

## *Lunar rapture: Nietzsche's religion of the night sun*

By Jill Marsden

As the evening sun gently bleeds into the horizon and healthy human beings slide into the snore of oblivion, an alien species stirs into life, enraptured by a universe that rivets it to its gaze. Only the insomniac knows the *profundity of night*. To remain awake when others sleep is to observe a vigil quite foreign to the waking hours of the day. Night is the un-lived world, indifferent to the working hours of calm, productive thought and for Nietzsche these restless hours are strangely exalted times. In the *Nachlass* one encounters the following fragment:

There is one part of the night about which I say, 'Here time ceases!' After all these moments of nocturnal wakefulness, especially on journeys or walks, one has a marvellous feeling with regard to this stretch of time: it was always much too brief or far too long, our sense of time suffers some anomaly. It may be that in our waking hours we pay recompense for the fact that we usually spend this time lost in the chaotic tides of dreamlife! Enough of that! At night between 1 and 3, we no longer have the clock in our heads. It seems to me that this is what the ancients expressed in the words *intepestiva nocte...* 'in the night, where there is no time' ... (KSA 9 11 260).

Never the woeful insomniac, wretchedly nailed to eternity, Nietzsche enthuses about the tremendous feeling to which only the night-wanderer is privy. In nocturnal wakefulness time loses its steady ordinal flow and dissolves into the anomalies of excess beyond measure—always too much or not enough. For the wakefulness of the night is not of the same order as the lethargic flickerings of consciousness, nor simply inverse to the wild flights of dreamlife. More than mere attentiveness, its light survives within you: 'one does not see in the dark with impunity'. An alien voyager from an uninhabited realm, the nightwanderer infiltrates the sun-lit world, entrancing it with its mystic spell and rendering the familiar strange at every turn. As Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*:

Oh, these men of former times knew how to *dream* and did not find it necessary to go to sleep first. And we men of today still master this art all too well, despite all of our good will toward the day and staying awake. It is quite enough to love, to hate, to desire, simply to feel—and *right away* the spirit and power of the dream overcome us, and with our eyes open, coolly dismissive of all danger, we climb up on the most hazardous paths to scale the roofs and spires of fantasy—without any

sense of dizziness, as if we had been born to climb, we nightwanderers of the day! We artists! We concealers of what is most natural! We are moonstruck and God-struck! (GS 59).

I want to ask what it would mean to be moon-struck and God-struck (*Mond- und Gottsuchtig*)—to be literally addicted to the lunar and the divine—and why it is the wakeful dreamer who has access to this experience. It seems that it is enough to throb with love, hate, desire, simply *passion* in order to become enraptured by the spirit and power of that which leaves the natural order behind. Liberated from the torpid values of a senescent humanism, the nightwanderer attains a different quality of sentience—a vibrant second nature. As every insomniac knows, in sleeplessness it is the *body* that is disturbed and encountered anew, as if in default of dogmatic slumber the inner forces beat to a fundamentally different rhythm. But why should exile from the natural and temporal order have any bearing on divinity? A fragment from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* provides a first tantalising clue.

—And how many new gods are still possible! As for myself, in whom the religious, that is to say, *god-forming* instinct, wants, from time to time, to come back to life, how differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time! So many strange things have passed before me in those timeless moments that fall into one's life as if from the moon, when one no longer has any idea how old one is or how young one will yet be—I should not doubt that there are many kinds of gods—(WP IV 1038)

Divinity appears to be revealed in those timeless moments that fall into one's life as if from the moon, moments in which the religious, *god-forming* instinct is reanimated, and more precisely, awakened ever again anew. In many ways this is a surprising thought in the wake of the death of God, an event which Nietzsche characterises as solar eclipse and collapse of being into night: 'Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning?' (GS 125). Yet if the religious instinct is to be located in timeless moments, *lunar* moments which ruin the seriality of a life and rob thinking of its co-ordination by the sun, might it be that night admits a clarity which is also divine?

