Edited by

Daniel Chartier + Katrín Anna Lund +
Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson

Darkness

Isberg

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DARKNESS

Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson [eds]
Darkness. The Dynamics of Darkness in the North
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With chapters by Judy Spark, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson, Toby Heys, Diego Gómez-Venegas and Bárbara Bielitz, Jóhannes Dagsson, Paul Landon, Christiane Lahaie, Batia Boe Stolar and Monique Durand, and an introduction by Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson.

Ingunn Ásdísardóttir translated the introduction and the abstracts into Icelandic; Luba Markovsiaka translated part of the introduction into English and French, and the abstracts into French. Yannick Legault made the layout of the chapters. Olga Jóhannesson revised the texts in English. We thank them all.

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DARKNESS

THE DYNAMICS OF DARKNESS IN THE NORTH

Edited by
Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson

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Introduction
Darkness: A Powerful Symbol of the Imagined North

Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund
and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson

Though it is frequently simplified in its representations[1], the "North" is a complex space, comprised of various physical, cultural, and semiotic realities and heavily labelled by external discourse. Attempts to define the North have resorted to various methodologies, giving way to neologisms such as *septentrionisme* [northernism],[2] arcticism,[3] the idea of North,[4] borealism,[5] the imagined North,[6]

[1] This section was translated from French to English by Luba Markovskaia. Daniel Chartier would like to thank Marie Mossé for her preliminary research which made it possible to write this part of the introduction.

[2] As of the turn of the 21st century, researchers from the Université de Lille put forward this notion, at the crossroads between aesthetics and history. See, for example Dubar & Moura, 2000.

[3] This term is occasionally used by Norwegian researchers, including Henning Howlid Wærp and his colleagues. See, for example Ryall, Schimanski & Howlid Wærp 2010: ix-xxii.

[4] This phrase was coined by Canadian musician Glenn Gould in his collection of radio documentaries *Solitude Trilogy*, which opened with the 1967 installment on "The Idea of North," and was frequently repurposed ever since, notably in the famed essay on English-Canadian literature by Sherill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 2001.

[5] The term was used by the Norwegian essayist Kjartan Fløgstad in his 2007 essay *Pyramiden*, a socio-aesthetic approach to the Svalbard. It was repurposed into considerations on the aesthetics of European depictions of the North by

Chartier, D., Lund, K.A. and Jóhannesson, G.T. (2021). « Introduction. Darkness: A Powerful Symbol of the Imagined North, » in *Darkness. The Dynamics of Darkness in the North*, eds. D. Chartier, K.A. Lund and G.T. Jóhannesson, Montréal and Reykjavík: Imaginaire | Nord and Land- og ferðamálafræðistofa / Research Centre in Geography and Tourism at the University of Iceland (Isberg), pp. 9-22.

nordicity,[7] and many others. These superimposed and interconnected viewpoints offer a rich and varied[8] perspective allowing to grasp the subtle interactions between the external and internal perceptions of the North, as well as to counter, by way of a cultural "recomplexification," the historical simplification of these depictions. This process involves analyzing the various components, signs, mythemes, chromaticism, narratives and landscapes—all of the vectors that form the vast system of signs that is the imagined North. These signs are often interrelated and frequently stem from various ancient cultural traditions, which is also the case for "darkness" and its association with the very definition of the North.

Analyzing the tensions and effects of the idea of "darkness" within the imagined North is part of a collective research effort to tackle the intellectual challenge of making the

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Sylvain Briens, notably in the excellent issue on this topic that he edited in *Études germaniques*, 2016.

[6] The present article is based on this notion, which was exposed in Chartier 2018. This book was published and translated in 15 Northern languages: see https://nord.uqam.ca/projet/traduire-publier-et-diffuser-en-15-langues-du-nord-quest-ce-que-limaginaire-du-nord (accessed on January 28, 2021).

[7] This is one of the many neologisms forged by the Quebec geographer and linguist Louis-Edmond Hamelin in order to provide the French language with the necessary vocabulary to comprehend the complexity of the cold world. According to Hamelin, nordicity refers to the North, as well as to the high mountains and the Arctic. To describe winter, which he viewed as a "temporary nordicity," he created the term "winterness" (*hivernité*). Many of the terms coined by Hamelin are now commonly used, and several have been translated into the main language of the circumpolar realm. See, notably, his intellectual legacy: *La nordicité du Québec*, 2014.

[8] As brilliantly demonstrated by Odile Parsis-Barubé in her article « "*Il y a tant de nords dans ce Nord!*" Problématiques de la délimitation et de l'indélimitation dans l'étude de l'imaginaire septentrional », 2017. Daniel Chartier, Helge Vidar Holm, Chantal Savoie and Margery Vibe Skagen [eds.], *Frontières. Actes du colloque québéco-norvégien*, Montreal and Bergen, Imaginaire | Nord and Département des langues étrangères de l'Université de Bergen, coll. « Isberg », 2017, p. 165-186.

North "definable"[9], even if this involves observing its borrowings from other cultural realms. Therefore, thinking about cold, silence, whiteness, snow, winter, ice, and many other signs and practices of the circumpolar space is a starting point for examining the various elements of this imagery and its cultural contributions.

Darkness falls within a system of signs as well as a geographical relationship to the physical space based on observations of lighting, at the crossroads between different ways of perceiving reality. Darkness also relates to various traditions, whose combined portrayals, narratives, and artworks have turned it into an aesthetic and a trope. Lastly, darkness and light are locked in a powerful dynamic of tension and opposition, lending a stern, severe, even moral aspect to the narratives that surround it, often tending towards absolutes and abstractions.

Darkness: Definitions, Components, and Moral Values

Defining darkness can be likened to an impossible stylistic exercise involving attempts to define absence, nothingness, and the absolute all at once.

Perception of darkness varies according to the speaker, that is whether the person expressing it lives in the North or is an outsider or a visitor. Darkness also varies depending on whether it is viewed as a physical phenomenon or in its relationship to human interiority, perhaps even to its transcendence. Is darkness unchanging? Does it vary with the seasons, climates, and cultures? Is it perceived differently according to creed, era, class, culture, or gender? Darkness falls within a system of symbolic values where colours are ascribed to meanings that are related to one

[9] Hamelin 1999: 19

another. In this system, darkness is often understood as opposed to brightness, whiteness, generally meaning light, purity, life – thus making darkness its polar opposite: a lack of light, of purity, of life. As with any binary, darkness (blackness) and light (whiteness) are often inextricably linked, which allows to temper the correlation between obscurity and the North, as with dark inevitably comes light.

Dating back to Antiquity, darkness carried and embodied moral, often religious values, as is the case in the Christian tradition, which stemmed from the Mediterranean and has heavily influenced perceptions of the North and the circumpolar regions. The longer day-night cycle, which follows the summer and winter seasons in the North, leads to a correlation—largely exaggerated through discourse—with a value gradient, portrayed as the eternal polar night, establishing the relationship between darkness and the North.

The definition of darkness is at once literal and figurative, with both meanings carrying the aforementioned legacy: the literal sense is related to chromaticism, while the figurative one connotes morality. Literally, the word signifies that which is of a dark shade, and in a larger sense, obscurity. Figuratively, it describes an evil and treacherous character, or something tainted with sadness or melancholy, or ominous and foreboding. This semantic shift towards the figurative sense has led to negative associations with the colour black and the term itself: evil, sadness, menace.

The relationship between the obscurity of the North and the darkness that allegedly lies in the hearts of its inhabitants is based on humourism and the meteorological climate theory. Both claim that human beings are influenced by their natural surroundings. As of the

5th century BC, Hippocrates suggested a correlation between the harshness of mountain climates and human constitution: according to him, the ruggedness of the terrain could explain the endurance, courage, and strength of those who lived in mountainous regions.[10]

The opposition between the physical North and the spiritual South, between the motionless North and the sensual South, between the manly North and the effeminate South are can be found in the theory of climates exposed by Montesquieu in the 18th century, then by Germaine de Staël at the beginning of the 19th century. In some ways, this enduring theory continues to inform and reproduce the current perception of northern societies.

Darkness and Light: A Symbolic Couple

The origins of the meaning of darkness and blackness are a reminder that they are inconceivable without their polar opposite: whiteness and light. In fact, it would be fitting to always evoke both darkness and light simultaneously as a semiotic couple in order to interpret their depictions and to understand the powerful meanings they convey.

The relationship between darkness and the North is as ancient as that between the North and whiteness: this dual connection persists in contemporary works of literature, an oscillation that both strengthens and counters this duality. The evolution of this semiotic couple, with its mutations and tensions, demonstrates the symbolic richness and polysemy of the various possible portrayals of the human connection to the North and the Arctic. It touches upon the inevitability of the day-night cycle in the northern geographical realm (growing ever longer as one approaches

[10] Hippocrate 1996: 244-45

the pole) as well as intimate and moral connotations related to issues of personal and collective identity. The association between physical, material observations and the inner quest, or even the transcendent search for self, identity, purity, abstraction, and the absolute that motivates one to head north, echoes the fundamental ambiguity of the darkness-light couple in the imagined North as an abstract system of signs, yet grounded in reality and inspired by it.

The Impact of Darkness

Darkness elicits emotions and provokes physiological responses such as fear, anxiety, or the feeling of loss. It thus leads to personal transformations and, subsequently, to social and aesthetic ones. The dark night sky triggers an emotion: complete darkness gives way to new ideas and perception, removed from daytime and its daily hubbub. It inclines towards silence and solitude, two other fundamental components of the imagined North.

After the reign of darkness comes the return of the light. And thus, a metamorphosis has occurred, as though surviving the night had been a rite of passage designed to strengthen and transform the innermost being of those who were able to face the darkness, the void, the resurgence of their deeply seated fears and worries, rooted in their distant past.

From an aesthetic standpoint, in cultural and literary production, the darkness of the surroundings is reflected in the characters' psychology, and vice versa. This is a process called "hypallage," a projection of a landscape or an atmosphere onto a living being and his or her emotion. By way of this rhetorical transposition, the northern phenomenon of seasonally varying daylight becomes an aesthetic effect, which in turn produces meaning and,

consequently, enters a system of signs, that of the imagined North.

A History of Northern Darkness

Historically, the symbolic system of the North is associated with emptiness and whiteness. However, the circumpolar day-night cycle, alternating between summer and winter, introduces the idea of a duality, between blinding brightness and everlasting night, two key components of the North. Although this opposition has historical roots and is based on observations of a geographical reality, it has also been converted into moral values, a sense of belonging, and a pride in one's northern identity based on the ability to adapt to darkness.

Adaptation to obscurity signals courage, ingenuity, and optimism, often remarked upon and valued by travellers, who sometimes perceive it as a test of membership to the northern identity. Learning to live in the dark, to read the signs of darkness, to turn obscurity into a theatre of light thus becomes a learning process and a form of affirmation, even victory, signalling strength and distinguishing the *true* Northerners.

This adaptation can be achieved in two ways: either by making darkness a *readable* space where one can learn to orient oneself and to live, or by creating light in the dark northern space, both outdoors—namely by mastering the art of city lighting—and indoors. For those who inhabit the North, subtle and subdued indoor lighting serves to create comfort, intimacy, and life in warm tones, an oasis of light and heat in the middle of a cold, silent, and dark outdoors, an expanse of blue and white.

Darkness as Reversal

Appreciating darkness in a northern setting leads to a reversal of the positive connotations of the duality between day and night, which can only lead to an upheaval of the moral and aesthetic order and a renewed sense of identity, within the North as well as outside of it. In certain cases, this allows for a deconstruction of the tropes surrounding the imagined North, and a more nuanced articulation of the power dynamics at play in cultural and social representations.

Darkness is a geographical fact of the North, which, through social and cultural discourse—and thus also by way of the collective imagination—, has become one of the signs used to portray the North from the outside looking in, as well as a trait used by Northern cultures to define themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

Darkness can also be viewed as one of the stereotypes or assumptions regarding the North. As such, it is highly morally charged, relating darkness to the absence of life, misery, and suffering. This perception can also be strongly political, linking it to colonialism, silencing, disregard for the other. This is why some northern artists and writers seek to distance themselves from this view, either by attempting to reverse the negative values related to the duality between darkness and light, or by turning darkness into a positive identity trait. As with any reversal of stereotypes, this is a double-edged sword: this attitude can certainly change the meaning of the trope, all the while tying it closer to the imagery it hopes to counter.

* * *

Above, we have discussed the conceptual definition of "darkness in the North" on which this volume is based. The ten chapters that follow explore the dynamics of darkness in different ways. They span social science, humanities and art, and attest to the diverse range of contributions by the various authors and their disciplinary and cultural perspectives. Given the focus on darkness, it is interesting that most of the chapters also deal with light and the interplay of light and darkness in its various forms, which accentuates the fact that darkness and light are never merely polar opposites but rather a complex interface that is experienced and felt. Together, they shed light on the meaning and use of darkness, its position and role in the worldview of different cultures, the scientific struggle with darkness, and not least the effects of this interplay on people's lives and their understanding of self and other. This book specifically directs attention to darkness in a northern context. Most of the chapters deal with the Arctic and sub-arctic regions, but contributions also include a focus on areas located more to the South, underlining connections and constant flows between North and South that continue to contribute to the shaping of the North and its imaginaries in various ways.

Judy Sparks sets out to examine the embodied experience of the interplay between darkness and light. She argues that rather than thinking about darkness as the absence of light, it could be described as the arrival of night or as part of a natural pattern of changing light. The transition between day and night is inherently entwined with our bodily existence, and Sparks explores how darkness holds the potential to shift people's experience "of world and self." She uses the idea of emptiness as coined in Buddhism to examine how darkness may create alternative abilities to experience the self and its relation to the world.

In a related manner, but in a different context, Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson and Katrín Anna Lund explore the meaning of darkness in the western worldview and how, through an interplay with light, it contributes to meaningful touristic experiences in the North. Focusing on northern lights tours, they argue that although darkness is a necessary precondition for seeing the northern lights, it is not a passive background but rather an active entity, playing multiple roles in the experience. The role and meaning of darkness become crucial in the absence of northern lights, when the tour guide needs to improvise and tune into the rhythm of darkness to create a special kind of atmospheric lightscape together with participating tourists.

There is a long way from northern lights tourism to the confined cells of the Guantánamo bay detainment camp in Cuba. However, the embodiment of darkness is very much at the forefront in Toby Heys' chapter on the sonic torture techniques used on detainees. It provides a compelling example of the meaning and effect of darkness on people's sensory abilities and their experience of the body's relation to its environment. Part of the sonic torture is to negate the ocular field in order to amplify the efficacy of music and noise on the detainee. Heys' chapter underlines how darkness is an active force in blurring the boundaries between the cultural sphere of music and the military sphere, thus creating a new, disturbing and dark cosmology of insidious relations.

The next two chapters look at the ways in which darkness has been and is constructed and articulated. It can thus be argued that how we experience darkness is at least up to an extent the product of design. In their chapter, Diego Gómez-Venegas and Barbara Bielitz reflect on what they call the episteme of space-time and the design of nature, arguing that darkness is nothing more than the remoteness

or the absence of light. They build their argument on their art installation *Remoteness of Light*, displayed in Reykjavík in 2015, which transferred rays of sunlight from Santiago, Chile all the way north, to Reykjavík. This also includes an epistemological argument, as the authors defend the idea that darkness was "what motivated human beings to contemplate the world and then to develop ideas, theories, and models based on it."

Drawing on more personal and embodied observations in his chapter, Jóhannes Dagsson ponders questions about the meaning of darkness. Darkness, he argues, is constructed through our use of language, image-making and other sign systems. Hence, the experience of darkness depends on the particulars of language, theory or abstract thought. This kind of experienced darkness is unique, but it is not the same as "darkness as such or darkness as the same everywhere." For Dagsson, however, this is not only a question of experience but also a manifestation of an emergent reality, i.e. how we create unique manifestations of darkness.

In his chapter, Paul Landon recounts his installation Hof. This short piece relates to the other chapters in terms of how it plays with effects of dark and light in display. The installation was a silent, colour, single-channel video, lasting 6:45 minutes and depicting 80 different views of a residential courtyard in Berlin at night. Landon explains that Hof is a reflection on how urban darkness becomes a cinematic darkness, and as such, a condition for viewing but also a diegetic device allowing to comprehend and narrate an everyday setting. The bright lights of the windows in the apartment buildings are reminiscent of movie screens, and the views into the apartments play with voyeuristic shots of popular films of the past and present. Hof also prompted viewers to make their own connections, inviting them to

engage with their imagination and to "wander" from their position "out of frame" to catch glimpses of other people's lives.

In the following chapter, Christiane Lahaie also focuses on the cinematic interplay of light and darkness, specifically in the movie *Insomnia*, originally made in 1997 and then remade in 2002. She studies the symbolic meaning of night and day in the movie and argues that the absence of night, and thus darkness during early summer in the North, gives way to a white purgatorial space. In her words, the "white nights of the North can be read as metaphorical space, as a place out of time that is neither heaven nor hell," but rather an in-between area or a liminal zone where "sins" have to be reckoned with.

In her chapter, Elsa Brander discusses the work of Harold Moltke, who was the official artist of the Danish Auroral Expedition to Iceland in 1899-1900, during which he created 19 paintings of the aurora borealis. While previous research has focused on Moltke's artistic abilities, Brander examines his work as an example of scientific practice, using the concept of *blind sight* leading to the elimination of any subjective intrusion. For that purpose, she studies two of 25 observational drawings made by Moltke, which he used as prototypes for the subsequent oil paintings. Observational drawing is an example of empirical record-taking of life events. Moltke's drawings are exceptionally detailed, including the location of stars and constellations as well as the shape of diverse occurrences of aurora borealis. Hence, it is a fascinating example of the entwinement between the practice of science and art.

Batia Boe Stolar also addresses representations of the North with a focus on the production and reproduction of stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic.

This is evident in policy reports, science, literature and art. Stolar analyses two cases of photographic displays, an artist book and a feature published in *National Geographic*, as examples of an imperialist gaze upon "the other." While the photographers aim to create awareness of global climate change threatening people and cultures, it nonetheless "echoes the colonialist context of Arctic and ethnographic photography." In the photographs analysed, darkness plays a particular role to augment the feeling of vulnerability and potential loss. It "defamiliarizes common activities" and "camouflages imperialist underpinnings."

The last chapter is a fitting end to the volume. In "The Blue Hour of the Mystic North" Monique Durand draws our attention back to the fundamental role and meaning of darkness in the lives of many people that live in the North. "Darkness is not night. It's the blue hour when the day's fire has just gone out, and incandescent purplish-blue on the horizon," she writes. The blue hour is a time for introspection and contemplation, and Durand explores its manifestation in the works of some of the writers of Québec's Côte-Nord. The blue hour is associated with a "mystic breath," the northern mystique that represents a kind of devotion to the idea of the North, underlining the interplay of light, darkness, barren or "abstract land" and people in the North.

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Beyond Edges:
Darkness and the Fluxing Field

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Abstract – The tendency of the contemporary western human on encountering darkness is to banish it with electric light. For the city dweller the experience of night is one of orange street lighting, darkness is a rarely, if ever, encountered realm of experience. Here, the dark hours can bring fear either of the darkness itself or of other humans. This paper takes the form of an exploration of northern light and its receding levels, seeking to explore other potential understandings of darkness. I will draw upon my own personal experiences of darkness before subjecting one of these accounts to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of *flesh* since, as a theory of embodied experience, it seems to hold some promise in terms of getting past the notion of darkness being in some way a separate phenomenon both from that of light and also from ourselves. Having established that darkness is more than just a quality of light or its absence that humans are subject to, I intend to then consider the Buddhist phenomenon of *emptiness* and whether, through its capacity to reflect the overlapping nature of the relationship between humans and world, it may have some import in our encounters with darkness.

Keywords – Darkness, experience, embodiment, flesh, emptiness, Buddhism

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Day and night, darkness and light may sometimes seem like, but are not, separate realms. An experience of total darkness could, I suppose, be encountered by closing oneself in a cupboard, but exposure to 'pitch blackness' naturally is quite rare. I mean to consider instead darkness as the arrival of night and as part of a natural daily pattern of changing light. It is a seasonal pattern too; the short, dark winter days of the northern latitudes could be regarded as the 'night' of the year relative to what is very nearly twenty-four hours of daylight in the summer months.

For a large proportion of
city dwelling people
in the developed world,
the experience of night is not one
of natural darkness at all,
but one characterised by
the presence of artificial light.

However in any attempt to define the relationship of darkness to light, it can be said that for a large proportion of city dwelling people in the developed world, the experience of night is not one of natural darkness at all, but one characterised by the presence of artificial light. In this there is really no room for personal preference; it is, instead, a culturally regulated denial of a type of natural experience in which past humans spent half their lives. For this bleaching of the night is a relatively new phenomenon; less than one hundred years ago the sky was dark enough to be experienced as a realm that was "brimming with stars".[1]

[1] *International Dark Sky Association (IDSA).* The *IDSA exists* to "protect the night skies for present and future generations". They seek to encourage

This essay seeks to explore the physical encounter with darkness as part of a shifting flux of phenomena. Its aim is to offer some perspectives on the condition of darkness through which the transitions between day and night will be shown to be a vital part of earthly experience. Moreover, the work will propose that the experience of darkness itself, being so profoundly different to that of daylight, holds the potential to effect a corresponding shift in our experience of world and of self.

To speak of darkness is also to speak of light; our eyes read darkness in relation to the levels of receding or arriving daylight, to the light of stars or moonlight and to artificial light too.

I will first lay out some personal experiences of darkness before viewing one such encounter through Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of *flesh.* As a theory of embodied experience, Merleau-Ponty's approach seems to hold some promise in terms of getting past the notion of darkness being in some way separate both from that of light and also from ourselves. I intend to then turn to the Buddhist phenomenon of *emptiness,* which seems to sit well as the natural extension of Merleau-Ponty's initial premises.[2] I will

responsible lighting policies for the reduction of both light pollution and the wasted energy of poorly designed lighting and educate on the impact of light pollution on wildlife and ecosystems. The *IDSA* claim that being able to see the stars is "part of our common and universal heritage" shared with our ancestors. Presently, there are over one hundred international *Dark Sky Places* of varying levels of designation.

[2] Glen Mazis states that by examining Merleau Ponty's embodiment in the light of śūnyatā "one can see aspects implicit in both philosophies that become visible and meaningful through the comparison." Mazis 2009: 83.

approach the notion of emptiness, which completely undermines the human attachment to an objective world by way of the concepts of 'sky' and 'self'. If it can be said that emptiness reflects the overlapping nature of the relationship between humans and world, then it may hold some import in our understandings of darkness.

Edges

I live at the very edge of a city. At night, above the ground that stretches out below my south-west facing first floor kitchen window, sits a patch of sky that appears darker than that over the rest of the city. The window overlooks low-rise housing that is nestled into land, through which flow both a river and a canal and over which passes a train line, each of these bounded by stands of broad-leaved trees. The tree cover continues uphill to the west and makes a line across the summit of *Dawsholm Park,* behind which in a dip lie a scattering of Glasgow suburbs and Clydeside towns. Beyond this, the tops of the Kilpatrick hills can be glimpsed; at twilight, these appear as just a range of black forms against what light remains in the night sky. This is a darkish pocket of land which is not overrun with streetlights, and only a few of those that are present sit in my line of vision. Only on the cloudiest of nights does this dark patch not afford some connection with the sky; the passage of light clouds, at least the most well known of constellations, and the trajectory of the moon, depending on the conditions and time of year, can all be seen. Even when there is mostly just a grayish orange blanket, this patch remains, comfortingly, just a little darker; dark enough, in fact, to make it worthwhile getting up, if one wakes in the night, to have a look to see what has changed.

More houses are planned, and I wonder how much longer this precious darkish patch will endure.

To speak of darkness is also to speak of light; our eyes read darkness in relation to the levels of receding or arriving daylight, to the light of stars or moonlight and to artificial light too. Indeed, we may even describe gloomy winter daylight as 'darkness'. Nevertheless, darkness and light are often regarded as two quite separate realms, even given that in the northern latitudes day can be so dark as to not feel properly like day and night light enough not to feel quite like night. Part of the reason that this fallacy of separation persists is that for many of us the transition from day to night is foxed by the transition from receding day to streetlight.

We fear darkness because within its realms the familiar is rendered unfamiliar; there is a feeling of lost information or of a deficit of some kind and, perhaps, then a feeling of vulnerability attends the experience. In darkness things seem less distinct from one another, sound travels to our ears differently as well, so we may feel a sense of disorientation and a firm separation between this experience of place and that of the same place in daylight. The difficulties associated with experiencing summer darks in the city due to the presence of street lighting as well as general fears for my safety are the reasons that I now find myself in a field near the small town of Milngavie, which is just outside Glasgow to the north-west, with the specific aim of watching the night roll in from the comfort of my tent. My aim was to go somewhere easily accessible to a city dweller without a car just to observe in a way I feel I cannot do from within the city boundaries, and the tiny *Bankell Farm Campsite* seems to suit my purpose perfectly. I am just out of the orange city fug, just on the edge of the darker countryside, so that I can at the same time see both worlds

– the one that I normally inhabit and the one that I feel I am generally denied. I expect that there will still be "sky glow" reflecting off cloud from the nearby city lights; it is 9.40pm on an August evening and I can see distant streetlights on already, but they are not covering my view of the sky in the way they do in the city itself. The first thing I notice is a reduction in clarity of the field and the trees in front of me; a slight fuzzing of the scene; I put my glasses on which helps a little. Then comes a slow desaturation of colour before things very gradually attain soft, hard to define edges like a darkening charcoal drawing, crisper where they are seen against the still pale sky for what has now opened itself to me is the hugeness of the sky. After just a few more minutes, quite suddenly my surroundings consist of only a series of overlapping, almost black shapes. It is the distant pinpoints of city lights that now make up the most dominant part of the scene, twinkling as they are in the clear air. It does not get completely dark but here out just slightly beyond the reach of the city's orange glow, I am aware of the nights gradual, rolling arrival, and, while this changes my perception of the space around me, it is a slow, overlapping, continuous experience of change, rather than the abrupt transition effected by closing the curtains on the streetlights or on one's own reflection at home; the latter of which is, most certainly, an experience of separation. Towards midnight I walk over to the toilet block in the barn and am blinded by light from a large halogen lamp placed high up on its gable end. I can see nothing except the detail of the stones under my feet as everything outside this sweep of brash light is masked over into invisibility. This light effects full separation from everything outside its reach. It is tempting to climb over the fence, straight out of the back of the campsite, to be swallowed in the subtle darkness beyond. Back in my tent making my notes, there is a strangeness to writing in the dark when all I can see is the movement of my hand across the page. It is hard to tell

where my own bodily boundaries are with no light reflecting off its surface. How dark, I wonder, is the inside of my own body deep beneath the skin? In light I might imagine that, since I can see some of my veins just under my skin inside the wrists, say, at least some light penetrates within. But in darkness, with edges blurred, my body seems continuous with what is outside of it, as if the dark seeps through my permeable skin and into the interior darkness of my body. I absorb it and am absorbed into it, like a sort of disappearance. Thinking over this personal encounter underlines for me how different the experience of darkness is from that of light, and how much this affects human behaviour. However, this only really supports the argument that the two are separate realms if that altered experience is regarded as somehow a *distortion* of the sense of a particular space that we might have in the hours of daylight. What if darkness instead could mean the disclosure of a different sense of space altogether, one that, though not separate, in some way goes beyond our general understandings of our situation? In the next section I will begin to look at these possibilities through Merleau-Ponty's notion of *flesh*.

Overlapping Edges

Maurice Merleau-Ponty insists that our situation in the world and our consciousness of it is a bodily consciousness or, better, an awareness, not a cerebral one alone. This is a highly contentious assertion for traditional western philosophy in which the body has historically been seen as separate from the mind. For Merleau-Ponty however, the things that make up the world and our consciousness of them are interdependent, overlapping realms and things arise, are incarnated from, this relationship. Therefore, things are as they are as a result of their relationship to

other things.[3] In this thinking we need to leave behind any notion of having a 'contained' body, a point which has led Glen Mazis to claim that in this Merleau-Ponty is de-centring the notion of "self", making of 'being' something not static or finished but more related to becoming or process.[4] In an essay entitled *The Intertwining, The Chiasm* Merleau-Ponty develops these notions through the concept of the *flesh,*[5] a familiar word, perhaps, but used in this case to designate something that has hitherto not been named.

Earlier in this essay, when I was sitting in my tent at *Bankell Farm* in the darkness, I described the strangeness of writing when I could not see my hand; being able to feel but not see where the surfaces met. This odd sensation brought to mind the key passage in *The Intertwining,* in which Merleau-Ponty describes a pair of hands in an embrace: as one hand touches the back of the other the sensation can, at any moment, only be felt by the fingers doing the touching or the back of the hand that is being touched but not by both at the same time. This, however, does not mean that the two components of the experience are separate, it just means that the point, where the surfaces meet, cannot be sensed except by way of a sort of *reversibility* – a flipping back and forth between the two perceived sensations. The object that is the touched hand (which is, after all, also

[3] Maurice Merleau Ponty did not articulate any specific theory of 'nature' as we might understand it today, but it was his contention that the intellectualised approach of western philosophy towards the things in the world led to a way of thinking about that world that made for the domination and possession of those things. Where his earlier work was deeply concerned with human perception, Merleau Ponty later came to feel that it was still too much comprised of a dependence on a separation between the human subject and the objects of its perception.

[4] Mazis 2009: 184

[5] Merleau Ponty 1968: 130-155. The radical concept of 'flesh' is a later development in Merleau-Ponty's thought: he died in 1961 and the *Visible and the Invisible,* within which "The Intertwining [...]" appears, was published from incomplete manuscripts with working notes in 1968.

touching and therefore also subject) and the subject that is the touching one (which is also being touched and therefore also object) occupy the position of subject and object *at the same time* and yet they are not the same thing.[6] The two aspects of experience are intertwined, and in order to describe the way in which these things encroach on one another but also still retain their own distinctiveness Merleau-Ponty employs the word 'chiasm'. His claim is that this chiasmatic relationship between the touching hands extends to apply to other pairs that are usually thought of separately, such as mind and body and, perhaps, most significantly, ourselves and our world.[7] In the darkness of my tent I was acutely aware of my touch on my notebook and pen as well as theirs on my body, shaping the position of my fingers and the angle of my wrist, the smooth touch of the paper beneath the side of my moving hand. I was also very aware of the position and movement of my body in relation to the bounds of my small tent around and above me, even though these boundaries could not be distinctly seen. It was both an unsettling and yet at the same time a somewhat soothing, all encompassing, full body awareness which seemed bigger than my attempts to conceptualise it. There I was, close to home but not at home, surrounded by darkness, though close to the city, surrounded by sleeping others also cocooned in their tents; others, probably, far from home and not known to me. In Merleau-Ponty's thought there is something of a participatory quality, a kinship even, in the relationship between ourselves and other things.[8] The *flesh* is the name that he gives to this interdependency and reversibility that exists between things.

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[6]Merleau-Ponty 1968: 133. Merleau-Ponty, in fact, first began to articulate this relationship of the touching hands in as early as 1945 in *The Phenomenology of Perception*.

[7] Merleau-Ponty 1968: 123

[8] Mazis 2009: 184

Perhaps, it is not too difficult to accept that darkness and light might comprise this reversibility, as their unfixable edges fade into and out of one another, but Merleau-Ponty takes the notion a little further still by stating that this encroachment means not just that we alter the world, but that it is capable of altering us. The overlapping of ourselves with the things of the world, though we remain distinct from one another, means that "we may say that the things pass into us, as well as we into the things."[9] So, the inside of what I regard to be "me" or "my" experience overlaps with what is outside of it and helps to articulate the feeling I had at *Bankell* of the night seeping into me. Merleau-Ponty regards sight to have the same reversibility as touch, but this experience was dominated by my tactile senses, my sense of sight having been reduced by the diminished light levels. It is worth noting that some twenty years before he got to the new ground broken with the *flesh,* Merleau-Ponty was considering the effects of darkness on our understanding of what is around us:

> When, for example, the world of clear and articulate objects is abolished, our perceptual being, cut off from its world, evolves a spatiality without things. This is what happens in the night. Night is not an object before me; it enwraps me and infiltrates through all my senses, stifling my recollections and almost destroying my personal identity.[10]

In this "spatiality without things" Merleau-Ponty is not suggesting that things actually become invisible by their

[9] Merleau-Ponty 1968: 123
[10] Merleau-Ponty 1968: 330

enwrapping of the night, he means rather that they no longer present themselves to us in the ways that we depend upon in daylight; they lose the familiarity we generally take for granted, requiring to be apprehended on quite different terms. Perhaps, then, by way of this consideration of the notion of the *flesh* under conditions of darkness, it is possible to begin to think of such conditions not as an impairment or distortion of illuminated experience but instead as a potential gateway to a different experience of physical space altogether. The body may then be experienced less in any contained sense through an accompanying *identity* and more fully and simply as an *entity* that is continuous with the world it inhabits, though that is not to say that this sensation will be one of comfort. I will explore the implications of these points more fully in the next section, but first I want to return to that space of transition between the departure of day and the arrival of night, this time in the flat landscape of East Anglia.

We are standing in the broad, wide open lawn of an old garden in the village of Toft in the middle of the East Anglian countryside of England on a crystal-clear February evening. Despite its close proximity to the city of Cambridge, the flatness of the land makes for a quite different experience of night from that which I am used to. To the north-west, we watch the arrival of night steal across what seems like a huge sky, while to the south-east, there are pink tinged clouds, reddening on a horizon behind black tree shapes. It is a slightly disorienting experience: I almost want to sit down and cling on, so aware am I at this moment of the movement of the surface on which I stand. I have the profound sense of standing on a tilt in the midst of a transition and on anything but fixed ground. As the night approaches, the sky commands my attention from the horizon up. Strictly speaking, the term 'gathering' may be incorrect in describing the way that the darkness of night

arrives around one's body while standing on the land, but here in Toft I can think of no other expression that fits so well. I feel exactly as if the night is gathering around me, the classic description is 'like a cloak', blending my body with what is at ground level where my visual perception is so dramatically reduced. My mind stretches back to the experience of my tent, however this is much, much darker. The sky is open to me as vast as I am tiny; it seems to command my openness in return. Still, for as long as I can keep my earthly fears of the dark at bay, I do not feel *exposed* but rather *ensconced* within the dark garden, much as one might feel sitting in the warmth of a cinema, eyes trained on the bright magic of the screen above. It may simply be the case that the night sky, if we get to see it, has the power to bring about this reflective turn in humans; the profound sense of transience, the sense of diminished human concerns, but it is worth examining these notions and the sense of blending edges more closely, because it may be that in our general avoidance of darkness, or in our being denied this phenomenon as common experience, we are missing something significant. I now want to consider how the sorts of experiences of darkness, that I have already outlined, might sit if they are read in correspondence with the Buddhist understanding of emptiness or śūnyatā[11].

[11]The Sanskrit *Śūnyatā* (Japanese *kū*) translates into English as 'emptiness' and means, variously, openness, void or spaciousness, being beyond concepts or being devoid of a 'self'. Harvey 2013: 96.

Beyond Edges

> "[...] we tend to misconstrue *what* presents itself to us in experience. That, which seems so clear and obvious, the world revealed to us by our senses and in everyday life, is not what we think it is at all."
> Simon P. James, *The Presence of Nature*.[12]

In darkness, though we are less able to rely on our sense of sight, in as far as being easily able to tell things apart and name them is concerned, we still see, we just see *differently* and perhaps this is less of a handicap, than it first seems. Perhaps, the distinguishing and naming of things and our sense of an inherent 'self' that can effect such distinctions is not how things are with the world after all. The concept of emptiness is one central to Buddhist thought, though its meaning varies between schools.[13] In the *Mahâyâna* or *Middle Way* Buddhist teachings emptiness or śūnyatā is the quality that pertains to all phenomena, including humans, in lacking their own inherent nature: instead each is said to form a distinct part of a fluxing field of interdependent meanings[14] that can be defined as "the original mode of being of things as they are in themselves and as they, in fact, actually exist."[15] Emptiness therefore rests upon our ability to experience things in a way that is unhampered by "our ordinary self-centred mode of being"[16], in which we depend on such things as a conception of self, knowledge constructs of differing sorts or memories or experiences of the world that we have garnered as an *I*. So, emptiness is a

[12] James 2009: 3
[13] These meanings vary particularly with reference as to whether this state of emptiness denotes a kind of lack, or whether it is being employed to describe an experience of 'reality' that is without negative features. Harvey 2013: 127.
[14] Harvey 2013: 120
[15] Nishitani 1982: 138
[16] Nishitani 1982: 140

radical concept, one that challenges the notion of the ego as the centre of human experience. Indeed, it is an absolute negation of everything that is intrinsic to most humans that leaves us with none of our usual footholds of existence; 'in emptiness there is no place where we can place our hands and feet, no place where we can lay our heads."[17] In his essay entitled *Emptiness and Sameness*, Kenji Nishitani is concerned with the "imaging of emptiness", which he addresses by considering the notion of the empty sky: the sky is an eternally constant empty space of unlimited depth and width and is the only "eternal thing" that we can see with our eyes.[18] Buddhist scriptures often employ this image of the visible sky to indicate things that cannot be seen or to refer to the notion of "eternal limitlessness" itself.[19] Whilst we know that there are many things in it, the sky is in large part, actually empty – an infinite clearing. However this notion of an infinity beyond our experience, an "eternal limitlessness" is staggering for human beings. It is a notion so outside of the experience of most of us that it is beyond comprehension; terrifying, because it completely destabilises the fundamental earthly experience of, certainly, the Western human as being at the centre of things. Of the concept of emptiness, such a difficult one for the Western sensibility to approach, this decentralisation of earthly concerns, however, is perhaps the easier part to accept. Any suggestion that the ego might not be the central locus of human experience, however, may be much harder to deal with, but the way that Nishitani poses this in terms of the imaging of emptiness is worth considering. Sometimes, it is said, emptiness "descends" from the empty sky above and is reflected in, for instance, the tranquillity of a landscape or a particular ambience in our surroundings. Our own

[17] Shoto 2009: 76
[18] Nishitani 1999: 179-217
[19] Nishitani 1999: 180

experience of this sort of tranquillity, when we pick up on it in the form of a moment of inner peace or quiet joy, is emptiness, reflected in our sentiment, since it is at such times that we forget ourselves and our ego driven concerns or cravings.[20] For Nishitani, this is the interiorisation of emptiness, but this forgetting leaves us more open to our situation as it actually is, before it is perceived as either *good* or *bad* experience and at such times we may be more open to others and their experience. Emptiness can be said to be a disposition of expansiveness; the reaching outside of ourselves in compassion for another, say, is the experience of emptiness; an experience open therefore to everyone, not just the enlightened.[21] In any case, the notion of the limitless "empty sky" is fundamental to the concept of emptiness, but as far as we are presently able to tell, darkness is a fundamental aspect of our limitless empty sky. Indeed, our experience of daylight is only a temporary phenomenon, visible to us at regular intervals as a result of a number of coinciding factors. This sliver of illumination that we call day, whenever it lights our part of the planet, slices across only a fragment of the blackness of a wider universe beyond; a temporary illumination in a deep, limitless darkness.

Earlier on I talked of the capacity of darkness to disorientate, because the relationships that things bear to one another, as we generally understand those relationships, seem changed or are missing. For both Nishitani and Merleau-Ponty, humans exist as they are as a result of their relationship to other things. It is perhaps this fundamental aspect of human existence that causes problems for us in darkness: we are less able to discern our own edges; in visible terms the boundaries of our bodies and of other

[20] Shōtō 2009: 77
[21] Inada 1989: 231-245

things overlap, become obscured. Our core sense of self is compromised by uncertainty or fear and by the inability to read ourselves as part of our visible surroundings. It is possible that this unseatedness, just like those moments of tranquillity, is in fact, itself, a variety of experience of emptiness reflected in our sentiment. This is the overlapping of our inner and outer experience even when we respond to this experience of discomfort by attending not to the feelings of unseatedness themselves but to the circumstances that we think may be causing them such as the dark.

In darkness […] we just see *differently*
and, perhaps, this is less of a handicap,
than it first seems.

Emptiness means not that there is no division between subject and object in the world – in this approach there is no subject and no object. Rather, the meaning of emptiness is that there is no world since if there were, it could only exist as an object out there, named and conceptualised by us as subjects. The notion of emptiness therefore rules out such labels as *light* or *darkness* altogether and it thoroughly undermines the idea of there being any point to an essay such as this one! However it is enough that we recognise the import of emptiness in grasping that our understandings of night, darkness, day and light are largely also human constructs. Beyond these constructs there may lie an opportunity to experience a continuity between self and world that is less dependent on 'self' and therefore more open to 'world'. For we have been subject to a distortion of perception under which we use our bodily senses to define what is 'out there' as separate from us,

rather than as the means through which to experience our own continuity with the world.[22] The exposure to darkness has the potential to yield a different experience of space and of self as part of an overlapping and cyclical world where everything is transitory, since "the ego does not affirm itself in relation to darkness."[23]

Darkness is a precious resource, one that we have not yet quite exhausted, but certainly one that has been banished – an experience of past peoples. If darkness and emptiness can be aligned in this way, then the experience of physical darkness may have the potential to mean for contemporary humans not a distortion of local space in daylight but the possibility of a different sort of space entirely; one that can flood human experience with an expansiveness that goes beyond its purely physical designation. In such a space beyond that of ego driven human concerns, perhaps the interdependent nature of being a part of the world, fearful as it is, may be more acutely sensed. If emptiness descends from the empty sky above, then perhaps the potentialities outlined above will be that much more evident when the visible sky, that we experience as being above our heads in daylight, descends to settle around us as it becomes night.

