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Chapter 2[1]
Nightnography: We Are Not Night Creatures

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The 16 gates of the New Spitalfields main market hall are widely open in the night. The cold wind ebbs and flows through these gigantic metal gates, leaving night-workers with few options to escape the chill. Male loaders carry tonnes of produce on their bodies, forklift drivers transport thousands of pallets, and women servers walk thousands of miles on foot between the café and market stands and lorries or customers' vans parked throughout the market.

Some nightshifts at New Spitalfields fruit and vegetables warehouse are quiet. In these moments, whilst waiting for customers' orders to arrive, workers shelter between the aisles, climb on banana, ginger or garlic boxes warm with the heat produced during fermentation, place their hands on the heated metal frame of the forklift engine or sip warm coffee and 'special mix' (Redbull mixed with whiskey). The silence of the usually clangourous space is heightened by fear and seething anger. Loaders wait, expecting orders that do not come because of some slowdown in the delivery chain. Business owners suffer losses and this is enough to amplify worries among workers acutely aware of their expendable existence. Workers are summoned at the end of their extensive hours long shifts. 'Arkadaşlar' ('friends' in Turkish), the manager addresses us, 'If you do not change into faster workers, I will

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replace you! You are out! I can replace you very easily because every night men with forklift driving and manual skills alike are coming to ask for work, every evening!'

On other nights, business is brisk. The dark becomes floodlit as the hustle and bustle of daytime worries dims beneath humming voices and the rumble of forklift engines. Thursday nights, for instance, are always frantic because hundreds of grocers descend on the market to stock up on produce to cover the weekend trade. The orders come in thick and fast, the rhythms intensify and people shout at one another, swearing loudly. Forklift drivers honk their horns and the screech of brakes punctuates the nightshift soundscape. On these occasions, New Spitalfields resembles pandemonium as people rush about, bumping into one another. Loaders and drivers sweat heavily, discarding a couple of layers of clothes even before the gates open. At midnight, when the wholesale customers and public rush through the gates, a long trail of forklifts and vans begin to zoom in and out of the market. As customers park their vehicles and quickly walk to their preferred grocery stands, the loaders bend and lift boxes, constantly on the move. Workers learn to rapidly respond to the intensity of requests rushing around them. With bodily movements—walking faster or running, to think of shortcuts to reach the produce and ways of placing them onto pallets. The loaders learn techniques to enable them to lift more crates and more sacks at a time. For example, tomatoes are sold in 5 kg crates and sell very fast. On a nightly basis, loaders carry thousands of crates of tomatoes – one customer could order up to 128 crates in addition to more than 200 other items. Thus, loaders need to move quickly. At 9 am their night(mare) ends. Bodies trickle out of the 31-acre site of the New Spitalfields market. They disappear inside cars, buses and into underground carriages.

As the nadir point approaches – the lowest point in the biological, circadian rhythms – bodies are exhausted and spent. Yet, these workers need these jobs to survive and so refuel their minds and bodies with energizing drinks to keep themselves going. Male loaders continue to grab, lift, turn and throw pallets to the ground. They jostle paper potato sacks on their backs, carry cardboard boxes of cassava, crates of apples and bags of red onions, which male traders spend the entire night selling. Female café servers hand out 'special mix' and hot food to their male colleagues, collect the empty glass mugs lying on the floor and briskly walk back to the café. Imran, one of the workers, refers to the men and women who work at this market as 'dead', yet continuing to work and move. Loaders toil and sweat night in, night out as they as they transport, coordinate and examine produce. The nightly exhaustion intrudes upon their social lives and permeates their private existence. Like a double-edge sword, for many, nighttime work represents the most lucrative way to support their families, however, the price nightworkers pay is felt in their bodies and culminates in being spent and used up. Without access to equal opportunity, which would allow them to demonstrate their skills in other ways and towards other forms of work, the fate of these migrant nightworkers has to some degree been decided. Having to accept this, they adjust to the aches, pains and blisters of this nightwork, only to become within a few years what Imran calls, 'dead women and men walking'.

I became a night researcher to reach out to nightworkers. I found out that we are not night creatures, yet that some of us must do the 'graveyard shift'. The fieldwork was my level playing field, and although it overlapped with the loaders and café server's nighttime work for only a brief time, it gave me the opportunity to understand why (i.e., forces of globalisation, global city, nighttime) and how (i.e., extraction of capital from the labouring bodies) migrants forced to enter nighttime work become bio-automatons – half-machines, half-humans. I also sought to further understand the economic and social facets of migrant labour and bodily precarity through what anthropologists call being 'immersed in the field'. My co-workers at New Spitalfields offered me the opportunity to enter their lives at work, and some invited me to into their lives outside of work – to meet their families and celebrate important milestones that they have achieved. I am grateful to my co-workers for sharing their lived experiences as precarious migrant labourers. To be able to step into their shoes on the treacherous frontier between night and day, I needed to forgo my familiar diurnal rhythms and routines and dedicate my 'mindful body' (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) to doing nocturnal fieldwork – the distinct characteristic of nightnography. This unconventional ethnography provides a meta-level perspective into a mode of labouring that has so far only been sketched by previous scholarship in migration and emerging fields of night studies. My hope is that, as an insider of a world that is invisible and hard to access for ethnographers (whom usually research by day), my study will contribute to these fields by adding an embodied dimension to an anthropology of migrant labour.

2.1 Nightnography

> The night people are those that dig what's happening and are not afraid to show their enthusiasm… welcome aboard![2]

Ethnography is in-person observation and participation. Traditionally, anthropologists have conducted ethnography during the daytime, retired at night to sleep or process information and continued fieldwork the next morning. In contrast, nightnography means to research an antithetic mode of life and the activities associated with it that are not accessible by day, requiring from the anthropologist a denser, deeper mode of engagement. As a nightnographer, I also made 'shifts of perspective' that enabled me to contribute to an Anthropology of the Night (Galinier et al. 2010). Instead of the more familiar characters of night revellers, I looked at

[2] Personal letter to Prof Will Straw, McGill University, author of *Media and the Night: Routledge Companion*, written by the 'leader of the night people in Buffalo', Kevin O'Connell, WYSL AM/FM Radio Buffalo, The McLendon Stations, February 1970.

less visible individuals who spend their nights at work, involved in repetitive, lonely labour processes. I chose to study the less romanticised nightlife aspects and peer into the hidden corners of 'legitimate lives' kept in the dark (Daveluy 2010, p. 838 apud Galinier et al. 2010). Further, instead of more commonly investigated events such as rituals and festivals, which happen within a particular period of the night (Chenhall 2010, apud Galinier et al. 2010), I focused on a continuous activity, that of food provisioning. Food production, processing, distribution and consumption is a 24/7 activity, but the loading and delivery of food to supermarkets happens mostly during the night. Consequently, the processes and the people involved in loading and delivering food at night remain invisible from the eyes and minds of those simply purchasing or consuming food products. As a nightnographer researching food provisioning, I was up and working all night, immersing myself in this reality when most of society sleeps. Yet, this nightnography does not replace, but complements, the past and present legacies of diurnal ethnography that are the dominant points of reference in anthropological research.

In the process of making sense of a nocturnal landscape as a researcher, I often shifted from being a 'participant observer' to being an 'observant participant'. I use these terms to indicate degrees of proximity to a world in which one is witnessing either by actively *participating* as a detached observer (participant observer) or by being an involved *observer* whilst participating less (or not at all) in activities (observant participant). The level and depth of engagement in the field indicates the degrees to which one is more of a participant than an observer (and conversely). The shift between the two required not only that I switched from the mode of day to night to research this community of workers, but that I also used my bodily knowledge and the mind's ability to make an 'epistemic shift' beyond the 'front stage' that respondents, at first, use to protect their nightly lives from 'day outsiders' like me (Goffman 1956). However, when immersed in an empirical reality, clear separations are hard to draw. Hence, the shifts between *participant observer* and *observant participant* indicate only degrees of the tension between being a deep and thickly immersed participant sharing the experiences and that of an involved, yet uncommitted observer. This tension is negotiated by the ethnographer when moving closer to conduct an interview, witness intimate activities or wait for a window of opportunity to open a sensitive topic for deep discussion. In real case scenarios, the ethnographer decides the best course of action depending on their fieldwork experience and what is permissible and consented to by participants. Ultimately, as Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1987, p. 419) argues, the 'witnesses are accountable for what they see and fail to see, how they act and how they fail to act in critical situations'.