As is well known, Nietzsche's thought of eternal return—a thought which radically reconfigures our understanding of time—is always revealed in moonlight, where demons become gods and 'many a thing can be heard which may not speak by day' (Z 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 3). As the famous *The Gay Science* passage intimates, to *affirm* eternal return as *sacred* hinges upon the experience of a

'tremendous moment' which would prompt one to sanctify the diabolical prophet of recurrence: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine' (GS 341). Elsewhere in the same text Nietzsche declares that religion is the means by which the human animal 'learns to hunger and thirst for *himself*' (GS 300) and we are told that it is the happiest who, in the 'most profound enjoyment of the moment' are prepared to risk all festively, 'impelled by the longing for undiscovered worlds and seas, people and gods' (GS 302). Affirming the moment appears to be the wellspring for a religious ecstasy of an extraordinary kind but what would *affirming the moment as divine* actually mean? Intriguingly, it is in 'The Nightwanderer's Song' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that an avowal of eternal return is made and it is the murderer of God who utters its pronouncement. Might this be a key to understanding the divinity of lunar moments or will our nocturnal journey carry us elsewhere through the 'spiriting night'? In the words of Zarathustra, *'the hour has come: let us walk into the night!'* (Z 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 2)

### **The Nightwanderer**

Night 'is sacred to those astray', a mythic world of dream and derangement, peopled by dark and vagrant souls. But strange are the night-time pathways travelled by Zarathustra who from the outset identifies himself with the gratuitous self-expenditure of the sun. It is at 'noontide' that he basks in his most perfect happiness and it is night that plunges his spirit into darkest despair. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche quotes the entirety of 'The Night Song', a Dionysian dithyramb of deepest melancholy, which tells of one who through his nature as a 'sun' is condemned not to love: 'Oh wretchedness of all givers! Oh eclipse of my sun! Oh craving for desire! Oh ravenous hunger in satiety!' (EH *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Elsewhere in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the sun is associated with innocence and creative desire, eliciting the sea to rise with a thousand breasts, 'to be kissed and sucked' by its hot thirst whereas the moon is a symbol of stealth and deception: 'When the moon rose yesterday I thought it was about to give birth to a sun, it lay on the horizon so broad rind pregnant. But it was a liar with its pregnancy ... Behold, the moon comes along catlike and without honesty' (Z 'Of Immaculate Perception'). This is the first of many riddles that constellate around the sacred moment and its perpetual lunar unfolding.

Indeed, Nietzsche's extraordinary text 'The Nightwanderer's Song' is set against the backdrop of an immense full moon and explicitly recalls the earlier epiphanies of moonlight from 'The Greatest Weight' (GS 341) and 'Of the Vision and the Riddle' (Z). At this point in the narrative, the band of Higher Men go out to 'greet the night'

after having finished celebrating their bizarre acts of idolatry at the 'Ass festival' in Zarathustra's cave. Unlike the prisoners in Plato's cave, they do not emerge from darkness into light but enter what Zarathustra calls his 'nocturnal world'—the deep mystic night of unknowing. As the 'mystery of the night' draws nearer and nearer to their hearts, an astonishing event takes place. The ugliest man and 'murderer of God' finally attains the point of speech and turns to address the gathered throng:

'My assembled friends,' said the ugliest man, 'what do you think? For the sake of this day—I am content for the first time to have lived my whole life. And it is not enough that I testify only this much. It is worthwhile to live on earth: one day, one festival with Zarathustra has taught me to love the earth. 'Was *that*—life?' I will say to death. 'Very well! Once more!' My friends, what do you think? Will you not, like me, say to death: 'Was *that*—life? For Zarathustra's sake, very well! Once more!' Thus spoke the ugliest man; and it was not long before midnight (Z 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 1).

