound for him. In it he saw clear indications of his overseas study, religious conversion, and many other aspects of his life 'it was all right there, written in the chart'. He came to understand the chart as a manifestation of karma, which he understands as 'things I can change, and things I cannot change'; astrology and the natal chart are, for him, an extension and an expression of this. He elaborated by saying 'do your duty, not other people's duty. The natal chart helps you to identify what your duty is.' Ichii would not agree with T. L. Brink's assertion that 'astrology's

fatalism is based upon blind impersonal forces and is substantially different from whatever fatalism reincarnationists attribute to the workings of karma.’<sup>39</sup> Ichii views the astrological birth chart as a clear expression of the nature and manifestation of karma.

There was only limited discussion about astrological clients, but interestingly both Kibi and Ichii mentioned very similar things. Kibi gave an account of a client who was considering a divorce. In consultation he explained to the client that a Jupiter-Sun transit was occurring, at which time people may feel a need to manifest relationship changes, and explained ‘this transit is like a reset button for relationships’. Ichii also remarked that he had had clients who were engaged in extra marital affairs and were seeking astrological explanations for their own behaviour. He also drew attention to the Jupiter-Sun transit. In both Ichii’s and Kibi’s cases, they advocated waiting out the transit before making any big decisions.

Russell’s article could be seen as a clear example of hostile inquiry, so each interviewee was asked directly about dealing with this type of hostility - explained to the respondents as people challenging the astrologer in a belligerent or accusatory tone to defend his position and justify his practice. Perhaps second-guessing the exact essay question, Miraa’s immediate response was ‘fortunately in Japan, there is no Richard Dawkins’, followed by, ‘we can’t prove astrology through the accepted way of thinking, astrology is a kind of subjective experience’. Kibi’s answer was similar, but began with a diagram. He drew two lines that started close, and then split further apart, and then he added a barrier between the two. He explained: ‘at the start there was no conflict between metaphysics and rationality. Then they started to pull apart. Now, there is a wall between them and neither can accept the other without giving up their own ideas’. For him, the main concern was to not seek conflict. Ichii reflected a similar historical sentiment in saying that ‘when people challenge astrology with science I remind myself (and maybe them) that science is catching up to spirituality and religion, not the other way around. We’ve had many answers long before they started asking questions.’ Yumi, in seeking clarification, elicited the specific example of Bertrand Russell from me and responded ‘I think astrology has evolved a lot since then, that is to say that his stance is old-fashioned’. She also made an interesting comment that astrologers in Japan occupy something of a privileged position because they get all the benefits of the progress and development of the field, but generally do not have to fight the fights because Japan does not share the Western tradition of people constantly championing their own causes whilst trampling others.

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<sup>39</sup> Brink, ‘Inconsistency of Belief among Roman Catholic Girls’, p. 82.

## Conclusion

In the case of the four respondents in this study, the answer to Russell's question about astrologers - 'Do they believe themselves in the sciences that they profess?' - seems to be 'yes'.<sup>40</sup> Yumi believes in astrology on a material and astronomical level, and feels that psychological astrology is a good way to express that. Miraa believes in astrology as 'a framework of the expression of the human experience, intuition, patterns'; and adds that Jungian astrology is the latest manifestation of these ancient symbolic traditions. Miraa expresses a tendency towards reflexivity, often scrutinising his own beliefs. This was most clearly demonstrated in his experimental divinations discussed earlier, from which he concluded that arbitrarily made-up divinations are much less accurate and effective than those based on established divinatory practices.<sup>41</sup> Kibi explains his core beliefs about astrology in an eloquent way 'astrology is like breath work. When a client comes to you, you inspire – that is, you breathe in their situation. Then you use your intuition to make deductions before you expire – which is to express compassion and understanding for them'. Ichii's belief is tied in with his Hinduism, and particularly with the principles of karma within that. None of the respondents had much to say about Japanese astrology - during the interviews they all tended to focus on the astrology that they do practice, rather than the astrologies that they do not. In peripheral conversations that were not directly part of the interviews (and therefore not recorded), some of the astrologers mentioned that they intentionally chose to practice foreign rather than domestic astrology because it was outside of their cultural norm. The adoption of Western or Vedic astrology by these Japanese practitioners could be a manifestation of the privatisation of religion. Walter and Waterhouse note that as part of the privatisation of religion in the UK, people often hold deviant beliefs, such as combining Christianity with reincarnation.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps a major reason for the adoption of foreign astrologies by the Japanese is that the sense of progress and ongoing development that is apparent in Western astrology is very much lacking in Japanese astrology - which according to Yumi, is stagnant. Throughout the interviews, Yumi, Kibi, and Miraa spoke with enthusiasm about major figures in astrology, such as Liz Greene, Dane Rudhyar, Nicholas Campion, Geoffrey Cornelius and Ryuji Kagami. Ryuji Kagami is Japanese and an astrologer, but not one that deals with Japanese astrology. The pervading sentiment was that Western astrology is intellectually engaging and thus more attractive for the astrologers.

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<sup>40</sup> Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Experimental data details unavailable

<sup>42</sup> Walter & Waterhouse, 'A Very Private Belief', p. 187.

Additionally, Western astrological horoscopes are a common feature in the Japanese media and a mainstream example of public acceptance of astrology in Japan.

