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Chapter One

pp. 1-28

Crary, J., (2013) 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep, London; New York: Verso

CHAPTER ONE

Anyone who has lived along the west coast of North America may well know that, each year, hundreds of species of birds migrate seasonally up and down for various distances along that continental shelf. One of these species is the white-crowned sparrow. Their route in the fall takes them from Alaska to northern Mexico and then back north again every spring. Unlike most other birds, this type of sparrow has a highly unusual capacity for staying awake, for as long as seven days during migrations. This seasonal behavior enables them to fly and navigate by night and forage for nourishment by day without rest. Over the past five years the US Defense Department has spent large amounts of money to study these creatures. Researchers with government funding at various universities, notably in Madison, Wisconsin, have been investigating the brain activity of the birds during these long sleepless periods, with the hope of acquiring knowledge applicable to

human beings. The aim is to discover ways to enable people to go without sleep *and* to function productively and efficiently. The initial objective, quite simply, is the creation of the sleepless soldier, and the white-crowned sparrow study project is only one small part of a broader military effort to achieve at least limited mastery over human sleep. Initiated by the advanced research division of the Pentagon (DARPA),[1] scientists in various labs are conducting experimental trials of sleeplessness techniques, including neurochemicals, gene therapy, and transcranial magnetic stimulation. The near-term goal is the development of methods to allow a combatant to go for a minimum of seven days without sleep, and in the longer term perhaps at least double that time frame, while preserving high levels of mental and physical performance. Existing means of producing sleeplessness have always been accompanied by deleterious cognitive and psychic deficits (for example, reduced alertness). This was the case with the widespread use of amphetamines in most twentieth-century wars, and more recently with drugs like Provigil. The scientific quest here is not to find ways of stimulating wakefulness but rather to reduce the body's *need* for sleep.

For over two decades, the strategic logic of US military planning has been directed toward removing the living individual from many parts of the command, control, and execution circuit. Untold billions are spent developing robotic and other remote-operated targeting and killing systems, with results that have been dismayingly evident in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. However, despite the extravagant

claims made for new weaponry paradigms and the constant references by military analysts to the human agent as the anomalous "bottleneck" in advanced systems operations, the military's need for large human armies is not going to diminish in any foreseeable future. The sleeplessness research should be understood as one part of a quest for soldiers whose physical capabilities will more closely approximate the functionalities of non-human apparatuses and networks. There are massive ongoing efforts by the scientific-military complex to develop forms of "augmented cognition" that will enhance many kinds of human-machine interaction. Simultaneously, the military is also funding many other areas of brain research, including the development of an anti-fear drug. There will be occasions when, for example, missile-armed drones cannot be used and death squads of sleep-resistant, fear-proofed commandos will be needed for missions of indefinite duration. As part of these endeavors, white-crowned sparrows have been removed from the seasonal rhythms of the Pacific coast environment to aid in the imposition of a machinic model of duration and efficiency onto the human body. As history has shown, war-related innovations are inevitably assimilated into a broader social sphere, and the sleepless soldier would be the forerunner of the sleepless worker or consumer. Non-sleep products, when aggressively promoted by pharmaceutical companies, would become first a lifestyle option, and eventually, for many, a necessity.

24/7 markets and a global infrastructure for continuous work and consumption have been in place for some time, but now a

human subject is in the making to coincide with these more intensively.

In the late 1990s a Russian/European space consortium announced plans to build and launch into orbit satellites that would reflect sunlight back onto earth. The scheme called for a chain of many satellites to be placed in sun-synchronized orbits at an altitude of 1700 kilometers, each one equipped with fold-out parabolic reflectors of paper-thin material. Once fully extended to 200 meters in diameter, each mirror satellite would have the capacity to illuminate a ten-square-mile area on earth with a brightness nearly 100 times greater than moonlight. The initial impetus for the project was to provide illumination for industrial and natural resource exploitation in remote geographical areas with long polar nights in Siberia and western Russia, allowing outdoor work to proceed round the clock. But the company subsequently expanded its plans to include the possibility of supplying nighttime lighting for entire metropolitan areas. Reasoning that it could reduce energy costs for electric lighting, the company's slogan pitched its services as "daylight all night long." Opposition to the project arose immediately and from many directions. Astronomers expressed dismay because of the consequences for most earth-based space observation. Scientists and environmentalists declared it would have detrimental physiological consequences for both animals and humans, in that the absence of regular alternations between night and day would disrupt various metabolic patterns, including sleep. There

