

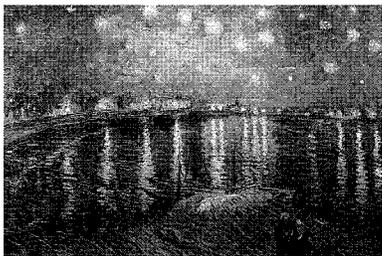
Friday, September 24
Imagining Other Worlds



Imagining Other Worlds
Key Concepts

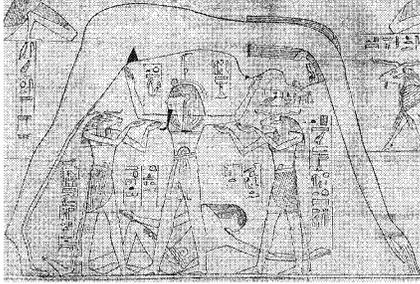
- 1) People have speculated about life on other worlds since ancient times.
- 2) Interest in life elsewhere was stimulated by the heliocentric model of Copernicus.
- 3) Modern popular culture is permeated with the concept of life on other worlds.

On a clear, moonless night, you can see at most 3000 stars with your naked eyes.

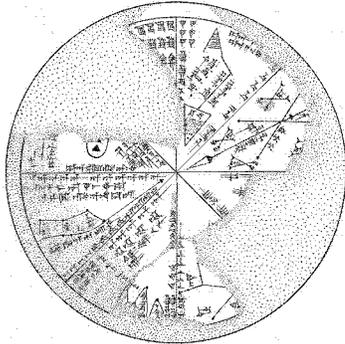


Starry Night Over the Rhône
Vincent van Gogh (1888)

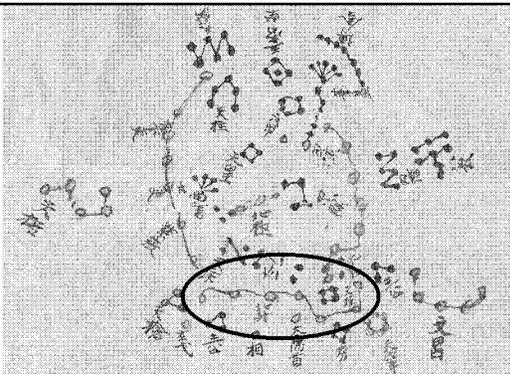
Early civilizations thought the stars were small lights attached to a domed (solid) sky.



Greenfield papyrus (1050 BC)



neo-Assyrian star chart (650 BC)



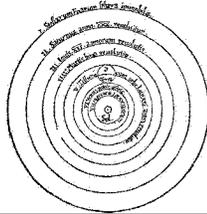
Chinese star chart (Tang Dynasty: AD 670)

Revival of the idea of other worlds came with the Copernican Revolution.

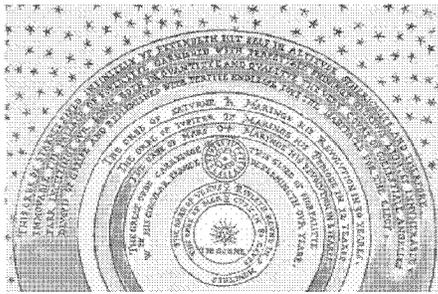


Nicolaus Copernicus (1473 – 1543) devised a heliocentric (Sun-centered) model for the universe.

Earth is moving.
Earth is not central.
Earth is just another planet.
Space is big – REALLY big.



Thomas Digges (1546-1595) realized that the Copernican model permitted an **infinite** universe with an **infinite** number of stars.



Giordano Bruno (AD 1548-1600) famously supported the idea of extraterrestrial life.



Bruno's hypotheses:
The universe is infinite.
All stars have planets.
All planets are inhabited.

Stories about life on other worlds provided criticism of life on Earth.



Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre Monde* (ca.1655) Moon inhabitants are a satirical version of French society.

Voltaire's *Micromégas* (1752)
A 20 mile tall visitor from Sirius marvels at man's smallness.

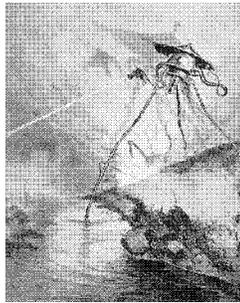


H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1898) is the prototypical "alien invasion" story.

Martians invade Earth to escape their dying planet.

They are ultimately stopped by terrestrial diseases.

Resonated with anxiety about the role of British imperialism.



Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast (October 1938)

Martians invade New Jersey!

The broadcast was so realistic it caused a near panic.

Resonated with anxiety about tension in pre-WWII Europe.



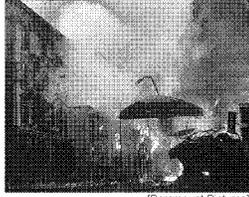
Orson Welles

War of the Worlds (1953, George Pal)

Film moved the dramatic focus to Los Angeles.

Incorporated stock footage of WWII combat and destruction.

Resonated with post-WWII anxiety about atomic war.

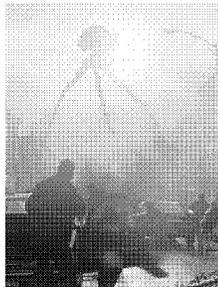


[Paramount Pictures]

War of the Worlds (2005, Steven Spielberg)

Martians return to New Jersey!

Resonated with post-9/11 anxiety about terrorism.



[Paramount Pictures]

Monday's Lecture:



The Copernican Revolution

Next week's reading:

Chapter 2 & 3
