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AFTERWORD: WAYPOINTS IN THE NIGHT

Taken together, the studies in this collection exemplify and broaden the concept of the 'rhythms of the night' with which Jean-Claude Schmitt opens the book[1]. The book's editors and contributors show that focussing on the bright side of the night makes us «aware of the difference between the heart of the night – which is not necessarily its darkest moment – the fall of night or twilight, or on the contrary the appearance of the first light of dawn»[2]. These studies show how the rhythms of the night emerge from specific waypoints in the night, moments when the night enabled ways of thinking and acting that were socially desirable. We can understand these nocturnal waypoints like those used to navigate by land or sea: as a familiar sequence of reference points, each leading to the next. In the night these waypoints, such as curfew, midnight, matins, or the 'first light of dawn' were understood through their connections to one another, like links in a chain. They arose more from the experience of the night than from any precise measurement of it.

We can access this experience of the night because the contributors to this volume have identified groups, individuals, and ways of thinking that truly 'inhabited' the night. Whether they were spiritual authorities or social outcasts, these inhabitants of the night knew its contours, its depths, and its waypoints. When religious or political authorities viewed the night from the outside – as a dark and dangerous time to be contained, exploited, or policed – they engaged as little as possible with the experi-

1. See Schmitt's contribution to this volume.
2. *Ibid.*, 22.

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ence of time *within* the night. But those who *did* see the night as an opportune time – freedom seekers, mystics, ascetics, and city councils or citizens seeking more or better streetlighting – experienced the night in its divisions and parts, using the hours from dusk until dawn to enable a range of spiritual and secular activities. Although the moments in the night examined here differ in many ways, they were all defined in relation to one another, which invites us to collect the insights of this book by charting a sequence of waypoints from daylight and evening to midnight, matins, and on to dawn.

Daytime

We can start during the day because, as Ilaria Hoppe's contribution shows, objects associated with the night and sleep, such as beds, also had important diurnal roles in the pre-modern era. After referencing the royal *lever* (typically occurring sometime after daybreak), she examines the social role of the bed throughout the daytime for women rulers, and for bourgeois Florentine women, who after the birth of a child would receive guests and gifts by day while in bed. Given the bed's social, spiritual, and political uses, any time could be 'bedtime' in pre-modern Europe, where female saints and rulers were depicted as lying in bed. Surveillance and law enforcement could also extend the night into the day. As Schmitt notes, in medieval Venice the Lords of the Night (*Domini de nocte*), responsible for policing after dark, played such an important role in the governance of the city that the ruling council soon extended their authority into daytime policing, so that the Lords of the Night became the lords of the day as well.

The night was also a spiritual waypoint during the day whenever spiritual guides cited sleep as a metaphor for spiritual sloth, in which the sinner remains asleep to God, night and day. As Agnes Rugel shows, sermons for laypeople preached during the day might reference sleep, a fundamental aspect of the night, and extend it metaphorically into the pastoral/moral vocabulary of the day through parallel semantic oppositions such as 'darkness-

light', 'asleep-awake' and 'sin-guilt'[3]. The purpose was to figuratively «wake idle people to the dawn», as a draft sermon from the thirteenth or fourteenth century exhorted[4]. The protean night could extend its material culture, policing, and association with beds and sleep into the day.

Evening

The hours immediately after sunset were the busiest time of the night. As the contributions from Sophie Reculin and Maria Weber show, by the end of the eighteenth century western Europeans were filling the period between sunset and sleep with every kind of labor and leisure. Members of the British Parliament agreed that candles were «one of the necessaries of life» for both the «lower classes [...] as well as those of opulence». This 1784 Parliamentary discussion, cited by Weber, established that many of the poor «worked half their time by candle-light», primarily in the evening after dark, but also when rising before dawn to labor[5]. In France, the 1780s saw a wave of petitions and plans to establish or improve public lighting. Reculin shows that these initiatives were intended to adapt public lighting to a wide range of evening activities, including dockyard work, worship, movement between a city and its suburbs, and visiting promenades, cafés, and theaters. This part of the pre-modern night has the most rich and dynamic history – a history made especially vivid because this collection places evidence about uses of the evening in Caribbean slave societies studied by Adrian van der Velde alongside the European foci of Weber and Reculin.

