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<u>A Critical Examination of the Sky in Relation to Material Culture</u>

Introduction: Abstract

This research project aims to compare the lunar eclipse documented in two different artistic mediums during two time periods. The first is a photo of the March 3, 2026, Lunar Eclipse (fig.1) taken in New York City by myself. The second is William Rimmer's painting *Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse* (fig. 2), which was executed in America during 1848-1850. This paper explores themes of artistic medium, creative environments, and supplementary subject matter in each artwork to draw conclusions about the symbolic influence of the Lunar Eclipse on two unique cultures. By comparing these two works, I will explore my own phenomenological understanding and experience of the lunar eclipse, as an astrologer living in the new-age spiritual era, and how this compares and contrasts with the cultural nuances of Rimmer's life and how they drew him to create Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse

Introduction: Overview of Works

The first subject, being a photograph of the lunar eclipse, was taken on March 3, 2026, on an iPhone 15 at approximately 9:30 PM Eastern time by me.

Figure 1. A photograph of the March 3, 2026, lunar eclipse taken from an iPhone 15 in New York City, NY, at approximately 9:30 PM Eastern time.

I was drawn to documenting the lunar eclipse because of its visual prominence in the New York City night sky. As an astrologer, I often spend a great deal of time looking up, trying to connect the dimly lit constellations together through the cracks between skyscrapers. The moon,

however, is almost always shining as bright as the streetlamps and apartment buildings when I take a moment to observe the vastness above me, provided the lunar phase is not a crescent or new moon. In the photograph, the glow of the lunar eclipse moon is near the center, flanked by a brick apartment building in the right foreground and a more modern apartment building in the left foreground, with a gradient from deep navy to black night sky above.

The second subject, being a painting that was created, presumably, by William Rimmer between the years of 1848-1850, of Native Americans observing the lunar eclipse. Rimmer, primarily a sculptor, was raised by a reclusive father, known as Thomas Rimmer, who "brought up [his children] in the study of literature, nature, science, and art, teaching them to draw and to paint."[1] Like his father, Rimmer was a recluse, often characterized by arrogance and by his struggles to connect with his community, whether creative, political, religious, or otherwise.[2] Rimmer has been attributed with the creation of this piece due to its stylistic similarities to two other Rimmer attributes, *Scene from 'The Tempest' and Scene from 'Macbeth'*.[3]

Figure 2. William Rimmer, Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse, c. 1848-50 [4]

Comparison of Works: Artistic Medium

Observation and subsequent artistic depiction of the moon during an eclipse has been a facet of creative and scientific exploration for centuries. Many of these depictions were a by-product of both belief and rational appreciation of the eclipse, going beyond simply a

[1] W.R.W, 'Dr. William Rimmer', Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, Vol. 6, No. 32 (1908), p.15
[2] Kirstein, Lincoln, 'William Rimmer: His Life and Art,' The Massachusetts Review, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Summer, 1961), p. 709
[3] Weidman, Jeffrey. William Rimmer: Critical Catalogue Raisonné, Ph.D. dissertation, vol. II., Bloomington, Indiana University, 1981, no. 115, p. 476
[4] "William Rimmer, Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse, c. 1848-50." n.d. Schoelkopf Gallery <https://schoelkopfgallery.com/artworks/7252-william-rimmer-indians-experiencing-a-lunar-eclipse-c.-1848-50/> [accessed March 19, 2026]

religious or scientific observation.[5] Blatchford argues that "the period might reveal the personal meaning of an eclipse even when that specific event is not per se the subject of the painting."[6] This notion offers a significant point of reflection when considering these two pieces, given the way they were created.

In the photograph of the lunar eclipse, I am immediately brought back to the rapidity of the process. The simple action of pointing my phone's camera lens to the sky, snapping the photo, and having an image to look back on in less than 30 seconds almost trivializes the act of observation. Colleen Boyle argues that our primary relationship with the moon, due to the decreased significance of its observation and appreciation, has now reduced it to an accent piece to cityscapes, or in the background of family photos.[7] This argument is a near-exact parallel to my own experience documenting the lunar eclipse. I spent more time reviewing the photo I took of the eclipse than I did observing the moon in the night sky.

