0300–0430

Jesus M. Sierra
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Broadcast and Video Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Sierra, Jesus M., "0300–0430" (2012). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 603.
https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/603

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu,dig-commons@du.edu.
A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Jesus Sierra

June 2012

Advisors: Diane Waldman and Tony Gault
Abstract

Night, a time everyone experiences and few contemplate. It is a time of darkness both figuratively and literally. Darkness of the soul and of the mind, when some rest and others are restless. We live in an age of endless day where the night is nothing more than a time to be blinded by electronic light. With this in mind the question becomes how was our night seen in the past? Also, how was the night and the darkness represented throughout time? To answer these questions I researched the topic of night and made a film entitled 0300 – 0430.

The film was only recorded between three and four-thirty in the morning and delved into what occurs at night and by whom. Moving from mountain nightscapes to bustling cities the film explores what it means to be up at night. Working, partying or at rest each has a part to play.
# Table of Contents

Thesis Proposal .......................................................................................................... 1  
Literature Review ........................................................................................................ 3  
Content and Form ........................................................................................................ 18  
Tentative Shooting Schedule .................................................................................... 24  
Preliminary Shooting Budget .................................................................................... 25  
Audience Analysis and Impacts ................................................................................ 26  

Thesis Report ............................................................................................................... 33  
Pre-Production ........................................................................................................... 34  
Post Production .......................................................................................................... 52  

Critique of Strengths and Weaknesses ..................................................................... 63  

Bibliography ................................................................................................................ 75  

Appendices .................................................................................................................. 76  
   Appendix A ........................................................................................................... 76  
   Appendix B ........................................................................................................... 77  
   Appendix C ........................................................................................................... 78  
   Appendix D ........................................................................................................... 79  
   Appendix E ........................................................................................................... 80  
   Appendix F ........................................................................................................... 81  
   Appendix G ........................................................................................................... 82  
   Appendix H ........................................................................................................... 83  

Thesis Proposal

The night we live in is no longer filled with darkness but has become an extension of the day. Once, we feared the night, and so, from the torch to the lamp and from the lamp to the computer screen, we sought to brighten the dark places. Over time, as our outer world became perpetually brightened, our inner world became a place of perpetual discontent. Our fears of the external darkness have been replaced by the constant, restless distraction wrought by the light. Today, we need to turn off sources of light (TVs, electronics) to truly appreciate the serenity found only in the dark. The very light our ancestors relied on for survival now removes any hope of true rest. My film is called Night and it is a poetic documentary about how the light that meant our freedom from the dark has created the need for the dark to become a freedom from the light. It is a film about the battle between the light and dark places, and about how the darkness that was once a source of fear has become a source of respite.

What does it mean to live when others sleep? What is it to live in different times of light? Our night is a world of the constantly awakened masses ready to find solace. This is the new norm in our times but it was not always like that. There are those who work and play when others are asleep, and they do these things for differing reasons. When most of America’s people are in their fourth dream, those of us in night jobs keep watch over everyone else, quietly enjoying the undisturbed serenity of night. From this perspective of peaceful respite, and from the yellow lights of empty parking lots to the
grey haze of moonlight, Night will showcase the factors that contribute to, and continually disrupt, this quiet serenity.

I, too, was this person, awake while others slept, almost viewing my role in life as a guardian over the black endlessness of night. I was entertained by the infomercial, not recognizing its true dark intent to lure me in with false promises for quick success. Once awakened from this false light, the world opened up suddenly. Those people I saw working during a rare visit to the outside world in the deep nighttime created inspiration. Through them I saw my own future. I too can be awake and productive. If the proposed film Night had existed then, this process of embracing the peace of the night would have come much sooner for me, and all of the successes I found in working nights may have been realized much earlier.

A documentary about the night is not new, but this will be unlike the others. The focus will be on the poetry found in the darkness. This film will not showcase any one subject or profession, but will move fluidly between various celebrations of the night. The viewer will experience what it feels like to walk through an empty forest without a flashlight, or to see the city without the brightness of a never ending day. My love for the night will be expressed in the poetic mode of documentary highlighted by the freedom allowed in the observational mode. Through this film, the viewer will be given the same freedom to experience a sense of timelessness and surrender as someone awake at three a.m. Production will be primarily in Denver and over the road throughout the summer; settings for the film will include forests, convenience stores and broken down buildings. Every image will be treated so as to echo the feeling of a painting on velvet. The
soundtrack will be composed of (or built from) not just silence, but natural sounds and music that will vary based on the theme being explored.

I was born in the 1980s and can remember a slower time when staying awake meant a fun sojourn from the norm. The night was a special time to look up at the stars and wonder. This love for the slowness of the time led to my desire to be awake and exploring the darkness. Now, as speed and availability of communication have increased, we have lost something, from the fun of the night to the need to stay up to keep up. The world doesn’t appreciate what the night has become or what the endless day that has replaced night has meant for us all. *Night* will explore this feeling of the loss of night’s serenity. When is light too much light? What is lost when nothing but light and its brief shadows remain?

**Literature Review**

Even as the light continues to encroach upon every moment of natural darkness, we as a community continue to reach deeper into the darkness through the mystery of both the soul and the mind. Throughout time many artists, thinkers and performers have spoken of this inner darkness as well as of the allure of the night. What does it mean to be surrounded by darkness? To be engulfed in not only the emotional ties of the night but also the inner fight of the mind? From saints and psychiatrists to comedians and naturalists, the night has been a source of inspiration. Each thinker interacts with and attempts to understand what it means to be surrounded by the darkness in a way that either must be fought or embraced. This literature review will look at the relations
between the human condition and the night, and how our perceptions have changed over time.

**Surrounded by the Night**

According to Gerald Brenan (1975), the religious poetry of the Renaissance echoed a new positive sense of accomplishment. The metaphor of light was intended to remind people of the need to lift the human soul to heaven. Religious scholars during the early Renaissance still represented religious doctrine while also exploring new aspects worthy of study, employing poetry and rhyme to describe what they saw as the necessity of fighting against the temptations of the night. Darkness came to be associated with chaos and the hidden dangers concealed inside every person, and persons willing to listen or able to read were cautious of the need to be aware of the inevitable internal struggle against darkness (Brenan, 1975, 120). What became a simple choice away from temptation ended up as a lifetime search to find the light. Writers encouraged these lost sheep to use the metaphorical light as a guide to heaven and away from temptation. Bringing temptation into the light was the true goal of writing about the darkness of the soul. The temptation of man was too easily given into; too easily the darkness crept in. With every misplaced deed their flocks came closer to destruction.

At the same time, 16th century writers such as St. John of the Cross of Spain saw the night as inevitability. The metaphor of night became not just sin but love; the person was free to see night as not inherently bad or worthy of damnation. Poets such as St. John spoke of redemption as experienced in even the faintest of light in the darkest of nights be it a candle or the human soul. Through the moonlight and through the warm
breath of a lover’s touch the lost were found. Renaissance poetry embraced the early belief in not only the power of the day, but in the romance of the night. These early Renaissance works shifted the view of darkness as just sin to a chance for redemption. It was entirely up to the viewer to experience fear and conquer it by walking into the dark wilderness.

Speaking on more of a metaphysical level, the night became a path on the road to the one love of god and his eternal embrace. This can be found in the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, a Flemish Renaissance painter. In his painting *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565) the darkened, faceless hunters move towards the white snowy town filled with prancing citizens. With their track animals in tow the hunters are free to walk into the light of the city; free to move from the darkness of the hunt to the loving embrace of family and friends (Bruegel 1565). In this, Bruegel speaks towards the redemptive value of conquering the wilderness of fear. (The painting can be found in appendices A.)

The night ultimately became a time of tests and unlike the day they were harder to see as the literal and metaphysical realms of defining and resisting the dark were one. During the day temptation meant resistance; during the night the same temptations needed to be actively fought. It was through this fighting where true revitalization was found. Another Renaissance painter, Michelangelo of Italy, was responsible for the genesis of this belief. In many of his works Michelangelo spoke of the redemptive value of the light in the dark. Specifically in the fresco *The Last Judgment* (1541) he depicts Jesus as the center of the dark heaven protected by a ring of light (Michelangelo 1541). (Michelangelo’s painting can be found in appendices B.) The judgments made by the
saints are not based on earthly location but deed. Heaven is a dark blue with neither side of the afterlife truly black or white but still separated by a thin layer of light. Nothing less than the human soul was at stake. Following the Renaissance, artists struggled to find new media through which to express the dark. We moved from outward values and redemptive values of the light and dark into the large bustling cities of our inward selves. No longer were we told how to experience the dark but were free to look inward for answers.

The modernist view of the soul became an inward metaphysical construct. It became our desires and needs, not just a tool to reach heaven. From scholars such as Carl Jung to painters like Monet and Seurat the darkness represented a subject of humanity to explore. This era also saw the rise of film as another medium to look at the relationship between our increasingly modern lives and the dark. There was no question that technology or science couldn’t answer, but still, artists attempted to portray ourselves as nothing but movers through the darkness and not conquerors of it.

With the advent of impressionist paintings the world was not just a religious battle between light and dark but a world to be lived in. No one painted more prolifically on this subject then Edouard Manet, a French painter. Not to be confused with Claude Monet who also painted the human as subject, Manet portrayed the human form as interacting with the light and not just affected by it. Works such as *The Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) and *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere* (1882) radiated light off the central female subjects. (Each Manet work can be found in appendices C and D respectively.) The reflections presented were not just black shadows but were true detailed shadows of
reflected light. Manet was not the only painter to explore this subject as modern impressionist forms took over from the realist religious forms of the Renaissance. A French contemporary of Manet, Claude Monet also sought to present the human as subject. From his painting *The Woman in the Green* (1866) with its jet black background to the lonely painter found at night in *The Boat Studio* (1876) Monet worked to bring out the night. Unlike Manet, Monet incorporated large nature and city scenes to represent a move from our renaissance past into our modern lives. (*The Woman in the Green* and *The Boat Studio* are represented in appendices E and F.)

In the early 20th century while impressionist painters were still portraying the human condition as a subject to interact with, philosophers like Carl Jung spoke of humanity’s shadow. This shadow, according to Jung, was a metaphorical dark tail still dragging behind us (Jung 2007, 25). World War One was still casting a long dark silhouette into the possibility of a peaceful modern future. From the gore of trench warfare, Jung described the shadow of war as earlier external fears of the night turned inward, expressed in the fear of not falling behind either technologically or physically. Jung called this the despiritualization of the world (Jung 2007, 140), and described a time in which we were fascinated with the shadow that dragged behind us. This shadow encompasses our darkest desires, and our subsequent willingness to destroy ourselves through war to attain them.

Before film processing was used to make “moving pictures” the dark was explored using ink and oil. The world was only able to be seen through a museum window or reproduced book. It was not until the advent of film production and
processing when the search for the dark inside all of us found a new voice, a new medium to explore. In the 1890s, film was still considered an experimental form, sought to explore the link between our modern lives and the human condition. With no set rules of what defined a documentary or narrative, filmmakers begun striking their own tones and meanings. In more of the literal sense the film camera captured light and displayed it in dark places for entertainment purposes. The film camera became a ringleader in a circus of darkness. The last act of the 1927 film *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* dealt most specifically with this transition from the fear of the night to the bright city life. The city itself is depicted as almost expecting its citizens to give into the earthly temptations of the night.