Russell may readily pick apart the details of many of the above beliefs, and perhaps also see the diversity of the reasons for belief as problematic. The only functional response to such criticism is the one that each interviewee offered in some form or another: the scientific method is a belief that cannot conclude in astrology's favour due to its paradigms; astrology does not need to operate within those paradigms, so science can have its opinion, but astrology will be what it is. This was a persistent sentiment among the interviewees and in the context of this research is an example of Champion's idea that 'it is the perception of the believer which counts'.<sup>43</sup>

Ichii, when asked how he explains astrology to both curious and hostile inquirers gave the same answer to both questions: 'it's very simple: MYOB – mind your own business', by which he means that one's natal chart tells them what their own business is and this is what must get on with rather than the common meaning 'don't interfere.' He added that 'if being hostile to astrology is part of one's karma, then so be it', which reflected a similar sentiment expressed by Yumi, who said 'people have the free will to attack astrology, or to practice it. In fact, it's probably in their chart.'

Each respondent demonstrated belief in the validity of what they are doing. Miraa believes that astrology can be handled academically, that symbolism is significant and that astrology is an effective manifestation of symbolism. Ichii believes in the Hindu principle of karma, and that astrology is relevant to comprehending karma. Yumi and Kibi demonstrate a belief that astrology is a good and helpful thing. This is not to say that any of my respondents believe in the 'science' of astrology, or the versions and manifestations of astrology that Russell had in mind when he wrote his article. Indeed, they all expressed in some way that science and astrology are on different paths and may do well to have less to do with each other. All the above respondents believe in what they practice, and appear supportive of pluralism and enchantment.

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<sup>43</sup> Champion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 155.



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# A Sky Journal as an representation of the world: an exploration of a personal endeavour to understand the sky

by Mara Steenhuisen-Siemonsma

During the Summer of 2013 I kept a sky journal as to explore what I soon realised was my struggling relationship with the sky, that ever-changing canvas, from an artistic point of view. This paper records those sky explorations and musings. For comparison I looked at the works of English landscape painter John Constable, in particular his experiences with the sky. Over the course of that period of time I discovered how much the sky is in me and I am in the sky, an observation Tim Ingold also describes from a phenomenological point of view. Another context provides the introduction of mnemesthetic consciousness, an ability of your brain to perceive the transcendent quality of beauty as described by artist Robert Mueller. For illustration I added both my own pictures and sketches and those of John Constable, who was also struggling to put a multidimensional experience into two-dimensional artwork.

## Introduction

A way of seeing the sky is as an ever changing canvas where light in all its facets is implicit, or as Tim Ingold states is 'luminosity itself.'<sup>1</sup> Observations of the sky reveal its on-going process of change. The English landscape-painter John Constable (1776-1837) coined the term 'skying' for monitoring the sky. <sup>2</sup> Both Ingold and Constable touch upon the thematic contents of this paper to represent what experiencing the daytime sky encompasses and how to externalise the creative result. Therefore, as observer and experiencer, I seek to 'understand the sky' by free reminiscence on occurrences in the sky, in particular the manifold appearances of light in and of the sky, predominantly expressed in two-

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Ingold, 'Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, Wind, Life, Health: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives (2007), [hereafter Ingold, Earth, Sky, Wind and Weather], p. S29.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie, C.R., *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, Esq., R.A.*, Second Edition, London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1845 [1843],[hereafter Leslie, *Memoirs*], p. 92.

dimensional artwork. The substantiated result mirrors my direct and reflexive perspective of ‘an elaborate venture’ of the sky, as Clifford Geertz remarks.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, considering my question what and why art may evoke strong reactions in the mind, it can perhaps be answered from the idea of mnemesthetic consciousness, described by artist Robert Mueller as ‘a complex re-enactment of the entire sense and sensibility of a past, conscious experience.’<sup>4</sup>

### Academic Rationale

The reason for choosing this topic pertains to a mixture of philosophical and psychological considerations pondering the reasons to observe the sky, engage with it and manifest it as art. Constable embodied his observations of the sky in a way that Michael Kitson describes as ‘no artist of his time more intensely concerned himself with the creative process - the act of painting - and none was a more sensitive craftsman.’<sup>5</sup> As Ronald Rees puts it ‘[Constable’s] approach to both the landscape and landscape painting was scientific; and much is known about his intellectual and artistic processes.’<sup>6</sup> Constable’s profound interest in the sky also encompassed the meteorological occurrences which account for the diverse phenomena in the sky, for example as his intensive studies of clouds in the period of 1821-22 testify.<sup>7</sup> However, my notes do not gravitate towards scientific observations, rather the depiction of aerial phenomena is the focus and this choice outweighs the written content of the journal.

A brain faculty permits translating those impressions of the sky into a work of art, resulting in a potential conjoining of the perceiver and his object, which can be comprehended as the idea of ‘mnemesthetic consciousness’.<sup>8</sup> This also involves participation, and as the realisation emerges that the sky is not apart from the observer, Ingold’s insights may elucidate the actual experience of being ‘a sky dweller’.<sup>9</sup>

### Research Methodology and Considerations

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Emmett Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics: Art as the Revivification of Significant Conscious Events,’ *Leonardo* 21 (1988) [hereafter Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics’] p. 191-192.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Kitson, ‘John Constable, 1810-1816: A Chronological Study,’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1957) [hereafter Kitson, A Chronological Study] p. 338.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Rees, ‘John Constable and the Art of Geography,’ *Geographical Review* 66 (1976) [hereafter Rees, John Constable and the Art of Geography] p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> John Thornes, ‘Constable’s Clouds,’ *The Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979) p. 697.