It is tempting to interpret this proclamation as a sign that Zarathustra has successfully communicated his teaching; indeed, after the ugliest man has finished speaking the Higher Men fling themselves upon Zarathustra, thanking, adoring and caressing him as if *he* were a god and his teaching divine. But their messiah is oddly unmindful of their adulation. Standing there like one intoxicated, Zarathustra's eyes grow dim, his tongue stammers and his feet totter as if the organs of the body suddenly forget their proper functions: 'And who could divine what thoughts then passed over Zarathustra's soul? But it seemed that his soul fell back and fled before him and was in remote distances and as if "upon a high ridge", as it is written, "wandering like a heavy cloud between past and future" (Z 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 2). No words are uttered to the ugliest man, no response is given to his surprising disclosure. Instead, in a state of bodily entrancement, Zarathustra is overcome with thoughts so potent that they sever him from the ensuing commotion. More precisely it is his soul, which seems to travel vast distances fore and aft, as if a chasm opens in the night into which all connection to the present is swallowed. Nietzsche's reference to the wandering soul strongly echoes the opening of 'The Seven Seals' in which Zarathustra declares that if he were a prophetic spirit, wandering between past and future, pregnant with lightening flashes which affirm 'Yes!', how ardently he would *lust* for eternity and the ring of recurrence. Zarathustra's rapture—both his mystic transport into the vastness of becoming and his deeply sensual longing—disrupts the narrative with the force of trauma.

Or perhaps we might say that it is the power of *Traum*, of the waking dream, that takes possession of this nightwanderer. In a startling passage in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes:

How wonderful and new and at the same time how dreadful and ironic I feel my position to be with respect to all of existence in light of my realisation! I have *discovered* for myself that primeval human and animal kind, indeed, the whole primal age and past of all sensate being continues in me to poetise, to love, to hate and to conclude: I suddenly woke up in the middle of this dream but only to the consciousness that I am still dreaming and that I *must* continue dreaming so as not to perish just as a sleepwalker (*Nachtwandler*) must go on dreaming in order not to fall. (GS 54)

Nietzsche suggests that the continuation of all affective force within the compass of a single life is experienced within a waking dream—as if liberated from the sanity of the day, the self becomes a vessel for alien inhabitation. A vast virtual phylum flows through the self like a main line artery, linking a life to possibilities no longer *owned*. Ironically, whilst the ugliest man is able to avow his existence in his own name—'*I am content ... to have lived my whole life*'—it is Zarathustra adrift in the seas of cosmic ruin who appears to have been touched by the moon. For in his lunar intoxication, Zarathustra is borne away by a soul that streams out in as if in 'slow rivers through the inky sky'. When he finally begins his 'Nightwanderer's Song', the moon-crazed ravings which ring out in the night air displace the temporal location of the narrative once again, but this time enigmatically recasting and *condensing* the moment into that of 'Of the Vision and the Riddle': 'Woe is me! Where has time fled? Did I not sink into deep wells? The world is asleep—Ah! Ah! The dog howls, the moon is shining. I will rather die, die, than tell you what my midnight-heart is now thinking. Now I am dead. It is finished. Spider, why do you spin your web around me?' (Z 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 4).

From the heart of 'ancient, deep, deep midnight', the gateway of moment returns: "'And this slow spider that creeps along in the moonlight, *and this moonlight itself*, and I and you at this gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must we not have been here before?'" (Z 'Of the Vision and the Riddle' 2, emphasis added). Liberated from the moment of self-presence, Zarathustra returns anew to the revelation of recurrence. Perhaps moonlight is not simply the background within which events unfold but is *lunar unfolding* itself, the regeneration of the moment *within itself*. Past and future emerge together in the timeless moment but this moment is not 'in' time: it 'is' time. One recalls that Zarathustra's dialogue with

the dwarf is interrupted by a dog howling at the moon, a howling from the past—Zarathustra's most distant childhood. Yet this is also a howling from the future, as events no longer *succeed* one another but, as if in a dream, collapse in a vertiginously spiralling depth, drawing in and out of focus like shapes in the night sky. Night has no points, no sequence, no arching sun by which to map the passing of a life. In lunar rapture one has no idea how old one is or how young one will yet be. And Zarathustra, in his moon-struck madness proclaims his own crushing demise as a subject, as an 'I'. The lunacy of eternal return is such that it excludes the thinker at the very moment it is thought.

