

Night-loving Creatures in the Greco-Roman World

Despina Iosif

Adjunct Professor of Ancient History and Religion,
College Year in Athens

Περίληψη: Στα ελληνορωμαϊκά μυθιστορήματα η νύκτα συστηματικά εμφανίζεται να ταιριάζει σε ερωτευμένους που ξαγρυπνούν ή αξιοποιείται κατά κόρον για παράνομες ερωτικές συνενυρέσεις. Τα χριστιανικά αναγνώσματα λειτουργώντας ανταγωνιστικά, σκόπιμα θεωρώ, και για να επισκιάσουν τα μυθιστορήματα που ήταν δημοφιλέστατα εθνικά αναγνώσματα της εποχής, εμφανίζουν τους χριστιανούς, τόσο τους έγκλειστους στις ρωμαϊκές φυλακές όσο και τους επισκέπτες τους, ως ιδιαίτερα δραστήριους τη νύκτα με, σχεδόν πάντα, σαφώς πιο ουσιαστικές και ανώτερες ασχολίες. Η νυκτερινή δράση των πρώτων χριστιανών, και κυρίως οι νυκτερινές επισκέψεις χριστιανών γυναικών σε ρωμαϊκές φυλακές, τόσο στην πραγματικότητα όσο και στις λογοτεχνικές αναπαραστάσεις, συνέβαλαν καθοριστικά στην επικράτηση της νέας θρησκείας, κάτι που δεν έχει επισημανθεί από την ιστορική έρευνα.

Abstract: This paper will argue that most people in the Greco-Roman world did not avoid going out at night, the streets were not empty after dark, and the night was not a time for inactivity and silence in antiquity. Pagans were out and about at night, and Christians invited them to become even more active in the service of their god. A great percentage of significant Christian action took place during the night. Early Christians did not regard the daytime as sufficient for their venerating needs. For them, the night was ideal for even more instruction, more prayer, more miracles, prophetic visions, and dreams. Expanding Christian time was a desideratum, and nocturnal activities became almost normative with the advent of Christianity. Christians, and especially Christian women, were busy after hours visiting their incarcerated ikons most of whom were Christian confessors, and collecting the remains of the new heroes of the day, the martyrs. The NT exhortation: *'remember those in prison as though in prison with them,'* was taken (or was to be taken) by Christian and aspiring Christian women very seriously. One factor that contributed to the success of the new religion, and which has escaped scholarly notice, must have been the activity of early Christian women throughout the night, especially inside Roman prisons. Christian's use of the night and Christian women's fearlessness partly accounts for their eventual success. Dark, nocturnal prisons, not just arenas, were places of Roman violence and torture and displays of Christian courage and inspiration.

Out and about at night

Human activity in the Greco-Roman world did not cease at the time the sun went down. People stayed awake to narrate stories,¹ continued traveling at night,² sailing under the night stars,³ went fishing⁴ or hunting⁵ or guarded their cattle⁶ in moonlight, judges examined cases when there was no more natural light,⁷ farmers worked in the fields between dusk and dawn if necessary,⁸ soldiers waged battles or prepared for them during the night if need be,⁹ delivery wagons brought commodities to city shops after hours (which could result in blocked traffic and rage, sometimes expressed with swearing and curses),¹⁰ scholars composed literary works with lamps¹¹ by their side,¹² sometimes seeking total seclusion and inspiration inside pitch-

I am grateful to Professor Hans-Friedrich O. Mueller for at least two reasons. This paper would probably not have existed if it weren't for his inspirational talk at College Year in Athens. And it would have been weaker if it weren't for his perceptive insights on an earlier draft of this paper. I am equally indebted to my colleagues Moa Airijoki, David Brakke, Jan Bremmer, Christian Bull, Jean-Daniel Dubois, Laura Feldt, Ingvild S. Gilhus, Anders Klostergaard Petersen, Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, Einar Thomassen and Alexandros Tsakos who generously offered encouragement and erudite advice, when I presented this paper at the Religions in Late Antiquity Workshop in Paris in April 2022, in such a friendly and intellectually stimulating atmosphere.

¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.1-12.

² *Acts of Peter* 32 (Greek version). Traveling at night was sometimes decided in order to escape notice (Mt 2:14 and Acts 17:10). Messengers were often obliged to travel at night, (see for example Herodotus 6.10 and 8.98). Ascetic Amonathas traveled one time by night to meet the emperor (*Saying of the Desert Fathers*, Amonathas 1) and ascetic Eulogius once got lost while traveling at night (*Saying of the Desert Fathers*, Eulogius 1).

³ Herodotus 8.12-13, Thucydides 2.97 and 4.67, Polybius, *Histories* 2.3, Pliny, *Natural History* 6.21.1, Plutarch, *Solon* 9, Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 19.1, Acts 27:27, *Clementina* 12.16.3, *Acts of Peter* 5 and Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 5.17.5. See also J. Beresford, *The Ancient Sailing Season*, Mnemosyne Supplements 351, Brill, Boston and Leiden, 2012, 205ff.

⁴ Alciphron, *Epistle* 1,2, Lk 5:5 and Jn 21:3. See also E. Lytle, 'Fishing with Fire: Technology, Economy and two Greek Inscriptions', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 67.1, 2018, 61-102.

⁵ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.11.8.

⁶ Lk 2:8.

⁷ Libanius, *Oration* 45,18 and 22,21. See also Despina Iosif, *Ἐγκλειστοὶ στὶς ρωμαϊκὲς φυλακὲς*, Crete University Press, Herakleion, 2020.

⁸ Pliny, *Natural History* 18.63.

⁹ Spartans, according to Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 12, learnt how to march without fear at night. For a detailed account of how battles were conducted at night, i.e. with the aid of passwords and songs to compensate for the limited visibility see Thucydides 7.44. For military sabotage operations during the night see Herodotus 4.201, 5.121, 6.133 and 8.71 and Polybius, *Histories* 7.16. For military night watches see Polybius, *Histories* 6.35. For naval battles at night see Thucydides 4.25. See also Herodotus 7.56, Thucydides 2.82, 3.112, 4.68, 4.125, 7.77, 8.73 and 8.80, Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.2.13-21, Polybius, *Histories* 2.27, 2.66, 7.15, 8.36, 9.15 and 9.18, Livy, *History of Rome* 3.2.9, 4.39 and 9.12.5, Plutarch, *Symposiacs* VIII, 722E, Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Attica 1.28.9 and M. Dinter, S. Finkmann and A. Khoo, 'Nyktomachies in Greco-Roman Epic' in C. Reitz and S. Finkmann (eds.), *Structures of Roman Epic*, vol.2.1, 245-282.

¹⁰ Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 232-238. On curses in the Greco-Roman world see *Greece and Rome* special issue, *Curses in Context IV: Curse tablets in the Wider Realms of Execrations, Commerce, Law and Technology*, Christopher A. Faraone and Sofia Torallas Tovar (eds.), vol. 69.1, 2022.

¹¹ On ancient lamps see Andrew Wilson, 'Roman Nightlife' in A. Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit: imaginaire et réalités nocturnes dans le monde gréco-romain. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, 64, Fondation Hardt, Geneva, 2018, 59-89. On ancient magic lamps see Athanassia Zografou, 'Magic Lamps, Luminous Dreams: Lamps in PGM Recipes' in *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion*, Menelaos Christopoulos, Efimia D. Karakantza, Olga Levaniouk (eds.), Lexington, Maryland and Plymouth, 2010, 269-287.

¹² Plutarch, *Symposiacs* II, 634B, Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 10.3.25-26, Seneca, *Epistle* 8, 1, Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Praefatio 18, Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 3.5.2, Horace, *Epistles* 2.2.54 and Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, Praefatio 4. Certain doctors advised against night study as unhealthy, for example Celsus, *On Medicine* 1.2.5. On literary work under lamplight see J. Ker, 'Nocturnal Writers in Imperial Rome: the Culture of Lucubratio', *Classical Philology* 99.3, 2004, 209-242.

black tombs,¹³ engaged in astronomical¹⁴ or astrological research¹⁵ or just relaxed at the baths with friends after sunset.¹⁶ No wonder complaints were expressed that nights in ancient Mediterranean cities were far too noisy.¹⁷ Juvenal, for example, joked that most deaths in Rome occurred from insomnia¹⁸ due to urban noise pollution.¹⁹ Bakers received a considerable part of the blame for the noise, at least in surviving satire.²⁰ All this mobility before sunrise sometimes resulted in accidents, for example, by objects falling out of windows and injuring passers-by fatally at a time with little visibility²¹ (unless, of course, there was a full moon, and then it was not that dark). One of Theophrastus' characters is presented satirically as going in the darkness of the night to the lavatory (outside the house he was residing in) and finding himself by accident in the yard of his neighbour, where he was attacked by his neighbour's dog.²² In earnest, emperor Julian, echoing Plato²³ and Demosthenes,²⁴ wished to add to the list of nighttime activities the conduct of funerals, a common practice in the past according to the emperor,²⁵ saying: *ἡσυχία μὲν ὁ θάνατός ἐστιν, ἡσυχία δὲ ἡ νύξ ἀρμόττει* ('death is silence/inaction and silence/inaction befits the night') and threatening with the severest penalty, the death penalty, those who dared to disobey.²⁶

Ancient sources rarely cared to document the exact time the actions they discussed occurred. It would have been very convenient for scholars if more ancient sources were as

¹³ Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 32. Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Marvellous Things Heard* 101(a)(106) wrote about a tomb that was not safe to approach at night when sounds of music and laughter were heard.

¹⁴ On solar eclipses in antiquity and sudden darkness in the middle of the day see *The Gospel of Peter* 5.15, *Paradosis Pilati* 1, *Anaphora Pilati* 7 and *Acts of John* 97.

¹⁵ Aesop, *Fable* 40, Polybius, *Histories* 9.16 and 19 and Strabo, *Geography* 1.1.15.

¹⁶ *I. Stratonikeia* 254 and 324, *Historia Augusta*, Alexander Severus 24.6 and *CTh* 15.1.52. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* 949D-951A, who exhausted from travel, desired to have a bath during the *ἑσπέρα*.

¹⁷ To ensure minimum noise *Lex Iulia Municipalis* prohibited wheeled traffic in Rome from sunrise to between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. roughly, according to Glenn Reed Storey, 'All Rome is at my bedside'. Nightlife in the Roman Empire' in Nancy Gonlin and April Nowell (ed.), *Archaeology of the Night*, University Press of Colorado, Colorado, 2018, 307- 331 at 308. Plutarch dedicated a whole chapter on the quality of noise during the night in his *Symposiacs* VIII, (3rd problem entitled: *Διὰ τί τῆς ἡμέρας ἡχῶδεςτέρα ἢ νύξ*). Thucydides discussed how visibility is better at daytime and all things are *σαφέστερα* (Thucydides 7.44).

¹⁸ The idea that nocturnal sleep occurred in two sleep periods separated by a wakeful interlude in the Greco-Roman world is gaining more and more adherents. However, there is not enough evidence to support it. See Thucydides 8. 43 and Georgia Frank, *Unfinished Christians: Ritual Objects and Silent Subjects in Late Antiquity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023, 79, A. R. Ekrich, *At Day's Close. Night in Times Past*, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 2005, 300-323, and Storey, 'All Rome is at my bedside', 328. See also L. Dossey, 'Watchful Greeks and Lazy Romans: Disciplining Sleep in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.2, 2013, 209-239.

¹⁹ Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 232.

²⁰ Martial, *Epigrams* 12.57.3-17, 26-28.

²¹ Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 268-277.

²² Theophrastus, *Characters* 14. In Theophrastus' satire one of the characters is presented as going in the middle of the night to ask back for a loan (*Characters* 4). Another one checked, in the middle of the night, with the help of a lamp, to see if his money was safely stored (*Characters* 18).

²³ Plato, *Laws* 12.960a.

²⁴ Demosthenes, *Against Macartatus* 43.62.