<sup>8</sup> Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics,’ p. 191.

<sup>9</sup> Ingold, ‘Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,’ p. S34.

Charlotte Davies argues that to enter next into a dialogue with the sky, is facilitated by ‘the relatively private, individualist and hence partially reflexive activity of a fieldworker keeping a journal.’<sup>10</sup> In her view, reflexivity encompasses ‘a turning back on oneself, a process of *self*-reference.’<sup>11</sup> The result can be described in terms of *self*-ethnography (my italics), being ‘to refer both to a particular form of research and to its eventual written product.’<sup>12</sup> The latter involves the Sky Journal, in which during three months (May-July 2013) my entries evolved around the theme of a heightened awareness of the sky.

Concerning the first, with Davies’s application of the ‘self’, social psychologist George Mead (1863–1931) discerns ‘the Me’ and ‘the I’ or ego; whereas the social ‘Me’ enables interaction with others in an on-going development, using symbolic forms and reflection upon actions, the active creative principle ‘I’, responds to the ‘Me’.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the ‘Me’ is Self as object, the ‘I’ is Self as subject. Moreover, as to reflexivity, Mead theorises that ‘Reflexiveness ... is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind.’<sup>14</sup> Mead also posits that ‘the individual mind can exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings’<sup>15</sup>. In that sense ‘the Me’ provides access to other selves in other societies, cultures and times, as well as a rationale for introducing Constable and Ingold, juxtaposing their impressions with mine with reference to Mueller’s idea of mnemesthetic consciousness.

As the Sky Journal progressed, I correspondingly realised that the sky as *an object* is reflected upon, and I reflect upon myself as an object as well, analogous to Mead’s designation of the Self. Nonetheless, my observation requires intentionality, a phenomenological approach, defined as ‘the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view, with the central structure of an experience its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object,’ as David Smith writes.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Charlotte Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography, A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) [hereafter Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*], p. 7.; Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> George Mead. ‘The ‘I’ and the ‘me’’, Section 22 in *Mind Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) [hereafter Mead, *Mind Self and Society*], pp.173-178.

<sup>14</sup> Mead. ‘The Relation of Mind to Response and Environment’, Section 17, *Mind Self and Society*, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> George Mead, *The Individual and the Social Self: Unpublished Essays by G. H. Mead*. Ed. by David L. Miller. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> David Smith, ‘Phenomenology,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia on Philosophy*, ed. E Zalta, 2011, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>, (accessed on 2 August 2013).

As the aim is to actively engage with the sky, I consequently needed to draw on another individual's perception of the sky for comparison, following Davies. Whereas Constable's is effectuated in his impressions on oil sketches and drawings, Ingold's narrative on the sky offers a phenomenological framework. Furthermore, I strived to achieve John McLeod's conception when looking at 'a qualitative research paper or monograph as a form of *representation* of the world.'<sup>17</sup> A dialogue with the sky reflected in the Sky Journal is by its nature an inner and fragmented dialogue. Ergo, what Alan Bryman describes as the problem of 'anecdotalism,' in that fragments are not encapsulating the totality of experience, are recognised.<sup>18</sup> Finally, I suggest that the sky journal is construed as a quilt-like 'set of fluid, interconnected images and representations' as belonging to the qualitative methodology of 'bricolage'.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Introduction of Mnemesthetic Consciousness**

On the experience of perceiving art, Mueller introduces the term 'mnemesthetics' describing it as 'only pertaining to art'.<sup>20</sup> His rationale to set it aside from the classical 'aesthetic experience' is because the latter regards for instance a sunset as something beautiful, omitting the 'enhancement' of the artist. Consequently, it should be distinguished from ordinary consciousness due to its 'powerfully enhanced and vividly repeatable,' capacities and moreover, it can be collectively shared.<sup>21</sup> It therefore is a unique event, and where ordinary memory is 'sketchy, symbolic, partial', the contrasting mnemesthetic event is 'vivid, alive, moving, complete'.<sup>22</sup> He mentions the participatory element of the senses in the paradigmatic perception of a work of art, also emphasising the effect a metaphor induces.<sup>23</sup> Metaphors are classified as so-called mnemesthemes, meaning 'concretized, tense, almost transcendent reflections of experiences, generating the most vivid and therefore some of the most unusual and important consciousness events of the mind,' because their resonance evokes powerful emotions of easy

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<sup>17</sup> John McLeod, *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), p. 153.

<sup>18</sup> Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 77 in David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, London: Sage Publications, 2011, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, 'Introduction' in ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks/London/Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 6

<sup>20</sup> Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

<sup>21</sup> Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

<sup>22</sup> Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 192.

<sup>23</sup> Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 191.

recognition and replay in the mind, as for example the sunset and the rainbow elicited.<sup>24</sup> The following sections seek to explore this idea, not prove the plausibility.