From the glitzy burlesque theatres to the fully lit ice rinks, *Berlin: Symphony* moved the viewer into a celebration of modernity. Not fully captured before on film were activities of the bright city life that any audience could experience and enjoy. The illumination of the city must have seemed to the small town viewer a world away from their oil lit street lamps and candlelit houses. The juxtaposition of shots allows for temptation to be experienced but not fully given into,pulling the viewer into believing that they could partake of any sin on screen, from the lustful young man drinking a beer to the sloth of modern life (Ruttmann 1927). *Berlin: Symphony* in its coverage of the city found a need to record the night life, creating a special film to cover the glitz and glamour of this new modernist nightlife. This need helped to reveal that darkness had shifted once again: now, it was not feared, nor internalized, but oversaturated by flickering light bulbs.
For the first time, modern technology could fully light the darkness, ostensibly conquering the fear of the night. Films such as *Berlin: Symphony* at the time encouraged living for the night and this must have been seen as a great revolution in the hunt for the true nature of temptation and the soul. The technology of the modernist time became the new sword and shield, the new bible with which we fended off the negative feeling that heaven may not be attainable. This new permanent curiosity into what was possible and what embracing the night can attain is key to what the act of modern looking became.

**The Act of Seeing**

Fifty years after Jung, the art of looking had become a subject of great interest. The scientist had replaced the naturalist in terms of romanticism of the world, as science enabled a deeper and closer look into the everyday details of the natural world than had ever before been possible. We came to see humanity itself as not just an exploration of our values in a modern world, but as a series of stories involving the truth and logic of science. Increasingly, stories questioned ideas of any single truth and highlighted the diversity of lived experience while trying to expand the future through looking into the past.

In 1963 author Bradley Angier wrote *We Like it Wild*, a book about true back-to-nature living. Bradley and his wife moved away from New York City to “find themselves” and escape the “big city hustle” (Angier 1963, 31). They fully embraced the darkness not to seek out hell or give up on modernity but to become true to who they felt they were. Unlike other authors such as Annie Dillard, Angier and his wife saw the darkness, as not just another avenue to explore but a freedom to embrace fully. They saw
the log as a tool to survive and the night as a time of reflection. This theme of reflection in the darkness, a choice to quiet the modern mind and just listen, runs deep through this era. Still trusting in the science of the steel blade and matchhead to make fire, Angier doesn’t give up on everything modern but uses only what is necessary to survive.

Annie Dillard in her 1974 book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* goes even further in fully embracing the darkness as well as the uniqueness of our own perspective. Dillard believes we have a need to see where we have been. The wilderness to her is now fully conquered and has become a new avenue to view ourselves. She states “I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam” (Dillard 1974, 81).

Dillard attempts to absorb all that is good and positive for the hopeful wish that even for a moment she can feel the true wilderness no longer available to her in the agitation of modern life. And yet, our fascination with the basic encounter between individual humans and nature occurred just as we were coming to realize the vastness of the universe itself. As space exploration advanced in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, we looked up collectively and, seeing the vast eternal darkness of space only illuminated by the stars, we sought to reach them. Our explorative nature pointed upward and the shadow cast was from the exhaust of rockets pushing astronauts into the dark abyss of space.

Through the space age, we became children of the stars, discovering that we are just stardust and atoms put together from the first light of the big bang (Sagan 1985, 166). We understood that the uneasiness felt in darkness was not just simply a fear reflex but an evolutionary response to predation. We as a society were united by the moon landing, as
the technology of television made it a global event. Published in 1985 as a response to his documentary, Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos* became not just another look at our past but at our dark past. For Sagan, our past pursuits of the spiritual light represented repression of reason and thought. Knowledge and our individual growth now represented the advances of our species (Sagan 1985, 170). The human story was no longer earthbound, and we were free to pursue the dark in new and exciting ways.

Late modern literature reflects a new romanticism with the scientists and their ability to peer farther and deeper into our own past. From the Hubble telescope, humanity gained a new perspective on the night, as scientists taught us that the stars we now view are long dead sources of light. Yet Sagan still believed the inner struggle of humanity must not be ignored. From the wars that created the peacetime technology we must be ever vigilant not to ignore our inner darkness. The end of the Cold War meant freer access to the darker side of science. Sagan knew embracing this dark path only meant destruction. Yet there is hope as humanity has become the light in the darkness, a beacon in the cold empty space. As he wrote, “as children we fear the dark…anything can be anything out there…ironically it is our fate to live in the dark” (Sagan 1985, 76).

In the postmodern world, Sagan remained a modernist, trusting that the inner light of humanity would guide us to great heights. Yet other authors of this time sought a simpler mix with modernity and postmodern story telling.

In the 1994 film *Ecological Design: Inventing the Future*, Cousineau explains that it is our dark past and hopeful future that elicits a back-to-nature philosophy, trusting that nature and the night will accept us again if we embrace them. As a civilization we must
use our technology to limit the light we spread and the darkness we corrupt. From the destructive light of a nuclear world to the never ending light of civilization, *Ecological Design* advocates that we don’t become more industrialized, but rather use what we have to live within nature’s limits. We must turn off the lights and look outwards (Cousineau 1994); otherwise, we will all be forced to fear the dark cold again. The widened perspective of our modern and postmodern worlds now embraces the dark and we make meaning in it; the night, its fear and mystery no longer makes meaning for us.

**Living in the Night**

The romanticism we once held toward the night has given way to the need to see realism, even nihilism, in the darkness. The bloody over the top horror films of the 20th century now give way to “torture porn” and the gritty look of a narrative film presented as documentary. The meaning presented feels, and the almost surreal need to feel fear again became paramount as the emotions associated with darkness and shadows were now employed as conventions simply to entertain. Horror films have long tried to scare people with the boogieman in the dark, knife in hand, and ready to murder another hapless stereotype but now the enemy is fear itself. Now, we no longer associate fear with the masked killer, but through the postmodern technique of faking a documentary, the audience feels real fear for the actors themselves. The empty, inevitable, death of a character has come to represent our empty technologically crazed world bathed in light.

Simple fear in us remains, even as the march of technology continues to push the light into every dark place. In the 1999 film *The Blair Witch Project* the producers chose to play off our still present fears of the darkness. In the past we lit the streets and forests
with our technology; now the interest is in the artificial light being removed, with all that remains is a campfire and camera to record the breakdown of civilization. The night became a missed time, an opportunity lost from our previous lives.

During filming of *The Blair Witch Project* the actors were unaware of the script or next location; they just followed directions found in notes located around the campsites (Blair Witch Project 1999). The fear felt on camera was as real as any documentary but still presented as a narrative. The Blair Witch entity is not real, ghosts are not real, and the focus of the film was not on the animals that lurk at night but on fictitious dark enemies ready to drag anyone they found into hell. St. John of the Cross spoke about this dark night of the stilled house and the lovely dawn (Brenan 1975, 44). *The Blair Witch Project* in its postmodern approach to the meta-realism associated with the darkness found in the film becomes a modern retelling of the themes of St. John of the Cross. The characters living in the metaphor of night are realized as not just sin but worthy of redemption.

The night has again become something to be feared but still explored. The fear comes not from the unknown but of the breakdown of norms, symbolized in a campfire losing the flame simultaneously with an unexpected noise in the blacked out forest. What was once just a brief thought can quickly become the endless fear and hopelessness of a modern life. The fear of loss, of non-existence, truly a life without meaning can bring a representation of the ultimate silence found at night.
**Reality**

From the shadow of a crumbling infrastructure the disposed citizens of our world move under it and away from the prying lights of the city. These urban under dwellers find safety in the darkness, find a home and community in the never ending night. These new citizens of the world are found and documented in the 2000 documentary *Dark Days*. Living in the “freedom tunnels” created in a 1930s New York City, the current occupants are, like the tunnels, all but forgotten. Whereas *The Blair Witch Project* attempted to bring back fear of the dark wilderness, the documentary *Dark Days* chooses to embrace the New York urban jungle. Darkness and meaning are only truly experienced, the film proposes, when living and moving under the city, away from its rules and authority.

The castaways living in these tunnels embrace the darkness not out of choice but necessity. Living in these conditions is not easy, but the old stubbornness of the soul is now mixed with the realities of an electronic time. The night is fully embraced, yet there are punctures of light in these tunnels. With what electricity can be harvested, the sounds of radios and small lamps can be seen and heard. These small amenities of a modern world break through the endless silence and dark of the tunnels, but are still nothing compared to the sights and sounds of the city found above. Below the hustle and brightness of the city life, these people live in eternal darkness in a way that few understood before *Dark Days*. Yet by the end of the film, all the citizens of this under city are forced to move into the light. In the end, the tunnel and the half built shanty homes within them, are cleared of people, with belongings now adorning the end tables
of government housing. The feeling of community found in the tunnels was destroyed; the housing provided above ground in the light removed their freedom found in the dark; a dark freedom, this film proposes, that we would all soon seek with the advent of portable electronics and twenty-four hour television.

The film is a metaphor for life in a twenty-four seven society: even as more people work at night or at otherwise dark occupations, even those who truly live surrounded by the black are eventually forced into the light. The same methods used during the day are assumed to work at night, although from doctors to police officers, night work is generally found less desirable.

There are only a few chosen professions that revel in their night status. These people chose to do good work when surrounded by the worst the world can offer, to be alert when everyone else is asleep. Still judged for these choices, it is assumed by everyone else that they must “recover” from working the night shift (Horrocks 2006, 4) as if it’s some kind of illness. Working nights is seen as a problem that can be overcome with simple bed rest. Even in a post 9/11 world where vigilance is sought, the night worker is still cast aside or misunderstood.

Although their chosen fields can range from health to hospitality, still the night gives them no cover from mandated judgments levied against them. Managers are advised on how to force employees to cope with working nights, as if the darkness is a real aspect to be feared. The “want to sleep” (Horrocks 2006, 10) means to them less productivity in an already slow shift. Still, these night watchmen are given no backup, forced to walk lonely darkened halls and alleys. Their mind is left to wander and rest.
This needed sleep is always present but at the same time, the consequences of being caught sleeping during peaceful moments can range from reprimand to losing a job. Whereas before the soul could find relaxation and calm in the dark, now the night of work brings anyone awake nothing but the pain of sleeplessness and television, of course. The technology that once lit a room with a simple press of a remote now keeps anyone nearby awake with twenty four hour news and entertainment. The suggestion becomes to embrace the darkness again and sleep days, covering your windows and quieting the technology that keeps us thinking and awake (Horrocks 2006, 11).

Although television is the common companion of the night worker, an increase in popularity of electronic gaming has brought with it stories of the dark and the night to get through the time of darkness, as well. Whereas most games are run-and-gun-shoot-to-kill terrorists, *Alan Wake* attempted to speak to a fear of the dark and the need to overcome it. Taking place in the fictitious city of Bright Falls, the town’s people have been completely taken over by a dark force that no gun or conventional weapon can defeat. Those “taken” must be shown the light before attacked, be it through flare or flashlight. Every citizen is an enemy until cleansed by the player.

The increase in technology again lends itself to telling the story of our struggle with the temptations and darkness that resides in us all. Computer generated shadows are none the less speaking to us and the inner struggle between what is our dark past and the hopeful future. The detective story of *Alan Wake* is as much a tale of humanity’s past and its near future as it is entertainment. Again the night is to be feared but also fought against. The enemies are nothing to the power of human conviction and the will to
survive. The player is defeated once he is overwhelmed by the dark but can survive once fully invested in the light.

