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The cover shows a detail from an 11th Century illustration of a labyrinth in a copy of Boethius’ *Consolation*, produced at Abingdon Abbey

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Cultural Astronomy and Astrology is a relatively new field in the academic world, but in many ways the studies in the field look into are far from new: history, cosmology, archaeology and anthropology are frequently the areas that students in this still new and groundbreaking field venture into.

The papers in this issue all start from established or traditional knowledge and approach them from the expanded point of view that cultural studies in astronomy and astrology provide.

Starting with the best known ancient astronomical source, Ptolemy, Mai Lootah makes a comparative study of his treatment of the significance of the star Sirius with that in pagan Arab religion and magic, and then brings her study into contemporary scholarship with further comparison with the work of Bernadette Brady. Following a similar approach, Akindynos Kaniamos compares Ptolemy’s Mars with Ficino and Liz Greene, showing the close relationship between astrological interpretations and cosmologies of the astrologers.

The other two papers here highlight the value of contemporary experiential scholarship brought to more traditional cultural studies. Kathy Greethurst explores a modern rendition of a labyrinth in an eleventh century illustration, trying to discover its value as a sacred space and even its potential for divination, whereas Judy Jibb examines a contemporary sacred space around traditional Algonquin spirituality inside a skyscraper in Quebec. Both papers offer a unique study of the interaction between the traditional and the modern and how the sacred defines itself today.

The MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology continues to offer new insights into old territories, and promises journeys into even newer spheres. I hope you enjoy this taste of some of those worlds.

Rod Suskin
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Numerous verses in the Holy Qur’an describe celestial phenomena such as the luminaries, planets, zodiacal signs, constellations, stars and comets. However, in a sūrah (chapter) titled an-Najm (the Star), what was believed by many Qur’an commentators to be al-Shi’rā or Sirius was singularly mentioned, thus suggesting its possible importance to pagan Arabia. Therefore, this paper explores the theological and mythological significance of Sirius through a critical comparative study of three primary sources belonging to different cultures and historical eras, namely the works of Claudius Ptolemy (96-168 CE), ibn-Qutaiba al-Dīnawarī’s (828-889 CE) and Bernadette Brady. While the mystical significance of al-Shi’rā to pagan Arabs was explored by al-Dīnawarī, Brady examined how certain astronomical phenomena were reflected in ‘Sirius-based’ theology and calendars. In contrast, the religious and magical elements of Sirius seem to have been deliberately expelled from Ptolemy’s Tetrabiblos in his attempt to ‘secularise’ astrology.

The aim of this paper is to explore the names and characteristics attributed to Sirius, focusing on its theological and mythological significance, comparing and contrasting three texts; Claudius Ptolemy’s (96-168 CE) Tetrabiblos, ibn-Qutaiba al-Dīnawarī’s (828-889 CE) Al-Anwā’ fi Mawāsim al-‘Arab or On Astro-Meteorology of the Arabs, and Brady’s Book of Fixed Stars by Bernadette Brady. ¹ Noted Qur’an commentators agreed that Sirius is the star referred to in Sūrat an-

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Najm, or the chapter of ‘The Star,’ thus indicating its importance in pagan Arabia. While earlier Qur’ān commentators such as such as al-Tabarī (d.922 CE) and ibn-Kathīr (d.1372 CE) suggested that al-Thurayyā or Pleiades could also have been the aforementioned ‘star,’ the 19th century commentator Shihāb al-Dīn al-Alūsī (d. 1854 CE) stressed that the first verse of this chapter; ‘By the star when it descends,’ particularly described the morning setting of the star Sirius, for it was later mentioned by name in the same chapter; ‘And that is He who is the Lord of Sirius.’

Before proceeding further, it is important to point out that stellar lore was transferred by Arabs through word of mouth in the form of poetry and rhymed prose, and was thus documented by linguists and philologists, as al-Bīrūnī (973-1048 CE) recorded in his Chronology. Daniel Martin Varisco wrote about the same tradition adding that pre-Islamic information about anwa’, or stellar rain markers, came mostly via ‘rhymed sayings compiled for each of the twenty-eight stations, as well as a few important stars such as Sirius and Canopus.’ Hence, although al-Dīnawarī was a medieval philologist, he quoted directly from the poetry and rhymed prose of pagan Arabs. Yet, whatever survives of this oral tradition remains fragmented and incomplete, for as Varisco noted, what was preserved is ‘the history of what learned men have recorded.’

Both translations of J. M. Ashmand and James Wilson of the Tetrabiblos, published in 1822 and 1828 respectively, indicated that Ptolemy described Sirius as a bright star in the mouth of; the constellation of ‘Canis’ according to the

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6 Varisco, p.25.
former translation, or ‘the Stars in the Dog,’ according to the latter. Allen Richard Hinckley (1838-1908) believed that while the mention of Ptolemy’s ‘Dog-Star’ dates back to Homer (c. 850 BCE), the name Σειριος or Sirius was never used by Ptolemy. However, in the Heinrich, Peters and Knobel version of *Almagest*, Ptolemy’s star catalogue; the first star in the constellation of Canis Major, is described in Latin as ‘that which is brightly shining in the mouth (or the face) and is called Sirius, and is somewhat red.’ Hence, although *Almagest* suggests that Σειριος could have been known and used by Ptolemy, it could still be a later addition by translators and commentators. Discrepancies in historical translation is thus evident, a problem Richard Evans pointed to while asking ‘how do we know which translation is “correct”?’

Conversely, according to al-Dīnawarī, *al-Shi’rā*, which is mentioned by name in verse forty-nine of *Sūrat an-Najm*, refers in particular to *al-Shi’rā al-‘Ubār*, namely Sirius; not *al-Shi’rā al-Ghumaisā*’ which corresponds to Procyon. Al-Shi’rā al-‘Ubār, al-Dīnawarī continued, is located in the constellation of Orion, known as *al-Jabbār* and *al-Jawzā*. Interestingly, al-Jawzā’ was equally used to refer to the zodiacal sign Gemini, for al-Bīrūnī mentioned that Arabs inaccurately regarded Orion, or *al-Jawzā’,* as the sign Gemini which he believed should be correctly called *al-Taw'amān* or the ‘Twins’. In contrast, noted astronomer al-Sūfī (903-986 AD) believed that Sirius was the ‘great luminary’ in the mouth of Canis Major; the dog of *al-Jabbār* (FIG. 1.); calling it *al-Shi’rā al-Yamānah and al-‘Ubār*, which Hinckley inaccurately translated as ‘the Brightly Shining Star of the Passage of Yemen’. The words *Yammanīyah* and *Shammūnah* were clearly used by al-Sūfī and al-Bīrūnī as geographical adjectives to describe the southern or northern declination of any star respectively; for Yemen is located to the south of the

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9 ‘Quæ in ore fulgentissima est, et vocatur Sirius, et est subrubfa.’
11 al-Dīnawarī, pp.50-51
12 al-Dīnawarī, p.49.
Arabian Peninsula, and conversely *al-Shām,* or Syria, is located to the north.\(^{15}\) Apparently, Hinckley was uncertain whether *Yammanāyah* referred to ‘the myth of Canopus’ flight to the South; and the adjective to the same, or perhaps to the southerly position of the star towards Yemen.’\(^{16}\) Thus, ‘arbitrary’ meanings of some words, as noted by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and cited by Evans, appear to be another challenge to conveying historical meaning.\(^{17}\)

![FIG. 1. *al-Shi’rā al-Yammānīa* depicted as the alpha star in the constellation of *al-Kalb al-Akbar* or *Canis Major.* ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Omar al-Sūfī, *Book of Fixed Stars*, Manuscript (Istanbul, 1130), 3493, fol.124v, Topkapi Sarayi Müzesi.](image)

Like Ptolemy, Brady classified Sirius as the alpha star of the Canis Major which is ‘one of Orion’s hunting dogs’; not a star in Orion or *al-Jabbar,* as stated by al-Dīnawarī.\(^{18}\) According to Brady, Egyptians called it the ‘Shining One’ and the ‘Scorcher,’ and other civilizations called it ‘The Dog of the Sun,’ its unmatchable radiance capturing the imagination of ancients.\(^{19}\) Hence, it could be assumed that the Greek adjective *Σειριος,* which translates to ‘scorcher,’ was either of Greco-

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\(^{16}\) Hinckley, p.121.

\(^{17}\) Evans, p.81.

\(^{18}\) Brady, pp.80-81.

\(^{19}\) Brady, pp.81; 83.
Egyptian origin or a Greek adaptation of the Egyptian name. Sirus’ particular importance to the Egyptians is further revealed by the other names given to it as mentioned by Brady; ‘The Nile Star’ and ‘Sirius Isis’; the former linking it to the annual flooding of the Nile, and the latter to what Nicholas Campion described as the ‘archetypal queen’ Isis.