If I, an astrologer, have a detached relationship with the moon, what meaning am I ultimately deriving from my work, and what does that mean for the culture I live in as a whole? Boyle recounts that Leonardo da Vinci would argue that artists who use simple lenses or create art "through glass" could not "reason about nature with their minds," and made images that were "poor and mean in every invention."[8] With this in mind, the observation and depiction of celestial phenomena without intention almost bastardize the act of viewing them. Thus, one could argue that if an entire society observes the moon only through a camera lens, they have a crude perception of the phenomenological significance of a lunar eclipse.

However, advances in photographic technology have enabled greater detail in lunar and other celestial documentation. From an artistic point of view, a photograph is a duplication of the world, but only a fragment of it..[9] A photograph captures the present world in real time and with a level of realism that other media may lack. This fragmentation requires the viewer to piece together the implied presence of everything outside the frame, thus forcing them to tap into a personalized imagination and interpretation of the artwork.[10] While observing a photograph of a

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[5] Blatchford, Ian, 'Symbolism and discovery: eclipses in art' Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences, Vol. 374, No. 2077, (2016) p.2
[6] Blatchford, Ian, 'Symbolism and discovery: eclipses in art' p.6
[7] Boyle, Colleen, 'You Saw the Whole of the Moon: The Role of Imagination in the Perceptual Construction of the Moon' in Leonardo, Vol. 46, No. 3, (2013), p.252
[8] Boyle. 'You Saw the Whole of the Moon, p.249
[9] Boyle. 'You Saw the Whole of the Moon, p.251
[10] Boyle. 'You Saw the Whole of the Moon, p.251

lunar eclipse might be filtered through a digital lens, the awe & wonder of observing a lunar eclipse can still exist in one's imagination.

Rimmer had always wanted to be a painter, having been quoted in conversation with his daughter that in a "brighter future" they will "revel in paint," however, only a sixth of his recorded paintings have survived to present day.[11] Which is why there is great speculation over whether or not he truly created the image of *Indians Experiencing the Eclipse*.[12] With that in mind, it is presumed that the image was created exclusively from one's imagination.

Weidman recounts that Rimmer's painting was likely based on the lunar eclipse that occurred in Boston on September 12, 1848, and that there is no mention of Native Americans experiencing a lunar eclipse in any anthropological or literary source.[13] The implication that this painting was created without personal observation poses a clear dissonance between the photograph and the painting of the lunar eclipse. Where one's existence is contingent on observation, the other's existence is simple due to awareness of the event. Weidman questions why Rimmer would have painted such a picture, offering suggestions that it could have been "symbolic of his father's fitful hopes of regaining something of his seemingly lost inheritance, or is some way portentous of his death."[14]

The only objective truth of the painting being the medium in which it was created leaves everything else, from artist to subject matter to meaning, up to the interpretation of the viewer. With this in mind, it is the medium that gives us the greatest understanding of the cultural implications of the lunar eclipse of the time. In contrast to the photographic depiction of the March 3 lunar eclipse, William Rimmer's painting was executed in oil on canvas and took nearly two years to complete.[15] In the time it took to create, this depiction of the lunar eclipse surpasses that of the photograph, reflecting a potentially deeper appreciation for the eclipse than is seen in the contemporary era.

One could argue that spending several years on a painting would require greater focus, dedication, and appreciation for the subject matter. Committing nearly two years to the artistic process reflects a slower, more methodical culture that relies less on convenience and more on

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[11] Lincoln, 'William Rimmer: His Life and Art,' p. 715
[12] Weidman, William Rimmer: Critical Catalogue Raisonné, p. 477
[13] Weidman, William Rimmer: Critical Catalogue Raisonné, p. 476
[14] Weidman, William Rimmer: Critical Catalogue Raisonné, p. 476
[15] "William Rimmer, Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse, c. 1848-50." n.d. Schoelkopf Gallery

the ability to immerse oneself in a particular piece. That said, time could also be viewed as the enemy of the painter. Where a photographer can capture the exact moment in time with significant accuracy, a painter often does not have the same luxury. Without a consistent point of view, any non-photographic depiction of a lunar eclipse will rely heavily on memory and interpretation.

Boyle argues that "our everyday phenomenological experience with the moon is thus 'one-sided,' but when combined with our pictorial experience of the moon, this natural occlusion, or incomplete vision, can be circumvented by imagination."[16] This argument holds that any documentation of the moon requires some creative license to produce a complete work of art. This creates an understanding that, regardless of medium, personal interpretation is integral to the creation and understanding of artworks depicting celestial phenomena, and the tools used in this process can be seen as a reflection of the individual's integration into the greater culture's appreciation of these phenomena.