²⁵ For the view that early Romans used to have nighttime funerals see *C. Th.* 9.17.5 and Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'La reglamentación nocturna en la antigua Roma' in *Nova Tellus: Anuario del Centro de Estudios Clásicos*, 2004, 123-139 at 134-137. For the opposite view see H. J. Rose, 'Nocturnal Funerals in Rome', *Classical Quarterly* 17 /3-4, 1923, 191-194.

²⁶ *Οὐκ ἴστε ὅτι πρὸ πάντων τῶν ἄλλων τὰ τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τὰ τῆς νυκτὸς ἔργα διήρηται*., Julian, *Epistle* 56. Contrary to the emperor's wishes, his funeral cortege traveled during the day, his *translatio* being deliberately shameful and degrading (see Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church. Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus and the Vision of Rome*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2012, 457).

accurate as Martial when he explained the daily schedule his contemporaries followed according to their social class:

The first and second hours of the day exhaust the clients who pay their respects to their patrons; the third exercises the lungs of the noisy pleaders; until the fifth Rome employs herself in various occupations; the sixth brings rest to the fatigued; the seventh closes the day's labours. The eighth suffices for the games of the oily palaestra; the ninth bids us to press the piled-up couches at the table. The tenth is the hour for my effusions, Euphemus, when your skill is preparing ambrosial delicacies, and our excellent Caesar relaxes his cares with celestial nectar and holds the little cups in his powerful hand. At that time, give my pleasantries access to him; my muse with her free step fears to approach Jupiter in the morning.²⁷

Nighttime activities were not always solitary. Martial complained that the laughter of the crowds kept him awake at night.²⁸ Greco-Roman crowds, as we read, for instance, in Phlegon,²⁹ used to gather outside houses of fellow citizens at night if they felt it was urgent to investigate intriguing pieces of gossip going around and subsequently, before daybreak, sometimes gathered at the local theatre to discuss matters further (in the episode narrated by Phlegon rumor had it that a young bride had come back to Amphipolis from the dead).³⁰ It is noteworthy that Phlegon presents the night gathering of the populace at the local theatre for reasons other than attending a theatrical performance as nothing out of the ordinary. Everyone was invited to watch open-air sensational spectacles after hours to watch, for example, the philosopher Peregrinus voluntarily set himself on fire at Olympia, as Lucian mentioned in his biography of Peregrinus,³¹ or the resurrection of a demon-possessed boy by apostle Andrew at the theatre of Thessaloniki according to Gregory of Tours.³² Emperor Nero allegedly greatly enjoyed having the crowds cheering and shouting favourable slogans (he had in advance himself chosen) while he was performing, not only during the day but also during the night.³³ Nero knew how to put on a spectacular night show for the amusement of the crowds, and 'when daylight failed, he had (Christians) burning, serving as lamps by night.'³⁴ Nero was not the first emperor to make the most of the night. Caligula is said to have 'offered theatrical shows of different kinds continuously and in many places. He sometimes held them at night, and the entire city (i.e., Rome) was lit with lamps.'³⁵ We should not think it was just 'bad' emperors who found the night suitable for communal festivities. According to an impressive marble inscription erected in the Campus Martius, next to the Tiber, in 17 BC, emperor Augustus celebrated with reverence a Greek festival and: 'once the sacrifice was completed, the presentation of plays begun at night on a stage without the addition of a theatre and without setting up seats.'³⁶ The practice seems to have continued. The *Theodosian Code* 15.5.2 (in May 386) prescribed that

²⁷ Translation by Topostext found at <https://topostext.org/work/677> (accessed 7/7/23).

²⁸ Martial, *Epigrams* 12.57.3-17, 26-28.

²⁹ See Despina Iosif and Maro Triantafyllou, *Η αυλή των θαυμάτων*, Crete University Press, Herakleion, 2022.

³⁰ Phlegon, *On Marvels* 1.13.

³¹ Lucian, *On the Death of Peregrinus* 35.

³² Gregory of Tours, *Epitome* 14.

³³ Tacitus, *Annals* 14.15 and Suetonius, *Nero* 20.3. On the most popular slogans of the Greco-Roman crowds see the forthcoming Despina Iosif, 'Per Suffragium Populi. The Voices of the Lower Classes', in H. Gasti, V. Pappas and S. Alekou (eds.), *Audience Response in Ancient Greek and Latin Literature*, Brepols, 2023.

³⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44. See also Seneca, *On Anger* 3.18.4 on the cruelty of decapitating victims *ad lucernam* (by lamplight) discussed by Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Imperial Rome and the Habitations of Cruelty' in Edmund P. Cueva, Shannon N. Byrne (eds.), *Veritatis Amicitiaeque Causa: Essays in Honor of Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark*, Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Wauconda, Illinois, 1999, 165-196.

³⁵ Suetonius, *Caligula* 18.1-2.

³⁶ *CIL* 6.32323=ILS 5050.

officials were not permitted to attend nighttime spectacles as ordinary citizens were, but only daytime ones, which is yet another proof that shows continued to be offered during the night for the delight of the Mediterranean crowds that apparently kept late hours.

It seems, however, that the night was primarily considered suitable for disgraceful or illegal activities.³⁷ Lucian, in his satirical work was probably alluding to a well-known fact when he presented a talking lamp associating the night with scandalous activities.³⁸ During a terrible famine in Athens, some not-very-honorable people hid the extra wheat when it was desperately needed and ground it secretly overnight in their houses.³⁹ During the Second Messenian War, the Messenians attacked and tried to kidnap the Spartan women who were celebrating the Thesmophoria at the sanctuary of Demeter in Aegila.⁴⁰ In the darkness of the night, a spiteful servant destroyed a beautiful garden to incriminate a rival servant. The novel describes the incident, but we have no reason to doubt that such unfortunate instances could also happen in real life.⁴¹ Indeed, it did, and the case was taken to court, as we learned from Demosthenes.⁴² Bandits lurked at night, and it was preferable to avoid nighttime travel, sometimes innkeepers advised their guests.⁴³ The members of gangs were not always low-class, desperate individuals. Emperor Nero enjoyed after-dinner wanderings with his gang and his bodyguards, beating up unsuspected passers-by and breaking into shops for looting for the thrill of it, as ancient historians reported (or slandered him).⁴⁴ Pirates⁴⁵ and thieves⁴⁶ made their attacks at night. Political conspiracies⁴⁷ were organized, and murders⁴⁸ were often committed when the day was over. In Plutarch, we read about an accidental murder by night. A maiden

³⁷ Activity during the night was not always prompted by evil motives and did not always mean to cause harm, but was just convenient and time saving. For example, in Plutarch, *Gaius Grachus* 12.3-4, we read about the removal of benches during the night for the benefit of the poor. The benches were meant to go for sale at the forthcoming gladiatorial shows, but are removed during the night so that the poor would not be excluded from enjoying the shows.

³⁸ Lucian, *The Downward Journey or The Tyrant* 27.

³⁹ Plutarch, *On Being a Busybody* 523A-B. See also the relief panel from the 3rd cent CE sarcophagus with depiction of horse-powered millstone grinding grain during the night by the light of a lamp, now kept at the Vatican Museum (inv. 1370).

⁴⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 4.17.1. See also Jan N. Bremmer, 'Ritual and Transgressions in Ancient Greece' in Carlo Ginzburg and Lucio Biasiori (eds.), *A Historical Approach to Casuistry*, London et al., 2019, 47-64 at 53.

⁴¹ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.7.

⁴² Demosthenes, *Apollodorus. Against Nicostratus in the Matter of Slaves of Arethusius* 15.

⁴³ Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 1.15. On the contrary Joseph and Mary assume that traveling by night would be safer for them to avoid bandits and decide to travel by night until they come across some sleeping bandits, in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 23. Christian ascetics, if we judge from the desert literature, often were attacked by robbers, especially at night. Arsenius for example worried that if he fell asleep at night he might be the target of robbers and as a result stayed awake in order to prevent it, in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Arsenius 43. See also the *Lives of the Desert Fathers* 6.2. For bandits in the Roman world see Brent D. Shaw, 'Bandits in the Roman Empire' *Past and Present* 105, 1984, 3-52.

⁴⁴ Suetonius, *Nero* 26 and Tacitus, *Annals* 13.25. See also Edward Champlin, *Nero*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003, 151-153 and Garrett G. Fagan, 'Urban Violence: Street, Forum, Bath, Circus, and Theater' in *The Topography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World*, edited by Garrett G. Fagan and Werner Riess, University of Michigan Press, 2016, 231-247 at 231.

⁴⁵ Polybius, *Histories* 4.4.

⁴⁶ Livy, *The History of Rome* 38.59.9, 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10. The ancient Roman law deemed it legal to kill a thief at night but not in daylight unless he offered armed resistance (Twelve Tables 8.13-14).

⁴⁷ Sallust, *Conspiracy of Catiline* 27.2-28.3, Livy, *The History of Rome* 2.28.1-2 and Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 7.20.1. On Cicero and the nocturnal execution of the Catilinarian conspirators in the Tullianum see Mueller, 'Imperial Rome and the Habitations of Cruelty', 165-196.

⁴⁸ Herodotus 1.12 and Libanius, *Oration* 45.25. For the opposite view, i.e. that more people were killed by day than by night, see Chaniotis 'Violence in the Dark: Emotional Impact, Representation, Response' in M. Champion, L. O'Sullivan (eds.), *Cultural Perceptions of Violence in the Hellenistic World*, Routledge, London and New York, 2017, 100-115 at 110.

was killed in the darkness of the night as someone wrongly assumed it was an enemy approaching. The dead woman haunted her murderer, appearing every night in his dreams as a phantom and causing him to suffer from restless nights.⁴⁹ Some people left inns without paying for the hospitality they had received.⁵⁰ Mental issues intensified at night. 'In Tarentum, they say that a seller of wine went mad at night, but sold wine by day,' Pseudo-Aristotle wrote.⁵¹ Aesop, the fable maker master, was believed to have tried to commit suicide during the night.⁵² Rapes sometimes occurred in the darkness of the night.⁵³ Could this possibly be why Solon forbade women in Athens from traveling at night unless they were inside a carriage with a lamp?⁵⁴ There was one story circulating, towards the end of antiquity, of a rape at night committed by the Devil. The story went that once two ugly men attacked, threw down, and stripped naked a married woman and her daughter as they were returning to their house after having attended a wedding late at night, carrying lamps and torches and having their slaves escorting them. These attacks persisted and made the women feel constantly insecure and the husband and father desperate.⁵⁵ The night was full of dangers, it was commonly held;⁵⁷ but that did not deter early Christian action at night, as we will see.

Major cities, like Antioch, Caesarea, Ephesus, and Constantinople, were lit at night, at least in late Roman times, to restrain criminal activity. As Wilson recently showed, there was more artificial illumination in the Roman world than in classical Greek or Hellenistic periods, which was partly facilitated by a larger long-distance trade in olive oil.⁶⁰ Lighting city streets seems to have been a civic obligation. Governor Tisamenus wanted Antioch's streets to be lit at night and made sure of it. Libanius, however, complained that the governor's actions (whom he strongly disliked) did not have the desired results and did not discourage criminals, contrary to Tisamenus' intentions.⁶¹

Emperors, and not only officials, cared for nighttime criminality. Emperor Constantine, for example, issued a law in 320 CE that stressed that 'night doubles the necessity of guard' for prisoners and ordered prisoners to be transferred to a more secure place inside prisons when the day was over.⁶² The night was suitable for inmates to escape.⁶³ Roman prisons usually had two different quarters.⁶⁴ At daytime, prisoners stayed in the upper level (where they accepted visitors who, according to the prevailing custom, bribed the guards with a small sum of money to allow them access), and, during the night, they were to be transferred and kept in the basement. Lucian mentions the case of prisoner Antiphilos, who did not like his jailer very much, probably because he kept him tied around his neck and his one arm during the day, while

⁴⁹ Plutarch, *Cimon* 6.4. Agitated sleep seems to have been one of Hippocrates' research interests, (see for example Hippocrates, *Epidemics* 1.4 case 8). On cases of people suffering at night due to illnesses see Hesiod, *Work and Days* 90, Lucian, *On the Death of Peregrinus* 44, Hierocles and Philagrius, *Philogelos* 189 and Storey, 'All Rome is at my bedside', 309.