### *On the depiction of cloudy skies*

Alexander Cozens (1717-86) is credited with being the first English artist to create cloud schemata.<sup>25</sup> Cozens' early method was already outlined in 1759, derived from Leonardo da Vinci's creed, who said that for inspiration, an artist should turn to old blotches, stains and crevices in old walls and stones.<sup>26</sup> Cozens transformed and perfected random inkblots on paper into features of landscape (see figures 1 and 2), and as Joshua Taylor comments, both the blot and the result stir the mind, because of their 'mindlessness' on which the spectator freely associates 'without prejudice or pre-existing rules.'<sup>27</sup> His approach was as revolutionary, as Constable's lifelike renderings, which Rees calls 'radical' in Constable's time, as he chose 'old brickwork, ploughed fields, rotting banks, and slimy posts,' instead of idyllic scenes.<sup>28</sup> Constable stated that 'the first thing I try to do is, *to forget that I have ever seen a picture*.'<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, being Cozens' keen and lifelong admirer, he imitated his' twenty 'Engravings of the Skies (1795),' based on his blotting techniques between 1812-14 (see figures 3 and 4), and to which Louis Hawes comments, with 'a variety of striking light and dark patterns that an artist can plausibly effect in terms of general cloud imagery.'<sup>30</sup> On its website, The National Gallery of Australia shows a late example of 'blot-like' drawing, his 'Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk' (c.1829-35) (see figure 5).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mueller, 'Mnemesthetics,' p. 192.

<sup>25</sup> Louis Hawes, 'Constable's Sky Sketches,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969), [hereafter Hawes, *Constable's Sky Sketches*], p. 349.;

<sup>26</sup> Joshua Taylor, 'A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape,' in *Nineteenth Century Theories of Art*, ed. Joshua Taylor, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) [hereafter Taylor, *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art*], p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Cozens, *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* (London: J. Dixwell, 1785), p.; Taylor, *Nineteenth Century Theories of Art*, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Ronald Rees, 'Constable, Turner, and Views of Nature in the Nineteenth Century,' *Geographical Review* 72 (1982) [hereafter, Rees, 'Views of Nature'] p. 257.

<sup>29</sup> Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 307.

<sup>30</sup> Hawes, *Constable's Sky Sketches*, p. 350.

<sup>31</sup> John Constable, 'Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk (c.1829-35)', National gallery of Australia online <http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/constable/Detail.cfm?IRN=143196> (accessed 31 July 2013).





Figure 1 Alexander Cozens -38. [title not known], from *A New Method for Assisting the Invention in the Composition of Landscape*, 1785. Aquatint on paper. Width 30 cm, height 22,5 cm. Photo: Tate London.



Figure 2 Alexander Cozens -39. [title not known], from *A New Method for Assisting the Invention in the Composition of Landscape*, 1785, Aquatint and etching on paper; Width 30, height 22,5 cm. Photo: Tate London.

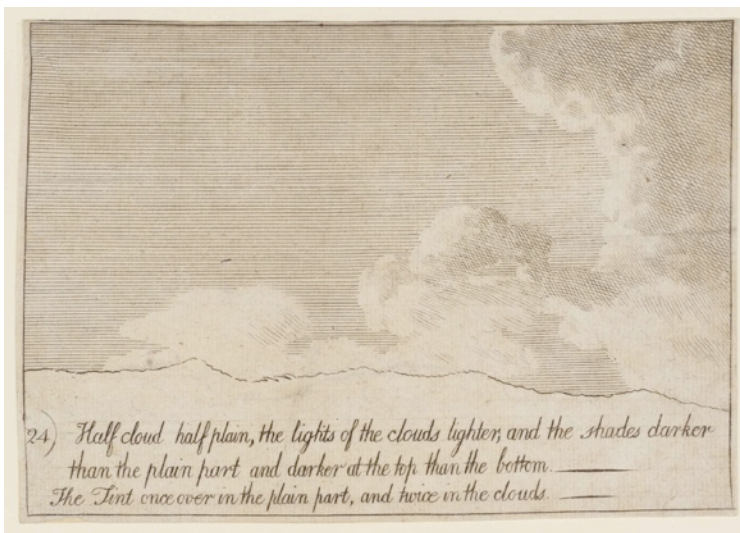


Figure 3 - Alexander Cozens, *Engravings of Skies* no. 24, 1785, Etching on paper, a compilation of twenty engravings from his *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape*, (1785-86) Width 16 cm, height 11 cm. Photo: Tate, London.



Figure 4 – John Constable, Cloud study (after Alexander Cozens' *'Engravings of Skies'*), 1812-14, graphite on paper, height: 9.4 cm; width: 11.5 cm; The inscription reads: 8. Half

cloud half plain. The lights of the Clouds lighter - and the shades Darker than the plain part and darker at the top than the bottom The tint once over in the plain part, and twice on the Clouds. Photo: Courtauld Institute of Art, London.



Figure 5 John Constable- *Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk with a double rainbow* c.1829-35. Iron-gall ink wash and pencil; Width 16,5 cm, height 12,2 cm. Private collection. Photo: The National Gallery of Australia.

Constable realised that when an artist draws a sketch from an existing painting, thus in an already *experienced* picture, it differentiates in that 'a sketch of a picture will not serve more than one state of mind & will not serve to drink at again & again.'<sup>32</sup> I conclude this section by arguing Constable displays here an important aspect of mnemesthetic awareness, namely the fact that a genuine artwork after even repetitive seeing it never bores.

