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THE IMAGERY OF NIGHT
(The Significance of Night
in Artistic Images & Philosophies)

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T H E I M A G E R Y

O F N I G H T.

(The Significance of Night
in
Artistic Images and Philosophies.)

by

Thomas Matthews.

"If no glow my gloom invades,
With a celestial light I'll glow."⁽¹⁾

St. John of the Cross.

"I shall give myself just enough light to
see the topics I am to meditate on."⁽²⁾

St. Francis Loyola.

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INTRODUCTION.

At first glance, darkness is merely the absence of light, and is therefore negative; hence the traditional equation of night with death, evil and the creatures of the underworld.


But a closer study will reveal that darkness is also a positive force; examples can be cited from various cultures where darkness was thought to have given birth to light. The subterranean is the realm of fertility; the worshippers of Dionysius realised this, as did the followers of the world-wide cult of the Great Earth Mother.

The realm of darkness is also the habitat of the mystic.

In this essay, we will attempt to define the nature of nocturnal imagery, and to trace the various ways in which mankind has sought to reconcile himself with the powers of darkness.

PART I.

1. THE NATURE OF THE IMAGERY.

The root of the word NIGHT is "usually taken to be NAK - to perish it is connected with the Latin NEX - death, NOCERE - to hurt"⁽³⁾. In the same way, the Alchemist's sign for evening is ⁽⁴⁾. It represents the going down, the decline, the decay of light into dark.

The idea of darkness arises only in relation to its opposite - "Our simplest notion of light derives from its contrast with darkness. You cannot have the one without the other white and black, day and night, life and death. On the moral plane, these were extended to include the positive and the negative, the good and evil The alternation between light, which gives life, and darkness, which plunges into apparent nothingness made strong impression on early man. It contributed to his religious beliefs. Indeed, the contrast between light and dark seems to be at the bottom of every dialectical pairing of opposites."⁽⁵⁾

The two concepts suggest also the contrasts of reason and instinct, the real and the magical, the masculine and the feminine. Hence Elouard talks of "this woman that I discover as I fall asleep, like a black star in deliverance

(6)
from day"; and Andre Breton of "My woman whose breasts
are night whose armpits are midsummer night." (7) Johann
Ritter says - "The sun and man govern the day, in the night
the earth and woman carry off the comely victory." (8)

Because night is the domain of woman, the moon is
conceived of as a mother. For the same reason it is also
the domain of love - "My whole being awakes. I am thine
and thou art mine. Night has aroused me to life and manhood.
Consume my earthly frame, draw me into deeper and closer unison,
and may our bridal night endure forever." (9)

Where the day-concept suggests the natural light of the
sun, night's light is unreal moonlight, the light of lamps and
fires. Fire is sympathetic with night, yet is symbolic of day,
light and God; it has often been considered to possess magical
properties; we may be sure that Palaeolithic man, for whom fire
was difficult to obtain, considered it holy. The Mexican fire-
god Xiuheuctli was "closely related to the Sun-God" The
Kamchadals and Ainus of North-east Asia "make fire their chief
deity"; among the ancient Aryans, Agni (whence comes the Latin
ignis) "was the chief god." Also, the Persians "held fire to
be a god." (10)

The North and South, the Mediterranean and the Nordic,
have necessarily different conceptions of night; in the South
the sun is always near; in the North it is more precious because
night is always close:- "The longer the night has lasted, the
more dramatic is the sunrise." (11)

This coming and going of night, this alternation, suggests a tension; at the periods of change, the climaxes, the moments of sunrise and sunset, light is most significant - "The last hours before sunset are the hours when the sun achieves its greatest colour and brilliance."⁽¹²⁾

The aggression between day and night has throughout history been the basis of myths; the light is most often represented by a sun-hero, who battles with and defeats the darkness, symbolised usually by a serpent. In Egypt the serpent was Apophis (In the tomb of Seti I at Thebes is depicted the destruction of the serpent before the Sun-boat.) "How beautiful is Rê in his sun-boat Apophis falls before him."⁽¹³⁾ In Greece, the serpent was Python, who lived in the darkness of the caves of Mount Parnassus. The theme of Apollo and Python was depicted by Delacroix, who said of his painting - "The God, mounting on his chariot, has already hurled his arrows The bleeding monster writhes, exhaling his last gasp of life and impotent rage in a fiery vapour. Meanwhile Victory comes down from the celestial heights to crown victorious Apollo, and Iris, messenger of the gods, waves her scarf in the air, symbolising a triumph of light over darkness and the rebellious waters."⁽¹⁴⁾

In some cultures, the power of darkness, the subterranean serpent is the supreme god, as in Mexico with Quetzlcoatl. The prehistoric inhabitants of Malta worshipped the great snake Delphyne, a female, subterranean power. Shrines were erected to her, and "people slept in these shrines in

order to enter into communion in dreams with the powers
of the underworld.⁽¹⁵⁾"

2. CREATION MYTHS AND DARKNESS.

In many creation myths one finds what may be called a tragic world-view; the sun, or light is seldom conceived of as being eternally dominant; rather it is considered to be a transient phenomenon, at the beginning and end of which is the all-enveloping darkness. One finds this even in classical Greece, supposedly the land of light par-excellence:-

"Black-winged Night, a goddess of whom even Zeus stood in awe, was courted by the Wind and laid
a silver egg (the moon) in the womb of darkness."⁽¹⁶⁾

- Orphic Creation Myth.

"Some say that Darkness was first, and from Darkness sprang Chaos - From a union between
Darkness and Chaos sprang Night, Day and the Air."⁽¹⁷⁾

- Creation Myth based on Hesiod's Theogony.

Indeed, in pre-classical times, Zeus was subject to the Moon-goddess:- "Ages before Zeus became an eternal almighty God in Greece, he had been a simple old-fashioned sun-king,
annually sacrificed, a servant of the Great Goddess."⁽¹⁸⁾

The Incas also, to whom the sun was a supreme deity, believed that as ancestors of the sun-god they emerged from darkness - "from certain caverns in a hill" - and would return to the darkness; they believed that their Empire would be

destroyed, "as legend has it, the day the Sun-god disappeared
(20)
beneath the waters of Lake Titicaca."

Many primitive tribes conceive of their gods as living in the land of darkness. The Tlingit of Alaska believe that the Supreme Being "does not live in the sky, but at the beginning of all things, in the world of darkness." (21) The Seeknan tribe of South America believe that the Supreme Deity, "Temaukl, is above the firmament and beyond the stars." (22)

In the Old Testament as well, we read that "In the beginning God created heaven and earth and darkness was upon the face of the deep." (23)

In our own era, the creation myths have perhaps been superceded, but science presents us with the image of even more all-embracing darkness - "Galileo and Copernicus re-assigned us to a modest place in infinity, a mere speck in the cosmos. Must we now make a second re-capitulation, and resign ourselves to the reign of the absurd Are we truly no more than a wisp of straw being carried no-one knows where by unknown waves operating no-one knows how through the blackness?" (24)

Nietzsche echoes this thought - "Do we not stray, as through an infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker?" (25)

3. DARKNESS AND MYSTICISM.

The mystic experience is at the origin of all great art and religion, and the root of mysticism lies in the soul, the unconscious, the animal sources of instinct, in the darkness:- "Somehow the inner life is not after all confined to the glass-walled well-lit cell at the top, from which everything is seen and understood. Rather it extends in depth endlessly inside the gloomy, concealed body; its source lies within: the life of the mind does not comprise the whole of the inner life; this life is bigger, heavier and stronger, for it contains the whole (26) immense domain of the unconscious."

This surrounding oneself with darkness, and the illumination that comes from it, has been variously expressed by painters, poets and holy men:-

"His eyes are closed, it is night;
his limbs are relaxed, all his senses
are shut off he is alone his
smile is far more alert than in the
waking state it pierces through the
(27)
thickest darkness."

Maurice de Guerin.

"Oh night that was my guide!
O darkness dearer than the morning's pride" (28)
The more I rose into the height
More dazzled, blind and lost I spun.
The greatest conquest ever won
I won in blindness, like the night." (29)

St. John of the Cross.

"The secrets of God appear in darkness more
clearly than in the light of silence When
everything is black it floods with its
marvellous splendours the souls that have no
eyes." (30)

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

"Now it is night; everything is at rest.
My eyes are closing in order to see, without
understanding it, the dream in the infinite
space that extends before me." (31)

Paul Gauguin.

"The dawn I love rises in the night at its
most splendid and will never set." (32)

Sufi-al-Hallaj.