This attempt to set out the potential ways in which darkness may be attended to that could take it a little beyond its conception as an interdependent part of the experience of light, may not help to soften the experience of a long dark winter in the northern latitudes, however, in the same way that our eyes are able to *dark adapt* to lower light levels, it might turn out that we also have the ability to adjust the way that we attend to darkness, so that we might begin to sense more fully our immersion in a shifting world.

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[22] Mazis 2009: 19

[23] Minkowski 1970: 429 in Cataldi 1993: 50

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Journey into the Dark: Encountering Aurora Borealis

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Abstract – The Northern Lights have become a major attraction and a driving force for winter tourism development in Iceland and northern regions in Scandinavia and North America. This is the case even though Northern Light tours are a challenging phenomenon to turn into a product due to their unpredictability. Although Northern Light tours differ considerably in terms of structure and setup, depending on conditions, they all are based on the same principle; the interplay of light and darkness. In this chapter we focus on the role and meaning of darkness in Northern Light tours. We argue that although darkness is a necessary precondition for seeing the Northern Lights it should not be treated as a passive background to their display but should rather be approached as a matter playing active and multiple roles in shaping the Northern Light experience. Every Northern Light tour is partly improvised intact with circumstances and it is when the Northern Lights are absent that darkness comes to matter most for creating memorable tourism experience. This places a particular emphasis on the role of the guide who needs to improvise and weave together the qualities that darkness offer in order to create memorable and positive experience. The role of the guide is crucial in how these actors are brought together in order to perform the tour itself and they may use various strategies to manoeuvre a no-show. In this paper we will briefly trace two examples of Northern Light tours where the guide successfully deals with the absence of Northern lights by tuning into the rhythm of darkness and creating a special kind of atmospheric

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lightscape together with the participating tourists, which provides a positive Northern Light experience.

Keywords – Northern lights, darkness, guides, lightscape, Iceland, Norway

The guide has stopped talking and we all sit quiet on the bus. We are immersed in darkness and I can hardly see the person sitting across the aisle. The weather turns worse and worse and most of us are sceptical that we will see any Northern Lights tonight. I'm not sure where we are exactly, although I should know the way […] We arrive at Hjalteyri, a small fishing hamlet, a stop there and the guide invites us to step off the bus. Most of us do so, although some only for a short while. The wind blows and it is cold, but the closeness to the sea is captivating; to feel the wind and the smell of the ocean. I think about the fishermen that used to live here as I look up to the sky trying to see a break in the cloud cover. Cloud of hail is approaching from the north.

This snippet from the fieldnotes, written by one of the authors, describes a moment of an experience from a Northern Light tour undertaken in the north of Iceland, in February 2015. That particular night it was what tour operators usually call a "no-show", meaning that there is no sighting of the Northern Lights. Still the tour provided us, tourists and researchers, with a memorable experience that brings forth the importance of all the other "stuff" that, in addition to the Aurora Borealis, play key roles for Northern Light tourism, such as guides, weather and variety of different materialities, human as well as non-human, not least darkness itself.

The Northern Lights have become a major attraction and a driving force for winter tourism development in Iceland

and northern regions of Scandinavia.[1] This is the case even though Northern Light tours are a challenging phenomenon to turn into a product due to their unpredictability. The uncertainty of the lights is often presented in marketing material and by the guides at the beginning of tours frequently with reference to the mythical or magical character of the Aurora Borealis as well as to scientific explanations of their fluctuations. Although Northern Light tours differ considerably in terms of structure and setup depending on conditions, they all are based on the same principle: the interplay of light and darkness. In this chapter we focus on the role and meaning of darkness in Northern Light tours. We argue that although darkness is a necessary precondition for seeing the Northern Lights it should not be treated as a passive background to the Northern Lights but rather should be approached as a matter playing active and multiple roles in shaping the Northern Light experience, as it affects our perception of space and time. Every Northern Light tour is partly improvised intact with circumstances and it is when the Northern Lights are absent that darkness comes to matter most for creating memorable tourism experience. This is when the guide needs to improvise and weave together the qualities that darkness offers in order to create what Bille and Sörensen[2] refer to as lightscapes which, as we demonstrate, are woven together by different actors, human and non-human. The concept of lightscapes aptly captures how the relational dynamic of light and darkness shapes the appearance of the world. The role of the guide is crucial in how these actors are brought together in order to perform the tour itself. Thus the guides may use various strategies to manoeuvre a no-show. In this paper we will briefly trace two examples of Northern Light tours where

[1] Heimtun, Jóhannesson, & Tuulentie 2014; Heimtun & Viken 2015.
[2] Bille & Sörensen 2007

the guide successfully deals with the absence of Northern lights by tuning into the rhythm of darkness and creating a special kind of atmosphere together with the participating tourists, which provides a positive Northern Light experience.

The chapter is based on research that we worked on in collaboration with colleagues in Norway and Finland during the winter of 2014-15. We carried out comparative fieldwork in numerous locations in the three countries, involving participant observation as well as carrying out interviews and focus group discussions with tourists and tour providers.[3] The chapter proceeds in three parts. We will start with a discussion of Northern light tours and describe how they are different in comparison to guided tours in day lit nature. This leads us to discussion on the role and meanings of darkness and how it shapes tourism experience in relation to other actors, human and non-human. We will then illustrate the theoretical discussion with two anecdotes that emphasise the material quality that darkness brings forth.

Journey into Darkness

We start on the ground. In a meeting room at the University of Akureyri, Iceland, three Northern light guides from a local company explain to researchers from Iceland, Finland, and Norway what Northern Light tours are all about from their experience and what makes them special. All of them agree that guiding Northern Light tours is not for anyone and one of them comes straight to the point saying: "You throw a handful of people into a black box and you go with them and have to entertain them for six

[3] This research was part of the WINTER: New turns in Arctic Winter Tourism hosted by the University of Tromsø: The Arctic University of Norway.

hours". This is the challenge. The black box is the vehicle, in their case, usually a mini-bus (10-30 people). The average tour is only three hours, but in case of no-show every participant is entitled to try again and on occasions the guides have to be ready to deal with numerous nights in a row where the Aurora is not to be seen. One hardly ever knows for certain if the Northern Lights can be seen. The guides in Akureyri explain that they do not cancel a trip unless the road conditions are unsafe. Thus tours are undertaken in all kinds of possible and impossible conditions.

The Northern Lights have become
a major attraction and a driving force
for winter tourism development in Iceland
and northern regions of Scandinavia.

This uncertainty makes Northern Light tours demanding for the guides, not the least since the tourists often have high expectations for the "show". As one of them explains: "You could not do this only for the money […] To be a Northern Light guide takes a special skill", it is a performance, especially during nights when it is almost certain that the Northern Lights will be absent. On such occasions, a Northern Light tour turns into a journey into darkness.

To understand why the Northern Lights do not always behave according to the itineraries posted in marketing material of the tourism companies we have to take off from the ground. The activity and intensity of the Northern Lights fluctuates in tandem with the rhythms of the sun. The solar wind emits charged particles out to space and, if

they reach the Earth, they collide with atoms in the high altitude atmosphere (thermosphere) emitting the Lights in an oval shaped region around the magnetic poles of the Earth.[4] The Aurora's oval remains stable around magnetic poles, although it shifts in size in relation to solar activity. Due to rotation of the Earth, Iceland moves out of the oval in the morning hours and the best chance to see the lights is during the evening. The Aurora's display can vary a great deal. Most often they take a curtain-like form, which can fold into arcs, bands, and ribbons. Greenish-white is the most common colour, but many variations are possible.[5] The intensity of the solar wind is constantly changing, which affects the chances of seeing the Northern Lights. As noted above, conditions closer to the ground also complicate things. Clouds often block the view from the ground and light-pollution can affect the visibility of the Lights considerably. Often, Northern Light trips take the form of a treasure hunt, where guides and tourists are looking for a break in the cloud cover.[6] It is however never certain that one will see the Lights, even though there is a clear sky. The fluctuations of the Northern Lights underscore that the world is constantly changing, which "not only opens up a space for improvisation but also demands it" [7].

Thus the guide's task is to create a positive experience out of constantly changing circumstances. Research on tourist guides have recently pointed towards the importance of the guide's performance, emotional labour, and the co-creation of the guided tour.[8] We would like to add an emphasis on

[4] The Lights around the southern magnetic pole are called Aurora Australis. Akasofu 1979.
[5] Akasofu 1979
[6] Heimtun 2016; Lund 2017
[7] Ingold & Hallam 2007: 2
[8] Bryon 2012; Heimtun 2016; Larsen & Meged 2013; Weiler & Black 2015

various non-human actors that affect and entwine with the guiding practice, not the least, in nature-based tourism.[9] When touring, the guide encounters the contingencies of a vibrant world and seeks to create an enjoyable experience through the assemblage of light, darkness, energetic particles, technologies, and weather, to name only few of the elements of Northern Light tours[10]. The inherent uncertainty of Northern Lights tours revolves around the absence and presence of the Aurora Borealis. As a guide, you have to be ready to handle the unexpected and improvise. If the Lights appear, "everything changes", as one guide told us further stating that "sometimes the guide is happier than the group". If the Lights perform and fulfil the expectations of the group, the guide's task is also much easier, as the Lights have taken over the performance of the tour. If however the Lights remain absent, the tours need to change accordingly. The guide needs to engage with the absence of the lights and then darkness comes to the fore as a central ingredient and matter out of which tourism experience needs to be improvised.

Dynamics of Darkness and Light

Darkness and light have often appeared as binaries in Western thought. While darkness connotes some sort of absence, lack, danger, and uncertainty, light is related to clarity, enlightenment and goodness.[11] To approach darkness as the 'other' to light might however be misleading. Morris reminds us that "there is no such thing as total darkness at night (or total lightness in the day). […] Darkness is situated, partial and relational".[12] It is through relations to other things and elements that darkness and

[9] Rantala, Valtonen, & Markuksela 2011; Valkonen 2010
[10] Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017; Lund 2017
[11] Bille & Sørensen 2007; Morris 2011
[12] Morris 2011: 316

light come to matter as performative actors. For example, we see both in and with light.[13] Light is then not only a medium but also an object that affects how we perceive our surroundings. The same can be said about darkness – it affects our perception of space and time. In order to grasp the dynamic interplay of darkness and light Bille and Sörensen suggest the concept of lightscapes. In their words: "The appearance of the world is determined by the changing lightscapes cast by the shadows in the relationship between things, persons and light".[14] Lightscapes are dynamic, becoming in relations to human and more-than-human actors as well as in tandem with rhythms of nature caused, for instance, by the rotation of the Earth. We are always part of one or another lightscape and, when embarking on a Northern Light tour, we may expect or hope to experience a particular lightscape; one that includes the unfolding of the somewhat magical Aurora Borealis.[15] Every Northern Light tour relates to and enacts different lightscapes. For grasping how darkness comes to matter it is therefore necessary to trace emergent lightscapes of Northern Light tours.

Edensor[16] has written about "the quest for bright space" as one of the markers of modernity. For the context of this chapter it is important to note that illuminated or bright space is the norm that most people are used to in their everyday lives. Darkness not affected by man-made illumination is increasingly rare. Although darkness has usually negative connotations, it does also have positive values that should not be overlooked or forgotten. These include:

[13] Edensor 2012
[14] Bille & Sørensen 2007; Morris 2011: 267
[15] Mathisen 2014
[16] Edensor 2013

> The potential for conviviality and intimacy to be fostered in the dark, the aesthetics and atmospherics of darkness and shadow, the affective power of the star-saturated sky, the possibilities for looking at the world otherwise and apprehending it through other senses.[17]

These are qualities that may contribute to valuable tourism experiences. Darkness has the potentiality to create a special kind of atmosphere and affect. In that regard, the capacity of darkness to alter our perception of time and space is particularly important. Darkness embraces and flows through space. Many tourists undertaking a Northern Light tour have, without a doubt, experienced to be immersed in darkness while sitting on a bus on the way to a potential viewing spot and got disorientated not exactly knowing in which direction the bus is heading or for how long it has been driving.

Darkness not affected by man-made illumination is increasingly rare.

Darkness alters the rhythm of our behaviour and our relation of the body with the physical surroundings. As Morris[18] notes, humans are variously dependent on vision and when the lights go out we need to slow down and use other senses to orient ourselves and move around. The adjustment that darkness demands may be liberating as well as uncomfortable. Darkness opens up the unknown and the uncertain and mystifies the surrounding, even if we may be

[17] Edensor 2013b: 447-48
[18] Morris 2011

familiar with it during daylight. Darkness then contributes to the creation of an affective space of alternative rhythms one needs to tune into in order to move safely around. Such affective spaces are relational configurations of diverse elements, energies, bodies, and technologies.[19] Affect is a relational force that flows through humans and other actors as well as the physical world.[20] As these diverse entities come together and relate in time and space, they prompt distinct atmospheres. Atmospheres can be described as being "[…] a quality of environmental immersion that registers in and through sensing bodies while also remaining diffuse, in the air, ethereal".[21] According to Edensor and Sumartojo, […] affects, sensations, materialities, emotions, and meanings are all enrolled within the force-field of an atmosphere.[22] "[A]ffect is thus generated by immersion in an atmospheric environment that folds subject and space together".[23] What tourists on a Northern Light tour are longing for is to experience the affective lightscapes created when the Aurora Borealis intertwines with the gloom of the night sky. What happens when the Northern Lights do not appear is that the guide needs to negotiate their absence and improvise an alternative atmosphere through which affective lightscapes may emerge.

Traces of absences are abundant around us and from time to time they may grab our attention, as they unsettle the order of things by creating a rift in the present.[24] As Frers points out "[t] hose who experience something as absent have to fill the void that they experience with their own

[19] Edensor 2010
[20] d´Hauteserre 2015
[21] McCormack 2008: 413
[22] Edensor & Sumartojo 2015: 253
[23] Edensor 2010: 236
[24] Frers 2013

emotions, they have to bridge the emptiness that threatens their established expectations and practices".[25] Hence absence is relational, it exists through relations that make it matter.[26] Such relations are created through various practices and technologies that in effect may turn absences into "objects, texts, pictures, and so on".[27] It is through such practices and technologies that absences gain capacity to affect social world.

The relational presence of absences "[…] prompt us into action. And like present things, absences also have their distinctive affordances and material consequences"[28] and hence they affect us. The relationality of absences is important here. It means that absences are always part of the social, they come with what is present[29] but are not an external actor or force that pushes us into action. What is absent is part and parcel of our everyday practices and as such absences wax and wane intact with circumstances and practices. They are experienced and made meaningful through "connections the corporal body, its senses and emotions, and the world around it".[30] We thereby necessarily engage with absences; "it is something we do something *to*".[31] Things may be more or less nearby or far away in time and space and it is this level of propinquity that is at play when we engage with absences. We enact and negotiate the relation between absences and presences, and it is such a negotiation that guides on Northern Light tours need to perform when the Aurora Borealis do not appear. In order to demonstrate how absences are negotiated and improvised on Northern Light tours we shall now revisit

[25] Frers 2013
[26] Meyer 2012
[27] Meyer 2012: 103
[28] Fowles 2010 in Meyer 2012: 104
[29] Law 2004
[30] Frers 2013: 431
[31] Meyer 2012: 104

our fieldnotes of two trips we participated during the period of February and March 2015 – one in the north of Iceland and the other one close to Tromsø, in Northern Norway. The trips were of completely different kind regarding settings and conditions, but what they have in common is the absence of the Northern Lights.

Tuning into Darkness – Negotiating Absence

Our first anecdote is about a Northern Light tour in the north of Iceland. The two of us went with three other Northern Light researchers as well as a group of approximately ten people on a tour one night in February 2015. A mini-bus picked us up in front of our guesthouse and drove to the hotel where the other participants were waiting. Both of us had been on a trip with our guide, Ármann, once before. At that time the Northern Lights appeared as expected and we had had a very good show. This night it was more uncertain if we would turn lucky as the weather forecast showed thick cloud cover over the area as well as possibility of snow showers. Actually, this was the second trip for most of the tourists coming into the bus at the hotel. They had been out the night before also with Ármann and seemed excited about going with him again. When in the bus, Ármann kept up the expectations. He did not want to give up before hand as it can "only be a matter of finding a break in the clouds". Sometimes no more is needed. He talked a bit about possible routes and told us what he had been thinking would be the plan for the night. He said he had been on the phone in the afternoon, calling up his friends and relatives in the region that could help him to decide upon where to go. We later found out that this was something that most of the guides do. That is, to make use of social network to get information about the local weather conditions and foresights in particular places. The region has rather varied climate and weather systems,

which the general weather forecast does not always describe in accurate terms. The local people do, however, know how the wind and clouds may behave given their embedded place connections and by announcing their involvement adds a touch of the authenticity to the tour.

When we drove out of the town of Akureyri heading north, we sat quietly and were immersed in darkness. The weather turned worse and it began to snow. Ármann still sounded optimistic when he asked us to look out the window and let him know if we would see any break in the cloud cover. We did not see much. After a short while Ármann started to tell some stories from the area and someone from the group of tourists that had been with him the night before asked for a ghost story. He was going to do that but then the bus was close to a crossing and Ármann suddenly decided not to head longer north but drive down to a small fishing hamlet, Hjalteyri, to see if there was a break there. He held his camera in his hands and took some photos of the night sky to determine if some cloud was a glimpse of Aurora or simply an ordinary cloud.[32] Unfortunately, it was an ordinary cloud. The road to Hjalteyri is approximately two kilometres from the main road. The hamlet stands under a hillside with few houses scattered along the shoreline and out on a sandbank the Eyri itself. The bus drove to the edge of the sandbank and we got off the bus. This was quite an astounding place. The bus was parked by a huge factory building, an abandoned herring factory, which currently houses art residencies and a gallery during summertime. At this time, it was desolated and loomed behind us, casting

[32] Northern Light tour guides often use their cameras to help them spot Aurora Borealis in the night sky. The characteristic greenish glow of Aurora may appear as white/grey cloud to the human eye. The camera lens is able to gather more light than the human eye and is thus more sensitive towards the colours of Aurora. This also explains the fact that photographs of Aurora are usually much more colourful and vivid than what is possible to "see" with eyes only.

long shadows across a small gravel plane, on which we stood, and out to the sea. A small lighthouse was close by sending beam of light into the darkness, further creating a vivid interplay of light and darkness. Ármann helped people with their cameras and talked to almost everybody that was on the trip. People were satisfied and not very eager to wait. Some were obviously cold and others were tired, but most were captivated by the atmosphere created by the relational materiality of the concrete walls of the factory, the smell and sound of the ocean, the wind that blew from the north mingling with light and darkness. On the way back Ármann performed as an eager huntsman of Northern Lights again, as he jumped out of the bus, when we were driving back to the main road, photographing the night sky once more in order to see if there were any sight of greenish glow of the Aurora. At last he had to affirm that the Northern Lights would remain absent that night and the bus headed back to the town of Akureyri. On the way back he recounted a well-known ghost story from the area, which some of the passengers enjoyed. People laughed and moaned in tandem with the storyline and we could hear some quiet conversations taking place in the bus. Upon arrival the whole group seemed more than satisfied with the experience. Lightscape had been created with dramatic multisensory surroundings and stories brought in directly from the dark. Some were going to try their luck once more the following night, including us.

The second anecdote derives from a trip that we went on from the city of Tromsø, Norway. We were among a group of approximately fifty people heading off on a bus from the city centre. The guide, Maria, greeted us when we stepped on board. Before driving off, she explained that according to the Northern Light forecast there was only a small chance to see the lights this night. She however promised to do her best to provide everybody with a memorable

experience. After a half an hour drive, we came to base camp, the main destination of the tour. This was a farm where she and her family lived. When we came, we saw an apartment house, a barn, and stable and close by stood a big Lavu, a traditional Sami tent. Not far off was the shoreline. Maria invited the group to step out of the bus and told us that we were free to walk around and encouraged us to hike up to a low hill close by or down to the shore. First, she would however want to gather the group into the Lavu where she was going to give us an introduction to the Northern Lights and some refreshments.

Northern Light tours revolve around the creation of certain kind of atmosphere, providing conditions where tourists can relate to and co-create affective lightscapes – with or without the Northern Lights.

Inside the Lavu in the middle of the floor an open fire was set surrounded with wooden benches with fur and pillows on top. The group of tourists consisted of people from various parts of the world. Most were travelling in pairs, but there was also a family of four on the tour. We sat down and Maria told us again that, unfortunately, there was a very little chance of seeing Aurora Borealis this night. After offering tea, coffee, and cakes to the visitors, she walked between the benches and asked about where people were coming from thus gathering an overview of the group, as well as creating some small talk that sometimes got us, the tourists, into conversation with each other. A cosy atmosphere around the fire started shaping, as the tourists started to exchange stories about their travels, experiences,

and desires. Maria then screened a short video on one side of the tent, which recounted the history of Norway and described the "typical" Norwegian in a rather playful manner. As such she performed as a hostess giving a sense for the locality. She made an effort to make sure that everybody felt comfortable, as she engaged with the atmosphere by telling about myths relating to the Northern lights and answering questions from the visitors. People felt relaxed and cosy around the warmth from the fire, but occasionally someone stood up and went out to look at the sky or take a stroll down to the shoreline. The weather was calm, hardly any wind at all and despite the lack of Aurora people enjoyed pleasant lightscapes created by the surroundings, that were brought together by María's performance. When it was time to leave, people seemed to be quite happy with the tour despite the "no-show".

Improvising Lightscapes

The two examples recounted above cast light on the ways in which affective lightscapes are improvised during Northern Light tours. The role of the guide is in both instances crucial. In the former case, Ármann continues to perform as an "eager huntsman" of Aurora Borealis keeping up optimism in face of weather conditions that are far from optimal. Most importantly he choreographs the tour in such ways that he allows for certain qualities of darkness to come to the fore, providing tourists with the opportunities to connect to those and participate in an emergent lightscapes of affect, bridging the void created by the absence of the Aurora. We mentioned two occurrences where the relational force of affect came to the fore during the tour. First was the chilly encounter with the sea and strong wind staged quite dramatically close to an abandoned herring factory. Second notions of fear and horror but also play and conviviality found their way into

the dark mini-bus as Ármann recounted ghost stories from the region on the way back to Akureyri, relating to different kinds of absences and making them matter in the present tour.

In the second example Maria played with different elements of darkness. The surroundings were different: calm weather and actually very little chance of seeing Aurora Borealis at all. This tour did have altogether different rhythm that Maria carved out as she engaged in dialogue with tourists bringing forth their stories and motives for joining in the tour. The materialities of the Lavu, the smell, sound, and sight of the fireplace in the middle of the space prompted thoughts and discussions on (otherwise absent) Sami culture, while she also gave insight into "typical" Norwegian way of life providing opportunity for her guests to reflect on their own life-histories and identity. This is a clear example of how tourists, as participants in the tour, also co-created the atmosphere through which an affective lightscape, void of the Aurora Borealis emerged.

In both cases we do not know what individual tourists thought or if they shared the feeling, we had for the atmospheres created. Nevertheless, it was obvious that most of the tourists were satisfied, even though they did not see any Northern Lights. Ármann and Maria skilfully improvised affective lightscapes by relating to material and discursive elements in the surroundings and offering tourists to participate, giving them the chance to connect to particular qualities of darkness and engage in the co-creation of the atmosphere. As such, these examples bring forth how darkness comes to matter not only as a backdrop of the Northern Lights but as a crucial element that shapes the lightscapes of Northern Light tours.

Northern Light tours revolve around the creation of certain kind of atmosphere, providing conditions where tourists can relate to and co-create affective lightscapes – with or without the Northern Lights. Guides need to be able to relate to and play with the qualities of darkness, making them available to tourists to relate to and engage with. This demands that they are capable of embracing the unknown and engaging in improvised choreography, working across the spheres of nature and culture as usually defined. Every Northern Light tour relates to and enacts different lightscapes. For grasping how darkness comes to matter in each case, it is therefore necessary to venture on a journey into darkness and trace emergent lightscapes of Northern Light tours.

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The Black Ecstasy of Guantánamo Bay[1]

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Abstract – "The Black Ecstasy of Guantánamo Bay" focuses on the state sanctioned sonic torture techniques utilised on persons illegally captured and sequestered within the Guantánamo Bay detainment camp in Cuba, which, since the 11th January, 2002 has been operated by the Joint Task Force of the United States Government. More particularly, it considers the waveformed dynamics of violence that are carried out in the dark, when the ocular field is negated in order to amplify the efficacy of music and noise as instruments of torture. It is in this intensely pitched environment that the body as antenna is considered; a subjectivity that receives and transmits information about the affect of waveforms. When music becomes weaponised, it blurs the distinctions between cultural and military spheres and, as a result, the darkness of the detainee's cell, military strategy, and frequencies coalesce into a new cosmology of insidious relations.

Keywords – Sonic torture, waveformed dominance, sound as a weapon, antenna-body, black ecstacy

Numerous torture techniques and acts of inhumane cruelty have occurred in the Guantánamo Bay detainment camp in Cuba, which, since the 11th January 2002, has been operated by the Joint Task Force of the United States Government.

[1] Portions of this text were originally published in Heys, T. (2019). *Sound Pressure: How Speaker Systems Influence, Manipulate and Torture*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Heys, T. (2021). "The Black Ecstasy of Guantánamo Bay," in *Darkness. The Dynamics of Darkness in the North*, eds. D. Chartier, K.A. Lund and G.T. Jóhannesson, Montréal and Reykjavík: Imaginaire | Nord and Land- og ferðamálafræðistofa / Research Centre in Geography and Tourism at the University of Iceland (Isberg), pp. 65-86.

In the context of this organised violence the following text considers waveformed attacks carried out in the dark, a setting that negates the ocular field to amplify the efficacy of music and noise as instruments of torture.

It is in this intensely pitched environment that the body as antenna shall be considered; a subjectivity that receives and transmits information concerning the affect of waveforms. When music becomes weaponised, it blurs the distinctions between cultural and military spheres and, as a result, the darkness of the detainee's cell, military strategy, and frequencies coalesce into a new cosmology of insidious relations. It is a new entangled matrix that includes civilian and entertainment fields and it raises the tideline of ambient fear because all modes of frequency-based activity are in range of assimilation. But then, maybe that production of fear or urban 'dread', as Steve Goodman calls it[2] is the raison d'être of a military-entertainment complex that aims to encompass us all in its paranoid, intimate embrace of 'Pure War'.

For Paul Virilio the state of pure war is an omnipotent ecology that fosters constant neurosis and preparation.[3] It works to immutably mesh together the civilian and martial matrix of cultural, economic, social, spatial, and technological networks, so that they become evermore symbiotic and indefinable from each other's interests, ultimately creating a situation whereby "it is impossible to tell where the civilian sector begins and where the military ends".[4] Within this collapsed logic of difference, new nebulous and malleable offshore spatialities such as Guantánamo Bay are creased open. At the same time legal and ethical systems that should be able to challenge them

[2] Goodman 2009: 64
[3] Virilio and Lotringer 1983: 18
[4] De Landa 1991: 228

are made problematic or, worse than that, paralyzed. Purposefully crippled they are coerced into a dysfunctional stasis meaning that "the Guantánamo detainees are located in the space "between the two deaths," occupying the position of *Homo sacer,* legally dead (deprived of an official legal status) while biologically still alive…".[5]

The darkness of the detainee's cell, military strategy, and frequencies coalesce into a new cosmology of insidious relations.

Hundreds of men and boys have passed through the camp, the vast majority being released without charge. Despite this, as of January 2021, there are still forty detainees being held. While there are numerous torture techniques and acts of inhumane cruelty to be taken into account when analysing the full spectrum spread of Guantánamo's organised violence, this text focuses more closely on "the use of this kind of audio-technique (that) is rather new in interrogation"[6], according to vice president of the PsyOps Veterans Association, Rick Hoffman. The use of music as torture appears to have been widespread throughout all the camps within Guantánamo, the reports from ex-detainees beings numerous and detailed.

Shafiq Rasul, one of the "Tipton Three" – British Muslims detained in Guantánamo for over two years after being captured by the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan – tells of being short-shackled to the floor in a dark cell while

[5] Zizek 2006: 371
[6] BBC MMX. 2006

Eminem's 'Kim' and pounding heavy metal played incessantly for hours, augmented by strobe lights.[7]

It is during Michael Winterbottom & Mat Whitecross's 2006 documentary drama *Road to Guantánamo* that re-enacted scenes of this recently developed sonic technique firmly entered public consciousness, amplifying the searing acoustic brutality of sensory overload into our collective consciousness.

In a 2010 "Spiegel Online" interview with Rasul's detained friend Ruhal Ahmed, German writer Tobias Rapp leaves us in no doubt as to the serious psychological threat of this sonic practice that has become mediated as "torture lite"[8]:

> You can't concentrate on anything. Before that, when I was beaten, I could use my imagination to forget the pain. But the music makes you completely disoriented. It takes over your brain. You lose control and start to hallucinate. You're pushed to a threshold, and you realize that insanity is lurking on the other side. And once you cross that line, there's no going back. I saw that threshold several times.

While Ahmed goes on to iterate how he was short-shackled for days at a time and "left to urinate or defecate in his pants"[9] in ice-cold chambers, it is his account of music's

[7] Hultkrans 2008

[8] The term "torture lite" refers to a set of torture practices that is also deceptively referred to as the application of 'moderate physical pressure'. Employed by the U.S. military to torture detainees in Guantánamo Bay, torture lite methods include musical and psychological torture, sensory deprivation, starvation and thirst, sleep deprivation, waterboarding, forced standing, and sexual abuse.

[9] Rapp 2010

capacity to psychologically relocate the listener that is most revealing:

> When you go to a concert or a club, you're looking for loud music and flashing lights. You want to be transported into ecstasy. We experienced exactly the same thing, except that it was turned on its head, says Ahmed. You could call it black ecstasy.[10]

Whereas Rapp's article relates to circumstances in which the employment of popular music by artists, such as Eminem and Metallica, reveals the state's choice of 'mainstream' sonic apparatus by which to apply force, Jon Ronson's interview with Jamal Udeen Al-Harith (another Briton who was never charged and held in extrajudicial detention as a suspected terrorist and tortured, hence his involvement in the "Rasul v. Rumsfeld" case[11]) reveals a different aesthetic approach to waveformed torture altogether. In conversation with Al-Harith about the types of music used to disorient and disturb him in Guantánamo, Jon Ronson[12] cannot hide his surprise at learning that rather than music genres such as Country, Heavy Metal, and Rap being employed by the military for their torture sessions, guards played atonal soundscapes that had no beats or rhythms. They were aural collages that could be termed *experimental electronic compositions* consisting of noise, industrial sounds, and electric piano.

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[10] Rapp 2010

[11] In the case "Rasul v. Rumsfeld", former Guantánamo detainees Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal, Ruhal Ahmed, and Jamal Al-Harith filed suit against former U.S. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld. The claimants requested financial compensation from Rumsfeld, as he condoned the use of illegal interrogation practices upon them during their wrongful detention in Guantánamo Bay. On December 14th, 2009, after a number of hearings and transferals, the U.S. Supreme declined to accept the case for hearing on the grounds of "limited immunity".

[12] Ronson 2004

At the other end of the musical spectrum where repetitive beats and strings carry melodic choruses a more literal notion of black ecstasy provides another disturbing example of sonic abuse; the tenebrous nature of the military's strategies manifesting in the blacked out rooms of a genre not discussed yet but which has figured heavily in academic analysis of U.S. torture practices in Iraq by American musicologist Suzanne Cusick and English professor Moustafa Bayoumi. It is the much-maligned genre of Disco. In an article entitled *Disco Inferno,* Bayoumi provides examples of torture rooms in Mosul where detained Haitham al-Mallah described being "hooded, handcuffed and delivered to a location where soldiers boomed "extremely loud (and dirty) music" at him. Mallah confirmed that the site was "an unknown place which they call 'the disco"".[13] In his conclusion, Bayoumi surmises that "torture threatens to decivilize us today not only because its practices are being normalized within our national imagination, but also because civil society is being enlisted to rationalize its demand".[14]

This notion of disco being 'dirty music' is not a new narrative in the west. As noted by Richard Dyer (1979), the genre of disco has commonly been associated with its roots - 1970s clubs whose clientele consisted mainly of African American and homosexual communities whom supposedly practiced sexually deviant behaviours and embraced excessively hedonistic lifestyles (often involving drug taking). Cusick further examines the utilisation of music that has been labelled 'queer' or 'effeminate' by champions of overtly masculine, heterosexual culture. She proposes that such types of music are employed as a weapon because of their perceived association with and promotion of excess and deviancy, which in turn are understood to be

[13] Bayoumi 2005
[14] Bayoumi 2005

transmittable qualities that can infect the religiously pure body of the detained male Muslim.

Examining bloggers' responses to the notion of music as a weapon, Cusick touches upon this cultural paranoia about 'dirty' types of music that are understood to also soil 'clean' Western value systems. She comments that a number of bloggers "use the idea of music as torture to displace onto Muslim detainees a rage rooted in their own fear that they are immersed in a culture that has become, in their words, 'nancy', 'pansy', and 'pussy'"[15]. For Cusick, musical genres such as disco are being employed against the incarcerated bodies of Guantánamo to disturb, contort, and distress them via sexual connotation and transferral; the cell's acoustic organisation (the disco music) and its efficacy internally ratified, because to the U.S. military officer it represents a sonic currency of carnal hostility.

Break it Up, Break it Up, Break it Up, Break Down

In attempting to break the detainee's body and mind, music is the most effective technique employed that falls under the insidious rubric of no touch torture.[16] Analysing the relations of power implied in the use of sonic weapons, Cusick asks, "What better medium than music to bring into

[15] Cusick 2006: 10

[16] A relatively new model of psychological torture (that does not mark the body of its victim) in which music is deployed to inflict pain. "'No touch torture' using music to dissolve others' subjectivities has been imposed on persons picked up in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Indonesia, Iraq, Mauritania, Pakistan, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates" (Cusick 2006: 8). For Cusick, this strategy entails that "a detainee […] must experience himself as touched without being touched, as he squats, hands shackled between his shackled ankles to an I-bolt in the floor, in a pitch-black room, unable to find any position for his body that does not cause self-inflicted pain […] the experience creates a nexus of pain, immobility, unwanted touching (without-touch); and of being forced into self-hurting by a disembodied, invisible Power" (2006: 8).

being (as a felicitous performative) the experience of the West's (the infidel's) ubiquitous, irresistible Power?"[17] Conducting research along similar lines to Cusick, Ramona Naddaff intones that "music torture impels a rethinking of how musical listeners experience being touched by sounds that harm their inner senses and maim identity formation".[18] Such a re-consideration would entail investigating the relationship between haptic spatiality, the socially constructed body, and the waveforms that fuse, modulate, and separate them. In Guantánamo, conducting this thirded analytical principle to its logical conclusion leads to an archetypal presence that is innately connected to itself and to the other through the politics of oscillation; in its capacity to synthesize, to have impact and to be impacted upon, the "body is rendered as multi fx-unit, as transducer of vibration as opposed to a detached listening subject isolated from its sonic objects".[19]

The sheer weight of the sonic mass pressuring the body in Guantánamo was generated precisely to control and possess the culturally compressed anatomy of the other. The alterity and solipsistic spatiality of the torture cell reverberated with echoes of the self, the 'enemy', and the architecture. The divisions between them collapsed by the waveforms that established aural control of the situation. For Julian Henriques, "sonic dominance is visceral, stuff and guts. Sound at this level cannot but touch you and connect you to your body".[20] Skin, hair, nails, sinew, and muscle, all pitched and rippled, as the soundwaves pounded upon, into, and through them. The 160-decibel[21] vibrations being

[17] Cusick 2006: 10
[18] Naddaff 2009
[19] Goodman 2009: 46
[20] Henriques 2003: 452
[21] 160-decibel – as verified by Roman Vinokur "[…] acoustic noise starts inflicting discomfort to the ears at 120dB and pain at 140dB in the audio

received via "bone conduction as well as through the acoustical properties of the air…".[22] It is within this coercive ocean of sound that we find the unwilling antenna-body, channelling all waveforms, including those in which it is supposed to drown.

For even in such circumstances, where a dynamics of overloading the organs of perception predominates, the antenna-body still transmits, albeit through noisy channels of interference; it speaks of the pain implicit within repetition and of the struggle for sentience amid overwhelming acoustic intensities. It reveals the "dark ecstasy"[23] that resides within the 'will' to secure complete dominion and direction of waveforms in space. And it tells us that, no matter how severe the techniques for silencing difference become, it will always communicate and reveal the structures, techniques, and strategies that try to mute it.

As compelling as this narrative of acute relational sonic embodiment is, it also needs to be acknowledged that, while the music in Guantánamo connects and transforms the body, the unlit air, and the architecture of the cell, there is an inverse operation of 'waveformed disembodiment'[24] being simultaneously carried out. Music is effective at negotiating and performing this procedure because:

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region. Eardrum rupture occurs at approximately 160 dB; lung rupture may occur at 175dB" (2004: 5).

[22] Ihde 2003: 66

[23] Cusick 2006: 8

[24] Waveformed disembodiment – an example of the disembodying capacity of waveforms is evident in Alexander Bell's invention of the telephone – a technology, which he conceived would allow him to speak to his brothers when they passed away. Henriques also notes that "in his *Gramaphone, Film, Typewriter* Frederick Kittler gives a fascinating account of how the first use for phonographic voice recording was to listen to the literally disembodied voices of the dead" (2003: 461).

> […] like touch, sound has this other opposite aspect that separates us from ourselves, each other and the world […]. Just as the tactile sense is pre-eminent in determining the organism's simultaneous connection with and separation from its environment, the sonic sense plays a similar combining and separating role.[25]

By understanding what this sonic operation of disembodiment entails exactly – what its routines and procedures are – we can better comprehend what it ultimately strives to achieve. This will also reveal a great deal about those with a remit to acoustically make manifest that which is deemed 'hidden' and about others who seek to transmute (the detainee's) silence into something knowable, recordable, and effable.

Commenting on the historically legalised nature of torture, Michel Foucault surmises that its legitimisation as a practice was a result of its capacity to render observable results,

> because it revealed truth and showed the operation of power. It assured the articulation of the written on the oral, the secret on the public, the procedure of investigation on the operation of the confession; it made it possible to reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal [...].[26]

In Guantánamo, reproducing the crimes on the detainee's visible body was problematic, not least because there were no proven crimes whose brutality might be metaphorically reciprocated in this way. Here, instead, the state's desire to

[25] Henriques 2003: 452
[26] Foucault 1975: 55

embody its revenge by carving its abstracted logistical initials onto the anatomy of the detainee had to be inverted: no traces would be left on that which could be observed. This new disembodied torture practice would require means by which to invisibly score *into* the body rather than onto it, which is why music is so effective in such circumstances. Music does not leave marks because it does not operate by merely touching or representing its power on the somatic interface; it is instead committed to enveloping the anatomical surface, moving into and beyond it, challenging the rationale of the perceivable and quantifiable:

> In fact, with sound it simply does not make sense to think of having an inside and an outside in the way that the visual sensory modality, with its preoccupation with surfaces, restricts us. Sound is both surface and depth at once.[27]

Excavation, Autopsy, and Exorcism of the Sonic Body

The potential of waveforms to transgress interfaces has been touched upon already, but we need to up the ante when trying to verbalise the concerns of a body that is simultaneously being sonically punctured and saturated. Hence the shift in tone in what follows as we try to explicate the frequency-based turbulence that is compressed through the hollowed-out detainee in his cell. Rather than analysing how anatomies are touched, the text will now investigate how the body is breached, penetrated, and emptied. In doing so we ultimately aim to reveal how the somatic is operated upon by sound in order to locate discrete and fictionalised forms of knowledge that are allegedly concealed within it. Here we will consider three

[27] Henriques 2003: 459

disparate methods employed by divergent ontological and epistemological practices to search out hidden and esoteric phenomena: *excavation*, *autopsy*, and *exorcism*.

The first and possibly most abstract way of thinking about how the body is plotted, entered, and searched is in terms of excavation. This is a useful concept when thinking about how the body is examined in relation to the organizing spatiality of the architectural cell. The body trades place with the architectural walls of the cell, becoming itself the material container understood to potentially contain secrets and useful information. Like a wall, the will is perceived to be something that can be taken apart and broken. If it is correct to say that "the process of embodiment can only take place through the sensory perceptions",[28] then it is also accurate to say that when the organs that provide those sensory perceptions are overstimulated they become synonymous with entry points to the body (for the organs, as well as informing the self, can soon be made to betray it). It is from these inlets that sonic shafts are driven and the disembodying processes of mining information begins. This unearthing and tunnelling of the body expresses the state's urge to discover the essential articles of faith that define the 'unknowable' culture being investigated – to expose its organizing principles and to definine the (metaphorical) objects of desire, disgust, and sacrifice of that which it does not understand, in order to overcome its legacy.