According to Maurice Blanchot: 'Wakefulness is without beginning and end. To wake is neutral. 'I' do not wake: someone does, the night does, always and incessantly, hollowing the night out into the other night where there can be no question of sleeping'. If night is sacred to those astray might this be because it marks the awakening of the *inhuman*? In the 'wavering moment' of sacred sleeplessness the self becomes irrevocably estranged from the familiar species coordinates that anchor a life in its passage. For we inhabit the day but night inhabits us: the chaos of the starry skies *within* twinkle in the dark tangled capillaries of a sentience no longer *ours*. Across the dark canvas of the sky, a sinister destiny is realised. It is at the level of affective yet *anonymous* force that lunar rapture impacts. Perhaps to affirm a tremendous moment as divine is to consecrate oneself to the night—to submit to the ecstasy of overwhelming passions and to be entranced like the nightwanderer of the day. Could it be that affirmation of eternal return is nothing attitudinal, rather, something libidinal? We recall that Zarathustra in his mystic flight from self-presence voraciously lusts for the ring of recurrence and in his rapture it is the body that is undone. Yet this is not a flight from the body, rather a re-encountering of corporeality at a physiological frequency different to that of the day and its regular pulse of the 'clock in the head'. Earlier in the text, he proclaims that the body does not say 'I' but performs 'I', that the bodily self thirsts to create beyond itself (Z 'Of the Despisers of the Body'). Is this the key to the creation of new gods, the source of the religious instinct?

### **The sleepless and the sacred**

In the *Nachlass* Nietzsche characterises the human body as that in which 'the most distant and most recent past of all organic development again becomes living and corporeal, through which and over and beyond which a tremendous inaudible stream seems to flow' (WP III 659). In this exquisite formulation, Nietzsche implies that the body is a conduit for forces that it neither wholly controls, nor

discretely contains. It is as if all sentient being continues in us to invent, love, hate and infer. In another remarkable passage he speculates that if we imagined our body on analogy with the stellar system we would abandon belief in a consciousness that determines purposes (WP III 676). Yet the mute intensity of the tremendous pulsions that flow through, over and beyond the body is only rendered intelligible at the price of commuting its power to the rational order of signs and exposing its dark complexity to the glare of sun. What might be termed the 'levelling power of gregarious thought' (NVC p.7) functions by stabilising primary affectivity within its pre-established codes where it must surrender its intensity to the columbarium of concepts. But perhaps things are different for the nightwanderer. In the night of consciousness, the afflux and reflux of corporeal excitations attain a clarity no longer assimilable within the representational matrix. Cloaked by the gentle veil of darkness, the senses no longer subordinate themselves to the speculative gaze of the eye and the silent libidinal forces impose themselves more insidiously on thinking. Such a reattunement of the body has been described by E. M. Cioran as insomniac sensibility:

The pure passing of time, naked time, reduced to an essence of flux, without the discontinuity of the moments, is realised in our sleepless nights. Everything vanishes. Silence invades—everywhere. We listen; we hear nothing. The senses no longer turn toward the world outside. What outside? Engulfment survived by that pure passage through us that is ourselves, and that will come to an end only with sleep or daylight ...

To think the self as pure passage, as sheer intensity, holds in abeyance the prejudice that consciousness should coincide with 'a' subject and give the measure to 'inner sense'. However much the imperious ego might be invoked to contest such a thesis, its material coexistence with the forces it seeks to suppress enables the latter to intimate their power at the level of thought. Hence, perhaps, the *lunacy* of the one who no longer succeeds in mapping his life in terms of the serial order of personal self-identity.

In a letter to Karl Fuchs dated 14th December 1888 Nietzsche makes explicit reference to the fluctuating currents of his tortured, inner depths:

*The vehemence of my inner oscillations* has been terrifying, all through these past years; now that I must make the transition to a new and more intense form, I need above all a new estrangement, a still more intense depersonalisation. So it is of greatest importance what and who still remain to me.

What age am I? I do not know—as little as I know how young I shall become ...