Comparison of Works: Socio-cultural Environments

To better understand these two pieces, it is necessary to examine the physical and social environments in which they were created. Each piece is a notable reflection of the world in which it was created. With one painted during the height of national expansion and reform, and the other photographed during the digital age, each points toward a shift in the human experience as it relates to the natural world.

Due to the increasing presence of light pollution, the photograph of the lunar eclipse on March 3 is a clear depiction of the celestial erasure, to the naked eye, that has occurred over the past century. John Gelder defines light pollution as "excess artificial light, in the wrong place at the wrong time."[17] In a natural, unpolluted sky, around 4500 stars are visible to the naked eye; however, in major cities, due to urbanization and light pollution, only approximately 35 are visible.[18] Light pollution has created a modern environment where nearly 2/3 of Americans live in places where it is impossible to see the Milky Way.[19] When planning my observations, this was a significant consideration given my residency in New York City. With such a limited view of the night sky, the moon often serves as a light source, along with street lamps and skyscrapers.

[16] Boyle. 'You Saw the Whole of the Moon, p.248
[17] Gelder, John. 'Light Pollution' in Environment Design Guide, Gen 24: Light Pollution (2018) p.1
[18] Gelder, John. 'Light Pollution' p.5
[19] Hoerger, Jacob. 'Missing the Night Sky,' in *The New Atlantis.* No. 48 (2018) p. 115

The night sky has historically been one of the most universal objects of curiosity and mythology for human beings.[20] However, that curiosity seems to play second fiddle to technological advancement and a material human experience. The moon is used not just as a symbolic tool but also as a light source on dark nights. However, with the advent of lighting advancements, the need for the moon's light has lessened over time. By the 1870s, electric lighting had become increasingly prominent due to its affordability and greater brightness than gas.[21] The shift in nighttime artificial lighting was not just a result of technological advancements, but also a by-product of increasing populations and the need to keep civilians safe at all hours of the day in urban areas.[22]

Even in the photograph, the streetlamp to the lower left of the composition appears to glow just as brightly, but in an artificial yellow hue, compared to the pure white glow of the moon. As the functional significance of the moon has decreased, so has the spiritual and cultural significance. In an era when a man-made light source can rival that of the moon, it can lead one to believe that the culture of that time has not just rejected the need for the moon but has almost claimed superiority over it.

However, the irony of that potential is that even the most durable lightbulbs will burn out, while the moon cycles regularly as it always has. Hoerger reminds us of Nietzsche's teachings that "our forgetfulness of the intellectual, spiritual, and artistic traditions" has driven us to this point in society, to try to control forces beyond our control.[23] The photographic depiction of the lunar eclipse captures a society that may have forgotten the long-standing tradition of honoring the moon, despite its constant presence.

It could be argued that the American continent shifted from its cultural reverence of the moon with a rise of Christian nationalism that resulted in the erasure of Native American Indian traditions. During the 1840s, the American government focused on "a program for the civilization and advancement of the Indian nations."[24] The plan for this involved "Christianizing the Indians" and their removal from direct contact with white society by relocating tribes to the western parts of the country.[25] With the support of missionaries and financial coercion, the

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[20] Hoerger, Jacob. 'Missing the Night Sky,' p. 124
[21] Hoerger, Jacob. 'Missing the Night Sky,' p. 116
[22] Hoerger, Jacob. 'Missing the Night Sky,' p. 117
[23] Hoerger, Jacob. 'Missing the Night Sky,' p. 128
[24] Pruch, Francis Paul, 'American Indian Policy in the 1840s: Visions of Reform' in The Frontier Challenge: Responses to the TransMississippi West by John G. Clark (University Press of Kansas, 2021) p. 81
[25] Pruch, Francis Paul, 'American Indian Policy in the 1840s: Visions of Reform'p. 82

American government was able to pursue this mission, despite the disruption of and disapproval of many Native American Indian tribes..[26]