As previously suggested, for those who confine them, the Guantánamo detainees are already considered legally dead, so an acoustic autopsy of the living is the next logical step in such an irrationally mandated environment. As strobing lights flash down on the body, they highlight the reactions of the prisoner as his anatomy and mind are scored by

[28] Henriques 2003: 466

repetitious orchestrations. The motivation for such a procedure is to find reasons why he has become (legally) dead, for all the detainees have been immediately found guilty and sentenced upon capture without meaningful legal or ethical recourse. The acoustic autopsy is both a wilfully disturbing procedure and an unnaturally occurring phenomenon at the same time. The repetitious music is pumped into the cells, each song "listened to anesthetizes a part of the body."[29] The mind is numbed and emptied, sonic scalpels slowly removing its content neuron-by-neuron, note-by-note. Pain is an inevitable outcome when such a procedure is carried out upon the living, emptying the body of its contents in order to identify the causes of death – both those he is presumed to have caused and his own drawn-out demise.

Torture and punishment routines are epitomized by their capacity to reveal information considered to lie beyond the physical and social body. With this in mind we will now contemplate the third technique for searching the body – the aural exorcism. For centuries, the kind of knowledge labelled as being beyond both the collective and individuated corpus has changed depending upon the state's desire to reveal or expose some hidden or threatening phenomenon. In the case of the social body, the United States has a history of paranoia and neurosis concerning internal threats. Such anxieties were made manifest through the search for clandestine socialist sympathizers in the 1950s, for example, who were legally punished for their beliefs during the era of McCarthyism.[30] In *Discipline and*

[29] Attali 1985: 111

[30] An era in U.S. history in which any persons showing sympathies towards communist causes were legally persecuted by the state. The government often had scant evidence, which was regularly based on allegations made by unnamed informers or no evidence of such allegiances or political affiliations at all.

Punish, Foucault discusses a different type of existential search into and beyond the physical body of the individual, one that discloses the judicial system's preoccupation with accessing the prisoner's essential and graspable seat of consciousness. He writes,

> If the penalty in its most severe forms no longer addresses itself to the body, on what does it lay hold? The answer of the theoreticians – those who, about 1760, opened up a new period that is not yet at an end – is simple, almost obvious. It seems to be contained in the question itself: since it is no longer the body, it must be the soul.[31]

In Guantánamo, the rationale of sonic torture is not to connect with the prisoner's soul so that the state might try to retrain it and realign its offending compulsions with the rhythms of its own value systems. Rather, it is to expose what the state perceives to be the nexus of evil that resides within the very core of the detainee. That which can only be communicated with by re-possessing the prisoner's inner voice. In order to break the detainee and locate this fundamental evil, the inner language must be contacted and seduced from its quiescent interiority, to speak and reveal its covert intentions. The interrogators, who religiously carry out the torture have to believe that there is a fundamentally monstrous nature within these secured bodies, an unnatural power that endows them with the appearance of the living. Those who torture must rationalize their quest to reveal and speak to the source of the evil (the inner voice synonymous with the devil). They also need to legitimate such techniques employed to destroy

[31] Foucault 1975: 16

the will of this vital malevolence that they believe lurks within the pitch-black depths of the orange suited flesh.

In the torture cells, no religious incantations are reiterated so as to aggravate and draw out the force of evil, for the speakers here are not priests; they are technologies of a different repetitious rhetoric – namely, forms of music that have themselves been accused of worshipping and summoning evil: Heavy Metal and Death Metal. In a darkly ironic turn, the Occident amplify the devil through music and direct the resulting sonic terror at the detainee, bringing pressure to bear upon the resistor's will to silence. The spectre of the devil has historically been conceived of as having a particular affinity to sound and unsound. For example, "the early Christian church believed that pagan residues in music could be exploited by the Devil to produce depravity [...]".[32] Such a proposition suggests that the adumbrated form of the demon could only become embodied – so as to cause chaos, turmoil, and suffering – by coming into contact with alchemical frequencies. It is such powerful historical associations with exposing and communing with the voice of the devil that led the military to harness music as an ancient language of somatic violence. Rituals of sonic deliverance are enacted upon the demonised captives believed to be possessed by the malignant 'evils' of Islamic fundamentalism in order to break them. Military operations of acoustic exorcism call upon the recorded musical violence of the underworld to infiltrate and cleanse the living dead bodies tied down in Guantánamo's Heavy Metal cells. The Devil no longer has the best tunes; it has the state's tunes.

[32] Johnson and Cloonan 2009: 32

Not Wanting to Listen

"As David Levin puts it, 'by virtue of developing our listening, we may find ourselves granted the sense of a different norm, a different measure, a different principle for thinking the 'ratio' of rationality'".[33] For those who are forced to listen, however, their measure is one of achieving psychological detachment. While the detainee's anatomy is shackled during sonic torture, his hopes of retaining cognitive autonomy during this process reside in his ability to perform feats of cerebral escape.[34] Cusick substantiates such captive exigency and the need to disengage when she declares that:

> The state's interrogators share with many civilian musicians, composers, and scholars the notion that listening to music can dissolve subjectivity releasing a person into a paradoxical condition that is both highly embodied and almost disembodied in the intensity with which one forgets important elements of one's identity and loses track of time passing.[35]

In lieu of the detainee's need to somehow shut out or elude the sonic pressure bearing down on them, Naddaff takes matters to a sensorially instructive conclusion by proposing that

[33] Henriques 2003: 471
[34] Cusick 2006: 5
[35] Cusick 2006: 5

> listening to music imposes a particular form of violence on the psychic structure that dissolves cognitive, linguistic, and affective capacity. Music torture produces subjects who cannot listen, who no longer desire to listen, who must not listen in order not to speak involuntarily.[36]

As we are well aware, enacting modes of 'not listening' or 'not hearing' is easier said than done. This is especially true if we are to believe R. Murray Schafer's declaration that we submissively relate to sonic phenomena inasmuch as "We hear sound. We belong to sound. We obey sound".[37] If the detainee is to resist such demands, then the ear is a crucial sensory facility from which a distance must be negotiated. Thus from his point of hearing he must re-orchestrate the amplitude of his entire anatomy, so that the tensile waveformed pressure gripping him is prohibited from breaking down possibly the most defining attribute of the self – that vulnerable and porous psychological manifestation designated as *sanity*.

Conclusion

The military-entertainment complex has radically shifted any expectation we might have once harboured, that the production of culture is inherently aligned with antihegemonic forces. Considered at this time when it is difficult to think of music (and by extension culture) in the same way, the antenna-body finds efficacy in its capacity to distribute information about political and military atrocities. As such, this frequency-based agency holds the potential to form modes of resistance against the organised mobilisation of cultural ideology into martial practice. The victim of such

[36] Naddaff 2009
[37] Schafer 2003: 30

shadowy sonic torture is not merely a passive receiver but also an active proponent or transmitter in a network of power relations. And it is in the essential condition of darkness, where the hierarchy of the senses is recalibrated, that the future-facing haecceity of the antenna-body can be more readily felt and heard.

In the darkness of Guantánamo Bay's cells, the concept of the body as antenna destabilises the hierarchy of the senses as it transmits to us even though we cannot see the damage being done with our eyes.

While it is judicious to claim that the interactive assembly of perception-based systems supplies us with the prevalent information we require to formulate a sense of agency, orientation and sanity, it is the information provided by our sense of sight that is privileged and dominates the construction of our understanding of the world. Jonathan Sterne iterates this proposition when he writes, "[…] sight is in some ways the privileged sense in European philosophical discourse since the Enlightenment".[38] In the darkness of Guantánamo Bay's cells, the concept of the body as antenna destabilises the hierarchy of the senses as it transmits to us even though we cannot see the damage being done with our eyes. It is a crucial proposition as it renders the detainee not merely a pacified subject. Rather, in the most extreme of circumstances, it displaces accepted notions of agency, disorients the perceptual compass of those subjected to intense waveforms and by doing so

[38] Sterne 2002: 3

reveals the asymmetric modes of warfare deployed by the occidental military-entertainment complex.

In this sense, the antenna-body is a conceptual evolution of the decentred subject, as described thirty years earlier by Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift. For these spatial theorists, cultural analysis of the body's status led to its significant re-conception; from a "privileged centre of perception, to *embodiment,* in which carnality becomes a field, which only ever has a partial grip on the world and which constantly interacts with other fields, mimetically and otherwise".[39] Thus, speculatively, the antenna-body comes to be recognised as the epitome of the motile and networked subject. A body that is in continual interaction and negotiation with its surroundings. Comprehending that its "whole life is based on environment and condition",[40] it is also aware of its facility to transmit and make communicable the emergence of new domains along with challenging ways of speaking about them. This is not the language of socio-techno-science inferred by McLuhan in the 70s (in 1977 he mooted the idea of forming a media ecology[41]) or demanded by Virilio in 2002 (in *Desert Screen* he intones, "it is time to found an ecology of the media").[42] It is a new way of denoting the viral relations of the body, spatiality, and temporality to frequencies; an ontology of the haptic and the imperceptible; of the peripheral and the oscillating; of the emotional swell and the break down. In the political, sensorial, and legal darkness of Guantánamo Bay, it is the form of the antenna-body that synthesizes this waveformed ecology, revealing to us those activities that are rendered arcane and clandestine in the process.

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[39] Crang and Thrift 2000*:* 19
[40] Lanza 2004: 222
[41] McLuhan 2004: 271
[42] Virilio 2002: 32

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Remoteness of Light: Reflections on an Episteme of Space-Time and the Design of Nature

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Abstract – This essay presents, on the one hand, a conceptual reflection around what we have called an episteme of space-time and the design of nature as a way to discuss the dynamics of darkness in the north of the planet by arguing that darkness is actually only remoteness of light. On the other hand, this text is also an introduction to an aesthetic discussion and creative processes that sustained the authors' development of the installation, *Remoteness of Light*, exhibited at the Nordic House in Reykjavík, Iceland, in the context of the *Dynamics of Darkness in the North* conference in February 2015.

Keywords – Darkness, remoteness of light, media studies, media arts, critical design

During the last weeks of the boreal winter – if the weather permits so – around two o'clock in the afternoon the rays of the Sun seem to hit the snow covering the streets of Reykjavík with such a precision, and light appears thus as a phenomenon so sharp and crystalline, that it is hard to describe it without referring to what technical media have taught us about light beams: for example, the moment when the lens of a photographic camera confronts the Sun

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– even a fraction of a second will be enough – revealing thus in the resulting image, the *nature* of light as the translucent geometric pattern that we usually call lens flare. In a context like this, when February 2015 was coming to an end, a myriad of people gathered precisely in Reykjavík aiming to reflect on the *dynamics of darkness in the north* from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Hence, they travelled long distances willing to address such phenomenon from the vast sciences, others from the humanities, whereas more than one, perhaps, expected to do so from hybrid fields. Yet, it may be noted that the problem to be discussed – if we are allowed to call it a problem – triggered a sort of a paradox, because, after all, the general framework behind that meeting was the celebration of the *International Year of Light* promoted by the UNESCO. There lies then the first indication of a dialectic opportunity which would prevent us from thinking about darkness without paying constant attention to light. It is precisely there where we have situated ourselves as artists and designers, and where we pursue to locate our artwork as an object of inquiry; not in light or darkness specifically and separately, but in the aforementioned paradox and in the opportunity it offers for a dialectical exercise. We thought that by inquiring into such a space we would be able to approach from a new context the *sphere* containing our general matter of concern; namely, how we know and understand the world we live in through *things*. Thus we have travelled from Santiago de Chile with an artwork that was exhibited in the Nordic House in Reykjavík, aiming to claim that from our perspective there would be no such thing as darkness, but rather only what we aim to call *remoteness of light*.

Thus in the following pages we will explore the relation between light and the history of knowledge as shaped by science, paying special attention to some of the aspects that the German scholar, Friedrich Kittler, can teach us about

the field of optics. Then, in a second moment, we will approach what we call *the design of nature*, which in this case, alternatively, will not refer to what nature constitutes as an *a priori* but just the opposite; that is, how humanity designed what we have called nature through articulating norms, techniques, scientific laws, and, as a consequence, by developing technologies. For such purposes we will look at the work of the French anthropologist and philosopher, Bruno Latour, which we will discuss in the light of other authors' arguments and ideas too. Finally, all of the above will give us the framework to deepen in the conceptual and aesthetic configuration of our artwork, *Remoteness of Light*, paying special attention to its interior and exterior material conditions.

Light and Optical Media

The rays of light – which are, in the end, light itself – move between things and our eyes, while at same time they caress the surface of this planet of ours to give us sunrises and sunsets, which are deployed, simultaneously concatenated in different points of the globe. In this way, by paying attention to the movement of light between the Sun and our cities human beings have designed conventions and norms that gave us the North and the South, the East and the West, forms of navigation, and the modes *to project*, to plot, this planet. Thus when this light gets closer to Santiago, it moves away from Reykjavík, giving us particular modes of knowing and comprehending our world *from the other side of light*, to paraphrase Friedrich Kittler.[1] Precisely from an archaeological point of view – to honour the aforementioned reference – a part of our argument seeks to draw a link between, so to speak, the history of our relation with light and the history of what we can call *objects of knowledge*. Our inter-

[1] Kittler 2010: 19

est here is to argue that, first, the human understanding of the movement of light over *things*, as well as the effects of such movement, has allowed us humans to understand the so-called *nature*; and secondly, that it has been the study of light and its behaviour that has let us build an image of ourselves in this planet. In other words, visualizing the movement of light, its closeness and remoteness, gave us modes to know the place we call home, and thus the development of optics contributed with forms and techniques to situate ourselves at it properly.

When this light gets closer to Santiago,
it moves away from Reykjavík,
giving us particular modes of
knowing and comprehending our world
from the other side of light,
to paraphrase Friedrich Kittler

As Friedrich Kittler reminds in his book *Optical Media*, it was Leonardo da Vinci himself who stated that "[t]he sun never sees a shadow"[2]. This sentence, very modest in appearance, is of particular importance to us. Not only because it is shadows, that is to say, darkness, what has brought us to this discussion, but rather because it would be from those shadows that knowledge and then science begun to be built. Hence, we dare say that probably it was darkness – *remoteness of the light*, to be consistent with our argument – what motivated human beings to contemplate the world and then to develop ideas, theories, and models based on it. A stable place with static and constant light,

[2] Kittler 2010: 19

perhaps it would not have led to the epistemic drift triggered by a territory where light moves away and then comes back, generating a paradigmatic loop which took men and women to only one conclusion: we are at the other side of the Sun, at the other side of light. This is a condition *sine qua non* – our own condition. Thus bearing that in mind, we would like to move now to the particular field that allows us to develop our questions in the manner we intend to deploy here, namely, art and technology, which, in Kittler's words, "represent two ways of shifting the boundaries of visuality, so to speak, by either misusing or circumventing the sun";[3] in historical terms probably the most thoughtful and inventive field regarding the question of light.

Consequently, bringing optical media to this discussion, which at least initially invites to think of contemporary technology only, will allow us, however, to look over a sort of genealogy, which could delineate how our perception of (and in) the world, was *artificially* conditioned by a ceaseless work to technically understand and control the phenomenon of light. Thus in this also archaeological path the *camera obscura* emerges as a fundamental apparatus, and even though it can be loosely situated in the fifteenth century's Europe, it has traceable backgrounds that go all the way back to Antiquity[4], teaching us thus the dialectic relation between darkness and light. We know that the technology of this device consists of opposing a bright object to a cubic chamber or box into which no light enters except for the one penetrating a small hole on the front side of the aforementioned volume, which rightly faces the bright object. Thus the rays of light coming from the object crowd towards this powerful hole getting into the shady space, being expanded then in conical shape to project an upside-

[3] Kittler 2010: 19
[4] Link & Röller 2011: 23

down remote re-produced image of the bright object on the interior rear side of the box (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Schematic illustration of a camera obscura

That image has *told* us, doubtlessly, many things. First, it empirically shows the significant and inseparable relation between light and darkness, which, at least from our condition as those at the other side of light, reiterates that only from darkness the so-called humankind has been able to *value* light. Second, the image also shows that the movement of light towards darkness is what triggered the emergence of remote images, making possible, for instance, the discussion about what has been called *the real*, *the symbolic*, and *the imaginary*.[5] Third, the image inside the *camera obscura* seems to point out that this apparatus is not anything else but, paradoxically, both a technical and symbolical analogy of our own position in the planet Earth; that is, individuals thrown into darkness, waiting for the arrival of light to see, to know. In sum, darkness would be the *place* where human-

[5] Kittler 2010: 39-40

ity were able to build knowledge from and thus through it, to develop science and in the end, *the* mode, our mode, to know the world. An important antecedent to sustain this premise is *linear perspective*; and even though it cannot be connected directly to the *camera obscura* through strong evidence according to Friedrich Kittler, it can be linked to the dark chamber, however, by way of historical speculation and more precisely by paying attention to its conical hole – a structuring element for the development of painting, architecture, and engineering during the Renaissance.[6] All the more, just as the German scholar puts it, the genealogical tie between these two aesthetic apparatuses can be found in the work of the Italian artist, Filippo Brunelleschi, who around the year 1425 used this conical hole to obtain a remote reproduced image, which through *linear perspective* allowed him to paint the façade of the church of Saint Giovanni in Florence, locating himself right in front of it, inside the Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral, using the latter as a dark chamber. It is paradigmatic in this example that Brunelleschi then included another hole on the painting itself, inviting an eventual spectator behind the canvas to look through it and watch the church of Saint Giovanni for, while holding a small mirror with a hand, witnessing with her/his own eyes the verisimilitude between reality, *linear perspective*, and the re-produced image.[7] This case study is absolutely medullar for the purposes of this text, because it shows with clarity how the movement of light towards darkness – not only as a matter of fact but as a philosophical one too – can be seen as a foundational aspect of the so-called sciences of the artificial, which are, in the end, a part of the techniques we have given ourselves to understand and design the world, and thus, it comes without saying, our place in it.

[6] Kittler 2010: 53-54
[7] Kittler 2010: 54-57

Designing Nature

Following our argument that there would be no such thing as darkness but only *remoteness of light* – a rhetorical effort to sustain this reasoning, this conceptualization – we would now like to state that similarly there is no such thing as nature, at least not in an autonomous and pure sense – not for our eyes, not for our gaze. To put it another way, we consider that nowadays nature seems to be tantamount to the artificial, or that the distinction between the former and the latter should be reconsidered. On that track let us support these claims with the work of the French anthropologist and philosopher, Bruno Latour, who in his article *A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Towards a Philosophy of Design* states that "[nature] is in great need of being re-designed",[8] arguing that given the expansion of design towards new *spheres* of culture, insofar as contemporary practice, it should also take over nature. Understanding that Latour's tropes are an important part of his modes of expression and considering that his article's initial ideas seek, on the one hand, to provoke and, on the other, to situate the issue within the historical context that his work covers, that is to say, so-called modernity, we would like to add, nonetheless, that nature, since humans were intellectually and technically able to do it, has been always artificially designed. This precedes by many centuries the Renaissance – a period in which, as mentioned above, *apparatuses* like linear perspective emerged. Similarly, it is important to consider that the scientific knowledge triggered, so to speak, by the implementation of the camera obscura, emerged from Greek and Arabic cultures during Antiquity, just as it was pointed out earlier. All the more, Aristotle himself described the phenomenon behind the aforementioned chamber around the

[8] Latour 2008: 2

year 350 BC by studying the relation of perspective and shadow between the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth; laying thus the groundwork for Arab mathematicians to build the first functional models of the camera around that same period.[9] Therefore, if humans have been developing for more than two thousand years theoretical and practical techniques to model and visualize nature, would it be valid to argue that what we see, now and before, is only a designed version of it?

There would be no such thing
as darkness but only *remoteness of light*

Returning to Latour's work, let's consider what may be one of his fundamental premises: that we have never been modern.[10] This somehow points out that all that knowledge based on pre-existent and irrefutable facts, which have dominated Western societies since Renaissance, when science forged itself as the only path to embrace concrete truth, would be coming to an end, and, all the more, that this could be seen in how we understand design today – a field where *things* emerge:

> To think of artefacts in terms of design means conceiving of them less and less as modernist objects, and conceiving of them more and more as "things." […] So as their appearance as matters of fact weakens, their place among the many matters of concern that are at issue is strengthened[11].

[9] Kittler 2010: 50-51
[10] Latour 2007: 17-24
[11] Latour 2008: 4

Here it is important to notice Latour's differentiation between the mentality of the modern period, where issues were based on *matters of facts*, namely, the objective, and the alternative space, where issues constitute *matters of concern.* Then objects, conceptually speaking, would be overtaken by *things* – whose Germanic etymological root, *Dinge*, takes us precisely to the realm of concerns.[12] This is what we have pursued from the beginning of this text: to argue that through the development of instruments, procedures, theories, and apparatuses, we, humans, have modelled the *things* that concern us. We will thus say that we agree with Latour's *we have never been modern* statement, and that because of this we consider that a *politics of things*, so to speak, should take us to critically reflect on the epistemic and mediating role that technology and apparatuses have played between organized human groups, the polis, and *things* themselves;[13] many of which are, ontologically speaking, (in) nature. Yet, beyond the optimistic tone of Latour's text on what design is or could be nowadays, let's consider, contradictions notwithstanding, that this, so to speak, cultural practice still holds a strong connection to what modernity has inherited us. Thus the Czech-Brazilian philosopher, Vilém Flusser, somehow tackles this in his book *The Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design*, arguing that the word design pertains etymologically to the domain of deception and malice, and that not very far from there we find the words machine, technique, and art – all close to *shady spaces.*[14] In sum, these reflections push us back to the main question: is the world we see just what we have been able to design from darkness?

[12] Latour 2008: 6
[13] Latour 2005: 1-33
[14] Flusser 2002: 24-25

Towards a Remoteness of Light

Our answer to that (it is a group of re-articulated questions rather than an actual answer) was materialized in the project *Remoteness of Light*. This artwork seeks, on the one hand, to aesthetically approach the question of light and its condition insofar as movement and remoteness, and on the other, it wants to draw a reminder of the epistemic context in which the aforementioned issue could be located; that is to say, the dichotomy between artificiality and nature. Thus in the interior of the artwork a live-broadcasted image, which is generated by a camera obscura, depicts the view of a rooftop in downtown Santiago de Chile, thereby, sunlight, which at the time of the exhibition was close to that city, is processed and transmitted through darkness, artificially to Reykjavík (Fig. 2). Moreover, the exterior of the piece is a simulacrum of a tree trunk, a geometrically synthesized reproduction of an old and forgotten fragment of nature we found and collected from the southern semi-rural periphery of Santiago (Fig. 3).

Figure 2: Image of the interior of the *Remoteness of Light project*

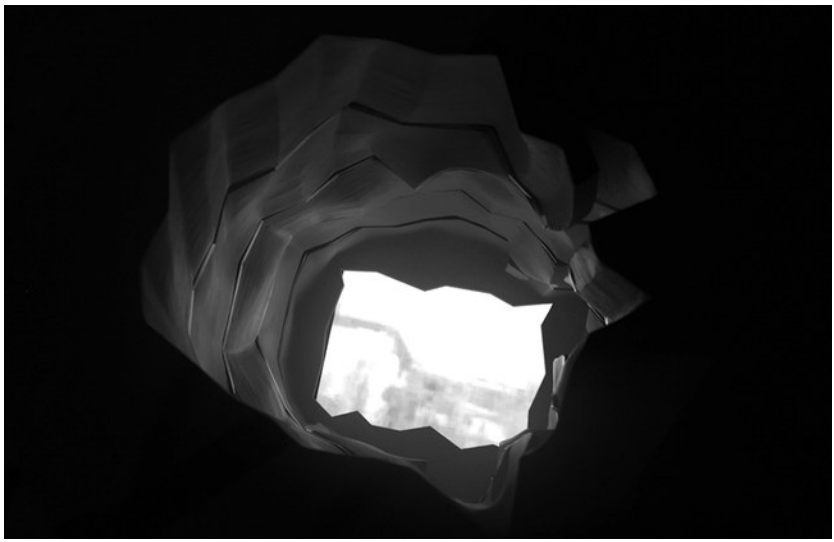

Figure 3: Image of the Remoteness of Light project in the country side near Santiago de Chile

Hence, we travelled with our artwork against the light, before and after presenting it in the context of the conference that triggered these reflections, to take the piece to the city border – a threshold where the artificial and the nature struggle, the place where the asphalt gives way to cold fluted lands hit by the sea, the also semi-rural periphery, where the yellow light of the streets vanishes in the grey of dawn as well as in the blackness of dusk. There, twice, in the gelid morning and then through the icy breezes of the early night, we sought to install our artwork as a probe that draws a middle line between light and its remoteness, and thus, accordingly, between an interiority configured by knowledge and its techniques and a mythological, remote and ungraspable exteriority called nature, which, ironically enough, we can only apprehend through techniques. *Remoteness of Light* thus was an artwork and a conceptual experiment to inquire into the material embodiments of modern knowledge and its, let's say, adversarial relation to nature, where light and darkness form a thread that weaves the mesh that sustains and expands the epistemic and aesthetic scope of such non-dichotomy. In the documentation two stars after the aurora call another pair of bright spots across the bay. There, below the clouds, they are the tiny contours of an imaginary interiority, inside a house, in a building. From this side, the pale surface of a shape synthesized out of an old forgotten trunk draws four bright horizontal lines, four cuts of light that remind that every exteriority shines through what comes from an interior – imaginary notwithstanding (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: Image of the Remoteness of Light project near the Grótta Lighthouse in Reykjavík, Iceland

This essay, therefore, represents the activation and support for an old and yet new broad discussion on the historical, theoretical, conceptual, and material questions that configure the fundamental issues of light and darkness and, consequently, the matter on which our perhaps too modern modes of knowing the world lie. Hence, these pages aim to be a complementary project that can guide the spectators of our artwork, either in an exhibition or through its documentation, towards a more transparent and thus richer dialogue with the artistic reflections, we as a team had over the process that took us to complete this piece, and then to displace it from one hemisphere to the other, towards the remoteness of the North. Yet, it is still worth insisting on how first media theory and more particularly the work of Friedrich Kittler, who, in our opinion and that of others, is one of the founding fathers of the methodological ap-

proach called media archaeology,[15] constituted a substantial basis to begin and thus develop this historico-technological inquiry on the role of light and darkness in the, so to speak, technical construction of modern knowledge. And then, similarly, we have to remark that our search is also indebted to Bruno Latour's science and technology studies, which have helped us to understand how our material and artificially driven work as artists and designers can be configured as *things* and thus as objects of knowledge that incorporate in its form and materiality, an ongoing discussion on how modern scientific thought installs an invisible cloak of epistemic weight over the modes of perceiving and seeing the world – processes which always occur through the transparent presence of designed apparatuses of mediation.

In sum, these reflections push us back to the main question: is the world we see just what we have been able to design from darkness?

Finally, to conclude, let us leave a last (re)mark, this time again in the form of a question, which, borrowed from Michel Foucault, will perhaps help us to draw a wider justification for a work of art and design seeking to be a form of exploration and an inquiry on issues that, just as darkness, one cannot directly see:

> One question remains in suspense: could one conceive of an archaeological analysis that would reveal the regularity of a body of knowledge, but which would not set out to analyse it in terms of epistemological figures

[15] Huhtamo and Parikka 2011: 5-9

and sciences? Is an orientation towards the episteme the only one open to archaeology?[16]

[16] Foucault 1972: 192

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Comparison in/of darkness

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Abstract – In this paper I use a narrative approach to examine the idea of darkness as a cultural construct. I show that darkness as a perceptual object is a cultural construct, one that we use language, image making, and other sign systems to construct. Darkness as such does not exist as a part of our world of experience but only as a bearer of properties or features that are always, at least to a degree, constructed through language or other sign systems. I use an example of direct sense experience, inspiration from metaphysics of properties, and theories from aesthetics of nature as parts of the narrative.

Keywords – Cultural constructions, sign systems, sense experience, metaphysics, aesthetics

This paper, *Comparison in/of darkness*, while being a philosophical paper, does not contain a direct argument. The structure of the paper is not one that leads from premises to conclusion. It is structured as a story or a narrative about how I moved closer to a conclusion when thinking about some features or aspects of darkness. The conclusion I arrive at can be put something like this:

Darkness is a featureless "thing" that can and does take on or support relational or non-essential properties in virtue of language and other means of expression; or, to put it differently: Darkness as a perceptual object is a cultural construct, which we construct using language, image

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making, and other sign systems. Darkness as such does not exist as a part of our world of experience, but only as a bearer of properties or features that are always, at least to a degree, constructed through language or other sign systems.[1]

Darkness as a perceptual object is
a cultural construct, which we construct
using language, image making,
and other sign systems.

This as a conclusion is nothing new or original; it is actually close to how we think about darkness, if we think about it at all. What might be new is the road taken to that conclusion. This paper can be thought of as a new path to a place we have all been to. I hope you will follow me down that path. We will meander between experience and theory, texts and contemplation, we will stay out in the open air but in different places. We will deliberately shy away from most of the literature that already deals with darkness, and we will also try to stay away from many interesting and insightful philosophical theories; the reason for this being that we want the direct experience not to be drowned but to stay on the surface and be the guiding thread through the text. We want to stay on the surface for reasons that will become apparent later on in the journey.

The justification for this approach within a text that deals with a philosophical problem is twofold: firstly, telling a

[1] There are some philosophically loaded concepts in this definition. These should not be thought of as well-defined, some will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

story rather than offering an argument enables me to show some problems that an argument would not capture. These are problems that have to do with the application of theory and the danger of overlooking direct sense experience when it comes to giving a philosophical account of a problem. Secondly this methodology enables me to move more freely through different approaches and theories already established without having to commit to any of them. This is not caused by fear of commitment but used as a methodological tool to bring to light some features of the subject being dealt with, namely, darkness.

The point of departure is the night sky over Calgary on a particular night early summer 2012. I was walking home very late from the philosophy department. I had been working on the concept of properties or, more accurately, the idea that objects have properties and further that objects might even be nothing else or more than collections or bundles of these mysterious "things" - properties. "Working" here refers to reading, thinking, and trying to understand. I was nowhere near having my own opinion on this, I was still just trying to figure out what others had said about the topic, what they meant by what they had said about the topic, and why they had said what they had said about the topic. I am, as I was all these nights ago, using the concept of properties to mean entities that can be predicated of 'things' or 'objects' or attributed to 'things' or 'objects'. There are different kinds of attribution and different kinds of exemplification that can be used to make sense of the relationship between object and property, but in the current context we don't have to have a more complicated conception of this relationship. I don't make an ontological distinction between a thing and an object, but sometimes I do make a semantic distinction. When I make a semantic distinction between an object and a thing, I use *thing* to refer to something that is a part of the material

world and that we can attribute properties to, but that we need not or even cannot name as a particular object.[2]

As some readers might already suspect, John Locke's ideas were a part of the readings I was dealing with that night.[3] His primary and secondary qualities distinction I had already thought about, but what I was concentrating on that particular night was Locke's confusing idea of substance or substratum.[4] There is no agreement on what Locke´s own view was on substratum or "substance in general", and it is not clear what role it was supposed to play in his metaphysics. This does not need to concern us here. What I was trying to think my way through that particular night were two different views that have both been attributed to Locke, and how these different views would entail different outcomes or understanding when it came to the concept of substance. The views can be put forward in very simple terms: a) the idea of "substance in general" is exhausted by the simple ideas (properties) we attribute to a particular substance (or thing), or b) there is something more to substance than just the collection of properties it may have, some kind of "we-know-not-what-support" for sensible qualities. Which one of these we pick is a metaphysical question of great importance (in the context of properties and in particular in the context of Locke's notion of properties). When we form ideas about the perceptual world, we do so by first getting simple ideas, such as the yellow colour, oblong shape, sour taste, and then we put

[2] If the reader wants to look more closely into the metaphysics of properties and objects or things, a good place to start would be *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, especially, Orilia & Swoyer 2017 and Rettler & Bailey 2017.

[3] There is a substantial literature on Locke and properties. See for example: Bennett 1968; Bennett 1987; Newman 2000; Ayers 1977, 1991, 1998. On properties in general in modern context see Galluzzo & Loux 2015.

[4] On substratum in Locke there is also substantial literature. My main inspiration is Bennett 1987. An interesting treatment of the topic is also to be found in Marin 1980 and Lowe 2000.

them together into complex ideas, such as the idea of a lemon.[5] The metaphysical question is; does this exhaust the substance that is the lemon or is there something more to it, some kind of a substance in general that we may not have any sense experience of, but functions, whatever it is, as having these particular qualities? The way I understood this at the time was that the outcome of picking either a or b would not only affect what we could safely say about the world (what kind of epistemic questions would we or could we answer), but also it would have an influence on what kind of things, substances, objects would be found in the world. We might be accustomed to think about atoms or quarks (or whatever is the smallest unit of matter we know) as a candidate for what holds up or grounds perceptual properties in the world of perception and matter but Locke's notion is (strangely) much less empirical than that. What is at stake here is, in part, how we might know about such a thing, given his epistemology, and, partly, how would such a thing fit into the list of things that exist according to his metaphysics? A captivating question that falls out in the context of Locke's theory is, if there is such a thing as substratum or substance in general and we do not have sense experiences of it, how can we know it at all?[6]

The reason for this dip into metaphysics here in not one of explaining or coming to terms with Locke's ideas, nor is it meant to explain or add to the literature on Locke. The reason for drawing this to your attention is one of explaining the context, and even the content to some degree of the things traveling through or resting in my mind

[5] The lemon was not picked without a reason. I had on my table a copy of Robert Kroetsch´s poem *Sketches of a Lemon*. The poem was and still is an important input into my thinking about properties and things. See Kroetsch 1995: 142-147.

[6] See for example Bennett 1987.

this particular night. I do so because it will help in understanding and appreciating what follows.

I was walking home; something that on a regular night took me twenty minutes or so, but on that night halfway there, I looked up and saw this *strangely black* darkness over me, that felt or seemed different from any other night sky I had seen. It was a feeling of not having seen this particular kind of darkness before, this somehow clear, deep and warm darkness that seemed irrelevant to light. It seemed or felt like something you could not touch but was still concrete, something you could see through, but was at the same time completely opaque. This sight produced a strong feeling of delight, of wonder, and I remember thinking for a split second about silence and wanting to capture this in a painting. I don't know if it is right to try to describe the colour of it or if that only confuses the impression, it seemed to be a colour that was so mixed in with the particular surroundings, it had light, sound, and smell to it somehow, but was still a visual *thing*, it was still colour. I think I remember correctly that things like atmosphere and distant skyline came to mind. This was a strong and important experience. I knew right away that taking a photograph was of no use and somehow taking a video never even crossed my mind. The air felt somehow "fitting" - it was a bit cold, but it was clear and crisp. I walked the rest of the way home, with my eyes fixed on this strange phenomenon, and it disappeared only when I walked into the streetlight near my apartment.

When home I scribbled down the idea of a research topic for a paper, and, like all ideas one has when tired and almost asleep, it felt both important and brilliant at the time - the topic was, (or what I scribbled down was): "Is darkness a universal, a substratum, or does it have inherent first order or second order properties?"

The morning after the topic did not sound as important as finishing the studies at hand, and I put it into the pile of "marvellous things I have thought about", and it stayed there until I saw the call for papers for *Dynamics of Darkness*.[7]

> It was a feeling of not having seen
> this particular kind of darkness before,
> this somehow clear, deep and warm darkness
> that seemed irrelevant to light.

I tell you this elaborated story of an origin of a paper, because it explains my approach in what follows. Theory in the sense of something being constructed, applied, thought about, and analysed in order to understand the world on the one hand, and direct sense experience on the other overlap or co-author an experience that became a starting point of further work on a topic. This experience enabled me to see darkness as a topic for philosophical discussion, and the philosophical topics occupying my mind at the time enabled me to have this particular experience.

Having re-found the topic or the attempt at a question, I started to put it into a more formal structure (some kind of methodology had to be developed). I tried to stay true to the feeling or experience where the idea originated from. This meant staying on the surface of things - I wanted to capture something that is not hidden in darkness but is held

[7] The Dynamics of Darkness in the North. A scientific and artistic multidiciplinary international event at the Nordic House, Reykjavík, Iceland, February 26-28, 2015.

on the surface of it.[8] The reason for this feeling remains unclear to me, but it can, I think, be found in the original experience itself, the feeling of having experienced something like a surface of a large thing with interiors that remained hidden, be that for contingent reasons or because of the nature of the thing experienced.

This emphasis on the original sense experience proved to be a helpful clue in answering the first question at hand, namely: what would be the object of study? It meant that the object of study had to be something that could be directly experienced using the senses but was not an internal state or a theoretical construct.[9] This was helpful but also problematic.

The concept of darkness, if there even is such a thing (it seems to be on the verge of breaking down as meaningful), has so many different meanings that it is almost overwhelming; but stipulating that what is being studied has to be a possible object of direct experience simplifies things up to a point. For example, darkness in the sense of physics as something that absorbs photons (rather than reflects them) falls by the wayside. The same goes for *darkness* as a metaphor we use to capture some other meaning (for now we see through a glass, darkly) and darkness in the sense of mental state or a general outlook is also ruled out and so on. There are a number of usages of *darkness* not listed here

[8] The surface-depth distinction is at this stage only a methodological tool, it has not been argued for and does not come with any metaphysical commitments.

[9] There are some reasons to believe that one can have direct experience of mental states and even of theoretical constructs. We don't have to worry about these reasons here. If we do have experience of our mental states, I am tempted to say that we do not have sense experiences of them. This is an important topic in philosophy, especially philosophy focusing on intentions and intentional action, but, as I hope will become apparent, we need not worry about it in the current context.

that our senses are of no use in experiencing. It is however far from clear, if we can always make the distinction between an object of direct perceptual experience and object of mind (such as metaphor, meaning, mental state and so on), but maybe we can do so sometimes and that might suffice in this case or at least it would be worth testing out that idea.

The concept of darkness, if there even is such a thing (it seems to be on the verge of breaking down as meaningful), has so many different meanings that it is almost overwhelming

So, having established that the "darkness" I wanted to talk about had to be such that you could have direct sense experience of it, the idea of comparison came almost naturally - it seems to be in the nature of things that we can experience, that we can compare them with each other. This feature of perceptual objects has often been thought of as a reason why we can learn, build up concepts, use language, and communicate at all. I had nothing on that grand scale in mind but simply a pragmatic or methodologically useful characteristic of the thing I was investigating.

Even granted this easiness with definitions and method, it turned out that darkness is a difficult "thing" to tackle. It is difficult because it is hard to find out what kind of properties it might have or what it might be in terms of properties or characteristics that one could use to establish a comparison. The problem turned out to bear strong resemblance to Locke's problematic theory of substratum

or rather it turned out that darkness is strange and complicated (and even opaque) when thought of in terms of properties and something they can be predicated of. This should of course not have come as a complete surprise. There are already many clues in how we talk about darkness that suggest that treating it as an object, to be compared with other objects of the same kind will turn out strange. The problem is not with darkness being an object that is dispersed and hard to figure out the limits of, or that it is hard to figure out the material it is made of - those same things we encounter with other objects without any problems arising. We don't even need concepts such as Timothy Morton´s "hyperobjects" when dealing with things of such nature - just think of snow, rain, light, coffee, water, soda, and so on.[10] We are much less ontologically committed in our day to day language than some philosophical ideas might lead us to believe. The problem with dealing with darkness through the model of properties and substratum or objects seems to be that it remains unclear what it is that supports the properties and if there is something (we know not what) that supports them, it seems that when we attribute properties to it, we end up with something else than darkness. Even with the restriction already established (it has to be a part of the perceptual world) it is hard to see what kind of a thing we are having a first-hand experience of. What properties, relational, first-order or second-order might darkness consist of or be

[10] The concept of hyperobjects has been developed within a context quite different from the one developed here. Timothy Morton has described them as being objects that are "viscous, molten, nonlocal, phased and interobjective" (Morton 2013ab 40). As example of things that fit under this description, he has named all the Styrofoam on Earth, all the plutonium we have ever made, and global warming, see Morton 2015: 8. There is a clear comparison with how I am dealing with darkness, and the way Morton deals with hyperobjects, but my point here is that we don't need this kind of metaphysical picture of objects, and the properties these might have in order to understand and tackle darkness. For a more comprehensive account of hyperobjects, see Morton 2013a.

rightly characterized by? There are different kinds of darkness, at least that is my experience, but how does one capture that difference so that it can be used for comparison? As an example: what could we use as a marker for the darkness over Calgary on that summer night mentioned earlier and the darkness outside my window right now years later in a different place?

One might want to object here and say, well, darkness has the property of 'not having light' or it has the property of 'being dark' or it has the property of 'being a condition where it is hard to see things' and so on. To cut to the core of it: one might want to object and say that I am being too narrow-minded in the choice of properties - there are going to be some that darkness can rightly be said to have and that can function as a basis for comparison for different instances of darkness.

There is something to this objection in the sense that I cannot prove that there cannot be any properties or characteristics that can be used in this kind of comparison. But so far I have not found any. There is a further problem with at least some of these suggestions - they invite impossibly complicated metaphysics. To think of properties in term of what properties objects (or conditions or situations) do not have is an example of that. But more to the point - it seems that most of these proposed properties have to do with our perception of darkness rather than darkness as a thing. What I am suggesting is not that most of them are second-order properties in the sense that they are dependent on our perception of the object, such a metaphysical picture could well be established and by consistent. What I am suggesting is that these have more to do with the experience itself than the object being studied. It might turn out that these might be features of the experience but not properties of things and not even

relational properties that are kind of a co-creation of a mind and an object.

