Controlling Darkness: Self, Dark and the Domestic Night

Geographies of light and dark have largely been concerned with the affective power that light and dark can have[1] and how this can alter our experience of space.[2] The recent emergence of this area in geography builds from a longer history of the study of light and dark in design, architecture, art and philosophy in particular. In these disciplines, researchers have explored the power of both light and dark to shape emotional and affective experience of a variety of spaces. In social science, there have also been specific areas of research where light and dark have been a focus– for example, exploration of safety and perception of safety in the urban night[3,4,5] – but this has rarely gone beyond conceiving of light and dark as more than a 'background' within which action takes place. A gap has thus existed between this humanities-oriented literature looking at subjective experience of light and dark, and the social science-oriented literature in which light and dark are unexplored features of the landscapes. More recent research has started to bring these together and I want to contribute to this by shifting away from research located in the public realm, which has looked at the ways in which our use of urban spaces, art galleries, and landscapes are affected by the interplay of light and dark.[6,7] Instead, I want to explore how our experiences of the night and darkness are much more commonly located in the home.[8]

Geographical and social science studies of the home have typically understood experience of home as resonating between two poles, of relaxation and protection on the one hand, and fear and isolation on the other. Lorimer summarizes that home can be either an "emotional hearth" or a "place of retreat and entrapment".[9] Building a better understanding of the role that darkness plays in the home can better inform how home moves between these two poles. This has a significant implication for well-being. Where home takes on its emotional hearth role, it can act as an 'anchor' for subjectivity, that is, as a location in which emotions, materials and affects contribute to "processes of identification" for the self.[10] As such, disruptions to the home – that is, when home becomes a place of 'retreat and entrapment' – threaten identity and senses of subjectivity.[11] Drawing from phenomenological discussions of light and dark from Minkowski,[12] Merleau-Ponty[13] and Levinas,[14] I argue that in the dark, we become significantly more open to the 'other'. Vision and the perceptual field of light acts as a protective field which holds objects at a distance from the self – if I can see the other, I know that I am not him/her/it. As this ability is lost in the dark, the self is instead rendered open to the other, dissolving or at least reducing our sense of bounded selves.

Understood in a Deleuzian vocabulary of affect,[15] I then argue that this openness to the other is an openness to being affected by other objects and bodies. As such, to be able to control this becomes an operation of power: "the power to be affected is like a matter of force, and the power to affect is like a function of force".[16] In the remainder of the paper, I then explore the ways in which having more or less control over the ability to experience of darkness in the home can be understood as having more or less power over this experience of being rendered open to the other. In doing so, I argue that darkness in the home contributes to emergence of home as either safe or dangerous through the power operated over its control. While previous work has looked at how the dangerous[17] or isolated[18] home emerges, the role of darkness and light in this has not been researched. By engaging with three different home-related research themes in geography, I seek to explore whether an understanding of the role of dark and light in the home might add to this literature. I begin the paper with an exploration of existing literature on the home, before introducing work on darkness and the night. The paper continues with a discussion of

phenomenological studies of darkness, before moving on to describe three ways in which understanding darkness in the domestic night might inform future research.

Geographies of the Home

As Blunt succinctly argues, "the home is a material and an affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions".[19] Home is a multiplicity, pulling in a varied and complex series of components. While initial academic interest in home centred on attempts to problematize and debunk myths of the home as a space of strength, as a safe haven for identity,[20] the field has since increasingly emphasised the complexity of home, in which multiple different conflicting geographies intersect. Johnston and Pratt's research into the experience of Filipino women who have travelled to Canada to become domestic workers[21] is exemplary of this. Their research explores the ways in which this migration shapes multiple different experiences of home. For the Filipino women, home is stretched from their homeland to their new residences in Canada, where they work apart from their families in order to secure residency permits in the future. For their Canadian employers, home is simultaneously interrupted by the presence of a new (racialized) body, while the image of the ideal home is maintained by the work that the domestic workers do.[22] At the same time, the process of migration speaks to both Filipino and Canadian debates about homeland, with pasts and futures of identity in both nations challenged and informed by this process.[23] What emerges from this research is an image of home as complex, contested, multi-scalar and constantly negotiated. This image of home resonates through other geographical research as well, which has diversified into a range of issues: the ways in which different homes are constructed according to rhythms and routines;[24] how senses of home are felt by those who do not have permanent abodes;[25] how our understanding of comfort in the home has been conditioned by practices of consumption;[26] and a myriad of other topics. The key issues for geographies of home, summarised by Dowling and Blunt, are thus: "home as simultaneously material and imaginative; the nexus between home, power and identity; and home as multi-scalar".[27] While there is a diversity of work on home, these three key issues bring much research together.