Due to Ptolemy’s attempt to ‘secularise’ and provide astrology with a ‘scientific’ basis through Aristotelian naturalism as Campion proposed, one can see no mention of ancient religious beliefs associated with Sirius, albeit very briefly about its connection to the summer solstice and inundation of the Nile in Egypt. To Ptolemy, Sirius was plainly ‘like Jupiter, and partly like Mars.’ Further investigation of the indications of the two planets only reveals that Jupiter ‘promotes both warmth and moisture’ and Mars ‘chiefly causes dryness, and is also strongly heating’. Evidently, as Campion pointed out relying on Anthony Long, Ptolemy was in actuality responding to hostile critics and trying to vindicate astrology through providing it with a rational and naturalistic framework.

Alternatively, al-Dīnawarī confidently delved into pagan beliefs associated with al-Shi’rā al-ʿUbūr, for its mention in the Qur’ān reveals a history of star worship among pagan Arabs; a view unanimously shared by al-Ṭabarī, ibn-Kathīr and al-ʿAlūsī. While Al-ʿAlūsī specified two particular tribes that worshipped Sirius; Hīmīr and Khuzā’ī; historian Mahmūd Shukrī al-ʿAlūsī (1856-1924) thought that they were Lakhm, Khuzā’ī and Quraish, the latter being the tribe of

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23 Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos, trans. Ashmand, I.XI.
24 Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos, trans. Ashmand, I.IV.
prophet Mohammad. The Qur’an commentator al-Zakhamsharī (1074-1143 CE) added that Manāt, a pagan goddess mentioned in verse twenty of Sūrat an-Najm, was worshipped because it was thought to be connected to stellar anwā’. Hence, the phrase ‘And that is He who is the Lord of Sirius’ was meant to refute stellar-religions and replace them with monotheism; only Allah is worthy of worship, for he is the Creator God of stars; Sirius the brightly shining star included.

On the other hand, the adamant preservation of the calendar of Sirius for millennia reflected the supreme status of the star in Ancient Egypt. According to Richard A. Parker and Campion, Egyptians occasionally added an intercalary month to their ‘luni-stellar’ year to ensure that the heliacal rising of Sirius; which represented the goddess Sothis according to Parker; was synchronized to the annual flooding of the Nile; a topic also explored by Brady. Since heliacal rising was perceived as an expression of Horus, Brady elaborated, great temples were built in alignment to the heliacal rising of important stars. A similar modern view; which may lack accuracy; is mentioned by Hinckley who added that astronomer and archaeologist Sir Joseph Norman Lockyer (1836-1920) may have found seven temples in Egypt possibly aligned to the heliacal rising of Sirius. Thus, preserving the ‘Sirius-based calendar’ was crucial to maintain the immortality of Isis as Brady believed; and to protect Ma’at, cosmic order personified as Campion opined.

Likewise, Sirius had a significance role in the Arabic calendar and seasonal changes of Arabia. According to Andalusian lexicographer and philologist Ibn Sīdāh (c.1007-1066 CE), as quoted by al-Dīnwarī, Arabs said, ‘when al-Shi’rā rises, the sand becomes dry, the water becomes stagnant, and date palms bear fruit.’

Al-Dīnawarī elaborated writing that Arabs linked the heliacal rising of stars,
especially those of \textit{al-Jauzā‘} and the two \textit{Shi‘rās}; Orion, Sirius and Procyon; to the latter part of the summer season called \textit{al-Qa‘iz} which began in July, and \textit{al-Bawārēh} northern winds that brought dust and intensified the summer’s heat.\textsuperscript{35} Alternatively, the morning setting of stars which was known to Arabs as \textit{anwa‘}, \textit{al-Dīnwarī} continued, was linked to rains and the commencement of the spring season which coincided with the last week of September.\textsuperscript{36}

While Ptolemy’s \textit{Tetrabiblos} was devoid of any mythology connected to Sirius, \textit{al-Dīnwarī} described in detail how pagan Arabs worshipped \textit{al-‘Ubur} because they ‘falsely’ believed in the myth of the crossing of the Milky Way.\textsuperscript{37} According to this myth, \textit{al-Dīnwarī} elucidated, Canopus and the two \textit{Shi‘rās}; Sirius and Procyon; lived together, yet Canopus fled towards the south and Sirius followed him, crossing the Milky Way, and was therefore called, \textit{al-Dīnwarī} added, \textit{al-‘Ubur} or the ‘One that Crossed’. Procyon, abandoned by both stars was so devastated weeping till its eyes got affected by rheum; hence was given the name \textit{al-Ghuma‘īsā‘} which literally translates to the ‘Eye Affected by Rheum,’ and so became less brilliant than Sirius.\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Al-Sūfī} added an interesting twist to the myth stating that Canopus went to marry \textit{al-Jauzā‘}; the constellation of Orion; leaving his sisters the two \textit{Shi‘rā}s behind. The matrimony however was unfortunate, for while Canopus was lying atop of \textit{al-Jauzā‘}; possibly implying that they were copulating; the former broke the back of the latter and fled towards the south in fear of revenge. Whilst his sister Sirius was able to follow him, Procyon wept till she lost her radiance.\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Al-Alūsī} explained that since \textit{al-‘Ubur} was perceived as the only star that crossed the sky horizontally; north to south as opposed to the east to west diurnal motion of stars; it was thus revered and worshipped by pagan Arabs.\textsuperscript{40} Consequently, according to Qur‘ān commentator \textit{al-Alūsī}, the practice of stellar-based divination was quite common and particularly when \textit{al-‘Ubur} rose.\textsuperscript{41}

The connection of Sirius to the canine archetype Canis Major is nevertheless evident in the mythology of pagan Arabia, for \textit{al-Dīnwarī} wrote that it was also called the dog of \textit{al-Jabbar}; the male expression of Orion as opposed to \textit{al-Jauzā‘} its female expression; and was believed to cause canine madness.\textsuperscript{42} A remarkable

\textsuperscript{35} al-Dīnwarī, p.92; 95; pp.107-108.
\textsuperscript{36} al-Dīnwarī, p.92; pp.107-108.
\textsuperscript{37} al-Dīnwarī, pp.50-51.
\textsuperscript{38} al-Dīnwarī, pp.50-51.
\textsuperscript{39} Al-Sūfī, pp.288-289.
\textsuperscript{40} al-Alūsī, \textit{The Fulfillment of Desire on Knowledge of the Affairs of Pagan Arabs}, Vol. 3, p.222.
\textsuperscript{41} al-Alūsī, \textit{The Essence of Meaning in the Interpretation of the Great Qur‘ān and the Seven Holy Verses being Sūrat al-Fātiha}, p.68.
\textsuperscript{42} al-Dīnwarī, p.52.
story is mentioned by al-Tabarī in his interpretation of Sūrat an-Najm, for according to him, when this verse was revealed, a man called ‘Utbah ibn abī-Lahab boldly announced that he disbelieved in the ‘God of the Star,’ so the prophet Mohammad replied, ‘beware lest the Dog of God eats you.’ Later, while on a trade trip to Yemen, a lion snatched ‘Utbah from amongst his friends while they were asleep and killed him.

In contrast, Brady cited De Santilla and von Dechend who believed that ancient laments to Gods actually mirrored the astronomical phenomenon of the precession of the equinoxes which ‘swallowed’ up gods and goddesses. Due to this phenomenon, the dates of the heliacal rising of revered stars, such as Sirius, gradually shifted backwards in the calendar losing its synchronicity with seasons and festivals. Therefore, when the calendar of Sirius was abandoned in favor of the Alexandrine calendar, Brady continued, Sirius did not rise on the anticipated day indicating that Isis, who seemed perpetual for millennia, was suddenly ‘swallowed by precession into the whirlpool’. Brady further explored the significance of the mythology of Sirius Isis writing that:

The Isis/Sirius mythology includes one of the earliest episodes of a woman building a fire which will burn away mortal flesh, which is echoed by the Greek story of Thetis and Achilles, as well as in its darker expression in the story of Althea and Meleager, where Althea kills her son by burning a stick which fate has decreed indicates his length of life. Sirius can bring immortality to its bearer, but the price may be the burning away of the mortal flesh.