Nietzsche speaks of inner oscillations so frightful that they command an intense depersonalisation, forces so violent that they struggle to register themselves within a consciousness constantly under siege. Yet in many respects, consciousness is a fragile dictator for it is only insofar as it commensurates with the unity of an organism that it is able to maintain its tyranny. The identity of the self seems to depend on the creation of an irreversible history of the body, a temporal horizon or 'linkage of causes and effects' (NVC p. 29). As Pierre Klossowski has so convincingly argued in his reading of Nietzsche, the body is only the *same* body insofar as the self in its singularity is able to coincide with it, the body being nothing other than a locus where individuated impulses confront each other 'so as to produce this interval that constitutes a human life' (NVC p. 26). Intriguingly, Klossowski expresses these ideas as follows:

What is born from this chance association of impulses is not only the individual they constitute at the whims of circumstance, but also the eminently deceptive principle of a cerebral activity that progressively disengages itself from sleep. Consciousness seems to oscillate continually between somnolence and insomnia, and what we call the *waking state* is merely the comparison of the two, their reciprocal reflection, like a play of mirrors (NVC p.26).

If consciousness is a mere fluttering between dormancy and attentiveness, it lacks the inherent unity that would enable it to bind and temporarily reconcile the contradictory impulses that comprise the body, yet as a reactive force it has the power to stifle those impulses which seem to proceed from corporeal states hostile to its own sense of cohesion. On this basis, Klossowski conjectures that by 'passing through the *limit* that is constantly redrawn by the *waking state*' the self establishes a strategic unity:

the waking state *never lasts more than a few seconds*. At every instant, the brain is flooded by excitations of greater or lesser intensity, excitations whose *overwhelming reception* must constantly be filtered. The new excitations are filtered through the traces of prior excitations, which have already been absorbed. But the new excitations can be coordinated with prior ones only through assimilation, namely by comparing what is 'habitual' with what is foreign (NVC p. 31).



This means that intensive energy is bound by consciousness via the reduction of difference to sameness, a process that inhibits the generation of new connective pathways which might bypass its channelling mechanism. In other words, the bodily self is reiterated as the same through oscillations that reinscribe *identity in the present*. One is reminded in this context of Nietzsche's claim that the greater the impulse towards unity, the more firmly one can conclude that weakness is present, the greater the force towards variety and differentiation—even at the cost of inner decay—the more force is present (WP III 655). This said, perhaps the bodily self which 'thirsts to create beyond itself' must risk this inner collapse if it is to attain the intense depersonalisation which Nietzsche desires. Everything hinges, it would seem, on attenuating the waking state. In Nietzsche's *Nachlass* from Winter 1888 one encounters the following astounding passage:

Five, six seconds and no more—then you suddenly feel the presence of eternal harmony. Man in his mortal frame cannot endure it; he must either physically transform himself or die. It is a lucid and ineffable feeling. You seem to be in contact with the whole of nature and you say: 'Yes, this is true!' God, when He created the world, said at the end of each day: 'Yes, it is true, it is good.' It is not emotion, it is joy. You forgive nothing because there is nothing to forgive. Nor do you really love anything—oh, this feeling is higher than love! The most terrible thing is the horrific *certainty* with which it expresses itself and the joy with which it fills one. If it lasted longer the soul could not endure it, it would have to disappear—In these five seconds I live the whole of human existence, I would give my life for it, the price would not be too high. In order to bear this any longer one would have to transform oneself physically. (KSA 13 11 337)

If the fragile waking state constitutes consciousness through the assimilation of difference to the same, what happens when multiplicity in all its fullness floods the system, facilitating connections with all of nature? Such a high point of intensity compels a new estrangement from man in his mortal frame. One would sacrifice one's life for this feeling, One would literally expend oneself, For some time I interpreted this passage as an expression of the sublime feeling that Nietzsche attributes to the 'experience' of eternal return until I came upon a near identical extract in Dostoyevsky's novel *The Devils*. It would seem that these remarks made such an impact on Nietzsche that he copied them down in his notebook, perhaps perceiving in these awe inspiring lines something akin to his own encounter. The words are spoken by the insomniac Kirilov, who urged by his interlocutor that he really must get some sleep at night 'came out of his dream and—strange to say—spoke more coherently than he usually did. It is as if in sleepless clarity, the self

cohesion constantly redrawn by the waking state, short-circuits at the insomniac state *and begins to oscillate there*, forging connections with all of nature at the price of its own self-reassimilation. For in his wakefulness *beyond waking*, this nightwanderer speaks of a marvellous yet *unendurable joy*—a feeling which mortal being cannot sustain without physically transforming or perishing. Kirilov wakes from his dream but perhaps to the consciousness that he is still dreaming and must go on dreaming lest he fall. The demon's chilling words ring out: 'If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you' (GS 341). At this high point of intensity the self-present subject literally cannot endure.