As the central issues that Blunt and Dowling identify seem to suggest, there has been recognition that the home is a key place in which subjectivity, identity and well-being are all anchored. Even if the home is no longer conceived of as a private fortress, safely protecting its residents against the external 'public' realm, it is still an important place for the self. Indeed, the fact that such protection does not come automatically has resulted in domestic geographers paying closer attention to it: an interest has emerged in the ways in which the home has become a space of "contrasting connotations"[28] of positivity and negativity. Rather than just a protected ground for the safe self, researchers have come to recognise that home is a space within which both positive and negative versions of the self can be found. Head's research is particularly revealing of this. In her work with young mothers who spend their days at home with their children, Head explores how "the oppressiveness and isolation of home and full time mothering" can limit the lives of mothers who are unable to leave the house.[29] While this is a well-recognised trend, her research also revealed that mothers found the home a unique space for bonding with new-born babies, and where one participant was able to "create the kind of leisure activities that she finds too expensive to access outside the home. Here she describes how she turns her living room into a mini-cinema where the family cannot be disturbed".[30] The potential for positive experience in the home does not undo or

undermine the negative effects of isolation, with the gendered aspects of this particularly problematic. It does, however, reveal the ways in which our experience of home tends to fluctuate between two poles; rather than being either a space of isolation or a space of protection, home is most frequently both of these, to some degree.

While researchers have opened up a range of issues relating to the home, the specificities of the home at night have not been explored. Yet our existing knowledge of the home suggests that many of the activities associated with home are nocturnal ones. In the UK, the British Time Use Survey shows the six most common domestic activities to be the following

Table 1: The Most Common Activities in the Home[31]

Activity	Minutes in the home	% of day	% of time spent in the home
Sleep	476	33.06	47.46
Watching TV	152	10.06	15.15
Eating, Drinking	59	4.10	5.88
Personal Care e.g. Washing and Dressing	42	2.92	4.19
Rest	40	2.78	3.99
Cooking/Washing Up	40	2.78	3.99
Total	809	56.1	80.66

These activities can, broadly, be seen in two ways. First, almost all the activities are somehow involved in 'care of the self': sleep, rest, leisure activities (e.g. watching TV) and personal care. Such tasks may be done individually, or with cohabiters. These are the activities associated with looking after the self, either through relaxation – allowing external pressures to be removed from within the protecting walls of the home – or through direct physical care of the body.[32] Second, many of the activities are also involved in home 'making', that is, the work required in order to reproduce and maintain the home as both a material and imaginative space.[33] These two groups of activity interact: cooking, eating and washing up are necessary in order to provide for nutrition, but can also take on a key role in making a house 'homely'.[34] Indeed, an emergent sociological literature on home has sought to explore the ways in which these everyday practices of maintaining the self in the home have become increasingly important as vehicles of self-expression.[35] While research has not established whether these take place at 'night' – broadly defined here as the intersection of multiple rhythms entering phases of rest, inactivity or maintenance, of which the diurnal rhythm of light and dark is just one – activities such as sleep,[36] cooking[37] and personal care[38] are very closely associated with night and with darkness. Although this element of my argument mainly raises the need for

further research (as discussed in the conclusion), this suggests that there is a close connection between the practices which take place in domestic nights and the role of the home in fostering subjectivity. This opens up grounds for exploring the darkness and home relationship as a key component of domestic nights.

Darkness and the Home

While research into the home has therefore opened up in recent decades, the home at night – and associated darkness – has not been explored in any meaningful way. As the papers in this issue attest, studies of darkness in contemporary social science have tended towards studies of the public realm. In other words, home does not appear in studies of darkness and the night, while darkness and the night do not appear in studies of home. Research into darkness in geography has moved in three directions. First, work which explores 'night-time economy', which has been dominated by research into the night-time alcohol and leisure industry,[39] but which also looks at the role of darkness and lighting in creating a nocturnal urban sublime.[40] Second, research into the experience of towns, cities and landscapes in the dark,[41,42] connected to a long tradition of studies of the relationship between darkened spaces and crime or fear of crime.[43] Third, research which has studied the social-cultural histories of darkness[44] and the relationship between this and innovations in lighting technology.[45]