"Nights are their days, their most
illuminated hours." (33) "I am not pent in
darkness, rather say in darkness
I am embowered." (34)

Young.

"Methinks the lying, dying ray
Of twilight time doth seem more fair,
And lights the soul up more than day."⁽³⁵⁾

Samuel Palmer.

"Close your physical eye so that you
may look first at your picture with
your spiritual eye. Then bring to
the light of day what you have seen
in the darkness."⁽³⁶⁾

Caspar Friederich.

Robert Graves discerned the realm of night as the true realm of poetry. In his foreword to the "White Goddess" he says - "... the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon-goddess and this remains the language of true poetry."⁽³⁷⁾

PART II.

1. NIGHT-IMAGERY IN PRE-HISTORY.

In pre-history, night was conceived of as being the realm of the magical and miraculous, the time of the most intimate contact between man and god. The Shaman of Siberia still works only at night, for he finds that "the light of the sun is a disturbing element." His essential characteristic is "his excitement, his ecstasy and trancelike condition.... he sees dreamlike apparitions, hears voices and receives visions of truth." (38) (39)

To Palaeolithic man, the caves were natural sanctuaries; he entered into their furthest, darkest recesses in order to engrave and paint his religious and magical images on their walls. It was often the most inaccessible parts of the cave that were considered holiest, and at times artistic remains have been found nearly a mile from the entrance.

The darkness of the cave with its profound stillness, finds various parallels in later epochs. The Neolithic "Hypogeum" at Malta consists of cavern-like curved lines, concave surfaces In the flickering light of little oil or grease lamps these caverns must have suggested the protective darkness of the maternal womb. (40)

The same quality is also expressed in the temples of Egypt, in the depths of which lay the holy of holies, and in the man-made caves in the depths of the pyramids; in the gloom of Byzantine and Romanesque interiors, illuminated from within by lamps, or by mosaics which caught and reflected the light. The churches of the Gothic era, with their organic structure, were also great upward-reaching caverns, filled with a light transfigured by the stained-glass windows.

Prehistoric man invested the world in its totality with religious significance. This pantheism is believed to have originated in the interpretation of dreams, visions, hallucinations, cataleptic states and similar phenomena. ⁽⁴¹⁾ The soul itself was revealed in sleep:- "People all over the world became acquainted with the soul's existence in sleep, dreams and visions long before the dawn of history. Since sleep divorces a man from his waking self, he came to believe that he could meet his own soul during dreams, that the soul could release itself The sleeper's groan is an echo of the grief and anguish felt by a soul in torment. Sometimes a sleeping man gets up and goes where his vision directs sometimes, when the spirits of the forest are particularly active, they set upon a man and pull him hither and thither, or squat gibbering at his side while he sleeps, so that he

wakes at dawn exhausted and depressed Souls like to wander while their owners sleep, so it is dangerous to rouse a dreaming man suddenly in case his soul is too far away to get back in time. Similarly, almost all Siberian tribes believe that a man who is abruptly wakened readily falls prey to madness.⁽⁴²⁾"

Sleep was the main link with the dead, the "sacred past". The aborigines of Central Australia, e.g., conceived of the "notion of Alcheringa, 'dreamtime', or sacred past."⁽⁴³⁾

The time of sleep was the time of the sacred healing, the magic sleep:- "The idea that dreams originated in the realm of the dead and the belief in the magic effects of sleep at ancestral tombs was apparently among the oldest features of the religion of the Megalithic peoples They survived practically unchanged into historical times. Aristotle, Diodorus and Pausianus mention incubatio."⁽⁴⁴⁾ Also, people slept in the shrines on Malta "in order to enter into communion in dream with the powers of the underworld."⁽⁴⁵⁾

The time of sleep was also the time of the living death. The dead were often buried as if asleep in bed, as in the Etruscan Cemetery at Cerveteri. There is an "ancient tradition according to which the legendary heroes of Sardinia did not perish after death, but remained in a state of perpetual sleep."⁽⁴⁶⁾

Early man studied the heavens, and possibly conceived of a lunar cycle - "It is hard to say why the number seven should be so universally invested with magical properties or religious symbolism, but it may be due to the twenty-eight day Lunar cycle. On the other hand, both the Great and Little Bears are composed of seven ⁽⁴⁷⁾ stars."

Early man established fixed centres around which the rest of the universe moved - "A man's eye view of the whole firmament makes it seem to revolve about a central point which now (in the Northern hemisphere) lies in the region of the pole star Many American Indian tribes regarded Polaris as the leader of the ⁽⁴⁸⁾ heavenly bodies."

NIGHT-IMAGERY IN THE HISTORICAL ERA.

2. EGYPT.

In Egypt, the sun is the eternal victor, symbolised by the god Ré. The Supreme God is Amon-Ré, a fusion of sun and air. The pharaoh was believed to have been directly descended from the sun, and from the time of Chephren he assumed the title of "Son of Ré."

The enemies of the sun, and therefore of the whole of Egypt, were Apophis the serpent of darkness, and Seth, described ⁽⁴⁹⁾ as the "Lord of destruction and darkness." At every dawn

the sun battled with and was victorious over these underworld forces; each day it journeyed across the heavens in its solar barque, and with every crossing repeated its cycle of youth to age: at sunrise it was the child Sefhris; at midday, the grown man at the zenith of his power, the supreme Rê; at evening it was Atum, the old man close to death. The sun's decline and descent into the world of darkness was symbolised by its being swallowed up by the goddess Nut; (as depicted on a ceiling at Dendera); at evening the sun passed from the barque of day to the barque of night; (as depicted on a basalt sarcophagus of the Ptolemaic period; c.3000 B.C.).

Because the sun set in the West, the mountains of the West were thought to be "The tomb of the sun"⁽⁵⁰⁾, and the West was generally held to be the abode of the dead; it was on the West bank of the Nile that the pyramids, the "houses of the living dead" were built.

Many Royal Tombs indicated the intimate relationship between night and death. In the Tomb of Amenophis II, in the Valley of the Kings, "the ceiling of the chamber is painted blue with yellow stars to represent the heavenly firmament; (this was e.g.) a regular feature of the Tomb-chambers of the Eighteenth Dynasty."⁽⁵¹⁾

The Egyptians had "The greatest cult of the dead in history,"⁽⁵²⁾

but they wanted death to be a continuation of the earthly life. Of their dead they said that "They depart not like the dead, but like the living."⁽⁵³⁾ Their Underworld was joyless and dark, and they believed that "in death you will never see the sun."⁽⁵⁴⁾ A widow's lament expresses a similar feeling:- "How sad is the descent in the Land of Silence. The wakeful sleeps, he who does not slumber at night lies still forever The dwelling place of the inhabitants of the West is dark and deep. It has no door, no window, no light to illuminate it, no north-wind to refresh the heart. The sun does not rise there, but they lie every day in darkness Those who are in the West are cut off, and their existence is misery; one is loath to go to join them."⁽⁵⁵⁾

Akhnaton's "Hymn to the Sun" similarly expresses Egyptian man's fears in the face of darkness -

"When you sleep in the West beneath the horizon,
The earth is plunged in a shadow
That resembles the shadow of death.
Then men sleep in their dwellings,
Their heads muffled, their nostrils blocked,
And no-one's gaze encounters that of his fellow.
The robbers steal into houses,
And filch the valuables from beneath pillows,
And creep away undetected.

The lion pads forth from his lair,
And poisonous creatures bare their fangs.
Oh how dark it is.
And what a brooding silence falls over the world,
When the maker of all things slumbers in the West!
But when the dawn comes you glitter on the horizon
When day breaks you chase away the black shades
Day-sun, mighty in power."⁽⁵⁶⁾

From other sources we learn that the sun descended into the Underworld, but "gives short joy to the inhabitants, and when the iron doors close with a crash behind Rê, it is said that there is general weeping among the dead."⁽⁵⁷⁾

The Nile itself possessed a dual character; by day it was the "Heavenly Nile", and the sun-god sailed on its waters in his barque. By night it was the "Infernal Nile", the Nile of the Dead, where "ghostly boats carried the shadowy forms of the gods."⁽⁵⁸⁾
⁽⁵⁹⁾

In keeping with their equation of the Night with Evil, the moon was conceived of as the "bad eye of Hathor."⁽⁶⁰⁾

3. CRETE AND GREECE.

Crete lay in a seismic area, and so the most powerful divinities were subterranean. Their snake priestesses made sacrifices to the great serpent, who was in many ways a fertility god. "When the early Cretans paid homage to the

obscure powers that fructified the crops, caused women's breasts to swell and controlled the destinies of the race, they descended into the Earth Mother's womb of darkness." (61)

Their palace at Knossos, "A Royal Palace (was) equipped with all the amenities of life, but also (had) access by way of tortuous, subterranean passages to an underworld haunted by chthonian numina." (62) The system of dark basements and recesses, a vast subterranean monument, was paralleled in myth by the Labyrinth.