After this rather disappointing trip into metaphysics I started to think that I was approaching this from the wrong end. I should start with experience and try to figure out what it was that I wanted my description to capture and then work my way to a metaphysical picture that fitted. Did that mean giving up on properties or characteristics of *darkness* all together and starting talking about the experience of darkness in terms of phenomenology or in terms of sensations rather than in terms of something belonging to the object *darkness*? Again, I was up against a deep philosophical question, but I wanted to stay away from going into theoretical work in order to answer that kind of a question. Instead, again, I wanted to try to stay close to the original experience and let that guide the answering and questioning.

One of the problems with this new approach was that it was difficult to find a way to talk about experience in these terms but still be true to the nature of experience itself. Language and how we talk about darkness and how we experience darkness often seem worlds apart and there was also an underlying suspicion that this discontinuity was not something contingent on the texts I had read but might have something to do with the nature of the two phenomena. There was also a suspicion that there would not be any way into metaphysics from experience and language (again, a huge philosophical question not to be addressed). This did not have to be a bad thing in the sense that maybe that was just a conclusion that there are no metaphysics of darkness, but it still had a hint of disappointment built into it.

I was still trying to figure out where and how to start this new approach when an inspiration and help came from a somewhat unexpected place. In his CBC Massey Lectures Adam Gopnik deals with winter - a subject interwoven with darkness at least this far north - both because of the lack of light during winter but also because of the association of darkness and cold. Thinking about this connection, Gopnik writes:

> There are moments when we can experience winter as, in effect, the universe experiences it: loveless and emotionless and just *there,* an endless cycling of physical law that is not just indifferent to our feelings but in some sense so arbitrary that it doesn´t even have the quality of being elemental. There are moments when I almost think that I sense, with fear, the reality of the cosmos as it is: just this big, huge *nothing,* billions of years old, without segments or seasons or anything in it, where the truth of the universe is just that it brutally *is*. We live in a cold world. But instead we give the coldness names, we write it poetry, we play it music, we experience it as a personality - and this is and remains the act of humanism. Armed with that hope, we see not waste and cold but light and mystery and wonder and something called January. We see not stilled atoms in a senseless world. We see winter.[11]

The initial inspiration came from the juxtaposition of "just brutally is" and "we give it names". Just this act of naming, of making something more habitable and more

[11] Gopnik 2011: 210-211

understandable by naming it. In my mind at least this does not have to do with rationality and knowledge in Gopnik's text but rather with just this act of transporting into language something that stands outside of it and thereby not necessarily understanding it but rather just making it thinkable and even perceivable in a somewhat different way. The initial idea was that darkness might be best approached as something named, something we sing about, something we write poetry about, something we make pictures of, rather than the nameless, uncreated and undefined thing, that just "is upon the face of the deep" to quote another authority on the matter. We have countless examples of this, but was this what I was looking for in my description of the original experience? One of the features of it, I thought now at least, was how lost for words I was when experiencing it and when trying to reconstruct it in my mind I thought about paintings rather than words, but maybe this was just a different medium for the same conclusion.

It is not just that we need to name it in order to know what we are dealing with, but rather that, whatever the darkness of our perception is, it consists in part of the names we give it. Gopnik has a nice way of showing how the cold indifferent universe does in fact not change at all, even if we give it names, write poems or have feelings towards it. It is rather that in order to make it inhabitable, we break it down into manageable parts such as January (as opposed to endless winter cold). This is the act of humanism that Gopnik talks about, but it is also something that contributes to our experiences of things like darkness.

There is an element of time in Gopnik's description that is an important one. The universe (and darkness) are somehow above and beyond time, at least when we try to deal with them in terms of experience. Darkness, as

experienced, has this same ambivalence in terms of time, it is temporal in the sense that it only takes up some given time, but it is also atemporal in that it returns as the same regardless of time, in different experiences of not the same thing but of different instances of darkness.

As an initial inspiration this did look promising. I started working on darkness description that would fit with my purpose, that would capture the original experience but could and would contain language in the sense of containing not only descriptive terms but concepts and names that could and would help in giving a picture of a particular darkness that could be compared with other particular instances of darkness. This approach has a rather strange consequence, in that the direct object of experience (darkness in this case) is not direct but filtered through language by conceptual thought, by image making or by poetry or whatever other medium used for mediation. The more I thought about this (something I had already encountered in aesthetics and art theory) the more I thought this did not fit with the aim of the project. This caused me to have some serious doubts about the viability of the project, but I decided to solder on, because I thought Gopnik was on to something important, I just needed to draw it out.

My approach now took the direction of trying to find out what might be the criteria of comparison used when comparing darkness and darkness. This particular situation of having to think about darkness as both an object of direct sense experience and as something named drew my attention to the concept of place. What led me there was the fact that the concept or idea of place is a response or a proposed solution to a somewhat similar problem.

Place is a particular region of physical space that has been singled out by naming, inhabiting, dwelling or even loving, hating, and even living. But it is also a physical thing or a physical entity that can be a direct object of our experience. It also struck me that a part of the power of the original experience of a night sky in 2012 was due to the fact that it was somehow Calgarian, that is, it was somehow tied to the particulars of being in this particular place.

The problem with this approach to darkness is that it is counterintuitive. "Darkness is just darkness, no matter where you are" is a sentiment many would identify with, and more fundamentally; darkness is conceptually tied to absolutes like space, physical laws, and endlessness. Darkness does not simply happen on the surface of things - it is a space-related concept and it implies space in the sense of an ideal featureless construct either of our senses or of our imagination. Even when contained within your bedroom, complete darkness implies endlessness.

This does not only apply to darkness - this tension between surface and depth, between concept and perception is also something we deal with when we think about place, in somewhat less dramatic terms. In his 1989 paper, "Surface Phenomena and Aesthetic Experience", Yi-Fu Tuan identifies a similar problem in our account of our aesthetic appreciation of nature.

He begins by pointing out the well-known fact that aesthetics has often been criticized for focusing on the surface of things rather than looking past it or through it and unto the deeper structures that lie beneath. This tension between surface and core or surface and underlying structure runs through much of the history of western philosophy. It is not something Descartes invented, even if he might be the one that comes to our minds as an

advocator of the view that the senses should not be trusted.[12]

Connecting darkness with universals or absolutes invites thinking that darkness - true darkness - is not to be obtained from sense experience but is an offspring of conceptual thought, of rational thinking, even if it almost by accident is a part of our world of perception. And this calls for thinking about darkness that we experience as no more than appearance, no more than surface of this eternal boundless thing that is the same everywhere. Traditionally, this would be thought an unworthy thing to study, just like the perfect triangle or perfect circle are the true and worthy subjects of mathematics (as opposed to the mere copies we encounter in real life), so, darkness, as something to be sensed, is a mere appearance of the truly important thing - darkness itself. But just as is the case with nature it is the same with darkness, we should not move to quickly from the vibrant world of perception.[13]

Tuan argues that there are good reasons even for philosophers to stay in the world of surface. As he points out, some of our more profound aesthetic experiences take place on the surface of things, and some of these experiences have almost nothing to do with rational or conceptual thought. We can have simple, almost bodily reactions to shallow things like a beautiful smile, a ray of sunlight coming through the window or some fragment of language. We can also have more complicated experiences, even if the object or reason for our experience is simple and on the surface. Sometimes even simple things, like paintings, can cause a complicated experience.[14] Tuan argues further that the physical scientist, rather than

[12] Tuan 1989: 237
[13] Tuan 1989: 233-235
[14] Tuan 1989: 238-239

thinking that the hidden reason or structure of things must be of a different nature than what happens on the surface, will assume that whatever lies hidden beneath the surface is of the same nature as what one can see, even if it is more fundamental in some sense. We should therefore not mistrust our aesthetic responses just because they are a response to something happening on the surface; we should rather think of them as possibilities of a deeper understanding of more fundamental elements.[15]

Further clarification can be derived from looking at the concept of *place* within the context of aesthetics of nature. Places get constructed. The physical aspects are the most obvious in that process: a bulldozer, a concrete wall and so on, but there is another contributing factor that is even more important in this process – language. We use language to make places or to construct places. Not only is language a vital part of how to use or orchestrate more physical aspects (like in the talk between an architect and a contractor, the calculations made by engineers and so on) but also in the sense that names, sentences, stories, poems and descriptions make places. They do so by making them meaningful and thereby make them into place rather than space.

In a paper from 1991, "Language and the Making of Place", Tuan maps some of the ways language contributes to place making.[16] One of the ways, he singles out, is the way language is used to make features, contours, and characteristics of landscape more understandable, more inhabitable and thereby more accessible to our perception. As Tuan explains, at least in the case of some language use/users, the "effect [of language][…] is perceptual. And

[15] Tuan 1989: 236
[16] Tuan 1991: 685-686

it […] rests on the fact that words - names, proper names, taxonomies, descriptions, analyses, and so on - can, for a start, draw attention to things: aspects of reality hitherto invisible because unnoticed become visible."[17] The same is true of darkness in the sense of darkness as place specific and something we experience with our senses. Just notice how words make this beast tamer: "shadow", "late night", "night sky" and so on.

But it is not so simple that we treat darkness like a landscape and break it down into manageable parts by using language. Darkness still holds too much of its unity of appearance, it is still too close to its universal nature for us to be able to do so.

What we do, what we are able to do is to define or make it apparent by the use of language or by any other means of expression the *specifics* of a given instance of darkness. This means that just as in the case of the concept of place, we have sensory experience of darkness through language. We can at least sometimes experience darkness as a surface and it can bring forward aesthetic responses: joy, wonder or fear. But it is not darkness as such or darkness as the same everywhere that we experience but rather darkness as a named object. We may not be able to point to the edges of it where it ends and where it starts, but we are in no doubt that it is there on the surface.

The resemblance with Locke´s problematic idea about substratum became almost too obvious here. This underlying something "we know not what" that either is just the combination of qualities we attribute to it or is something more, something in itself fitted almost to an almost uncanny degree with darkness. It was his language

[17] Tuan 1991: 692-693

(or my thoughts about his language) that had enabled the original experience as that experience. I had a hard time finding the words for the experience, partly because what enabled it was not something directed at darkness or at a perceptual experience but rather something directed at explaining the structure of how we know the world and what it may contain.

The co-authorship or merging of a direct experience and theory laden language that I take to be at the origin of the experience of darkness being discussed here becomes even more prominent, because darkness is an unusual thing to experience. It is not a question of "feel" or "texture" of the experience itself, it is that the experience is made possible by a particular language or by a particular theoretical and abstract thought. It is not that the theory applies to or even shapes the content of an experience, but it is made possible by it. One can have this experience in light of a specific use of language. What is maybe somewhat unusual about experiences of darkness is that these are always experiences of this kind when experienced darkness is a surface and a cultural construct.

There is not a lot of friction on the surface of darkness for language to get any traction. But in a way similar to how we deal with space and dividing it into place(s), we construct different darkness. The friction we do find we find in light of perceptual properties that are enabled by knowing, enabled by not necessarily naming but by gestures, descriptions, and comparisons. We re-cognize these surface features and use them in our dealings with darkness.

My conclusion became the idea that darkness is a cultural artefact when it is perceived. We perceive it through language and/or other symbol systems. Explaining and working out what it entails and how it fits with the other

ideas about darkness, perception and about language will have to wait for another time. This is, as already stated, a mundane idea most of us probably have, but the way I got to it gives some clues about what kind of an idea it is, how that idea functions and why we find it near at hand but so implausible.

You will remember that the sleepless philosophy student under the Calgary sky had his mind more or less filled with thoughts about properties and how things have or are composed of properties. I want to end by offering that younger version of me some consolation.

The experience was of a unique darkness, it was not only a unique experience. The initial topic, scribbled down just before sleep, was in a sense misguided - it was too close to metaphysics rather than to the surface of things. If we stay on the surface of darkness, we will be alright.

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Hof

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Abstract – Hof is a silent, colour, single-channel video installation, configured to be projected into the corner of a darkened room. The projected sequence lasts 6:45 minutes and is played back in a loop. Hof was exhibited for the first time at the Nordic House in Reykjavik in the Dynamics of Darkness in the North event. 80 different views of a residential courtyard (ein Hof) in Berlin at night are projected in a continuous dissolve sequence. Hof proposes the transformation of the domestic everyday presence of the urban landscape at night into the psychological and physiological attraction of the experience of watching a film in a darkened cinema. While the bright lights of the windows in the apartment buildings recall the movie screen in a cinema and the views into the apartments recall the voyeuristic shots of films such as *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock 1954), the photos taken for Hof were not staged and the sequence is non-narrative. The connections viewers may make to scenes from films will be arbitrary and random; they are conditioned by the darkness; their imagination wanders and familiar images appear. Darkness becomes cinematic darkness. Dreams become movies.

Keywords – Video, Berlin, voyeurism, films, night, urban landscape

Hof is a projected HD video installation. 80 different views of a residential courtyard (ein Hof) in Berlin at night are projected in a continuous dissolve sequence. Hof proposes the transformation of the domestic everyday presence of the urban landscape at night into the psychological and physiological attraction of the experience of watching a film in a darkened cinema.

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I spent a winter in Berlin in a rented apartment. I became intrigued by the view into the courtyard from my kitchen, the varied compositions of windows lit up at the night. I installed a digital camera on a balcony outside my apartment. I manually adjusted the settings to capture changing views of different windows. I programmed the camera to take one image every minute and triggered it to begin shooting just before sundown and to end the sequence after sunrise. I framed an approximate view from my kitchen window. I finished with 800 images. I made a selection of 80 images in order to produce a sequence that represented the passage of night from dusk to dawn condensed to a sequence of 6:45 minutes. The fixed images were given a duration of 5 seconds each. These were presented as a series of dissolves in order to give a subtle illusion of movement and the flow of time. The idea was neither to accelerate the passage of time in the night, nor to slow it down.

There is a moment in the night,
between midnight and pre-dawn,
when the passage of time seems to stop.
Darkness submerges the spectator into
this realm of non-time
(this is emphasised by the silence).

Night and particularly urban night, where celestial bodies are less in evidence, differs from daytime when the passage of time is marked by changes in sunlight and temperature. There is a moment in the night, between midnight and pre-dawn, when the passage of time seems to stop. Darkness submerges the spectator into this realm of non-time (this is emphasised by the silence). It also submerges the spectator

into a non-place as the architecture of the courtyard disappears in the night.

Cinematic viewing (and cinematic pleasure) is conditioned by the gaze (historically male and heterosexual) onto the filmed subject. As in the movie theatre, the gaze of the viewer into the illuminated apartments is voyeuristic. We look upon the subjects, but they cannot see us; our gaze is not returned. Laura Mulvey investigated the "complex interaction of looks" that cinematic apparatus and industry made possible and normalised. In her influential book *Visual and Other Pleasures* Mulvey (1989) calls for a breaking down of these conventions as a rejection of hierarchical dynamics of looking invoked by accepted traditions in cinematic narrative. "The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical filmmakers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics and passionate detachment."[1]

While the bright lights of the windows in the apartment buildings recall the movie screen in a cinema and the views into the apartments recall the voyeuristic shots of films such as *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock 1954), the photos taken for Hof were not staged and the sequence is non-narrative. The connections viewers may make to scenes from films will be arbitrary and random; they are conditioned by the darkness; their imagination wanders and an experience informed by movie watching is evoked. But the narrative is ruptured, the fleeting and blurred appearance of the apartment dwellers never fulfilling our scopic desire.

[1] Mulvey 1989: 26

The illumination of the nocturnal cityscape has a long history following the development of technologies of lighting and projected image. Churches and cathedrals lit inside by torches would radiate colourful stained-glass iconography into the medieval night. Lantern slide projections lit up public squares with diversion and advertising in the nineteenth century, precursors to the flashing of neon signs of the early twentieth century. While complex digital systems of projection predominate in heavily trafficked areas of global cities today, other, less ambitious, displays of illumination occur constantly in the peripheries of the urban spectacle.

The illumination of the nocturnal cityscape has a long history following the development of technologies of lighting and projected image.

My experience living in Berlin was one of darkness; long nights prevail in the winter months at its northern latitude, the streets and public spaces not flooded with the artificial electric light I was accustomed to in the metropolises of North America. Darkness seems characteristic of Berlin, an inherent quality of the city's geography, climate, and culture. It is a darkness that Walter Benjamin (1986) referred in his writings on his childhood in the German capital and on the people he tried to recall from that time, "[…] whoever and whenever they may have been. The atmosphere of the city that is here evoked allots them only a brief, shadowy existence. They steal along its walls like beggars, appear wraithlike at windows to vanish again […]."[2] Benjamin's search for his past is an excavation into black earth in order to revel in an ominous indication of the city's true location.

[2] Benjamin 1986: 28

"True, for successful excavations a plan is needed. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam […]." The darkness becomes a metaphor for searching and loss that was the city of Benjamin's childhood, the darkness of the city's soil and the "dark joy of the place finding itself."[3]

The inner courtyards of Berlin apartment blocks are spaces that are at once public and private. Normally closed off to the street, they provide multi-functional open spaces for the surrounding buildings' residents, spaces which have served over time as workshops, warehouses, parking, gardens, and playgrounds. A characteristic of the configuration of the buildings around the courtyards is that the buildings are not connected directly to each other; they have separate entrances often on different streets. As such, it is not common to see the neighbours from across the courtyard except through their rear windows. The distance is also such that the quasi-cinematic experience behind these windows is silent. With the exception of crying babies and the occasional argument or party, voices are not heard. The actors are mute; they are fragmented and hard to make out, like the figures in Benjamin's (1986) reflections they are allotted "only a brief, shadowy existence."

Hof is a silent installation, its images projected onto two interior walls. The installation was exhibited in an office space in the Nordic House, Alvar Aalto's monument of modernist architecture in Reykjavík. Entering the closed space of the installation, the visual presence of the Nordic House disappeared. The space was darkened with its windows blocked. Darkness served to occlude Aalto's architectural references, as the darkness effaced the

[3] Benjamin 1986: 26

architecture of the courtyard in the projections. The first and the final images of the projected sequence showed the courtyard at daylight's waning and waxing, the projection briefly illuminated the exhibition space showing its architectural details as the displayed architecture of the courtyard is simultaneously revealed in the images.

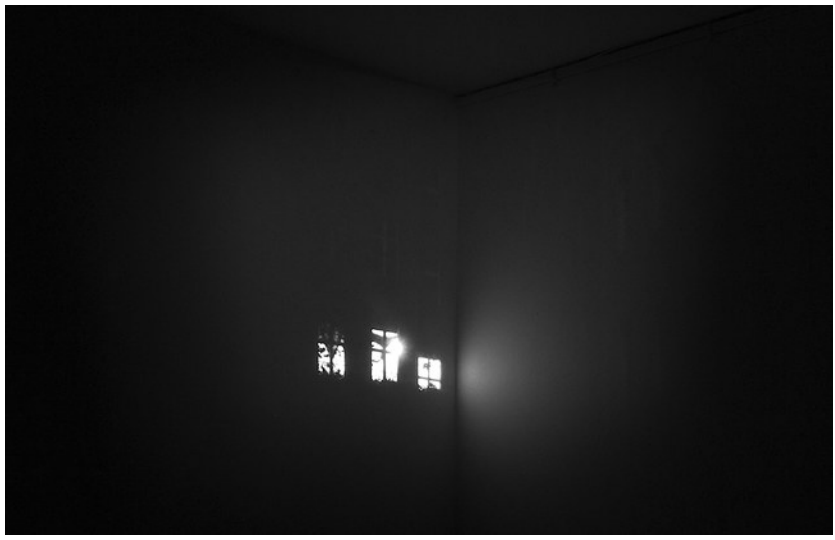
This fleeting view of the courtyard in daylight is intended as a break from the hypnotic rhythm of the windows piercing the darkness. The repetitive turning on and off of the lights in the different apartments is echoed by the sporadic rhythm of the changing images in the slide show. The sequence is played in a loop and eventually becomes abstract and contemplative. Watching the oscillating windows against the dark background is intended to recall the wonder at watching a flickering constellation of stars in the night sky.

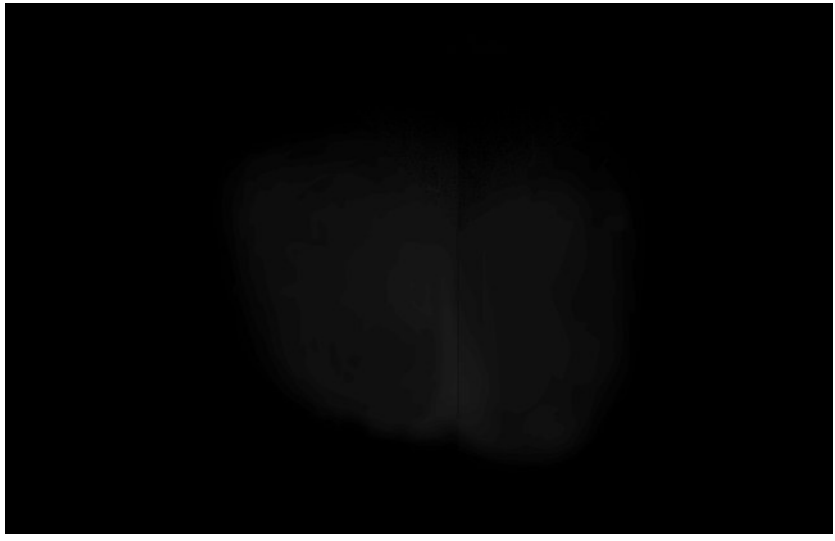
As with watching a movie in a darkened cinema where the interior of the movie theatre disappears when the lights go down and the film begins, the darkness at night erases the architectural and urban setting of the courtyard. The apartment interiors become isolated architectural entities suspended in space; fragments of private lives lit up and extinguished as their inhabitants return home and prepare for the night.

In the mass ritual of going to the movies, the darkness of the cinema constitutes a collective cocoon for the spectators. Inert and losing both temporal and spatial awareness, mentally captive, yet physically passive, the viewer yields to a state of what the American sculptor Robert Smithson (1996) referred to as "cinematic atopia." In the darkness of a cinema, our submissive bodies are tricked into believing it is night time. We thus find ourselves disoriented after seeing a film in the afternoon

and stepping out into daylight expecting darkness to extend outside the confines of the cinema. In his essay *En sortant du cinema*, Roland Barthes (1975) described the moment of exiting the dark shrouded illusions of the movie theatre and being confronted with the bright light of reality with as one of physical and psychological shock.

The experience of seeing lit up interiors through a dark courtyard at night reverses this cinema induced experience. We forget about the night time outside and obsess about the interiors, mentally transforming them into cinematic vignettes projected into the surrounding darkness. While we share the same reality, we occupy the same diegesis as our neighbours in adjoining apartment buildings, our access into their lives is limited by the tight framing device of their apartments' rear windows. We catch glimpses of their movement leading us to construct the remaining narrative around their lives, their cares, their fears, and their desires.
Hof is a work that reflects upon urban darkness as both a condition of the cinematic viewing apparatus (the darkened cinema) and as a recurrent diegetic device; darkness as a hors-champ, an out of frame in a film's storyline. As viewers we occupy this hors-champ, we are also in a window, one that is not visible in the projection, that exists beyond the diegesis of what we are watching on the other side of the clin d'oeil into the nocturnal lives of the anonymous apartment dwellers. The darkness of the courtyard becomes cinematic darkness. Fleeting glimpses of other people's lives become movies.





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White Nights, Sleeping Disorder and Sin in *Insomnia* (1997) by Erik Skjoldbjærg and its Remake (2002) by Christopher Nolan

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Abstract – Seasonal depression and sleeping disorder associated with perpetual night are well-known phenomena. Therefore, in the land of the midnight sun, any search for darkness (and slumber) should be considered as a practical problem. But in a fiction film context, day and night inevitably acquire a symbolic value, so that a pragmatic quest for sleep (and artificial night) may very well turn into a hectic search for oblivion, away from guilt and secrecy. In this article, two versions of *Insomnia* (the original [1997], by Erik Skjoldbjærg, and its remake [2002], by Christopher Nolan) are examined in order to demonstrate that by creating a "place without time" the absence of night in the north becomes a white purgatorial space where "sins" are inevitably unveiled.

Key words – Midnight sun, north, purgatory, insomnia, Erik Skjoldbjærg, Christopher Nolan, film

Seasonal depression and sleeping disorder associated with perpetual night are well-known phenomena. However and, surprisingly enough, mental health problems related to the northern midnight sun seem of lesser concern. Is it because artificial darkness is easier obtained than natural light? In fact, is it really?

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What about the representation of "eternal" darkness and that of the even more challenging never-ending day? From the very beginning, cinema, as an art of both light and obscurity, always had to deal with this duality, for instance, in order to indicate the passage of time. But what happens when day stands for night as in *Insomnia*, a motion picture described as "a moody, tortured psychological thriller."[1] What are the links between these "visual lies" and the characters' mental state? These paradoxes, emerging from the dynamics of light and darkness in the north, take us back to simple yet complex questions such as: on the screen time is mainly conveyed by shifting representations of space (thus light). But what if the sun never sets? Are there any risks of losing one's grip over time, hence over reality?

Of course, in the land of the midnight sun, any search for darkness (and slumber) should first be considered as a practical problem. In a movie, which is by definition an artistic representation, day and night inevitably acquire a symbolic value, so that a pragmatic quest for sleep (and artificial night) may very well turn into a hectic search for oblivion, away from guilt and secrecy. Bearing that in mind, I intend to explore the initial version of *Insomnia* (1997) by Erik Skjoldbjærg (set in Norway) and its remake (2002) by Christopher Nolan (set in Alaska) as allegorical tales of damnation and redemption, insomnia being depicted as a purgatorial space in-between.

[1] Lewis-Kraus 2014: 30

Insomnia in Real Life: Definitions, Causes, and Consequences

According to Dr David Taylor, insomnia "refers to a difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep at least three nights per week for at least three months, accompanied by impaired daytime functioning."[2] This rather clinical definition nonetheless identifies two major triggers for insomnia, which will be specifically addressed here, because both of them are explicit in the films I will soon examine. They are the difficulty in initiating sleep and, mainly, any impaired daytime functioning.

In a movie, which is by definition an artistic representation, day and night inevitably acquire a symbolic value, so that a pragmatic quest for sleep (and artificial night) may very well turn into a hectic search for oblivion, away from guilt and secrecy.

Causes for insomnia are too numerous to be thoroughly laid out in this paper. But I can still name a few, such as circadian disruption (due to jet lag, for example), mood disorders like depression, inadequate medication (use and abuse of drugs), stress (often leading to cognitive arousal – ideas spinning in one's head) or sensitivity to stimuli (environmental light).[3] In two film versions of *Insomnia*, the leading characters experience the never ending day of the north. This midnight sun can then be easily pointed out as

[2] Taylor *et al.* 2014: 1
[3] McCrae *et al.* 2006: 325

the source of all their troubles. But there may be more to it, as we will see.

As for the daytime consequences of insomnia, they are, generally speaking, impaired psychosocial, occupational and physical dysfunctioning. Specific adverse daytime effects include depressed mood, anxiety, fatigue, irritability, social discomfort, impaired motor skills […]. It also reduces concentration, [induces] memory complaints, and nonspecific physical symptoms.[4]

Among these many disorders, according to Christina S. McCrae *et al.* in *Practitioner's Guide to Evidence-Based Psychotherapy*, it is stated that even psychosis is possible (schizophrenia, phobias, panic, even paranoia). Of course, in real life one has to experience insomnia over a certain period of time before such symptoms take over.

However, as we all know, everything has to fall into place fast when it comes to the movie screen. Light and darkness (or the lack of it) not only bring about insomnia, they may also help underlining the heroes' (or antiheroes'?) life and torment. In both versions of *Insomnia*, detective Jonas Engström and detective Will Dormer quickly experience some sort of perceptual distortion. As they lose grip on reality, their ability to distinguish right from wrong, which was apparently already impaired by their past, tends to slowly fade away. The consequences are multiple and significant.

[4] McCrae *et al.* 2006: 324

Insomnia on Screen: The Story Line

Whether we consider the Norwegian – and original version – of *Insomnia* or its American proposal, we can marvel at the similarity between the two intrigues: a flawed detective, specialized in violent crimes, arrives in a northern, very northern town, accompanied by an assistant. This trip to the north comes as a punishment, for working in remote regions is usually left to the rookies or the incompetent. In any case, the detective's expertise is required because a girl named Tanja (or Tanya in the American version) was brutally killed. The murderer – a very skilled one at that, for he had left no evidence behind – is still on the run. So, investigation takes place immediately under the command of a disgraced cop from the south. Shortly after the beginning of the inquiry, a close encounter with the murderer leads to a tragic event: an appointed detective, lost in the fog, accidently shoots his partner. The chaser then becomes the chased, for the murderer witnessed everything and intends to use his knowledge to blackmail the policeman, hoping to avoid a trial.

Until now, both movies have the same plot and sub-plots. Their ending however takes different paths. This ultimate gap between the two intrigues leads to interpretations that are almost opposites. Linda Haverty Rugg may hold the key to this apparent enigma when she states,

> […] it could be argued that the north has its own particular notion of the criminal. Certainly, murder reigns supreme in Scandinavian crime fiction as in all other national iterations of the genre. But the way

that guilt is assigned and assessed is peculiarly Nordic.[5]

The Effects of Insomnia on Jonas Engström and Will Dormer: Similarities and Differences

Insomnia, as portrayed by Erik Skjoldbjærg and Christopher Nolan, wears many guises; its symptoms may well vary from one person to another. In *Insomnia* Engström and Dormer do suffer from fatigue, hallucinations, cognitive troubles impairing their judgment and motricity, but their torments tend to be somewhat different. After all, we're dealing with a Norwegian movie and its American remake – Hollywood "happy endings" have been often discussed and, in a way, they will be discussed again here.

Sure enough, Jonas Engström and Will Dormer are experienced detectives. They have been there; they have done that. They have nothing to prove, and their inquiry at least at the beginning looks like a walk in the park. Very soon, though, they feel disoriented due to the fact that night never falls, both time and slumber getting out of reach. The Swedish detective knew he was being sent to Norway but not so far north; the American one, based in Los Angeles, California, is even less familiar with the midnight sun and, moreover, "plagued by memory."[6] Going to sleep hence becomes impossible for both of them.

If their northern ordeal seems interchangeable, the same cannot be said about their work ethics. While Dormer visits the morgue and examines the dead girl's body with detachment, almost cynicism, Engström seems touched, if

[5] Haverty Rugg 2017: 600-601
[6] Brislin 2016: 202

not aroused, by the strange beauty of the young woman's body, covered with bruises and lying on the forensic surgeon's table. This suggests that the Swedish detective may have a deviant sexuality, while the American one in a very puritan manner totally obliterates his.

Furthermore, the two investigators have distinct professional situations. We never know exactly what's behind Engström's exile. He apparently, benefits from the esteem of his colleagues. We can only suppose something, somewhere went wrong, which would explain his attitude between boredom and disgust. One assistant mentions a story about Engström having slept with a first witness, but this is never confirmed, nor insisted upon. Dormer, who seems tired but motivated, has a clearer skeleton in his closet: he is under investigation for having, supposedly, produced false forensics. Finally, while Engström's assistant is a nice but handicapped colleague by the name of Erik Vik (the man has memory loss), Dormer has to team up with Hap Eckhart, a double agent who was sent to Alaska in order to keep an eye on his superior. On a symbolic level, we could say that Engström and Dormer flee from too much light. Hence their main problem may just be they were sent to the land of the midnight sun…

Now, sleeping disorder leads to trouble, as the two detectives make a terrible mistake. Unnerved and lost in the fog, they aim at a silhouette they are unable to identify while pursuing the murderer they earlier lured into a trap. Unfortunately, Engström and Dormer commit the same "crime" – blindfolded by the elements and their deranged state of mind, they kill their partner.

In Engström's case, we can be 99% sure that this was an accident. Vik being ill – probably, a victim of Alzheimer's disease – he tends to mix things up. While he is told to turn

left, he, nonetheless, turns right and meets with death. So, Engström's real crime will be perpetrated later, when he will lie blaming the fleeing suspect Jon Holt for the death of Vik. It is clear he does not want to worsen his case. As for Dormer, things look a lot murkier. The least we can say is that trust does not prevail between Eckhart and his superior when they set out to arrest Walter Finch. In a way, Dormer could benefit from his assistant's disappearance, be it tragic. Hence doubt is permitted in our mind and, more importantly, in Dormer's mind. Did he deliberately shoot Eckhart? In the last part of the movie, he tells his young colleague Burr that he doesn't know. That he doesn't know *anymore*. At this point, insomnia has seemingly taken its toll.

Facing a similar ordeal, that is blackmail on the part of the suspect who witnessed the shooting, Engström and Dormer sometimes take the same road. Sometimes they don't. Indeed, both choose to negotiate with the villain, but what deeply links them to their enemy is slightly, if not radically, divergent.

As stated above, Engström tainted desire for the young and the beautiful makes him feel guilty and pathetic, his torment being enhanced by sleepless nights. His short-lived affair with the hotel receptionist as well as his car ride with Frøya, a friend of the victim who tries to seduce him and nearly succeeds, tend to prove so. And there is more. When confronted to the killer, Engström will accuse him of being unable to contain his basic instincts, as if Jon Holt were the mirror image of what he most dislikes about himself: his vulnerability when it comes to sex.

In Dormer's case, breaking the general rules seems to be the main issue. Of course, he despises Finch for being a murderer, even a maniac. But what Finch did worse was to cross the line. Not surprisingly, Dormer himself did cross

the line, as he finally confesses to the hotel's employee. He produced faked forensics, so that Dobbs, a child murderer, could be convicted and condemned. In a certain way, while the Swedish detective bathes in an aura of lust and forbidden desires, the American one seems too "pure" for this world. He is an idealist, unable to cope with the imperfections of justice as an institution.

Yet, both men feel some remorse, following the death of their respective assistant. Engström experiments hallucinations: Vik appears to him in broad daylight in a hospital corridor. The dead man even invades the detective's hotel room, sitting there, joking and laughing at what seems to be night. When this happens, Engström doesn't hide his discomfort nor his grief. As I mentioned before, Vik suffered from confusion, even, probably, an early state of dementia, which explains why he did not follow his superior's orders during the pursuit in the fog, which ended with his accidental death. As for Dormer, he sees Eckhart's ghost during a search in the woods for a lost bullet. On this occasion, angered Eckhart gazes at Dormer, the latter being petrified. Afterwards, Eckhart will reappear in Dormer's nightmares, through mental images and flashbacks. This not only suggests but confirms that the detective is literally haunted by guilt or subject to numbness.

In the end, despite their evident lack of sleep and troubled state of mind, both Engström and Dormer succeed in their respective mission. Paradoxically, one hopes to save his soul by passing away, while the other goes back home, apparently damned for having turned his back on the truth.

Indeed, in an attempt to arrest Finch, Dormer has an unexpected opportunity to show Burr, whose suspicions kept growing and growing, that he is nonetheless a good

cop. In the movie's ultimate scene, a shooting takes place. Dormer rescues Burr then falls, shot to death by Finch, who has also been mortally hit. Consequently, Dormer gets a chance to redeem himself at least in front of his young colleague Burr. Tanya's murderer is killed in a context of legitimate defense; Burr is safe and sound. While dying and as a legacy Dormer tells Burr never to give up her "faith", so that the young woman refrains from destroying the bullet that incriminates him in the death of Eckhart. Having atoned for his "sins", Dormer may now rest in peace under a shining sun and a blue sky, his last words being "let me sleep." He is thus being freed from the purgatorial space he entered when arriving to Alaska.

Engström also gets back to the murderer who, while trying to flee, falls through a rotten floor, breaks his neck and plunges into cold water. Paralyzed Holt slowly sinks, while the detective contemplates the scene without a single move. Engström then finds what he was looking for: a dress worn by Tanja on the day of her death. Again, the Sweden's "perversity" takes over as he smells with delight the dress still impregnated with Tanja's perfume. In the meantime, a colleague and former lover found the bullet that could put an end to his career but chose to let him go with a guilty conscience. Hence, while Dormer is definitely cured from insomnia and finds redemption, Engström deserves damnation and, very likely, a chronic form of insomnia.

From Light to Darkness, from Heaven to Hell

Since the intrigue of the two versions of *Insomnia* unfolds in a space where the midnight sun takes place at a certain time during the year, one has to observe how light and darkness, be it rare, contribute to the telling of Engström's and Dormer's destiny. On the one hand, I will portray how light, colour, and the absence of both are dealt with. Then I

will show how the protagonists try to cope with invasive light and insomnia.

Based on a single viewing, one may easily notice how grey, black and white the upper parts of Norway are, especially when compared to bright and almost colourful Alaska. To say the least, Skjoldbjærg chose the hazy shades of the north to convey an eerie feeling of disorientation. As Peter Cowie points out,

> [as] a detective, who travels to the coastal town of Tromsø to help solve a local murder, Skarsgård's Jonas Engström finds himself taunted by locals and climate alike. He cannot sleep as the glaucous light of the midnight sun glares through his hotel window, and he loses himself – and his reason — in the fog-shrouded landscape.[7]

Nolan prefers to show savage but majestic landscapes often bathed in direct light. The two lands possess the rough beauty of wilderness, but one is almost colourless, while the other has the true blue skies that can only be seen just around the polar circle. In fact, this is only logical on a symbolic level, since, in the end, Skjoldbjærg's protagonist not only will lose his "innocence", if there were any left in him, and go back to a private hell, suggested by the film's final image: sad and blue eyes glowing in the dark. Colour does exist in Engström's world, but it always looks veiled, as if time were suspended between day and night. Nothing is ever clear. *Insomnia* was filmed in Skjoldbjærg's home town of Tromsø. The director, as quoted by Peter Cowie, explains his visual choices:

[7] Cowie 2000

> So many crews had used the landscape in an epic manner […], but I had never experienced that when growing up, so I wanted to give the film a sparse, unspectacular look. We tried not to build classical compositions. Instead we wanted the eye to wander, to create a certain discomfort, almost exasperation at the impenetrability of the enigma.[8]

We could say that Nolan's protagonist is luckier, for he finds redemption in the admittance of his crime both at night (be it artificial) and under a full sun. To him the ultimate confession could only be made where there is no place to hide. However for the most part both men do try to flee from light.

> Insomnia, as a consequence of the absence of darkness, contaminates Nordic landscape. Therefore the white night of the north can be read as a metaphoric space, as a place out of time that is neither heaven nor hell.

Engström is very proactive in this matter and uses tape to block sunrays from entering his room. When the tape fails him, he turns to a quilt which has a big hole in it. So, no matter what he attempts, light (and truth) pursues him. As for Dormer, whose name means "a slight opening by which light can enter", he does not seem to be so disturbed by light at first, leaving the shades open in his warm room,

[8] Cowie 2000

then half closing them before finally trying to tape them. Again, light filters through. So, Dormer will put anything he can find against the window including furniture and clothes. Only once in the dark does he become able to face his past and reveal his story of faked forensics to the hotel's receptionist.

The frequent use of chiaroscuro in both films has to be pointed out too. Since Skjoldbjærg's *Insomnia* is almost a black and white movie, the effect seems more spectacular there: Engström is very often shown with half of his face in the dark. So does his alter ego Holt. Nolan also makes use of this particular lighting when opposing Dormer to Finch or suggesting Dormer's struggle with himself. In any case, the "message" is clear: the human soul has its darker side and no mask can completely hide it. Moreover, as long as the sun doesn't set, the truth becomes impossible to hide.

Peter Cowie seems convinced that

> *Insomnia* [the original] may be accused by some of perpetrating the same sin as its antihero Engström, for its sleek editing and allusive dialogue leave the audience unnerved and unable to distinguish between good and evil, guilt and innocence.[9]

I'm not sure I agree. In my view and when compared to its remake, *Insomnia* by Skjoldbjærg is definitely on the evil side of things. Light does help seeing things clearly, but it can also blind one who gazes at it for too long.

[9] Cowie 2000

Towards an Ethical Vision of the North

In a paper on the narrative strategies chosen by authors in order to depict the immensity of the desert and, eventually, what she calls the "white desert" of the north, Rachel Bouvet recognizes the importance of metaphoric language. Indeed, Skjoldbjærg refuses to *describe* Nordic spaces in *Insomnia* and make way for a series of metaphors, ranging from a hole in a blind to the mist that obliterates all, including the truth. Hence the metaphor of the "white desert", as identified by Bouvet, takes a new shape – that of the "white night". Time or the abolition of time gives space overwhelming and undeniable powers. Insomnia, as a consequence of the absence of darkness, contaminates Nordic landscape. Therefore the white night of the north can be read as a metaphoric space, as a place out of time that is neither heaven nor hell. It is an in-between area where "sins" have to be dealt with.

Following this logic, Nolan's movie suggests that even if the midnight sun has a negative effect on his protagonist, Will Dormer still manages to escape from the purgatorial space he unavertedly stepped in by accepting to be blinded by light – a metaphor (almost a *clichê*) for honesty… However, according to Skjoldbjærg, the north with its midnight sun remain greyish, even to the point of becoming dark for a non-repentant sinner such as Engström. For people like him, shadows prowl everywhere and are eager to swallow the damned.