### ***On the creation of a depiction of cloudy skies***

Creating such genuine artwork may encompass Constable's sky sketches using oil on paper (see figures 6 and 7). However, a sky in constant flux poses

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<sup>32</sup> John Constable in Ronald Brymer Beckett, *John Constable and the Fishers: The Record of a Friendship*, (London: Routledge and Paul, 1952), p. 149 in Kitson, 'A Chronological Study', p. 349.



challenges in imaging cloudsapes. A first issue is the transient atmospheric character of their forming and disintegrating, rendering depiction difficult. Clearly, my intention is directed towards representing the *actual and authentic* cloud formation in colour sketching (see figures 8, 9 and 10). However, experimenting with the second medium, photography, enables me to acquire an actual picture of the sky (see figure 11). This medium I then solely apply 'as itself', meaning not as an example for modifying it into a drawing. Whereas sequencing demonstrates the varying effects sunlight displays (see figures 12 and 13), the creation of visual effects, is another application as photographing a sunset from a speeding car (see figure 14) shows. I note 'a linear quality, encompassing now the setting sun in between the trees and reflecting in the water of the Tjeukemeer.'<sup>33</sup>



Figure 6 - Cloud study- 1822-John Constable, Oil on paper; height: 30.5 cm; width: 49 cm; Photo: The Courtauld Gallery, London.

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<sup>33</sup> My translation: 'een lineaire kwaliteit, omvat nu de ondergaande zon tussen de bomen en reflecteert in het water van het Tjeukemeer.'



Figure 7 -Cloud study-1822-John Constable, Oil on paper laid on canvas. height: 30.5 cm; width: 50 cm. Photo: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.



Figure 8- Dronten, 10 May 2013-Land, Lake, Sky, oil pastel on paper, width 19 cm, height 20 cm.

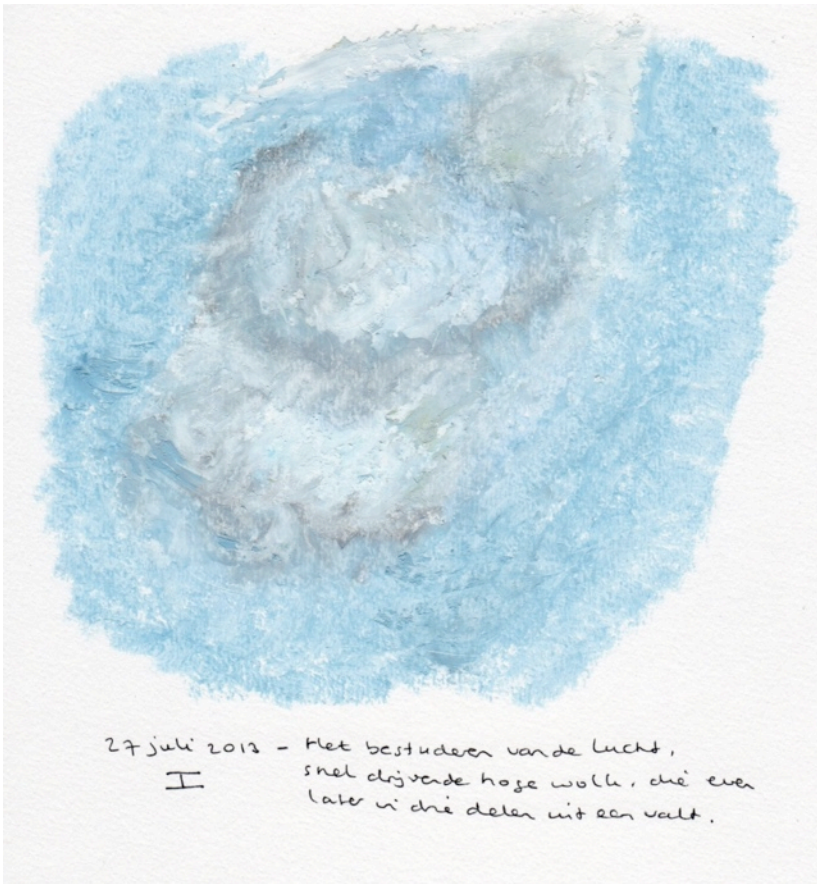


Figure 9 – Dronten, 27 July 2013 –I Cloud study, oil pastel on paper.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> My translation: ‘Studying the clouds, fast moving high cloud, which falls apart just moments later into three parts.’