One thinks of Greece, on the other hand, as the "home of light", (63) the domain of Apollo, the sun-god champion of reason, who slew Python with his golden arrows. Yet Apollo was originally an "underworld oracular hero". (64) His metamorphosis from a subterranean to a heavenly god was due largely to the early Greek philosophers, who "were strongly opposed to magical poetry as threatening their new religion of logic". (65) Yet the victory of the light of reason over the darkness of instinct was only partial:- "Despite their passion for clarity, logic and clean-cut distinction, the Greeks with one accord sought counsel in the 'prophetic frenzy' of a woman half-asphyxiated from fumes rising from a deep cleft in the ground." (66) It is interesting that this instinctive side of life was almost exclusively represented by females, whose connection with the underworld was embodied in the term for a female

prophet, a Pythoness.

But instinctual darkness was symbolised above all by Dionysius, "The Night Sun", in whose honour were held full-moon festivals and nocturnal rites; and by Orpheus, the derivation of whose name is "possibly from the root signifying darkness." It is ironical that Greek rationalism originated largely in Orphic literature, for it "exercised great influence, directly or through Pythagoreanism on Plato;" and on Socrates.

4. THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

At the transference from Antique world-view to Christian, the nocturnal element again assumes dominance. Of this change, Novalis says - "Light ceased to be the abode and symbol of the Gods; they covered themselves with the veil of night. Night was the cradle of the coming age; in it, the Gods took refuge, and sleep came upon them."

This change is noticeable in comparison between Greek and Christian religious buildings. The Greek temple was meant to be seen from the outside, in full sunlight, but the essential element of the Cathedral is the gloom of the interior.

Christianity contains much that is nocturnal in its symbolism. Christ was born at Night; the Wise Men were led to Christ by the Evening Star. At the climax of the

Crucifixion, the sun disappeared from the sky, and "From the sixth hour there was darkness all over the land until the ninth hour."⁽⁷¹⁾

The Virgin is symbolically connected with the moon. The Madonna with the Child is often represented as standing on a crescent moon, "as depicted in the late Middle Ages, and above all in the Baroque era."⁽⁷²⁾ The apostles, when depicted in connection with Mary, are often represented by twelve stars. Of this particular symbolism, St. John the Divine says - "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."⁽⁷³⁾

Yet the old idea of the evil of darkness and the beneficence of light persisted: the aim of Christianity was "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of Death."⁽⁷⁴⁾ In the same way, the New Testament is represented by the Sun,⁽⁷⁵⁾ "whereas the Moon represented the Old Testament."⁽⁷⁶⁾

This solar aspect of Christianity was expressed in later ages, e.g., in Young's "Night Thoughts" when he says - "A Christian dwells, like Uriel (Milton) in the sun."⁽⁷⁷⁾

5. ITALY.

Italian art was concerned with day rather than night; as Andre Malraux says - "Italian art, on the whole, denies the subterranean element."⁽⁷⁸⁾ As in Greece, Italian art is conceived

in the clear, intellectual light of day. Even in night-scenes, the light of Giotto and the primitives is "habitual daylight."⁽⁷⁹⁾

Francesca's night, also, is suffused with light so as to dispel all irrational qualities. Nothing is eaten up in blackness; it is the lucid light of a mathematician. In his "Dream of Constantine", the only indication of Night is a sleeping figure; in the "Resurrection", only the closed eyes of the guards. With Masaccio too, the tragedy of the Expulsion takes place in the full light of day.

In the High Renaissance, the depiction of night becomes systematised, or is taken directly from antique imagery. Michelangelo, for instance, "faithfully presented night as the ancients depicted her, in giving her as attributes the owl and the crescent moon on her forehead."⁽⁸⁰⁾ Annibale Caro, in his "Vasari" says:- "The night should have black wings, spread out as if she were flying. She should have in one hand a sleeping white child to signify sleep, in the other a black one that seems asleep, and signifies Death. Her complexion should be dark, her cloak black, and black her hair The sky around her should be the darkest blue, and dotted with many stars."⁽⁸¹⁾

The sfumato of Leonardo is concerned with darkness, but reduces it to a rational basis. With him, the depiction of night or darkness is the result of systematic observation.

In his Notebooks he observed that "a body that bathes in weak light will show little difference between its shadows and its lights." For representing night-scenes, he gives the following advice - "Whatever is entirely deprived of light is all darkness. When such is the condition of night, if you wish to represent a scene therein, you must arrange to introduce a great fire there; and then the things which are nearest to the fire will be more deeply tinged with its colour, for whatever is nearest the object partakes most fully of its nature." (82)

In Venetian art we are close to night. The scene is often set at twilight; the golden light of Giorgione and Titian is the light of afternoon and evening.

Caravaggio is exceptional in Italy for his intimate concern with darkness. With him, the action takes place against a background of blackness, of "tenebrosi". The highlights that play in front of this background are transitory, ready to be eaten up. Especially in his early work, he is "fully on the side of night now light is an assailant; it wrests bits of brightness from the encroaching dark. They are mere stumps of forms, flashing salients, emerging like islands hitherto covered by the sea. Out of this massive darkness, lumps and bulges of light appear." (84)

With his painting we are close to the emotionalism of Spain, and it is no wonder that many of the greatest tenebrists, e.g. Ribera, were Spanish.

6. SPAIN.

The darkness of Spanish painting is not only the blackness of night or the subterranean, but of a land burned dark by the sun. In many ways Spanish art is an odd mixture; to a Mediterranean temperament has been added something of the Northern "angst", as well as the darkness of Africa and the Moors. From the black pathos of Bermejo's "Pieta", or Valdez Leal's "Death" to Zurbaran's and Solana's austere clerics; to Picasso's "Minotauromachia", there is the same burning sun and the blackness, the cruelty and the cult of blood that one finds in the religious fervour of St. Theresa of Avila or the Jesuits. Spain is a violent, harsh, tragic land, torn between North and South, between Europe and Africa.

El Greco's nights are lit with the white light of the moon and with his electric, visionary blue. Spain was naturally receptive to his Byzantine mysticism. Typical of the mystic, his illumination was interior: he refused to leave his darkened room "because the light of day disturbed his inner light."
(85)

But perhaps the greatest painter on the side of night was Goya. His "Pinturas Negras", his concern with blood and

blackness, with witches, goblins and the devil reveal his obsession with the powers of darkness. From the time of his deafness till his death, his exclusive concern was with night. "Goya seems to want to draw a language from the (86) darkness" "Like the eyes of a cat, his imagination only (87) lights up in the dark." His world was "without pardon, (88) redemption, or revelation."

Under one of the plates of the "Goblins" series, he observed:- "It is a remarkable thing that this kind will not allow itself to be seen except at night and in the dark. No-one has found out where they lock themselves up and hide (89) in the day-time." In the "Visions of a Night" he asserted (90) that he "drew his dreams".

7. THE NORTH: GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS.

In the North, the Fransiscan message was not as well heeded as in Italy where God was benign, and where man was considered noble and triumphant. In the North the greater reality was man's consciousness of his original sin, his imperfectability. The religious attitude was held to be inconsistent with humanism: St. Hildegarde said that "God (91) does not inhabit healthy bodies." If there was to be salvation or revelation, it was to be only through suffering. In this way we read of "the mystical flights experienced by Christina von Stommeln, (who was) every night racked,

lacerated and burned by demons and sullied with excrement and toads. She suffered a thousand deaths before, during her attacks of rigor, she discovered Gothic paradises decorated with steeples and towers, laden with jewels, encrusted with lacy stone-work." ⁽⁹²⁾

This pessimism, this pre-occupation with suffering and death found expression in the Northern Dances of Death, in works like Durer's "Night, Death and the Devil" and Baldung's "Death Embracing a Woman". The nudes of Cranach and Baldung often appear in fragile whites against the encroaching background of black.

The same attitude is expressed again in the gloomy gothicism of Goethe's "Faust" - "Light grows from substance, makes it beautiful so I hope it won't be long till light and the world stuff are destroyed together." ⁽⁹³⁾

"I am part of the past that was first of all,
Part of the darkness that gave birth to light,
That supercilious light which now disputes
With Mother Night her ancient rank and realm,
And yet cannot succeed." ⁽⁹⁴⁾

"There is van Dyck, too, whose preferred figures are beautiful, fragile young men, promised to death, looming up against a background of twilight woods where, in the distance, hunters are sounding the mort." ⁽⁹⁵⁾

Yet salvation, joy and triumph there was. Where in Grunewald's Crucifixions, tragedy, horror and the night are synonymous, where the Man-God festers and drips with blood and the sun disappears from the sky, there is also the majesty of the "Adoration of the Virgin", where the light of the sun and the features of the God are fused into one substance.