2.2 Autoethnography: A Migrant, Apprentice and Nightnographer

Autoethnography is not autobiography, though it involves biographical milestones and trajectories. Autoethnography originates at the junction between ethnographer's encountering of others' lived experiences as they are encountered during fieldwork. In the space between the personal and the 'other', experience-led knowledge is born and then laced into the ethnographic writing, film or audio-waves, which the ethnographic researcher crafts and produces. Unlike more objectively narrated accounts, autoethnographic writing invites its readers 'to feel the truth of their stories and to become coparticipants, engaging the storyline, morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, p. 745). The autoethnography presented in this book integrates my own experiences of being emplaced in the nocturnal landscape of the New Spitalfields market in London along with the experiences of the full-time migrant nightworkers at this market, and also draws upon some of my former experiences as a migrant worker in Istanbul in the 1990s. I now write this autoethnographic account in order to make a contribution to a better understanding of the researchers' role when portraying the lives of migrants in writing, film or through digital means – that is, away from a more dichotomous dynamic (e.g., 'villain' or 'hero'), and towards integrative portrayals that more accurately depict the lived reality that migrant labourers face on a day-to-day or night-by-night basis.

Although I trained as an anthropologist and gained much practical experience under supervision, I still faced difficulties in the fieldwork that I present in this book. Despite my best preparation, there were specific challenges in researching the nightwork of migrants living in precarity that I did not entirely anticipate. This autoethnography was undertaken through bodily participation and the challenges came from directly experiencing myself the the lived physicality of the nightworkers lives. The sheer difficulty of both the work and the work environment required me to have a reflexive awareness in order to not only viscerally learn what my coworkers and I were required to undertake in this work, but then to somehow also accurately express this in writing. Additionally, practicing this autoethnography significantly required my 'emotional participation' (Hage 2009, p. 71), as I often shared both the anger and disdain felt by my co-workers with them. Our experiences were strengthened by this and frequently blurred the boundaries between them and me. At times, this 'emotional participation' is preserved in the text. In the words of Hage (2009, p. 76), these are 'emotions that I captured analytically', which refers to the negotiation required between keeping the emotions raw whilst also identifying ways to categorise them according to an emerging analytical theme. Negotiating between what one feels and what one must do for the analysis does not need involve suppressing emotions, but instead a delicate balancing of what one observes with the emotional heart with the analytical mind. For this, I was able to draw upon what I learnt and practiced as a former trainee in Psychodynamics of Human Development at Birkbeck College, London, as well as my practice as a graduate mental

health worker[3] (e.g., develop a non-judgmental approach, paraphrase to clarify participants' statements, and synthesise). This emotional participation transpires best in CHAPTERS FIVE, SIX and SEVEN, through the interactions documented from the working group between the foreman, other co-workers and myself. Through the analysis, my aim is to bridge emotions and sensations with analytical categories. It has also been to illuminate the research topic of migrant nightworkers' experiences through demonstrating the lived components of the ethnography undertaken for it (e.g., the site, people, interpersonal connections, emotional transactions and physical actions).

One of my objectives through the ethnographic writing of this book, is to help mediate between the world of precarious migrant nightworkers and that of various audiences outside of and perhaps unfamiliar with this world. This in-betweenness is the central focus of my autoethnography, and not the suffering of doing the nightnography. I have undertaken this autoethnography, too, sharing the views of Khosravi (2016, p. 56), who writes that:

> There is potentiality for democratisation of knowledge, partly by making the knowledge accessible to non-experts, and partly by challenging the hierarchy of knowledge in which objective analytical expertise is valued higher than the knowledge arising from experiences and emotional responses, which excludes the position of the marginalised who are in constant negotiation of subject-object boundaries.

I sympathise also with the criticisms of humanitarian organisations who portray migrants and refugees as being lost and hopeless (Rajaram 2002; Massari 2021). When depicted in this way, as Rancieré's (2012) writes, they cannot tell their own stories and are further invisibilised and silenced. As such, this autoethnography invited precarious migrant nightworkers to tell their own versions of their stories. I saw that I was merely providing an opportunity so that they may 'resist being invented and consumed, just as many so-called informants have been, by anthropologists' (Hastrup 1992; Khosravi 2016; 2017, p. 56).

2.3 Multi-positionality

2.3.1 The Migrant

I have understood the language of the migrant through my own migration, in Romania, where I was born and spent the first two decades of my life, I belonged to a

[3] Experience gained whilst a part of psychological services and case management of patients in the National Health Service (NHS), U.K.

small ethnic minority, the *Lipoveni* or 'Old believers'. *Lipoveni* had fled 17th century Russia due to religious persecution, migrating along the north-eastern borders of Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. Except the locals of northern region of Romania (Moldavia), many Romanians in other parts of the country are not even aware of this almost invisible group. Most are, nonetheless, aware that this (same) ethnic group lives in the southern region, situated on the Danube Delta[4], in part due to researchers, artists and tourists interested in this UNESCO protected ecosystem. As a child of an ethnic minority, I lived through precarity, inequities and injustices that communists inflicted through persecution for not willing to join the Communist Party, and through made up accusations against my mother. Outside of post-socialist Romania, I was labelled – first as an 'economic' immigrant in Istanbul, Turkey, where I worked as a garage driver, and then as an 'immigrant' in the U.K., where I have studied, worked and lived for the past 16 years. When I was in Istanbul just over 25 years ago, I had the determination, but no theoretical or methodological tools then to turn my experience into an autoethnography of the poor garage drivers of the wealthy strata (Wacquant 2015, p. 1). I 'performed precarity' as my Istanbulite co-workers did, exploited and underpaid without any social security or work contract (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016). There I learnt about abstract concepts such as 'precarious work', 'indecent working conditions', 'migrant labour' and the attitude of 'make live or let die' (Li 2010) – through my skin, as it were.

Fig. 2.1. INSERT HERE

In London, between 2010 and 2012, when I was associated with University College London (UCL) and supervised by Professor Ger Duijzings, an anthropologist at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, I began researching vulnerable and marginalised Romanian migrants working in the nighttime economy and later, expanded my research to include the lives of other workers whose languages I could also speak, those being of Turkish and Bulgarians workers. I had learnt to do my research by hanging out and schmoozing with everyone in order to create contacts, and by being deeply immersed in the fieldwork as a participant observer, prepared at any moment to record audio or images if the situation permitted and when respondents allowed me to document our audio-video interviews or take photographs of them. In 2015, I worked at night and lived during the day with poorly paid migrants in a neglectfully maintained, yet highly priced house of multiple occupation.

These mixed experiences of migrant-hood, of being seen as an 'economic' migrant with 'settled' status and living a kind of academic nomadism, constitute my alternative status. In the sedentary order of things, this makes me a migrant or nomad deemed unfit and who challenges the norms (Khosravi 2016; Khosravi 2017).

[4] Danube Delta has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. This natural reservation, situated between Romania and Ukraine, has massive ecological importance due to its rich biodiversity.

As one of the 3.5 % of the world's 272 million international migrants (IOM 2020), my life has been a constant (and tiring) navigation through the invisible borders set between minority groups and the majority, between being a migrant (poor) and an expat (white professional) and between academic institutions. I have tried to barter for myself, a place in mainstream societies for whom I was and continue to remain, an invisible contributor.

My own migratory experience has not only shaped my interests in migration-related topics, but also my nightnography methodology, what I call the 'Researcher's Nightworkshop' methodology (MacQuarie 2021). In a world where millions of migrants travel to work abroad and contribute to societies where they settle, I began questioning the anti-nomad/migrant sentiments by locals and the U.K. government. Besides being curious how items in the 'national order of things' reaches the immigration agenda in countries like Britain (Malkki 1995), I have been asking why migrants, otherwise invisible to the public eye, are represented either as 'villains' or 'thieves' (an exception being the COVID-19 crisis, during which migrant essential workers became 'hero/ines' for a brief period). This question lead me into anthropology and has been the motivation for delving more deeply into this topic with those at the bottom of the labour market with whom I relate to in several ways. This is how I ended up becoming one of the migrant Londoners who sought to work the nightshift.

2.3.2 The Apprentice Loader

Upon entering the research site for the first time, whether it be day or night, the researcher carries a degree of doubt as to what the fieldwork will uncover and where the discoveries might lead. Yet, when entering the realm of nightnography for this study, my body went through shock. The site itself, the nightly rhythms, the isolation and the seemingly interminable nightshifts, all greatly affected my being. For this fieldwork, I first enacted the life of a migrant seeking work at a night market in London. From November 2014 and until mid-January 2015, I journeyed at night from South-West London to East London to seek employment at New Spitalfields night market. Prior to entering the field, I was theoretically prepared to inquire about forms of solidarity and competition among migrant nightshift workers. I suspected these to exist in some form of sociability drawn along ethnic lines, for example, between Romanian, Turkish and Roma migrants. I, therefore, primarily sought employment at Turkish owned companies who employed Romanian nationals with a Turkish background, and where the business language was Turkish. I had a good command of languages, which I thought could help me, being a native speaker of Romanian, having learnt Turkish whilst living in Istanbul and furthered through classes at the Central European University in Budapest, and excellent English

language skills – although the latter was of very little use, as I came to find out a few months later.