In the Internet age, we play games to discover our own darkness and react to what we see at night. The primal fears lessened by the campfire are now explored from the safety of home. Button presses have replaced the poetic verse in analyzing our intentions and chances of heaven, either spiritual or scientific. It is nirvana through the end of a flashlight as the avatars of real players break every shadow into pieces and shatter the dark inclinations of temptation. In the end Alan Wake confronts the dark presence taking over the town only defeating it once he sacrifices himself to the “insane” version of Alan Wake (Jarvilehto, 2010). After apparently drowning in a lake of darkness his last words are punched onto the page of his typewritten “It’s not a lake; it’s an ocean” (Jarvilehto, 2010). In that Alan Wake becomes all of us in the current age who are drowning with the lack of dark spaces wrought within a technologically enhanced universe that does not allow for a moment’s rest from the light. This freedom from the world we created is found in the absence of light by embracing the darkness. We are desperate to escape the light.

**Conclusion**

From religious writers to video game producers, we have confronted the darkness and the night it lives in differently over time, as we create and live out different definitions of what the dark represents. In the end, there can be no shadow without the light and light and darkness must be treated equally. Living in one and resting in the other, the line must be clear and the sacrifices understood. The night of technological
absence is not for everyone; only the most free of us are willing to put away the cell phone and look upwards.

**Content and Form**

*Night* will explore different themes associated with the struggle of night and darkness and light and day. Filmed between 0300 and 0430, every point of light is seen and its effects are directly felt. The camera will attempt to find and use these bits of light, be it from my headlamp or the shimmer of a river. Properly lit spaces are the ideal in filming, but my film will encourage less light. To properly show the reality of the night, little if any professional lighting equipment will be used. All the ideas explored start and end with the lighting or lack thereof.

**Surrounded by the Night**

We are surrounded by the darkness and the first section of *Night* will explore how I imagined a pre-electric people saw the world. Moving from the outside to the inside, the theme of the flame and nature will be seen. Still we fought against the darkness for what it represented, fear and the unknown. From every child with a nightlight to every traveler using torches to light a darkened path, we peered upward at gods in the dark empty of space, praying for them to give us light.

This stage of the film will be the most challenging to shoot, as there will be no artificial light sources used. Neither headlamp nor light bulb will be utilized; only the gifts of Prometheus will be present. An attempt will be made to keep true to this section’s themes even if the shot requires the tiniest amount of light from a cell phone or
artificial source. Planning will be needed to shoot these scenes during a full moon and near natural reflective surfaces such as rivers and lakes.

The natural beauty of the outside at night will be contrasted with the inner beauty of a dark room. The rooms will be chosen based on their ability to experience outside light. Every shadow will be relied upon to represent humankind. A building or room with lots of windows is preferred over a room with very little outside light or mood. There must be discipline in lighting, or the beginning of the film will not work.

Another aspect that is important is the editing. With the stillness of naturally lit night be it meadow or interior, the edit must reflect this tranquility. The long edit will be preferred over the quick cuts of the following sections. Longer dissolves, possibly tens of seconds in length, will speak against how different that time is compared to the one in which we currently live. The audience must be allowed to absorb all the light themselves. They must be allowed to fight their own fears while watching. In the same sense, the music must match the editing and makeup of shots.

Music is important but a subtle use of natural sounds, wind, or the cracking of flooring is just as important. Care will be taken not to over saturate the soundtrack with the artificially created music. I will conduct a simple melody of piano and violin, attempting to match the sounds of a medieval or renaissance frame. This is to try and allow the night a moment to speak. Similar to the lighting, the music will dance with the darkness but not overwhelm it. This first section will find its transition to our modernist times via a dark train track staring into a fully lit cityscape.
The Act of Seeing

The start of our victory over the dark begins with this section. The night no longer represents fear but a beginning of our full extension of daylight artificiality at night. Along with this comes the ugliness brought out by this same light. The serenity of the previous section will be blurred by our electric sins. There will be no remnants of candles or flames; headlamps and flashlights will replace these. The empty city with its sparse nightlife replaces the forest.

Not completely over powering the darkness, the dark hue of a street lamp replaces the flicker of a torch. To explore the theme of modernist appreciation of light, the city at night must be darkly lit with sparse fully lit areas. These fully lit sections can be theatre signs, outsides of buildings and stop lights: signs of cheerfulness and progress. Mass transit vehicles will represent moving ahead in the world, moving ahead in time. The key to representing the theme of not yet fully lit and still afraid will be to use artificial light but not to completely rely on it. I must not be afraid to walk into a dark alley or towards an unlit street. The ugliness of our modern city life will be heightened by the use of intentional music and symbolic images edited in relation to the music to create an increasingly dissonant experience.

Unlike the beginning of the film, this editing will be more obvious and “obnoxious.” The sounds of the city will be mixed with a percussive orchestral sound. This will allow for the edits to follow the beat and stray only when needed for full thematic effect. Editing is important and is best when fully hidden or fully brought to attention. The latter will be attempted for this second section. It will represent a
hammer’s hit or a flip of a switch over and over again. With such a deliberate editing style, the music will play a more important role than before. The modernity of percussion will follow a template of songs from the early 20th century. Finding its melodic roots in Tin Pan Alley the notes will be written to replicate the unease of the time. This should work well with the mechanical sounds of mass transit running all night; of a half empty city life. Dissonance of sound will play a role in the composition and the edit.

The fully lit building or house at night represents a disruption to nature and the end of night’s hold over us. These buildings will be juxtaposed with a fully artificially lit forest, which represents our conquest of nature and the night. The beginning of the film is now over and so is our innocence; we transition from our first fears to a playfulness of night. We as a society are now fully grown and fully embrace our darkness while living in the night.

**Living in the Night**

Modernity brought out the light in the darkness, but our neo and post modern world finally defeated it. The night became something to live in and joke about. We as a civilization no longer looked up and saw an empty space. What we saw was our future; no longer the simple hope of modernism or distant dreams of our past, the day extended deep into the night, and our lives became fully engulfed in artificiality.

This section of the film will delve into what it means to be awake at night without fear, be it for the worker or the partier, the fully awake baby or the insomniac. Starting with a full bar, the lights and sounds are amplified. Everyone is happy; everyone is
having a good time. Money and alcohol flow freely and the cares of the day are nonexistent. This is fully contrasted with the night worker, someone in a convenience store or security guard. There, lone vigils evoke solitude and also loneliness.

These workers are the heart of the film, for they are why this film is being made. Even early in this section, the contrast between their world and that of the partier is obvious; one life is serenity and the other is a series of loud blurs. When the bars close or festivities end, the last remnants of energy are used to enter the night worker’s domain.

The editing for this section will be the most standard of all, following a modern cutting process of not too fast but also not staying on a shot for too long. Unlike the previous sections that cut on the music and included long shots, the editing will reference the post-modern time it is portraying. Still not an observational documentary the editing and flow will be formatted as if it was. This will be mixed with the different cultural music used to represent different cultures.

From the smoky bars to the fully lit convenience stores finally ending in the dimly blue lit bedrooms, this section will transition with a turning off of the light. Solace, true solace will be found in this darkness. The rest of the film will deal with transition from night to morning. But for now peace is found in facing the harsh realities of working at this time.

**Reality**

It can be said that in an age of twenty-four hour news and endless twitter feeds, night is just a time of day and in a fully connected world there is never a chance to rest. Technology and the light it emits pull us away from a dark sleep and towards the fully lit
night. The choice becomes rest or the want to be stimulated. The theme for this final section of Night will be trying to find that rest and peace absent the light and free from our technologies and the hold they have over us. The dimly lit faces of the subjects will be countered by the dark surrounding and shadowy silhouettes. This will be conveyed through the eyes and late night hunched over mannerisms found at this time. This is a time of relaxation and subtly, the shooting will reflect that. All the film concludes with the coming of the morning and the harshness it brings.

As those who were featured in the earlier sections put away what it meant to be awake at this time in preparation for the morning, the film Night will come to its conclusion. The subtlety of the night is shattered by the first cars on the road as the cranky masses head to work. Even before the sun fully rises, the day workers are on the highways and byways. At first there will be very few vehicles but slowly the streets will be congested. The message here is that life is just better at night before the sun forces us to wake up.

This last section is a combination of all that came before and the editing will reflect this. The long cut, the short on the beat editing styles all will merge into one cohesive flow. Fast and slow will effortlessly transition between each other as the music adds what it can to the mix. The sounds will be of the few roaming vehicles out at this time. Those waiting for the bus or just waking up will be heard. Serenity and the sounds of a loud groggy morning takes over. The reality of Night arrives at its conclusion; it was all a dream of our own wants and desires. From the early times of natural light to the creation of the artificial, all was just a dream to keep us up and away from reality.
If the theme calls attention to our oversaturated culture, then the form must follow with electronic lighting. If the theme moves the viewer away from this and toward our candlelit past, then the editing process must be flexible enough to see this needed change. The content and form will follow both the themes and shots needed. *Night* requires not just perfection in shooting but the darkness demands more than simply pointing the camera at a subject and pressing “record.” The light present may push away the dark but also highlight it.

**Tentative Shooting Schedule**

With the recent tornados and flooding tearing through the South, the shooting may need to be changed at a moment’s notice. Additionally, the shooting schedule may encounter the extra challenge of finding open roadways and streets. Taking place in middle of July and early August of 2011, the shoot will be in Denver, Colorado and throughout the southern United States. A road trip through the South will start in Louisville, Kentucky and make a loop through Mobile, Alabama returning back to Louisville. The last week of the shoot will act as both a makeshift vacation and a look at a small town and darkness. Though the rural south could look like anywhere else it is the kudzu vine strangling every wall and tree that gives this area character. From the intense humidity and wide open wilderness areas states like Alabama and Tennessee allow for the opportunity to find interesting contrasts close to the back roads and unpaved streets of small towns. These areas may not necessarily be found near Denver. The people of the south have such a curious nature the challenge will be in staying real and hidden. Anyone with a camera on the street gets questioned, not out of spite or thievery but of
pure curiosity about what that person is doing. Morehead, Kentucky will be the
figurehead of small town life and is similar to Pueblo, Colorado in terms of size and
isolation. Spending time with family and their places of work will help to contrast the
open spaces of the South and the lights of the big city with Morehead.

The majority if not all of the shooting will be completed from three in the
morning to four thirty am which, in my experience, is the prime time of night. It is
during this time I’ve seen the true night come out. Those that stay in a specific area in
fear of being harassed spread out; they experience the night as I have. The themes of
isolation and loneliness are heightened and must be experienced at this time, since the
average person, even when going out, returns home by three. This time of the night is
fully dark; an eerie kind of dark and towards the end of shooting there will be brief
glimpses of the sun on the horizon. The light will be peeking through as if to call
attention to itself. At this time of the night, the lights appear deeper and more penetrating
as the majority of the population sleeps. Another concern is the heat and humidity which
should be lessened at this time.

**Preliminary Shooting Budget**
The following is a rough estimate of what it will cost to produce and edit my
documentary thesis: (The final budget can be found in Appendices G)

Lexas UDMA 8GB CompactFlash (2 @ $70.00 per disc)………………$140.00

Xoom H4N …………………………………………………………………………………..$300.00

Rental Vehicle ($24 per day) ……………………………………………………………$408.00

Gas…………………………………………………………………………………………$300.00
Food.............................................................................................................$200.00
Lodging..............................................................................................................$700.00
Travel to Louisville, KY......................................................................................$375.00
Total....................................................................................................................$2423.00

Since I will be using my own DSLR camera to shoot the project, only the field recorder Xoom H4N is necessary to properly capture sound. I plan to use the University microphones and cables to complement the capabilities of the field recorder even if the final project will be silent. The final capture and edit will be completed at home on my Mac Pro with Final Cut installed. Even taking these into consideration, the budget will be largely consumed by travel expenses. The seventeen day travel schedule will include only ten days of needed hotel stays. One week spent in Morehead, Kentucky staying with family will help in lowering food and gas costs.