Within these explorations of darkness, however, home has not appeared as an important space. In part, this is because much of this work has emerged out of areas which have traditionally studied the public realm, such as architecture,[46] and from social theories which emphasise the material and affective constitution of urban spaces.[47] In particular, Edensor draws on work which has explored the concept of atmosphere – "a certain mental or emotive tone permeating a particular environment… spreading spatially around me, in which I participate through my mood"[48] - and seeks to show how light and dark contribute to our experience of these atmospheres, in a variety of different darkened and lit landscapes.[49] Such work has formed part of the 'affective turn' in social science,[50] which has encouraged a wider interest in the permeability of bodies, and in how we respond to forms of stimulation which may in part be pre-cognitive,[51] without falling outside of the realm as of the social: as Protevi argues, "social institutions and somatic affect are intertwined in diachronically developing and intensifying mutual reinforcement".[52] Despite the origins in topics which study the public realm, geographers have explored the home as part of this, emphasising the ways in which home becomes practiced as an affective space of attachment.[53] This pushes us towards questions of darkness and how bodies respond differently as light and dark emerge. This also ties into some of the existing research into the higher levels of fear of crime in darker spaces, which is based upon the embodied experiences of the dark landscape, though again outside of the home. So while a turn towards practice and affect appears to have generated an interest in darkness, and an interest in the embodied experience of home, these have not been extensively connected.

An exception to the lack of connection between home and darkness has come in some of the historical work which has explored the evolution of our relationship with light and dark. Here, the technological process of electrification has been explored as connecting to a cultural desire to 'banish' darkness (from the city) through lighting. Historically, darkness has been equated with danger: the night was a time when demons, criminals and others who presented a threat were imagined to be present in the landscape. Darkness was thus imagined as a space in which both real

and mythical dangers were present.[54] However, this darkness also offered opportunity to avoid surveillance in an era of sovereign-power. As Ekrich argues, darkness altered forms of power in the pre-artificial illumination city: "the darkness of night loosened the tethers of the visible world. Despite night's dangers, no other realm of preindustrial existence promised so much autonomy to so many people."[55] While those about in the dark were always under threat of falling foul of curfews, the lack of surveillance technology allowed people to move about with relative freedom, a feature of darkness which persists to some extent to the present day.[56] Nevertheless, though the night offered a freedom to roam – as long as one was not spotted by the city guard – the majority of people nevertheless retreated into home at night. Here, Ekrich's account is one of the few to look at the relationship between darkness and home. At night, in the dark, people would build familial and personal relationships. Of particular interest is the differing sleeping patterns that were common in pre-artificial illumination homes. With bedtimes associated with the fall of dusk, it was common for people to wake during the night and spend one-two hours in the darkened home, awake.[57] During this time, people would chat, make love, or engage in other home-making activities that they had not fitted into the day, before eventually falling into what was called the 'second sleep'. This reveals a darkened, nocturnal home that was far from emptied of activity, as we might initially imagine. Rather, night offered an opportunity for home-making that was not possible during the day.

The work of Ekrich, through exploration of diaries and written accounts of domestic life in Medieval England, reveals how in Medieval Europe, there were a number of key social-cultural practices which took place in the darkness of the home. This begins to open up space for a contemporary study of the domestic night which also focuses on the ways in which darkness cultivates a series of specific nocturnal practices. Here, this could tie into similar explorations of the 'rhythmic night', which drawing from time-geographies have emphasised the habits and rhythms that are located in the night due to domestic routines.[58] With research into temporality suggesting that our experiences of time have changed significantly with industrialization and technologization of society,[59] we might also expect shifts in the way that darkness is now experienced.[60] What practices, then, in the contemporary world are associated with darkness in the night? Before moving on to explore how darkness might be playing a role in a series of areas that domestic geographies have researched, I want to take some time to go into how the intimate experience of darkness has been conceived, drawing from phenomenological conceptions of darkness and influenced by writings in geography on atmosphere. This complements existing attempts to understand the darkness of larger public spaces through similar means. From this, I will move on to commenting on the potential contributions that an understanding of darkness in the home might have for geography.