were also protests from cultural and humanitarian groups, who argued that the night sky is a commons to which all of humanity is entitled to have access, and that the ability to experience the darkness of night and observe the stars is a basic human right that no corporation can nullify. However, if this is in any sense a right or privilege, it is already being violated for over half of the world's population in cities that are enveloped continuously in a penumbra of smog and high-intensity illumination. Defenders of the project, though, asserted that such technology would help lower nocturnal use of electricity, and that a loss of the night sky and its darkness is a small price to pay for reducing global energy consumption. In any case, this ultimately unworkable enterprise is one particular instance of a contemporary imaginary in which a state of permanent illumination is inseparable from the non-stop operation of global exchange and circulation. In its entrepreneurial excess, the project is a hyperbolic expression of an institutional intolerance of whatever obscures or prevents an instrumentalized and unending condition of visibility.

One of the forms of torture endured by the many victims of extrajudicial rendition, and by others imprisoned since 2001, has been the use of sleep deprivation. The facts surrounding one individual detainee have been widely noted, but his treatment was similar to the fate of hundreds of others whose cases are less well documented. Mohammed al-Qahtani was tortured according to the specifications of what is now known as the Pentagon's "First Special Interrogation Plan," authorized by

Donald Rumsfeld. Al-Qahtani was deprived of sleep for most of the time during a two-month period, when he was subjected to interrogations that often lasted twenty hours at a time. He was confined, unable to lie down, in tiny cubicles that were lit with high-intensity lamps and into which loud music was broadcast. Within the military intelligence community these prisons are referred to as Dark Sites, although one of the locations where al-Qahtani was incarcerated was code-named Camp Bright Lights. This is hardly the first time sleep deprivation has been used by Americans or their surrogates. It is misleading in some ways to single it out because, for Mohammed al-Qahtani and many others, sleep deprivation was only one part of a larger program of beatings, humiliations, prolonged restraint, and simulated drownings. Many of these "programs" for extrajudicial prisoners were custom designed by psychologists on Behavioral Science Consultation Teams to exploit what they had determined to be individual emotional and physical vulnerabilities.

Sleep deprivation as torture can be traced back many centuries, but its systematic use coincides historically with the availability of electric lighting and the means for sustained sound amplification. First practiced routinely by Stalin's police in the 1930s, sleep deprivation was usually the initial part of what the NKVD torturers called "the conveyor belt"—the organized sequences of brutalities, of useless violence that irreparably damages human beings. It produces psychosis after a relatively short period of time, and after several weeks begins to cause neurological damage. In experiments, rats will die

after two to three weeks of sleeplessness. It leads to an extreme state of helplessness and compliance, in which extraction of meaningful information from the victim is impossible, in which one will confess to or fabricate anything. The denial of sleep is the violent dispossession of self by external force, the calculated shattering of an individual.

Certainly, the United States has long been involved in the practice of torture directly and through its client regimes, but notable of the post-9/11 period has been its easy relocation into the light of public visibility as merely one controversial topic among others. Numerous opinion polls show that a majority of Americans approve of torture under some circumstances. Mainstream media discussions consistently reject the assertion that sleep deprivation is torture. Rather, it is categorized as psychological persuasion, acceptable to many in the same way as is the force-feeding of hunger-striking prisoners. As Jane Mayer reported in her book *The Dark Side*, sleep deprivation was justified cynically in Pentagon documents by the fact that US Navy Seals are required to go on simulated missions without sleeping for two days.[2] It is important to note that the treatment of so-called "high-interest" prisoners at Guantánamo and elsewhere combined explicit forms of torture with complete control over sensory and perceptual experience. Inmates are required to live in windowless cells that are always lit, and they must wear eye and ear coverings that block out light and sound whenever they are escorted out of their cells to preclude any awareness of night and day, or of any stimulus that could provide cues to their whereabouts. This regime of

perceptual deprivation often extends to routine daily contact between prisoners and guards, during which the latter are fully armored, gloved, and helmeted with one-way Plexiglas visors so that the prisoner is denied any visible relation to a human face, or even an inch of exposed skin. These are techniques and procedures for producing abject states of compliance, and one of the levels on which this occurs is through the fabrication of a world that radically excludes the possibility of care, protection, or solace.