Road trips are expensive and even sleeping in my rental vehicle will not take enough off the final budget to make the safety concerns worthwhile. It is much simpler and thus expensive to check into hotels and use them as home bases in each location town. At the same time, this will allow for a proper rest and sleeping during the day inside, away from the humidity and heat of the South.

**Audience Analysis and Impacts**

The viewers for my film are varied but have one connection; they all live in or have a curiosity about the night. From the people who sleep nights and judge anyone up at this time to the workers who are only awake because they have no other choice, the film will work to reach all of them and, through its poetic nature, a new recognition of
our differences. A truly powerful film will reach each differently and cause a further exploration of themselves and the night. The love of the night and dark places felt in *Night* will be apparent, spread over many types of viewers. If any of them feel a small amount of the positive emotion associated with the film, then the work will be successful. The success of the film won’t just be in its popularity or exposure, but in how it reaches hearts, changes minds, and opens perspectives.

When working at night, a common necessity is to interact with people who usually sleep nights. From the cranky stubborn half-awake attitudes to the complete lack of civility just because they are up at an odd time, “night sleepers” are forces unto themselves and create an inherent and visible tension that illustrates the clash between dark and peaceful solitude and technologically induced chaos. The darkness inside them is borne of a loss of civility and forgetfulness towards their surroundings. In their stubborn refusal to acknowledge the painful role of the artificial and technological in their lives, they become an audience for the documentary. The film will grant them a look into a time when they are usually asleep as they only interact with this world at less than fully cognizant times.

The night is a different world for the night sleeper, one that is only experienced when forced to be experienced. From the half asleep drive to the grocery store to buy medicine for a sick child to taking a friend to the airport, the nighttime world is just a passing annoyance for most. Their view of the darkness is negative with cold and dreary exteriors, but it is they that choose to see it this way. The warmth of a bed and the energy gained from a good night’s sleep overwhelm any wish to explore what is out there, and
thus they may miss the most peaceful and least frenetic of our twenty-four seven days. The film will change how they see this dark time of night, suggesting that it is not something to be tolerated but rather enjoyed, not as an inconvenience but a ride to be explored with childlike abandon.

When one is working nights, family members often express their wishes that you would find a new job; one that is more in the norm of society. In this constant need to nitpick an employment choice, these family members, too become an audience for the film. They don’t see choices made at this time as the worthwhile embrace of humanity that they can be. From the judgmental daytime glances at a half asleep night-loving friend to the constant questioning of why they chose this time to work, their own prejudice will add to the experience of *Night*. In their stubbornness to accept the different they become what is different; they may feel themselves in turn judged by the film. And as a result, they may no longer always choose to sleep at this time of potentially great clarity and restorative peace.

The film will move from the sprawling vistas of the south to the dark alleys of the big cities. This is the home of the partier; with drink in hand s/he finds revelry in the night. If even for a second the partier considers going out at night not to fulfill some carnal lust but to find a respite from the technology and lights that fills both halves of his/her life, then this film will be successful. Like the person who enjoys the day, the person who enjoys the night because of its potential for disruption can learn to enjoy the serenity of the night. These viewers will become whole once fully engulfed in a darkened meadow or glistening moonlit stream. Their past lives, the past debauchery,
will just be another whispered story to tell while on a night stroll through their new lives. Their day halves will be thankful not to need twelve cups of coffee to stay awake with their soul fully rested.

The self-help film is pushing out the poetic documentary, a dying art form from the early days of film. *Night* will be made to be analyzed, with every shot and musical choice forming themes that must be fleshed out. This is the domain of the intellectual, the person who goes to film festivals with notepad in hand and rents movies to write about them. The enjoyment of the documentary for this person will come from the repeat viewings and the in-depth investigation of intent and form. They will gain a smile from a new thought or avenue of reason formed by the film.

Although the film is not intended as a modern self-help documentary, it may yet help people understand themselves and their preconceptions a little more. The loneliness felt, be it on a lonely street or in a screening, will be part of the film viewer’s experience. *Night* will work to hold this viewer’s hand through this journey; will help to lighten a saddened thought and deepen an appreciation for the contemplative.

When alone awake at night, cold, with the only sound a television or radio, the endless darkness almost forces negative thoughts to creep in. When making the documentary, a goal will be to reach these lonely people to tell them they are not alone; they are not without friends or compatriots. This film will shine a light on their appreciation for darkness, reminding them that all the light provided by technology in these dark times can easily be turned off. A community of one will be spread to many, and even if they spend their nights alone, at least they will know that there are other
people up at this time, other people willing to let the dark in, other people enjoying the ambiguity of the darkness. The insight gained from this will be enough to warrant the film. Perhaps as a result of this film, people may go out and stay out for longer and longer times at night, embracing the night and the darkness, and through this, experience the happiness that can come from being awake while others rest. They can embrace what it means to be truly alive.

The documentary will spend a large amount of time filming people who work at night, not directly questioning them but taking the observational approach. This will allow anyone who views the film to feel what they feel: an embracing of the night and the dark, from the drudgery to the lack of respect associated with working while others rest. Everyone who works at night knows this feeling and can attest to the damage it does mentally, which includes being scared to tell anyone about your work for fear of judgment by others. From the call of “late night zombie” to general mistreatment, it can be difficult working at night. Audiences may not fully understand how this feels, but the late-night worker will see him or herself portrayed in a poetic and positive way.

Seeing their lives through those of others of similar lifestyle, people who work at night should feel a sense of accomplishment. There are similar themes of loneliness throughout different night jobs, and the film will help to form a communal strength with everyone working at this time. Again, exploring this loneliness will help lessen it when the tone of a singular family or friendship for people awake at night comes out. Then, this audience will feel validated. This validation will add to the powerfulness of the documentary, as their viewing of the film and the emotions presented will help the film
find its meaning. The audience itself, this particular audience, is who the film is for, ultimately, as it is their lives and their choices that will be represented throughout. The poetry of working at night and being awake when others sleep is the life they live, and it is the soul of the film.

Since I have spent a large amount of time working at night, I know how night workers feel. The need to be counted and respected still remains even today. I can be associated with the main audience, as my real audience to some extent is my fellow late night workers and myself. To properly portray the fight between the night and the darkness inside the worker, this film must explore the fight between our need to rest and a need to work, and the need to find a balance between the two. Through this film, the beauty and serenity of this time will replace the constant fear of how others will see me, how others have seen them. My life and my loves will help the film’s various audiences from the drunkard to the night worker to the intellectual understand how wonderful this time of the day is, how great it is to be awake while others sleep.

Night will attempt to elicit the love of being awake in the darkness. This ranges from changing perspectives and caring for people that live “strange” lives to moving the viewer through the landscapes and darkness of both the mind and place. From the false light of technology to the serenity found in the pitch black this shift in perspective on the night may be new enough that most will have never seen it. My greatest hope lies in giving my voice an avenue, expressing my love for the night and for the people that live in it. From the calls of the unnatural to the interest of different lifestyles represented, I believe minds can be changed. The greatest impact will be on me, and if others follow
along, then they can revel in my joy of the night as well. Together we will share in the charm of what can barely be seen and felt, of creation and art, of the never ending struggle between light and the dark.
**Thesis Report**

For most of my life I lived in the darkness. Through the film I discovered bleakness found both in the darkness of soul and of environment. Looking back, this project became my inner feelings turned outward, finding these emotions through concerns of dark locations and concerns over my own life. We were told during the proposal process to work on a project we care deeply about. My mistake was assuming that caring deeply for something directly meant love. This film tested my desire to stay a night-stalker.

For years this film was brewing in my mind and through other projects it came out in bits and pieces. From first proposing a film in documentary class about people that work in the night to monthly time-lapse sessions on the streets of Denver, the idea for the film was always present. The entire time was a just build up for this film. In the pre-production phase of the film life became still as I waited for the right moment to record. The plan called for shooting in July, but if I ignored the permissions needed I could have shot in June.

These delays detailed below led to more, well thought out, moments captured on camera. My original plan of using those I knew for the “Living in the Night” section quickly dissipated. They were originally intended to be both partiers and then as blue hued gamers. My friends let me down but I could understand why they avoided the
camera. Very few people, especially those production minded, can put themselves up for ridicule or put themselves up on a large screen for others to judge. This did hurt the film and adjustments needed to be made. Covered in more detail below in my discussion of the preproduction phase, the shoot tested my feelings about the film.

Eventually the film was made not during the production phase but in post. The edit is where I finally discovered why I made this film. My personal sin was relying too much on my skills in this area. I started on the path of production as an editor, nothing else really mattered early on, and my focus was just on this part of film. The edit phase was going to fix every problem during production. In the end, the one problem I couldn’t fix or condone was myself. Having taken longer the edit phase became the hardest to look inward for. As the outward emotions of those around me caused pain and problems the process continued. Overall, the film was made better through this struggle. The whole process from the proposal phase to the final DVD printing was a learning experience. Life, like this film, tested me and through that they both became better.

**Pre-Production**

On June 15th I sent emails to companies that I wanted to record in. The general form letter used can be found in appendices H. These locations included King Soopers/Krogers, 24 Hour Fitness, an RTD bus, Securitas Security, Cintas Cleaning, and finally the Civil War battle site of Shiloh. These locations were detailed in my proposal and were chosen based on my needs and least amount of concerns that my presence would raise. By this time I had grown my beard out to keep people from talking to me on
the street but at the same time this brought a new concern from security officers. These
guards tend to think differently, choosing to confront shady characters over being
passive.

It was not until June 24th that I received my first response. Greg Yates, the
General Superintendent of Transportation for RTD, was eager to talk about my film
plans. After returning his call we had a very interesting conversation about films in
general. He educated me on the procedures of filming on public transportation and how
everything I had known was wrong. Mr. Yates told me that legally he couldn’t stop
anyone from shooting on a bus. He went on further to say that he cannot “publicly”
allow me to film on the bus due to insurance concerns but still suggested I just go and do
it.

It is at this point that his concerns became more for my own safety than for the
legality of my time on a bus. He was worried about the people that didn’t want to be
filmed on the East Colfax bus at night. To him, these people were up to “no good” and
suggested I try the Broadway bus closer to 0430 over 0300. Mr. Yates further went on to
give suggestions on possible tactics to keep tensions to a minimum. He suggested that I
“jump” from one bus to another throughout the night. The goal of my phone call was to
get permission but ended with getting advised on how to have a safer production. He
would be the first of many that would warn me about the dangers found in the night.

As mentioned in my proposal I wanted to shoot at a Civil War site to watch the
light that soldiers saw. While planning out my summer road trip I did a Google search
along the planned path to find possible Civil War locations. The best and most reasonable site was Shiloh in Tennessee, a pivotal Civil War battle. There were backup locations planned near and around Morehead, Kentucky, but these sites were not as important to the war and do not hold such a vaunted position. Not one for nationalist sentiment I still hold respect for those that fight for their beliefs. My road trip would test me emotionally and physically, determining how the film was shot and locations used.

The key to my road trip beyond the Shiloh battleground was seeing the ocean and walking through the untouched swamps of Mississippi. It seems foolish now but at the time I was energized to tromp through untouched lands and stand near a moon draped ocean landscape. The entire trip was planned to coincide with a full moon on the Gulf of Mexico. For reasons detailed below the film would lack these sections. Hurt or for the better, the road trip became a test in my determination to make my film. Becoming a lesson in malleability an entirely different movie could have came out of the trip.