⁵⁰ Petronius, *Satyricon* 95.1,8.

⁵¹ Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Marvellous Things Heard* 32(31).

⁵² *Life of Aesop*, version G, 1-90.

⁵³ Lucian, *Symposium* 46.

⁵⁴ Plutarch, *Life of Solon* 21.5-6. See also *IC* iv 72 II, 2-20, (480-460 BCE), where rapes of non-virgin female slaves that occur during the night are to be punished with a fine of two obols, whereas for the same crime committed during the day a fine of one obol is set.

⁵⁵ *Acts of Thomas* 43.

⁵⁷ Juvenal, *Satire* 3.

⁶⁰ Andrew Wilson, 'Roman Nightlife' in Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit*, 59-89 at 85.

⁶¹ Libanius, *Oration* 33,36-37.

⁶² *CTh* 9.3.1pr.

⁶³ Livy, *The History of Rome* 37.46.5 and Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Messeniaca 17. See also Acts 9:25.

⁶⁴ The prisons in Lambaesis, Djemila and Corinth, followed different patterns. On prisons and Martyr Acts see Christodoulos Papavarnavas, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie. Eine Untersuchung früh- und mittelbyzantinischer Märtyrerakten* (Millennium-Studien / Millennium Studies, 90), de Gruyter, Berlin, 2021.

in the course of the night, his legs were also tied, something that, along with the unpleasant sound the chains of his fellow inmates made, obstructed his relaxation and proper sleep.⁶⁵ In Heliodorus' *Aethiopiaca*, Queen Arsaki orders Charikleia to be kept in detention handcuffed at all times without exception, both during the day and throughout the night, since she particularly disliked her.⁶⁶ Night increased the need for security measures.

Fires sometimes got out of control during the night in ancient Mediterranean cities.⁶⁷ So, emperor Augustus, replacing the earlier system of *tresviri nocturni*, established seven cohorts of freedmen as *vigiles* in Rome, with an impressive strength of about 7,000.⁶⁸ The *vigiles* served both as firemen and night watchmen.⁶⁹ They went on regular nightly patrols (*πρώτη, δεύτερα, τρίτη, and τετάρτη φυλακή*)⁷⁰ in a police capacity⁷¹ and sometimes even captured runaway slaves.⁷² In Apuleius, we read of a *praefectus nocturnae custodiae* in Hypata who 'inspected the whole town every night moving from house to house'⁷³ (I haven't come across this office anywhere else, so far, at least).

In Greco-Roman novels, the night is, first and foremost, erotically charged. It appeared systematically to suit predominately lovers who wished to enjoy their love without disruptions, especially if it was an illicit affair that had preferably to remain hidden.⁷⁴ In real life, the night was perfect for mating, relaxing inhibitions, and visiting brothels.⁷⁵ *Πόσου τὴν νύκτα μισθοῖς;*, a man in *Philogelos* inquired the price for spending the night with a dark-skinned prostitute.⁷⁶ Some men desired, if the price was right, to spend the night with female captives.⁷⁷ Ascetics (who got it totally wrong) were recorded as having sexual intercourse with female strangers passing by their cells in the desert at night,⁷⁹ a horrible sin according to Christian values, which, however, could be forgiven after genuine repentance. Some women (who also got it wrong?) took the initiative to have sexual intercourse with strangers during the night.⁸⁰ Some people had sex with animals during the night (we can be confident there was no major stigma attached

⁶⁵ Lucian, *Toxaris or Friendship* 29.

⁶⁶ Heliodorus, *Aethiopiaca* 8.9.

⁶⁷ Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 197-202. See also Stephen Dando-Collins, *The Great Fire of Rome. The Fall of the Emperor Nero and his City*, Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, 2010 and Anthony A. Barrett, *Rome is Burning. Nero and the Fire that Ended a Dynasty*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2020.

⁶⁸ Strabo, *Geography* 5.3.7, Suetonius, *Augustus*, 30.1 and Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 55.26.4-5. In the second century the *vigiles* were largely recruited from freeborn citizens, (see P. K. Baillie Reynolds, *The Vigiles of Imperial Rome*, London, 1926, 67-68 and R. Sablayrolles, *Vigiles. Libertinus miles. Les cohorts de vigiles*, École française de Rome, 1996). By present standards, Rome was heavily policed in terms of numbers, but much of that force was occupied with firefighting, and the core of the police were riot troops, not patrolmen.

⁶⁹ The duties of the prefect of the city guard were described in the *Digest of Justinian* 1.15. On the night in the *Digest* see Mueller, 'La reglamentación nocturna en la antigua Roma', 128-132.

⁷⁰ Polybius, *Histories* 9.18, Mt 14:25, Mk 6:48, Lk 12:38 and Acts 12:10. The seventh book of Pliny's *Natural History* concludes with a discussion of the Roman time-keeping method and the problems of accuracy of sundials, (Pliny, *Natural History* 7.60.212-215).

⁷¹ Wilfried Nippel, *Public Order in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et al., 1995, 96.

⁷² Christopher J. Fuhrmann, *Policing the Roman Empire: Soldiers, Administrations and Public Order*, Oxford University Press, Oxford et al., 2011, 24.

⁷³ Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 3.3.

⁷⁴ Heliodorus, *Aethiopiaca* 1.10, 1.11 and 4.4, Chariton, *Callirhoe* 1.1, 1.4, 4.4 and 6.7, Iamblichus, *Babyloniaca* 2, Xenophon, *Ephesiaca* 1.5 and 1.9, Achilleas Tattius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 6.18, Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 2.9 and 3.4 and Lucian, *Toxaris or Friendship* 14. See also Aesop, *Fable* 300.

⁷⁵ Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead* 20 (10) 11 and Palladius, *Lausiaca History* 65.3.

⁷⁶ Hierocles and Philagrius, *Philogelos* 151.

⁷⁷ Pseudo-Lucian, *The Ass* 50-51. According to Herodotus 4.172, the Nasamonians, when they attended as guests at a wedding, had the habit of sleeping with the bride the night after the ceremony. See also Herodotus 2.181 and 6.69.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *History of the Egyptian Monks*. John of Lycopolis 32.

⁸⁰ Phlegon, *On Marvels* 1.

to such a union).⁸¹ Ovid's heroes remained wakeful out of love,⁸² as real people in real life always did.⁸³ The great Paris Magical Papyrus (early 4th century Egypt?) contains a spell that promises to make an unsuspected victim remain sleepless out of love for the spell user. A graffito in the Domus Tiberiana in Rome reads:

Vis nulla est animi, non somnus claudit ocellos noctes atque dies aestuat omnes amor ('the soul has no peace, sleep does not close my eyes, love burns all the days and nights').⁸⁴

Homosexual acts in the Roman army sometimes took place during the night.⁸⁵ *Πάθος* (passion) matched the night;⁸⁶ the night was lust's cover, as Plutarch put it, voicing a common sentiment: *παρακάλυμμα τῆς ἡδονῆς τὸ σκότος*.⁸⁷ The abundance of ancient lamps with erotic scenes depicted on them might point to sexual intercourse being more common at night, although Pliny proves me wrong when he states that humans are the only animals that do not have a mating season and mate both during the day and the night.⁸⁸ The youth of Andrapolis (a bridal couple and a flute girl) when they heard the teaching of Jesus, they allegedly started having sexless nights.⁸⁹ Their encounter with Jesus altered the way they spent their nights and signified the end of their sensual nights/the end of their pagan era.

Strangely, although there is ample evidence that people in the Greco-Roman world remained active after sunset for various reasons (including religion, as we will see next), scholarship has only recently turned its attention to the study of the ancient night.⁹⁰

Night at the service of pagan gods

Before the advent of Christianity, nocturnal religious ceremonies had a long prehistory in the Mediterranean Greco-Roman world and further beyond.⁹¹ Goddess Νύξ played an important part in the ancient Greek creation story, as far as we can judge from the *Iliad*,⁹² Hesiod's

⁸¹ The ancient sources that mention cases of bestiality, like Aesop, *Fable* 305, seem to record an accepted occurrence. This sounds horrific to modern western sensibilities, but bestiality still occurs often unproblematically in certain secluded Mediterranean areas.

⁸² Ovid, *Cures for Love* 205. Lovers remain sleepless (and fight) in Ovid, *Cures for Love* 31.

⁸³ Plutarch, in his *Moralia. That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* 4, says that Cyrenaics did not allow men so much as to practice their amours by candle-light but only under the cover of the dark. See also Ovid, *Cures for Love* 400, 505, 520, 538 and 7284.39, Hierocles, Philagrius, *Philogelos* 45 and Keith C. Sidwell, *Chattering Courtesans and Other Sardonic Sketches*, Penguin, London, 2004, 445.

⁸⁴ See A. Chaniotis, 'Many Nations, One Night? Historical Aspects of the Night in the Roman Empire' in Jonathan J. Price, Margalit Finkelberg and Yuval Shahar (eds.), *Rome: An Empire of Many Nations. New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et al, 2021, 146-165 at 149.

⁸⁵ Plautus, *Pseudolus* 1180-81 in R. Knapp, *Invisible Romans*, London, 2011¹, 2013, 223.

⁸⁶ Plutarch, *Symposiacs* VIII, 722F.

⁸⁷ Plutarch, *Symposiacs* III, 654D.

⁸⁸ Pliny, *Natural History* 10.83.1. Pliny in his *Natural History* (for example in 8.3.1, 9.12.2 and 10.79.2) discussed peculiar animal behaviour at night. Herodotus had also observed animal behaviour at night; see for example *Histories* 2.68. There must have been in antiquity an interest about changes of the natural world occurring at night, for Herodotus to record in his *Histories* 4.181, that in Libya the water of a spring changed temperature when the day was over, and for Aulus Gellius, in his *Attic Nights* 9.4.6, to discuss how in Albania there lived a strange tribe in which men could see better at night than they did during the day.

⁸⁹ *Acts of Thomas* 12-16.

⁹⁰ See bibliography at the end of this article.

⁹¹ Xenophon, *Ephesiaca* 3.2, 5.1, 5.7, Achilleas Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon* 2.18, 5.2, 6.3, Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 1.10 and *CTh* 16.10.7. On pagan authors worrying on the effects immorality and indecency nocturnal religious rites (*licentia noctis*) caused on females see Filippo Carl-Uhink, 'Nocturnal Religious Rites' in Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit*, 331-370, (especially 336-341). L. Dossey, 'Shedding Light', 330, expressed the opinion that early Christians were particularly active at night in order to compete with mystery cults.

⁹² In *Iliad* 14.249-261 the almighty Zeus appeared anxious not to offend the goddess Νύξ.

Theogony and the Orphic Derveni Papyrus.⁹³ Aelius Aristides' experience of nocturnal union with Asclepius was not unique.⁹⁴ The numerous shrines of Asclepius scattered in the Mediterranean received for centuries (even after the advent of Christianity) people who faced health issues and spent the night there in the hope of healing dreams.⁹⁵ Παννυχίς, an important all-night feast of the Eleusinian mysteries, was celebrated in Greek cities.⁹⁶ The Panathenaic festivals held in late July and August included observation of the night sky.⁹⁷ The Olympic games included night festivals in honor of Pelops, the Pythian in honor of Neoptolemus, the Nemean in honor of Opheltes/Archemorus, and the Isthmian in honor of Melikertes/Palaimon.⁹⁸ The worshippers of Bacchus Dionysus gathered at night⁹⁹, and their persecution in Rome in 182 BCE did not result in their extinction. Plutarch often mentioned νυκτέλια, i.e., mass noisy celebrations in honor of Dionysus μεσοῦσης τῆς νυκτός.¹⁰⁰ Ancient cities boasted having temples dedicated to Dionysus Nyctelius, like Megara.¹⁰¹ Cult associations of initiates of Dionysus held nightly meetings and put up lavish inscriptions, like the one found in Thessaloniki concerning a private endowment in the 1st century. CE.¹⁰² Night sacrifices performed with great reverence were of the utmost importance for the first Roman emperor, Augustus, as he stressed in an impressive lengthy inscription he erected in a central and much-

⁹³ Hesiod, *Theogony* 124-125 and 212-225. See also Aristophanes, *Birds* 693-704.