To bear such a thought one would have to transform oneself physically. Might it be that libidinal forces here succeed in deindividuating themselves from cranial identity, tending towards the variety and differentiation that consciousness functions to hold in check? As active forces these pulsions go to the limit of their power, even if this means to make a sacrificial offering of the self for the sake of its desire to *create beyond itself*. Perhaps it is in this register that the nightwanderer experiences incarnation otherwise: as if struck by the moon, he must physically transform or perish. Nietzsche tells us that the 'feeling of rapture' is an 'exalted feeling of power'—sensations of space and time are altered, tremendous distances are surveyed and organs are refined to apprehend that which is extremely small and fleeting (WP IV 800). Overcharged by exorbitant and impossible passions which again become 'living and corporeal', insomniac physiology is refractory to the discontinuous moments of personal self-presence. If the waking state lasts merely a few seconds, perhaps the insomniac state—wakefulness beyond waking—frustrates duration precisely because it cannot be endured or can only be endured through repeating itself as *other*: 'I live the whole of human existence, I would give my life for it'. In a kindred passage, Dostoyevsky says that in these moments the vital forces are strained to the utmost all at once and 'the extraordinary saying that *there shall be time no longer*' becomes 'somehow comprehensible'.

### **Nietzsche's religion of the night sun**

In our nocturnal wanderings might we have encountered finally the source of the religious instinct, the *god-forming* force that in timeless moments wills to come back to life? This force emerges in a life, in a body, independent of human agency: 'As for myself, in whom the religious, that is to say *god-forming* instinct wills, from time to time, to come back to life, how differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time!' (WP IV 1038). It is life itself which returns to

life, repeats itself as other to itself in its depersonalised intensity. Lacking any constitutive identity, this life is sensitive to the panoply of its variegated possibilities and the necessary impossibility of sustaining a self-identical state. It is in precisely this sense that Nietzsche conceives of divinity as instinctive—an immanent economy of sacred self-expenditure. In his heightened sleep-deprived fervour, Kirilov enthuses about a marvellous, unbearable, God-like feeling of immense connection with all of nature. In a passing yet prescient remark, Klossowski comments that if everything in us is conscious there would be a simultaneous activation of all available bodily intensities, a state he calls *generalised insomnia* (NVC p. 39). Formulated thus, such a notion calls to mind the idea of God as a total sensorium, a view which Nietzsche elsewhere in the *Nachlass* describes as symptomatic of the elevation of consciousness to the supreme standard and condition of life, the erroneous perspective of *a parte ad totum* (WP III 707); however, might it be possible to retain the notion of a generalised insomnia as an account of the flux of libidinal, transhuman energies liberated from the *unifying power* of the ego? Beyond the conscious waking state, such forces perpetually generate and disperse a life in their striving to differentiate themselves from the stabilising oscillations of consciousness and from one another, indeed, (from bodily integrity itself. This tension is so extreme because in default or psychic equilibrium, in the wake of the death of God, the highest feeling can only be attained in violent conflict. A force differentiates itself in its perpetual overcoming of its rivals whilst remaining materially continuous with them, much as we might distinguish a shooting star from the night sky. Affirmation of self can only be won at the price of affirming *everything*.

In this respect we might think of generalised insomnia as the night-pool from which the divining of identity emerges. In the heart of darkness it is the affective potential of the vast differentiated richness of a single existence which is incarnated as the most exalted feeling. Nietzsche writes that anyone who manages to experience the history of humanity as a whole as *his own history* will feel in 'an enormously generalised way' all the grief of an invalid who thinks of health, of an old man who thinks of youth, of a lover deprived of his beloved, of the hero vanquished in battle, an immense sum of grief of all kinds. Yet if one could endure this feeling, welcoming the glimmering dawn like a person whose horizon encompasses 'thousands of years' past and future, a religious pathos of unprecedented magnitude will be the reward: 'if one could finally contain all this in one soul and crowd it in one feeling— this would surely result in a happiness that humanity has not known so far: the happiness of a god full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness that like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its riches, pouring them into the sea' (GS 337).