This day-night symbolism, this duality between good and evil plays an all important part in the art of the North. In Patinir's "Boat of Charon", the Styx divides the earthly paradise of the day from the darkness of hell and its infernal fires. In Altdorfer's "Battle of Alexander", "the struggle of the sun with the clouds underlines the sun-god nature of Alexander, contrasting with his enemy, symbolised by the darkness."

Among the most famous of the Northern Caravaggeschi were Gerard Honthorst, called "Gerhardo della Notte", and Rembrandt. Rembrandt's "chiaroscuro" and Caravaggio's "tenebrosi" have a similar function. No action takes place without the presence of the impending darkness; no victory or triumph but that the night should be ready to swallow it up. Reality is always close to oblivion; Rembrandt's philosophers sit in darkness.

8. FRANCE.

In France, the night was not so intimately concerned with tragedy as in the Northern Countries or in Spain. Georges de la Tour, a kind of nocturnal Seurat, attempted to blend science and mysticism in his night-scenes, and they are illuminated always by the artificial light of candle or torch.

With Lorraine the time is most often early evening, yet the subject is the sun and the fluidity of atmosphere.

Watteau painted the afternoon of love and languour, and filled it with gentle melancholy, but never with tragedy. One is aware only that the evening is not far off, and coming on all the quicker for the lovers having dallied.

9. ENGLAND.

In England, from ancient times, the personification of night was the Moon-Goddess. The ancient Picts and Britons dyed themselves blue in honour of Anu, the goddess of the night-sky. We know that "The priestesses of the White Goddess in ancient times are likely to have chalked their faces white in imitation of the Moon's white disc." In poetic colleges in Ireland and Wales, an irrational poetic and mystic language was taught in honour of the White Goddess. She was the subject of song and myth from ancient times through to the Nineteenth Century. At times she appears as a beautiful goddess, at times as a night-hag. Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans

Merci" is the White-Goddess. Coleridge, in his "Ancient Mariner" talks of her as the hag:-

"Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold,
Her skin was white as leprosy.
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she.
(98)
Who thicks man's blood with cold."

Milton, in "Paradise Lost", talks of the same night-hag:-

"Nor uglier follows the night-hag, when, called
In secret, riding through the air she comes,
Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With Lapland witches; while the labouring moon
Eclipses at their charms"

Shelley, however, pays homage to the night-goddess:-

"I ask of thee, beloved night,
Swift be thine approaching flight -
(99)
Come soon, come soon!"

John Clare says of the Night-Goddess:- "These dreams of a beautiful presence, a woman deity, give the sublimest conception of beauty to my imagination; and being last night with the same presence, the lady divinity left such a vivid picture of her visits in my sleep, dreaming of dreams, that I could no longer doubt her existence."
(100)

In Eighteenth Century England, the idea of the "Picturesque" so popular at the time was often synonymous with the nocturnal. Anne Radcliffe wrote of Gothic fortresses in moonlight, of nocturnal burials - "The fierce features of the wild condottieri bending with their torches over the grave to which the corpse was descending, were contrasted with the venerable figure of the monk wrapt in long, black garments, his cowl thrown back from his pale face, on which the light, gleaming strongly" (101).

William Gilpin noted the grandeur that darkness gives to nature:- "A mountain is an object of grandeur; and its dignity receives more force by arraying itself in the majesty of darkness." (102)

He noted its fearsomeness:- "A towering rock hangs over you; under which you enter an arched cavern, twelve yards high, forty wide, and near a hundred long. So vast a canopy of unpillared rock stretching over your head gives an involuntary shudder. A strong light at the mouth of the cave displays all the horrors of the entrance in full proportion. But this light decaying as you proceed, the imagination is left to explore its deeper caverns by torch-light, which gives them additional terror." (103)

He noted its mystery:-

"A faint erroneous ray

Glanced from their perfect furnace of things,

(104)
Threw half an image"

.... and its melancholy:- "Joy is in their course,
but it is soon past: the shades of darkness pursue them."
(105)

He left descriptions of night-storms and landscapes in deep twilight, and made observations concerning the difficulty of rendering darkness in painting:- "It is very difficult in painting to manage so feeble an effusion of light (moonlight) in such a manner as, at the same time to illumine objects, and produce an effect."
(106)

The melancholy of darkness was also noted by Burton; he denotes "sleeping and waking as causes of melancholy", and says of a particular type of melancholy that "it proceeds from the stars."
(107)
(108) In his "Digression of Spirits" one reads of demons, "terrores magicos nocturnos lemures"
(109)
(110) ".... who will make strange noises in the night."

At times his observations on the state of sleep foreshadow the Surrealists - "In time of sleep this faculty (of Phantasie) is free, and many times conceives strange, stupend, absurd shapes!"
(111)

Young in his Night Thoughts equates night with death-

"The knell, the shroud, the mattock and the grave;
The deep, damp vault, the darkness and the warm."
(112)
.... and with silence - "Silence and darkness! Solemn sisters! Twins! From ancient night"
(113)

He conceives of night as the eternal element, out of which

all creation is born-

"O majestic night!

Nature's great ancestor! day's elder born!

And fated to survive the transient sun!"
(114)

Yet at the same time, he sees God as light, and darkness
as the absence of God-

"Consider man as an immortal being,

Intellegible all; and all is great;

A crystalline transparency prevails,

And strikes full lustre through the human sphere:

Consider man as mortal, all is dark,

And wretched."
(115)

10. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Nineteenth Century art was above all Romantic; and hence, much preoccupied with night. The Nineteenth Century saw "the possibility of becoming friends with things that had previously been objects of terror - night, the deep, dreams and the infinite!"
(116)
This pre-occupation with night was also expressed in Nineteenth Century music, foreshadowed by what Spengler calls the "dark music of Beethoven." There were Chopin's and Debussy's "Nocturnes", Mussorgksky's "Night on Bald Mountain!" The great Romantic writers and painters were all men enveloped in darkness - Fuseli, Hugo, Novalis, Kubin.

Novalis, above all, whose "heart remains ever true to night", explored the realms of sleep and dreams, and, like

the ancients, considered sleep as holy. He observed that "we are united by closer bonds with the unseen than with the (117) seen"; and that "sleep is the condition in which body and soul are blended, as it were, chemically. The soul pervades the whole body. Man is neutralised. Waking is a polarised state sleep nourishes the soul In a waking state the (118) body feeds on the soul."

Kubin, "even when awake was inclined to surrender to (119) those night visions." He illustrated mostly night-themes - the works of Poe, Turgenev's "The Dream", Huch's "New Dreams", Hoffman's "Night Tales". He concentrated on these themes to (120) rid himself of his "nightmare visions by imposing form on them." He was a precursor of the Surrealists in his emphasis on those (121) "moments of strange half-wakefulness." He talked of "these moments of transition from one state of consciousness to the other" as being "artistically the most productive", and says that "in dreams I find unquestionable confirmation of my belief that our experiencing of reality is exactly identical with the (122) experiencing of art."

Fuseli called himself "a sleepwalker, grasping his way (123) through mists of fantasy."

The Nineteenth Century also gave birth to the gentle pastoral night of Samuel Palmer and the Ancients, who undertook "twilight excursions on summer evenings." A surprising affinity

between the gentle Palmer and the ecstatic van Gogh is revealed in Palmer's "Thoughts on a Rising Moon", where he talks of
"The raving-mad splendour of orange twilight glow on landscape."⁽¹²⁴⁾

Hugo talks of the "enormous black sun whence the night radiates."⁽¹²⁵⁾ He conceives of man as a fragile light in the midst of darkness -

"My soul which in midnight
(126)
A frail barque strays"

Rimbaud associates himself with the waking night of the "voyeur", wishing with his "Illuminations" to light up the dark:- "I lower the jets of the chandelier, I throw myself on my bed, and turning my face toward the darkness"⁽¹²⁷⁾ or again - "I wrote silences, I wrote the night"⁽¹²⁸⁾

The painter Corot is never consciously Romantic, yet, as he grows older, his work inclines more and more toward romantic, nocturnal tonalities - "Now watch the evening descend from the mountains: the shadows become greyer, larger the sunset grows narrower, pulls down the shade Over the drowsy world, the silent hours wring their brown hair, drenched with nocturnal tears. There remains hardly enough daylight, Corot, to see your name written modestly in a black corner."⁽¹²⁹⁾

11. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

In the Twentieth Century, Surrealism re-investigated the world of dreams, hallucinations and the subconscious.

