

UMBGRAPHILLIC ESOTERICA: A Retrospective Beyond Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT

Thirty One. This (to date) is the number of times I have been privileged to stand (of fly, or sail) in the lunar umbral shadow. We (umbraphiles) mark the stages of our lives by those fleeting transcendental moments that quasi-periodically bring us into personal syzygal alignment with the Moon and Sun, responding to the siren's song of Totality. It's not the number that has meaning, but what we make of each TSE (or what it makes of us!). "Totality". The mere mention of the word fires neural pathways in the cerebral cortices of eclipse chasers that puts any other stimuli to shame. But WHY do we chase eclipses? Ask a hundred umbraphiles and you will get (at least) a hundred different answers. The diversity of TSE-related talks at this conference alone hint at the reasons many of us elaborate upon to friends, relatives, and colleagues our passion for all things TSE, often with focus on science, and technologies - but fueled by celestial grandure that can only be experienced and not explained or conveyed. By ask why do we REALLY chase eclipses and we admit (if not profess) that only in those instants of Totality, nature reveals itself to us as no other event within human cognition, with a depth that reaches into our psyche. Each totality is an umbraphillic opiate not only for the intellect, but for the soul. Science has motivated, technologies have enabled, but transcendental perception is what etches into our mind's eye and has us returning from Saros to Saros and node to node for more. (Let's face it, total solar eclipses are just plain cool). Today, we may be in a "Golden Age" of eclipse-chasing with the contemporary tools of technology and globally-collective wisdom at our fingertips. But, it is the product of our shared efforts (and addiction to coronal photons), that both bind us in spiritually in common conviction, and physically in co-location, in those isolated moments of space-time that celestial mechanics demands. This is not new, nor confined to our current generation. Umbraphillia has been with us long before the term has recently come into the popular vernacular, and will be along as the Sun will continue to shine, and occasionally be snuffed out at mid-day by the moon. Herein I offer some retrospectives from the fringes, as well as the main stream, of eclipse chasing enabled by science and technology.