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Light into Darkness – Visualising the Northern Lights in the Auroral Expedition to Iceland (1899–1900)

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Abstract – The purpose of this research is to look at the work of Harald Moltke (1871–1960), who from July 1899 to April 1900 made nineteen paintings of the aurora borealis in the town of Akureyri, Iceland. Due to technical difficulties in providing colour photographs of the aurora, The Danish Meteorological Institute commissioned Moltke as the official artist of the Danish Auroral Expedition to Iceland (1899–1900). This research draws upon two observational drawings of the aurora made by the artist during this period. Most prior research on Moltke's paintings focus on his artistic ability to reproduce the auroras. This focus undermines Moltke's principal mission that is the scientific representation of the auroral phenomena. The drawings made by the artist represent hours of observation of different forms of auroras and are therefore instruments of scientific practice. Through analysis of Moltke's work this research wants to study the representation techniques used in the drawings of the aurora, the production of knowledge, and the relationship between the practice of art and the practice of science. Finally, this research will identify how Moltke's work disseminates knowledge and understanding of auroral phenomena.

Keywords – Scientific expedition, aurora borealis, Northern Lights, auroral phenomena, aurora observation, scientific practice, Akureyri, voyaging artist, drawing, visualisation

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Tuesday, 8 August 1899, the painter Harald Moltke (1871-1960) arrived together with a group of scientists in Reykjavik, Iceland, to participate in the aurora expedition organised by the Danish Meteorological Institute. The scientific team consisted of the physicists Adam Paulsen (1833–1907), Dan Barfod La Cour (1876–1942), and the engineer Ivar Jantzen (1875–1961). In the following eight months Moltke's task would be to assist the scientific team by rendering the Northern Lights as accurately as possible.

This research draws upon two of the twenty-five observational drawings made in Akureyri, Iceland, by Harald Moltke. The term *observational drawing* implies here the unpublished free-hand pencil sketches drawn from life and used by Moltke as prototypes for the subsequent execution of the nineteen oil paintings of the aurora made in Akureyri between 1 September 1899 and 4 February 1900. The twenty-five observational drawings that survived the expedition were drafted on paper or cardboard with pencil or charcoal. The drawings are registered with the date of the day, month and year, the exact time of the observation of each aurora and the geographical position. In ten of the twenty-five drawings Moltke recorded the location of stars such as the North Star and constellations including the Little Dipper or Ursa Minor.

Observational drawing is sketching from life. The actual drawing that is rendered as accurately as possible is not taken from either a photograph or the artist's imagination but from real-life observation. Most prior research on Moltke's work in Iceland focuses on the artist's paintings of the Northern Lights, ignoring the many observational drawings that the artist made during his observation of the aurora *in situ*. These sketches represent hours of study and relevant documentation of aurora phenomena, and for that reason we argue that they are instruments of scientific

practice. Furthermore, the focus of this article is to understand and enlighten through a first-hand analysis of Moltke's sketches the practice(s) of knowledge involved in the scientific representation of the aurora and the fine brink that emerges between observation, precision and visualisation; in other words between the generation and practice of science and its particular relationship with art.

To help us better understand the relationship between science and art, we draw on the concept of *blind sight* developed by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison in their work, *Objectivity* (2007). According to Daston and Galison objectivity evolves from the mid-nineteenth century from *truth-to-nature* to *mechanical objectivity* or *blind sight*. Whereas the first type of observation aimed to extract a universal truth by carefully selecting what had been observed by the naked eye and then transform it aesthetically with the help of an artist; *blind sight* leads to the elimination of the observer's subjective interference: "To be objective is to aspire to knowledge that bears no trace of the knower - knowledge unmarked by prejudice or skill, fantasy or judgment, wishing or striving."[1] The best method to be objective while making scientific observations was to record natural phenomena with the help of a machine such as a photographic camera. Photography exposed the ascetic relationship between the image, the scientist and the technique itself. However, the relationship between science and photography was largely complex: "Far from being the unmoved prime mover in the history of objectivity, the photographic image did not fall whole into the status of objective sight; on the contrary, the photograph was also criticized, transformed, cut, pasted, touched up and enhanced."[2] The complex bond between the observer and

[1] Daston & Galison 2010: 17
[2] Daston & Galison 2010: 125

the world is also why Daston and Galison argue that science and art cannot be defined as two incompatible or hostile components in observation and understanding of the world. We want to understand how *blind sight* generates visible knowledge and how is knowledge manifested in the image or picture? And can scientific knowledge be produced by the biased and untrained eye of an artist?

> To catch the aurora on a photographic plate required special technical skills in the field of night photography, a practice that was hard to manage, since it involved very long exposures, stillness, and a source of light, usually moonlight

Moreover, this article examines the observational drawings made by Moltke in light of *working images* - a methodological approach developed by Omar W. Nasim to study the work of observers of nebulae in the nineteenth century. The author defines *working images* as provisional sketches or observational tools to study, control, and observe. Working images are sketches drawn by a skilled observer, a scientist, who becomes acquainted with the intensive observation of known or unknown objects. Furthermore, working images are sets of repetitive drawings made during many nights of observation that will subsequently generate one single visual image that will eventually be published. Working images are, according to Nasim, tools that emphasise the pictorial and the mimetic representation and are used at the service of science.[3] In using Nasim's approach, this study focuses

[3] Nasim 2013: 10–11

on the interaction between the act of observation and the act of recording auroral phenomena. Finally, the objective of the present article is to understand both the nature of scientific observation of the aurora by means of observational drawings and the production and dissemination of knowledge of auroral phenomena.

Visibility and Blind Sight – Catching the Aurora Light

In the nineteenth century photography progressed and became an important method in documenting visual celestial objects and phenomena. By 1858 the first photographs of the moon, stars, and comets had been taken and were being used among scholars to provide and foster scientific evidence.[4] While the techniques and processes in planetary photography were improving, photographing the aurora was extremely difficult to master due to the techniques then available along with the geographic and atmospheric limitations that were involved in the process. To catch the aurora on a photographic plate required special technical skills in the field of night photography, a practice that was hard to manage, since it involved very long exposures, stillness, and a source of light, usually moonlight.[5] In addition to such practical difficulties, there is also the fact that the Northern Lights are predominantly visible during the winter in freezing and remote areas of the arctic sphere.

Several unsuccessful attempts to photograph the Northern Lights were made, many of these by the Danish astrophysicist Sophus Tromholt (1851–1896), who dedicated his life to study the aurora. Finally, on 26 March 1885, Tromholt recorded the first photographic impression

[4] Hugues 2013: 107, 321, 334
[5] Leighton 2008: 1007

ever of an aurora in Kristiania, today Oslo. In an article in the magazine *Nature* he writes: "I may add that on this occasion I succeed in what I myself, as well as other friends of the aurora, have tried before in vain, viz. to get the aurora to make an impression on a photographic plate."[6] This first mechanical representation of an aurora, taken with an exposition of eight and a half minutes, was described by Tromholt as very feebly illuminated and maybe because of its poor quality it was never published.[7] In Tromholt's words materializes the idea of the "automatism of the photographic process"[8], as if during the action of rendering the aurora visible the scientist was careful in keeping his beliefs at bay. It would take seven years for the world to see a photograph of an aurora, this time taken in Bossekop, Finnmark, Norway, by two German physicists, Otto Baschin (1865-1933) and Martin Brendel (1862–1939). On 1 February 1892, with the help of a camera previously used to photograph luminous clouds, Baschin and Brendel's camera captured an aurora, which was later published in the magazine *Nature*. Although a ground-breaking event, the photograph shows the aurora as a mere white blurred patch in murky sky.[9]

Organising Vision – Greenland as a Laboratory of Light

After Tromholt and Brendel's strenuous experiences with aurora photography, Adam Paulsen, the leader of the aurora expedition in Iceland (1899–1900) and a director of the Danish Meteorological Institute, understood that he had to invite an artist to join the scientific team in order to secure the graphic work that was an important part of the

[6] Tromholt 1885: 479
[7] Moss & Stauning 2012: 149
[8] Daston & Galison 2010: 130
[9] McAdie 1897: 874

expedition's scientific production as well as its later dissemination.

Adam Paulsen was familiar with Moltke's reputation as a skilful draughtsman working closely with scientists after the artist had joined a geological mission to Qeqertarsuaq or Disko Island, Greenland, from August to November 1898. Back in Copenhagen, the painting that Moltke rendered in Greenland was exhibited at the Geological Museum[10] where Paulsen also worked. Paulsen could not have missed a five-metre long canvas of the south coast of the Nuussuaq Peninsula around the Ataata Kuua river, which was displayed at the museum and that had caught attention of many scholars not only because of its unusual size but especially due to the rich topographic and geological detail. The majestic painting displayed fully Moltke's ability to work with a methodological approach that was, if not totally controlled, at least moderated by science with the aim of translating the geological peculiarities of the arctic scenery. Paulsen realised that Moltke's technical ability as well as his sensibility could be helpful for the aurora expedition that had initially been planned to take place under Greenlandic skies, due to geographical and climatic reasons but changed to another northerly space – Iceland.

From Darkness to Light – Training the Eye

Harald Moltke was an adventurous and curious soul. Besides the auroral expedition to Iceland (1899–1900), he also participated in three other scientific expeditions, namely: a geologic expedition to Greenland in 1898, a second auroral expedition to Finland (1900–1901), and a literary expedition to Greenland (1902–1904). It was on the first expedition to Greenland, led by the geologist Knud

[10] Moltke 1933: 89

Steenstrup (1842–1913), that Moltke discovered peculiarities of the arctic landscape. His first observations made on his way to Disko Island off the west coast of Greenland illustrate how after seeing icebergs for the first time he became fascinated with the frozen yet organic scenery:

> June 20. This morning at four o'clock the captain woke Porsild[11] and I so we could see the fields of ice. Drowsy, we stumbled off the hammock, put some clothes on and ran to the deck. What an astonishing view! As far as the eye could see, lay big masses of ice side by side. They had the most fantastic forms one could imagine or to be more precise one has no idea at all of what nature is capable of when it drops such large masses of ice into the sea. Some blocks of ice are shaped like jagged peaks, others like huge mushrooms, while others resemble vaults. However, what impressed me the most were the beautiful colours. The ice is itself as white as snow, but inside its crevices and fissures shines a beautiful transparent blue shade that while hard to render is impossible to describe.[12]

[11] A reference to the botanist Martin Porsild (1872–1956).

[12] "*20. Juni. I morges Kl. 4 vækkede Kaptajnen Porsild og mig, for at vi skulde se Storisen. Søvndrukne tumlede vi ud af Køjen, fik nogle Klæder paa og for op paa Dækket. Hvilket imponerende Syn. Saa langt Øjet rakte, laa den store Isblokke ved Siden af den anden. De havde de mest fantastiske Former man kan tænke sig eller rettere man gør sig intet Begreb om hvilken Fantasi Naturen ødsler med naar den sender Storisen (Havisen) ud i Verden. Nogle Blokke er savtakkede, andre har Form som Paddehatte; nogle danner Hvalvinger – men det der gjorde mest Indtryk paa mig var de dejlige Farver. Isen i sig selv er saa Hvid som Sne, men inde i Revne og Hulninger, skinner en dejlig transparent blaa Farve, der næppe kan males men på ingen Maade beskrives.*" Moltke 1889–1901: June 20 1889. I translate.

Moltke's first description of an iceberg epitomises the change in the artist's ability to observe; the movement of the eye shifting from a downward inner sphere to an upward outer world, from the darkness of the cabin to the lightness of the wide space ahead. It is from this initial encounter with Greenland that Moltke evolves into a *voyaging artist* in the purest sense of the word, tuning his eye into changeable, novel environments and locations, learning to render either with words or drawings the outcome of his observations, hence becoming gradually familiar with the characteristics particular to arctic landscapes.

Learning how to see and how to observe are fundamental qualities common to both artists and scientists. However, while the first are skilled at seeing things or phenomena differently, the latter are trained to find distinct patterns or paradigms from the myriad of information they observe. The same applies to the act of drawing. Drawing is a way of knowing, a way of seeing. One could argue that artists draw for themselves as their drawings represent their own subjective view of the outer world sifted through their own inner world. Drawing for scientific purposes, on the contrary, forces the artist to learn how to maintain order in the disarray of information provided by the outside world. Artists working at the service of science like Moltke have to become skilled at dissociate oneself from the world, at keeping distance by shifting from subjective vision to objective blind sight. Daston and Galison identify these two ways of seeing in the scientific practice of drawing as the artistic and the scientific self. According to the authors, the *artistic self* flaunts its personality, its subjectivity, in opposition to the *scientific self* that disciplines its will and its desires.[13]

[13] Daston & Galison 2010: 36

Moltke's mission in Greenland was not to draw in figurative or metaphoric ways what he saw but to translate objectively through drawing and painting the novelty of the world that he observed, in other words, to master an unbiased view of nature, to perceive nature as it was while drawing. This new way of gazing at the world requires persistence and attentiveness, self-discipline, and if not eradication of the *artistic self*, then at least ability to constrain it. However, the division between these two practices, the subjective and the objective, are not always well-defined or evenly separated. In the case of Moltke they supplemented each other. This is also the case as in the episode when the artist exposed significant characteristics that otherwise would be missing while drawing the fells in Disko Island at the request of Steenstrup.

Moltke's first description of an iceberg epitomises the change in the artist's ability to observe; the movement of the eye shifting from a downward inner sphere to an upward outer world, from the darkness of the cabin to the lightness of the wide space ahead.

Moltke had rendered the walls of the fells that were intensely illuminated by the evening sun in warm colours of blue, violet, red, and yellow. When Steenstrup saw the outcome of Moltke's work, he was disappointed and accused the artist of suffering from colour blindness. Steenstrup had travelled in Greenland for eleven years, Moltke reports, and knew painstakingly that the fells were grey and brown. Due to Moltke's alleged artistic sensibility, Steenstrup felt himself forced to photograph the fells. Moltke was devastated and could not fathom why the

geologist could only see the dispassionate and sterile nature throughout the landscape. Fortunately, something happened when Steenstrup placed the camera, put his head beneath the black cloth and looked at the picture in the matt plate, Moltke reports: "*and [Steenstrup] saw that it reflected the same as in my watercolour – the same colour*s."[14]

The encounter with Greenland was for Moltke an unspoiled studio for his schooling in arctic landscape, allowing the artist to study the scenery and most important the light, shades, and colours. This experience is the starting point for Moltke's work as a voyaging artist at the service of science, and Greenland would undoubtedly shape his work on the aurora phenomena on his forthcoming assignment in Iceland.

Iceland – The Colour and Shape of the Aurora

Adam Paulsen's invitation to Iceland was clear-cut from the beginning: Moltke was there not to study the land and its people but to study the aurora. Before his departure to Iceland and indeed inspired by his previous voyage to Greenland, Moltke unveils his interest for atmospheric phenomena: "Although I had never seen the Northern Lights, I was confident that I could teach myself how to paint these heavenly phenomena, since I have always been interested in clouds and air lighting – especially at night."[15]

As soon as the scientific group arrived in Akureyri, Moltke, the engineer Ivar Jantzen, and the physicist Dan Barfod La Cour hastened to build the house for the magnetic observations and the observatory building named *Aurora*. In

[14] "… *og saa Billedet paa den matte Plade, afspejlede det jo det samme som paa min Akvarel – de samme Farver.*" Moltke 1933: 86. I translate.
[15] Moltke 1933: 94

the latter Moltke arranged his atelier and it was here, according to him, his paintings of the Northern Lights' phenomena would come into existence.

As a student at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, Moltke was taught by C. N. Overgaard (1851-1921), whose drawing technique consisted of capturing the movement and rhythm of an object by drafting it swiftly with quick strokes. In case students could not seize the motif straightaway, instead of erasing some lines here and there Overgaard forced them to throw the paper away and start again until they finally succeeded. According to Moltke, the only thing that students were not allowed to do was to tell their teacher that they could not *see* the motif, since the lack of observation skills would entail far too many hours of training until Overgaard finally opened a student's eye.[16] Overgaard's drawing technique would prove to be crucial for Moltke's observation and his representation of the Northern Lights' phenomena in Iceland.

Drawing aurora posed many challenges: Moltke either drew from life outside the observatory building or from the observation post at the top of Mount Sulúr located south-west of Akureyri. In a letter to his mother, Countess Karen Marie Moltke (1849–1940), the artist reports that the team was on duty day and night to take readings and undergo many different observations. Because of arctic winter it was dark most of the day, and by the time the Northern Lights became visible, the group, including Moltke, was fully absorbed with their respective work.[17] Apart from the long nightly auroral observations in freezing weather starting normally at around 6 p.m. and ending at around midnight,

[16] Moltke 1933: 37–38
[17] Moltke 1899

Moltke also painted in his atelier during the day. Here he would convert his observational drawings, sketched the previous night, into paintings.

Visualising aurora – Observational Drawings

On a cloudless night celestial objects appear to be motionless. As an example, the moon is ideal for drawing or photographing because although orbiting around the Earth our natural satellite seems almost immobile in the sky due to its particular path. Contrary to the moon, drawing auroras from life demands rapidity, routine, and memory; since auroras are per definition mutable, they emerge and fade away, changing constantly in appearance and colour.

From the nineteenth century on portraying natural phenomena objectively implies elimination of everything but reason, as if between the world and the eye there should be no emotion whatsoever. By portraying natural phenomena for scientific purposes, an artist must consequently eliminate or at least reduce considerably aesthetic impressions and expressions of the motif. Drawing had to be a process as exact as a naturalist's description of an insect or a plant. It was imperative that an act of representing nature was a disciplined process; an artist had to educate his eye in order to observe reality or phenomena in the outer world. As an instrument to witness the unknown, an eye was essential to mediate reality first hand, selecting any interference from an artist's cultural baggage such as beliefs and education and the impressions originated in the actual moment of the discovery.

Anyone who has actually observed an aurora knows how difficult it is to describe. Moltke's journal, letters, and memoire are proof of this. The almost nonexistence of written descriptions of auroral events strikes the reader who

was looking forward to perusing the artist's experience with the Northern Lights. Instead, Moltke describes small details about the difficulties of living and working conditions both at the observatory and at Sulúr, following the tradition of the voyaging artist for whom the life in foreign and exotic countries was a symbol of sacrifice and devotion to science. Compared with earlier narratives like for example Maupertuis' ardent descriptions of the aurora as moving taffeta ribbons or flaming tanks, tinted in so lively shades of red that even the constellation of Orion seemed as if dyed in blood,[18] Moltke's descriptions are by comparison highly contained. However, for Moltke his drawings and paintings were his visual language, a means of making observations visible, allowing him to communicate, explore the world, and construct knowledge.

With Nasim's definition of *working images* in mind, which are provisional sketches that are made by a skilled observer or scientist to study unknown or known phenomena, Moltke's observational sketches are in their initial phase incomplete and fragmentary. Moltke had never seen an aurora and consequently lacked familiarity and routine. Besides, Moltke was not a scientist and for this reason, he had not previously been trained in the procedures applicable to the observation of auroral phenomena.

There is however evidence that Moltke sought information about the phenomenon. He had for example read the lecture that Adam Paulsen had presented at the Royal Geographic Society about the different types of aurora, following his expedition to Godthaab, Greenland in 1882–83.[19] Inspired by the terminology of Paulsen's lecture, Moltke notes in his memoir:

[18] Maupertuis 1756, III: 156–158
[19] Paulsen 1886

> From descriptions I thought auroras were like clearings of light in the sky, luminous mists of twilight. Then I understood that they were autonomous phenomena with their own light, their own motion – own beginning, development and ending, and once again a new beginning – an enigmatic display, vanishing mysteriously and so diverse that one can say that the Northern Lights are never one and the same.[20]

It is noteworthy that when addressing Moltke's work on the aurora phenomenon, scholars have focused their attention on the nineteen oil paintings. One reason for this is certainly because not only the oil paintings appear more dramatic obviously due to the colour range and their size with twelve oil paintings being about 58x40 cm and seven paintings about 27x25 cm, but also because the representation of the aurora seems more perfected, more refined. Of the nineteen aurora paintings that Moltke made during his stay in Akureyri, Iceland, twelve are of white-yellowish coloured auroras, four of green-whitish auroras and three are a mixture of green, blue, and red. Moltke believed pastel would be the best colour material to reproduce the shade of the Northern Lights. However, after seeing the first auroras he changed meaning and opted for oils. He gives no further explanation for his choice aside from the fact, that Moltke realised that he had previously imagined the colour of an aurora to be like clearings of light in the sky or luminous mists of twilight, but instead the

[20] "*Efter Beskrivelserne havde jeg tænkt mig Nordlys mere som lysninger paa Himlen, som lysende Taager og Dæmringer. Og saa var det selvstændige Fænomener med eget Lys – egen Bevægelse – egen Opstaaen, Udvikling og Opstaaen igen – egen gaadefulde Udfoldelse, egen gaadefulde Forsvinden og med en Mangfoldighed saa man med Rette kan sige: Nordlys er aldrig ens.*" Moltke 1933: 98–99. I translate.

actual auroras had their own light.[21] The artist's choice of oils was based on his intent to visualise the aurora not aesthetically but more like a mnemonic device in order to record and retain the actual reality of the observation.

Two Aurora Studies

The earliest observational drawings were nothing but some jots and doodles that Adam Paulsen and Moltke immediately rejected, proving that drawing auroras from life required practice. However, Moltke soon realised that to master the aurora he ought to acknowledge that there were rules that sternly applied to the alleged randomness of the Northern Lights.[22]

The first successful observation of an aurora was a drapery made on 1 September 1899. According to Moltke, he painted it previously with a pencil, indicating the stars through which the 'veil draperies' moved towards and trained himself carefully to remember the colours of both the aurora and the sky. The next day Moltke went to his atelier and painted from memory. No observational drawings were found from this first attempt. Four oil canvases were made during September 1899, indicating that the artist, after this first successful painting, quickly came to terms with the observational and practical procedures needed to visualise the aurora.

[21] Moltke 1933: 98
[22] Moltke 1933: 99

Figure 1: Harald Moltke, *Iceland*, October 4, 9.27 PM

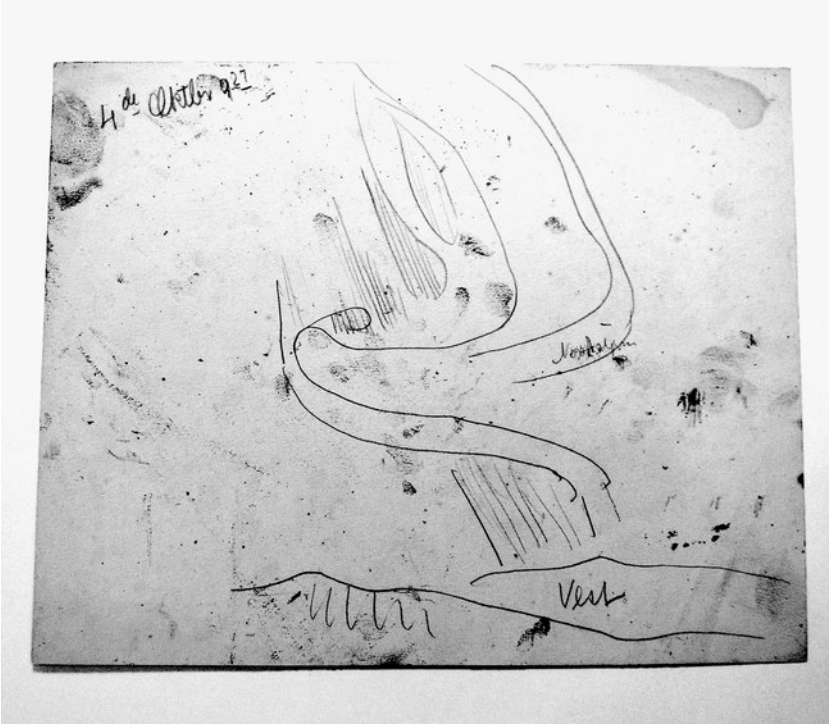
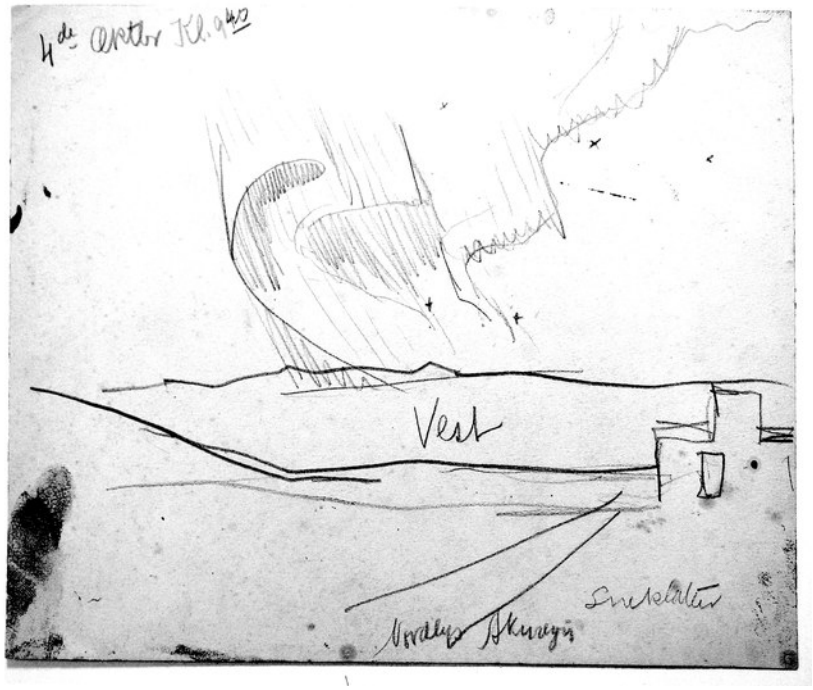


Figure 2: Harald Moltke, *Iceland*, October 4, 9.40 PM



On 4 October 1899, Moltke recorded two aurora bands at respectively 9.27 p.m. (Fig. 1, Fig. 3) and 9.40 p.m. (Fig. 2, Fig. 4). Moltke filed the date and hour, the geographical position and the words West (Vest), North Star (Nordstjernen) and patches of snow (snovklatter).

Figure 3: Harald Moltke, *Nordlys*, October 4, 1899, 9.27 PM

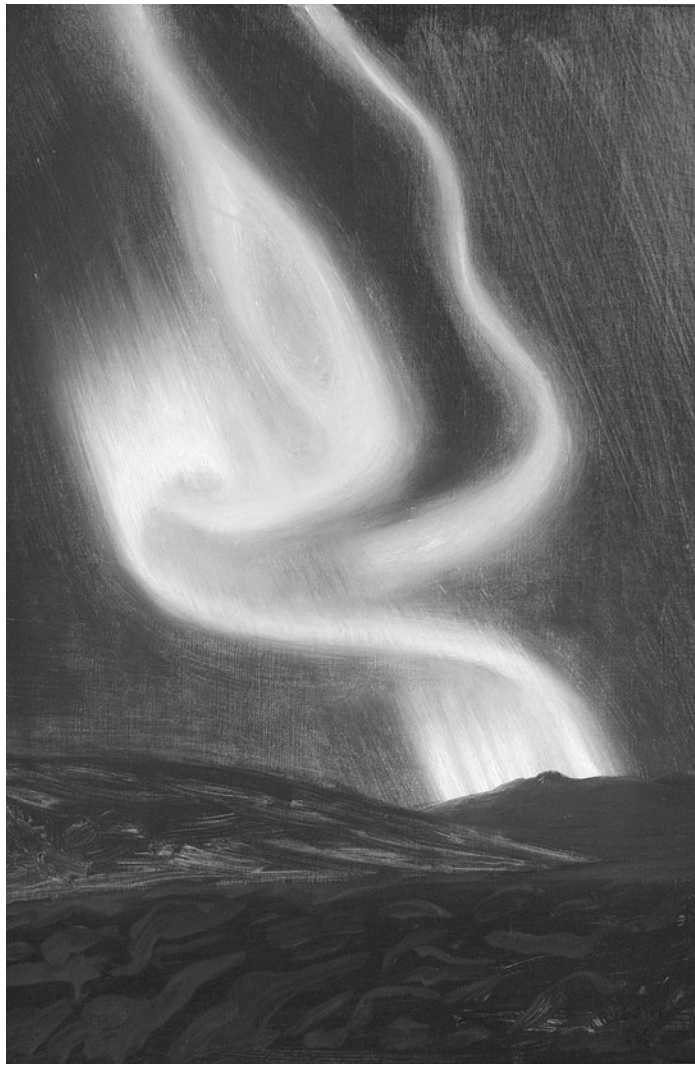
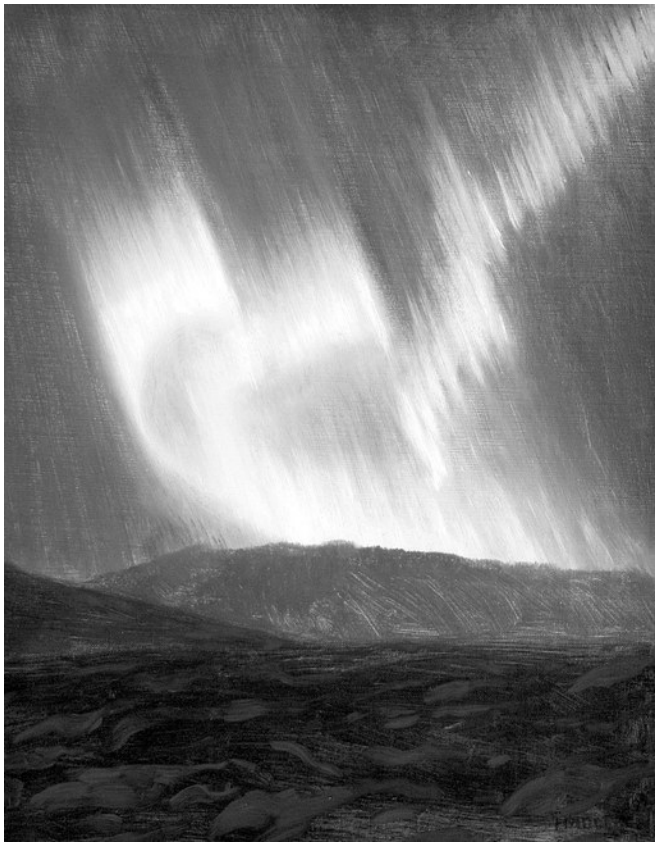


Figure 4: Harald Moltke, *Mod Vest*, October 4, 1899, 9.40 PM



The most fascinating aspect of these two observational drawings is the close resemblance between the drawings and the two oil paintings. Except for the stars represented by the five tiny crosses which are visible in the second sketch and the delineation of the observatory (Fig. 2), Moltke tried to portray the two auroras in oil exactly as possible as the auroras sketched during the night. Regardless of the differences that exist between an observational drawing that at first seems unfinished, it is interesting that the artist did not try to change what he had observed during the night of 4 October 1899. Neither did he, we believe, changed the colour of the two auroras,

although we have not found any records about the shades observed by the artist that day aside from a general observation in his memoir: "The most common colour is white tinged with yellow or white tinged with green, which can change into a strong green with a red border at the base."[23] There is also a description of the shape of the aurora bands: "The most common forms of aurora are curtain formations. Mighty, bright draperies with folds that invisible hands flick and spin around, making them into cone-shapes that glow and then fade away to reappear somewhere else."[24]

> Moltke was not trying to capture an ideation or perfect vision of an aurora, neither he was trying to discern an abstracted perfect form of aurora like flamboyant photographs we see today in tourist brochures advertising multicoloured arctic auroras that look the same.

The two observational drawings (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) were drawn thirteen minutes apart from each other. We know for a fact that Moltke pondered on which of his observations he would select for later reproduction. In his memoir the artist reports: "Every evening and night there were magnificent phenomena which I drew in my sketchbook. Every now and then it was difficult for me to

[23] "*Den almindeligste Farve er hvidgult-hvidgrønt, som kan udvikle sig til til stærkt grønt ned en rødlig Kant forneden.*" Moltke 1933: 99. I translate.

[24] "*De almindeligste Former for Nordlys er Drapperidannelser. Vældige, lysende Tæpper med Foldekast som usynlige Hænder vifter med og drejer rundt til kræmmerlignende Formationer, snart lysende stærkt, snart svindende bort for at opstaa et andet Sted.*" Moltke 1933: 99. I translate.

decide which of these were the best suited for reproduction."[25] Moltke had read Paulsen's lecture on different types of auroral displays observed in Greenland and knew that it was important to represent a wide-range of phenomena.[26] Being able to reproduce bands, hazes, crowns, and rays, which Moltke had indeed observed in Iceland, would also reinforce his position among the scientific team.

The two observational drawings and two paintings are evidence that Moltke basically followed the expedition's actual purpose, which was to render the Northern Lights as accurately as possible. Therefore, the accuracy of Moltke's pictorial reproductions must also be regarded in the light of the scientific production of knowledge. With Overgaard's efficient technique in mind, there is no digressing between the observational drawings and the oil paintings. Unlike working images aggregating many nights of information into one single visual image, Moltke gives his observation an act of emergency that equals to a certain extent that of an aurora itself. Instead of drawing and perfecting what he sees, Moltke surpasses the aesthetic rules of representation and keeps his paintings true to his observations. From a very early stage his observational drawings become immune to uncertainties due to the technical and manual progression that sets off with the first tentative representations and then evolves into observational drawings that stabilise the ever-evading aurora and disclose Moltke's ability to observe.

[25] "Hver Aften og Nat var der pragtfulde Fænomener, som jeg tegnede i Skitsebogen. Det kunde ofte være svært at bestemme hvilket egnede sig bedst til Gengivelse." I translate. Moltke 1933: 100.
[26] Paulsen 1886

Light into Darkness

The observational drawings must be understood and analysed in light of their scientific functionality. Even if Moltke was not a scholar, his drawings are proof of his commitment to science, owing to the fact that he was able to record what he saw, as if between his eye and his hand there was no intermediary, no attempt to reconstruct the reality he observed and as a result no attempt to reflect upon it. This is what Daston and Galison identify as *blind sight* - the act of seeing without inference and interpretation. Moreover, blind sight is an act of minimising subjectivity when capturing the world. Moltke was not trying to capture an ideation or perfect vision of an aurora, neither he was trying to discern an abstracted perfect form of aurora like flamboyant photographs we see today in tourist brochures advertising multicoloured arctic auroras that look the same. Moltke's aspiration for objectivity was not a reflected act of creation either. Instead it must be seen as an unpretentious inherent response to his initial scientific commitment, which was to visualise aurora objectively. But first and foremost, Moltke's drawings are proof of the complex relationship between art and science in the production of knowledge.

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Night-time Projections: Ciril Jazbec's "Magical" Light Show

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Abstract – Photography, by its very nature, immerses us in the dynamic interplay between light and shadow, providing a visual medium that interrogates and challenges the very dualism it seems to embody. Read critically, photography – as an act and as a material product – also offers a useful metaphor for deconstructing dualism. This article examines the representation of a "magical" event that took place in Uummannaq: the screening of a film projected onto an iceberg. Photographer Ciril Jazbec, while on assignment to document the effects of climate change on the traditional lifestyle practiced in low-lying regions in Greenland, was part of an impromptu outdoor film screening arranged for the residents of the Children's Home in Uummannaq. His description and photographs of the event, featured in *National Geographic*, illustrate the intersections between tradition and modernity, nature and technology, as well as Indigenous and Western cultures. Drawing on photographic and postcolonial theories, this article examines contemporary visual representations of Indigenous peoples and photographic acts in the North.

Keywords – Photography, Indigenous portraiture, Greenland, postcolonial, dualism

Contemporary discourses of climate change play a key role in shaping the ways in which the Arctic is constructed in the popular global imaginary. Although cognizant and valorising of Indigenous knowledge of and presence in the

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land, climate change discourses nonetheless fall into imperialist traps that associate Indigenous peoples with nature and thus at odds with a modern, global, urban world. Climate change discourses like the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), a 2004 transnational study, use the Arctic to reflect back southern environmentally irresponsible practices. As Marybeth Long Martello notes, the ACIA's synthesis claims "climate change in the Arctic is happening now, at a faster pace than elsewhere on Earth," and the urgency for action lies in the "implications for the rest of the world" as well as the "major economic and cultural impacts for Arctic Indigenous peoples."[1] The synthesis includes photographic images and accompanying texts that "present Arctic Indigenous peoples as exotic, expert, and endangered."[2] Contemporary photographers, like Ciril Jazbec, continue the century-long practice of photographing Indigenous peoples of the Arctic to *capture*, as Susan Sontag might put it, such endangered cultural traditions.[3]

In 2013, Jazbec undertook a project to document the effects of climate change on the traditional life of hunters in northern Greenland. *On Thin Ice* was exhibited at Les Rencontres d'Arles in 2014, and a selection of images was published in a limited edition artist book. Seven night-time photographs from the project were also featured in *Proof*, the online photography journal of the *National Geographic*, in the story titled "A Magical Night at a Cinema on Ice." *On Thin Ice* documents everyday life "in remote villages surrounding the town of Uummanaq [*sic*]," mainly in "the village of Saatut," and follows the story of Unnartoq, "one

[1] Martello 2008: 353
[2] Martello 2008: 353
[3] Born in Slovenia, Jazbec earned an MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography from the London College of Communication in 2011. "Ciril Jazbec," http://www.ciriljazbec.com/ciril-jazbec/

of the last remaining people sticking to tradition and living as subsistence hunters."[4] Jazbec's images also reflect the effects of globalization "worming its way into every nook and cranny of the world," as it drives "youth away from tradition and self-sufficiency."[5] Like the ACIA, his work is an urgent call for awareness—an awareness that nonetheless echoes the colonialist context of Arctic and ethnographic photography: "self-sufficient hunters are *disappearing* and a 1000-year tradition of hunting and survival in the most extreme of conditions is *being forgotten*."[6] In this article, I analyse Jazbec's artist book and Becky Harlan's feature in *Proof* to show the ways in which climate change discourses and the *National Geographic*'s colonialist gaze work to frame Arctic Indigenous peoples as a vulnerable population entrenched in a state of continual negotiation between tradition and modernity. I focus on the narrative that Jazbec's and Harlan's stories tell and the role that darkness plays in the night-time photographs featured in *Proof* to illustrate how aestheticism camouflages imperialist underpinnings.

Photographic Representations of Indigenous Life: Edward "Sheriff" Curtis

Framing the Arctic landscape, its inhabitants, and their cultures as pristine, endangered, and in peril of disappearing is in keeping with the representations of Indigenous life that photographers like American ethnologist and photographer Edward "Sheriff" Curtis (1868–1956) propagated at the turn of the 20th century. In his colossal compilation of photographs and writings, *The North American Indian*, Curtis strived to capture what he saw as a "vanishing race."[7] As

[4] Jazbec 2014: 1
[5] Jazbec 2014: 1
[6] Jazbec 2014: 1, my emphasis.
[7] Egan 2006: 59

Shannon Egan notes, the frontispiece of the first volume, titled *The Vanishing Race—Navajo*, was meant to capture his goal and vision, best articulated in the caption accompanying the image: "The thought which this picture is meant to convey is that the Indians as a race, already shorn in their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the *darkness* of an unknown future."[8] Best known for his images of southern Indigenous peoples, Curtis is, according to Richard G. Condon, perhaps "the best known professional photographer to make a contribution to Arctic photography."[9] He began and ended his "photographic mission" in Alaska, photographing "a region of the world which so decisively challenges the photographer's craft."[10] Controversy over Curtis' work stems from his staging of his subjects to produce ideologically constructed images that would come to define Indigenous peoples. As Condon explains, "[m]ost of Curtis' photographs were also carefully posed since he insisted that his Indian and Eskimo subjects be dressed in a traditional manner and that the backdrop include a scene which was a vital part of their land. […] The fact that Curtis often told his subjects how, where, and in what dress to pose has led some critics to dismiss his work as overly contrived."[11]

Curtis' practice and work have led Indigenous peoples to respond to the image of "the Indian" that became imprinted in the southern imaginary. In *The Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story*, for instance, playwright Marie Clements teams up with non-Indigenous photographer Rita Leistner to produce a modern-day story that illustrates the workings of systemic and historical racism. Clements' Indigenous characters confront historical key figures like

[8] Curtis in Egan 2006: 59, my emphasis.
[9] Condon 1989: 70
[10] Condon 1989: 70
[11] Condon 1989: 71

Curtis and Alexander Upshaw, Curtis' translator who also participated in the production of Indigenous images as facilitator, mediator, and subject. Of the process of writing the play, Clements states: "It was liberating because we were engaged in something other than light and dark, Aboriginal or white, vanishing or surviving. We were making our own pictures out of our own beliefs and they were adding up."[12] Leistner's contribution to the project is a series of portraits of Indigenous peoples that also respond to Curtis' ethnographic portraits.[13] Noting the "commonly held view in Curtis's time that the Aboriginal peoples of North America were a 'vanishing race'—and his job was to create a photographic record before it was 'too late,'" Leistner asks: "But what happens when the 'vanishing race' doesn't vanish? What is the impact on a people who are told they are vanishing?"[14] In her images, which include portraits of peoples in the Northwest Territories, Leistner photographs her subjects often dressed in both contemporary and ceremonial or traditional dress. In so doing, she opens a dialogue with her subjects about how various cultural and temporal intersections are regularly negotiated. Her images also confront the viewers' preconceptions about Indigenous identities as well as lingering visual stereotypes.

