

When The Eye Cannot See: Rethinking Night

by Andrew Satterthwaite

*We are all poets or babies in the middle of the night,
struggling with being.*

Martin Amis, from *Time's Arrow*

Night is contested: from a hundred directions claimants come to appropriate. From the quasi-religious claims of those who would call on the powers of darkness, the night-rallies of the National Socialists and the Klan, to the urbanite dream of a well-lit world, the commercial interests of neon, and the feminist march to Take Back the Night, darkness is a battleground. Many scholars now write about the hidden dangers of technology, and the loss of contact with nature, writ large or writ small. They talk of nuclear reactors and genetic engineering. I start small--I wonder about the lightbulb. This is a personal exploration of darkness, about the other side of time we call night. It is personal, and I do it for fun. But I am embedded within Western society, so my exploration follows through Western traditions of mythology, history and literature, before turning to a contemporary sociological consideration of the world after dark. From these, the exploration gains a serious aspect. In the end, this exploration becomes one more appropriation of night: that of the naturalist, who finds something worth saving in the division between night and day.

Before there was land there was water, before there was light there was darkness. When the earth was first created there was darkness upon the face of the deep. This was the primordial condition. Only after there was earth did light come into being. Already there was heaven, and it existed in darkness.¹ As life before death, night before day is the natural condition. Sometimes the moon sits in the evening sky and brightens, sometimes stars in the firmament break an absence. But sometimes there is a healthy primordial darkness, rich as compost, that sits on the land.

But at some time in the history of humankind, darkness was constructed as another world, and populated with ghosts. There are the mythologies of shadowy beings who inhabit the night, stalking innocents, both in ancient and modern literatures.² These are the mythologies of fear. Nothing is celebrated. This is the unknown, the unpredictable. Most of all, it is the unseen, shrouded in a cloak. Night is a time we would sooner end.³

For all the religious observation however, prehistoric experience of night was not wholly positive. Death

comes at night. Out beyond the fire where eyes do not reach, and more crisply after the fire has gone out, the narrow squeals of a caught animal reaches the ear. This is the sound of death visiting. Biologically we are not prepared for night. Our eyes gave up acuity in dim light for the sake of colour, and our hearing is poor.⁴ But perhaps without eyes, imagination leaps to the fore. Prehistoric cave art relied on the inner eye to depict daytime scenes where no light came, an art that perhaps had the power to sear into memory unconfused images that helped structure society.⁵ But the early imagination depicted scenes from daytime, and actions that would be of consequence. They did not depict the illusions of night, the mythic beasts that would haunt us later.

Archaeologists deduce from the remains of early civilizations that a great deal of their knowledge focused on the night: stars and planets were key to their vocabularies and libraries; the accuracy of their celestial observation still evokes comment. As far back as the Celts and the Sumerians, buildings and monuments sought their orientation in the heavens. In the waters of Lake Titicaca, glittering silver and gold, are the islands of the Sun and the Moon, whereon the ritual passing of night to day is still played out to tourists. But with the emergence of religious structures, and recognizable altars, darkness acquired other characteristics. Certainly by the time of the Iliad and the Odyssey, an underworld characterized by poor lighting had emerged. By the time Lucifer fell, and took on the mantle of the Prince of Darkness, this other world inimical to human interest had been fully constructed, an allegorical means of social restriction, and a tool of moral suasion.⁶ Conducted tours were given by Dante's Beatrice.⁷

But notice that the art of darkness had changed: the positive social images of the cave hunt had largely been replaced by the negative power of a feared future consequence.

Night was not wholly given over to the evil spirit of imps and goblins from the netherworld however. Carlo Ginzburg tells us of the night battles of sixteenth and seventeenth century Friuli, now part of Northern Italy.⁸ The spirits of the *Benandanti* (good witches) left their bodies during the nights of the Ember days to defend the fertility of the crop. Armed with fennel, these *benandanti* fought against warlocks and witches (*malandanti*) armed with sorghum stalks who worshipped the devil. This dream activity, which went beyond individual non-historic immediacy, embodied the traditions, hopes and

needs of the agrarian community. Some *benandanti* also claimed to be able to see the processions of the dead. That this community existed within the broader sphere of catholic church influence, a church with an established demonology, indicates that while nighttime had been constructed as another world, it had not, at that time, in that place, yet been rendered wholly evil: in the night battles between *benandanti* and witches the possibility for moral action still existed. The defenders of social order met and battled the agents of chaos outside of daily life.⁹ Ginzburg's researches show, however, that over the course of Friulian Inquisitions between 1575 and 1650, the distinction between the *benandanti* and witches collapsed: all night activities of the spirit were rendered diabolic.