Author as apprentice sweeping the floor **INSERT HERE**

Fig. 2. 1. Author as apprentice sweeping the floor

Either by some coincidence or through perseverance, at the end of January 2015 I was hired by a Bangladeshi owner and began training as an apprentice manual worker, loading fruits and vegetables and carrying out numbing chores as instructed. One month later, I left, eager to work for my new Turkish employer, FruitVeg (Figure 5), another fruit and vegetable wholesaler. For five months I worked alongside men of various religious faiths, ethnicities (e.g., Turkish-Bulgarian, Bangladeshi, Roma and non-Roma Romanian-Turks, Kurdish-Turks and Pakistanis from Europe and Asia – see Appendix 1.2), and some of mixed nationality (e.g., British Pakistanis and British Turks). Their ages ranged from their late 20s to mid 40s. No women were hired where I worked as a loader. Six months later, I changed employer again to work in an on-site café. I shared the duties with a small team consisting of three female café servers and two men, the chef and the co-owner, who juggled tasks between the kitchen and the front counter. I was employed alongside and shared the fate of these nightworkers at the New Spitalfields market for eight months.

At 5'7' (1.75 m) and with over a decade of physical martial arts training, my body endured the physical toil that an apprentice loader needs to cope with at night, reasonably well. I was less capable, however, at staying awake all night. Whilst on nightshifts, the nocturnal rhythm required me to be alert and active at night and to begin sleeping during the day. As a result, my usual seven to eight hour nightly sleep was replaced with a four to five hour daytime sleep. I woke up in the evenings rather than in the mornings, and I worked at night. My mealtimes also reversed and my appetite decreased. I started having my first meal at around midnight, then if the fast-working pace permitted, I would have a snack between 2 – 3 am. Many a time, I ate on the go or more accurately, ate whilst running because the place was crowded and the company I worked for had neither a designated space for loaders to eat nor clearly defined breaks for workers. Given the one to two hour commute back home (sometimes due to long transport delays), I would have my first meal at around

noon, unsure any longer whether it was breakfast or lunch. Each week I had one night off (on Saturdays) when I would sometimes sleep all through until Sunday afternoon in order to recover. This sleeping pattern and long hours was very rare for me, before changing my circadian rhythms.

Every night at the market, I lifted and loaded crates and sacks of fruits and vegetables weighing four to five times more than my body weight. I also handled and pushed a manual forklift loaded with pallets weighing one to two tonnes of products. Measurements taken with a Pacer Pedometer digital application, as well as video recordings and field notes that I recorded, documented how I began to feel the effects of these changes both physically and mentally from the first month of nightwork. Over the course of the fieldwork, I lost a total of 14 kg and my body has since only partially recovered. Nightwork was a physiological shock to my system. I not only reversed my usual behavioural patterns and daily habits, but my body was also placed under enormous strain every night. I remember the pain I felt when I overloaded my body with produce, and still vividly recall the way my palms and fingers became swollen and bruised from repeatedly grabbing, twisting and lifting packages and crates, and how the skin on my hands became dry and peeled around my cuticles because I was handling the packages without gloves. Wearing gloves in this masculine culture would have been a sign of weakness, something I tried to hide despite the constant inconveniences. But admittedly, I felt the physical pain of the work mentally. I was afraid of taking breaks although I so desperately needed them, as during a 15 – 20 minute break, my body would relax and afterwards refuse to return to the hyper alert state required to keep up with the rhythms of the job. Resuming work after a break was always very painful, even more painful than if I had worked continuously. I experienced this also when I took a week off to pass a forklift driving course. On one hand, I felt rested, but on the other hand, when I returned to the rhythms and routines of the loading work, I felt the physical toil of carrying the fruits and vegetables nightly as an overwhelming burden.

Apart from this corporeal shock, there was the social isolation. I often felt isolated from the people I had regularly associated with before beginning the nightnography. When they were having their dinner, I was preparing my lunch. When they were going out, I was going to work. On Sunday's, when they were having a barbecue, I was asleep recovering from the previous week and trying to prepare physically and mentally for the next. If I did join people I knew for dinner, I had to constantly try to stop myself from falling asleep in the middle of a conversation. When I did try to participate in a social or cultural event, I always ended up being on the run for lack of time. That year in London when I undertook the nightnography, seemed to pass by me. I felt disengaged with life beyond the market and can barely recall other events that occurred that year. I noticed too how my colleagues would return to work every week on Sunday night still tired as though they had not rested at all. Those who spent their only day off on Sunday's with their families during the day seemed to pay a price, as they would return to work physically exhausted. As a colleague expressed to me one time, 'night work eats your life, without knowing or really living, the years pass by you. Nightwork breaks you'.

After a year spent in New Spitalfields, I understood in own my body the bodily effects that precarity takes. All of my energy was used up in trying to keep up with the frantic pace imposed by management and traders in the market. Entire nights were spent walking and sometimes running at a fast pace. I averaged 8.2 km per night inside the market, and covered a total of 1,600 miles (2,310 km) during the year of my nightnography working nightshifts at the New Spitalfields market. Like all the other workers in the market, I drank many energy drinks. Each week, I worked an average of 63 hours in total, and spent 77 hours away from home with the inclusion of my nightly commutes, which averaged 2.4 hours for each nightly return trip. In contrast, a full-time, daytime manual labourer can legally only work eight-hour shifts totalling a maximum of 40 hours per week, and only on weekdays.

2.3.3 The Nightnographer

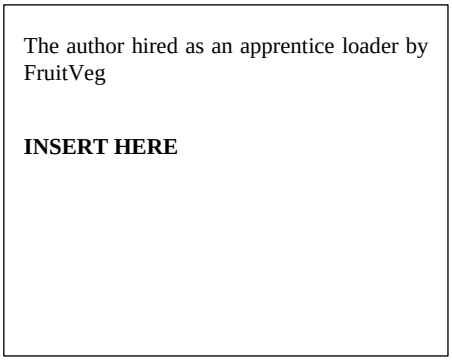


Fig. 2. 2. The author hired as an apprentice loader by FruitVeg

Throughout my fieldwork, I was far from being a seasoned nightshift worker, though I was a migrant and a nightworker. I committed myself to the aims and objectives of my study and theoretically prepared for it, but was unprepared for the methodological challenges of doing nightnography. Anthropologists are trained to observe, think, interpret and disseminate their findings according to agreed methods, standards and outlets, even when the practice of being a participant observer becomes intensely corporeal. It was my experience that the more I immersed myself in the field at night, the more body-and-mind-provoking my engagement became (e.g., loss of of weight, emotional upset from isolation, lack of sleep). I entered the nightshift workers' world to understand how they function and how they structure their social relations in the precarious landscape of the market. This has been the most thought-provoking experience, and several insights were gained from this. As the research progressed, I was able to notice aspects of bodily practices that my co-workers learnt and perfected, but which they did not talk about in interviews or during our informal conversations. Following the fieldwork, it was through my

analysis of the ethnographic data I had collected, that I was better able to reflect upon the learning processes behind their bodily capital. These reflections are fully fleshed out in CHAPTER SIX (section 6.1). Such aspects led to a discovery that I neither anticipated nor constructed, which is that workers hold mastery over their physical labour skills to the extent that they can transform it into bodily capital in socialised encounters. I also came to understand how they enacted sociabilities off-site, and the relationality of these embodied experiences of sociability are analysed in CHAPTER EIGHT.

When researching the nightshift through immersive ethnography, one's daily life becomes very different by living at rhythms opposite to the society that functions in the daytime. As an apprentice loader doing anthropology, I learnt directly about the effects of the physical toil of the work on the body – not only on my own, but also of hundreds of other manual nightworkers. I recollect the bodily pain and muscle cramps I experienced resulting from overloading my body just so I could keep pace with my experienced co-workers. I remember the dizziness I felt in the early hours of the morning when the human body reaches its nadir point – the lowest level of activity of the human body during the 24-hour physiological and circadian cycle. The response varies according to individuals, but I reached the lowest point between four and six in the morning. During that period, I often felt like I was losing my balance and that my whole body was tired. It was a strange sensation both physically and mentally, which felt as though the ground was running from underneath my feet; like I could 'hear' my body 'screaming' that it wanted to lie down, refusing any further walking, let alone to rushing around whilst loaded with groceries. Yet, I could not obey how I felt since stopping was not permitted, and so had to carry on lifting crates and bags, very often in the shadow of a client watching over me.