Brady thus suggested that a person with a prominent Sirius in his or her horoscope may attain great success and recognition, yet the brilliance of Sirius the ‘Scorcher,’ she added, could be hard to handle and the experience of the archetype hard to endure. Evidently, Brady thought that the ‘fundamental symbol’ of Isis, Thetis or Achilles may repeatedly manifest regardless of culture or time; a theory of archetypes first proposed by psychotherapist Carl Jung (1875-1961) and cited by Campion. According to Jung, an archetype is comparable to ‘an old water course along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep

43 al-Tabarī, pp.6-7.
44 al-Tabarī, p.6.
45 Brady, p.84.
46 Brady, p.84.
47 Brady, p.85.
channel for itself,’ as Campion quoted.\(^{49}\) Similarly, Brady believed that Sirius activated in a horoscope triggers the manifestation of the ‘universal theme’ of Isis in the individual’s life.\(^{50}\) A comparable approach is seen in earlier modern astrology literature, such as Vivian Robson’s (1890-1942) *The Fixed Stars and Constellations*, for Robson wrote that a prominent Sirius in a person’s horoscope indicates both ‘great profit and reputation,’ and ‘death by fiery cutting weapons or from beasts,’ thus indirectly echoing the dramatic theme of the star.\(^{51}\)

On the other hand, al-Dīnawārī, who was also a respected scholar of Hadith; the study of the prophet’s deeds and sayings; opposed the belief of pagan mythology citing prophet Mohammad who said, ‘Among my people there are four characteristics belonging to paganism which they do not abandon; boasting of high rank, reviling other peoples’ genealogies, seeking rain by stars, and wailing.’\(^{52}\) Hence, al-Dīnawārī concluded that while it was theologically acceptable to anticipate rainfall and other weather patterns in accordance to the morning setting of stars, the pious Muslim should avoid believing in stellar pagan mythology or attributing any influential power to star and planets, for that would be blasphemous.\(^{53}\) Furthermore, Al-Alūsī added that belief in *anwa‘* was a trait of pre-Islamic Arabic Sabaean tribes who did not ‘travel or inhabit a land without looking at the morning setting of stars.’\(^{54}\)

In conclusion, the evidence presented in this essay has suggested that while the religious, magical and mythological elements of Sirius were deliberately expelled from Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*, they were richly present in the work of al-Dīnawārī and Brady. Al-Dīnawārī investigated the significance of *al-Shi’rā al-‘Ubūr* in pagan Arabia and its relationship to seasonal changes in the Arabian Peninsula, exposing a lore of stellar worship and divination that was deep-rooted in the Arabian Peninsula, and not neglecting to demonstrate his strong disapproval of such practices being a scholar of Hadith. Brady in contrast examined ‘Sirius-based’ theology, mythology and calendars, revealing how these reflected astronomical phenomena, particularly the precession of the equinoxes.


\(^{50}\) Brady, pp.85-86.


\(^{53}\) al-Dīnawārī, pp.17-18.

and heliacal risings of stars. Furthermore, Brady emphasized the impact of the mythological archetype of Sirius/Isis on the individual. Moreover, translation problems of Greek and Arabic primary texts was noticed especially in relation to conveying historical meaning to the modern or foreign reader; a point which concerned Evans.\textsuperscript{55} It is also important to point out that whatever had survived of the pagan oral tradition of \textit{anwā}’ had undergone a historical selective process, for as Varisco pointed out, what we have is ‘what compilers have chosen to preserve.’\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Works cited:}

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\textsuperscript{55} Evans, p.78.

\textsuperscript{56} Varisco, p.25.
English Sources:


Image:

Can a labyrinth walking be used for divination? A phenomenological study of walking the Abingdon Labyrinth.
by Kathy Greethurst

This is an auto-ethnographic study of walking the Abingdon Labyrinth which is located in St Michael and All Angel’s Church in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, England. It was built in 2008 and is based on an illustration in an 11th century manuscript. I begin by explaining how a labyrinth differs from a maze and describe a range of perspectives from labyrinth enthusiasts and opponents. I explore secondary sources to demonstrate that Abingdon Labyrinth is a sacred space with the potential for divination. I present my own phenomenological account of walking the Abingdon Labyrinth twice in December 2014 and reveal my four powerful divinatory experiences, which according to Mircea Eliade constitute hierophany, and two interesting synchronicities. These were achieved using my natural talents of ‘essential divination’ and proved to be examples of divination working as a result of what Patrick Curry identifies as ‘enchantment.’

Introduction

The aim of this research project is to explore whether a labyrinth can be used for divination - by establishing whether it is a sacred space, whether it has the potential for divination and whether divination occurs when I walk the Abingdon Labyrinth in St Michael and All Angel’s Church, Abingdon, Oxfordshire on 9th and 16th December 2014 as part of the church’s Advent celebrations.¹

Barbara Tedlock asserts that ‘all people in all times and places have practised divination as a way of exploring the unknown, making decisions, solving problems and diagnosing ailments’ and identifies the labyrinth as one of

hundreds of forms of divination. Helen Curry claims that there is currently a revival in labyrinth walking - with more than a million people walking the one thousand plus labyrinths in the United States. The World-wide Labyrinth Locator, an online database of 4600 labyrinths in 75+ countries, shows that 72% of the constructed labyrinths in England (with a date) have been built or restored since 2000, which appears to support her claim. One of these is the six-path, seven-wall Abingdon Labyrinth, constructed by the Labyrinth Builders in 2008 from an illustration in Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy produced in the early 11th century at Abingdon Abbey.

Methodology

My main primary source is the Abingdon Labyrinth and my phenomenological experience walking it with the intention, as Christopher Tilley suggests, of understanding and connecting with it through ordinary human embodied experience. I recorded my experiences in a journal. My other primary

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sources are popular works by labyrinth experts. I had planned to use Helen Curry’s 5-stage process for labyrinth walking – preparing to walk, on the way in, at the centre, on the way out and after the walk – as a framework to prepare for and reflect on my experience. I found that its use was limited and it distracted me while walking the labyrinth and so I abandoned it. Instead, I focused on the theories and ideas of Mircea Eliade, Emile Durkheim, Aristotle, Patrick Curry, Tilley, David Abrams, Anthony Thorley (with Celia Gunn and with Chantal Allison, Petra Stapp and John Wadsworth) and Lauren Artress to inform my research.

My study is autoethnographic, which Kim Ethrington describes as part of the ‘autobiographical genre of writing.’ According to both Russell McCutcheon and David Hufford, it is subjective because I have made the choices about what to

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10 Kim Etherington, Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research, (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2004), [hereafter, Etherington, Reflexive], pp. 139-140.
research and how to approach it.' Recognising that research boundaries can become blurred, I have tried to be self-reflexive - which Charlotte Aull Davies defines as ‘turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference.’ My research is influenced by my personal spiritual beliefs in the existence of the divine, angels and spirit guides; the connectedness of everything in the cosmos; the everlasting nature of the soul; and reincarnation. Although brought up as a Christian, I rejected it as my religion in my late teens. After about twenty years without spiritual focus, I became involved in the New Age movement and neo-paganism. I currently describe myself as ‘spiritual’ and ‘following my own path.’ I am a ‘believer’ in the divinatory nature of labyrinth walking based on my previous ‘more than human’ experiences walking the labyrinth at the Brahma Kumaris Global Retreat Centre in Nuneham Courtney, Oxfordshire approximately twenty times. As Edmund Husserl recommends, I have attempted to bracket these previous walks during my research. Although, I have been anxious about revealing my spiritual beliefs and private experiences and like Etherington, have found that increasing self-reflexivity feels like ‘coming out,’ I share my story, as Helen Curry recommends, to enhance my personal learning.

What is a Labyrinth?

In the past, the words ‘labyrinth’ and ‘maze’ have been used interchangeably but nowadays, it is generally accepted that the word ‘labyrinth’ describes unicursal constructs with a single path to the centre whereas ‘maze’ refers to multicursal constructs with many paths and dead ends to create choice and confusion. Commentators generally agree that the origins of the labyrinth are unknown and speculate that labyrinths have existed for over 2,500 years, identifying petroglyphs, images on clay tablets, coins and pottery, and classical

literary references to labyrinths – for example, Ariadne’s labyrinthine ‘dancing place’ in Homer’s *Iliad* and Ovid’s ‘Ariadne and The Minotaur’ myth in his *Metamorphoses* - as evidence to establish this timeline for early labyrinths.¹⁷

Individual accounts of labyrinth walking vary. Helen Curry says that her first labyrinth walk was ‘life-changing.’¹⁸ David Willis McCullough has never experienced ‘… a Saul-on-the-road-to-Damascus revelation…’ but has recalled good/bad memories and gained ‘a sense of moving through a design as old as the human imagination…’¹⁹ One woman reports that when her husband walked a

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labyrinth ‘all he could think about was what …to have for lunch!’ Opposition to
labyrinth walking is voiced by fundamentalist Christians like Mike Oppenheimer
who argues that the Bible shows that prayer, not labyrinth walking, is the only
true way to God and Greg Griffin who condemns it as a pagan ‘heresy that
precedes apostasy’ and challenges the commercial activities of American
labyrinth walking proponents.

The Abingdon Labyrinth as sacred space

Eliade sees sacred space as non-homogeneous and argues that ‘in the sacred
enclosure, communications with the gods is made possible.’ Durkheim regards
the sacred as ‘set apart’ and ‘forbidden’ which applies to the Abingdon Labyrinth
because it is a human construct in a church, ‘set apart’ from the secular landscape
surrounding it – which appears to align with Aristotle’s idea of place - as a
container with ‘boundaries [that] are coincident with the bounded.’ It is
forbidden because access is limited to church opening times and when the chairs
are not covering it.

