Darrellyn Gunzburg, editor, *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*

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This is a rich and varied collection of eleven essays dealing with the role of the sky in human imagination and culture. The disciplinary mix is wide, including history and history of art, classics, cartography and social anthropology. Collectively the authors make a compelling case for the importance of the sky and its interpretation in human cultures from the beginning of recorded history, and almost certainly well before that, to the present. In her "Introduction", Gunzburg gives a précis of each chapter, which gives a taste of the range of themes and approaches under the general rubric of cultural astronomy. Ronald Hutton's contribution "The Strange History of British Archaeoastronomy" provides a fascinating account of the academic politics involved in the rise and to some extent fall of attempts to understand ancient monuments and their relationship to the sky, particularly the prehistoric circle at Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England. For those who look to scholarship to provide accurate and scientific data, this is a timely reminder that cultural movements (Paganism) and fashions (Earth Energies), academic assassinations and subsequent self-censorship, the dissemination of ideas through popular books and the role of individual personalities loom large in attempts to understand and communicate the significance and purpose of ancient monuments such as Stonehenge. An interesting observation at the end of Hutton's essay relates to the difference between archaeoastronomy in Europe, where it can draw on historical and ethnographic data, and the Americas, where in the absence of such data, there is much greater emphasis on mathematical and statistical analysis. The data can be slanted to suit almost any theory, it seems. Numbers are not necessarily more "objective" than narratives.

Although not placed next to it in this collection, John Goldsmith's description of the "Cosmos, Culture and Landscape" project in Western Australia provides an excellent example of the combination of ethnography and science; in this case, of what can be achieved when observations using radio telescopes are brought together with indigenous knowledge of the sky. As with most of the chapters in the book, Goldsmith's essay

has some wonderful illustrations, although sadly all in black and white. The Aboriginal “Emu in the Sky”, a black space visible within a skyscape of stars, is reminiscent of Tim Ingold’s ruminations on Vincent Van Gogh’s painting *The Starry Night* (1889), which Ingold uses to anchor the idea that we are part of what we see and it is part of us. In his chapter “Reach for the Stars! Light, Vision and the Atmosphere”, Ingold is sympathetic to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological view that “to be sentient is to open up to a world, to yield to its embrace, and to resonate in one’s inner being to its illuminations and reverberations” (p. 225). In some ways Ingold’s chapter is the most abstract, certainly a long way from his earlier ethnographic work, but it also encapsulates a view that other contributors illustrate in a number of detailed and scholarly ways, affirming that the sky is never marginal to our being on this planet.

Historians, classicists and art historians will enjoy the central chapters, in which we are introduced to the Farnese Atlas (Kristen Lippincott, “Reflections of the Farnese Atlas”), Giotto’s sky in an Italian palazzo (Darrelyn Gunzburg, “Giotto’s Sky”), medieval and early modern European understandings of the “Children of the Planets” (Geoffrey Shamos, “Astrology as a Social Framework”) and depictions of the heavens on the ceiling of the Sala Bologna in the Vatican Palace (Emily Urban, “Mapping the Heavens”). The other main theme running through several chapters is the cultural history of horoscopes. Roger Beck, in “Imagery and Narrative in an Ancient Horoscope”, introduces us to an ancient Greek horoscope, and Bernadette Brady ends the volume with “Images in the Heavens”, a broad, comprehensive view of the role of images in the heavens across many cultures, times and places. As a reminder that stars are not the only celestial figures with a cultural impact, Patrick McCafferty, in “Comets and Meteors”, explores comets and meteors in myth and apocalyptic literature. On a rather different note Tylor Nordgren discusses the Dark Sky movement in “At Night’s End”, and its attempts to preserve places on earth in which people can continue to view the night sky without the effects of light pollution. Despite being such a mixed interdisciplinary collection of essays *The Imagined Sky* achieves coherence through its assertion of the *cultural* importance of the sky, making a very strong case that no discipline can afford to ignore such a central feature of the human imaginal and natural world.