One of the most sustained attempts to account for experiences of darkness has come from phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty's discussion of darkness is brief, but opens up the field for later consideration. He argues that "night is not an object before me; it enwraps me and infiltrates through all my sense, stifling my recollections and almost destroying my personal identity."[61] In other words, night penetrates into our sense of self – it erodes the body and its independence from other objects. Merleau-Ponty suggests that this is because night removes the safe perceptual field of daytime, that is, it is the experience of darkness which "enwraps me and infiltrates me", rather than night itself. Minkowski builds upon this idea in greater detail. His interest is in how experiences of mental unwellness often coincide with changes ability to experience time and space: "Pathological disorientation in time is accompanied by a disorientation in space, as if the two disorientations were only expressions of the same disorder" [62] Minkowski wants to recapture 'lived' time and space, that

is, time and space which are not dominated by technology and capitalism but by the embodied subject. This requires a qualitative definition of space, rather than one based upon space-as-extension. In doing so Minkowski differentiates two types of space: 'light space' and 'dark space', representing "the two ways of living space".[63] Though he does not claim that there is always a correlation between 'dark space' and space experienced in darkness, he does use the experience of darkness as the best illustration of dark space.

In living dark space, we do not simply sense the absence of light. Rather, darkness is defined by the shrinking of the bounded, perceiving space of the body. This space shrinks so tightly as to disappear so that, rather than active perceiving beings connecting out to materials in the world, instead our internal porosity is revealed, threatening our daytime sense of self. As Minkowski argues, darkness:

> "does not spread out before me but touches me directly, envelops me, embraces me, even penetrates me, completely, passes through me, so that one could almost say that while the ego is permeable by darkness it is not permeable by light. The ego does not affirm itself in relation to darkness but becomes confused by it."[64]

Here Minkowski expands on the argument made by Merleau-Ponty, exploring its implications in more detail. In particular, Minkowski argues that the affirmation of the ego does not operate in the same way in the dark. In other words, in light, we are able to recognise ourselves as selves by seeing ourselves as separate from other objects. In darkness we are unable to do this, unable to affirm the difference between our-selves and the objects around us.

This phenomenological theorisation of darkness chimes with other approaches. Bateson argues that the identification of the self as a bounded unit comes from seeing oneself as separated from the world: it relies on the visuality of light.[65] Similarly, Levinas' ontology of the night is based upon a rejection of the reduction of otherness that comes from a dominance of light.[66] Sparrow interprets this as "a dark realm of sensuous materiality" in which one is "caught in the grip of alterity".[67] So with light being the mechanism through which some other appears to me,[68] in darkness I am rendered open to that other. The perceptual field created by light is thus reconceived as a protective field, a boundary separating me from other objects which are 'held' at a distance. In night, however, these objects are no longer held at a distance, but are hidden and unknown. Cataldi describes this as "spatiality without things".[69] In the protecting 'bubble' of light, our sense of space is much clearer, but in the dark we have a more fluid spatiality, in which the internal and the external more readily intermix.

Thus we see that various understandings of darkness place their emphasis on openness to othering in the dark.[70] In a Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, we might understand this as a shifting towards the body-without-organs,[71] in which darkness has rendered us more open to being affected by the world. For Deleuze, the affective capacities of the body are the means that we can use to understand what a body is.[72] In inhabiting dark spaces, we inhabit a space in which the affective capacity of the body is simultaneously reduced as we lose touch with the certainty of our subjectivity, and increased as the openness to the world creates possibilities for new and unexpected connections. In the dark, our interaction with objects and space is much more vulnerable:

> "the sombre red colour of my curtain enters into an existential constellation with nightfall, with twilight, in order to engender an uncanny effect that devalues the self-evidences and urgencies which were impressing themselves on me only a few moments ago by letting the world sink into an apparently irremediable void."[73]