⁹⁴ William V. Harris and Brooke Holmes, *Aelius Aristides Between Greece, Rome and the Gods*, Leiden, 2008.

⁹⁵ On the sociology of dreams in antiquity see Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, 114-115, M. Andrew Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams: Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, University Press of America, Lanham, 2002, 151-164, William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009, 39 and 184-185, D.A. Russell and H.-G. Nesselrath (eds), *On Prophecy, Dreams and Human Imagination. Synesius, De insomniis: Introduction, Text, Translation and Interpretative Essays*, Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam Religionemque pertinentia 24, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2014 and G. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come. Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2017.

⁹⁶ Kevin Clinton, 'Epiphany in the Eleusinian Mysteries', *Illinois Classical Studies* 29, 2004, 85-109 and Ioanna Patera, 'Light and Lighting Equipment in the Eleusinian Mysteries: Symbolism and Ritual Use' in *Light and Darkness*, 254-268.

⁹⁷ Efrosyni Boutsikas, 'Astronomical Evidence for the Timing of the Panathenaia', *American Journal of Archaeology* 115, no. 2, 2011, 303-309.

⁹⁸ Rocío Gordillo Hervás, 'Day and Night in the Agones of the Roman Isthmian Games' in Antón Alvar Nuño, Jaime Alvar Ezquerro, and Greg Woolf (eds.), *Sensorium: the Senses in Roman Polytheism*, series Religions in the Greco-Roman World, volume 195, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2021, 160-176 at 161.

⁹⁹ Livy, *History of Rome* 39.13.8-13 and 39.15.1-2. There must have been a political component. It seems to me that the secession of the plebs, which took place at night, to the Bacchanalian affair, to early Christians, the downtrodden, the socially dispossessed, robbers, bandits, etc., were the ones attracted to an alternative life at night, which frequently included a religious component (even the robbers in Apuleius' *Golden Ass* have their own religious rites), in compensation for their poverty and political powerlessness by day. This seems to be the point made by the consul Postumius in Livy (as Mueller discusses in 'Nocturni coetus') when, after accusing Bacchantes of immorality, he warns his fellow citizens that, after the sun goes down, the worshippers of Bacchus 'consultabunt de sua salute' (Livy 39.16.4). See Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Nocturni Coetus in 494 BC' in *Augusto augurio: rerum humanarum et divinarum commentationes in honorem Prof. Jerzy Linderski*, C. F. Konrad, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2004, 77-88 at 84 and R. A. Bauman, 'The Suppression of the Bacchanals: Five Questions', *Historia* 39, 1990, 334-348.

¹⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Whether the Affections of the Soul are Worse than those of the Body* 502, *Life of Antony* 75.4 and *Symposiacs* 672A.

¹⁰¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.40.6.

¹⁰² IG X 2,1,259 discussed by Pantelis M. Nigdelis, 'Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonike: In Search of Identity and Support in a Cosmopolitan Society' in Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis and Steven Friesen (eds.), *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: Studies in Religion and Archaeology*, Harvard Theological Studies 64, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2010, 13-47, 15-16, 30 and 38). For more inscriptions that mention nighttime religious activities see Angelos Chaniotis, 'Nessun dorma! Changing nightlife in the Hellenistic and Roman East' in *La Nuit*, 1-58 at 24-25. On relevant vase iconography see Dimitris Paleothodoros, 'Light and Darkness in Dionysiac Rituals as Illustrated on Attic Vase Paintings of the 5th Century BCE', in *Light and Darkness*, 237-253.

frequented spot in Rome.¹⁰³ Auspices were busy between midnight and dawn before battles.¹⁰⁴ It was common knowledge in the ancient world that some gods were to be venerated at night, some at day; by day, it was fitting to honor the gods of the sky, Phlegon wrote.¹⁰⁵ Lucian predicted jokingly that *λαμπαδηφορίες* ('candlelight processions') would eventually be organized during the night in honor of the vain fraud Peregrinus.¹⁰⁶

Before the advent of Christianity, women were expected to remain awake for religious purposes. Out of piety, priestesses had to retire for the night with gods inside the local temples at Patara in Lycia, at Thebes in Egypt, and in Chaldean temples in Babylon.¹⁰⁷ *Λυχναπάτρια* was a female cult servant in charge of lighting the lamps¹⁰⁸ in honor of Meter Theon in Leukopetra, in honor of Dionysus in Philippopolis, as well as in honor of Isis.¹⁰⁹ Greek, Roman, and Phrygian women performed a night festival, described by Plutarch, from which males were strictly excluded:

Now, the Romans have a goddess whom they call Bona, corresponding to the Greek *gynaikeia*. The Phrygians claim this goddess as their own and say that she was the mother of King Midas, while the Romans say she was a Dryad nymph who was wedded to Faunus, but the Greeks believed that she was one of the mothers of Dionysus, whose name is not to be uttered. And this is why women, when they celebrate her festival, cover the roofs of their houses with vine-branches and why a sacred serpent is enthroned near the goddess per the myth. It is forbidden for a man to attend the sacred ceremonies, nor even to be present in the house when they are celebrated, but the women, on their own, are said to perform many rites during their sacred service, which are Orphic in character. Thus, at the time of the festival, the consul or praetor at whose house it is to be held goes away, along with other men, while his wife takes control of the premises and sets them in order for the celebration. The most important rituals are celebrated by night when lightheartedness mingled with nighttime festivities is evident, and much music, too, is heard.¹¹⁰

The night was crucial for initiates of the Mithras cult.¹¹¹ Sarapis appeared by night to his followers, or so they believed.¹¹² Nocturnal festivities known as *Λυχναψία* and *Λαμπαδεία* were held in honour of Isis.¹¹³ Attis' alleged resurrection and triumph over death was celebrated as follows, according to Firmicius Maternus:

¹⁰³ *CIL* 6.32323.

¹⁰⁴ Livy, *History of Rome* 10.40.2. The passage is discussed in Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Spectral Rome from Female Perspective: An Experiment in Recouping Women's Religious Experience' in *Classical World: A Quarterly Journal on Antiquity* 104, 2011, 227-243 at 236, where it is also noted that the Roman magistrates sought impetrative auspices between midnight and dawn before calling an assembly, holding an election or engaging in battle.

¹⁰⁵ Phlegon, *On Long-lived Persons* 6.3. Hades was often described as a dark place (see *Odyssey* 11.57-58, Theognis, *Elegiae* 1. 243-244, Euripides, *Hecuba* 1105-1106 and Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead* 4 (21) 1 and *Haron or the Inspectors* 1).

¹⁰⁶ Lucian, *On the Death of Peregrinus* 28.

¹⁰⁷ Herodotus 1.182.

¹⁰⁸ On the use of lamps in religious celebrations and festivals see A. Chaniotis, 'The Materiality of Light in Religious Celebrations and Rituals in the Roman East' in Zahra Newby, *The Material Dynamics of Festivals in the Graeco-Roman East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford et al., 2023, 290-321.

¹⁰⁹ Chaniotis, 'Many Nations. One Night?', 159.

¹¹⁰ Plutarch, *Life of Caesar* 9.3.4.

¹¹¹ Roger Beck, 'Ritual, Myth, Doctrine, and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel', *JRS* 90, 2000, 145-80, esp. at 179.

¹¹² Maiistas, *The Aretology of Sarapis* P, 68.

¹¹³ Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 11.1-7, 11.20-21 and 11.23-24. See also Athanasia Zographou, 'Magic Lamps', 271.

On a certain night a statue of the god is laid flat on its back on a bier, where it is bemoaned in cadenced plaints. Then, when the worshipers have had their fill of feigned lamentation, a light is brought in. Next, a priest anoints the throats of all who were mourning, and, once that is done, he whispers in a low murmur: *θαρρεῖτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σωσμένου. ἔσται γὰρ ὑμῖν πόνων σωτηρία* ('rejoice, you initiates, for god is saved! And we shall find salvation, springing from our woes').¹¹⁴

Celts, it was claimed, stayed all night at the tombs of their brave chieftains in the hope of receiving oracles.¹¹⁵ Scythians, driven by religious motivations, slept outdoors at night.¹¹⁶ Ethiopians arranged, for religious purposes, meat to be left outdoors at night to be picked up the next morning by passers-by.¹¹⁷ The night was significant in Egyptian religion; *λυχνοκαία* was celebrated with great reverence throughout Egypt with the lighting of lamps outdoors and placed all around houses,¹¹⁸ Egyptian priests were to bath twice at night with cold water,¹¹⁹ and pigs were to be sacrificed when the moon was full.¹²⁰ Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3.475 commemorates a tragic incident during night religious ceremonies in Egypt. Leonidas wrote to the strategus of Oxyrhynchus Hierax to report that an 8-year-old slave named Epaphroditus was leaning out of a window to watch the dance of a girl, which was part of the local night festival when he fell to his death:

To Hierax, strategus, from Leonides alias Serenus, whose mother is stated as Tauris, of Senepta. Late yesterday evening, namely 6th Hathyr, while a festival was taking place at Senepta and the castanet dancers were giving their usual performance at the house of my son-in-law Ploution son of Aristodemos, his slave Epaphroditus, about 8 years old, tried to lean out of an upper room of the said house to see the castanet dancers, fell, and was killed.¹²¹

The night belonged also to the supernatural and magic.¹²² If, for some reason, one wished to visit the underworld or get in touch with the dead, then the performance of nighttime rituals was deemed in order, as we read in Virgil.¹²³ Women were yet again involved. It was at night when Furia, a heartbroken widow, hoped to somehow meet her deceased husband, according to a romantic inscription she prepared and set up.¹²⁴ Witches performed magic by night.¹²⁵ The witch Pamphile, as rumor had it, was able to perform magic only by night.¹²⁶ Another witch purportedly invoked the night prior to committing murder.¹²⁷ Certain people believed that Apollonius of Tyana spent the night in the tomb (*κολωνός*) of Achilles; the hero presented himself to Apollonius tall and handsome,¹²⁸ vanishing with daybreak.¹²⁹ Apollonius, by the

¹¹⁴ Firmicus Maternus, *The Error of Profane Religions* 22.1.

¹¹⁵ Tertullian, *On the Soul* 57.

¹¹⁶ Herodotus 4.7.

¹¹⁷ Herodotus 3.18.

¹¹⁸ Herodotus 2.62.

¹¹⁹ Herodotus 2.37.

¹²⁰ Herodotus 2.47.

¹²¹ P. Oxy 3.475. The aim of the report was to ensure Epaphroditus was given a proper burial. The strategus did indeed order an assistant to view the dead body in the company of a public physician and deliver it over for burial.

¹²² Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.570-578 and Lucian, *Menippus or The Descent into Hades* 7.

¹²³ Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.236-281.

¹²⁴ *CIL* 6.18817=*ILS* 8006 discussed magnificently by Mueller, 'Spectral Rome from Female Perspective'.

¹²⁵ Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 1.13-19. See also Koen de Temmerman, 'Novelistic Nights' in Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit*, 257-292 at 277.

¹²⁶ Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 3.16.

¹²⁷ Oratius, *Epode* 5.

¹²⁸ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 4.11.

¹²⁹ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 4.16.

way, was taught magic in Arabia around noon and around midnight.¹³⁰ Others were taught magic by both day and night.¹³¹ Imperial legislation acknowledged and condemned night magic.¹³² The night was regarded as suitable for demons and for spirits to appear and to confront people.¹³³ At night the rattle of chains was heard in a haunted house in Athens, and it was also at night that a ghost appeared and cut the hair of Pliny's slaves; or so Pliny, the serious and well-respected, both in antiquity and today, historian, claimed.¹³⁴ 'Are you not frightened of the deceased spirits and the ghosts that haunt the night?', Charite was asked as she was riding a donkey in moonshine in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*.¹³⁵ In Ovid's *Fasti*, we learn of a trick for the protection against ghosts that appear *nox ubi iam media* ('in the middle of the night'): the tossing of black beans with clean hands along with the following formula that had to be recited nine times in order to prove effective:

haec ego mitto, his redimo meque meosque fabis ('I am the one who dispatches these (beans). I release myself and my family with these beans').¹³⁶

The Christian night

Early Christians did not regard the daytime as sufficient for their venerating needs. Christianity made nocturnal encounters with the divine even more frequent and significant than ever before. With the help of their bishops, early Christians organized regular after-dark communal love feasts known as *agapai*,¹³⁷ a practice that has been satisfactorily studied by scholarship and thus will not preoccupy the present paper.¹³⁸

Early Christians acquired the reputation of night-loving creatures from a very early date, a reputation based, as far as I am concerned, upon reality.¹³⁹ Pliny informed emperor Trajan that Christians were a harmless group with the custom of meeting before dawn to sing hymns

¹³⁰ Eusebius, *Reply to Hierocles* 11.1 and 29.1.