This particular constellation of recent events provides a prismatic vantage point onto some of the plural consequences of neoliberal globalization and of longer processes of Western modernization. I do not intend to give this grouping any privileged explanatory significance; rather, it makes up a provisional opening onto some of the paradoxes of the expanding, nonstop life-world of twenty-first-century capitalism—paradoxes that are inseparable from shifting configurations of sleep and waking, illumination and darkness, justice and terror, and from forms of exposure, unprotectedness, and vulnerability. It might be objected that I have singled out exceptional or extreme phenomena, but if so, they are not disconnected from what have become normative trajectories and conditions elsewhere. One of those conditions can be characterized as a generalized inscription of human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning. It is a time that no longer passes, beyond clock time.

Behind the vacuity of the catchphrase, 24/7 is a static

redundancy that disavows its relation to the rhythmic and periodic textures of human life. It connotes an arbitrary, uninflected schema of a week, extracted from any unfolding of variegated or cumulative experience. To say "24/365," for example, is simply not the same, for this introduces an unwieldy suggestion of an extended temporality in which something might actually change, in which unforeseen events might happen. As I indicated initially, many institutions in the developed world have been running 24/7 for decades now. It is only recently that the elaboration, the modeling of one's personal and social identity, has been reorganized to conform to the uninterrupted operation of markets, information networks, and other systems. A 24/7 environment has the semblance of a social world, but it is actually a non-social model of machinic performance and a suspension of living that does not disclose the human cost required to sustain its effectiveness. It must be distinguished from what Lukács and others in the early twentieth century identified as the empty, homogenous time of modernity, the metric or calendar time of nations, of finance or industry, from which individual hopes or projects were excluded. What is new is the sweeping abandonment of the pretense that time is coupled to any long-term undertakings, even to fantasies of "progress" or development. An illuminated 24/7 world without shadows is the final capitalist mirage of post-history, of an exorcism of the otherness that is the motor of historical change.

24/7 is a time of indifference, against which the fragility of human life is increasingly inadequate and within which sleep has no necessity or inevitability. In relation to labor, it renders

plausible, even normal, the idea of working without pause, without limits. It is aligned with what is inanimate, inert, or unageing. As an advertising exhortation it decrees the absoluteness of availability, and hence the ceaselessness of needs and their incitement, but also their perpetual non-fulfillment. The absence of restraints on consuming is not simply temporal. We are long past an era in which mainly things were accumulated. Now our bodies and identities assimilate an ever-expanding surfeit of services, images, procedures, chemicals, to a toxic and often fatal threshold. The long-term survival of the individual is always dispensable if the alternative might even indirectly admit the possibility of interludes with no shopping or its promotion. In related ways, 24/7 is inseparable from environmental catastrophe in its declaration of permanent expenditure, of endless wastefulness for its sustenance, in its terminal disruption of the cycles and seasons on which ecological integrity depends.

In its profound uselessness and intrinsic passivity, with the incalculable losses it causes in production time, circulation, and consumption, sleep will always collide with the demands of a 24/7 universe. The huge portion of our lives that we spend asleep, freed from a morass of simulated needs, subsists as one of the great human affronts to the voraciousness of contemporary capitalism. Sleep is an uncompromising interruption of the theft of time from us by capitalism. Most of the seemingly irreducible necessities of human life—hunger, thirst, sexual desire, and recently the need for friendship—have been remade into commodified or financialized forms. Sleep poses the idea of a human need and interval of time that cannot be

colonized and harnessed to a massive engine of profitability, and thus remains an incongruous anomaly and site of crisis in the global present. In spite of all the scientific research in this area, it frustrates and confounds any strategies to exploit or reshape it. The stunning, inconceivable reality is that nothing of value can be extracted from it.

It should be no surprise that there is an erosion of sleep now everywhere, given the immensity of what is at stake economically. Over the course of the twentieth century there were steady inroads made against the time of sleep—the average North American adult now sleeps approximately six and a half hours a night, an erosion from eight hours a generation ago, and (hard as it is to believe) down from ten hours in the early twentieth century. In the mid twentieth century the familiar adage that "we spend a third of our lives asleep" seemed to have an axiomatic certainty, a certainty that continues to be undermined. Sleep is a ubiquitous but unseen reminder of a premodernity that has never been fully exceeded, of the agricultural universe which began vanishing 400 years ago. The scandal of sleep is the embeddedness in our lives of the rhythmic oscillations of solar light and darkness, activity and rest, of work and recuperation, that have been eradicated or neutralized elsewhere. Sleep of course has a dense history, as does anything presumed to be natural. It has never been something monolithic or identical, and over centuries and millennia it has assumed many variegated forms and patterns. In the 1930s Marcel Mauss included both sleeping and waking in his study of "Body Techniques," in which he showed that aspects of

seemingly instinctive behaviors were in fact learned in an immense variety of ways through imitation or education. Nonetheless, it can still be suggested that there were crucial features common to sleep in the vast diversity of premodern agrarian societies.