Similarly seeking to collapse binaries that oversimplify the complexity of postcolonial identities and negotiations, author and scholar Thomas King confronts Curtis' legacy when he writes,

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[12] Clements & Leistner 2010: 5

[13] *The Edward Curtis Project* staged the premiere of the play and opened the exhibit of photographs at the North Vancouver Museum at Presentation House in 2010 as part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad.

[14] Clements & Leistner 2010: 71

> I collect postcards. Old ones, new ones. Postcards that depict Indians or Indian subjects. […T]he vast majority of my postcards […] are simply pictures and paintings of Indians in feathers and leathers, sitting in or around tipis or chasing buffalo on pinto ponies. […] It is my postcard Indian that Curtis was after. And in spite of the fact that Curtis met a great variety of Native people who would have given the lie to the construction, in spite of the fact that he fought vigorously for Native rights and published articles and books that railed against the government's treatment of Indians, this was the Indian that Curtis believed in.[15]

King acknowledges the importance of Curtis' work insofar as it provides, beyond the contrived look of authenticity, a record of the people who existed vis-à-vis the "idea of 'the Indian'" that is "fixed in time and space."[16] As King puts it, "[e]ven before Curtis built his first camera, the image had been set."[17] Neither Clements nor King comment on Curtis' contributions to Arctic photography directly. However, Curtis' images of the Eskimo, like that of a man sitting in a kayak with a raised harpoon, have been highly influential in creating an image of a people who are fixed in time and space, even as—or because—that space is in flux.

As the trauma of colonial practices like cultural genocide begins to be addressed, there is now a shift towards recognizing the damaging impact of past practices and

[15] King 2003: 34-36
[16] King 2003: 37
[17] King 2003: 37

towards valorising Indigenous knowledge. The call to protect and retain surviving cultural traditions is paramount. In the context of the Arctic, the newest threat to that survival now wears a different name: climate change. The way in which this new threat is documented, treated, and articulated, however, is curiously familiar and evident in Jazbec's visual story and Harlan's feature.

Ciril Jazbec's *On Thin Ice*

On Thin Ice unfolds from the perspective of an outsider.[18] The opening shots position the gaze externally, surveying the landscape of northern Greenland. The scale is mapped from a vantage position, with aerial shots showing the expanse of ice- and snow-covered water. Set against this immense grey-white terrain, barely visible, miniscule dark shapes cluster in the middle of the frame. In the next shot the perspective shifts; with the gaze now at ice level the miniscule shapes are revealed to be Saatut villagers walking towards an enormous iceberg, their footprints visible. The gaze shifts again, zooming in on close-up shots of people's faces, dogs, fish, and objects associated with the Inuit hunt. These objects include spears, trousers made out of polar bear skins, and mukluks, and their close-up marks them as central—or vital—to the hunt and survival. The gaze in the story oscillates from tight close-up shots that fragment people and objects to shots that showcase the full form of a Lilliputian human within the massive landscape, to claustrophobic shots in which a human figure or dwelling takes up most of the frame. These shifts in perspective denote the anthropocentric sensibility informing the gaze, melding place and people with the "goal of putting a human face on climate change."[19]

[18] This refers to the artist book, not to the exhibit of the same title.
[19] Harlan 2014

Shifting from the vast outdoor spaces to the confined interiors of fishing shacks and hunters' homes, Jazbec's story shifts in focus, moving from what appears to be a strictly traditional hunting lifestyle to one where tradition intertwines with global modernity. Interior shots showcase telescopic rifles, a stainless-steel thermos, headlamps, electrical cords, and brand-name products like Coca-Cola appearing next to bearskin trousers. Another interior shot shows a man sitting on a bed watching summer sports on a widescreen television while two boys play on the floor with Greenlandic puppies as a woman, further in the background, dries dishes in a modern kitchen. Playing on the binaries between the indoors and outdoors, between tradition and modernity, between frigid and cosy temperatures, Jazbec pursues "the harmony" that "stems from somewhere in between." [20] In this pursuit the trajectory of colonization is subtly articulated.

As the trauma of colonial practices like cultural genocide begins to be addressed, there is now a shift towards recognizing the damaging impact of past practices and towards valorising Indigenous knowledge.

Near the end of Jazbec's photographic story are three outdoor shots taken at night-time that share a uniform indigo hue. These shots repeat the shift we see at the beginning, moving from the outdoors (more closely connected to tradition) to indoors (more closely connected to modernity and its intersection with tradition), as these

[20] Jazbec 2014: title page

are followed by violet-hued photographs taken indoors. Of all the photographs in the book, the indigo-hued shots evoke a sentiment that is almost mystical, reverential, or ceremonial. The first image shows the back of a human figure watching a nearby iceberg the size of a small building. The iceberg is lit by an unseen light source, likely the same source casting a large circle of light on the frozen space that separates the human figure from the block of ice. The light appears to be emerging from within the ice. Surrounding the person and iceberg are darker shades of indigo blue and specks of light—the stars in the sky and the glitter of light refracting off the ice on the ground and off the icebergs. The turn of the page holds two close-up portraits in which the subjects are lit by an unseen source of soft light that illuminates their faces in different shades of blue. The first shot shows a young couple lying on the ground, facing, but not looking directly at, the camera. They wear fur coats, knitted hats beneath their hoods, and their facial expressions are relaxed and content, their eyes focusing on something beyond the frame.[21] The second portrait is of a young woman sitting with her arms either crossed or holding something to her torso (Fig. 1).

[21] Harlan provides the following caption: "Ron Davis Alvarez and Sofia Hernandez Mejia are musicians and music teachers from Venezuela. They visited Children's Home for a few months this year to teach the kids music with El Sistema, a music program that aims to create great musicians while dramatically changing the life trajectory of the kids it works with." (Harlan 2014).

Figure 1: Photograph of Nielsine Løvstrøm from the Children's Home Uummannaq by Ciril Jazbec

She is dressed in what appears to be a traditional fur coat (likely seal) and polar bear-skin trousers. Her head is uncovered, and she also looks at something beyond the camera with a soft smile and calm expression. Above her head are small circles of light, out of focus objects due to the depth of field, giving the photograph an ethereal quality. In both photographs the figures are static, gazing steadily beyond the camera. Unlike Curtis' staged portraits whereby the subject looks directly at the camera or holds a mid-action pose, the gaze and expression of Jazbec's subjects suggest the presence of a candid camera. Their effect is uncanny. The familiar portrait is made strange here by the use of the blue light and by the uncertainty of the action. Unlike the other images that depict people at work or at leisure, it is not clear what the subjects are doing or what we are looking at. The unusual colour and light make these photographs aesthetically beautiful and different from the rest. Yet, looking closely at these images, especially the portrait of the young woman, a familiarity is striking: the composition of the shot is akin to historical and conventional ethnographic portraits.[22]

Jazbec's story is in keeping with the tradition of Arctic photography. As Condon notes, Arctic explorers and anthropologists welcomed the advent of photography to support and illustrate their research. As the advancements in photographic technology evolved, so did the kinds of representations of the people and their lifestyles. Curtis, unlike his contemporaries, turned to photography not only as a useful technology to record a version of reality, but also as an art form with a political message. Because photography produces images that have a "real-world"

[22] This photograph is included in Harlan's story with the following caption: "Nielsine Løvstrøm from the Children's Home Uummannaq cradles a Greenlandic puppy to keep it warm while she watches the film [*Inuk*]" (Harlan 2014).

referent, photographs are often accepted as truths and not questioned or read critically unless controversies over the photographer, setting, or subject arise. Photography theorists like Sontag, Roland Barthes, and John Tagg, however, challenge these assumptions and argue that photographs show socially constructed ideologies. Curtis, in spite of his good intentions, is a case in point. By the mid-20th century researchers turned to Arctic photography again as a form of testimonial to make visible the curious ways in which tradition and modernity intersect, without critically scrutinizing the ideological biases that informed the very images produced. After World War II, as Condon notes, the Arctic region was coveted for its strategic importance, which "shattered" its "relative isolation."[23] The presence of the military, scientists, and missionaries in the region coincided with changes in the field of anthropology emerging after 1945. As "a new generation of anthropologists" became more interested in "the impacts of rapid change upon the social, economic, material, and political adaptations of the Inuit," Arctic photography became a useful way of illustrating "these marked and irreversible changes."[24] In a sense, Arctic photography tells us more about those behind the camera than the subjects and conditions they photograph. Jazbec's 21st century photographs similarly foreground the ways in which traditional and contemporary, local and global, northern and southern, meet in the face of ever-present change. The last images in the book are violet-hued interior shots of a social gathering, showing partygoers dancing and drinking, with a sizable cluster of opened Carlsberg bottles lined up on a table behind them. Just as Coca-Cola signals the presence of global capitalism in earlier shots, the Carlsberg bottles here point more specifically to the Danish

[23] Condon 1989: 80
[24] Condon 1989: 80

colonization of Greenland and the alcoholism of its aftermath. In these shots, the figures are slightly out of focus, darkened, and engulfed in the violet light. On a pragmatic level, the shots convey the movement of the figures, the sociality of the event, and the effects of alcohol, positioning the camera well within the action of the shot. On a symbolic level, however, these shots denote the loss of tradition and purpose, especially when compared to the first images, which are clear, focused, and portray the hunters in control and in sync with the natural world. The book closes with an outdoor shot of a close-up portrait of a man smoking. Wearing a headlamp on his hat and sporting a cigarette between his lips, he stands with eyes closed and brow creased, his features in focus but veiled by the smoke. His face is set against the dark background, partly illuminated by unseen streetlamps. He stands between light and darkness, metaphorically caught between colonization and autonomy, between globalization and tradition, between present and past.

Becky Harland on Ciril Jazbec's "Cinema on Ice"

As assistant photo editor (digital) of *Proof*, the online photography journal published by the *National Geographic* that "present[s] an ongoing conversation about photography, art, journalism, and the people who create it," Harlan's feature on Jazbec's work is, in keeping with the journal's mandate, the "stor[y] behind [his] photographs."[25] Not unlike colonial narratives, her story focuses less on his subject and more on his perspective, privileging the gaze of the southerner in the Arctic over that of the Greenlandic Indigenous peoples. Harlan's story centres on one event that took place during Jazbec's time in Greenland that resulted in the blue-hued night-time photographs. Her story

[25] Harlan 2014

features seven uniform photographs, five of which are not included in the artist book, and frames them with accompanying text and captions.[26] Her story is itself akin to a photograph; it is a snapshot of one "magical" moment that occurred within what is, for most of the magazine's readership, already an extraordinary experience: trekking through the low-lying regions of Greenland.[27] The unusual indigo hue of these night-time photographs adds to the exoticism already associated with the institutional gaze of the *National Geographic*. As Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins identify in their analysis of the print version of the magazine in the mid-20th century, there are "'lines of sight' evident in the *Geographic* photograph of the 'non-Westerner,' [… that render a photograph] a dynamic site at which many gazes or viewpoints intersect"; these include the photographer's, the editor's, the audience's, and the academic gazes, to name just a few.[28] The audience is not only invited to look at uncharted landscapes and peoples, but to do so, in this case, under unusual circumstances—under the cover of darkness.

Harlan describes the circumstances that led to the event as something remarkable and extraordinary in itself. She describes how Jazbec "came across" Children's Home in the town of Uummannaq, an institution that cares for "children and young people with social problems" due to Greenland's "readjustment," which Finn Jørn Jakobsen describes as follows: "From hunting to industry. From settlement life to information society. From colony to self-governance. From local villages with their own values to national, parliamentary democracy." [29] The director of

[26] Two additional photographs appear on Jazbec's website, http://ciriljazbec.com/national-geographic/cinema-on-ice/
[27] Harlan 2014
[28] Lutz & Collins 2003: 352
[29] Harlan 2014; Jakobsen 2008: 25

Children's Home informed Jazbec that "one of the ways the facility helps children is by 'involving them in the traditional way of life, connecting them with hunters and fishermen,'" which, Harlan points out, are "the sort of cultural traditions often affected by changing weather patterns and globalization, and right in the crux of Jazbec's" project.[30] Jazbec and the director planned a "special outing" for the children: they "decided to head to the ice—to the frozen-over sea—to project *Inuk*, a Greenlandic language film, onto an iceberg."[31] The film, Harlan writes, "is especially relevant because of its cast of 'nonprofessional Inuit actors'—seal hunters and youth from a local children's home—and its narrative highlight[s] the tension between tradition and modernity present in contemporary Greenland."[32]

Harlan's representation of the event evokes the conceptual example of what Henri Cartier-Bresson termed the "decisive moment" in photography: the moment that brings together "the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as the precise organisation of forms which gives that event its proper expression."[33] In Harlan's narrative, this unusual event seems to have materialized spontaneously, like a fairy tale: "One night, Children's Home arranged to take the kids on a special outing […]."[34] Although the article quotes Jazbec stating that the "preparation [for the outing] took a few days," both Harlan's and Jazbec's choice of diction cast the event as an equivalent "fraction of a second" within the larger context of Jazbec's visit and work, as well as a synthesis of all the right elements coming together: finding

[30] Harlan 2014
[31] Harlan 2014; Jazbec in Harlan 2014
[32] Harlan 2014
[33] Cartier-Bresson in Errington 2014
[34] Harlan 2014

"a suitable iceberg," having the "perfect" weather conditions (-4 degrees Fahrenheit or -20 degrees Celsius without wind) and "the most beautiful starry night sky sprayed with northern lights" along with the "especially relevant film" to the right audience all contribute to make this event, in Jazbec's words, "[i]n a visual sense, […] one of the craziest things [he's] ever experienced" that "inspired" and "touched" him.[35]

The first two photographs in Harlan's story are contextual shots, depicting the vastness of a rich, dark blue sky. The intensity of blue varies according to the degree and placement of artificial lighting in the shot. Electrical lights are a bright light blue. In the second contextual shot the position of the camera/photographer is positioned behind a small gathering, outside its circle, reinforcing the power dynamics inherent in the gaze as well as the role of artificial light within the gathering. This is the vision of a spectacle, prominently showcasing the technology: snowmobiles and a rectangle of light on the iceberg are markedly bigger (in part because of the perspective) than the human figures standing in a semi-circle. The caption underneath provides the film's title, the director's name, and the basic plot line, as well as a description of the gathering. The image is further contextualized by the title and narrative of Harland's text, especially the opening sentence: "On his most recent trip to Greenland, photographer Ciril Jazbec witnessed something magical—a photographic experience that made his 'hairs stand on end.'"[36] The use of the words "witnessed" and "magical" here are important as they nod to the imperialist tradition of casting Indigenous peoples as naïve and superstitious in relation to the colonizers who bring with them modern technological knowledge and apparatuses and

[35] Harlan 2014; Jazbec in Harlan 2014
[36] Harlan 2014

serve as authoritative witnesses whose stories are credited as truths.

In the 19th century, for instance, ethnologist and ornithologist Edward W. Nelson, renowned for compiling "the earliest and most extensive ethnographic photographic collection from the Arctic region," documented the following "challenge" in Alaska:

> While preparing his camera to take a picture of an Eskimo settlement, the village headman came up to him and asked to look through the camera lens. When he did so, he was shocked to see the residents of his village upside down in the camera's viewfinder. He immediately shouted to his companions: "run away and hide… he has captured your shades (souls) in this box!" Almost immediately, the people ran into their homes for cover.[37]

The "magical" experience of Jazbec's event appears to be, at first, the flipside to Nelson's account, as it is the technological savvy newcomer who experiences something inspirational and meaningful, something "magical," as a result of being in this outdoor space and company in northern Greenland.

Yet, upon closer examination, echoes of Nelson's narrative emerge in Harlan's text. Jazbec recalls "Just coming onto the ice with snowmobiles was immensely exciting." [38] Although his project seeks to promote and retain Inuit traditions, the modern contraption of the snowmobile, already an embedded part of contemporary Inuit life, is the

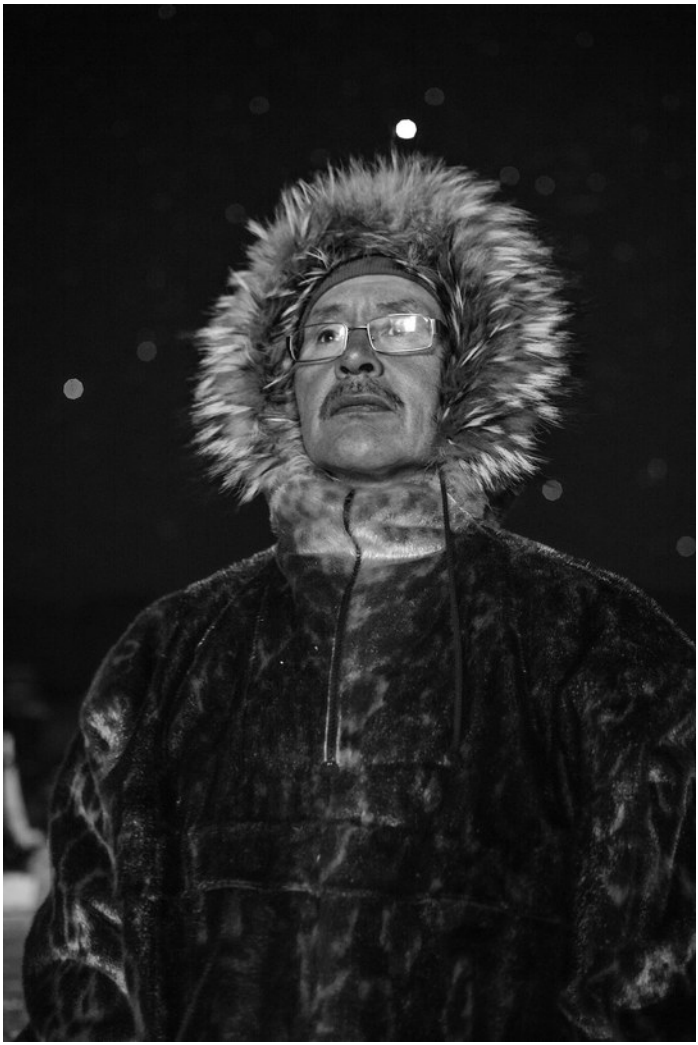
[37] Nelson in Condon 1989: 52, 53
[38] Harlan 2014

cornerstone of excitement. The extraordinary event, moreover, is the screening of a film onto an iceberg. Significantly, Jazbec recalls that "before the projector was set up, the children did a couple of dances and sang some Greenlandic songs."[39] Ironically, the names of the dances and songs remain unidentified in the story, although these speak precisely to the local traditions—the very culture—Jazbec's project seeks to record for posterity. Instead, the kind of information that is provided to the curious reader is that one of the featured children, "Jensigne Løvstrøm […] is wearing traditional clothing made out of seal skin."[40] Jazbec recalls only watching "the first 10 minutes of the movie" before deciding to "use the tripod to discreetly shoot multi-second exposure photos, trying to *capture* the images *illuminated by the projection.*" [41] The spectacle is therefore a space of cultural and discursive intersections, evident in Harlan's summation: "As children *caught* between the old ways and the new sat *transfixed* by the film, their faces *illuminated with light from the digital projector*, Jazbec felt he was able to *record images* that "don't just tell the story of a moment, but also *capture* a larger story about modern Greenland—remote towns caught up in globalization, about young people leaving for the cities."[42] The use of such words as "magical," and the description of the children as being "captured" in photographs, "transfixed" and "illuminated" by the projection from a technological artefact, are not that removed from Nelson's anecdote, and continue to represent Indigenous peoples in essentialist terms that pit them more closely with the natural world that is in great peril because of globalization.

[39] Harlan 2014
[40] Harlan 2014
[41] Harlan 2014, my emphasis.
[42] Harlan 2014, my emphasis.

These echoes are also evident in the portrait of Joas Korneliussen (Fig. 2), "a local hunter," who "helped organize and transport everyone to watch the film on the ice using a snow mobile".[43]

Figure 2: Photograph of Joas Korneliussen by Ciril Jazbec



[43] Harlan 2014

The perspective in this portrait angles the gaze upward, figuratively and literally looking up at this man. The gaze here evokes a sense of respect for an elder. The solemn affect of the shot is suggested by his upright posture and tight facial expression, and by the bluish light that illuminates his face and torso. Looking more closely, the rectangle of light from the film projected onto the iceberg is reflected on his glasses, and the effect, coupled with his solemn and intent gaze, is startling. Like Harlan's description of the children, he also appears to be entranced by what he sees. Although the textual context of the story suggests it is the subject matter of *Inuk* that he must find so moving, the image itself can also be read by his fascination with the projection of the film onto the iceberg or by the technology itself. Similar to the last photograph of the artist book, this portrait conveys a story about cultural collisions wherein tradition and modernity intersect. He is revered at the same time that he is infantilized, as he seems "transfixed" by what he sees. He is also objectified as a subject-to-be-looked-at, to paraphrase film critic Laura Mulvey in her discussion of the gaze. Mulvey, and other film critics like Christian Metz, have long discussed cinema through a psychoanalytical critical lens, informed in part by their reading of people watching images collectively in the dark. Writing in response to Mulvey, for instance, bell hooks also discusses the act of looking under the cover of darkness, especially those who have been persecuted for transgressing—for "looking"—like the young Emmett Till who was lynched for "looking" at a white woman. In this particular event, we have a photographer looking at, photographing, people watching collectively in the dark. In looking at his images, we are complicit in the look. Jazbec's discreet tripod shooting is an invasion of what is arguably a private experience, even in a collective environment. The viewer is granted entry into a meaningful experience through these photographs, granted a privileged look into

what the Indigenous audience is experiencing at seeing images of Greenlandic youth and hunters reflected on film. Our gazing is curious, surveying their responses, not so far from watching children looking at their images reflected in mirrors, photographs, moving pictures; in other words, we are complicit in infantilizing Indigenous peoples—and some of the subjects in these images *are* children.

The role darkness plays in Jazbec's photographs extends beyond providing the cover to take discreet shots of a collective screening. It, in fact, plays a crucial role in setting the "magical" atmosphere

The role darkness plays in Jazbec's photographs extends beyond providing the cover to take discreet shots of a collective screening. It, in fact, plays a crucial role in setting the "magical" atmosphere that contributes to "a very special moment."[44] The function of darkness in these images, more specifically the interplay between darkness and light—itself the cornerstone of what photography *is*—also plays a crucial role in facilitating the reproduction of what are stereotypical conventions in ethnographic portraits of Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. This interplay calls attention to the intersections articulated in *On Thin Ice*. Its role in Harlan's story, however, also reveals embedded ideological biases. These become evident when analysing the context framing Jazbec's photographs, and when the role of darkness in these images is read alongside James Elkins' photographic theory of what he terms the "surround"—meaning "all that unwanted stuff" that

[44] Harlan 2014

surrounds what we see as the main subject of a picture.[45] Distinct from the "background" of a painting, Elkins suggests that "ambitious photojournalism requires that the surround be just a little bit unusual, because that lends the photograph the aura of fine art, which in turn helps the photograph stand out in the field of photojournalism."[46] It is precisely the surround that gives Jazbec's ethnographic portraits that "aura of fine art" and makes them "stand out" to be featured in *National Geographic*'s *Proof*. The unusual light—the light from the projector—makes the darkness visible. The light, provided by the technology, works to illuminate—literally to make visible and symbolically to elevate—the subject which remains, nonetheless, "in the dark."

Darkness is figuratively evoked in climate change discourses when projecting the catastrophic effects of global warming. Darkness has also been figuratively used in colonial discourses to portray seemingly primitive and un-enlightened Indigenous peoples, traditions, and practices.

Darkness is figuratively evoked in climate change discourses when projecting the catastrophic effects of global warming. Darkness has also been figuratively used in colonial discourses to portray seemingly primitive and un-enlightened Indigenous peoples, traditions, and practices. Closely connected with negative stereotypes and associations, darkness in the Arctic conventionally reflects

[45] Elkins 2011: 116
[46] Elkins 2011: 118

the unknown, unwelcome change, the threat of disappearing from conscious view, and ignorance. The use of light in Jazbec's photographs calls into question the role that darkness plays in the photographs, as well as the interplay between darkness and light and the multiple associations each term carries. But darkness in Jazbec's photographs also takes centre stage, becoming an integral part of the subject matter. As such, it works to defamiliarize common activities, to make the ordinary seem extraordinary. As a result, it allows us to reconsider and tease out the many contradictory and conflicting ideological biases that inform each image, and to see how colonialist assumptions and stereotypes remain entrenched in contemporary scientific, artistic, and popular narratives.

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The Blue Hour of the Mystic North

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Abstract – Darkness is not night. It's the blue hour when the day's fire has just gone out, leaving an incandescent purplish-blue on the horizon. It's the blue hour, which some call the divine hour. The literature written about the North has always been imbued with the idea that the blue hour is the time when human beings draw themselves up to touch what, in their eyes, is a little bit of infinity. It's a time for contemplation and introspection. And the writers of Québec's Côte-Nord have not been immune to it. This is what we are talking about here: that mystic breath that washes over all those who have written in or about the North. There is indeed a Northern mystique, a kind of devotion centred on the idea of the North, just as there is one around the ideas of the desert and the sea. This Northern mystique is palpable in Québec literature and amply embodied in its authors' choice of language and the atmospheres they create. Gabrielle Roy, a leading 20th-century writer in French Canada, and Innu poets Rita Mestokosho and Joséphine Bacon have written dazzling passages about the blue hour.

Keywords – Blue hour, Northern Québec, Innu writers, Innu poets, Northern mystique, Québec literature, Côte-Nord literature, Gabrielle Roy, Rita Mestokosho, Joséphine Bacon

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I would like to dedicate this text to a French friend, Myriam Tiersen, who left to rejoin the blue hour on March 31, 2015.

Darkness is not night. It's the blue hour when the day's fire has just gone out, leaving an incandescent purplish-blue on the horizon. The blue hour lights up the sky and strikes flames out of river water and mountain rock like a vast *rock fire* in the words of Innu poet Rita Mestokosho. The blue hour, which some call the magic hour. Which my mother called the divine hour.

The literature written about the North has always been imbued with the idea that the blue hour is the time when human beings draw themselves up to touch what, in their eyes, is a little bit of infinity. It's a time for turning inward, for contemplation and introspection. And the writers of Québec's Côte-Nord have not been immune to it. Again, Rita Mestokosho: "I walk from Nordic moon to Nordic moon and across the lichen-dyed spaces […] I am but a breath in this mystic respiration."[1]

And this is indeed what we are talking about here: that mystic respiration that bathes all those who have written in or about the North. For French philosopher Michel Hulin, the mystical refers to an altered state of consciousness in which one has "the impression of waking to a higher reality, (...) of experiencing a foretaste of something like salvation."[2]

There is indeed a Northern mystique, in other words, a kind of devotion centred on the idea of the North, just as there

[1] "*Je marche à travers les lunes nordiques et les espaces colorés de lichens. […] Je suis un petit souffle parmi cette respiration mystique.*" Morali 2008: 58-59. I translate.
[2] "*l'impression de s'éveiller à une réalité plus haute, […] de vivre par anticipation quelque chose comme un salut.*" Hulin 1993: 23. I translate.

is one around the ideas of the desert and the sea. This Northern mystique is very palpable in Québec literature, particularly in that of the Côte-Nord, and is amply embodied in its authors' choice of language and the atmospheres they create.

La montagne secrète (The Hidden Mountain), a novel by Gabrielle Roy,[3] a leading 20th-century writer in French Canada and Québec, has resonated with such force that it has helped to construct the mystique of the North in our imaginations. Through her main protagonist, a painter, Roy gives us a rapt description of Canada's Far North, particularly the Ungava, which is the furthest northern region of Québec. She writes dazzling passages about the blue hour: "The most glorious hour."[4] Speaking again of her protagonist, she continues: "The lowering sun was bathing one side of the mountain in a soft blue-green. (…) New perspectives opened before his eyes."[5] "His thought (…) seemed to him now on the point of bursting brilliantly over the horizon of his conscious mind."[6]

For Roy, as for all the others who have written about the North, the blue hour is, in fact, a metaphor for a North that saves human beings from themselves and brings them closer to the mysteries of human existence. The North becomes a principle of redemption, a sort of answer to the great existential questions that have haunted men and

[3] Gabrielle Roy was a novelist who was born in 1909 in Saint-Boniface, in the Canadian province of Manitoba. She died in Québec City in 1983. In 1945, she published her highly acclaimed first novel, *Bonheur d'occasion*, which won her France's prestigious Femina prize. *Bonheur d'occasion* is considered the first urban novel in Québec literature.

[4] "*L'heure la plus glorieuse*" Roy 1962: 82.

[5] "*Le soleil bas allumait justement sur un côté de la montagne une douce lueur bleu-vert [...] Des perspectives nouvelles s'ouvraient à ses yeux.*" Roy 1962: 92.

[6] "*Sa pensée [...] lui semblait sur le point de monter, toute brillante, à l'horizon de sa conscience.*" Roy 1962: 89.

women since the beginning of time. Life. Death. Love. Ancestry. A balm to ease the absurdity of our finitude.

This crepuscular hour "fulfils the infinite hope, the infinite expectation, of men!"[7] Roy writes. "He sounded the depths of the northern night – so unfathomable, throbbing with stars – ready, it seemed, like no other night on earth, to explain to men their own desire, so often far beyond their own understanding."[8]

Darkness is not night.
It's the blue hour
when the day's fire has just gone out,
leaving an incandescent purplish-blue
on the horizon.

A Northern mystique is seen by the men and women who have attempted to convey it in writing as a bridge to transcendence, but *caveat lector* as a bridge to the essentially secular form of transcendence – independent of all religious beliefs to be found in contemporary literature. With the exception, perhaps, of Innu writers, for whom all of nature – its landscape, flora, fauna and the wild light of the blue hour – constitute a reach for the divine, for a divine in equal parts animist and Christian; a syncretism in which Indigenous spirituality is compatible with Christian faith.

[7] "*combler ainsi l'espérance infinie, l'infinie attente des hommes!*" Roy: 1962 85.
[8] "*Il sondait la nuit si étrange du Nord, palpitante d'étoiles, comme nulle autre au monde prête, semblait-il, à expliquer aux hommes leur propre désir si souvent à eux-mêmes incompréhensible.*" Roy 1962: 12.

Effects on Travellers

For Gabrielle Roy, the blue hour has different effects on Northern travellers. "Some fall under the spell of a heart-rending melancholy. Others become as though bemused by boundless confidence . . . destiny burgeoning in their mind's eye."[9] I would hazard a comparison with the effects of altitude; indeed, as scientific documentation shows, high altitudes can cause depression or euphoria in travellers.

Gabrielle Roy's protagonist in *The Hidden Mountain* belongs to those who find the North to be an exhilarating place that inspires unbridled confidence and allays doubt.

The same holds for Frédéric Dion. This 37-year-old Québécois earned a place in the annals of the planet after skiing 4400 kilometres across the Antarctic, alone and with only a wind sail to help him, in temperatures that sometimes dropped below -50 degrees Celsius. And do you know what he said upon his return from this expedition? He said that the experience helped him to focus on simple things, reducing both his needs and his doubts.

The North as a Dispeller of Doubt

The writer and journalist Henry de Puyjalon[10] said much the same as Dion when, over a century ago, in 1894, he wrote in his *Récits du Labrador*: "When I am around people I am prone to the most hideous form of scepticism; but far from them, in the North, all my doubts fall away and I

[9] "*Les uns tombent alors sous le coup d'une mélancolie déchirante. D'autres deviennent comme fous de confiance, leur destin leur paraît grandir.*" Roy 1962: 17.

[10] Henry de Puyjalon was a naturalist who was born in France in 1841, and died in 1905 in Havre Saint-Pierre, in Québec's Côte-Nord region. A geologist, trapper and hunter, he published technical and literary works, including *Récits du Labrador*, in 1894.

attain a degree of naivety that you would find touching, if only it were possible for you to plumb its depths."[11]

In speaking of the North, Puyjalon talked of a "death to the world" and the asceticism that this entails. He chose to "die to the world" by settling in northern Québec along with his wife, who came from the French nobility and had been a regular patron of Parisian cabarets. It has even been said that Puyjalon was one of the founders of the mythical Chat Noir in Montmartre before leaving everything for the North's vast solitudes and purity.

To become a different self – this was the fulfilment he sought and attained in his Arctic exile with its desert of wind, snow, and ice. To become another and freer self.

The Nord as a Vector of Freedom

Addressing her Northern land directly, the Innu poet Joséphine Bacon wrote: "I owe you my liberty."[12]

It was this freedom that also came to mind when the great Québec geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin considered the North and its endless spaces. It was, he claims, this irrepressible desire for freedom that drove the *coureurs des bois* ever farther North with their snowshoes and trap lines. He has them say, "Let's go farther, out there, to see if it's

[11] "*Près du monde, j'appartiens au scepticisme le plus hideux; loin de lui, au Nord, tous mes doutes se dissipent et je deviens d'une candeur qui vous toucherait, s'il vous était possible d'en sonder la profondeur.*" Puyjalon 2007: 15. I translate.

[12] "*Je te suis redevable pour ma liberté.*" Bacon 2013: 10. I translate. Joséphine Bacon, born in 1947, is an Innu poet from Pessamit, in Québec's Côte-Nord region. She writes in French and Innu-aimun. In 2009, she published a collection of poems entitled *Bâtons à message*, which gained her recognition throughout the Francophonie. She is also a documentary filmmaker.

better, if we'll be freer there."[13] In an interview published recently by the Université du Québec à Montréal, Hamelin described the *coureur des bois* as the archetype of the free man.

To See as Never Before, in the North

But let us return to the blue hour. "It takes in everything potentially ugly," wrote the French mountain climber Frison Roche in 1966.[14] The blue hour washes everything clean. It softens the harshness of the landscape. Equalizes the human soul.

Roy, again, gives us fabulous descriptions of it. "There was, in this water of the heavens, a colour to which might properly be ascribed no name known to man. The light, about to disappear, cast a golden glow, glazed with red. All one saw was carmine, acid greens, sunny yellows."[15]

In this play of iridescent and sparkling light, she writes, "at a stroke, truth sprang into life." "Life," she continues, "lay here plain as day."[16]

The blue hour makes it possible to see what would otherwise remain unseen. It enables us to see what is invisible to the eye, to use the well-known expression of Saint-Exupéry's Petit Prince. It seems to bring us closer to truth, to the truth of ourselves.

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[13] "*Allons plus loin, là-bas, voir si c'est mieux, nous y serons plus libres.*" Chartier, Désy, Hamelin 2014: 58. I translate.

[14] "*Elle absorbe tout ce qui pourrait être laid,*" Frison-Roche 1966: 62. I translate.

[15] "*Il y avait dans cette eau du ciel une couleur à laquelle n'eût pu convenir aucun nom connu, quelque doux mélange de bleu et de vert déjà difficile à définir par la pensée.*" Roy 1962: 45.

[16] "*cependant la tenait-il à jamais, à l'intérieur de soi, cette autre vie de sa vie...*" Roy 1962: 171.

I am blind
But I have seen,[17] writes Joséphine Bacon.

A Time for Confidences

The blue hour is also a time for confidences, an hour conducive to recollection and syntheses, a time for taking stock and for discreet avowals. It is often the moment when we settle down with a drink before the sun drops below the horizon. A time of shared intensities sheltered from the cold in warm houses. A time for those with an eye for beauty, for admirers of infinity, to sit quietly together and raise a glass to life!

The blue hour makes it possible
to see what would
otherwise remain unseen.

The blue hour is also a time for professions of love. In *The Hidden Mountain* Roy writes that Pierre and Nina had "an impulse to link hands."[18] It is a time for joining together in ecstasy, when the Cup of the Sublime runs over and two pairs of lips are needed to drain it. For beauty, like good wine, is made to be shared.

The Mystique and Poetry of the North

When it comes to the North, the mystical and the poetic are often tightly intertwined. For Innu writers, the blue hour, the primordial earth, and the sacred caribou are cut from the same cloth as the words of a poem.

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[17] "*Je suis aveugle/Pourtant, j'ai vu*" Bacon 2013: 46. I translate.
[18] "*un geste comme pour joindre leurs mains*" Roy 1962: 24.

Joséphine Bacon:

> *The blue and the night sing me a lullaby.*
> *I am alone with my prayer.*
> *I look for the caribou star.*[19]

Rita Mestokosho:

> *I would like to be old and to have travelled over lands of plenty.*
> *Like the tundra, the mountains, the rivers and all those trails I trod upon to be a caribou.*
> *When I draw nourishment from the earth,*
> *I always stand straight and tall,*
> *my eyes raised to the sky.*
> *I vanish for the night and clasp the stars.*[20]

Naomi Fontaine:

> *I would like you to see the virgin forest all the way down to its roots, to hear the perfect silence of the breeze at dusk. But what I would have liked to share is this indescribable pride in being myself, without makeup or perfume, set against this horizon of woodland and whiteness. Of grandeur that humbles even the most eminent of this world. Following this*

[19] "*Le bleu, la nuit, me chante une berceuse./Je suis seule avec ma prière/Je cherche l'étoile du caribou.*" Bacon 2013: 54,78. I translate.

[20] "*Je voudrais être vieille et avoir voyagé sur des terres de plénitude./Comme la toundra, la montagne, la rivière et tous ces petits sentiers où j'ai marché pour être caribou./Quand je me penche pour me nourrir de la terre,/je me tiens toujours droite,/le regard levé vers le ciel./Je disparais pour la nuit et j'enlace les étoiles.*" Morali 2008: 58-59. I translate. Rita Mastokosho, born in 1966, is an Innu poet from Ekuanitshit, in Québec's Côte-Nord region. A consultant for cultural matters in her community, she spearheaded the creation of an Innu cultural centre. She is the first Innu poet to have published a collection in Québec, *Comment je perçois la vie, grand-mère.*

> *caribou trail, you would have seen the tenacity of men against the cold, more alive than ever.*[21]

Schefferville

I would now like to speak to you about a small town that sprang up around iron mines. Schefferville, located at the 54th parallel, may well be the best embodiment of the North in the Québec imagination. Most of those who live there are Indigenous people, Innu and Naskapi, along with a handful of others. Together they make up a population of some 1000 inhabitants. Schefferville is a desert of stunted pines and rock cut out by lakes and rivers. This is the land where the waters divide not into two but four, running west to Hudson Bay, east to the Atlantic, north to Ungava Bay and south to the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Like four sections of one vast heart formed by the Labrador Peninsula.

There, at day's end, men, women and children drop whatever they are doing and gather behind the Hôtel Royal to watch the sunset in the blue hour. When it is cold, some people stay in their cars, which they've parked to face the fiery ball. They cut the engines of their snowmobiles and four-wheel-drives. They stop everything to look, just to feel what it's like in this place at the edge of the world, where

[21] "*Je voulais que tu voies la forêt vierge jusqu'à sa racine, que tu entendes le parfait silence de la brise à la brunante. Mais ce que j'aurais aimé partager, c'est cette indicible fierté d'être moi, sans maquillage et sans parfum, dans cet horizon de bois et de blancheur. De grandeur, qui rend humbles même les plus grands de ce monde. En suivant le route du caribou, tu aurais vu la ténacité des hommes devant le froid, plus vivants que jamais.*" Fontaine 2011: 90-91. I translate. Naomi Fontaine, born in 1987, is an Innu novelist from Uashat, in Québec's Côte-Nord region. She studied at Université Laval in Québec City, and in 2011 she published the award-winning novel *Kuessipan*. She is sometimes considered the first "modern" writer of Innu literature.

mineral seams weave through the earth and the waters meet in a titanic flood of energy.

This is the blue hour.
An almost supernatural hour
that could very well be the last,
say those who have experienced it.

Where it feels as if time has stood still. Has stopped fleeing. They hold it in their hands. "A strange state of anaesthesia,"[22] wrote Puyjalon in his *Carnets du Labrador*. An unparalleled moment of grace and presence. Eternity is there, and they have both feet in it, as it wraps them in the sheen of the setting sun.

The Final Hour

This is the blue hour. An almost supernatural hour that could very well be the last, say those who have experienced it. With their eyes glued to the sapphire horizon, they are ready, ready to fly away. To be nullified in a flash, in this abstract land that resembles, perhaps, the paradise of believers. Or the nothingness and the hereafter of non-believers.

[22] "*État d'anesthésie étrange*," Puyjalon 2007 : 132. I translate.

I will end with these words by Joséphine Bacon:

You raise your head
The aurora borealis
White, green, violet angels
Take you under their wings
And carry you off,
Where you will live on[23]

[23] "*Tu lèves la tête/Des aurores boréales/Des anges blancs, verts, mauves/Te prennent sous leurs ailes/Puis t'emmènent,/Là où tu resteras vivant*" Bacon 2013: 9. I translate.