In darkness our world is reduced in size, but also expanded into an 'apparently irremediable void'. Is there a distinction between the intimate spaces of home of which Guattari speaks, and the darkness experienced in public space? The geographical research into public darkness seems to suggest that there might a connection here. Valentine's research into fear in cities tells us that "most women, especially at night, have a heightened consciousness of the micro design features of their environment, and adjust their pace and path accordingly".[74] Similarly, Edensor speaks of an increased awareness of specific objects within a largely dark rural landscape: as he argues: "in the darkness, the sight of small patches of light in an otherwise dark landscape… may serve to focus vision far more acutely than in the daylight".[75] As Morris points out, this heightens the non-visual: in the dark, "one is obliged to 'see' by drawing on other senses such as touch, smell".[76] All three writers are describing a heightened awareness which – particularly in the case of women looking to avoid darkened spaces in cities – emerges as an attempt to cope with the openness of the self to the other in darkness. For Morris, the nocturnal engagement with landscape indicates a limit to the visually-oriented phenomenological accounts of the self outlined above.[77] Darkened spaces do indicate that the affirmation of the self can take place through other means – through sound, touch or other senses. This fits with the Deleuzian account of affect mentioned above, which emphasises that subjectivity is multi-sensorial.[78] However, it also reveals that the capacities of non-visual senses in the bodies of people who are used to operating in an ocular-centric world are limited. Indeed, this has been a core argument made by proponents of a darker environment, who argue that the brightly lit nights of the twentieth century have dulled non-visual sensual capacity.[79] Moreover, if non-visual senses' roles in subjectivity formation are either affective (and therefore in part non-cognitive and tacit) or slower and more hesitant,[80] then control over the environment in which these become important ways of knowing the other - that is, control over darkness – emerges as a key question.

Through this review of some understandings of our experience of dark space, we have opened up a way of considering the relationship between darkness and the home. In the dark we are rendered radically open to the other. At home, due to our familiarity with the micro-geographies of the space, we may be able to gain control over our experience of darkness: encouraging the emergence of home as a space of safety and security for our subjectivity. By contrast, if we are unable to control our experience of darkness, home becomes less secure and potentially shifts towards experiences of 'entrapment'.[81] In the subsequent three sections, I want to consider how this insight might influence our understanding of three existing areas of home-related research: the home and relaxation; the home and intimacy; and the home and violence.

Darkness and Relaxation

Geographers have become increasingly concerned by the ways in which affective spaces of homeliness are curated – what Rose, after Derrida, terms a "spacing with composition"[82] - alongside a broad social science interest in the health benefits of well-being.[83] The cultivation of the home as a

space for well-being forms a central part of the discourses of home as hearth and as a place for anchoring subjectivity. While research such as Rose's has established the materialities of this cultivation,[84] less focus has been placed on the affective experiences of relaxation. Holloway et. al. explore how this can take place through the creation of positive corporeal and affective atmospheres. In their research, alcohol consumption facilitates the relaxing home. As one of their research participants states,

> "[W]hat I really like doing to be really decadent, [is to] just take a big glass to bed, to bed with me when I'm reading. You know if you sort of think there's nothing to watch on telly, I'll take a big glass of wine to bed and read, and it's lovely, it feels really decadent. And, and relaxing and lovely, so I like to do that as well. I suppose it is a bit of a luxury, I'm treating myself and being kind of to myself sort of thing"[85]

Crucially, this drinking "smoothes [participants'] passage through everyday life".[86] The body which is open to the world is one through which affects can pass both in and out: barriers are relaxed and the body is at rest. The spiritual practice of 'mindfulness', derived from interpretations of Buddhist philosophy, has emphasised the importance of encounters with 'natural darkness' in urban and rural landscapes.[87] Daniel describes an "introspective awareness" which emerges from the reduced vision of darkness, whereby the simultaneous experience of isolation and openness which comes with darkness helps relaxation and reflexivity.[88] More broadly, we can find in ritual and myth throughout the world an association between darkness and practices such as meditation, hypnotism, and other ways of attempting to generate states of openness to the world, and associated relaxation.

Might darkness help domestic relaxation function in the same way? Research might look at the ways in which light and dark are used as materials within the home. Petty argues that in the early Twentieth Century, lighting was sold as a way of making the use of the home easier and more enjoyable, with three key features being "attraction, comfort, and personality".[89] By contrast, researchers now regularly explore how exposure to artificial lighting has affected sleep (see below), as well affecting different forms of relaxation.[90] On the other hand, the presence of the lit home as a sanctuary in the darkened city can have well-being implications.[91] Here, the perceived safety of the home is central to its role as a space of relaxation, with the ability to banish dark from the home reinforcing its position as a 'subjectivity anchor'. In practice, research might compare different practices of home lighting and how these are cultivated towards relaxation. This would also intersect with other studies of the materialities of comfort.[92] In particular, then, we might imagine that the power to control both darkness and light is at the heart of domestic relaxation. In other words, in the relaxed home, we are able to choose whether to experience complete or partial darkness, and thus gain control over when and how our bodies are opened up towards the affectivity of the world. Here, then, we enter into a position of power: Deleuze argues that "an exercise of power shows up as an affect, since force defines itself by its very power to affect other forces and to be affected by other forces".[93] How people attempt to control darkness in the home may reveal that for the home to become a space of relaxation, it needs to become one in which we can exercise power over the affectivity of our bodies through (for example) controlling how we experience darkness.