During the last part of the fieldwork, from August to December 2015, I was able to cease working, at which time I became an involved observer and focused on undertaking interviews with co-workers, shop floor managers, wholesale customers and the odd market visitor, which were conducted in Turkish, Romanian and English. I had gained a good degree of an insider's familiarity of the work ethics, i.e., the ethical or unethical practices between Kurdish-Turkish owners and Bangladeshi, Bulgarian, Pakistani, Romanian and Turkish manual workers. I had not been employed by any British-owned companies but had interacted with English traders whilst serving food and drinks over the counter at the café. I aimed to collect information that I could not find in the existing public debates, policy agendas and scholarly literature on migrant forms of sociability, embodied precarity and the invisibility of nightworkers in this 24/7 society. The length of the fieldwork stretched over 14 months.

As a nightnographer, I left the market before it completely depleted my bodily and mental resources. This is a luxury that precarious nightworkers, such as those whom I met at New Spitalfields, rarely have. It took me months to recover physically and psychologically from this brutal experience.

Reporting on these important existential issues is part of the contribution I hope to make in presenting a focused study about precarity and the conditions of manual

labour. I have tried to articulate in my writing, the experience of bodily pain and exhaustion, as well as the isolation and alienation experienced by workers – which was not only from society, but also from their families. I point out that some migrants experience precarity year in and year out because they have no economic, social or cultural capital that might help them exit the trap of the nightshift. These experiences are produced by the contemporary capitalist system, which knowingly undoes the rhythms of the 24 hour human circadian cycle, and which squeezes the last drop of energy from these exhausted bodies for the sake of capital accumulation. These experiences remain unknown and nightworkers themselves remain invisible. Our society unthinkingly accepts this reality in its expectation of and desire for ceaseless consumption. Nocturnal workers are indispensable in our 24/7 society and yet, they remain invisible to the majority of people who live according to natural circadian rhythms. Migrant nightworkers are dignified workers wrecked by undignified working conditions, though their cases continue to hardly ever be included in public and political debates.

2.4 Nightnographer, Explained

When we anthropologists engage with others in the field, we do so because we want to step beyond the corridors of the university department to reach out to others. Although this is well understood among social or cultural anthropologists, it often receives mixed responses from other social scientists. Like most researchers, nonetheless, I have had to overcome obstacles in reaching out beyond academic audiences, and have felt the need to explain that as these 'others' are so fundamentally different that we need to make an epistemic turn to enter that world, and later to 'make sense of' the diverse cultural, social, and behavioural practices that we have witnessed during fieldwork (Bringa and Bendixsen 2016a; Bringa and Bendixsen 2016b). Conversely, to invite people in the field to participate in the research is to ask people to voluntarily share their world with you. At times, I was successful in getting access to certain activities, people's intimate space or information. At others, I have had to wait for a window of opportunity to move closer to the people I worked with. And this could be because anthropology, at times, appears difficult to explain to people outside of the discipline, and more so to those outside of social sciences.

My position was difficult to explain even to myself. Do I position myself in the field or do co-workers place me according to what I tell them? From day one, I told everyone that I was a doctoral researcher and that I would like to publish a book on invisible nightshift workers. This was met with disbelief. 'What do you mean?', asked one co-worker. 'Are we invisible to you?'. Another co-worker could not fathom my interest and asked me, 'What is so special about nightshift work?' Another person wanted to know if, as a medical doctor, I could treat both men and women. To my co-workers, I became known as *Doktor* ('Doctor' in Turkish). I tried to explain my complicated presence in the field by saying that I was interested in

the health problems that occurred as a result of working at night, as well as the ethnic and social relations among migrant workers. This appeared to have been clearer and more understandable than my first attempt, although I could still not convince any of my co-workers why I would take on 'a dog's life' to publish a book. So, for many, I was the crazy student, photographer, filmmaker and translator. Others told me that they could not understand if I was a student, a teacher or a spy. Romanians, specifically, thought that I was spying on them. Moreover, apart from a few co-workers with whom I formed a friendship, nobody ever called me by my real name. Most twisted my name with a Turkish accent, calling me 'Sezar'.

Time is a crucial factor when trying to progress from being an 'outsider' to being an 'insider'. During the first couple of months, my co-workers would only greet me when I entered the stand, but then standing in small groups throughout the store, most male co-workers, if they did not completely ignore me for the rest of the nightshift, certainly did not help me in finding the produce needed to complete orders. It took me several months to move beyond the pleasantries and politeness that co-workers showed to an 'outsider' to be accepted as an 'insider', and to be invited to witness their world both at work, as well as outside of it.

Performance is another crucial factor. I needed to prove that I was capable of navigating the hardships of the nightshift for months in a row, that was, to 'do your job' – enduring the physical labour as other workers did, be a docile employee for the foreman and shop floor management and to show allegiance to the company by not socialising or even briefly speaking to workers from the competitive stands in the market. Gică, a Romanian-Turkish and the foreman of the FruitVeg, explained one day that he did not think I would last there long. He emphasised that, 'We had once a lawyer working with us, but he only lasted three months'. Basrí a loader turned porter, said in a video interview that, 'This work, working at the night market is not for everyone. Thank God that I have the strength to do it. But we will see for how long'. At that time, neither he nor I knew that he would end up continuing to work as a porter for another five years. Whilst I was immersed in performing this work, I 'dived-in deep into the stream of action' alongside my co-workers (Wacquant 2015, p. 5). The result was integration and, at the same time, an investigation into workers' bodies and subjectivities from 'under-the-skin'. This expression, 'under-th-skin', refers on the one hand to learning how regimes of discipline make nightshift workers travail unceasingly for fear of the unbearable pain that enters their bodies when they take a pause from the physical labour. On the other hand, the expression indicates how these regimes morph precarious nightworkers into obedient bio-machines, frozen by the knowledge that they are expendable and disposable. Having grasped these prerequisites earned me an insider's place. Another indication that I had shifted from being a 'participant observer' to an 'observant participant' came when customers of FruitVeg (the company where I worked) trusted me to carry and load their produce onto pallets. My co-workers noticed this and began to warm to me. From barely acknowledging my presence when I entered the stand, they began to open up to me and, for instance, began freely cursing customers in my presence, which would have been unheard of until now. Sharing

similar hardships with co-workers, as well as building increasing rapport with customers, contributed to me earning a place as an insider.

Though being willing to take the toll of a 'dog's life' to write a book did not make sense to my co-workers, sharing in their hardships in order to understand their lives was met with approval. I noticed how it allowed my co-workers to put down their masks, as well as to stop asking why someone with a different status (education, social class and British citizenship) would work in a night market. This was also noticeable, as some told me, to workers from other stands at New Spitalfields whom I would meet on Saturday mornings in the café where my co-workers would have a drink or two before going home for a well-deserved night's sleep. Whilst some drank alcohol and ate Turkish pizza and others played cards, loud conversations would bounce back and forth over the heads of many present at the café. Eray, a Romanian-Turkish co-worker from another firm asked Gică, my foreman, why they called me 'Doctor.' In a roar of laughter, the foreman shouted loudly over my head that, 'He took a dog's life to experience our misery, write a book and make millions from selling it afterwards!'. It suddenly occurred to me that I *was* there to understand the 'misery' of being a night market worker. Gică's explanation of what I was doing at the market made sense to Eray, as well as to me, although I had not put it into these words prior to now. We all cheered to that and before I knew it, the whole café became solely interested in how much money I would make from selling this book. By being explained from an insider's viewpoint, the nightnography that I enacted for this book was as succinct as it could be about the embodied aspects of the anthropology of labour that I was there to perform. This 'misery' was a combination of factors from a lack of opportunities to poverty and debt escalation, as well as the physical and emotional suffering. These experiences overlap in many of my co-workers' lives and as such, are primary topics throughout this book.

This 'fleshy companionship' (Wacquant 2005, p. 450) between my co-workers and I also grew in the endless hours of small talk we shared during our nights together as we carried produce with our bodies, gripping, grabbing and pulling packages, crates and wrappers with our sore fingers. Pétonnet (1982) described 'small talk' as 'floating conversation' – not over precise details, but as a tool for 'being receptive by hanging around in specific places and developing sensitivity to chance-encounters in which people reveal their local or inside knowledge' (quoted in Driessen and Jansen 2013, p. 251).