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Abstracts in French

Par-delà les frontières
La noirceur et le champ fluide

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Résumé – En Occident, lorsque l'être humain est confronté à la noirceur, il a tendance à la chasser à l'aide de l'électricité. Pour les citadins, qui font rarement, voire jamais, l'expérience de l'obscurité, la nuit est toujours illuminée par un éclairage de rue orangé. Ici, les heures sombres peuvent être porteuses d'effroi, que ce soit par peur de la noirceur elle-même ou encore par crainte des autres êtres humains. Cet article explore la lumière nordique et son estompement, visant à découvrir de nouvelles façons de comprendre l'obscurité. Je m'appuierai d'abord sur mes propres expériences avec celle-ci, avant d'analyser l'un des récits tirés de mon vécu à l'aide du concept de *chair* développé par Maurice Merleau-Ponty. En tant que théorie de l'expérience incarnée, celui-ci paraît en effet prometteur pour aller au-delà de la conception de la noirceur comme une entité séparée de la lumière et de nous-mêmes. Après avoir établi que l'obscurité est plus qu'une simple qualité de la lumière, ou que son absence telle que ressentie par les êtres humains, je me pencherai sur la notion bouddhiste de *vacuité* afin de déterminer si elle pourrait s'appliquer à notre relation à la noirceur, de par sa capacité à refléter le caractère enchevêtré du rapport des êtres humains au monde qui les entoure.

Mots-clés – Noirceur, expérience, incarnation, chair, vacuité, bouddhisme

Un chemin vers la noirceur
À la rencontre des aurores boréales

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Résumé – Les aurores boréales sont devenues un attrait majeur et un moteur important pour l'industrie du tourisme d'hiver en Islande et dans les régions nordiques de la Scandinavie et de l'Amérique du Nord, et ce, même si les itinéraires axés sur les aurores boréales sont difficiles à mettre en marché en raison du caractère imprévisible de celles-ci. Si les circuits consacrés aux aurores boréales varient beaucoup en matière de structure et d'organisation selon les conditions sur le terrain, ils sont tous fondés sur le même principe : l'interaction entre la noirceur et la lumière. Dans cet article, nous nous pencherons sur le rôle et le sens de la noirceur dans les excursions axées sur les aurores boréales. Notre thèse centrale est la suivante : bien que la noirceur soit un prérequis pour assister aux aurores boréales, elle ne doit pas être envisagée comme un arrière-plan passif à leur manifestation, mais plutôt comme une matière jouant une multitude de rôles actifs pour façonner l'expérience que procurent les aurores boréales. Toute visite guidée des aurores boréales est en partie improvisée en raison des circonstances particulières entourant le phénomène, et c'est en l'absence d'aurores boréales que l'obscurité devient essentielle pour concevoir une expérience touristique mémorable. Ceci a pour effet de mettre un accent particulier sur le guide, qui doit, pour ce faire, improviser afin de tirer profit des qualités de la noirceur. Son rôle est essentiel, car il consiste à déployer une panoplie de stratégies pour orchestrer une expérience positive à l'aide de ces éléments, en l'absence d'aurores boréales. Nous retracerons brièvement deux exemples d'excursions où le guide parvient à se mettre au diapason de la noirceur pour créer un paysage lumineux singulier avec la collaboration des touristes, leur faisant vivre de ce fait une expérience mémorable.

Mots-clés – Aurores boréales, noirceur, guides, paysage lumineux, Islande, Norvège

La sombre extase de Guantánamo

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Résumé – Cet article se penche sur les méthodes de torture sanctionnées par l'État que l'on fait subir aux personnes capturées et séquestrées illégalement dans le centre de détention militaire de la baie de Guantánamo, à Cuba, géré depuis le 11 janvier 2002 par l'armée américaine. Il s'intéresse plus particulièrement à la violence exercée par les ondes soniques dans la noirceur, lorsque le champ de vision des détenus est occulté pour accroître l'efficacité de la musique et du son en tant qu'instruments de torture. Dans le noir absolu, le corps devient une antenne, une subjectivité qui reçoit et transmet des informations sur l'affect des ondes sonores. Lorsque la musique se transforme en arme, les frontières entre les sphères culturelle et militaire sont brouillées, amalgamant la noirceur des cellules, la stratégie militaire et les fréquences audio dans une cosmologie nouvelle de relations insidieuses.

Mots-clés – Torture sonore, domination par les ondes, le son comme arme, le corps-antenne, la sombre extase

L'éloignement de la lumière
Réflexions sur une épistémè de l'espace-temps et le design de la nature

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Résumé – Cet essai présente, dans un premier temps, une réflexion conceptuelle sur ce que nous avons appelé une épistémè de l'espace-temps et sur le design de la nature comme façon d'aborder la dynamique de l'obscurité dans les régions nordiques de la planète, en avançant que la noirceur n'est en fait rien d'autre que l'éloignement de la lumière. Dans un deuxième temps, ce texte est une façon de présenter la discussion esthétique et la démarche artistique qui sous-tendait le travail des auteurs lorsqu'ils ont conçu l'installation *Remoteness of Light*, présentée à la Nordic House, à Reykjavík, dans le cadre de la conférence *Dynamics of Darkness in the North*, en février 2015.

Mots-clés – Noirceur, éloignement de la lumière, études médiatiques, arts médiatiques, design critique

Comparaison de/avec la noirceur

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Résumé – Cet article emploie une approche narrative pour étudier l'idée de la noirceur en tant que construction culturelle. Il montre que la noirceur en tant qu'objet de perception est construite socialement, à l'aide du langage, de la création d'images et d'autres systèmes sémiotiques. La noirceur en tant que telle n'existe dans notre univers d'expérience qu'à travers des caractéristiques qui sont toujours, du moins jusqu'à un certain point, construites à travers le langage ou d'autres systèmes de signes. Je me base sur un exemple tiré de l'expérience sensorielle directe, et m'inspire de la métaphysique des propriétés et des théories de l'esthétique de la nature pour alimenter ce récit.

Mots-clés – Constructions culturelles, systèmes sémiotiques, expérience sensorielle, métaphysique, esthétique

Hof

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Résumé – Hof est une installation vidéo muette, en couleur et à canal unique, conçue pour être projetée dans le coin d'une pièce sombre. La séquence dure 6 minutes 45 secondes et joue en boucle de façon continue. Hof a été présentée pour la première fois à la Nordic House à Reykjavík, dans le cadre de l'événement *Dynamics of Darkness in the North*. Quatre-vingt différentes prises de vue nocturnes d'une cour intérieure (ein Hof) à Berlin étaient projetées dans une séquence de fondus enchaînés. Hof fait voir la transformation, la nuit, de l'espace urbain quotidien et familier en un lieu qui s'apparente au cinéma, où s'exerce la fascination psychologique et physiologique que l'on ressent en visionnant un film dans une salle obscure. Si la lumière vive que jettent les fenêtres des blocs appartements rappelle l'écran lumineux du cinéma, et que les points de vues qu'elles offrent sur les logements évoquent les prises de vue voyeuristes de films tels que *Rear Window* (*Fenêtre sur cour*; Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), les photographies prises pour Hof n'ont pas été mises en scène, et la séquence est non narrative. Les liens que pourront créer les spectateurs avec des scènes de film seront arbitraires : ceux-ci sont conditionnés par la noirceur – leur imagination se met à errer, et des images familières apparaissent. La noirceur devient une obscurité cinématographique. Les rêves deviennent des films.

Mots-clés – Vidéo, Berlin, voyeurisme, films, nuit, paysages urbains

Nuits blanches, troubles du sommeil et péché dans *Insomnia* (1997) d'Erik Skjoldbjærg et son adaptation (2002) par Christopher Nolan

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Résumé – La dépression saisonnière et les troubles du sommeil associés à la nuit sans fin sont des phénomènes bien connus. Ainsi, dans les terres du soleil de minuit, toute recherche de la noirceur (et du sommeil) doit être envisagée comme un problème pratique. Mais dans le contexte fictionnel d'une œuvre cinématographique, le jour et la nuit se dotent forcément d'une valeur symbolique, de sorte que la recherche pragmatique du sommeil (et de la nuit artificielle) devient aussi une quête éperdue de l'oubli, à l'abri de la culpabilité et du secret. Dans cet article, deux versions du film *Insomnia* (l'original [1997] d'Erik Skjoldbjærg et l'adaptation [2002] de Christopher Nolan) sont étudiées afin de montrer que la création d'un « espace atemporel » fait de l'absence nordique de la nuit un vaste purgatoire blanc, où les « péchés » remontent inévitablement à la surface.

Mots-clés – Soleil de minuit, nord, purgatoire, insomnie, Erik Skjoldbjærg, Christopher Nolan, film

De la lumière à la noirceur – Visualiser les aurores boréales de l'expédition danoise en Islande (1899-1900)

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Résumé – L'objectif de ces recherches est d'examiner le travail de Harald Moltke (1871-1960), qui a peint, entre juillet 1899 et avril 1900, 19 tableaux d'aurores boréales dans le village d'Akureyri, en Islande. En raison des difficultés techniques qu'entraîne la prise de photographies en couleurs de ces phénomènes, l'Institut météorologique danois a embauché Moltke en tant qu'artiste officiel de l'expédition danoise de 1899-1900 en Islande. Cet article se base sur deux dessins d'observation réalisés par l'artiste au cours de cette période. La plupart des recherches sur les peintures de Moltke se concentrent sur ses habiletés artistiques, ce qui a pour effet de minimiser sa mission principale : la représentation scientifique d'un phénomène météorologique. Ses dessins sont le fruit d'heures entières d'observation de différents types d'aurores et sont donc le résultat d'une pratique scientifique. En analysant le travail de Moltke, nous souhaitons étudier les techniques de représentation employées dans ses dessins des aurores, les modalités de production du savoir mobilisées et les rapports entre la pratique de l'art et celle de la science dont ils témoignent. Enfin, cette recherche montrera comment l'œuvre de Moltke a servi à diffuser les connaissances sur le phénomène des aurores et a contribué à sa compréhension.

Mots-clés – Expédition scientifique, aurores boréales, phénomène des aurores, observation des aurores, pratiques scientifiques, Akureyri, artiste voyageur, dessin, visualisation

Projections nocturnes : Le spectacle lumineux « magique » de Ciril Jazbec

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Résumé – La photographie, par sa nature, nous immerge dans l'interaction dynamique entre lumière et ombre, résultant en un médium visuel qui interroge et défie le dualisme qu'il incarne. Analysée de manière critique, la photographie – en tant que performance et objet concret – fait figure de métaphore pour déconstruire ce dualisme. Dans cet article, l'auteure analyse la représentation d'un évènement « magique » qui a eu lieu à Uummannaq, soit la présentation d'un film projeté sur un iceberg. Le photographe Ciril Jazbec, alors en mission pour documenter les effets des changements climatiques sur le mode de vie traditionnel dans les régions du Groenland situées près du niveau de la mer, a été témoin de cette projection extérieure impromptue organisée pour les résidents du foyer pour enfants d'Uummannaq. La description et les photographies de l'événement qu'il en a tirées, parues dans le *National Geographic*, illustrent le croisement entre la tradition et la modernité, la nature et la technologie, ainsi qu'entre les cultures autochtones et occidentales. S'appuyant sur les théories postcoloniales et celles de la photographie, l'auteure analyse des représentations visuelles contemporaines des peuples autochtones et les performances photographiques dans le Nord.

Mots-clés – Photographie, portraits autochtones, Groenland, postcolonialisme, dualisme

L'heure bleue du nord mystique

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Résumé – La noirceur n'est pas la nuit. C'est l'heure bleue qui s'installe quand l'embrasement du jour s'éteint, laissant une lueur bleu-mauve subsister sur l'horizon. C'est l'heure bleue, que certains surnomment « l'heure divine ». La littérature sur le Nord a toujours été empreinte de l'idée que l'heure bleue est ce moment où les êtres humains s'élèvent pour atteindre ce qui leur paraît être un brin d'éternité. C'est un moment de contemplation et d'introspection. Et les écrivains de la Côte-Nord n'y échappent pas. Et c'est de cela que nous parlons ici : ce souffle mystique qui enveloppe tous ceux qui ont écrit dans ou sur le Nord. Il y a bien un mysticisme nordique, une sorte de dévotion à l'idée même du Nord, tout comme celles consacrées au désert ou à la mer. Cette mysticité nordique est tangible dans la littérature québécoise et s'incarne à foison dans les choix linguistiques des auteurs et les atmosphères qu'ils créent. Gabrielle Roy, une grande écrivaine canadienne francophone du XX^{e} siècle, et les poètes innus Rita Mestokosho et Joséphine Bacon, ont toutes trois écrit des passages fulgurants sur l'heure bleue.

Mots-clés – Heure bleue, Nord du Québec, auteurs innus, poètes innus, mysticisme nordique, littérature québécoise, littérature nord-côtière, Gabrielle Roy, Rita Mestokosho, Joséphine Bacon

Introduction in French

Introduction
La noirceur, un puissant signe de l'imaginaire du Nord

Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund
et Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson

Le « Nord » est un espace complexe et pourtant souvent simplifié dans les représentations[1], composé de réalités physiques, culturelles et sémiologiques, lourdement défini et marqué par les discours extérieurs, défini selon des méthodologies qui appellent l'invention de néologismes : *septentrionisme*[2], *arcticism*[3], *idea of North*[4], *boréalisme*[5], *imaginaire*

[1] Daniel Chartier aimerait remercier Marie Mossé pour ses recherches préliminaires qui lui ont permis de rédiger cette partie de l'introduction. Une version ultérieure et plus longue de cette partie est publiée dans la revue *Deshima* sous le titre « La noirceur, un signe de l'imaginaire du Nord ».
[2] Les travaux de l'Université de Lille dès le tournant du 21e siècle proposaient cette notion, entre l'esthétisme et l'histoire. Voir par exemple : *Le Nord, latitudes imaginaires*, Monique Dubar et Jean-Marc Moura [dir.], Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Presses de l'Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, coll. « UL3 Travaux et recherches », 2000, 490 p.
[3] C'est le terme parfois utilisé par les chercheurs norvégiens, dont Henning Howlid Wærp et ses collègues. Voir par exemple Anka Ryall, Johan Schimanski et Henning Howlid Wærp, « Arctic Discourses: An Introduction », Anka Ryall, Johan Schimanski et Henning Howlid Wærp [dir.], *Arctic Discourses*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, p. ix-xxii.

Chartier, D., Lund, K.A. and Jóhannesson, G.T. (2021). « Introduction. La noirceur, un puissant signe de l'imaginaire du Nord, » in *Darkness. The Dynamics of Darkness in the North*, eds. D. Chartier, K.A. Lund and G.T. Jóhannesson, Montréal and Reykjavík: Imaginaire | Nord and Land- og ferðamálafræðistofa / Research Centre in Geography and Tourism at the University of Iceland (Isberg), pp. 233-46.

du Nord[6], *nordicité*[7] et bien d'autres. Ces perspectives, qui se superposent et se rejoignent à la fois, permettent un point de vue varié et riche[8] pour comprendre la subtile interaction entre le rapport interne et externe de perception du Nord, mais aussi pour renverser, par une « recomplexification » culturelle, la simplification historique de ces représentations. Ce processus nécessite une analyse des composantes, des

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[4] Selon la formule utilisée par le musicien canadien Glenn Gould dans son essai musical et radiophonique *Solitude Triology* amorcé dès 1967 par un volet sur « The Idea of North », formule souvent reprise par la suite, notamment dans le célèbre essai pour la littérature canadienne-anglaise de Sherill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, Montréal et Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, 341 p.

[5] La formule est utilisée en 2007 par l'essayiste norvégien Kjartan Fløgstad dans son essai socioesthétique sur le Svalbard intitulé *Pyramiden* (traduit en français sous le titre : *Pyramiden. Portrait d'une utopie abandonnée*, Arles, Actes Sud, coll. « Aventure », 2009, 176 p.), mais elle est transformée en une réflexion sur l'esthétique des représentations européennes sur le Nord par Sylvain Briens, notamment dans l'excellent numéro qu'il a dirigé sur cette question en 2016 des *Études germaniques*, vol. 71, nº 2, avril-juin 2016.

[6] C'est sur cette notion que se base cet article, notion notamment exposée dans Daniel Chartier, *Qu'est-ce que l'imaginaire du Nord? Principes éthiques*, Montréal et Harstad, Imaginaire | Nord et Arctic Arts Summit, 2018, 156 p. Ce livre a fait l'objet d'éditions et de traductions en 15 des langues du Nord : voir https://nord.uqam.ca/projet/traduire-publier-et-diffuser-en-15-langues-du-nord-quest-ce-que-limaginaire-du-nord (consulté le 28 janvier 2021).

[7] C'est là l'un des nombreux néologismes inventés par le géographe et linguiste québécois Louis-Edmond Hamelin pour enrichir la langue française d'un vocabulaire qui lui permettrait de comprendre la complexité du monde froid. Selon Hamelin, la nordicité renvoie tant au Nord, à la haute montagne qu'à l'Arctique. Pour la saison hivernale, conçue comme une « nordicité temporaire », il a forgé le terme d'« hivernité ». De nombreux mots inventés par Hamelin font aujourd'hui partie du vocabulaire courant, et plusieurs ont été traduits dans les principales langues de l'espace circumpolaire. Voir notamment son testament intellectuel : *La nordicité du Québec*, Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2014, 141 p.

[8] Comme l'a brillamment démontré Odile Parsis-Barubé dans son article « "*Il y a tant de nords dans ce Nord!*" Problématiques de la délimitation et de l'indélimitation dans l'étude de l'imaginaire septentrional », Daniel Chartier, Helge Vidar Holm, Chantal Savoie et Margery Vibe Skagen [dir.], *Frontières. Actes du colloque québéco-norvégien*, Montréal et Bergen, Imaginaire | Nord et Département des langues étrangères de l'Université de Bergen, coll. « Isberg », 2017, p. 165-186.

signes, des mythèmes, du chromatisme, des schémas narratifs, bref, des vecteurs qui composent ce vaste système de signes qu'est l'imaginaire du Nord, signes interreliés et souvent issus de traditions culturelles anciennes et variées, comme c'est ici le cas pour la « noirceur » associée à la définition du Nord.

L'analyse des tensions et effets du signe de la « noirceur » dans le cadre de l'imaginaire du Nord s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une recherche où l'on tente collectivement de répondre au défi intellectuel de rendre le Nord « définitoire[9] », même s'il s'agit d'en constater les emprunts à d'autres espaces culturels. Ainsi, réfléchir au froid, au silence, à la blancheur, à la neige, à l'hiver, à la glace — et à bien d'autres signes et pratiques de l'espace circumpolaire — permet d'amorcer une réflexion sur les composantes de cet imaginaire et sur sa contribution culturelle.

La « noirceur » s'inscrit à la fois dans un système de signes et dans un rapport géographique de la réalité physique basé sur les observations de la luminosité, à la jonction de différents modes d'appréhension du réel. La noirceur renvoie également à des traditions diverses dont l'accumulation des représentations, des discours et des œuvres a fini par la transformer en esthétique et en lieu commun. Enfin, cette noirceur forme avec la blancheur un couple d'opposition et de tension puissant, qui donne aux discours qui y renvoient un caractère rigoureux, « sérieux », parfois moral, tendant quelquefois vers l'absolu et l'abstraction.

[9] Louis-Edmond Hamelin, « À la rencontre du Nord et du Sud », *Cap-aux-Diamants*, nº 56, « Au nord du Nord », hiver 1999, p. 19.

La noirceur : définitions, composantes et valeurs morales

Définir la noirceur s'apparente à un impossible exercice de style dans lequel il faudrait tout à la fois définir l'absence, le néant, l'absolu.

La perception de la noirceur varie selon la situation d'énonciation, c'est-à-dire selon que l'énonciation vienne de ceux et celles qui vivent dans le Nord ou de ceux et celles qui, de l'extérieur à celui-ci, l'imaginent, puis parfois le visitent. La noirceur varie aussi selon qu'on la considère comme un phénomène de la physique ou dans son rapport à une intériorité — voire à une transcendance — humaine. La noirceur est-elle uniforme? Est-elle semblable selon les saisons, les climats, les cultures? Sa perception varie-t-elle selon les croyances religieuses, les époques, les classes sociales, l'appartenance culturelle, les genres? La noirceur se situe dans un système de valeurs symboliques où les couleurs se voient associées à des significations, inscrites dans un rapport les unes avec les autres. Dans celui-ci, la noirceur est souvent perçue dans son opposition à la blancheur, qui souvent signifie la lumière, la pureté, la vie — et qui renvoie donc la noirceur à ses inverses, soit une privation de la lumière, de la pureté et de la vie. Comme tout couple d'opposition, noirceur et blancheur se révèlent souvent inséparables, ce qui rend plus nuancée l'association entre le Nord et la noirceur, puisqu'avec cette dernière vient toujours la lumière.

Depuis l'Antiquité, la noirceur porte et représente une valeur morale, voire religieuse, comme le veut la tradition chrétienne venue de la Méditerranée et qui influence en grande part la conception de l'idée du Nord et des territoires circumpolaires. La variation plus grande entre le jour estival et la nuit hivernale dans le Nord induit une

association, volontiers exagérée par les discours, d'un gradient de valeurs, qui se manifeste dans les représentations de la nuit éternelle, qui fixe le rapport entre Nord et noirceur.

La définition de la « noirceur lui donne à la fois un sens propre et un sens figuré, qui traduisent cet héritage : le sens propre est lié au chromatisme, le figuré, à la morale. Au sens propre, le mot signifie ce qui est noir; par extension, l'obscurité. Au sens figuré, il désigne le caractère méchant et perfide; l'état de ce qui est assombri par la tristesse ou la mélancolie; ce qui est inquiétant et menaçant. Ce glissement sémantique vers le sens figuré a conduit à donner à la couleur noire des valeurs négatives, associées au mot : le mal, la tristesse, la menace.

Le lien entre la noirceur nordique et celle intérieure des habitants du Nord s'appuie sur la théorie des humeurs et celle des climats. Toutes deux affirment la pertinence d'un rapport de l'être humain à son milieu naturel et l'influence que la nature exerce sur eux. Dès le 5e siècle avant l'ère chrétienne, Hippocrate suggérait l'existence d'un rapport entre la rudesse des climats montagneux et la complexion : la difficulté du terrain expliquait pour lui la capacité d'endurance, de courage et de force de ceux qui y vivaient[10].

L'opposition entre le Nord physique et le Sud spirituel, celle entre le Nord inerte et le Sud sensuel, celle entre le Nord viril et le Sud féminisé se retrouvent dans la théorie des climats telle qu'exposée par Germaine de Staël au début du 19e siècle. Cette théorie continue par certains aspects à influencer la perception générale des sociétés nordiques.

[10] Hippocrate, *Airs, eaux, lieux*, XXIV, 2, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1996, tome 2, partie 2, p. 244-245.

La noirceur et la lumière comme couple symbolique

Les origines de la signification de la noirceur nous rappellent l'impossibilité de la concevoir sans son double et son contraire : la blancheur et la lumière. En réalité, il faudrait en toute circonstance plutôt parler du couple sémiotique de la noirceur et de la lumière pour interpréter les représentations et comprendre le sens puissant qui s'en dégage.

Le rapport qui existe entre Nord et noirceur est tout aussi ancien que celui qui unit Nord et blancheur : ce double rapport perdure dans les œuvres contemporaines comme une oscillation qui renforce l'association et, parfois, la renverse tout à la fois. Les évolutions de ce couple sémiotique, ses mutations et ses tensions font état de la richesse et de la polysémie symbolique des représentations possibles dans le rapport de l'être humain au Nord et à l'Arctique. Celles-ci touchent tant à la fatalité de la variation de la lumière dans l'espace géographique septentrional (de plus en plus marquée à mesure qu'on monte vers le pôle) qu'à des connotations intimes et morales, qui se rapprochent de l'identité personnelle et collective. L'association entre les observations physiques et matérielles et une quête intérieure, voire transcendante, de recherche de soi, de son identité, de pureté, d'abstraction et d'absolu qui caractérise la montée vers le Nord, cette association fait écho à l'ambiguïté fondamentale du couple sémiotique de la noirceur et de la lumière dans l'imaginaire du Nord comme système de signes abstrait, mais tout de même inspiré et ancré dans le réel.

Les effets de la noirceur

La noirceur provoque l'émotion et cause des effets psychologiques, comme la peur, l'angoisse ou l'impression d'un manque. Elle conduit par conséquent à des transformations personnelles et, par extension, sociales et esthétiques. Le ciel de la nuit noire fait naître l'émotion : la noirceur absolue déclenche des idées et des perceptions nouvelles, hors du jour et du brouhaha de l'activité quotidienne, et elle renvoie au silence et à la solitude, deux autres composantes fondamentales de l'imaginaire du Nord.

Au terme du règne de la noirceur se pointe ensuite celui du retour de la lumière. Avec lui, se réalise une métamorphose, comme si le passage de la nuit était une épreuve initiatique qui renforçait et changeait, de l'intérieur, les personnes qui ont pu faire face à l'obscurité, au vide, au retour vers leurs peurs et leurs angoisses enfouies au fond de leur passé.

D'un point de vue esthétique, dans les productions culturelles et littéraires, la noirceur du monde ambiant se reflète dans la psychologie des personnages et vice-versa : on peut donc parler d'un processus d'« hypallage », c'est-à-dire une projection des qualités du paysage ou d'une atmosphère à un être vivant et à son émotion. C'est ainsi, par cette transposition au moyen d'un procédé rhétorique, que le phénomène de l'irrégularité saisonnière de la lumière diurne dans le Nord se transforme en effet esthétique qui à son tour produit du sens et, par extension, arrive à intégrer un système de signes, celui de l'imaginaire du Nord.

Une histoire de la noirceur nordique

Historiquement, le système symbolique du Nord associe ce dernier à la vacuité et à la blancheur. Toutefois, le régime d'alternance entre le jour estival et la nuit hivernale propre à

l'espace circumpolaire induit l'idée d'un couple d'opposés, la blancheur éblouissante et la nuit longue, toutes deux composantes du Nord. Cette opposition duelle a des racines historiques et s'appuie sur une observation de la réalité géographique de la région, mais elle s'est également transmutée en valeurs morales, en liens d'appartenance et en une valorisation de l'adaptation à la noirceur comme ancrage identitaire nordique.

L'adaptation à la noirceur révèle un sens du courage, de l'invention et de la positivité qui est remarqué et valorisé par les voyageurs, qui en font parfois un critère d'adhésion et d'identité au Nord. Apprendre à vivre dans le noir, à lire les signes de la noirceur, à transformer l'espace sombre en théâtre de lumière devient ainsi un processus d'apprentissage et d'affirmation — voire de victoire — qui dénote la force et induit une validation de l'identité des *véritables* habitants du Nord.

Cette adaptation peut s'effectuer de deux manières : soit en faisant de la noirceur un lieu *lisible* où l'on peut arriver à se repérer et à habiter, soit en créant de la lumière dans l'espace sombre du Nord, à la fois à l'extérieur, notamment par l'art d'éclairer les villes, et à l'intérieur des habitations. Pour les Nordiques, l'usage intérieur tamisé et subtil de la lumière permet de créer un mode de confort, d'intimité et de vie au chromatisme chaud, une oasis de lumière et de chaleur au milieu d'un monde extérieur marqué par le froid, le silence, la noirceur et les couleurs blanche et bleue.

La noirceur comme renversement

La valorisation de la noirceur dans un contexte nordique conduit à un renversement des positivités dans le couple d'opposition entre jour et nuit qui ne se fait pas sans un bouleversement de l'ordre moral, esthétique et identitaire,

de l'extérieur comme de l'intérieur du Nord. Dans certains cas, cela permet une déconstruction des lieux communs de l'imaginaire du Nord et une reformulation nuancée des rapports de force dans les représentations culturelles et sociales.

La noirceur est une donnée géographique du Nord, et par le biais des discours sociaux et culturels, et donc, par celui de l'imaginaire, elle est devenue l'un des signes par lesquels est représenté le Nord de l'extérieur, mais aussi un de ceux par lesquels les cultures du Nord se définissent par rapport au reste du monde.

La noirceur peut aussi être perçue comme l'un des stéréotypes ou l'une des préconceptions du Nord; elle porte alors une lourde valeur morale (liée à l'absence de vie, aux misères et aux souffrances) et parfois, politique (liée au colonialisme, à la mise sous silence, à l'ignorance de l'autre). Certains artistes et écrivains nordiques cherchent ainsi à s'en distancier, soit en tentant d'inverser le pôle des valeurs négatives qui y sont liées, soit en la transformant en un trait identitaire qui s'en trouve valorisé. Comme dans tous les cas de renversement de stéréotype, ce geste a un double tranchant : il déplace certes la signification du lieu commun, mais il renforce en même temps son association obligée avec l'imaginaire dans lequel il s'inscrit.

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Plus haut[11], nous avons abordé la définition du concept de « noirceur nordique », qui fait l'objet de cet ouvrage. Les dix chapitres qui suivent examinent chacun à sa façon les dynamiques engendrées par la noirceur. Les contributeurs sont issus de disciplines variées en sciences sociales, en

[11] Cette partie a été traduite de l'anglais au français par Luba Markovskaia.

sciences humaines et en arts, couvrant de ce fait un large éventail d'approches et de perspectives culturelles. Étant donné le sujet, il est intéressant de noter que la plupart des chapitres s'intéressent à la lumière et à son interaction avec l'obscurité sous différentes formes. Ceci permet de souligner que la noirceur et la luminosité ne sont pas simplement des pôles opposés, mais composent au contraire une dynamique complexe que l'on éprouve et ressent. Ensemble, ces contributions éclairent le sens de la noirceur, l'usage qu'on en fait, sa place et son rôle dans la vision du monde de différentes cultures, la lutte scientifique contre l'obscurité, et les conséquences de ces interactions sur les vies humaines et sur la compréhension de soi et de l'autre. Ce livre se penche en particulier sur la noirceur dans un contexte nordique. La plupart des chapitres explorent les régions arctiques et subarctiques, mais certains s'intéressent également à des zones situées plus au sud. Cela montre que la fluidité des rapports entre le Nord et le Sud contribue à façonner le Nord et ses imaginaires de manières multiples.

Judy Sparks étudie l'expérience incarnée de l'interaction entre la lumière et la noirceur. Elle avance que plutôt que de la voir comme une absence de lumière, il conviendrait de concevoir l'obscurité comme la tombée de la nuit, ou encore comme une étape dans une séquence naturelle de variations de luminosité. La transition entre le jour et la nuit est indissociable de notre existence corporelle, et Sparks explore le potentiel de la noirceur à dicter notre expérience « du monde et de nous-mêmes ». Elle convoque le concept bouddhiste de vacuité pour examiner la façon dont la noirceur peut créer des formes alternatives d'expérience du soi et de son rapport au monde.

D'une manière connexe, mais dans un contexte différent, Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson et Katrín Anna Lund explorent le sens de la noirceur dans la vision occidentale du monde.

Ils s'intéressent aussi à la façon dont, dans son interaction avec la lumière, elle permet de créer des expériences touristiques mémorables dans le Nord. Se penchant sur les itinéraires axés sur les aurores boréales, ils avancent que si la noirceur est nécessaire pour apercevoir celles-ci, il ne s'agit pas d'un arrière-plan neutre, mais bien d'une entité active, qui remplit différentes fonctions dans l'expérience. Le rôle et la signification de la noirceur deviennent essentiels lorsque les aurores ne sont pas au rendez-vous. C'est le moment où le guide doit improviser et s'harmoniser au rythme de la noirceur afin de créer un paysage lumineux atmosphérique en collaboration avec les touristes.

Entre le tourisme des aurores boréales et le confinement de Guantánamo, il y a tout un monde. Mais l'expérience corporelle de la noirceur est au cœur même du chapitre de Toby Heys sur les méthodes de torture sonore employées contre les détenus. Il donne un exemple marquant de la signification de l'obscurité et de ses effets sur la perception sensorielle des êtres humains, ainsi que de leur expérience du corps en lien avec l'environnement. Un élément de la torture sonore consiste à abolir le champ de vision afin d'amplifier l'impact de la musique et du bruit sur le détenu. Le chapitre de Heys souligne à quel point la noirceur peut s'exercer comme une force servant à brouiller les frontières entre la sphère culturelle de la musique et les stratégies militaires, pour donner lieu à une nouvelle cosmologie, sombre et troublante, tissée de relations insidieuses.

Les deux chapitres suivants portent sur les manières dont la noirceur a été construite et formulée. On peut dès lors avancer que la façon dont nous éprouvons l'obscurité est au moins jusqu'à un certain point issue du design. Dans leur chapitre, Diego Gómez-Venegas et Barbara Bielitz réfléchissent à ce qu'ils appellent l'épistémè de l'espace-temps et le design de la nature, proposant l'idée que la

noirceur n'est que l'éloignement ou l'absence de la lumière. Leur argument se fonde sur leur installation artistique *Remoteness of Light*, présentée à Reykjavík en 2015, qui consistait à déplacer des rayons de soleil de Santiago, au Chili, vers le nord, à Reykjavík. Le point de vue épistémologique des auteurs est que la noirceur a « motivé les êtres humains à contempler le monde, puis à développer des idées, des théories et des modèles basés sur celle-ci ».

Dans son chapitre, Jóhannes Dagsson se base sur des observations plus personnelles et empiriques pour réfléchir à la signification de la noirceur qui, selon lui, se construit à travers le langage, la fabrication d'images et d'autres systèmes de signes. Ainsi, l'expérience de l'obscurité passe par les particularités de la langue, de la théorie ou de la pensée abstraite. Notre perception de la noirceur est unique et n'est pas la même que « la noirceur elle-même ou la noirceur conçue comme étant partout identique ». Pour Dagsson, cependant, ce n'est pas seulement une question d'expérience, mais aussi de la manifestation d'une réalité émergente, c'est-à-dire la façon dont nous créons des représentations uniques de l'obscurité.

Dans son chapitre, Paul Landon décrit son installation Hof. Ce court texte se rapporte aux autres chapitres dans la mesure où il s'intéresse aux effets de la noirceur et de la lumière que présentait l'œuvre. L'installation était une vidéo muette en couleur et à canal unique d'une durée de 6 minutes 45, montrant 80 différentes prises de vue nocturnes d'une cour intérieure berlinoise. Landon explique que Hof présente une réflexion sur le caractère cinématographique de la noirceur urbaine, qui en fait une condition de visionnement, mais aussi un dispositif diégétique permettant de saisir et de narrer un environnement quotidien. La lumière vive que jettent les fenêtres des blocs appartements rappelle l'écran lumineux

du cinéma, et les points de vue qu'elles offrent sur les logements évoquent les prises de vue voyeuristes de films populaires classiques comme récents. Hof invitait aussi les spectateurs à créer leurs propres liens, les invitant à faire preuve d'imagination et à « s'aventurer hors du cadre » pour entrapercevoir des scènes de la vie des autres.

Dans le chapitre suivant, Christiane Lahaie s'intéresse également aux interactions cinématographiques entre noirceur et lumière, plus particulièrement dans le film *Insomnia*, d'abord sorti en 1997, puis adapté à nouveau en 2002. Elle y étudie la signification symbolique du jour et de la nuit et avance que l'absence de nuit, et donc de noirceur, au commencement de l'été dans le Nord, donne lieu à un espace blanc évoquant le purgatoire. Selon elle, « les nuits blanches du Nord peuvent être lues comme un espace métaphorique, un lieu hors temps qui n'est ni enfer ni paradis », mais plutôt une zone d'entre-deux ou liminaire, où l'on doit composer avec ses « péchés ».

Dans son chapitre, Elsa Brander aborde le travail de Harold Moltke, artiste officiel de l'expédition danoise de 1899-1900 en Islande, au cours de laquelle il a peint 19 tableaux d'aurores boréales. Tandis que les travaux sur Moltke ont jusqu'ici porté sur ses habiletés artistiques, Brander étudie son travail en tant que pratique scientifique, employant le concept de *vision aveugle*, qui consiste à éliminer toute intervention subjective. Pour ce faire, elle examine deux des 25 dessins d'observation de Moltke, qu'il a employés comme prototypes pour créer ses huiles sur toile. Le dessin d'observation est une façon de circonscrire des événements réels. Les croquis de Moltke sont particulièrement bien détaillés, y compris en ce qui a trait au positionnement des étoiles et des constellations, ainsi qu'aux formes sous lesquelles se manifestent les différentes aurores boréales.

Ainsi, ils constituent un exemple fascinant du chevauchement entre les arts et la science.

Batia Boe Stolar se penche aussi sur les représentations du Nord, avec un intérêt particulier pour la production et la reproduction d'images stéréotypées des peuples autochtones dans l'Arctique, en politique, en science, en littérature, et en arts. Stolar analyse deux cas d'expositions photographiques, un livre d'artiste et un dossier paru dans la revue *National Geographic*, en tant qu'exemples du regard impérialiste posé sur « l'autre ». Si les photographes visaient à sensibiliser le public aux changements climatiques menaçant les peuples et les cultures, ils ont néanmoins eu recours à des images qui « font écho au contexte colonialiste de l'Arctique et à la photographie ethnographique ». Dans les photos analysées, la noirceur occupe une place de choix et sert à accroître le sentiment de vulnérabilité et de perte potentielle. Elle « défamiliarise les activités du quotidien » et « recèle les relents impérialistes ».

Le dernier chapitre est très à-propos pour clore cet ouvrage. Dans « L'heure bleue du Nord mystique », Monique Durand nous rappelle le rôle fondamental de la noirceur et sa signification dans la vie de nombreuses personnes vivant dans le Nord. « La noirceur n'est pas la nuit. C'est l'heure bleue qui s'installe quand l'embrasement du jour s'éteint, laissant une lueur bleu-mauve subsister sur l'horizon », écrit-elle. L'heure bleue est un moment de contemplation et d'introspection, et Durand explore ses figurations dans le travail de quelques écrivaines de la Côte-Nord québécoise. L'heure bleue est associée à un « souffle mystique », un mysticisme nordique qui représente une sorte de dévotion à l'idée même du Nord et qui éclaire l'interaction entre la lumière, l'obscurité, le territoire aride ou « abstrait » et les peuples du Nord.

Abstracts in Icelandic

Handan jaðra
Myrkur og síbreytilegt flæði

Judy Spark
Moray College
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Elgin (Bretland)

Útdráttur – Fólk á Vesturlöndum hefur tilhneigingu til að bægja frá sér myrkrinu með rafmagnsljósum. Nóttina upplifa borgarbúar að mestu sem gulleita götulýsingu og myrkrið er sjaldan eða aldrei stór þáttur í reynsluheimi þeirra. Í stórborg eru myrkurstundirnar gjarnan orsök ótta, annað hvort við myrkrið sjálft eða aðrar manneskjur. Þessi kafli kannar birtu á norðurslóðum og minnkandi birtustig í því skyni að athuga hvort setja megi fram hugsanlegan annars konar skilning á myrkri. Ég mun fyrst gera grein fyrir eigin reynslu minni af myrkri og setja eitt þeirra tilvika síðan í samhengi við hugmynd Maurice Merleau-Ponty um *holdið* þar sem samkvæmt kenninguni um líkamlega reynslu virðist það fela í sér að hægt sé að komast hjá því að líta á myrkrið sem einhvern veginn óskylt fyrirbæri, bæði óskylt birtunni og okkur sjálfum. Að þeirri niðurstöðu fenginni að líta megi svo á að myrkrið sé eitthvað meira en aðeins sérstakt birtustig eða fjarvist ljóss, sem maðurinn er undirorpinn, mun ég síðan skoða búddíska fyrirbærið tómarúm og hvort það geti skipt máli í tengslum okkar við myrkrið gegnum hæfi sitt til að endurspegla hvernig samband manns og heims skarast.

Lykilorð – Myrkur, reynsla, líkamlegt, hold, tómarúm, búddismi

Ferð inn í myrkrið
Að hitta á norðurljósin

Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson
Katrín Anna Lund
Háskóli Íslands, Reykjavík

Útdráttur – Norðurljósin eru orðin eitt helsta aðdráttarafl og meginþáttur í þróun vetrarferðamennsku á Íslandi og nyrstu svæðum Skandinavíu og Norður-Ameríku, og það þótt það sé mikil áskorun að gera norðurljósaferðir eftirsóknarverðar þar sem ógerlegt er að tryggja að markmið þeirra náist. Þrátt fyrir að norðurljósaferðir séu af mörgu mismunandi tagi hvað varðar form og umbúnað, byggja þær allar á sama grunni, þ.e. samspili ljóss og myrkurs. Í þessum kafla er sjónum beint að hlutverki og merkingu myrkurs í norðurljósaferðum. Við teljum að þó að myrkrið sé nauðsynleg forsenda þess að sjá norðurljós ætti ekki að líta á það sem óvirkan bakgrunn þeirra heldur ætti fremur að skoða það sem fyrirbæri sem gegnir virku og margvíslegu hlutverki í upplifun norðurljósaferðanna. Sérhver norðurljósaferð er óvissuferð um hvort þau sjáist og ef þau gera það ekki skiptir myrkrið mestu máli í tengslum við að gera ferðina samt að minnisverðri upplifun. Þarna er hlutverk leiðsögumanns afgerandi að því leyti að það verður hlutverk hans að draga fram allt hið markverða sem myrkrið hefur upp á að bjóða. Hlutverk hans felst þá í því að flétta saman margvíslega þætti sem tengjast myrkri og birtuspili og ná þannig að bæta upp fjarveru norðurljósanna sjálfra. Hér verður sagt frá tveimur dæmum af norðurljósaferðum þar sem leiðsögumanninum tókst að skapa eftirminnilega reynslu af myrkrinu og búa til eins konar birtuspilsstemmningu með þátttöku ferðamannanna og skila jákvæðri upplifun úr norðurljósaferð þó að norðurljósin sjálf hafi ekki dansað á himni.