A section of my film included finding people who were inside and awake at 0300. I wanted them to be playing video games, watching TV, or simply surfing the Internet. During my time as a night worker most of my friends were night owls. These were people that I knew were up but I made the mistake of assuming they would want to be filmed. During the proposal process and pre-production I asked many of my friends if they would want to help with the film. All of them turned down the offer.

Through many conversations with my friends I couldn’t convince anyone to help. I even went to Craigslist trying to find anyone up at night who would be willing to be
filmed. It was at this point that I realized most of my shooting would have to be outside in the world, where in the proposal outdoor and indoor shooting seemed more equal. The final project would be heavy in outside shots but lack the interiors that at the time were needed. Missing would be the lonely night creeper up and bathed in blue electronic light. Lacking would be a section on what it meant to live in a modern world, alone and constantly absorbing information transferred through light in the dark. Again, it is understandable as to why no one wanted to be filmed. Of all the sections this would be the most obvious. My camera would be, compared to other locations, right in their faces. The close up would show the audience every wrinkle and empty look.

It was my ultimate hope that all my locations would be doable at night. I assumed that at night it would be easier to get permission to shoot at locations otherwise considered off limits during the day. After being rejected by my friends, Craigslist and making follow up phone calls with the businesses I contacted I decided that I had to plan most of my shoot for the outside, the outside where vaunted light could be found but not controlled. It was then that I chose not to take my own lighting kit out into the darkened world. Though mentioned in my proposal that the Blender LED light would be used in the forest and naturescapes, only the natural light available would be used. It was now that I made a decision that would affect the look of my entire project. To see anything, even darkened small details in a black world I would have to up the gain on my camera, even at the cost of image quality. This is important, as primary audiences for the film are families of people that work at night. They may not find solace in the dark as others
would. They may see the dark and not be swayed by the lack of light but grow angrier because of it.

First Trip into the Night

July 12th was my first night of shooting; all the pre-production work had led to this night. I kept detailed journal entries, writing them as I did footage ingest. Written early in the morning these journal entries are raw and full of emotion. Looking back the entries get darker as the shoot continues. The first night was full of encouraging notes and the fear felt early on is discounted as just nervousness.

The focus of this first night was “workers.” This meant people who were up and working. I figured that these people would be the easiest to find and film without much worry. Being a Thursday there was a limited chance of getting bothered by drunks or police officers downtown, as both come out in mass on weekends. Still, I was warned by two security guards about the dangers of the night. One guard went as far as to warn me about people across the street. He made a show of pointing to them. I did not see those people as any more dangerous than anyone else. For me, they were normal people until they confronted me. That is not to say I was unaware of my location and of those around me at every moment.

I didn’t feel fear at first; the city night was my meadow to capture. It was also now that I discovered a lie I could tell easily when asked about the camera. In my experience people will not let you record video but will allow still pictures to be taken. My DSLR camera is a photography camera that can take video and thus I told anyone
asking that I was just taking pictures of the nightlife. This would later save me from being bothered but for now it kept others from asking further questions. Inside myself the lie was difficult to tell but seen as a necessity. A critique of my film is the need to tell this lie for my own convenience. Further mentioned below in the critique section I was not willing to let others react to the truth but be soothed by a lie.

Also, it was during these first two nights of shooting that I decided to change the type of equipment used. At first I used my professional metal tripod, which was overly heavy and took time to set up. After these first few nights I switched to my older, plastic photography tripod. This tripod could be carried by an attached handle and took seconds to set up. The downside was that it was not as stable in windy conditions. The tripod, when added to my dressed down demeanor, painting pants and shirt, sent the message that my equipment is subpar and I carry no valuables.

These first two nights were learning experiences and directly led to the look of the project. Having chosen people at work for the first nights of shooting over nature or areas without people caused me to adjust to a certain amount of light. As my journal entry for July 13th ends “this film is not about me, it (sic) about the people.”

My next shoot date was July 18th in the mountains. This was for the time-lapse sections in the small mining towns near Blackhawk, CO. Being accustomed to the bright downtown lights I again decided to turn up my ISO rating on the camera. DSLR cameras, unlike film cameras, or even older digital cameras, have a very high upper limit for capturing in low light situations. The downside is the amount of “digital grain” in the
image. Having thought about this beforehand I decided that the image needed to be seen to be appreciated. Though advised by Professor Gault to not be afraid of the darkness, I was afraid. The fear was of the choice of making an entertaining piece over my own desire to truly capture the darkness. If my desire was to keep the attention of an audience not accustomed to experimental filmmaking then I had to consider how they would view the film. The battle became my own fear of acceptance over some feeling of misunderstood artistic value.

If I chose to capture the moment as seen through the low ISO setting over my own eye then I should just stay home and film a black empty room. The viewer wouldn’t be able to tell either way. The ISO then must be made higher, thus incorporating the distortion part of the modern technology. After researching *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* I knew they had to make a new film stock to capture the night and I will follow them by using the new DSLR video technology to capture the same environment with less light.

I had received free hotel room coupons to a Blackhawk hotel for 2 days and this became the best option for the planned mountain shoot. Having used Google Maps to find the best routes through the mountains, I found areas where the casino lights quickly disappeared. Still they could be seen off in the distance as I tromped along in the forest. Little could be seen from the footage once ingested but I wasn’t worried, as my road trip would be capturing the same types of footage.
The rest of the night was filled with driving up and down the Central City Parkway, a highway built to connect the gambling towns to I-70. I stood next to an empty highway listening for far off sounds of movement. Evident in the footage is how nervous I was capturing anything useful. Surrounded by mystery, who wouldn’t feel nervous? On the lit up highway it seemed that every time I considered leaving, a car would drive by keeping me another ten minutes. I eventually made my way to Central City and by now was tired enough to capture any sign of light. A lone Pepsi machine found in Central City led to the lonely dark road of Nevadaville. From Nevadaville, a ghost town, I realized truly how alone I was in the world. Lights were on in only a few buildings in town, but still the only sound was the wind. The only presence was my own.

Early in the process this footage was used but as the project changed, I eliminated the shots of this rural ghost town. These scenes of Nevadaville appeared in early edits as signs of humanity’s transition into the city but were removed once that theme no longer fit the film. I did, however, use this footage in other films made during this time. Of note is that this town was the only location where I used my own artificial light. Known or unknown my headlamp was left on while walking around the area.

The second and subsequent nights were used to capture time-lapse sequences. It was here that I had the most fun of the shoot. Standing on roadsides, mountain cliffs, in areas where humanity can be seen only in the distance, I embraced the loneliness from the night before and captured humanity and nature intertwining as if through time. In the years past these highways didn’t exist and it was a life or death choice to pass over these
areas to find a new life. From my proposal I knew this footage would be how my film started and until the very end it was. The stars and mountains danced together like they must have for countless other nights. It could be seen as our future but I was not concerned with that aspect, only the past rural nature of humanity. We moved through these areas to larger cities through compressed time. I stood and captured this past’s light.

Those early eerie feelings found in the mountains were blunted by my increased love for Denver. Looking back to the journal entry of July 22nd, my second to last planned shooting night before the road trip;

July 22nd, 2011 - Going down Broadway, saw NOTHING to shoot. Ended up at Bus transfer station and filmed people waiting for and getting on bus. Denver has me, my heart.

This bus station would become a long section in my film but reading the journal entry it was just another event, not a pivotal shot that everyone will hopefully remember. Even the length of the journal entry tells a story. Where other entries were multiple pages this and the subsequent entries were only a few short lines. At first when the film was chronological the people going off to work represented the end of the resting night and a beginning of the working day but eventually this footage came to represent just a generalized beginning of work over play. Even the race of the people going on to the bus told a story, as the one person remaining and watching was white but everyone else leaving to work would be considered a member of a minority. The short journal entry did not see any of this, only the oneness of people awake and going off to work, people that
chose to get up earlier than I would to go and work a job most likely low paying and repetitive.

I ended the first set of Denver shooting nights on July 23rd. Eleven days after I started shooting, the contrasting natures of love for Denver and hatred of having to watch my back on every street corner became too much. No less than fifteen people I met along the way, both security guards and civilians, warned me about the dangers inherent in the night. I was escorted off three locations, including public areas such as the Denver Sheriff’s Office and Courthouse. This led to being questioned by two police officers, one of whom followed me and asked if I was taking pictures of him. The question was answered “no”; though technically correct, I was taking video. I have the feeling that if he knew what I was doing then I may have been detained and my footage confiscated under some misguided idea of justice. This idea would unknowingly follow me on my coming road trip; still I looked forward to experiencing what the road at night had to show me.

**Road Trip**

Having finished the first set of Denver locations on July 23rd I needed a few days to prepare for my road trip. I had planned to shoot in ten states, driving through another thirteen so my car needed a tune up and inspection. During the time my car was in the shop I bought AAA roadside assistance and updated my GPS. Updating my GPS was as important as anything as some of my locations were far away from large towns and on
my last road trip the older GPS maps got me lost a few times. Little did I know that getting lost would be the least of my worries.

On July 25th I left Denver on my way to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The drive is eighteen hours and was uneventful other than my ego needs to test my limits of driving on the road. This would come to haunt my entire shoot as it physically drained me and unknowingly weakened my confidence and resilience when dealing with otherwise passible situations. I rested for a day in Pine Bluff while scouting out locations. The town is small compared to Denver but seemed to have just as many police patrolling the streets. As a ritual of my road trips in general I like to drive through the poor and rich parts of town to get a contrast of how the town treats its less advantaged. This time the ritual acted as location scouting. Pine Bluff was a mix of mansions and shanties, a town unaware of its own problems and I became the enemy. A town of contradictions found my camera threatening.

On the very first night of my road trip shoot I put my tripod down near a Waffle House restaurant. This was as much to get the jitters out as anything. In Denver my nervousness came from getting composition correct while on the road it became the foreign locations. People inside the restaurant saw me getting ready and I saw some on cell phones. It did not take long for the police to arrive. Before I could even press record I had a police officer arrive with a second soon after. After asking for my ID and verifying my vehicle’s registration they questioned my intent of being out so late with the camera.
It was apparent from their tone that they would not allow me to stay. Even though legally I was in the right to be on public property they watched my hands for any signs of aggression. Having started to setup at 0315 the entire altercation ended up taking thirty minutes. This, coupled with the officer’s insistence on watching me continue setting up, was emotionally draining and ruined the entire scene. It felt as if they were waiting for the right moment to arrest me, watchful parental eyes letting me turn on a stove only to teach me now to touch the open flame. They did not leave until I did and even then remained on site in the restaurant. Back in my motel room and with the night’s problems behind me, the next day would bring the ocean to my lens. Watching the early morning news I had wondered if all my assumptions about the South were correct and if the rest of my shoot was going to be this arduous.

Having planned on staying in Pine Bluff for two nights, I only stayed one. I would not spend another dollar in this town. The late night motel worker understood my story and cancelled my reservation for the following night. While we talked I considered getting footage around the motel but found I was outside of my shooting timeframe. As before, it would have been disingenuous to shoot past 0430. Still, I had a nearly full moon and oceanscape to shoot the following night. The sheen of both would hopefully make up for this night’s debacle. On the way to Mobile, Alabama it rained. Not a normal rain but an oily residue that was caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. I only later learned the cause of the oily rain but still feared going out in the mess.
I planned on staying in Mobile for two days. Mobile is similar in size to Denver so getting the night life wouldn’t be a priority over the oceanscape. Mentioned in my proposal I wanted to get the natural life found on the beaches and the ocean itself. The grand landscape of our watery origin would be explored. This would be my first time seeing the Gulf of Mexico and I looked forward to experiencing it the way I wanted.