Foreshadowing the Surrealists and even Freud, Novalis says -
"Dreams have a high degree of interest to the psychologist,
also to the historian of humanity. Dreams have largely
contributed to the culture of men - hence the great
importance formerly attached to them."⁽¹³⁰⁾

Elouard refers to the "victory of his dreams", and
considers them as "the real world".⁽¹³¹⁾ He says that "nothing
is more effortless than falling asleep. But once we are
sleeping there begins a mental activity so great that the
body ... may be found on waking to be utterly exhausted."⁽¹³²⁾

Rouault was not a Surrealist, but was, like his master
Moreau, concerned with a symbolic darkness. His black suns,
and moons red as blood bring to mind the apocalyptic images
of St. John the Divine.

Of the post World-War II painters, it is perhaps Manessier
and Soulages who have best given form to a nocturnal imagery.
Manessier especially is concerned with night in his paintings
which are reminiscent of the stained glass in a Gothic interior.
Of his pre-occupation with night, he says - "It is out of my
night, like the dark night of the soul of St. John of the Cross
that I perceive truth. Then only can I shed light on things."⁽¹³³⁾

The black paintings of Soulages glow like the gloom of a
Romanesque interior.

PART III.

1. NIGHT, THE WEST AND THE EAST.

Oriental thinkers have always sought salvation in that which is farthest removed from life. Contemplation of the absolute has, in the East, always been regarded as the highest good. Nirvana is a state of non-being, where the "heart-beat and the pulse can be voluntarily suspended." ⁽¹³⁴⁾ The Gherana Samhita "gives six kinds of Samadhis," among them being "the ⁽¹³⁵⁾ trance deep dreamless sleep."

The Hindus sought to prove that the world did not really exist. "If a man seen in a dream was unreal, his mind must be equally unreal. In the same manner, the subject in the dream-state, who is also a product of the dream, cannot but be unreal .. The question then arises: who had the dream? To this the correct answer is that no-one had it and there has never been a dream-state. The world of the waking state also, if ⁽¹³⁶⁾ examined in a like manner, will be found to be non-existent."

In the West, at the advent of the Nineteenth Century, there became apparent a will to nothingness, a revulsion from life, close to this Oriental outlook. What Alain Jouffroy said of Modern Man applies also to Nineteenth Century man - "One might say that Europeans have abandoned their wish to conquer the world. The will to power has ceased to inspire

them. Painters have become orientalised. Their work
(137)
expresses the desire for effacement, for annihilation."

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, Novalis, in his "Hymns to Night", expressed the weariness, the loss of hope, the languour of a senile culture. - "My heart is full of sadness. Let me dissolve in drops of dew, and join the beloved dust. Long-past memories, youthful ambitions, childhood's dreams, a long life of brief joys and blighted
(138)
hopes pass before me - dusky forms, like evening mist."

And again he says:- "Earthly glory vanished, bearing with it the sorrows of my heart; my sadness has fallen from me into an unknown, unfathomable world. Spirit of Night, heavenly rest, o'ershadowed me existence shall become an endless
(139)
dream."

Sleep is praised as the greatest good, life is seen as a dreary pilgrimage to the grave. He symbolises the senility of Western culture when he talks of "the last agony of day under
(140)
the conquering oppression of night", and like Longfellow longs
(141)
for "refreshing darkness", for Baudelaire's "exquisite
(142)
annihilation."

Longfellow is discomfited by the energetic feats of earlier centuries:-

"For like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest

Life's endless toil and endeavour,
(143)
And tonight I long for rest."

Poe also, "steeped in misery", expressed his "scorn for all
(145) things present." To him genius was inseparable from ill-health
and ill-being:- "The question is not settled whether madness is
or is not the loftiest intelligence, whether all that is
profound does not spring from disease of thought - from moods
(146) of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect."

This will to nothingness is not mysticism but a sickness
of life that has little to do with the "midnight altar's
(147) hallowed flame."

2. THE REACTION.

Nietzsche, in his hatred of melancholy, in his contempt
for the otherworldly, in his "day-time" quality, stands by way
of reaction opposed to this ethic; he scorns the dark, perhaps
too violently; like Icarus he comes too close to the sun and
burns his wings. He refers to his Zarathustra as "sunny"; to
(148) him "all sun-love is innocence and creative desire". He
(149) distrusts the night and everything concerned with it. In his
works one can find many disparaging references to night -
(150) "Avoid all that sleep ill and watch at night", he says. "Like
(151) a cat goeth the moon, dishonestly." And again he says -
"Thou belongest to that kindred that feareth the light, that
cannot find rest in the light. Now daily must thou bury thy

head deeper in night and vapours! And verily, thou chocest
well thine hour; for even now the night-birds fly again.
The hour of all folk that fear the light is come, the hour
(152)
of evening."

"I recognise the minds that seek repose by the many dark
objects with which they surround themselves; those who want
(153)
to sleep darken their chambers, or creep into corners."

"The weary shun the passing sun, afraid, And only care for
(154)
trees to gain the shade." "Oh my soul, I have delivered thee
out of all dark corners, I have brushed from thee dust and
spiders and twilight I have persuaded thee to stand naked
(155)
in the eye of the sun."

"His soul squints, his mind loves hide-outs, secret paths,
back doors; everything that is hidden seems to him his own
world, his security, his comfort: he is expert in silence, in
long memory, in waiting, in provisional self-deprecation and
(156)
in self-humiliation."

"For if ye be not sick and worn-out wretches of whom
earth is weary, then are ye cunning sluggards lurking
(157)
night-prowlers."

(158)
He attacks all shame, "night-flies", all turning away
from life - "How extravagantly do these weary souls, too weary
even for dreaming, prize deep sleep - deep sleep standing for
the entry of the soul into Brahma, the accomplished mystical

union. 'When he is fast asleep', the oldest and most venerable scripture tells us, 'and so completely at rest that he no longer sees any dream-image, then he is at one with Him Who Is In profound sleep, the soul is lifted out of the body, enters the highest sphere of light becomes the supreme spirit No person who is deeply out of tune can help reviewing the hypnotic Nirvana, the peace of profound sleep, as the greatest of goods, as the positive value par excellence."⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

A similar view is expressed by Young, for whom God and light are synonymous - "Man, turning from his God, brings endless Night."⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ He laments the increasing effeminacy of modern man, and compares him to a night-vermin:-

"Those ends were answered once; when mortals liv'd
Of stronger wing, of aquiline ascent
In theory sublime. O how unlike
Those vermin of the night, this moment sung,
Who crawl on earth, and on her venom feed!"⁽¹⁶¹⁾

In praise of the men of ancient times Nietzsche says -
"Oh, those men of former times understood how to dream, and did not need first to go to sleep!"⁽¹⁶²⁾

3. THE SPIRITUAL TIME OF DAY.

Spengler, in his "morphology of world-history" presented the idea that each culture has its period of birth, maturity

and death. This is equivalent to Young's "time of day". As Spengler says - "Every culture passes through the age - phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age. It is a young and trembling soul, heavy with misgivings, that reveals itself in the morning of Romanesque and Gothic the spring wind blows over it."⁽¹⁶³⁾

At its birth are "the great creations of the newly-awakened, dream-heavy soul"⁽¹⁶⁴⁾; at its death, "the fire in the soul dies down. The dwindling powers rise to one more, half-successful effort of creation The soul thinks once again, and in Romanticism looks back piteously to its childhood; then finally, weary, reluctant, cold, it loses its desire to be, and, as in Imperial Rome, wishes itself out of the overlong daylight and back into the darkness of Protomysticism, in the womb of the mother, in the grave."⁽¹⁶⁵⁾

The Nineteenth Century saw the death-throes of traditional Western culture. Nineteenth Century man was late Western man. His art was senile; "Of great painting and great music there can no longer be, for European people, any question."⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ His art and religion had been superceded by science and rationalism, thus forming the modern counterpart of the Greek transference from "Dionysiac" to "Appolonian". All the signs of tiredness were evident, its will to nothingness, and

ironically, at the same time, an overemphasis on the physical, so that the moon, for instance, was no longer honoured, but "despised as a burnt-out satellite of the earth." ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ The same exclusively physical emphasis finds parallel in the third and final decline of Egypt, when Akhnaton, scorning the earlier solar symbolism, worshipped only the physical orb of the sun.