By pushing tribes toward Christianization, they were pushed away from their traditional understanding of the moon and the lunar eclipse. Native Americans felt a sense of fellowship with celestial bodies and observed the moon, its phases, and eclipses, each with varied meanings in relation to ritual and creation myths..[27] Some Native tribes believed that "at an eclipse, the moon was in pain or sick. If it were not to recover, the world would become totally dark at night."[28] Many Native tribes also believed that lunar eclipses were caused by various celestial creatures, such as lizards, birds, and sky dogs, or by others attempting to eat the moon.[29] These same tribes would attempt to cure or drive away the negative omen during lunar eclipse rituals, hoping it would be reborn and restored to its former glory. Often, this would take the form of makeshift cannons, a flight of arrows, and ritualistic dances and chants expressing reverence for the moon and a desire to allow it to be reborn.[30]

Rimmer himself did not take a significant interest in the outside world, as there is little documentation of any political affiliation, and he was not active in any religious affiliation later in life.[31] "He was deeply concerned with great principles and large forces," and his writing implied a great appreciation for some sort of spiritual or cosmic force.[32] However, his creation of this piece allows for speculation about whether it is a subversive nod to that "great appreciation" and his disapproval of the cultural push of the time. While the true meaning of "*Indians Experiencing the Lunar Eclipse"* is unknown, the painting appears to reflect the treatment of Native Americans at the time.

The greater implication of these artworks' coexistence is a phenomenological erasure in both cultures. The photograph of the lunar eclipse accurately depicts the impact of light pollution and how man-made lighting now competes with the moon's light. In Rimmer's depiction of the lunar eclipse, he offers an imaginative portrayal of the Native Americans' cultural erasure within the broader American culture in the East.

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[26] Pruch, Francis Paul, 'American Indian Policy in the 1840s: Visions of Reform' p.101
[27] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' Western Folklore, 24.2, (1965) p.87
[28] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.96
[29] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.97
[30] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.97
[31] Lincoln, 'William Rimmer: His Life and Art,' p. 716
[32] Lincoln, 'William Rimmer: His Life and Art,' p. 716

Though it may be a stretch, could these two depictions of the lunar eclipse be part of the same cultural domino effect? The assimilation of the Native Americans into a white American culture led to a decreased significance of Native American influence on the greater social norms in America at the time. Almost as a byproduct, nearly 200 years later, the night sky, which has always held particular significance for indigenous folks, is devoid of its cultural significance as well.[33]

Comparison of Works: Supplementary Subject Matter

As a final focal point, each lunar eclipse depiction features elements beyond the celestial phenomena. Remarkably so in both artworks: while the moon is the brightest figure, it is not the largest, almost as if it is both the focal point and an accent to a larger thematic story. Upon examining the supplementary subject matter in both, an understanding of how ritual plays out on a cultural level is illuminated.

Leading up to the March 3 lunar eclipse, I was experiencing significant emotional stress. The recent end of a long-term romantic relationship had seemingly eclipsed everything in my life and left me looking for the simplest outlets to support my academic endeavors. On the night of the eclipse, I was alone on the streets of New York, and with a long sigh, I looked up at the sky and saw the moon shining brightly. Almost as a reflection of my own aloneness, the moon stood out in the dark night sky as the lone beacon of light from the cosmos.

For me, experiencing and documenting the lunar eclipse was deeply personal and solitary. My depiction of the lunar eclipse reflects my spiritual connection to the moon and my often looking to it as a symbolic guide. And as an individual who sought out an "alternative to institutionalized religion in Euro-American modernity," I am a direct reflection of the cultural shift to New Age Spirituality.[34] New Age Spirituality has been described by many as emphasizing individuality. Though popularized through mainstream media such as television programs and movies, New Age Spirituality tends to project an image of an individual on a ***personal*** growth journey. [35]

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[33] Gelder, John. 'Light Pollution' p.5

[34] van der Veer, Peter, Spirituality in Modern Society, Social Research, Vol. 76, No. 4, The Religious-Secular Divide: The U.S. Case (2009), pp. 1097

[35] Dobrovolskiy, M. (2020). Reflection on New Age Spirituality in Television and Cinematic Narratives. The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society, 11(1), p. 67.

Post a romantic separation, I had made an intentional choice to observe the lunar eclipse by myself, almost as if it were a grief ritual. van der Veer argues that "the connection between art and spirituality points at the way in which art comes to stand for the transcendental interpretation of experience."[36] In that regard, the photographic depiction of the lunar eclipse captures a spiritual solitude of the culture. Through the depiction of the lunar eclipse as the only celestial body amongst man-made structures, the picture also reflects a sense of aloneness at the time, yet the lights in the buildings seen in the photograph imply the presence of others.