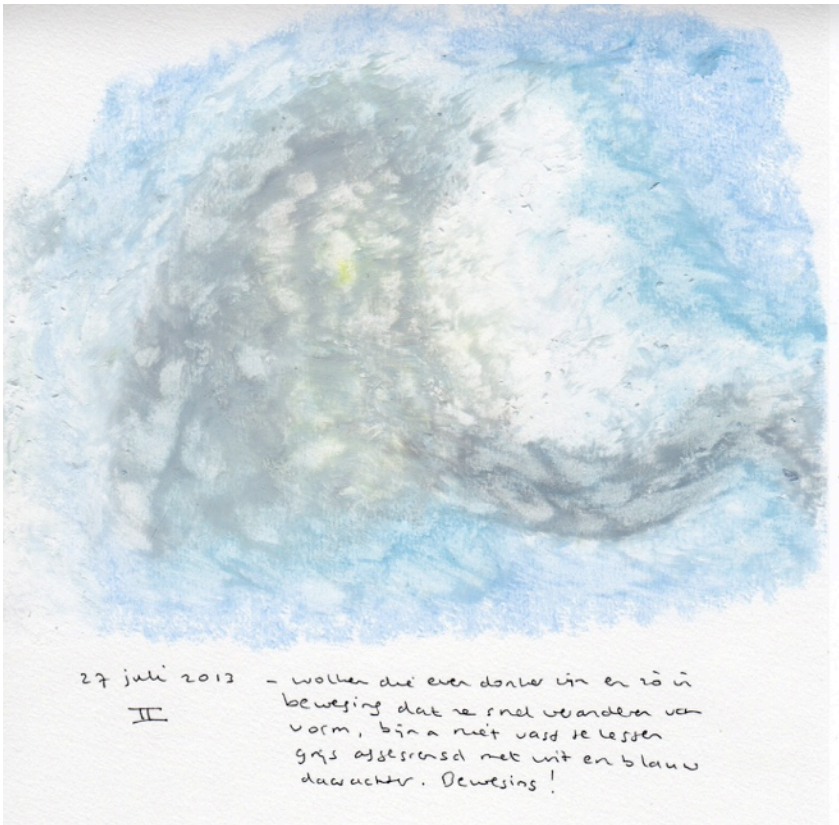


Figure 10 – Dronten, 27 July 2013 –II Cloud study –Oil pastel on paper.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> My translation: ‘clouds that are dark for a moment and so much in movement that their form changes fast, almost impossible to record, grey bordered with white and blue behind. Movement!’



Figure 11- Swifterbant-23 May 2013, 16.02 hrs. Robert Morris Observatory. Photo: author.



Figure 12 Swifterbant-23 May 2013, 16.07.12 hrs. Robert Morris Observatory with the sun shining through the clouds. Photo: author.



Figure 13-Swifterbant-23 May 2013, 16.07.19 hrs. Robert Morris Observatory with the sun obscured by the clouds, photograph taken seven seconds later than figure 11. Photo: author.

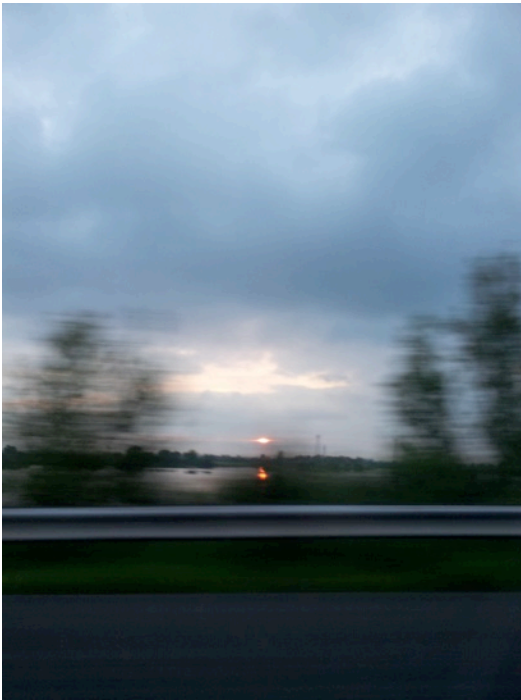


Figure 14-29 May 2013, 21.32 hrs- Tjeukemeer, Friesland- the sky as photographed from sitting in the passenger's seat in a car driving at 130 km/h on the motorway A6. Photo: Author.

My next issue is in depicting the entirety of the sky. Constable argues that ‘I have often been advised to consider my sky as ‘*a white sheet thrown behind the objects*’.’<sup>36</sup> Representations in two-dimensional art are challenged by the fact that the sky is observed in 3D, where techniques to enhance it into a 3D-experience such as linear perspective, nevertheless force the artist to determine its ‘role’. Constable acknowledged imaging skies pose substantial difficulties, writing to his friend and biographer John Fisher that ‘because, with all [the skies’] brilliancy, they ought not to come forward, or, indeed, be hardly thought of any more than extreme distances are.’<sup>37</sup>

I notice depicting the sky involves creating a representational ‘part’ with the intentional act of deciding which part, whether in drawing or in photography. I notice as well the ‘urge’ to ‘frame the sky’, to enclose a drawing within a pictorial frame. The first notion echoes the perceptual ability of seeing-in, meaning in philosopher Richard Wollheim’s words ‘a natural capacity we have ... so that, on the one hand, we are aware of the differentiation of the surface, and, on the other hand, we observe something in front of, or behind, something else.’<sup>38</sup> As the description in the framed sketch of Cozens shows (see figure 3), he refers to ‘plain part’ twice, indicating the outlined section. Constable’s panoramic cloud study sketches of 1822 still represent a part of the sky without an pictorial frame (see figures 6 and 7).

In photography, a panoramic view offers opportunities for registering colouring effects on the sky during a sunset (see figures 15 and 16), whereas a close up reveals the sun disc amidst flaming colours (see figure 17).

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<sup>36</sup> Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 92.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and Its Depths* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) [hereafter Wollheim, *The Mind*], p. 188.





Figure 15- Swifterbant-13 May 2013, 20.09 hrs. Sunset and large portion of the sky photographed on bridge to Robert Morris Observatory. Photo: author.