The Twentieth Century continued these tendencies, but the death-throes became more violent. Spengler saw that "the state of West Europe and America as at the epoch 1800-2000 - to establish the chronological position of this period in the ensemble of Western culture history appears as chronologically parallel with the phase of Hellenism, and its present culmination, marked by the World War, corresponds with the transition from the Hellenistic to the Roman Age." ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

As Rene Huyghe says - "It is as though mankind has gone through some monstrous mutation, inconceivable even so few as fifty years ago. Many efforts have been made to formulate a philosophy to the scale of this mutation, but they all seem to come down to false doubts, to intellectual panic, to anxiety and despair." ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

Spengler talks of the Baroque park as being "the park of the Late season, of the approaching end, of the falling leaf. A Renaissance park is meant for the summer and noonday." ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾

Perhaps the new monstrosities that Huyghe talks of are the first signs of a rebirth, a new dawn; perhaps the remains of the old culture will simply serve to fertilise the new. But it seems rather that we are at the spiritual midnight of the West. If this is true, if to us belongs the spirit and morality of Spengler's night, it is ironical that even in our own realm we are surpassed; for the further one goes back in history, the more profoundly did man conceive of night, the more vitally did he fill it with his deities.

More often than not we know merely the superficiality of night, the neon-lights, the artificial day, while the profundity of the great night of nature, eternal night, escapes us.

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A P P E N D I X A.

In the beginning was the flight from the stronger enemy, from the plains of the Veneti to the muddy islands. There, in isolation, life began again from nothing, or rather, from the mud. These fugitives, the refined mainland Venetii, mostly descendants of Roman race, blended with the more barbaric islanders.

They were diciplined by their adversities, and were compelled to live nobly or to perish. Through adversity they became strong; the muddy islands became a powerful state, serene and confident, the "Serenissima", queen of the Adriatic, eventually of the Mediterranean, and of a "quarter and a half" of what had once belonged to the Roman empire.

Though serene, the people did not forget their all-too-recent nearness to destruction; Venice was hard-headed and realistic - the merchant queen; yet she tempered realism with a voluptuous and epicurean philosophy, enjoying life, living, by the senses rather than the intellect, preferring to feel rather than to reason.

At first she was subject, both culturally and politically, through Ravenna to Byzantium. As time went on, and as Venice gained independence, this political subjection became merely nominal, and took the form more of an alliance. The change was symbolised by the replacing of the Greek patron saint St. Theodore for the Latin St. Mark, who anyway was more intimately connected

with the history of the islands. However, for economic reasons, Venice found it convenient to acknowledge the protection of Constantinople. But no matter how independent she became politically, at all times she maintained a cultural link with, and continued the heritage of Byzantium, and through Byzantium the Greeks and the Egyptians. It was never a rational, conscious attempt at continuity however; it was the spirit of the earliest, most virile Greeks that took effect rather than the later ones, as indicated by her traditional stand in opposition to Neo-Platonism. It was largely due to this link, through Byzantium that she survived the Renaissance with her Dionysiac spirit intact. Indicative of this spirit is the fact that the wife played a less important part in public life than did the courtesan.

Spiritually and geographically, Venice was close to the East. This proximity to Islam, and Venice's feared alliance with her, was one of the chief reasons given for the formation of the League of Cambrai. The legend of the transference of St. Mark's body from Alexandria is symbolic of what Venice learned from her mortal enemy, Islam.

While in the sphere of art Venice was instinctive, sensuous and anti-rational, commercially and politically she adopted a morality of pragmatism, expediency and efficiency. She was one of the last centres of Christianity in Europe to abandon the

slave-trade. Her political opportunism was illustrated by the large part that the Venetians played in the Crusaders' dishonourable sacking of Constantinople.

The aristocracy arose not from a feudal system but from trading power. Hence in this way she was a prototype of the modern state.

She combined a talent for commerce with a talent for war; in both spheres her ambitions were maritime; she kept two fleets, one for trading, one for war: necessarily so, since she possessed no hinterland. What mainland territory she did have she had to fight constantly to maintain.

In religious matters she was always closer to Byzantium than to Rome, and always struggled against the influence of the latter; eventually, she was temporarily excommunicated by Clement V. She contained something of the Protestant or the Greek Orthodox in her rebellious attitude to Rome, but without the Protestant's puritanism.

In spite of the great religious pageants and magnificent church-services, the state did not build any great churches for the populace. St. Mark's was not constructed as a cathedral, but as the ducal chapel; the seat of the bishop was originally at the more out-of-the-way Castello. Two of her greatest churches, ss. Giovanni e Paolo (San Zanipolo) and the Frari,

were built by Dominican and Fransiscan, not by national efforts,

It is wrong to think of her leaders as bourgeois, for her anti-monarchism was not born out of democratic tendencies, but out of the desire to maintain a balance of power by keeping this power within the reach of a limited number of aristocratic families (oligarchy). The Doge was nominally a servant of the popular will, but in reality was subject to the will of the aristocracy. No personal power was attached to his office; he was considered only as the first among equals.

Venice, bound in atmosphere, a city not only of the sea but actually in the sea, encouraging the delectation of the senses, found painting, mosaic and music more natural to her than, say, Florence where the landscape was hard, dry and lucid, and where fresco, sculpture and literature were the typical art forms. Besides Aretino who, characteristically was a journalist, and Bembo the poet, she produced hardly any great masters in literature. Marco Polo's "Libro del Milion", the tale of his journeys undertaken to find the best trade routes for reaching Asian markets, displays rather a talent for adventure than for the aesthetics of literature.

She produced great music and opera, which shared with the other arts of Venice their richness and lyricism.

From early times music had been a constantly recurring theme with painters. The Gothic Jacobello del Fiore had

surrounded his Madonnas with angel musicians; there were Giorgione's softly strumming lovers, and Veronese's haughty musical gatherings. In the Eighteenth Century, Guardi's rococco paintings evoked the grace-notes of a work by Mozart.

Much of her best sculpture was captured or stolen from foreign lands, or was produced by foreigners. The bronze horses of St. Mark's were from Constantinople, the lions outside the Arsenal from Delos and Piraeus; Riccio and Sansovino came from Florence; Verocchio's "Colleoni" expresses something of the pride and will to power of Venice, but is essentially Florentine in conception.

Those sculptors who were true Venetians, such as Paolo and Giacobello delle Massegne, accepted the discipline of a foreign school. Venice was too abundant in qualities which make for painting, too lacking in qualities or materials that make for sculpture to allow much interest in a native school. Much of her sculpture approximated in one way or another to painting, or harmonised in terms of colour with its surroundings. The Quadriga are bronze, harmonising with the golden domes of St. Mark's. Donatello's John the Baptist is gilded and tinted. Favourite materials were bronze, gold, porphyry, all materials that add an air of sumptuousness to an essentially austere art.

Where in other centres painting and sculpture were made to contribute to architecture, in Venice it was the case that

architecture and sculpture were subordinated to a total effect of colour. Of St. Mark's, "the Golden Basilica", Ruskin says:- "The first prerequisite for a true judgement of St. Mark's is the perfection of a colour faculty." In architecture, Venice concerned herself as much with chromatism, a chromatism reflected in the polyphonic choral music of her church-services, as she did with formal or structural values. The jewel-like shafts were of little importance as sustaining members, and existed principally for splendour of effect. Walls were almost always covered with paintings or with precious materials, even with gold, as in the Ca' d'Oro. Even when precious materials were not used, a jewel-like effect was obtained, as at Murano, where the apse was decorated with a girdle of wedges of marble; inlaid in the brickwork like precious stones. Stone was inlaid with voluptuous materials: vert-antico, jasper, marmo-greco.

Precious building materials were obtained more by pillage than by trade, and were more frequently brought home by the warships than by the merchantmen. Venice herself possessed no natural sources of building materials; the amount of labour and cost of carriage were just as great, whether common or precious stone was imported, so that there was always a tendency to make each shipload as valuable as possible.

Permeating Venetian architecture is a feeling of Baroque luxuriance and display. St. Mark's and the Salute, centuries

apart yet geographically close, have a harmony between them which is evidence of the continual baroque quality inherent in the architecture of the city. Perhaps Venice, even more than Rome, was the true foreshadower of Baroque.

Yet opulent though it was, Venetian architecture was also formed by practical necessities, the dampness, the enforced use of piles. It is one of the most individual and harmonious of all European styles, yet at the same time is one of the most heterogeneous, combining Arab, Byzantine and Lombard forms. Often, as in San Michele, a column obviously derived from Greek orders is placed between columns so extravagantly decorated, so sinuous, so restless that they could only have been of Eastern derivation. In spite of this heterogeneity, in spite of the chance employment of building materials, a totality of effect is achieved which is greater than the analytic feats of other Italian states.