Martin Gray identifies labyrinths as sacred spaces and the American NGO,
Sacred Sites International regards them as sacred sites to be protected, which are
both viewpoints supported by Thorley and Gunn. Thorley and Gunn have
produced nineteen characteristics to define a sacred site - the Abingdon Labyrinth
meets six of them (see Appendix 2) and falls within their operational definition of
sacred space as ‘a place in a landscape, occasionally over or under water, which is
especially revered by a people, culture or culture as a focus for spiritual belief and
practice or likely religious observance.’

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22 Eliade, Sacred, pp. 20 and 26.
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the Internet Classics Archive - http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.4.iv.html
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Sacred Sites International Foundation website - http://www.sacred-sites.org/about-us/
(accessed 26 December 2014); and Thorley, Overview, p. 101.
25 Thorley, Overview, pp. 76-77.
Does the Abingdon Labyrinth have the potential for divination?

Although P J Heather acknowledges universal interest in divination, Patrick Curry reports limited academic focus on the subject. Thorley highlights a useful, general definition from Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe - ‘By divination we mean the attempt to elicit from some higher power or supernatural being the answers to questions beyond the range of ordinary human understanding.’ Patrick Curry rightly broadens his definition beyond ‘answers to questions’ to expound divination as a continuous conversation with ‘with more-than-human agents.’ Eliade proffers that a sacred space naturally manifests a hierophany which results in ‘a break in the homogeneity of space... [and] a revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding space.’ Thorley and Gunn confirm hierophany as ‘an expression of the divine.’ Thorley, Chantal Allison, Petra Stapp and John Wadsworth identify two types of divination – one conducted by specialist practitioners (like shamans) and the other, ‘essential divination’ which happens for ordinary people using their natural divinatory instincts everyday ‘as part of their psychology and culture’ and which can be developed and refined to achieve ‘practitioner’ level.

In his research, John W. Rhodes shows that labyrinth walking can result in greater calmness and/or reduced stress and bring about positive ‘state of mind’ responses that can increase an individual’s openness to their ‘intuition, hunches, “inner voice” and other insights.’ Lonegren upholds labyrinths as places of ‘emotion, intuition and spirit’ where it is possible to contact ‘non-physical realms.’ These claims suggest that there is the potential for divination in the sacred space of the Abingdon Labyrinth.

29 Eliade, Sacred, p. 21.
30 Eliade, Sacred, p. 21 and Thorley, Overview, p. 31.
33 Lonegren, Labyrinths, p.7
My phenomenological experience walking the Abingdon Labyrinth

During my two Abingdon Labyrinth walks, I felt a connection with the divine on four occasions, which constituted what Eliade describes as a hierophany and Patrick Curry calls a conversation with ‘more than human agents.’ The first time was during my first inward walk when I questioned my right, as a non-Christian, to be in a church and my ‘not belonging’ issues surfaced. I arrived at the centre, ‘faced the altar and was overpowered by a great sense of wisdom - “we are all just travelers trying to find our way in a challenging world. No one way is right or wrong. Our journeys are just different.”’ This confirmed to me, as Helen Curry and Lauren Artress claim, that the centre is a place that represents the divine. It felt like being in the ‘holy of holies,’ the place which Eliade posits as the ‘imago mundi,’ ‘the true world’ and quoting Flavius Josphesus’s symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple, equates with heaven.

My second hierophany was towards the end of my first walk when, not wanting it to end, I felt ‘the labyrinth tug at my ankle to stay within its boundary’

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34 Eliade, Sacred, p. 21 and Patrick Curry, Divination, opening statement on an unnumbered page.
35 Author’s journal.
37 Eliade, Sacred, pp. 42-43.
and I asked myself whether ‘the labyrinth [is] alive?’\(^\text{38}\) This is the kind of ‘embodied’ experience that Tilley proffers and which David Abrams describes as ‘participation of the senses’ in a mutual experience such that we – the labyrinth and I - became connected and attuned to each other in ‘reciprocity’ and shows that ‘... each place has its own mind, its own psyche’ - thereby being a ‘more-than-human’ world.’\(^\text{39}\) An interesting synchronicity is that the prayer card given to guide me during my second walk by the lady church warden organising the Advent walks contained Mary Oliver’s poem, ‘The Journey’ which includes the words ‘and you felt a tug at your ankles.’\(^\text{40}\) Another synchronicity is that, in my journal, I describe the ‘wild wind’ and the wind whistling around the church’s rafters on the dark December evening of my first walk and in her poem, Oliver depicts life as a ‘wild night’ and how ‘the wind pried/with its stiff fingers/at the very foundations/though their melancholy/was terrible.’\(^\text{41}\)

My third hierophany was during the inward walk of my second visit when, annoyed and upset that the meditation subject was ‘journeying’ through life because I did not want to dwell on my mainly unhappy past, I invoked Archangel Michael and felt the warmth of an angelic presence supporting me.\(^\text{42}\) I misremembered Jesus’s words, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’ as ‘I am the way, the truth and the light’ and in my memory, filled the events and places of my past with golden light and cried as I walked.\(^\text{43}\)

My fourth hierophany occurred during the return walk of my second visit when the Abingdon Labyrinth called me to return and walk monthly at the church’s Silent Reflections events and the Chartres Labyrinth called me to walk there.\(^\text{44}\) Afterwards, ‘I felt very positive, fulfilled, connected with the Cosmos and the divine’ and not surprised that there is a labyrinth revival with many people wanting to experience labyrinth magic.\(^\text{45}\) My experiences resulted from what Thorley et al present as ‘essential divination’ performed by me, an ordinary


\(^{41}\) Oliver, *Journey*.

\(^{42}\) Eliade, *Sacred*, p. 11.


\(^{44}\) St Michael and All Angel’s Church, *Silent Reflections* leaflet - events are ‘open to anyone, who wants to come and see’ on the final Tuesday of every month (except December) and include group prayers/meditations, shared silences and labyrinth walks.

\(^{45}\) Author’s journal.
person with no special skills except my ‘natural divinatory instincts,’ past
labyrinth walking experiences and openness to the divine.46

The totality of my Abingdon Labyrinth walking experiences accords with
Patrick Curry’s view of divination working as a result of ‘enchantment, the direct
experience of a meaningful world.’47 Combining ideas from Max Weber’s
disenchantment and Tolkein’s Faërie world, his three part theory of enchantment
includes Tolkein’s concept of a ‘secondary world’ and the ‘realization of imagined
wonder.’48 On my first visit, I felt that I had been transported into a Tolkein-type
‘secondary world’ when I entered St Michael and All Angel’s Church and ‘was
immediately enveloped in the church’s calm and prayerful atmosphere - so
palpable that it brought tears to my eyes. In front of me was a beautiful labyrinth
tiled into the church’s floor. I was enchanted.’49 Walking the Abingdon Labyrinth
had a powerful sensory impact on me and Patrick Curry’s enchantment
characteristics of ‘indispensably existential wonder;’ ‘ineffable’ and ‘mysterious’,
‘embodied’ and ‘very precisely situated;’ ‘participatory’ (like ‘finding oneself
within a song’); and unified, complete and infinite’ are perfect descriptors for my
Abingdon Labyrinth experiences.50

It has been a challenge to reveal my spiritual beliefs and personal
vulnerabilities while walking the Abingdon Labyrinth – but I have faced my fears
that such experiences may be interpreted as ‘crazy’ or discounted because they
are not ‘scientific.’ As Helen Curry suggested, sharing my story has helped me
with my personal growth and made me a stronger person.51

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Abingdon Labyrinth is a sacred space with
the potential for divinatory experiences - which I realised during my two
labyrinth walks on 9 and 16 December 2014. As a sacred space, it exemplifies
Durkheim’s concept of the sacred being ‘set apart’ and ‘forbidden,’ Eliade’s
proposition that sacred space is not homogenous and Aristotle’s idea of place as a
container.52 It meets six of Thorley and Gunn’s eighteen criteria that define a

46 Thorley, ‘Divinatory’ in Curry, Divination, pp. 254-255.
www.patrickcurry.co.uk/papers.htm (accessed 3 January 2015).
49 Author’s journal
www.patrickcurry.co.uk/papers.htm (accessed 3 January 2015).
51 Helen Curry, The Way, p. 95.
52 Durkheim, Elementary, p. 129 cited in Thorley, Overview, p. 31; Eliade, Sacred, pp. 20 and
Aristotle, Physics on the Internet Classics Archive - http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/
sacred site and falls within their operational definition. As a sacred space, it has divinatory potential because, as Eliade’s asserts, sacred space manifests hierophany. In his research, Rhodes confirms that labyrinth walking can lead to calmness and positive ‘state of mind’ responses that can increase divinatory insights. During my two labyrinth walks, I had four divinatory experiences which align with Eliade’s concept of hierophany and what Patrick Curry calls a conversation with ‘more than human agents.’ I also had two experiences of synchronicity and experienced the centre of the labyrinth as Eliade’s ‘holy of holies.’ These experiences amount to the kind of embodied encounters proffered by Tilley and Abrams’s sense of ‘participation of the senses’ and ‘reciprocity.’ My experiences were achieved through what Thorley et al have identified as concept of ‘essential divination’ in which an ordinary person (that is, me) can connect with the divine using their ‘natural divinatory instincts.’ My total experience is best described by Patrick Curry’s theory of divination working as a result of ‘enchantment’ with the Abingdon Labyrinth in St Michael and All Angel’s church representing a Tolkein-type ‘secondary world’ and his enchantment characteristics perfectly depicting my Abingdon Labyrinth walking experiences.