Related to this relaxation in the darkened home is the experience of sleep. As Kraftl and Horton point out, "the states and practices of sleeping and sleepiness… remain largely overlooked" in social

science.[94] In their list of potential possible provocations that sleep can provide geographers, Kraftl and Horton do not mention darkness: creating the proper space for sleeping in, including the lighting levels, is a key part of many people's experiences of sleep. A series of products – eye-masks, black-out blinds, dimmer switches – exist so that people can either obtain 'complete' darkness, or else chose a level of darkness suitable to them. This forms part of the 'consumption of sleep',[95] in which differing elements of sleep become incorporated into capitalist political economy. While Kraftl and Horton seek to place sleep alongside other social-cultural practices,[96] Harrison by contrast is interested in how sleep troubles and ruptures our sense of the social. His account of sleep, specifically 'dreamless sleep', is an attempt to explore the body "in the absence of practice",[97] and whether the sleeper can be said to engage with their environment. Drawing from phenomenological accounts of sleep, Harrison aligns sleep to Fink's concept of 'lethe', that is, dark or night. In this account, sleep, night and darkness are all "the undifferentiated ground upon which differentiation - or `worlding' - occurs… put simply, sleep is the necessary but forgotten condition of disclosure".[98] He goes on to argue that such accounts of sleep open up an opportunity for accounts of subjectivity which are withdrawn from the world, which do not engage with practices around them. Research into the home might suggest that such experiences of sleep are predicated upon a particular environment: that a comfortable, dreamless sleep, is for many people only possible through the cultivation of a particular relationship to the world, namely, one in which there is this control over the dark environment. Both relaxation and sleep seem to be connected to experiences of darkness in the home, and in particular to the ability to control this experience.

Darkness and Intimacy

> "What man art thou that, thus bescreen'd in night
> So stumblest on my counsel?"[99]

There has long been a relationship between darkness and intimacy. For people in Early Modern times, "night was a fertile time for romantic liaisons of all sorts, notwithstanding rigorous restrictions against sexual activity".[100] Night provided a cover for sexual liaisons that would have been forbidden during the day: the celebrated balcony scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* reflects this, taking place at night so that the lovers can avoid the surveillance of the Montague and Capulet houses. On a more mundane basis, the seventeenth century saw the emergence of the practice of 'bundling', in which courting couples were permitted to spend the night at the home of the woman's parents, with sexual intercourse strictly forbidden.[101] Here, the value of nocturnal intimacy was recognised as important, extending beyond the simple convenience of the dark as a time in which to have sex. The association between darkened spaces and romantic/sexual intimacy continues through to modern day, with Melbin in particular noting that night-time 'pioneers' would be those looking for darkened spaces for sexual activity that might be otherwise deemed illegal or improper,[102] while the association between the night-time alcohol and leisure industry and sex[103] persists in part due to the intimacy which is possible in the dark.

Similarly in the contemporary home, we can identify the importance of darkness in supporting forms of non-visual intimacy. Morrison focuses on touch as "a homemaking practice often considered a 'normal' part of life, particularly when couples live together and see each other on a regular basis".[104] Here, touch may be sexual or non-sexual. In either instance, research might explore how the openness of the body in darkness increases the sensual experience of touch that Morrison

identifies, but also might feed into more negative experiences of the dark home (explored in the next section of this article). Other work on intimacy has emphasised how the home is a space in which sexuality is learned,[105] supported by access to darkness and the privacy that it can afford . Indeed, it is possible to identify the similarities between the youthful learning of sexuality that Robinson et. al. report and the practice of 'bundling' reported on by Ekrich. This suggests a continuing lineage of darkness in the home as fostering the intimacy and cover for people to develop and practice ways of being intimate.