By the mid seventeenth century, sleep became loosened from the stable position it had occupied in now obsolete Aristotelian and Renaissance frameworks. Its incompatibility with modern notions of productivity and rationality began to be identified, and Descartes, Hume, and Locke were only a few of the philosophers who disparaged sleep for its irrelevance to the operation of the mind or the pursuit of knowledge. It became devalued in the face of a privileging of consciousness and volition, of notions of utility, objectivity, and self-interested agency. For Locke, sleep was a regrettable if unavoidable interruption of God's intended priorities for human beings: to be industrious and rational. In the very first paragraph of Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, sleep is lumped together with fever and madness as examples of the obstacles to knowledge. By the mid nineteenth century, the asymmetrical relation between sleep and waking began to be conceptualized in hierarchical models in which sleep was understood as a regression to a lower and more primitive mode in which supposedly higher and more complex brain activity was "inhibited." Schopenhauer is one of the rare thinkers who turned this hierarchy against itself and proposed that only in sleep could we locate "the true kernel" of human existence.

In many ways the uncertain status of sleep has to be understood in relation to the particular dynamic of modernity which

has invalidated any organization of reality into binary complementaries. The homogenizing force of capitalism is incompatible with any inherent structure of differentiation: sacred-profane, carnival-workday, nature-culture, machine-organism, and so on. Thus any persisting notions of sleep as somehow "natural" are rendered unacceptable. Of course, people will continue to sleep, and even sprawling megacities will still have nocturnal intervals of relative quiescence. Nonetheless, sleep is now an experience cut loose from notions of necessity or nature. Instead, like so much else, it is conceptualized as a variable but managed function that can only be defined instrumentally and physiologically. Recent research has shown that the number of people who wake themselves up once or more at night to check their messages or data is growing exponentially. One seemingly inconsequential but prevalent linguistic figure is the machine-based designation of "sleep mode." The notion of an apparatus in a state of low-power readiness remakes the larger sense of sleep into simply a deferred or diminished condition of operationality and access. It supersedes an off/on logic, so that nothing is ever fundamentally "off" and there is never an actual state of rest.

Sleep is an irrational and intolerable affirmation that there might be limits to the compatibility of living beings with the allegedly irresistible forces of modernization. One of the familiar truisms of contemporary critical thought is that there are no unalterable givens of nature—not even death, according to those who predict we will all soon be downloading our minds into digital immortality. To believe that there are any essential

features that distinguish living beings from machines is, we are told by celebrated critics, naive and delusional. Why should anyone object, they would counter, if new drugs could allow someone to work at their job 100 hours straight? Would not flexible and reduced sleep time allow more personal freedom, the ability to customize one's life further in accordance with individual needs and desires? Would not less sleep allow more chance for "living life to the fullest"? But one might object that human beings are meant to sleep at night, that our own bodies are aligned with the daily rotation of our planet, and that seasonal and solar responsive behaviors occur in almost every living organism. To which the reply would likely be: pernicious New Age nonsense, or even worse, an ominous yearning for some Heideggerian connectedness to the earth. More importantly, within the globalist neoliberal paradigm, sleeping is for losers.

In the nineteenth century, following the worst abuses in the treatment of workers that accompanied industrialization in Europe, factory managers came to the realization that it would be more profitable if workers were allowed modest amounts of rest time to enable them to be more effective and sustainable producers in the long run, as Anson Rabinbach has well shown in his work on the science of fatigue. But by the last decades of the twentieth century and into the present, with the collapse of controlled or mitigated forms of capitalism in the United States and Europe, there has ceased to be any internal necessity for having rest and recuperation as components of economic growth and profitability. Time for human

rest and regeneration is now simply too expensive to be structurally possible within contemporary capitalism. Teresa Brennan coined the term "bioderegulation" to describe the brutal discrepencies between the temporal operation of deregulated markets and the intrinsic physical limitations of the humans required to conform to these demands.[3]

The decline in the long-term value of living labor provides no incentive for rest or health to be economic priorities, as recent debates around healthcare have shown. There are now very few significant interludes of human existence (with the colossal exception of sleep) that have not been penetrated and taken over as work time, consumption time, or marketing time. In their analysis of contemporary capitalism, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have pointed to the array of forces that esteem the individual who is constantly engaged, interfacing, interacting, communicating, responding, or processing within some telematic milieu. In affluent regions of the globe, this has occurred, as they note, amid the dissolving of most of the borders between private and professional time, between work and consumption. In their connectionist paradigm, the highest premium is placed on activity for its own sake, "To always be doing something, to move, to change—this is what enjoys prestige, as against stability, which is often synonymous with inaction."[4] This model of activity is not some transformation of an earlier work-ethic paradigm, but is an altogether new model of normativity, and one that requires 24/7 temporalities for its realization.