The Friulian *benandanti* were by no means the only nocturnal activists in pre-modern Europe. The processions of the dead were led by various divinities, usually representing the goddess of vegetation, and thus fertility, and therefore embodying the contradictory attributes of life and death. In *Dreamtime* Hans Duerr outlines the 'mixed-pickles method', the nocturnal rites of diverse cults and societies.¹⁰ Duerr discusses witches and their ointments, concerned initially with the supposed realities of witches' broomflights. But he soon turns to the imaginative significance of the night travellers - those women who answered Diana's call to the Venus Mountain, and rode on the backs of animals through the wilderness - and numerous other peasant practices and beliefs, as a response to the Christian suppression of earlier mythological structures. These frequently violent and often sexually-expressed rituals reversed social roles, and participants entered another reality, unbound by law. Duerr argues that all these practices are united in being 'outside of time':

'Between the times' indicated a crisis in the ordinary course of things. Normality was rescinded, or rather, order and chaos ceased to be opposites. In such times of crisis, when nature regenerated itself by dying first, humans died also, and as ghostly beings ranged over the land in order to contribute their share to the rebirth of nature. The aspect of the *struggle* against the forces of darkness expressed itself with greater or lesser intensity in all of this.

In the course of time, knowledge became lost that 'outside of time' the boundaries dissolved between the living and the dead, between those in the mountain and those walking in the sun, between wilderness and civilization. With knowledge gone, the experience itself also faded. The last of the night travellers might still have been aware of the fact that they flew away with 'fraw Holt' or went to the mountain with 'Domina Venus,' but why it was that they were doing this, they became less and less aware. Increasingly, rather than being actors, it hap-

pened to them. Eventually people simply ran the risk that some ghostly throng carried them along 'from the fields and the streets at the time of night, transporting them with great speed to regions far away.'¹¹

And as this transformation took place, those who were outside society no longer knew why they were. The tradition of children leaving society in order to 'die' in the wilderness, that they might be 'reborn' into the social order as adults, left the legacy of marauding groups of youths. This practice of going outside the boundary of social order was already well-established with the Spartans, and is still found in one form or another in some contemporary African cultures.¹² But with the rise of Christianity and the enforced requirement of remaining within the fold, the actions of these groups were perceived as increasingly intolerable, and during the middle ages the 'youths of the night' resorted to extortion and robbery to support themselves.¹³ If the archaic understanding that it was first necessary to be outside in order to know what inside meant, was replaced by the articles of Christian faith, the physical and social remnants of the archaic system lasted longer. The outlaws outlast the system that produced them. The outlaw becomes criminal, retaining the 'between time' of night not as the arena of struggle between order and chaos, but as a zone wholly of social predation.

Against the incipient chaos presented by the threat of the highway robber and the quiet footsteps that threaten from behind, the candle in the window beckons. Gaston Bachelard thought this to be a phenomenological image of the poetic imagination, a felt security.¹⁴ Within a forest or along the lone road, the single pane of a one-room hut lit from within offers sanctuary, relief, a beacon to steer by and towards, a condition as singular to our consciousness as a shell or a nest, and as timeless as legendary past:

This image would have to be placed under one of the greatest of all theorems of the imagination of the world of light: *Tout ce qui brille voit* (All that glows sees)... The lamp keeps vigil, therefore it is vigilant. And the narrower the ray of light, the more penetrating its vigilance. The lamp in the window is the house's eye and, in the kingdom of the imagination, it can never be lighted out-of-doors, but is enclosed light, which can only filter to the outside. A poem entitled *Emmur* begins as follows:

Un lampe allumee derriere la fenetre
Veille au coeur secret de la nuit.¹⁵

The elevation of the rational faculties during the Enlightenment, an eighteenth century philosophical movement, undoubtedly had a great effect on the way night was perceived. The imaginative status of witches was greatly diminished, and nighttime found esteem only in

the Romantic reaction to Enlightenment, which placed higher value on feeling and imagination.¹⁶ But if nighttime caught the imaginative impulse, reality itself had no being at night --that could only be seen in the raw light of day. Literature demonstrates a strange ambivalence toward the idea of night, and the place of humans in it. One popular Victorian novel captured the prevalent mood, the yearning toward the lighted window:

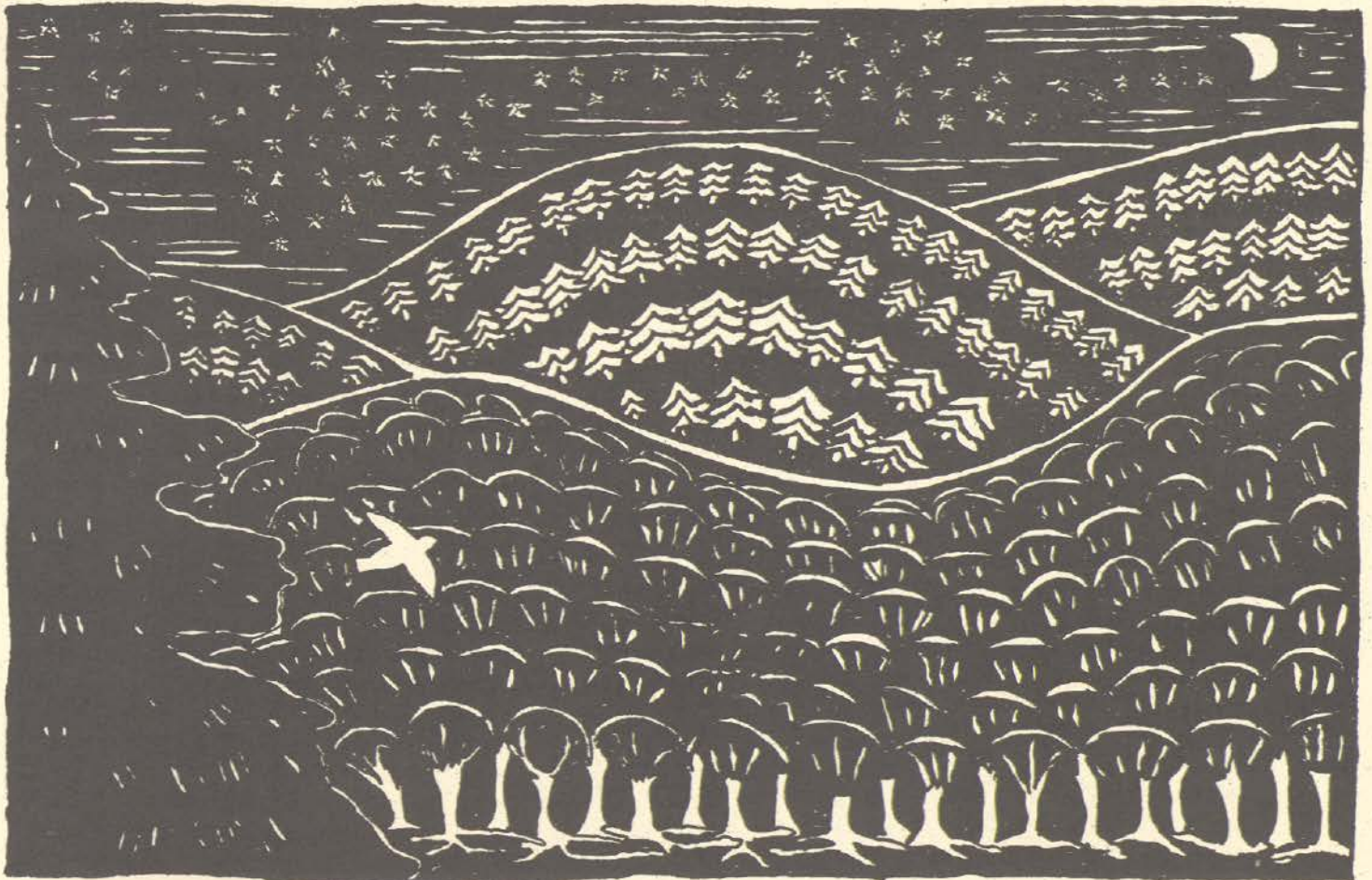
We are creatures of the sun, we men and women. We love light and life. That is why we crowd into the towns and cities and the country grows more and more deserted every year. In the sunlight--in the daytime, when Nature is alive and busy all around us, we like the open hillsides and the deep woods well enough; but in the night, when our Mother Earth has gone to sleep, and left us waking, oh! the world seems so lonesome, and we get frightened, like children in a silent house. Then we sit and sob, and long for the gas-lit streets, and the sound of human voices, and the answering throb of human life. We feel so helpless and so little in the great stillness, when the dark trees rustle in the night wind. There are so many ghosts about, and their silent sighs make us feel so sad. Let us gather together in the great cities, and light huge bonfires