Figure 16- 28 May 2013, 21.45 hrs-Sunset with a band of clouds on the horizon, photographed en route from Dronnten to Swifterbant on the N309. Photo: author.



Figure 17- 22 July 2013, 21.00 Sunset close-up, photographed between Dronnten and Swifterbant. Photo: author.

Thirdly, in capturing the interactive quality of the sky, I find visual awareness is extended by other bodily sensory perceptions. I see it exemplified in Ingold, describing it as ‘the light of the sky is experienced as a commingling of the perceiver and the world without which there could be no things to see at all. As we touch *in* the wind, so we see *in* the sky.’<sup>39</sup> There is an on-going interplay between the perceiver and the environment. With Constable this becomes clear when he refers to painting which is to him ‘but another word for *feeling*,’ the memories of his childhood in the Stour region ‘made me a painter, and I am grateful; that is *I had often thought of pictures of them before I ever touched a pencil*.’<sup>40</sup> I partly italicised his quote because of his other referral, ascribing to the sky ‘the

<sup>39</sup> Ingold, ‘Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,’ p. S29.

<sup>40</sup> Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 93.

chief organ of sentiment.’<sup>41</sup> Mueller suggests that the recurrent character of encounters with a painting borne out of a undefinable need, may sprout from its personal importance to me.<sup>42</sup> At every glance, aspects of the painting are memorised gradually and during the immersion in the painting, additional categorical information from books or the media, is ‘completing the picture,’ and demonstrates a renewed, enriched state, until it has become a mnemestheme. <sup>43</sup>



Figure 18-21 July 2013-Biddinghuizen. Oil pastel on paper, width 15 cm, height 17 cm.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 92.

<sup>42</sup> Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics’, p. 193.

<sup>43</sup> Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics’, p. 193.

<sup>44</sup> My translation: ‘Cycling through Flevoland. The sun has almost reached its zenith, Burning sun, a cooling breeze, the windmills turn. Straight blue sky. The oats are already high. The Sunday feeling of Summer.’



The above sketch (see figure 18) may serve as an example, for it encompasses the impressions of a particular cycle tour, externalised in a sketch drawn after the event, accompanied by observations which result in ‘a Sunday feeling.’ My intention is to capture precisely that feeling. When I only look at the sketch, I discern something happens when I picture ‘Me’ as the latter cyclist, then I relive that particular cycle-tour, not as a memory-image but as a fragmented *actual* experience with the sensory input included and I can zoom in closer ,conjuring up detailed information about what I heard, saw, smelled, thought, felt. In short, I am in the process of developing a potential mnemestheme.

Also, the next drawing may demonstrate this potentiality (see figure 19). In the third drawing (see figure 20), I depict the sun in a frame. I observe that I consider the luminaries as belonging to ‘here’ and not ‘out-there’ where the stars and planets reside. Ingold notes the texturing of sky, or rather its absence on a Summer’s day and he discerns that the earth’s texture is designated ‘as what we usually call ground, whereas the sky above is perceived as vacant space without limit.’<sup>45</sup> Likewise, the use of frames might be elucidated by Ingold, pointing out that ‘the sky can be described only *within a picture of the earth* conceived as the ground of human habitation ... the sky belongs ... to the world as it is presented to experience - to the phenomenal rather than the physical order of reality.’<sup>46</sup> By contrast, Mueller explains a frame is denoting ‘the place of art’ as it accentuates our mnemesthetic abilities and aids in the perception of visual art.<sup>47</sup>

With the Sky Journal advancing, I became inquisitive as to whether the visual stimulus of a sketch or photograph can evoke such strong associations, whereby one may undergo again the qualities that belong to the time-frame of capturing the sky in image. In an mnemesthetic event, the evanescent clouds come and go, or in the beauty of a sunset, both gaining more qualitative stamina when assigned characteristics and then can be referred to as ‘that cerulean sky’ or ‘that crimson sunset’. Overall I notice the gradual immersion in the processes that allow for the ability to represent the outer sky as well as the inner externalisation of the sky. In the next section the operation of that immersion is elaborated on, and finally to evaluate the experience of mnemesthetic consciousness.

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<sup>45</sup> Ingold, ‘Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,’ p. S26.

<sup>46</sup> Ingold, ‘Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather,’ p. S25.

<sup>47</sup> Mueller, ‘Mnemesthetics,’ p. 194.



Figure 19-Noordwijk, 14 May 2013-seascape. Oil pastel on paper, width 21 cm, height 30 cm.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> My translation: 'Grey palette, everything greys with the onset of the twilight. What is far away, is more grey. The trees and other foliage last longer until they too have become grey, lightened by the villa's and apartments. The sky shines grey.'



Figure 20-Dronten, 26 July 2013-Depiction of the sun in the sky above the ground.<sup>49</sup> Oil on pastel; width 15 cm, height 23 cm.

<sup>49</sup> My translation: 'I know that the sky knows not of boundaries, but the sun, how do I render the sun when I look into it, I don't perceive boundaries then, I see boundlessness. It seems that boundaries are indicated by other boundaries. Boundaries of the earth, of the atmosphere, and frames like I have set in this picture.'