To return briefly to the project mentioned earlier: the plan to launch huge orbiting reflectors as mirrors for solar light that

would eliminate the darkness of nighttime has something preposterous about it, like a low-tech survival of a merely mechanical scheme from Jules Verne or early twentieth-century science fiction. In fact, the first experimental launches were essentially failures—on one occasion the reflectors did not unfold into position properly, and on another, dense cloud cover over a test city prevented a convincing demonstration of its capabilities. Its ambitions might seem related to a broad set of panoptic practices developed over the last 200 years. That is, it points back to the importance of illumination in Bentham's original model of the Panopticon, which called for flooding space with light to eliminate shadows, and to make a condition of full observability synonymous with effects of control. But for several decades other kinds of satellites have performed in far more sophisticated ways the operations of actual surveillance and accumulation of information. A modernized panopticism has expanded well beyond visible wavelengths of light to other parts of the spectrum, not to mention the many kinds of non-optical scanners and thermal and bio-sensors. The satellite project is perhaps better understood as a perpetuation of more plainly utilitarian practices initiated in the nineteenth century. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, in his history of lighting technology, shows how the broad deployment of urban street lights by the 1880s had achieved two interrelated goals: it reduced long-standing anxieties about various dangers associated with nocturnal darkness, and it expanded the time frame and thus the profitability of many economic activities.[5] The illumination of the nighttime was a symbolic demonstration of what

apologists for capitalism had promised throughout the nineteenth century: it would be the twin guarantee of security and increased possibilities for prosperity, supposedly improving the fabric of social existence for everyone. In this sense, the triumphal installation of a 24/7 world is a fulfillment of that earlier project, but with benefits and prosperity accruing mainly to a powerful global elite.

24/7 steadily undermines distinctions between day and night, between light and dark, and between action and repose. It is a zone of insensibility, of amnesia, of what defeats the possibility of experience. To paraphrase Maurice Blanchot, it is both of and after the disaster, characterized by the empty sky, in which no star or sign is visible, in which one's bearings are lost and orientation is impossible.[6] More concretely, it is like a state of emergency, when a bank of floodlights are suddenly switched on in the middle of the night, seemingly as a response to some extreme circumstances, but which never get turned off and become domesticated into a permanent condition. The planet becomes reimagined as a non-stop work site or an always open shopping mall of infinite choices, tasks, selections, and digressions. Sleeplessness is the state in which producing, consuming, and discarding occur without pause, hastening the exhaustion of life and the depletion of resources.

As the major remaining obstacle—in effect, the last of what Marx called "natural barriers"—to the full realization of 24/7 capitalism, sleep cannot be eliminated. But it can be wrecked and despoiled, and, as my opening examples show, methods and motivations to accomplish this wrecking are fully in place.

The injuring of sleep is inseparable from the ongoing dismantling of social protections in other spheres. Just as universal access to clean drinking water has been programmatically devastated around the globe by pollution and privatization, with the accompanying monetization of bottled water, it is not difficult to see a similar construction of scarcity in relation to sleep. All of the encroachments on it create the insomniac conditions in which sleep must be bought (even if one is paying for a chemically modified state only approximating actual sleep). Statistics of soaring use of hypnotics show that, in 2010, around fifty million Americans were prescribed compounds like Ambien or Lunesta, and many millions more bought over-the-counter sleep products. But it would be misguided to imagine an amelioration of current conditions that would allow people to sleep soundly and wake refreshed. At this point in time, even a less oppressively organized world would not likely eliminate insomnia. Sleeplessness takes on its historical significance and its particular affective texture in relation to the collective experiences external to it, and insomnia is now inseparable from many other forms of dispossession and social ruin occurring globally. As an individual privation in our present, it is continuous with a generalized condition of worldlessness.