of a million gas-jets, and shout and sing together and feel brave.¹⁷

The party is 'after hours,' not 'after dark.' Darkness is feared here: the nocturnal world is experienced as emotive and irrational, unpredictable and uncontrollable, and these are the qualities projected back onto the fabric of night.¹⁸ This is the darkness that conceals the half-hidden horror, the darkness the director uses suggestively, where merely the darkened stage brings the adrenalin on. But if the panicked desire for light and crowds was being indulged to excess in the Victorian city as technological advances made street lighting possible, the same author was still sufficiently aware of the soothing possibilities of night to later reflect on the experience of night far from the madding crowd:

It was a glorious night. The moon had sunk and left the quiet earth alone with the stars. It seemed as if, in the silence and the hush, while we here children slept, they were talking with her, their sister - conversing of mighty mysteries in voices too vast and deep for childish human ears to catch the sound.

They awe us, these strange stars, so cold, so clear. We are as children whose small feet have strayed into some dim-lit temple of the god they have been



taught to worship but know not; and standing where the echoing dome spans the long vista of shadowy light, glance up, half hoping, half afraid to see some awful vision hovering there.

And yet it seems so full of comfort and of strength, the night.¹⁹

Perhaps the writer's small company of travellers shared these musings as they contemplated the heavens from the seclusion of a rowboat in the English countryside. Perhaps again, though, the intimacy of night speaks only to the individual, or else to lovers who find in the quiet time space for communion. Now the city lights are brighter, but the night is still available, and remarked upon, by those who venture into the lakes and woods. When I go canoeing or hiking on a cloudless night, and escape the tyranny of the streetlamp and city light, how different is the sky as the light fades. Stars first appear in the eastern sky, till the whole sky is full of them, full of pinpoints and nebulosities, the vast sheet the ancients saw. I saw it best high in the Bolivian Andes, far from lights, where the sky was painted, and the Milky Way was a swatch done with a paint brush--that was magical. That was a night sky I still hold before me in my thoughts. In the woods too, the wildlife sounds, and the passing of the wind, force to my ears another knowledge of night--and here I sleep better for the darkness. When we look at the night sky, the eye does not operate as it does during the day: it is looking into infinity. The gaze that during the day fixes the extension of an object, at night cannot weigh the stars. And so other senses are transformed, are brought forth. Scents swell, time stretches and dilates, feelings grow more acute...

Warm perfumes like a breath from vine and tree
Drift down the darkness. Plangent, hidden from eyes,
Somewhere a *eukaleli* thrills and cries
And stabs with pain the night's brown savagery.
And dark scents whisper; and dim waves creep to me,
Gleam like a woman's hair, stretch out, and rise;
Over the murmurous soft Hawaiian sea.
--And I recall, lose, grasp, forget again,
And still remember, a tale I have heard, or known
An empty tale, of idleness and pain,
Of two that loved--or did not love--and one
Whose perplexed heart did evil, foolishly,²⁰
A long while since, and by some other sea.