### *On the observation and depiction of a double rainbow on 8 May 2013*

Due to inexperience with photographing a double rainbow, I opted for a snapshot (see figure 21). After taking the picture, I wrote a factual comment, closing with ‘what a curious phenomenon when you look at it and wonder about the scientific explanations for such an occurrence.’<sup>50</sup>

Constable’s first known sketch of a double rainbow (1812) (see figure 22) reveals he omitted the dark band in between the two arcs, Paul Schweizer notes, and similarly in the ‘Sky Study with a Rainbow’ (1827) (see figure 25); he by then was regarded as having knowledge of geometric optics, but still painted ‘the inner area of the primary arc ... with a blue-gray wash which is darker than the tones on the outer red side of the bow’.<sup>51</sup> My curiosity piqued, I scanned my photograph to verify Schweizer’s claim and concluded he is right (see figure 24). Constable’s friend Edward Verrall Lucas (1868-1938) stressed that he ‘insisted so often on the importance of working on the spot and being authentic.’<sup>52</sup> However, as Rees points out, despite Constable’s focus on ‘painting is a science’, it can be suggested his aesthetic view was more important to him than his scientific view.<sup>53</sup> Wollheim affirms that pictorial meaning generally is dependent ‘on fulfilled intention.’<sup>54</sup> In this light, Constable’s spiritual personality outshined both views, Rees states.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 21-Dronten, 8 May 2013, 20.00 hrs. A double rainbow arching the sky. Photo: author.

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<sup>50</sup> My translation: ‘Een merkwaardig verschijnsel als je het ziet en je afvraagt wat de wetenschappelijke verklaringen zijn voor zo’n gebeurtenis.’

<sup>51</sup> Paul Schweizer, ‘John Constable, Rainbow Science, and English Color Theory,’ *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982) [hereafter Schweizer, ‘Rainbow Science,’], p. 435.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Verrall Lucas, *John Constable, The Painter*, (London: Halton & Truscott Smith, New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1924), p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Leslie, *Memoirs*, p. 350 ; Rees, ‘John Constable and the Art of Geography,’ p. 69.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Wollheim, ‘On Pictorial Representation,’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998), pp. 226.

<sup>55</sup> Rees, ‘Views of Nature,’ p. 260.





Figure 22-Dronten, 30 June 2013-Impression after viewing Constable's double rainbow (translation of text is incorporated in body text on page 25)

In the Sky Journal on 30 June 2013 (see figure 23) I write that ‘When I look for the first time at Constable’s first oil sketch of the double rainbow, I am moved, for I sense the vigour with which he has selected and brushed the colours onto the canvas, the haste to capture a short lived event of such evanescent beauty, I feel absorbed into this moment and the view on the sketch in its simplicity and yet it’s all there and I feel connected, touched.’<sup>56</sup>

Mueller presumably would qualify my interaction as a potential ‘mnemesthetic reaction’. Finally, it can be posited that Constable’s sketches of nature in her truest sense, reflect mnemesthemes: it is tangible in his landscapes, cloudscares and his depiction of the (double) rainbow. Schweizer calls the rainbow ‘Constable’s personal emblem’ and it can be presupposed his characterisation fits the description of Mueller’s mnemestheme remarkably well.

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Figure 23 –John Constable, ‘*Landscape and Double Rainbow*’ 28 July 1812, oil on canvas, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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<sup>56</sup> My translation: ‘Als ik Constable’s eerste schets in olieverf zie van de dubbele regenboog, voel ik me emotioneel, want ik bemerk de inzet waarmee hij de kleuren heeft gekozen en gestreken op het doek, de haast om zo’n kort moment van voorbijvlietende schoonheid te vangen, ik voel me opgenomen in dit moment en dit beeld op de sketch in zijn eenvoud en toch is het er allemaal en ik voel me verbonden, aangeraakt.’

<sup>57</sup> Paul Schweizer, ‘John Constable, Rainbow Science, and English Color Theory,’ *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982), p. 425.



Figure 24- Detail of figure 18. Photo: author.



Figure 25-20 May 1827 *Sky Study with a Rainbow*. Watercolour, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.



## Conclusion

The question remains whether understanding the sky equivocally refers to 'truly seeing the sky'. The three months of keeping the journal demonstrate a fragmented array of reflections on an intentionally heightened awareness of aerial phenomena represented in oil pastel sketches and photographs. It can be suggested the comprehension is vitalised by this profound engagement with the sky, which Ingold names 'the feel' of the sky with physical touching *in* the sky. Mueller's idea of mnemesthetic consciousness may perhaps be paralleled to reaching into those aerial phenomena as a genuine and recurrent act of nature, but only when an artist's intensive and authentic commitment is simultaneously conjoined with his imagery of for instance a double rainbow, thereby stimulating a re-enactment in both allusions, namely that of an optimal participator and of a co-creator with the sky in art. Mnemesthetic consciousness allows perhaps to access this particular experience of a rainbow in a way that transcends boundaries of culture, time and space. This occurs with an initial impact, and can be replayed endlessly, keeping the particular complex experience of the artwork and the universal of a rainbow alive, thus temporally bridging the gap between 'the Me' of the Self and the other, and equalling my initial perception of Constable's first sketch of a double rainbow. I realise this is what comprises Constable's gifted artistry and contributes to my potential 'grasping' of the sky. Concluding, I venture that, residing on the earth involves dwelling in the sky as well, involving participation and 'skying' as reflected in the Sky Journal's purpose of 'a representation of the world', to coalesce into a deeper understanding of the sky and me'.

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