

NIGHT TERRORS

By Wendy MacLeod

In front of the plate glass window in the front rehearsal studio, two female playwrights (the same person), PW #1 and PW #2, stand wearing identical pajamas. They are trying to get to sleep but are kept awake by their own circling thoughts.

PW #1

The lights of Broadway
 What are they really?
 A playground, a pizza parlor, a grocery store....

PW #2

A panel, a jury, a prize committee
 Destiny, posterity, the deciding vote!
 They're reading the oeuvre
 They're considering the canon
 They have reservations
 They're questioning our scope
 Have we failed to address the oppressed?
 The unexpressed
 The dispossessed?
 Have we found the dialectic?
 Or just skated the surface?
 Have we merely constructed
 Or managed to deconstruct?
 Have we made a case for theater in the age of cinema?

PW #1

(worried)

No! I don't think so! Did we?

PW #2

We should have worked harder...

PW #1

What if we started now?
 What if we wrote every day?
 What if we wrote every day for eight hours minimum?
 Parked our seats in that chair
 For eight lonely hours!

PW #2
 We can't
 Not tomorrow
 We have that thing tomorrow...

PW #1
 The day after that!

PW #2
 Maybe not *eight*....

PW #1
 Six! Four!
 Two hours a day, 10 hours a week...
 14 if we work weekends !

PW #2
 Which we won't...

PW #1
 Two hours a day, 10 hours a week
 Six pages a session
 A play every two weeks!

PW #2
(dubious)
 Twenty four plays a year?

PW #1
 If we rented an office
 Did nothing but write
 Wore gloves without fingers
 Lived on four hours sleep!
 We sequester ourselves
 With the famous at Yaddo
 If not Yaddo, then Ojai
 Or maybe MacDowell
 Bag lunch with the famous
 At maybe MacDowell

PW #2
(agony)
 Why aren't *we* famous?
 More famous?
 Famous-er?

PW #1

(happy thought)

What if we *are* famous?

Famous enough that it goes without saying

Do we ask the famous

If they know that they're famous?"

PW#2

How would we know if we're famous or not?

PW#1

We Google ourselves!

They huddle around a blue light which suggests a computer screen and mime Googling. Their faces fall.

Check our Amazon rating!

They return hopefully to the invisible keyboard.

515, 653.

Their shoulders slump.

PW #2

Wish list!

Order that book.

Order another.

Group them together for economy shipping....

PW #1

No shopping!

It's time to acknowledge how far we've come.

PW #1 and PW#2

(looking at each other)

Let's read the resume'!

They huddle again and read their resume aloud.

Reading.

Reading.

Workshop.

Workshop.

Finalist.

Finalist.

Benefit.

PW #2
Why Upstairs?

PW #1
Shhh.

PW #2
Why not the Main Stage?

PW #1
Maybe women are on a slower trajectory. They traject more slowly. They come into their power. They become wise women, warriors, crones...

During this reverie PW #2 picks up Arts and Leisure.

PW #2
Who do you have to fuck to get a MacArthur?!

PW #1
(snatching the paper)
We're a genius!
Flashes of genius...

PW#2
Fucking *children* winning MacArthurs!

PW#1
Hey girly!
No jumping the queue!

PW#2
(brainstorming)
Greek mythology
People with wings
Machines that talk
Flowers that walk
African folk tales
Magical realism

PW #1
Think big
Think bigger
Go global
Iraq
Darfur

Monks in Burma...

PW#2

Why can't we be Tony Kushner?
 Why can't we get outside our own...?
 Oh my God, we forgot to pay the dentist!

PW #1

What keeps dentists up at night?

PW #2

What *does* keep dentists up at night?

A dentist in a lab coat enters.

DENTIST

What keeps dentists up at night?
 Do we not regret
 The hygienist lost?
 The lease not signed?
 The root canal blown?
 Waiting too long to go porcelain?
 Don't amalgam fillings pepper our nightmares?
 No reviews but the waiting room
 Brought bolt upright
 by the empty waiting room
 The receptionist flipping through LL Bean
 Startled by the sound of the opening door
 Why do our monitors fail to impress?
 Why do the field trips pass us by?
 Can we blame it on location?
 The magazine selection?
 A general lack of dental hygiene?

PW #2

What about dogs? What about cats?

PW #1

What keeps animals up at night?

PW #2

Oh to be a creature with no ambition
 Our silky fur baking in the sun

DENTIST

Do they not regret the mouse missed?
 The bird lost to the hasty pounce
 Do they not envy the cat next door?
 Her wet food?
 Her cat-door?
 Her comely house-sitter?

PW #1

Does the Manx envy the tail?
 The domestic short hair the long hair?

PW #2

Oh to be
 An inanimate object...

PW #1

A tree perhaps...

PW #2

A tree can't fail
 A tree can't fall short

DENTIST

A tree has no payroll to meet
 No appointments to fill

PW #1

We don't presume to judge a tree
 Compare that tree to other trees

PW #2

The leaves blow
 Its circles grow
 To survive is to triumph

PW #1

Affirmations!

ALL

We are now enjoying the process
 We are now enjoying the journey...

PW #2

(a cry from the heart)
 I hate traveling!

I want to *arrive*!
 I want to *be* there!
 I want results!
 I want fame!
 I want feature articles!

PW #1
 Standing O's!

PW #2
 Pulitzer Prizes!

PW #1
 Tonys!

PW #2
 Obies!

PW #1
 New Yorker profiles!

PW #2
 Sag Harbor!

PW#1
(fantasy)
 Why there's Joe Mantello!

PW#1 and PW#2
(waving)
 Hey Joe!

PW #2
 Invitations to Prague!

PW#1
 Two new plays a year!

PW #1
 With movie stars in every role!

PW #2
 Rave reviews!

PW #1
 Above the fold!

PW#2
Bidding wars!

PW #1
Buzz!

PW#2
Movie sales!

PW#1
Biographers!

PW#2
And last but not least

PW #1 and #2
We want our name spelled right!

They've worked themselves into a lather. They look at each other.

PW #1
Melatonin.

PW #2
(something stronger)
Somnex.

DENTIST
(something strongest)
Vicodin.

Dentist whips out a prescription pad, writes it, tears it off. The sheet flutters to the floor. They mime swallowing their pills in unison. Their thoughts get a little float-y.

DENTIST
We must try to remember...

PW #1
Where did I read that...?

DENTIST

We must try to remember...

PW #2
Where *was* that?

DENTIST
We must try to remember
That the sun and the moon and the stars...

PW #1
The waiting room!

PW #2
That magazine!

DENTIST
We must try to remember
That the sun and the moon and the stars will not go out when we die.

PW #1
We are going to die...

PW #2
(*good news*)
We are going to die!
Whatever we do or don't do, we are going to die!
Shakespeare doesn't care if he's on the syllabus
Or that Coriolanus is a big fat mess.

PW #1
Shakespeare is with his dead son.
And the dark lady of the sonnets
Who may or may not be that guy.

DENTIST
Our teeth will rot away...

PW #2
Our pages will be recycled...

PW #1
Our time here is less than the circle on a tree trunk.

PW #2
Think of the world without us...

ALL

And sleep.

The three, standing in a row, reach for the unseen bedside lamp and turn it off as the lights go sharply out.

END OF PLAY