This aloneness reflects the expression of non-traditional spirituality through the lens of late-stage capitalism. Rather than adopting the ideals of "unity, order, coherence, or harmony," seen in traditional religions, New Age Spirituality seemingly adopts the "late capitalist aesthetic… of physical intensity, shock-value, immediate gratification, and ecstatic experience."[37] Culturally, this creates an apparent aversion to connecting with others on a spiritual level. The white light of the lunar eclipse in the photograph subtly contrasts the yellow-tinted lights of the apartment buildings, almost as if reflecting the separation of one from the others.

In *Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse*, the painting depicts Native Americans observing the "startling event at its beginning," with the central figures most directly observing the phenomenon, while other individuals crouch, seemingly in positions of worry, anguish, or some other extreme emotion.[38] Rimmer had a lifelong obsession with the animal nature of man, and often created works of art depicting the anatomical intricacies of the human form.[39] However, the inclusion of Native Americans was not just an artistic obsession but also a matter of historical accuracy.

Many Native American rituals involved group participation because it was believed that working together within a group suggests greater knowledge and appreciation of a collective goal and the group's vision of the future.[40] Furthermore, it is thought that, for many Native groups, "the process of the individual communicating with the sacred is more effectively accomplished in a community of people," where a powerful trance-like state elevates the

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[36] van der Veer, Peter, Spirituality in Modern Society, p.1103
[37] Urban, Hugh B., 'The Cult of Ecstasy: Tantrism, the New Age, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism', *History of Religions*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2000), p. 292
[38] Weidman, William Rimmer: Critical Catalogue Raisonné, p. 476
[39] Lincoln, 'William Rimmer: His Life and Art,' p. 714
[40] Talamantez, Inés M., 'Dance and Ritual in the Study of Native American Religious Traditions', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3/4 (1982), p.353

collective consciousness.[41] For Native Americans, the moon was viewed as a benevolent supreme being that protected and provided nourishment for the community's needs.[42]

As it relates to lunar eclipse rituals, it was not uncommon for the entire community to throw every effort on the side of the moon.[43] Some tribes would go "into the open, they rushed, the women and children screaming, shrieking, beating tom-toms, and urging on the frantic dogs, while the men fired flight after flight of arrows."[44] Given that Native Americans viewed the lunar eclipse as an ailment or attack on the moon, it is reasonable to presume it was a community effort to restore the moon's benevolence.[45] TThe Native Americans had an understanding of the power of community, as reflected further in Rimmer's painting.

In *Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse,* five figures are present, which immediately imply a communal viewing experience. This intentional choice reflects the importance of community within Native American groups and how, culturally, the tribal dynamic functions within a collectivist ideology.[46] Without a sense of togetherness, the Native American lunar eclipse rituals might not have the same potency.

The stark juxtaposition of subject matter in the two depictions of the lunar eclipse illustrates a dissonance between the individual and the collective's willingness to participate in the culture of the time. Through the progression of New Age Spirituality and individualism as by-products of capitalism, the photographic depiction of the lunar eclipse conveys a preference for a solitary experience and for finding power within oneself. Almost as if "the fundamental belief that the individual human self is inherently sacred, divine, or even identical with God" is present within the culture.[47]

Conversely, because of a belief that the spirit of the natural world (i.e., celestial bodies) is in unity with the human spirit, the depiction of *Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse* highlights the importance of a harmonious relationship with celestial and natural phenomena. Thus, the theme of solitude vs. togetherness presented by these two artworks poses an important question

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[41] Talamantez, Inés M., 'Dance and Ritual in the Study of Native American Religious Traditions', p.354
[42] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.90
[43] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.96
[44] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.96
[45] Wilson, Eddie W. 'The Moon and the American Indian,' p.96
[46] Stiles, Curt H., Carlos L. Rodriguez, and Craig S. Galbraith. 2006. "American Indian Collectivism," Property and Environment Research Center, 1 June <https://perc.org/2006/06/01/american-indian-collectivism/> [accessed April 27, 2026]
[47] Urban, Hugh B., 'The Cult of Ecstasy', p. 277

for both cultures: is it the role of the individual to integrate into the culture, or the role of the culture to normalize the integration of the individual?