¹³¹ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.11.6.

¹³² *Pauli Sententiae* 5.23.15.

¹³³ Eusebius, *Reply to Hierocles* 29.1. Christian ascetics and monks had to confront (their) demons by night. See David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*, Harvard University Press, 2006 and Despina Iosif, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Illness as Demon Possession in the World of the First Christian Ascetics and Monks", *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, Routledge Journals 14.4, April 2011, 323-340.

¹³⁴ Pliny, *Letters* 7.27. See also David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, Einar Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4-8 May 1997*, The Norwegian Institute at Athens, Bergen, 1999 and Jan N. Bremmer, *Maidens, Magic and Martyrs in Early Christianity: Collected Essays I. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, 379, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2017.

¹³⁵ Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 6.30. See also Herodotus 6.69 for a story of sexual intercourse between a phantom and a woman at night.

¹³⁶ Ovid, *Fasti* 5.429-444.

¹³⁷ *Acts of John* 84, *Epistle of the Apostles* 15, *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 11.5, *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 5, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.2.10, Tertullian, *Apology* 42.5 and *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Agathon 17, Sisoës 20, Motius 1 and John the Dwarf 9. See Dennis E. Smith and Hal Taussig (eds.), *Meals in the Early Christian World*, New York, 2012.

¹³⁸ Valeriy A. Alikin, *Christian Gathering*, chapter 3: The Lord's Supper in the Early Church, 103-146 and Filippo Carl-Uhink, 'Nocturnal Religious Rites' in Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit*, 331-370 at 346.

¹³⁹ It has been rightly argued that early Christians met at night in order to avoid attracting attention and suspicion, see: B. Wagemakers, 'Incest, Infanticide, and Cannibalism: Anti-Christian Imputations in the Roman Empire', *Greece and Rome* 57, 337-354 at 343. There must have been Christians who wished to remain invisible and chose the night for their activities, especially if they were involved in the illegal business of stealing relics.

and to partake of food.¹⁴⁰ Actually, the *Apostolic Tradition* ordered aspiring Christian followers in preparation for baptism ‘to spend the entire night in vigil, reading the scriptures and in instruction’ until the cock crows.¹⁴¹ In *Octavius*, by Minucius Felix, we read of Christian nightlong rituals that eventually arouse suspicion of promiscuity.¹⁴² It is of interest that some Christians used without delay the same accusation against their most hated religious enemies: i.e., other Christian groups whom they recognized as heretical.¹⁴³ Carpocratians, reportedly, after stuffing themselves with dinner,¹⁴⁴ extinguished the lamps and indulged in orgies.¹⁴⁵ Vigils carried great weight for catechumens approaching baptism¹⁴⁶ and Christians in honor of a much-loved saint or in preparation for a special event. Melania the Younger, for example, before giving birth, spent the night in vigil and visiting the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, as evidently many other expecting women of her time did in the hope of ensuring safe deliveries.¹⁴⁷ The orations of the bishop of Dacia Nicetas of Remesiana, late in the fourth and early in the fifth centuries, seem to state a well-known and long-accepted fact when they praise night as an ideal time for worship.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the sixth-century preacher Leontius of Constantinople seems to be recording an established norm when he stated that ‘today the female sex is fond of vigils’.¹⁴⁹

Callirhoe, in the popular novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, remained sleepless, wondering if she should have an abortion or not.¹⁵⁰ The composers of Christian writings of the same era, operating in competition,¹⁵¹ perhaps even deliberately, in order to overshadow the novels that were incredibly popular readings of the time, consistently presented Christians as particularly active at night with, almost always, clearly more meaningful, more spiritual and hopefully more admirable occupations than the ones presented in the Greco-Roman novels. In my view, one factor that must have contributed to the expansion of Christianity¹⁵² and which has escaped scholarly notice is early Christian activity at night, especially inside prisons, especially involving Christian women who chose to remain sleep-deprived. Celsus and Porphyry may not have been wrong to observe, in their attacks against Christianity, that the new religion was particularly attractive to women.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁰ Pliny, *Epistle* 10.96. It has been proposed that Pliny composed his description of Christians in reference to Livy’s account on the Bacchanalia, (see R. M. Grant, ‘Charges of ‘Immorality’ against various religious groups in Antiquity’ in R. van der Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 1981, 161-170 at 161-162).

¹⁴¹ *Apostolic Tradition* 20.9 and 21.1.

¹⁴² Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.6-7.

¹⁴³ Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, ‘Christians against Christians: The anti-heretical activities of the Roman Church in the second century’, *Historiein* 6, 2006, 20-34.

¹⁴⁴ For early Christian communal dinners see Valeriy A. Alikin, *Christian Gathering*, chapter 1: The Origin of the Weekly Gathering in the Early Church, 17-78.

¹⁴⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.2.10.

¹⁴⁶ Tertullian, *On Baptism* 20.1.

¹⁴⁷ Gerontius, *Life of Melania* 5.

¹⁴⁸ Frank, *Unfinished Christians*, chapter 5: ‘Singing and Sensing the Night’, 79.

¹⁴⁹ Leontius of Constantinople, *Homilies* 8.5.

¹⁵⁰ Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.8-9.

¹⁵¹ G. W. Bowersock, in *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994, argued persuasively on the affinity between ancient novels and Christian gospels. Karl Kerényi, *Die griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur in religions-geschichtlicher Beleuchtung*, J. C. Mohr, Tübingen, 1927 and Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike*, C. H. Beck, Munich and Berlin, 1962, interpret the novels as religious narratives, as cult texts. See also Koen de Temmerman, ‘Novelistic Nights’ in Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit*, 257-292 at 286-287.

¹⁵² On the expansion of Christianity see Despina Iosif, ‘Power’, *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, (in press).

¹⁵³ Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.44 and Porphyry, *Against Christians* 2.15 and 3.5. If we read Celsus and Porphyry having in mind for example Mt 27.55, Lk 23.27, Acts 17.4 and 17.12 and 2 Jn 1, then their observation that

Christians, as stressed in early Christian propaganda texts, were busy at night collecting and caring for the remains of the new heroes of the day: the martyrs.¹⁵⁴ Christians in order to escape the attention of pagans, went during the night to pour wine on the ashes of the martyrs Fructuosus and his companions and to collect them,¹⁵⁵ and to take the body of the martyr Cyprian and bury it in a cemetery.¹⁵⁶ In the *Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne*, it is noted with surprise that neither the night, nor the money, nor the supplications (*λιτανεία* in the text) made it possible for the Christian community to obtain the corpses of their beloved martyrs;¹⁵⁷ thus we gather that early Christians (or certain early Christians at least) considered there were three ways available for them to obtain their most precious relics—the night being one—and at least one would bring the successful outcome. According to Christians, the soldiers who guarded Jesus on the cross had been bribed to spread the lie that his body was stolen at night; a lie that sounded convincing.¹⁵⁸

Although visitors were supposed to pay their calls to their confined friends or heroes during the day, we read of several nighttime visits.¹⁵⁹ People who wished to avoid probing eyes and gossip (which was never easy in small Mediterranean communities) chose to visit detention centers by night. Some upper-class women, in order to avoid being seen and discussed, chose to visit at night their incarcerated ~~idols~~, who were Christian confessors.¹⁶⁰ Apostle Andrew asked God for a special favour: he wished Him to make his female visitors temporarily invisible so that they would remain unnoticed during their arrival and departure from the prison where he was kept.¹⁶¹

Women in late Roman times, more than ever before, flocked or were encouraged to flock to prisons in impressive numbers, where Christian preaching occurred and where the Christian message became known and rapidly spread. Thecla was a young maiden who used to pay visits to the apostle Paul in prison at night.¹⁶² She was meant to get married to a man selected by her family following the mores of the time when she fell in love with the apostle and chose to forsake the expectations of her conservative contemporaries and the limitations placed at the time upon her gender, or so it was said.¹⁶³ And it was not just young maidens, like Thecla, who preferred the night for their prison visits. In Ephesus, rumor had it, that the wife of a manumitted slave spent every hour of the night and day at Paul's feet, in the company of other women.¹⁶⁴ Mnesara purportedly was married and also decided to visit the prison at night in order to spend time and receive a blessing from apostle Thomas, and when she did, she was

Christianity was particularly attractive to women seems accurate, and not slander. For the idea that ancient women were particularly religious, more than men, see Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.4. See also Nicola Denzey Lewis, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2007 and Kate Cooper, *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women*, Overlook Press, New York, 2013.

¹⁵⁴ *Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne* 1.61 and *Acts of Cyprian* 5.6. See also Jakob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen and Anders Klostergaard Petersen (eds.), *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt-am-Main, 2011.

¹⁵⁵ *Martyrdom of Fructuosus and Companions* 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Acts of Cyprian* 5.6.

¹⁵⁷ *Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne* 1.61.

¹⁵⁸ Mt. 28:13-15. See also Jn 20:1. Joseph asks Pontius Pilate the body of Jesus *ὀψίας γενομένης* in Mk 15:42-44. A lot of action in the NT gospels takes place *ὀψίας γενομένης*; the Last Supper for one thing (Mt 26:20 and Mk 14:17. See also Mt 6:16, Mk 4:35 and 14:17, Jn 6:16). The night is particularly prominent in the Gospel of Matthew.

¹⁵⁹ Mygdonia, allegedly prayed at night for daylight to return soon, so she could visit apostle Thomas in prison according to the *Acts of Thomas* 97.

¹⁶⁰ *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 19 and *Acts of Thomas* 154.

¹⁶¹ *Acts of Andrew* 29.

¹⁶² *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 19 and *Acts of Paul* 16.

¹⁶³ Despina Iosif and Maro Triantafyllou, *Απόκρυφες Πράξεις Παύλου και Θέκλας*, Athens, 2008.

¹⁶⁴ *Acts of Paul* 18.

rather surprised to find her husband, Ouazanes, already there.¹⁶⁵ Visits to Roman prisons usually took place during the day. That is why Ouazanes was vexed when he saw his wife arriving at prison in the middle of the night. That is also why in the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* the head of the prison expelled the visitors of an inmate who went in the middle of the night to call on their incarcerated friend.¹⁶⁶

The New Testament exhortation: *μυνήσκεσθε τῶν δεσμίων ὡς συνδεδεμένοι*¹⁶⁷ was (or was to be) taken by Christian and by aspiring Christian women very seriously indeed.¹⁶⁸ Early Christian women with enthusiastic devotion bribed (or were encouraged to bribe) prison warders to allow them to comfort and pamper their incarcerated *idols*.¹⁶⁹ That is the picture we consistently get from popular early Christian sources, like early Christian Martyr Acts and apocryphal literature; sources which may, or (as the trend is today) may not, have depicted actual instances but certainly preserve and reveal ancient expectations. And expectations preserved in constructed stories are, as far as I am concerned, valuable for understanding ancient mentality.¹⁷⁰

It is of extreme importance that it was evident even to pagans that early Christian women were determined to support Christians kept in custody. Lucian explained how, before dawn, Christian widows and orphans met near prisons in order to gather money to bribe guards so as to allow them to spend time with their *idols*, to bring them fine food and beautiful books to read¹⁷¹ together in confinement.¹⁷² Attending inmates had traditionally been a female responsibility in the ancient world anyway, if we believe Libanius: ‘suitable for a wife, sister, daughter.’¹⁷³

As far as early Christian prisoners were concerned, the night was ideal for intensive Christian teaching, prayer, and fasting,¹⁷⁴ for even more miracles,¹⁷⁵ prophetic visions, and

¹⁶⁵ *Acts of Thomas* 154.