Getting up for the shoot was difficult since my schedule was now accustomed to sleeping nights. I did not get up until 0305 and by the time I left my motel it was 0320. I had little time to find the beach and set up. As I reached the site there were health warnings signs up. I didn’t get twenty feet onto the beach before being confronted by night cleanup crews working for British Petroleum (BP). They showed me their permit giving them the right to expel anyone attempting to get on the beach during cleanup activities. Before I could argue two Mobile police officers were at my car inspecting it. Unlike Pine Bluff these officers followed me and every time I stopped to shoot something they stopped and what looked like radioed their command structure.

By now it was 0415 and my night was again ruined. The officers didn’t stop following me until I reached my motel. Even then they waited until 0430 to leave. Oddly enough it seems they trusted my word that I only wanted to shoot until 0430. I went to bed again ready to leave the town a day earlier than planned. Another southern town sucked my will to shoot, and my focus became whether I was going to get any usable footage on this trip.
On my way to Nashville, Tennessee where Shiloh is located, my confidence was destroyed. I drove straight from Mobile to Nashville and by now my limits were being tested. Short on sleep and patience, I had lost the confidence for successfully sneaking into Shiloh and shooting. Having done research before sending the original email, I knew it was possible to sneak onto the site. The serenity I sought could be found in the unlit areas inside.

Sitting in my hotel room I couldn’t think of anything else other than my project. What would it mean if I could only get one location outside of Denver? Would it be disingenuous to use part of the south and not represent them in this way? My original plan was to not mention my locations but my trips through the Denver nightscape reinvigorated my love for the town. What would it mean to use footage from other locations that I didn’t love as much? These thoughts were going through my head as I got up for Shiloh. Driving to Shiloh I was hit with the fear of being caught and arrested. The nearest people I knew were in Kentucky and Indiana. Sitting at my parking spot I made the choice to not sneak in. The respect for the soldiers I was seeking to portray would be destroyed in the act of capturing that image.

Destroyed mentally I drove back to the hotel. It was then that I decided to abandon any more attempts at shooting in the South. As my journal entry for July 28th reads, “I have taken on too much. My camera cannot be my sword when I lack the will to act.” To this end I lay on my hotel bed doubting my ability to continue the road trip at all.
July 29th I drove to Evansville, Indiana to help Keri Noll with her thesis project. I just needed to regain some kind of confidence in my ability to record footage. In the heat of Indiana I still missed much but it felt good to record for long periods without having to look behind my back or worry about being hassled. Spending two days in Nashville and Evansville my schedule was back on track as I arrived in Morehead, Kentucky for rest. Mentioned in my proposal as a location for shooting, the city and family I stayed with became my port in the storm.

I stayed in Morehead for seventeen days and barely touched a camera. Instead I chose to witness the birth of my cousin’s second child, participate in an amateur wrestling event to make people laugh, and finally see my cousin’s daughter off to her first day of class. Morehead, more than any other city, relaxes me. The quiet I seek in life has always been found in Kentucky. On the way home I felt rejuvenated and looked forward to driving back to Denver and finishing my shoot.

I forgot how much the road will eat you up if given a chance. It is what you put into it and the cities you visit are alive and aware of your location like a virus in the body. I still love the road but may never try to shoot video on it again. All the research in the world is nothing when compared to events on the ground. This trip had the hopes of hours of footage but in the end I arrived home with very little. As the road is a battle to survive and road trips are sought only in escaping life but with a single mistake can change that life or end it. The final project and I would need to rely on Denver to be completed as proposed.
**Second Denver Shoot**

I began shooting again on August 21\(^{st}\) and this time went straight through the week. Shooting lasted until August 26\(^{th}\) and was half inside and half outside. Most of my film came from this section of shooting. The new resolve from resting in Kentucky lasted all of one day. I was still determined to not let the fear grip me. Starting in Commerce City I was stopped by security near the chemical processing plant and was forced to move.

The complex is a bright eyesore in the Commerce City skyline. I found a bike path that led under a train bridge. By now it was 0330 and a train was approaching the bridge. I had ten seconds to set up and did so. The train kept coming and coming and instead of letting the camera record I made the mistake of moving it. I lacked the trust in my own composition and instead chose to fiddle with the moment. The scene would be used in the film but I had to work out the camera movement and my own mistrust of my skills.

Also the lighting in this space was negligible. The only light sources I had were the moon bouncing off a nearby river and the chemical plant two blocks away. The ISO on my camera was cranked higher then I would ever reasonably use but without it the image would be black. Again my choice was to see something over nothing and I included half of the scene in my final film.

Through the remaining week I went along Colfax Avenue and downtown Denver again. I captured the underbelly of the city, both in the sleeping homeless and those up at
this time that were up to “no good.” While driving down Colfax I saw people on every corner but my camera was more concerned with interior shots at this point as I thought exterior shots were taking over my film. Though the film weighed heavily on the exterior I should have stopped and recorded every corner. At the time I was not as concerned with these people, assuming I had enough of these people up to “no good”.

Eventually I found two twenty-four hour restaurants that could be reasonably used. To keep the drama down to a minimum I again told anyone who inquired about the camera that it was a photography camera. Still a few patrons wanted me to take pictures of them. No one suspected my camera was recording him or her.

I feel bad for having to lie to people throughout my shoot. The choice was made that this lie would be needed over the unpredictable complications that could have come. This fear came from first night of shooting when warnings came from security guards and civilians to be wary of everyone. I did anything I could to alleviate the tension of the street. I knew a lie would keep me safe, or safer at least. Also, through research I knew that legally, while on public property or in public areas, people did not have a reasonable assumption of privacy. This said, I do feel bad for recording the homeless; they have no choice but to sleep on the street and deserve better then someone pointing a camera at them to show the degrading nature of night.

Still they, as well as I, are on security cameras from the moment we step foot outside of our homes. Also, I prefer the observational method rather than my subjects knowing about my camera. Many did see the camera such as the train yard engineer,
who looked up while working and saw me. He didn’t pause and just kept working. I wonder what must have been going through his mind at 0415 when seeing a large bearded man recording him?

August 26th was my last planned shooting night. Throughout the shoot my “white whale,” referencing the illusive target of the obsessed Ahab in Moby Dick, was getting footage of people working out. I live near a 24-hour Fitness and every time I stopped nearby, the desk staff moved to close the blinds. This seemed odd or just a random ritual they did to block the coming sun. The other 24-hour Fitness nearby was on Colorado Blvd. and the moment I stopped in front of that location the single desk person would stare at my car. This site would not have worked either way as the windows were all blacked out, even during the night.

But this night, the last night of my shoot, I drove down 38th Avenue and captured the police through a fence. Two young men came and looked through the same hole that I was shooting through. They did not see me and I had to contain my joy in having this happen. Following this I found a lone quiet ambulance leaving a convalescent home, and I knew what this meant. The person the ambulance came for, most likely found cold, could not be woken up. The ambulance had no reason to speed to a hospital.

This thought came to me as the clock was moving closer to 0430. With ten minutes left I attempted the 24-hour Fitness again. This time the staff was preoccupied or just didn’t see me and I was able to capture a woman running on a treadmill. No one knew I was nearby but yet I felt like some kind of night creeper. This emotion and all
those other feelings would go into the edit. I needed to turn my inner strife into outward art.

**Post Production**

Footage “key wording” started on August 29th. In Final Cut Pro X (the reasons for using this program will be explained further below) the bin system is gone and in its place is the key wording function. It allows for files to be placed in multiple keyworded locations such as Interior, Train Yard, and Carwash. I came up with a total of thirty keywords based on locations and applied them to the eight hours of footage I captured.

This way of organizing clips is easier than in previous version of Final Cut and lead to a faster way of accessing and finding footage that may not have been seen for months. The interesting part of this process is discovering no clip was longer than four minutes. This was true through a total of three hundred and fifty-three clips. This process of key wording each clip took three days.

In retrospect the size of the clips are reflective of the feeling I had on the street, as I preferred not to linger too long in any one place. Going through the clips I realized just how loud my breathing was/is. Of all the mistakes I made this one would be the hardest to come to terms with as it showed my lack of professional ability. Also, it helped to emphasize how quiet certain areas were over the fear I felt at the time. My breathing isn’t quick and nervous, as one would expect when out and alone in the night. With school starting soon I put the project away; the media law class was calling. Before I did this though I discovered that footage couldn’t be reconnected in Final Cut Pro X (a
feature added seven months later). This caused my footage problems when moving it onto my hard drive that filled up. At the same time I had the advantage of using my own home computer so I could deal with problems like these without much worry. This is because I could easily deal with technical issues instead of having to wait for outside assistance in an outside editing lab.

It was during this time that I also took the experimental film class with Professor Rod Buxton. My goal for the class was to decide on what kind of sound I wanted to use on my thesis film and through every assignment I tried a different tactic. The choices were acoustic music, a mix of acoustic and natural sounds, and just natural sounds. My thought was that each would work but I needed to feel them through. Each style is mentioned in my proposal for different sections but by this time I had decided to use one of the above three singular methods throughout to keep the audience from being confused. My film was helped by this choice as it stopped me from having to adjust each section or clip to different sound designs as they moved or were added throughout the editing process.

Creating a soundtrack would be difficult but doable. I had done this before for projects during my undergraduate videos and they were fairly well received. On October 30th the journal entry reads simply “Decided on soundtrack for film.” This idea would not hold once scrutinized by my thesis committee but my thinking at the time was based on my ego’s need to create every bit of sound and guide the audience by the hand through my view of the night.
Before any of the acoustic sound could be organized or edited I had to put the film together. Storyboarding started on November 3\textsuperscript{rd} with scenes being grouped on multicolored notecards. It is not my style to use storyboards on paper, preferring to stay digital. But helping the Financial Crisis Thesis Group with their process the multicolored notecards seemed like an easier and more organized way to do storyboarding.

The notecards were broken up into three groups, Interior, Exterior, and Interior/Exterior. The clips were then further divided by areas I recorded in and then cut out and stapled onto the notecards. By the time I stapled all the clips onto the notecards the sheer amount of clips had become apparent. The easiest part of this process seemed to be putting the clips in order. Using my proposal as a guide I followed it almost scene for scene and section by section. The sections again were Surrounded by the Night, Living in the Night, Act of Seeing, and Reality. Only Living in the Night would remain in the final film in anything near the original edit. Even this section was changed from comparing partiers to workers. Watching the Red Balloon and Berlin City Symphony for inspiration I spent a week in the graduate lounge putting the cards together before sitting in front of the computer again.

**The Edit**

All the work done with the notecards paid off during the editing stage. The journal entries for this time are an angry read but thankfully, due to the cards, editing was not impossible to do. While editing, even my smallest emotion comes out in force, from the anger mentioned above to the happiness at actually seeing my footage go together in a
coherent way. Small thoughts in the back of my mind became anger or self-doubt. When looking back I never knew how bad this comes out on paper. Sections of the journal are written after long sessions of editing. During the long nights I became an emotional wreck.

On July 6th I went to a Final Cut power users meeting with my boss Bob Yablans. Going in I had already obtained a copy of Final Cut X and had more experience than almost anyone else in the room. Bob asked me to speak in front of everyone and it was during this day that I decided to edit my film on the new platform. My journal entry for this decision ends with the words “Bring it on!”.