Rupert Brooke thus filled night with emotional content, peaceful and reflective. But Brooke was writing in the advent of the Great War, and expressed a consciousness of the power of darkness that was losing ground in the popular imagination to a widely felt wish for security in the face of social tension. And so with war, the lightbulb. The Romantics saw it coming, anticipated the cold bright glare of reason gone astray. Yet even on the advent of

the industrial revolution, Wordsworth had been able to recall an easier time, a restful night:

When soothing darkness spreads
O'er hill and vale, and the punctual stars,
While all things else are gathering in their homes,
Advance, and in the firmament of heaven
Glitter - but undisturbing, undisturbed;
As if their silent company were charged
With peaceful admonitions for the heart...²¹

That night could be so restful. A time of peace, for dreaming. Another way of thinking about darkness, free from conflict, and irrational fear.²²

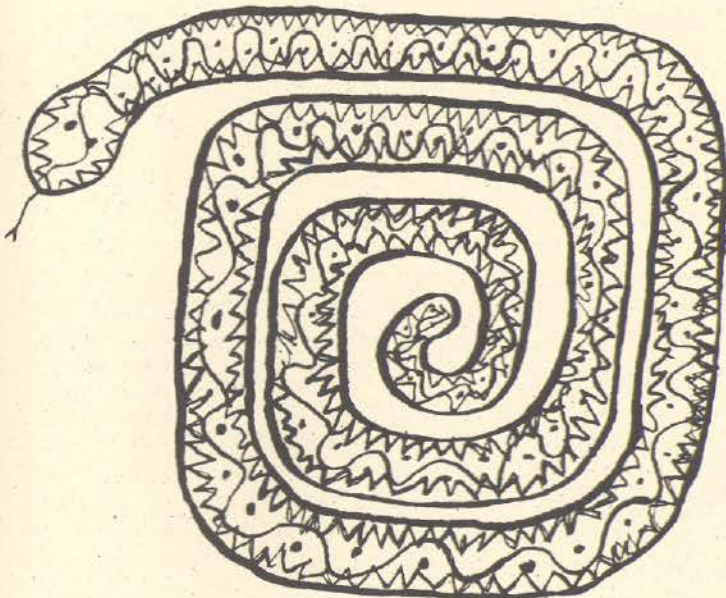
All that is gone. In our urban pride we have as a society quite literally pierced the night with a thousand points of light. And in doing so we have obliterated a million points of light so much older. A city or town in the industrial world can now be defined as an absence of darkness: as the mayor of Toronto flicked the switch to 100,000 lightbulbs in a civic square for an urban celebration, defying night and winter, he remarked that the "Cavalcade of Lights symbolizes the best... of our community: light, hope, excitement, vitality and a spirit of caring".²³ This completes the identification of light with good, darkness with evil. Light is our urban dream.

A night flight reveals below the patterns of human settlement, spiders of light with legs linking across a sheet of darkness where humans do not go. Or at least that is so in the United States: third world towns are marked by only a few small lights, while in Canada large tracts of pure darkness remain. The patterns of light reveal the ideology. The streets of industrial towns and cities are lined with posts, each topped with a sodium bulb that will shine from dusk to dawn. This is for convenience and safety. It is true that it is difficult to move quickly in the dark streets of towns in the third world, though the moon and stars are often helpful. In the industrial world we feel safer with lights, though it is not clear that our bright-lit streets are any safer than the dark streets of other countries. If we turn to our sense of the future, to the neon streets of *Bladerunner*, where light and shadows dance, light is not safe at all.²⁴ Nor are all crimes those of darkness. At the extremes of the sci-fi world, blinding light antisepticizes, making all things possible: in the brightest light there is no room for moral qualm. Yet light is the urban dream.

And so we have developed a language of light. If many other cultures have many words to describe foliage, or sand, or snow, Western culture has developed a vocabulary and practice around the qualities of light. Much of art is concerned with light quality as much as with form, and the Romantic artworks of Turner and Caspar David Friedrich are ample testimony to this, a tradition that continues into the photographic age with Ansel Adams, and then explodes with the advent of the motion

picture. These are the highest arts, that play with light.²⁵ We have many words to describe the glow of a lamp, from the warm aura through to lurid cast. Science too has been captivated by the properties of light.

From the initial prismatic separation of light into colours, through to its equation with mass and energy, science has been preoccupied with light, and the ultimate power of undoing the primordial division of light and darkness. And so we have created lights that take away the stars -- remove, from an already stripped world, another aspect of nature. One-eyed reason takes as its symbol the lightbulb, and on it builds an ideology. The first professional scientist, Humphrey Davy, was the first to demonstrate the arc-lamp. Edison's success was not merely that he commercialized the incandescent lightbulb, but that he was a master of patent-law and industrialization.²⁶ It is no accident that General Electric



and Westinghouse make lightbulbs, bombs, and nuclear submarines.