Lykilorð – Norðurljós, myrkur, leiðsögumenn, birtuspil, Ísland, Noregur

Svartur sæluhrollur í Guantánamo-flóa

Toby Heys
Manchester Metropolitan University (Bretland)

Útdráttur – „Svartur sæluhrollur við Guantánamo-flóa“ beinir sjónum að hljóðpyntingartækni sem opinberir aðilar láta viðgangast og notuð er á ólöglega fangelsað fólk sem haldið er í fangabúðunum við herstöðina við Guantánamo-flóa á Kúbu en þær hafa verið í umsjá Joint Task Force Guantánamo frá 2002 sem heyrir undir Bandaríkjastjórn. Kaflinn fjallar um hvernig uppmagnaðar hljóðbylgjur tónlistar og hávaða eru notaðar sem pyntingartæki í niðamyrkri þegar sjónsvið manna er óvirkt. Reynt er að skoða hvernig líkaminn bregst við slíkum ystu mörkum skynjunarinnar og rétt eins og loftnet tekur við og miðlar upplýsingum um geðhrif sem orsakast af bylgjuhreyfingum. Þegar tónlist er gerð að vopni riðlast skilin á milli menningarlegra og hernaðarlegra sviða sem veldur því að allt rennur saman í eitt: myrkrið í fangaklefanum, hernaðartæknin og bylgjutíðnin sem síðan magnast upp og skapar nýjar og öfgakenndar tengslamyndir.

Lykilorð – Hljóðpyntingar, bylgjustjórnun, hljóð sem vopn, líkaminn sem loftnet, svartur sæluhrollur

Birtufirrð: Þekkingarfræðilegar hugleiðingar um tíma og rúm og formgerð sköpunarverksins

Diego Gómez-Venegas
Humboldt University of Berlin
Berlín (Þýskalandi)

Bárbara Bielitz
Berlín (Þýskalandi)

Útdráttur – Í þessum kafla er annars vegar fjallað um hugmyndafræðina að baki hugtaks sem við höfum nefnt þekkingarfræðilegar hugleiðingar um tíma og rúm og formgerð sköpunarverksins sem leið til að ræða um virkni myrkurs á norðurslóðum plánetunnar út frá þeirri hugmynd að myrkur sé í raun aðeins fjarvist birtu. Á hinn bóginn er hún einnig ætluð sem inngangur að umræðu um þá fagurfræði og skapandi ferli sem var undirstaða þróunarvinnu höfundar fyrir innsetninguna *Remoteness of Light* sem sett var upp í Norræna húsinu í Reykjavík í tengslum við ráðstefnuna *Dynamics of Darkness in the North* í febrúar 2015.

Lykilorð – Myrkur, fjarvist birtu, miðlunarrannsóknir, listmiðlun, gagnrýnin hönnun

Samanburður í myrkri / við myrkur

Jóhannes Dagsson
Listaháskóli Íslands, Reykjavík

Útdráttur – Í þessum kafla nota ég aðferð frásagnarinnar til að rannsaka hugmyndina um myrkur sem menningarlega hugsmíð. Ég sýni fram á að við skynjum myrkur út frá menningarlegum bakgrunni okkar, tungumáli, hugmyndum og öðrum táknkerfum sem hugmyndaheimur okkar er byggður á. Myrkur sem slíkt er ekki til sem hluti af reynsluheimi okkar heldur eru í því fólgnir eiginleikar eða einkenni sem byggjast alltaf, að minnsta kosti að einhverju leyti, á tungumáli eða öðru táknkerfi. Í frásögninni nota ég dæmi af beinni skynjun, úr frumspeki eiginleika og úr kenningum innan fagurfræði náttúrunnar.

Lykilorð – Menningarleg hugsmíð, táknkerfi, skynjun, frumspeki, fagurfræði

Húsagarður

Paul Landon
Université du Québec à Montréal (Québec)

Útdráttur – Húsagarður er þögul, einnar rásar vídeó-innsetning í lit, sem varpað er í horn í myrkvuðu herbergi. Myndverkið tekur 6:45 mínútur og er síendurtekið í lúppu. Húsagarður var fyrst sýnt í Norræna húsinu í Reykjavík í tengslum við ráðstefnuna *Dynamics of Darkness in the North*. Verkið er samsett úr 80 mismunandi sjónarhornum úr húsagarði í Berlín að kvöldlagi sem sýnd eru í röð. Í Húsagarði ummyndast hversdagslegt borgarumhverfi að kvöldlagi og laðar fram þau sálfræðilegu og lífeðlisfræðilegu hrif sem skapast við að horfa á kvikmynd í myrku kvikmyndahúsi. Þó að björt ljósin í gluggum íbúðablokkanna vísi til kvikmyndatjaldsins og svipmyndirnar inn í íbúðirnar minni á gægjuhneigðina sem kvikmyndir á borð við *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock 1954) vekja, eru myndirnar sem teknar voru fyrir Húsagarð ekki uppstilltar og uppröðun þeirra ekki frásagnarform. Möguleg tengsl sem áhorfendur sjá við kvikmyndir eru handahófs- og tilviljanakennd; þeir eru undirorpnir myrkrinu, ímyndun þeirra fer á flakk og kunnuglegar myndir birtast. Myrkrið verður að kvikmyndamyrkri. Draumar verða að kvikmyndum.

Lykilorð – Vídeó, Berlín, gægjuhneigð, kvikmyndir, kvöld, borgarlandslag

Bjartar nætur, svefntruflanir og synd í kvikmyndinni *Insomnia* (1997) eftir Erik Skjoldbjærg og endurgerð hennar (2002) eftir Christopher Nolan

Christiane Lahaie
Université de Sherbrooke (Québec)

Útdráttur – Árstíðabundið þunglyndi og svefntruflanir sem tengjast löngu skammdegi eru vel þekkt fyrirbæri. Í landi miðnætursólarinnar gæti leit að myrkri því orðið vandamál. Í kvikmyndasamhengi fá dagur og nótt aftur á móti táknrænt vægi svo að raunsæ sókn eftir svefni (og tilbúnu myrkri) gæti auðveldlega breyst í hitasóttarkennda leit að óminni, fjarri sekt og leynd. Í þessum kafla eru skoðaðar tvær gerðir kvikmyndarinnar Insomnia (sú upprunalega [1997] eftir Erik Skjoldbjærg, og endurgerð hennar [2002] eftir Christopher Nolan) í því skyni að sýna að með því að skapa „tímalausan stað“, verði fjarvist náttmyrkurs á norðurslóðum að skjannabjörtu hreinsandi rými þar sem hulunni er óhjákvæmilega svipt af „syndinni“.

Lykilorð – Miðnætursól, norðurslóðir, hreinsunareldur, svefnleysi, Erik Skjoldbjærg, Christopher Nolan, kvikmyndir

Bjarminn í myrkrinu – norðurljósin myndgerð í Danska norðurljósaleiðangrinum á Íslandi (1899-1900)

Elsa Brander
Aalborg University (Danmörk)

Útdráttur – Rannsókn þessi beinist að verkum Harald Moltke (1871–1960), sem málaði 19 myndir af norðurljósunum á Akureyri frá því í júlí 1899 fram í apríl 1900. Þar sem enn var ekki til fullkomin tækni til að taka litmyndir af norðurljósunum réði danska veðurstofan listmálarann Moltke til að fara með Danska norðurljósaleiðangrinum (1899–1900) til Íslands. Hér eru skoðaðar tvær teikningar Moltkes úr leiðangrinum. Forrannsóknin beinist að að listrænni getu Moltkes til að endurskapa norðurljósin á myndfleti með sérstakri áherslu á þann megintilgang verksins að sýna norðurljósin á vísindalegum grundvelli. Teikningar listamannsins bera vott um að hann hafi fylgst með mörgum formum norðurljósa í margar klukkustundir og því eru þær afrakstur vísindalegrar vinnu. Greiningin á teikningum Moltke fól í sér nákvæma skoðun á tækninni sem hann notar í norðurljósateikningum sínum, framsetningu þekkingar og tengslunum á milli listrænnar vinnu og vísindalegrar. Síðast en ekki síst skilgreinir rannsóknin hvernig verk Moltke hafa útbreitt og aukið þekkingu og skilning á norðurljósum.

Lykilorð – Vísindaleiðangur, norðurljós, skoðun norðurljósa, vísindastarf, Akureyri, listamaður á ferð, teikningar, myndgerð

Sýning að næturlagi:
Hin “undraverða” ljósasýning Ciril Jazbec

Batia Boe Stolar
Lakehead University, Thunder Bay (Canada)

Útdráttur – Það er eðli ljósmyndunar að dýfa okkur á kaf ofan í hið síbreytilega spil ljóss og skugga og sú sjónræna miðlun bæði þaulspyr og ögrar í sífellu einmitt þeirri tvíhyggjur sem í henni felst. Þegar ljósmyndun er íhuguð gagnrýnið – sem verknaður og efnisleg afurð – býður hún einnig upp á gagnlega myndlíkingu til að afbyggja tvíhyggjuna. Þessi grein segir frá og skoðar framsetningu „undraverðs“ atburðar í Uummannaq: kvikmynd var sýnd á hafísjakafleti í stað kvikmyndatjalds. Þegar ljósmyndarinn Ciril Jazbec var að vinna að ljósmyndaverkefni um áhrif loftslagsbreytinga á hefðbundna lífshætti við strendur Grænlands var haldin kvikmyndasýning fyrir börnin á munaðarleysingjahælinu í Uummannaq. Frásögn Cirils og ljósmyndir af þessum atburði, sem birtist í *National Geographic*, koma vel til skila andstæðunum á milli hefðbundinna lífshátta og nútímans, náttúrunnar og tækninnar, en ekki hvað síst á milli innfæddra og vestrænnar menningar. Í þessum kafla er ljósmyndatækni nútímans notuð til að kanna hvernig ímynd innfæddra Grænlendinga í Norðri birtist út frá kenningum í annars vegar ljósmyndafræði og hins vegar í síðnýlendustefnu (e: postcolonialism).

Lykilorð – Ljósmyndun, Myndgerð innfæddra, Grænland, Síðnýlendustefna, Tvíhyggja

Rökkurstund hins dulúðuga norðurs

Monique Durand
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Útdráttur – Rökkrið er ekki það sama og náttmyrkrið. Ljósaskiptin, þegar sólin er nýsest og skilur eftir sig glóandi rauð-bleik-bláan bjarma á sjóndeildarhringnum, eru þessi rökkurstund sem stundum virðist ójarðnesk. Í bókmenntum um norðrið er rökkrið alltaf sá tími þegar mennirnir teygja sig út eða upp yfir hið jarðneska til að komast í snertingu við óendanleikann. Rökkrið er stund íhugunar og sjálfskoðunar. Og rithöfundar Côte-Nord í Québec hafa ekki verið ósnortnir af rökkrinu. Það er efni þessa pistils: þessi dulúðugi andblær sem smitar alla þá sem hafa stundað skriftir á norðurslóðum eða um þær. Norðrið geymir sérstaka dulúð, eins konar ást sem beinist að ímyndinni um Norðrið, rétt eins og líka á við um ímynd eyðimarka og hafsins. Þessi dulúð er áþreifanleg í bókmenntum frá Québec og kemur skýrt fram í málsniði og stíl höfundanna ásamt því andrúmslofti sem þeir skapa. Gabrielle Roy, einn af fremstu 20. aldar rithöfundum franska Kanada og Innu-skáldin Rita Mestokosho og Joséphine Bacon hafa skrifað undursamlega um rökkurstundina.

Lykilorð – Rökkurstund, Norður-Québec, Innu-rithöfundar, Innu-ljóðskálds, norræn dulúð, Québec-bókmenntir, Côte-Nord bókmenntir, Gabrielle Roy, Rita Mestokosho, Joséphine Bacon

Introduction in Icelandic

Inngangur
Myrkur: Magnað tákn um ímynd norðursins[1]

Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund
og Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson

Í umfjöllun um „Norðrið“ rekst maður oftsinnis á mikla einföldun, þrátt fyrir að um flókið fyrirbæri sé að ræða, samsett úr fjölmörgum raunverulegum, menningarlegum og táknfræðilegum þáttum og að mjög miklu leyti skoðað og lýst utan frá. Í tilraunum sínum til að skilgreina Norðrið hafa menn notað margskonar aðferðafræði, þar á meðal nýorðasmíði svo sem *septentrionisme* [norðurhyggja][2], ímyndir Norðursins[3], norðræna[4] og mörg fleiri. Með þessum

[1] Þýtt úr ensku af Ingunn Ásdísardóttir.

[2] Um aldamótin síðustu settu fræðimenn við Lille-háskóla fram þessa hugmynd um skilin á milli fagurfræði og sagnfræði. Sjá, til dæmis: *Le Nord, latitudes imaginaires*, ritstjórar Monique Dubar og Jean-Marc Mouira, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Presses de l'Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, coll. « UL3 Travaux et recherches », 2000, 490 bls.

[3] Þessi grein byggir á hugmynd sem sett var fram í riti Daniel Charier, *What is the Imagined North? Ethical Principles*, Montreal og Harstad, Imaginaire | Nord and Arctic Arts Summit, 2018, 156 bls. Bók þessi hefur verið þýdd og gefin út á 15 norrænum tungumálum, sjá https://nord.uqam.ca/projet/traduire-publier-et-diffuser-en-15-langues-du-nord-quest-ce-que-limaginaire-du-nord (skoðað 28. janúar, 2021).

[4] Þetta er eitt þeirra mörgu nýyrða sem landfræðingurinn og málfræðingurinn Louis-Edmond Hamelin frá Quebec bjó til í þeim tilgangi að auðga franska

Chartier, D., Lund, K.A. and Jóhannesson, G.T. (2021). « Inngangur. Myrkur: Magnað tákn um ímynd norðursins, » in *Darkness. The Dynamics of Darkness in the North*, eds. D. Chartier, K.A. Lund and G.T. Jóhannesson, Montréal and Reykjavík: Imaginaire | Nord and Land- og ferðamálafræðistofa / Research Centre in Geography and Tourism at the University of Iceland(Isberg), pp. 257-69.

viðbættu og innbyrðis tengdu sjónarmiðum fást mörg og margbreytileg[5] sjónarhorn sem gefa færi á að skilja hina fínlegu víxlverkun á milli ytri og innri skynjunar Norðursins, ásamt því að andæfa hinni sögulegu einföldun þessara lýsinga gegnum menningarlega „endurreisn hins flókna." Slíku ferli fylgir að skilgreina hina mismunandi þætti, tákn, mýþem, krómatisma, frásagnir og landslag – alla þá hluta sem mynda hið víðfeðma táknkerfi sem móta hið ímyndaða Norður. Þessi tákn eru oft innbyrðis nátengd og eiga gjarnan rætur að rekja til fornra menningarhefða og þetta á einnig við um „myrkrið" og tengsl þess við hina sértæku skilgreiningu Norðursins.

Einn þáttur í því rannsóknarsamstarfi sem hefur að markmiði að „skilgreina"[6] Norðrið er að skoða spennuþætti og áhrif hugmyndarinnar um „myrkur" í ímynd Norðursins, jafnvel þó að það feli í sér að taka tillit til ýmissa atriða sem eiga rætur að rekja til annarra menningarsvæða. Af þeim sökum er raunhæft að skoða kulda, þögn, hið hvíta, snjóinn, vetur, ís og fjölmörg önnur tákn og venjur sem tíðkast á pólsvæðunum sem byrjunarreit rannsóknar á hinum

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tungu með nauðsynlegum orðaforða til að ná að skilja hve flókin þessi kalda veröld er. Samkvæmt Hamelin, vísar orðið norðræna til Norðursins en ekki síður til háfjalla þess og pólsvæðanna í hánorðri. Til að lýsa vetri, sem hann skilgreindi sem „tímabundna norðrænu" bjó hann til hugtakið „vetrartíð" (*hivernité*), Mörg þeirra hugtaka sem Hamelin bjó til eru nú komin í almenna notkun og þó nokkur hafa verið þýdd yfir á aðaltungu pólsvæðanna. Sjá einkum meginrit hans: *La nordicité du Québec*, Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2014, 141 bls.

[5] Þessu kemur Odile Parsis-Barubé snilldarlega á framfæri í grein sinni « "*Il y a tant de nords dans ce Nord!*" Problématiques de la délimitation et de l'indélimitation dans l'étude de l'imaginaire septentrional », Daniel Chartier, Helge Vidar Holm, Chantal Savoie and Margery Vibe Skagen [ritstj.], *Frontières. Actes du colloque québéco-norvégien*, Montreal og Bergen, Imaginaire | Nord and Département des langues étrangères de l'Université de Bergen, coll. « Isberg », 2017, bls. 165-186.

[6] Louis-Edmond Hamelin, « À la rencontre du Nord et du Sud », *Cap-aux-Diamants*, nº 56, « Au nord du Nord », vetur 1999, bls. 19.

fjölmörgu þáttum þessarar ímyndar og menningarauðs hennar.

Fyrirbrigðið myrkur er hluti af táknkerfi ekkert síður en landfræðileg tengsl við raunverulegt umhverfi sem byggjast á athugunum á birtu og ljósi, á mótum mismunandi leiða til að skoða veruleikann. Myrkur tengist líka ýmsum siðvenjum sem í gegnum myndlýsingar, frásagnir og listaverk hafa í sameiningu gert úr því eins konar fegraða líkingu eða myndhverfingu. Síðast en ekki síst, standa ljós og myrkur í órjúfanlegu samhengi spennu og andstæðna, þannig að frásögur sem tengjast því hafa oft á sér strangan og alvarlegan, jafnvel siðrænan blæ sem jafnvel kallar fram tilhneigingu til algildra og óhlutstæðra staðhæfinga.

Myrkur : Skilgreiningar, þættir, og siðferðisgildi

Það má líkja því að skilgreina myrkrið við ómögulega stílæfingu sem felur í sér tilraunir til að skilgreina fjarvist, veruleysi, og hið algilda, allt á einu bretti.

Skynjun myrkurs er mismunandi eftir því hver á heldur, þ.e. hvort sú eða sá sem tjáir sig um það er búsettur í Norðrinu eða annars staðar eða kemur þangað sem gestur. Myrkrið er líka mismunandi eftir því hvort það er skoðað sem raunverulegt fyrirbæri eða í tengslum við hugsun mannsins, jafnvel sem eitthvað óháð efnisheiminum. Er myrkur óbreytanlegt? Breytist það eftir árstíðum, loftslagi og menningarsamfélögum? Skynja menn það á mismunandi hátt eftir (trúar)sannfæringu, svæðum, stétt, menningarsviði eða kyni? Myrkrið er einn þáttur kerfis táknrænna gilda þar sem litir eru eignaðir mismunandi merkingum sem tengjast innbyrðis. Innan þessa kerfis er myrkrið oft talið andstæða hins bjarta, hins hvíta sem almennt er tákn birtu, hreinleika og lífs – og þannig verður myrkrið andstæðutákn þessara eiginda, skortur á birtu, hreinleika, lífi. Eins og oftast er

tilfellið með tvíeindir, eru myrkrið (hið svarta) og ljósið (hið hvíta) órjúfanlega tengd, sem dregur úr því að hið óljósa, dimma, sé endilega tengt Norðrinu, þar sem birtan fylgir jú alltaf í kjölfar myrkursins.

Allt frá fornöld hefur myrkrið falið í sér og haft að geyma tengsl við siðræn, og oft trúarleg gildi, eins og tilfellið er í kristindómnum sem á rætur að rekja til Miðjarðarhafssvæðanna og hefur haft mikil áhrif á hugmyndir manna um Norðrið og pólsvæðin. Hinir löngu og björtu/dimmu dagar sumars og vetrar í Norðrinu veldur tengslamyndun – sem orðræðan hefur ýkt fram úr hófi – með gildishalla sem vísar til hinnar eilífu nætur pólsvæðanna og staðfestir þannig samsvörun á milli myrkurs og Norðursins.

Skilgreining myrkurs er bæði bókstafleg og óeiginleg, en hvoru tveggja býr yfir áðurnefndri geymd: hinn bókstaflegi skilningur tengist krómatisma, en hinn óeiginlegi siðalögmáli. Orðið myrkur merkir bókstaflega það sem er dökkt og í víðari skilningi það sem er óljóst. Í óeiginlegum skilningi merkir það hið illa og svikula, eða eitthvað sem hefur á sér blæ hryggðar eða þunglyndis, eða óheillavænlegt og ills viti. Merkingartilfærslan til hins óeiginlega hefur leitt til neikvæðra tengsla við hinn svarta lit og hugtakið fengið merkinguna: illska, hryggð, ógn.

Tengslin á milli hins óljósa Norðurs og dimmunnar sem að því er sagt er, býr í hjörtum íbúa þar eru byggð á miðaldahugmyndum um samsvörun fjögurra líkamsvessa og skaplyndis, sem og kenningu Montesquieus um áhrif loftslags á skaplyndi manna. Hvoru tveggja gerir ráð fyrir að umhverfi og náttúra hafi áhrif á lundarfar manna. Þegar á 5. öld f. Kr. setti Hippókartes fram þá hugmynd að tengsl væru á milli harðneskjulegs háfjallaloftslags og líkamsástands manna; samkvæmt honum var skýringuna á

þolgæði, hugrekki og styrk þeirra sem bjuggu í fjalllendi að finna í hrikalegu og óblíðu landslaginu.[7]

Andstæðurnar, hið efnislega Norður og hið andlega sinnaða Suður, hið kyrrstæða Norður og hið skynræna Suður, hið karlmannlega Norður og hið kvenlega Suður, eiga rætur að rekja til loftslagskenningar Montesquieus á 18. öld og síðan í upphafi 19. aldar í ritum Germaine de Staël. Að sumu leyti heldur þessi langlífa kenning áfram að hafa áhrif á og endurskapa hugmyndir manna um norðlæg samfélög.

Ljós og myrkur: Táknrænt par

Uppruni merkingarinnar sem felst í myrkri og hinu svarta minna okkur á að hún er óhugsandi án andstæðu sinnar, birtunnar og hins hvíta. Í rauninni þyrfti að nefna bæði fyrirbrigðin alltaf í sömu andrá sem merkingarfræðilegt par til þess að geta túlkað þau og skilið þær mögnuðu merkingar sem þau fela í sér.

Tengsl myrkurs og hins norðlæga eru jafnforn og tengsl hins norðlæga við hið hvíta: þetta tvíhliða samhengi hefur fest sig í sessi í samtímabókmenntum og er eins konar pendúlsveifla sem bæði styrkir og veikir þetta tvíeðli. Þróun þessa merkingarfræðilega pars með allri sinni spennu og stökkbreytingum sýnir vel hve hinar mörgu myndir mannlegra tengsla við Norðrið og pólsvæðin eru ríkar að táknum og fjölbreytni. Komið er inn á hina óumflýjanlegu eigind sólarhringsins (þar sem dagur og nótt lengjast stöðugt eftir því sem norðar dregur) á norðlægum svæðum ekki síður en hvernig mikil nánd og siðfræðileg spursmál tengjast umræðu um persónulega og samfélagslega sjálfsmynd. Sambandið á milli raunverulegra og efnislegra

[7] Hippocrate, *Airs, eaux, lieux*, XXIV, 2, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1996, tome 2, part 2, bls. 244-245.

athugana og innri hvatar, eða jafnvel hin óhlutbundna leit að sjálfi, sjálfsmynd, hreinleika, fjarhygli og hinu algilda sem hvetur fólk til að heimsækja Norðrið, endurspeglar kjarna hins óljósa í myrkur-birtu parinu í ímynd Norðursins sem óhlutbundið táknkerfi sem þó er rótfast og til orðið í raunverunni.

Áhrifamáttur myrkursins

Myrkrið kallar fram tilfinningar og vekur sálræna svörun, svo sem ótta, áhyggjur og missiskennd. Þannig leiðir það til persónulegra umbreytinga og í kjölfarið samfélagslegra og fagurfræðilegra. Myrkur næturhiminninn vekur kenndir: í niðamyrkri, fjarri dagsins amstri, kvikna nýjar hugmyndir og skynhrif. Myrkrið hvetur til þagnar og einveru en hvort tveggja er einn meginþáttur í ímynd Norðursins.

Þegar myrkrið sleppir tökum sínum tekur birtan við. Þannig hafa orðið hamskipti, líkt og það að lifa af nóttina hafi verið vígsluathöfn sem styrki og umbreyti innsta sálarkjarna þess sem stóðst þá raun að horfast í augu við myrkrið, tómið, og endurlifa frumóttann sem teygir rætur sínar aftur í órafjarlæga fortíð.

Skoðað frá fagurfræðilegu sjónarhorni sést berlega hvernig myrkrið birtist í lundarfari persónanna og öfugt í menningar- og bókmenntaefni þessara svæða. Slíkt ferli er eins konar viðsnúningur (e. hypallage), þ.e. þegar landslags- eða loftslags-/stemningarímynd er yfirfærð á lifandi veru og tilfinningar hennar. Með þessari retórísku yfirfærslu fær hið norðlæga fyrirbrigði breytilegs dagsbirtutíma eftir árstíðum fagurfræðilegt inntak sem í kjölfarið skapar merkingu sem síðan innlimast í táknkerfi, táknkerfi ímyndar Norðursins.

Saga hins norðlæga myrkurs

Skoðað í sögulegu ljósi má segja að táknkerfi Norðursins tengist hugmyndinni um auðn og hið hvíta. Aftur á móti birtir hinn mislangi dagsbirtutími norðurslóða, eftir því hvort er vetur eða sumar, hina tvíhliða ímynd; annars vegar blindandi birtu og hins vegar eilífa nótt en hvort tveggja eru lykilþættir ímyndar Norðursins. Þó að þessar andstæður eigi sér sögulegar rætur og byggist á athugunum á landfræðilegum veruleika, hafa þær einnig verið yfirfærðar á siðferðisleg gildi, að tilheyra á svæðinu, og stolti af norðlægri sjálfsmynd sinni sem byggist á hæfileikanum til að aðlagast myrkrinu.

Aðlögun að dimmunni er til marks um hugrekki, hugvit og bjartsýni en þessa eiginleika tiltaka ferðamenn gjarnan og líta jafnvel svo á að í henni felist eins konar prófraun til inngöngu í hið norðlæga sjálfsmyndarsamfélag. Að læra að lifa með myrkrinu, lesa í tákn dimmunnar, snúa hinu óljósa og skuggsýna upp í vettvang hins bjarta, verður þannig að námsferli og eins konar staðfestingu, jafnvel sigri, og þar með til marks um styrk og sérstöðu hins *sanna* íbúa Norðursins.

Þessi aðlögun næst á tvo vegu: annað hvort með því að gera myrkrið að læsilegu rými þar sem hægt er að læra að ná áttum og búa; hins vegar með því að skapa birtu í hinu dimma norðlæga rými, bæði utandyra - með því að fullkomna aðferðir borgarlýsingar - og innandyra: Í huga þeirra sem búa í Norðrinu skapar mjúk og hlýleg birta innanhúss tilfinningu fyrir þægindum, nánd og hlýju, eins konar afdrep birtu og hlýju andspænis hinu kalda, þögla og dimma utandyra, víðáttu bláma og hins hvíta.

Myrkrið á hvolfi

Að meta myrkrið á norðlægum slóðum til verðleika felur í sér að snúa jákvæðri merkingu tvíhliða eiginda dags og nætur á hvolf en slíkt getur aðeins leitt til upplausnar hinnar siðrænu og fagurfræðilegu skipanar og endurnýjaðrar sjálfsmyndar, bæði í Norðrinu sem og utan þess. Í sumum tilfellum gefur þetta færi á afbyggingu klisjanna í ímynd Norðursins og blæbrigðaríkari framsetningu þeirra krafta sem koma fram í menningarlegri og samfélagslegri túlkun og tjáningu.

Í Norðrinu er myrkrið landfræðileg staðreynd og með samfélagslegri og menningarlegri orðræðu – og þar með einnig í sammannlegri ímyndun – hefur það orðið eitt þeirra tákna sem notuð eru til að sýna Norðrið utan frá og inn, en einnig sem einkenni sem norðlæg menningarsamfélög nýta til að skilgreina sjálf sig í samhengi við önnur samfélög heimsins.

Einnig má líta á myrkrið sem eina þeirra staðalímynda eða almennt viðhorf sem eiga við um Norðrið. Sem slíkt ber það með sér stórfelld siðferðisgildi, þar sem myrkrið táknar fjarvist lífs, eymd og þjáningu. Þessi skynjun getur einnig verið mjög pólitísk og tengist þá myrkrið nýlendustefnu, þöggun og virðingarleysi fyrir öðrum. Af þessum sökum leitast sumir listamenn og skáld frá norðlægum slóðum við að hafna þessu sjónarhorni, annað hvort með því að reyna að snúa neikvæðum gildum sem tengjast tvíhyggju ljóss og myrkurs við, eða með því að gera myrkrið að jákvæðu sjálfsmyndareinkenni. Rétt eins og þegar hvaða staðalímyndum sem er, er snúið á hvolf, er þetta tvíeggjað sverð: slíkt viðhorf getur vitaskuld breytt merkingu klisjunnar en jafnframt heft það betur þeirri ímynd sem það reynir að andæfa.

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Hér að ofan höfum við rætt hugtakaskilgreiningu „myrkurs í Norðrinu“ sem er undirstaða þessarar bókar. Í köflunum tíu kanna höfundar krafta myrkursins á fjölbreyttan máta. Þeir tilheyra, hugvísindum og listum og endurspegla víðfeðm fræða- og fagsvið auk menningarlegra sjónarhorna. Þar sem umfjöllunarefnið er myrkur er áhugavert að sjá að flestir kaflarnir fjalla einnig um birtu og samspil ljóss og myrkurs í mismunandi myndum sem dregur fram að ljós og myrkur eru aldrei aðeins andstæður heldur flókinn snertiflötur sem menn skynja og finna fyrir. Saman varpa þau ljósi á merkingu og notagildi myrkurs, stöðu þess og hlutverk í heimsmynd mismunandi menningarsamfélaga, baráttu vísindanna við myrkrið og síðast en ekki síst, þau áhrif sem þetta samspil hefur á líf fólks og skilning á sjálfu sér og öðrum. Í bókinni er athyglinni sérstaklega beint að myrkri á norðlægum slóðum. Flestir kaflanna fjalla um pólsvæðin og kaldtempruð svæði en nokkrir kaflar beina sjónum einnig suður á bóginn og vekja athygli á tengslum og stöðugu flæði á milli norðurs og suðurs sem heldur áfram að móta hugmyndir manna um Norðrið og ímyndir þess á margvíslagan hátt.

Judy Spark rannsakar líkamlega reynslu samspils ljóss og myrkurs. Hún telur að í stað þess að líta á myrkur sem fjarvist birtu megi lýsa því sem næturkomu eða hluta af náttúrumynstri breytilegrar birtu. Umskipti dags og nætur séu eðlislægur þáttur líkamsveru okkar og Sparks kannar hvort myrkrið sé þess megnugt að umbreyta reynslu „heims og sjálfs.“ Hún notar hugmyndina um tómarúm Búddismans til að skoða hvernig myrkrið geti skapað annars konar færni til að upplifa sjálfið og tengsl þess við veröldina.

Á svipaðan máta en í öðru samhengi skoða Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson og Katrín Anna Lund merkingu myrkurs frá sjónarhóli hins vestræna heims og hvernig samspil ljóss og myrkurs eykur gildi ferðamennsku á norðlægum svæðum. Þau beina athyglinni að norðurljósaferðum og telja að þótt myrkur sé skilyrði þess að hægt sé að sjá norðurljós sé það ekki óvirkur bakgrunnur heldur gegni það mörgum hlutverkum í norðurljósaupplifuninni. Hlutverk og merking myrkursins skiptir sköpum í þeim tilfellum þegar norðurljósin sjást ekki. Þá verður leiðsögumaðurinn að spinna af fingrum fram og nota myrkrið sjálft til að skapa sérstaka stemningu með þátttöku ferðamannanna.

Langur vegur er frá norðurljósaferðum til lokaðra klefa fangabúðanna við herstöðina við Guantánamo-flóa á Kúbu. Samt sem áður er ímynd myrkursins meginefni kafla Toby Heys um hljóðpyntingar sem fangar eru beittir og lýsir ógnvekjandi dæmum um merkingu og áhrif myrkurs á skynjun manna og líkamleg viðbrögð við umhverfi sínu. Hluti af hljóðpyntingunum felst í að gera sjónsviðið óvirkt í þeim tilgangi að magna upp þau áhrif sem tónlist og hávaði hafa á fangana. Í grein sinni lýsir Heys því hvernig myrkrið verður virkur þátttakandi í að eyða skilunum á milli menningarlegra og hernaðarlegra sviða og magna upp og skapa nýjar og öfgakenndar tengslamyndir.

Í tveimur næstu köflum er myrkrið skoðað út frá því hvernig fólk hugsar og talar um það og því haldið fram að sú hugmynd sem við gerum okkur um myrkrið sé að nokkru leyti tilbúin. Í kafla sínum ræða Diego Gómez-Venegas og Barbara Bielitz það sem þau kalla þekkingarfræðilegar hugleiðingar um tíma og rúm og formgerð sköpunarverksins og halda því fram að myrkur sé ekkert annað en fjarvist birtu. Þau byggja hugmynd sína á innsetningu sinni *Remoteness of Light* sem sett var upp í Reykjavík 2015 en þar var sólargeislum frá Santiago í Chile

varpað norður til Reykjavíkur. Í hugmyndinni felst einnig sú þekkingarfræðilega röksemd að í upphafi hafi myrkrið „komið mönnunum til að hugleiða veröldina og síðan að þróa hugmyndir, kenningar og módel sem byggðust á því."

Á persónulegri og áþreifanlegri nótum ræðir Jóhannes Dagsson hugmyndir um merkingu myrkurs. Að hans mati verður myrkrið til í gegnum notkun tungumáls, hugmynda og annarra táknkerfa. Þar með byggist reynslan af myrkri á tungumáli, kenningu eða óhlutbundinni hugsun. Þannig skynjun myrkurs er sérstök en hún er ekki sú sama og „myrkur sem slíkt, eða myrkur sem er eins alls staðar". Í augum Jóhannesar Dagssonar er hér ekki aðeins um að ræða spurningu um reynslu heldur einnig birtingu veruleika í mótun, þ.e. hvernig við sköpum sérstætt myrkur.

Í kafla sínum Húsagarður lýsir Paul Landon innsetningu sinni. Þetta stutta verk tengist öðrum köflum bókarinnar í gegnum samspil og leik ljóss og myrkurs. Innsetningin var þögult, einnar rásar mynband í lit sem tók 6 :45 mínútur og sýndi 80 mismunandi skot úr húsagarði íbúðablokka í Berlín um kvöld. Landon telur að í Húsagarði megi sjá hvernig borgarmyrkrið breytist í kvikmyndamyrkur og feli sem slíkt í sér áhorfsástand en einnig sannferðuga aðferð til skilnings og frásagnar um hversdagslegt umhverfi. Björt ljósin í gluggunum í íbúðablokkunum minna á kvikmyndatjald og innlitin inn í íbúðirnar vísa til gægjuhneigðar í vinsælum kvikmyndum fyrr og nú. Húsagarður vakti mismunandi hugrenningatengsl hjá mismunandi áhorfendum. Innsetningin bauð upp á að áhorfendur virkjuðu ímyndun sína og „reikuðu út úr ramma" sinnar eigin stöðu til að kíkja inn í líf annars fólks.

Í næsta kafla fjallar Christiane Lahaie einnig um samspil ljóss og myrkurs í kvikmyndum og tekur sérstaklega fyrir myndina Insomnia sem gerð var árið 1997 og síðan

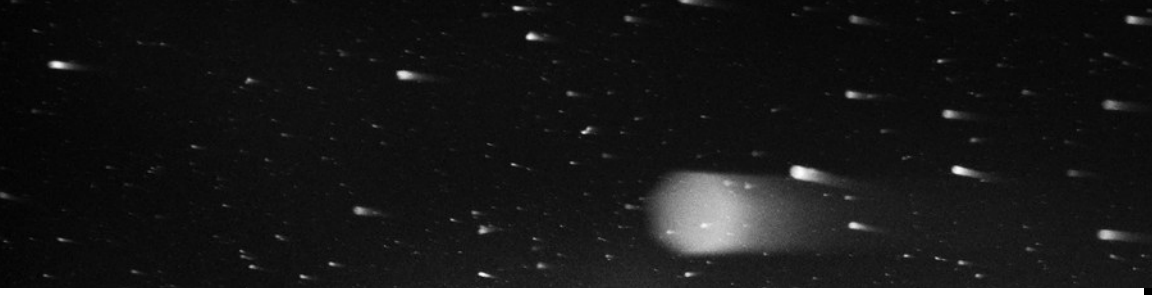
endurgerð 2002. Hún skoðar táknræna merkingu dags og nætur í myndinni og álítur að fjarvist nætur og þar með myrkurs snemmsumars á norðurslóðum skapi bjart hreinsandi rými. Samkvæmt henni „má lesa bjartar nætur Norðursins sem myndhverft rými, stað utan tíma, það er að segja hvorki himnaríki né helvíti“ heldur fremur millisvæði eða jaðarsvæði þar sem tekist er á við „syndirnar“.

Í sínum kafla ræðir Elsa Brander verk Harold Moltke en hann var opinber teiknari danska norðurljósaleiðangursins á Íslandi 1899-1900 og málaði 19 myndir af norðurljósum í leiðangrinum. Fyrri rannsóknir hafa beint athyglinni að listrænum hæfileikum Moltkes en Brander skoðar verkin út frá vísindalegu sjónarmiði og notar *hugtakið* blindsýn sem hjálpartæki til að halda hlutlausu áhorfi. Hún ræðir tvær af 25 norðurljósateikningum Moltke en teikningarnar notaði hann sem frumgerðir fyrir olíumálverk sín. Slíkar athugunarteikningar eru dæmi um empíríska skrásetningu atburða. Teikningar Moltke eru ákaflega nákvæmar og sýna staðsetningu stjarna og stjörnumerkja auk mismunandi forma af norðurljósum. Hér er því um að ræða ákaflega áhugaverða blöndu vísinda og lista.

Batia Boe Stolar fjallar líka um ímyndir Norðursins út frá tilurð og endurgerðum staðlaðra ímynda um fólkið sem býr á pólsvæðunum. Þetta kemur vel fram í stefnuskrám, vísindum, bókmenntum og listum. Stolar greinir tvö dæmi úr ljósmyndun, bók með ljósmyndum og grein í *National Geographic Magazine*, sem dæmi um heimsvaldasinnaða sýn á „hina“. Ljósmyndararnir reyna að vekja fólk til vitundar um hvernig loftslagsbreytingar ógna fólki og menningarsamfélögum en þær „enduróma jafnframt viðhorf nýlenduvelda til pólsvæðanna og þjóðflokkanna þar.“ Á ljósmyndunum sem fjallað er um eykur myrkrið tilfinningu áhorfandans fyrir varnarleysi viðfangsefnisins og jafnvel söknuði. Það hefur þau áhrif að „hversdagslegar

athafnir verða ókunnuglegar“ og „dulbýr hin heimsvaldasinnuðu viðhorf.“

Síðasti kaflinn er viðeigandi lokahnykkur í bókinni. Í „Rökkurstund hins dulúðuga Norðurs“ dregur Monique Durand athygli okkar aftur að grundvallarhlutverki og þýðingu myrkursins í lífi margra sem búa í Norðrinu. „Rökkrið er ekki það sama og náttmyrkrið. Ljósaskiptin, þegar sólin er nýsest og skilur eftir sig glóandi rauð-bleik-bláan bjarma á sjóndeildarhringnum, eru þessi rökkurstund sem stundum virðist ójarðnesk,“ skrifar hún. Rökkrið er stund íhugunar og sjálfskoðunar og Durand skoðar birtingu þess í verkum nokkurra skálda í Côte-Nord í Québec. Rökkurstundin hefur á sér „dulúðugan blæ“, norræna dulúð sem er tákn um eins konar ástúð til hugmyndarinnar um Norðrið; samspils ljóss og myrkurs, auðnar eða óhlutstæðs landslags og fólksins í Norðrinu.



Darkness

The Dynamics of Darkness in the North

Defining darkness can be an impossible exercise to explain absence, nothingness, and the absolute all at once. Darkness falls within a system of symbolic values where colours are ascribed to meanings that are related to one another. The relationship between darkness and the North is as ancient as that between the North and whiteness. The circumpolar day-night cycle, alternating between summer and winter, introduces the idea of a duality, between blinding brightness and everlasting night. The ten chapters of this book explore the dynamics of darkness in social science, humanities and art, and attest to the diverse range of contributions by the various authors and their disciplinary and cultural perspectives. Together, they shed light on the meaning and use of darkness, its position and role in the worldview of cultures, the scientific struggle with darkness, and not least the effects of this interplay on people's lives and their understanding of self and other.

Edited by Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson. With chapters by Judy Spark, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson, Toby Heys, Diego Gómez-Venegas and Bárbara Bielitz, Jóhannes Dagsson, Paul Landon, Christiane Lahaie, Batia Boe Stolar and Monique Durand, and an introduction by Daniel Chartier, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson.

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