At the market, I spoke Romanian and Turkish with workers from Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and English with my Pakistani co-workers. I did not make use of my English language skills nor my professional qualifications to obtain preferential treatment from the management. In the first instance, it was verbal communication that was required for taking instructions from the supervisor and manager, as well as engaging in small talk, which later expanded into in-depth discussions. Additionally, verbal communication was a tool for maintaining and expanding the network of interlocutors. Nonetheless, for over six months, I could not move beyond the FruitVeg company where I worked. I could stand, walk and carry produce and talk in snippets with my co-workers, but was not permitted to move out of the stand

or leave it except when I needed to use the bathroom. As such, many conversations floated between the pallets, and the general content was gossip against customers. Spatially and temporally, the rhythm of the nightshift work dictated our conversations and depended on my co-workers' availability or willingness to contribute to or dismiss any opportunity to have more than just a chat.

Most times, small talk would happen in snippets as we were sitting on a stack of pallets, which served as the loaders' table for eating or for rolling a cigarette. The manager, however, surveyed his workers via CCTV cameras installed throughout the stand and upon seeing us resting would call his supervisor to disperse us. Nevertheless, the snippets of information I gathered from these brief conversations were important because they elicited small pieces of 'inside' information otherwise difficult to collect. As a rule, I seized any opportunity that arose to have conversations about situations relating to work. These early conversations formed the bottom-up processes that led to the formation of questions asked in the semi-structured interviews.

I was continually challenged in the fieldwork in regard to initiating conversations with my co-workers. Months into my fieldwork, for example, I was frustrated at being rejected by the people that I least expected. I respected the fact that regardless of whether or not I shared my co-workers' fates as a participant observer or observant participant, that some did not wish to be interviewed. My Romanian-Turkish co-workers were the one's refusing to engage in further structured, formal interviews. I was mistaken in anticipating prior to the fieldwork, that Romanian nationals (although of a different ethnicity to me), would be easier to convince than co-workers of other nationalities, given that we shared the same mother tongue. I tackled this challenge by relying heavily on the small chats we had on the work floor, as well as observations.

I also became more cautious in what I disclosed to my co-workers in the early stages of our interactions. Upon reflection, I now understand that acting cautiously when providing information about oneself may prevent getting into awkward situations. For example, having disclosed to one co-worker that I practised martial arts, it attracted provocations to fight with him. Although I successfully defused and de-escalated the provocations on three occasions, I became more aware of how certain self-disclosures early on in the field could be detrimental in the long term and prevent open discussions. Nonetheless, disclosing one's actual intentions about the aims of the research from day one is utterly recommended, regardless of the length of time spent in the field to build trust with research participants, especially if envisaging to return to the field site after the project ended.

As in daily life, the informal conversations between co-workers and myself went through stages of transition from initially being strangers to increasingly becoming familiar with one another as we learnt more about each another. On this basis, building rapport through small talk became the first and most crucial phase in this ethnographic study. This small talk positively influenced my research by being the gradual way through which connectedness with co-workers and preparedness for the later stages of the research developed. This was inclusive of, but not limited to my

co-workers' willingness to participate in interviews following the first participant observation phase of my research. This changed my research approach from what I initially imagined, and opened up opportunities for interacting outside of the work that I have completed as a participant observer. Although it was difficult to move across the invisible line between small talk during participant observation to becoming an observant participant, once I entered their homes, it became easier to gain insight into how they managed precarity and by what rules (e.g., helping out with paying their gas bills or parking fines gave me insights into how they deal with lack of English language).

Driessen and Jansen (2013, p. 256) have found that small talk provides 'ample space for serendipity, may lead to quicker access to taboo subjects, lubricates access to cultural meanings, [and] maintains and enlarges the network'. Most importantly, when coupled with other techniques, small talk can '[lead] to theoretical considerations', although this tends to be an undervalued technique in the academic community. There are dangers, however, in over-practising this technique, especially if used on its own. In the early phase of initiating small talk, one may lose a certain naturalness in communication in needing to first learn and the practice the vernacular, and therefore fail to be convincing. Uncomfortably, this type of 'close communion may involve the researcher in a certain degree of prejudice and gossip' (Driessen & Jansen, 2013, p. 257). Practices to counter or prevent such dangers include personal variation and inventiveness, though these may also be undertaken with some tensions.

2.5 Nightnographic Storytelling in Migration Studies

The aim to visibilise manual migrant nightworkers and their predicaments guided the nightnography of this study. Inherent in this nightnographic design is a set of strategies and tools that may enable researchers to make visible the nightly issues that invisible migrant nightworkers experience. Among them, visual methods are of particular importance in migration (Martiniello 2017; Nikielska-Sekula and Desille 2021) Migration scholars turn to visual methods because 'images have always accompanied humans as means of interpreting and representing reality' (Desille and Nikielska-Sekula 2021, p. 1). Moxey, (2008, p. 132) argues that images can transmit their own 'message' and have their own representation independent of the meanings created in certain languages (Anglo-Saxon). At a time when masses of data and information via digital mediums have become salient in the study of human lives, new types of media, social media, and still and moving images provide a means to engage with and address concerns in migration studies. Such an approach offers new possibilities of presenting audiences with perspectives in a more accessible, non-prescriptive manner and also invites multiple interpretations by a wider, critical public, which has the potential to result in greater impacts for scholarly research.

For this study, I used visual research methods both to collect and disseminate the research findings. To engage participants with the research topic, I made use of any opportunity for photography and video sessions. It was through my body that I could feel the depths of precariousness and how it invaded migrant nightworkers bodily and emotionally and the ways it affected their cognitive functioning. When co-workers could not clearly articulate their experiences, my own 'body notes' helped to prompt and reveal the depths and nuances. Without my camera, however, I could not have framed and portrayed my co-workers or even engaged them as I did, by inviting them to look at the photos that I was taking during the photos shoot.

INSERT** Photos with Canon displaying Gica looking at the photo camera display screen. **HERE

Fig. 2. 3. Photos with Canon displaying Gica looking at the photo camera display screen.

Interestingly, co-workers like Gica did not wish to be interviewed, but he consented to appearing on camera. Out of 55 research participants, 30 agreed to a traditional interview, but all accepted to be included in the photo montages and films that I produced during or after the fieldwork concluded. As such, in this study the use of audio-visual methods presented an advantage over interviewing alone for knowledge production. The participants' consent to appear in the photos and film recordings was also a good indication to me that we had established a good level of trust between us and that I had been accepted as an insider (see the photoshoot illustrated in Figure 2.5). I felt that this also reflects what Maurice Bloch (2008, p. 29) concludes when writing that, in most societies people 'ascribe more reliability to sight over the spoken because language introduces intentionality and fallibility'.

Apart from the use of visual research methods, I depart from other migration scholars in the way I place emphasis on experimentation. Desille and Nikielska-Sekula (2021, p. 18) point out that by 'crosscutting one's findings with existing theories and concepts … with a certain degree of dramatisation' ethnographers produce visual stories that add to the participants' realities, complexities and dimensions without compromising the scientific weight in favour of fictional aspects'. Whilst others argue that the 'process of storytelling involves the creation of a 'character'' (Desille and Nikielska-Sekula 2021, p. 18), I favour the production of a visual story made with and about factual people. As part of this nightnography study, I produced a trilogy of three short films.

The trilogy consists of three short films titled, *Invisible Lives* (2013), *Nocturnal Lives* (2015) and *Nightshift Spitalfields* (2020). This visual ethnography is about the 'other' workers, and visually documents migrant nightworkers in 24/7 London. Each film, respectively, marks a different time politically – before and after E.U. transitional controls for A2 migrant workers ended in January 1st, 2014, before and after the Brexit referendum on June 24th, 2016; different research stages and skills levels of the researcher/filmmaker—before, during and after my doctoral studies in June 26th, 2018, and a different focus—four Romanian migrant night workers in London (*Invisible Lives*); the researcher and three migrant co-workers (*Nocturnal Lives*); and one Bulgarian-Turkish co-worker and his family (*Nightshift Spitalfields*). In this trilogy that I produced during and after completing this nightnography, the protagonists were nightworkers who had never appeared in a film before.