The anger felt became blind determination and maybe that is what was needed to finish the project on time to graduate in two years.

The newest version of Final Cut is such a departure from anything previous. The program at this time had a negative reputation and though workable was still very stiff to use. Each clip placed in the timeline took more time than earlier versions of Final Cut. Looking back this decision to use the new version of Final Cut was most likely more of a detriment but not a major hindrance. It did force me to slow down and plan out every edit. Every small movement was a struggle with every edit followed by a series of expletives. More than just a resume builder, the program helped me to understand the film better. Having to sit down in a foreign environment removed me from my own footage. The footage was no longer my own and later in the edit this made removing clips and shifting themes much easier. The early unsuccessful theme of control over the
night quickly became the three separate themes of working, playing, and emergencies in the night. The video and sound moved around each on a “magnetic” timeline. The magnetic timeline was designed for this kind of work, the ability to easily move scenes and sections around each other, without having to use multiple mouse clicks that would sometimes separate sound and video. This would come into play as the film changed drastically from what was originally edited together.

The pressure of needing to finish the film combined with learning the new language of FCPX didn’t create a very well rounded mentality. What I can remember of this time is small comments from friends and family about how sad I seemed. I knew inside that something was wrong but couldn’t stop, choosing instead to push through and use my negative emotions to put together the rough cut. If I didn’t have the proposal to look back on or the notecards put in order then this time would have been even more miserable. It always helps in documentaries to have some kind of framework or trajectory in mind before shooting any footage and the misery would have come from having to define what my film was about as I learned the footage. Where one could see a train moving in the black as industrial mechanization I knew I was going to use it as a transition. The entry for December 10th reads:

The anger has subsided, what I really wanted was to extend the scenes to four minutes, settling on 2 minutes it works well enough. A happy mix of long scenes and short, each setting the other up. The wealth of shots, once well thought out make just enough sense to be meaningful for the act of seeing.
I obviously knew about my emotional state but didn’t care. The visual rough cut was finished two days later and the soundtrack was started. I knew that this part would take the most time and focus.

During the rough cut process I found themes repeating and planned on using them for the soundtrack. Instruments were assigned to each scene including a harp for nature, taiko drum for humanity, and cello for water. Each instrument was chosen to subtly represent what the viewer is seeing. The harder sounds of the taiko drum represented humanity’s constant growth, compared to the longer, softer but still deep notes of a cello that could be heard as the constant flow of a river. Not as obvious as humanity’s breaking down, still doing the same work only over a longer time frame, we would be left with the impression that humanity and water are similar and are needed by each other. Again, the choice was to lead the audience by the hand and hopefully allow them to see the larger themes presented.

For the next two weeks I worked through the second rough cut while also making music. This is not preferred but I liked getting to know my footage through the musical notes that I made. The journal entries for this time represent the cold logic I used while making the music:

Begun the soundtrack work, used Note Writer and exported to Garageband to make it sound less computer midi like. The theme of the first section SURROUNDED BY THE NIGHT is about the battle between nature and the incoming human incursion. To do this nature is represented by the lone harp and humanity (sans humans) is the lower part bass of the piano. This is to represent humanity as rough
and just breaking through. Things do not match up perfectly yet but this is just a rough set of music.

Eventually the first rough cut with music put in was finished and I took the next week off before giving the film to my thesis co-chairs.

**The Rough Cut**

Based on the feedback from my advisors the one clear consensus was the sound didn’t fit or work. Looking back, creating music in the Midi format was a detriment to the process. The entire project rested on the music and it was both too loud and computer sounding. Instead of a natural piano every note sounded synthetic. The decision then became to either redo the music with actual instruments or dump the entire idea and focus just on the natural sounds captured.

Again while working in the experimental film class, one of the projects used just natural sounds with human voices. This became appealing as I moved the blueprint of the film from city symphony to a more modern approach. During the entire project the film *Our Daily Bread* kept coming back in my mind as the ideal example. No words are spoken and the ambient sounds speak for the themes presented. Upon going through the sound unlike before where the focus was just on the image I discovered the film became reflexive as my breathing and footsteps can clearly be heard.

Early in my career as a painter I was told to “embrace the mistake.” This film, once natural sounds were chosen, became that mantra. My footsteps, the crunching of rocks under my feet became metaphors for the journey the viewer is taking. Still I tried
to limit the amount of crunching as to not overpower the larger sound of the spaces presented.

The sounds of the night are subtle by nature. The majority of humanity is asleep and the sound I recorded reflected this. Beyond just the wind and the passing of cars, mechanical far away train sounds shatter the quiet found at a river’s edge. The blaring ambulance siren breaks the stillness of the image being captured. While editing I found that most of the sounds that worked best were those captured either directly or near the image’s location. It is almost as if the city was speaking to me with its many voices. The film became more powerful and relatable because of this. As mentioned above, the goal became to entertain and the change from music to natural sounds definitely helped that.

Through the various edits the one thing that became clear was an obvious problem with trajectory. If the film was going to entertain it must first make reasonable sense. Mentioned in a previous section, the rough cuts before the music followed my proposal almost exactly. Based on the notes received through the winter quarter the film changed drastically from this outline. The entire film went from the basic four sections proposed to a more micro-look at what the changes in time meant throughout the night and how we illuminate the darkness. The new sections now represent what I saw while out on the night streets: How we illuminate the world versus the darkness of night.

Previously I mentioned contrasting people out partying with those working and I decided to contrast these people with scenes that could easily be seen during the day. These scenes included people working out or washing vehicles, all of which are day
actions. When contrasted with scenes of drunken couples it provides a contrast more powerful than that of the worker and partier. This is done to fully emphasize the difference between the day and night while still remaining in the timeframe provided. This framework is important to emphasize but the most powerful contrast could be the difference between the homeless and those out working. The question becomes what if any of these people lose their jobs? What if a single homeless person had the means to not be sleeping on the street? Or would that mean less of each as the ebb and flow of our economy would always find a need for both? Any of these questions raise fear in the viewer as to what is the difference between the audience and the homeless person or even the laborer. Anyone can fall in a moment and become the ignored bottom of our society. They can feel the fear I did during production only through the questions raised above.

It was also during this time that the film title became 0300 – 0430. Going through different iterations that included Night, Denver Nights, and Darkness each seemed to fit but not completely explain what the film is. Professor Gault again suggested that each did not work with the film as it is no longer just about the nighttime but also about the people and scenes of the night. In January 2012, Jim Conway and Joseph Pennella visited campus for the distinguished alumni series. While meeting with them I played a rough cut of my film. They suggested putting an explanation of the shooting time frame at the beginning. I am not a proponent of large text sections starting documentaries and instead decided to make my title 0300 – 0430. Looking back it was an obvious title that explains just enough to give the viewer needed background.
I believe that a film is never finished; you just give up on it. With this project particularly it is very difficult to determine when I had to “give up.” What I did know is as the final edit became closer no footage or sound was safe. I killed shots I had from the beginning such as the Denver Convention Center blue bear. The beginning narration of my film was changed in every rough cut. The images themselves changed in position and meaning.

Carl Sagan always appeared in my film. Short or long his voice always started my film. A last minute decision was breaking up or changing the voices used in the film. Once I added the homeless man sleeping in front of the realty office, the film showed a bit of my own fear in recording my footage. The viewer hopefully is left to believe that s/he is the camera person and viewing the night through me. To combat the unease of viewing the homeless scenes or other creeper sections such as the woman working out I decided to end the film with the Sagan line beginning with “the darkness retains its power to frighten us.” This highlights that some people chose to look away and they are stronger for continuing to view the film.

This helped in making another decision, changing the BBC radio voice from a world breaking apart to needing a new way of thinking. I hunted for hours for this bit of voice over on the off chance I remembered it correctly from six months previous. Moving from the chronological order of the film to a more open interpretation of what happens in the light and how we illuminate the dark made the new female voice necessary. She speaks of a “new internal attitude of detachment from the world.” The
viewer is left to wonder what that new detachment means, what it means in the scenes of darkness. This is combined with the shots of people riding bikes on empty streets contrasting the partiers and people doing activities reserved for the daytime. The message is that the detachment is just being you. Doing what you want in the night, be it day activities, drunken revelry, or simply working out, the night provides freedom to be.

Professor Gault highlighted that every film is an argument and the opening narration was the thesis statement. Through the long hours of listening to speeches, attempting to record my own, and reading, Carl Sagan spoke the best for the search through the darkness. Through his voice the film itself became more about how we illuminate the night and less about how we saw light through time as originally proposed.
Critique of Strengths and Weaknesses

Every film has strengths and weaknesses that need to be brought up for both the artist and the act of filmmaking. The true artist is a person who can move beyond criticism and internalize what each person is saying. They must understand that weakness is not weak and no film is perfect. That being said my film has severe problems from the look to the messages presented. 0300 – 0430 is not a perfect film nor is it a disaster. Every choice was purposeful and logical, even if only to myself.

The film has a distinct look of interference; I have heard this called “digital grain” but that term is not accurate. The look of my film is caused by ratcheting up the ISO rating on my camera to be able to see in dark places. The reason for this is mentioned above and though justified still it takes away from the image. I wish I could have had a crisp digital image without having to up the ISO rating. It could have helped but my film would end up being a series of black images where the audience would strain to view intent. Though interesting this is not the point of the film. This is not what I needed the film to be.

Still the interference is severe and noticeable. Whenever a rough cut is shown to people who work behind the camera the first questions are related to cleaning up the image. I did research methods on lessoning the interference but each way removed the
overall crispness and in some cases the size of the image. Since this project will be projected the image needs to be as large and untouched as possible. I watch my film and wince at the amount of interference when compared to inside locations such as the grocery store. The feeling now is that if done again I would need to invest in a higher-end camera that can pick up the dark images and have them seen without much interference. This would of course raise the cost of production but it would pay off in the end.

This camera would help with another problem with the film, the sound. DSLR cameras are notorious for having subpar sound recording and my camera is no exception. Using the Zoon H4n helped remedy this but still I could not connect professional microphones to it and stay hidden at the same time. Using either the camera’s microphone or the H4n on board microphones the sound reflects weakness. The microphones used were not unidirectional, and each acted with a large pattern of pickup. This was good and bad, good in that I picked up far off sounds such as trains or people talking but bad because I couldn’t control that sound.

The need for crunching under my feet was mentioned in my proposal but was almost overpowering when heard during the video ingest. Also I never realized how loud I breathe until this project. Adjusting to the new reflexive elements to the film at first caused a lot of headaches. The problem came from my lack of realizing what my film was going to be while shooting. In retrospect, preferring to let the street talk to me means
planning every section before going out. My proposal acted more as a general guide and less of a concrete plan.

This issue came up time and again during the edit phase. What was my film about? What is it about? I know 0300 - 0430 is about the illuminated night and what stirs within. Will others read it that same way? The thesis process answered that question as a hard no. A weakness of my film is that it lacks a coherent message.

The poetic form is somewhat built on this idea but where other films succeed in one idea over all, my film does not. In the strengths section I will discuss how this may be a strength but for now I truly see it as a weakness. The film is complete and I enjoy it but the above mistakes make viewing it hard. Though others find it enjoyable, the technical and analytical problems have sapped any love I have for my own film.