In the medieval period examined by Jean-Claude Schmitt, city authorities and trade guilds tried to prevent the artisanal or manufacturing work of the day from extending into the evening. Working hours were limited, and in some towns the end of the legal workday was signaled by the sound of a specific bell. But, like the curfew, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the

3. Rugel, 55.
4. *Ibid.*, 58, n. 82.
5. Weber, 135.

limitations on evening activity receded in the largest cities, as the public streetlighting of the late seventeenth century reflected and promoted the nocturnalization of urban daily life. Weber discusses the corresponding expansion of domestic lighting: in the period before 1680, lighting implements such as glass windows, candlesticks, candle pans, tallow lamps, and mirrors were luxury items. After 1680, though, these lighting instruments appear more often in poor households. The wide range of domestic lighting options – from simple to luxurious – that made the evening more available for labor and leisure are the focus of Weber's contribution.

The impact of the small group of courtiers, officials, and wealthy urbanites who led the nocturnalization of the late seventeenth century must be described with care: for the vast majority of the people of Europe and the Caribbean, whose lives were rural, nocturnalization was felt only at a distance. As Reculin's work demonstrates, the most significant shift in the history of the evening came in the second half of the eighteenth century, as the residents of small cities who resisted the first wave of streetlighting in the late seventeenth century embraced it a century later. Her chapter examines French evidence, but the same pattern appears in the German-speaking lands[6]. She shows how after about 1760 French master craftsmen, port authorities, clergy, hospital officials, and groups who designated themselves as 'local residents', citizens, or taxpayers all petitioned for new or improved streetlighting, invoking a sort of right to get home safely from honest activities in the evening.

In the slave societies created by the French, English, and Dutch in the Caribbean, the history of the evening unfolded very differently. Strict curfews and patrols intended to limit the movement of the enslaved remained in effect throughout the era of slavery. Generally, enslaved persons out after eight o'clock in the evening (about two hours after sunset) without a pass would be jailed until claimed by their masters the next day. These curfews, patrols, and militias reflected a well-founded fear: as van

6. Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 153-55.

der Velde explains, "the threat of nocturnal revolt directly or indirectly transformed the daily – and nightly – lives of every person in the colonies"[7]. For this reason, nocturnalization developed very differently in the region. In contrast with London, Amsterdam, or Paris, there was no public streetlighting in colonial cities like Kingston, Willemstad, or Cap-Français. Evening and night activities were sharply divided between the social life of the white minority, which came to include coffee houses, theater, and balls, and the brutal nocturnal labor of the enslaved in the sugar mills and boiling houses of the plantations.

Midnight

We know from the work of Schmitt how important midnight was to the weekly cycle of the canonical hours. Midnight, however, was as much a symbol as an actual point in time. Anxious slaveowners in the Caribbean imagined it as the time when the enslaved would rise up, but it could also serve as an extension of the sociability of the evening. Van der Velde reports on the celebration of the centennial of the plantation town of Jodensavanne in Dutch Suriname in October 1785. The town's synagogue provided a lavish feast illuminated by more than a thousand lanterns. The 1,600 guests included Dutch colonial officials, and dancing began at midnight[8]. This time of night was open for sociability in western Europe as well, as Reculin has noted: «From the 1770s to the 1790s, the Swiss guard Ferdinand de Federeci, in charge of the security of the very popular Champs-Élysées promenade in Paris (where it was not unusual to meet ladies after midnight), worried in his police reports about the increase of nightly gatherings that he was ordered to disperse after ten o'clock in winter and midnight in summer»[9]. For elites in cities like Paris and London, nocturnalization had reached midnight itself.

7. Van der Velde, 116.
8. *Ibid.*, 123.
9. Reculin, 162.

The Heart of the Night

Those active after midnight entered a liminal time or state: this was 'the heart of the night' – and, like the heart, this waypoint in the night was both hidden and vital. Defined in relation to other parts of the night, it was hidden between the latest typical bedtime and the earliest time to rise. It was vital in the sense that, for the vast majority of any population, it was the central time for the refreshment of sleep.