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas is one of several thinkers who have tried to engage the meanings of insomnia in the context of recent history.[7] Insomnia, he argues, is a way of imagining the extreme difficulty of individual responsibility in the face of the catastrophes of our era. Part of the modernized world we inhabit is the ubiquitous visibility of useless violence

and the human suffering it causes. This visibility, in all its mixed forms, is a glare that ought to thoroughly disturb any complacency, that ought to preclude the restful unmindfulness of sleep. Insomnia corresponds to the necessity of vigilance, to a refusal to overlook the horror and injustice that pervades the world. It is the disquiet of the effort to avoid inattention to the torment of the other. But its disquiet is also the frustrating inefficacy of an ethic of watchfulness; the act of witnessing and its monotony can become a mere enduring of the night, of the disaster. It is neither in public nor fully private. For Levinas, insomnia always hovers between a self-absorption and a radical depersonalization; it does not exclude a concern for the other, but it provides no clear sense of a space for the other's presence. It is where we face the near impossibility of living humanely. For sleeplessness must be distinguished from an unrelieved wakefulness, with its almost unbearable attention to suffering and the boundlessness of responsibility that would impose.

A 24/7 world is a disenchanted one in its eradication of shadows and obscurity and of alternate temporalities. It is a world identical to itself, a world with the shallowest of pasts, and thus in principle without specters. But the homogeneity of the present is an effect of the fraudulent brightness that presumes to extend everywhere and to preempt any mystery or unknowability. A 24/7 world produces an apparent equivalence between what is immediately available, accessible, or utilizable and what exists. The spectral is, in some way, the intrusion or disruption of the present by something out of time and by

the ghosts of what has not been deleted by modernity, of victims who will not be forgotten, of unfulfilled emancipation. The routines of 24/7 can neutralize or absorb many dislocating experiences of return that could potentially undermine the substantiality and identity of the present and its apparent self-sufficiency. One of the most prescient engagements with the place of the spectral in an illuminated world without day or night is Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 film *Solaris*. It is the story of several scientists on a spacecraft orbiting an enigmatic alien planet to observe its activity for possible inconsistencies with existing scientific theory. For the inhabitants of the brightly lit and artificial environment of the space station, insomnia is a chronic condition. In this milieu, inimical to rest or retreat, and in which one lives exposed and externalized, there is a breakdown of cognitive control. Under the extremity of these conditions, one is overtaken not just by hallucinations but by the presence of ghosts, in the film referred to as "visitors." The sensory impoverishment of the space station environment and the loss of diurnal time loosen one's psychic hold on a stable present, allowing dream as the bearer of memory to be relocated into waking life. For Tarkovsky, this proximity of the spectral and the living force of remembrance enables one to remain human in an inhuman world, and makes sleeplessness and exposure bearable. Coming as it did in the tentative spaces of cultural experiment in the early 1970s Soviet Union, *Solaris* shows that to acknowledge and affirm these ghostly returns, after repeated denials and repressions, is a pathway toward the attainability of freedom or happiness.

A current in contemporary political theory posits exposure as a fundamental or transhistorical feature of what has always constituted an individual. Rather than being autonomous or self-sufficient, an individual cannot be understood except in relation to what is outside them, to an otherness that faces them.[8] Only around this state of vulnerability can there be an opening onto the dependencies by which society is sustained. However, we are now at a historical moment when this bare condition of exposure has been unhinged from its relation to communal forms that at least tentatively offered safekeeping or care. Especially relevant here is the exploration of these problems in the work of Hannah Arendt. Over many years, she used figures of light and visibility in her accounts of what was necessary for there to be any substantive political life. For an individual to have political effectiveness, there needed to be a balance, a moving back and forth between the bright, even harsh exposure of public activity and the protected, shielded sphere of domestic or private life, of what she calls "the darkness of sheltered existence." Elsewhere she refers to "the twilight that suffuses our private and intimate lives." Without that space or time of privacy, away from "the implacable bright light of the constant presence of others on the public scene," there could be no possibility of the nurturing of the singularity of the self, a self that could make a substantive contribution to exchanges about the common good.

For Arendt, the private sphere had to be distinct from the individual pursuit of material happiness in which the self is defined through acquisitiveness, and by what it consumes. In

The Human Condition she elaborated these two realms in terms of a rhythmic balance between exhaustion and regeneration: the exhaustion resulting from labor or activity in the world, and the regeneration that regularly occurs within an enclosed and shaded domesticity. Arendt was well aware that her model of mutually sustaining relations between public and private had only infrequently been historically actualized. But she saw even the possibilities of such a balance profoundly threatened by the rise of an economy in which "things must be almost as quickly devoured and discarded as they have appeared in the world," making impossible any shared recognition of common interests or goals. Writing in the midst of the Cold War 1950s, she had the perspicacity to say: if "we were truly nothing but members of a consumer society we would no longer live in a world at all, we would simply be driven by a process in whose ever-recurring cycles things appear and disappear."[9] She was equally cognizant of how public life and the sphere of work were for most people experiences of estrangement.