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55 Rhodes, *Effects*.


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Photographs by The Labyrinth Builders, used with permission
Erratum
by Sean Thornton

In the article "What do Japanese Astrologers Believe about the Astrology that they Practice?" featured in: Spica, Vol. II No. 2 AUTUMN 2014, page 43 of the publication states that the respondent:

"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’.”

Similar claims are made on page 45 of the same article.

Upon seeing this content Miraa contacted me because he wanted to clarify his position on two points:

- Miraa has never conducted experiments of this kind. His comments about the differences between astrological content that is based on traditional methods of symbolism and content that is arbitrarily made-up were based on observation and intuition and not on experimentation.

- Miraa feels that traditional methods of divination are not specifically more accurate than alternative or arbitrary methods. However, in his experience the consumers and clients exhibit greater satisfaction and resonance with readings and content which originates from a traditional basis.

Neither the interviewer nor the respondent used the term “experiment” during the interview. In attempting to summarise the interview content “experiment” and similar terms were applied as I wrote.

These complications seemed to arise from within the nature of language and expression: the difference between what one person thinks they are saying; what the other thinks they are hearing; and how these differences are then at risk of being magnified when interview content is written up.
The following textual analysis of three primary source documents on the astrological planet Mars seeks to elaborate how the range of meanings and functions ascribed to this planet has evolved throughout the history of western astrology. Beginning with Ptolemy’s scientific and naturalistic approach in the second century CE, followed by Marsilio Ficino's Neoplatonic and magical frame of reference in the Renaissance, and finally leading to the exploration of Liz Greene’s psychological perspective in the early twenty-first century, the astrological interpretation of Mars varies. In spite of the established consensus among astrologers on the energising aspect of the planet, each interpretation appears to be rooted in the philosophical and cosmological context favoured by the astrologer in question, to such an extent that the nature of the 'Red Planet' can be radically transformed and reinvented throughout each document.

Introduction

This paper reviews three source documents on the astrological planet Mars, each one anchored within a different philosophical and cosmological context. In the first place, Mars will be examined in the scientific and principally naturalistic perspective of the *Tetrabiblos* (meaning 'Four Books' in Greek), also known as the *Apotelesmatika*, written in Greek around 120 CE by the Graeco-Egyptian mathematician, geographer and astrologer Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria (c.80-c.158 CE).¹ The Stoic and Aristotelian dimension of his interpretation of Mars will be put forth, as well as Pythagorean and Platonic aspects of it. Secondly, Mars will be explored within the Neoplatonic, Hermetic and magical frame of reference of *The Book of Life (Liber de Vita)*, composed in Latin in 1489 by the Florentine scholar,
priest, astrologer and magus Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). Finally, Mars will be viewed in its psychological and archetypal dimensions within the framework of the seminar 'Thugs and Warriors', given by the contemporary American-British astrologer and Jungian analyst Liz Greene, and held on 18 March 2001 at Regents College, London as part of the seminar programme of the Centre for Psychological Astrology.

The primary concern of this analysis is to gather insights into the perceived nature of the astrological Mars in different philosophical and cosmological traditions. Mars, often described as the 'Red Planet' because of its reddish colouring, was named after the Roman god of war. The mythological association of the planet with warlike divinities, such as the Babylonian Nergal and the Greek Ares, matches the prevailing astrological interpretation of Mars as the planet of energy and aggression. In the twentieth century, the eminent British astrologer Alan Leo qualified Mars as 'the Energiser', while the influential Australian astrologer Bernadette Brady has suggested that the key principle for this planet lies in 'focused action, directed motivation, [and] drive'.

In spite of the established consensus among astrologers on the energising aspect of Mars, the range of meanings and functions ascribed to this planet throughout the centuries can be quite extensive.

Claudius Ptolemy

Acclaimed by Owen Gingerich as 'one of the major figures in early science', Ptolemy can be viewed as a genuine observer who managed to reconcile discordant philosophical and cosmological models into one unified astrological theory. Ptolemy adopts in his astrology the naturalistic perspective set out by Pliny the Elder in *Naturalis Historia* (first century CE) and transposes it within an Aristotelian cosmos in which, as Nicholas Campion argues, 'nature, through such

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primary qualities such as hot, cold, wet and dry really mattered’. Hence, as Ptolemy asserts, 'the nature of Mars is chiefly to dry and burn, in conformity with his fiery colour and by reason of his nearness to the sun, for the sun's sphere lies just below him'. According to these four humours, which give the planets their benefic or malefic character, Mars is considered along with Saturn as malefic because of its excessive dryness. Equally because of its dryness, Mars is regarded by Ptolemy as a masculine planet. However, in his assignment of the planets into 'sects' (αἵρεσις) that classify the planets as either diurnal or nocturnal, despite his assertion that moist is nocturnal and heat diurnal, Ptolemy followed the established astrological tradition and assigned Mars to the nocturnal sect. Ptolemy justified this assignment by suggesting that the evil effects of Mars' dryness would be lessened in the moisture of the night. As Mark Riley remarks, 'it is clear that Ptolemy did not invent this system, but he does try to make it plausible'. The scientific foundation for astrology that Ptolemy attempts to establish through the humours, taken as principles of physics, is further developed in the assignment of the planets to their signs. Due to its dry nature and the occupation of the sphere below that of Jupiter, according to Ptolemy Mars rules, 'Scorpio and Aries, having a similar nature, and agreeably to Mars' destructive and inharmonious quality, in quartile aspect to the luminaries'. The influence of the mathematician Pythagoras, who attributed theological and philosophical resonances into numbers, is accentuated in Ptolemy’s chapter on the triangles, in which Mars dominates the fourth triangle of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces through his house in Scorpio. The exaltation of Mars in Capricorn is based on the rationale that this sign is the farthest south and therefore suits the planet's fiery nature.

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7 Ptolemy. Tetrabiblos, I.4.18, p. 37. [The order of the heavenly bodies followed by Ptolemy is Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon: see Ptolemy. Tetrabiblos, p.37, n.1].
10 Ptolemy. Tetrabiblos, I.7.20-21, p. 43.
11 Ptolemy. Tetrabiblos, I.7.20-21, p. 43.
14 Ptolemy. Tetrabiblos, I.17.38, p. 81.
15 Ptolemy. Tetrabiblos, I.18.41, p. 87.
Throughout the *Tetrabiblos*, Mars is viewed principally as a malefic planet producing calamitous effects by means of its destructive hot and dry nature in various fields of life. When he assumes rulership of the predicted event alone, the planet brings about wars, capture, fevers, violent deaths, murder and robbery.\(^{17}\) Similarly, under certain astrological configurations, Mars is mainly or partially implicated in weakness or loss of the father, sickness or sudden death of the mother, the birth of monsters, or of children who do not survive.\(^{18}\) Mars can equally shorten the length of life, render foreign travel dangerous, kill by means of fever, sudden strokes, haemorrhages, miscarriages, or pestilences, and is associated with the fifth age of life, between 41 and 56 years of age, introducing misery, severity and troubles in the soul and the body.\(^{19}\) Besides the fatalistic character of his views that link Mars to unavoidable external events or situations, Ptolemy was further influenced by the Stoics through their concept of *cosmic sympathy*, the organic interrelation of all phenomena in the universe. Consequently, he associated Mars with diseases resonating with violence and heat, such as 'blindness from a blow, a thrust, iron, or burning'.\(^{20}\) Furthermore, in his chapter on the quality of action, Ptolemy maintained the room is now so that Mars 'sympathises' with professions whose essence relates to fire, mines, iron, the military, and various crafts.\(^{21}\) Last but not least, the Platonic legacy of an ensouled *cosmos* is indicated in the connection of celestial mechanics with the quality of the soul.\(^{22}\) As Campion suggests, 'when Mars dominated the soul, Ptolemy argued, the individual would display the planet’s qualities, whether positive or negative, either blind aggression or great courage'.\(^{23}\)

**Marsilio Ficino**

During the High Italian Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino’s principal inquiry throughout *The Book of Life* was the harmonisation of physical and spiritual existence within the divine heavenly order. Following Ptolemy, Ficino often groups Mars with Saturn as mostly malefic. As Thomas Moore remarks, '[Ficino] warns against the influence of Mars and relatively few times this planet is

Mars signifies for Ficino the animal nature in men, 'affects and actions common equally to man and to the other animals'. According to Ficino, one is subjected to Mars through anger and struggles, and, 'too many Martial things are like poison to the spirit', because of their extreme dryness. Ficino stresses that Mars can, in certain astrological configurations, dissolve the intestines, and indicate that a sick person should be separated from their doctor. Ficino follows the tradition established by some Platonists and the Hebrew astronomers, 'who put harmful, Martial daemons in the North, and kindly, Jovial ones in the South'. As Ficino claims to have learned from the theologians and from Iamblichus, '[those] evil daemons often take on the illusions of images and deceive us'. However, he doesn't regard Mars as unilaterally malefic. Ficino remarks that, 'if anyone wishes to convict Saturn and Mars of being harmful by nature, which I never would believe, still they also are to be used as doctors sometimes use poisons'. As a matter of fact, martial substances like euphorbium and hellebore can be profitable, advances Ficino, and Mars can be of service to the spirit as a kind of medicine, by heating it up when necessary. Sometimes Mars can even imitate the Sun in certain benefits.

