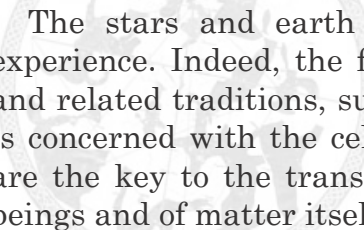


Coleston Brown

The Stars, the Landscape & Initiation



The stars and earth are closely bound up with initiatic experience. Indeed, the fundamental mystery of the Hermetic and related traditions, such as the alchemical and Rosicrucian, is concerned with the celestial powers inside the earth. These are the key to the transformation and regeneration of mortal beings and of matter itself.

In certain Celtic traditions, somewhat influenced in their later versions by Christian mythology, these powers gain expression through Faerie presences who are said to have fallen from the stars into the earth with Lucifer from whose crown the Grail also fell. This tradition is paralleled in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, where the hermit Trevrizent tells how the Grail was written in the stars and how it was brought down to earth by “neutral angels.” (Book 9)

We have here a theme or motif that is well-documented world-wide ~ the descent of sacred mysteries from the celestial region, the OverRealm, which is the spiritual zone associated with powers and presences in their most primal expression.¹



As the Grail is written in the stars, so it is also imprinted in the land. Imposing or important land forms are commonly associated with deities, heroes, and other sacred presences who are connected to constellations, stars, planets, moon, sunrise, sunset, and so on. The existence of great mounds and effigies in various parts of the world and their relation to sacred presences and powers as well as to stellar, solar and lunar cycles that affect the health and peace of the people and creatures that live in the surrounding landscape is undeniable.

For instance, where I currently live on Vancouver Island, Canada, there are sacred tales of divine beings descending from the stars into the landscape, merging with hills, rivers, stones and trees. Right behind my home I can see a series of ridges which together form what is locally known as the “Sleeping Wizard” a figure that, in many respects, is similar to the “Fisher King” of Arthurian Legend. What is remarkable about this particular example is that it reflects a living tradition, still active and still actively engaged by the aboriginal peoples who have lived in the area for thousands of years. I consider it a great opportunity and a blessing to be part of this sacred landscape and to be able to forge significant relationships with it.

It is well known that the anonymous author of *The High History of the Holy Graal* was familiar with the sacred landscape around Glastonbury, and in fact claims the book was written from sources at what is obviously Glastonbury Abbey:

The Latin from whence this history was drawn into Romance was taken in the Isle of Avalon, in a holy house of religion that standeth at the head of the Moors Adventurous, there where King Arthur and Queen Guenievre lie (Branch XXVIII).

This is significant for us here because it means that when Katharine Maltwood was researching the map of Somerset she had been commissioned to draw for a new edition of *The High History*, she was immersed in sacred lore that was magically bound to the landscape.² Moreover she wandered the hills



and vales herself. And indeed, as she tells us in her book *Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars*, it was while researching the figure of the Lion, so prevalent in Arthurian Legend, that “with Bartholomew’s Map, Sheet 34, open before me ... I saw the outline of a lion and it was only later that ‘The lion of the Zodiac’ was suggested.” (James Clarke. 1982 edition, p. 14)

Thus her awareness of stellar correlations arose directly out of her contact with great presences in the landscape and the deep earth. The land spoke to her and it revealed the secrets of the stars and illuminated the meaning of sacred lore. This is not a result of stories having been being consciously “mapped” on the landscape, but of the land revealing its mysteries through sacred lore, including its interrelationships with stellar and chthonic or UnderRealm powers.

All the motifs and magical themes of esoteric traditions rise out of these interrelationships and take on forms of expression that are meaningful and regenerative for the people inhabiting a landscape. All coherent traditions of sacred lore stem from the interaction of human consciousness with the powers and presences of the landscape, atmosphere and stars.

The Glastonbury Enclosure is an empowered place, part natural, part modelled, that epitomizes and embodies the primal sacred landscape, the abode of immortality, or region of light, as a fusion of the celestial patterns and powers of the OverRealm with the chthonic powers and centralising light of the UnderRealm. It is thus an area particularly open to initiatic forces. For those already on the magical path, being in the Enclosure is like being in a living temple or sacred space. Power flows instantaneously and effectively into consciousness allowing for important inner work to be done.

However, these forces are also available, if in a reduced capacity, to anyone who lives in or has visited the sacred area.³ Bear in mind that this merely makes an opportunity available, it doesn’t guarantee an initiatic connection. There must always be present certain characteristics or qualifications for the initiatic



experience to manifest, the most fundamentally important of which is a certain awareness and openness to the possibilities of a magical life.

Initiation works off of two main lines of contact or transmission. These are the lines of sacred space and sacred lore, both of which are bound up with the mystery of the Three Realms and with sacred geography and the inherent power of a locality.⁴ The Glastonbury Zodiac, by both design and nature, constitutes an initiatic centre or focus of spiritual power and presence. It is a place of initiation, transformation and regeneration both of people and of streams of sacred lore. As I will show in other articles, it is also a mystery complex linked to great rhythms and cycles crucial to planetary health and regeneration.

Notes

¹ Examples are too numerous to list, but it is worth mentioning the tradition of the Royal Glory among the Sumerians, Persians and others, which descended from the stars. Sumerian city states were linked to specific constellations, seven-gated Nippur for example to Ursa Major.

² Of course, Arthurian legend is not limited to Somerset, but is widespread across the landscape of Britain and Europe. This is again a matter of resonance, whereby the powers and presences in the land assume forms appropriate to the consciousness of the humans who live there. The legends of Joseph of Arimathea are likewise widespread though, as with the Arthurian matter, they are remarkably concentrated in the area of the Somerset Star Complex. The two are by no means mutually independent, nor is one simply a replacement or substitute for the other, for they express two interdependent streams of initiatic power, which we might term the *Royal* and the *Sacerdotal*.

³ Because of the principle of resonance there is the possibility of virtual initiation, through inner connections with sacred enclosures like the Glastonbury Zodiac.

⁴ The often misunderstood and over-inflated role of the “initiator” in this is not as a mediator of the initiatic power per se, but as a catalyst for the conditions conducive to initiation.