This evening sun offers a glorious vision of extravagant expenditure but if Nietzsche's philosophy has a religion it is a religion of the *night sun*. Just as the insomniac experiences a clarity quite alien to the day and to the mediating structures of representation, there is a mystic sensibility which illuminates the lunarscape without delivering it over to the levelling power of signs: 'It is a lucid and ineffable feeling'. This sensuality is resistant to all idealising gestures and can only be endured as a perpetual deviation from itself. Most importantly, it is a delight which can never be conceived 'redemptively' in terms of the absence of pain for it is only felt in terms of its affirmation of everything, its self-differentiation from, and determination by, the vast libidinal maelstrom of becoming. Such is a god-like feeling, the *affirmation of eternal return as divine*. 'The Nightwanderer's Song' does not end with Zarathustra's cries of woe but with mounting tension oscillates between outbursts of despair and jubilation reaching a final crescendo of *bliss born from pain*: 'it ruminates upon its woe in dreams, the ancient, deep midnight hour, and still more upon its joy. For joy, though woe be deep: *Joy is deeper than heart's agony*' (2 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 8).

Do you not hear it? Do you not smell it? My world has just become perfect, midnight is also noonday, pain is also a joy, a curse also a blessing, the night is also a sun—be gone, or you will learn: a wise man is also a fool. Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love; if you ever wanted one moment twice, if you ever said: 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' then you wanted *everything* to return! You wanted everything anew, everything eternal, everything chained, entwined together, everything in love, O that is how you *loved* the world ... and you say even to woe: 'Go, but return!' *For all joy wants—eternity!* (Z 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 10)

The collapse of midnight into noonday signals the annihilation of any notion of temporal order that maintains the axes of a human world and divides sleepers from the inhumanly awake. Perhaps it could be said that in 'The Nightwanderer's Song' the moon, characterised as clandestine much earlier in the text, finally does give birth to a sun. For it comes to light up the dark Dionysian underworld of inhuman passion and hence to overcome the wisdom of the day, much like the Apollinian power of dream comes to radiate and intensify Dionysian night. The nightwanderer wakes to the realisation that he is dreaming and whispers: 'It is a dream. I shall dream on!'—affirming the moment, however gruesome and melancholy his insights might be (BT 1). The crushing torment of sexual longing, epitomised in the 'The Night Song', is transfigured into the perfect moment of noonday, in an affirmation of every joy and every pain.

As Zarathustra's nocturnal incantations exemplify, joy wants the eternity of all things: '*what* does joy not want! It is thirstier, warmer, hungrier, more fearful, more secret than all woe, it wants *itself*; it bites into *itself*, the will of the ring wrestles within it, it wants love, it wants hatred, it is superabundant, it gives, throws away, begs for someone to take it, it would like to be hated' (2 'The Nightwanderer's Song' 11). This is not the contentment of which the ugliest man speaks but manic, insatiable desire. Return is not willed for the sake of one day, one festival, for Zarathustra's sake, but for its own sake—an affirmation so excessive it is illegible within the balance sheets of satisfaction and recompense. Might it be that eternal return is so terrible to endure because of the raw intensity of its rapture—a 'mad tension that puts every moment of your life on the plane of eternity'? Joy is not acceptance of the moment, it *is* moment, a moment without duration, unendurable, excruciating, bliss. Affirmation—monstrous, tremendous, terrifying, exorbitant—can never endure for it is only produced through its rhythmic tension with, and overcoming of, an immensity of pain. In passing the moment must return, eternally open to past and future. Indeed, the moment's returning, returns in every moment, lunar moments in which divine happiness is resuscitated ever again anew. This is the lunacy of a love that is so voracious it bites into itself, recoils on itself, eternally, insatiably needing itself again and again: 'And would this not be—*circulus vitiosus deus?*' (BGE 56).