Each film portrays how workers experience severe shortages of rights to decent work. The themes highlighted in the films include invisibility, nocturnal versus diurnal work and sleeplessness, and are as important as the period in which they were recorded, that was, during a time when British politics was charged with immigration debates, and when both British and European media were portraying self-employed Romanian and Bulgarian (A2) migrant workers as 'health tourists' and 'benefit frauds'. *Invisible Lives* was shot in 2013, the same year that rights came into force allowing migrant workers from A2 countries access to the labour markets in the 27 E.U. member states (except in Britain). *Nocturnal Lives* was completed in 2015, which was after the transitional controls and before the Brexit referendum in 2016. *Nightshift Spitalfields* was shot mostly during 2015, the year when Ali, the film's protagonist, and I worked at New Spitalfields together, and later over two brief visits that I made to the U.K. in 2017 and 2019. A lack of funding hampered its completion but was made possible following a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo in 2020. Since 2013, I have presented all three of the films in various academic settings, have used them as a tool in teaching, and for communication purposes to diverse audiences.

As noted, a primary objective of this research was to make the lives of nightworkers more visible and palpable. If the distinctly sensorial aspects involved in their experiences were not conveyed by the migrant nightworkers themselves, one would need to call upon all kinds of cinematic kits and skills in order to portray them. Therefore, I stress here the advantages of a participatory approach. For example, in *Nightshift Spitalfields*, the main protagonist's perspective is central. As the researcher, I am hidden off-camera. To allow his participation without my interference, I installed a GoPro camera on the roof of the forklift so that he could direct the filming as he saw fit whilst driving around the night market. From the start of the film, we see Ali adjusting the camera's shooting angle from front to rear depending on how he was driving the forklift when either using the back or front wheels. During the entire shooting of *Nightshift Spitalfields*, Ali decided what and whom to capture as he drove at night through the market. For instance, among the long hours of travail in the night market, there is a moment of respite captured by Ali when he surprises one of his co-workers who was dozing off on the forklift seat

whilst waiting for a customer, live on camera. This incident sparks a short conversation between the two men. Ali captures the spontaneous reaction of his co-worker asking him, 'Is the camera working?', as in, 'Are you filming me?'. Such a moment of truth is framed spontaneously and marks the participation between the director and the protagonist, as well as gives evidence to the reality of nightwork. This kind of testimony is 'what gives us the subjective voice of the historical person, yet we are implicated in the destiny of others through narrative; and the mythic potential of social actors is heightened through the distancing created by exposition' (MacDougall 1998). Ali as the main protagonist in Ali, turned-filmmaker, experiments with the visual tools in a Vardarian non-traditional documentary style, where non-professional actors cast in the film. With his 1-person story, Ali opened the back door to an intimate area of his life that includes his children and wife. He does it with generosity, emotion, sometimes in a mysterious way and other times with silence that adds grace. This osmosis was in the eyes of late Agnes Varda (1928-2019), what made relationships with non-actors so special. Interested readers can learn more about the experimental approach to visual methods applied in this trilogy via the open access text in the Researcher's Nightworkshop (MacQuarie 2021). They can also watch the short films, which are available to green access subscribers on Vimeo.

To turn *real lives* into *reel stories* is a quest. Some real lives fail to become reel stories. Despite living and working in a global city in high demand of migrant workers, these 'other' workers have no guarantees apart from remaining faceless, voiceless and vulnerable. Consequently, researchers need to find methods that allow research participants to speak through images to a variety of audiences. Although the exploration of the invisible, nocturnal and sleepless migrants in this trilogy is not an exhaustive account, the three short films illustrate how ethnography that is accompanied by visual methods can provide insights into the lived aspects of a nebulous contemporary society that operates 24/7. In addition to the video methods used to visualise these migrants, I also incorporated infographics and photo montages in these films as they enabled an inclusion of other specific characteristics that are currently missing from scholarship and public imaginary on nightwork (such as being overrepresented by ethnic migrant groups of many creeds). In doing so, I attempted to show that the invisibility of migrant workers is symptomatic of a capitalist system that causes the crisis in itself, as well as the exclusion of the 'other' – the immigrant anti-hero.

The use of visual methods in migration studies also raises ethical research issues. Nikielska-Sekula (2021) points out that photography offers two key aspects to the researcher as a process that can initiate social relations and that can powerfully capture the sensory experience of fieldwork through images. Nonetheless, once in front of the camera, participants are on record and their identity can be compromised. Visual storytelling aims to bring representations of nightworkers into the public eye. It is, thus, important to consider the ethical implications of visual methods on the privacy of those participating in our research. How then can we use visual methods to raise awareness of social issues whilst still ensuring people's confidentiality? To

prevent revealing participants' identities, researchers must carefully follow and uphold the instructions of their participants regarding what parts of their experience can or cannot appear in written, audio and visual forms, as well as their rights to be represented on their own terms or to not be portrayed at all (Prieto-Blanco 2021, p. 333). In this study, I have concealed the identities of all participants and have anonymised their names. Yet, there remains a degree to which confidentiality cannot be entirely guaranteed in the use of audio-visual methods. The power of the image in the hands of researchers-turned-filmmakers can change that by documenting the lives of migrants at home, away from home by giving interlocutors the right to disappear, as it has been the case all along in this study. For example, a specific person requested total anonymity, I removed his voice in the backdrop and I applied special effects so his face was not recognisable.

2.6 Data Collection Using Embodied, Cyber-ethnographic and Visual Tools

This section outlines the methodological process undertaken in collecting the data. It contains the bodily ethnography that was used to research migrant nightworkers, as well as the cyber tools used to measure their sensorial experiences to quantify effort and qualify suffering, as well as collate it to present it visually via infographics, photo montages and films about and with them. Just as nightworkers cannot be compared with any other group of migrant workers, in the same way, the dominant, diurnal research cannot capture with classical methodology the layers of precarity that nightworkers inhabit. Next to observations, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, I used tools such as night walking, observations and schmoozing (Driessen and Jansen 2013), as well as recording audio-visual interviews and collecting soundbites, visual notes and cybernotes. I engaged with my body to feel the physical and sensorial experiences at night. Bourdieu's (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 2000) notion of 'embodied knowledge' best captures the way my own body became my tool and gave me a *feel* for the *field*. My body became a finely tuned instrument, recording data, that is, incorporating and situating data whilst fully immersed in this participatory observation experience. Yet, putting this abstract notion into the reality of my research necessitated existential and methodological choices. First, the kind of nightnography that I practiced required high levels of endurance to withstand the tiredness, pain and the physical effort demanded from manual labourers, plus the additional energy invested in the observation and taking of mental notes of the small talk with strangers and co-workers. Consequently, my body became my 'stock-in-trade' and I had to rigorously manage its limited resources for labour (Wacquant 2004, pp. 128–129). I also employed digital technology to quantify bodily experience, more specifically an application called Pacer

Pedometer & Step Tracker™ (Pacer app™, from hereon)[5]. I had it installed on my phone and it quantified physical effort and physiological changes in my body in real time (e.g., heart rate between periods of activity or inactivity). This multi-modal approach contributed to better understanding the multi-layered kind of precarity that involves not only poor working contracts and pay rates, but also a subjective experience of precarity that makes one anomic in the face of bodily exhaustion and suffering due to lack of night sleep and for being under the weight of produce, so to speak, for interminable hours of the 'graveyard' shift. In this way, what was hidden before (e.g., bodily precarity and suffering) became both visible and qualifiable. Researchers of 'hybrid work' emphasise that this multi-layered precariousness affects similarly precarious self-employed workers enveloping their entire lives in 'subjective, existential' ways (Armano and Murgia 2017, pp. 48, 56). I focus in my methods on how to better extract from the experimental nature of my fieldwork, the work-related bodily suffering caused by this kind of layered, subjective precariousness (Lorey 2015; Pulignano et al. 2021).

INSERT** The author is showing to his co-workers the photos that he took that night. **HERE

Fig. 2. 4. The author is showing to his co-workers the photos that he took during the photoshoot that night.

2.6.1 Field Notes and Mental Notes

For a nightnographer, the most common anthropological activity of writing field notes can be challenging, both intellectually and physically. The mental labour of writing down the notes is a dual process that engages the body of the 'sensing scholar' after the physical labour has ended (Desille and Nikielska-Sekuła 2023, p. 10). Each morning throughout my fieldwork at New Spitalfields, after having done anywhere between an exhausting 10 to 16 hour nightshift, I wrote my field notes.

[5] Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™ Application available for Apple iOS devices. Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker 4+ Walking, Weight Loss & Health. Online at: http://bit.ly/pacerappAccessed: 03.01.2023.