¹⁶⁶ Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 6.14.

¹⁶⁷ To Hebrews 13:3. See also Mt 25:36, 25:39, 25:43 and 25:44.

¹⁶⁸ Christian monks sometimes also cared about prisoners and worked hard in order to support them, see for example Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Pachomius and the Tabennesiots 32.7. See also *Life of Pachomius* 4.

¹⁶⁹ See for example *Acts of Thomas* 118 and 151 and *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 18. Augustine explained how some low-lives and public debtors took advantage of Christian charity and got wealthy while in prison in his *Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference with the Donatists* 3.13.25.

¹⁷⁰ Ancient constructed stories have been unduly neglected by scholarship. Jan N. Bremmer in ‘Emotions and Narrative in the Martyrdom of Polycarp’ in Bremmer and Feldt (eds.), *SHAR*, rightly protests against the tendency to reject *a priori* the historical value of all the martyrs’ Acts, for they were written in connection with contemporary Greco-Roman culture. In the same volume Hugo Lundhaug in ‘Storyworld-Immersion and Elaboration in Egyptian Monasteries’ discusses wonderfully the mental blending of the imaginary world with the everyday real world and how the real world serves as a model for the fictional storyworld.

¹⁷¹ On early Christian reading practices see David Brakke, ‘Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon’ in Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and David Brakke (eds.), *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 11, Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2012, 263-280 at 271 and Despina Iosif, ‘Ψυχής φάρμακα και ψυχής ιατρεία. Βιβλία και Βιβλιοθήκες στην ελληνορωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα’, *Mnemon* 34, 2015, 161-187.

¹⁷² Lucian, *On the Death of Peregrinus* 12.

¹⁷³ Libanius, *Oration* 45.9. See also Plutarch, *Concerning the Virtues of Women, Of the Tyrrhene women* 8 and Pliny, *Natural History* 7.36.1.

¹⁷⁴ In imitation of Christ in Mt 4:2. For a case of Christian fast for 3 days and 3 nights see *Christ’s Descent into Hell* 11(27)1, and another one for 40 days and 40 nights see *the Protevangelium of James* 1.4.

¹⁷⁵ Acts 5:19. See also Mk 6:48, Mt 8:16 and 14:25, Mk 1:32, Lk 12:38, Acts 12:10 and *Gospel of Peter* 9.34.

dreams.¹⁷⁶ The day was not long enough to satisfy the unbridled desire of Christians to pray,¹⁷⁷ especially if they were incredibly pious and aimed at sainthood: *ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε*,¹⁷⁸ *ἀγρυπνεῖτε δεόμενοι*,¹⁷⁹ *τὴν νύκτα πᾶσαν ἐν προσευχαῖς τε καὶ ὕμνωδαίαις διαγρυπνήσας*.¹⁸⁰ Jesus had set the example when he prayed at night in Gethsemane while his disciples were sleeping.¹⁸¹ Christian fathers (and Seneca in his treatise *On Darkness as a Veil for Wickedness*) taught against frivolous nighttime activities, like the ones described in Ovid,¹⁸² like drinking, eating, enjoying merry music, and other pleasures of the flesh.¹⁸³ Apostle Andrew inside prison prayed all night.¹⁸⁴ Paul and Silas prayed *κατὰ δὲ τὸ μεσονύκτιον* ('at midnight'), and the other prisoners listened to them and were exposed, perhaps for the very first time, to the Christian message.¹⁸⁵ In detainment, the confessors were in the presence of an audience that consisted of numerous people: female visitors, fellow prisoners, and soldiers,¹⁸⁶ an audience that may or may have not been exposed to Christianity before, were busy explaining obscure passages from Scripture (*φιλολογούσαν*), preaching,¹⁸⁷ composing letters,¹⁸⁸ singing psalms in tears antiphonally,¹⁸⁹ and praying day and night,¹⁹⁰ *diebus ac noctibus* in the Latin texts.¹⁹¹

The prison gathering usually left a favorable impression or at least a memorable one to those involved (and led either to conversions or solidifications of Christian identities if already converted). The apocryphal *Acts of Peter* starts with the following words:

¹⁷⁶ Mt 1:24, 2:12, 2:13, 2:19 and 2:22, Lk 12:20, Acts 12:9, 16:9, 18:9, 25:11 and 27:23, *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 5, 7, 8.5 and 21.6, *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 8 and 11, *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 4.9 and 10.1 James, (Latin translation Eustochius) *The Life of Pelagia* 4, *Life of Pachomius* 6, and Evargius, *Scholia on Proverbs* 36. On the Greco-Roman eagerness to accept night visions and dreams as medium for divine communication see W. V. Harris, 'Roman Opinions about the Truthfulness of Dreams', *JRS* 93, 2003, 18-34.

¹⁷⁷ A. Maravela, 'Christians Praying in a Greco-Egyptian Context: Intimations of Christian Identity in Greek Papyrus Prayers' in Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (eds.), *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2014, 291-323.

¹⁷⁸ 1 Thess 5:17.

¹⁷⁹ Lk 21:36, 2:37, 6:12 and 12:46, Mk 13:33 and 13:35-37 and Acts 26:7.

¹⁸⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* 916B.

¹⁸¹ Luke 22:45 and Mark 14:37.

¹⁸² Ovid, *Cures for Love* 306.

¹⁸³ Clement, *Paedagogus* 2.4. See also Herodotus 2.133, Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.30 and Hierocles and Philagrius, *Philogelos* 44.

¹⁸⁴ *Acts of Andrew* 48.

¹⁸⁵ Acts 16:25.

¹⁸⁶ Soldiers guarded Christian confessors inside prisons and heard the Christian teaching from them, see for example *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Apollo 8.10. Apollonius allegedly preached to soldiers guarding him and as a result converted them to Christianity, see *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Apollonius 19.10.

¹⁸⁷ *Acts of Andrew* 28 and 47 and *Martyrdom of Pionius* 12.2.

¹⁸⁸ *Testament of the Forty Martyrs of Sebastê* 3.4 and *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 1-11. Apostle Paul (or someone under his name) composed (or allegedly composed) his Epistle To Philemon and his To Ephesians while in prison.

¹⁸⁹ *Martyrdom of Pionius* 18.2 and Basil, *Epistle* 207,3. Antiphonal singing was regarded by some as unacceptable innovation in the Church, not observed in the time of Gregory, (see Basil, *Epistle* 207,4). See also Ephraem, *Life of St. Mary the Harlot* 2, Sophronius, *Mary of Egypt* 4 and Zosimus, *New History* II, 5.2. On early Christian singing see Valeriy A. Alikin, *Earliest History of the Christian Gathering*, chapter 6: Singing and Prayer in the Gathering of the Early Church, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2010, 211-253.

¹⁹⁰ *Νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν οὐδὲν ἕτερον ποιῶν προσευχόμενος περὶ πάντων* in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5.1. See also *Martyrdom of Pionius* 11.7, *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 21, Basil, *Epistle* 207,2, Anonymous, *The Life of St. Thais* 3, James (Latin translation by Eustochius), *The Life of Pelagia* 4 and Lucian, *On the Death of Peregrinus* 12. Christians were instructed to pray while gazing at the stars, before going to bed, and to wake up to pray at midnight in Basil, *Homily on the Martyr Julitta* in PG 31:244. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9, advised Christian followers and Christian sympathisers to 'rise often by night and bless God'. Even the moon and the stars allegedly acknowledged the Christian power and addressed the Lord saying: 'Lord God Almighty to us you have given the power of the night', in the *Apocalypse of Peter* 5.

¹⁹¹ *Acts of Cyprian* 1.2.

When Paul was at Rome confirming many in the faith, it also happened that a certain woman Candida, wife of Quartus, the prison warder, heard Paul and listened to his words and became a believer. When she instructed her husband, he became a believer. In no time, she exerted her influence on her husband who offered the apostle the chance to escape from prison.¹⁹²

All this Christian instruction and prayer in captivity led, or ideally led, to instant baptisms being performed inside prisons.¹⁹³ In addition, imprisoned Christians at times left prison for a few hours during the night in order to perform more baptisms.¹⁹⁴ Crowds were yet again involved who, at the end of the day, turned to Christianity or strengthened their Christian beliefs. On the other hand, Tertullian knew of some contemporary Christ-followers who left prison for non-godly acts so as to refresh themselves, attend to some personal business or, even worse, visit the local baths; he strongly reprimanded such practices as totally inappropriate Christian behaviour, which at the same time gave Christianity a bad name and pagans grounds for slander.¹⁹⁵

The night was also exploited by those in power to inflict even more torture and even more violence.¹⁹⁶ Authorities expected prisoners to be more vulnerable at night. Jesus was tortured at night, and, at dawn, given to Pilate for crucifixion, according to one version of the story.¹⁹⁷ Apostle Andrew was tortured at night.¹⁹⁸ The interrogation of Irenaeus, bishop of Sirmium, took place *media nocte*, in the middle of the night.¹⁹⁹ Sixteen days after his incarceration, bishop Felix was taken in handcuffs to prison (*in vinculis*)²⁰⁰ and was presented to the proconsul Annius Anullinus at four o'clock at night.²⁰¹ Prisoner Ignatius was also tortured at night, as he admitted in his *Letter to the Romans*.²⁰² Tertullian was accurate in the observation he made: *semen est sanguis Christianorum* ('seed is the blood of Christians'); but it ought to be noted that the blood that triggered Christian conversions was the result of violence not only in the arenas but also inside prisons.

As the night was so important, it was rumored that imprisoned Christians also received Christ as a frequent apparition.²⁰³ Then, no pain from torture was felt. It was believed that Jesus Christ appeared at night to apostle Peter and smiled at him,²⁰⁴ and every so often sent his

¹⁹² *Acts of Peter* 1.1. Apostle Thomas' fellow prisoners observed him pray and asked him to include them in their prayers in the *Acts of Thomas* 108.

¹⁹³ *Martyrdom of Fructuosus and Companions* 2.1 and *Martyrdom of Potamiaena and Basilides* 6. See also Benjamin Edsall, '(Not) Baptizing Thecla: Early Interpretive Efforts on 1 Cor 1.17', *Vigiliae Christianae* 71, 2017, 235-260.

¹⁹⁴ Acts 16:34 and *Acts of Thomas* 155.

¹⁹⁵ Tertullian, *On Fasting* 12.

¹⁹⁶ *Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius* 4.3. Violence was endemic in the Greco-Roman world, (see Despina Iosif, 'Religious Violence' in Tarmo Toom (ed.), *Augustine in Context*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et al., 2017, 195-202).

¹⁹⁷ *The Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea* 3.

¹⁹⁸ *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 26.

¹⁹⁹ *Martyrdom of Irenaeus Bishop of Sirmium* 4.1.

²⁰⁰ See Julia Hillner, *Prison, Punishment and Penance in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et al., 2015 and Iosif, *Εγκλειστοί*.

²⁰¹ *Martyrdom of Felix the Bishop* 26.

²⁰² Ignatius, *Epistle to the Romans* 5. 'I fight with beasts day and night' and 'I am tied to ten leopards', prisoner Ignatius wrote in his *Letter to the Romans*, apparently referring to soldiers who were guarding him. It was customary for him to call people beasts. We find it in at least two other letters attributed to him: the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* and the *Letter to the Tarsians*, (Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 4 and Pseudo-Ignatius, *Epistle to the Tarsians* 1).

²⁰³ *Acts of Peter* 16 and *Martyrdom of Marian and James* 6.4.