The home is also a space for forms of intimacy beyond sexuality, particular in relationships with friends and family.[106] Research into this topic, however, is largely absent. As Valentine argues, "the whole affective register of familial connections and practices, including erotic and non-erotic relations has been largely neglected".[107] Jarvis' research into the temporalities of domestic practices suggests that the negotiation of intimacy in the home is a complex process which will vary between differing living arrangements. She argues that a range of different "social spaces, moral codes, and practical systems of sharing facilitated by the infrastructures of daily life" [108]– in other words, a range of different ways of negotiating intimacy – emerge in cohousing when opposed to the dominant practices of the family home. Homes are the time-spaces of the making of sexual relationships with partners, familial relationships with kin, and through invitation into the homespace, friendship relationships as well. As such, the home contains multiple ways of being intimate.[109]

Darkness can help support certain forms of intimacy: existing research emphasises the importance of darkness for love, both romantic and erotic, but it may play other roles as well. Intimate moments in the relationships between parents and children, for example, are often practiced in the dark: through watching television, reading stories, or sharing a bed after nightmares. Social care may take place in dark or dimmed rooms, again with the sharing of personal activities at the centre of intimacy. The curation of a home as a space for relaxation may be predicated on the ability to have intimate relations with others in the dark. Conversely, as will be discussed in the section on darkness and violence, it is the intimacy of darkened spaces which perpetrators of domestic violence are able to exploit in order to generate atmospheres of fear.[110] In the dark home, as we become more open to affect, so there is the possibility of the emergence of these new and stronger connections between people, both positively and negatively: subjectivity becomes increasingly mixed as darkness encourages greater levels of affecting and being affected by other bodies.[111] Once again, intimacy in darkness reveals a complex relationship between, on the one hand, the protective cover that darkness provides, and the openness to the world that darkness generates.

Darkness, Fear and Violence

The cultivation of the home as a space for relaxation and intimacy suggests some of the positive features of darkness in the home. It connects the openness to affect fostered by darkness to the positive experiences of, first, being able to connect with others and, second, having the power to choose the extent of darkness to experience. However, as noted previously, many experiences of the home contain more negative components, and darkness is no exception to this. Studies of domestic violence have noted that much domestic violence, both physical and mental, takes place at night.[112] Very little work on domestic violence, however, has explored the role played by either night or darkness in allowing the violence to perpetuate. Rather, these have largely been presumed to be a background to other more important features. In this section, I want to consider the ways in which

the darkness of the domestic night might contribute to the wider social and personal ecology which fosters domestic violence.

In previous sections, we have noted that the openness to the world associated with darkness contributes to openness to being affected by the other.[113] In particular, this openness involves an increase in flow between the body and the world. As established in research with domestic violence victims in Scotland, domestic violence is able to be perpetuated through the creation of a "chronic fear which builds up over the long term and leads to significant trauma and negative effects on health and wellbeing".[114] While the implications of this 'nocturnality' are not reflected on by the researchers, the paper suggests that this fear is more prevalent at night. The report, for example, includes several references to nightmares. As one of participant summarises: "the flashbacks you get as well eh and that's what I couldnae cope with and terrified at night".[115] It is in the night, when darkness falls, that the mental effects of this form of abuse become most felt. World and mind fuse together, and emotions such as fear are able to dominate in ways that the protective light of day can prevent.

Fear in the home at night extends beyond domestic violence, however. Fear of the dark is a common experience among children,[116] and can extend to adults too. Little research seems to exist into the experiences, practices, activities and coping behaviours that are associated with children's fear of the dark, outside of studies located firmly in the psychological.[117] While potentially dismissible as a phenomenon that children grow out of, exploration of the ways in which darkness takes form for children as an active and menacing presence in the home might tell us more about children's experiences of home, and space in the home more broadly. In developing practices and behaviours to respond to the darkness, children attempt to regain control over their experience of the unknown, and of the openness to the world that dark creates. The relative lack of power that children have in home, and over their experiences of darkness – at night children are 'tucked-in' and then abandoned to the dark by their parents – can again be understood as contributing to these fears. With darkness playing a key role in children's experience of home, there are multiple potential questions here that could inform understandings of home in the study of children's geography.

Darkness in the home can create a positive affective atmosphere where individuals have had choice over their ability to enter in and engage with the openness to affectivity created by darkness, but there seems to be a reverse process occurring where individuals do not have this power. Research has also focused on the ways in which the darkened home binds abusers together with those who are abused. Lowe et. al., for example, raise the issue of sleeping alongside the perpetrator of domestic violence. They found that women in abusive relationships were forced to take a variety of strategies with regards to sleep: they might avoid sleep while the partner is at home; they might only sleep once the partner was in bed. These combine to mean that there is a: "connection between sleep deprivation and the establishment of a regime of power and control by one person over another—the hallmark of domestic violence".[118] Here, the proximity of the two bodies in the darkened space allow the perpetrator of violence to exercise power over the other – a power which I argue is exacerbated by the effects of darkness in opening the self up to affectivity.