Six nights a week I was up and working and after each shift I would leave the market, travel to a retail park to sit in a café and write the field notes. These notes included a range of details from the market's flow, the composition of the team to the observations of people I encountered and our interactions during the informal conversations we had. These notes were based on my experiences whilst working at night and as I gradually accessed the backstage of the night by night lived experiences of co-workers. The writing helped me overcome my anxieties, which lasted throughout the research, to clarify specific conversations and to pinpoint gaps in the information, which I would then try to cover in the following nights. After arduous labour at night, note writing would take its physical toll on my body as I had to stay up extra hours against other obstacles to overcome: mental fatigue experienced as memory loss and cramps in my exhausted legs whilst sitting to write. Sometimes the fatigue and sheer lack of sleep interfered, and I would fall asleep whilst writing. Many times, I feared that my mind was playing tricks on me because my short-term memory was noticeably affecting me as I continued with nightwork. I was also worried that some of the field notes were not structured adequately and that I might need to revisit the experience, activity or conversation that I felt was muddled in my head at the time of recollecting it after an exhausting night. I found comfort in there being a distinction between fieldnotes, mental notes acquired through my 'mindful-body' (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). Whilst field notes tend to involve material that is well-documented, mental notes linger in our minds and we can return to them, enhance, reflect or change them. I also made efforts to supplement the field notes with data I collected through other methods that emphasise the engagement of the body more than of the human brain.

2.6.2 Body Notes

Throughout my fieldwork, I took what I call 'body notes', at first, these body notes were not intentionally recorded. These were movements incorporated and sedimented 'under-the-skin' through the repetitive, practical tasks of loading with its sub-movements of carrying, gripping, twisting and lifting. Other scholars have experienced the bodily dimension of skin-deep ethnography(Desille and Nikielska-Sekuła 2023). Retrieving the knowledge that I incorporated in my body and turning it into written notes was not always an easy thing to do. One particularly effective strategy was to have another ethnographer interview me so that I could accurately explain how precarity was born into my body, which was an experience that my co-workers did not speak about. I came up with this strategy after I had exhausted the Socratic self-questioning technique, which proved inadequate to elicit the desired descriptions and to overcome what I felt to be a resistance in verbally retrieving and putting into writing, the ethnographic material that I was embodying. These interviews enabled me to better recollect, retrieve and articulate my nightshift work experiences. It is worth noting that it was helpful to verbally articulate these physical

practices when I gesticulated them to this ethnographer, such as when I moved my arms in various positions to illustrate either my strategy in dealing with the back-breaking pain, the action of picking up heavy loads of produce or the way I moved my hips forward – something I devised so that I could tackle the pressure of the weight on my lower back. In other words, I increasingly gained a fluency in being able to verbally describe these movements whilst demonstrating them to him. It did became troublesome, however, because of my own emic positioning, i.e., being able or not to sufficiently detach from my body as an object of knowledge. Body notes might not be easily verbalised in the field notes, but they allow the anthropologist, through their own body as an epistemological tool, to access the subjectivities of their research participants. Despite these difficulties, I turned these body notes into 'corporeal vignettes', which are transpositions of the embodied knowledge gained during the participant observation period of my fieldwork.

2.6.3 Digital (Self)Tracking

INSERT *Fig. 2. 5. Weight fluctuations. Whilst working at the New Spitalfields night market, I also used the self-tracking Pacer application™, which gives the average walking distance (Upper left and right charts), weight loss (lower left chart) and hear rate (lower right chart). I experimented with this method at the intersection between my body, my personal data and technology as a way of learning about embodied precarity among nightworkers. Source: Author http://bit.ly/blckbstr2*

Fig. 2. 6. Weight fluctuations. Whilst working at the New Spitalfields night market, I also used the self-tracking Pacer application™, which gives the average walking distance (Upper left and right charts), weight loss (lower left chart) and hear rate (lower right chart). I experimented with this method at the intersection between my body, my personal data and technology as a way of learning about embodied precarity among nightworkers. Source: Author http://bit.ly/blckbstr2

The application collates data based on step length, height, weight, blood pressure and pulse rate entered by the user from which it produces a series of charts. These are given as descriptive categories that show a) the level of *activity* by the user during a set time or throughout a day; b) the *distance* travelled in kilometres or miles of the total number of steps taken; c) the number of *calories* burnt during exercise; d) the fluctuation in *weight*; and e) the *blood pressure* (Systolic/Diastolic) reading, all which are optional features in the app – I updated mine at the local

chemist each week. I complemented these data with field notes to create 'hyper-real' vignettes, as in the following example:

Vignette №1
April 2nd, 2015
Night walking distance: 18.8 km
Nightshift duration: 12.5 hours [10:00 pm – 10:30 am]
Commuting time: 1 hour each way.

That nightshift I walked nearly 18.8 km or took 35,278 steps within 6.5 hours of activity. It is the second longest distance I ever walked during any travail, at night or in the day. The longest has been 25 km. The pedometer data places me 50 % above any fit walker – that is, active users taking 25,000 – 30,000 steps daily. The limitation here is that the pedometer does not record the weight of the fruit and vegetable crates or sacks that I carry on my body during this window of fast-paced activity.

The Pacer app™ quantified my bodily experience, the pains, gains and losses from sleepless hours and endless nightshifts and helped me to better understand the physical labour that I was putting in each nightshift. Once quantified, exhaustive bodily labour could be interpreted as depreciating bodily capital (e.g., ankle injuries and rapid weight loss caused by long walking distances[6], see Figure 2.6). The descriptive statistics show a cumulus of physiological stages and changes that I associated with exhaustion, sleep disturbances and mood swings, most of which I experienced throughout fieldwork, but which became acute in the first month after I exited the field, due to readjusting to the daytime circadian rhythms (see Figure 2.7).[7]

The application also allowed me to compare my sensorial experiences with those of my-co-workers and thus, ascertain the intensity of our physical effort and how that 'shape[d] every[night] situations' (Vaike et al. 2020, p. 29). I quantified the

[6] It shows the number of steps converted to kilometres and accumulated by foot during the 11 months of fieldwork. The 2,310km are an equivalent of the distance between New York and Lafayette in the United States or nearly the same as between London, U.K. and Sibiu, Romania.
[7] The lowest weight was registered in June 2015 with a slight increase during mid-June when I took one week off to fulfil INTEGRIM project duties. I regained weight when the activity rhythms and intensity decreased, indicating that intensive bodily labour affects weight loss, and conversely. Caution is needed to read the indicators' values (BMI/SBMI) as they offer different range values. Source: Author http://bit.ly/blckbstr2. Also, on the left the BMI* value, according to the World Health Organization, BMI is based on 'normal weight' class (good); (Right) SMBI** Smart Body Mass Index's represents a health-risk system weight-class definition. However, for an ethnographer to manage his bodily capital based solely on S/BMI indicators is not sufficient. Combined they may aid awareness of wellbeing in the field. Sources: Kromeyer-Hauschild K, Wabitsch M, Kunze D et al. Monatsschr Kinderheilkd 2001, 149:807; The Global BMI Mortality Collaboration, Lancet 2016; 388:776-86 (adults 40 – 80 years).

intensity with which the workers covered a particular distance, whether the activity be carrying heavy produce or trays with coffees, to appreciate the effort they were exposed to. Arguably, men carrying heavy loads would feel more exhausted by the effort of constantly walking with the heavy weights they carried on their shoulders than women would in constantly carrying drinks on trays. The app could not differentiate between the amount in weight, but it could measure the number of steps and the distances. When compared at the end of the nightshift, the apps revealed similar digits (e.g., 16 km in one nightshift). Combined, the data collected by the pedometer complemented and supported the text interpretations and the visual analysis. In short, it objectifies the physical effort by giving accurate spatial-temporal dimensions, later used for data visualisation or alerting users of any health concerns.

Further research could tackle the limitation of this method by using more performance focused applications than Pacer app™ to record the weight that night workers carry on their bodies as they walk throughout the nightshift and whilst picking up, moving, placing and replacing crates or sacks of packed produce. The intensity of the bodily labour could not be captured by the pedometer app. Strikingly, medical studies from Nepal and Belgium have been able to clarify the effects of the 'prodigious loads' that Nepalese porters carry on their bodies (Basnyat and Schepens 2001, p. 316). Nepalese porters of Rai, Sherpa and Tamang ethnicities, are hired by merchants to carry loads onto their heads at altitudes of 3,500 m and higher. Methodologically, these researchers employed advanced self-tracking technology to determine distances, as well as how the load weight affected the Nepalese porters' performance over the course of the route that the women and men trekked by foot, which totalled approximatively 100 km over mountain paths and river crossings that involved ascending (8 km) and descending (6.3 km) off-road terrain (Bastien 2005). They found greater variation in the age of the porters (this time including children aged 11 and older males aged 68), and weights carried by porters, some carrying up to >183 % greater than their body mass. This and another case study of the *dabbawalas* ('lunch carriers') of Mumbai are discussed later in detail in CHAPTER SIX.