And we dream of new lights, and better lasers.

If the cinema screen is any measure of our dreams, light is our preoccupation. Intensity and condition, and the more apparently artificial, the more spectacular.²⁷ The climax to *Close Encounters* was bathed in a golden glow, purer than that we know on earth. *Bladerunner*, like many science-fiction films, depicted manic streets of blazing neon, and the disaster of a depopulated metropolis frequented by androids. Our dream homes and offices are now lit with halogen. The latest status symbol on the desk of the executive pseudo-warrior is the light fixture, sleek in the matte blackness of brushed metal, small but powerfully intense in its attention to the desk, which it renders in a halo. In the dreams of science-fiction

books there are worlds with two suns, as if one were not enough: a convenient way to banish night entirely.²⁸

We never dream of new forms for darkness.

Instead we have invented factories that need no rest. There are those who would mine from the night the resource of time. Time for more work, more sacrifice, all beneath the glare of lamps.²⁹ The invention of gas-lighting spurred the first significant move to productively occupy all hours, at Arkwright's Cromford mill on the Derwent around 1790.³⁰ As Wordsworth continued in his elegy to the pre-industrial night sky,

...an unnatural light

Prepared for never-resting labour's eyes
Breaks the many-windowed fabric huge;
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard,
Of harsher import that the curfew-knoll
That spake the Norman Conqueror's stern behest -
A local summons to unceasing toil!
Disgorged are now the Ministers of day;
And, as they issue from the illumined pile,
A fresh band meets them, at the crowded door -
And in the courts - and where the rumbling stream,
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed,
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths,
Mother and little children, boys and girls,
Enter, and each the wanted task resumes
Within his temple, where is offered up
To gain, the master idol of the realm,
Perpetual sacrifice.³¹

Yet against this image of oppressed workers toiling the grave shift, we have the image of Wordsworth himself, and other artists and poets, working the midnight oil; indeed, as I write this, it is slightly after midnight. But then there is the difference between production and creativity, the bound activity of the shop machine and the subversive expression of the artist. The poet works in the intimacy of the candle, surrounded by darkness, a small illumination past which darkness sits in the corners of the room.³² The solitary condition of the insomniac is not the negation of night, it is merely sleep postponed, and indeed many revel in their freedom from the call of daytime errands. It is not the poet we find illumed by arc-lamp, but the mad scientist. For the darkness of night is not a resource; there is nothing we can readily extract from it, except perhaps leisure when freed from the demands of the daily work regime. Indeed, night is the absence of resource, of enabling light, and only becomes resource (in the form of additional time) when light is added.

For all the lights in place, night is still a contested zone, and the ideological force with which its technological and industrial colonization is pursued is testimony to this. This is the rationality of daytime imposing its will, in an

effort to stifle opposition to production, efficiency, and money. But the night battles continue. Night divides between solitary vigil, and communion with the stars, and massed social movements that wish to impose back on the society of day, some order that is fundamentally foreign to the status quo. Night is the ground on which the strictures of daily society are weakest, and therefore most sensitive to revision in ways that cannot be readily addressed through regular and sanctioned social regulatory mechanisms. Thus the jackboot torch parade, seeking to establish totalitarian rule over a social species. Thus too, distressingly, the need for the 'Take Back the Night' marches, seeking to establish equality and security of person, for these issues too are not dealt with in the political forums.³³ How complex this struggle gets is perhaps illustrated by the different forms feminist activism takes on issues of nocturnal habit. There are attempts to retrieve from obscurity the knowledge and social world of witches, benandanti, night-riders, and the goddess cultures that frequently found expression in dark hours, and at solstice. Here night becomes the ground for resistance, in which universal object knowledge might be challenged. There are the 'Take Back the Night' campaigns, and also the more liberal positions taken by those who take current fears as fundamental and demand 'better' lighting.³⁴ Perhaps some of these forms of feminist activism are at odds, and it seems to me that they are, though the participants may not recognize this. And this is not surprising, for they are not the only other participants in the night battles. There is the arbitrary violence of those who make thoughtless rebellions against systems they do not understand, systems they unconsciously assist in their petty cruelty and acquisitiveness. The voices of authoritarianism and destructive social prejudice are also active. For many, the knock on the door at night, accompanied by the flash of torch inspection, and even the interrogation lamp, is still a possibility. And the torchlight parade, the burning cross, continue to register as the potential flashpoints for fascism and bigotry. Like guns, these lights that break the night signal malevolent intention: light can serve more than one end in the ideological battles for control in the weak social order of the world after dark. The dialogue between the social order of day and the chaotic world of night continues, in new night battles.