Nietzsche's religion of the night sun is a sacred energetics of desire, a divine eroticism which demands self-annihilation. As Nietzsche's texts subtly indicate, one only 'exists' as the eternal joy of becoming, the profound delight 'in which existence celebrates its own transfiguration'. (WP N 1051). Zarathustra's ardent lust for eternity is deeply sexual yet ruthlessly impersonal, for it is the upsurge of a wholly inhuman eroticism which, in lunar rapture, thirsts for its own overcoming. This sacrificial force defines the religious instinct which Nietzsche determines as a longing for the most intense feeling and in the name of which the human animal learns to hunger and thirst for itself (GS 300). We recall Nietzsche's claim that it is the happiest who long for new gods, who in the 'deepest joy of the moment' are overcome 'by tears and the whole crimson melancholy of the happy' (GS 302). This is the deep, deep eternity or which Zarathustra sings and it is in this state that the Greeks are said to have 'invented' their gods. Yet with such happiness in one's soul 'one is also more capable of suffering than any creature under the sun' (GS 302). If suffering is identified as 'evil' then one can never proceed beyond the religion of pity, comfort and otherworldly redemption for the latter only knows how to share affliction, not to share joy. Nietzsche maintains that the 'path to one's own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell' (GS 338). To affirm eternal return is to affirm this darkness.

The revelation of the highest feeling in those timeless moments is an affirmation of 'God' as the high point of power, not as a sensorium of being but as an expression of a sacred will to overcome being as such—to eternally recome, *'the universe being nothing but a perpetual flight from itself, and a perpetual re-finding of itself in multiple gods'* (NVC p. 65). The religious impulse is a libidinal charge which in wanting to be more, thirsts to overcome itself and to do so ever again anew. It is a carnal pulsation, the rapturous tension of differential forces, which inexhaustibly renew themselves in the moment wherein all things are enchained and entwined together or as Zarathustra, puts it, 'all things are in love'. For love, even the love of God, remains the same in its roots (WP IV 808).

A people which still believes in itself still also has its own God. In him it venerates the conditions through which it has prospered, its virtues, —it projects its joy in itself, its feeling of power on to a being whom one can thank for them. He who is rich wants to bestow; a proud people needs a God in order to *sacrifice* ... Within the bounds of such presuppositions religion is a form of gratitude. One is grateful for oneself: for that one needs a God. (AC 16)

Moon struck and god struck the nightwanderer soars through the star-splashed night, intoxicated by demons and madmen, seared by eternity: wanting it, hating it, loving it, crazed for it, wracked by torments that glisten through the pores, galvanising every nerve ending and burning with a slow, cruel passion, as the soul combusts in lunatic worship to the blank, incurious moon. If lunar rapture fades with the dawn like an evanescent dream, its afterglow colours the day with its indelible nightmares and its poetry, a deftly spreading contagion, communicates beyond the pulse of reason its delicately proliferating disaster. A convalescent from time, the nightwanderer inhabits the waking life of a mythically inspired people which 'more closely resembles a dream than it does the waking world of a scientifically disenchanted thinker' and 'as in a dream, anything is possible at each moment, and all of nature swarms around man as if it were nothing but a masquerade of the gods, who were merely amusing themselves by deceiving men in all these shapes.'

To conclude, a discarded draft from Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, entitled 'Lunar Rapture'.

Every inner and outer occurrence of lunar nights possesses the nature of the unrepeatable. Every occurrence possesses an enhanced nature. It has the nature of an unselfish liberality and dispensation. Every communication is a sharing without envy. Every giving a receiving. Every reception inextricably interwoven in the

excitements of the night. To *be* this way is our only way to *know* what is happening. For the 'I' does not retain for itself any elixir of its past possession, scarcely memory; the enhanced self radiates outward into a boundless selflessness, and these nights are full of senseless feeling that something will have to come to pass and has never come to pass before, something that the impoverished reasonableness of the day cannot even visualise. And it is not the mouth that gushes fourth but all the body from head to foot, the body above the darkness of the earth and beneath the light of the sky, the body that is yoked to an excitement that oscillates between two stars. And the whispers we share with our companion or pervaded by and utterly unfamiliar sensuality, which is not some person's sensuality, but the sensuality of the earth, of all that compels our sensibility, the suddenly unveiled tenderness of the world that touches is all our senses and that all our senses touch.