²⁰⁴ *Acts of Peter* 16.

messenger angels to his chosen ones.²⁰⁵ Such visits boosted the martyrs' morale, greatly impressed contemporaries, were extensively used in Christian propaganda, and led to innumerable conversions. No wonder apostle Andrew got distressed at one point for not receiving nocturnal revelations, according to Gregory of Tours.²⁰⁶

The night was of equally extreme importance for the successors of the martyrs, i.e., ascetics and monks. In their own cells, in their own voluntary confinement, the successors of the martyrs prayed with admirable devotion,²⁰⁷ talked about salvation,²⁰⁸ and sometimes kept themselves busy at work at night so as to keep inappropriate thoughts at bay.²⁰⁹ Pachomius took night prayers very seriously, his biographers stressed. According to his *Life*, Pachomius spent the entire, or at least half of the night, praying and studying Scripture.²¹⁰ Palladius, in his *Lausiac History*, presented Pachomius as giving very specific instructions to his monks concerning night prayers and ordering them to make twelve prayers during the day, twelve with lamplight, twelve during night vigils and three at the ninth hour.²¹¹ Additionally, ascetics and monks spent a considerable part of the night crying as a sign of repentance of sins and as a sign of grieving to be alive, and passers-by at night heard them and testified it.²¹² Repentance was a priority for ascetics and monks. It was in the middle of the night, for example, that a repentant prostitute fled to the desert for a dramatic life change, or so it was said.²¹³ Admirers and curious onlookers followed around at night Pachomius' successor, Theodore, as he went to pray at the tomb of Pachomius.²¹⁴ Once persecutions were seized, visitors remained night and day outside the cells of their desert heroes,²¹⁵ as in previous generations, it was admirable to frequent prisons in support of the martyrs.

Christian ascetics and monks were overachievers (and greatly admired for that). Bessarion, for example, once remained sleepless in the service of God for fourteen days and nights, or so it was claimed.²¹⁶ *Agrypnia* (wakefulness) was expected of Christian ascetics and monks (and to an extent by their admirers),²¹⁷ since it was believed that the Devil, who was always on the lookout to attack and enslave unsuspected victims, and Christians had to confront him and overcome him, hated and was afraid of sleeplessness.²¹⁸ According to Theodoret of Cyrus, a demon appeared to an ascetic at night carrying *λαμπάδας* (candles) and making a tremendous noise.²¹⁹ The *μηχανήματα* (devices) of the Devil were innumerable, and Christians

²⁰⁵ In the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, John the Dwarf 33, angels come to fan and comfort the ascetic during hot nights. See also Acts 5:19 and 12:6-7, *Apocalypse of Paul* 1, *Protevangelium of James* 14.2, *Acts of Paul* 17 and *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Macarius 33 and Ioannes Kolovos 30.

²⁰⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Epitome* 22.

²⁰⁷ Ascetic Apollo was once a shepherd who out of curiosity ripped the belly of a pregnant woman to observe her foetus, but underwent a dramatic transformation and prayed night and day, according to Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Apollo 2; see also *Lausiac History*, Ammoun of Nitria 8.3 and Sisinnius 49.1 and *Saying of the Desert Fathers*, Ammonas 3.

²⁰⁸ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Eulogius 12.9.

²⁰⁹ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Candida 57.2.

²¹⁰ *Life of Pachomius* 6. There were recorded occasions of Pachomius praying at night and being interrupted by visitors, for example in *Life of Pachomius* 88.

²¹¹ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, Pachomius and the Tabennesiots 32.6.

²¹² Ephraem, *Life of St. Mary the Harlot* 10, 14 and 16. See the seminal Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Tears flowed from his eyes unceasingly": Weeping and Total Devotion in Egypt in Late Antiquity', *Religion* 53, 2023, 116-136.

²¹³ James, (Latin translation Eustochius), *Life of Pelagia* 12.

²¹⁴ *Life of Pachomius* 146.

²¹⁵ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 13.

²¹⁶ *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Bessarion 6.

²¹⁷ Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 7, *Life of Pachomius* 6 and 14 and 22 and 60 and 148 and 149.

²¹⁸ Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 30.

²¹⁹ Theodoret of Curus, *Ecclesiastical History* in PG 82:1488. For more unpleasant devil transformations and appearances at night see Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 5 and 8, Theodoret of Curus, *Ecclesiastical History* in PG 82:1441 and 1445 and James, (Latin translation by Eustochius), *Life of St. Pelagia the Harlot* 10.

had to be constantly alert.²²⁰ Jesus was by the side both of the saints and the faithful, even at their limited sleeping hours: ‘When you sleep... he (the Lord) sleeps not and watches’.²²¹

Cases of recorded failures are of equal interest as cases of overachievements. The author of the *Life of St. Mary the Harlot*, Ephraem, confessed with frankness (and evident guilt) in the epilogue of his work that he strived to stay awake at night and pray (in imitation of the Christian heroes), but, alas, kept falling asleep.²²² Stratocles was with his hero, apostle Andrew, ‘at all times and never left him, learning from him and interrupting him or remaining silent. When the others fell asleep, he would lie awake and, by his enthusiastic interruptions, would not let Andrew sleep’, even when the apostle wanted to satisfy this bodily need and wanted to go to sleep.²²³ This last episode shows the expectations of (at least certain) his admirers at the time and the pressure put on the man.

All this nighttime activity, described above, led to extensive use of *λαμπάδες* by early Christians.²²⁴ Emperor Constantine used bees-wax candles for church service, transforming night into day:

He (Constantine) transformed the sacred vigil into daylight, as those appointed to the task lit huge wax tapers throughout the whole city; there were fiery torches that lit up every place, so as to make the mystic vigil more radiant than bright day. When dawn interposed, in imitation of the beneficence of the Saviour, he opened his beneficent hand to all provinces, peoples, and cities, making rich gifts of every kind to them all.²²⁵

According to the *Life of Pachomius* a large Christian crowd holding *λαμπάδες* and *λυχνία* (lamps) used to remain with their hero after hours to watch him chant.²²⁶ The archaeological record backs my assumption and suggests a dramatic shift towards late hours in late Roman times. A virtual explosion of mass-produced glass oil lamps seems to have swept across the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans in the second half of the 4th century.²²⁷ The invention of the glass oil lamp is often described in recent scholarship as the most remarkable technological innovation of late antique architectural fittings. O’Hea even went as far as to attribute the invention to Christian liturgical needs: the Christian basilica had a large space that needed to be lit up at night.²²⁸

Whether the Christian Church prompted technological advances or whether it fully exploited the technology already available might be hard to establish. One thing however is certain: the Christian message was loud and clear, and it (mostly) went through:

Ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ (‘we, thus, ought not to sleep as the rest do’),²²⁹ *οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ὄφελος καθεύδοντος* (‘a man asleep has nothing to

²²⁰ Theodoret of Curus, *Ecclesiastical History* in PG 82:1345. Prayer was promoted as an excellent *ἀλεξιφάρμακον*, for example in Theodoret of Curus, *Ecclesiastical History* in PG 82:1417.

²²¹ *Acts of Thomas* 66.

²²² Ephraem, *Life of St. Mary the Harlot* 16.

²²³ *Acts of Andrew* 8.

²²⁴ Acts 20:7-8.

²²⁵ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.22.2, (translation by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1999).

²²⁶ *Life of Pachomius* 143-144.

²²⁷ Dossey, ‘Shedding Light’, 301. In addition, Aswan pink clay lamps were abundant and widespread during late Roman and late antique times in Egypt and have only recently been studied in a comprehensive way; see for example D. Katzjäger, L. Peloschek and L. Rembar, ‘The Multiplicity of Aswan Pink Clay Pottery (Roman Times to Late Antiquity). Synchronising Shape Repertoire, Clay Pastes and Firing Properties’, *ReiCretActa* 44, 2016, 731-736.

²²⁸ M. O’Hea, ‘Glass in Late Antiquity’ in L. Lavan, E. Zanini and A. Sarantis (eds.), *Technology in Transition A.D. 300-650*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2007, 233-248 at 236.

²²⁹ 1 Thess 5:6-8.

gain'),²³⁰ *καθεύδων δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐδεις οὐδενὸς ἄξιος, οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τοῦ μὴ ζῶντος* ('a man asleep is useless, just like a dead man'),²³¹ *οὐ διὰ τοῦτο γέγονεν ἡ νύξ, ἵνα διαπαντὸς καθεύδωμεν καὶ ἀργῶμεν* ('the night was not made for us to sleep nor keep inactive'),²³² *μηδὲ καταδέξῃ διὰ τῆς κατὰ τὸν ὕπνον ἀναισθησίας τὸ ἥμισυ τῆς ζωῆς ἀχρειοῦν* ('do not waste half of your life with sleep').²³³

Fearing God was an important Christian ideal. Fearing God during the night was especially admirable, at least for the Montanist community that prepared a relevant inscription that has survived.²³⁵ Was emperor Julian's sleepless nights another trait he shared with Christianity?²³⁶

The two Pauline quotes:

*ὁμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτῃς καταλάβῃ· πάντες ὁμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους*²³⁷ ('but you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness')

and

*ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν. ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους καὶ ἐνδυσώμεθα τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός*²³⁸ ('the night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light')

are not testimony of a different early Christian ideology, an effort to dissociate Christians from the night, but rather an allegorical reminder that Christianity represents goodness and truth, as Jesus Christ had pointed out:

*ὁμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη· οὐδὲ καίουσι λύχνον καὶ τιθέασιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μῶδιον, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν, καὶ λάμπει πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ. οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς*²³⁹ ('you are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven').

How could the night have negative connotations when Jesus appears in so many narratives as *διανυκτερεύων*?²⁴⁰ as busy at night for a good cause, and could unexpectedly show up at night to anyone as in the Parable of the Ten Virgins:

²³⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.79.1.

²³¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.9.79.3.

²³² John Chrysostom, *Homily 26* in PG 60:202.

²³³ Basil, *Homily on martyr Julitta* in PG 31:244.

²³⁵ SEG XLIII 943, (c350 CE). The prophetess Nana declares in a metrical inscription that from the beginning she felt the fear of god all night long: *παννύχιον θεοῦ φόβον εἶχεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*.

²³⁶ Julian, *Misopogon* 340.

²³⁷ 1 Thess 5:4-5.

²³⁸ Rom 13:12.

²³⁹ Mt 5:14-16, Lk 12:3, Jn 3:19-21, 12:35-36 and 12:46, Acts 26:18, Eph 5:8 and 2 Cor 4:6.

²⁴⁰ The term *διανυκτερεύων*, to the best of my knowledge, appears only in Lk 6:12. However, Jesus and the apostles often remained active at night for a just cause, (see Mt 4:2 and 14:25, Mk 6.48, Lk 12:38, Acts 12:10).

μέσης δὲ νυκτὸς κραυγὴ γέγονεν· ἰδοὺ ὁ νυμφίος ἔρχεται, ἐξέρχεσθε εἰς ἀπάντησιν αὐτοῦ²⁴¹ ('at midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!').

In Christian literature, Jesus is habitually metaphorically described as light, as representing truth and goodness,²⁴² and angels with exceeding brightness, while Satan is associated with darkness and evil.²⁴³ When Jesus slept, whether by day or by night, the brightness of God shone upon Him; that is how the apocryphal *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* ends.²⁴⁴ The soul of the Virgin Mary is described as white as snow and bright as light in the *Narrative of Pseudo-Melito*.²⁴⁵ Apostle Thomas was accredited pleading to Jesus in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* with the following words:

*Now Jesus is the time for you to hasten for behold the children of darkness put us into their darkness. Illuminate us by the light of your nature!, and suddenly the whole prison was as light as the day. And while all those who were in the prison were asleep, only those who believed in the Lord were awake.*²⁴⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, contrary to the scholarly view, which still has adherents,²⁴⁷ it seems to me that most people in the Greco-Roman world did not avoid going out at night; the streets were not empty after dark, and the night was not a time for inactivity and silence in antiquity. Pagans were already out and about at night, and Christians invited them to become even more active in the service of their God. A great percentage of significant Christian action took place during the night. In Christianity, the potential of the night was exploited, and the night had the most positive evaluations overall. As Christianity grew in confidence and in numbers, Christian imperial legislation turned against and tried to obliterate pagan nightly rites once and for all.²⁴⁸ Contrary to what emperor Julian held, as far as Christians were concerned, silence and inaction did not befit the night, far from it. In fact, it may very well be that more women went out than ever before under a Christian pretext or in order to serve a Christian cause. Christianity did not introduce an innovation when it encouraged its female members to be active at night for the benefit of the new religion and their souls. Pagan women, as we saw, already had their own important nighttime religious celebrations from which males were forbidden. Christianity placed more emphasis on the practice of staying awake in order to prove devotion and certain women seized the opportunity. Tertullian wondered what pagan husband would tolerate his wife leaving the house for nocturnal religious meetings inside Roman prisons. Apparently, many did.²⁴⁹ One could even argue that the night, Roman prisons and women turned out to be catalysts for Christianity's success.