Social categories could be obscured or transformed at any time of the night, but the hidden, liminal period deep in the night was especially suited for this function. Examples range from the sacred to the secular. According to the medieval hagiographies examined by Romedio Schmitz-Esser, the bodies of the holy dead often crossed key thresholds at night: opening a tomb, examining bones, or interring a saint in the course of a *translatio* – all were often explicitly described as being performed in the secrecy provided by the night. In her contribution, Anne-Lydie Dubois explains how mystics such as Catherine of Siena found in their nightly vigils «a very secret cell» where they could withdraw from the world and approach the Divine. Catherine herself noted explicitly that in her nightly vigils she remained awake in the hours *before* matins, while the friars in her religious community slept. And in similar terms reports of the nocturnal vigils of Marie d'Oignies emphasize that she remained awake with the relics of the saints of her church at night at a time when all others – including the clergy – were sleeping. During this hidden time, the saints whose relics she venerated crossed the threshold into this world and appeared to Marie: «they 'spent nights in celebration with her' and 'gave her prodigious spiritual comfort'»[10]. This same secrecy, which was at its height after all were asleep and before dawn, also served the earthly pleasures of illicit lovers, as described in the Middle German poetry of the *Tagelieder*, which originated in the late twelfth century.

Expressions of faith entirely forbidden by the religious and political authorities, such as the Afro-Caribbean traditions of

10. Dubois, 79.

Obeah and Vodou, were almost entirely nocturnal. Van der Velde quotes a Jamaican report from 1789 that describes Obeah as superstitious practices performed under a «Veil of Mystery […] to which the Midnight Hours are allotted, and every Precaution is taken to conceal them from the Knowledge and Discovery of the White People»[11]. And even in relatively well-lit European cities in the long eighteenth century, the street lanterns went out during these midnight hours: the public streetlighting of the Old Regime was not intended to provide light from dusk until dawn. Public lighting kept lit until one o'clock in the morning was considered exceptional in Lyon in the 1780s[12].

These hours in the middle of the night were vital for restorative sleep. The scholarship collected here shows three contrasting disruptions to this part of the night: the monastic practice of rising for matins, individual forms of voluntary sleep deprivation by ascetics such as Catherine of Siena, and the forced nocturnal labor of enslaved Africans in Caribbean sugar production. To these we might add the literary trope of illicit lovers awake until dawn.

Matins occurred sometime within the heart of the night – on average about two o'clock in the morning[13]. The importance of this waypoint in the night to monastic liturgical life cannot be overestimated, as shown in the contributions by Schmitt, Dubois, and Schmitz-Esser. Schmitt very effectively cites the *Ménagier de Paris*, a fifteenth-century treatise on household management, to show how matins divided the night, and separated lay time from monastic time. The bourgeois husband explains to his young

11. Van der Velde, 119.

12. Reculin, 157-58.

13. Rising for matins 'in the middle of the night' also evokes the arguments about biphasic sleep made by Roger Ekirch in several influential publications. The work of Sasha Handley has begun to define and analyze pre-modern European sleep habits more precisely and locally as historically situated environmental practices. She sees a need to challenge «a tendency to idealize and homogenize 'pre-modern' or 'pre-industrial' experiences of sleep» (Handley, 200). See also Sasha Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016. On the Ekirch thesis see most recently an attempt to challenge it by Gerrit Verhoeven, «(Pre)Modern Sleep. New Evidence from the Antwerp Criminal Court (1715-1795)», *Journal of Sleep Research*, 30, no. 1 (2020), 1-7; and responses by Ekirch in the same issue of the *Journal of Sleep Research*.

wife that when she «hears the bell of the neighboring monastery ringing for matins in the middle of the night, she should not get up, but should simply recite an oration before going back to sleep. Later, at sunrise, she will say to the Lord and to Our Lady two prayers *suitable for awakening or rising*»[14]. Ascetic rising in the dark of the night was not generally considered appropriate for married women, but Hoppe shows how the Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria, during her regency at the Villa Poggio Imperiale in the early seventeenth century, surrounded herself with various expressions of nocturnal piety and «even had herself portrayed by Justus Sustermans in a night scene as the penitent Saint Mary Magdalene»[15]. Catherine of Siena, on the other hand, made sleep deprivation part of her daily life, and her vigils were cited as evidence of her sanctity. She explained that no other act of self-discipline had cost her as much as the struggle against sleep (*bellum somni*)[16]. As noted above, she herself referred to the extension of her nightly vigils until the time of matins, suggesting that she exceeded the 'standard' asceticism of monastic life by staying awake when even the monks slept.