Nevertheless, Ficino doesn't view Mars exclusively in its raw animal dimension, which mostly poisons the spirit even though it can reanimate it in the long run. Besides the appreciation of Mars established by Ptolemy as primarily a transmitter of ominous physical effects due to its heat and dryness, Ficino highlights the divinity associated with this planet that once resonating with the inner realm can indicate a spiritual ascent of consciousness and may additionally give rise to the practice of astral magic. Influenced by the Hermetic mythology of creation in which the powers of the planets are mirrored in the soul and the Platonic inheritance of an ensouled divine cosmos where everything is interconnected, Ficino affirms that, 'this machine of the world is so connected that heavenly things are on earth in an earthly condition, and earthly things are in

\[\text{Footnotes}\]

25 Ficino. 'On obtaining Life from the Heavens', p.117.
26 Ficino. The Book of Life, p.93, 118.
30 Ficino. 'On obtaining Life from the Heavens', p.118.
31 See respectively; Ficino. 'On obtaining Life from the Heavens', p.118; Ficino. The Book of Life, p.119.
32 Ficino, 'On obtaining Life from the Heavens', p.133.
heaven in a heavenly dignity'.

According to the theory of the ‘great chain’ of correspondences every existing thing in the universe had its 'place' in a divinely planned hierarchical order, which was pictured as a chain vertically extended, and each object's 'position' in it depended on the relative proportion of 'spirit' and 'matter' it contained. Through that universal interdependence one can operate sympathetic magic, that is, argues Campion, 'the harmonisation of one's life with the cosmos through ritual, meditation, the use of talismans, colour, music and herbs'.

According to Ficino, 'magic can even unite the celestial bodies to us through the celestial things overhead, or work them inside us, where one can finally see them'. Since, for Ficino, Mars governs effective motion, in order to get something of him through magic one should use 'materials which are fiery or red, red brass, all sulphurous things, iron, and bloodstone'. By fabricating images of Mars armed and crowned, in the hour of Mars, when the first face of Scorpio is rising, one can fight against timidity.

According to Ficino astral magic attracts powerful celestial gifts through seven steps each corresponding to a planet. The force of Mars is suggested by strong concepts of the imagination, such as forms, motions and passions. As Ficino asserts there are hidden powers in the stars which produce heavenly force into the spirit and, 'for a Martial power, in order to do much, [it] needs a lot of matter. When it has a certain kind of form, however, even when there is very little matter, it works very strongly'. Perhaps, as Angela Voss suggests, 'we have to understand Ficino's humanistic astrology as part of an intensely personal quest to overcome himself and in so doing to lift it out of the deterministic model inherited from the classical tradition to a new “psychological” level'.

Liz Greene

In the early twenty-first century, Liz Greene proceeds in her exploration of Mars by means of mythology and Jung's depth-psychology. According to Patrick Curry, psychological astrology is 'a development and renewal of neo-Platonic/

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36 Ficino. 'On obtaining Life from the Heavens', p.118.
37 Ficino. 'On obtaining Life from the Heavens', p.139.
42 Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.168;
Hermetic astrology with its emphasis on self-knowledge and transformation.\textsuperscript{43} In that context Mars is no longer recognised as a divinity but rather as a psychological function permeated by the realm of the unconscious and the archetypes. As Greene argues, the war-god, 'symbolises an archetypal pattern of life - what the ancients understood as gods'.\textsuperscript{44} From that viewpoint, the myth of the Babylonian fire-god Marduk destroying his water-mother Tiamat stands for the struggle to emerge as an autonomous individual, which first occurs, according to Greene, at the age of two, during the first Mars return.\textsuperscript{45} Similarly, the French astrologer Andre Barbault links Mars to the so-called Freudian ‘oral-sadistic’ phase, occurring at the same age, during which the first appearance of teeth marks the desire to hurt or destroy the loved object.\textsuperscript{46} Inspired by the Greek war-god Ares, the only god who fighters in the Iliad as an ordinary human warrior and who is conceived by Hera alone without recourse to male seed, Greene advances that ‘Mars belongs to the realm of the instincts and the body’.\textsuperscript{47} Mars remains malefic argues Greene, only to the extent that family ties and social norms impose repression of the archetype and thus a pathological relationship to it.\textsuperscript{48} According to Greene, Mars gets castrated when emotional manipulation or the imposition of guilt around any demonstration of self-assertion takes place. This results in a feeling of impotence, which often breaks out in blind violence, either against oneself or against others, and can even lead to cruelty, depression and to drug or alcohol addiction.\textsuperscript{49} The most creative face of Mars arises, argues Greene, from service to the solar principle since Mars represents the fighting instinct, which the solar inner hero uses to make his vision manifest.\textsuperscript{50} However, advances Greene, ‘when Mars feels completely incapable of fulfilling its function of service to a central solar principle, it can indeed become “malefic”’.\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{thebibliography}{51}
\bibitem{44} Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.168.
\bibitem{47} Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.175-176.
\bibitem{49} Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.186, 196-197, 204-5.
\bibitem{50} Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.205, 215, 249.
\bibitem{51} Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.205.
\end{thebibliography}
What is more, Greene examines Mars through the elements in synastry and in relation to the collective. She maintains that Mars in the element of air needs a rational justification for the self-assertive instinct; Mars in water is subtle and imaginative; Mars in earth is realistic and pragmatic; while in fire 'it's a very clear, direct, and unequivocal Mars'.\(^52\) In synastry, which is the astrological practice of comparing how the planets and houses in two people’s charts relate to each other, Mars raises issues of dependency, freedom, rivalry, the expression of anger and can easily be projected upon the other person.\(^53\) Jung considers that projections transform the world into the replica of one’s unknown face or shadow. As Jung argues, 'the effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one'.\(^54\) Greene holds that in the case of projecting Mars, especially if the planet is triggered by someone else's Saturn or Chiron, 'the other person may become a means of waking us up to the fact that we are not sufficiently connected with Mars in ourselves'.\(^55\) From that perspective, Ficino's 'Martian evil daemons' could be interpreted as inner sub-personalities of repressed anger and frustrated desire that haven't yet been sufficiently elaborated, in order to be fully integrated into the conscious personality. Concerning the implication of Mars in wars, Greene cites Jung's belief that, 'the only antidote to inundation in collective madness is the formation of a solid individual centre'.\(^56\) Liz Greene seems to adopt the Stoic belief that everyone is subjected to the laws of Fate, and has to somehow cope with predetermined bodily desires and passions, inherent to the human condition, which often remain unconscious. As Curry maintains for the whole 'school' of psychological astrology, 'one's fate is only “transformed” by recognising and accepting the pre-existent unconscious forces revealed by the birth chart'.\(^57\)

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has reviewed a range of meanings and functions assigned to Mars in three astrological documents. Mars has initially been presented within the naturalistic and Aristotelian framework of Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* as hot and dry. The principally malefic character of the planet has been

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\(^{56}\) Liz Greene, 'Thugs and Warriors', p.249.

put forward, along with Ptolemy’s syncretism combining equally Stoic, Pythagorean and Platonic influences in the astrological interpretation. Mars has subsequently been explored in the Neoplatonic and Hermetic context of Marsilio Ficino’s *Book of Life*, not only as a malefic planet but primarily as a divine entity mirrored in the soul. Also, the importance of astral magic through which one can obtain celestial gifts has been additionally examined here. Finally, Mars has been regarded as a Jungian archetype of self-assertiveness and autonomy. In the psychological and mythological perspective of Liz Greene’s seminar, 'Thugs and Warriors', the analysis has focused on the pathologies related to the planet on individual and transpersonal levels, which constitute its so-called 'malefic' aspect when Mars is in difficulty for the planet to emerge as a solar ally. The richness of the primary documents, their similarities and their cosmological and philosophical divergences on the nature of Mars can highlight the passionate temperament of the Red Planet in western astrology.