Many things to many people, night is an object of literature, mythology, and half of human experience. It is broken by technology and defamed in metaphor, yet it is still half of human experience. Perhaps in time we could come to terms with darkness for its own sake, and not solely by importing daylight. In this, the blind have much to teach the sighted. I have talked extensively of night, but not of sleep, and only of our waking dreams, and not those of slumber, for there is more to darkness than meets the eye, and this is only a beginning.³⁵ The computer in Jean-Luc Goddard's *Alphaville* interro-

gates: 'do you know what illuminates the night?' The suspected enemy of technocracy and logic answers: 'la poesie.' Walt Whitman obliges:

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns
 before me,
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add,
 divide, and measure them,
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured
 with much applause in the lecture-room,
 How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

Notes

1. Judeo-Christian creation mythology, Genesis 1-10.
2. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954) for example, furthers the modern concept of night in his literary proto-mythology by combining elements of the Christian tradition of good and evil with elements from other mythological traditions that are concerned with the powers of darkness.
3. I have used 'we' and 'our' in this essay because rethinking night is something that has to be done as a society. It is not because I think everyone feels exactly the same about darkness.
4. Other species are far better adapted to the dark. The nighttime acuity of nocturnal predatory mammals is in the order of 10x greater than humans. Their sense of smell is far better developed. Owls have 100-1000x greater aural sensitivity. Only with the lantern of curiosity and electric torches was the natural world opened up for humans.
5. See John Pfeiffer, *The Creative Explosion: An Inquiry into the Origins of Art and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982). Pfeiffer argues that darkness could be used to impress, as images were revealed by knowledge-keepers to novices after a disorienting trip through the dark. Perhaps these knowledge keepers became religious-leaders, eventually perverting the experiences to maintain power through terror and the use of masks. In the darkened cinema, the director of horror and suspense uses the same tricks.
6. Timothy Findley, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (Markam, Ontario: Viking, 1984), gives another look at Lucifer.
7. For more on allegorical thinking and the medieval city of light see Carolly Erickson, *The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception*. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976)
8. Carlo Ginzburg, translated by J. & A. Tedeschi, *Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983)
9. See Ginzburg, p.61, p.118. According to the Inquisition archives Ginzburg based his research on, *benandanti* roughly operated as champions of Christ's faith in opposition to the witches, although they were not always aware of this.
10. See Ginzburg, p.40. Diana-Hecate was the root pagan deity, leading to Holda in northern Germany, Perchta in southern Germany. Also see Hans Peter Duerr (trans. F. Goodman),

Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985). Duerr (pp.12-13) traces the complex origins of the deities' powers--the Greek deity Artemis, that later became fused with the Roman Diana, was the goddess of trees and natural, but not agrarian, fertility. Diana was originally the goddess of wild animals, and also a goddess of war, and patron of outsiders.

11. Duerr, pp.35-36.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

14. Gaston Bachelard (trans. Maria Jolas), **The Poetics of Space** (Beacon Press, Boston, 1964), p. 32.

15. Bachelard, pp. 33-34, Walled-in: A lighted lamp in the window, watches in the secret heart of night.

16. There is a whole literature of the night from this period. See for example Charles Peake, ed., **Poetry of the Landscape and the Night: Two Eighteenth Century Traditions** (London: Edward Arnold, 1967).

17. Jerome K. Jerome, **Three Men in a Boat**, (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1889), p. 56.

18. Even the word takes on these powers in modern literature: by their titles alone, Eugene O'Neill's **Long Days Journey into Night**, Celine's **Journey to the End of Night**, and Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** compel; Poirier's **In the Heat of the Night** performance is easily matched by the cinematic title. We project into these words all of our feeling about darkness, and these works thereby gain a claim on our imagination.