As previously mentioned, the original thematic sections were Surrounded by the Night, Act of Seeing, Living in the Night, and Reality. Each was intended to build on each other and leave the viewer questioning where they fit into the timeline of how we see the light. A strength and weakness simultaneously was how quickly I abandoned these themes during the editing process. As an example of being pliable to the process, giving up on these themes meant I had to discover new ways to see my film. The film became moldable in ways not proposed and was intended to look at the night through a chronological perspective, but in the end was an attempt to view the night by how we light it. A weakness then became one of the themes currently represented may not be as clear, considering they have had the least amount of time to be formed in my mind.
Changed a mere two weeks before having to be turned in to my thesis committee, the project’s newest and final sections attempt to build on the idea of illuminating the night. Each section has remnants from the original themes but transformed to represent something new. An identifiable weakness is how these themes may not be as obvious or clear as needed to relay the overall considerations needed. These considerations are hopefully for the viewers to think about at who they are during the night and how they perceive the light. They can view themselves as the protector, such as in the authority section, or as a vagrant as seen in the homeless ending. Also included are sections built around the worker, the nightly partier, and simply people who are up and active doing day activates. The start of the film is an introduction to these ideas and prepares the audience for what is coming. The beginning of the film must be a thesis statement, with the rest of the film acting as evidence. This combined with the beginning section about traveling in the light through the darkness, and later people up and preparing for work, becomes the thematic core of my film. They build a core possibly without an outer overall meaning.

As I sit here reading over my own ideas of the strength or weaknesses of the thematic sections presented in the film, I am left to wonder if anyone would see these ideas presented. If they would see anything more than just images and a series of fades that may or may not represent unread sections? A weakness of my film is how easily the messages can be missed. In a short film every image must be meaningful, but the audience may not know this. They can look away or yawn, missing a vital bridge between two different slices of the overall theme presented.
The theme that I have presented has taken many forms over the past several months, yet my overall goal of focusing on the night has remained intact. At this point, it is up to the audience, however respectful or disoriented they may be, to carry the message of my film. I too became a night worker, a night protector, and one who completes mundane tasks by the light of the stars to ensure that my film maintains my heartfelt message.

Though 0300 – 0430 is hard to watch I still enjoy parts of it. The strengths of my film include capturing the true essence of night and the readings people have taken out of the film. The criticism heard is tempered by what viewers enjoyed, and what they acquired from the viewing. Where some viewed the film as growth of the human body and mind, others saw it as a criticism of our social structures. The first individual viewed the scene of speeding police cars as our desire to save those in need, regardless of the night, while the second individual questions an officer’s actions and intent. The film is for me a success when I can hear how much others enjoyed it, even if I did not have that same feeling.

I believe that life is well lived when you uplift and help others over your own needs. In this, my film and how it captured night is a strength. Not completely able to capture “my” night the film itself does capture a large swath of what happens during this time. These range from the emptiness of the city to the people who are up and working. Each image builds on the previous to give the viewer a sense of what it would be like to walk through the night with eyes open.
There is a quiet dignity to people working at night. I saw few yawning (even in the unused footage) or looking at watches waiting for work shifts to end. The poetry of night is felt most through them. These unnamed night workers strive while others try to hide and do their jobs. In the morning these people know finding a time to sleep will be difficult; it has always been difficult. As for the people I chose to address, those that judge night-working family members, hopefully they may see something new from the film. If they do view the film, it is reasonable for them to see their fathers or brothers, daughters or mothers in the faces of the people working. My hope is that they understand what it takes to survive and, in a small part, understand a bit of the enmity they felt towards the night that took that family member away from them. Hopefully they will see the solemnity in having to clean up after or prepare society for the day to come. Hopefully they will see dignity in the faces of the construction workers not only awake at night but having to hurry as to not get in the way of morning. Hopefully this is understood and can be a positive.

The positive side of representing almost every aspect of the night is that my younger self would find strength in both the night workers and the partier. I could be either or both. Life for these lonely people can be anything they wish and that is the true power of the night. With less people up and awake any signs of life are to be marveled at. I know this to be true, as I may remain that up-at-night loner. I was out and alone in the street just like I was up and awake as a teen.
Helping to build on this idea of the loner marveling at all signs of night life are the images presented. Though full of interference they can still be seen and felt. It is obvious that the people sleeping on the street are homeless as much as the darkened train is a train. These images are heightened by the weak sound, as the day is clean and ready while the night is dark and dingy. At the same time the mixing of mistakes both in the image and sound build a stronger dark atmosphere. The two together are more than the individual technical parts and problems. Even if the image could be cleaned up, would I? Even if the sound could have been recorded with an entire crew would it make the film better? I don’t think it would have. The interference, ugly as it is, adds just enough to be interesting.

Interesting means the viewer has read what s/he wants of the film. Where one person highlights the people working being minorities, another will focus on the emptiness presented. Though one overall theme may not be completely clear, I am happy in the fact that multiple meanings can be read and viewers just don’t sit confused as to what they saw. The conversations I have had with people who watched the film were as enlightening as the process of making the film itself. Even if some disagree with the beauty of the night, even with all the harassment and fear I experienced, I fell in love with Denver at night again. I hope others appreciate the dark as much as I did and somewhat still do. As a goal I never actually assumed my film would allow for such varied readings. For this I am grateful in how the film turned out and how it has been received.
A very late addition is the use of the second narration, which can potentially be considered a strength. Initially, and a large part of the editing process, the narration was included from the start. This choice was to set up the audience immediate insight regarding the message of the movie. While still leaving a small section of narration at the beginning, the ending narration, once moved, became a strength. Instead of helping the audience understand what the movie is about, the narration became an attempt to create an emotional surge in the audience. Instead of just leaving the viewer to interpret the film themselves, the ending narration, when coupled with the beginning, help steer them to think about the night in new and innovative ways. The audience began to subconsciously consider the night in a new light, if you will, as opposed to sleeping it away without another thought. What may seem like an obvious or simple addition to the ending of the film was not included until the final processing. In retrospect, the process would have been helped to being more open to changes of this type.

Even if I felt negative emotions such as fear or paranoia that didn't mean my film would be felt this way. My goals were generally positive and in striving to reach them I had to embrace all emotions. Unable to just focus on the positive I fought against calls for reshoots or taking more time on my project. This could have come out as having an attitude when in reality it was a fear of the same night and city that I proclaim to love. If the road trip through the South taught me anything it is that even the simplest shot can become impossible when faced with hidden fears that are based in harassment. My goal was to show a positive or otherwise "bright" experience in the night and though this may
not have come out at least I buried my negative feelings in the end. Viewers may not want to experience that internal hatred and would not respond positively to misunderstood negativity. If I had used my paranoia to portray the homeless as trash or the workers as needless, then the audience would have turned against the very premise of the film. In reality the enmity came from authority figures. This could have easily been misconstrued as being a creeper and judge of those seen as lesser by society instead of towards those in power.

As mentioned above, society fears the shadow and I fell into that category. Out at night in the big empty cityscapes I let what others told me break into my psyche. Even though the shoots lasted two hours or less it felt like days when surrounded by nothingness. I could have blended into the night, hiding and capturing what was happening. My way of being on street corners and out in the light helped more in my own safety over the shadows found. Ironically, I did choose to hide when finding police officers to record. If I didn’t do this then the film may have lacked any signs of police and I may even have been detained in the process. It was during these summer months that alleged Denver police brutality was on the rise and I felt hiding became more important over making myself known to the officers.

On the other hand where every other person that came to talk to me was a potential risk I was not blending into the dark. I stood in the light and tried to record the darkness and became my own worst enemy. I escaped into myself and allowed the more erratic emotions to take over. The truth is it took a week of psyching myself up to shoot
inside the restaurant locations, not because I feared the footage gathered but because I feared my own reactions to people inquiring about the camera. The lying did hurt but though seen as a necessity it didn't make the words any easier to say.

The end film may not reflect this fear. To me the single scene that represents my inner emotions while outside is the first sleeping homeless person. While shooting I parked next to him and set up my camera. Once he saw me and lifted his head I panicked and quickly grabbed my camera and left. The scene is in the film and few if any will understand the fear I had in being seen. This came after an entire month of being seen and confronted. I was tired; this project was more than I could handle. The night did not defeat me but it came close to destroying my interest in the darkness and in the night.

In conclusion, now that this film is put away I can look back at myself and wonder what happened, look hard at my own problems in the filmmaking process. It has been suggested I should have taken another tack once I started to find obstructions during the shoot. Obviously the film would have been different but still I should have considered this. It was foolish on my part to not even consider my film could be something else while shooting. In the end I must hold open the thoughts of malleability. At the very least I could have looked beyond my own definitive framework at another movie wanting to be made. This film could have been about authority and the night versus my camera.

If I only had help out there on the street, a friend or two able to follow where I led, a simple third party not directly involved in the preproduction. Someone who could
make a simple suggestion that would take the film in interesting places. Mentioned at the beginning of the thesis report, my friends refused to be in front of the camera but I could have asked any of them to help shoot the film, a production job worthy of my friend’s skills while also forgiving them for not willing to help. This doesn’t mean necessarily on the street but also in the edit. Many times I sat in front of my screen at home screaming for help. One phone call and they would have been over to give advice. Though I did show my film to people throughout the process, no one was allowed into my edit room. I refused to even be open to this idea. I really need to be more truthful to myself and give in to my imperfections in all aspects of production.

Part of being open means willing to step on toes when needed. I took no for an answer from everyone I contacted during the preproduction phase. This changed the equilibrium of the film from equal outside and inside to almost all exterior locations. Taking chances is different than taking no for an answer. I was willing to trespass and walk the lonely night but not able to make repeated follow up phone calls. I needed to be stronger internally to get what I wanted but at the same time using that strength to understand my own weaknesses. No one is perfect and I, my attitude, became my weakest attribute. My education at the University of Denver was about learning about myself. This is interesting as I first assumed it would be about film history and gaining further experience in production, when in reality it was about learning who I am and who I want to be as a filmmaker. I need to become a filmmaker able to ask for help and able to receive such help graciously.
The world screams for realism in an age of postmodernism. Documentaries are more popular now than they have ever been, affecting more lives and swaying opinion like never before. Knowing this I made a film about the light of the night. I went against the current and attempted to use the oldest form of documentary (poetic) to change minds. If I had to do it all over again then the night would have followed specific people, highlighting their lives and struggles, and through this more directly highlighting the struggle felt when up at night. That was always the message I wanted to portray but I got lost along the way.
Bibliography


Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis, Dir. Walter Ruttmann. 1927.


Monet, Claude. *The Boat Studio (Le bateau-atelier)*, Barnes Foundation, Lincoln University, Pennsylvanias.


Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix E

Appendix F

Monet, Claude. *The Boat Studio (Le bateau-atelier)*. Barnes Foundation, Lincoln University, Pennsylvanias.
Appendix G
Final Budget

Texas UDMA 8GB CompactFlash ......................................................... $120.00

Xoom H4N ...................................................................................... $300.00

Gas .................................................................................................. $450.00

AAA Insurance ............................................................................... $75.00

Food ................................................................................................. $70.00

Lodging ......................................................................................... $280.00

Total ............................................................................................... $1295.00
Appendix H

My name is Jesus Sierra and I am a Graduate Student at the University of Denver. For my thesis I am making a film about being awake at night. To this end I would like to film in your business for a night, 1 hour at most between midnight and 4am. This piece is observational and I would spend the majority of the time filming employees working without interacting with them.

I begin shooting on July 11th and plan on ending on the 25th so my schedule is flexible to suit your concerns and needs. The goal of the film is not to show any negatives about working at night or in your business but to celebrate the quiet of the night. If you have any further questions or would like to discuss the project further please feel free to email me at fnordcinco@gmail.com or you can call any time at (303)513-6724.

Thank You

Jesus Sierra
Graduate Student
University of Denver