Conclusion

Upon analyzing the photographic depiction of the March 3 lunar eclipse and William Rimmer's *Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse* through the lens of their artistic media, the socio-cultural environments in which they were created, and the supplementary subject matter of each artwork, a unifying theme of individualism within a group emerges. The two artworks capture unique cultural moments in which collective experiences are erased, whether through Native American traditions or simply by observing the fullness of the night sky. Additionally, technological advancements and industrialization could be to blame for a rise in individualism and a lack of appreciation for natural phenomena.

The disparate media used to create each piece firstly depict the use of tools as an ability to connect with the culture of the time. For an individual in the modern era, the convenience of rapid documentation of the natural world through a digital lens seemingly creates a disjointed appreciation for the temporal phenomena. Whereas the less advanced artistic methods of yesteryear rely on the individual's devotion to their documentation, even if that process relies heavily on the stories of others and one's imagination. Almost as if technological advancements aid in documenting the cultural realism of the time, but have removed a cultural synergy that builds upon both the individual and the collective experiences to create a more holistic understanding of the universe.

Furthermore, cultural erasure, whether through the establishment of physical or political barriers, drives a wedge between the individual and the group by imposing collective assimilation. Most notably, the Native American assimilation into the white Euro-American Christian lifestyle slowly eroded their tradition, despite pushback from chieftains and tribes. Additionally, with the rise of light pollution, there are fewer and fewer celestial objects for individuals to view and draw up their own stories about, making the moon a solitary fixation for various societies. Rather than harmonizing, reducing the breadth of cultural experiences and beliefs associated with celestial phenomena creates more dissonance between the individual and the culture, rather than unifying under a shared experience. Almost as if each work is singularly important, both individually and collectively within a culture, to create a rich cultural experience.

Finally, and most significantly, the supplementary subject matter of the paintings illustrates the most significant divide in the comparison of works, while simultaneously representing the same message of unity. While the focal point for each is the lunar eclipse, the presence of other subjects highlights the importance of being one part of a whole. Each artwork is complete only with all its elements. Even in the solitary depiction of the lunar eclipse as a photograph, there are implications that other people exist within the picture. Additionally, the communal act of experiencing the lunar eclipse in Rimmer's painting is a nod to the connection between the individual's experience and a collective one. Thus, both artworks further emphasize that every individual experience remains interwoven with the greater cultural experience.

In the case of the photograph of the March 3 lunar eclipse and William Rimmer's *Indians Experiencing a Lunar Eclipse,* both reflect cultures that are becoming increasingly disconnected from the awe and wonder of natural celestial phenomena. Viewing these pieces through the lens of the cultural norms of the time provides insight into how these phenomena were appreciated by both artist and viewer. While the lunar eclipse is still observed by both cultures, over time, its cultural significance and the way it is observed have shifted, altering its cultural meaning altogether.

With this in mind, artistic depictions of the lunar eclipse, or any celestial phenomena for that matter, become a time capsule of sorts for the attitudes of the creator and viewer. Drawing once again on Boyle's arguments, it's worth noting that the creation of art depicting natural phenomena often requires a facet of imagination that stems from the individual's own experiences, whether through personal observation or cultural retelling.[48] This allows for the argument that both the artist and the viewer are responsible for contributing to the understanding of said works, given their own unique experiences within the cultures they reside in.

In conclusion, the comparison of these two depictions of the lunar eclipse reveals a gradual cultural distancing from the awe and wonder of the celestial phenomenon. However, even as the cultural significance of the lunar eclipse may dwindle through personal observation and artistic depiction, the individual can derive their own understanding of the phenomenon and impose their own meaning on the event based on their experiences within the culture.

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[48] Boyle, Colleen, 'You Saw the Whole of the Moon', p.252

Peter van de Veer argues that “artists are groping for a radically new way of expressing transcendental truth.”[49] This argument proposes that artists could be catalysts in shifting cultural perspectives on spiritual truths. Thus, the artistic depiction of celestial phenomena becomes the bridge that connects the individual's understanding to the cultural appreciation. So both entities become responsible for highlighting the significance of the event, first through creation and then by uplifting it to a wider audience for appreciation.

[49] van der Veer, Peter, Spirituality in Modern Society, p.1103