19. Jerome, p. 96.

20. Rupert Brooke, "Waikiki of Waikiki sequence," October 1913, in **1914 and Other Poems** (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1915).

21. William Wordsworth from book eight of **The Excursion: A Poem** (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1814).

22. Jennifer Sutherland's 'Essay on Night' on Ideas, (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC Radio, 20th December, 1991) takes a psychological approach to night, following Rilke and Shakespeare as literary sources and Durrell as the naturalist. She seeks peace at night, and follows Jung's approach of taking a little candle (daytime consciousness) into night to ward off irrational fears. She blurs the lines, without abolishing night. Although there is a lot to be said for her approach, I'm not so sure about importing the rationality of day into night: most of the conflicts of night are imported from daytime existence, and merely seek their resolution outside social surveillance and the sway of authority. I'd rather keep consciousness of day and night separate, that we might learn to deal with the conflicts of daytime society during daylight hours (this would involve a political transformation), and come to enjoy night for its own sake again.

23. 'An urban celebration: Lighting Up the Night,' **Eye Magazine** Nov 28/91, p.44. Art Eggleton quoted on flicking the switch for 100,000 lightbulbs in Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto.

24. As Sutherland points out many of the crimes that we fear most, assault, rape, murder etc, are done by those we know, and it is simply easier to point a finger at the anonymity of night, at the bad guys out there, than at those we know around us. Night functions as a cloak to hide issues we'd rather not address directly.

25. Consider the status of the arts that play with form, eg., sculpture and pottery; and texture, eg., weaving; and their relative place in the museum. These arts rarely make it into the

gallery, which is dominated by two-dimensional visual representations.

26. David Noble, **America by Design: Science, Technology and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism** (New York: Knoff, 1977). See pp. 8-10.

27. If I am correct about the centrality of artificial light to industry and science, this would complement Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of the Hollywood culture industry. Even Ford, the symbol of industry, takes the lightbulb as its icon rather than a car. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, **Dialectic of Enlightenment** (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. xvii & p. 258.

28. I recall reading one science fiction novel, perhaps by Isaac Asimov, where a very rare eclipse drove everyone mad: they could not stand darkness.

29. Murray Melbin, **Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World After Dark** (New York: The Free Press, 1987). Melbin describes this temporal invasion. Most library books that deal with night are about how to best manage adaptation of circadian rhythms to the nightshift.

30. W.G. Hoskins (1955) **The Making of the English Landscape** (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), p.217.

31. Wordsworth, **The Excursion**.

32. We'll ignore for the moment that I write at a computer, watching orange letters appear on a cathode tube, while above me is a fluorescent office light: this is not where I want to be, and besides the concept/construct of poet/writer/artist is significant.

33. This essay is written in sympathy to the 'Take Back The Night' marches, which I think currently is one of the most significant forms of activism. Security of person at night is a matter of respect for persons, not lamplight.

34. The argument that city lighting is a women's issue has frequently come up in my discussions of night. Yet if many women say that they feel safer at night with lights, so too do men feel safer, though they will not admit it, for to be afraid of the dark is not something many men feel comfortable admitting. (One could ask for whose benefit the lights put up for in the first place, given that other putative 'women's concerns' in other areas of planning cities, such as community centres, daycares, nearby schools and stores, were rarely considered.) Yet to *feel* safer is not to *be* safer. From two years old we are told of the robbers and ghosts out there, so it is hardly surprising we feel unsafe in the dark. As I have tried to show, our feelings about night have a complicated history, and it is not always prudent to confuse these feelings about night with actual risks. City lights may give a false sense of security. See **Take Back The Night**.

35. There is a wealth of literature to explore. I have not mentioned Friederich Nietzsche's **Twilight of the Idols**, nor Maurice Merleau Ponty's reflections in the **Phenomenology of Perception**. Walter Benjamin speaks of the experience of night in his essays on Naples and Paris in **Reflections**. For a literary treatment, see **In the Land of the Nyx: Night and it's Inhabitants**. For those able to read Portuguese, Antonio Vieira's **Discurso da Ruptura da Noite: Prolegemenos a uma Teoria da Conhocioemto Fenomenologico** may prove interesting.

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