There are many familiar and related utterances, from William Blake's "May God us keep from single vision and Newton's sleep," Carlyle's "over our noblest faculties is spreading a nightmare sleep," and Emerson's "sleep lingers all our lifetime about our eyes," to Guy Debord's "The spectacle expresses nothing more than society's wish for sleep." It would be easy to accumulate hundreds of other examples of this inverted characterization of the *waking* portion of modern social experience. Images of a society of sleepers come from

the left and right, from high culture and low, and have been a constant feature of cinema from *Caligari* to *The Matrix*. Common to these evocations of mass somnambulance is the suggestion of impaired or diminished *perceptual* capabilities combined with routinized, habitual, or trance-like behavior. Most mainstream social theory prescribes that modern individuals live and act, at least intermittently, in states that are emphatically unsleeplike—states of self-awareness in which one has the ability to evaluate events and information as a rational and objective participant in public or civic life. Any positions that characterize people as bereft of agency, as passive automatons open to manipulation or behavioral management, are usually deemed reductive or irresponsible.

At the same time, most notions of political awakenings are considered equally disturbing, in that they imply a sudden and irrational conversion-like process. One has only to remember the main election slogan of the Nazi Party in the early 1930s: "Deutschland Erwache!" Germany awake! More remote historically is Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans: "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . . let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Or more recently and tediously, the call by anti-Ceauçescu forces in 1989: "Awake Romanians from the deep sleep put upon you by a tyrant's hands." Political and religious awakenings are usually articulated in perceptual terms as a newfound ability to see through a veil to a true state of things, to discriminate an inverted world from one right-side-up, or to recover a lost truth that becomes the negation of whatever one has awoken from.

An epiphanic disturbance of the numbed blandness of routine existence, to wake is to recover authenticity as opposed to the numbed vacancy of sleep. In this sense, awakening is a form of decisionism: the experience of a redemptive moment that seems to disrupt historical time, in which an individual undergoes a self-transforming encounter with a previously unknown future. But this whole category of figures and metaphors is now incongruous in the face of a global system that never sleeps, as if to ensure that no potentially disturbing awakening is ever necessary or relevant. If anything survives of the iconography of dawn and sunrise, it is around what Nietzsche identified as the demand, formulated by Socrates, for a "permanent daylight of reason."[10] But since Nietzsche's time, there has been an enormous and irreversible transfer of human "reason" to the 24/7 operations of information processing networks, and to the unending transmission of light through fiber-optic circuitry.

Paradoxically, sleep is a figure for a subjectivity on which power can operate with the least political resistance *and* a condition that finally cannot be instrumentalized or controlled externally—that evades or frustrates the demands of global consumer society. Thus it hardly needs to be said that the many clichés in social and cultural discourse depend on a monolithic or fatuous sense of sleep. Maurice Blanchot, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Walter Benjamin are only a few of the twentieth-century thinkers who have meditated on the profound ambiguity of sleep and on the impossibility of positioning it in any binary schema. Clearly, sleep needs to be understood in relation to distinctions between private and

public, between the individual and the collective, but always in recognition of their permeability and proximity. The larger thrust of my argument is that, in the context of our own present, sleep can stand for the durability of the social, and that sleep might be analogous to other thresholds at which society could defend or protect itself. As the most private, most vulnerable state common to all, sleep is crucially dependent on society in order to be sustained.

In Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, one of the vivid examples of the insecurity of the state of nature is the defenselessness of an individual sleeper against the numerous perils and predators to be feared on a nightly basis. Thus, a rudimentary obligation of the commonwealth is to provide security for the sleeper, not only from actual dangers but—equally important—from anxiety about them. The protection for the sleeper provided by the commonwealth occurs within a larger refiguring of the social relation between security and sleep. At the outset of the seventeenth century, one finds the remains of an imagined hierarchy that distinguished the more-than-human capabilities of a lord or sovereign whose omniscient powers, at least symbolically, did not succumb to the disabling conditions of sleep, from the somatic instincts of ordinary toiling men and women. However, in Shakespeare's *Henry the Fifth* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* one finds both the articulation and the hollowing out of this hierarchical model. For King Henry, the relevant distinction is not simply between sleep and wakefulness, but between a perceptual vigilance sustained throughout "the all-watched night" and the sound slumber and "vacant mind" of the

yeomen or peasant. Sancho Panza, from a different vantage point, divides the world into those, like himself, who were born to sleep and those, like his master, who were born to watch. In both texts, even though the obligations associated with rank superficially survive, there is a parallel awareness of the obsolescence and merely formal persistence of this paternalistic model of watchfulness.