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This essay discusses whether the Kumik lodge is a sacred space. Built inside a skyscraper that headquarters Canadian government aboriginal affairs administration, it overlooks the sacred waterfalls Asticou also known as Great Kettle of Boiling Water or Chaudière Falls, in the Ottawa River landscape. French explorers met Algonquin hunters and gatherers here four centuries ago. Indigenous cosmologies are complex but typically held all nature as animate. Today the dominant paradigm of scientism is evident in the surrounding office towers and hydro turbines. In researching the sacred, Eliade recommended the phenomenological approach, he thought sacred space could occur naturally or could be human-built. From the evidence, the Kumik is a human constructed space made sacred in the acknowledgment and repetition within it of ideas from Algonquin spirituality. New trends are emerging where individuals are claiming back the landscape and small installations like the Algonquin lodge inside a workplace seem to be re-establishing this connection.

Introduction

This essay looks at an area inside a skyscraper and discusses whether it is sacred. Kumik, meaning ‘lodge’ in Algonquian, was built inside Les Terrasses de la Chaudière, a public service workplace adjacent to a bend in the Ottawa River, which straddles Hull, Quebec and Ottawa, Ontario.¹ This landscape was the home of the Algonquin when French explorers first referenced the geography in describing their explorations in 1613.² The subsequent four centuries had European settlers from France, then England, moving into the landscape. Today the area is dominated by Canadian Parliament Buildings and hydro turbines girdling the circular waterfalls in the river at the bend. The essence of the Kumik will be examined referencing the work of religious historian Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), ecologist and philosopher David Abram, theologian Belden C. Lane, an interview with

aboriginal author K. Dumont and photographs taken from inside the Kumik. The regional landscape, the cosmology of the Algonquin, and spirituality in the workplace are discussed in exploring the sacredness of the Kumik space.

Sacred Space

A phenomenological approach is recommended by Eliade in researching religious subject matter like the sacredness of space. For Merleau-Ponty the study of essences involved ones perceptions and ‘re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world’. Abram found the study of direct experience with the landscape to reveal the centrality of the earth in human experience, something that has been lost in the ‘electronically-generated vistas’ that claim our spaces. The Kumik essence will be evaluated with themes found by Lane to be present in American spirituality. Reference is made to Dumont’s experience both assisting Elders in the Kumik and working on the eighteenth floor in the skyscraper, and also to photographs taken from inside the lodge.

Space and place were commonly interchangeable words imbued with complex interwoven ideas that are difficult to define, according to Robert Trubshaw. Used frequently in everyday speech they seemed to connect to the specific culture and landscape of the individual. Sacred was also found to be difficult to define by Anthony Thorley and Celia Gunn in their research on world sacred sites for the Gaia Foundation. Linguistic roots for ‘sacred’ revealed wide usage that meant a dedication to the divine and a crossing between the earth and the sky. Eliade viewed the sacred and its opposite, the profane, as co-existing but

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3 K. Dumont. *Interviewed by the author*, Ottawa, 4 December 2014 [hereafter Dumont, *Interview*]; all photographs by the author, Hull, Quebec, 7 November 2014
8 Dumont, *Interview*
also thought that all space was in some way sacred even if just scarcely so. He thought a sacred space could be ritually constructed using different techniques to access the divine. Environmental historian Donald Hughes thought the ‘traditional Indian view’ to be that while all nature was sacred, some spaces held easier access to spirit because of, for example, unusual features in the geography. The Algonquin heralded a site they called Great Kettle of Boiling Water as sacred, now Chaudière Falls on the map. Also, Samuel de Champlain (1574-1635) observed and recorded details of a tobacco ceremony here in mid-June 1613. The experience of the sacred was primordial to Eliade and occurred in natural spaces like the Kettle, but it could also be constructed by humans, like a church or temple, by using divine imagery.

In legend the Ottawa Valley landscape has always been the home of the Algonquin people, who believe they have always lived there. Archaeologists thought that human habitation began in America after they crossed over a land bridge from Siberia during the last ice age at least 10,000 years ago. In the Northeast Woodlands four hundred years ago, it was the Algonquin tribe who connected first with European explorers. Since then conflicts have continued that commonly occur in human groups from entirely different bioregions due to, for Abram, the ‘incommensurability of cultural universes’.

The ‘October Crisis’ in 1970 involved a longstanding French-English conflict and resulted in the invocation of the War Measures Act; by 1975 a government concession brought the construction of new government workplaces

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11 Eliade, Sacred, p.23
12 Eliade, Sacred, p.52
14 Samuel de Champlain, Les voyages de Champlain Xaintongeois, capitaine ordinare pour le Roy, en marine; quatrieme voyage (Paris; Jean Berjon, 1613) p.46-47
15 Eliade, Sacred, p.20-21, 36-37
17 Morrison, Algonquin, p. 20; Francis, Origins, p. 2
18 Francis, Origins, pp. 13-14
19 Abram, Spell, p. 267
in Hull and the relocation of federal employees from Ottawa. In 1990, another crisis concerning a Mohawk-French clash involved blockading sacred burial grounds from a proposed golf course; almost immediately Kumik was installed inside the government headquarters overseeing aboriginal affairs to deal with the aftermath in employee stress. The lodge was to provide essential guidance and counselling services to all workers. Engineers constructed special ventilation in the public building to allow for the smoke from the pipe and smudge ceremonies that are associated with Algonquin spirituality. After twenty-four years of uninterrupted operation, the lodge continues to be presided over for two week stints each by Elders from across Canada.

**Algonquin Spirituality**

More than a thousand highly-developed cultures developed independently over millennia and large distances in prehistoric America. Lane thought that there was no typical early American cosmology but that it tended to express in five common themes that combined into an ambiance containing an essence of ‘transcendence, a love of the earth, a renewed vision, a story worth telling, [and] silence in the presence of mystery’. The five themes of American spirituality mentioned by Lane will be applied in the evaluation of Kumik’s sacredness. Photographs reveal the inner lodge and outer skyscraper.

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23 Dumont, *Interview*; AANDC, *Elder Information*
24 AANDC, *Elder Information*
25 Lane, *Landscapes*, p.74
26 Lane, *Landscapes*, p.74 in Chapter 3: ‘‘Seeking a Sacred Center: Places and Themes in Native American Spirituality’’
Sacred Hoop

The first of Lane’s ideas was the central role of the circle or hoop as a representation of the creator. This form was revered in early traditions as the place where the cosmic emerged or broke-through, as mentioned by Eliade and Lane, and where a vertical ‘axis mundi’ facilitated contact with the numinous. The sacred hoop was mythically reconstructed in ceremonial sweat-lodges thus rehearsing and repeating creation. Inside the Kumik the circular hoop was evidenced inlaid in wooden floorboards around the circumference of a sweat-lodge or tepee. It was apparent in the shingle hanging at the entry way picturing a hoop welcoming the four races and other placements like a stone circle and various circular drums placed about the interior space.

The Algonquin sacred circle can be marked out into the four cardinal directions. Figure 1 shows a shingle announcing Kumik from the skyscraper atrium, which contains the demarcation of four arms reaching into the centre from four directions and grasping an inner braided hoop: white arm from the north, yellow east, red south, and black west. Lane pointed out that the shape of the sacred circle can include one break ‘with a single door opening always to the east’ representing to Eliade the place where heaven and earth meet, the opening to the cosmos. The break establishes the centre and thus orientation with the divine is possible. Dumont said that Kumik had a design flaw because the entryway to the lodge, the break in the circle, was not true to the east. Elders consequently practiced re-orientation movements upon entering; they walked ‘to the left but of the western door so it’s a little bit backwards’, however Dumont said it works well, as ‘we’re adaptable’.

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27 Lane, Landscapes, p.74
28 Eliade, Sacred, p.36; Lane, Landscapes, p.75
29 Dumont Interview
30 Dumont, Interview
31 Lane, Landscapes, p. 75; Eliade, Sacred, p. 36; Jibb, Photographs
32 Eliade, Sacred, p. 62
33 Dumont, Interview
Sacred Earth

A second theme common to first American cosmologies was respect for the earth. The Algonquin were hunters and gatherers in a territory defined by natural resource boundaries and organised by family groups. Indigenous cultures experienced a sense of oneness with all nature mentioned by Abram and Lane who attributed the idea to scholar Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939). There is no longer a balanced relationship with the earth, something Abram found sad and massive in scale. Employees in Les Terrasses went to the Kumik space for solace from the ‘bad energy’ that can accumulate in the surrounding offices. Dumont experienced increased tension going upwards in the elevators approaching the Minister’s headquarters at the top. Looking down into the landscape from the 18th floor windows, the Kettle is visible at the river bend. Dumont thought the proximity of the Kumik to the sacred site was important and that they ‘communicated with one another’.