The material conditions of the production of sugar, the Caribbean commodity that enriched Europe more than any other, demanded 'round-the-clock labor' at harvest time. As van der Velde describes, as soon as the ripe canes were harvested, they had to be crushed to extract the sweet juice before it could ferment and turn sour. And this cane juice had then to be quickly boiled down and concentrated to prevent spoilage before refinement into molasses or sugar. This time pressure meant overnight work for the enslaved, who had already worked a full day harvesting the cane. Darkness, sleep deprivation, and exhaustion increased the number of accidents in the mills, where workers were crushed by rollers and burned by boiling syrup. Plantation owners and abolitionists alike agreed that nocturnal labor was essential during the harvest and sugaring periods, which totaled several months each year. This was true from the first years of sugar production across the region. As chattel slavery

14. Schmitt, 36.
15. Hoppe, 194.
16. Dubois, 73.

denied the humanity of the enslaved, it left very few sources on their experience of this nocturnal labor.

Pre-Dawn

The time just before dawn spoke to pre-modern people in several ways. With the spirit refreshed and the humors of the body at their calmest, it was considered the most fertile time for vivid, meaningful dreams. Others explained that the sleeping body is furthest from the carnal or physical and closest to God at this hour. For those who were still awake or already awake just before dawn, it was also a time of revelation and transition. In his discussion of Gerhard of Augsburg's *Vita sancti Uodalrici*, the life of Bishop Ulrich, Schmitz-Esser notes that near dawn, when the saintly Ulrich felt his life waning, he asked for a cross to be marked out with ashes on the ground. He laid upon it, was sprinkled with holy water, and died once the dawn had «illuminated the whole breadth of the world». Schmitz-Esser astutely explains this as a clear transition from the ambiguity and liminality of the night to the clear light of day. And it heralded the making of a saint[17]. In courts and cities, announcing the coming of dawn would be the last duty of the night for the watchman[18]. But for illicit lovers, the cry of the watchman, the light of the morning star, or the song of the lark made it clear that their secret time together was about to end. In the Middle German *Tagelieder*, the dawn ends the lovers' shared time. As discussed above, the spiritual poetry of the dawn existed alongside these secular, romantic, or erotic dawn songs. And beyond the literal dawn of the romantic dawn songs and the figurative dawn of the call for sleepers to awaken from sin, there was the dawn of labor, greeted by milkmaids, domestic servants, the working poor, and certain craftsmen such as bakers who were already awake and working as the sun came up.

17. Schmitz-Esser, 105.
18. Rugel, 40-41.

The contributors to this volume share a rich awareness of specific and recurring moments in the night, and it is this awareness that gives the collection both a powerful method and a coherent theme. By focussing on what the night enabled, the collection reveals myriad nocturnal activities that were neither diabolical nor dishonorable. Instead, we see the opportunities provided by the night as it reordered the hierarchy of the senses and of society, recasting epistemological, spiritual, and political authority. Thanks to these essays we can move with more confidence through the pre-modern night, from daylight through darkness to the dawn, and see how pre-modern men and women used each waypoint to reach beyond what could be thought, said, or done during the day.

ABSTRACT

Craig Koslofsky, *Afterword: Waypoints in the Night*

The studies in this collection show how the premodern night was structured by specific waypoints, marked by recurring moments such as curfew, midnight, matins, or the «first light of dawn». These waypoints arose more from the experience of the night than from any precise measurement of it. By focusing on «the bright side of the night» the book's editors and contributors have identified groups, individuals, and ways of thinking which truly «inhabited» the night. Whether they were spiritual authorities or social outcasts, these inhabitants of the night knew deeply its contours, its depths, and its waypoints. Spiritual or political authorities who viewed the night from the outside – as a dark and dangerous site to be contained, avoided, or policed – engaged less with the experience of time *within* the night. But those who *did* see the night as an opportune time – enslaved laborers, freedom seekers, mystics, clandestine lovers, and citizens seeking better street lighting – experienced the night more richly as they made their way from dusk until dawn. The divisions of the night revealed by this collection were all defined in relation to one another, which allows this Afterword to collect the insights of this book by charting a sequence of waypoints from daylight and evening to midnight, matins, and dawn.

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