

Hundstage

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Invited by Daniel Herleth and Bärbel Trautwein

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In the *Iliad*, the death of the Trojan hero Hector is precluded by his frightened father's comparison between the approaching Achilles and Sirius, already then commonly named *Orion's Dog*, or simply, *Dog Star*:

The careful eyes of Priam first beheld.
Not half so dreadful rises to the sight,
Through the thick gloom of some tempestuous night,
Orion's dog (the year when autumn weighs),
And o'er the feebler stars exerts his rays;
Terrific glory! for his burning breath
Taints the red air with fevers, plagues, and death.

– Homer, *Iliad*, XXII 26–31

The heat of the midsummer days was feared by the ancient cultures around the Mediterranean.

Its occurrence coincided with the rising of *Canicula (Little Dog)*, as the Romans called it in late July.

Not only withering the harvest and flaring the tempers, but also stirring the dogs' continuous barking
ever since then they are called *dies caniculares*, dog days.

And Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, scorching at the chest of the celestial canine, was attributed

malicious traits, heating up the terrestrial to the point a latent madness aroused.

Things start to be somehow different then before. Just enough to get nervous, suspicious.

Distorted, grotesquely altered and out of proportion, problems mount up.

An erratic apathy that might any moment be acted out.

Due to the axial precession of the earth, the heliacal rising of Sirius defers behind every year.

When Vergil was working on the *Aeneid* during the last decade of his life – the chronicles of the Trojan Aeneas,

progenitor of the Romans – the rising of Sirius had already shifted to August 1, and today it's not to be seen before

late in August, when it starts to appear at dawn. Dante called upon Vergil 1300 years later to show him around and witness

the world he found himself in, the inferno, a hell populated by those who fell for the seven sins. Today they walk

side by side at the Costa del Sol, strolling through a purgatory of wire, foil, and fertilizer.

Dog days are now a continuous state, an everlasting condition. As if in a confinement built by rays of light,

lives are lived under the sign of misery, Fata Morgana's chased in the heat.

It can be fun, though, going out only to get tanned and wasted, dreaming about a place

under the sun,
palm trees, melting ice cream on a chaise lounge, while living inside air-conditioned
offices, apartments and SUVs 24/7.
Dog days are delegated – have your apprentices in the sun, sweating.