Respect for the sacred earth is apparent inside Kumik through the use of imagery including wolves and ravens, natural fabrics and carved wooden objects, animal hide and feathers, stones and hanks of fresh greenery as well as rituals that mimick celestial movement and give thanks to the ‘grandmother’ earth. The spirits of the ancestors inhabited the natural world for the Algonquin. The lodge

34 Francis, Origins, pp. 14-15
35 Abram, Spell, p. 57; Lane, Landscapes, p. 80
36 Abram, Spell, p. 267
37 Dumont, Interview
38 Dumont, Interview
A Council of 26 Elders thus aligning with the lunar year: 13 grandmothers and 13 grandfathers. North American ethnographer Frank Goldsmith Speck (1881-1950) found that Algonquin medicine practices included a deep association with earth’s flora and included engagement with physical and spiritual healing through their ‘supernatural realm in the north’. Figure 2 shows an altar in Kumik graced with cedar, sage, sweet grass, and tobacco, said by Dumont to be the four medicines associated with healing in Algonquin tradition.

**Figure 2: Kumik interior**

*Vision Space*

The Kumik is a lodge symbolically set apart from the surrounding work space, something Eliade thought necessary for communing with the sacred and Lane’s third theme for aboriginal spirituality. For Hughes, we are challenged to find the places where we can connect with the divine. For the Algonquin, the sweat-lodge experience was central in healing and vision questing. In there, careful preparations were repeated in an individual’s life on those occasions when spiritual direction was needed. Merging the purifying qualities of smudged earth medicines with rites and sun-wise movements around the interior circle,

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39 Dumont, *Interview*  
41 Dumont, *Interview*  
42 Eliade, *Sacred*; Lane, *Landscapes*, p. 83  
43 Hughes, *Spirit*, p. 247  
44 Dumont, *Interview*  
45 Lane, *Landscapes*, p. 83; Dumont, *Interview*
while acknowledging the directions, provoked visions. For the Algonquin there were seven directions representing the four cardinal points, above and below, and inside. A pipe is involved and smoke is inhaled, then symbolically whished around ones body and is associated with communing with spirit. Lane thought that putting rocks into the sacred fire pit corresponded to purification and oneness with all. Abram thought sacred pipe smoke was associated with making the invisible visible, opening up previously unseen connections with other entities that dwell in the world like ones ancestors.46 The air around us according to Abram is the most ‘taken-for granted phenomenon’ continually imbibed, and often unnoticed and representative of divine presence.47

The sweat-lodge dimensions are represented in the floorboards of the lodge hinting at the vision quest space. Lane and Dumont characterized a sweat lodge experience as intense, dark, smoky, steamy, confined and culminating when ice cold water is poured onto hot rocks provoking a divine interaction, a break-through which Eliade called a hierophany.48 Dumont said the Kumik was used by people for solace from the ‘bad energy’ in their work relationships and their communities, to experience a peaceful sojourn from the pressures outside.49 The Kumik, while not a formal vision space like the sweat-lodge, was a space where Elders taught about them.

Figure 3: The skyscraper

46 Abram, Spell, p. 229
47 Abram, Spell, p. 258
48 Eliade, Sacred, p. 36
49 Dumont, Interview
Stories and Songs

The oral tradition was central to the passing on of spiritual values to first Americans. The continuous repetition of sacred stories is a key part of making and keeping a space sacred. They were a set of hunting and gathering instructions but also for Abram, provide codes of behaviour, customs, social taboos, interspecies etiquette and more. Algonquin stories have an inseparable link to the landscape and their repetition in the oral tradition and in dream life illustrated a reciprocal relationship with the terrain. Lane thought aboriginal stories were uncomfortable for whites of European background who were more familiar with the written word. Algonquin legends told of their origins and their interactions with the stars and earth. Historian Nicholas Campion noted that imagery from the stars was a common theme in early lore, from his research on the roots of astrology. Folklorist Charles G. Leland (1824-1903) compiled north-eastern Algonquin stories, which he said were once sung, like ‘Song of the Stars’:

We are the stars which sing,
We sing with our light;
We are the birds of fire,
We fly over the sky.
Our light is a voice.
We make a road for spirits,
For the spirits to pass over.
Among us are three hunters
Who chase a bear;
There never was a time
When they were not hunting.

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50 Lane, Landscapes, p. 85
51 AANDC, Kumik Information; Dumont, Interview
52 Eliade, Sacred, p. 32
53 Abram, Spell, p. 175
54 Lane, Landscapes, p.87
55 Dumont, Interview
56 Campion, Nicholas, A History of Western Astrology, Volume I The Ancient World (London: Continuum, 2008)
Campion, History, pp. 12-13 [hereafter Campion, History]
We look down on the mountains.
This is the Song of the Stars.

Folklorist Horace Beck went on an expedition in 1940 with Speck to Maniwaki, an Algonquin community in northern Ottawa Valley, to record their stories. One legend spoke of a great flood and people floated in a canoe for a long time before arriving at a land of fish and game but no trees; ‘[H]ere they stopped. Later trees came to the land. These people called themselves Algonquin’. Scholar of American oral literature Robert Bringhurst, in an on-line interview with Guernica magazine, said that the rich body of stories transcribed since the 1880s, if read and internalized by a new generation, would fundamentally change society from a culture inconsiderate and disrespectful of the earth to one of kinship with nature.
The Kumik was established as a space for quiet meditation and repose from the hectic work spaces above it. The Eskimo in northern Manitoba and Nunavut found silence to be the appropriate response to the harsh and extreme landscape, according to Lane. Abram agreed that silence was important to humans, but was missing from modern life; what some call silence is for aboriginals a listening stance. There is much to hear in silence, the roar of the rapids, birds and animals, wind and trees or spirits of the ancestors in visions and dreams. Abram thought that sacred space revealed ‘synchronization between my own rhythms and the rhythms of the things themselves, their own tones and texture’. He argued that the phenomenal world was ‘remarkably stable and

61 AANDC, Elders Information; Dumont Interview
62 Lane, Landscapes, pp. 88-89
63 Abram, Spell, p. 147
64 Abram, Spell, p. 54
solid; we are able to count on it in so many ways, and we take for granted much of its structure and character.’

Religious studies lecturer Graham Harvey wrote that contemporary spiritual leaders or shamans in the west are engaged in a difficult task of introducing people back to listening to the living land. From evidence, silence is regarded highly in the Kumik space through placement of articles, ritual movements, and summons the essence within by encouraging employees to take a quiet and listening stance while there.

### Spirituality and Workspace

Today humans work in landscapes that are rife with technologies. This was evident in contemporary Canada for cultural critic Neil Postman (1931-2003) who thought the surrender of culture to technology was the result of scientism, the dominant underlying paradigm. Spirituality needed acknowledgement to ‘know the difference between the sacred and the profane’. Research on sacred sites by Thorley and Gunn revealed the tendency in contemporary culture to separate religion from science but they found an emerging awareness in academic documents of the necessity for acknowledging the sacred in the secular world. Abram thought this had started, with individuals and communities who were ‘engaged in a process of remembering’ or some call it ‘reinhabitation’ to restore their ecological regions. The Kumik is an example of how aboriginal Canadians and one branch of the public service are working to restore what Abram calls a reciprocal relationship honouring the sacred earth and is no longer content with cultural genocide and the extinction of nature. For author Mathew Sheep, spirituality in the workplace is a young area of enquiry long overdue and pertinent to the health and well-being of individuals, organisations and societies. While studying a labour force of nurses in 2003, Don Grant, Kathleen

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65 Abram, Spell, p. 35
66 Graham Harvey, Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth, (New York: New York University Press, 1997) p. 120-122
67 Jibb, Photographs; AANDC, Kumik Information Sheet
68 Abram, Spell, p. x
70 Postman, Technopoly, pp. 14-15
71 Thorley and Gunn, Sacred, pp. 21, 151
72 Abram, Spell, pp. 271-272
73 Abram, Spell, p. 271
O’Neil and Laura Stephens found there to be a dearth of theories on spirituality in non-religious organizations. They argued that ‘craft versions of sacred authority’ was important because from the seedbeds of spirituality in the workplace there could emerge ‘new sacred structures’ within secular bureaucracies.\(^75\)

**Conclusion**

To consecrate and make space sacred, for Eliade, required transforming it into an image of the cosmos, achievable by projecting the four horizons from a central point. This is apparent in the sacred hoop that first announces the entry to Kumik and thrives throughout.\(^76\) The five themes observable in most native North American spiritualities, according to Lane, were evidenced in the Kumik: an essence of transcendence was present from the scores of circular representations in form and ritual; the earth was honoured throughout; vision quests were discussed but it was not a sweat-lodge experience; in there, stories were told, songs sung and teachings given; and silence was respected in this lodge. Problems such as the break in the circle, the entryway, not being true to the east were taken in stride by presiding aboriginal Elders. New trends have emerged that are claiming back the landscape and small installations like the Algonquin lodge inside a workplace seem to be re-establishing this connection. From the evidence it can be concluded that the Kumik is a human constructed space made sacred in the acknowledgment and repetition within it of ideas from Algonquin spirituality.

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\(^76\) Eliade, *Sacred*, p.52-3; Dumont, *Interview; Jibb, Photographs*


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