In Gothic architecture generally, the will toward a certain style of building, for a certain type of vaulting was a functional and scientific, and not primarily an aesthetic consideration. But in Venetian Gothic, function gives way to or is combined with richness of decoration and splendour of effect. For instance, a Venetian characteristic is the strong round or pointed arch used in combination with the graceful reversed arch.

In St. Mark's, structure is not the primary aim. There are no great weights to bear, and the domes are of timber instead of stone. The Doges' Palace, also, seems to invert and contradict traditional structural principles: owing to the fact that the majority of weight appears to be in the upper portion of the building, there is a feeling of lightness, as if it were floating. Ruskin quotes Andrea della Valle as saying that the wall of the saloon is thicker by fifteen inches than the shaft below it, projecting nine inches within and six without.

In St. Mark's there is an interior and exterior richness of colour, and an interior subordination of architectural detail to mosaic decoration. In Santa Maria della Salute, the feeling of buoyancy, the undulating facades, the spirals, approach the spirit of Baroque painting.

Essentially foreign to and out of place with these splendid effects is the spirit of Palladio's classicism and intellectualism, with its hard, straight, static lines, its austerity of form and its subduing of all decorative or expressive elements. It is ironical that the best work of many of the classicists, Sansovino, Scamozzi, Sanmichele, should have been executed in Venice.

Peculiar to Venetian architecture are the Fondaci: hotels for foreign, usually Eastern merchants and their wares. Stemming from the Arab countries, ("fondaco" derives from the Arab word - "fondouk"), they grew out of the commercial needs of

the city.

Bridges are normally considered as feats of engineering, but in Venice they have a specifically architectural or sometimes sculptural quality, and are often more than bridges; for instance, the Bridge of Sighs is also a covered passage, while the Rialto Bridge is a row of shops sustained on an arch.

A city which sprung from the sea, where the leading citizen periodically underwent a symbolic marriage to the sea, in which the air was saturated and the light diffused, gave rise to the pictorial portrayal of atmosphere and of unbroken masses, instead of a harsh linear style such as would appear in a land lighted more directly.

Compared to the mosaics of Constantinople, whence they stem, and whose tradition they continue into Baroque times, those of Venice seem to take on an added painterly quality. Over the centuries, they grow progressively softer until eventually they attempt to reproduce all the infinite modulations of a liquid oil medium, as in the Presbetry mosaics of St. Mark's, which approach illusionism. They follow so closely designs by Tintoretto and Lotto that at some distance away it is difficult to tell whether they are mosaics or paintings. Unique in Venetian mosaic was the use of squares made from transparent glass, instead of the normal opaque tesserae; the rich and modulated gold was not limited to Venice, however, but was widely

used throughout the Byzantine Empire. Also widely used were precious and semi-precious stones, as with the "David" mosaic in St. Mark's, into which are incorporated mother-of-pearl and jewels from the Orient. It is largely out of mosaic where springs the Venetian feeling for colour, for the goldenness of thing, with Tiepolo silvering, perhaps with age.

Also characteristic of Venetian painting is its individuality, its general independence from Italian painting, its sense of enjoyment rather than of devotion, its generosity, both emotionally and in the manipulation of medium, its comparative lack of eclecticism. Up till the Seventeenth Century Venice remained comparatively immune to the Michelangelesque manner which was pervading all Italy. Even Sebastiano del Piombo who, influenced by Michelangelo, abandoned Venice for Rome, integrated these Roman influences with a Venetian feeling for colour. Tintoretto, although related to Mannerism, and in spite of the deceptive sign over his doorway proclaiming a synthesis of Michelangelo's drawing and Titian's colour, was too direct, too vehement and forceful to be merely eclectic. His figures are more natural than Michelangelo's, while retaining their colossal proportions, and his colour tended more toward a dramatic monochrome than did Titian's.

Venice is climatically unsuited to fresco, and therefore there is little that survives, apart from Veronese's work, from before the Eighteenth Century. It is only from the paintings of chroniclers like Gentile Bellini, or from records, that we can gain an idea of what Guariento's frescoes on the walls of the Doges' Palace were like, or of Giorgione's or Titian's on the walls of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.

From the jewel-like Gentile da Fabriano stretches a line of artists, non-Venetian by origin, which includes Veronese, and even Titian, who came from the mainland, and who became inseparable from the sumptuousness and material luxury of Venice.

Opposed to this tendency, contrary to the Venetian feeling for sensuality are Pisanello and Mantegna, who worked in Venice, and who added an element of the linear - dreamlike in the case of Pisanello, metallic, stonelike and severe with Mantegna, closer to the art of Signorelli and the Umbrians than to the Venetians.

Mantegna was connected with Venice as much for his relationship with the Bellini family as for his work there. He influenced Giovanni by his linear style. In Giovanni the linear and the painterly meet: he developed out of his early engraved style towards a softer, more atmospheric, more Venetian painting, sympathetic to the new oil technique introduced by Antonello da Messina. Giovanni went from singularity to harmony, from

analysis to synthesis, and covered the distance that separates the line from the passage. With him Venetian art reached a turning point, and from then on concerned itself with modulation, seeing this as the truer, more complete way of representing nature than the draughtsmanly. In a way he is similar to Raphael in that he applied himself continually to the theme of the Madonna, in order to bring it to perfection. With Bellini Venice is at the height of her artistic powers; there is the majesty, the measure of austerity. With Titian and Giorgione there is already a ripeness, a presage of decline.

Where Jacobo Bellini was related to the mainland, especially to the empiricism of Florentines like Ucello in his concern with geometric perspective, Gentile typifies at once a chronicler's attitude toward his native Venice, and, by his travels and services in the East, her Oriental leanings.

It is really with Giovanni that the high point of the Renaissance is reached in Venice; with Giorgione and Titian there is already the sense of mystery, of the anti-rationalism characteristic of the Baroque **era**.

Paganism came more naturally to the Venetians than to the other Italians; in Venice it is less scholarly than Mantegna's, more instinctive than Michelangelo's. It appears, modified by propriety in the last works of Giovanni Bellini; with Giorgione it still lingers in the background behind the youthful melancholy.

With Titian it strides forth sturdily, blatantly virile and triumphant. This spirit had first reached a high point in the Renaissance with Giovanni's "Feast of the Gods", then in Titian's "Bacchanalia"; of the latter Berenson says that they are truly Dionysiac, Bacchanalian triumphs, the triumph of life over the ghosts that love the gloom and chill and hate the sun.

Where we see the continuity from Bellini through Giorgione and Titian, to their contemporaries such as Vasari or Michiel there was something of a division. Bellini stood both for the old way, for tradition, yet found continuity with the new, whereas Titian and Giorgione stood only for the new.

There is an unusual correspondence between the works of Giorgione and Titian. The mature Giorgione and the early Titian are so alike that there is often confusion in attributing works to one or the other. Yet with Titian there is little of the dreamer; in him one feels something of the hard-headed Venetian business-acumen; Titian's grip on reality is firm, while Giorgione's is gentle. Where Giorgione's Venus is a goddess, asleep, Titian's is a woman, awake, and inviting. With Giorgione there is something of the first fullness of the newly ripe and mature. There is a pensive and a quietly festal paganism, even in a storm. It is as fitting that Giorgione should have died young as it is that Titian should have reached almost a century. The so-called enigmatic quality in Giorgione

probably stems from the fact that so little is known about his life. He may be enigmatic, but his art is not exceptionally so. All great art defies rational explanation, being, like the Catholic concept of a mystery, a truth above reason.

Gentile Bellini, Carpaccio, Veronese and Guardi are perhaps the most typically Venetian of them all, and their work could have arisen nowhere but from the life and atmosphere of Venice. Giorgione, on the other hand, coming from the mainland, always remained something of a fascinating stranger; Tintoretto, often described as terrible, with his restlessness and turmoil, portrayed something of the less typical, the less expected side of Venice, her spiritual rather than her bodily state. In Gentile's pageants there is the omnipresent architecture, the Piazza, St. Mark's looming always behind the ordered groups. Carpaccio, with an eye for the commonplace, transcends both genre and anecdotism; even in his public ceremonies there is something of the personal, peculiar and intimate. In Veronese there is the luxurious surface of things, the gatherings of titled and celebrated personages, the tapestry tones, the green and red richness of the gorgeous fabrics of an Eastward-looking merchant city. With his theatrical yet majestic architectural layouts, he is an inspired decorator; one wonders what Titian meant when he called Veronese the ornament of Venetian painting. In his enormous canvases he shares with Tintoretto the concept

of the canvas as a substitute wall. The most representative of Tiepolo contains a flavour that, even before his work in Madrid, shows something of the elegance and haughteur of the Spanish court. There is elaboration of gesture, stylishness, rhetoric, a womanly hedonism that remains unbalanced by masculinity. He is queenly where Veronese is majestic; he is a feminine counterpart of the intense Tintoretto. If Tintoretto is restless, then Tiepolo is flighty, even dizzy, and he lacks Tintoretto's baroque resonance.