²⁴¹ Mt 25:6.

²⁴² *The Narrative of Jesus of Arimathea 5 and The Epistle of the Apostles 3.*

²⁴³ *Narrative of Pseudo-Melito, the Assumption of the Virgin* (latin) III 2-3.

²⁴⁴ *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 42.*

²⁴⁵ *Narrative of Pseudo-Melito, the Assumption of the Virgin* (latin) VIII.3 and X.

²⁴⁶ *Acts of Thomas 153.*

²⁴⁷ O. F. Robinson, *Ancient Rome City Planning and Administration*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods. Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire*, Phoenix, London, 2000, 10 and Mueller, 'La reglamentación nocturna en la antigua Roma', 125-128. For the opposite view see Glenn Reed Storey, 'All Rome is at my bedside'. Nightlife in the Roman Empire' in *Archaeology of the Night*, Nancy Gonlin and April Nowell (eds.), University Press of Colorado, Colorado, 2018, 307- 331 at 315.

²⁴⁸ *CTh* 9.16.2 and 9.16.7 and 16.10.5.

²⁴⁹ Tertullian, *To His Wife* 4.2-3.

Bibliography

- Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2010.
- Anthony A. Barrett, *Rome is Burning. Nero and the Fire that Ended a Dynasty*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2020.
- J. Beresford, *The Ancient Sailing Season*, Mnemosyne Supplements 351, Brill, Boston and Leiden, 2012.
- David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006.
- David Brakke, 'Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon' in Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and David Brakke (eds.), *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 11, Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2012, 263-280.
- Jan N. Bremmer, *Maidens, Magic and Martyrs in Early Christianity: Collected Essays I. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, 379, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2017.
- Jan N. Bremmer, 'Ritual and Transgressions in Ancient Greece' in Carlo Ginzburg and Lucio Biasiori (eds.), *A Historical Approach to Casuistry*, London et al., 2019, 47-64.
- Jan N. Bremmer, 'Emotions and Narrative in the Martyrdom of Polycarp' in Jan N. Bremmer and Laura Feldt (eds.), *Studies in the History and Anthropology of Religion*, Peeters (in press).
- E. Bronfen, *Tiefer als der Tag Gedacht. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Nacht*, Carl Hanser Verlag, München, 2008.
- R. A. Bauman, 'The Suppression of the Bacchanals: Five Questions', *Historia* 39, 1990, 334-348.
- Efrosyni Boutsikas, 'Astronomical Evidence for the Timing of the Panathenaia', *American Journal of Archaeology* 115, no. 2, 2011, 303-309.
- A. Chaniotis, 'Violence in the Dark: Emotional Impact, Representation, Response' in M. Champion, L. O'Sullivan (eds.), *Cultural Perceptions of Violence in the Hellenistic World*, Routledge, London and New York, 2017, 100-115.
- A. Chaniotis (ed.), *La Nuit: imaginaire et réalités nocturnes dans le monde gréco-romain. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, 64, Fondation Hardt, Geneva, 2018.
- A. Chaniotis, 'Many Nations, One Night? Historical Aspects of the Night in the Roman Empire' in Jonathan J. Price, Margalit Finkelberg and Yuval Shahar (eds.), *Rome: An Empire of Many Nations. New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et al, 2021, 146-165.
- A. Chaniotis, 'The Materiality of Light in Religious Celebrations and Rituals in the Roman East' in Zahra Newby, *The Material Dynamics of Festivals in the Graeco-Roman East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford et al., 2023, 289-321.
- M. Christopoulos, M. Meyer, and O. Levaniouk (eds.), *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion*, Lexington Books, Maryland and Plymouth, 2010.
- Kevin Clinton, 'Epiphany in the Eleusinian Mysteries', *Illinois Classical Studies* 29, 2004, 85-109.
- Kate Cooper, *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women*, Overlook Press, New York, 2013.
- Stephen Dando-Collins, *The Great Fire of Rome. The Fall of the Emperor Nero and his City*, Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, 2010.
- Nicola Denzey Lewis, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2007.
- M. Dinter, S. Finkmann and A. Khoo, 'Nyktomachies in Greco-Roman Epic' in C. Reitz and S. Finkmann (eds.), *Structures of Roman Epic*, vol.2.1, 245-282.
- Leslie Dossey, 'Watchful Greeks and Lazy Romans: Disciplining Sleep in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.2, 2013, 209-239.
- A. R. Ekrich, *At Day's Close. Night in Times Past*, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 2005.
- Jakob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen and Anders Klostergaard Petersen (eds.), *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt-am-Main, 2011.

- Christopher A. Faraone and Sofia Torallas Tovar (eds.), Greece and Rome special issue, *Curses in Context IV: Curse tablets in the Wider Realms of Execrations, Commerce, Law and Technology*, vol. 69.1, 2022.
- Georgia Frank, *Unfinished Christians: Ritual Objects and Silent Subjects in Late Antiquity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023.
- H.-G. Friese, *Die Ästhetik der Nacht. Eine Kulturgeschichte*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 2011.
- C. J. Fuhrmann, *Policing the Roman Empire. Soldier, Administration and Public Order*, Oxford University Press, Oxford et al., 2012.
- R. M. Grant, 'Charges of 'Immorality' against various Religious Groups in Antiquity' in R. van der Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 1981, 161-170.
- Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "'Tears flowed from his eyes unceasingly': Weeping and Total Devotion in Egypt in Late Antiquity", *Religion* 53, 2023, 116-136.
- William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009.
- Rocío Gordillo Hervás, 'Day and Night in the Agones of the Roman Isthmian Games' in Antón Alvar Nuño, Jaime Alvar Ezquerro, and Greg Woolf (eds.), *Sensorium: the Senses in Roman Polytheism*, series Religions in the Greco-Roman World, volume 195, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2021.
- M. Andrew Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams: Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, University Press of America, Lanham, 2002.
- Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods. Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire*, Phoenix, London, 2000.
- Despina Iosif, "'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Illness as Demon Possession in the World of the First Christian Ascetics and Monks'", *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, Routledge Journals 14.4, April 2011, 323-340.
- Despina Iosif, 'Ψυχής φάρμακα και ψυχής ιατρεία. Βιβλία και Βιβλιοθήκες στην ελληνορωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα', *Mnemon* 34, 2015, 161-187.
- Despina Iosif, 'Religious Violence' in Tarmo Toom (ed.), *Augustine in Context*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge et al., 2017, 195-202.
- Despina Iosif, *Εγκλειστοι στις ρωμαϊκές φυλακές*, Crete University Press, Herakleion, 2020.
- Despina Iosif and Maro Triantafyllou, *Η αυλή των θαυμάτων*, Crete University Press, Herakleion, 2022.
- Despina Iosif, "'Per Suffragium Populi. The Voices of the Lower Classes'", in H. Gasti, V. Pappas and S. Alekou (eds.), *Audience Response in Ancient Greek and Latin Literature*, Brepols, (in press).
- Despina Iosif, 'Power', *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, (in press).
- David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery and Einar Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4-8 May 1997*, The Norwegian Institute at Athens, Bergen, 1999.
- J. Ker, 'Nocturnal Writers in Imperial Rome: the Culture of Lucubratio', *Classical Philology* 99.3, 2004, 209-242.
- J. Ker and A. Wessels (eds.), *The Values of Nighttime in Classical Antiquity Between Dusk and Dawn*, Mnemosyne 434, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2020.
- Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, 'Christians against Christians: The anti-heretical activities of the Roman Church in the second century', *Historiein* 6, 2006, 20-34.
- Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, *Η Οδός και τα βήματα των πρώτων χριστιανών*, Athens, 2020.
- Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, 'Religious Conflict in Roman Nicomedia' in Kelly Michael J. and Burrows Michael (eds.), *Urban Interactions Communication and Competition in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Punctumbooks, Binghamton, New York, 2020, 147-180.
- Hugo Lundhaug, 'Storyworld-Immersion and Elaboration in Egyptian Monasteries' in Jan N. Bremmer and Laura Feldt (eds.), *Studies in the History and Anthropology of Religion*, Peeters (in press).
- E. Lytle, 'Fishing with Fire: Technology, Economy and two Greek Inscriptions', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 67.1, 2018, 61-102.
- A. J. MacGregor, *Fire and Light in the Western Triduum. Their Use at Tenebrae and at the Paschal Vigil*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1992.

Night-loving Creatures in the Greco-Roman World

- A. Maravela, 'Christians Praying in a Greco-Egyptian Context: Intimations of Christian Identity in Greek Papyrus Prayers' in Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (eds.), *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2014, 291-323.
- Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994.
- Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Imperial Rome and the Habitations of Cruelty' in Edmund P. Cueva, Shannon N. Byrne (eds.), *Veritatis Amicitiaeque Causa: Essays in Honor of Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark*, Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Wauconda, Illinois, 1999, 165-196.
- Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'La reglamentación nocturna en la antigua Roma' in *Nova Tellus: Anuario del Centro de Estudios Clásicos*, 2004, 123-139.
- Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Nocturni Coetus in 494 BC' in *Augusto augurio: rerum humanarum et divinarum commentationes in honorem Prof. Jerzy Linderski*, C. F. Konrad, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2004, 77-88.
- Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Spectral Rome from Female Perspective: An Experiment in Recouping Women's Religious Experience' in *Classical World: A Quarterly Journal on Antiquity* 104, 2011, 227-243.
- Hans-Friedrich Mueller, 'Tua Divinitas: Religious Self-fashioning in Tiberian Rome' in Papaioannou, Sophia and Andreas Serafim (eds.), *Rhetoric and Religion in Ancient Greece and Rome*, De Gruyter, Berlin and Boston, 2021, 245-266.
- Pantelis M. Nigdelis, 'Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonike: In Search of Identity and Support in a Cosmopolitan Society' in Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis and Steven Friesen (eds.), *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: Studies in Religion and Archaeology*, Harvard Theological Studies 64, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2010, 13-47.
- M. O'Hea, 'Glass in Late Antiquity' in L. Lavan, E. Zanini and A. Sarantis (eds.), *Technology in Transition A.D. 300-650*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2007, 233-248.
- Christodoulos Papavarnavas, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie. Eine Untersuchung früh- und mittelbyzantinischer Märtyrerakten* (Millennium-Studien / Millennium Studies, 90), de Gruyter, Berlin, 2021.
- E. T. Reimbold, *Die Nacht im Mythos, Kultus, Volksglauben und in der transpersonalen Erfahrung*, Wison Verlag, Köln, 1970.
- G. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come. Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2017.
- O. F. Robinson, *Ancient Rome City Planning and Administration*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995.
- H. J. Rose, 'Nocturnal Funerals in Rome', *Classical Quarterly* 17 /3-4, 1923, 191- 194.
- E. Sistakou, *The Aesthetics of Darkness. A Study of Hellenistic Romanticism in Apollonius, Lycophron and Nicander*, Peeters Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA, 2012.
- Dennis E. Smith and Hal Taussig (eds.), *Meals in the Early Christian World*, New York, 2012.
- Glenn Reed Storey, 'All Rome is at my bedside'. Nightlife in the Roman Empire' in Nancy Gonlin and April Nowell (eds.), *Archaeology of the Night*, University Press of Colorado, Colorado, 2018, 307- 331.
- J. Verdon, *Night in the Middle Ages*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.
- B. Wagemakers, 'Incest, Infanticide, and Cannibalism: Anti-Christian Imputations in the Roman Empire', *Greece and Rome* 57, 2010, 337-354.