Hobbes's work is an important indication of a transformation in both the guarantee of security and the needs of the sleeper. New kinds of dangers have displaced those that concerned Henry and the master of Sancho Panza, and these perils are addressed in a contractual arrangement no longer founded on a natural order of earthly and heavenly positions. The great inaugural bourgeois republics, like Hobbes's imagined commonwealth, were exclusionary in that they existed to serve the needs of propertied classes. Thus the security offered to the sleeper turns not simply on physical or bodily safety, but on the protection of property and goods while one slept. Also, the potential menace to the peaceful sleep of the ownership class comes from the poor and indigent, whereas the lowliest, even the "wretched slave," were fully included among the sleepers over whom King Henry was obliged to keep watch. The relationship between property and the right or privilege of restful sleep has its origins in the seventeenth century, and remains in force today in the cities of the twenty-first century. Public spaces are now comprehensively planned to deter sleeping, often including—with an intrinsic cruelty—the serrated design of benches and other elevated surfaces that prevent a

human body from reclining on them. The pervasive but socially disregarded phenomenon of urban homelessness entails many deprivations, yet few are more acute than the hazards and insecurities of unsheltered sleep.

In a larger sense, however, the contract that purported to offer protection for anyone, whether propertied or not, has long been broken. In Kafka's work we find the ubiquity of the conditions that Arendt identified as the absence of spaces or times in which there can be repose and regeneration. *The Castle*, "The Burrow," and other texts repeatedly convey a sense of the insomnia and the obligatory watchfulness that accompany modern forms of isolation and estrangement. In *The Castle* there is a reversal of the older model of sovereign protection: here the desultory vigilance and enervating wakefulness of the Land Surveyor mark his inferiority and irrelevance to the slumbering officials of the castle bureaucracy. Kafka's "The Burrow," a tale of creaturely existence reduced to the obsessive and anxious pursuit of self-preservation, is one of the bleakest portrayals in literature of life as a solitude cut off from any mutuality. It is a dark prospectus of human life in the absence of community or civil society, at a furthest remove from the collective forms of living in the recently established kibbutzim, to which Kafka was so attracted.

The devastating reality of the absence of protection or security for those most in need of it was horrifyingly evident in the 1984 Bhopal chemical plant disaster in India. Shortly after midnight on December 1, a leak of highly toxic gas from a

poorly maintained storage tank killed tens of thousands of nearby residents, most of them sleeping at the time. Many thousands more died over the weeks and months following, with an even greater number injured and disabled permanently. Bhopal remains a stark disclosure of the discordance between corporate globalization and the possibility of security and sustainability for human communities. In the decades since 1984, the continuing repudiation by Union Carbide of any responsibility or of justice for the victims confirms that the disaster itself cannot be posed as an accident, and that, in the context of corporate operations, the victims were inherently superfluous. Certainly, the consequences of the incident would have been equally horrific had it occurred in daytime, but that it did take place at night underscores the unique vulnerability of the sleeper in a world from which long-standing social safeguards have vanished, or where they have been debilitated. A number of fundamental assumptions about the cohesion of social relations come together around the issue of sleep—in the reciprocity between vulnerability and trust, between exposure and care. Crucial is the dependence on the safekeeping of others for the revivifying carelessness of sleep, for a periodic interval of being free of fears, and for a temporary "forgetfulness of evil."[11] As the corrosion of sleep intensifies, it may become clearer how the solicitude that is essential for the sleeper is not qualitatively different from the protectiveness that is required by more immediately obvious and acute forms of social suffering.

ENDNOTES

Chapter One

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4 Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso, p. 155.
5 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, transl. Angela Davies, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.
6 Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, transl. Ann Smock, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, pp. 48–50.

7 For some of Levinas's many discussions of insomnia, see *Existence and Existents*, transl. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001; and *Otherwise than Being*, transl. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998.

8 See, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

9 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958, p. 134.

10 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, 1968, p. 33.

11 Roland Barthes, *The Neutral*, transl. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 37.

Chapter Two

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, transl. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 107–9.

2 Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?* transl. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 21.

3 Fredric Jameson, Lecture at Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York, June 12, 2011.

4 See Bernard Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique Vol. 1: L'époque hyperindustrielle*, Paris: Galilée, 2004.