Guardi and Tiepolo belong to the same century but to different worlds. Tiepolo's virtuosity (he painted frescoes, like Goya, as though he were painting on canvas) is the last burst of energy of the heroic impulse in Venice; after him there are no more heroes (or rather heroines), only citizens. Guardi, with Canaletto belongs to this new world, a world which had grown smaller, more precious, more bourgeois; because of this more intimate, more sensitive. Of the two, Canaletto is the more topographical, more the objective observer. Guardi's work is more personal, attuned to instantaneous effects, to perpetual flux; there is the impressionist flick of the brush to render the momentary light.

Longhi, whose work has affinities with Domenico Tiepolo, was the chronicler of the new bourgeoisie; his carnival figures are anything but bacchanalian: they resemble the puppets of the then

fashionable Commedia dell'Arte, or figures from a comedy by Goldoni.

Rosalba Carreira's pastel portraits communicate something of the frivolousness of the age, and also indicate, parallel with Vigee Lebrun in France and Angelica Kaufmann in Germany, the rise of the female society artist.

In the Nineteenth Century Tito had neither the imagination nor the virtuosity of Tiepolo, whose destroyed ceiling in the Scalzi he sought to replace. The Tuscan Macchiaioli absorbed something of the colour sense of the Venetians, but overloaded it with synthetic qualities similar to those found in French Impressionist paintings.

In the early part of the century Canova, whose sculpture has affinities with Palladio's Venetian buildings, returned to linear ideals, and based his sculpture largely on that of the Hellenistic world. A native Venetian sculptor is something of an exception, but one with classical, or rather neo-classical tendencies is even more unique; he rose to fame, significantly, at a time when the national consciousness had been submerged in a multi-national one. His ascendancy coincides with the Napoleonic era and the will towards a fusion of European states.

Typical of her heterogeneous nature, Venice had affinity not only with the East but also with Northern countries. Durer had great enthusiasm for the work of Giovanni Bellini; and it is significant that Venice was the first of the Italian

states to adopt the Flemish technique of painting with oil for her own uses.

Of all the schools of painting her influence has been the most widespread and the longest-lasting. From the Seventeenth Century onwards there was hardly a school of painting that, if it contained something of a Dionysiac element in its attitude toward life, did not learn something from her. In the Seventeenth Century, Rubens, in his joyful opulence, was the true heir of the Venetians. Poussin shared with them his often rich chromatism, as well as his idea of art as delectation. In Holland, Rembrandt absorbed something of the golden quality of Titian.

Spain and Venice had in common a geographical and spiritual proximity with Islam. Tintoretto and the Bassani would have been at home in Spain. El Greco, who learned something from Tintoretto, but who actually had a greater affinity with some of the works of Maffei, made manifest the tendency that Spain and Venice had in common towards a certain metaphysical restlessness.

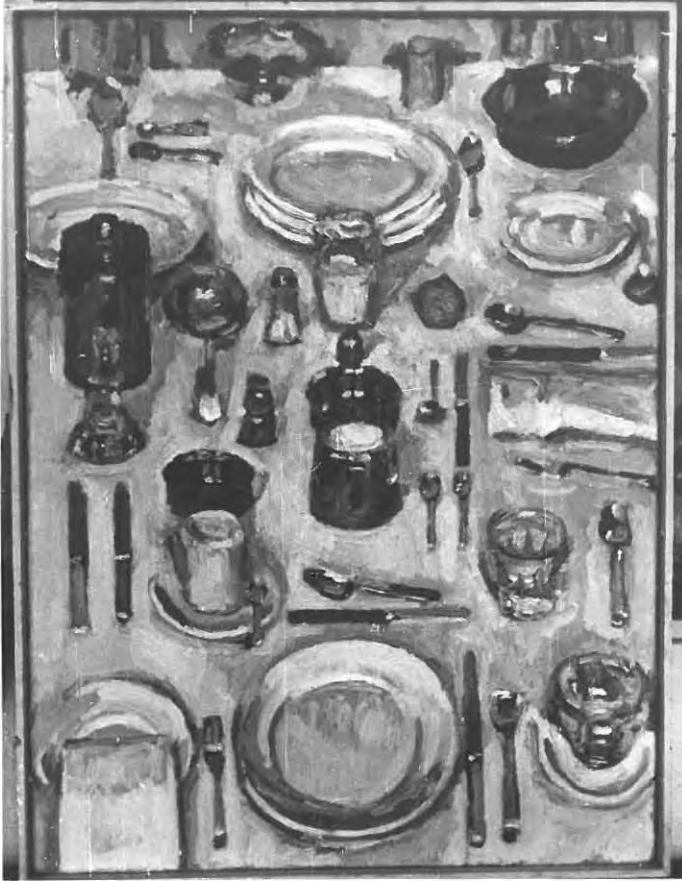
In the Eighteenth Century Goya learned from Tiepolo's colouring, and in his early work even shared a certain similarity with Longhi in the puppet-like quality of many of his figures. In the Nineteenth Century, Delacroix and the Romantics spoke of Veronese and Titian as their gods, and had something of the Venetian obsession with Islam. Then, as now, the true inter-

preters of Venice were foreigners: Turner saw its liquidity, Kokoschka its affinity with Austrian Baroque.

By the time of the French Revolution her sea-power was almost totally diminished, her industries idle. In the words of the Inquisitor, Tron, she had forgotten the laws and maxims that had made her great. Tron talked of her indolence, her crushing weight of luxury, her inability or unwillingness to defend herself. She was ripe for Napoleon, Austria, and eventually for her submergence into the conformity of a pan-Italian kingdom, so that today she is little more than a vast open-air museum, a haven for honeymooners; she possesses no artists of exceptional ability, and the most notable of her artistic events is the biennial exhibition which is imbued with something of the atmosphere of the Cannes Film Festival.

A P P E N D I X B.

A Selection
of
PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS
by
the Author.



White Still Life No.1.



White Still Life No. 2.



Small White Still Life.



Reclining Male Nude.



Model: Head & Shoulders



Standing Male Nude.



Landscape with Buildings.



Portrait of the Model.



Landscape - Grahamstown.



Skyscape.



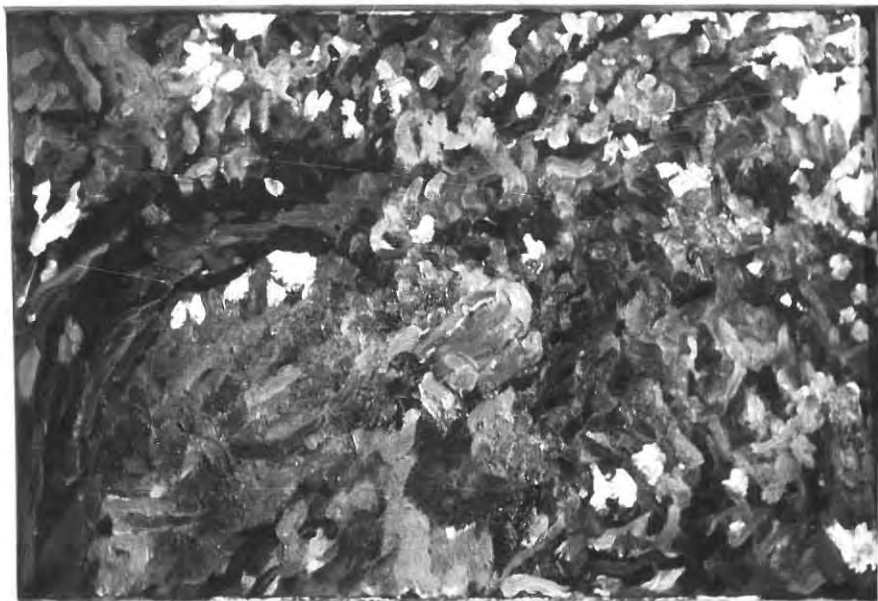
Skyscape.



Blind Man with Young Boy.



Flowerscape.



Hedge.



Still Life with Copper Bowl.