I tested the data in my research for validity and reliability by triangulating the combined methods of field notes, respondents' accounts, and photographs and film, and this confirmed that fluctuations in weight and sleep patterns disruptions were not so dissimilar across the board. Some workers continued to have disrupted nighttime sleep whilst their daytime sleeping pattern was somewhat regulated. After watching how my weight dropped a staggering 13 kg during the eight months of nightwork, I was relieved to see my weight increase again in September, soon after I had stopped working the nightshift and had continued with just the non-participatory observation and 'schmoozing'. In line with Wacquant's encouragement (Wacquant 2005, p. 469) to '[wed] analytical precision with experimental acuity', I also used visual vignettes to make what was abstract concrete. Specifically, I quantified sensorial experiences collected through the Pacer Pedometer technology and corroborated this data with the visual material collected with the digital SLR camera and action film camera (i.e., GoPro) attached either on my body, my co-workers'

bodies or to a mobile unit, as it had been the case with Ali, who filmed the market whilst driving his forklift. I could thus better scrutinise the micro-movements involved in the action of loading and carrying produce to ascertain and support the description of bodily practices and skills that my co-workers had not or could not verbalise in minute and ordinary details. Ultimately, the purpose of using the anthropologist's body and these complementary, visual and digital methods has been to track the hidden and unspoken connections between the habitus of precarity and the market as a 'field' in Bourdieu's sense, endowing nightworkers with symbolic bodily capital. This is the tacit, practical bodily knowledge needed to navigate, negotiate or merely survive the mechanisms of a post-circadian capitalist era that manipulates and realigns people's 24 hour bodily rhythms to meet capital demands.

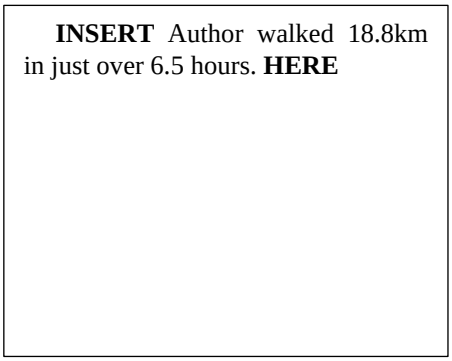


Fig. 2. 7. Author walked 18.8km in just over 6.5 hours.

2.7 Returning from the Dark

At the end of 2015, I exhaustedly exited the field and gradually readjusted to diurnal rhythms. I felt privileged that I could leave the night market behind, but I never stopped being concerned about the fate of my co-workers. Migrant nightworkers cannot afford to exit precarious labour due to many constraining, structural and individual factors, as discussed in the different chapters of this book, that is, they cannot simply escape the entrapment of nightwork. In a follow-up interview with one co-worker, Basrí, conducted in May 2017 two years after we had first met, he told me that he had just returned to FruitVeg after a month's break. He confessed that he had stopped working nights for a while as he could no longer cope as well as he used to, but that as the sole bread winner of his family of five, he had had to

return to working nights since his family had eventually run out of savings. The nocturnal existence, stressful rhythms, frugal sleep and lack of time during the day are what preoccupied Basrí's thoughts as he considered repeatedly over a decade to make a change from working nights to daytime work. Yet, every year he found himself still working at the market. As he told me, 'I think of changing to days, every month. I cannot carry on working nights for long because it does not help my health. Hopefully, this year it will happen for real! … I will work here for a maximum of one more year' (in 2020 Basrí was still working at the New Spitalfields market).

My fieldwork has been a personal, subjective affair where as a researcher I immersed *in situ* in the actual conditions where manual migrant nightworkers exist and operate daily and nightly. In this night market, I was one of the bodies-turned-machines, another post-Fordist worker whose labour power was both disposable and expendable. I sedimented in my body with blood, sweat and tears, a world of precarity layered at the junction with migration and nightwork. I accumulated a bodily capital that was useful in performing precarity.

I then began another ethnographic journey. I turned my body into the 'means of production' as an epistemological tool with which I could begin making sense of this nocturnal world. Had I not engaged in the difficult task of lacing this experience into words, my bodily knowledge would have remained as instrumental as floor washing – an unpaid, overtime task that I completed during fieldwork after an exhausting 16-to-17-hour nightshift. Such fieldwork method that emphasises the immersion and use of the body to collect data (aside the classical tools, e.g., interviews and observations) provides the researcher with outcomes overcome the challenges. Despite the bodily pains and aches, emotional unrest, social isolation and low mood that I experienced, this exploratory journey and experimental research has rewarded me with insights that I lacked when I performed precarity as a labour migrant in Turkey or as a novice researcher upon entering this academically uncharted territory beyond the frontier of the night. I brought to surface, stories that include, but are not limited to vulnerability, marginalisation and the exploitation of im/migrant nightworkers – stories that remain unchallenged in today's non-inclusive societies. In this chapter, I outlined the steps and core methods involved in doing nightnography for the purpose of understanding the reality of migrant nightworkers seen as 'others' – migrants perceived by mainstream society as foreign, alien, strange and unfit.

2.8 Final Act

Patience and persistence in 'small talk', as well as using visual tools in the research paid off in the long term. I forged a degree of friendship and intimacy with some co-workers in this way. Other co-workers gradually opened the door to me and accepted me a part of their inner circle. It felt like a break-through whenever co-

workers invited me to join underground parties after 'lock out' hours, asked me to say their names in English in our phone conversations, requested my help with their unpaid fines and gas bills or to act as a translator or support worker in their interactions with others. When research participants remove their persona, i.e., they no longer hide real meanings from strangers behind a mask, it is said that the researcher has managed to cross the 'invisible line' between the front and the back of the house (Moeran 2007). In short, s/he has reached to the 'inner circle' or entered the backstage to join the insiders, from whom to learn if they do what they say they act when in the frontstage. From a methodological standpoint, those who 'perform the phenomenon' become insiders, i.e., they capture aspects and moments of dynamics that go unnoticed to outsiders. I too became an insider, no longer a 'non-native anthropologist, who can never transcend difference' (Stoller 2005, p. 197).

Wright Mills (2000, p. 215) explains that emerging researchers best hone their 'intellectual craftsmanship' through transparently and openly exchanging their 'actual ways of working' with other researchers. In this spirit, the final discussion presents the outcomes from this study of employing methods to build ethnographic theory for an embodied anthropology of migration. Firstly, the sensorial experiences (senses, suffering and skills) and the visual and cyber-ethnographic tools used here, bridge mind and body to restore lacunas in a social science, and to include visual methods in migration research, specifically (Wacquant, 2015). Secondly, as I reflected on my migratory experience and the lessons learnt during this nightnographic research, I found two key hallmarks: a bodily method that works in many contexts, which were, away from and at home, with migrants and with locals, and in the day and at night, as well as a mode of approaching the field. To directly experience and observe, I entered the field of nightwork armed with sociological constructs to objectify workers' bodily labour using cyber-ethnographic tools that capture, measure and monitor sensorial experiences, and to visually tell the stories of migrants. Thirdly, visual nightnography is multi-layered. I was able to 'see' what I could not have without the camera. This led me to create more real and unique 'representations' of migrants in the nocturnal landscape. The core message here is that we experience the world that surrounds us with our bodies and through the senses, whilst at the same time we use our eyes to receive and transmit messages. The 'message' is a window into a reality documented through research, before the camera captures it, that lives outside of film that represents it to an audience and lives long after the researcher has left the field site.

Finally, I have learnt about the different kinds of cooperation involved in working with filmmakers and my co-workers in order to create and produce the trilogy of short films. Ali, the co-worker turned filmmaker in *Nightshift Spitalfields*, have taught me invaluable, practical and theoretical insights about standing back to let participants give their views and impressions, as they see fit about their own social message, and also that images are ubiquitously present (Wacquant 2005; Pink et al. 2010) and about the power the image offers the mind-space for interpretation with multiple meanings and fascinating endings. This nightnographic method, thus, contributes to migration studies with an innovative portfolio of tools that reveal hidden experiences of nightworkers, narrows the gap between the visual and touch senses

in research and conveys the significance of the body in experiencing and grasping a hidden world. My sincere hope is that this strategy resonates with both novice and experienced researchers alike, to the extent where it demonstrates that the joys and sorrows experienced in migrating for work reveal mechanisms that entrap certain groups in precarious, hidden environments. To bring these workers out of the dungeons of the dark needs collaborative efforts from all social scientists to change the public's lack of awareness and the political lack of will in recognising and addressing the inherent problems with nightwork in the current, traditionally designed daytime labour system.

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