Conclusion

By focusing on these three research areas, we begin to open up some of the ways in which control over darkness takes on this position of power in the domestic night. The primary aim of this account

has been to open up a research agenda towards exploring this. This necessarily contains some moments which are more speculative or which call for further exploration. Most obviously, the phenomenological accounts of subjectivity from which the argument derives have their own limits.[119] Non-representational accounts of subjectivity also explore the multiple ways in which subjects can emerge from experiences, many of which are not visual.[120] I would support accounts which recognize the limit to visually, and the wider importance of corporeity, but would also argue that non-visual ways of producing subjectivity tend to either operate at an affective level, which is in-part tacit and non-cognitive, or else are slower and more hesitant:[121] if anything, then, this might reinforce the importance of control over the conditions, such as darkness, when these forms of subjectification become more central. The account has also drawn from theoretical material which typically talks of a dark/light binary.[122] In practice we experience dark and light relatedly. Homes are rarely wholly dark or wholly light, and we move between different levels of light and gloom.[123] Finally, it is worth noting that this account does not deny the possibility of danger being associated with light, or protection being associated with darkness. It is possible to developed skilled, corporeal knowledge of dark places through extended engagement with dark or dimly lit landscapes. Similarly, the protective field of light may be an illusory one, whose glare hides other ways of being with the other. Thus to associate dark with openness to the other is not to necessarily associate it inherently with danger, and to connect light with safety: the point is that, following Deleuzian theories of affective capacities,[124] openness to alterity brings both vulnerability and opportunity.

To conclude this paper, we may consider four research directions that an orientation towards darkness in the home might push us. First, we might consider the experience of varying levels of darkness in greater detail. Future research might help open up some of the nuances of dark and light in the home, and the relationship between spaces which are lit and unlit. This is exemplified by Bille's work on the concept of 'hygge', hinting at the complexities of light and dark in the home.[125] Second, geographies of domestic darkness might connect us to explorations of the infrastructure required for light in the home, and the differing domestic experiences of people in the lit and unlit home. Petty has previously explored how electrification of the home did not happen automatically. Rather, the new ways of consuming light were encouraged by companies who needed to justify their investment in infrastructure. How our relationship to light and dark has shifted, and how this changed domestic practices, is of interest.[126] Third, and building on this, the consumption of darkness in the home might be increasingly explored. Already mentioned is the purchasing of numerous materials to increase darkness in the home and aid sleep.[127] However there may also be other ways of consuming darkness in the home which are of interest – for example, the popularity of amateur astronomy, which might also suggest the existence of unequal access to the night's darkness, predicated as it is on either a large garden, or access to the roof of a building. Fourth, geographies of domestic darkness might intersect with other questions of the domestic night more broadly. In particular, the darkened home connects with broader 'rhythmic' understandings of night, in which social networks and mobility often reduce in size and scope. This might in particular combine with darkness in situations of vulnerability to leave people trapped in the home, enhancing the importance of control over how dark is experienced.

The emerging literature on geographies of darkness has helped explore how people have engaged with dark landscapes.[128] Darkness in the more intimate spaces of the home has received significantly less attention. Yet this paper has argued that darkness, and the interplay between spaces of greater or lesser extent of light, is important to our experience of the domestic. This paper has drawn from

phenomenological perspectives of the experience of darkness to argue that in the dark, we are left more open to be affected by other objects. Light generates a zone around the self, within which it feels protected, whereas in darkness, we are rendered more open to the affectivity of other. This openness to affect also allows flows to come out from the body, so that the gap between the 'internal' space of the self and the 'external' space of the world becomes much more porous. This porosity is at once opportunity, and vulnerability. As such, power comes from controlling how, when and with whom this openness to the world is experienced. Within a wider ecology of violence or suffering, this can damage the self further; within a wider ecology of care and relaxation, it can help anchor the self in the home. The interplay or light and dark in the home is thus much more than a background within which action takes place, but a key constituent part of what home is and how it helps produce self.

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